

# **In the Shadow of the Church**

## **Burial practices in the Wessex heartlands**

**c.600-1100 AD**

**Part 2**

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## **Part 2**

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## Chapter 6

### **Barrows, grave markers and churches: Above-ground commemoration in early medieval Wessex**

The primary focus of the study thus far has been on the nature of funerary processes that accompanied the corpse from deathbed to grave. However, it is important to realise that burial does not mark the end of the funerary process, merely the culmination of one phase and the beginning of another, that of the commemoration of the deceased. Commemoration can take many forms ranging from a simple marker raised above the final resting place of a single individual to large monuments remembering individuals, or groups of the deceased, raised either in the vicinity or, in some cases, at some distance from where their remains lie. Alternatively, the memory of an individual may be preserved not in any material way, but through an oral tradition of stories and genealogies or through the written word (Geary 1994:87).

Just as commemoration may take many forms, it can also serve many functions (Hadley 2001:125). For the immediate family and friends of the deceased, depending on the beliefs of the period, the commemoration of the departed, in whatever form, may have provided a focus for their grief. Alternatively, commemoration could have served as a means of placating ancestors or ensuring their well-being. Of equal importance is the potential ability of the commemoration of the departed to reach a wider audience, beyond those participants involved in the transitory deathbed and burial rites (Petts 2003:195). The use of physical structures, oral histories or the written word provided a more durable way to commemorate the deceased (Hadley 2000a:158), one that could be used to remind the wider audience of an individual's importance, wealth or status and by association that of their surviving family (Hadley 2001:125).

This chapter considers the ways in which the dead of early medieval Wessex were commemorated by the living and the impact that the introduction and consolidation of the Anglo-Saxon Church may have had on these processes. Initially, the chapter will focus on the evidence for above-ground commemoration, ranging from simple markers, such as grave stones, wooden posts, ditches, through to more monumental structures, such as barrows and pyramids. This data allows not only the influence of the Church to be examined, but also the

identification of any geographical and chronological differences in the nature of commemoration within the study area. Finally, the development of a commemorative liturgy during the late Saxon period and its impact on both the relationship between the living and the dead and the form of commemorative markers and monuments is examined.

## **6.1. Evidence for the use of above-ground markers in early medieval Wessex**

The evidence for above-ground markers used in this analysis consists of examples found among the burials and cemeteries within the study dataset. This sample was augmented by examples from the corpus of inscribed stones of South-west Britain (Okasha 1993) and the corpus of Anglo-Saxon stone sculpture from South-east England<sup>1</sup> (Tweddle *et al*, 1995). Neither of these two studies provides a completely comprehensive survey of all examples of early medieval funerary sculpture for the entire study area, but the use of this data does allow a more complete overview of commemoration during this period than would be possible just using evidence from cemetery excavations.

The evidence for the use of above-ground markers in early medieval Wessex is both very fragmentary and subject to significant bias. Differential preservation within the archaeological record ensures the preferential survival of masonry grave markers, with slots, stake holes and postholes providing the only evidence for the possible existence of timber markers. Furthermore, by virtue of their position, above-ground markers are particularly susceptible to damage and displacement by later activities in comparison to the graves below. Ploughing or later settlement of a site can disturb or remove the upper layers of soil, thus potentially obliterating any postholes or slots in the upper grave fill, which may be all that survives of a timber grave marker. Even the more durable stone markers rarely survive *in situ* within the archaeological record. Stone funerary markers were often taken from graves to re-use in later construction projects. Moreover, once displaced from their original context, the funerary role of stone markers is not easily discerned unless they are elaborately inscribed or carved. Undressed or simply dressed stones, which were once used to mark the positions of graves, are unlikely to be recognised as grave markers out of context. This results in ornate funerary sculpture being over-represented among the dataset. Yet despite the clear bias towards the more elaborate forms of above-ground commemoration and the relatively small sample size, the analysis of the evidence for above-ground markers in the study area will allow a basic examination of the impact of the Church on the commemoration

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<sup>1</sup> Covers Hampshire and Berkshire.

of the deceased and allow the identification of chronological and geographical variations in their distribution. Moreover, the analysis has the potential to provide a valuable insight into funerary practices beyond those processes directly involved in the actual disposal of the body.

## **6.2. The commemoration of the dead in early medieval non-churchyard cemeteries in the Wessex heartlands**

This section of the chapter examines the evidence for the commemoration of the deceased found outside the churchyards of early medieval Wessex. This provides an idea of the commemorative practices in use particularly during the seventh and eighth century, a period when the Church had, as yet, little impact on mortuary behaviour and provides a starting point against which to consider the increasing impact of the Church on the commemoration of the deceased during later centuries.

### **6.2.1. The evidence for the use of grave markers in early medieval non-churchyard cemeteries within the study area**

The field cemeteries, which both preceded and co-existed with the churchyards of the early medieval period, contain little evidence for the use of grave markers. Eighteen possible examples were found among the study dataset from non-churchyard burials of the seventh to tenth centuries and are listed in table 6.1. The most unambiguous example of a commemorative marker in table 6.1 is the box-like structure constructed of lias slabs set on a mound of earth raised above the rock-cut grave of a juvenile of 12-14 years at Cannington (So)<sup>2</sup> (figure 6.2) (Rathz *et al*, 2000:57, 489). An additional marker for this grave may also have been present in the form of a small group of stones, including a piece of red sandstone with lines and a circular motif carved into one side, that lay to the east of the box-like structure (*ibid*: 51). It has been suggested that the incised red sandstone may have been a grave marker, although it is possible that it has been moved from elsewhere. The well-defined path leading to this grave and the cluster of later graves surrounding it indicate the importance of this grave both as a focus for later burial and perhaps as a place of visitation (*ibid*.:54). The individual within this grave was clearly held in some esteem, although it is unclear whether this was due to familial connections or the result of social or religious

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<sup>2</sup> Although this burial has been radiocarbon dated at the 2 $\sigma$  level of confidence to 620-1020AD (Rathz *et al* 2000:454), there is a question over the accuracy of this date as it is one of the original radiocarbon dates from the cemetery (*ibid* 126). Many of these samples were rerun recently and found to have changed significantly. It was not possible to re-run a sample from this burial as the skeleton was re-interred.

*Figure 6.1. A slot-hole, which may have supported some form of wooden marker, cut into the floor above the skull at the west end of grave 11 in the seventh-century cemetery at Bradford Peverell (image courtesy of B. Hawthorne)*



*Figure 6.2. A box-like structure of Lias slabs constructed on the mound of earth covering grave 409\* at Cannington (So) (from Rathz, Hirst & Wright 2001:53, figure 30)*



\*Burial radiocarbon dated to 620-1020AD at a level of  $2\sigma$  (Rathz, Hirst & Wright 2000:454).

**Table 6.1. Evidence for the use of above ground markers in the field cemeteries within the study area.**

Type of evidence	Site	Date of cemetery	Grave number	Evidence for the marking of the grave	
Mound of earth over the grave	Wembdon Hill (So)	7 <sup>th</sup> to 9 <sup>th</sup> century	10	Burial has pronounced mound of charcoal dark soil cut into red sandy soil over the grave.	
			12	Burial covered by mound of backfill containing fragments of red sandstone	
	Bradford Peverell (Do)	7 <sup>th</sup> century	13	Possible rounded mound over the grave	
Stones associated with the grave	Brean Down (So)		Context 20	Concentration of limestone blocks 1m above the grave.	
			Context 32	4 limestone blocks found 0.5m above burial	
			Context 212 <sup>1</sup>	A limestone boulder, 1.15m x 0.6m x 0.5m, lay directly above the body in grave 7.	
	Cannington (So)	4 <sup>th</sup> -7 <sup>th</sup> /8 <sup>th</sup> century	409 <sup>2</sup>	A box-like structure of lias slabs was built over a grave cut into bedrock. An additional marker for this grave may also have been present in the form of a small group of stones, including a piece of red sandstone with lines and a circular motif carved into one side, that lay to the east of the box-like structure	
Postholes and slots	Bradford Peverell (Do)	7 <sup>th</sup> century	9	Slots at west and east ends of the grave, the slot at the west end was deeper.	
			11	Slot at west end of grave associated with large flints	
		Didcot Power Station, (Ox)	7 <sup>th</sup> century	1	Small ovoid feature cut into top of the grave fill – possibly a post hole for a grave marker
	Bevis' Grave (Ha)	7 <sup>th</sup> -10 <sup>th</sup> century	23	Stake holes at head and foot of grave, but considerable number of stake holes over the site.	
			25	Four postholes lie in the vicinity of grave 25, one of which intersects with the grave itself. These post holes may represent a four post structure above the grave.	
			59 <sup>3</sup>	A single stake hole a third of the way along the south side of the grave may represent a grave marker, although a considerable number of undated stake holes were uncovered over the whole site.	
	St. Mary's Stadium I (Ha)	Late 7 <sup>th</sup> to early 8 <sup>th</sup> century	4002	A small slot 0.36m x 0.08m x 0.13m to west of grave – presumed to represent a grave marker	
			5352	2 slots 0.2m x 0.05m and 0.1m deep cut in west end of the grave, may represent some form of grave marker	
		Cook Street (Ha)	Early 8 <sup>th</sup> century	2597	A feature c. 1.58m x 0.32m and 0.16m deep was set into the top fill of grave. It was on the same alignment as the grave, but lay to the south of centre. It may have held a grave marker.
	SOU 32 (Ha)	8 <sup>th</sup> century	421	A narrow slot ran along most of the length of the top of the grave. It seems likely it was related to the grave and was probably the setting for a horizontal grave marker.	
407			Postholes found at eastern corners of grave. Western end of grave disturbed.		

<sup>1</sup> Radiocarbon date (HAR-8549) for this skeleton of 1430±70bp (Levitan 1990:77) when re-calibrated using OxCal v.3.8 gives a date of 430-770AD at 2σ level of confidence

<sup>2</sup> Although this burial has been radiocarbon dated at the 2σ level of confidence to 620-1020AD (Rathz *et al* 2001:454), there is a question over the accuracy of this date as it is one of the origin radiocarbon dates from the cemetery (*ibid* 126). Many of these samples were rerun recently and found to have changed significantly. It was not possible to rerun a sample from 409 as the skeleton was re-interred

<sup>3</sup> This burial was radiocarbon dated to 890-1020AD at 2σ level of confidence as part of dating programme undertaken for this research (see chapter 8 for details).

factors (*ibid.*:413).<sup>3</sup> The only other examples of masonry markers identified associated with non-churchyard burials within the study dataset were found in the fifth-to-seventh-century cemetery at Brean Down (So) (table 6.1) (Levitan 1990). The location of one grave in this cemetery appears to have been marked by a single large stone (context 212: skeleton 7) (*ibid.*:77).<sup>4</sup> The position of another grave was marked by a cluster of limestone blocks (context 20:skeleton 1) (*ibid.*:74) above the grave. The position of a third grave may also have been indicated by four blocks of limestone, although this example is more ambiguous (*ibid.*:76).

Evidence for the possible presence of timber grave markers, in the form of slots and postholes, was observed in seven non-churchyard cemeteries within the study sample (table 6.1). Deep slots cut into the floor at the west end of grave 9 and both ends of grave 11 in the seventh-century cemetery of Bradford Peverell (Do) (figure 6.1) probably provided the setting for some form of timber grave marker (JB Hawthorne *pers. comm.*), with the large flints associated with the slot in grave 11 possibly providing additional support to hold the marker in place. The two slots cut into the western end of grave 5352 in the late seventh- to early eighth-century cemetery of St. Mary's Stadium may also have held an above-ground marker as may the single slot immediately to the west of grave 4002 (Birbeck 2005:31,41). Similarly, the long slots cut into the upper grave fill of the eighth-century burials in grave 2597 at Cook Street (Ha) (Garner 1993:86) and grave 421 at SOU 32 (Ha) (Morton 1992a:174) may have held some form of grave marker. In fact it has been suggested that a fragment of quern stone found in the vicinity of grave 421 at SOU 32 may have formed part of this marker, although it is possible that it was part of the later disturbance of the site (*ibid.*:177).

Postholes were found in association with five graves (table 6.1). In some cases, such as the post holes found at the two eastern corners of grave 407 from the eighth-century cemetery of SOU 32 (Morton 1992a:177) and those cut into the upper fill of grave 1 from the seventh-century cemetery at Didcot (Ox) (Boyle *et al* 1995:239), there are strong reasons to believe these structures are related to the grave itself and may have supported above-ground markers. The postholes seen in grave 407 at SOU 32 were probably originally accompanied by a pair of corresponding postholes in the corners of the now destroyed western end of the

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<sup>3</sup> It has been suggested that a focal point within the early Christian cemeteries in the western part of the study area was initially provided, not by ecclesiastical buildings, but by "special graves" distinguished by an elaboration of the usual grave form (Thomas, Fowler & Gardener 1969:140). It is possible that these special graves may not have just been confined to enclosed cemeteries and it has been suggested that the elaborate slab-covered grave at Cannington (So), with its richly furnished child burial, could also be considered a special grave (Thomas 1971:63; Rathz, Hirst & Wright 2000:413). Also see discussion in section 7.1.1.

<sup>4</sup> This burial has been radiocarbon dated to 430-770AD at a 2 $\sigma$  level of confidence (Bell 1990:77).



grave (Morton 1992a:177). Parallels have been suggested between these four postholes and the sockets seen along the sides of some graves at St. Peter's, Broadstairs (Kt) (Hogarth 1974:109-11). The posts may have possibly served as supports to some form of roofed structure above the grave or held some form of horizontal planking in place, perhaps acting as a revetment for a small mound of earth over the grave (Morton 1992a:177). For other examples listed in table 6.1, the relationship between the postholes and the grave is far more ambiguous. Stakeholes were found at the head and foot of grave 23 and a third of the way along the south side grave 59, both from the seventh- to tenth-century cemetery of Bevis' Grave, and may once have held timber grave markers (Rudkin 2001:19). However, the large number of undated stakeholes of indeterminate function, which cover the entire site, raise the possibility that the association between the stakeholes and the graves may be coincidental. There are also four postholes in the vicinity of grave 25, one of which intersects with the grave itself. These post holes may represent a four post structure similar to that at SOU 32, discussed above, yet there is no dating evidence for the structure and it proved impossible to determine the stratigraphic relationship between the posthole, which intersects grave 25, and the grave itself (*ibid.*). This raises the possibility that the association between the postholes and the grave is no more than coincidence, particularly given the far from central position of the grave to the four posthole structure.

Overall, there is little evidence for the use of simple grave markers of stone and timber in field cemeteries within the study area. This may simply be a result of the problems with the survival of above-ground markers in the archaeological record, discussed above, with the available evidence representing only a tiny fragment of what was once there. Alternatively, it may be that marking the position of a grave with stone or timber markers was far from routine and may have been reserved only for the graves of certain individuals or only used by certain communities. In addition, the use of stone markers was perhaps governed by the availability of raw materials. There is stratigraphic evidence, in the form of contrasting soils, suggesting the presence of mounds of earth over three graves within the study sample. These are graves 10 and 12 from the seventh- to tenth-century cemetery at Wembdon Hill (So) (Woods undated) and grave 13 from the seventh-century cemetery at Bradford Peverell (JB Hawthorne *pers. comm.*) (table 6.1). Such mounds of earth would have occurred over freshly dug graves and this may have been the only form of above-ground marker used by many communities. Moreover, given that many non-churchyard cemeteries of the seventh to tenth centuries were relatively short-lived with the majority containing less than fifty burials, this may have been all the above-ground commemoration considered necessary.

A final category of evidence for the commemoration of the deceased is provided by inscribed stones. Twenty-two examples of these undressed or roughly dressed stones incised with an inscription, but usually lacking any other form of decoration (Okasha 1993:4), were found in the study area (table 6.2 and figure 6.3). These inscribed stones are traditionally associated with the British kingdom of Dumnonia, which roughly corresponds to modern Devon and Cornwall. As such, it is not surprising that 15 of 22 inscribed stones within the study area are found in Devon, particularly in the west of the county, although examples are also found at Winsford Hill in Somerset, Wareham in Dorset and at Silchester in Hampshire (table 6.2) (*ibid.*:3). A similar, although not identical, tradition of inscribing stones is found in Wales (*ibid.*:42; Edwards 2001). Although there are no definite instances of these stones being found in association with a grave,<sup>5</sup> the nature of the inscriptions, often a simple memorial containing the name of an individual and in some cases familial relationships (*ibid.*:14) (table 6.2), suggest that many of these stones formed a commemorative function, with some perhaps serving as grave markers (*ibid.*:5). Unlike the other types of evidence for above-ground markers considered above, the use of inscribed stones is predominantly confined to the western part of the study area, an area where the British Church existed prior to the arrival of the Roman missionaries. As such, these markers may have Christian connotations. A number of stones from Cornwall bear Christian symbols, such as the “chi-rho”, or Christian formulae, such as “*hic iacet*” (Okasha 1993:5), although none of the stones within the study area possesses Christian iconography.<sup>6</sup> While it is often difficult to date inscribed stones beyond a general range of fifth or sixth to eleventh century (Okasha 1993:51), it is clear that these stones, whether intrinsically Christian or not, represent a distinctive tradition, predominately confined to the west of the study area, and one which seems likely to have both predated and continued after the arrival of the Roman Church in England.

### 6.2.2. The use of monuments to commemorate the dead

Above-ground commemoration was not confined to simple grave markers. Markers in the form of structural monuments, such as ditches and barrows, were found in association with burials at a number of sites within the study area (tables 6.3, 6.4 & 6.5). In many cases, the early medieval population used existing prehistoric or Roman monuments to enhance the

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<sup>5</sup> Antiquarian records suggest that the stone from Yelhampton (Dv) may have been found in association with human bones, but as it was found in a churchyard it is not clear if the bones and stone were actually related (Okasha 1993:338).

<sup>6</sup> There is some archaeological evidence for the existence of early Christian churchyards in the South-west, particularly in Cornwall (see section 7.1.1 for more details). It has been argued in some cases that the inscribed stones may have been part of early Christian cemeteries which later acquired churches (Swanton & Pearce 1982:140).

**Table 6.2. Inscribed memorial stones found within the study area.**

County	Location	Date	Text <sup>i</sup>
Devon	East Ogwell	5 <sup>th</sup> /6 <sup>th</sup> – 11th century	(the stone) of Cal --, son of -plicus
	Lundy I	5 <sup>th</sup> /6 <sup>th</sup> – 11th century (probably 6 <sup>th</sup> -8th)	(the stone) of -gernus, (son?) of -i-ernus
	Lundy II	5 <sup>th</sup> /6 <sup>th</sup> – 11th century (probably 6 <sup>th</sup> -8th)	Potit – presumably a personal name
	Lundy III	5 <sup>th</sup> /6 <sup>th</sup> – 11th century	Resgeut(a?) – presumably a personal name
	Lundy IV	5 <sup>th</sup> /6 <sup>th</sup> – 11th century (probably 6 <sup>th</sup> -8th)	(the stone) of Timus
	Lustleigh	8th century onwards	Datuidoc Conhina(-) – presumably two personal names although unclear whether just one person or whether consists of name and patronymic.
	Lynton	5 <sup>th</sup> /6 <sup>th</sup> – 11th century (probably 6 <sup>th</sup> -8th)	(the stone) of Caudus, son of Civi(l)is
	Plymstock	???	
	Stowford	8th century onwards	(G)u(g)le(s) – probably a personal name
	Tavistock I	5 <sup>th</sup> /6 <sup>th</sup> – 11th century (probably 6 <sup>th</sup> -8th)	(the stone) of Nepranus, son of Conbevus
	Tavistock II	5 <sup>th</sup> /6 <sup>th</sup> -8th century	(the stone) of Sa(b)inus, son of Maccodechetus
	Tavistock III	5 <sup>th</sup> /6 <sup>th</sup> -8th century	(the stone) of Dobunnus the smith, son of (E)inabarrus <sup>ii</sup>
	Tavistock IV	10th-11th century, or even post-conquest	(-) within lies (-) under (-). <sup>iii</sup>
	Tavistock V	10th-11th century, or even post-conquest	(-) here is buried (-)fridus
Yelhampton	5 <sup>th</sup> /6 <sup>th</sup> – 11th century	Goreus – presumably a personal name.	
Dorset	Wareham I	Possibly 7th century	Vidcu(mi) son of Vida(r) <sup>iv</sup>
	Wareham II	Probably late 7th century	Iudnne(rth) son of Qui... <sup>v</sup>
	Wareham III	Possibly 7th century	Possibly Cattwg, son of Gideo(n) <sup>vi</sup>
	Wareham IV	8th century	(D)eniel son of Aupril lies <sup>vii</sup>
	Wareham V	8th or 9th century	Gongoria – presumably a personal name <sup>viii</sup>
Hampshire	Silchester <sup>ix</sup>	c.500AD	The tombstone of Ebicatus, son of... <sup>x</sup>
Somerset	Winsford Hill	5 <sup>th</sup> /6 <sup>th</sup> – 11th century	(the stone of X), descendant <sup>xi</sup> of Caratacus

<sup>i</sup> All translations from Okasha 1993, unless specified otherwise.

<sup>ii</sup> Alternatively instead of translating Fabri as smith it may be a Latin personal name (Okasha 1993:280)

<sup>iii</sup> Additional text on the stone cannot be clearly interpreted (Okasha 1993:284)

<sup>iv</sup> Translation from Radford & Jackson 1970:311.

<sup>v</sup> Translation from Radford & Jackson 1970:311.

<sup>vi</sup> Translation from Radford & Jackson 1970:311.

<sup>vii</sup> Translation from Radford & Jackson 1970:311.

<sup>viii</sup> Translation from Radford & Jackson 1970:311.

<sup>ix</sup> Question have raised as to whether this stone may be a fake (Fulford & Selwood 1980:99)

<sup>x</sup> Translation from Fulford & Selwood 1980:96.

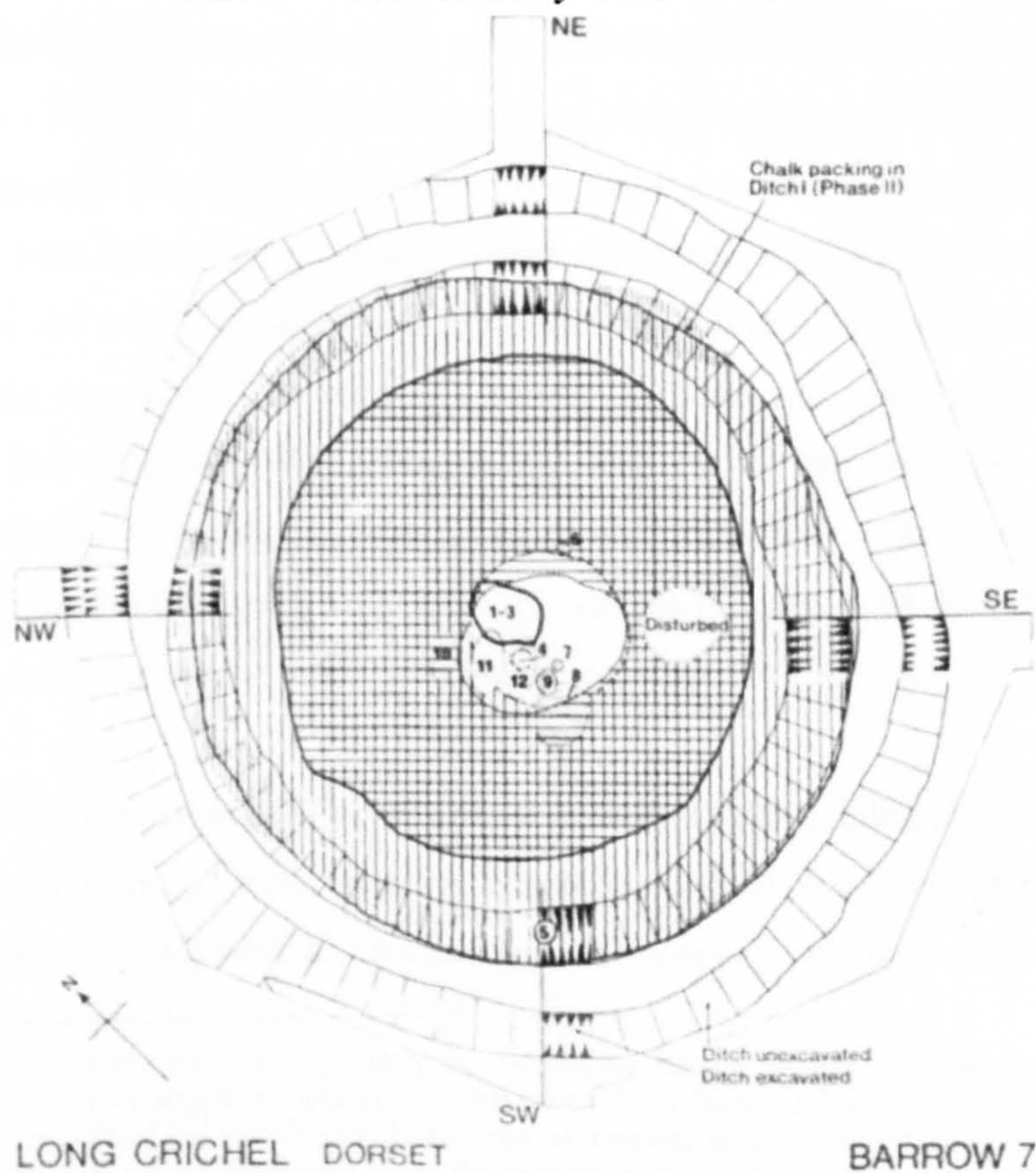
<sup>xi</sup> Nepvs – can mean descendant, but may also mean nephew or grandson.

*Figure 6.3. Inscribed stone from Yealmpton (Dv)*



*(from Okasha 1993:339)*

*Figure 6.4. Plan of barrow 7 at Long Crichel (Do). The position of the early medieval burials are indicated by numbers 10-12.*



*(from Green et al 1982:45)*

visibility of isolated burials and cemeteries within the landscape. Within the study area early medieval burials have been found in association with a wide range of earlier monuments, including Roman forts and temples, Iron Age hillforts, and Neolithic causeway enclosures (table 6.5). Yet, barrows were by far the most commonly re-used monument within the study area. Indeed, only 3 (9.73%) of the thirty-one barrows associated with burials, dating to between c.600-1100AD, identified within the study area were of Anglo-Saxon construction (table 6.3 & 6.4).

Barrows, whether of prehistoric or early medieval construction, could be used in two ways with burials either being inserted into the barrow or interred in the general vicinity of the barrow. At twenty (64.5%) of the thirty-one sites, the burials had been placed within the barrow (table 6.3 & figure 6.4).<sup>7</sup> At six of these sites, there was a single primary burial within an early medieval barrow, while another twelve examples contained secondary burials within prehistoric barrows, two in Neolithic long barrows, seven in Bronze Age barrows and three within barrows of unknown type. At the two remaining sites, it was unclear if the burials were primary or secondary interments. Sixteen of the barrows, including all those of early medieval construction, contained a single inhumation of early medieval date. Four barrows contained multiple burials. Two skeletons, presumed to be a double burial (Semple 2003:86), were found in the Yatesbury II barrow (Wi) (Cunnington 1934:167), while two inhumations, lying some distance apart, were found in the long barrow at Maiden Castle (Do) (Wheeler 1943:78 & 21-2). The Bronze Age barrow at Eggardon hillfort (Do) and the Long Crichel Barrow No. 7 (Do) both contained three extended burials interred in separate parallel graves (Bill Putnam *pers. comm*; Greene *et al* 1982: 47, fig 4). Fifteen of twenty-six individuals interred within barrows within the study area were male, or possibly male, with only two burials, one from Roundway Hill barrow 7 (Cunnington 1860) and the other from Swallowcliffe Down (Speake 1989) being female (table 6.6). The sex of the remaining nine burials is unknown. Virtually all the inhumations were adult with the barrow at Long Crichel containing the only juvenile within the sample (Greene *et al* 1982:56), although it should be noted that the age of many individuals is not known (table 6.6).

Barrows were not only associated with isolated burials. The remaining eleven (35.5%) of the thirty-one sites associated with barrows identified within the study area consisted of cemeteries, which lay adjacent to, around and occasionally within barrows, or possible

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<sup>7</sup> None of the single, double or triple primary or secondary barrow burials in table were associated with cemeteries of flat graves, although as many antiquarian excavations did not extend to the area around the barrow, it is possible that associated flat graves may have been overlooked at some sites (Semple 2003:74). A second seventh-century burial has been recovered from the enclosure at Lowbury (Atkinson 1916:10-11; Fulford & Ripon 1994:189) and the burials from the late sixth- and seventh-century cemetery at Bargates are spread over two barrows and the area separating them (figure 6.5) (Jarvis 1983:107).

Table 6.3. Burials placed in barrows dating to c. 600-1100AD within the study area.

Site	County	Barrow type	Relationship of burials to barrow	Date of burials	Basis of dating	No. of inhumations
Cross Barrows III	Berkshire	Anglo-Saxon	Primary	Late 7 <sup>th</sup> -early 8 <sup>th</sup> century	Grave goods	1
Seven Barrows		Bronze Age barrow	Secondary?	Late 7 <sup>th</sup> -early 8 <sup>th</sup> century	Grave goods	
Maiden Castle	Dorset	Long barrow <sup>i</sup>	Secondary	Late 6 <sup>th</sup> -early 8 <sup>th</sup> century	Grave goods/radiocarbon	2
Long Crichel No. 7		Bronze Age round barrow	Secondary	7 <sup>th</sup> century	Grave goods	3
Pentridge, Woodyates		Long barrow	Secondary	7 <sup>th</sup> century	Grave goods	1
Eggardon Hillfort		Bronze Age barrow	Secondary	7 <sup>th</sup> -9 <sup>th</sup> century	Radiocarbon dating	3
Barrow Hills, Radley I	Oxfordshire	Bronze Age round barrow	Secondary	Late 6 <sup>th</sup> -early 7 <sup>th</sup> century		1
Lowbury Hill		Anglo-Saxon <sup>ii</sup>	Primary	c.650-700AD	Grave goods	1
Alvediston, Barrow 1C	Wiltshire	Anglo-Saxon	Primary	c.650-700AD	Grave goods	1
Ford Barrow 18		Anglo-Saxon	Primary	c.650-700AD	Grave goods	1
West Knoyle I		Type unknown	Interred in barrow	Late 7 <sup>th</sup> -early 8 <sup>th</sup> century	Grave goods	1
Swallowcliffe Down		Bronze Age round barrow	Secondary	Late 7 <sup>th</sup> century	Grave goods	1
Roundway Hill, Barrow 7		Bronze Age barrow	Secondary	7 <sup>th</sup> -early 8 <sup>th</sup> century	Grave goods	1
Roundway Hill, Barrow 3		Anglo-Saxon	Primary	7 <sup>th</sup> century	Grave goods	1
Rodmead Down Barrow		Type unknown	Interred in barrow	7 <sup>th</sup> century	Grave goods	1
Coombe Bissett I		Anglo-Saxon	Primary	Early 7 <sup>th</sup> century	Grave goods	1?
Yatesbury II, Cherhill Barrow 10	Type unknown	Secondary	7 <sup>th</sup> century	Grave goods	2	
Ogbourne St. Andrews	Bronze Age round barrow	Secondary	Late 9 <sup>th</sup> or 10 <sup>th</sup> century	Style of coffin fittings	1	
Winkelbury I	Prehistoric barrow	Secondary	Middle Saxon	Coffin fittings	1	
Winkelbury III	Prehistoric barrow	Secondary	Middle Saxon	Grave goods/location	1	

<sup>i</sup> The long barrow at Maiden Castle lies within a Neolithic Causeway enclosure (Wheeler 1943).

<sup>ii</sup> The Anglo-Saxon burial mound at Lowbury lies adjacent to a probable Romano-Celtic temple (Atkinson 1916; Fulford & Rippon 1994).

*Table 6.4. Field cemeteries in the vicinity of barrows within the study area.*

Site	County	Barrow type	No. of burials	Date	Basis of dating
Burghfield	Berkshire	Bronze Age round barrow	50	7 <sup>th</sup> century	Grave goods
Bargates	Dorset	Bronze Age round barrow	30	Late 6 <sup>th</sup> -7 <sup>th</sup> century	Grave goods
Portway West	Hampshire	Barrow type unknown	17	Late 6 <sup>th</sup> -7 <sup>th</sup> century	Grave goods
Ports Down II		Barrow type unknown	25	7 <sup>th</sup> -8 <sup>th</sup> century	Grave goods
Bevis Grave		Long Barrow	88	7 <sup>th</sup> -10 <sup>th</sup> century	Grave goods/Radiocarbon dating
Snell's Comer		Barrow type unknown	33	7 <sup>th</sup> century	Grave goods
Stockbridge Down		Barrow type unknown	41	11 <sup>th</sup> century	Coins
Barrow Hill, Buckland Dinham	Somerset	Possible barrow?	5 or 6	7 <sup>th</sup> century	Grave goods
Roche Court Down III	Wiltshire	Barrow type unknown	13	Late 6 <sup>th</sup> -7 <sup>th</sup> century	Grave goods
Winklebury Hill II		Barrow type unknown	30	7 <sup>th</sup> -8 <sup>th</sup> century	Grave goods
Monkton Deverill		Possible barrow?	15	7 <sup>th</sup> century	Grave goods

*Table 6.5. Field cemeteries in the vicinity of other Prehistoric and Roman structures<sup>1</sup>*

Site	County	Type of structure	No. of burials	Date	Basis of dating
Hambledon Hill	Dorset	Neolithic causeway enclosure	14	7 <sup>th</sup> or 8 <sup>th</sup> century	Grave goods
SOU 862	Hampshire	Roman fort and ramparts	15	7 <sup>th</sup> to 8 <sup>th</sup> century	Radiocarbon dating
SOU 414			6+	7 <sup>th</sup> to 8 <sup>th</sup> century	Radiocarbon dating
SOU 207			Unknown	7 <sup>th</sup> to 8 <sup>th</sup> century	Radiocarbon dating
Porchester Castle	Somerset	Roman fort	22	11 <sup>th</sup> century	Stratigraphy
Meon Hill		Iron Age enclosure ditch	10	Middle-late Saxon	Grave goods
Henley Wood		Roman temple	75+	5 <sup>th</sup> -7 <sup>th</sup> century	Radiocarbon dating
Lamyatt Beacon		Roman temple/hillfort	16	6 <sup>th</sup> -8 <sup>th</sup> century	Radiocarbon dating
Cannington			542	350-800AD	Radiocarbon dating
Brean Down	Hillfort		8	5 <sup>th</sup> -7 <sup>th</sup> or 8 <sup>th</sup> century	Radiocarbon dating
Hicknall Slait, Taunton			4	Late 7 <sup>th</sup> century	Grave goods

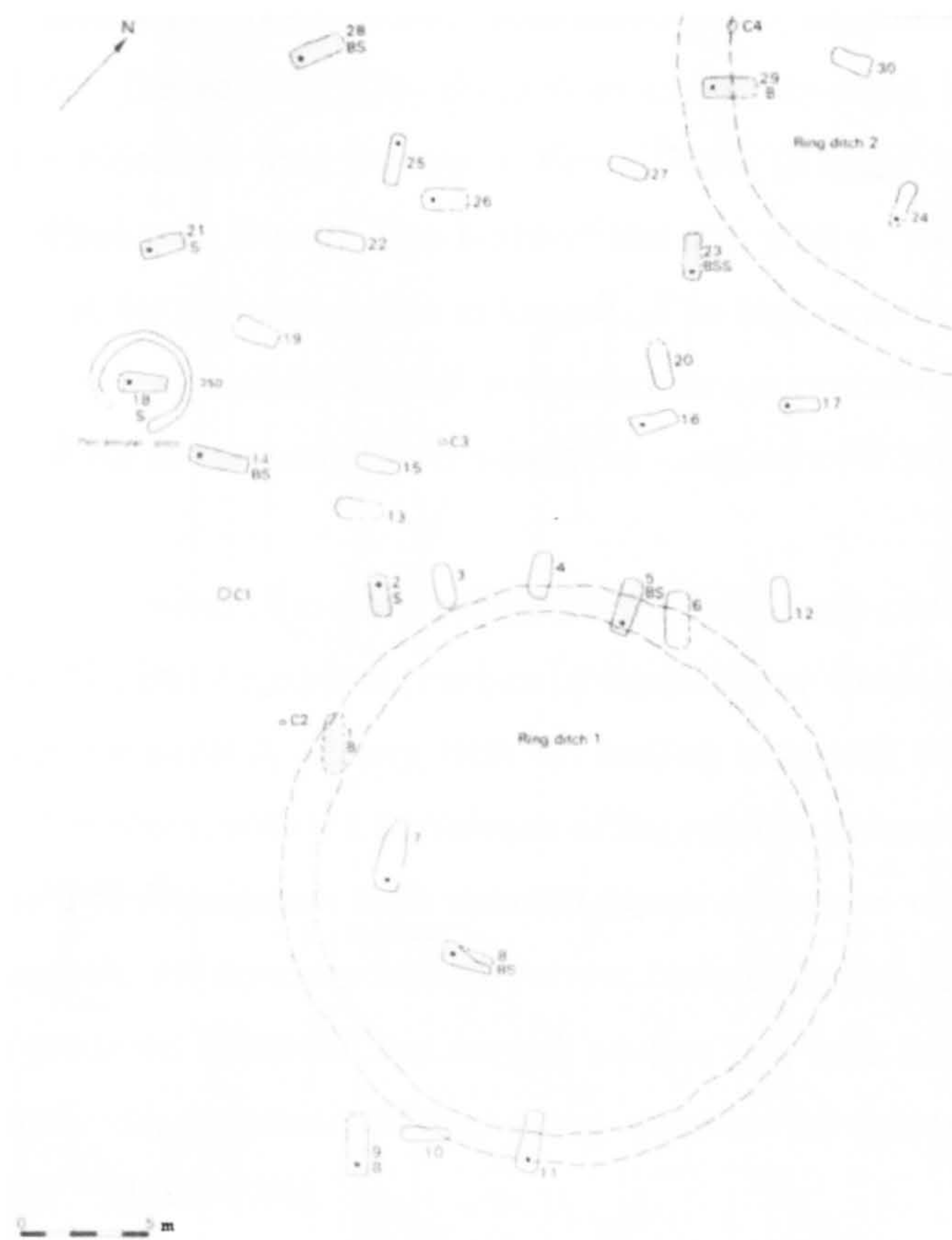
<sup>1</sup> Sites with isolated burials associated with Roman structures South Gate, Winchester – Roman gate (Ha) (Biddle 1995a), Shepton Mallet II – Roman building (So) (Leach 2001), and Frilford II – Roman temple (Ox) (Bradford & Goodchild 1939).

Table 6.6. Burials placed in barrows dating to c. 600-1100AD within the study area.

Site	No of burials	Sex of Occupant	Age of occupant	Grave goods
Cross Barrows III	1	Unknown	Unknown	2 knives, buckle, shield boss, 2 spearheads
Seven barrows	1	Unknown	Unknown	Buckle
Maiden Castle	2	Male	Adult	Seax & knife
		Male	25-35 years	None
		Unknown	9-12 years	None
Long Crichel No. 7	3	Male?	Adult	None
		Male	15-20 years	Buckle with buckle plate & knife with sheath.
		Long barrow	Secondary	Buckle, beads, gold wire and enamel plaque (remains of rich necklace and linked pin set)
Eggardon Hillfort	3	Male	35-45 years	None
		Male	35-45 years	None
		Male	17-20 years	None
Barrow Hills, Radley I	1	Unknown	Unknown	Late 6th-early 7th century
Lowbury Hill	1	Male	54+	Knife, 2 buckles, shield boss, spearhead, sword, hanging bowl, comb, strip of bone, part of a pair of shears, firesteel? & hooked tag
Alvediston, Barrow 1C	1	Male	c.25 years	Knife, shield boss, spearhead, shale bracelet
Ford Barrow 18	1	Male	40-50 years	Buckle, shield boss, 2 spearheads, seax & hanging bowl & comb
West Knoyle I	1	Male?	Unknown	Knife, shield boss, spearhead
Swallowcliffe Down	1	Female?	18-25 years	2 knives, 2 buckets, 2 palm cup, iron vessels, satchel & suspension belt, wooden casket, 5 silver safety pin brooches, bronze water sprinkler, 3 beads, comb, strap mount & bronze tube.
Roundway Hill, Barrow 7	1	Female	Adult	Gold beads, 7 pendants & two gold pins joined by a gold chain with a gold medallion, bucket
Roundway Hill, Barrow 3	1	Male	Older adult	Iron or ivory ring, possibly from mouth of a bag, 30 gaming pieces of ivory or bone, decayed wood possibly a gaming board
Rodmead Down Barrow	1	Male?	Unknown	Knife (possibly seax), buckle, shield boss, 2 spearheads, bucket & skillet
Coombe Bissett I	1?	Male?	Unknown	2 knives, 3 buckles, shield boss, 3 spearheads, sword with pyramid, skillet, wooden vessel, palm cup & cone beaker
Yatesbury II, Cherhill Barrow 10	2	Unknown	Unknown	Knife, 3 beads & workbox
		Unknown	Unknown	
Ogbourne St. Andrews	1	Male	Adult	None
Winkelbury Hill I	1	Unknown	Adult	Coffin fittings
Winkelbury III	1	Unknown	Adult	Knife

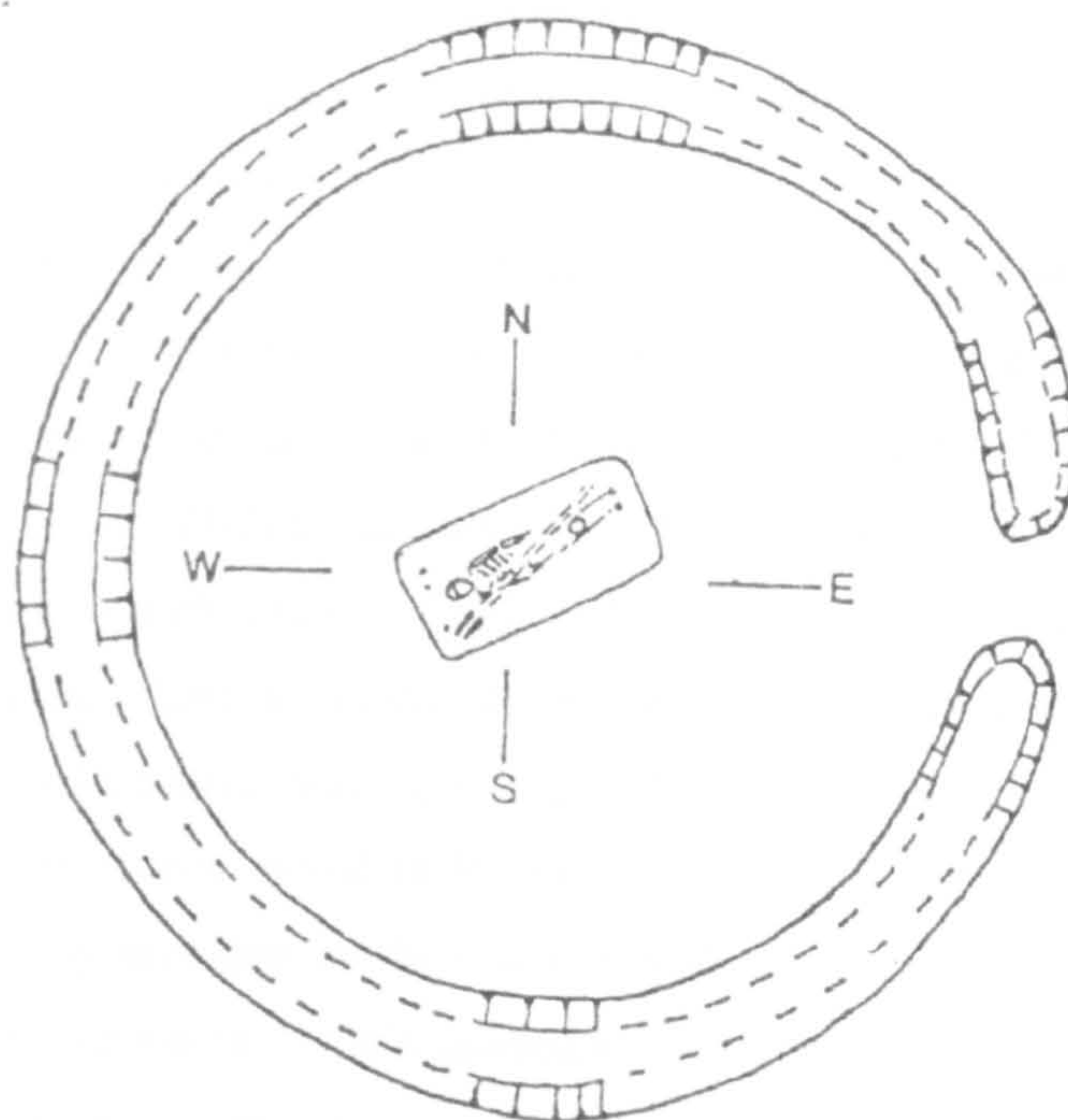


Figure 6.5. Plan of the late sixth and seventh century cemetery at Bargates(Do)



(from Jarvis 1983:107)

Figure 6.6. The penannular ditch associated with barrow 2 at Ford (Wi)



(from Musty 1969:100)

barrows (figure 6.5). The number of burials found at these sites ranged from the five or six inhumations in the vicinity of a possible barrow at Barrow Hill, Buckland Dinham (Meaney 1964:218; Horne 1926; Geake 1997:176) through to the eighty-eight burials cut into the southern ditch of the Neolithic long barrow at Bevis Grave (Rudkin 2001). Three of the cemeteries are associated with Bronze Age barrows and one with a Neolithic long barrow, with the barrow type at the remaining sites unknown. The high prevalence of Bronze Age barrows associated with both isolated burials and cemeteries is probably, in part, a result of the large numbers of these monuments found within the study area (Williams 1997:14).

Barrow-associated burials within the study period are predominantly confined to the seventh and eighth centuries. The early medieval practice of burial either within or in the vicinity of the barrows pre-dates the seventh century with the earliest examples within the study area dating to the late fifth century, with the prevalence of the practice increasing during the sixth century, a pattern which corresponds with national trends in barrow use (William 1997:6; Carver 2001:4). As such, the seventh-century barrow burials should, in part, be seen as a continuity of early practices. However, the seventh century saw both increasing numbers of cemeteries associated with barrows and increasing numbers of barrows used for single burials (Williams 1997:22; 1998:94).

There is some evidence from two, possibly three, sites within the study area that barrow-associated burial continued into the ninth and tenth centuries. At Ogbourne St. Andrews (Wi) (Cunnington 1885), the coffin fittings accompanying the isolated secondary inhumation suggest a late ninth- or tenth-century date for this burial (Semple 2003:79). The cemetery associated with the Neolithic long barrow of Bevis' Grave (Ha) (Rudkin 2001), which was founded in the seventh century, contains a burial that has been radiocarbon dated as part of this study to the late ninth to early eleventh century<sup>8</sup> and a second burial was interred with a strap-end that has been stylistically dated to the ninth century (*ibid.*:26). The burials within the barrow at Eggardon hill-fort may also be relatively late as one of the burials was radiocarbon dated giving with a range of 640-980AD at a 2 $\sigma$  level of confidence (B. Putnam *pers. comm.*). Given that there are many barrows within the study area containing or in the vicinity of unfurnished undated burials; it is possible that there may be other examples of ninth- or tenth-century barrow burial in Wessex. Yet, even if some of the undated barrow burials within the study area date to the ninth or tenth centuries, all the available evidence points to a marked decline in burials associated with barrows after the eighth century. Indeed, as churchyard burial became increasingly universal during the later Saxon period,

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<sup>8</sup> 890-1020AD at a 2 $\sigma$  level of confidence.

there appears to have been a change in the way barrows were perceived with the monuments acquiring malevolent connotations as the haunts of evil spirits and creatures (Semple 1998:123). By the eleventh century, the only example of burials associated with barrows within the study area was not a community burial ground or an isolated burial, but the execution cemetery at Stockbridge Down (Hill 1937).

Barrows, whether prehistoric or of early medieval construction, form an enduring feature within the landscape, visible to the local community long after the more ephemeral burial rites. Such monuments could serve to remind those in their vicinity of the deceased, whether a single individual, a family or a community. This may not have been the only function barrows served. The seventh century saw an increasing number of isolated barrow burials, many richly furnished (table 6.6), and it has been suggested this may be the result of changes in faith or patterns of land tenure. Some have seen the use of barrows for burial as overtly pagan and an act of defiance against the new faith (Carver 1989:158 & 1998:136; Van de Noort 1993:72). Yet, there is little evidence that the Church was particularly concerned where individuals were interred in the seventh or even eighth centuries (Bullough 1983:186), and documentary sources suggest that it was not until the later Saxon period that barrows acquired malevolent, even heathen, connotations (Semple 1998:123). In contrast, others have linked the increased numbers of high-status barrow burials with changes in land tenure and changes in inheritance (Shephard 1979:77). The raising or re-use of a barrow is indicative of additional expenditure in both time and resources and its continued presence within the landscape could well have been used not only as a mnemonic for the deceased, but also to enhance the status of elite groups, whether in simply staking their claim to land or as part of an unwritten mythology or history reinforcing their status (Williams 1999:80).

Barrows and structural features from the prehistoric and Roman period were not the only form of monument associated with early medieval non-churchyard burials. Eight examples of penannular ditches were identified from five sites within the study area (table 6.7 & figure 6.6).<sup>9</sup> Seven of the examples contained a single grave. However, despite extensive excavation, no evidence for the presence of a grave was uncovered within the eighth example, ditch 1898 from the Cook Street cemetery (Ha) (Garner 1993:86). It has been suggested that, in this latter case, the body may have been interred in a mound created from the spoil produced from the ditch and has not survived. Six of the eight examples had causeway entrances to the east. Of the remainder, the causeway entrance lay to the south in grave 18 at Bargates (Jarvis 1983:107) while the location of the entrance to penannular ditch

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<sup>9</sup> The burial in barrow 18 at Ford (Wi) appears to have been a barrow surrounded by a penannular ditch and as such is counted both as a barrow burial and a burial with a penannular ditch.

Table 6.7. Penannular ditches within the study area.

Site	Date	Total no. of burials in cemetery	Grave number	Sex	Age	Any grave goods	Evidence for coffins/coffin linings	Orientation of causeway entrance <sup>i</sup>	Alignment of grave	Diameter of ditch	Width & depth of ditch
Bargates, Do	Late 6 <sup>th</sup> -7 <sup>th</sup> century	39	18	Unknown	Unknown	Knife, spearhead	None	South	South-west-North-east	Unknown	0.1m deep. Width unknown
Portway West, Ha	Late 6 <sup>th</sup> -7 <sup>th</sup> century	12	11	Female	Young adult	2 glass beads, iron spike	None	East	South-north	5.5m in diameter	0.15m deep. Width unknown
Cook Street, Ha	Early 8 <sup>th</sup> century	21	5688 <sup>ii</sup>	Male	Mature adult	None	Wood stains	East	West-east	c.4m	1.0m wide & 0.4m deep
			2423	Male	Mature adult	None	Wood stains	East	West-east	c.4.5m	1.3m wide & 0.4m deep
			2962	Unknown	Mature adult	Knife, suite of pins and chains	Wood stains	East	West-east	c.3.8m	1.0m wide & 0.5m deep
			1898			No grave <sup>iii</sup>		Unknown <sup>iv</sup>	.	c.3.8m	1.0m wide & 0.5m deep
SOU 32, Ha	Early 8 <sup>th</sup> century	11	560	Female	Adult	None	Wood stains	East	West-east	Unknown	Maximum depth of 0.42m, 1.4m wide
Ford, Wi	Late 7 <sup>th</sup> century	2	Barrow 2	Male	Old adult	2 spearheads, shield boss, Seax, buckle, bone comb, hanging bowl containing onions & crab apples	None	East	South-west-North-east	Unknown	c.0.6-0.9m wide & c.0.45-0.55m deep

<sup>i</sup> Position of head given first.

<sup>ii</sup> Radiocarbon date for burial 642-777AD at two sigma levels of confidence.

<sup>iii</sup> No grave was uncovered after extensive excavation and it has been suggested that the body may have been interred in the mound formed from the spoil from the ditch (Garner 1993:86)

<sup>iv</sup> Unclear as to whether ditch had causeway, but it may have been positioned where this ditch intersected the penannular ditch around grave 2962 (*ibid* 86).

1898 from Cook Street is unclear but it may have been positioned by the intersection of this ditch with the one around grave 2962 (Garner 1993:86). Although, this is a very small sample it appears that both males and females were interred inside penannular ditches, while all burials, where the age was known, were adult suggesting the practice may have been reserved for adults. Wood stains suggesting the presence of coffins or wooden lining were found in the graves from Cook Street (Garner 1993; 2001; Garner & Vincent 1997) and SOU 32 (Ha) (Morton 1992a), while four of the burials contained grave goods (table 6.7). The available data suggests that the use of penannular ditches within the study area was confined to the seventh and early eighth centuries. The use of penannular ditches appears to be confined to burials from the south-east of England, particularly Kent (O'Brien 1999:137), with the examples found in the eastern part of the study area forming the western extreme of the national distribution of this phenomenon.

Seven examples of rectangular ditches containing a total of ten graves were identified from two cemeteries within the study sample: Kenn (Dv) (Weddell 2000) and Stoneage Barton, Cothelstone (So) (Webster & Brunning 2004) (table 6.8). Five of the enclosures contained a centrally-placed single grave, while enclosure A from Kenn contained three graves (figure 6.7) (Weddell 2000:101) and one of the rectangular ditches from Stoneage Barton contained two (Webster & Brunning 2004:56). Bone preservation in both cemeteries was very poor and the only grave to produce any biological data was grave 1 at Stoneage Barton, which contained a female of 35-50 years (*ibid.*:58). Evidence for wooden linings or coffins was observed in all three graves in enclosure A at Kenn (Weddell 2000:101) and in grave 3 at Stoneage Barton (Webster & Brunning 2004:60), with the possible suggestion of wood stains in grave 1 also at Stoneage Barton (*ibid.*:58). All three enclosed graves from Stoneage Barton were partially lined with stones (*ibid.*:58 & 60). Chronologically, the evidence for rectangular ditches within the study area suggests their use is confined to the early and middle Saxon period, with the skeleton in grave 1 at Stoneage Barton being radiocarbon dated to 600-690 AD (*ibid.*:63) and the cemetery at Kenn to the fifth to eighth century.<sup>10</sup>

The cemeteries at Kenn and Stoneage Barton lie in the far west of the study area. The Kenn cemetery is one of only two cemeteries of early or middle Saxon date in Devon.<sup>11</sup> Stoneage Barton, at the edge of the Quantocks, is the most westerly of the known middle Saxon sites in Somerset. Example of rectangular ditches are known from Wales, with the best parallels

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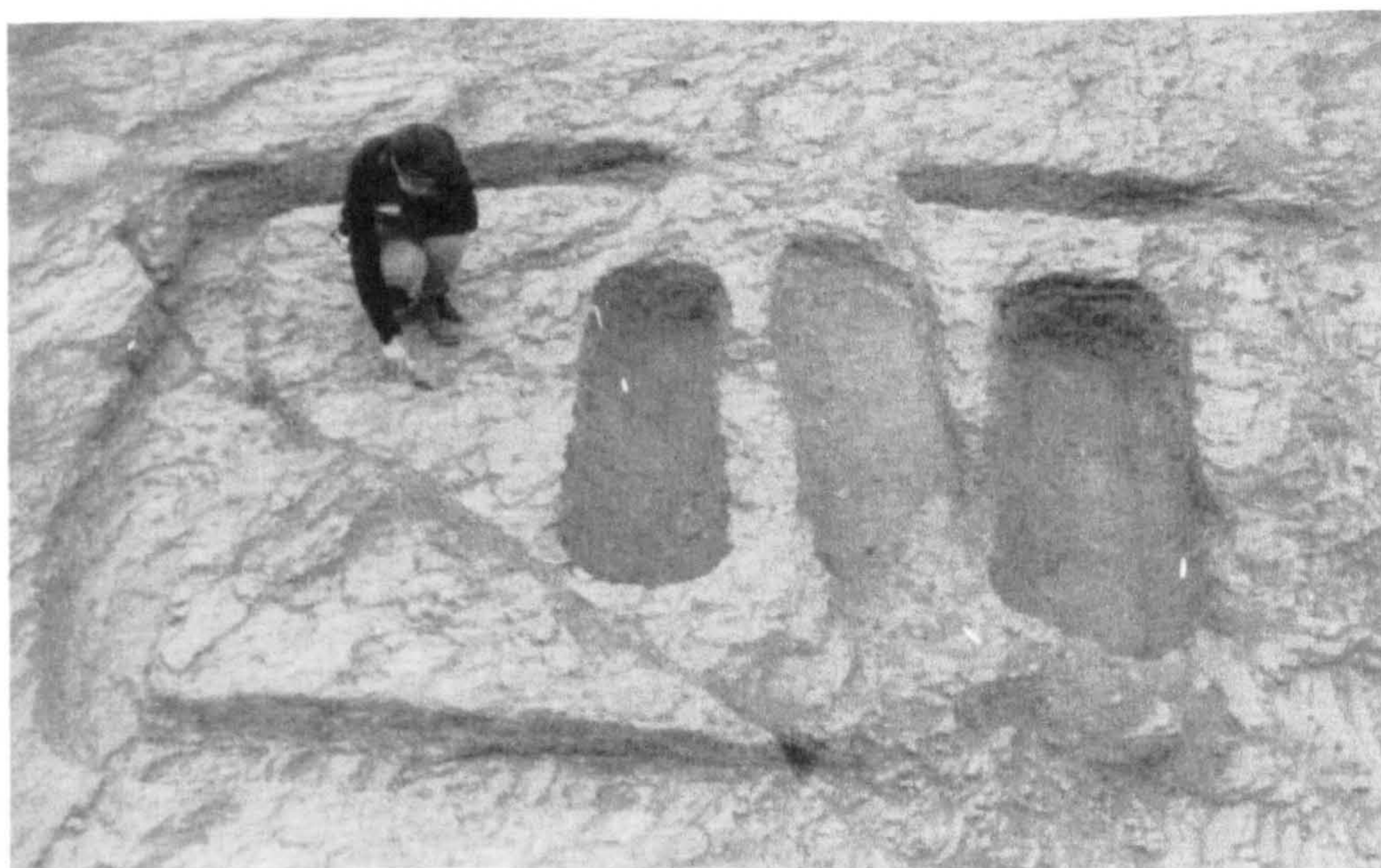
<sup>10</sup> The lack of any surviving human bone in the graves within enclosures meant that dating of cemetery was based on fragments of surviving bone from three unenclosed graves (Weddell 2000:115).

<sup>11</sup> The other is the sub-Roman burials over the Forum at Exeter (Bidwell 1979).

**Table 6.8. Examples of burials with rectangular enclosure ditches from early medieval Wessex.**

Site	Date	Rectangular enclosure ditches	No. of graves in enclosure	Size of enclosure	Causeway entrance	Associated postholes	Other features
Kenn, Dv	5 <sup>th</sup> to 8 <sup>th</sup> century	Enclosure A	3	4.8m x 3.94 m	Yes, in east side	One adjacent to entrance, another mid-way along north side	All graves contain evidence for coffins
		Enclosure B	1	3.26m east-west. Ditch to south lost due to ploughing and erosion	Unknown	No	-
		Enclosure C	1	Unknown, as only west side excavated.	Unknown	No	-
		Enclosure D	1	4.1m x 3.2m	No	No	-
		Enclosure E	1	4.0m x 3.1m	No	No	-
Stoneage Barton, Cothelstone, So	7 <sup>th</sup> century	Graves 1 & 2	2	-	Probably	No	Stones within both graves, possibility of coffin in grave 1
		Grave 3	1	5.3 x 4.2m	Yes	Post-holes at 3 corners of grave	Few stones lining grave & wood stains from coffin or wooden lining.

**6.7. A rectangular ditch surrounding three graves in enclosure A in the fifth- to eighth-century cemetery at Kenn (Dv)(from Wedell 2000:109).**



to the sites within the study area being found in Plas Gogerddan in Dyfed (Murphy 1992) and Tandderwen near Denbigh (Brassil *et al* 1991).

The soil displaced when both rectangular and penannular ditches were created may have been used to create additional funerary structures. These may have taken the form of internal or external banks around the ditch or perhaps the soil was used to raise a small mound over the grave (Morton 1992:177). Alternatively, the ditches may have held some form of wooden structure. The presence of a posthole at the north-east side of the penannular ditch around grave 18 at Bargates raises the possibility that the ditch contained some form of stake fence, analogous to that seen at St Peter's Broadstairs (Hogarth 1974:113) or the timber building suggested by the decayed wood recovered from the ditches at Plas Gogerddan (Murphy 1992:17,22). Regardless of the form of any additional structures associated with them, it seems probable that these ditches served to define a sacred area around the grave (Stoodley, forthcoming). In addition, the ditches perhaps limited or controlled access to the grave and it has been suggested that the small posthole close to the causeway entrance of enclosure A at Kenn may have held the pivotal post for a door or gate (Wedell 2000:101).

### **6.3. The commemoration of the deceased in the churches and churchyards of early medieval Wessex**

Having considered the evidence for the use of above-ground markers and monuments in non-churchyard cemeteries in Wessex, this section examines the evidence for the commemoration of the deceased seen in the churches and churchyards within the study area. Given the high levels of the post-burial disturbance of the deceased seen in the churchyards of early medieval Wessex,<sup>12</sup> it is perhaps of little surprise that they contain few *in situ* examples of above-ground markers. The only evidence for the use of timber grave markers within the study sample is the circular posthole found in the south-west corner of grave 219 from the ninth- to eleventh-century cemetery at Staple Gardens<sup>13</sup> in Winchester (Ha), which may have being the setting for some form of above-ground marker (Winchester Museums Service Archive SG84 & 89). Similarly, only three graves with *in situ* evidence of stone markers were identified within the study area.<sup>14</sup> An *in situ* grave cover, bearing the Old

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<sup>12</sup> Discussed in more detail in section 4.5.

<sup>13</sup> Although there is no archaeological evidence for the existence of a church at this site, it is possible one may have been present (see section 8.4.1 for a more detailed discussion).

<sup>14</sup> There are also occasional references to grave markers in documentary sources. For example the late tenth-century *Translatio et miracula S. Swithuni* by Lantfred and the late tenth- or early eleventh-century *Narratio Metrica de S. Swithun* by Wulfstan of Winchester contain descriptions of St. Swithun's tomb prior to his

English inscription 'Here lies Gunni the earl's companion' accompanied by a foot stone were found above an eleventh-century male burial at the Old Minister, Winchester (Ha) (figure 6.8) (Tweddle *et al*, 1995:279), while an unadorned dressed limestone grave cover and footstone covered the late Saxon or Norman burial of a neonate at Wells Cathedral (So) (figure 6.9) (Rodwell 2001:106). The association of funerary markers with this neonate demonstrates that commemoration was not just the preserve of adults. A more unusual and possibly ambiguous use of stone to mark the position of a grave occurs at the late Saxon cemetery at Barnstaple Castle (Dv), where two semicircles of pebbles were set vertically into the buried turf on either side of the burial of a child of 6-8 years in grave 48 (figure 6.10) (Miles 1986b:69). The pebbles may have acted as a grave marker, perhaps forming part of a circle crossing the grave fill, although the possibility that they may have been part of an earlier structure cut by the burial cannot be excluded.

Additional evidence for the use of above-ground markers in early medieval Wessex is provided by examples for displaced late Saxon funerary sculpture. While this source of information is biased towards the most elaborately decorated carved pieces which can still be identified out of context, they substantially increase the evidence for commemoration in later Saxon Wessex. In total, 21 examples of funerary sculpture from the study area were identified either from the corpus of Anglo-Saxon stone sculpture for Hampshire and Berkshire (Tweddle *et al* 1995) or from excavation reports for the rest of the study area (table 6.9). The majority of these examples of funerary sculpture have survived due to their incorporation into later structures, including later medieval graves (16%), boundary walls (11%) and ecclesiastical buildings (31%) (figure 6.11), and range in size from fragments of grave markers to complete grave covers and foot and head stones (table 6.9). Many of these examples of funerary sculpture feature Christian iconography. Five of the examples in table 6.6 are decorated with crosses, while another three are carved with a hand in a blessing position, with the fourth and fifth fingers folded up and holding a cross between the thumb and extended second and third fingers, representing the hand of God (Tweddle *et al* 1995:273,324,330). Other examples of Christian iconography include a figure with a cruciform nimbus representing Christ on the head stone from Whitchurch (Ha) (figure 6.13) (*ibid.*:272), and a lamp, synonymous with the resurrection and eternal life on a head stone, from the Old Minster, Winchester (figure 6.14) (*ibid.*:277). The funerary sculpture was also likely to have been brightly painted, and traces of red paint have been found on the fragment

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translation into the Old Minster (Lapidge 2003a:251-333, 2003b:371-551). The grave slab above St. Swithun's grave is described as being covered by 'a mortuary-shrine, made with walls and covered with a roof, with four panels set in the manner of a saccophagus' (Wulfstan of Winchester's *Narratio Metrica de S. Swithun* - Lapidge 2003b:425; Quirk 1957:41). In addition, The grave slab appears to have six iron rings fixed to it (*ibid.*; Lantfred of Winchester *Translatio et Miracula S. Swithuni* - Lapidge 2003a:263,265).



*Figure 6.8. "In situ" eleventh-century gravecover over a male burial at the Old Minster, Winchester (Ha) (from Yorke 1995:144)*



*Figure 6.9. In situ foot stone and part of grave cover lying over the neonate burial at Wells Cathedral (from Rodwell 2001:107)*



*Figure 6.10. Plan of grave 48 from Barnstaple depicting the semi-circles of stones on either side of the grave.*



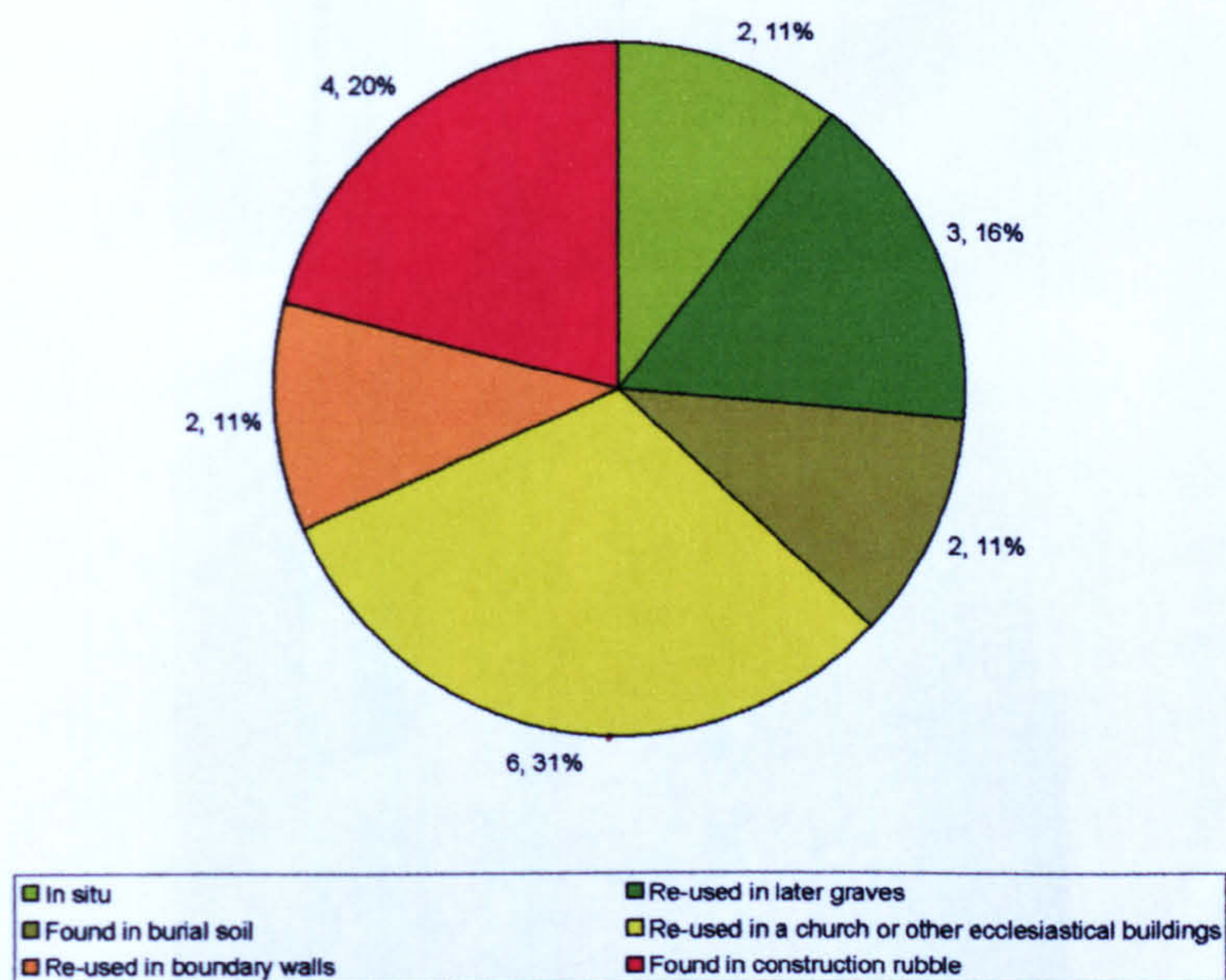
*(re-drawn by M.Cherryson from a figure in Miles 1986:65)*

Table 6.9. Examples of stone funerary markers from the Wessex heartlands

Location	Type of marker	Date	Description	Inscription	Where found	Reference
St Mary's Church, Stratfield Mortimer (Bk) Old Minster, Winchester (Ha)	Grave cover	11th century	Tapering grave cover with inscriptions forming a border around the edge of the upper surface.	"On the eighth day before the Kalends of October Argehtward son of Kypping was buried in this grave. Blessed be the man who prays for his soul - Told wrote me". Inscription in Latin	Below the floor of church tower	Tweddle <i>et al</i> 1995:335-7
	Grave marker	Pre-10th century	Fragment of grave marker with inscription on one surface thought to be from a grave in Old Minster cemetery	"My he/she live for ever". Inscription in Latin.	From fill of Anglo-Saxon grave, probably disturbed from pre 901AD Old Minster cemetery	Tweddle <i>et al</i> 1995:273-4
	Grave marker	Early 11th century	Only one broad face decorated with a hand holding a cross between thumb and 2 <sup>nd</sup> and 3 <sup>rd</sup> fingers.	None	In situ grave marker at foot of grave of a male in his twenties	Tweddle <i>et al</i> 1995:274-5
	Grave cover.	Early 11th century	Virtually complete coped stone which when bedded the west end is higher & wider than the east end. The inscription runs west-east across the centre of the stone (illustrated in figure 6.7).	"Here lies Gunt the earl's companion". Inscription in Old English	In situ grave cover, found in association with foot stone above.	Tweddle <i>et al</i> 1995:8-9
	Grave marker	Late 10th century	Fragment of grave marker decorated on two sides; one with stone grill, one with geometric triangular pattern.	None	Found in medieval burial earth	Tweddle <i>et al</i> 1995:276
	Grave marker	Early to mid 11th century	Virtually complete grave marker with top shaped into three arches, & probably a foot-stone, which is decorated on one side with curtains flanking a central lamp (illustrated in figure 6.7).	None	Found in rubble filling an assemblage of 10th century in the Old Minster	Tweddle <i>et al</i> 1995:276-7
	Grave marker	Late 10th or early 11th century	Fragment of grave marker decorated on one face with linear pattern, probably from round-headed-marker	None	In rubble derived from 10th century east spire of the Old Minster	Tweddle <i>et al</i> 1995:277-8
	Grave marker	Mid- to late 11th century	Rectangular grave marker, in battered condition with 5cm wide strip trimmed off when re-used. Decorated on broad surfaces with crosses with wedge-shaped arms on both sides.	None	Re-used in medieval cist	Tweddle <i>et al</i> 1995:337
	Grave marker	Mid- to late 11th century	Fragment of round-topped grave marker, decorated on one side with expanding-arm cross.	None	Re-used in boundary wall	Tweddle <i>et al</i> 1995:337-8
	Grave marker	Mid- to late 11th century	Two fragments from a round-topped grave marker decorated on only one side with a cross.	None	Re-used in boundary wall	Tweddle <i>et al</i> 1995:338-339
New Minster, Winchester (Ha)	Grave marker	Late 10th - early 11th century	Fragment of grave marker with one carved face decorated with a cross	None	Over demolished domestic buildings of New Minster	Tweddle <i>et al</i> 1995:323-4
St Pancras, Winchester (Ha)	Grave marker	Late 10th or early 11th century	Part of round-headed grave-marker with one curved face depicting a cross on a hill, which lies in front of a steep hill or cliff, possibly containing a cave opening or tomb.	None	Among demolition rubble from south wall of New Minster	Tweddle <i>et al</i> 1995:324-5
	Grave marker	Late 10th or early 11th century	Left half of round-headed grave marker decorated on one side with hand in blessing gesture holding a cross emerging from a cloud.	None	Re-used in wall of 13-14 <sup>th</sup> century bell turret	Tweddle <i>et al</i> 1995:330
St Maurice, Winchester	Grave cover	11th century	Sub-rectangular fragment of grave cover with inscription in Scandinavian runes. Evidence suggests that the inscription ran up one edge of the face and down the other.	Too fragmentary to produce a text. The inscription is in Old Norse in Scandinavian runes.	Re-used in core of east wall of tower of St. Maurice	Tweddle <i>et al</i> 1995:327-8
	Grave marker	9th century	Round headed grave marker with inscription on narrow sides and top of marker with recess containing a figure holding book in left hand and with right hand raised in blessing on one broad side (see figure 6.7). The figure's cruciform nimbus is usually identified with Christ. The other broad face is decorated with a stylised plant motif.	"Here rests the body of Friburga buried into peace" - inscription in Latin	Built into north aisle of church.	Tweddle <i>et al</i> 1995:271-3
St. Michael, Weyhill (Ha)	Grave cover	11th century	Tapering grave cover decorated on lower half by Latin cross, the sculpture on the upper half has been chiselled away possibly during iconoclasm.	None	Built into structure of church	Tweddle <i>et al</i> 1995:269-70
	Grave cover	10th century	Fragment of grave cover decorated with tree motif	None	Re-used as building stone	Rodwell 2001:488-489.
Wells Cathedral (So)	Grave cover and foot stone	Late Saxon-Norman	A grave-marker of unadorned dressed limestone blocks, consisting of part of a recumbent stone covering the body and an upright foot stone.	None	Found in situ above the burial of a neonate	Rodwell 2001:106-7
	Grave cover	10th century	Fragment of grave cover decorated with plants and flowers	None	Re-used in medieval grave	Davenport 2002:52-3
Bath Abbey	Grave marker	10th century	Fragment of upright grave marker decorated with plants and flowers	None	Re-used in medieval grave	

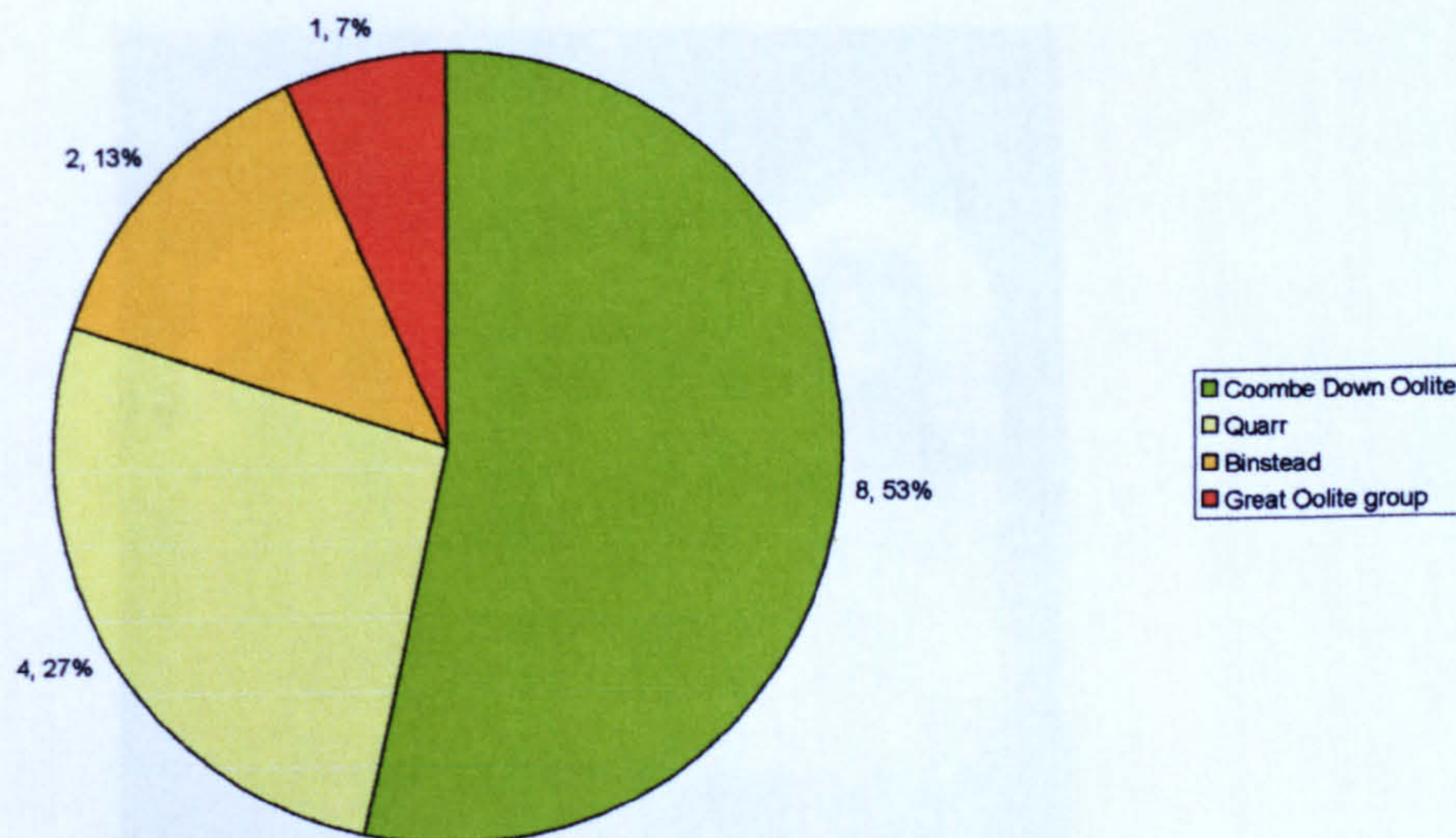
<sup>1</sup> Evidence for stone crosses within the study area is excluded from this table. The inscribed plaque from Lower Brook Street, Winchester is also excluded as it is unclear if this originally lay in a funerary context (Tweddle 1995: 331-2).

Figure 6.11. The re-use of funerary markers\* within the study area



\*Based on the sample of 19 examples of funerary sculpture in table 6.9. No. of examples, followed by percentage given in labels. N.B. The paired *in situ* grave covers and foot stones from the Old Minster at Winchester and from Wells Cathedral are counted together.

Figure 6.12. Type of stone used in funerary sculpture recovered during 1961-71 Winchester excavations†



†Based on data in table 4 in Tweddle *et al* 1995:105 and the sample includes markers from the Old and New Minsters, St. Pancras Church, St Maurice's Church and the possible marker from Lower Brook Street.

*Figure 6.13. Ninth-century grave marker found in All Hallows Church, Whitchurch (Ha)  
decorated with a figure thought to represent Christ  
(from Tweddle et al 1995, illustration no.483)*



*Figure 6.14. An eleventh century grave marker from the Old Minster Winchester (Ha)  
depicting drawn curtains flanking a central lamp  
(from Tweddle et al 1995 illustration no.508)*



of a grave cover from Wells Cathedral (Rodwell 2001:488) and in the runic inscription in Old Norse on the grave cover from St. Maurice's Church in Winchester (Ha) (Tweddle *et al* 1995:327). Inscriptions were present on five pieces of funerary sculpture (table 6.6), three of which contain the name of the deceased. Three of the inscriptions also echo the Christian iconography seen on many of the markers, with allusions to Christian beliefs in the afterlife. References to eternal life are suggested by a fragment of a tenth-century grave marker from the Old Minster in Winchester, which bears the Latin inscription 'may he /she live forever'(Tweddle *et al* 1995:274), while the Latin inscription on the ninth-century grave marker from Whitchurch states that the individual has been 'buried into peace' (*ibid.*:272). Finally, the Latin inscription on the grave cover from Stratfield Mortimer (Bk) contains a request for the living to pray for the soul of the deceased; 'Blessed be the man who prays for his soul' (*ibid.*:336). These types of request for the living to attend to the welfare of the souls of the deceased are common components of medieval commemorative inscriptions from the early medieval period onwards (*ibid.*) and reflects the changing relationship between the living and dead catalysed by the arrival of the Roman church.<sup>15</sup>

Occasional Scandinavian influences can be seen in the funerary sculpture from the study area, particularly in Winchester. Examples include the Old Norse inscription in Scandinavian runes on the grave cover from St. Maurice's Church and the Scandinavian name in the Old English inscription on the *in situ* eleventh-century marker from the Old Minister, Winchester (*ibid.*:328;280). These are thought to be linked to the period of Scandinavian political dominance in the early eleventh-century under Cnut (*ibid.*:328) and are distinct from the tradition of ninth- and tenth-century Hiberno-Norse sculpture seen in Northern England (Tweddle 1995:22). When compared to the north of England, examples of funerary sculpture from Wessex are far less prevalent, often stylistically different, and usually of a later date, with the majority of funerary monuments dating to the late tenth or eleventh centuries. The comparative rarity of funerary sculpture prior to the late tenth century suggests that these earlier examples were the preserve of the elite and probably only found at major ecclesiastical sites.

The increasing use of funerary sculpture during the later tenth and eleventh centuries may be the result of ever greater proportions of the population being interred in churchyards (Bullough 1983:200). Simply being buried in a churchyard was no longer an indicator of high status and it was necessary to use additional means, such as commemorative masonry, to demonstrate the standing of the deceased. Funerary sculptures were the monuments of an

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<sup>15</sup> See discussion below.

elite minority (Stocker 2000:182), requiring good-quality freestone often transported long distances (Biddle & Kjølbye-Biddle 1995:103). For example, figure 6.12. illustrates the type of stone used in the funerary sculpture recovered during the Winchester excavations of 1961-71. All the stone has been sourced to just two quarries. The Quarr and Binstead stone, representing 27% and 13% of the sample respectively, originate from quarries on the Isle of Wight, while the Coombe Down oolite and stones of the great oolite group are from quarries near Bath, some 80 miles from Winchester (*ibid.*:102-3). Given the nature of funerary sculpture during this period, it has been suggested that clusters of these commemorative markers are likely to lie within unusual communities (Stocker 2000:187). As such, it is perhaps no surprise that the only cluster of funerary sculpture seen in this study is at Winchester, a major political and religious centre in Wessex during the late tenth and eleventh centuries. Not only were Winchester's Old and New Minsters among the most important churches in the country and the final resting place of kings and saints, but any elaborate commemorative displays within the ecclesiastical core of the city would be seen by an influential audience, including those who wielded secular and religious power in both Wessex and England.

While this survey has demonstrated that above-ground commemorative markers were used in the churchyards of early medieval Wessex, many questions remain unanswered. While the sample used in this study, for reasons discussed above, is comprised predominantly of elaborate funerary sculpture, to what extent can the existence be assumed of simpler markers of wood and unadorned dressed stone, which either do not survive in the archaeological record or cannot be readily identified once displaced from their original context? Was every grave marked with some form of above-ground marker or were other forms of commemoration sought? The reality of the highly intercut and disturbed churchyards of the early medieval period would have been familiar to all, as was the knowledge that the vast majority of commemorative markers would, at best, last a few generations before being broken up for use in later graves, as in the example in figure 6.16. from Bath Abbey (So) (Davenport 2002:52), or becoming incorporated in buildings such as the fragment in figure 6.15. from Wells Cathedral (Rodwell 2001:488).

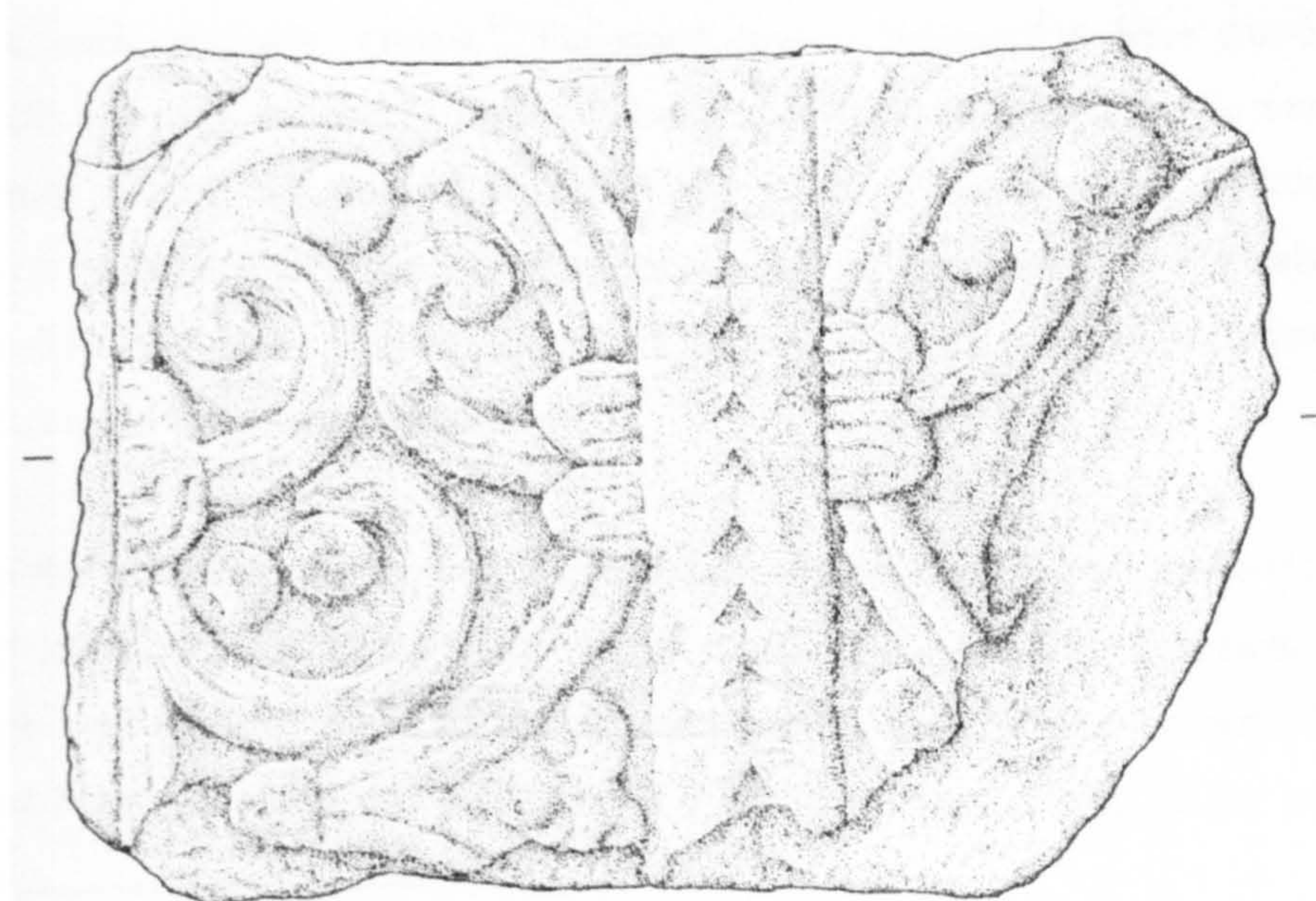
Stone grave markers were not the only masonry monuments within early medieval churchyards. Fragments of elaborately carved stone crosses, which are believed to have stood in many early medieval churchyards, have been found within the study area, including examples from Southampton (Ha), Bishops Waltham (Ha), and Wherwell (Ha) (Tweddle *et al.* 1995:250, 264-5, 270-1). In addition, it has been suggested that the two monolithic stones found at Wells Cathedral may have served as bases for stone crosses (Rodwell 2001:74). The

*Figure 6.15. Fragment of a tenth-century grave cover from Wells Cathedral (So), which was re-used as building stone*



*(from Rodwell 2001:489)*

*Figure 6.16. A fragment of tenth-century grave cover from Bath Abbey (So), which was reused in a later medieval grave*



*(from Davenport 2002:53)*

function of these crosses varied both chronologically and regionally, but inscriptions found on some crosses in northern England suggests they could, on occasion, have a commemorative role (Hadley 2001:126). While no examples of stone crosses with commemorative inscriptions are known from the study area, it is possible that the stone “pyramids” at Glastonbury Abbey described in William of Malmesbury’s twelfth-century *De Antiquitate Glastonie Ecclesie* as tapering carved stone shafts, were possibly comparable to the high crosses found elsewhere in Britain and Ireland (Scott 1981:85; Rahtz & Watts 2003:114). Both “pyramids” are reputed to have had the names of West Saxon bishops inscribed on their sides (Scott 1981:85), and while the primary function of the pyramids may not necessarily have been commemorative, the presence of the bishop’s name on these stones would have had a mnemonic function.

The church buildings themselves could also have had a commemorative function as royal and aristocratic patronage of ecclesiastical houses could lead directly or indirectly to the creation of family shrines providing a lasting reminder of an individuals or families influence (Blair 2005:65). For example, Edward the Elder’s motives for founding the New Minster are unclear. The need for a larger church for the city’s growing population, tensions between the king and the bishop of Winchester or the creation a new burial place for the West Saxon royal house have all been suggested (Biddle 1976:314; Rumble 2001:234, Yorke 1984:67). Yet whatever Edward the Elder’s motives for building the New Minster, the translation of his father’s remains to the New Minster, along with the burial of a number of Edward’s close relatives – his wife, two of his sons and his brother, served to make the New Minster a royal mausoleum during the tenth century (*ibid.*). For those of lesser means commemoration could perhaps be provided by association with important features within the ecclesiastical landscape, such as saints’ graves,<sup>16</sup> the stone crosses believed to have stood in many churchyards and even the church itself. Indeed, it has been suggested that accumulation of burials both within and around churches led to these ecclesiastical buildings being increasingly associated with the remembrance not only of the departed individuals, but with a community of the dead (Williams 2003:230,232). This was an association enhanced by the development of a commemorative liturgy.

Although the existence of purgatory was not formally recognised until the twelfth century (Le Goff 1984:135), during the early medieval period the time between death and final judgement was seen for many of the deceased as a state of purgation with their souls suspended between heaven and hell (Paxton 1990:66). The suffering of the souls of the

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<sup>16</sup> A high density of burials was found clustered around the grave of St. Swithun at Winchester (Kjøbye-Biddle 1992:223).



deceased could, however, be alleviated by the actions of the living as Bede explained in his Homilies:

‘..some who because of their good works, are predestined to share the fate of the elect [blessed repose in Paradise], but who, because of certain evil works have left the body in unclean state, are taken after death by the flames of purgatorial fire and severely punished. Either they are cleansed of the taint of their vices by long trial in this fire, or thanks to the prayers, alms, fasting, tears, and Eucharistic offerings of their faithful friends, they are delivered from punishment and allowed to enjoy the repose of the blessed’  
(Le Goff 1984:102-3)<sup>17</sup>

The idea that the souls of the departed could be helped by prayer provided the faithful with the means to provide aid to family and friends beyond the grave (*ibid.*:134). Evidence of this can be seen in the requests for prayers for the souls of the deceased seen on grave markers, such as on the marker from Stratfield Mortimer (Bk) (discussed above), and in the bequests to religious houses in many late Anglo-Saxon wills for the soul of the deceased (Whitelock 1930:25,31,55)<sup>18</sup>. More permanent memorials could be provided by gifts, such as bequests of land, to a church, which in theory could ensure perpetual prayers for the dead by that religious community, continuing long after the immediate descendants of the deceased had themselves died (Geary 1994:91-2). Religious communities often kept records of the names of those to remember in their prayers in the form of Liber Vitae, books of life, or as necrologies, lists of the dead kept in the margins of a calendar (Keynes 1996:49-50; Le Goff 1984:125). Surviving mortuary records from Wessex include the Liber Vitae of the New Minster at Winchester (figure 6.17), written in 1031AD, and the calendar from Aethelwine’s prayer book, compiled in 1023-1031AD, also from the New Minster at Winchester (Keynes 1996:58,113). Many of the names in both registers are departed members of the community at the New Minster, but members of royalty, ealdormen and lay benefactors were also present (*ibid.*:58;120-1). Not all the entries refer to individuals, with two entries in Aethelwine’s prayerbook commemorating those killed in the battles of Assandun (1016AD) and Aethelingadene (1001AD) (*ibid.*). The commemorative liturgy of the early medieval period was, like the elaborate funerary sculpture discussed above, usually the preserve of an elite minority (Le Goff 1984:125). However, during the eleventh century, there were some limited moves to extend the benefits of the liturgy to the wider population. At some point between 1024 and 1033, the monastery of Cluny began to commemorate all of

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<sup>17</sup> Original source not consulted by author.

<sup>18</sup> For example, from the the will of Aethelwold “First he grants for his soul twenty mancuses of gold to the New Minster” (Whitelock 1930:31).

Figure 6.17. The frontispiece from the *Liber Vitae* of the New Minster and Hyde abbey, Winchester depicting King Cnut and Queen Aelgifu (from Lapidge et al 2001:292)



the dead on November the 2<sup>nd</sup>, the day following All Saint's Day. Such was Cluny's influence that this "day of the dead" was soon being marked across Western Europe.

#### **6.4. The impact of the Anglo-Saxon Church on the commemoration of the dead in early medieval Wessex**

The early medieval period saw the development of the Church as an intermediary between the living and the dead, one which played an integral role in the commemoration of the deceased (Geary 1994:78). By the eleventh century, the commemoration of the deceased was primarily the preserve of the Church, with the churches and churchyards not only receiving the bodies of the deceased, but also providing the focus for their commemoration (Williams 2003:232). The increasing influence of the Church can be seen in the archaeological record, with the appearance during the later Saxon period of Christian iconography and inscriptions making increasing reference to Christian beliefs in the resurrection on funerary sculpture. In addition, this period saw the increasing belief that the souls of the dead could be helped by the prayers of the living. This led to the development of a commemorative liturgy and, as the process required the intercession of the Church, it served to increase the Church's control over the living (Le Goff 1984:135).

The increasing influence of the Church can also be seen in chronological changes in the nature of above-ground commemoration for the elite, with the use of barrows and ditched enclosures of the seventh and eighth centuries being replaced by the elaborate funerary sculpture of the late Saxon period with its Christian connotations. Equally, those seeking commemoration by burial in prominent positions in the later Saxon period looked not to be buried within or in the vicinity of prehistoric monuments, but instead to be interred close to the graves of saints or by stone crosses within churchyards. Better still was burial close to or within the church itself. The later Saxon period also saw a shift in the distribution of commemorative markers. The variations in the geographical distribution of some types of above-ground markers, such as barrows, inscribed stones, rectangular and penannular ditches, seen in within the study area during the middle Saxon period, seem virtually to have disappeared in the later Saxon period. Instead, the status of a church and the nature of the community it served dictated to a great extent the range and type of commemorative markers found within the churchyard.

## Chapter 7

### **Burial in the shadow of the church: the development of churchyard burial in the Wessex heartlands**

The late Saxon bequest of an estate by Ordnoth<sup>1</sup> and his wife to the Old Minster states that ‘on the day of our death they [members of the monastic community] will fetch us with the minster’s resources and provide for us such a resting-place as is necessary for us in God’s sight and fitting in the eyes of the world’ (Whitelock 1930:17). By the late Saxon period, such a suitable resting place was increasingly seen to be in consecrated ground adjacent to a church. By the end of the eleventh century, few, if any, chose to be interred away from sacred ground and the prospect of the Church’s intercession on behalf of their souls. The development of churchyard burial represents a fundamental shift in burial location and, in many ways represents the church’s greatest impact on funerary behaviour during the early medieval period. Traditionally, the transition to churchyard burial was thought to have been relatively rapid, occurring over a few generations during the seventh and eighth centuries (Meaney & Hawkes 1970:51). The validity of this assumption is now increasingly questioned, with recent work demonstrating that the transition to churchyard burial was far from rapid or as straightforward as initially thought (Hadley 2000a:160; 2000b:199; Blair 2005:245). This chapter uses documentary and burial evidence to examine two of the key aspects of the transition to churchyard burial within the study area: when churchyard burial began in Wessex and the rate at which it was adopted by the majority of the population.

#### **7.1. The origins of churchyard burial in Wessex**

The Wessex of the later Saxon period is a product of the expansionist policies pursued by the West Saxon kings during the seventh and eighth centuries. As a result, the study area encompasses both Anglo-Saxon and British areas with different Christian traditions, making it necessary to consider the origins of churchyard burial within the western part of the study

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<sup>1</sup> The identity of the Ordnoth mentioned in the bequest is uncertain, but a thegn called Ordnoth appears in the witness lists of two charters, one dated to 959AD and the other to 982AD (Whitelock 1930:116).

area, Devon, Dorset and Somerset, and the eastern part of the study area, Hampshire, Berkshire, Wiltshire, Isle of Wight and southern Oxfordshire, separately.

### 7.1.1. The British church in the south-west peninsula

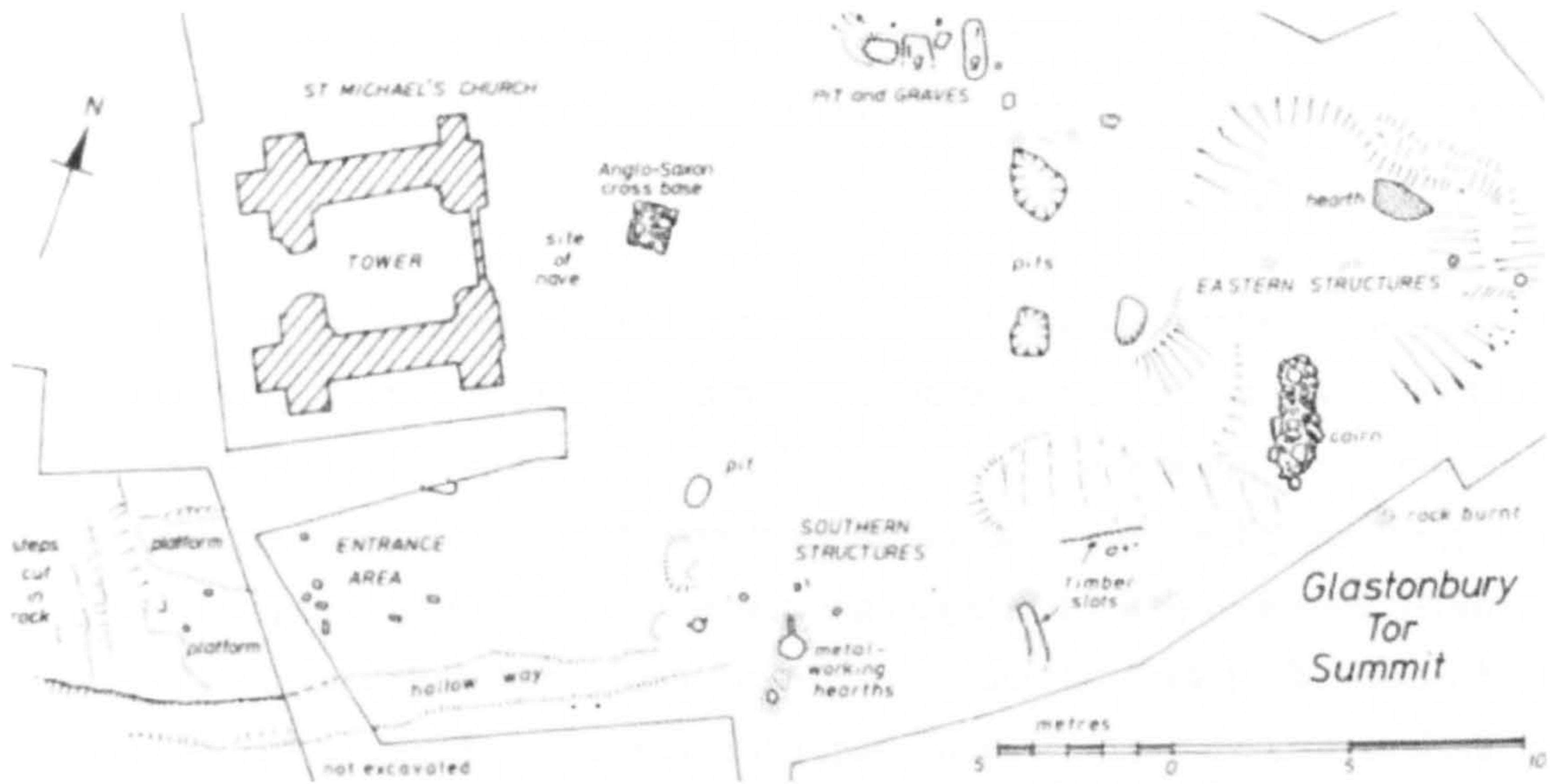
Prior to the conversion of the West Saxons in the seventh century, there was already a Christian presence in the western part of the study area, albeit one that is poorly understood. There is no documentary evidence for churchyard burial in the western part of the study area predating the arrival of the West Saxon Church, and the archaeological evidence is fragmentary. Early medieval burials have been uncovered at Glastonbury Tor (So) and on Lundy Island,<sup>2</sup> and both are sites that have been suggested as the location of possible British monasteries. In addition, it has been postulated that the buildings associated with the small cemeteries at Lamyatt Beacon (So) and Brean Down (So) may have been chapels or churches (Leech 1986:274). However, the evidence for a religious presence at all of these sites is at best ambiguous.

At Glastonbury, excavation on the top of the Tor has revealed substantial evidence for fifth- to seventh-century activity (Rahtz & Watts 2003:71). This included postholes indicating the presence of a number of structures, a large quantity of animal bones, domestic and metal-working hearths, an entrance complex with steps cut into the rock and two graves (*ibid.*:73-4) (figure 7.1). Ten sherds of imported Mediterranean pottery of sixth-century date were recovered from the layers containing these features, suggesting a fifth- to seventh-century date for them (Rahtz 1971:19; Rahtz & Watts 2003:71). The nature of the occupation on the Tor is far from clear. One possibility is that the site was a secular stronghold, analogous in some ways to the reused Iron Age hillforts at Cadbury Castle (So) (Alcock 1995) and Cadbury Congresbury (So) (Rahtz 1992), with the natural geology of the Tor providing security for its occupants (Rahtz & Watts 2003:76-7). Alternatively, the occupation of the site may have been religious, either as a Roman and post-Roman pagan shrine or as the site of an early Christian hermitage. This latter interpretation is favoured by the excavator based in part on the later West Saxon monastery, which subsequently occupied the same site, with the inaccessibility of the site providing the isolation required by early Christian hermits

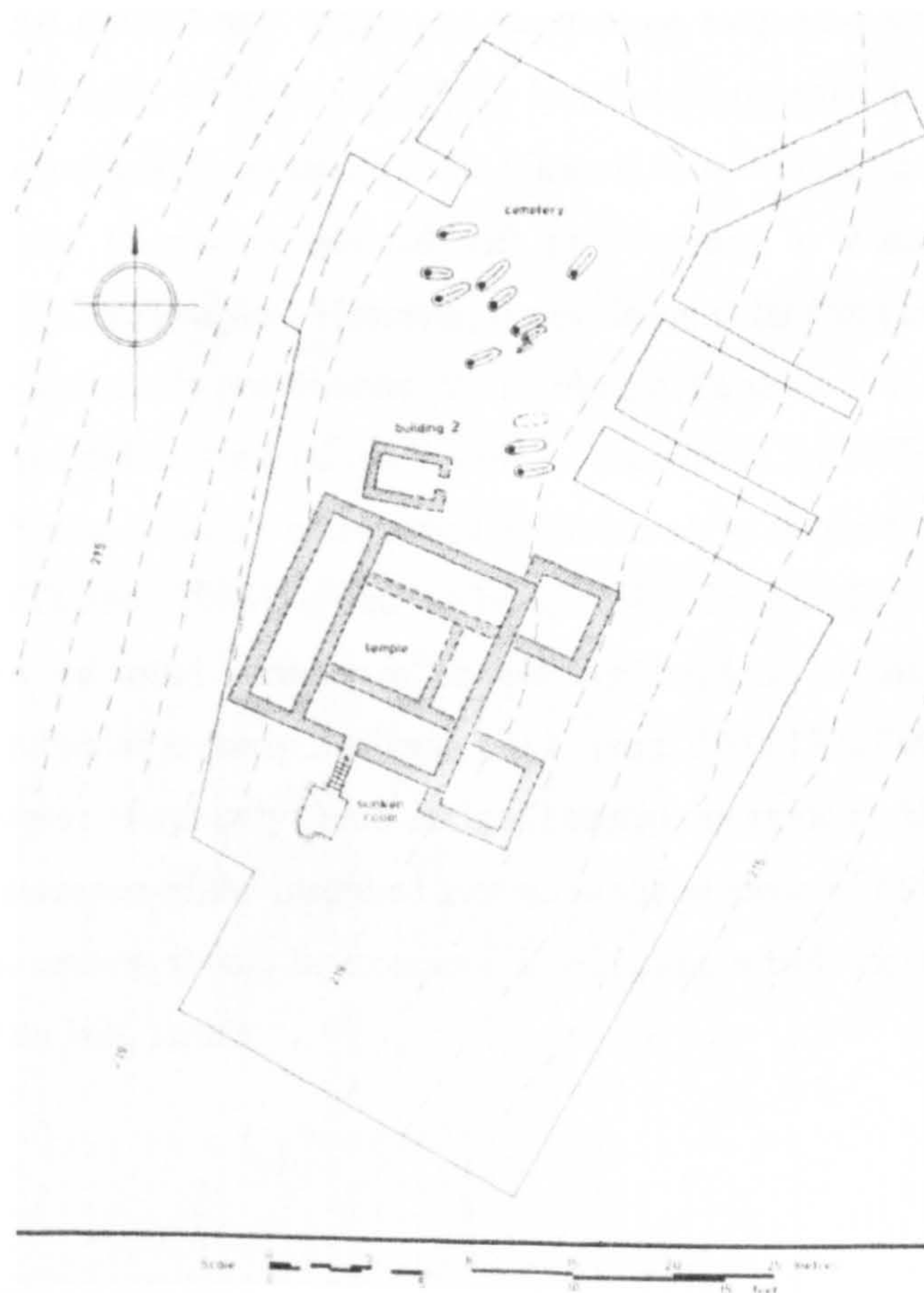
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<sup>2</sup> The churchyard at Lustleigh (Dv), which exhibits many features typical of an early Christian enclosed cemetery, including a circular outline and an inscribed stone dated to the second half of the sixth century (Swanton & Pearce 1982:140), is not included in this discussion as a possible site of a pre-seventh century churchyard as it has not been subject to any archaeological excavations.

**Figure 7.1. Plan of Dark Age settlement on Glastonbury Tor. The later Saxon cross base and the tower of the medieval church are also depicted (Rahtz & Watts 2003:73)**



**Figure 7.2. Plan of the site at Lamyatt Beacon, showing the seventh-century cemetery, the Roman temple and the small building discussed in the text. (from Leech 1986:263)**



(*ibid.*:77-8).<sup>3</sup> However, the evidence is at best ambiguous and all three hypotheses about the nature of the site remain possibilities. Furthermore, even if the Tor was an early religious site and the two graves are of a contemporary date,<sup>4</sup> two burials associated with a religious complex is hardly substantive evidence for an early tradition of churchyard burial in the south-west.

The burial evidence from Lundy Island is more substantive with the remains of twenty-four cist graves being uncovered during excavations (Thomas, Fowler & Gardener 1969:141). There was no direct evidence as to the date of the burials, but the presence of four inscribed stones dated to between the fifth and seventh centuries raises the possibility that the graves may be of comparable date (*ibid.*:139). A standing chapel of twelfth- or thirteenth-century date lies offset from the centre of the enclosure at Lundy (*ibid.*:140). The chapel may represent the last of a series of chapels and the spatial organisation of the excavated graves suggests that there was an earlier pre-medieval focus to the cemetery nearer the centre of the enclosure. The cemetery appears to have been enclosed by a single bank and it has been suggested that the cemetery originally had an oval or curvilinear outline (*ibid.*:142). Circular enclosed cemeteries, referred to as *lanns*, have traditionally been associated with early Christianity in both Cornwall and Wales and ascribed an early post-Roman date (Preston-Jones 1994:91 & Thomas 1971:50-51, 67). It has been suggested that Christianity was introduced into the south-west peninsula from Wales (Olson 1989:48-50). Lundy's isolated location in the Bristol Channel, combined with its proximity to Wales, makes it a good candidate as an early Christian site. However, the evidence is far from clear-cut. The lack of dating evidence is particularly problematic. While some cemeteries with curvilinear outlines, such as the burial ground at Tintagel (Co), were in use during the fifth and sixth centuries (Nowakowski & Thomas 1992:9), others, such as Merther Uny (Co) which has been dated to the tenth century (Thomas 1968), appear to be later foundations (Preston-Jones 1994:92). This suggests that enclosed cemeteries should not be seen as an early post-Roman phenomenon, but rather as an early medieval one (Turner 2003:173; Petts 2002:46). In fact, there are few examples of securely dated enclosed cemeteries prior to AD 700 (*ibid.*:42). As such, despite the presence of the inscribed stones, in the absence of direct evidence for the date of the graves, caution should be exercised in assigning a fifth- or sixth-century date to the burials at Beacon Hill, Lundy.

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<sup>3</sup> The Anglo-Saxon monastery on the Tor was probably a daughter house or subsidiary to Glastonbury Abbey, which lay approximately a mile away (Rahtz & Watts 2003:78)

<sup>4</sup> There is no specific dating evidence associated with either of the burials.

The small cemetery of sixteen burials at Lamyatt Beacon has been radiocarbon dated to the sixth to eighth century (Leech 1986:272). A small east-west stone building lay to the south-west of the burials (figure 7.2). A *terminus post quem* for the building is provided by a coin of 291 AD sealed in the floor (*ibid.*:268). While the chronological relationship between the burials and the building is unclear (*ibid.*:274), there is a possibility that they may have been contemporaneous. A similar small stone building also lies close to the small cemetery at Brean Down (So) (ApSimon 1965:224). The building is constructed of stone robbed from an adjacent Romano-British temple (*ibid.*:226) and has Roman coins of the late fourth century embedded in the lower floor layers (*ibid.*:217). The size and shape of the buildings at Lamyatt Beacon and Brean Down closely resemble early Irish timber oratories, such as at Ardwall Island (D & G) (Thomas 1967:138-140), and it has been suggested that the building at the two Somerset sites may have served as churches or chapels (Leech 1980:350). However, this is not the only possible function for these buildings particularly as the building at Brean Down, unlike that at Lamyatt Beacon, does contain evidence indicative of domestic occupation, including a midden and spindle whorls (Ap Simon 1965:224).<sup>5</sup>

Overall, the evidence for churchyard burial prior to the seventh century in the western part of the study area is, thus, far from substantive. Instead, the archaeological evidence suggests that the majority of the population were interred in non-enclosed field cemeteries with no associated ecclesiastical buildings (Petts 2004:81) (see table 7.1. for a list of pre-seventh century non-churchyard cemeteries from Devon, Dorset and Somerset). Little is known of the nature of Christianity in the south-west peninsula prior to the arrival of the Anglo-Saxon Church in these areas as a result of the westward expansion of Wessex during the seventh century, nor is it clear how wide-spread the faith was among the general population. The large number of field cemeteries and relative absence of churchyard burial may indicate that Christianity had made little impact on the majority of the population before the arrival of the Anglo-Saxon Church, and this may have been reflected in their funerary practices. Yet, it is possible that the inscribed stones, discussed in section 6.2.1, and found across the western part of the study area, primarily in Devon with occasional examples in Somerset, Dorset and even Hampshire (see table 6.2 for details) (Okasha 1993:3), may have Christian connotations. A number of inscribed stones from Cornwall bear Christian symbols, such as the “chi-rho”, or Christian formulae, such as “*hic iacet*” (*ibid.*:5), although none of the stones

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<sup>5</sup> Many of the post-Roman cemeteries in the western part of the study area are associated with Roman temples, with examples including Cannington (So) (Rahtz, Hirst & Wright 2000), Lamyatt Beacon (So) (Leech 1986), Henley Wood (So) (Watts & Leach 1996) and Brean Down (So) (Bell 1990), while burials of suspected post Roman date associated with temples have been found at Nettleton Scrub (Wi) (Wedlake 1982), Wint Hill Banwell (So) and Maiden Castle (Do) (the burials referred to here are not the seventh-century barrow burials from Maiden Castle, but a group of undated west-east orientated unfurnished burials (Wheeler 1943:77-8)). It has been suggested that in some cases these temples may have been converted into Christian shrines in the fifth century, although conclusive archaeological evidence for such a change is at best fragmentary (Rahtz 1991:12)



**Table 7.1. Sub-Roman cemeteries in the western part of the study area.<sup>ii</sup>**

Site	County	Date	Basis of dating	No. of inhumations
Exeter Cemetery I	Devon	5 <sup>th</sup> century	Radiocarbon dating	6
Kenn		5 <sup>th</sup> -8th century	Radiocarbon dating	111
Tolpuddle Ball	Dorset	c.400-100 AD	Radiocarbon dating	50
Poundbury		Roman- 6th/7th century	Radiocarbon dating	2
Tinney's Lane, Sherbourne		c.430-660 AD	Radiocarbon dating	1
Cannington	Somerset	c.350-800AD	Radiocarbon dating	542
Shepton Mallet IV		4 <sup>th</sup> -5 <sup>th</sup> , possible 6 <sup>th</sup> , century	Radiocarbon dating	9
Henley Wood, Yatton		5 <sup>th</sup> -7th century	Radiocarbon dating	75+
Brean Down		5 <sup>th</sup> to 7th/8th century	Radiocarbon dating	8
Huish Episcopi		6 <sup>th</sup> -7th century	Grave goods	3
Lamyatt Beacon		6 <sup>th</sup> -8th century	Radiocarbon dating	16

**Table 7.2. Churchyard burials within the study area which may date to the seventh century.**

Site	County	Grave	Laboratory reference	Uncalibrated radiocarbon date (BP)	Calibrated date <sup>iii</sup> with a confidence level of	
					1σ (AD)	2σ (AD)
Beckery Chapel	Somerset	HB 18	Birm 69	1220±80	690-900	660-980
Wells Cathedral <sup>iv</sup>		B115	HAR-3397	1220	685-889	660-980
		B294	GU-5014	1260	677-790	660-890 <sup>v</sup>
		B257	GU-5016	1360	619-690	550-853
		F1493 <sup>vi</sup>	GU-5018	1210	680-953	640-1020
			GU-5019	1450	553-652	450-670
	GU-5154	1230	685-883	660-950		
SOU 13	Hampshire	31	OxA-12041	1260±26	690-780	675-865
		40	OxA-12042	1475±26	560-640	540-645
		59	OxA-12043	1239±26	690-860	685-885
		64	OxA-12044	1290±25	685-770	665-780

<sup>i</sup> Area covered by Devon, Somerset and Dorset. This table does not contain cemeteries founded in this area after c. 600 AD, such as Ulwell (Do) (Cox 1989) and Portesham (Do) (Valentin 2003). Nor does it include those burials in Eastern Dorset and North Somerset, such as Bargates (Jarvis 1983), Elm Farm Burnett (Leighton 1937; Geake 1997:144) and Wimborne St. Giles (Meaney 1964:81-2; RCHM 1975:102), which seem to have been influenced by burial traditions seen in the eastern part of the study area.

<sup>ii</sup> The table only contains relatively securely dated cemeteries and it is important to note that there are a number of other burial grounds which are also thought to date to this period but are not securely dated. Examples included Daws Castle (So) (Pearce 1976), Queen Camel Hill (So) (Meaney 1964:219), Wint Hill Banwell (So) (Hunt 1964), Portishead (So), and Bradley Hill (So) (Leech 1981).

<sup>iii</sup> Unless specified all radiocarbon dates have been recalibrated using OxCal version 3.8.0.1 (Bronk Ramsey 2003).

<sup>iv</sup> There was insufficient information to allow the recalibration of any of the radiocarbon dates from Wells. As such, the calibrated ranges given in Rodwell 2001:571 are used.

<sup>v</sup> This is given as 60-890AD in Rodwell 2001, but this is a typing error. The value was checked with the SUERC radiocarbon laboratory and it should read as 660-890AD (G.Cook *pers.com*).

<sup>vi</sup> Dates obtained from charnel from within the Mortuary Chapel (Rodwell 2001:78, 571). It has been suggested that these bones are derived from coffins and tombs, possibly from within a building.

within the study area possesses Christian iconography.<sup>6</sup> Fragmentary evidence for a Christian presence in the South-west peninsula can also be found in seventh- and eighth-century documentary sources, such as the account in Bede's eighth-century *Ecclesiastical History of the English people* of the two British bishops involved in the consecration of Chad in AD 664 (Sherley-Price 1990:197). This appears to provide brief glimpses of an established British church, with bishops, monasteries and holy places in the western part of the study area (Morris 1989:6). While caution should be exercised in extrapolating information from seventh-century sources back into the sixth and fifth centuries, the possibility of both an established British Church and the widespread acceptance of Christianity by much of the population in the western counties prior to the seventh century cannot be excluded. If this was the case, it makes the absence of evidence for churchyard burial surprising. It may be that during the fifth and sixth centuries, the British Church was not particularly concerned with the funerary behaviour of the laity and the majority of the population continued to be interred in their traditional burial grounds.

Yet it is perhaps a mistake to assume that the presence of Christianity in the south-west peninsula would necessarily result in churchyards similar to those seen in the later Saxon and medieval periods. It has been suggested that early Christian enclosed burial grounds may not initially have been associated with churches, instead acquiring them at a later date (Preston-Jones 1994:91; Thomas, Fowler & Gardener 1969:140). For example, the earliest evidence for an ecclesiastical structure in the fifth- and sixth-century cemetery at Tintagel is a stone church dated to the tenth century (Nowakowski & Thomas 1992:35). Similarly, even if the burial ground on Lundy Island is an early Christian cemetery, it may not necessarily be a churchyard. The church within the enclosed cemetery dates to the twelfth or thirteenth centuries and, while it may be that this is simply the last in a series of churches, it is equally probable that any ecclesiastical structure may significantly post-date the foundation of the burial ground. While the possibility that the earliest buildings associated with these burial grounds were timber and have left little trace cannot be excluded, it may be that the focus of these earliest Christian cemeteries was not initially provided by an ecclesiastical building. Instead, it has been suggested that a focal point was initially provided by "special graves" distinguished by an elaboration of the usual grave form (Thomas, Fowler & Gardener 1969:140), such as the small rectangular enclosure of granite slabs surrounding three graves at Lundy (*ibid.*:141). This may explain the absence of pre-seventh-century churchyards in the western part of the study area. Moreover, these special graves may not have just been confined to enclosed cemeteries. It has been suggested that the elaborate slab-covered grave

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<sup>6</sup> It has been argued in some cases that the inscribed stones may have been part of early Christian cemeteries which later acquired churches (Swanton & Pearce 1982:140).

at Cannington (So), with its richly furnished child burial, could also be considered a special grave (Thomas 1971:63; Rathz, Hirst & Wright 2000:413). This raises the possibility that, at least in the latter phases of its use, Cannington may have been a Christian burial ground. If Cannington was, indeed, a Christian burial ground, it is possible that the other field cemeteries also had Christian affiliations. However, whether this simply took the form of individuals who had converted to Christianity continuing to be interred in local cemeteries or a more formal arrangement, with some of the existing burial grounds coming under Christian control or Christian communities interring their dead in newly founded field cemeteries, is unclear.

### **7.1.2. The arrival of the Church of Rome in seventh-century Wessex**

Unlike the western counties, there is little evidence for the presence of Christianity in the eastern part of the study area prior to the arrival of continental missionaries in the seventh century. The Augustinian mission may have reached Kent in AD 597, but it was another 38 years before continental missionaries were first recorded in the kingdom of the West Saxons with the arrival of Birinus (*HE* III:7; Sherley-Price 1990:153).<sup>7</sup> With the missionaries came the earliest West Saxon, as opposed to British, churches, whose seventh-century incarnations are known primarily from documentary sources. The earliest of the West Saxon churches lie outside the study area in Dorchester-on-Thames (Ox). In the early and mid-seventh century Dorchester-on-Thames lay under West Saxon control and it was here that Birinus is recorded as having built what were probably the first West Saxon churches at the site of the first West Saxon see as part of his missionary activities (*HE* III:7; Sherley-Price 1990:153). The period 660-750 AD saw the foundation of many new religious houses in Wessex (Blair 1994:56), with the Dorchester-on-Thames churches being just the first of a number of known seventh-century ecclesiastical foundations. Documentary sources indicated that a church was present by the mid-seventh century within the Roman walls at Winchester. The documentary sources suggest it may possibly have been in existence by AD 648 (*ASC* F 648 Swanton 2000:28), and was definitely present by the 660s when the town became the site of the second and then only West Saxon see as Dorchester-on-Thames was lost to Mercian expansion (*HE* III:7; Sherley-Price 1990:154).<sup>8</sup>

The seventh century also saw the foundation of non-episcopal religious houses, such as the monastery at Exeter which St. Boniface entered as an oblate in the 680s or 690s (Yorke 1995: 181; Levison 1905:6). The royal patronage of religious foundations was not confined

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<sup>7</sup> See Chapter 2 for a more detailed account of the conversion of the West Saxons.

<sup>8</sup> See chapter 8 for a discussion of the debate on the foundation date of Winchester's first church.

to the West Saxon kingdom and some of Wessex's best known monasteries received grants from other royal houses during the seventh century. For example, the monastery at Malmesbury (Wi) was granted land by King Aethilred of Mercia in 681 AD (Edwards 1988:126),<sup>9</sup> while King Osric of the Hwicce gave land to the convent at Bath (So) in 675 AD (Davenport 2002:31). These seventh-century foundations provided the Church in Wessex with an increasing number of religious foci across the study area.

### 7.1.3. The origins of Anglo-Saxon churchyards in Wessex

Documentary sources indicate that the first West Saxon churches appeared during the seventh century and the presumption is that these earliest churches had associated churchyards, which probably catered for the ecclesiastical communities. For example, the first West Saxon bishop Birinus was buried in Dorchester, presumably either within or close to one of the churches he founded there (*HE* III.7; Sherley-Price 1990:153). Initially, the numbers of the laity interred within churchyards is likely to have been small. The missionaries in Wessex, as in the other Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, initially targeted the royalty and the nobility (Morris 1989:91). The conversion of even the elite was far from straightforward with successive seventh-century West Saxon kings oscillating between the old and new faiths depending on their political needs (Mayr-Harting 1991:65). It was only after the abdication of Caedwalla in 688 AD that there was an unbroken succession of Christian West Saxon kings (Yorke 1995:173). It can be assumed that some, but not necessarily all, of the newly converted elite may have been interred within churchyards. According to the twelfth-century *Annales monasterii de Wintonia*, the seventh-century West Saxon kings Cenwalh, Aescwine and Centwine were interred at the Old Minster in Winchester (Deliyannis 1995:119). However, there is no evidence that the seventh-century Church demanded that the newly converted were interred within churchyards (Geake 1992:89). In fact, there is no evidence to suggest that the early Church was overly concerned where the dead were buried (Bullough 1983:186) or that it sought to impose burial in the vicinity of a church (Blair 2005:229). As such, it seems likely that some of the newly converted were interred close to churches, possibly as a means of indicating their allegiance to the new faith or perhaps as a means of enhancing their status, while others sought the burial grounds of their ancestors, if not necessarily the traditions of an older faith.

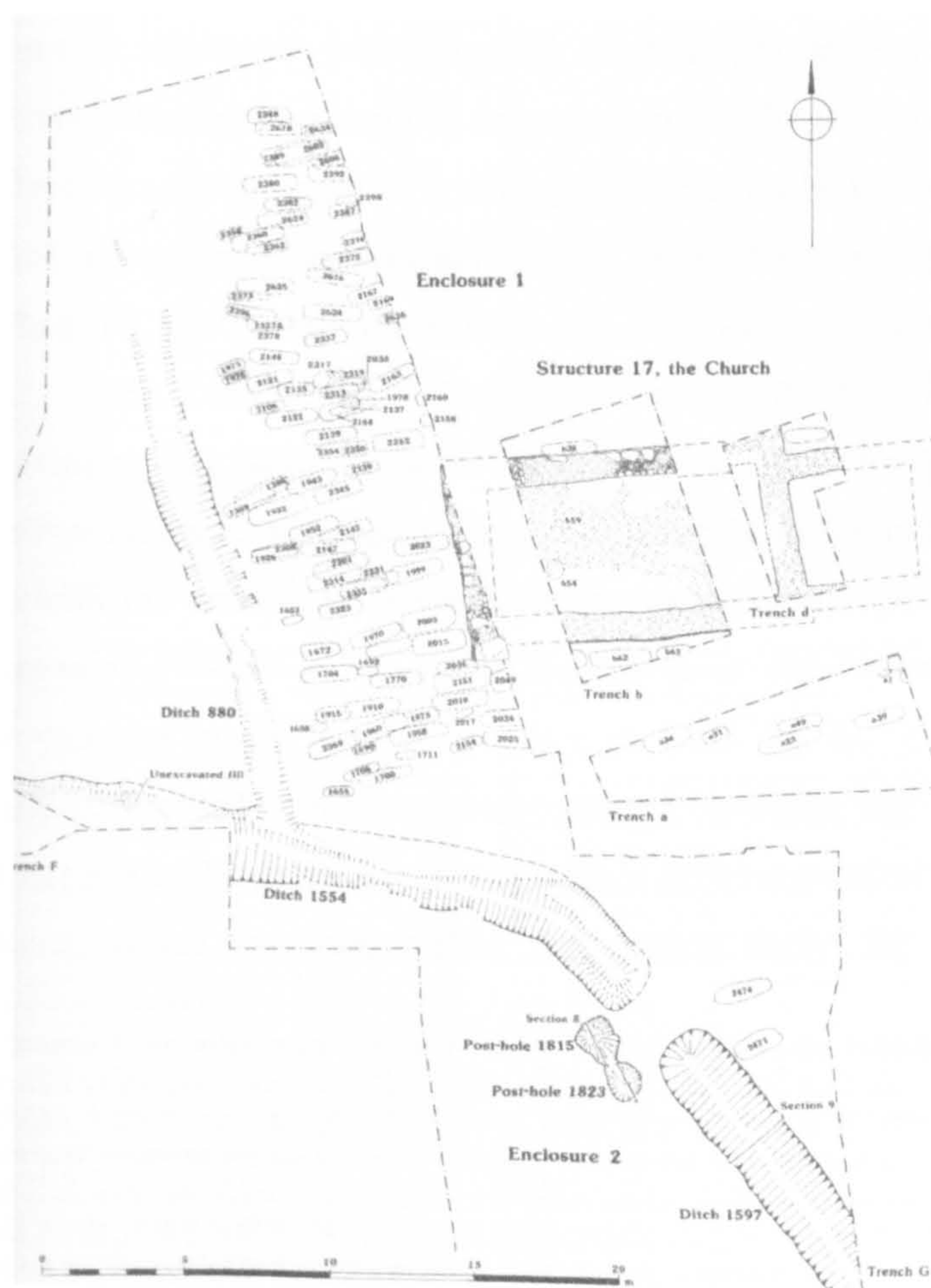
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<sup>9</sup> William of Malmesbury's twelfth-century *Gesta Pontificum Anglorum* suggests that the monastery at Malmesbury was founded by an Irishman called Meldrum, or Maildubh (*GPA* V:189 -Preest 2002:226). This may indicate that Malmesbury was a pre-Augustinian foundation. However, others have suggested that William of Malmesbury's account of the foundation of the monastery was based on a mistranslation of a passage in a papal privilege and that there is no substantive evidence for a monastery at Malmesbury prior to Aldhelm's abbacy, c. AD 680-705 (Edwards 1988:126).

Figure 7.3. Plan of the site at Beckery Chapel (from Rahtz & Hirst 2003:153)



Figure 7.4. Plan of church and churchyard at Trowbridge (from Graham & Davies 1993:35 )



If the documentary evidence for churchyard burial in seventh-century Wessex is at best fragmentary, the archaeological evidence is little better. Within the study area, only three sites – SOU 13 (Ha), Beckery Chapel (So) (figure 7.3) and Wells Cathedral (So) - have produced evidence for possible seventh-century churchyard burials.<sup>10</sup> All three sites have burials that have produced radiocarbon dates indicating they may have been interred during the seventh century (table 7.2). However, radiocarbon dating often provides a relatively broad date range. This means that while any of the burials listed in table 7.2 may have been interred during the seventh century, and in the majority of cases they are equally likely to have been buried during the eighth, ninth or even tenth centuries. For example, the only radiocarbon date from the monastic cemetery at Beckery Chapel has a date range of 660-980AD at a 2 $\sigma$  level of confidence and may represent a seventh-century burial, but may equally be of a much later date. Only two examples - one of the bones from the charnel at Wells and burial 40 from SOU 13 - produced a date range which predated the beginning of the eighth century at a 2 $\sigma$  level of confidence, while burial 257 from Wells Cathedral has a range of 619-690 AD at a 1 $\sigma$  level of confidence.

To demonstrate seventh-century churchyard burial, it is necessary not only to have burials of the appropriate date, but also to prove that the graves were associated with a contemporary church. While there is substantial archaeological evidence for an Anglo-Saxon minster church at Wells, none of the structures can be securely dated to the seventh century. The first documentary evidence for the presence of a religious community in Wells is in a charter of 766 AD where land was given to the Minster Church of St. Andrew's by the West Saxon king, Cynewulf (Rodwell 2001:2; Whitelock 1955:457-459). However, it has been suggested that this document may be a tenth-century forgery (Edwards 1988:252). If valid, the charter implies that the Minster was already present by the mid-eighth century and points to a foundation date either earlier in the eighth century or possibly in the late seventh century. This corresponds with the earliest of the radiocarbon dated *in situ* burials, B257, which produced date ranges of 619-690 AD and 550-853 AD at 1 $\sigma$  and 2 $\sigma$  levels of confidence respectively, and indicates burial was taking place at Wells by the ninth, and probably eighth, century, and even possibly in the seventh century. However, one of the dated bones from the charnel deposit in the mortuary chapel gives a date range of 450-670 AD at a 2 $\sigma$  level of confidence, which is much earlier than seems likely for any West Saxon

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<sup>10</sup> Seventh-century burials have also been reported from the Old Minster in Winchester (Kjølbye-Biddle 1992:222), but as the full excavation report for the site has yet to be published, these burials are not discussed in this chapter. In addition, a small cemetery at Lower Brook street also lies within Winchester city walls (Biddle 1975b:303). This cemetery occupies the same island of raised land as the Old Minster and it is possible that the Old Minster, with its church, ancillary buildings and burials grounds, controlled and occupied the entire island (Scobie 1995:4). This means it is possible that the small late seventh-century Lower Brook Street cemetery may in some way be linked to the ecclesiastical presence in Winchester, although the nature of this connection is unclear (see chapter 8 for a more detailed discussion).

ecclesiastical foundation at Wells. This suggests that this individual's remains may have originated from an earlier burial ground at Wells, or elsewhere, and may predate the West Saxon religious foundation on this site. Indeed, some have interpreted some of the site's earliest features as representing a circular enclosure with associated burials (Blair 2004:137), which may not necessarily have been associated with the later ecclesiastical occupation of the site.

The timber church excavated at SOU 13 lies within the eighth- and ninth-century emporium of Hamwic, and is thought to be contemporary with the settlement. The presence of a burial with a date range of 540-645 AD at a  $2\sigma$  level of confidence in the earliest phase of its churchyard is puzzling. It seems increasingly likely that the church at SOU 13 was part of a minster complex, which formed the southern part of the settlement at Hamwic.<sup>11</sup> If this is the case, the minster complex may pre-date the foundation of the wic, making seventh-century burials in the churchyard at SOU 13 a possibility. However, the earliest radiocarbon date from SOU 13 is from the first half of the seventh century, which is a very early date for it to be associated with any ecclesiastical foundation in eastern Wessex, making it more likely that the church at SOU 13 was built on a pre-existing field cemetery. Despite difficulties with the earliest dated burials at both SOU 13 and Wells Cathedral, radiocarbon dating evidence suggests that burial adjacent to a church was probably occurring at both sites by the eighth century. In addition, it seems possible that the cemetery at Beckery Chapel may also have been in use during the eighth century as the radiocarbon date range of 690-900AD at a  $1\sigma$  level of confidence suggests an eighth-to ninth-century date.

The archaeological evidence within the study area for seventh- and even eighth-century churchyard burials is poor and unlikely to be representative of their true incidence.<sup>12</sup> This is due, in part, to a number of practical factors. Key among them is the ability to date the burials accurately. Radiocarbon dating is currently the only means by which to date unfurnished burials and the cost can be prohibitive. As such, radiocarbon dating may not be used if there is stratigraphic evidence for the date of the cemetery, such as burials sealed by late Saxon or Norman building work. Yet, stratigraphic evidence while giving a good general idea as to the date of the cemetery, often gives little indication of the date that the burial ground came into use. This raises the possibility that other unidentified seventh-or eighth-century churchyard burials may already have been excavated within the study area. Furthermore, even if radiocarbon dating is used on churchyard populations, usually it is only

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<sup>11</sup> See chapter 8 for a more detailed discussion of the evidence for Hamwic's minster complex.

<sup>12</sup> A large programme of radiocarbon dating was undertaken on the burials excavated from around the Old Minster in Winchester and will probably add to the number of known seventh- and eighth-century burials within the study area when the final report is published.

possible to date a small number of burials and it is possible that some of a cemetery's earliest burials may be overlooked. The survival and recovery of these earliest burials is another key factor which may explain their scarcity. Unlike the field cemeteries which preceded them, early medieval churchyards are characterised by high levels of intercutting with the graves of later generations disturbing, displacing and destroying earlier inhumations.<sup>13</sup> This means that the earliest churchyard burials may well have been completely destroyed at some sites. It is also possible that at some sites the area containing the earliest burials may not have been excavated. Most archaeological excavations of churchyards are piecemeal with only part of the cemetery being uncovered. Sites such as SOU 13 and Beckery Chapel where all or most of the cemetery has been uncovered are unusual.

Finally, when considering the low levels of evidence for seventh- and early eighth-century churchyard burial, it is important to realise that this was a minority burial rite. There is substantial evidence for seventh-century burial in the study area (tables 7.3 & 7.4), but these burials are in field cemeteries or take the form of isolated burials, often under barrows. Many of the cemeteries in table 7.3 were founded the late sixth or seventh centuries. Indeed with the possible exceptions of the cemeteries at Cannington (Rahtz *et al* 2000) and Kenn (Weddell 2000), none of the cemeteries within the study area that pre-date the last quarter of the sixth century were still in use at the beginning of the eighth century. Traditionally, this abandonment of many sixth-century cemeteries and foundation of new cemeteries in seventh century was attributed to the influence of the Church (Faull 1976:232; Meaney & Hawkes 1970:54-55; Hyslop 1963:194). However, the validity of this assumption has been increasingly questioned and it has been suggested that changes in the pattern of settlement and land use was responsible for much of the relocation of cemeteries seen during the seventh century (Boddington 1990:189). Moreover, there is no evidence that the Anglo-Saxon Church in Wessex was particularly concerned where the indigenous population were interred (Bullough 1983:192; Morris 1983:50), nor was the Church in the first century of existence in a position to enforce a shift in burial location (Morris 1983:54). As such, it seems unlikely that the arrival of the Roman Church initiated a major shift in burial location during the seventh century. This is not to say that the continental missionaries had no effect on burial location as they provided the early medieval population of Wessex with a new alternative location to inter their dead, adjacent to their newly founded churches (Hadley 2000a:160). Yet, at least in the seventh and early eighth centuries, it was one with a limited appeal. Traditional burial practices provided a valuable forum for displaying status and had links to the ancestors (Blair 2005:58). These were not easily abandoned for a Christian burial

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<sup>13</sup> The high level of post-burial disturbance seen in early medieval churchyards is discussed in more detail in section 4.4.



*Table 7.3. Examples of cemeteries founded within the study area during the seventh century*

Site	County	Date	Basis of dating	No. of burials
Burghfield	Berkshire	7 <sup>th</sup> century	Grave goods	50
Bradford Peverell	Dorset	Late 7 <sup>th</sup> -early 8 <sup>th</sup> century	Grave goods	16
Hambledon Hill		7 <sup>th</sup> -8 <sup>th</sup> century	Grave goods	14
Trumpet Major, Dorchester		7 <sup>th</sup> century	Grave goods	At least 8
Ullwell		7 <sup>th</sup> century	Radiocarbon dating	At least 57
Bevis Grave	Hampshire	7 <sup>th</sup> -10 <sup>th</sup> century	Grave goods/ radiocarbon dating	88
Lower Brook Street		Late 7 <sup>th</sup> -early 8 <sup>th</sup> century	Grave goods	4, possibly 5
Portsdown II		7 <sup>th</sup> -8 <sup>th</sup> century	Grave goods	25
Snell's Corner		7 <sup>th</sup> century	Graves goods	33
SOU 207		7 <sup>th</sup> -8 <sup>th</sup> century	Radiocarbon dating	At least 12
SOU 414		7 <sup>th</sup> -8 <sup>th</sup> century	Radiocarbon dating	At least 6
SOU 682		7 <sup>th</sup> -8 <sup>th</sup> century	Radiocarbon dating	16
St. Mary's Stadium I		Late 7 <sup>th</sup> /early 8 <sup>th</sup> century	Radiocarbon dating <sup>1</sup> / grave goods	23 inhumations, 18 cremations
Winnall II		Late 7 <sup>th</sup> century	Grave goods	44
Didcot	Oxfordshire	7 <sup>th</sup> century	Grave goods	17
Barrow Hill, Buckland Dinham	Somerset	7 <sup>th</sup> century	Grave goods	5 or 6
Hicknall Slait		Late 7 <sup>th</sup> century	Grave goods	4
Stoneage Barton		7 <sup>th</sup> century	Radiocarbon dating	5
Templecombe		Late 7 <sup>th</sup> -11 <sup>th</sup> century	Radiocarbon dating	11
Wembdon		7 <sup>th</sup> -9 <sup>th</sup> century	Radiocarbon dating	At least 22
The Fox, Purton	Wiltshire	Late 7 <sup>th</sup> -early 8 <sup>th</sup> century	Grave goods	11 or 12
Monkton Deverill		7 <sup>th</sup> century	Grave goods	15
Roche Court Down I		7 <sup>th</sup> century	Grave goods	16
Winklebury Hill		7 <sup>th</sup> -8 <sup>th</sup> century	Grave goods	30

<sup>1</sup> Radiocarbon dating of inhumations and charcoal associated with cremations

*Table 7.4. Examples of isolated burials of seventh-century date within the study area*

Site	County	Date	Basis of dating	No. of burials	Associated barrows?
Cross Barrows	Berkshire	7 <sup>th</sup> -early 8 <sup>th</sup> century	Grave goods	1	Yes
Forbury roundabout		7 <sup>th</sup> -8 <sup>th</sup> century	Radiocarbon dating	3	No
Seven Barrows		c. 700AD	Grave goods	Unknown	Yes
Eggardon Hillfort	Dorset	7 <sup>th</sup> -9 <sup>th</sup> century	Radiocarbon dating	3	Yes
Long Crichel No. 7.		7 <sup>th</sup> century	Grave goods	1	Yes
Maiden Castle		7 <sup>th</sup> century	Grave goods	2	Yes
Pentridge, Woodyates Inn I		7 <sup>th</sup> century	Grave goods	1	Yes
Oliver's Battery	Hampshire	Late 7 <sup>th</sup> -8 <sup>th</sup> century	Grave goods	1	No
Preshaw		7 <sup>th</sup> century	Graves goods	1	No
South Gate, Winchester		7 <sup>th</sup> -8 <sup>th</sup> century	Radiocarbon dating	2	No
Lowbury Hill	Oxfordshire	Late 7 <sup>th</sup> -early 8 <sup>th</sup> century	Grave goods/radiocarbon dating	2	Yes
Noah's Ark Field		7 <sup>th</sup> century	Grave goods	1	No
Alvediston, Barrow 1C	Wiltshire	Late 7 <sup>th</sup> century	Grave goods	1	Yes
9 Barnes Close, Mere		7 <sup>th</sup> century	Grave goods	1	No
Barrow Hill, Ebbesbourne Wake		7 <sup>th</sup> century	Grave goods	1	Unknown
Coombe Bissett I		Early 7 <sup>th</sup> century	Grave goods	1?	Yes
Perham Down		7 <sup>th</sup> century	Grave goods	1	
Rodmead Down Barrow		7 <sup>th</sup> -early 8 <sup>th</sup> century	Grave goods	1	Yes
Roundway Hill, Barrow 7		7 <sup>th</sup> century	Grave goods	1	Yes
Roundway Hill, Barrow 1		7 <sup>th</sup> -early 8 <sup>th</sup> century	Grave goods	1	Yes
Shrewton		Early 7 <sup>th</sup> century	Grave goods	3	No
Stonehenge		7 <sup>th</sup> century	Radiocarbon dating	1	No
Swallowcliffe Down		Late 7 <sup>th</sup> century	Grave goods	1	Yes
West Knoyle I		Late 7 <sup>th</sup> -early 8 <sup>th</sup> century	Grave goods	1	Yes
Yatesbury II, Cherhill Barrow 10		7 <sup>th</sup> century	Grave goods	2	Yes

in the vicinity of a church (*ibid.*), and it is, perhaps, not surprising that in the first centuries of the Anglo-Saxon Church's existence, the vast majority of the population continued to inter their dead in field cemeteries or under barrows.

## **7.2. The spread of churchyard burial in Wessex**

### **7.2.1. Of minsters and monasteries**

The century following the arrival of the continental missionaries saw the foundation of large numbers of religious houses in the Wessex heartlands (Blair 1994:56). These foundations provided the foci of all religious activity within the kingdom of the West Saxons (*ibid.*:67) and their distribution is likely to have had a significant effect on the development of churchyard burial within a given area. It is unclear whether Wessex's first churches were envisioned as forming part of a network of religious foci from the beginning and were part of a general policy of converting the population, or whether they arose independently, only later to become incorporated within a network (Hase 1994:61; Morris 1989:130; Pitt 2003:67). What is clear is that even at the end of the eighth century, it seems likely that in some areas churches would have been widely dispersed with some communities lying some distance from any religious centres.

Pastoral care would initially have been provided by itinerant priests and others in religious orders based at the new religious foci (Foot 1989:43). However, there has been much debate about the nature of the interaction between these new religious foundations and the provision of pastoral care to communities in their vicinity. Of particular concern is whether a distinction should be made between minsters which were staffed by priests and monasteries housing communities of monks, which were potentially more contemplative in nature (Blair 1988b:35; Foot 1992b:216). Some have suggested that the pastoral care provided by more contemplative enclosed monasteries was restricted to the inhabitants of their own estates (Cambridge & Rollason 1995:94). However, the terms *minster*, which is derived from the Old English *mynster* (Foot 1992b:215), and *monastery*, which is derived from the Latin *monasterium* (*ibid.*:214), appear to have been used interchangeably in contemporary documents to describe any religious community, apart from an episcopal see (*ibid.*:224). Furthermore, given the great diversity seen in the origins, status and activities of the religious houses in this period (*ibid.*:225; Blair 2005:82) and the complexity of some ecclesiastical establishments (*ibid.*), it may not be appropriate to consider them as simply fulfilling either a pastoral or contemplative role. Instead, it may be that many ecclesiastical establishments had both roles, although the balance between the two probably differed in

each religious house. Indeed, it may be that many, if not all, religious foundations would have undertaken varying degrees of pastoral work, particularly in the first centuries after the conversion (Blair 1988b:37). As such, the term minster will be used in this study to describe ecclesiastical houses whether housing communities of priests, monks, nuns or a combination of religious personnel.

Any variation in access to pastoral care has important implications for the development of churchyard burial. The level of contact between a religious community and the surrounding population would have affected the extent to which the laity may have considered churchyard burial a viable and desirable option, particularly during the seventh and eighth centuries. If ecclesiastical communities limited their interactions primarily to those on their own estates or were pastorally inactive, this would have retarded the rate at which the local population may have come to consider interment in the vicinity of a church as a possible burial location. In addition, those communities lying in close proximity to a religious foundation would potentially have had a greater degree of interaction with the ecclesiastical community, and access to pastoral care, than those dwelling some distance from the nearest church. This could have had a significant influence on the uptake of churchyard burial.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, for those living close to a church, churchyard burial was a viable option, but for those living some distance from any church and facing the task of transporting a body over some distance, interment away from the church may have been easier.

### **7.2.2. Documentary evidence for the spread of churchyard burial**

The evidence for seventh-century and early eighth-century burial from the study area clearly demonstrates that there was not an immediate transition to churchyard burial in Wessex in the decades following the arrival of the continental missionaries. Instead, the evidence indicates that during the seventh and early eighth centuries the majority of the population sought interment in field cemeteries and not the new churchyards. It seems probable that initially lay interments in churchyards were confined to those with close connections to ecclesiastical establishments, such as patrons and perhaps tenants (Blair 2005:241), but determining the rate at which churchyard burial was adopted by the wider community is far from straightforward.

Documentary sources can be used to provide evidence for the presence of churches and in some cases associated churchyards. Occasionally, they may give examples of individuals

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<sup>14</sup> It has been suggested that by 800AD, most of the population of lowland England were within walking distance of a minster, i.e. 3 to 5 miles (Blair 2005:152)

interred within certain churchyards. A number of late Anglo-Saxon wills specify where the individual wished to be interred. For example, the late tenth-century will of Ealdorman Aethelmaer expresses his wish to be buried at the New Minster in Winchester (Whitelock 1930:31). In addition, other documents such as hagiographies, chronicles and histories may also mention where some individuals were interred. For example, St. Aethelwold's biographer describes his final resting place to the south of the Old Minster's high altar (Lapidge & Winterbottom 1991:63). This information is invaluable in understanding the development of a network of churches and in demonstrating the burial of notable lay and ecclesiastical figures within churches and churchyards. Yet while this demonstrates that lay and ecclesiastical elites were being interred within churches or churchyards, it tells us little about where the majority of the population were being interred at any point in time.

Documentary sources do, however, provide some indirect evidence for the increasing numbers being interred in churchyards in the late Saxon period. The introduction of soul scot, a charge for burial levied at the grave side (Blair 1988a:8),<sup>15</sup> which is first mentioned in two ninth-century charters (Gittos 2002:201),<sup>16</sup> has important ramifications for the rise of churchyard burial. Ecclesiastical dues are thought to have been paid by the laity in exchange for pastoral care (Tinti 2005), with the earliest church levy, churchscot, appearing to date from the first century of the Anglo-Saxon Church (Blair 2005:156).<sup>17</sup> The appearance, by the ninth century, of an ecclesiastical levy, soulscot, specifically linked to funerary provision implies that burial under the auspices of the church had become sufficiently desirable for the Church was able to charge for the privilege. This could in turn indicate that increasing numbers of the population were also being interred in the vicinity of a church. However, it has been suggested that the payment may not necessarily have been for a space within a churchyard, but for priestly services in the form of last rites and other funerary services (Blair 2005:437). Yet, even if this was the case, the greater levels of ecclesiastical engagement in lay burial suggested by the introduction of soulscot may well have been accompanied by greater levels of churchyard burial. In addition, the advent of soulscot may have altered the clergy's attitude towards lay burial. Soulscot provided an important source of revenue to the religious houses. Aelfric's first pastoral letter to Archbishop Wulfstan written in c.1006 describes how 'Some priests are glad when men die and they flock to the

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<sup>15</sup> 'And it is best that payment for the soul be always paid at the open grave' from Aethelred's code of 1008 (V Aethelred) (Whitelock 1955:407). Examples of the payment of soulscot can be found in late Saxon wills such as that of Aethelwold in which 'he grants for his soul twenty mancuses of gold to the New Minster, and a cup as his burial fee.' (Whitelock 1930:31).

<sup>16</sup> One of these charters is from Winchester and the other from Worcester (Gittos 2002:201). The Winchester charter, which dates to the 870s, states that the land at Eaton, near Winchester, leased to Cuthred was free from all services with the exception of the construction of bridges, military service, churchscot, priest's rights and soulscot (Robertson 1939:27).

<sup>17</sup> Churchscot is mentioned in the seventh-century law code of King Ine of Wessex (Whitelock 1955:365).

corpse like greedy ravens when they see a carcass in wood or in field' (*ibid.*:463). These comments relate to the period in the tenth and eleventh centuries when the minster churches' monopoly over burial was contested by later lay foundations, resulting in the different churches competing for burial fees.<sup>18</sup> However, the advent of soulscot in the ninth century may have encouraged the clergy to pursue any lay individuals choosing to be buried away from the church's influence with a greater vigour than they had previously.

Other indirect evidence for the increasing desirability of churchyard burial comes from the tenth- and eleventh-century law codes. These documents provide details of the judicial system and the types of punishment meted out to those found guilty of breaking the law. In some cases, the punishment extended beyond death. Edmund's first set of laws, c.939-946, excludes the bodies of those guilty of murder and adultery from burial on consecrated ground, i.e. most likely a churchyard (Robertson 1925:7).<sup>19</sup> A similar fate was prescribed for those who failed to observe celibacy or who had intercourse with a nun. These statutes are echoed in the law of the Northumbrian priests, c.1020-30, which states that 'Any man with more than one wife- if dies in that sin – forfeits Christian burial ..as does any who sleeps with a nun' (Whitelock 1955:438). While Cnut's second law code states that if a man 'has no surety, he is to be slain and to lie in unconsecrated ground' (*ibid.*:424). For the exclusion of the bodies of certain criminals from Christian burial on consecrated ground to constitute a punishment, the implication is that Christian burial on consecrated ground was not only desirable, but by the tenth and eleventh century increasingly the norm.

### **7.2.3. Archaeological evidence for the spread of churchyard burial**

As with the documentary sources, the archaeological data provides ample evidence for churchyard burial in later Saxon Wessex. In fact, the vast majority of early medieval burials known to post-date c.800AD within the study area are associated with ecclesiastical buildings. A total of seventeen churches within the study area have associated burials that can be securely dated to the early medieval period (tables 7.5 & 7.6)<sup>20</sup> with the majority of these churchyards containing a mix of male, female and juvenile burials indicative of lay

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<sup>18</sup> This issue was of sufficient concern to appear in eleventh-century law codes, with Aethelred's code of 1008 (V Aethelred) stating that 'if any body is buried elsewhere, outside the proper parish, the payment for souls is nevertheless to be paid to the minster to which it belongs' (Whitelock 1955:407)

<sup>19</sup> Edmund I.4 – "He who has intercourse with a nun, unless he make amends, shall not be allowed burial in consecrated ground any more than a homicide. We have decreed the same with regard to adultery" (Robertson 1925:7)

<sup>20</sup> This number does not include undated burials associated with churches of known late Saxon origin, where the burials are assumed to be either late Saxon or medieval.

**Table 7.5. Early medieval churchyards within the study area, c. 650-1100AD<sup>i</sup>**

Site	No. of burials <sup>ii</sup>	Type of associated church	Date	Basis of dating
The Bull Inn, Sonning (Bk)	c.25	Minster	10 <sup>th</sup> - 13 <sup>th</sup> century	Radiocarbon
St. Mary's Reading (Bk)	Unknown	Minster	c.875 AD	Coins
Exeter Cathedral (Dv)	114	Minster	Middle-late Saxon	Stratigraphy & grave goods
Romsey Abbey (Ha)	30	Monastery	8 <sup>th</sup> -11 <sup>th</sup> century	Radiocarbon dating
SOU 13 (Ha)	81	Part of minster complex? <sup>iii</sup>	8 <sup>th</sup> -9 <sup>th</sup> century	Radiocarbon dating
St. Mary's Church, Southampton (Ha)	8	Minster	8 <sup>th</sup> century to post-medieval	Radiocarbon dating
Old Minster, Winchester (Ha)	743	Minster	7 <sup>th</sup> century to post-medieval period	Stratigraphy, grave goods.
New Minster, Winchester (Ha)	109	Minster	10 <sup>th</sup> -12 <sup>th</sup> century	Stratigraphy, grave goods
Nunaminster, Winchester	6	Monastery	10 <sup>th</sup> century to medieval period	Stratigraphy
Beckery Chapel (So)	63	Daughter house of Glastonbury Abbey	7 <sup>th</sup> -10 <sup>th</sup> century	Radiocarbon dating
Bath Abbey (So)	30	Monastery	9 <sup>th</sup> -10 <sup>th</sup> century	Radiocarbon dating
Glastonbury Abbey (So)	Unknown	Monastery	Middle-Late Saxon	Stratigraphy
Shapwick (So)	Unknown	One of seven churches attached to Glastonbury Abbey	9 <sup>th</sup> century	Radiocarbon dating
Wells Cathedral (So)	270	Minster	7 <sup>th</sup> /8 <sup>th</sup> century to post medieval period	Stratigraphy and radiocarbon dating
Castle Green, Taunton (So)	Unknown	Minster	9 <sup>th</sup> -12 <sup>th</sup> century	Radiocarbon dating
Trowbridge (Wi)	164	Manorial church	c.950-1139 AD	Stratigraphy
Malmesbury Abbey (Wi)	6	Monastery	11 <sup>th</sup> -12 <sup>th</sup> century	Radiocarbon dating
Portchester Castle (Ha)	22	Manorial church?	11 <sup>th</sup> century	Stratigraphy

<sup>i</sup> The table only includes churchyards containing burials that can be relatively securely dated either by radiocarbon dating or stratigraphy to the early medieval period. Churches known to pre-date 1100AD with undated burials which may possibly date to the early medieval period are not included.

<sup>ii</sup> Only gives number of burials thought to date to the early medieval period

<sup>iii</sup> See chapter 8 for a discussion of the relationship between the church at SOU 13 and the Minster church in Hamwic.

**Table 7.6. Radiocarbon dates<sup>iv</sup> for early medieval churchyard burials within the study area**

Site	Grave number	Laboratory reference	Uncalibrated radiocarbon date (BP)	Calibrated date with a confidence level of	
				1σ (AD)	2σ (AD)
The Bull Inn, Sonning (Bk)	Unknown	SWAN 559	930±50	1030-1160	1010-1220
	Unknown	SWAN 560	1010±50	970-1160	890-1170
Romsey Abbey (Ha)	Context 3120	HAR-2527	1050±70	890-1150	780-1170
	Context 5127	HAR-3760	1100±70	880-1020	770-1040
SOU 13 (Ha)	Grave 31	OxA - 12041	1260±26	690-780	675-865
	Grave 40	OxA - 12042	1475±26	560-640	540-645
	Grave 59	OxA - 12043	1239±26	690-860	685-885
	Grave 64	OxA - 12044	1290±25	685-770	665-780
St. Mary's Church, Southampton (Ha)	SOU 630 - Inhumation 115	OxA - 5448	1215±45	720-890	680-950
	SOU 630- Inhumation 107	OxA -5447	1065±45	900-1020	880-1040
	SOU 753	OxA - 7187	885±60	1040-1220	1020-1260
	SOU 184	OxA - 12075	965±22	1020-1155	1015-1160
Beckery Chapel (So)	HB 18	Birm 69	1220±80	690-900	660-980
Bath Abbey (So)	Skeleton 21	BM-2902	1150±40	780-980	770-990
	Skeleton 13	BM-2903	1170±40	478-940	770-980
	Skeleton 15	BM-2904	1200±50	720-900	680-980
Shapwick (So)	Unknown	SUERC 2937 <sup>v</sup>	1025±35	983-1026	890-1160
Wells Cathedral (So) <sup>vi</sup>	Burial B61	HAR - 3375	910	1021-1221	980-1270
	Burial B115	HAR - 3397	1220	685-889	660-980
	Burial B69	HAR - 3398	870	1039-1245	1010-1270
	Burial B294	GU - 5014	1260	677-790	660-890 <sup>vii</sup>
	Burial B277	GU-5015	1080	829-1030	680-1180
	Burial B257	GU-5016	1360	619-690	550-853
	Ossuary bones (F1493)	GU-5154	1230	685-883	660-950
		GU-5155	1070	888-1021	780-1157
		GU-5018	1210	680-953	640-1020
GU-5019		1450	553-652	450-670	
Castle Green Taunton (So)	B2	HAR-2674	1090±70	880-1030	770-1160
Malmesbury Abbey (Wi)	Unknown	Beta-67371	930±50	1030-1106	1010-1220

<sup>iv</sup> Unless specified, all radiocarbon dates were recalibrated using OxCal software version 3.8.0.1 (Bronk Ramsey 2003).

<sup>v</sup> C. Gerrard *pers. comm.*

<sup>vi</sup> There was insufficient data to recalibrate the radiocarbon results from Wells Cathedral. The calibrated ranges given in the table are from Rodwell 2003:571.

<sup>vii</sup> This is given as 60-890AD in Rodwell 2001, but this is a typing error. The value was checked with the SUERC radiocarbon laboratory and it should read as 660-890AD (G.Cook *pers.comm.*).



burial.<sup>21</sup> Minsters are considered to have provided the major foci for Christian activity during much of the early medieval period. This is reflected in the burial evidence from the study area with fifteen of the seventeen cemeteries being associated with either Minsters, often with connections to the West Saxon royal house.<sup>22</sup> Indeed, there are no securely dated early medieval churchyard burials away from minsters and their daughter houses within the study area prior to the tenth century.

Unlike in some other parts of the country, Wessex's minsters survived the Viking raids of the ninth century relatively unscathed, and it was only in the tenth and eleventh centuries that a challenge to their monopoly began to emerge in the form of a new wave of church foundation (Blair 1985:117,119; 2005:300-304). Initially, these new churches, which were the result of royal, aristocratic and monastic activities (*ibid.*:300), only served to modify and extend the existing ecclesiastical system (*ibid.*:306). In the west of the study area - Devon, Dorset and Somerset - many of the new churches served to fill gaps in the existing pattern of ecclesiastical cover (*ibid.*:304), while in the eastern part of the study area new ecclesiastical foundations, such as manorial churches, added additional layers to the existing minster system (*ibid.*:302; Pitt 2003:67). The advent of smaller manorial and urban churches in tenth- and eleventh-century Wessex marked the beginning of the erosion of minster rights (Blair 1985:119; 1987:268).<sup>23</sup> Burial rights and their associated revenue, soul scot, once the sole domain of the minsters were increasingly contested by these newer foundations.

The challenge to the minster's monopoly over churchyard burial from the tenth century onward is reflected in the archaeological record. The manorial church at Trowbridge, which has an associated burial ground thought to have been used for burial from c.950AD (Graham & Davies 1993), provides the earliest securely dated example of a late Saxon manorial churchyard within the study area (figure 7.4). The only other possible example of a manorial church with an associated churchyard is at Porchester Castle (Ha). The walls of the Roman

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<sup>21</sup> The one exception is the cemetery at Beckery Chapel where 63.8% of the individuals were male, while the sex of a further 31% was indeterminate. There was only one known female burial and one juvenile burial in this cemetery of 58 individuals. The unusual demographic profile seen at Beckery Chapel, with a preponderance of male burials suggests that the cemetery is likely to have served a monastic community (Rathz & Hirst 1974:33). High levels of male burials combined with low levels of female burial and an absence of juvenile burial are seen at two other sites, Bath Abbey (Bell 1996) and Romsey Abbey (Scott 1996), which again may be suggestive of a monastic burial ground. However, the skeletal populations from both sites are smaller than that recovered from Beckery Chapel. In addition, the sex of over 60% of the adult skeletons recovered from both sites is indeterminate making any conclusion based on either cemetery's demographic profile tentative at best. Furthermore, both Romsey Abbey and Bath Abbey were founded as nunneries (Scott 1996:37; Davenport 2002:31), and if the excavated areas included parts of the religious community's burial ground a preponderance of females, not males would be expected.

<sup>22</sup> Beckery Chapel is a daughter-house of Glastonbury Abbey (Rahtz & Watts 2003:149) and the relationship between the church and churchyard at SOU 13 and the minster church of St. Mary's is discussed in chapter 8.

<sup>23</sup> The need to regulate and to some extent protect the financial rights of the minsters can be seen in King Edgar's tenth-century legislation (Edgar II) (Whitelock 1955:395-6)

fort at Porchester contained, by the tenth century, the core of a manorial complex, which had acquired by the eleventh century a masonry tower (Cunliffe 1976:303). By the mid-eleventh century, a small cemetery of 22 burials lay to the north of this tower (*ibid.*). It has been suggested that the stone tower, which was rebuilt not long after the foundation of the cemetery, had a religious function, perhaps serving as a church and bell-tower, although this deduction is not certain (*ibid.*:304).

Yet while there is substantial archaeological evidence for the foundation of new smaller churches within the study area during the tenth and eleventh centuries, there is little evidence, apart from at Trowbridge, that these churches had associated churchyards in the pre-Conquest period.<sup>24</sup> The excavations in Winchester have uncovered the remains of a number of small late Saxon churches.<sup>25</sup> Only one of these, St. Anastasius, which lies just outside the city walls and where four, or five, graves possibly dating to the eleventh century have been uncovered, is thought to have had a pre-twelfth century churchyard (Qualmann 1978:265,269).<sup>26</sup> There is no evidence that any of Winchester's other small churches possessed substantial churchyards, although one or two isolated burials of possible late Saxon date have been found in association with some of these churches. This suggests that burial within the city walls remained the preserve of the three minsters (Kjølbye-Biddle 1992:226).<sup>27</sup> Winchester's minster churches are unlikely to be entirely representative of all minsters' ability and desire to retain burial rights.<sup>28</sup> Yet, with the exception of Trowbridge, there is no other evidence for securely dated early medieval churchyard burials, not associated with minsters or monasteries, within the study area outside Winchester.<sup>29</sup> As such, the current archaeological evidence for late Saxon burial within the study area appears to suggest that the burial remained very much the preserve of the minster churches well into the eleventh century. Indeed, documentary sources suggest that it was perhaps only after the Norman Conquest that there was a substantial decline in the authority of the systems of minster or mother-churches (Blair 2005:449-451). However, there are two important caveats to be borne in mind when considering the picture of the minster's monopoly over churchyard burial in early medieval Wessex painted by the archaeological evidence. First, it is possible

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<sup>24</sup> The eleventh-century cemetery at Porchester Castle is thought to post-date the Conquest (Cunliffe 1976:303).

<sup>25</sup> See chapter 8.3.4. for a more detailed discussion of Winchester's churches and any associated burials.

<sup>26</sup> See section 8.3.4. for more information on St. Anastasius and why this church, unlike Winchester's other small churches, may have had a churchyard.

<sup>27</sup> The Old Minster, the New Minster and the Nunnaminster.

<sup>28</sup> Other examples of late Saxon urban churches lacking graveyards include St. Martin's in Wareham (Do), whose parishioners were interred the Minster Church of St. Mary's (Hinton & Webster 1987:50).

<sup>29</sup> There are, however, a number of churchyards associated with manorial or urban churches containing burials which may be as early as the eleventh century but cannot be securely dated to the eleventh century. Examples include St. John's Church, Glastonbury (So) (Hollinrake & Hollinrake 1996:14), St. Swithin's Church, Compton Bassett (Wi) (Hawkes & Adams 2001:5) and Brownsea Island (Do) where one of five graves, thought to be associated with a possible church, gave a radiocarbon date of 1030-1390AD at a 2 $\sigma$  level of confidence (Jarvis 1981:136).

that the continued importance of many of Wessex's larger minsters and monasteries may have increased the chances of these sites being excavated. Second, human remains recovered in small-scale excavations at smaller churches are rarely radiocarbon dated, even if the church is known to have pre-Conquest origins and the stratigraphical evidence may indicate an early date.

The archaeological evidence clearly demonstrates that lay burial was occurring in the churchyards of minsters and monasteries in early medieval Wessex from the seventh and eighth centuries and in a few manorial and urban churches from the tenth and eleventh centuries. Yet this does not necessarily help determine the rate at which churchyard burial was adopted by the laity. The lay burials in the eighth and ninth century churchyard at SOU 13 may be indicative of a relatively rapid adoption of churchyard burial. Yet this cemetery could be atypical as it lies within the middle Saxon emporium of Hamwic, the earliest large settlement within the study area. One of the main problems in determining the spread of churchyard burial lies in the dating of both the cemeteries and individual burials. The majority of the churchyards in table 7.5 were dated either by stratigraphy or by the radiocarbon dating of a few skeletons from the cemetery (table 7.6). Both methods tend to provide a relatively wide chronological range, often of several centuries. In addition, stratigraphic dating provides only a general date range for the entire cemetery, while cost means only a few burials from any cemetery can be radiocarbon dated. This makes it difficult to detect changes in the frequency of deposition within the churchyards over time. For example, the long-lived churchyard at Wells Cathedral was probably in use from the eighth century to the end of the early medieval period and beyond. It is possible that large numbers of the lay population were interred in its cemetery from its earliest days, making the transition to churchyard burial very rapid. However, it is equally possible that only in the tenth and eleventh centuries were large numbers of the laity interred within the churchyard. The existing archaeological evidence allows no distinction to be made. While radiocarbon dating a greater proportion of excavated churchyards would improve this situation to some extent, the inability of this methodology to produce tightly defined dates means it is unlikely to provide all the answers. The situation is further complicated by the nature of churchyards and churchyard excavations themselves. With the possible exceptions of SOU 13 and Beckery Chapel, the churchyards in table 7.5 were only partially excavated. As such, it is possible that in some cases the earliest parts of the churchyards may not have been excavated. Furthermore, even had the earliest parts of the churchyard been excavated, given

the high levels of intercutting seen in many churchyards,<sup>30</sup> it is possible that the skeletal remains of the earliest interments may have been destroyed or dispersed by later burials.

#### **7.2.4. The evidence for post-eighth century non-churchyard burial**

An alternative method of determining the rate at which churchyard burial was adopted by the laity is to examine the evidence for the persistence of burial away from churchyards. Non-churchyard burials postdating the end of the eighth century were found at eighteen sites within the study area (table 7.7). The sites fall into four categories. The first are field cemeteries founded in the seventh century and which appear to have continued in use into the late Saxon period. In the case of Bevis Grave (Ha) (Rudkin 2001) and Templecombe (So) (figure 7.5) (Newman 1992), the presence of grave goods<sup>31</sup> or radiocarbon dating clearly demonstrated that some burials in these cemeteries dated to the ninth or tenth centuries (table 7.8). The evidence for later burials at Wembdon (So) (Wood undated) and SOU 862 (Southern Archaeological Services 1998) is less clear-cut. Radiocarbon dates from burials at both sites have produced relatively wide date ranges (table 7.8), which may indicate a post-800AD date for the burials. However, the radiocarbon date ranges are so wide that the burials could equally have been interred during the seventh or eighth century.

Traditionally, poorly furnished field cemeteries with predominantly extended west-east burials have been dated to the seventh and early eighth centuries, either on the basis of datable grave goods or, if the grave goods cannot be closely dated are often assumed to be of that date. It seems likely that many of these cemeteries were relatively short-lived and did not persist beyond the eighth century. However, sites like Templecombe and Bevis Grave raise the possibility that other seventh- and eighth-century cemeteries, such as Winnall II (Meaney & Hawkes 1970), may contain later burials that can only be identified using radiocarbon dating. As such, the phenomenon of long-lived burial grounds with seventh-century origins may be more prevalent than the two definite and two possible examples identified within the study area would suggest. Of particular relevance to the understanding of the development of churchyard burials is the nature of the continued use of these seventh-century cemeteries. One possibility is that cemeteries like Bevis Grave remained a major burial focus for the surrounding area well into the eighth and ninth centuries, and then abruptly ceased to function during the tenth century. Alternatively, the majority of burials in these cemeteries may have been interred during the seventh and eighth centuries. As the

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<sup>30</sup> See chapter 4 for a more detailed discussion of levels of post-burial disturbance in Wessex's early medieval churchyards.

<sup>31</sup> One of the burials, grave, at Bevis Grave was interred with a strap end dated stylistically to the ninth century (Rudkin 2001:26)

**Table 7.7. Post-eighth century non-churchyard burials within the study area.**

Type of site	Site	Date	No. of burials	Basis of dating
Long lasting 7th century cemeteries	Bevis Grave (Ha)	7 <sup>th</sup> -10 <sup>th</sup> century	88	Grave goods & radiocarbon dating
	SOU 862 (Ha)	7 <sup>th</sup> -11 <sup>th</sup>		Radiocarbon dating
	Wembdon (So)	7 <sup>th</sup> -9 <sup>th</sup> century	At least 22	Radiocarbon dating
	Templecombe (So)	7 <sup>th</sup> -11 <sup>th</sup> century	11	Radiocarbon dating
Cemeteries founded post-c.700AD	Six Dials (Ha)	9 <sup>th</sup> century	11	Stratigraphy
	St. Mary's Stadium II (Ha)	8 <sup>th</sup> -9 <sup>th</sup> century	8	Radiocarbon dating
	Staple Gardens, Winchester (Ha)	c.850-1000AD	288	Radiocarbon dating
Execution cemeteries	Old Dairy Cottage (Ha)	Late 8 <sup>th</sup> -early 11 <sup>th</sup> century	18	Radiocarbon dating
	Stockbridge (Ha)	11 <sup>th</sup> century	43	Coins
Isolated burials	Shepton Mallet II (So)	8 <sup>th</sup> -9 <sup>th</sup> century	3	Radiocarbon dating
	Bugle Street, Southampton (Ha)	Late 8 <sup>th</sup> -early 10 <sup>th</sup> century	1	Radiocarbon dating
	The Brooks, Winchester (Ha)	Late 10 <sup>th</sup> -11 <sup>th</sup> century	2	Stratigraphy
	Westgate, Southampton (Ha)	9 <sup>th</sup> -10 <sup>th</sup> century	3	Radiocarbon dating
	Lower High Street, Southampton (Ha)	9 <sup>th</sup> -10 <sup>th</sup> century	At least 2	Radiocarbon dating
	Eggardon Hill-fort (Do)	7 <sup>th</sup> -10 <sup>th</sup> century	3	Radiocarbon dating
	Ogbourne St. Andrews (Wi)	Late 9 <sup>th</sup> -10 <sup>th</sup> century	1	Coffin fittings
	Play Hatch, Sonning (Bk)	Late 9 <sup>th</sup> -10 <sup>th</sup> century	2	Grave goods
	Reading I (Bk)	Early 9 <sup>th</sup> century	1	Grave goods

Figure 7.5. Plan of the seventh- to eleventh-century cemetery at Templecombe (So)  
(from Newman 1992:63)

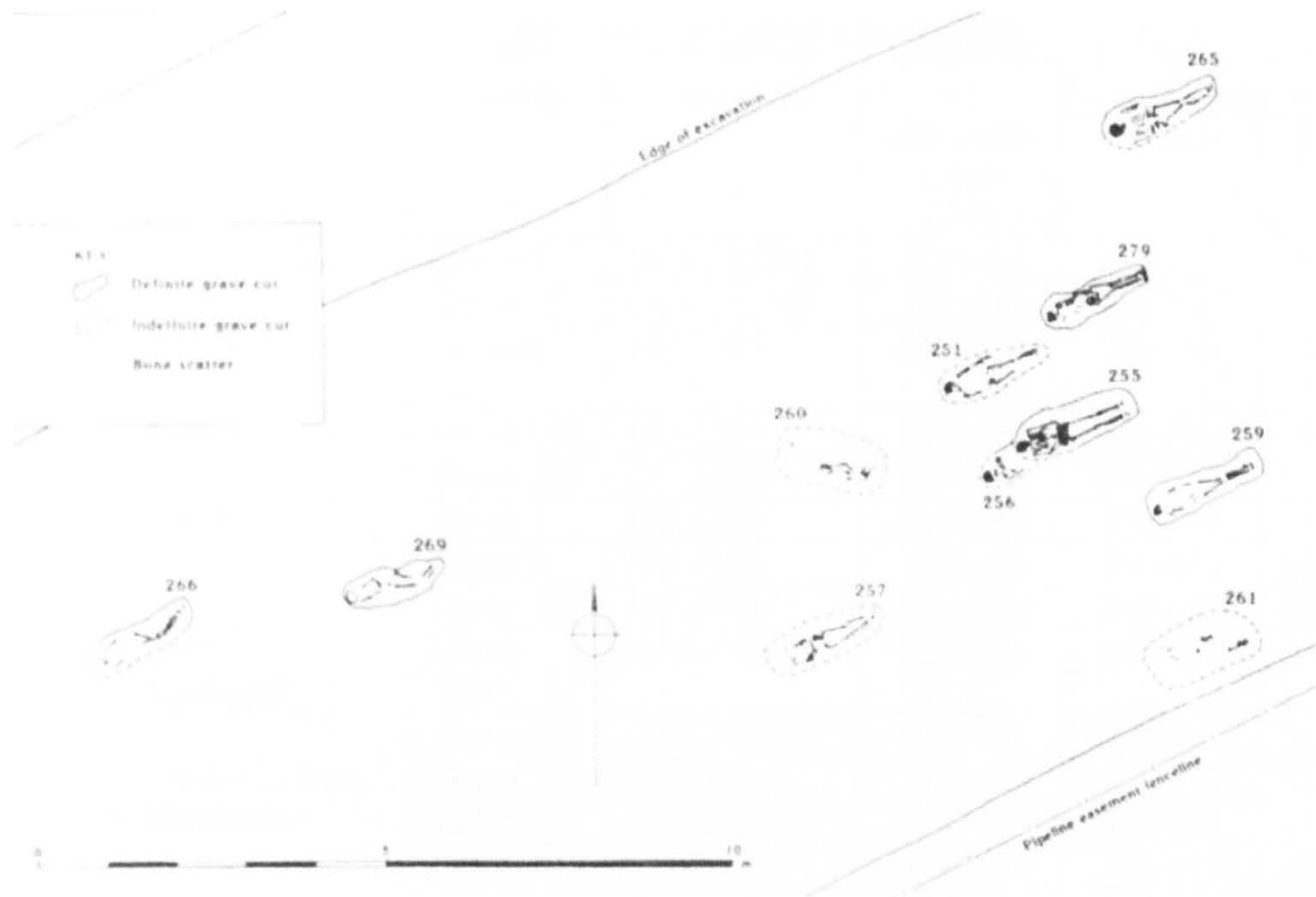
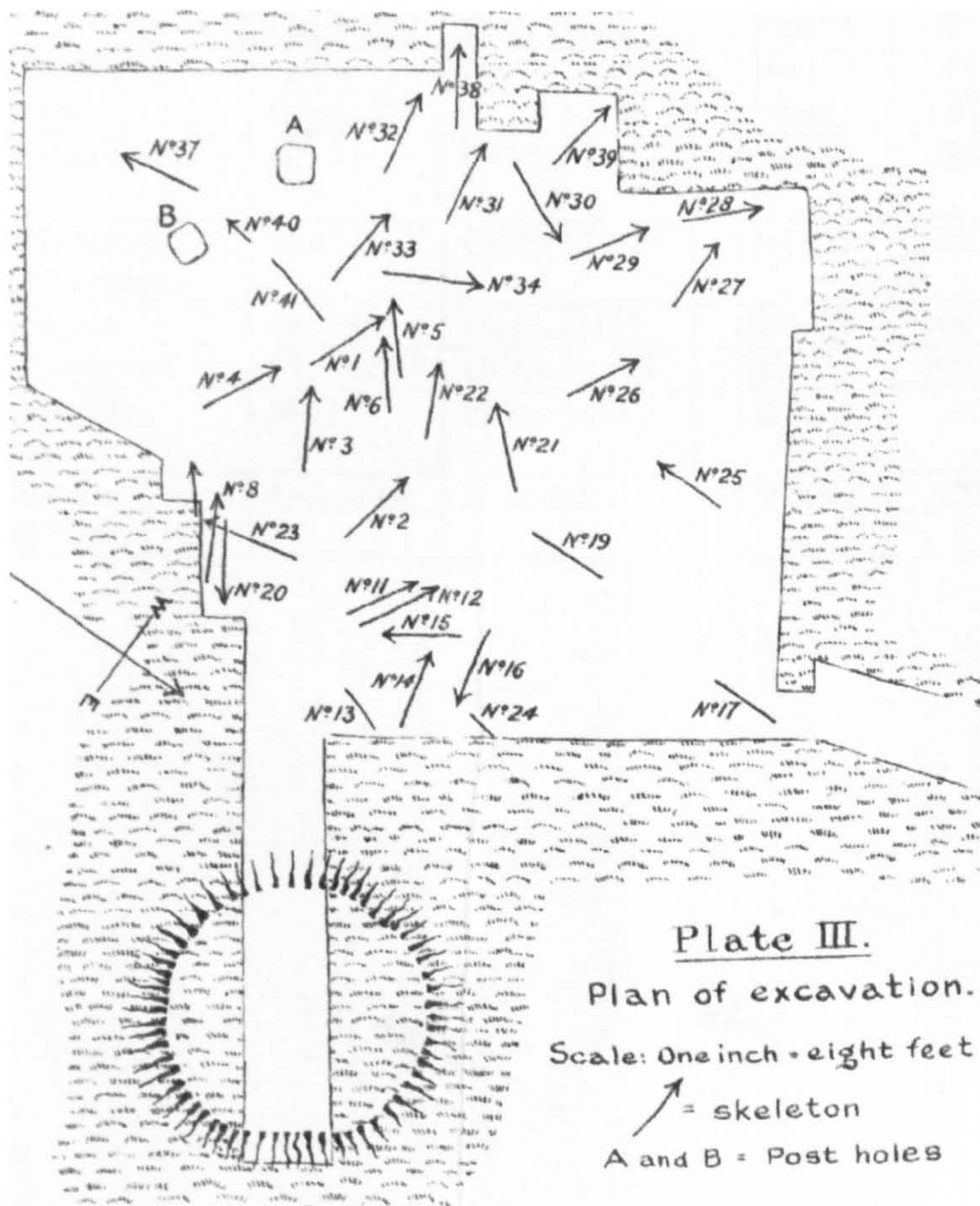


Figure 7.6. Plan of the late Saxon execution cemetery at Stockbridge Down (Ha)  
(Hill 1937-facing p.253)



**Table 7.8. Radiocarbon dates<sup>1</sup> for the post-eighth century non-churchyard burials<sup>2</sup>**

County	Site	Grave number	Laboratory reference	Uncalibrated radiocarbon date (BP)	Calibrated date with a confidence level of;	
					1σ (AD)	2σ (AD)
Hampshire	Bevis Grave	Grave 3	OxA - 12182	1237±32	690-865	685-890
		Grave 59	OxA - 12193	1075±33	900-1020	890-1020
	SOU 862	Context 22	GU-7595	1160±70	770-980	690-1020
Somerset	Templecombe	Grave 282	GU-3124	1190±70	720-960	680-990
		Grave 288	GU-3123	1090±60	890-1020	770-1040
	Wembdon	Grave 4	GU-5149	1300±90	650-860	580-970
		Grave 8	GU-5150	1240±70	690-890	660-970
		Grave 12	GU-5151	1060±90	780-1160	770-1190
Hampshire	St.Mary's Stadium II	Grave 7380	NZA-14941	1245±70	680-880	650-960
	Staple Gardens, Winchester	Grave 203	GrN-26184	1040±25	988-1018	900-1030
		Grave 219	GrN-26815	1130±25	890-975	780-990
		Grave 276	GrN-26186	1145±25	780-980	780-980
		Grave 327	GrN-26187	1140±25	885-975	780-990
		Grave 355	GrN-26188	1175±25	780-900	770-960
		Grave 380	GrN-26189	1165±25	780-950	770-970
		Grave 536	GrN-26190	1130±25	890-975	780-990
		Grave 546	GrN-26191	1105±25	895-985	890-995
	Old Dairy Cottage	Grave 549	GrN-26192	1170±25	780-940	770-960
		Grave 123	OxA - 12045	1163±25	780-955	775-965
	Grave 128	OxA - 12046	1088±26	895-995	890-1020	
Somerset	Shepton Mallet II	HB 33	GU-5267	1160±50	780-960	720-990
Hampshire	Bugle Street, Southampton	N/A	OxA - 12076	1169±22	780-940	775-960
	Westgate, Southampton	Sk. 3558	OxA - 12115	1075±24	900-1000	895-1020
		Sk. 3425	OxA - 12195	1066±32	900-1020	895-1025
	Lower High Street	3933	OxA - 5941	1135±60	780-990	770-1020
Dorset	Eggardon Hill-fort	Unknown	HAR-6251	1260±90	670-880	640-980

<sup>1</sup> All radiocarbon dates recalibrated using OxCal software version 3.8.0.1 (Bronk Ramsey 2003)

<sup>2</sup> The table does not include all the radiocarbon dates from each site, but only those which may indicate that a burial post-dates 800AD.

popularity of churchyard burial increased, the numbers of those seeking interment in the ancestral burial grounds may have rapidly declined with the result that by the late ninth and tenth century, new burials were infrequent and few in number. Unfortunately, as only a few burials from any of the long-lived cemeteries within the study area have been individually dated, it is impossible to determine any variations in chronological distribution of burial at these sites.

Non-churchyard burials were not just confined to those cemeteries that originated during the seventh century. There is evidence within the study area for the foundation of two, possibly three, cemeteries with no associated ecclesiastical buildings during the eighth and ninth centuries (table 7.7). Two of these cemeteries lie in the northern part of the middle Saxon emporium of Hamwic. The small cemetery of St. Mary's Stadium II, consisted of eight unaccompanied west-east burials, and has been dated to the eighth, and possibly ninth, century (Birbeck 2005:107). A second cemetery of eleven unaccompanied west-east burials at Six Dials lay approximately 400 metres to the north-west of the St. Mary's Stadium site (Andrews 1997:198) and is thought to have been in use in the second half of the ninth century (*ibid.*:203). Although no evidence for any buildings has been uncovered at either of these cemeteries, the possibility that there were associated structures at one or both of the sites cannot be completely eliminated. Parts of the Six Dials site were damaged during the nineteenth century (Andrews 1997:198) and this may have removed any evidence of associated buildings. Articulated skeletons were only recovered from the site in areas where the stratigraphy was sufficiently deep to protect the skeletons, often where burials had subsided into pits. The absence of skeletons from a large pit lying in the centre of the cluster of burials has led to suggestions that a structure might have lain above the pit preventing burial (*ibid.*:203). However, if there was a church or chapel at Six Dials, it would have been much smaller than the church at SOU 13 and the postulated structure at SOU 32. Similarly, the area directly to the north of the small St. Mary's Stadium II cemetery was not excavated and it is possible that the cemetery extended further in that direction. Should this be the case, the unexcavated area may have contained some form of associated structure (A. Morton *pers. comm.*). However, while not discounting the possibility of an ecclesiastical structure at either site, there is currently no evidence indicative for any church associated with these cemeteries, and, thus, it remains possible that not all burial grounds founded during the eighth and ninth century were associated with churches. In fact, there is already archaeological evidence for two churches in Hamwic, both with associated churchyards, during the middle Saxon period. Both churches lay in the southern part of the settlement,



some distance from the cemeteries at Six Dials and St. Mary's Stadium.<sup>32</sup> The churchyard at SOU 13 was in use during the eighth and ninth centuries,<sup>33</sup> while the churchyard at St. Mary's Church was in use at least by the ninth century, probably earlier (Smith 1995:258-9).<sup>34</sup> One, or possibly both, churchyards would have been contemporary with the cemeteries at St Mary's Stadium and Six Dials. It seems probable that the individuals interred in these cemeteries would have had the option of burial in either of the churchyards at SOU 13 and St. Mary's Church, yet they, or their relatives, chose, for whatever reason, to be buried in cemeteries where there is no evidence for the existence of a church.

There is one other cemetery within the study area that originated after 800AD and may have lacked an associated church. Excavations at the large cemetery at Staple Gardens in Winchester (Ha) (Kipling & Scobie 1990) have recovered two hundred and eighty-eight burials thought to date from between c.850-1000AD (Winchester Museums Service archive SG84 & SG89: Bayliss 2001)(see table 7.8 for radiocarbon dates). The cemetery lies within Winchester's Roman city walls but some distance from the minster church (Kipling & Scobie 1990:8). As with the cemeteries at Six Dials and St. Mary's Stadium, no evidence for a church has been uncovered at Staple Gardens. However, large parts of the site remain unexcavated and again as with the other cemeteries, the possibility that a church was associated with this cemetery cannot be excluded (Winchester Museums Service archive SG84 & SG89). The case for a church at Staple Gardens is further strengthened by documentary evidence for a church in the vicinity of the site during the thirteenth century (Keene 1985: 467),<sup>35</sup> as this may possibly have had a Saxon forerunner. However, most of Winchester's small churches, with the exception of some lying within the Minster precincts, were foundations of the tenth and eleventh centuries and not the ninth century (Kjølbye-Biddle 1992:224). As such, it is plausible that the Staple Gardens cemetery, which originated in the ninth century, may not have had an associated church or that the cemetery acquired a church some time after its foundation. With the information currently available, it is impossible to determine whether there was a church associated with the Staple Gardens cemetery, but the cemetery's existence demonstrates that burial was occurring away from the minster church yet within the city walls, and in a burial ground which lacks any evidence for an associated church.

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<sup>32</sup> The church at SOU 13 lies some 200m from Southampton's mother church, St. Mary's and the two churches may possibly have been part of a single minster complex during the eighth and ninth centuries. See chapter 8 for a more detailed discussion of the relationship between the two churches.

<sup>33</sup> Burials from this cemetery were radiocarbon dated as part of this study and the results are listed in table 7.6.

<sup>34</sup> See chapter eight for a more detailed discussion of Hamwic's churches.

<sup>35</sup> See section 8.3.3. for a more detailed discussion of the cemetery at Staple Gardens.

This second category of non-churchyard burials is important as it demonstrates that not only did burial continue in older burial grounds founded during the seventh century, but that new cemeteries without any associated buildings were being founded away from the minster churches during the eighth and ninth centuries. Moreover, this practice was not occurring in remote areas away from any ecclesiastical influence. All the examples of these later foundations in Wessex lie in large settlements containing churchyards of a contemporary date, and the new cemeteries may, in part, be a response to their increasing populations. In addition, these new foundations were also likely to have been a result of the loss of the existing late seventh- and early eighth-century cemeteries in the vicinity of both Southampton and Winchester. A number of late seventh- and early eighth-century cemeteries, including SOU 32, the Cook Street cemetery, and the St. Mary's Stadium I cemetery (Morton 1992a; Garner 2001; Garner 1993; Garner & Vincent 1997; Birbeck 2005), are known to have been present in the vicinity of what would become the Hamwic settlement (Morton 1992a:28; Birbeck & Smith 2003:195). These were all abandoned and subsumed when the settlement expanded in the mid-eighth century and became sites of domestic or industrial occupation (Scull 2001:74; Birbeck & Smith 2003:77). In Winchester, the one non-churchyard cemetery within the city walls known to date to the seventh century, the cemetery at Lower Brooke Street, appears to have been abandoned and the area used for domestic occupation at some point during the eighth century (Biddle 1975b:308)<sup>36</sup>. A second seventh-century cemetery in the Winchester area is Winnall II, which lies well outside the city's Roman walls (Meaney & Hawkes 1970). While it is possible that this cemetery could have continued to have been used by the growing settlement within the walled area, it seems likely that they would have sought to bury their dead close by within the city walls.

While the unfurnished supine extended burials seen in the cemeteries in the first two categories of non-churchyard burials would not have been out of place within contemporary churchyards, the same cannot be said of interments in the next group of cemeteries. Burials in the two cemeteries in this category, Old Dairy Cottage (Ha) (Winchester Museum Archive ODC89) and Stockbridge Down (Ha) (Hill 1937) (figure 7.6),<sup>37</sup> are characterised by the lack of care shown in interring the deceased. Many burials from both sites were not supine but lay on their sides or in a prone position, often with their limbs akimbo, giving an overall

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<sup>36</sup> An Anglo-Saxon stone building built over the site of the Brook street cemetery was later incorporated into the fabric of the tenth-century St. Mary's Church on Tanner Street (Biddle 1975b:308, 312)

<sup>37</sup> Old Dairy Cottage and Stockbridge Down are not the only execution cemeteries within the study area, but they are the only ones that can clearly be demonstrated to have been in use between 800-1100AD. Artefacts found with the bodies at Meon Hill (Ha) (Liddell 1933) indicate an early medieval date for the cemetery but cannot securely date the cemetery to the period 800-1100AD, while at Roche Court Down (Wi) (Stone 1932), Old Sarum (Wi)(Blackmore 1894) and Wor Barrow (Do)(Pitt Rivers 1898), there is insufficient information to date the burials.

impression that many had been thrown and not placed within the grave. In addition, a number of individuals in both cemeteries had been decapitated and/or interred with bound hands. These features are characteristic of execution cemeteries, burial grounds used to inter those denied a churchyard burial, including criminals, the unbaptised and suicides (Reynolds 1997:37). Prior to the eighth century, criminals appear to have been interred within community cemeteries judging by the incidence of decapitations, amputations and prone burials found in many early and middle Saxon cemeteries (*ibid.*)<sup>38</sup> It is possible that the earliest churchyards were also initially more inclusive as six prone burials were found in the monastic cemetery at Beckery Chapel (So), which has been dated to the eighth to tenth century (Rathz & Hirst 1974). It has been postulated that these individuals may have been guilty of committing some form of mortal sin, although the possibility that prone burial in this context may represent some form of penance cannot be excluded (Rathz 1993:121). The period between the eighth century and the end of the early medieval period saw a marked shift in the attitudes towards the treatment of the corpses of criminals. The early tenth century saw the first specific ordinance excluding criminals from churchyard burial in Edmund's first set of laws (discussed above in section 7.2.2). It seems likely that this legislation may have served to reinforce existing practices (*ibid.*:38). One of the two radiocarbon-dated burials from Old Dairy Cottage gives a range of 775-965AD (table 7.8) and may well have been interred prior to Edmund's legislation. It is possible that initially some of those executed by decapitation or hanging for their crimes were simply interred close to gallows to avoid having to transport the body to the community burial ground.<sup>39</sup> As the practice became more commonplace, it became the custom to exclude those guilty of certain crimes from community burial grounds, with the practice being subsequently formally codified in the law codes. These cemeteries are distinct from the other examples of late non-churchyard burials within the study area in that they contain those expressly excluded from churchyards. As such, as has been argued above, the existence of these cemeteries actually strengthens the case for the increasing popularity of churchyard burial.

Not all of the examples of post-eighth century non-churchyard burials lay in cemeteries. Isolated burials, which post-dated the seventh century, were recovered from seven, possibly eight, sites within the study area (table 7.7). Isolated burials of this date have traditionally been seen as being individuals excluded from community burial grounds, for whatever reason (Zadora-Rio 2003:7). Such an interpretation could be applied to some of the isolated

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<sup>38</sup> Examples of prone burials within community burials grounds within the study area are found at Worthy Park (Ha) (Hawkes 2003) and Camerton (So) (Horne 1933:55,63). An individual with an amputation of the right leg just above the ankle was also found at Camerton (*ibid.*:58).

<sup>39</sup> It has been suggested that the two post-holes found at Stockbridge Down may have represented a gibbet (Hill 1937:252)

burials identified within the study area. The position of the eighth- to tenth-century skeleton recovered from a Saxon ditch at Bugle Street, Southampton suggests little care was taken when burying this individual (Southampton City Museum Archive SOU 124). This lack of care may indicate that this individual had been excluded from the community burial ground or that perhaps this was an illicit burial. Likewise, the location of the two supine extended burials from the Brooks in Winchester interred on marginal marshy ground within Winchester's Roman walls may point to these individuals being ostracised from the rest of society in death (Scobie, Zant & Whinney 1991:34-37).

Yet, this simplistic equation of isolation in death being synonymous with exclusion has been increasingly questioned due to the increasing number of isolated burials identified in England and on the continent (Zadora-Rio 2003:7). Moreover, there is little that is deviant, atypical or suggestive of a lack of care about a number of the isolated burials identified within the study area. The three supine extended west-east inhumations that were discovered during the excavations at Fosse Lane, Shepton Mallet would not have looked out of place in a contemporary churchyard (Leech 2001:31). Yet this group of isolated burials, one of which had a radiocarbon date of 720-990AD at a  $2\sigma$  level of confidence, were interred in graves cut into the remains of a Roman building. A similar situation exists with the row of three west-east burials, two supine extended and the other partially crouched, which were uncovered from the Westgate site in Southampton (Youngs & Clark 1980:251). Radiocarbon dating of two of the skeletons gave a tenth-century date for both burials (table 7.8). The burials lie some distance from any known churchyard in early medieval Southampton and there are no associated contemporary structures, although it should be noted that only parts of the site were excavated. It has been postulated that these burials may form the southern extremity of a larger cemetery (Southampton City Museum SOU 25 archive), but as there is currently no evidence for any other burials in the vicinity of these graves, they are being considered as isolated burials in this study. Although a partially crouched burial is unusual at such a late date,<sup>40</sup> there is nothing about these burials which is inherently deviant or suggestive of an outcast status for them. Elsewhere in Southampton, disarticulated bone from at least three individuals recovered during the excavation of the Lower High Street (Platt 1975; A. Russel *pers. comm.*). The bones were radiocarbon-dated to between the eighth and eleventh centuries (table 7.8) and may be indicative of another small cluster of isolated burials within the Late Saxon town (Southampton City Museum archive SOU 161).

The remaining isolated burials identified within the study area (table 7.7), while not necessarily deviant or displaying any evidence for lack of care, do exhibit some atypical

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<sup>40</sup> See chapter four for a more detailed discussion of body position.

features. For example, the furnished burials from Reading (Bk) (Meaney 1964:50; East 1986) and Play Hatch, Sonning (Bk)(Evison 1969) are unusual, not because they are furnished,<sup>41</sup> but because of the type of grave goods. The grave goods that accompany most of the later furnished burials within the study area were small personal items, such as knives, or items associated with dress, such as buckles, strap-ends and hooked tags. The swords that accompany the isolated burials from Reading and Play Hatch, Sonning provide a marked contrast to the grave goods seen in other late burials. The Reading burial, which was also accompanied by the skeleton of a horse (Meaney 1964:50), has been dated to the early ninth century (East 1986:6), while grave goods accompanying the Sonning burial, which included a knife, arrowheads, and a bronze pin, suggest a ninth- to tenth- century date (Evison 1969:333).

The presence of grave goods, particularly weapons, in post-eighth century burials has traditionally been equated with pagan practices and, in particular, is thought to have been indicative of a Scandinavian presence (Richards 2000:142). However, caution should be exercised in assuming that the presence of grave goods in these burials is necessarily synonymous with paganism or a Viking presence as there is no evidence that the church ever prohibited the use of grave goods. Moreover, the Sonning burial was accompanied by a “Celtic” ring-headed pin (Evison 1969:330) while the inlaid blade of the sword may possibly have been of English origin (Halsall 2000:269). In contrast, the closest stylistic parallels to the gripping beast design on the Reading sword come from Danish and Norwegian contexts, which may be indicative of a Scandinavian origin for this item, although a Carolingian manufacture cannot be completely eliminated (East 1986:4). In addition, the Reading burial reportedly contained the skeleton of a horse (Meaney 1964:50). This is the only known example of an early medieval burial containing a horse within the study area.<sup>42</sup> The practice is seen elsewhere in early medieval England, notably in East Anglia, such as the example from Sutton Hoo (Carver 1998:86), but the practice appears to have been confined to the sixth and seventh centuries. However, horse burials are also seen in Scandinavia during the ninth and tenth centuries (Richards 2000:142), so it is possible that those who interred this individual had Scandinavian connections. The burials from Reading and Sonning have no parallels within any contemporary churchyards or even other non-churchyard burial grounds

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<sup>41</sup> Although uncommon, there are a number of late Saxon furnished burials within the study area. A complete list of furnished post-eighth-century burials within the study sample is given in chapter 5, table 5.21 and examples of furnished churchyard burials from the Old and New Minster are given in table 5.20.

<sup>42</sup> Horses skulls and other bones were recovered from the same location as human bones and grave goods, including stirrups, a spur, iron shears and a horseshoe at Magdalen Bridge Oxford, which lies just outside the study area (Blair & Crawford 1997:135). These remains were interpreted as the burial of a Viking warrior and his horse. This interpretation has since been questioned (Graham-Campbell 2001:116). Instead, it has been suggested that given the very circumstantial association between the metal objects and the bones that there was no furnished burial at Magdalen Bridge.

within the study area. Whether this is the result of Scandinavian connections is unknown. The Viking army was known to be in Reading in 870-1 and it is possible that these burials were interred at that time (ASC A & E 871(870) – Swanton 2000:70-1; Graham-Campbell 2001:115). However, what is clear is that those who buried these individuals either wished to distinguish them in death or were forced by circumstances to provide them with an atypical burial.

The isolated burial from Ogbourne St. Andrew could also be considered atypical. Not so much in the nature of the burial, as the supine extended body enclosed within the remains of a fir coffin would not have been out of place in any late Saxon churchyard, but in its location within a prehistoric burial mound (Cunnington 1885:346). The re-use of prehistoric barrows was a common practice in the study area during the early medieval period, but one which was mainly confined to the period between the late fifth and early eighth century (Williams 1998:95). The coffin fittings associated with the Ogbourne St. Andrews burial possess stylistic features comparable to those seen at the Old Minster in Winchester, St. Oswald's Priory (Gl) and York Minster (NYk) (Semple 2003:79). Stylistic comparisons suggested a ninth- or tenth-century date for this burial making it the latest known example of a barrow burial within the study area.<sup>43</sup> The Ogbourne St. Andrew's burial is also important because it demonstrates a significant investment of both time and expense in an isolated burial suggesting caution should be exercised in automatically equating isolated burials with an outcast status in the later Anglo-Saxon period. While the burial at Ogbourne St. Andrews is the only barrow burial that definitely postdates the eighth century, there may be another possible example of a barrow containing later burials within the study area. Three unfurnished west-east extended inhumations were discovered during the excavation of the prehistoric barrow, which lies on a ridge to the south of Eggardon hill-fort (Do) (Putnam 1982:181; B. Putnam *pers. comm.*). A radiocarbon analysis of one of the burials gave a wide date range, 670-880AD and 640-980AD at a 1 $\sigma$  and 2 $\sigma$  level of confidence respectively, which may indicate a post-eighth-century date for the burials, although a seventh- or eighth-century date is equally possible.

The diverse nature of the post-eighth century isolated burials identified within the study area provides graphic evidence that the automatic association between isolation in death and an outcast status in life is too simplistic. For while the lack of care exhibited in interring the Bugle Street burial or marshy location of the graves at the Brooks in Winchester may point to an outcast status, it is difficult to make a similar argument for other isolated burials within

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<sup>43</sup> Although, the large number of undated secondary barrow burials known from the study area raises the possibility that there may be other barrow burials within the study area dating to the late Saxon period.

the study area. There is nothing atypical or deviant about the burials from Shepton Mallet, Westgate or the Lower High Street, while those from Reading, Play Hatch Sonning and Ogbourne St. Andrew's, although atypical, seem to have involved the type of expenditure in terms of grave goods or elaborate coffins hardly likely to have been lavished on an outcast. Indeed, given the late seventh-century tradition for elaborately furnished isolated barrow burials, the idea of isolation in death being synonymous with exclusion may have developed much later than has been initially thought. When the evidence for isolated burials in Wessex is combined with a small, but growing, corpus of isolated burials of similar date outside the study area (Zadora-Rio 2003:7), it seems likely that at least up until the tenth century many isolated burials should simply be seen as a part of the normal range of funerary location and not necessarily indicative of some form of outcast status.

### 7.3. Discussion

Documentary and archaeological evidence, although fragmentary, clearly demonstrate that burial adjacent to ecclesiastical buildings was occurring in the seventh century within the study area. The scarcity of the archaeological evidence for seventh-century churchyard burials is in direct contrast to the large numbers of known contemporary non-churchyard burials. This suggests that burial adjacent to a church was, in the seventh and early eighth centuries, a minority rite, one that the documentary sources, such as Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* (Sherley-Price 1990), suggests may have been primarily restricted to ecclesiastics and some members of royalty and the aristocracy. It is possible that the rite was also extended to other sectors of seventh-century society, but the fragmentary nature of the available evidence makes it difficult to draw any firm conclusions. In addition, geography would also have determined an individual's ability to access this new form of burial. The late seventh and first half of the eighth century saw an unequalled level of new ecclesiastical foundations (Blair 1994:56). Yet despite this, in the first centuries following the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons, churches would have been few and far between (Foot 1989:44), and for many living far from the nearest church, churchyard burial was simply not a practical option. Nor at this stage was the nascent Anglo-Saxon church overly concerned where or how individuals were buried, its primary concern was the baptism of the lay population (Blair 2005:58; Foot 1992a:172; Morris 1983:50), and for the first centuries after the arrival of the Roman missionaries, the majority of the population would continue to use traditional burial rites and grounds with their links to the ancestors and hierarchical connotations (Blair 2005:58).

Determining the spread of the practice of burial adjacent to ecclesiastical buildings is problematic. Most of the known post-eighth-century burials within the study area lie in the shadow of a church, which seems to support the traditional model of a rapid transition to churchyard burial. The presence of an eighth- and ninth-century lay churchyard at SOU 13 also supports this theory. Yet this evidence must be interpreted with caution. Because of the problems inherent with dating unfurnished burials, it is difficult to identify any chronological variations in burial within the churchyards within the study area. As such, while it is possible that these churchyards were used for large numbers of lay burials from their foundation, it is equally possible that the majority of burials date from the tenth and eleventh centuries.

Moreover, the rate at which churchyard burial was adopted by the laity is unlikely to have been uniform across the study area. Levels of lay engagement with ecclesiastical institutions and their rites and rituals could vary markedly (Blair 2005:180). For example, tenant farmers and members of the laity employed to provide services and goods to religious houses may have enjoyed a greater level of interaction with ecclesiastical communities than others in the population (*ibid.*). Similarly, while the minsters were established to provide pastoral care for a designated area, those living in closer proximity to the church may have had a much greater contact with the new religious establishments than those who dwelt some distance away. Greater contact with the church and its teachings may have encouraged these individuals to be interred within a churchyard. As such, the earliest substantial lay cemeteries probably occurred where there was a high density of lay settlement adjacent to a religious foundation. As such, it is not surprising that the earliest evidence for a significant number of lay burials adjacent to a church within the study area were found in the eighth/ninth-century churchyard at SOU 13 in Hamwic, which was the earliest large settlement within the study area and home to at least two churches. However, the unique nature of the Hamwic settlement means caution should be exercised in applying this evidence for eighth- and ninth-century lay churchyard burial to the rest of the study area. Furthermore, while Hamwic provides some of the best evidence for early lay churchyard burial within the study area, the settlement also seems to contain a number of examples of eighth- and ninth-century non-churchyard burials.<sup>44</sup>

Hamwic does not contain the only evidence for late burials outside of a churchyard within the study area and their existence suggests that that the traditional model of rapid transition to burial in the vicinity of a church is too simplistic. Instead there appears to have been a great diversity of burial location in the centuries following the introduction of Christianity, including isolated burials, the continued use of seventh-century burial grounds as well as the

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<sup>44</sup> See section 8.3.2 for a more detailed discussion of churchyard and non-churchyard burials in Hamwic.



foundation of new burial grounds away from church buildings. However, does burial away from the church necessarily equate with a freedom from church control? There is increasing evidence that churches were just the core of diffuse minster complexes containing satellite cemeteries and holy wells (Blair 1992:257). It is possible that cemeteries such as Six Dials, St. Mary's Stadium and Staple Gardens, all of which lay in settlements containing known minster churches, may have constituted some of the more diffuse elements of a minster complex. In addition, it is possible that existing cemeteries may also have been incorporated into minster complexes (Blair 1988:51) and that the later burials in cemeteries of seventh-century origin, such as Bevis Grave, may have been interred under the auspices of the Church. Ultimately, determining the extent of the Church's influence over the dispersed burials within the study area is impossible.

Yet whether under the Church's influence or completely independent from ecclesiastical control, these late non-churchyard burials demonstrate that the traditional model of a rapid transition to churchyard burial is no longer tenable. In its place is a picture of a much more diverse and diffuse pattern of burial location. The archaeological evidence for non-churchyard burial suggests that it is only in the tenth and eleventh centuries that burial within the study area was completely concentrated around minster or manorial churches and that the scattered cemeteries and burials disappear (Zadora-Rio 2003:9), with the exception of the execution cemeteries that contained the remains of those denied a churchyard burial. This process may, in part, be linked to challenges to the minster's rights posed by the new manorial and urban churches resulting in an increasing pressure on the population to inter their dead adjacent to the local minster church (Blair 2005:463-5). Another factor may be the consecration of cemeteries. This practice is first referred to in documentary sources from the latter part of the ninth century, although references are uncommon until the tenth century (Gittos 2002:201). Consecration was used to separate the sacred from the secular and requires an increasing need to define churchyard boundaries (*ibid.*:202) and it is easier to enclose a single centralised cemetery adjacent to a church than a series of scattered satellite cemeteries. Finally, as ever greater numbers were interred adjacent to or within churches, burial in field cemeteries may have increasingly been seen as inappropriate (Thompson 2004:179-80).

The church was only one of the factors which influenced burial location, and even the development of churchyard burial. As has already been discussed, the nature of the settlement in a given area may also have been an important factor and one which would have varied significantly in different parts of the study area. The combined impact of both church and settlement patterns on burial location is best understood by the use of case studies from

within the study area and to this end chapter eight examines changes in burial practice and location in the Southampton and Winchester areas.

## **Chapter 8**

### **The dead of two cities:**

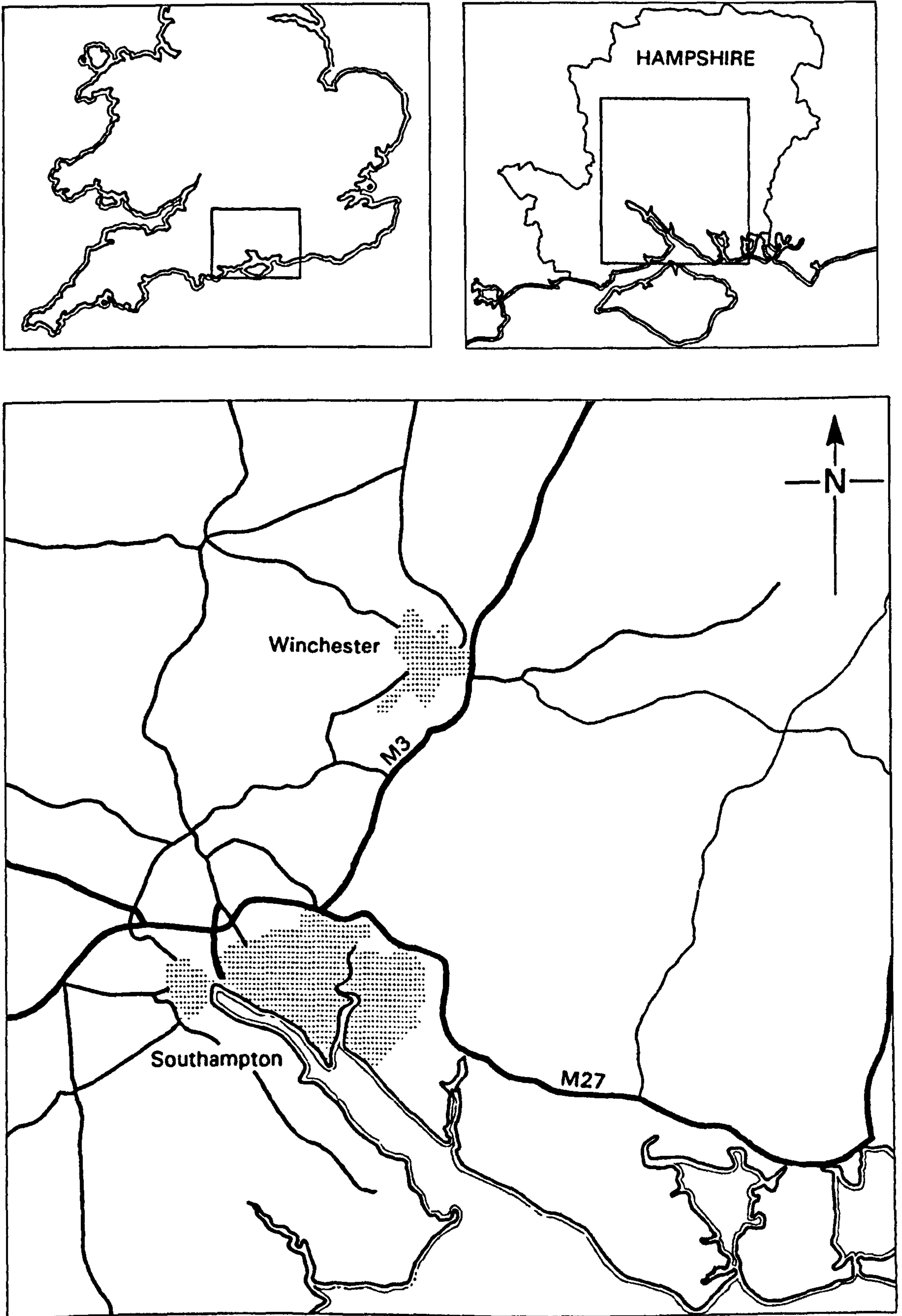
#### **Early medieval burial in Southampton and Winchester**

Mortuary behaviour does not directly reflect life, but neither is it divorced from the world of the living. The period 600-1100 AD was one of profound social, political, economic and religious change, some of which would have impacted on the attitudes to, and the treatment of, the dead. Due to constraints in both time and space, this study has, so far, chosen to concentrate on only one facet of the changing society of early medieval Wessex - the growing power and influence of the Anglo-Saxon Church and the impact it had on the mortuary behaviour of the period. In this chapter, the focus of study shifts to consider another aspect of early medieval Wessex which also may have influenced the nature of funerary provision - the re-emergence of urban settlement in the later Saxon period. These new urban centres potentially had a more complex social structure than earlier rural settlements of the sixth and seventh centuries and provided a new context and audience for mortuary behaviour.

#### **8.1. Winchester and Southampton**

The cities of Winchester and Southampton lie some 15 miles apart, beside the River Itchen in southern Hampshire (figure 8.1). Both were important centres within Wessex during the early medieval period and both have been subject to large-scale excavations due to post-war development, which has produced evidence for multiple cemeteries and substantial settlement data. As such, these two cities provide an ideal framework within which to consider the impact of an increasingly urban environment on burial. The complete chronological sequence of burials between the late seventh and eleventh century within both

*Figure 8.1. Location map for Southampton and Winchester*



(Adapted from James 1997:24)

cities also provides an ideal forum within which to explore the influence exerted by the Church on the burial location within urban centres.

Despite their proximity the development and nature of these two West Saxon centres was very different, and reflects the complete spectrum of urban development during the early medieval period, which allows the changing nature of funerary provision to be examined in two very distinct, but geographically close, urban settings. The post-Roman period saw the relatively rapid decline of urbanism in England (Clarke & Ambrosiani 1991:5), and there is little evidence for any substantial occupation of Roman towns during the fifth to seventh centuries (*ibid.*:8), although there is some suggestion that some Roman towns, such as Canterbury and London, may have been occupied by high-status settlements (Scull 1997:273). Not until the late seventh and early eighth century is there any substantial evidence for the emergence of settlements that could possibly be described as urban – the middle Saxon emporia or wics (*ibid.*:274), such as the middle Saxon settlement at Southampton, Hamwic (figure 8.2). There has been much debate about the extent to which middle Saxon emporia should be considered urban or whether they were simply some form of proto-urban settlement or urban precursor (Biddle 1976a:114-6; Scull 1997; Morton 1999). Although such debate is clearly important in understanding the processes behind the re-emergence of urban centres, it is not directly relevant to this study as it is not important whether Hamwic is seen as an urban precursor, urban or proto-urban. What is important is that Hamwic represents a settlement of greater size and, to a degree, density than had been seen in Wessex since the Roman period. In addition, the settlement functioned as a production and trading centre (Morton 1992a:55-57, 59-68; Andrews 1997:253-255 ; Timby 1988; Hodges 1981; Hunter and Heyworth 1998), contained a mint (Metcalf 1988:18-9) and was provisioned from outside (Bourdillon 1994). In short, it differed from the type of settlements seen in the previous two centuries and as such it offered a different physical and social context for burial.

The ninth century saw the decline of the wics, with the site of Hamwic all but abandoned by 900AD (Morton 1992a:70, 72; Andrews 1997:255). In their place were burhs, fortified locations within the landscape that sprung from King Alfred's reorganisation of Wessex's defences (Biddle 1973:250). These fortified places, which often utilised existing structures such as Roman forts and the walls of Roman cities, appear to have taken two distinct forms, with some having a single defensive role, for example Portchester, while others had multiple functions and developed into the towns of the later Saxon period (Hill 1988:202; Biddle & Hill 1971:81; Biddle 1976a:126-7). Winchester is often seen as the archetypal burh and the area within the Roman defences developed into a recognisably urban centre during the late

ninth century (Figure 8.3). Prior to that time, there is little evidence to indicate that the occupation within the Roman circuit could be described as urban (Biddle 1973:246). By the late ninth century, Hamwic was in terminal decline, but this did not mark the end of urban settlement in the Southampton area and by the early tenth century settlement had begun on the site of what was to be the late Saxon town, some 500 metres from the Hamwic site (Morton 1992a:73) (Figure 8.2). The differing patterns of urban development seen at Southampton and Winchester allows the nature of burial to be considered in the two classic types of “urban” settlement of the early medieval period, wics and burhs, and also allows the impact of fluctuations in the fortunes of the settlements on the organisation of burial to be examined.

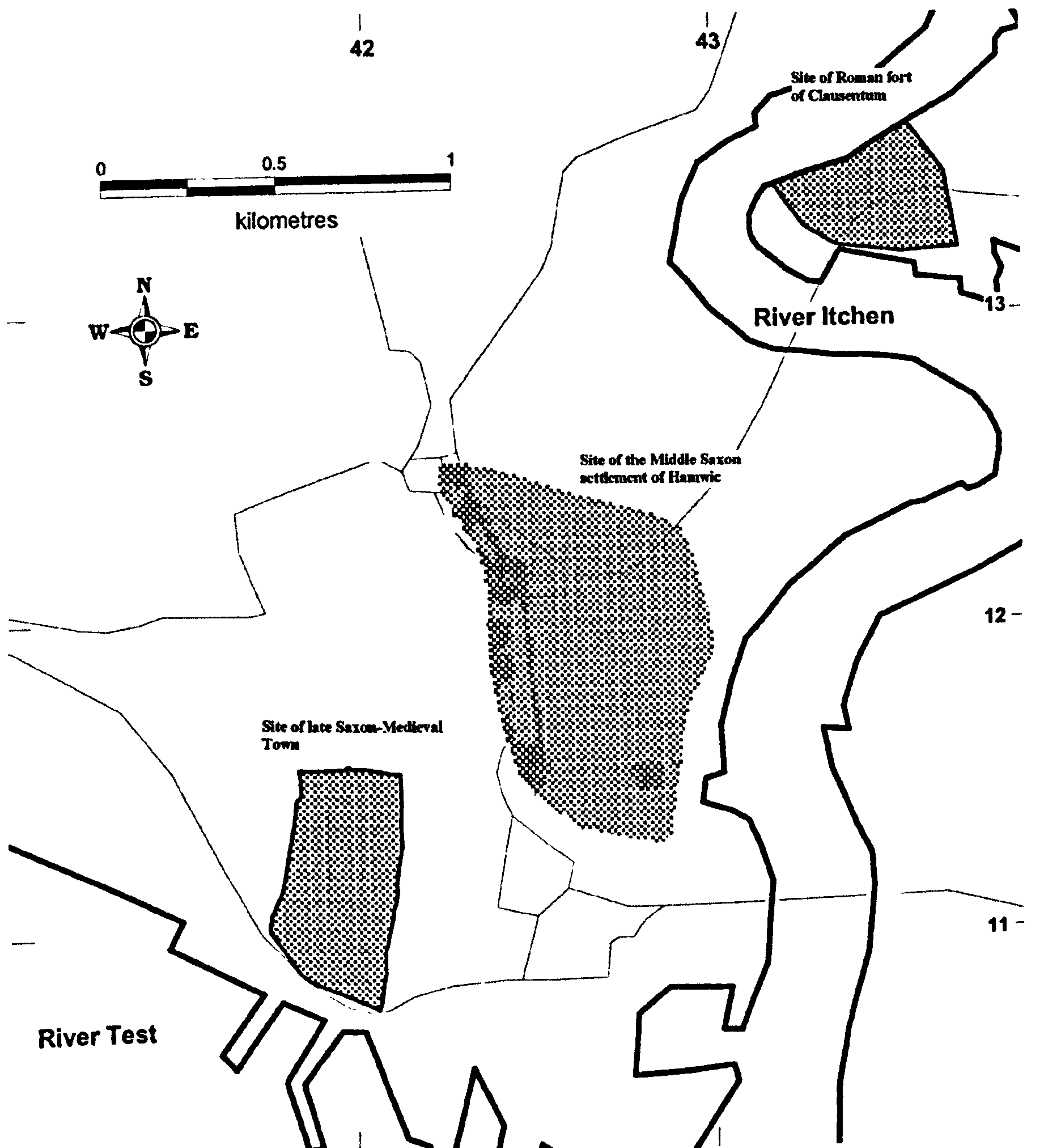
## **8.2. The burial evidence from early medieval Southampton and Winchester.**

Just as the world of the living cannot be completely divorced from that of the dead nor can the cemeteries in which the deceased were interred be separated from the settlements of the living with which they were associated. As such, it is important to consider the burial evidence from both Southampton and Winchester against the background of the development of both urban centres. Hence, the majority of this chapter consists of a chronological review of the burial evidence for both towns. This focuses on the relationship between the organisation of burial and the location of cemeteries and urban development within both settlements. This approach permits the relationship between the multiple contemporary burial loci within both cities to be examined, as well as the factors that may have influenced burial location within the two towns. Rather than examine the evidence from Southampton and Winchester separately, it was decided to consider the evidence from both cities simultaneously in order to highlight the differences in the development of the two urban centres and the repercussions this may have had on the organisation of burial.

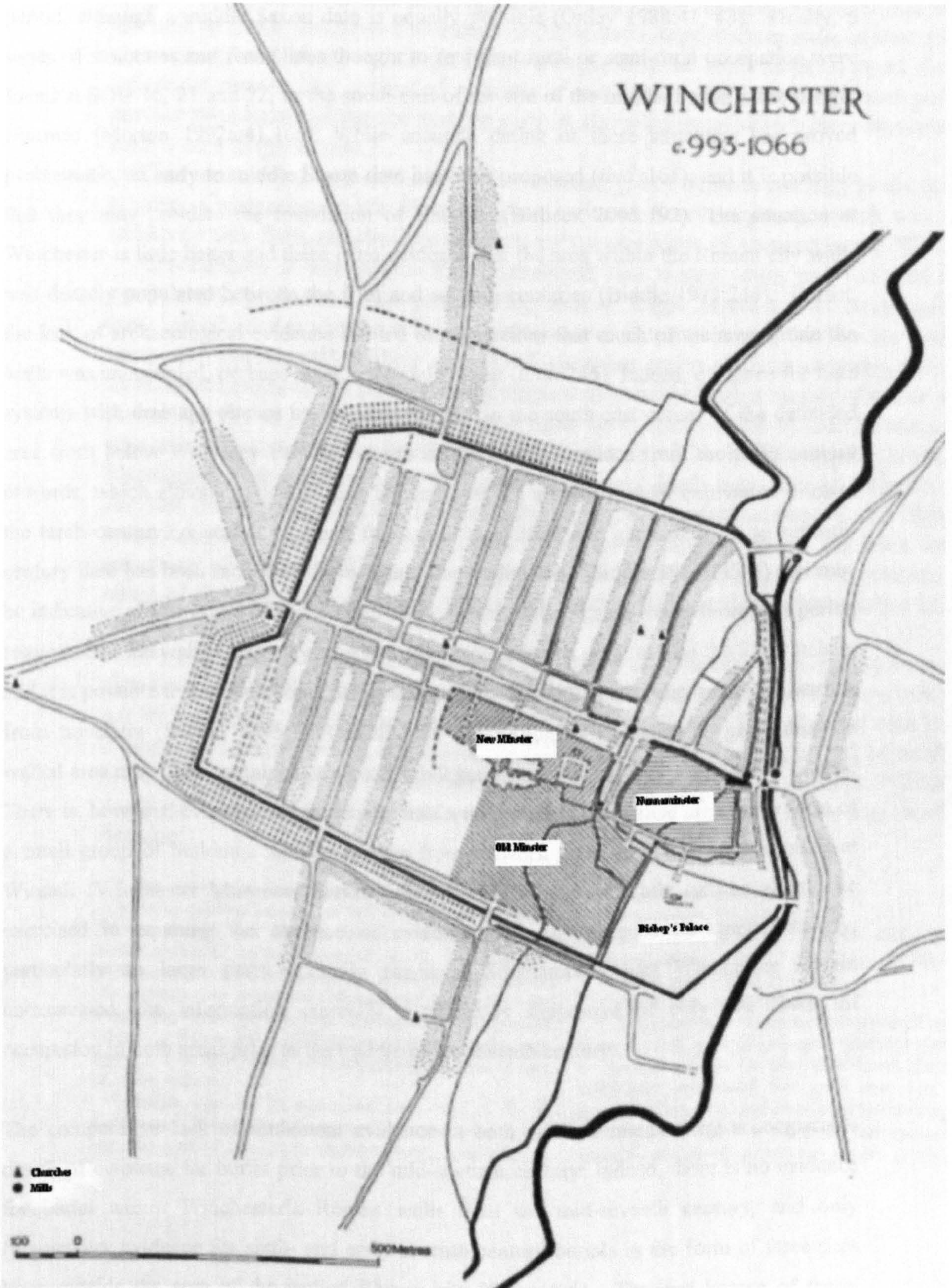
### **8.2.1. The Winchester and Southampton areas during the fifth and sixth centuries**

Both Southampton and Winchester were settled during the Roman period. Winchester, or *Venta Belgarum*, was the fifth largest city in the Roman province of Britain (Biddle 1976b:259), while the Roman settlement of *Clausentum* stood on the eastern shores of the Itchen at Southampton (Figure 8.2) (Cotton & Gathercole 1958). In contrast, little substantial evidence for settlement during the sixth and seventh centuries has been uncovered in either Southampton or Winchester. At Southampton, finds have been limited to a sixth-century

**Figure 8.2. Map of Southampton area showing the location of Roman, Middle Saxon and late Saxon settlements**



*Figure 8.3. Plan of late Saxon Winchester*



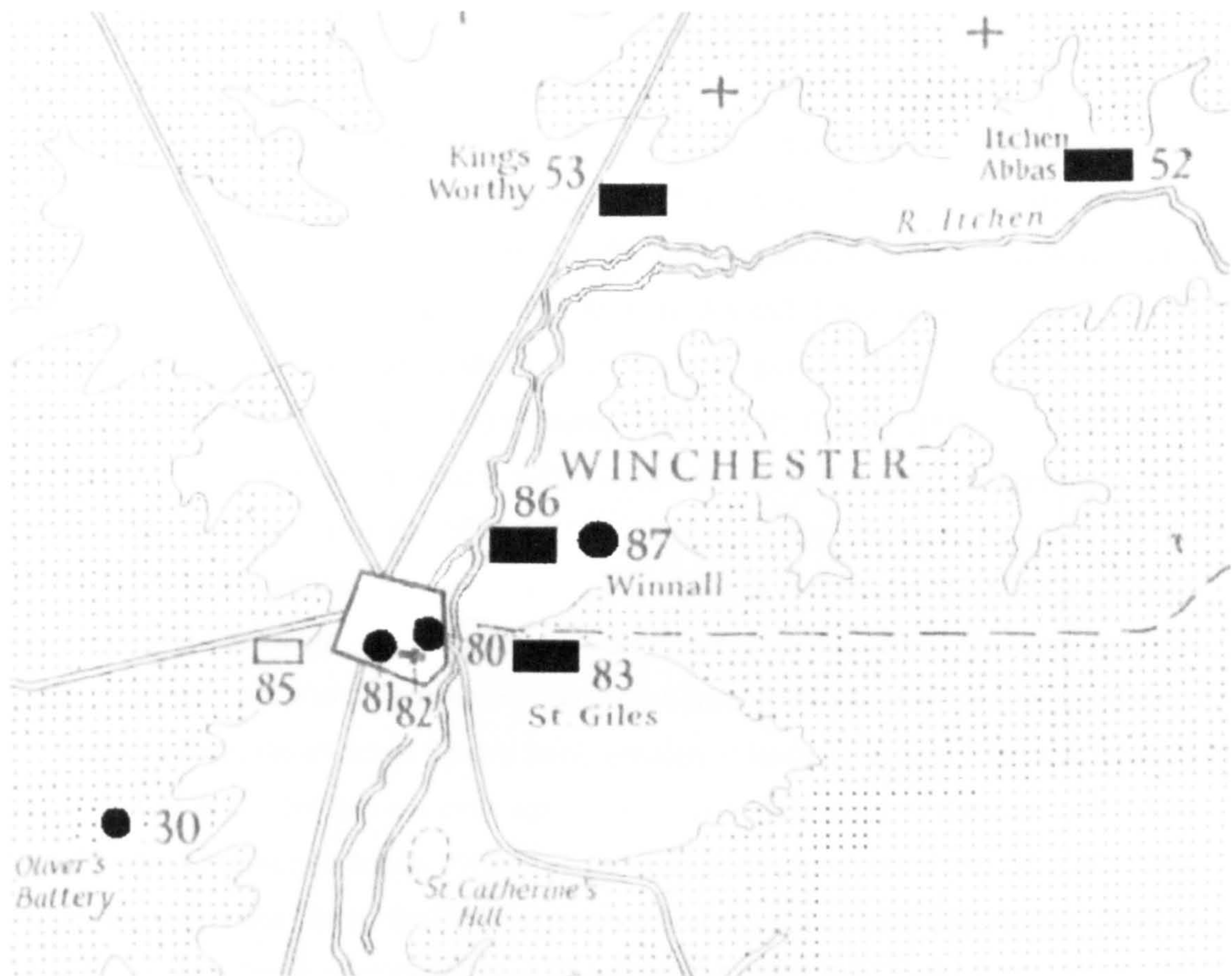
(Based on figure 25 in Keene 1985:448)



brooch from Clausentum (Morton 1992a:25), while evidence for smithing found below the medieval ramparts of the late Saxon/medieval town may have been from the early Saxon period, although a middle Saxon date is equally possible (Oxley 1988:41, 43). Finally, a series of structures and fence lines thought to represent rural or semi-rural occupation were found at SOU 16, 21 and 22, in the south-east of the site of the middle Saxon settlement at Hamwic (Morton 1992a:41,165). While accurate dating of these structures has proved problematic, an early to middle Saxon date has been proposed (*ibid.*:165), and it is possible that they may pre-date the foundation of Hamwic (Birbeck 2005:192). The situation at Winchester is little better and there is no evidence that the area within the Roman city walls was densely populated between the fifth and seventh centuries (Biddle 1973:246). In fact, the lack of archaeological evidence has led to suggestions that much of the area within the walls was unoccupied, perhaps even under cultivation (*ibid.*:245). Indeed, evidence for field systems with drainage ditches has been uncovered in the south-east corner of the defended area from below Wolvesey Palace, the site of the bishop's palace from the tenth century onwards, which although undated may indicate that the area was under cultivation prior to the tenth century. A scatter of small finds such as pottery and glass of fifth- to seventh-century date has been recovered from within the walled area (Biddle 1983:117-8) and may be indicative of low levels of occupation. The survival of the Roman roads during this period suggests that the walled area may have continued to serve as a point to ford the River Itchen, and it is possible that at least some of the finds within the walled area may represent detritus from travellers (Scobie 1995:2). Overall, the archaeological evidence suggests that the walled area may have contained at most a small community or perhaps a number of estates. There is, however, evidence for settlement half a mile outside the walled area in the form of a small group of buildings thought to date from between the fifth and seventh century at Winnall (Winchester Museums Service Archive SMC W86). While caution should be exercised in equating the absence of evidence with the absence of human activity, particularly as large parts of early medieval Southampton and Winchester remain unexcavated, the information currently available is suggestive of only low levels of occupation in both areas prior to the middle of the seventh century.

The comparative lack of settlement evidence in both cities is matched by a comparable dearth of evidence for burial prior to the mid-seventh century. Indeed, there is no evidence for burial within Winchester's Roman walls until the mid-seventh century, and only fragmentary evidence for sixth- and early seventh-century burials in the form of three sites lying outside the area of the walled Roman city (figure 8.4). The best known of these, mainly through its association with the "final phase" cemetery of Winnall II, is Winnall I (Meaney & Hawkes 1970). This site, which lies approximately half a mile north-east of the

**Figure 8.4. Map of Winchester showing the location of the early and middle Saxon cemeteries in and around the city. (adapted from figure in Hawkes 2003:2).**



**Key**

- Cemeteries or isolated burials of fifth- or sixth-century date
- Cemeteries or isolated burials of seventh- or eighth-century date
- Undated, but suspected early medieval burial
- Site of Roman villa
- Roman Road

**Key to site numbers**

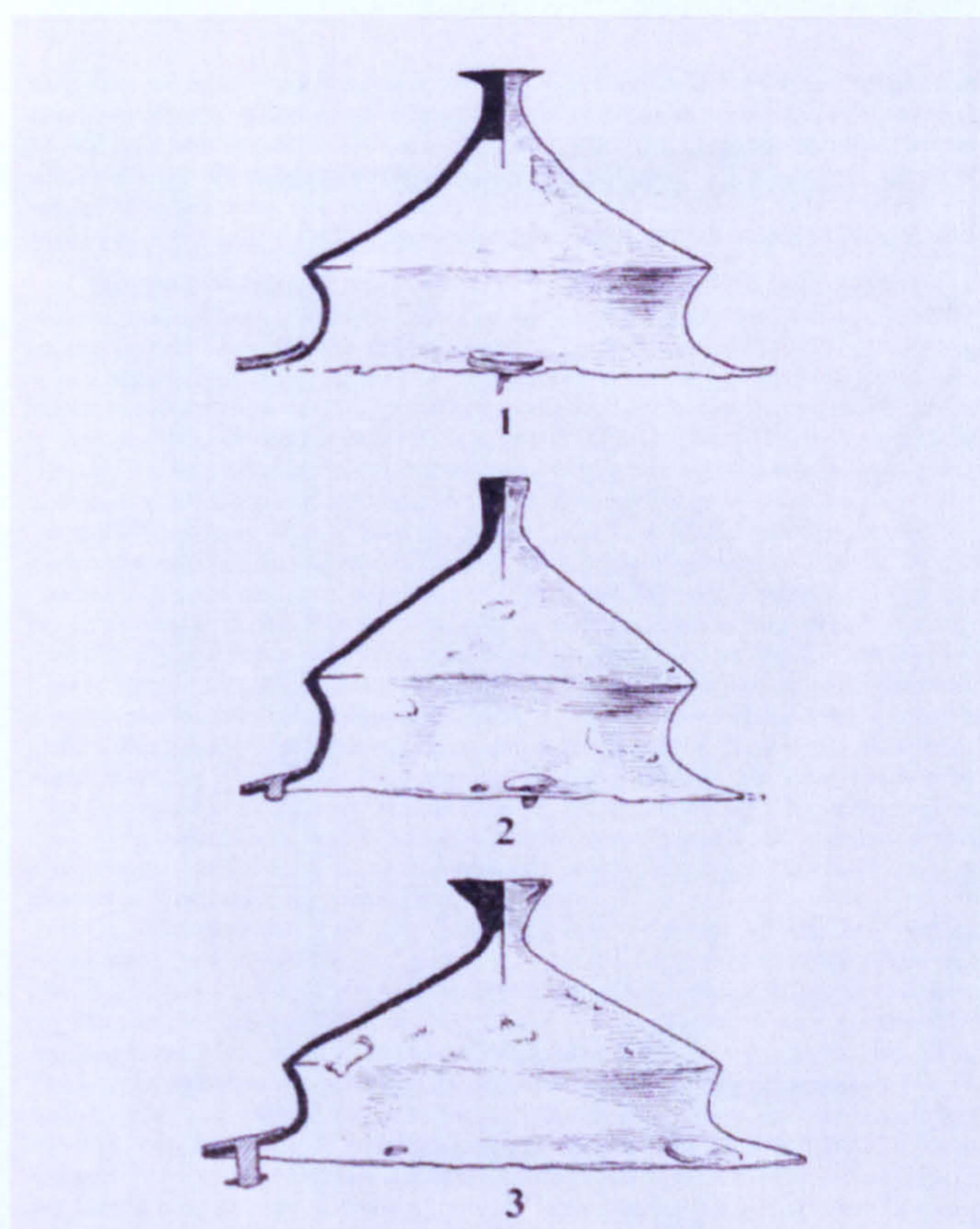
- 30 – Oliver's Battery:
- 52 – Itchen Abbas
- 53 – Worthy Park
- 80 – Lower Brook Street
- 81 – South Gate
- 82 – The Old Minster
- 83 – St. Giles Hill
- 85 – West Hill
- 86 – Winnall I
- 87 – Winnall II

Roman East Gate (*ibid.*:3), was disturbed during the construction of a railway line in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Little is known of the discovery save for some brief accounts in the local press of the period, and three shield bosses now in the City Museum are the only surviving finds from the site (figure 8.5) (*ibid.*:4). According to newspaper accounts, a number of graves, some of which were furnished, and including at least one double burial, were disturbed while digging a railway cutting. The surviving shield bosses indicate a sixth- or early seventh-century date for this cemetery (*ibid.*:5-6). Evidence for the presence a second cemetery of a similar date to Winnall I has been suggested by the discovery of a series of inhumations over the last two centuries on St. Giles Hill (summarised in table 8.1)(figure 8.4) (Meaney 1964:101-2; Teague 2000). All, bar one, of the burials uncovered were furnished, with a number of the grave goods suggesting a fifth- or sixth-century date. The site of a possible third cemetery has been suggested by the discovery of an inhumation on West Hill in 1949 (figure 8.4) (Meaney 1964:101). Although this burial was unaccompanied, a spearhead was found in the grounds of the same house in 1852, which may point to the presence of an early Saxon cemetery. However, in the absence of additional finds, the evidence for this third cemetery is tentative at best. Evidence for early Saxon burials at Southampton is even sparser with no burials securely dated to earlier than the mid-seventh century (Morton 1992a:27). A loose human tooth recovered from SOU 266, which lies within the site of the late Saxon-Medieval town, has been radiocarbon dated to 593-656 AD at a  $2\sigma$  level of confidence (figure 8.31)(Russel & Leivers 2003). While this tooth could have come from anywhere, it is possible it came from a disturbed burial in the vicinity of the site. In addition, many of the skeletons uncovered during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries at the Roman fort of Clausentum (see figure 8.3. for location and below for details) and from the site of Hamwic, for example the human remains from SOU 77 and SOU 36 (Morton 1992a:48), are of unknown date and it is possible some of these burials may date from the fifth to early seventh centuries.

### **8.2.2. The origins of Hamwic**

It is only from the mid-seventh century onwards that there is substantive evidence for burial at both Southampton and Winchester. The earliest of the known cemeteries in Southampton is one of the two cemeteries uncovered during the recent excavations at the site of the St. Mary's Stadium (figure 8.6-9) (Birbeck 2005). This mixed rite cemetery, referred to in this study as St. Mary's Stadium cemetery I, consists of 18 cremations and 24 inhumations, interred in 22 single graves and one double grave, and was dated to c.650-720AD (*ibid.*:11). Two additional furnished burials recovered from the adjacent site of SOU 20 in 1975 (Holdsworth 1980) are also considered to be part of this cemetery (Birbeck 2005:11), as are

**Figure 8.5. Three Iron shield bosses from the sixth- and early seventh-century cemetery at Winnall I**

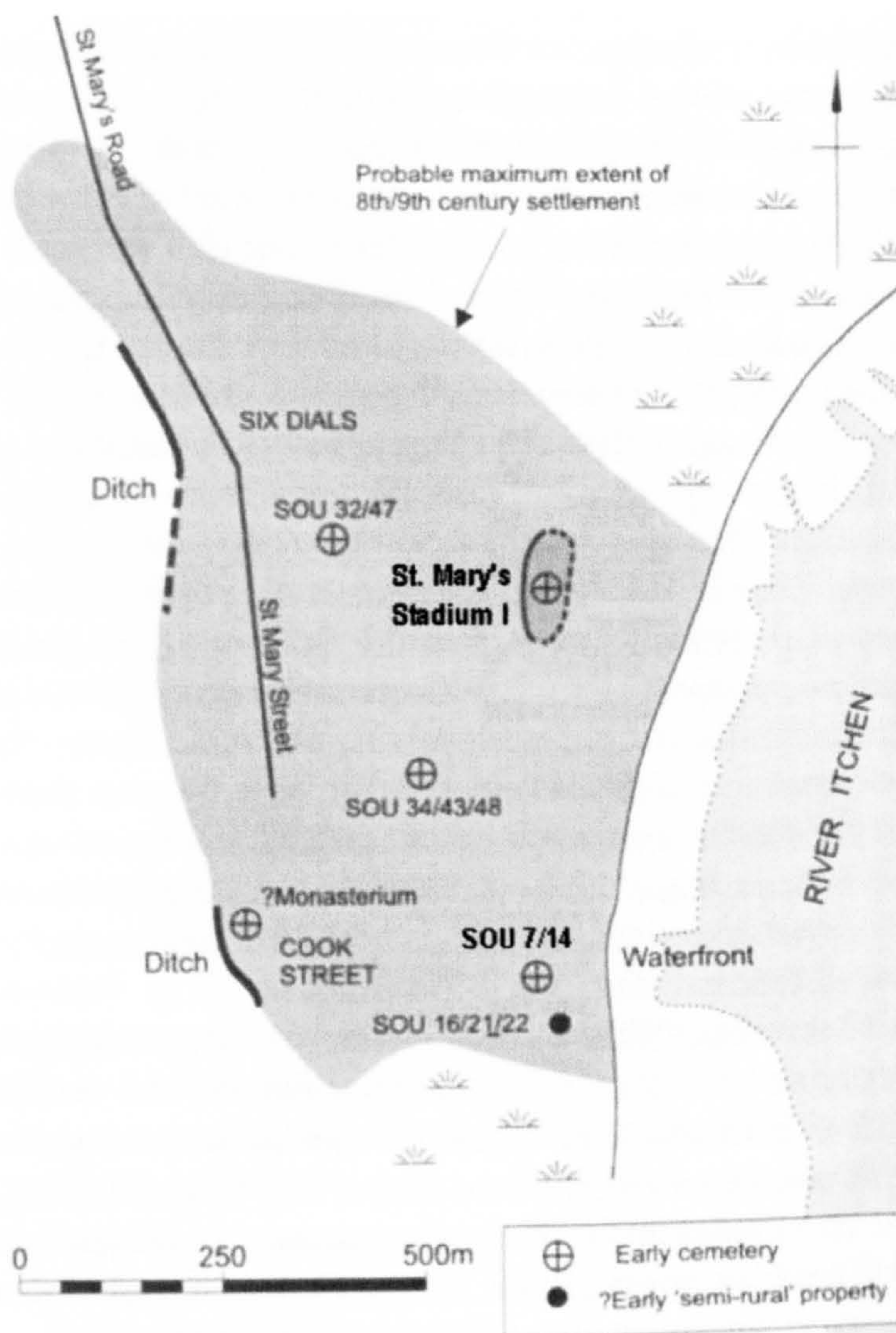


(From Meaney & Hawkes 1970:5)

**Table 8.1. Summary of finds from the early Saxon cemetery on St. Giles Hill, Winchester**

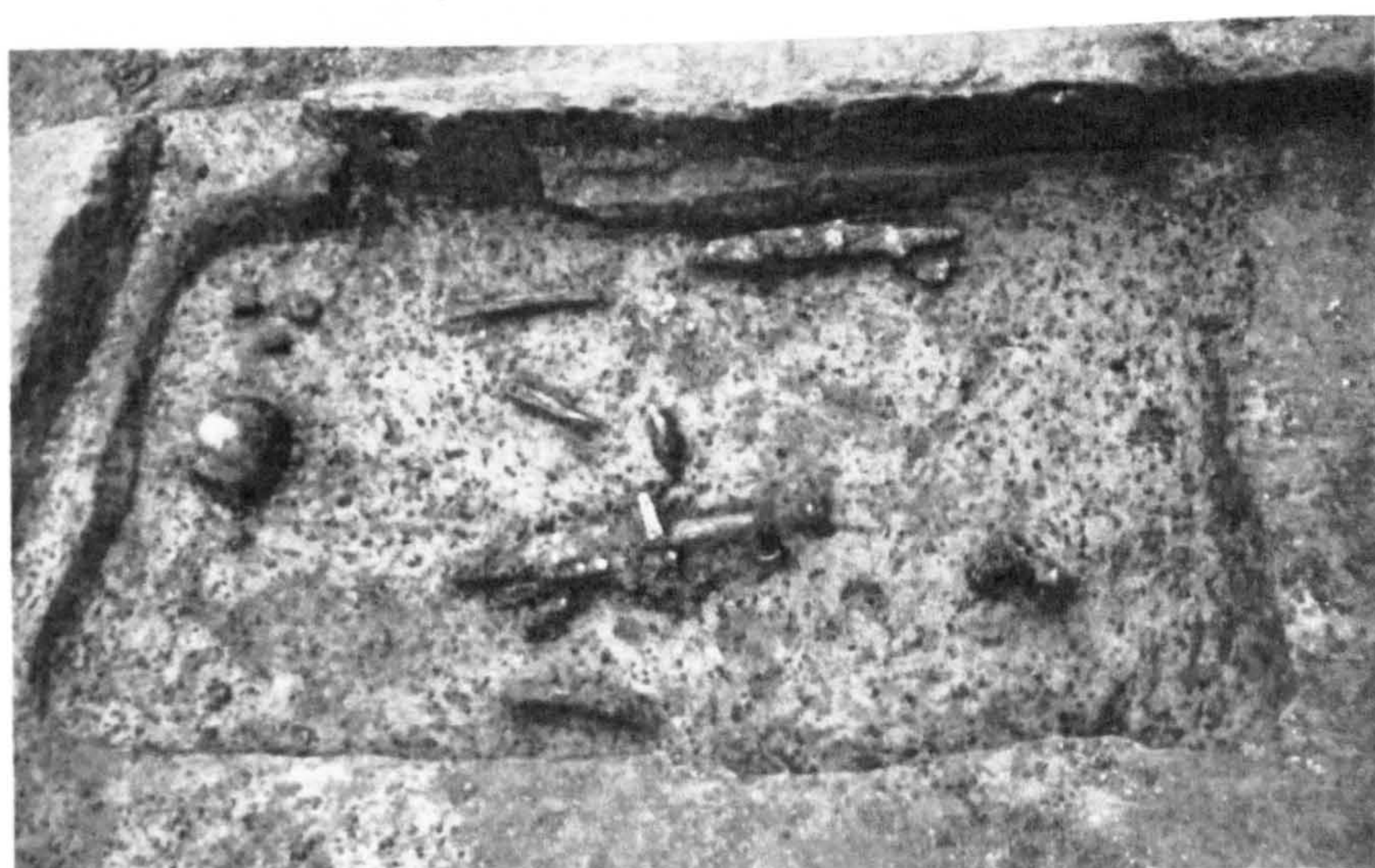
Year	Finds
1845	Grave containing 'cup and plate'
1884	Skeleton with a dagger and large knife
1893	Skeleton with iron sword
1894	5 or 6 iron knives, pair of tweezers, shield rivets, fragments of an iron ring
1905	6 skeletons, 2 spearheads, dagger, iron ferrule, silver ring, fragments of bronze shield attachments
1911	Key (Girdle Hanger?) and knife from St. Giles Hill presented to Museum
1944	Spearhead and a knife
2000	Skeleton
Undated finds	Bronze sword pommel, amber bead, glass beads, 2 shield bosses, iron buckle

*Figure 8.6. Plan of Hamwic showing early features and cemeteries*



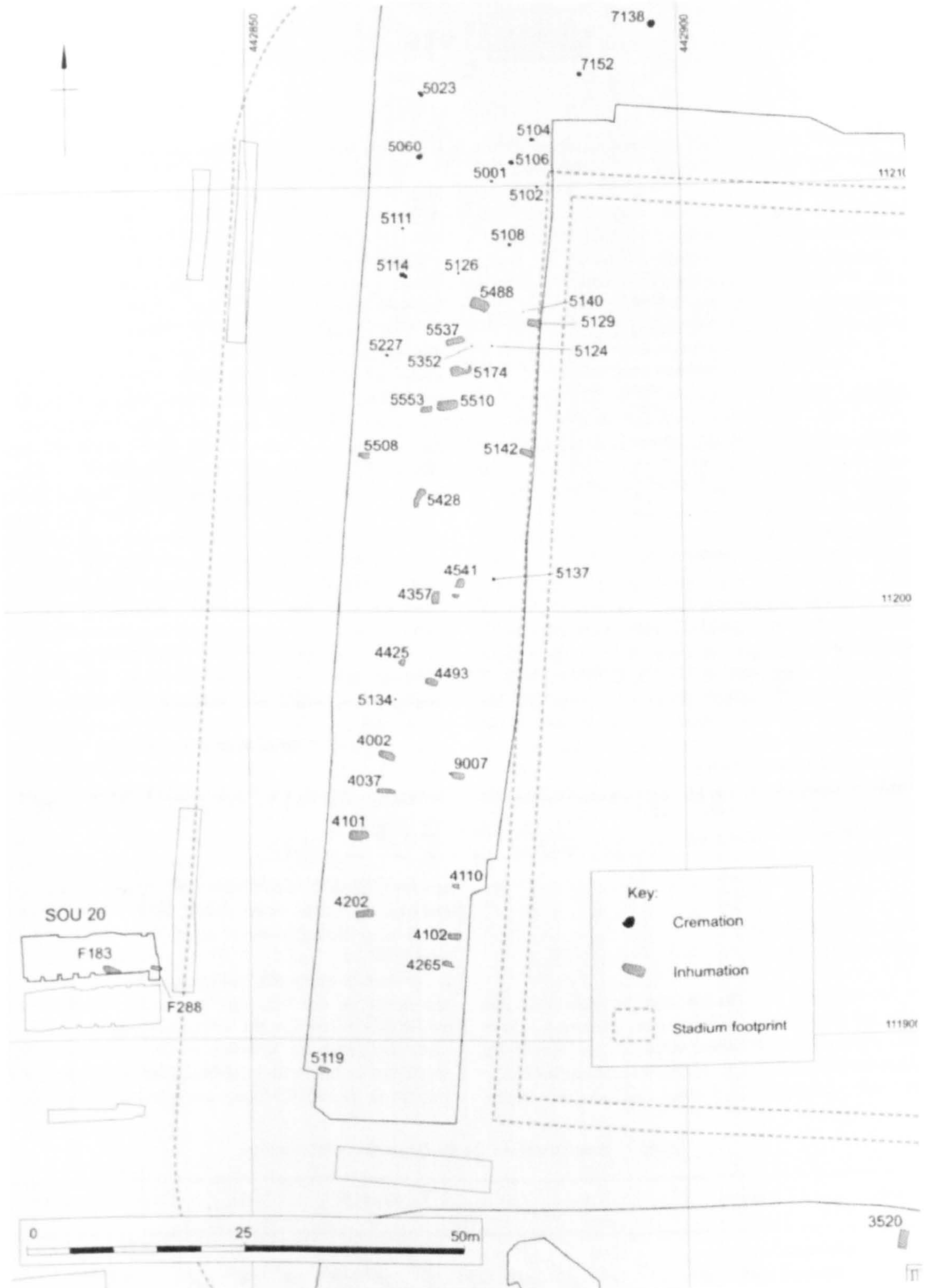
(adapted from Birbeck 2005:196 )

*Figure 8.7. View of the double inhumation burial from the late seventh- and early eighth-century St. Mary's Stadium cemetery I*



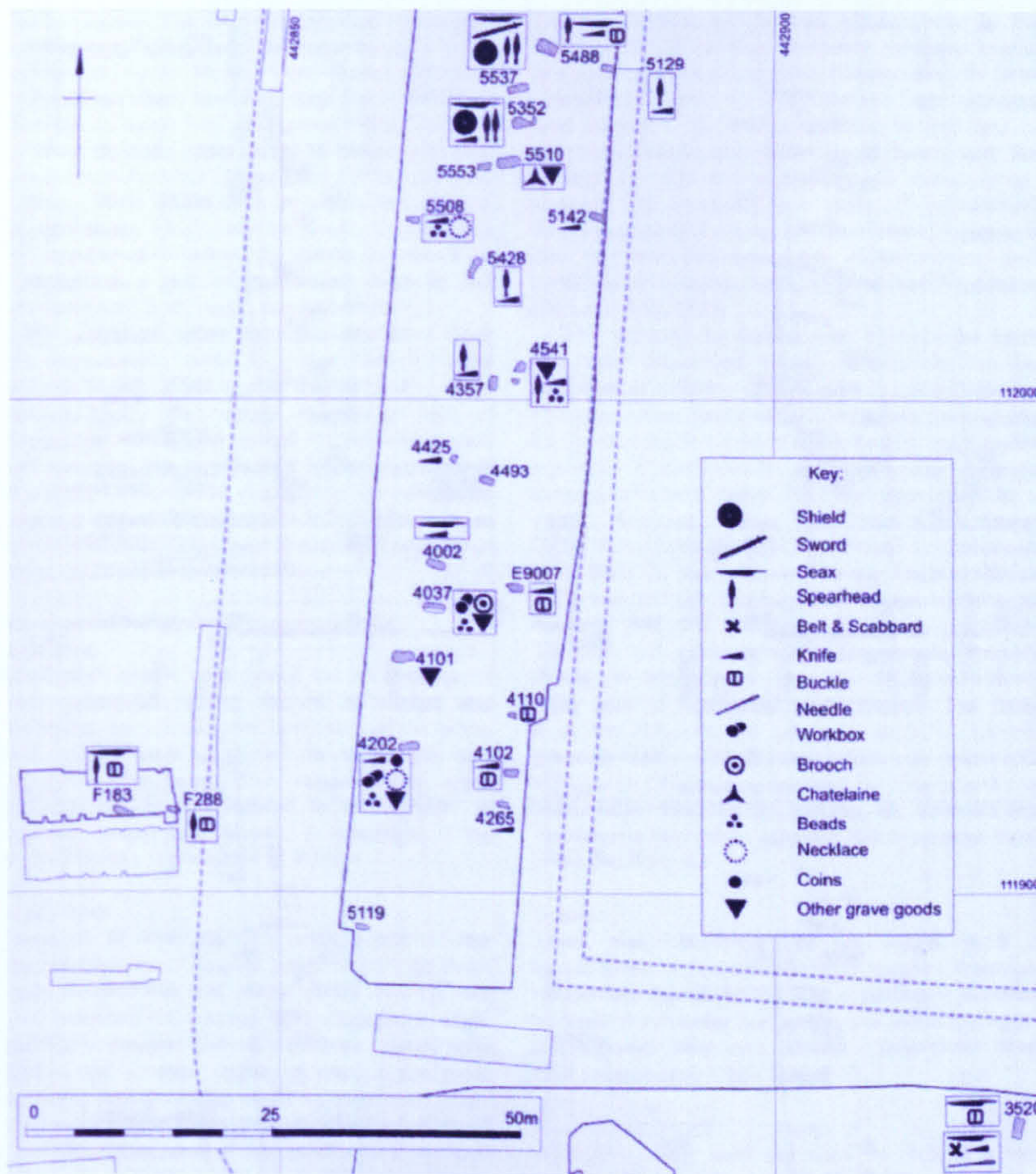
(from Birbeck 2005:31)

Figure 8.8. Plan of late seventh- to eighth-century St. Mary's Stadium I cemetery



(from Birbeck 2005:12)

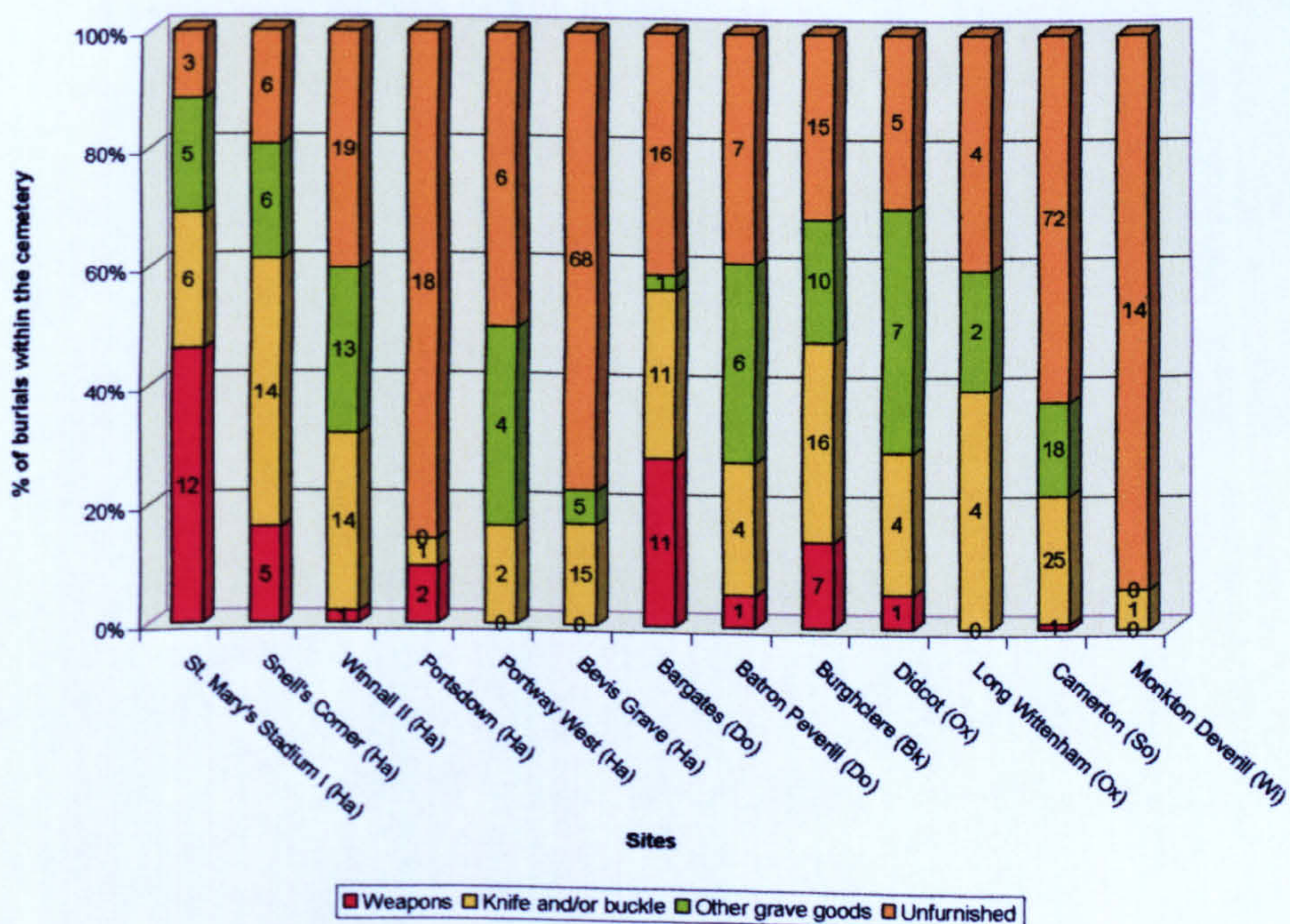
**Figure 8.9. Distribution plan of grave goods from the late seventh- and early eighth-century St. Mary's Stadium Cemetery I**



(from Birbeck 2005:52)

**Figure 8.10. Frequency of burials containing different types of grave goods in cemeteries within the study area.**

(figures in columns indicate the number of burials)



the disarticulated redeposited bones found to the south of SOU 20 at SOU 1 (Morton 1992a:48). With the addition of the burials from SOU 20, there are a total of 26 inhumations from 25 graves in this cemetery. Four of these graves, including the double burial, were orientated north-south, while the remaining burials were aligned approximately west-east (Birbeck 2005:30). Twenty-three of the twenty-six inhumations (88.5%) were furnished, many with elaborate grave goods. Wood stains indicating the presence of wooden linings, planks or coffins were found in four graves. Possible settings for above ground markers were seen in the form of a small slot to the west of one grave, while another had two slot-like features at the west end of the grave (*ibid.*:31,41). Burial density within the cemetery was low with the inhumation burials well-spaced with no intercutting of graves, although approximately two-thirds of the graves were disturbed by later middle Saxon features and it is possible that many other burials may have been destroyed (*ibid.*:75). The eighteen cremations were all contained in urns, seventeen of which were deposited in small sub-circular graves while the eighteenth lay in an irregular shaped grave (*ibid.*:13). Five of the cremations contained fragments of animal bone (*ibid.*:22), probably the remains of pyre goods, while grave goods, in the form of an ivory ring and an incised disc, probably of antler, were found with two cremations (*ibid.*:27). Establishing a date for the cremations proved to be difficult given the lack of grave goods (*ibid.*:9). Charcoal from three cremations gave calibrated radiocarbon dates of 670-880AD, 610-770AD and 550-680AD at the 2 $\sigma$  level confidence, while a date of 430-630AD was obtained from cremated bone using a new and relatively untried methodology (*ibid.*:11). Given the experimental nature of the methods used to date the cremated bone and the context of the cremations, it was felt that the radiocarbon dates from the charcoal were more likely to be accurate. This would suggest the cremations are of seventh-, and possibly eighth-, century date and that the cremation burials were contemporary with at least some of the inhumation burials in this cemetery (*ibid.*:13). Within the cemetery, the majority of the cremations lay to the north of the cemetery with the inhumation graves found to the south although there is a degree of overlap between the two types of burial (figure 8.6) (*ibid.*:73). This suggests that either there was no deliberate policy to segregate inhumations and cremations, or if there was, it was not adhered to rigorously (*ibid.*). However, on present evidence, it is possible that the initial burials on the site may have been the cremations in the northern part of the cemetery with burial expanding southwards as funerary practices gradually changed from cremation to inhumation (*ibid.*:75).

The St. Mary's Stadium cemetery I is distinct from the other cemeteries within the study area both in the presence of late cremations, one of only a few known examples of seventh-



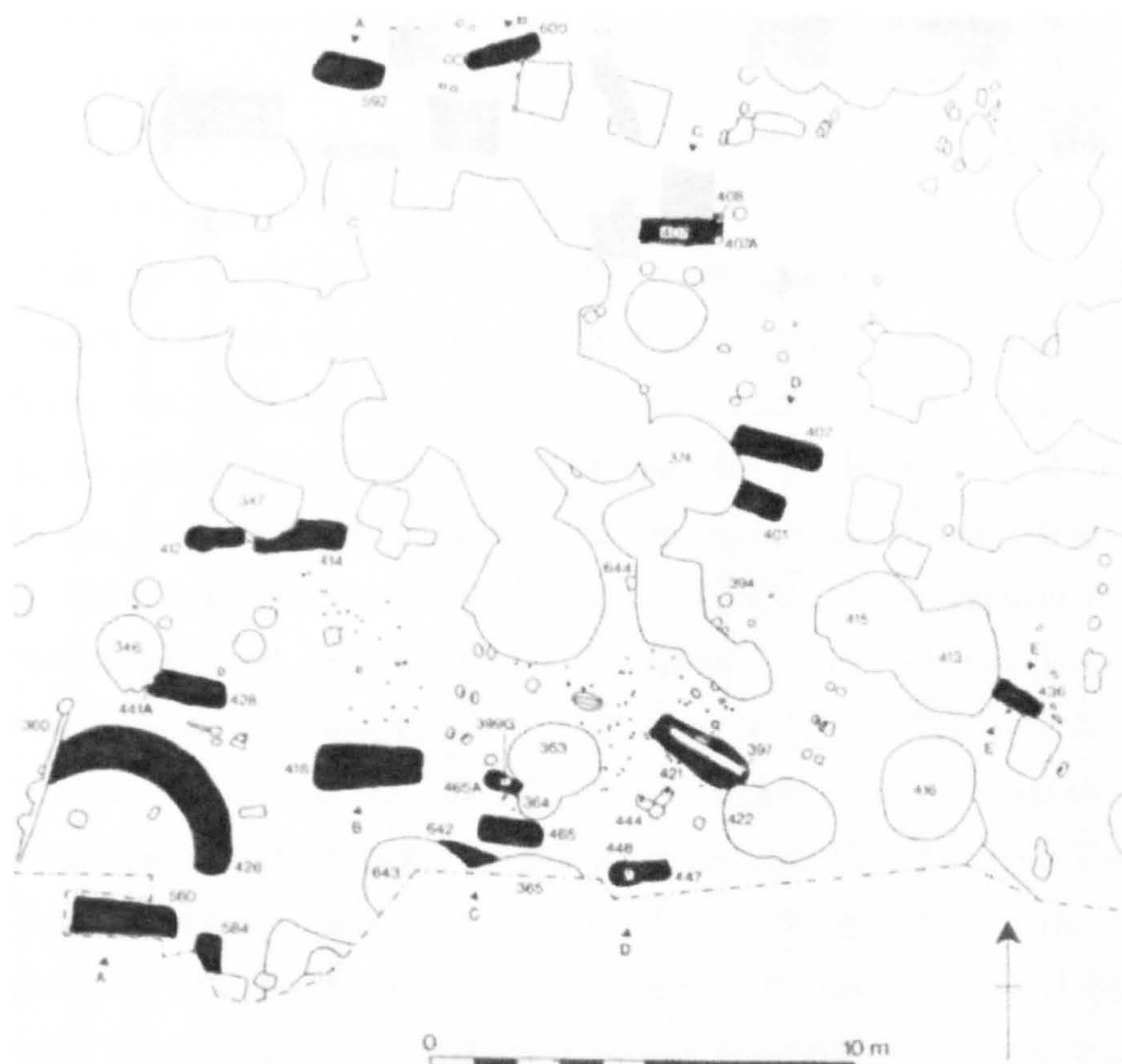
century cremations in the study area (see section 4.2.3),<sup>1</sup> and also by the nature of the grave goods. The quality of the jewellery recovered from the cemetery, which includes pieces in gold, is unusual for the study area, although not necessarily for the rest of the country (Stoodley 2002a:323). In addition, the high percentage of burials with weapons within the cemetery was unusual when compared with other contemporary cemeteries within the study area (figure 8.10) (*ibid.*:324). Furthermore, the weapon burials were also distinguished by the high numbers of weapons *per* grave. It has been suggested that weapons burials containing multiple weapons may be indicative of a high-status elite, particularly at a time when the inclusion of weapons within graves was in decline (Härke 1992:159). The richly and distinctively furnished burials at St. Mary's Stadium I suggest the cemetery was the burial ground for an elite community, one that was distinguished in death by the use of funerary practices not seen elsewhere in Wessex.

The St. Mary's Stadium cemetery I, while unusual, was not the only cemetery in use in the Southampton area during the late seventh to early eighth century. A number of contemporary, or potentially contemporary, cemeteries are known in the vicinity of Hamwic, as well as on the other side of the River Itchen at *Claesentum*. The small cemetery at SOU 32 lies roughly 300m to the north-west of the St. Mary's Stadium I (figure 8.5). The cemetery consists of ten graves and six grave-like features as well as disarticulated remains recovered from a number of pits (Figure 8.11) (Morton 1992a:171). As the levels of bone preservation in a number of the graves is poor, it is thought likely that the grave-like features once contained burials. All graves were aligned roughly west-east and unfurnished, although a sceatta was found in the grave fill close to the skull of the individual in grave 412. Wood stains suggesting the presence of wooden linings or coffins were identified in four graves with, in one case, cross-supports lying below a wooden coffin, while structural features such as the rectangular slots cut into the floors and ledges on the side of some graves may have been used to support wooden grave linings (*ibid.*:178). Other structural features included evidence for possible settings for above ground markers in the form of post-holes at the eastern end of one grave and a slot, running virtually the length of the grave, cut into the top of the grave fill of another (*ibid.*:177). The cemetery also contained more ostentatious above ground markers in the form of part of what was probably a penannular ditch encircling grave 560 and a series of post-holes associated with grave 421 (*ibid.*:176-7). It has been suggested that the post holes represent a bicameral church or a mortuary chapel. Yet the position of

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<sup>1</sup> Within the study area, the presence of cremations in the late sixth- to early seventh-century cemetery at Bargates (Do) is indicative of the persistence of the rite into the late sixth, and possibly seventh, centuries (Jarvis 1983). Also, it has been suggested that a cremation from the late fifth- to seventh-century cemetery at Weston Colley, Micheldever may date to the seventh century (N. Stoodley *pers.comm.*). In addition, a seventh-century cremation was identified in the mixed-rite cemetery at Apple Down (WSx), which lies just outside the study area on the Hampshire/West Sussex border (Down & Welch 1990:108).

*Figure 8.11. Plan of the early eighth-century cemetery at SOU 32, Southampton*



Shaded areas indicate graves and a ring ditch (adapted from Morton 1992a:173)

*Figure 8.12. Plan of the late-seventh-early eighth century cemetery at Cook Street, Southampton*

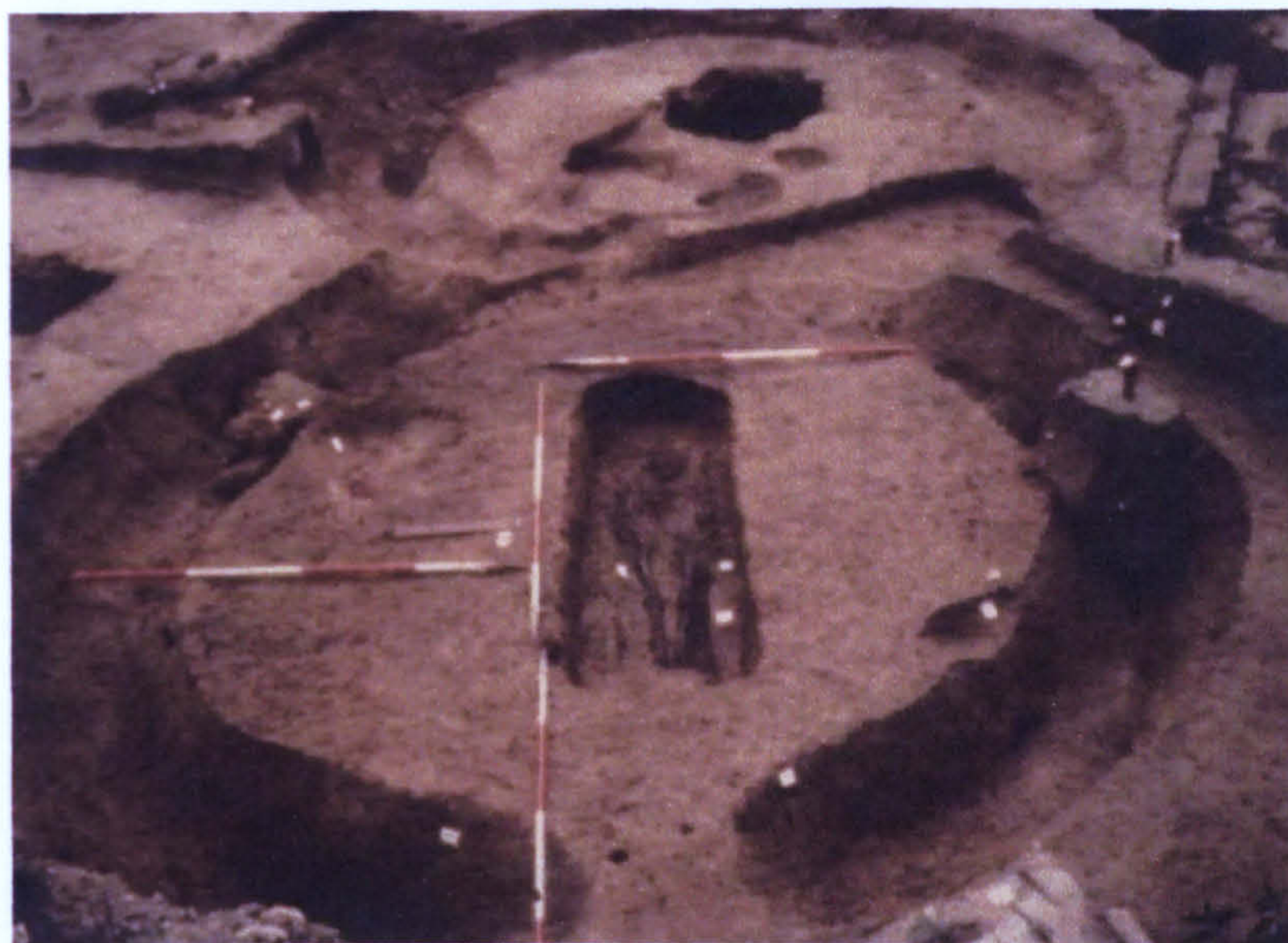


Shaded areas indicate graves and a ring ditch (modified from Garner 2001:176)

grave 421 astride the postulated division between the two cells of the church may indicate that these post-holes do not actually represent an internal division. Furthermore some of the post-holes in the area are clearly not related to the putative structure, while others definitely postdate the graves. As such, given the ambiguous nature of the evidence, it is uncertain if a structure was definitely present around grave 421, and even if there was, its form and function remains far from clear. The limits of the cemetery are poorly defined particularly to the south where skeletons were uncovered during the first half of the nineteenth century during digging for brickearth in a field (SOU 47). Little is known about the burials themselves, but a glass tumbler was reportedly found lying beside one of the skeletons and it is possible that some of the sceattas recovered may have come from graves (Atherley 1850:162). While the precise location of the burials within SOU 47 is unknown, the field lies only fourteen metres to the south of SOU 32 and the burials are likely to have been part of the SOU 32 cemetery (Morton 1992a:176; Atherley 1850:162). The available evidence suggests that the cemetery at SOU 32/SOU 47 was relatively small, containing the well spaced burials of some 40 individuals, and was in use for a short space of time. The cemetery has been dated to the early eighth century on the basis of a W series sceatta, thought to have been minted c.700-715, found in the lower fill of grave 412 (Morton 1992a.:179), although the possibility of a late seventh-century date for the cemetery cannot be excluded (Scull 2001:72). A radiocarbon date from one of the burials, obtained as part of the present study, gave a range of 640-780AD at a 2 $\sigma$  level of confidence. This confirms the early eighth-century or late seventh-century date for the cemetery.

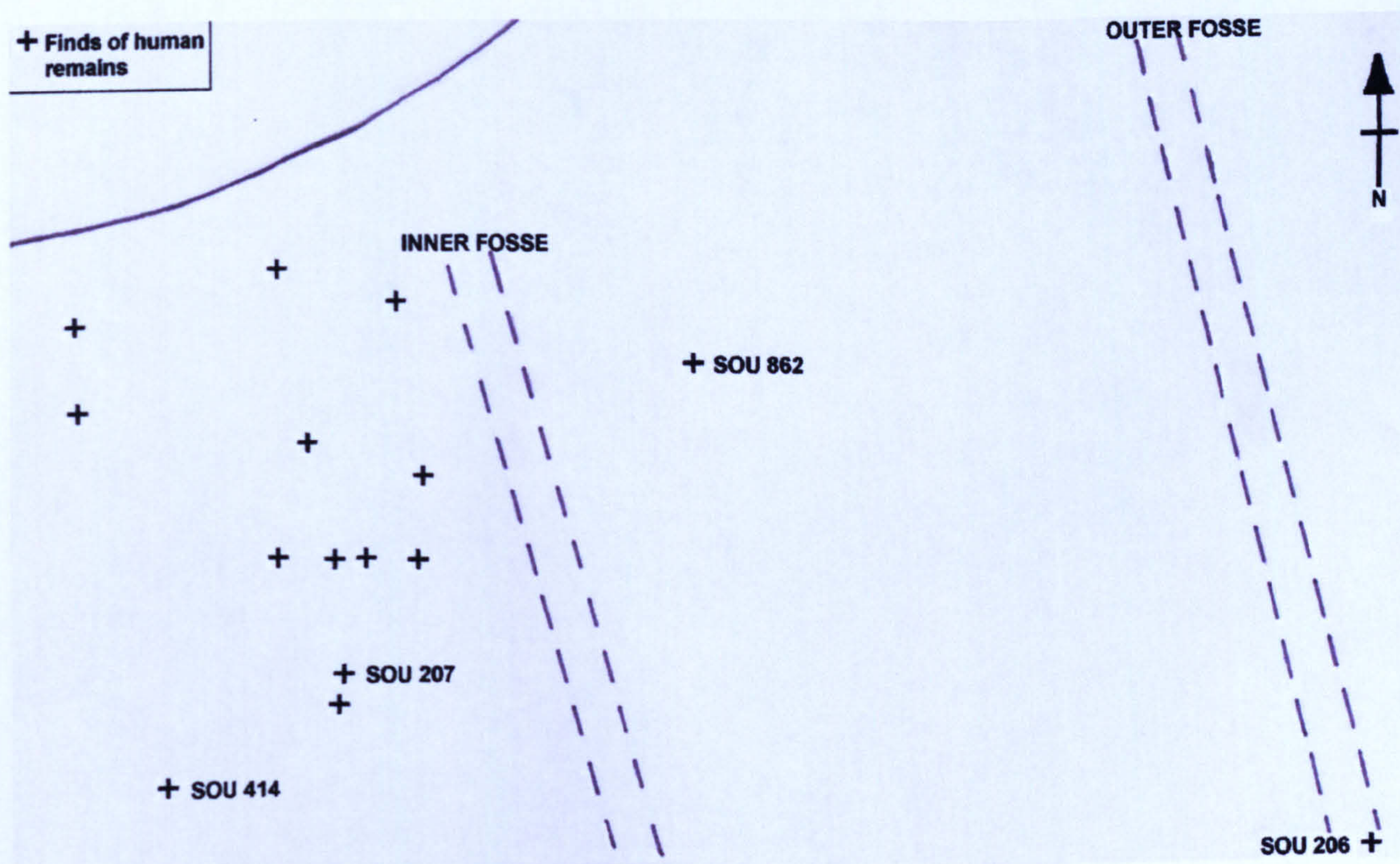
Five hundred metres to the south of SOU 32 lies another cemetery of similar date and with many similar structural grave features. The Cook Street cemetery (SOU 254, 567 & 823) consists of 21 burials and disarticulated human remains recovered from a number of other features (figure 8.6 & 8.12) (Garner 1993 & 2001; Garner & Vincent 1997). Eighteen of the burials lie to the east of a ditch, which appears to demarcate the western limits of middle Saxon activity on the site, and is thought to mark the boundary of either the cemetery or the settlement of Hamwic (Garner 2001:188). All of these burials lay approximately west-east with the exception of a single east-west burial (*ibid.*:178). Seventeen of the burials were unfurnished while the eighteenth contained a knife and linked pins of silver and bronze (Garner 1993:86). The site had been subject to substantial post-medieval disturbance and it is possible that some of the metal objects recovered from the site may have originated from disturbed graves (Hinton 1993:107). Three of the eighteen burials are encircled by penannular ditches (figure 8.13) (Garner 2001:179). No grave was found in the fourth penannular ditch from the site, although there is a possibility that the deceased was interred

Figure 8.13. A burial in penannular ditch in the cemetery at Cook Street, Southampton



© Southampton City Council

Figure 8.14. Location plan of cemeteries and finds of human bone around the defences of the Roman settlement at Clausentum



in a central mound created from soil displaced by the excavation of the penannular ditch (Garner 1993:86). Four of the graves contained wood stains indicating the presence of coffins or wooden lining (Garner 1993:90; Garner 2001:179). The stakeholes observed in one grave may have been used to hold supports for a wooden lining (Garner 1993:90), while another grave contained a possible cross support at its east end (*ibid.*:86). There are obvious parallels with the two cross supports seen in a grave at SOU 32 (Morton 1992a:178) and it is possible a second cross piece was present in the missing west end of the grave (*ibid.*:90). The presence of penannular ditches and cross-supports suggests a seventh- or eighth-century date for the cemetery (Garner 1993:122) as does a radiocarbon date of 642-777AD, at a 2 $\sigma$  level of confidence, from a burial within one of the penannular ditches (Garner 2001:177). The similarities with the cemetery at SOU 32 has led to suggestions that Cook Street may also be of early eighth-century date (Garner 1993:91), but as with SOU 32, a late seventh-century origin cannot be excluded (Scull 2001:71). A further three burials from the site lie in the ditch to the west of the cemetery (Garner 2001:179). Two of these burials are aligned north-south like the ditch with their head to the south and lay in the lowest fill of the ditch (Garner 2001:172; Garner 1993:88), while the disturbed remains of a third individual also recovered from the ditch may represent a shallow west-east burial cut into the top fill of the ditch (Garner 1993:86). The relationship between the burials in the ditch and the rest of the cemetery is not clear. The ditch itself is thought to be of similar date as the cemetery, but it is unclear how long it remained open (Garner 2001:177). The two south-north burials found in the lowest layer of ditch fill have been radiocarbon dated to 978-1206AD and 675-886AD at a 2 $\sigma$  level of confidence (*ibid.*:175-177). The radiocarbon dates raises the possibility that at least one of the ditch burials may be contemporary with the rest of the cemetery. However, given that the ditch may have served as a boundary for either the cemetery or the settlement, it is equally possible that the ditch remained open until after the rest of the cemetery, or even the settlement itself, went out of use and one or more of the ditch burials may represent isolated later interments.

While the cemeteries at SOU 32, Cook Street and the earlier cemetery at St. Mary's Stadium are the only Hamwic cemeteries securely dated to the late seventh and early eighth century, the cemeteries at SOU 7/14 and SOU 34/43/48 are also thought potentially to be of a contemporary date (figure 8.6) (Morton 1992a:48). The evidence for a possible cemetery at SOU 7/14 is fragmentary. It consists of the lower part of a single west-east grave from SOU 7 (Morton 1992a:85) and the disarticulated remains of at least two individuals recovered from middle Saxon pits and other structural features at SOU 14 (*ibid.*:152). An east-west aligned sub-rectangular feature from SOU 14 may represent a grave, although no human remains were present and at 1.4 metres in length if a grave it must have contained a juvenile

(*ibid.*:153). While it is possible that the human remains from these sites represent the remains of two separate small cemeteries or even just isolated burials, it has been suggested that a cemetery stretched the 47 metres between the two sites (*ibid.*:48,153). On site SOU 14, the burials appear to predate the early middle Saxon wells and pits, which suggests an early date for the burials.

The evidence for a cemetery at SOU34/43/48 is slightly more substantial. Three relatively intact burials and a small quantity of redeposited, disarticulated bone from at least another three individuals were recovered from the site of SOU 34 (*ibid.*:193). All three graves were orientated west-east and unfurnished. There is no record of wood stains in any graves although one of the graves may have had a slot cut along the length of the grave into the upper fill, similar to that seen at SOU 32. Pottery dating from the mid-middle Saxon period recovered from a pit, which post-dates the burials, implies the cemetery dates to the early part of the middle Saxon period, which, when combined with the similarities to SOU 32 (*ibid.*:194), suggests an early eighth-century date for the cemetery (*ibid.*:207). Redeposited, disarticulated human remains were recovered during the excavation of SOU 43 from areas previously disturbed in the nineteenth century (*ibid.*:193, 206). While much of the bone excavated from SOU 43 has been lost, the surviving bones contain the remains of at least five individuals (*ibid.*:207). SOU 43 is thought to lie to the east of SOU 34 and the human remains from both sites may have originated from the same cemetery (*ibid.*:48). Another part of this cemetery is thought to have been identified during brickearth digging on a site now known as SOU 48 where a large number of inhumations, including one with a glass vessel over its face, were uncovered in the first part of the nineteenth century (Addyman & Hill 1969:68; Morton 1992a:193).

Even if the less securely dated and fragmentary cemeteries of SOU 34/43/48 and SOU 7/14 are excluded, there are at least three cemeteries at Hamwic – St. Mary's Stadium I, Cook Street, and SOU32/47 – in use during the first decades of its existence in the late seventh and early eighth century (Birbeck 2005:193; Morton 1992a:28). As has been discussed above, the St. Mary's Stadium I cemetery is distinguished from other contemporary burials ground within Wessex by the high number of weapons burials and the quality of many of the grave goods (Stoodley 2002:323-6). In contrast, only very low levels of furnished burials were found in both the Cook Street and SOU 32 cemeteries, while the penannular ditches and timber cross-supports seen in these cemeteries were absent in St. Mary's Stadium I cemetery. It is possible that these differences in the type of funerary provision seen in the three cemeteries may be chronological. The St. Mary's Stadium I site has been dated to c.650-720 AD (Birbeck & Smith 2005:10) while SOU 32 and Cook Street have been dated to the early

eighth century (Morton 1992a:179; Garner 1993:91), although the possibility of a late seventh-century origin cannot be excluded for either of these two cemeteries (Scull 2001:71-2). However, it seems more likely that the distinctive and elaborately furnished burials at St. Mary's Stadium I may indicate the presence of an elite group in the Hamwic area during the first decades of the settlements existence (Stoodley 2005:81).

The Hamwic area is thought to have been the location of Hamtun (Yorke 1995:306). The suffix "tun" has multiple meanings, but in many early place names it often seems to have denoted a royal residence or a centre of authority (Yorke 1982:80). Hamtun was also called a *villa regalis* in a charter dated to the ninth century issued by King Aethelwulf while in residence there (*ibid.*; Yorke 1995:307). While there is no conclusive evidence for a royal estate in the vicinity of Hamwic before or during the settlement's existence, SOU 47, which lies some 300 metres away from the St Mary's Stadium I cemetery, has been suggested as a possible site for an elite, perhaps royal presence (Morton 1992a:28). The persistence of occupation at SOU 47 after Hamwic's decline has led to suggestions that this was a distinct area within the settlement, perhaps less directly involved in craft and trade than other parts of the settlement (*ibid.*). This may account for the longevity of occupation in this area. In addition, the site has yielded unusual finds, such as bronze spoons and forks, not seen elsewhere in the settlement (*ibid.*). While the St. Mary's Stadium cemetery I cannot prove the existence of a royal centre in the Hamwic area during the settlement's first decades, it does indicate the presence of a distinct and elite group in the vicinity (Stoodley 2005:81). This parallels the evidence for high-status seventh-century burials at both London and Ipswich and corresponds with suggestions that elite, perhaps royal groups, were involved in and controlled trade during this period (Scull 2002:314).

In contrast, the funerary provision accorded those interred in the cemeteries at SOU 32 and Cook Street differed markedly from that seen at the St. Mary's Stadium cemetery despite the proximity of all three burial grounds, which all lie within 500m of each other, and their comparable date. The differences in funerary provision suggest differences between the individuals interred within the three cemeteries. This could be the result of different elements of a single settlement being interred in separate burials grounds (Birbeck 2005:193), or it may be that the three cemeteries served several discrete areas of occupation in the Hamwic area which may have predated the main expansion of the settlement in the mid-eighth century (Birbeck & Smith 2005:193; Scull 2001:72), perhaps the presence of one or more beach markets and/or trading centres lying close to a putative high-status estate centre (*ibid.*). It has been suggested that earliest occupation at Hamwic may have lain closer to the waterfront with burials located inland on the periphery of the settlements (Scull 2001:72).

Indeed, the higher incidence of early pottery, i.e. dating to before the mid-eighth century, found adjacent to the waterfront appears to support the possibility of settlement initially lying along the waterfront (Timby 1988:116-7). In addition, evidence for rural or “semi-rural” buildings and enclosures at SOU 16/21/22, which lies in the south-east corner of Hamwic near the waterfront (figure 8.6), may be indicative of early occupation. While it is impossible to closely date these buildings, they lie at the beginning of a sequence of buildings and are thought to date to the early part of the middle Saxon period (Morton 1992a:165-6). A similar model for an initial settlement focus adjacent to the waterfront with burials located inland on the edge of settlements has been proposed for the comparable eighth-century settlements at Ipswich and London (Scull 2001:72; Scull 2002:308). However, there is increasing evidence for early occupation in the Six Dials area, which lies some 500m away from the waterfront. Pottery dating to the seventh century is known from the Six Dials site (Timby 1988:96 &112) and it has been pointed out the percentage of early wares seen at Six Dials does not differ greatly from that observed in sites along the waterfront, such as Chapel Road East (Morton 2005:124). Furthermore, when a recent analysis of pottery distribution within Hamwic also factored in density of occupation, there were 53 sherds weighing 823g per100m<sup>2</sup> at Six Dials compared with 27 sherds weighing 453g at Chapel Road East (*ibid.*). These results suggests that the densest occupation in the Hamwic area prior to the mid-eighth century may have lain inland at Six Dials in the north-west of Hamwic with a lower density of occupation along the waterfront as well (Morton 2005:124).

### **8.2.3. Middle Saxon burial at Clausentum**

The cemeteries in the vicinity of Hamwic are not the only burials of late seventh- to early eighth-century date in the Southampton area. Human remains dating from that period have been identified at three sites, SOU 862, SOU 414 and SOU 207, in the vicinity of the Roman settlement of Clausentum, a port and small town with later walled defences which lies across the river and approximately a mile to the north of Hamwic (figure 8.14). The largest of these sites, SOU 862, which lies between the inner and outer fosse of the Roman settlement, was excavated in 1998 and contained the remains of at least fifteen individuals (SAS Archaeology 1998). The burials were unfurnished (*ibid.*:30) and with the exception of the southwest-northeast orientated grave 22, all burials were orientated approximately west-east (*ibid.* 25). There was no evidence for the presence of coffins or wooden linings, although it should be noted ground conditions made it difficult to recognise grave cuts with only one grave cut definitely identified (*ibid.* 25). Where known the position of the skeletons was supine with the legs extended. Radiocarbon analysis of three of the burials produced dates



of 562-676 AD, 564-775 AD and 680-1010 AD at  $2\sigma$  levels of confidence (Southampton City Museum SOU 862 Archive). These dates provide a rather wide date range. It seems unlikely given the lack of grave goods that the cemetery was in use during the sixth century. As such, the earlier of two dates would suggest the cemetery came into use during the seventh century, while the later date indicates that burial may have persisted into the eighth, or even the ninth or early tenth, century.

The other known middle Saxon sites in the vicinity of the Roman settlement, SOU 414 and SOU 207, lie on the other side of the Inner Fosse from SOU 862, within the walled area (figure 8.14). The better documented of these sites, SOU 414, lies some 500 metres southwest of SOU 862. The excavation of SOU 414 prior to and during construction work uncovered parts of at least 6 individuals (Smith 1991a:15, 20). The burials were supine and orientated west-east. All, bar one, of the graves were unfurnished. The exception was a grave badly damaged by post-medieval activity and only a skull accompanied by a spearhead survived. The spearhead was initially dated to the early Anglo-Saxon period (Evison 1995 – letter in Southampton City Museum Archive SOU 414). Yet, radiocarbon analysis of another burial produced a date of 652-971 AD at a  $2\sigma$  level of confidence. A second radiocarbon date was obtained, as part of this study, to resolve this discrepancy in the dating of the cemetery and gave a result of 650-720 AD at a  $2\sigma$  level of confidence. Both radiocarbon dates suggest a late seventh to early eighth-century, or later, date for this group of burials and when the spearhead was re-examined, it was reclassified as a C2 (Nick Stoodley *pers. comm*). This was a particularly long-lived type of spearhead generally in use in the seventh century and later (Geake 1997:68). Overall, the available evidence suggests a seventh- or early eighth-century date for the cemetery, although the possibility that burial persisted until the tenth century cannot be eliminated.

The other securely dated group of human remains within the Inner Fosse are those from the site of SOU 207, which lay some 100 metres west-south-west of SOU 414 (figure 8.14). The burials were uncovered by a mechanical digger during the laying of new cables in 1984, with the remains of one burial removed by workmen (Southampton City Museum SOU 207 archive). At least another eight burials were recovered from the site. There is no report of any objects accompanying the burials nor were there apparently any wood stains, indicating the presence of wooden linings or coffins, although given the recovery conditions, there is a possibility that such evidence could have been overlooked. Radiocarbon dating of one of the burials, as part of this study, gave a date of 675-805 at a  $2\sigma$  level of confidence suggesting a late seventh- to eighth-century date for the cemetery. The sites of SOU 414 and SOU 207 lie approximately 100 metres apart and while they may represent two separate cemeteries, there

is a strong possibility that they are parts of the same burial ground. Indeed, human remains were recovered from an area between the two sites at the beginning of the nineteenth century by Englefield (1841:69). This cemetery may also have extended further to the north and east as human remains have been recovered from these areas (figure 8.14). While the date of these remains is unknown, the presence of human remains does raise the possibility of a large late seventh- to eighth-century cemetery, one which may even have persisted into the ninth or tenth centuries, lying within the area of the Inner Fosse and overlying the remains of the Roman settlement of Clausentum.

The relationship between SOU 862, which lies on the other side of the Inner Fosse, and this potentially large cemetery is unclear. One possibility is that these burials are simply a continuation of the cemetery at SOU 862 with burial occurring on both sides of the rampart. However, excavations of sites adjacent to SOU 862, which lie between the cemetery and the Inner Fosse, have not recovered any human remains (Alan Morton *pers. comm.*). As such, it seems more probable that SOU 862 represents part of a separate burial ground, one which originated at the same time as the burial ground on the other side of the Inner Fosse. It seems probable that the burials represent the occupants of one or more settlements in the general vicinity area of Roman Clausentum, although it should be noted that little evidence for settlement of Early or Middle Saxon date is known from this side of the Itchen, with the exception of a few sherds of pottery which may have come from graves (Andy Russel *pers. comm.*).

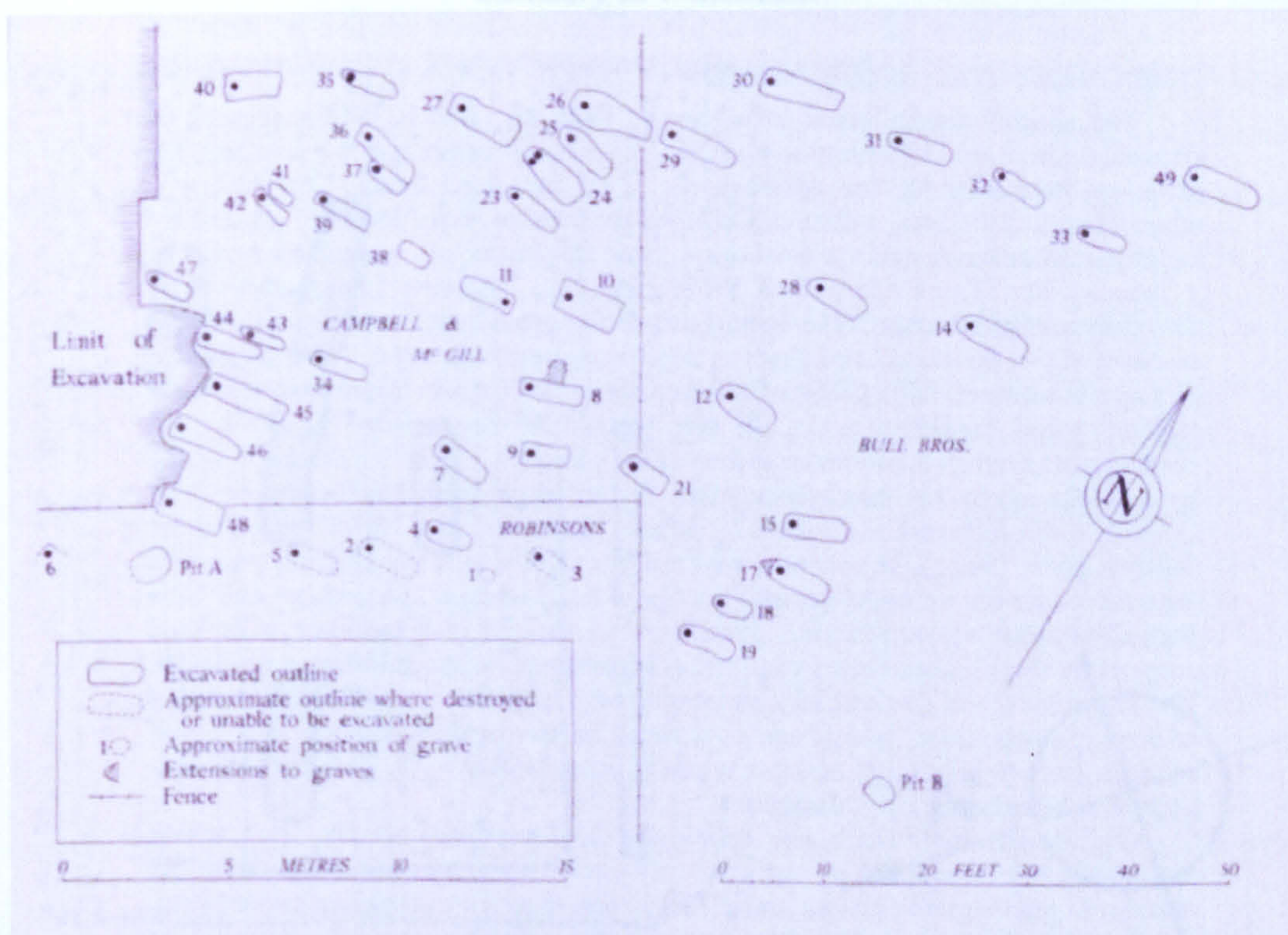
The cemeteries at Clausentum lack both the elaborate grave goods seen at the contemporary cemetery at St. Mary's Stadium cemetery I or any evidence of the grave structures or above-ground markers seen there, at SOU 32 and Cook Street. This may simply be a reflection of the more fragmentary data available for the Clausentum burials, but even allowing for this, there do seem to be differences in the nature of the funerary provision seen in Clausentum and Hamwic respectively. These differences may simply be the result of differing burial choices and customs exercised by the inhabitants at each of the settlements in the two areas. Alternatively, this may be a reflection of differences in the nature of the communities that the cemeteries served. Perhaps the presence of the putative elite settlement at Hamwic is expressed not only in the burial practices of that community, but also had an effect on the funerary behaviour of communities in the immediate vicinity as expressed in the penannular ditches and other variations in grave structure seen at Cook Street and SOU 32. There is no evidence for a comparable elite settlement in the vicinity of Clausentum and this may account for the lack of elaboration seen in the cemeteries at SOU 207, SOU 414 and SOU 682.

#### 8.2.4. Seventh-century burial in the Winchester area

Turning to Winchester, there are at least two comparable cemeteries of known late seventh-century and early eighth-century date: the Lower Brook Street cemetery within the walled defences (Biddle 1975b:303-305) and Winnall II, which lies approximately half a mile northeast of the walled city (Meaney & Hawkes 1970) (figure 8.4). The largest of these cemeteries is at Winnall II where a total of 43 single and two double graves were uncovered during excavations between 1955 and 1958 (*ibid.*:7) (figure 8.15). Twenty-eight of the 47 inhumations were accompanied by grave goods, of which 15 were accompanied only by a knife and /or a buckle (figure 8.16). Wood stains indicating the presence of a coffin or a wooden lining was observed in one grave (*ibid.*:16), while one or two nails, possibly from some form of coffin or wooden lining, were found in three other graves. Five graves contained a few stones placed on the edge of the grave cuts while another six burials had stone coverings, which ranged from a few stones to a partial covering of the body. All of the bodies were orientated approximately west-east, with their heads to the west. Where it could be observed, all of the bodies were supine with legs either extended or flexed, with the exception of the two individuals who lay crouched or flexed on their sides. The cemetery has been dated to the second half of the seventh century on the basis of grave goods (*ibid.*:49).

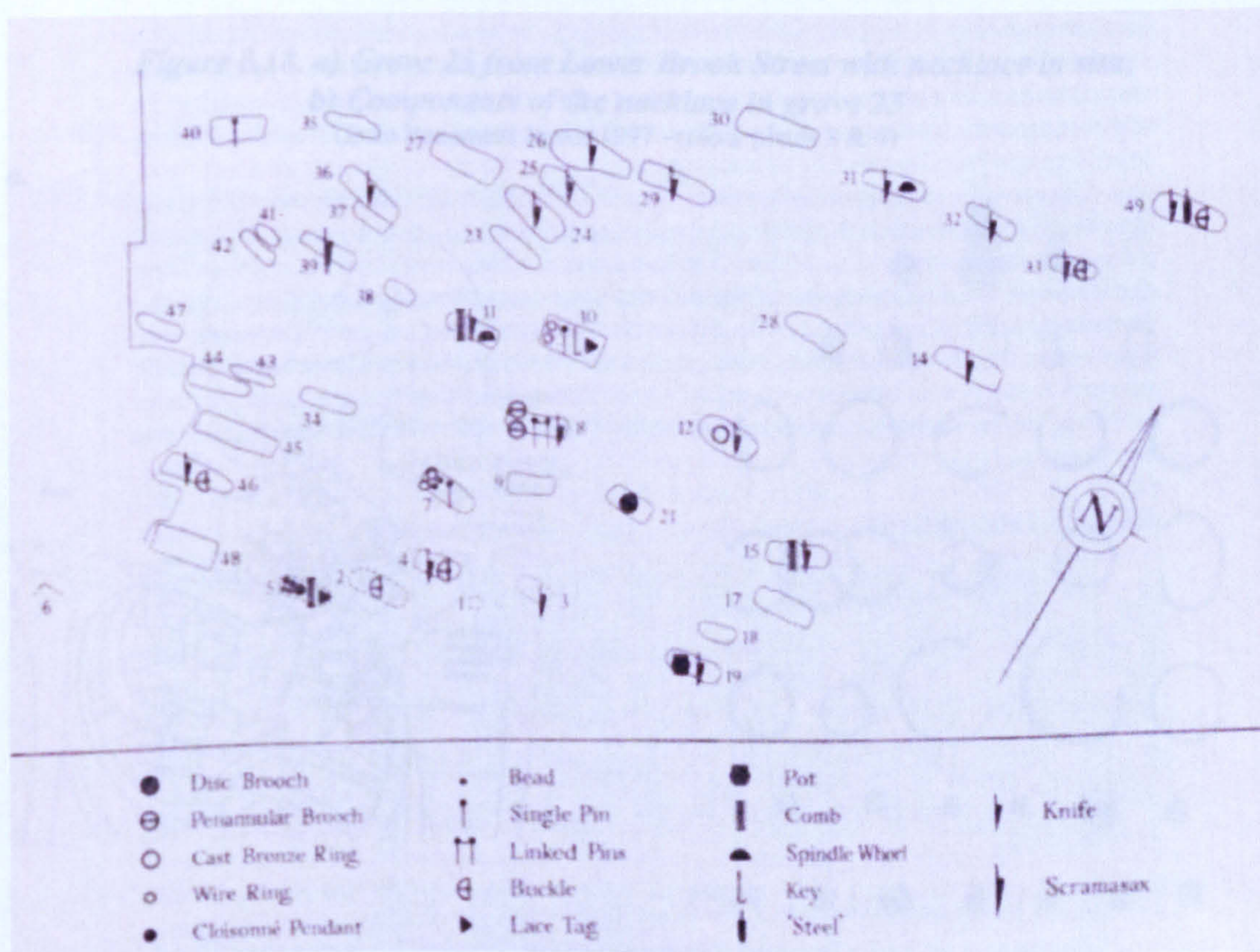
The cemetery at Lower Brook Street, which lies within the walled area, is also thought to be of similar date. This cemetery, which was excavated in 1971, consisted of five graves, four of which contained bodies (Biddle 1975b:303) (figure 8.4. & 8.17). Three of the burials contained grave goods: one accompanied by an iron object; another with a copper alloy buckle; while the occupant of the third grave wore an elaborate gold and garnet necklace (figure 8.18). No evidence for the use of coffins or wooden lining was observed in any of the graves. The necklace has been dated to the second part of the seventh century (Hawkes 1990a:627), and the cemetery is thought to have been in use during the later seventh and early eighth centuries (Biddle 1975b:303). It has been suggested that the two burials found during the excavations of the late Saxon church of St. Pancras may have been an outlying part of the Lower Brook Street cemetery as the two sites lie less than 50 metres apart (Biddle 1975b:319; Keene 1985:743). However, the two burials have been radiocarbon dated to 710±80 AD and 860±60 AD, which suggests that while one of the burials is contemporary with and possibly part of the Lower Brook Street cemetery, the other is significantly later and may be linked to St. Pancras church, which is thought to have originated in the ninth or tenth centuries (*ibid.*).

**Figure 8.15. Plan of the late seventh- and early eighth-century Winnall II**



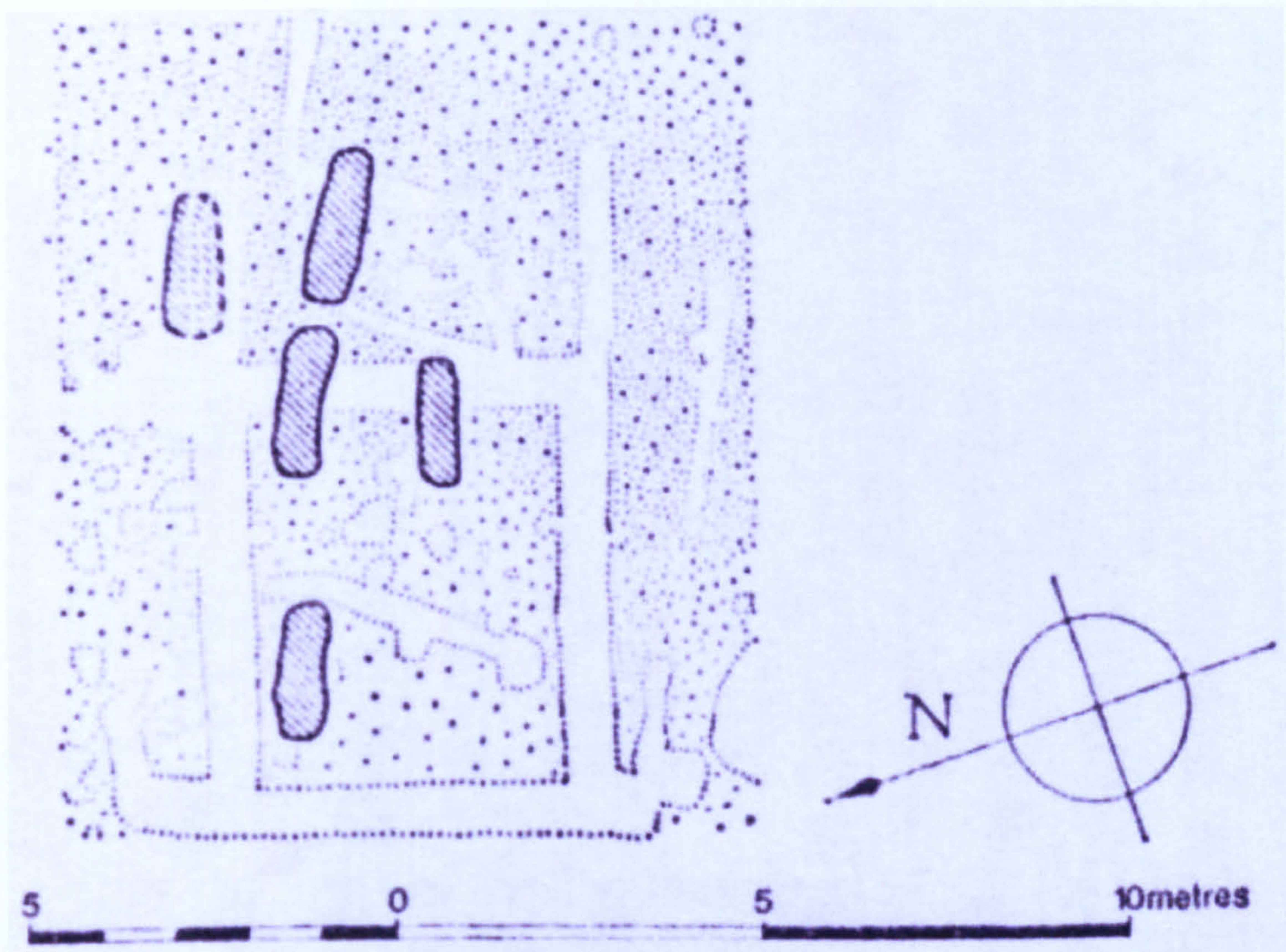
(from Meaney & Hawkes 1970:8)

**Figure 8.16. Plan of the Winnall II cemetery showing the distribution of grave goods**



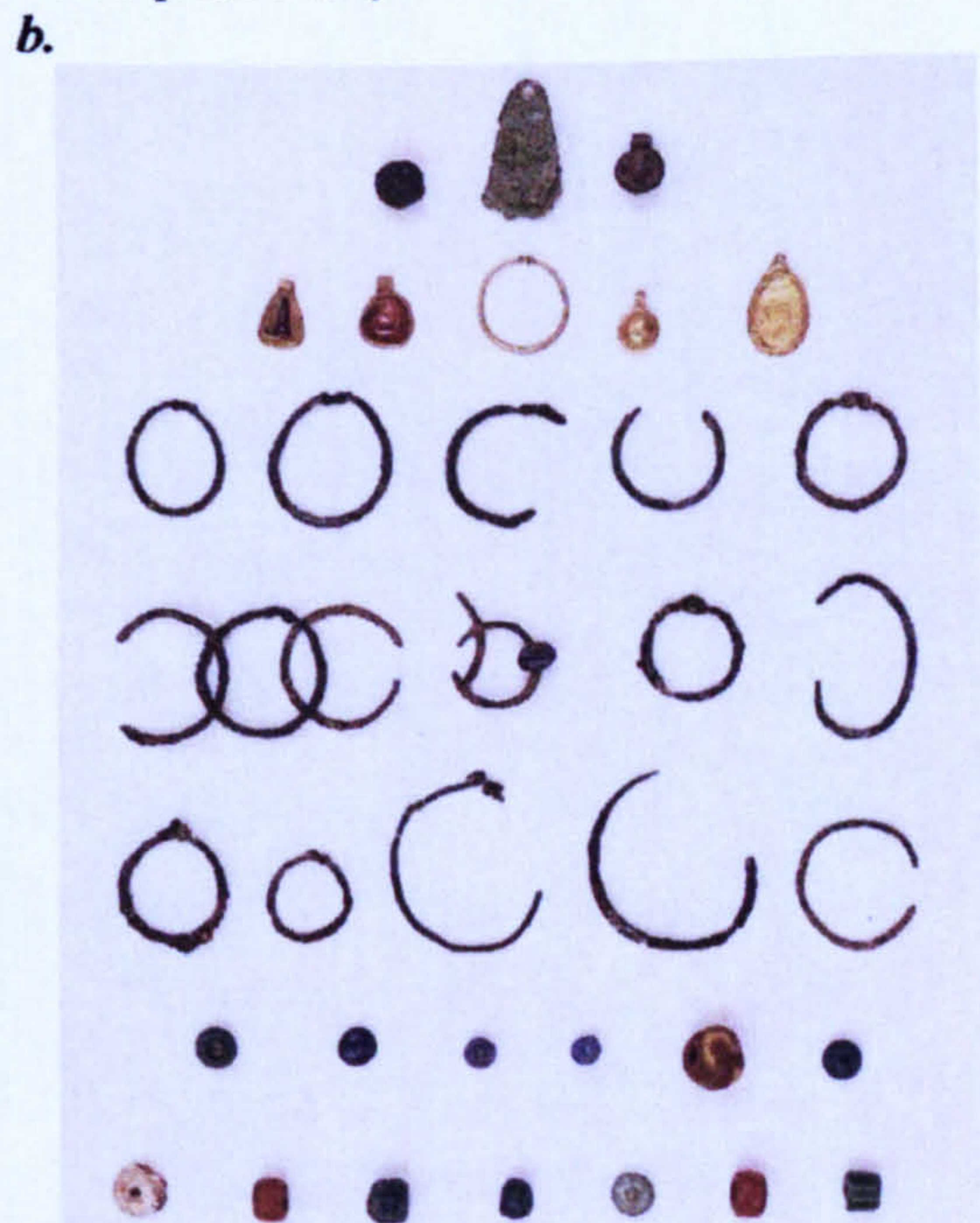
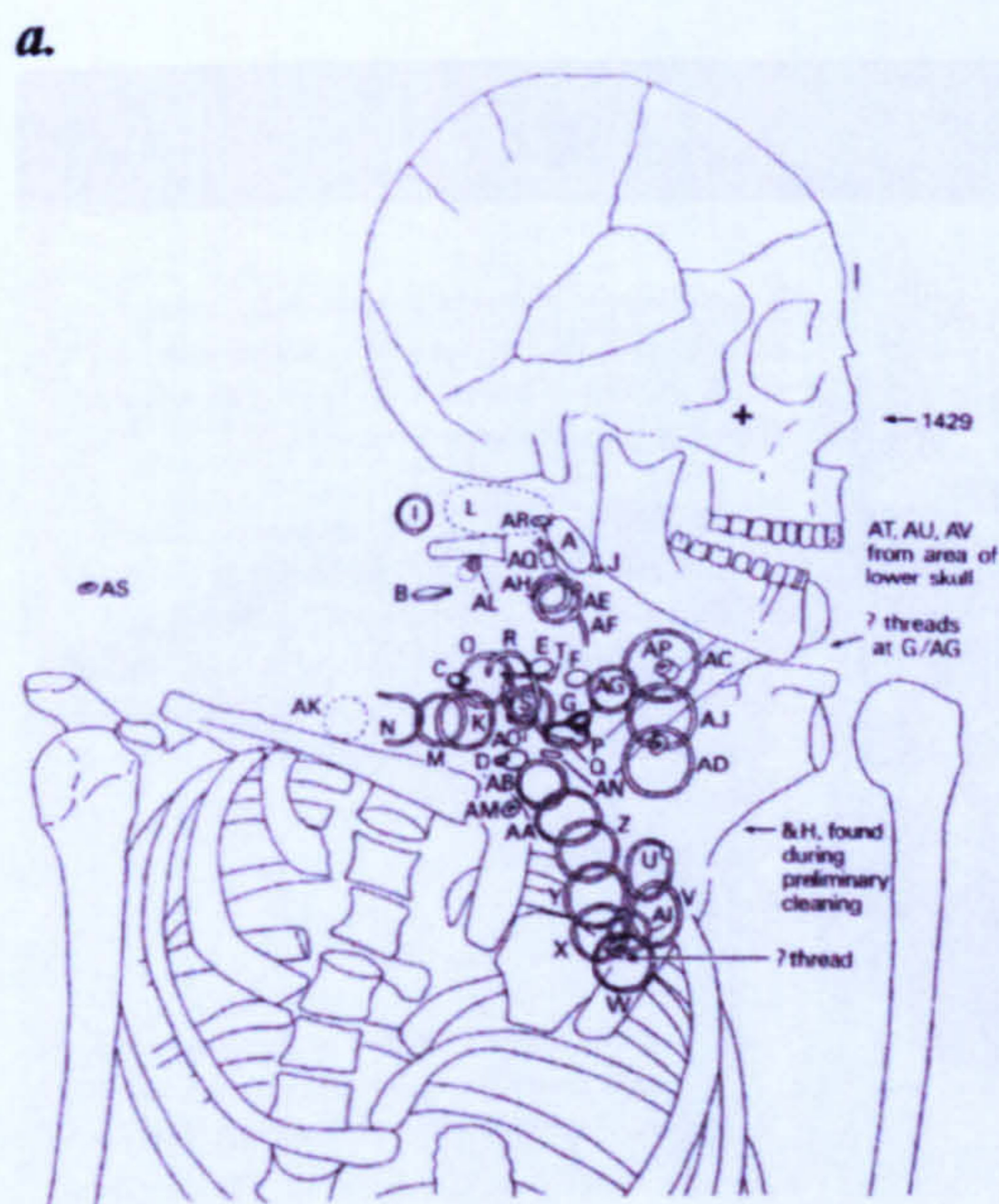
(from Meaney & Hawkes 1970:34)

Figure 8.17. Plan of the late seventh- and early eighth-century Lower Brook Street cemetery in Winchester



(Modified from Biddle 1975b:313)

Figure 8.18. a) Grave 23 from Lower Brook Street with necklace in situ, b) Components of the necklace in grave 23 (from Beaumont James 1997 –colour plates 3 & 4)



As was discussed earlier there is limited evidence for settlement within and around Winchester's Roman walls, and it is probable that the cemeteries of Winnall II and at Lower Brook Street served non-urban settlements. In the case of Winnall II, which lies outside the walled area, any associated settlement focus is likely to have lain beyond the defended area and it is possible that the cemetery was associated with the early medieval settlement recently found in the area (Winchester Museums Service Archive SMC W86), with the cemetery probably replacing the earlier sixth-century cemetery of Winnall I (Meaney & Hawkes 1970:53-4). In the case of the Lower Brook Street cemetery, the burials were possibly linked to some form of settlement, perhaps an estate, within the defended area (Biddle 1975b:305).

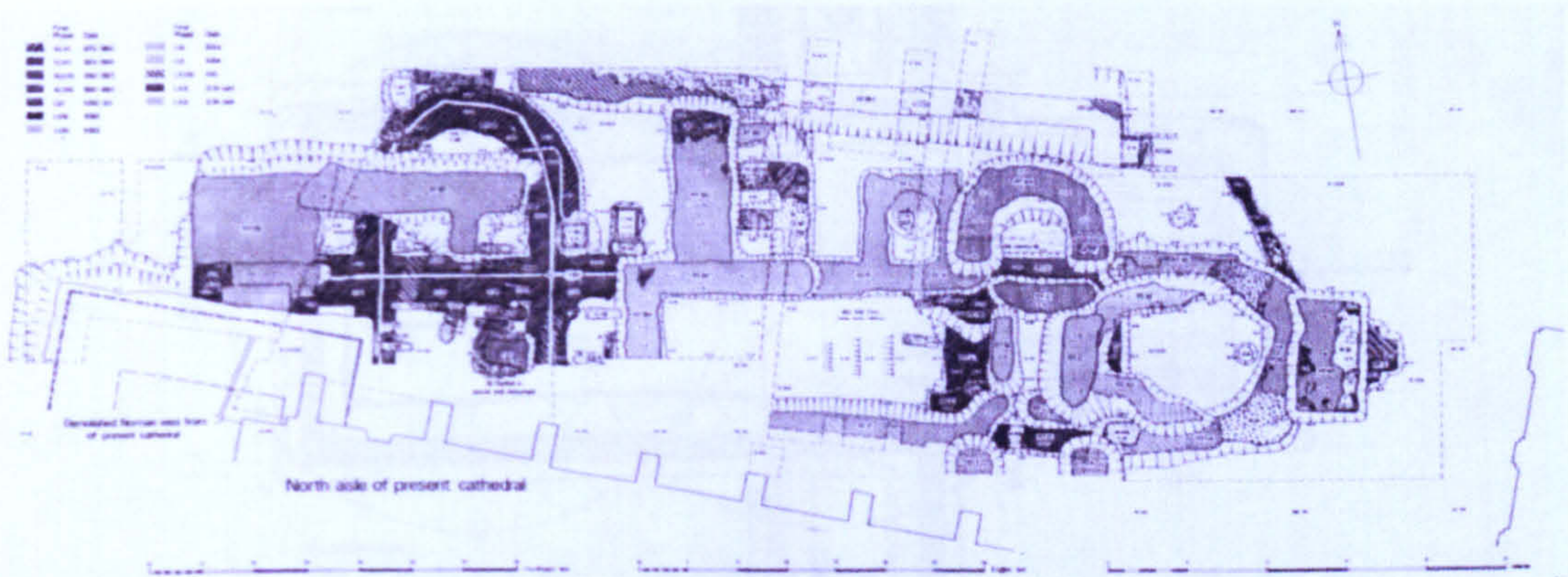
### **8.3. Enter the Church**

From the seventh century there was another factor to consider when considering the nature of burial in the Southampton and Winchester areas – the arrival of the Church.

#### **8.3.1. The Bishopric of Winchester and the advent of churchyard burial in Winchester**

Tradition has it that a church, presumably the Old Minster, was built in Winchester by King Cenwalh in 648 AD (*ASC* F 648, Swanton 2000:28), with the church within the walled area becoming the seat of the second West Saxon bishopric in the 660s (*HE* III.7; Sherley-Price 1955:154; *ASC* A 660, Swanton 2000:32). Winchester was soon the only West Saxon bishopric as the original West Saxon see at Dorchester-on-Thames was lost due to the southern expansion of Mercia (Finberg 1964:215) and Winchester was to remain the sole West Saxon see until the creation of an additional see at Sherborne in 705 AD (Yorke 1995:178). The remains of the seventh-century Old Minster and part of the associated cemetery were uncovered during excavations between 1962 and 1969 (Biddle 1964:202-211; 1965a:249-257; 1965b:319-326; 1966:266-272; 1968:268-280; 1969:312-323; 1970:314-321) (figure 8.19). The church was cruciform in plan, consisting of a nave with north, south and east porticus (Biddle 1970:317), and it was a relatively small building with the entire church being 29.20m in length and 21.90m in width (Kjølbye-Biddle 1986:201). A comprehensive understanding of the nature of burial around the Old Minster during the late seventh and eighth centuries will only be provided by the publication of the full excavation report, which is nearing completion. However, from the information currently available the absence of burials within the church prior to the ninth century suggests that the church was

**Figure 8.19. Plan of the excavations of the Old Minster in Winchester**



*(From Kjolbye-Biddle 1986:197)*

**Figure 8.20. Plan of Winchester, c. 900AD, showing postulated course of river through the walled area**



*(Figure courtesy of G. Scobie)*

unlikely to have been built on a pre-existing burial ground (*ibid.*). Burial probably occurred around the Old Minster from its earliest days, with the bodies of those closely linked to the new religious establishment, such as members of the ecclesiastical community and some members of the laity, interred around the church. This may be supported by the twelfth-century Winchester Annals which claim that Cenwalh (d. 676) and his son Centwine (d. c. 686) were buried at Winchester, presumably either by or within the church Cenwalh built, although caution should be exercised given the late date of the source (Yorke 1982:80).

The insertion of a church into the walled area and the ecclesiastical presence it brought with it is likely to have affected the nature of funerary provision in the vicinity. This may have been as simple as providing an alternative location for burial. The extent to which this fledgling church impacted on the other burials within the area is largely dependant on two factors: the character of occupation within and in the vicinity of the defended area and also the degree of influence the new religious community exerted over its environs. As has already been discussed, all available evidence suggests that the area within the Roman walls was not densely populated and was intrinsically non-urban, yet this area became the site of the second West Saxon see – why? One possibility was that the walled area contained a royal estate or residence (Biddle 1973:237). A royal palace is known to have been present within the walled area during the late Saxon period, lying close to the site of the Old Minster (*ibid.*:239) and it is possible that the palace had a Middle Saxon pre-cursor. In addition, it has been suggested that the clustering of sixth- and early seventh-century cemeteries around the walled area may have been indicative of some form of focal point of interest, possibly royal, within the Roman defences (*ibid.*:237). Furthermore the blocking of the South Gate (Biddle 1975b:117), and possibly the North Gate (Scobie 1995:2), at some point prior to the eighth century suggests that access into the walled area was being controlled (Biddle 1973:241). If the gates were blocked during the sixth or early seventh century, this would indicate some form of secular authority exercising a degree of control over the walled area, which perhaps supports the idea of a royal presence at Winchester during this period (Scobie 1995:3). However, if the alteration to the gates occurred in the late seventh century, then this could well have been linked with the development of the walled area as a bishop's see (*ibid.*). While there may have been a royal presence within the walled area during the sixth and seventh centuries, this is far from certain and it may be that the major royal influence in the Itchen Valley lay some 15 miles downstream at Southampton where there is growing evidence for a royal presence (see discussion in section 8.2.2). Ultimately, the question is unlikely to be resolved until excavations occur on the putative site of the royal palace.



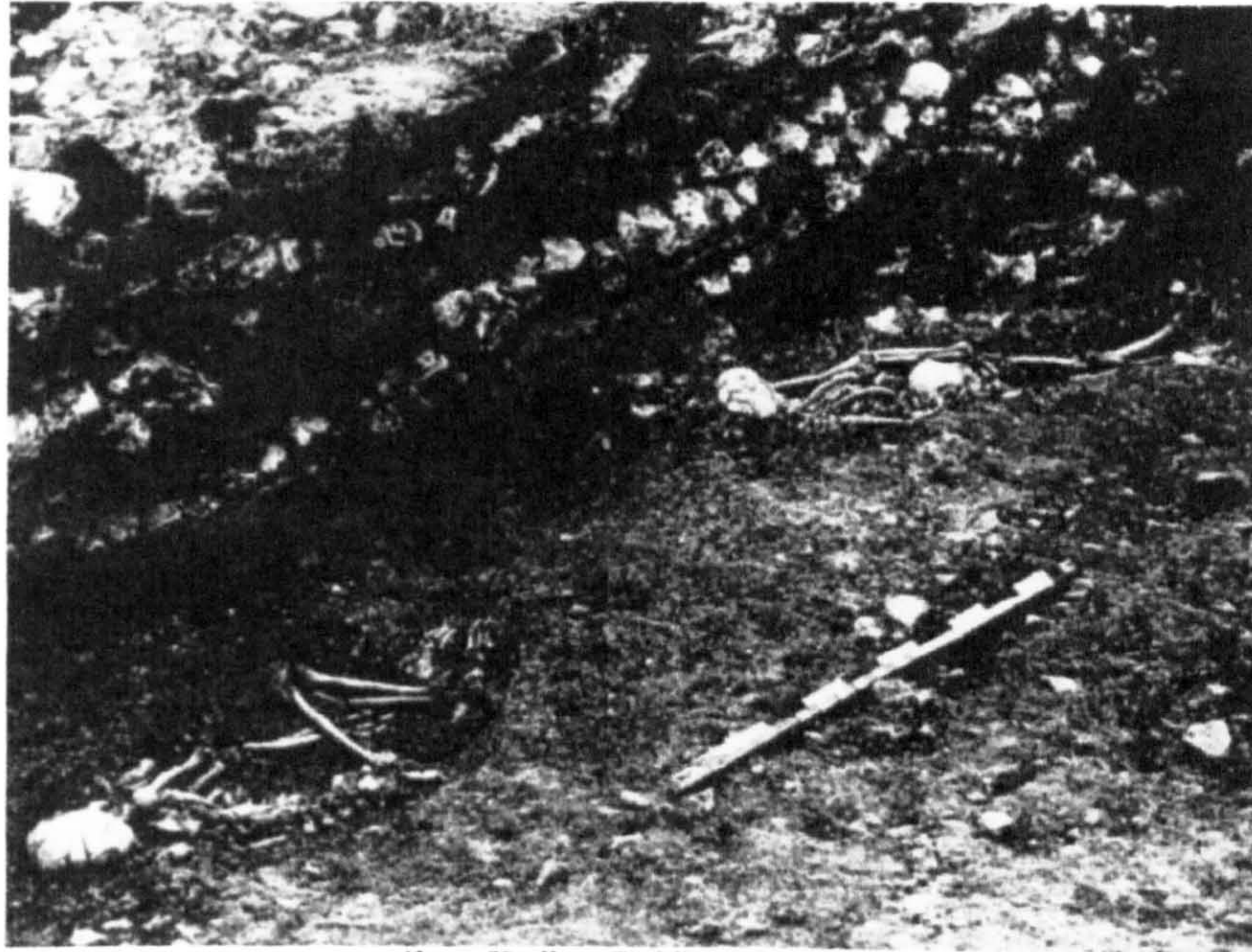
Yet it may be that a royal presence was not an essential prerequisite in determining the site of the see. A number of early Anglo-Saxon sees, such as Canterbury and London, were sited in the remains of Roman towns (Yorke 1982:78; Blair 2005:66) and it may have been that this was an important factor in locating the West Saxon see in Winchester. The re-use of Roman towns may simply have reflected practical considerations, such as the security provided by the surviving Roman defences, their position at the centre of the surviving network of Roman roads and the ready availability of building materials (*ibid.*). With regard to the last point, it is worth noting that the foundations and footings of the Old Minster were constructed from re-used Roman materials (Biddle 1970:318). Another factor may have been the continental tradition of bishoprics being sited in urban contexts (Yorke 1982:79). Seventh-century England had no urban centres and it may be that the continental missionaries used the next best thing when siting the new Anglo-Saxon sees, the ruins of the Roman towns, which also had the added advantage of providing continuity with the Roman world. If the bishopric was sited within the walled area to meet the needs of the missionaries rather than to place it in a pre-existing centre of royal authority this has potential implications for understanding of burial within the walled area at least.

The walled area of the Roman city of Venta Belgarum (Winchester) lay across the floodplain of the River Itchen, with the eastern parts of the walled area being drained by diverting the Itchen into an artificial channel to the east of the city and by the possible construction of watercourses running through the heart of the city (Scobie 1995:2). These watercourses fell into disrepair in the post-Roman period and by the time the Old Minster was founded much of the eastern part of the walled area was waterlogged save for a naturally occurring island of raised ground. During the early medieval period, islands within marshy floodplains were a favoured location for minster churches (Blair 1992:227), and it perhaps not surprising that the Old Minster lies on the southern part of the island of raised ground within the walled area (see figure 8.20) (Scobie 1995:3). The late seventh-century cemetery at Lower Brook Street lies on the northern part of the same island and is thought to be linked to a pre-urban secular estate, with the High Street marking the northern limit of the minster boundary. However, particularly if there was no royal presence in the walled area, it is possible that the Old Minster, with its church, ancillary buildings and burials grounds, controlled and occupied the entire island (*ibid.*:4). This means it is possible that the Lower Brook Street cemetery may in some way be linked to the ecclesiastical presence in Winchester. Many minster churches of middle Saxon date are known to have multiple cemeteries, for example Monkwearmouth, Ripon and Hartlepool (Cramp 1969:33; Hall & Whymer 1996:142; Daniels 1999:108-111) and it is possible that a similar arrangement occurred at Winchester. The possibility that existing burial grounds were gradually subsumed as subordinate parts of a growing

ecclesiastical network has long been suggested (Blair 1988: 51), and it may be that the Lower Brook Street cemetery pre-dates the foundation of the Old Minster, with the church assuming some form of control over the cemetery once it took control of the island. The other possibility is that the cemetery's foundation was in some way linked to the arrival of the Church within the walled area. The Lower Brook Street cemetery may contain ecclesiastical burials linked to a daughter house of the Old Minster, which may also have lain on the island. However, the burial need not necessarily be ecclesiastic; interment in the vicinity of the new churches was sought by high-status laymen as a form of status. In some cases, these individuals were interred in a separate cemetery from members of the religious community (Blair 1992:259) and it is possible that the Lower Brook Street cemetery was a lay cemetery associated with the Old Minster. The Anglo-Saxon church in the late seventh and even eighth centuries does not appear to have been unduly concerned with funerary practices or burial location (Bullough 1989:186). If the bodies at Lower Brook Street are those of the laity, their burial in the proximity of the Old Minster may represent an active choice (Blair 1988b:52). In contrast, for the majority of the population, such as those interred at Winnall II which lies approximately half a mile from the Old Minster, the arrival of a new faith is unlikely to have had an impact on their funerary behaviour, at least during the late seventh and early eighth centuries.

More difficult to explain are the two bodies found in a ditch outside the city walls by the blocked and disused Roman Southgate (Kjølbye-Biddle 1992:221) (figure 8.21) as they do not fit easily into either the existing pattern of field cemeteries or the new churchyards introduced by the church. One of the burials was interred in a supine extended position, while the other, whose skeleton exhibited the early signs of leprosy, lay on its side with the legs drawn up and it has been suggested this latter individual may not have had a formal burial (*ibid.*:221; Biddle 1975a:117). Radiocarbon dates from one of the burials gave dates of 560-850AD and 490-820 AD, and a date of c.700AD has been suggested for the burials (*ibid.*:118; Kjølbye-Biddle 1992:221). This would imply that these individuals were probably buried at a time when the Old Minster was present within the walled area. Traditionally, scattered or isolated burials were seen as being individuals excluded from community burial grounds. Yet the presence of deviant burials at Winnall II, a cemetery probably contemporary to the burials by the Southgate, suggest that wrongdoers were not necessarily excluded from community burial grounds during the seventh and perhaps even the eighth centuries, but rather set apart by their mode of burial (Reynolds 1997:38). Moreover, the discovery of increasing numbers of scattered burials within settlements, especially on the continent has led to suggestions that these burials are not of excluded individuals, but may, in some cases, represent an alternative mortuary practice (Zadora-Rio

*Figure 8.21. Two late seventh or early eighth century burials by the Southgate in Winchester*



*(from Kjolbye-Biddle 1992:221)*

*Table 8.2. Human remains recovered from around St. Mary's Church, Southampton.*

Site	Burial evidence	Date of remains*	References
SOU 630	2 burials, one above the other, with fragments of disarticulated bone in both graves.	Grave 106 – 888-1024AD Grave 113– 676-895 AD	Smith 1995
SOU 184	Lower half of articulated burial	1015-1160 AD	Youngs, Clark & Gaimster 1988
SOU 753	Feet of inhumation uncovered. Not excavated but few toe bones taken for radiocarbon dating.	940-1190 AD	Smith 1996
SOU 1193	Disarticulated human remains in 4 trenches. Minimum of 6 individuals represented.	Most complete skeleton radiocarbon dated to 17 <sup>th</sup> or 18 <sup>th</sup> century. 1 of 2 possible graves was thought to be of middle Saxon date.	Garner 2004b
SOU 1297	Articulated bones- possibly a grave	Unknown	Garner 2004a
SOU 925	Fragments of human bone found in a number of trenches	Unknown	Garner 1998

\*Radiocarbon dates given at 2 $\sigma$  level of confidence

2003:3).<sup>2</sup> Indeed, isolation does not necessarily have to be equated with exclusion. Isolated burials in the form of richly furnished inhumations below barrows and other earthworks, such as the burial at Oliver's Battery (Andrews 1931) which dates to the second half of the seventh or early part of the eighth century (Geake 1999:7-8) and lies some 1.75 miles to the south-west of Winchester (figure 8.4) (Andrews 1931:11), are found across much of the study area during the seventh and early eighth centuries<sup>3</sup> and in these cases, separation from others in death serve to enhance status rather than diminish it. Furthermore, although not as common as the re-use of prehistoric monuments, there are a number of examples of early Saxon burials and cemeteries associated with Roman remains, including town walls (Williams 1997:9). As such, it is possible that to those who buried the two individuals by the Southgate, this location had a particular significance, and may even have given status to those interred there and their ancestors. Yet, even allowing for this, it should be noted that documentary sources suggest that the early Church may have taken a different approach to "problematic" individuals in death. Effros (1997:2-3) has drawn attention to the examples in Gregory of Tours' History of the Franks and Gregory I's Dialogues of two individuals, one an aristocrat and the other a member of a monastic house, being buried away from recognised ecclesiastical burial grounds as punishment for wrongdoing. This raises the possibility that the early Anglo-Saxon Church, while having little interest in the burial mores of the general population, sought to control who was interred in the more exclusive burial grounds adjacent to churches (*ibid.*:4). As such, the possibility, however remote, that the burials by the Southgate, which lay just outside a walled area dominated by the Old Minster, represent members of that religious community who for whatever reason had been excluded from the community's cemetery cannot be completely excluded.

### **8.3.2. The origins of churchyard burial in Hamwic**

While information about the earliest church in early medieval Winchester is known from both archaeological and documentary sources, in contrast there is little comparable information on the early church in Southampton. St. Mary's church has long been considered to be Southampton's mother church and was known to be the mother church for the entire lower part of the Itchen Valley during the eleventh and twelfth centuries (Hase 1994:45). Yet while the location of this church within the site of middle Saxon Hamwic, as opposed to the site of the later Saxon and medieval town, seems to support this supposition, until recently there was little archaeological evidence suggestive of a middle Saxon origin. A series 49 sceatta was found in the St. Mary's churchyard in 1838 (Addyman & Hill 1969:67) and a

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<sup>2</sup> Also see discussion and examples in section 7.2.4 and 7.3.

<sup>3</sup> See table 5.9 for examples within the study area

burial accompanied by a lead cross of early medieval date was uncovered in 1884 (Morton 1992a:50), but this was far from conclusive evidence. Fortunately, the last decade has seen a number of skeletons excavated within and immediately adjacent to St. Mary's churchyard (table 8.2. & figure 8.22). A number of the human remains were radiocarbon dated to the early medieval period (table 8.2.), providing more substantive evidence that St. Mary's was in use as a burial ground during the early medieval period (Smith 1995:259). The earliest radiocarbon date gave a range of 676-895 AD at a 2 $\sigma$  level of confidence (*ibid*:258), which suggests that the churchyard was in use by at least the ninth century and probably earlier. Moreover, all of the burials that were radiocarbon dated lie on the periphery of the current churchyard, and assuming that burial commenced closer to the church, it is possible that the core of the burial ground is considerably earlier, possibly of seventh- or eighth-century date (*ibid*:259). With only a few fragmented skeletons recovered from the edge of the churchyard, it is virtually impossible to determine anything of the funerary practices being used except that the burials are supine and orientated west-east. That there was a middle Saxon cemetery associated with St. Mary's Church now seems highly probable, but this was not the only site of churchyard burial within the middle Saxon settlement.

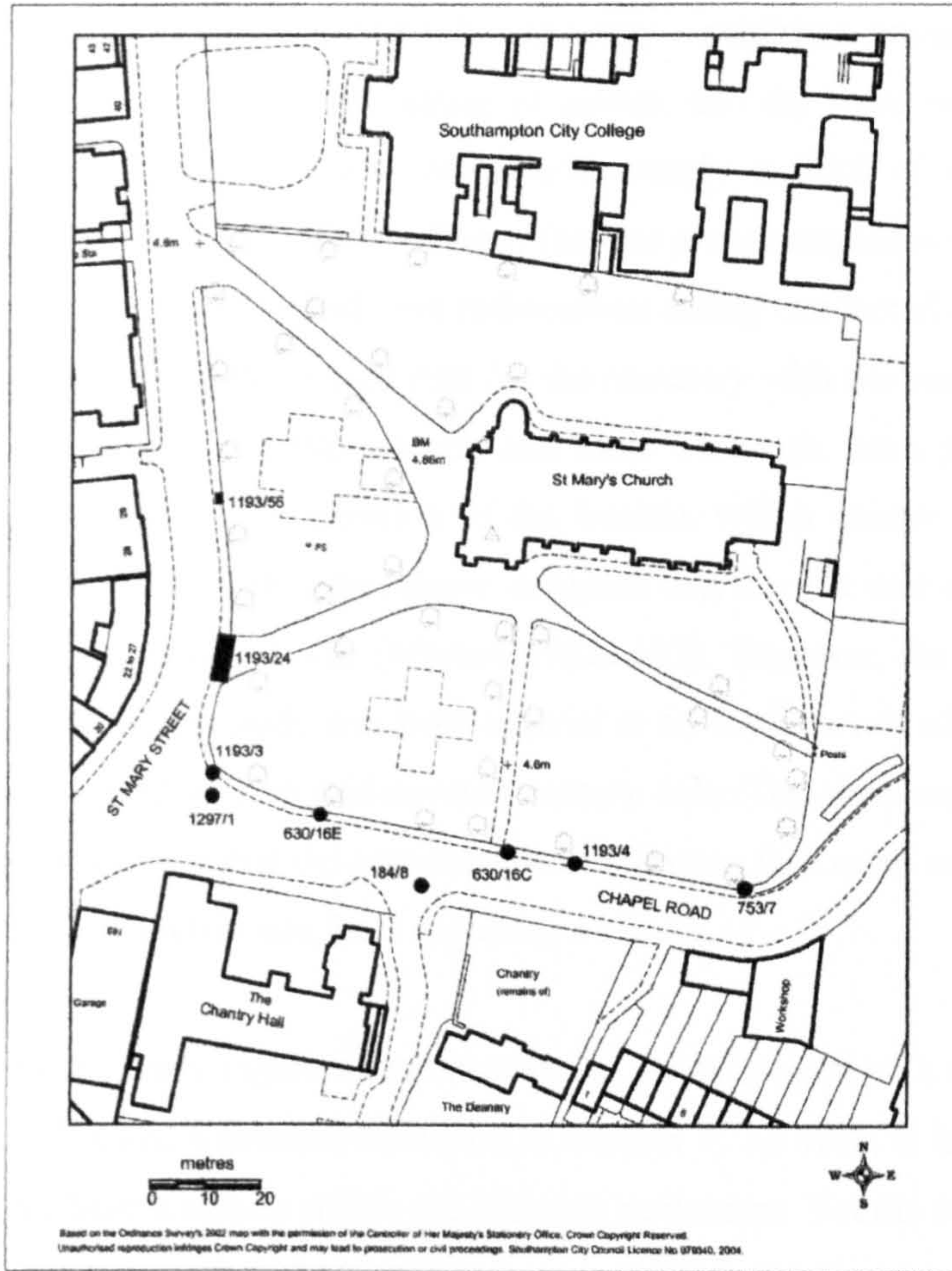
Excavations at SOU 13 in 1973 uncovered the remains of at least 81 burials (Morton 1992a:121). These burials, which are the largest cemetery assemblage recovered from the Southampton area,<sup>4</sup> lay either side of a trench and post-hole structure, some 4.2 metres wide and at least 12.94 metres long (figure 8.23) (*ibid*:122).<sup>5</sup> The spacing of the post holes suggests a door was present in the south wall, while a piece of window glass suggests the building was at least partly glazed (*ibid*:124). The burials found either side of the building indicate that it is likely to have been a double celled church (*ibid*:123), which usually dates to the eighth century or later (*ibid*:136). Burials were recovered from two trenches on either side of the church, with at least 45 inhumations recovered from the northern trench and at least another 36 from the trench to the south (*ibid*:123). Grave goods were only found with two burials, one accompanied by a knife and the other an iron object, although items such as the two knives, three pin shafts, three possible tags and possibly part of a chatelaine recovered from the site may have initially been deposited in graves (*ibid*. 133-4). Wood stains, indicative of the use of a coffin or wooden linings, were found in only one grave (*ibid*:136) and there was no other evidence for the use of grave structures or above ground markers observed in the cemetery. All the burials were orientated west-east and organised in

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<sup>4</sup> This is unlikely to be the case much longer as the site of the Friary in Southampton is currently being excavated (Summer 2005) and large numbers of medieval burials are being uncovered (Andy Russel *per. comm.*). When these are added to the 40+ burials uncovered in an earlier excavations, they will form the largest cemetery population from the Southampton area.

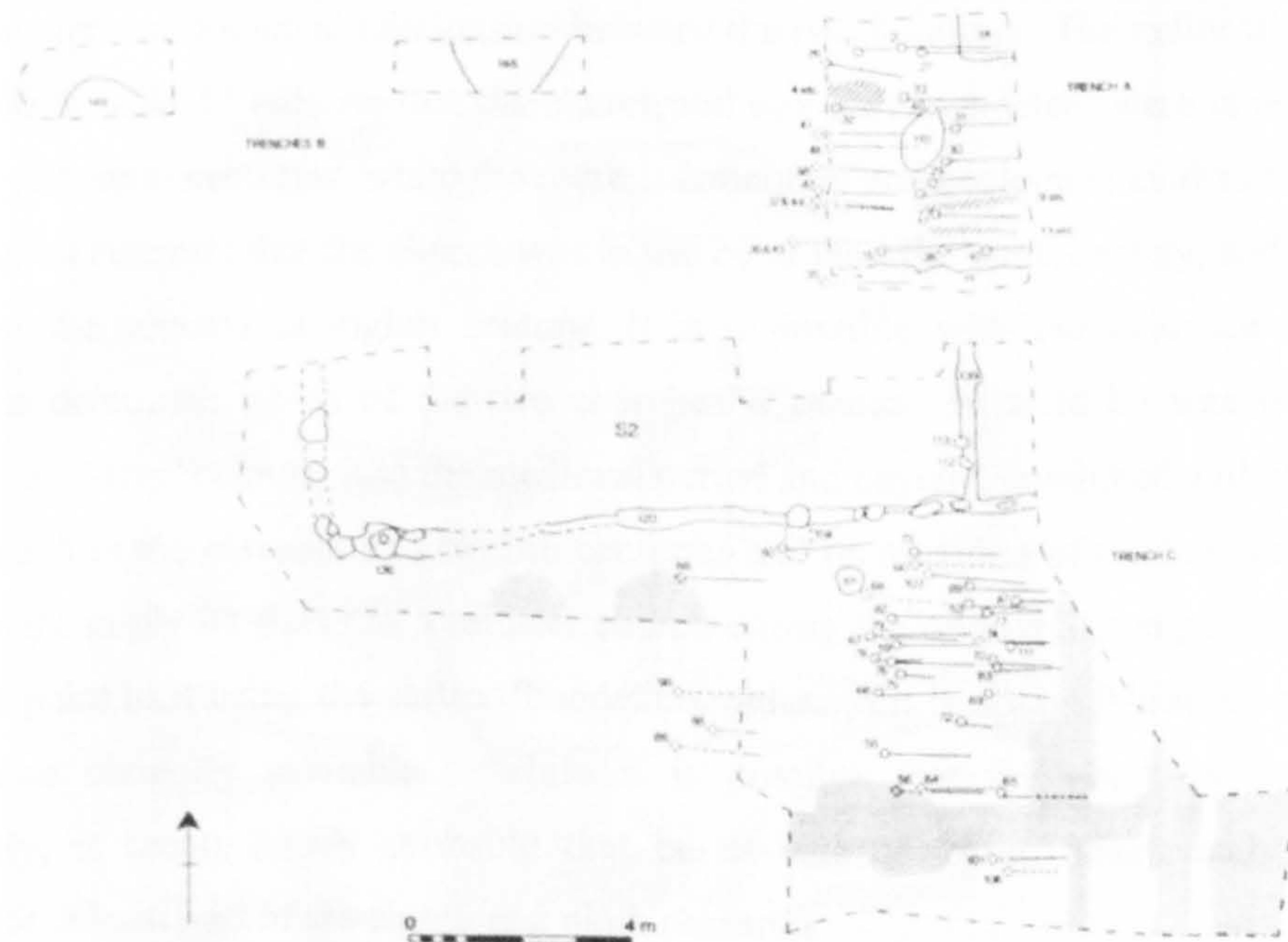
<sup>5</sup> The use of timber for the construction of churches is mentioned in the seventh-century *Theodore's Penitential* (2:3 – Geary 1997:257),

*Figure 8.22.. Map showing the position of human remains recovered from around St. Mary's Church.*



The site codes lack the SOU prefix and are followed by trench number or letters. (Figure courtesy of M.F. Garner)

*Figure 8.23. Plan of eighth and ninth century cemetery at SOU 13, Southampton*



(from Morton 1992a:123)

rows set approximately at right angles to the church (*ibid.*:134). Although no cemetery boundaries were clearly identified, the majority of the cemetery at SOU 13 is thought to have been excavated (*ibid.*:132). The SOU 13 cemetery exhibited considerable post-burial disturbance with high levels of intercutting of graves, and the rows of burials within the cemetery were reworked five times with approximately a third of all skeletons being redeposited (Morton 1992b:72). Many of these features are synonymous with churchyards of the later Saxon and Medieval periods, yet radiocarbon dating conducted as part of this study confirmed the suspected middle Saxon date for the cemetery with the burial ground likely to have been in use between the late seventh and ninth centuries, most probably during the eighth and ninth century. The position of the burials, which cluster closely around the church without being cut by its foundations, suggests that the site was only used for burial after the construction of the church (Morton 1992a:123). However, the fourth radiocarbon date obtained as part of this study was from a burial at the lower levels of one of the trenches and this produced a mid-sixth to mid-seventh century date. This date may be erroneous, but it does raise the possibility that the cemetery had its origins in a small seventh-century field cemetery, which continued in use, later acquiring a church.

The late seventh and early eighth centuries saw the establishment of a network of minster churches across Wessex, a process discussed in chapter 7. As such, it is not surprising that there should have been a church within the Hamwic settlement. Yet the settlement was home to two churches, lying some 200 metres apart, making it necessary to determine the relationship between them before considering their impact on the organisation of burial within the middle Saxon settlement. Resolving this issue is complicated by the difficulties in determining the chronological relationship between the two buildings. The radiocarbon dates from burials at SOU 13 indicate that the church and associated cemetery were in use during the eighth and ninth centuries, while the more fragmentary archaeological evidence from St. Mary's church suggests that the church was in use by at least the ninth century, and possibly as early as the seventh or eighth century. It is impossible with the evidence currently available to determine which of the two churches is earlier. It could be argued that the survival of St. Mary's church into the medieval period and beyond, combined with its role as mother church in the eleventh and twelfth centuries and its retention of the burial rights for the city might imply its status as a minster church during the middle Saxon period. This in turn might point to it being the earlier foundation, although it is impossible to be sure with the evidence currently available. While it is possible that the churches were used successively, it seems highly probable that burial was occurring concurrently at both churches for at least part of the eighth and ninth centuries.

It has been suggested that the settlement may have been home to both a putative royal centre (see discussion above) and a possible foreign enclave, the presence of the latter being suggested by the concentration of imported pottery in one part of Hamwic (Timby 1988:117). As such, it is possible that the two churches represent two completely separate ecclesiastical foci, perhaps serving different communities or kin groups within Hamwic. However, minsters of the eighth and ninth century were not compact enclosed units, but rather were composed of dispersed elements including multiple churches, chapels, holy wells and cemeteries (Blair 1992:239, 257; 2005:199). Thus, St. Mary's Church and the church at SOU 13 may well have been components of a single ecclesiastical complex,<sup>6</sup> perhaps with the two churches forming the churches which lay at the core of most minster complexes (*ibid*:199). Yet usually these multiple central churches were aligned approximately on a west-east axis linearly as at St. Augustine's Canterbury (Kt), Jarrow and Hexham (Nb) (Blair 1992:249-50; 2005:199; Gem 1992; Cramp 1976; Bailey 1991), although there are a few examples where the churches lie with their long sides parallel to each other aligned north-south (Huggins 1978). The two Hamwic churches, in contrast, are not arranged in anything approaching a straight line (see figure 8.24 for position of the SOU 13 site in relation to St. Mary's Church) and in addition they lie some 200 metres apart. While irregularities in the layout are not unknown – see example of Bywell (Nb) in Blair (1992:228) - they are unusual and the 200m distance between the two churches is much larger than usually seen between groups of central churches, thus reducing the likelihood that both churches were part of the central core of an ecclesiastical complex.<sup>7</sup> Some minster complexes are known to have possessed subsidiary chapels and oratories, which lay away from the central churches (Blair 2005:202). In some cases, these structures may have had associated burial grounds (Blair 1988:52). For example, the nun's cemetery at Barking (Ex) was associated with an oratory, which lay in the south of the monastic precinct (*HE IV:7* – Sherley-Price 1990:217; Blair 2005:202). As such, it may be that the timber church structure found at SOU 13 was a mortuary chapel or a small outlying church linked to the minster complex. It is possible that

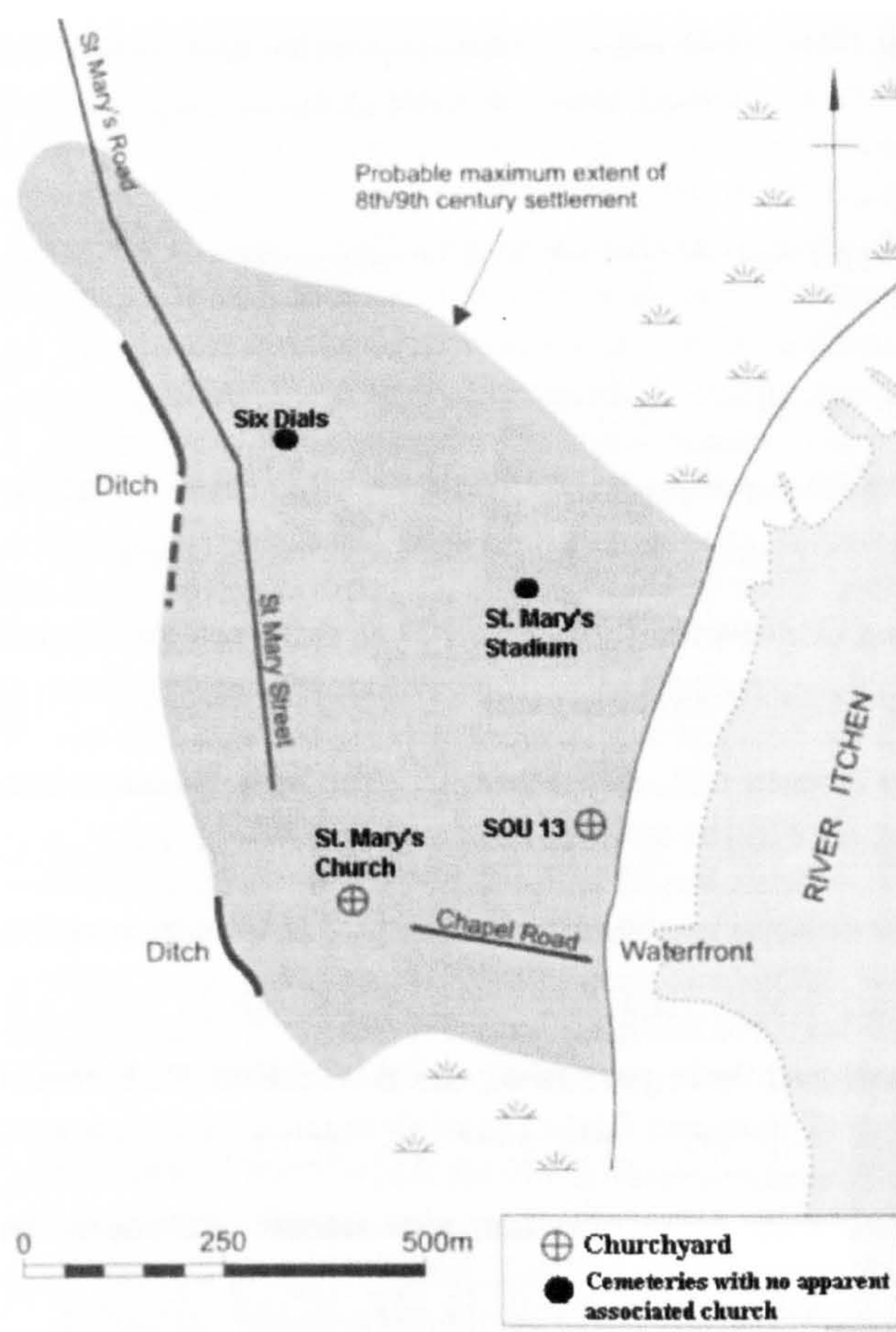
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<sup>6</sup> Lower densities of occupation features at SOU 254, 567 and 823 – the site of the Cook Street cemetery - which lies immediately to the west of St. Mary's Church, have been attributed to the site's peripheral location within Hamwic (Garner 2001:189; Morton 2005:197). However, it is possible that this may be indicative of differences in the nature of occupation in the vicinity of the church, and it has been suggested this could be synonymous with the presence of an ecclesiastical complex in the southern part of Hamwic (Morton 1999:56). In addition, evidence for ditches has been found at SOU 184 to the south of St. Mary's church and at Cook Street to the west of St. Mary's (Garner 1993:121). The distance between the two sites is about 75m and it is possible that the two sections of ditches are part of the same structure. The possibility that this ditch may have formed part of a town boundary has been suggested (*Ibid*:121-2). However, given the evidence for an ecclesiastic presence in this area, the possibility that the ditch forms part of the boundary around a monastic complex cannot be excluded (A. Morton *pers. comm.*). Furthermore should this be the case, the Cook Street cemetery would fall within the religious precinct.

<sup>7</sup> Leland writing in the first half of the sixteenth century described the small chapel of St. Nicholas, which stood at the east end of St. Mary's Church (Morton 1992a:50). While this may represent a medieval subsidiary chapel built in St. Mary's churchyard, it does raise the possibility that a second early church may have lain adjacent to St. Mary's Church (*ibid*).

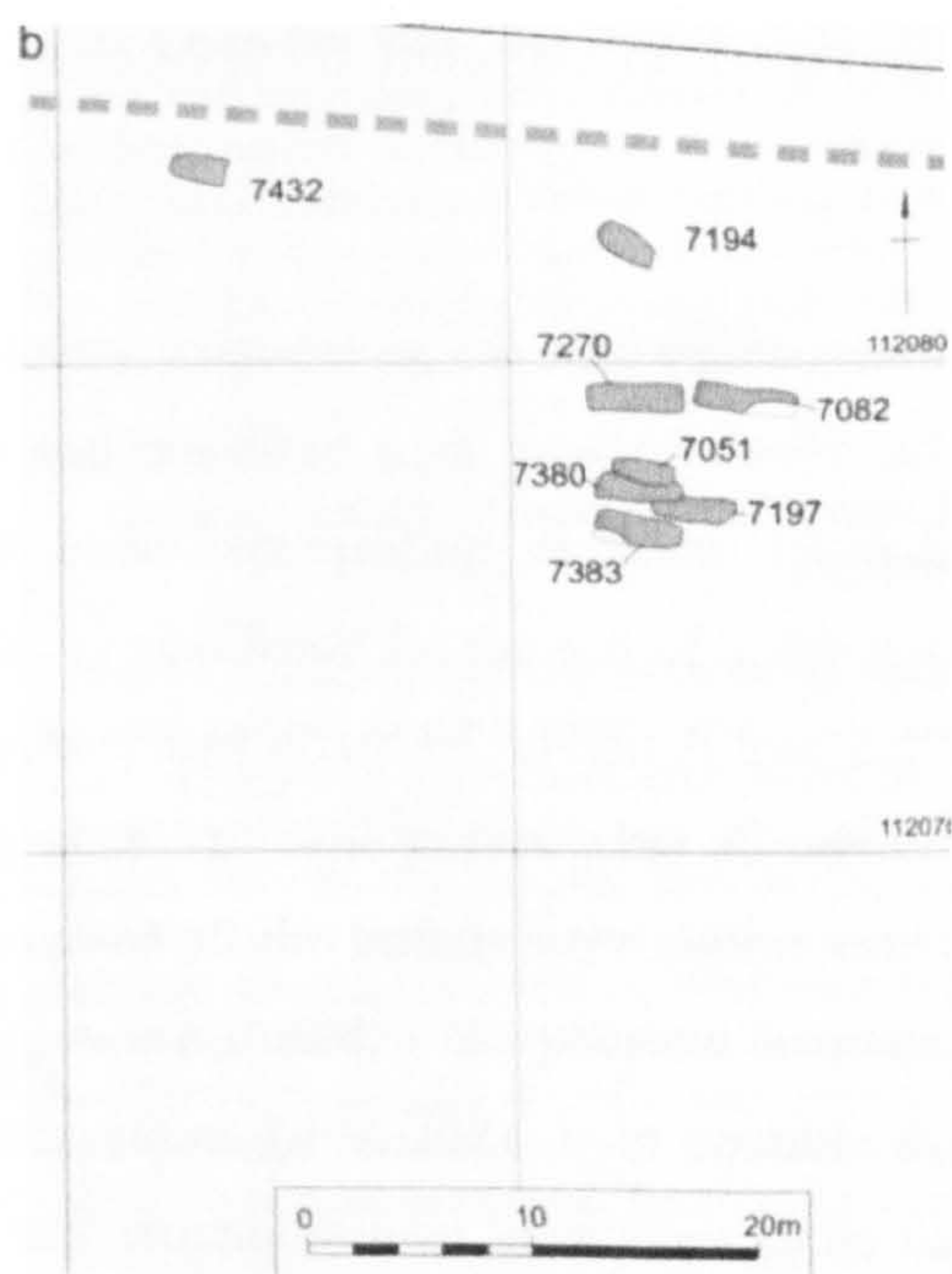


Figure 8.24. Plan of Hamwic showing location of later cemeteries (mid-eighth century onwards)



(modified from Birbeck 2005:196)

Figure 8.25. Plan of the eighth-century St. Mary's Stadium cemetery II



(from Birbeck 2005:108)

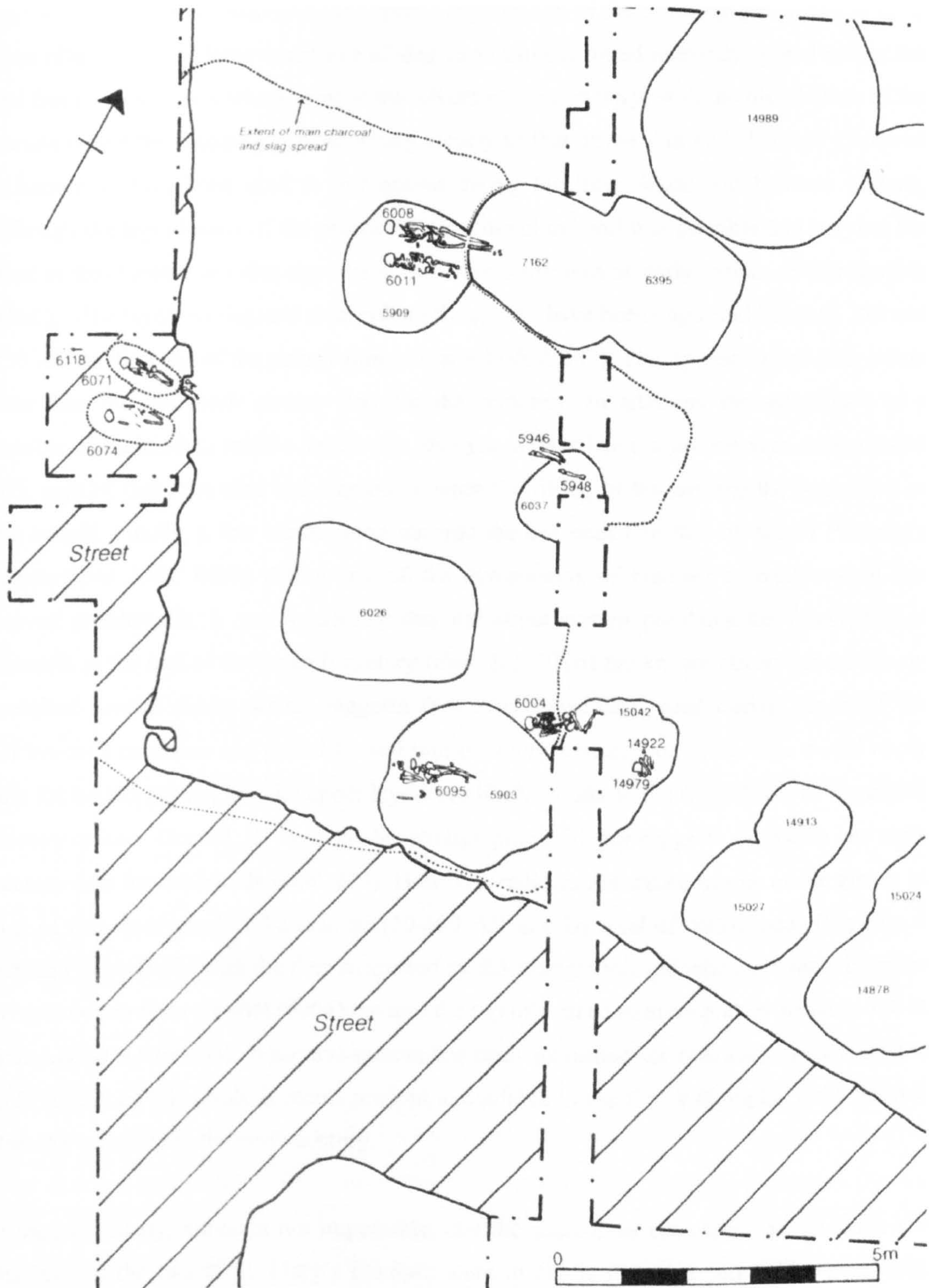
burial adjacent to St. Mary's Church, like that at the Old Minster in Winchester, may initially have been restricted to certain elements of the Hamwic community, possibly members of the ecclesiastical community and only certain members of the laity, with the cemetery at SOU 13 serving as a burial ground for another part of the community.

### **8.3.3. Non-churchyard burial in Hamwic during the eighth and ninth centuries**

The two churchyards were not the only cemeteries in Hamwic in use during the eighth and ninth centuries. For while the early eighth-century burial grounds at Cook Street, St. Mary's Stadium I and SOU 32 were probably abandoned and subsumed when the settlement expanded in the mid-eighth century (Scull 2001:74; Birbeck 2005:77), there are at least two other cemeteries, which appear to post-date the mid-eighth century, both without any apparent associated ecclesiastical structures (figure 8.24). The earliest of these is the later of the two cemeteries uncovered during the excavations at St. Mary's Stadium. The cemetery, called St. Mary's Stadium cemetery II in this study, contained eight inhumations and lay less than 100 metres to the north of the late seventh- and early eighth-century cemetery of St. Mary's Stadium I (Figure 8.24 & 8.25). It has been suggested that the cemetery may have been a small family burial ground (Birbeck 2005:107). The unfurnished burials were all supine with extended or slightly flexed legs and orientated with their heads to the west (*ibid.*). There was no evidence for the use of grave structures or above-ground markers, although the base of one grave was lined with a three centimetre layer of gravel (*ibid.*). Although it is possible that these burials could be part of the St. Mary's Stadium cemetery I, their separation from the earlier cemetery and the differences in funerary provision combined with a radiocarbon date of 650-950AD from one of the graves seems to indicate a later eighth-century date (*ibid.*).

The second Hamwic cemetery, post-dating the mid-eighth century, was uncovered during excavations at Six Dials and consisted of a total of eleven articulated burials and three groups of disarticulated bone representing at least 19 individuals (Figure 8.24 & 8.26)(Andrews 1997:198). No evidence for the use of grave goods, above-ground markers or any form of grave furniture was observed, although iron nails were recovered from the area around the graves (*ibid.*:203). The graves were all oriented approximately west-east and where it could be observed all the burials were supine extended with the exception of one burial where the legs were flexed. No physical boundaries to the cemetery were recognised during the excavations (*ibid.*:202). It is possible that some of the post- and stakeholes not linked to any structures may have been some form of fence, although the evidence is tentative at best. While it is impossible to be certain, the lack of human remains

Figure 8.26. Plan of ninth-century cemetery at Six Dials



(from Andrews 1997:199)

in the areas excavated surrounding the cemetery suggests much, if not all, of the cemetery that survives has been excavated. The spatial organisation of the cemetery also seems to have been affected by the large quantities of slag and charcoal found unevenly spread across the site from earlier iron working prior to the advent of the cemetery, with the distribution of the burials within the cemetery corresponding closely to that of the slag and charcoal. Charcoal is known to have been used to line graves during the later Saxon and Norman periods, although the significance of the practice is far from clear<sup>8</sup> and it is possible that burying the dead in the charcoal and slag deposits at Six Dials represents an early variant of this practice (*ibid.*). The layers of slag and charcoal are thought to have been deposited between 750 and 850 AD on the basis of the pottery they contained (*ibid.*:203). This appears to indicate a date later than the mid-ninth century date for the cemetery. In addition, the subsidence of a number of burials into middle Saxon pits, thought to have been in use between 750 and 850 AD, suggest that little time had elapsed between the filling of the pits and the deposition of the burials. Finally, a few burials were cut into the last extant surface of one of Hamwic's streets (*ibid.*:202). While dating any of the components of Hamwic's street system has proved problematic, it seems unlikely that the street system pre-dates the foundation of Hamwic at the end of the seventh century (*ibid.*:44). All of the known streets have been re-metalled several times, which suggests they may have been used during much of the settlement's existence and probably well into the ninth century (*ibid.*:31). This would imply that the burials cutting into the upper layers are likely to date to the second part of the eighth century or later. Overall, all the available stratigraphic evidence suggests a possible late ninth century date for the burials (*ibid.*:203). However, radiocarbon dating of one of the graves as part of this study produced a date of 550-690 AD at a 2 $\sigma$  level of confidence. This date is difficult to reconcile with the date suggested by the stratigraphic evidence, particularly as the sample comes from a burial (6004) cut into the top of a pit containing pottery dated to 750 to 850 AD (*ibid.*:198,203). A second sample has been submitted for radiocarbon analysis and until receipt of this result, it seems prudent to continue to use the stratigraphic evidence and date the cemetery to the ninth century.

It seems unlikely, although not impossible, that the short-lived cemeteries at Six Dials and the later of the two at St. Mary's Stadium were in use at the same time. However, both cemeteries were in use at the same time as the burial grounds at St. Mary's Church and/or SOU 13. Small, short-lived non-churchyard cemeteries both within and around settlements are not unusual in the eighth and ninth centuries, even when a church and churchyard is present (Hadley forthcoming; Zadora-Rio 2003:3). Where there is an ecclesiastical presence in the settlement, non-churchyard cemeteries, such as those in Hamwic, may lie under the

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<sup>8</sup> See section 5.1.2.3 for a more detailed discussion on charcoal burials.

control of the Church and form some of the more diffuse elements of a minster complex despite the absence of any associated buildings (Blair 1988:54). In some cases, these cemeteries may have had free-standing crosses. Indeed, it has been suggested that one of the postholes lying on the south side of the church at SOU 13 may have held a free-standing cross (Morton 1992a:123), which may have either pre-dated the church (Morton 1992b:70) or have been a feature within the churchyard. The post-settings for standing crosses leave little distinctive evidence within the archaeological record and it is possible that standing crosses may have been present in other non-churchyard cemeteries in Hamwic. Finally although it seems highly probable that the non-churchyard cemeteries were part of a minster complex, the possibility that some or all of these groups of non-churchyard burials are completely independent of any ecclesiastical presence within the settlement and may represent the persistence of an alternative non-ecclesiastical funerary practice cannot be excluded (Zadora-Rio 2003:3).

Not all of Hamwic's dead were formally interred in the settlement's cemeteries. The remains of two neonates have been found buried in middle Saxon rubbish pits at SOU 36 (Morton 1992a:198) and Six Dials (SOU 31) (Andrews 1997:204) respectively. This may represent the exclusion of the unbaptised from the community burial ground (Morton 1992b:52). However, this may not be the only explanation. In the case of the infant burials, it is worth noting that the comparative lack of infant burials during the early Anglo-Saxon period has led to the suggestion that infants were treated differently in death and not necessarily interred within community burial grounds (Crawford 1999:75-6). As such, the burial of infants in rubbish pits may have been the appropriate method of disposing of the bodies of neonates and the stillborn in middle Saxon Hamwic. A final resting place among the community's rubbish may even have had some form of traditional significance (Andrews 1997:204). Finally the possibility that these two infants were disposed of illicitly away from the usual burial grounds, for whatever reason, cannot be excluded. Illicit disposal is also a possible explanation for the isolated west-east burial found in a ditch at SOU 124 on the site of the later town, which lies some 500 metres outside Hamwic (Shaw, unpublished report) (figure 8.31). The burial was radiocarbon dated to 775-960 AD at  $2\sigma$  level of confidence as part of this study. The date of the burial suggests this individual was interred either before the area become the main focus of settlement or during the early days of the late Saxon town during the tenth century. The slight level of disarray in the position of the body does raise the possibility that this was not a formal interment.

#### 8.3.4. Burial in the Winchester area during the eighth and ninth centuries

In contrast to the plethora of known cemeteries in the Southampton area of eighth- and ninth-century date, there is a comparative dearth of burial grounds around Winchester. After the cemeteries at Lower Brook Street and Winnall II appear to have gone out of use during the first half of the eighth century, the only known burial ground in use until the mid-ninth century in the Winchester area was the churchyard of the Old Minster. Although parts of the churchyard lying to the west and north of the Old Minster along with small areas to the east and south of the church were excavated between 1962 and 1969, as has been stated above, detailed information on the seventh- to ninth-century burials around the Old Minster will only be available on completion of the final excavation report. However, the information currently available indicates burial began initially close to the church gradually spreading outwards (Kjølbye-Biddle 1992:22), with three ninth-century graves lying within the church itself (Kjølbye-Biddle 1975: 95). While the vast majority of the graves in and around the Old Minster contained no grave goods, there are a few exceptions. These include a writing lead recovered from an early ninth-century burial (Biddle & Brown 1990:746), a silver pin from an early to mid ninth-century grave (Biddle 1990b:555) and a matching pair of silver hooked tags from a mid to late ninth-century grave (Hinton 1990c:549). This last grave, which lay within the Old Minster, also contained gold braids thought to be from some form of head dress or covering (Crowfoot 1990:480-1) and may denote an individual, either lay or ecclesiastical, of some significance (*ibid.*:471), as may the gold braid around the skull of another burial of late ninth-century date (*ibid.*:481). Evidence for the use of coffins was recovered from a number of graves in the form of coffin nails (Kjølbye-Biddle 1992:223).

The absence of any evidence for other cemeteries within the walled area at Winchester between the mid-eighth and mid-ninth century, suggests the Old Minster held a monopoly over burial within the Roman defences at least until the middle of the ninth century (Kjølbye-Biddle 1992:224).<sup>9</sup> However, this needs to be put into context. While still far from substantial, there is an increasing amount of evidence for occupation of the walled area during the eighth and particularly the ninth centuries, much of it from on or around the raised land in the floodplain in the eastern half of the defended area (Scobie 1995:3) (see figure 8.26). Evidence for two workshops of the eighth to late ninth century, one containing evidence for iron working and the other bronze working, were uncovered just to the north of the Old Minster (Teague 1989:3-5). At Lower Brook Street, the late seventh- to early eighth-

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<sup>9</sup> Outside the walled area, there was at least one cemetery in the Winchester area, the execution cemetery at Old Dairy Cottage which has been dated to between the late eighth and eleventh centuries and which will be discussed later in this chapter.

century cemetery was replaced first by timber buildings, which may have reused some of the surviving Roman structures on the site (Biddle 1975b:308). These structures, in turn, were replaced, possibly in the late or early ninth century (*ibid.*:310), by a masonry structure which appears to have been used for gold working (*ibid.*:309). There was also evidence for iron working during the mid-ninth century on the site of the Nunnaminster prior to its foundation (Qualmann 1986:206) and evidence for glass working, also during the mid-ninth century, was found in the remains of a Roman building at the Brooks site (Scobie *et al* 1991:37).

There is no evidence for occupation in the western part of the walled area, with much of the human activity within the walled area confined to the flood plain to the east (Scobie 1995:3). All of the sites lie close to the Old Minster and this raises the possibility that the buildings and industrial activity may be linked to the cathedral. The Old Minster as a cathedral and monastic community would have had associated accommodation and service buildings (Scobie 1995:4). The exact extent of the minster precinct is unknown but it may have occupied all of the island in the floodplain. It is possible that some or all of the evidence for structures and industry in the vicinity of the cathedral formed part of the ecclesiastical complex, possibly including the dwellings of lay crafts- and tradesmen linked to the ecclesiastical community. However, the possibility that the defended area was home to a number of secular estates (Biddle 1975b:305) or even a royal habitation (Biddle 1973:237) cannot be excluded as an explanation for some of the evidence for habitation and industry. The overall picture painted by the available evidence is not of an urban centre (*ibid.*:246), but of the walled area being dominated by the Old Minster and its associated buildings with possibly some form of diffuse lay occupation. Given the Old Minster's apparent control over the walled area, it is perhaps not that surprising that it appears to have served as the sole burial ground for not only the ecclesiastical elements of this disparate community, but also for the laity with the remains of 128 children interred around the church between the seventh and ninth centuries (Kjølbye-Biddle 1975:102). However, the Old Minster's monopoly over burial within the walled area was to be short-lived.

#### **8.4. The changing fortunes of Winchester and Hamwic**

The later ninth century saw significant changes in the nature of settlement in the Southampton and Winchester area, and with this came changes to the organisation of burial.

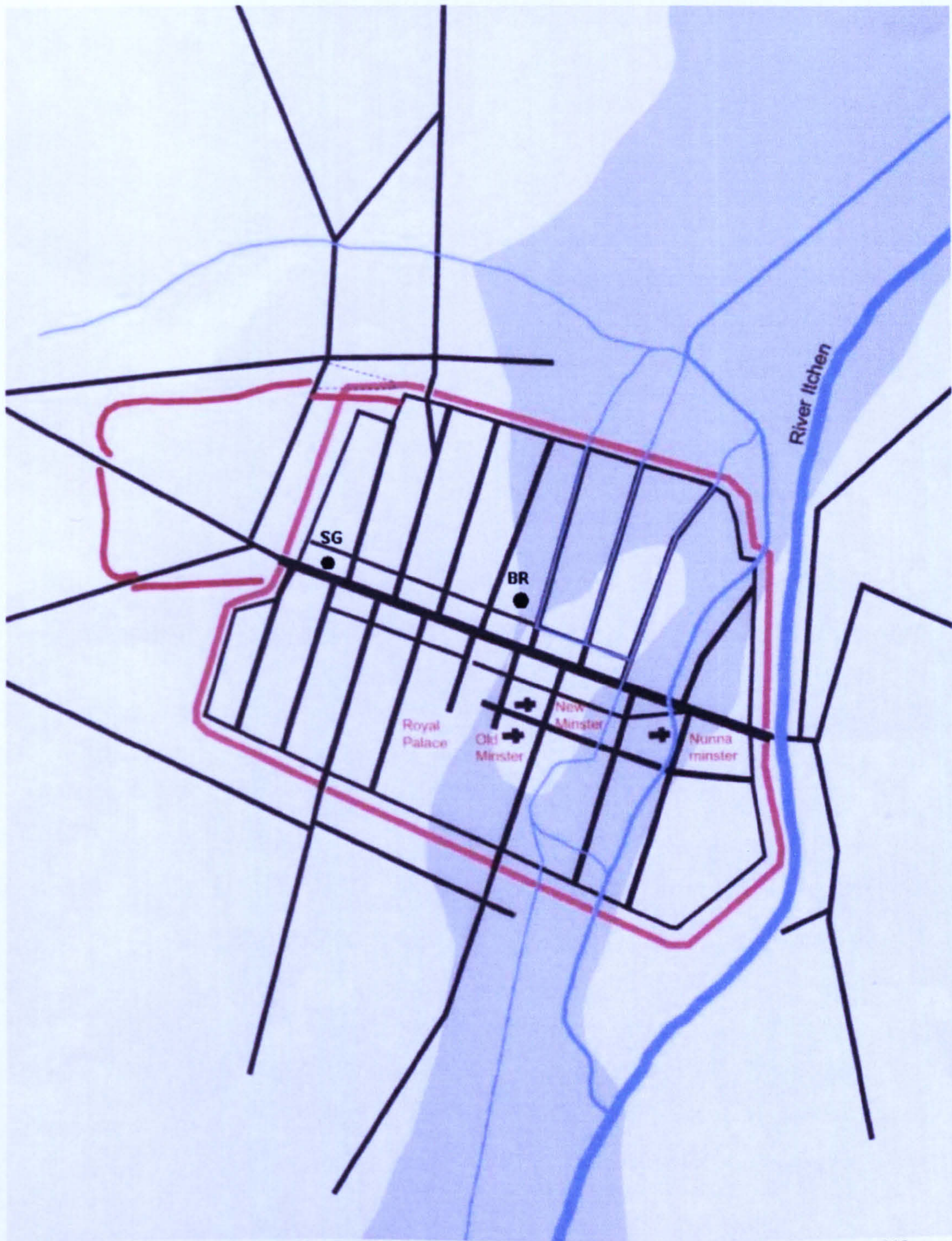
#### **8.4.1. Winchester during the reigns of Alfred and Edward the Elder**

The latter years of King's Alfred's reign (871-899 AD) saw the refurbishment of Winchester's Roman walls and defensive ditches (Biddle 1973:250). Excavations in 1976-7 at Sussex Street uncovered evidence for the renovation of the town's Roman ditches, which formed part of the town's defences (Hinton, Keene & Qualmann 1981:48). This was part of a general re-organisation of Wessex's defences linked to the establishment of a network of defensive burhs (Biddle 1973:250). This period also saw the establishment of a new rectilinear street system within the circuit of Winchester's Roman defences (Biddle & Hill 1971:78; Biddle 1973:251). The relative uniformity of the new street plan argues against organic growth (Biddle & Hill 1971:78) and suggests, instead, that it was part of a policy of urban re-foundation, possibly allied with the sub-division of land within the defended area in preparation for settlement (Biddle 1973:251). The second half of the ninth century also saw the establishment of a series of new watercourses, some to serve the city's mills, while others seem closely linked to the street system (Biddle 1976b:450), suggesting the two systems were laid out contemporaneously (Scobie 1996:3). No coins prior to the last decade of King Alfred's reign can be securely attributed to a Winchester mint and it seems likely the re-foundation of the city also saw the establishment of its first mint (Biddle 1976b:396). Overall, the evidence indicates that the nature of occupation within the walled area underwent profound changes in the last decades of the ninth century and that, by the beginning of the tenth century Winchester could be described as urban, something which could not have been said of the settlement 50 years earlier.

The changes in the nature, and probably density, of occupation within the walled area were accompanied by the appearance of a second burial ground within the Roman walls, so ending the apparent century long monopoly of burial by the Old Minster. The Staple Gardens cemetery lies in the western half of the walled area close to the West Gate and just within the Roman defences (Kipling & Scobie 1990:8) (figure 8.27). Human remains were first discovered there during the nineteenth century (Keene 1985:467) with parts of the site being more formally excavated prior to developments in 1984 (Youngs, Clarke & Barry 1986:149) and 1989 (Kipling & Scobie 1990). The remains of 288 individuals were recovered from the site (Winchester Museums Service archive SG84 and SG89). While none of the graves contained grave goods, eleven burials contained Roman coins and one a perforated iron object. As the cemetery lay over late Roman buildings and deposits containing large numbers of Roman coins, these objects may simply be accidental inclusions within these graves. However, the position of a few of the coins within the grave, particularly by the hands or on the skull, may be indicative of a degree of human involvement in the placement



**Figure 8.27. Location plan of ninth- and tenth- century cemeteries and burials in Winchester**



*(modified from diagram provided by G. Scobie. N.B. Position of river is given at c.900AD and this would have been modified during the later Saxon period)*

- Cemetery or burial not known to be associated with a church
- BR – The Brooks
- SG – Staple Gardens

of the disturbed objects. A decorated ivory knob was also discovered in the fill of a grave and this may have been the head of a staff originally interred with one of the earlier burials disturbed by the later grave (Kipling & Scobie 1990:8). Evidence for the use of coffins was found in 19.8% of graves either in the form of wood stains, coffin nails, both wood stains and nails or in the case of one individual, the presence of a lead coffin (Winchester Museums Service Archive SG84 & SG89). Seven burials within the cemetery lay on charcoal beds, including the individual within the lead coffin. This individual was also interred with flint pillow stones and pillow stones or possible pillow stones were present in a further eleven burials. All, bar four, of the burials were orientated west-east, with the exceptions lying north-south. Where the body position was known, all the burials were supine extended with the exception of five individuals whose legs were slightly flexed while another lay crouched on its right side. Seven of the burials from the cemetery were radiocarbon dated<sup>10</sup> and modelling suggests the cemetery was in use between c.850 to c.1000 AD (Bayliss 2001).

There was no evidence for a church at Staple Gardens, although only part of the site was excavated and the possibility remains that a church may have been present. The cemetery is thought to have been in the vicinity of the medieval Church of St. Paul's and although the earliest documentary reference to the church is not until in 1256 AD (Keene 1985: 467), it is possible this church may have had late Saxon origins. While the foundation of the cemetery at Staple Gardens is clearly linked to Winchester's increasing population density in the late ninth century, why are these individuals not interred by the Old Minster? This new cemetery may be an example of the phenomenon of multiple burial foci associated with minsters of the eighth and ninth centuries discussed above (Hadley forthcoming), with Staple Gardens being administered from the Old Minster. Data from a twelfth-century survey of Winchester indicate that much of the land in the raised western part of the walled area was held by the laity (G. Scobie *pers. comm.*). While care should be taken in projecting the nature of land ownership back to the tenth century, it does raise the possibility that the new cemetery may have served a growing secular community occupying the western part of the area within the walls.

In contrast, the twelfth-century survey has much of the land in and around the area of the former island in the eastern part of the walled area being held either by the king, the bishop or by one of a number of religious houses. This distribution corresponds with the suggestions, discussed earlier in this chapter, that much of the occupation in the eastern part

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<sup>10</sup> See Staple Gardens gazeteer entry and table 7.8 for details of the radiocarbon dates

of the defended area was associated with the Old Minster. This occupation did not just consist of the church but also of outbuildings, dwellings and workshops. Some of these were part of the Old Minster and occupied by members of the ecclesiastical community, while others may have belonged to lay craftsmen and labourers who provided essential services for the Old Minster (Scobie 1995:4). As such, it may be that many of the burials within the cathedral cemeteries were the inhabitants, both ecclesiastical and secular, of this eastern community augmented by some members of the West Saxon royal house and wealthy benefactors. Finally, the possibility that Staple Gardens had no ties to the Old Minster and functioned independently cannot be excluded, but given that the burial ground lay within the walled city, an area which the Minster church had dominated for much of the previous two centuries, it seems unlikely the bishop and his community would have exerted no influence over the cemetery.

The late ninth century and early tenth century also saw the foundation of another two minsters, which created a large ecclesiastical complex of three minsters in the south-east part of the walled area (see figure 8.28). The first of these, the Nunnaminster or the Nuns' Minster, is thought to have been founded by Ealhswith, Alfred's queen, at the end of the ninth century (Qualmann 1986:204) and completed after her death in 902 or 903 AD by her son Edward the Elder with the dedication of the tower c.908 AD concluding the construction (Biddle 1976b:321). Part of the site of the Nunnaminster, which lies some 300 metres to the west of the Old Minster, was investigated in excavations in 1973 and 1981-3 (Qualmann 1986:204). While evidence for the early tenth-century church was fragmentary, it appears to have been a small north-south timber building with a semi-circular apse at both ends (figure 8.29) (*ibid.*:205; Scobie & Qualmann 1993). No graves associated with this earliest phase of the Nunnaminster were uncovered during the excavations, although the remains of a masonry tomb were found in the southern apse of the church (*ibid.*). Despite the absence of graves, it seems likely that there may have been a burial ground, probably restricted to the members of the community, and that it lay in the vicinity of the church in an as yet unexcavated area or possibly has been destroyed by later phases of construction.

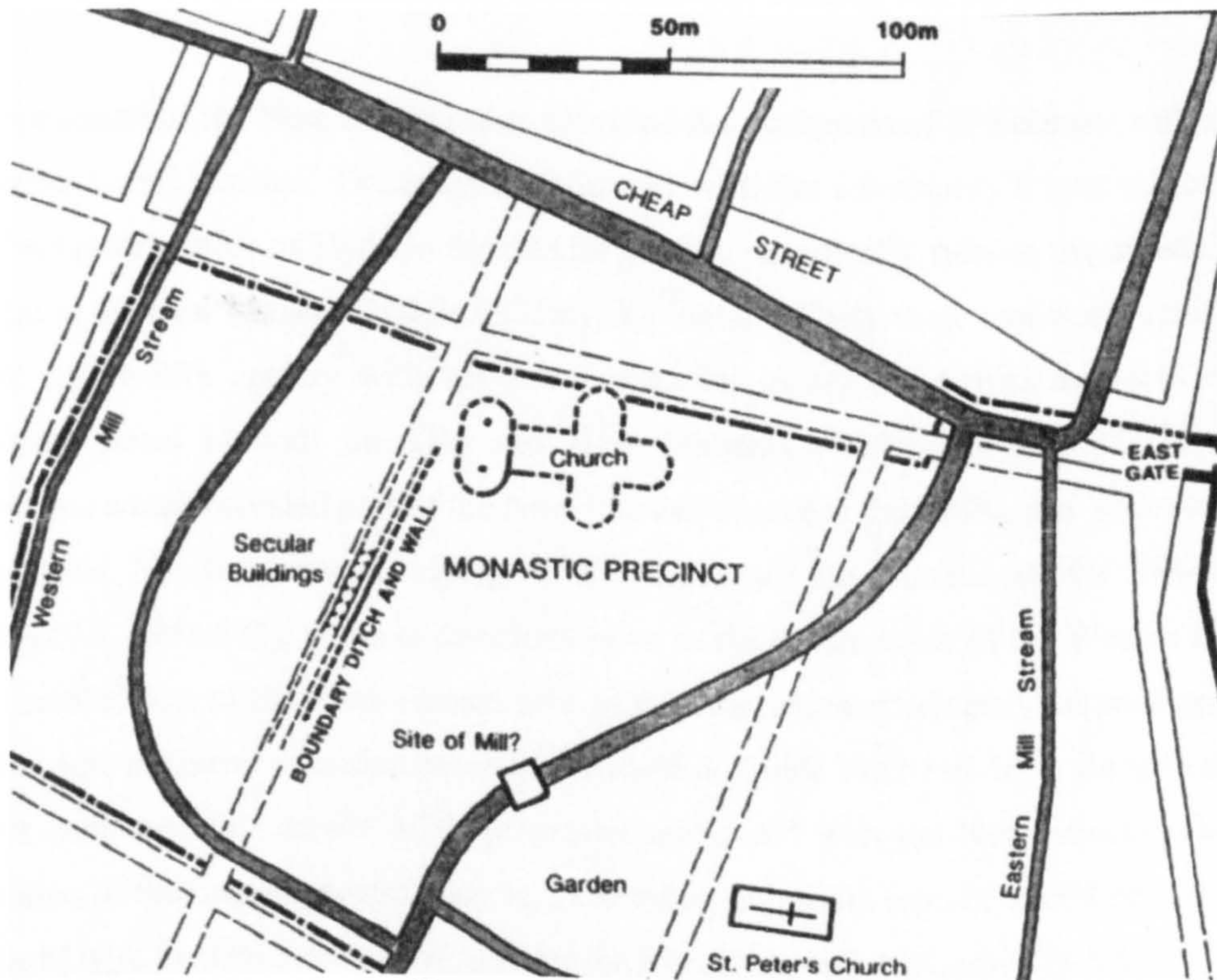
The other new minster foundation was the so-called New Minster, which was founded in 901 AD by Edward the Elder and dedicated in 903 AD (Biddle 1975c:128). It was built over parts of the Old Minster cemetery (Yorke 1984:68) and lay only four metres to the north of the Old Minster (Biddle 1975c:128). While only a small part of the New Minster church was excavated in the 1960s (Biddle 1964:257-8;1965b:325-6;1966:272), it is clear that Edward the Elder's new foundation was considerably larger than the adjacent Old Minster (Biddle 1975:128). Edward the Elder's motives for founding a second minster in such close

**Figure 8.28. Plan of south-east corner of the walled area at Winchester, showing the location of the three Anglo-Saxon minsters and the position of the later Norman Cathedral**



*(from Kjolbye-Biddle 1993:14)*

**Figure 8.29. Plan of the first Nunnaminster, c.901-964AD**



*(from Scobie & Qualmann 1993)*

proximity to the Old Minster are likely to have been complex (Biddle 1975c:131). A charter from c.904 AD, which extends the land around the New Minster, states that Edward founded 'a monastery thereon for the salvation of my soul and that of my venerable father King Alfred'(S 1443; Rumble 2002:52). Indeed, New Minster was to provide a final resting place not only for Edward himself but for many of his immediate family including his mother Ealdwith, his brother Aethelweard, and two of his sons Aelfweard and Aelfwine, while the remains of his father, King Alfred were transferred from their original resting place in the Old Minster to the newly founded New Minster (Yorke 1984:67). As such, at one level the New Minster can be seen as a monument to King Alfred and his immediate descendants (*ibid.*), with the new larger foundation providing more space than the smaller Old Minster, which was cluttered with a myriad of internal fittings (Biddle 1975c:131). However, in addition, some have suggested that this new church, constructed at time of significant expansion of the West Saxon kingdom, symbolised the growing power of the royal house as rulers not just of the West Saxons, but of the English (Yorke 1984:68). In addition, the construction of the New Minster has also been seen as potentially reflecting a degree of animosity between Edward the Elder and the Old Minster's monastic community headed by the bishop, with the king ignoring the existing church and founding a new community immediately adjacent to it (Rumble 2001:237; Yorke 1984:67). Indeed, while the advent of the Nunnaminster filled a vacant niche by providing the developing town with a female religious house, the foundation of the New Minster meant the walled area contained two very similar adjacent religious communities, one affiliated to the king and the other to the bishop.

The foundation of the New Minster also provided the occupants of Winchester with another alternative burial location. Documents associated with the community's later relocation to the Winchester suburb of Hyde in the twelfth century specifically refer to the citizen's right to burial at the New Minster (Biddle 1975c:131), and it is likely these traditions significantly predate the twelfth century with surviving examples of lay wills from the tenth century requesting burial in both the Old and New Minsters (Whitelock 1930:21&25). The excavations which revealed part of the New Minster church in the 1960s, also uncovered part of the New Minster cemetery lying to the north of the church (Biddle 1964:257-8; 1965b:325-6; 1966:272), while excavations prior to the construction of the Wessex Hotel in 1961 revealed part of the north-eastern area of the New Minster cemetery, as well as part of the later post-medieval cathedral cemetery (Biddle & Quirk 1962:159-161). As with the Old Minster cemetery, full details of those graves associated with the New Minster await the publication of the final excavation report. According to interim reports, a total of 109 burials associated with the late Saxon New Minster have been identified (Kjølbye-Biddle 1992:226). There is currently no available information as to which specific period of the New Minster

existence these burials date, but all must date between the minster's foundation c.903 AD and to its relocation to a new site in 1110 AD. Unlike the Old Minster, burial within the New Minster church seems to have been practiced from its earliest days (Biddle 1975c:131), with many of the excavated graves lying within the church (Kjølbye-Biddle 1992:230). A quarter of the New Minster's internal burials lay on charcoal beds, while 14.68% of external burials contained charcoal (Kjølbye-Biddle 1992:230). There was also evidence for the use of coffins with some graves containing iron nails and/iron coffin fittings.

Despite the presence of at least three cemeteries, possibly four if the Nunnaminster cemetery which was probably a predominately monastic burial ground is included, within the city's Roman walls, not all of Winchester's citizens were interred within these burial grounds. The remains of two individuals were uncovered during the excavation of The Brooks in 1987-8 (figure 8.27 & 8.30) (Scobie *et al* 1991:37). The west-east burials lay in shallow graves with no evidence for the use of coffins or grave goods. One of the burials had slumped into an earlier timber-lined pit, which has been dendrochronologically dated to c.880AD, while timber houses were built over the burials in the tenth and eleventh century, which suggests the burials are of late ninth- or tenth-century date. When these individuals were interred, this part of the Brooks site is likely to have been waterlogged and probably waste ground (*ibid.*:34). Scattered burials dating to the ninth- and tenth centuries have been seen elsewhere within the study area, suggesting that it was only in the late tenth and eleventh-centuries that all interments became concentrated around churches.<sup>11</sup> As such, it is possible that these individuals may have been buried at The Brooks under the auspices of the Old or New Minsters. However, the less than salubrious burial location does raise the possibility that these individuals may have been excluded from Winchester's usual burial grounds.

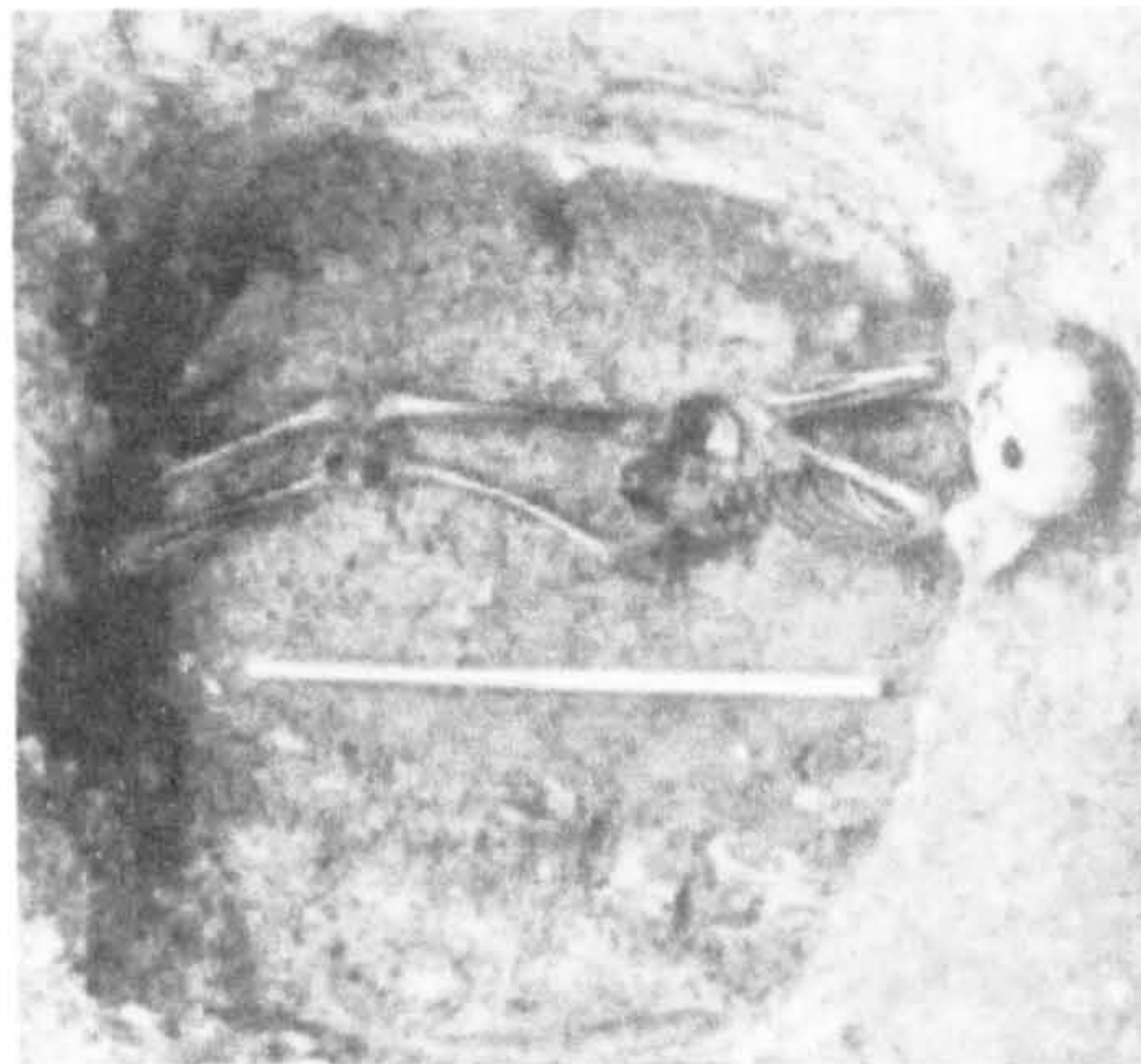
#### **8.4.2. The end of Hamwic and shifts in settlement location in Southampton area**

While the late ninth and early tenth century saw the rapid development of Winchester into a recognisably urban centre, containing at least three large cemeteries at the Old Minster, New Minster and Staple Gardens as well as what was probably a purely monastic burial ground at the Nunnaminster, the same period saw a decline in the fortunes of the middle Saxon settlement at Hamwic (Morton 1992a:70). While there is some debate as to the precise date of Hamwic's abandonment, ranging from the mid- to late ninth centuries, the archaeological evidence suggests that by 900 AD the settlement was largely deserted, although scattered occupation, possibly centred around key foci, may have persisted into the tenth century (Morton 1992a:70 & 72; Andrews 1997:255).

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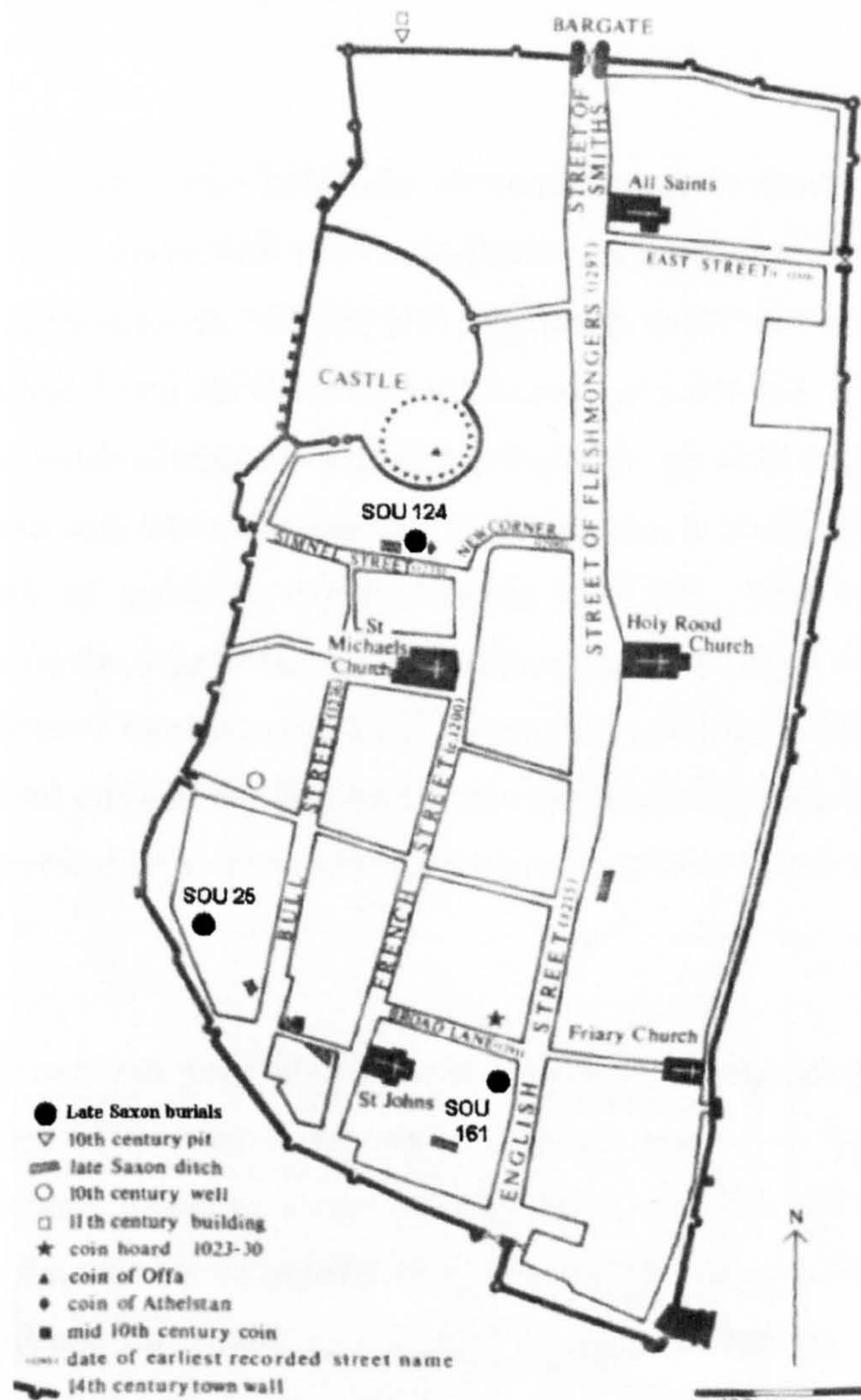
<sup>11</sup> See sections 7.2.4 and 7.3 for a more detailed discussion.

Figure 8.30. One of the burials from The Brooks, Winchester, which has slumped into a timber-lined pit



(from Winchester Museums Service 1990)

Figure 8.31. Plan of medieval Southampton showing location of middle and later Saxon burials



(from Holdsworth 1984:338)

The settlement's decline seems likely to have been the result of multiple factors. Hamwic appears to have owed much of its existence to trade. As such, the vicissitudes of trade were always likely to impact on the settlement and a number of factors combined to disrupt commerce, as well as Hamwic's position in trading networks, during the ninth century. Trade and the collection of tolls required a level of social stability and this is likely to have been absent, at times, on both sides of the channel during the ninth century. On the continent there was the general instability caused by the civil wars between Charlemagne's heirs in the first half of the ninth century as well as the anarchic conditions within the Empire in the later part of the century and the disruption caused by Viking activities (Hodges 1982:156-7; Morton 1992a:76). Similarly, in England there were numerous incursions by Viking armies in the ninth century, with Hamwic, itself, directly experiencing this turbulence when it was unsuccessfully raided by Vikings in 840 AD (ASC A & E. s.a.837(840) - Swanton 2000:62-3; Morton 1992a:75-76). This may have served to reduce trade at the settlement although it should be noted that raids on Quentovic in 842 AD did not result in the end of that settlement (Morton 1992a:76-77).

Viking activities may have also indirectly affected Hamwic's trade. Much of Hamwic's direct trade came from Rouen and the Seine Basin. As such, the Viking activities in and around the Seine Basin between 852 and 866 AD, which included over-wintering there one year, would have had disrupted Hamwic's major trading link (*ibid.*:77). In addition, it has been suggested that much of Hamwic's trade was based on agricultural goods and the Viking incursions in Wessex may have also resulted in a reduction in levels of agricultural surplus, leading to a dearth of goods to export (Hinton 1999:29). Finally, it is possible that Hamwic's position on the edge of the north-west European trading network contributed to its decline as its peripheral location may have meant that when the West Saxons established control over the Kent ports in the first half of the ninth century, their more central location within the trading network may have resulted in the relocation of much of Hamwic's trade to the east.

The ninth century saw not only a decline in Hamwic's trade, but in all probability its administrative role. Hamwic, it has been argued, may also have possessed some administrative functions, including a mint and possibly a royal vill, and it has been suggested that many of these functions were transferred to Winchester during the ninth century with the first definitive evidence for a mint and a royal presence within the walled city dating to Alfred's reign (Yorke 1984:66; Morton 1992a:75). This may, in part, have been the result of the undefended riverside settlement's vulnerability to Viking raids, which may have had an



impact on any administrative functions and resulted in their relocation to the more secure inland site at Winchester (Yorke 1984:66).<sup>12</sup> Overall, the evidence suggests that the ninth century saw the decline in Hamwic's role as a trading centre as well as the loss of any administrative responsibility and with the loss of these functions to other centres the settlement, which it has been argued was never sufficiently embedded into middle Saxon Wessex (Hinton 1999:30), ceased to exist.

The virtual abandonment of Hamwic was accompanied by the end of burial in three of its four burial grounds. However, establishing exactly when in the ninth century burial ceased is more problematic. The later of the two cemeteries at St. Mary's Stadium, referred to in this study as St. Mary's Cemetery II, has been dated to the late eighth century, but it may have been in use during the ninth century and exactly when interment finished is unknown. While one of radiocarbon dates from burials at SOU 13, 685-885 AD at a  $2\sigma$  level of confidence raises the possibility that burial may have persisted at this cemetery until the mid-ninth century, it is equally possible it ended decades earlier. It seems probable that the majority of the burials in the SOU 13 cemetery are from the eighth and first half of the ninth century reflecting the settlement's higher population density at this time, although whether interment continued during Hamwic's decline in the latter part of the ninth century is impossible to determine. In contrast, the cemetery at Six Dials has been suggested to date to the later part of the ninth century, making it the last known burial ground founded within the settlement (Andrews 1997:203). The cemetery was short-lived and appears to have gone out of use by the end of the ninth century.

The decline of Hamwic does not necessarily mean the complete abandonment of the entire area and it has been suggested that low levels of occupation persisted into the tenth century, probably centred around one or more foci (Morton 1997a:72). The analysis of pottery has suggested a decline in activity within Hamwic in the later part of the ninth century combined with a shift in the focus of occupation to the north (Timby 1988:117). The Six Dials cemetery lies in the north western corner of Hamwic and its presence may indicate an area of continued occupation in its vicinity at least until the end of the ninth century at a time when much of the settlement was derelict (Andrews 1997:204). A possible second area of later occupation is suggested by the evidence for two consecutive structures of late middle or late Saxon date at SOU 16 approximately 250m to the south-east of St. Mary's Church, which are thought to post-date the Middle Saxon settlement (Morton 1992a:164). A final area of late occupation within Hamwic is suggested by a burial from St. Mary's churchyard radiocarbon dated to 888 to 1024 AD at a  $2\sigma$  level of confidence (Smith 1995:259). This

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<sup>12</sup> Although Winchester was itself suffered a Viking raid in the 860s (ASC A & E 860 – Swanton 2000:67-8)

indicates not only the continued use of St. Mary's churchyard for burial after Hamwic had to all intents and purposes ceased to exist, but may also imply that there was some form of occupation associated with the ecclesiastical house in the southern part of the settlement into the tenth century and beyond.

It is possible that all those interred at St. Mary's were members of the religious community or dwelt in those parts of Hamwic where occupation had persisted in some form. However, there is evidence for the existence of other settlements within the Southampton area during the late ninth and tenth centuries (Morton 1992a:74), and it is possible some of their inhabitants were also laid to rest at St. Mary's. A document called the Burghal Hidage, thought to date to after 914 AD, lists all the burhs in southern England as well as how many hides of land was owed to each which allows the length of their defences to be calculated using a formula given on the document (Yorke 1995:115). Included in the list of burhs is one at Hamtun with defences 188 metres in length (Morton 1992a:73). The length of these defences corresponds closely to the dimension of the land-side wall of the Roman settlement at Clausentum and it has been suggested that its surviving late Roman settlement were re-used to provide a burh for the Southampton area (Hill 1967). As such, there may have been some form of occupation either within or in the vicinity of the fort, although no evidence for middle or late Saxon settlement has been uncovered in any of the relatively limited excavations in the area (Morton 1992a:74). As such, it is possible that the burh may have simply served as a refuge, accessed from the Hamwic area by a ford across the River Itchen (Hill 1996:217). There are, however, at least two predominantly seventh-century cemeteries in the immediate vicinity of the Roman fort (see section 8.2.1 for details). It is possible that at least one of these cemeteries may have continued in use into the ninth or tenth centuries, which may also imply some form of settlement at Clausentum, as the range of the radiocarbon date from one of the burials at SOU 862 gave a wide date range of 680-1110 AD at  $2\sigma$  level of confidence (Southampton City Museum Archive 862).

Clausentum was not only possible settlement focus in the Southampton area outside the Hamwic site. By the beginning of the tenth century, there was also evidence for a shift in the patterns of settlement on the peninsula in between the Rivers Test and Itchen, with the establishment of a new settlement, probably enclosed by a bank and ditch, lying some 500 metres to the south-west of Hamwic on higher, and more defensible land alongside the River Test (Morton 1992a:73) (figure 8.2). While the pre-Conquest archaeological evidence from this settlement is rather fragmentary as it underlies the later medieval town and its suburbs, evidence for late Saxon occupation has been found on many sites both within the medieval walled town and under its northern suburbs in the form of pits, hearths, floor surfaces,

buildings, roads and ditches, as well as a large quantity of pottery and other artefacts dating to the tenth and eleventh centuries (see summary of late Saxon evidence in Russell & Leivers 2003). There is little settlement evidence that can be securely dated to the early part of the tenth century but evidence which may date from the later part of the tenth century includes a wattle-lined well at SOU 111 and the earliest of a succession of hearths within a building at SOU 266, while pottery of tenth- and eleventh-century date has been recovered from rubbish pits, cess pits and layers at a number of sites (Russel *pers. comm*).

St. Mary's Church was known to hold a monopoly over the burial rights for Southampton in the post-Conquest period (Hase 1988:45), until this was contested from the thirteenth century by the Augustinian Friary (Ruddock 1947:140-1). As such, it has always been assumed that the occupants of the late Saxon town were laid to rest in St. Mary's Churchyard (Morton 1992a:50). However, the recent identification of late Saxon burials from two sites within the medieval town suggests the situation may be more complex. At the first site, SOU 161/266, which lies adjacent to the High Street, the disturbed partial remains of at least three individuals were uncovered. Two of these were found during excavations in the late 1960s and had been disturbed by the construction of later medieval stone houses, which suggested a possible late Saxon date for the burials (Platt 1975:232-269; McKinley 1995:3) (see figure 8.31 for location). Indeed, radiocarbon dating of one of these burials gave a date of 866-993AD at a  $2\sigma$  level of confidence (Russel & Leivers 2003) demonstrating the presence of late Saxon burials with the town.

At the second site, SOU 25 at the Westgate, a row of three undisturbed articulated burials were uncovered in the late 1970s (Webster & Cherry 1980:251). These burials lay on the edge of the excavated area and it has been suggested by the excavator that they formed the edge of a cemetery, which extended north into an unexcavated area. All the burials were orientated west-east and two of the burials were supine extended while the third lay partially crouched on its side (figure 8.32) (*ibid.*; Blackman 1979). There was no evidence for the use of coffins, wooden linings, pillow stones or charcoal in any of the graves, although one burial was accompanied by a piece of animal bone, which may be an accidental inclusion, while another had a knife by its arm. Two of the three burials were radiocarbon dated as part of this present study and both gave dates of 895-1020 AD at a  $2\sigma$  level of confidence.

SOU 25 and SOU 266 lie approximately 250 metres apart in the southern part of the medieval town (see figure 8.31). It is possible that all the burials come from a single cemetery, but this appears unlikely as no human remains have been reported from excavations in the area lying between the two sites. Instead, it appears that burial was

Figure 8.32. Partially crouched late Saxon burial from the Westgate, Southampton

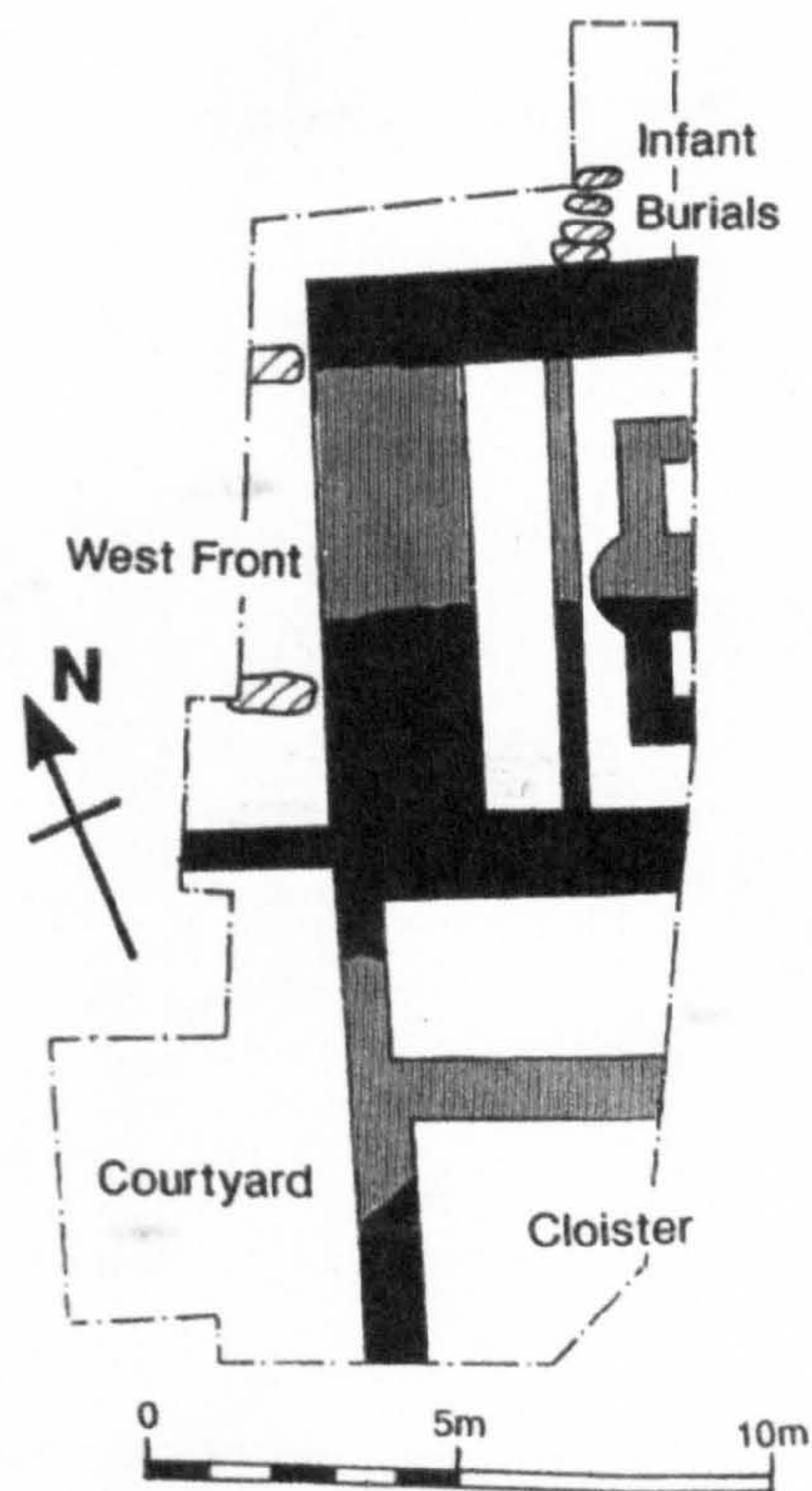
SKELETON 3558



A - ANIMAL BONE

(from Southampton City Museum SOU 25 archive)

Figure 8.33. Plan of West front of second Nunnaminster church showing location of burials



(from Scobie & Qualmann 1993)  
Burial are indicated by hatching



occurring in at least two separate locations within the settlement during the late Saxon period, although the fragmentary nature of the evidence makes it difficult to say much about the precise nature of the burials. It may be that the situation at Southampton was analogous to that at Winchester during the same period (see above), where the churchyard of the minster church provided one possible location for burial, but where there were also other satellite cemeteries, which lay some distance from the minster, which it perhaps oversaw. In the case of Southampton, the minster church at St. Mary's provided one option for the occupants of the late Saxon town with some of the population being interred within its churchyard, while others favoured, or were only permitted, burial in satellite cemeteries within the late Saxon settlement.

## **8.5. The monastic reform and burial in late Saxon Winchester and Southampton**

The English monastic reform of the late tenth century was part of a more widespread wave of change and reform that affected much of the western church in the ninth and tenth centuries and had its origins in the Carolingian reforms of the mid-ninth century (Stafford 1989:184). The reform movement sought to regularise monastic practice (*ibid.*) and, particularly in England, to promote a closer adherence to the sixth-century Rule of St. Benedict (Knowles 1940:17). Also inherent in these reforms was the need to separate the sacred from the secular (Stafford 1989:184), and this was to impact on burial.

### **8.5.1. The monastic reform and burial in late tenth and eleventh century Winchester**

Aethelwold, one of the key proponents of monastic reform, was appointed as bishop of Winchester in 963 AD (*ASC A & E 963*; Swanton 2000:114-5). Within a year he had expelled the canons from both the Old and New Minsters, installing monks in both houses (*ASC A & E 964* - Swanton 2000:116-7), so beginning a process that would result in the relatively rapid reform and refoundation of all three of the city's minsters. As part of this process, all three minsters were enlarged (Biddle 1975c:134), a move which in the case of the Old and New Minster may, in part, have served to accommodate the new monastic communities as opposed to the deposed secular canons (*ibid.*:136). The Old Minster had stood largely unchanged since its foundation in the seventh century. However, in 971 AD the remains of St. Swithin were removed from their original resting place outside the Old Minster's west door (Biddle 1976b:307; Lapidge 2003a, 285; 2003b, 457-9). The existing church was then extended westwards, over the original site of St. Swithin's grave to join

with St. Martin's Tower, which lay to the west of the Old Minster (Kjølbye-Biddle 1993:16). In addition, a new west work was constructed and dedicated in 980 AD (Biddle 1975c:136). A second wave of expansion followed with the extension of the eastern apse of the church to three times its original length and the addition of new north and south apses at the eastern end of the new church to create a new crossing point within which to site the new high altar (Biddle 1976b:307; Kjølbye-Biddle 1993:19). A second dedication presided over by Aethelwold's successor Aelfheah in 993-4 AD marked the completion of the construction work (Biddle 1976b:307). Aethelwold's episcopate also saw the upgrading of the claustral buildings of both the Old Minster and the neighbouring New Minster to meet the needs of the newly installed monastic community. These were not the only changes wrought to the New Minster during the monastic reform and its aftermath with a stone tower being added to the west end of the church during the 980s (*ibid.*:315).

Aethelwold's tenure as bishop also saw the rebuilding of the third minster, the Nunnaminster, with the original timber building being replaced by a more substantial stone structure built on the same site (figure 8.35) (Scobie & Qualmann 1993). Part of the church, including a thick north-south wall thought to form part of a west work, was uncovered during excavations in 1981-3 (Qualmann 1986:206). This period also saw the redefinition, rearrangement and, in some cases, the extension of the sites of all three minsters (Biddle 1976b:308). Land disputes between the three establishments were resolved and the precinct of the New Minster was significantly enlarged to the north, west and east (*ibid.*:315), while the expansion of the Nunnaminster's precinct saw the removal of adjacent secular buildings (*ibid.*:322). Also in keeping with the ideals of the monastic reform, the three reformed houses were all surrounded by a single defended enclosure, marked by ditches, fences and walls, in the south-east quarter of the city, which served to separate the religious houses from Winchester's secular community and provided a more secluded environment for the pursuit of monastic life (*ibid.*; Biddle 1975c:134; Biddle 1976b:308).

The walled south-east quarter of the city, with the three minsters, was the major focus of burial within Winchester during the tenth and eleventh centuries. There were cemeteries associated with all three religious houses and while that associated with the Nunnaminster was most probably mainly restricted to members of the community, the cemeteries at both the Old Minster and New Minster are known to contain both lay and ecclesiastical burials. Of the three minsters, the Old Minster has been subject to the most extensive excavations and as such more is known about its cemetery than those of the other two minsters. However, even in the case of the Old Minster excavation has been limited and all of the 418 tenth- and eleventh-century burials recovered come from either within the church or the area

immediately adjacent to the church (Kjølbye-Biddle 1992:226). There was significant variation in the funerary provision accorded these individuals. Charcoal burials, pillow stones, iron coffin fittings, sand-lined graves and monolithic coffins are all observed in burials from the Old Minster, with the most elaborate graves always found in prominent positions, such as inside the church and outside around the east and west ends of the church (*ibid.*:227). The graves from the Old Minster contained the remains of men, women and children, which suggests that at least some of Winchester's lay population were laid to rest by the Old Minster during the tenth and eleventh centuries. However, the Old Minster was not the only option for those seeking burial close to a minster church.

There were at least two cemeteries within the New Minster's extended grounds, one to the west of the church and the other to the north-east, and it has been suggested that one may have served the monastic community and the other Winchester's secular population (*ibid.*:316-7). Although a total of 109 burials associated with the New Minster were uncovered during the excavation of part of the New Minster during the 1960s (see section 8.4.1 for details) (Kjølbye-Biddle 1992:226), until the publication of the final excavation report it is impossible to determine whether the changes wrought on the New Minster and its precinct are reflected among these burials. However, excavations at Market Street in 1987-8 recovered the remains of close to 40 individuals (Teague 1988). This area is thought to have become part of the New Minster precinct during its expansion during Aethelwold's reform of the minster (*ibid.*:6). It seems likely that this area was used as a cemetery from the late tenth century until the New Minster was moved outside the city walls to a new site in 1110 AD, when it then became part of the cemetery of the medieval cathedral. While the lack of stratigraphy and datable artefacts makes it impossible to distinguish the pre-1100 AD burials from the later interments, a number of the lower burials have pillow stones and there is one charcoal burial. When this is combined with the fragmentary pottery evidence, it suggests that a number of these burials are of late Saxon date (*ibid.*:8).

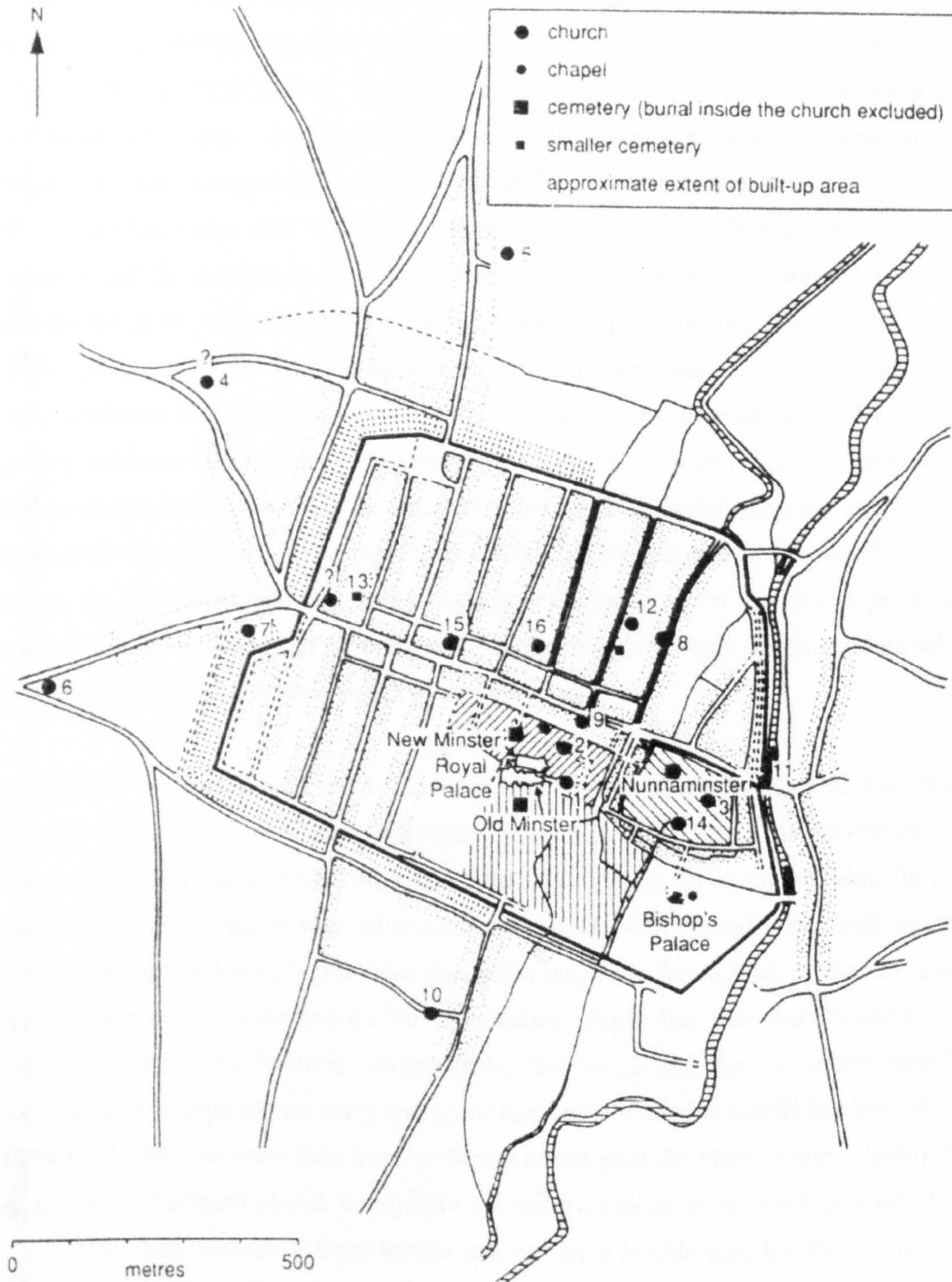
The excavations of the Nunnaminster uncovered six graves associated with the 964-1107 AD church (see figure 8.33) (Scobie & Qualmann 1993). Only one of these contained an adult, with the remaining graves consisting of the burial of a child and a group of four infant burials by the north wall of the church (*ibid.*). The presence of juvenile burials in the cemetery of a religious community that had become increasingly separated from the surrounding community as a result of the monastic reform is a little surprising. However, monasteries during this period often served as sources of medical knowledge and care and it is possible that the Nunnaminster may have cared for women of aristocratic status during pregnancy and childbirth (*ibid.*).



While the tenth and eleventh centuries saw burial increasingly confined to the south-east quarter of the walled city, it was not until the eleventh century that all Winchester citizens were interred in one of the burial grounds adjacent to one of the city's three minsters. Radiocarbon dating suggests that the cemetery at Staple Gardens, which lay in the west of the city, was in use until the end of the tenth or beginning of the eleventh centuries. It has already been suggested in section 8.4.1. that Staple Gardens may have been a satellite cemetery linked to the Old Minster. The later Saxon period is thought to have seen a centralisation of burial, with the diffuse scattered satellite cemeteries associated with many religious houses going out of use as all burials gradually became concentrated around the church (Zadora-Rio 2003:9). This process may be linked to consecration of cemeteries. The earliest references for this practice appear in the latter half of the ninth century, but are uncommon until the tenth century (Gittos 2002:201). The practice, which sought to separate the sacred from the secular, resulted in a need to define cemetery boundaries (*ibid.*:202) and it is easier to enclose a single centralised cemetery than a series of scattered satellite cemeteries. It is possible that this process of centralisation was responsible for the demise of Staple Gardens and that at some point following the reform of the Minsters all burial was relocated to within the minster's precincts in the enclosed south-east corner. Alternatively, it is possible that in the period following the monastic reform the majority of Winchester's population preferred to be buried within the newly enlarged precincts of one of the city's minsters, with the result that the cemetery at Staple Gardens fell out of favour and then out of use. Finally, the possibility that the cemetery at Staple Gardens was not controlled by the Old Minster but functioned independently and went out of use as the Old and New Minster consolidated their control over burial rites within the city and their rights to the important revenues this brought in the form of soul-scot cannot be excluded (*ibid.*:201).

The minster churches also jealously guarded their burial rights against the challenges to their monopoly by the increasing number of small churches founded within the city. The monastic reform had seen a loosening of the Old Minster's control over the more distant parishes within its huge *parochia* (Hase 1988:49). It was no longer feasible to serve these areas directly from the Old Minster, especially now that it was a monastic house, seeking a degree of separation from secular society. However, the Old Minster appears to have retained control over burial rights within the city and its suburbs. The Old Minster's (cathedral's) parochial rights laid out in a document of 1331 stated that no burials could take place in the city or its close suburbs, except at the cathedral (*ibid.*:64 – note 34). While this is a late document, it has been suggested that it may reflect rights held by the Old Minster during the late Saxon period (*ibid.*).

Figure 8.34. Location map of known pre-conquest churches in Winchester.



Plan showing location of known churches and cemeteries in Winchester between the late ninth and late eleventh centuries. 1-Old Minster, 2-New Minster, 3-Nunnaminster, 4- St Anastasius, 5-St. Bartholomew Hyde, 6-St. James, 7-St. Martin's in the Ditch, 8-St. Mary in Tanner Street, 9- St. Maurice, 10- St. Michael outside King's Gate; 11-St. Michael over East Gate, 12-St. Pancras, 13- Staple Gardens and the possible site of St. Paul; 14-St. Peter in Colebrook Street, 15-St Peter in the Fleshambles, 16-St. Ruald. (From Kjølbye-Biddle 1992:225)

Thirteen small churches that lay either within or in the immediate vicinity of the walled area are known or strongly suspected to date to the eleventh century or earlier (figure 8.34) (Kjølbye-Biddle 1992:224). Seven of these churches have been either partially or completely excavated. Perhaps a little surprisingly given that the Old Minster and New Minster assumed monopoly over burial rights in the city and its immediate environs, burials of possible late Saxon date have been identified at three of the churches, St. Pancras, St. Maurice and St. Anastasius. Four or five graves thought to have formed part of the churchyard of St. Anastasius were observed but not fully uncovered during excavations in 1972 (Qualmann 1978:265,269). The graves, which overlay settlement evidence of possible early medieval date, were built over when the church was extended in the late eleventh century and seem likely to be of late Saxon date (*ibid.*:265). The church of St. Anastasius lay in the suburbs outside the Westgate and during the medieval period had a separate parochial status from the rest of the urban area (Keene 1985:927). It is unclear if this was also the case during the late Saxon period, but if it was, it might explain why the church possessed a graveyard as the Old Minster's control over the burial rights within the city and its suburbs may not have extended into the parish of St. Anastasius.

Less easy to explain are the burials associated with St. Pancras and St. Maurice. Two burials, and disturbed remains of a third individual, were uncovered during the excavation of St. Pancras Church (Biddle 1975b:319; Keene 1985:743). One burial which lay below the north-west of the earliest church was radiocarbon dated to 710±70AD and it has been suggested that this burial which clearly pre-dates the church may have formed part of the late seventh- and eighth-century Lower Brooke Street cemetery, which lies less than 50 metres away (*ibid.*)(see section 8.2.4.above). Alternatively, this burial and the two others may have formed part of a separate cemetery and given that one of the other burials has been dated to 860±60 AD, this cemetery may have continued in use until the ninth century. Is this, then, an example of a small church being built on and over an existing burial ground? (Biddle 1975b:319). Yet, with only three known graves, these burials may be, like those at The Brooks, an example of the scattered small groups of burials observed in many early medieval settlements, possibly linked to the minster. However, there is also the possibility that the later of the radiocarbon dated burials and the undated burial are in some way associated with the church. Could the two graves contain the remains of individuals closely linked to the church, perhaps involved in its foundation? (*ibid.*). Even if these two graves are linked to the church they were exceptional as there is no evidence to suggest that there was a churchyard

associated with St. Pancras and thus there was no substantial challenge to the Old and New Minsters' increasing monopoly over burials in late Saxon Winchester.

When St. Maurice's Church was excavated in 1960, a number of graves were observed that appeared to predate the building of the medieval church, thought to be twelfth century in date (Collis 1998:7). The remains of a masonry building and a pink plaster floor were also recovered during the excavations. The associated pottery suggests an eleventh century date for the structure and it is a remote possibility that this may have formed part of a late Saxon church although this is thought to be unlikely (Collis 1998:7). If there was a late Saxon church at this site, it would have lain within the precinct of the New Minster and although there is a possibility that it served the community around the densely populated High Street, it is likely to have been a dependency of the New Minster (Keene 1985:539). Two graves, orientated approximately W-E (NB orientation of bodies unknown), were discovered which pre-date the twelfth century church and are cut into the pink plaster floor, with the stratigraphy of the site suggesting an eleventh century date for the burials. The fragmentary nature of the evidence makes it difficult to draw any firm conclusions about the relationship of the burials and the buildings uncovered at St. Maurice's, with a number of possibilities presenting themselves. One option is that there was no church presence on the site until the twelfth century and the earlier burials either form part of a small cemetery, which significantly pre-dated the church, possibly overseen by the Old Minster or New Minster, or that given the church's position on the edge of the New Minster cemetery, the burials may have been outliers of the New Minster's cemetery. The other possibility is that these graves were in some way directly associated with the putative late Saxon church. Ultimately in the absence of any additional evidence, any conclusions are tentative at best.

The late Anglo-Saxon church increasingly sought not only to control the location of burial and the revenues this brought, but also who was to be interred in the churchyards of late Saxon Wessex. By the tenth century, when churchyard burial was becoming increasingly commonplace, laws began to appear excluding the convicted and executed criminals, the unbaptised and the excommunicated from burial in consecrated ground (Reynolds 1997:38). The impact of the church's policy can be seen in the archaeological record in the form of the execution cemetery of Old Dairy Cottage near Winchester (McCulloch 1990:38-9). This group of fifteen graves, contains at least seventeen bodies (Winchester Museums Service Archive ODC 89). Of these, four individuals were decapitated with cutmarks visible on vertebrae while two individuals were interred with their arms bound, either in front or behind their bodies (figure 8.39). There was little evidence of formal burial, with the position of the bodies suggesting that individuals were placed in the graves with little care, while one body

was buried prone. Radiocarbon dates from two burials of 775-965 AD and 890-1020 AD at the  $2\sigma$  level of confidence indicate the cemetery was potentially in use between the late eighth and early eleventh centuries. Execution cemeteries, like that at Old Dairy Cottage and other similar sites within the study area, such as those at Stockbridge Down (Ha) (Hill 1937) and Meon Hill (Ha) (Liddell 1933), are thought to have provided both a place of execution and a location to dispose of the remains of those excluded from community burial grounds (Reynolds 1997:39) and should be seen as physical manifestation of the growing power of the state and the development of an increasingly complex judicial system (*ibid.*:37). The cemetery at Old Dairy Cottage lies on the boundary of Chilcomb Hundred (*ibid.*:38), which corresponds with the ancient Chilcomb estate that formed the original territorium of Winchester in the seventh century (Biddle 1976b:256-7) and it may be that those excluded from the late Saxon cemeteries associated with the Old and New Ministers and the cemetery at Staple Gardens prior to its demise in c.1000AD were banished to sites, such as Old Dairy Cottage, on the edge of the hundred to be interred (Reynolds 1997:37).

#### **8.5.2. Burial in late tenth- and eleventh-century Southampton**

The documentary and archaeological evidence for both burials and ecclesiastical buildings during the tenth and eleventh centuries in the Southampton area is more fragmentary. The late Saxon town remained the main focus of settlement in the area with evidence for structures, rubbish pits, floor surfaces, ditches and road surfaces continuing into the eleventh century. However, both of the known burial grounds within the late Saxon town appear to have ceased to function by the early eleventh century. Radiocarbon dating suggests that the burial ground at SOU 266 probably went out of use by the mid-tenth century, while the radiocarbon dates indicate that burial is unlikely to have continued at SOU 25 much beyond 1020 AD. Evidence for eleventh-century burial has, however, been found at St. Mary's Church, which lay outside the late Saxon town on the site of the middle Saxon settlement of Hamwic. Toe bones from the feet of a burial uncovered at SOU 753 gave a radiocarbon date of 940-1190 AD at a  $2\sigma$  level of confidence (Smith 1996), while the lower half of a skeleton recovered from SOU 184 was radiocarbon dated as part of this study to 1015-1160AD at a  $2\sigma$  level of confidence. Although the evidence is fragmentary, this suggests, as at Winchester, the late tenth and early eleventh century saw the increased centralisation of burial around the local minster church with the end of burial in satellite cemeteries within the Saxon town. This was a process driven, in part, by the mother church of St. Mary's as it increasingly sought to enforce its monopoly on burial rights, and the revenues this brought - a monopoly it would hold in Southampton for most of the medieval period. In addition, the eleventh century saw an increasing expectation by the general population of burial in

consecrated ground near to a church as churchyard burial became virtually universal (Hadley forthcoming).

St. Mary's probable monopoly over burial does not mean it was the only church in the vicinity of the late Saxon town. It has been suggested that the churches of Holyrood, All Saints, St. John's and St. Lawrence's may all have late Saxon origins. In addition, a floor surface found during excavations at SOU 555 at the site of St. John's church may have formed part of the first church building, which is known to date back to 1071 if not earlier (Russel & Smith 1994:5,9). There is no evidence for any eleventh-century burials associated with these churches and it is probable that, as was the case in Winchester, Southampton's small late Saxon churches did not possess any burial rights.

### **8.5.3. The Norman Conquest and its impact on burial in Winchester and Southampton**

Finally, before completing this chronological survey of early medieval burial in Winchester and Southampton, it is worth briefly considering what impact the Norman Conquest and the imposition of a new Norman secular and ecclesiastical elite had on burial within the two urban centres. Unfortunately, while the evidence for eleventh-century burial in Southampton is sufficient to demonstrate that individuals were being interred around St. Mary's Church, it is too fragmentary to provide any information on changes in burial practice after 1066 AD. However, the eleventh-century burial evidence from Winchester is far more substantial. It suggests that there was little change in either the location or mode of burial in the city prior to 1100AD. However, it should be noted that the difficulties inherent in dating unfurnished burials may have masked any changes over such a short period of time. Yet while burial remained concentrated around the three minsters in the south-east corner of the walled area throughout the eleventh century, the post-Conquest period did see a marked change in the buildings in this part of the city. In Winchester, as in other sees in England, Winchester's cathedral church, the Old Minster, was rebuilt (Crook 1993:21). The first phase of construction, the eastern arm and the transept of the new Norman cathedral, begun 1079AD to the east of the Old Minster (Kjølbye-Biddle 1993:13). Once this phase of construction was completed in 1093AD, the new church was dedicated and the Old Minster was demolished over the next year to make way for the nave of the new Norman cathedral (figure 8.40) (*ibid.*; Keene 1985:308). Stone was robbed from foundations of the Anglo-Saxon cathedral presumably to use in the construction of the new Norman church (Biddle 1970:317). The resulting robber trench was then used as a charnel pit for the skeletal remains of over 1000 individuals disturbed when the foundations for the new nave were dug across the Old Minster graveyard (*ibid.*; Keene 1985:309). The post-burial disturbance of the

deceased was a common phenomenon in late Saxon churchyards, usually as a result of the intercutting of graves (see discussion in section 4.5). The remains of the dead were also less frequently disturbed by the renovation, repair and construction of ecclesiastical buildings. It seems more than probable that the construction of the New Minster at the beginning of the tenth century and expansion of the Old Minster at the end of the tenth century would have disturbed burials. However, this was unlikely to have been on the scale seen during the construction of the Norman cathedral due to the immense size of the new edifice, which was unequalled in England until the second half of the twelfth century (Keene 1985:310) and represents the Norman Conquest's most obvious initial impact on burial in either Winchester or Southampton.

## **8.6. Discussion**

This chapter has examined early medieval burial within two developing early medieval urban centres in an attempt to understand the impact of urban development on burial practices. There are two main areas of inquiry – how did their urban context affect the burial practices seen in Southampton and Winchester and secondly how do the burial practices encountered in both centres differ?

For much of the early medieval period, both centres contain multiple scattered cemeteries and isolated burials with burial only becoming predominantly centralised around minster churches in the eleventh century (Figure 8.41). This pattern of dispersed burial is not unique to urban centres, having also been observed within rural settlements (Zadora-Rio 2003:2-3). The Southampton and Winchester areas contain the best examples of this phenomenon within the study area and this may simply be a reflection of the large-scale excavations seen in both centres in the post-war period. However, the changes in cemetery number and cemetery location seen in early medieval Southampton and Winchester are linked, in part, to changes in population density. Increases in population during the ninth century in Winchester coincide with the appearance of additional cemeteries first at Staple Gardens and then later at the Nunnaminster and New Minster. It is unlikely that increases in population density was the only factor involved particularly in the foundation of the New Minster and Nunnaminster, but changes in the nature and density of occupation within the walled area has to have been a contributory factor. Similarly, Hamwic's decline in the ninth century saw the end of burial in Hamwic away from St. Mary's church, while the shift in occupation some 500m to the south-west coincided with the appearance of burials within the late Saxon town. Thus, it is possible that the higher population density seen may have served to increase the numbers of cemeteries and isolated burials seen in early medieval Southampton and

Winchester. Differences between the social structure of rural settlements and that seen in the wics and towns of middle and late Saxon England may have been another contributory factor. Both centres are likely to have had a more complex social structure than seen in rural settlements, and the possibility that different cemeteries may have served different parts of the urban community cannot be excluded.

Finally, perhaps ironically given the comparatively large number of burials in both centres not apparently associated with ecclesiastical structures, it is possible that the adoption of churchyard burial by the laity may have been accelerated in urban centres. The eighth- to ninth-century churchyard at SOU 13 in Hamwic contains the earliest substantial evidence for lay churchyard burial within the study area and it lies in the earliest non-rural settlement within the study area. Access to pastoral care has important implications for the development of churchyard burial, with the level of contact between a religious community and the surrounding population affecting the extent to which the laity may have considered churchyard burial a viable and desirable option. In Hamwic the combination of, what for the period was, a large population and an ecclesiastical presence within the settlement may have served to promote churchyard burial among the laity resulting in much higher levels of lay burial in the vicinity of a church than was seen elsewhere at that time in the study area.

The middle Saxon churchyard at SOU 13 has many of the features characteristic of churchyards of the late Saxon and medieval period with a higher density of burials and higher levels of post-burial disturbance than seen in other contemporary cemeteries (Scull 2001:71). While evidence for the post-burial disturbance of the dead in the Wessex heartlands is found throughout the early medieval period, it clearly becomes more prevalent in the later Saxon churchyards.<sup>13</sup> This can, in part, be attributed to the Anglo-Saxon Church's increasing concern to separate the sacred from the secular, with the increasing definition of churchyard cemeteries as fixed and separate spaces, enclosed by boundaries and set apart by consecration during the late Saxon period (Thompson 2002:232), particularly when combined with the increasing concentration of burial around churches. This had the effect of limiting the space available for burial while increasing the number of bodies resulting in higher levels of post-burial disturbance. Yet, the Church was not the only factor; urban centres also had large populations and limitations on the space available for burial. Thus, it is perhaps not surprising that the one earliest example of a cemetery with high levels of post-burial disturbance lies in the study area's earliest non-rural settlement. The cemetery at SOU 13 dates from after the major expansion of the settlement at Hamwic (Morton 1992a:54). This was a time when there was increased pressure on space within the settlement and

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<sup>13</sup> See section 44 for a more detailed discussion.



placing the living and the dead in direct competition for space, and this was a competition which the living were always going to win. The restricted space for burial meant that the cemetery at SOU 13, rapidly exceeded its capacity (Morton 1992b:75), resulting in high levels of post-burial disturbance as existing rows of burials were reworked to allow the addition of later burials (*ibid.*:74). As such, the space available for burial in the earliest urban centres, such as Hamwic, was restricted due to competition much earlier than was seen elsewhere and long before the Anglo-Saxon Church was in a position to dictate the burial mores of the population of Wessex.

Determining the impact of an urban context on the mode of burial is more difficult. The main problem is that the vast majority of later burials within the study period, where there is sufficient information on the nature of funerary provision, lie in urban centres,<sup>14</sup> and there is insufficient data to allow a detailed comparison of urban and rural burials. The available evidence suggests that, in the most part, the funerary provision accorded to those interred in the Southampton and Winchester areas was comparable to practices seen elsewhere within the study area. The one obvious exception is the late seventh and early eighth-century St. Mary's Stadium cemetery I, which is distinguished from other contemporary burial grounds within Wessex by the late cremations, the high number of weapon burials and the quality of many of the grave goods. In addition, the penannular ditches seen in the cemeteries at Cook Street and SOU 32, which are both contemporary or slightly later than the St. Mary's Stadium cemetery I, while not unique to Hamwic are found in only three other sites<sup>15</sup> in the study area with Hamwic containing five of the eight examples of penannular ditches identified in this study.<sup>16</sup> Overall, the evidence from the three cemeteries is for a slightly different repertoire of funerary practices than seen elsewhere in the study area and this may be related to the distinctive nature of settlement in the Hamwic area in the late seventh and early eighth-centuries, with the St. Mary's Stadium cemetery I suggesting the presence of an elite community in the area.

While the early cemeteries in Hamwic contain the only examples of distinctive funerary practices from either early medieval Winchester or Southampton, the high level of grave elaboration and grave variation seen in the late Saxon burials from both the Old Minster and

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<sup>14</sup> There are two late Saxon manorial cemeteries at Porchester (Ha) (Cunliffe 1976) and Trowbridge (Wi) (Graham & Davis 1993), two seventh-century cemeteries which appear to have continued in use until the ninth and tenth centuries at Bevis Grave (Ha) (Rudkin 2001) and Templecombe (So) (Newman 1991) and a few isolated burials, such as those as Shepton Mallet (Leech 2001:31) and Ogbourne St. Andrews (Cunnington 1885:346; Semple 2003:79).

<sup>15</sup> Ford (Wi) (Musty 1969), Portway West (Ha) (Stoodley forthcoming) and Bargates (Do) (Jarvis 1983).

<sup>16</sup> Unlike in Wessex, the use of penannular ditches is not unusual in the south-east of England, particularly Kent (O'Brien 1999:137), with the examples found in the eastern part of the study area forming the western extreme of the national distribution of this phenomenon.

New Minster is worthy of mention, as is the cluster of funerary sculpture from the city. Many of the grave elaborations and grave variations seen during the late Saxon period have been associated with high status and it is worth noting that most of the burials recovered from the Old Minster and New Minster come from either within or the immediate vicinity of the church – prestigious locations likely to attract the burials of high-status individuals. Yet, even allowing for this, the number of elaborate graves and the range of grave elaborate seen at the Winchester minsters is unusually high. As has been discussed earlier,<sup>17</sup> it has been suggested that the clustering of high levels of grave types and grave variations combined with large numbers of elaborate graves is a reflection of the high status of some religious establishments and their associated graveyards during the late Saxon period (Buckberry in press). High-status religious centres, such as the Old Minster and New Minster, were likely to attract the burials of those with means, whose elaborate burials in a prestigious location could be used to signal their high status. Yet, the urban setting of some religious centres may also have contributed to the clustering of elaborate burials. Winchester was an important political and religious centre during the tenth and eleventh centuries and this would have generated a considerable demand for high-quality goods and individuals with construction skills, enhancing the city's economy and bringing wealth to Winchester (Keene 1985:45-44, 59-60). It is possible that the city's wealth and unique social structure may in part account for the high numbers of elaborate graves seen at the Old Minster and New Minster. Given the nature of grave elaboration in Winchester, it is perhaps not that surprising that the only cluster of funerary sculpture within the study area also comes from Winchester. It has been suggested that clusters of later Anglo-Saxon funerary sculpture are likely to lie within unusual communities (Stocker 2000:187) and Winchester with its unique social structure definitely fits this criterion. Indeed, its political and religious importance would have ensured that any elaborate commemorative displays within the ecclesiastical core of the city would be seen by an influential audience, including those who wielded secular and religious power in both Wessex and England.

When early medieval burials in Southampton and Winchester are compared there are noticeable differences. Some of these are artificial – the result of excavation. For example, in Winchester, parts of all three minster churches and their surrounding cemetery have been excavated, while with the exception of a few small excavations on the periphery of the modern churchyard, the Southampton area's mother church – St. Mary's – remains unexcavated. As a result, large numbers of late Saxon burials have been recovered from Winchester, and much is known about the nature of grave elaboration and commemoration in the city. In contrast, few burials of later Saxon date are known from the Southampton area.

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<sup>17</sup> See section 5.4.

Thus, little beyond the location of the burial grounds is known of late Saxon funerary practices in the Southampton area. Yet even allowing for this type of excavation bias, there do appear to be some differences in the burial record in the two areas and they seem, at least in part, to be the result of differences in the nature of settlement. There are seven cemeteries of eighth- and ninth-century date in Southampton, while at Winchester after the mid-eighth century and until the foundation of Staple Gardens in the mid-ninth century, the only burial ground within the walled area was by the Old Minster. The discrepancy in the number of burial grounds in the two centres appears to reflect differences in population density. During the eighth and ninth centuries, the Southampton area was home to the densely populated middle Saxon wic of Hamwic and this is reflected by the high number of cemeteries. In contrast, there is little evidence that the walled area at Winchester was densely populated before the latter part of the ninth century. Indeed, the evidence points to low levels of settlement associated with the Old Minster and possibly the presence of a few secular estates within the Roman walls, which may explain the concentration of burial around the Old Minster church. When levels of occupation at Winchester increase from the late ninth century onwards, the number of burial grounds rises with the appearance of Staple Gardens and the foundation of two additional religious houses, the New Minster and the Nunnaminster, both with their own cemeteries. Yet, unlike the pattern seen in Hamwic of high numbers of small short-lived cemeteries, increases in the population of Winchester resulted in only a few new cemeteries, which are larger and long-lived. These differences in the organisation of burial may be chronological. Many cemeteries of the seventh- and eighth century are small and comparatively short-lived and it seems likely that the cemeteries at Hamwic may represent this phenomenon in an urban context. Perhaps, by the time additional cemeteries appear in Winchester attitudes had changed. Instead of a number of scattered cemeteries, it was felt more appropriate to concentrate burial in just a few areas within the settlement. Although given the strong ecclesiastical presence within the walled area the possibility that burial was restricted to only a few areas by the church cannot be excluded.

Finally, the importance of dating unfurnished burials has been a recurrent theme throughout this study and one that it is necessary to return to when considering these two case studies. The programme of radiocarbon dating undertaken as part of this research focused primarily on skeletal material from the Southampton area.<sup>18</sup> Thirteen of the twenty skeletons analysed came from nine sites in Southampton. The results served to confirm and refine the dates of middle Saxon cemetery SOU 414 by the Roman settlement at Clausentum, and the Hamwic cemeteries of SOU 32 and SOU 13. The radiocarbon analysis also identified another group

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<sup>18</sup> See chapter 3 tables 3.9 and 3.10 for a list of all radiocarbon dates and appendix B.2. for more information about the study.

of early medieval burials at Clausentum (SOU 207), the first articulated early medieval burials within the late Saxon town (SOU 25 and SOU 124), and another late Saxon-Norman burial associated with St. Mary's Church (SOU 184). On occasion, the results were more surprising with this study inadvertently providing Southampton with its first securely dated Roman skeleton (SOU 206)! Meanwhile, the early Saxon radiocarbon date from the Six Dials cemetery (SOU 13) proved difficult to reconcile with the ninth-century date suggested by the stratigraphic evidence and it is hoped that an additional radiocarbon date may resolve this problem. The radiocarbon dating programme also included two burials from the Winchester area from the execution cemetery at Old Dairy Cottage and demonstrated that the cemetery dated to the late eighth to eleventh centuries. The results of the radiocarbon programme are summarised here to emphasise the difference they made to this investigation of burial in early medieval Southampton and Winchester. Without them, the evidence for early medieval burial in both areas would have been less complex, and particularly in Southampton, less substantial.

## Chapter 9

### Discussion:

#### The Church and burial in later Saxon Wessex

This study has investigated the relationship between burial practice and the Anglo-Saxon Church between the seventh and eleventh centuries, the period which saw the origins of churchyard burial and the growing control of the Church over many aspects of mortuary behaviour. In particular, this study has examined the extent to which the influence of the Church over funerary practices can be observed in the archaeological record and the extent to which the Church was responsible for the changes seen in the archaeological evidence for burial between c.600-1100AD.

##### 9.1. The impact of the Anglo-Saxon Church on mortuary behaviour

The arrival of the Roman Church at the end of the sixth century has traditionally been seen as the major factor in the changing nature of burial practices from the seventh century onwards. However, it is important to realise that fundamental shifts can occur in mortuary behaviour without any accompanying change in religious belief. For example, the reappearance of cremation in England in the last decades of the nineteenth century was not the result of religious change (Tarlow 1992:130). Rather, it was the product of increasing concerns about decomposing organic matter from cemeteries polluting the drinking water in urban centres and to a lesser degree worries about the amount of space required to inter the deceased, particularly within the increasingly congested towns (*ibid.*:129-30). This is not to say that the arrival of Christianity and the growing power of the Church had no influence on the changing nature of mortuary behaviour in later Saxon England. Indeed, few modern scholars have questioned the assumption that the Church had a general effect on burial in later Saxon England (Geake 2003:261). However, the traditional model that the arrival of the Roman Church resulted in the rapid abandonment of furnished burial in field cemeteries and ushered in an era of homogenous burial is no longer tenable (Hadley 2000a:160, 170; 2000b:199; Blair 2005:245; Boddington 1990:94; Halsall 1995b:61-3). The seventh century did see major changes in funerary behaviour including a decline in furnished burial, alterations in grave good type and a shift in burial location, with many sixth-century cemeteries going out of use to be replaced by new burial grounds. These changes have

traditionally been seen as the result of the arrival of the Roman Church, but recent work suggests that changes in social structure, and not the arrival of a new faith, were the major determining factors (Geake 1997:1). Indeed, the evidence from this study, and work by a number of other authors, suggests that the Church did not have a major impact on burial practices in the seventh and even the early eighth century (Hadley 2000a:159; Hadley & Buckberry 2005).

This is not to say that the Church had no effect on burial during this period. The Church brought new ideas about death, burial and the afterlife, a Christian iconography and an alternative burial location to Anglo-Saxon England (Hadley 2000a:159). However, the evidence from this study suggests that the Church's initial impact on existing burial practices was limited. Christian symbols appear on grave goods in some seventh-century graves, although this does not necessarily mean the occupant was Christian, and ecclesiastics and some members of the aristocracy were buried adjacent to or within churches, but this appears to be the limit of the Church's initial influence. Moreover, there is no evidence to suggest that the regulation of mortuary behaviour was a subject of major concern to the Roman Church. Indeed, the Church appears to have been uninterested in the mode and location of burial in the seventh and eighth centuries (Bullough 1989:186; Geake 1992:89). The early Anglo-Saxon Church's position was initially often precarious and its resources limited. Burial does not appear to have been one of its priorities and even if it had been, the Church was hardly in a position to dictate the mortuary behaviour of the indigenous population.

The later Saxon period saw the consolidation of the Church's power and position within Anglo-Saxon society. This was allied with an increased influence over many aspects of life, including death and burial. Yet even in the later Saxon period when the Church exhibits a more overt concern with burial, determining the impact of the new faith on mortuary behaviour is often far from simple and straightforward. In some cases, the major factor behind changes in funerary practices is undoubtedly the Church. The most obvious example is the development of churchyard burial, which owes much to the machinations of the Church and was examined in chapter 7. The picture painted by the evidence from the study area is one of a gradual transition to churchyard burial. The available documentary and archaeological evidence indicates that churchyard burial in the seventh and even for much of the eighth century was the preserve of ecclesiastics and a small number of royalty and aristocrats. Furthermore, even though most of the post-eighth-century burials from the study area lie within churchyards, a number of non-churchyard burials dating to the ninth and tenth centuries were identified. This group of non-churchyard burials includes both cemeteries and isolated burials and indicates that there was a great diversity in burial location in the

centuries following the arrival of Christianity and that non-churchyard burial persisted well into the ninth and tenth century. Indeed, the evidence suggests that it is only in the tenth and eleventh centuries that burial within the study area was completely concentrated around minster churches and that the scattered cemeteries and burials disappear, with the exception of the execution cemeteries that contained the remains of those denied a churchyard burial. This process is well illustrated in the detailed analysis of early medieval burial in the urban centres of Winchester and Southampton presented in chapter 8. A minster church was present in Winchester by the seventh century and in Southampton by the ninth century, if not earlier, yet non-churchyard burial in the form of cemeteries and isolated inhumations persisted into the tenth century, indicating that the centralisation of burial was a late phenomenon in both urban centres.

The transition to churchyard burial during the later Saxon period marks not only a shift in burial location, but also a change in the control of burial. It is unclear who was responsible for funerals and management of burial grounds during the early Anglo-Saxon period (Geake 2003:259). It is possible that the disposal of the dead was seen as the responsibility of the deceased's family, although it has been suggested that possibly one or more individuals within a community were charged with the control of some or all aspects of the community's funerals (*ibid.*:262). Even after the development of churchyard burial, some aspects of burial remained in lay hands (Thompson 2004:112). For example, late Saxon guild statutes from Exeter (Dv), Bedwyn (Wi) and Abbotsbury (Do) all contain sections outlining members' responsibilities on the death of a guild-brother (Whitelock 1955:558-560). These included contributing to the payment of soul scot, paying for masses or psalms for the soul of the deceased, arranging for the provision of food thirty days after death, and transporting, or arranging transportation, to the deceased's designated burial location. The preparation of the body and holding vigils may also have been conducted by family and friends (Thompson 2004:82-4). However, many aspects of burial were now very much the purview of the Church. In some cases this was a result of practical necessity, with increasing numbers being interred in churchyards the Church needed, at some level, to control grave digging (*ibid.*:117). This may simply have consisted of instructing the family and friends of the deceased where they could dig a grave, although it is equally possible that the graves were prepared by a low ranking member of the local church. In the absence of documentary evidence, it is impossible to know, but it seems unlikely that the laity would be allowed to dig graves within late Saxon churchyards without the Church exerting some form of control over the process.

More important than the Church's concern with the location and preparation of graves was its increasing control over the ceremonial and ideological aspects of burial. Little is known of the ceremonies that may have accompanied the interment of the deceased during the early Anglo-Saxon period or of the ideology that would have shaped attitudes to the deceased and concepts of the afterlife. What is clear is that by the late Saxon period, many of the ceremonies deemed necessary to inter the dead in an appropriate manner were conducted by ecclesiastics and usually took the form of masses, prayers and psalms prior to and during burial, and later to commemorate the deceased (*ibid.*:123; Geary 1994:91-2). The growing control of the Church over the ceremonial aspects of burial was paralleled by the increased dissemination of a Christian ideology, which included the concepts of bodily resurrection and the idea of penance. Unfortunately, unlike churchyard burial, many of the ceremonial and ideological aspects of burial are not easily identified in the archaeological record. The prayers, blessings, masses and psalms that formed the core of many Christian rites for the dead would have left little mark. However, some aspects of Christian ideology, especially the belief in bodily resurrection, are manifest within the material record, particularly in the evidence for the commemoration of the dead (discussed in chapter 6). The Christian iconography, seen on funerary sculpture in late Saxon Wessex, points to the growing influence of the Church, with many grave markers carrying inscriptions with references to Christian beliefs in the after life.

Elsewhere in the archaeological record, the impact of the Church and Christian ideology is less obvious. This is particularly true when considering the impact of the new faith on graves. It has been proposed that this increased complexity in grave elaboration during the late Saxon period were linked towards obtaining salvation (Thompson 2004:108). Yet while the period c.600-1100AD saw major changes to both the form and contents of the grave (discussed in chapter 5), it is difficult to demonstrate that many of these changes were the direct result of the increasing influence of the Church. Among the changes in mortuary behaviour that may have been influenced by the Church include the use of charcoal burials, which appear for the first time in the ninth century, and may have had some penitential function (Thompson 2002:240; Kjølbye-Biddle 1992:231). Another possible example is the use of stones to support the head, which may have been seen as a sign of penance or humility (Daniel 1997:160). Alternatively, it has been suggested that the use of stones to support the head, which becomes more prevalent in the later Saxon period, may be linked to beliefs in the afterlife, with the stones perhaps holding the head in position so that when the body was raised on the day of Judgement, it was facing the right way. Yet despite these examples, overall it is difficult to link many of the other changes seen in grave elaboration directly with the growing influence of the Church.



So far this discussion has considered examples of burial practice where the church can be demonstrated to have had a direct impact. Yet, often the Church's influence on mortuary behaviour was indirect, subtle and occasionally inadvertent. For example, many of the variations in the form and contents of the grave seen in late Saxon churchyards, such as stone linings, wooden coffins or linings, predate the consolidation of the Roman church in England and, in some cases, even the arrival of missionaries from Rome. Yet, the way these variables were used during the late Saxon period was indirectly influenced by the Church. The earliest churchyards within the study area are characterised by a marked lack of variation in grave form and variation. Yet, by the tenth and eleventh centuries, many churchyards within Wessex exhibited a much greater diversity of grave elaboration (discussed in chapter 5). By the later Saxon period, the increasing numbers interred within churchyards meant that burial near a church alone was no longer sufficient to denote high status. Many forms of grave elaboration, such as mortar-lined graves, coffin fittings, head niches and stone cists, seen in the later Saxon period have been linked to high status. Many of these variations either appear or become more prevalent at a time when churchyard burial appears to have been becoming increasingly common and seem likely to have been used to denote high status. It can be argued that the increasing variation seen in graves in later Saxon period was an indirect result of the Church's success in increasing the proportion of the population interred in churchyards making it necessary for those with means to find other ways to distinguish themselves in death.

The increasing popularity of churchyard burial did not only affect the levels of grave variation seen in late Saxon churchyards, but also the levels of post-burial disturbance (discussed in chapter 4). During the late Saxon period, the church was increasingly concerned to separate the sacred from the secular. This period saw the increasing definition of churchyards as distinct and separate places, set apart by consecration and defined by boundaries (Thompson 2002:232; Gittos 2002:195). The increasing use of fixed boundaries around churchyards combined with the growing number of bodies meant that many cemeteries rapidly exceeded their capacity. This resulted in much higher levels of post-burial disturbance than were seen in the field cemeteries of the seventh and eighth centuries as the limitations on space made it necessary to cut new graves through earlier burials.

The development of churchyard burial was not the only way in which the Church may have indirectly influenced mortuary practices. The decline in use of grave goods in the seventh and eighth centuries was traditionally seen as the result of the arrival of the Roman church (Leeds 1936:96; Meaney & Hawkes 1970:53). However, work by a number of authors over

the last two decades has demonstrated that Christianity is highly unlikely to have been a major factor in the virtual disappearance of grave goods (Boddington 1990:94; Halsall 1995b:61-3; Hadley 2000a:170; Bullough 1989:185; Young 1999:74). Instead, a combination of changes in technology, trade, and political and social structures are now seen as major causative factors (Carver 1989:157; Geake 1997:1; Lucy 2000:184). Yet, while the Church did not trigger the demise of grave goods, it is possible that it may have indirectly played a small contributory part. As the Church consolidated its position in the later Saxon period, its growing requirements for land, livestock and food would have placed an increasing drain on resources, which may have accelerated the decline in grave good deposition (Blair 1988; Geake 1992:91). The Church also provided an alternative recipient for an individual's wealth after death. Instead of depositing items in the ground, they could be given to the church as gifts.

In sum, this study has demonstrated that the Church had a major impact on burial location and the commemoration of the dead in early medieval Wessex. However, the impact of the Church on other aspects of the funerary process was subtle and often indirect. In addition, by the late Saxon period the Church had become inextricably linked with burial and commemoration. The Church provided funerary services such as prayers and masses prior to and during burial, the dead were interred in ground consecrated by the Church and commemorated in masses and prayers conducted by the Church. It also seems likely that there may have been a shift in the relative importance of the different aspects of the funerary process as a result of the Church's influence. This may, in part, be the result of changes in the focus of funerary rites. The nature of early Saxon funerary rites suggest that the stage provided by the body displayed within an open grave or the spectacle of the cremation pyre provided important venues for the signalling of information, and the renegotiation of social relationships, and also served as a means for dealing with loss. The evidence from the later Saxon period, particularly the increasing trend toward removing the body from view, either wrapped in a shroud or encased within a coffin, suggest that the focus of the funerary rites may have moved away from the body, and perhaps even to some extent the grave, with the rituals of the church, such as masses for the dead, funerary processions and praying for the soul of the deceased (Paxton 1990), becoming more prominent.

## **9.2. Early Medieval burial practices: Beyond the church**

While the primary focus of this study was the relationship between the Anglo-Saxon Church and mortuary behaviour, as is often the case, this work has generated a number of secondary

findings and valuable data on many aspects of burial practices in early medieval Wessex and these are briefly discussed in this section.

At the most basic level, this study provides the first survey of the burial evidence in the Wessex heartlands that encompasses the entire early medieval period, c.450-1100AD and details of all sites identified are given in the gazetteer. Analysis of the site survey, discussed in chapter 3, demonstrated important variations in the geographical and chronological variation of sites within the study area. In particular, the majority of sites that can be securely dated are fifth- to seventh-century cemeteries from the eastern part of the study area, while early sites from the western part of the study area and burials from the eighth to eleventh centuries are less well represented in the survey. The differences seen in both the chronological and geographical distribution of sites are the result of a number of factors, including variations in bone preservation, site visibility and levels of ground disturbance. However, the major factor is the difficulty inherent in dating unfurnished burials and there are many sites within the study area that could be of Saxon date, but lack secure dating. The importance of using radiocarbon methods, to date those undated burials of suspected Saxon date and to refine the dating of sites of known early medieval date, was demonstrated by radiocarbon dating a number of burials as part of this study (see chapter 3 for details). Nineteen of the twenty burials analysed were shown to be of early medieval date. The majority of burials came from Southampton and the dates were used to examine the changing nature of burial and complexity of burial location within the city in chapter 8. In addition, the radiocarbon dates also allowed the identification of another late Saxon execution cemetery within the study area, and demonstrated that burial persisted into the tenth century in a cemetery with seventh-century origins, thus adding to the small, but growing, corpus of late non-churchyard burials identified within the study area in chapter 7.

A detailed analysis of over 2000 individual burials conducted as part of this study was essential to the understanding of the impact of the Church on funerary practices, but has also provided information on other aspects of mortuary behaviour. For example, the data collected as part of the survey of burial data has allowed the chronological distribution of burial practices to be examined. The results, summarised in table 9.1, demonstrated major changes in burial location and the nature of commemoration, as well as the virtual disappearance of some practices, such as cremation and the use of grave goods, and the appearance of others, such as charcoal burials. Yet there was also continuity of funerary behaviour with some practices, such as with stone-lined graves, found across the entire period and others, such as coffins and the use of stones to support the head, present throughout but appearing to become more prevalent in the latter part of the study period.

This study has also provided valuable information about the geographical distribution of funerary practices within the study area. While many practices were found across the entire study area, a number were primarily confined to only part of Wessex (table 9.2). For example, inscribed stones, rectangular ditches around graves, stone-lined graves and stone grave covers were primarily confined to the western part of the study area, while other practices such as cremation, the use of grave goods, and penannular ditches, were only found in the eastern part of the study area. Differences in the distribution of some practices, such as stone-lined graves and stone grave covers, can be attributed to variations in the availability of raw materials. Both of these variables are primarily confined to the western part of the study area where the underlying limestone and sandstone bedrock provide a ready source of easily worked stone. In contrast, much of the underlying geology of the eastern part of the study area is chalk, which, apart from flint outcrops, provides no readily available source of stone to line or cover a grave.

Differences in the distribution of the other funerary practices - cremations, the use of grave goods, inscribed stones, and rectangular and penannular ditches - do not appear to be linked to the availability of raw materials, and seem to represent genuine differences between funerary practices in the western and eastern part of the study area. Interestingly, with the exception of inscribed stones that were used throughout the study period, the other funerary practices found in only part of the study area are confined to the seventh and eighth century. At the beginning of the seventh century, the area would become the heartlands of Wessex, and the study area did not exist as a single entity but as a number of distinct kingdoms, those in the eastern part of the study area considered Anglo-Saxon and those to the west, British. As such, it seems likely that many differences seen in the distribution of some types of funerary practice between the western and eastern parts of the study area are a reflection of this British/Anglo-Saxon division. Indeed, the majority of these differences disappear by the end of the eighth century, by which time much of the study area had come under West Saxon control.<sup>1</sup>

This study also identified a number of funerary practices that exhibited very localised distributions and were found in only a few cemeteries (table 9.2). The majority of these, such as head niches, grave ledges, bed burials and crouched burial, appear to be variations in funerary practice only adopted by certain communities. In some cases, the majority of examples lie within a relatively small geographical area. For example all the bed burials

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<sup>1</sup> See chapter 1 for more information on the formation of Wessex.

**Table 9.1. Chronological distribution of funerary practices within the study area**

Chronological distribution within the study	Aspect of funeral		
	Treatment of the body	Grave type and grave variations	Commemoration of the dead
Found primarily in middle Saxon period	Cremation Non-west-east orientated graves Non-supine extended burials	Ledges in graves Grave goods Bed burials	Barrow burials Rectangular ditches Pennanular ditches
Found primarily in later Saxon period	-	Head recesses Charcoal burials Coffin fittings	Funerary sculpture
Found throughout the study period but in increased levels in the later Saxon period	Supine extended burial West-east orientated graves Post burial disturbance	Wooden structures Pillow stones	-
Found throughout the study period	-	Stone linings Stone coverings	Inscribed stones Grave markers

**Table 9.2. Geographical distribution of funerary practices within the study area**

Geographical distribution within the study area	Aspect of funeral		
	Treatment of the body	Grave type and grave variations	Commemoration of the dead
Found primarily in the western part of the study area	-	Stone lined grave Stone grave covers	Inscribed stones Rectangular ditches
Found primarily in eastern part of the study area	Cremation	Grave goods	Pennanular ditches
Uncommon funerary practices confined to a few cemeteries	Prone burial Crouched burial	Ledges Head Niches Bed burials Coffin fittings	-
Found throughout the study area	Supine burial Supine burial with flexed legs Burial on side	Charcoal burials Coffins Pillow stones	Funerary sculpture Grave markers

within the study area lie along the Hampshire/Dorset border, while the majority of graves with ledges are found in three cemeteries in southern Hampshire. However, the type of burial ground may also be a contributory factor in some instances. For instance, all the examples of bed burials within the study area are found in barrow burials, although it should be noted this is not the case elsewhere in England. Similarly, coffin fittings are only found in a few barrow burials and late Saxon churchyards associated with high status ecclesiastical houses, while all the late Saxon examples of prone burial within the study area lay in execution cemeteries.

Interestingly, it is worth noticing that the majority of funerary practices which exhibit either a distinct regional or localised distribution within the study area date to the seventh and eighth centuries. Indeed, the evidence from this study suggests that there was a much greater level of homogeneity in burial practices across the study area during the late Saxon period. This should not however be equated with a uniformity in burial practice across all sites. Burial ground type appears to an important factor in determining the range of funerary practices seen at a particular site in the later Saxon period. For, example the majority of late Saxon examples of high levels of non-supine extended burials, decapitations and non west-east orientated graves are found at execution cemeteries. In contrast, higher levels of the more elaborate funerary practices - such as charcoal burials, lead coffins, monolithic stone coffins, coffin fittings and elaborate funerary sculpture - that are indicative of the additional expenditure of time and resources tend to be found in churchyards associated with high status religious establishments, such as the Old and New Minsters in Winchester.<sup>2</sup>

While the primary focus of this study was the relationship between burial practices and the Church, religion was not the only influence on burial practices in the early medieval period and this study was able to examine the effect of a number of other factors on mortuary behaviour. The middle and late Saxon period saw significant changes in settlement patterns and the re-emergence of urban centres. These changes seemed likely to have had a significant impact on burial practice, particularly on burial location, and this was examined, using Winchester and Southampton as case studies, in chapter 8. Perhaps not surprisingly, the evidence from both urban centres showed a strong correlation between the fluctuations and shifts in population density and distribution and the number and location of cemeteries.

Gender and age are known to be a significant factor in determining the funerary provision accorded an individual during the early Anglo-Saxon period (Stoodley 1999a & b; 2000; Lucy 1998; Härke 1989, 1990, 1992; Brush 1988; Pader 1982). Chapter 5 examined data on

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<sup>2</sup> This finding echoes the finding of Jo Buckberry in her study of burial in later Anglo-Saxon Lincolnshire and Yorkshire (Buckberry in press).

grave type and grave variation to determine whether this remained the case during the middle and late Saxon period. The results demonstrated that gender continued to be signalled by grave goods in the seventh century, but with the exception of bed burials, there does not appear to have been a strong correlation between sex and other forms of grave elaboration. Indeed, after the eighth century, when the use of grave goods virtually disappears, the evidence suggests that gender ceased to be a major factor in determining funerary provision. A similar pattern was seen when the relationship between funerary provision and age is examined. During the early Saxon period, age appears to have been an important factor in determining the number and type of grave goods accompanying an individual (Stoodley 2000). When the relationship between age and funerary practice during the middle and late Saxon period was examined in chapter 5, only patterns of grave good deposition exhibited a strong correlation with age. The other forms of grave elaboration examined did not appear to exhibit a strong correlation with age, although a number of variables were found predominately with adult burials. This suggests that, with the decline in the use of grave goods during the seventh century, the signalling of age within the grave becomes less apparent. However, the fact that a number of forms of grave elaboration were preferential accorded to adults suggests that age may have continued to exert some influence over the funerary provision accorded an individual during the middle and late Saxon period, although it had ceased to be a major factor. These findings echo those of a number of other studies (Buckberry 2004 & in press; Hadley 2004). Yet if age and sex were no longer major factors in determining funerary provision in the later Saxon period, other aspects of social identity continued to be reflected in mortuary practices (Buckberry 2004 & in press; Hadley 2004:314). Many forms of grave elaboration seen in the late Saxon churchyards, such as charcoal burials, head niches, coffin fittings, stone and lead coffins, mortar-lined graves and elaborate funerary sculpture, reflect extra expenditure of time or resources. Such variations would have only been available to those of means and should be seen as indicators of social status.

### **9.3. Further work**

This work should in many ways be seen as the essential first phase in the study of later Saxon burial in the Wessex heartlands. It provides a comprehensive survey of the range and nature of funerary behaviour and has examined some of the factors thought to have influenced burial during this period. Yet, like many studies of this kind, it has also highlighted areas where additional work is required.

At a practical level, the problems inherent in accurately dating unfurnished burials are a major limiting factor in the study of later Saxon burial practices. The dating programme

undertaken in this study, and that conducted by Dawn Hadley and Jo Buckberry (Buckberry 2004), provides graphic illustration of the value of accurately dating unfurnished burials. There is a clear need for the greater use of radiocarbon dating in future excavations when the date of cemeteries and isolated burials are unclear, and this should be combined with the analysis of undated skeletons held in archaeology collections. This approach should allow the identification of greater numbers of unfurnished early medieval burials and is essential for obtaining a truly comprehensive understanding of funerary practices of the period. In addition, this study has highlighted the need for a national burial database covering the entire early medieval period. There are a number of national and regional gazetteers for the early Saxon period (Meaney 1964; Stoodley 1999a; Welch 1983; Arnold 1982; Dickinson 1976; Lucy 1998) and one national survey of middle Saxon burial between c.650-850AD (Geake 1997). With the notable exceptions of Jo Buckberry's work (2004) on later Saxon burials in Yorkshire and Lincolnshire and now this work, comprehensive surveys of late Saxon burials are lacking. A comprehensive national database of burials encompassing the entire early medieval period and including burials from the west country, Wales and Scotland - areas not always included in the existing national gazetteers - would be very beneficial for future researchers (Lucy & Reynolds 2002a:7).

Turning to the mortuary practices of the period, this study has examined the relationship between burial and the Church and the findings of this study need to be placed in a wider context. To what extent is the impact of the Church on mortuary behaviour in Wessex echoed in other parts of England? How does it compare with that seen in neighbouring countries, such as Wales, Ireland and France, which have different Christian traditions? Furthermore to what extent are the burial practices seen in Wessex influenced by funerary traditions of these countries? In addition, the relationship between cemetery location and settlement requires further investigation. The analysis of early medieval burial in Winchester and Southampton in chapter 8 has demonstrated a strong correlation between population density and distribution and cemetery number and location. In addition, the chapter served to highlight the increasingly complex and diverse nature of burial location within early medieval urban centres. Further work is needed both in the form of a general study of the relationship between burial and settlement in the later Saxon period and more localised studies of early medieval burial in other urban centres, as well as in rural areas in order to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the changing nature of burial location during the early medieval period. Finally, the chronological endpoint of this study is c.1100AD and there is some suggestion that the geography of burial is beginning to shift in the late eleventh century. The Norman conquest of 1066AD led to the gradual imposition of a new aristocracy and episcopate on Anglo-Saxon Wessex. This Norman influx is likely to have been



accompanied by changes in the organisation of church and state and a shift in social mores as a result of the introduction of new traditions from Normandy and the new elite's unfamiliarity with the structures and customs in Anglo-Saxon England. This may have indirectly affected burial practices. As such, to what extent can the changes, particularly in burial location, observed in the funerary record between 1066 and 1200AD be seen as a result of the events of 1066 and its aftermath?

#### **9.4. Conclusions**

Thus in summary, this study has provided the first comprehensive study of burial practices between c.600-1100AD in the Wessex heartlands and the first gazetteer of sites for the entire period c.450-1100AD. It has highlighted the problems inherent in dating unfurnished burials and the implications this has for the study of early medieval burial. A programme of radiocarbon analysis undertaken as part of this study has demonstrated the value of this methodology in confirming the date of suspected early medieval burials and in refining the dating of known early medieval cemeteries.

This study has examined the relationship between the Church and burial practices in early medieval Wessex. It has demonstrated that the Church's initial impact on burial practices was limited and that most of the changes seen in mortuary behaviour in the seventh and even eighth century should be seen predominately as the result of other factors. However, the Church was to exert a major influence over burial practices by the later Saxon period. In particular, the church had a profound impact on burial location, with the development of churchyard burial, and on the commemoration of the dead. The Church's impact on other aspects of the funerary process, such as the grave elaboration and the treatment of the body, was more subtle and indirect. Indeed, had this study focused only on the grave and not considered other aspects of the funerary process, it would have concluded that the Church's impact on early medieval burial was minimal, emphasising the importance of considering all aspects of burial and commemoration.

While the primary focus of this study was the relationship between the Church and burial practices, this study has resulted in a number of secondary findings. This study has provided valuable information on the chronological and geographical distribution of funerary practices within the study area. It has demonstrated that settlement density and distribution is correlated with cemetery number and location. Finally, it has confirmed the findings of a number of other studies that gender and, to a lesser extent, age cease to be major factors in

determining funerary provision. Social identity does continue to be signalled with social status determining the nature of grave elaboration associated with many late Saxon burials.

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## **Appendix 1. Dating the dead of early medieval Southampton and Winchester**

There is substantial evidence for early medieval burial in both Southampton and Winchester with a large number of sites yielding human remains that are either known or strongly suspected to date to the early medieval period from Winchester and Southampton. These include examples of churchyard and non-churchyard burials, as well as a number of isolated burials. Chronologically, a complete sequence of burial from the mid to late seventh century through to the eleventh-century is represented in both cities, although it should be noted that the burial evidence is more plentiful for some centuries than others. At Winchester the major focus for burial lay in and around the remains of the walled Roman town, while at Southampton there were three burial foci: the Roman fort of Clausentum; the site of the middle Saxon "wic"; and the late Saxon town.

Many of the cemeteries and isolated burials from Southampton and Winchester areas have been securely dated on the basis of radiocarbon dating<sup>1</sup> or the presence of grave goods.<sup>2</sup> However, in both cities, a number of other cemeteries and isolated burials, particularly those from older excavations, are either undated, although strongly suspected to be early medieval, or can only be loosely dated to broad chronological ranges within the early medieval period. Ideally, the date of these burials need to be either determined or refined using radiocarbon dating if a truly comprehensive picture of the nature and location of early medieval burial within the two cities is to be achieved. As such, a programme of radiocarbon dating was undertaken as part of this study to improve the dating of a number of burials and so enhance the understanding of burial within these two cities. The programme selectively targeted for inclusion were sites of ostensibly unknown date that were suspected to be early medieval, and poorly dated early medieval cemeteries where refining the dating could have important implications for the understanding of the evolution of mortuary behaviour within the two

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<sup>1</sup> Including both cemeteries uncovered at the site of St. Mary's Stadium, Southampton (Birbeck 2004), the Cook Street cemetery in Hamwic (Garner 1993; 2001; Garner & Vincent 1997), the burials associated with St. Mary's Church, Southampton (Smith 1995), Staple Gardens in Winchester (Winchester Museums Service archive SG84 & SG89), the Southgate burials (Biddle 1975a:118).

<sup>2</sup> Including the seventh-century cemeteries of Lower Brook Street (Biddle 1975b:303-305) and Winnall II (Meaney & Hawkes 1970) in the Winchester area and the earlier of the two St. Mary's Stadium cemeteries (Birbeck 2003).

cities. Finally, it should be noted that it was not possible to include some sites in the analysis as no skeletal material of secure provenance survives.

A total of twenty burials from eleven different sites were radiocarbon dated as part of this programme. Twelve burials were analysed to refine the dating of five cemeteries (see table 3.7. for details). Three of the cemeteries, SOU 13, SOU 32 and Six Dials, lay within the middle Saxon settlement of Hamwic. While clearly in use during the middle Saxon period, the dating of SOU 13, the largest known cemetery excavated within Hamwic remains poor. This cemetery has always been thought to be one of the later Hamwic cemeteries due to its heavily intercut rows of burials, which are reminiscent of churchyards of the later medieval period. A more secure date for this site would greatly enhance the understanding of changes in burial practice and cemetery organisation during the middle Saxon settlement's existence. In addition, by dating four individuals, one from the earliest and one from the latest phases of each of the two trenches, it was hoped to obtain some idea of how long the cemetery remained in use. Radiocarbon dates from three of the burials analysed from SOU 13 suggested the cemetery could have in use between the late seventh and ninth centuries, most probably during the eighth and ninth centuries (see table 3.10). There is a 95.4% probability that the cemetery was in use by 780AD, and probably much earlier, suggesting that the transition from the earlier cemeteries, with well spaced burials, to the higher density of burial seen at SOU 13 occurred rapidly, probably within one or two generations. A fourth radiocarbon date from a burial at the lower level of one of the trenches at SOU 13 produced a mid-sixth to mid-seventh century date. This was a little surprising but one possible explanation is that the SOU 13 cemetery originated as a small field cemetery of the late sixth to seventh century and continued in use as Hamwic developed around it.

The small cemetery SOU 32 has long been considered to be one of the earlier of the Hamwic cemeteries and may have been in use at the same time as the Cook Street cemetery as both contain penannular ditches. The cemetery's similarity to the Cook Street combined with the presence of the early W series sceatta in the lower fill of one of the graves, thought to have been minted c.700-715 (Morton 1992a:179), suggests an early eighth-century date for the cemetery, although a late seventh-century date for the cemetery cannot be excluded (Scull 2001:72). A radiocarbon date was obtained from one of the burials both to confirm the proposed date of the cemetery, but also in the hope of further refining the date. The resulting date of 640-780AD at a  $2\sigma$  level of confidence served both to confirm the proposed early

eighth-century date for the cemetery, and it also strengthens the case for the cemetery originating in the late seventh century.

The small group of burials from Six Dials, in contrast, were thought to date from late in Hamwic's existence with the stratigraphic sequence suggesting a late ninth-century date for the cemetery (Andrews 1997:203). As with SOU 32, radiocarbon dating had the potential to refine the dating of the cemetery, and so increase the understanding of the chronological distribution of Hamwic's middle Saxon cemeteries. The results of the radiocarbon analysis were a little surprising, producing a date range of 550-690AD at a  $2\sigma$  level of confidence, which is some 200 years earlier than was anticipated. This date is difficult to reconcile with the date suggested by the stratigraphic evidence, particularly as the sample comes from a burial (6004) cut into the top of a pit containing pottery dated to 750 to 850 AD (*ibid.*:198,203). A second sample has been submitted for radiocarbon analysis and until receipt of this result, it seems prudent to continue to use the stratigraphic evidence and date the cemetery to the ninth century.

Middle Saxon burial in the Southampton area was not confined to Hamwic. Between 80 and 180 inhumations are estimated to have been recovered from the area of the Roman fort of Clausentum and its ramparts over the course of the last hundred years (see figure 8.14. for location). The majority of these have always been thought to be post-Roman, but the first secure dates for any burials in this area has been provided by the radiocarbon dating of two recently excavated sites, SOU 414 and SOU 108/862, which both proved to be middle Saxon<sup>3</sup>. However, the radiocarbon date from SOU 414 conflicts with the early Saxon date of the spearhead found in association with a displaced skull on this site. A new radiocarbon date of 650-770AD at a  $2\sigma$  level of confidence was obtained from the same skeleton as the first suggesting that the undisturbed burials formed part of cemetery in use during the late seventh and eighth centuries. In addition, the spearhead has been re-examined and has been shown to be a C2 type (Nick Stoodley, *pers.comm.*). This type of spear was particularly long lived and is found in seventh century graves, with a number of examples recovered from the St. Mary's Stadium I cemetery.

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<sup>3</sup> Radiocarbon date from SOU 414 – IGNS NZA 7958 gave a date range of 652-971 AD at a  $2\sigma$  level of confidence (Southampton City Museum archive SOU 414, while the radiocarbon dates from SOU 862 were 564-775, 562-676AD and 680-1010AD with all dates quoted at a  $2\sigma$  level of confidence (Southampton City Museum archive SOU 862).

The dearth of non-urban cemeteries which date beyond the mid-eighth century within the study area means there is little rural comparative data for the predominately urban cemeteries from Southampton and Winchester considered in this chapter. The one possible exception is the cemetery of Bevis' Grave at Bedhampton (Ha) (Rudkin 2001), the only large non-urban cemetery extending beyond the early eighth century in Wessex. While the majority of grave goods found with some of the predominately W-E aligned burials date from the seventh and early eighth centuries, one of burials was accompanied by a strap end dated stylistically to the early ninth century, which suggests a later date for some of the inhumations in this cemetery. The radiocarbon dating of five burials gives a similar chronological span as the grave goods. Four burials was dated to the seventh and eighth centuries (see table 3.10. for details), while the fifth is dated from 890-1020AD at a  $2\sigma$  level of confidence. The late date of the latter burial and the burial accompanied with the ninth-century strap end indicate that inhumation persisted beyond the end of the eight century and continued into the tenth century. The importance of this latter date in the context of the transition to churchyard burial in Wessex has already been discussed in chapter 7, but for the purposes of this discussion the radiocarbon dating confirmed that Bevis Grave continued in use into the late Saxon period.

The remaining eight burials from six sites included in the radiocarbon dating, were all undated but suspected to be of early medieval date (see table 3.8). St. Mary's Church, which lies in Hamwic, has long been suspected to have been founded in the Middle Saxon period and possibly to have been the mother church for the Southampton area (Hase 1988:45). Two burials recovered from just outside the current churchyard wall were radiocarbon dated to the late seventh to the late ninth century and to the late ninth to early eleventh century respectively. This provided the first conclusive evidence for the use of the graveyard during the early medieval period (Smith 1995:259). These burials also demonstrated that the churchyard was initially larger and it was suggested that a burial (SOU184) recovered from under Chapel Road, which runs alongside St. Mary's Church, was also part of the cemetery (Youngs, Clark & Gaimster 1988). Radiocarbon dating of this burial gave a eleventh to mid-twelfth century date indicating that the burial was part of the late Saxon-Norman churchyard of St Mary's and that the southern part of the burial ground had been reduced in size at a later date.

Following the decline of Hamwic, the focus of activity in the late Saxon period moved to the site of the medieval town, some 500m to the west (see figure 8.2.). The absence of late Saxon burials in the later town has led to the assumption that despite the shift in settlement location, St. Mary's Church in Hamwic remained the main focus for burial throughout the later Saxon period. However, the recent late Saxon radiocarbon dates from the disturbed human bones from the Lower High Street (SOU 161/266) may be indicative of burial occurring within the late Saxon town, suggesting a greater diversity in burial location than initially thought (Southampton City Museum archive SOU 266). The three burials overlying late Saxon pits recovered from the Westgate site SOU 25 are the only group of undisturbed remains of probable Saxon date from within the late Saxon/Medieval town (Webster & Cherry 1980). Two of the burials were radiocarbon dated and both gave tenth-century dates. The burials from SOU 25 are thought to represent the southern edge of a cemetery, and the presence of late Saxon burials in the late Saxon town indicate that St. Mary's Church did not have a complete monopoly over burial during this period. In addition, an isolated burial, recovered from a ditch within the late Saxon town (SOU 124) (Southampton City Museum Archive), was dated to the ninth or early tenth century. Why this individual was interred within this ditch is unclear, although the position of the body does raise the possibility that this was not a formal burial.

While skeletal material from recent excavations in the vicinity of the Roman fort of Clausentum has been radiocarbon dated to the middle Saxon period, as discussed above, the vast majority of the burials recovered from around the fort remain undated. Unfortunately, not all of the human remains that were recovered during early excavations were retained and much of the extant skeletal material from Clausentum within the Southampton City Museum stores can no longer be securely provenanced. The skeletal material from the small group of unfurnished burials recovered from SOU 207 and the isolated burial cut into the ramparts of the Roman fort (SOU 206) are rare exceptions. A radiocarbon date of 675-805AD at a 2 $\sigma$  level of confidence of a burial from SOU 207 served to demonstrate the existence of a further group of burials dating to the seventh or eighth century around the Roman fort. Furthermore, this date also raises the possibility that some of the burials found in the sites immediately adjacent to SOU 207 may also date to the same period. The isolated burial from SOU 206 was dated to 240-390AD at a 2 $\sigma$  level of confidence and was the only one of the burials within the sample not to date to the early medieval period. It should, however, be noted that this burial is the first inhumation from the Southampton area to be securely dated to the Roman period.



Finally, any consideration of early medieval practices in Winchester must also consider the burials from Old Dairy Cottage (McCulloch 1990). This cemetery, which lies just outside the city limits, contains a number of prone and decapitated burials and is often compared with the late Saxon execution cemeteries of Stockbridge Down (Hill 1937), Roche Court Down (Stone 1937) and Meon Hill (Liddel 1933). However, while the sparse artefact evidence is suggestive of a middle Saxon date for this site, with two associated buckles suggesting a seventh-century date, the dating of this site was far from secure (Geake 1997:154). Radiocarbon dates from two burials yielded dates of 775-965AD and 890-1020AD at 2 $\sigma$  levels of confidence suggesting the cemetery was in use between the eighth and eleventh centuries.

## Appendix A. Multiple burials

Even though single burial was the rule during the early medieval period, examples of multiple burials are found. These can take the form of the contemporaneous deposition of two or more individuals within a single grave or the addition of secondary and tertiary burials to a pre-existing grave (Stoodley 2002:106). This appendix focuses on the evidence for contemporaneous multiple burials from the Wessex. The evidence for the insertion of later burials into existing graves is considered later in this chapter (section 4.5.2). The recognition of contemporaneous burial within the archaeological record can be problematic. For the purposes of this analysis, graves were included if more than one individual was present within a single cut and there was no evidence of one skeleton disarticulating the remains of another.<sup>1</sup>

The twelve multiple burials were identified within the study dataset - seven double burials, two triple burials and two possible quadruple burials (see table A1.). These graves contained a total of 30 individuals (1.5% of the individuals within the study dataset). The biological sex for all adult occupants within the grave was available for seven of the multiple burials (table A1). Three burials consist of male and female combinations. Four burials contained only males,<sup>2</sup> including the triple burial from Bevis Grave. The double burial from Hambledon contained only females (Mercer & Healy *forthcoming*), while the three adults in the possible quadruple burial from Portesham were female (Valentin 2004). Eight of the twelve multiple burials contained only adults,<sup>3</sup> while another, the triple burial from Staple Gardens, contained two adults and an individual of indeterminate age. Both of the occupants of the double grave at Winnall II were juveniles.<sup>4</sup> The remaining two burials, the possible quadruple burials from Camerton and Portesham, contained the remains of both adult and immature individuals.<sup>5</sup> The scarcity of multiple burials containing only immature individuals seen in this study echoes the levels observed in a national survey of multiple burial between the fifth and seventh centuries where they accounted for only c.10% of burials (Stoodley 2002:113). Over 57.3% of multiple burials from the same study contained an adult and a

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<sup>1</sup> Female skeletons with foetal remains within the pelvic cavity, such as grave 100 at Camerton (Horne 1934:61), were not included among the multiple burials.

<sup>2</sup> Two of these burials are from Stockbridge Down, a site where all individuals are believed to be male. However, the age of the excavation report combined with the absence of any references to any form of osteological analysis suggests the demographic data should be used with caution.

<sup>3</sup> Only in one case, the double burial from Old Dairy Cottage, was an estimate of age beyond that of simply adult available for all the grave's occupants. This lack of data precluded any detailed consideration of the age composition of the adult burials.

<sup>4</sup> Grave 24 at Winnall II contained the remains of two immature individuals, a child of 8 and an adolescent of 15 to 16 years (Meaney & Hawkes 1970:15).

<sup>5</sup> The possible quadruple burial at Portesham contained three adults and a child of 6-8 years (Valentin 2003). The possible quadruple burial from Camerton contained the remains of two adults and two infants (Horne 1934:58).

sub-adult (*ibid*: 112), a combination only seen in only two burials in this study. The lower numbers of immature individuals found in the multiple burials identified in this study may simply be the result of distortion due to the small size of the Wessex dataset. Alternatively, it could be the result of chronological changes in the composition of multiple burials. The presence of three multiple burials in two execution cemeteries may also be a factor as the majority of the individuals buried at these sites are adults (Hill 1937; Winchester Museums Service archive ODC89).

Two combinations of body positions were observed among the multiple burials (see table A1). In the first, all occupants were laid in a supine extended position and this was found in six burials, including the triple burial from Bevis Grave (Rudkin 2001:16) and the possible quadruple burial from Manor Farm, Portesham (Valentin 2003). The second combination involved at least one supine individual, with legs either extended or flexed, and at least one individual lying on either their left or right side, often with their legs flexed. This combination was found in five burials, including the adults from the quadruple burial from Camerton (Horne 1937:58)<sup>6</sup>. As supine extended inhumations were the dominant body position found in Wessex throughout the early medieval period, as discussed in the previous section, the high incidence of this body position among the multiple burials is unsurprising. In this study, 16.7% of individuals in multiple burials lay on their side compared with only 2% of single burials within the study dataset. The higher incidence of burial on their sides among individuals in multiple burials may, in part, be a reflection of their chronological distribution. The majority of multiple burials identified in this study date to the seventh and early eighth centuries, a period which exhibits a higher frequency of burials lying on their sides than subsequent centuries. Practical necessity may, also, have been a significant factor in determining body position in multiple burials. Although multiple burials lie in larger graves, these graves are often only just sufficient to accommodate the occupants (Stoodley 2002:107). In these confined spaces, lying one of the bodies on its side was one method of ensuring that both occupants fit and often, as in the grave containing skeletons 11 & 12 from Stockbridge Down (Hill 1937:253), the back of the skeleton on its side lay right against the side of the grave. This pressure on space can also be seen among multiple burials where all individuals are in an extended supine position, where the bodies are often placed very close to each other or, as in Grave 3 from Portway West (Stoodley in press), with one body slightly overlying the other.

Funerary practices associated with the multiple burials were examined to determine whether the practices accorded those who shared graves differed from those given to individuals

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<sup>6</sup> The body position of the infants is unclear (Horne 1937:58)

buried alone. The findings suggested many of the multiple burials did demonstrate some atypical features when compared with other burials within the same cemetery, but the nature of the differences varied between cemeteries. For example, the triple burial from Staple Gardens is the only burial within that cemetery to be orientated south-north, with the burial lying along the edge of the Roman ramparts just inside Winchester's Roman city walls (Winchester Museums Service archive SG84). This burial may represent one of the earliest burials in the cemetery (Graham Scobie, *pers. comm.*).<sup>7</sup> The double burial from St. Mary's Stadium was also distinguished by grave orientation, being one of only five south-north burials identified in a cemetery with predominately west-east burials (Stoodley 2002a:322). The double burial from Winnall II had 6 large flints arranged in a square over the heads and upper torso of the two inhumations (Meaney & Hawkes 1970:30) (figure 5.32). This is not the only burial in the cemetery with stones placed over the body, but it should be noted that the occupant of the only other example (Grave 25) has a very unusual body position, supine with arms raised into front of the face. Evidence suggestive of decapitation was found in multiple burials from Old Dairy Cottage (Winchester Museums Service archive ODC89) and Portway West (Stoodley, *in press*). In the burial from Old Dairy Cottage, the sixth cervical vertebrae of skeleton 565 was cut through, with the head placed above the shoulders with the top of the cranium in contact with the top of the neck (Winchester Museums Service archive ODC89). The evidence from Portway West is more circumstantial. Both individuals appear to be headless, and there is no evidence for any disturbance that could account for the absence of both skulls. Unfortunately due to poor skeletal preservation, definitive evidence for decapitation is lacking (Stoodley, *in press*). Finally, the triple grave at Bevis' Grave cuts into the upper grave fills of two single graves that lay side by side (Rudkin 2001:20) and is one of only two burials in the cemetery which cut earlier graves.

The number of multiple burials identified in this study is significantly lower than the 173 contemporaneous multiple burials identified in a nationwide survey of fifth- to seventh-century cemeteries dating (Stoodley 2002:106). The higher numbers in that survey may simply be a reflection of the latter's nationwide scope or it may reflect chronological differences in the frequency of multiple burial. It is notable that eight of the twelve burials identified in this study date from the seventh or eighth century<sup>8</sup>, while three of the four later burials are found in the execution cemeteries of Old Dairy Cottage (Winchester Museums Archive ODC89) and Stockbridge Down (Hill 1937). While the possibility that multiple burials in later churchyards may have been obscured by the high levels of intercutting cannot

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<sup>7</sup> Although due to a lack of data, the relationship between the triple burial and the rest of the cemetery is far from clear (Graham Scobie, *pers. comm.*)

<sup>8</sup> Although the Bevis Grave cemetery dates from the seventh to tenth century, a radiocarbon date from the central body in the triple burial, obtained as part of this study, was 660-805AD at a 2 $\sigma$  level of confidence.

be discounted,<sup>9</sup> the available data suggests that in Wessex multiple burials may be confined largely to the seventh and eighth century and to later execution cemeteries. This is supported by other surveys, which have demonstrated an increase in the national frequency of multiple burial in the seventh century in comparison with the fifth and sixth centuries (Stoodley 2002:106). The variation in the frequency of multiple burial, both chronologically and by cemetery type, may also explain why eight of the twelve examples identified in this study are located in Hampshire, as the county has not only the highest density of seventh- and eighth-century cemeteries within the study area, but also the only three securely dated execution cemeteries.

Traditionally, it has often been assumed that the occupants of multiple burials are blood relations. For example the quadruple burial from Camerton was seen as probably containing a mother, a father, and their two offspring (Home 1937:58). Yet while this may be true for some burials, perhaps another way of approaching these burials is to consider the conditions necessary for them to occur. Contemporaneous multiple burial by its very nature required two or more deaths to occur within a single community within a very short period of time (Stoodley 2002:115). As settlements during the seventh- and eighth-century were comparatively small, the death of more than one individual at any one time is unlikely to have been common, which may explain the low prevalence of multiple burials. Furthermore, it cannot be assumed that all cases of two or more concomitant deaths merited multiple burial. The rite may only have been utilised under certain conditions. The cause of death may, in some cases, have been a significant factor. Three of the ten multiple burials lie in execution cemeteries, with at least one of the individuals exhibiting clear evidence of decapitation. Such sites are characterised by the lack of care given to the burial of the deceased (Reynolds 1997:37) with many of these cemeteries containing multiple graves.<sup>10</sup> The evidence suggests that when there was the simultaneous judicial execution of two or more individuals, their remains were deposited in a single grave simply as a matter of convenience and this is the most probable explanation for the multiple burials at Stockbridge Down and Old Dairy Cottage. Furthermore, although not located within an execution cemetery, the double burial of two headless skeletons from Portway West may also be the result of judicial execution.

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<sup>9</sup> Double burials have been reported in the churchyard of the Old Minster, Winchester (Kjelbye-Biddle 1975:100)

<sup>10</sup> Examples include Guildown (Sy) (Lowther 1931), Walkington Wold (Yk) (Bartlett & Mackey 1972) and South Acre (Nf) (Whymer 1996), and Wor Barrow (Do) (Pitt-Rivers 1898), which is a suspected early medieval execution site within the study area lacking secure dating.

While it is clear that the early medieval judicial process may lie behind a number of multiple burials within the study area, particularly those post-dating the eighth-century, this is unlikely to be the only factor. It may be that for small communities any instances of concomitant deaths, whether the result of disease, violence or accident, would have had a profound effect, one which may have necessitated the use of a distinctive burial rite to prevent further mortalities (Stoodley 2002:120). For example, one explanation offered for the large flints weighing down the bodies in the multiple grave from Winnall II is that they served to “lay the ghosts” of the deceased (Meaney & Hawkes 1970:31). Alternatively, some multiple burials may simply reflect practical expediency. Why dig two graves if you can use one? It is equally possible that not all concomitant deaths required multiple burial, but perhaps only those who had died in a particular way, or perhaps it was confined only to those which had some connection to each other, be it blood, friendship, or some other form of social tie. Ultimately, the comparative rarity of this form of mortuary practice in Wessex between the seventh and eleventh centuries makes it difficult to draw many firm conclusions as to why these burials occurred or the purpose they may have served.

*Table A1. Contemporaneous multiple burials identified within the study area*

Number of individuals in grave	Site	Date of site	Grave Number	Total number of individuals in cemetery	Sex of individuals	Age of individuals	Body position	
Double burials	Portway West (Ha)	Late 6 <sup>th</sup> – 7 <sup>th</sup> century	Grave 3	At least 11	2 probable males	Both adults	Both supine extended	
	Winnall II (Ha)	7 <sup>th</sup> century	Grave 24	47	Unknown	1 teenager & 1 child	1 supine with legs flexed to right 1 on right side with legs flexed to right	
Triple burials	Camerton (So)	7 <sup>th</sup> century	Skeletons 52 & 53	116	1 male? & 1 female?	Both adults	Both supine extended	
	Hambledon Hill (Do)	7 <sup>th</sup> century	Grave 12	12	2 females	1 young adult & 1 mature adult	Both supine extended	
	St. Mary's Stadium (Ha)	Late 7 <sup>th</sup> – early 8 <sup>th</sup> century	Grave 3520	23	Unknown	1 mature adult & 1 adult	Both supine extended	
	Old Dairy Cottage (Ha)	9 <sup>th</sup> -10 <sup>th</sup> century	Grave 125	17	1 male & 1 female?	1 young and 1 mature adult	1 supine extended 1 on left side	
	Stockbridge Down (Ha)		11 <sup>th</sup> -twelfth century	Skeletons 5 & 6	41	Both male???	Both adults	1 supine 1 on right side
				Skeletons 11 & 12		Both male???	Both adults	1 supine extended 1 on left side
	Bevis Grave (Ha)	7 <sup>th</sup> -10 <sup>th</sup> century	Grave 68	88	All male	2 adults & 1 mature adult	All supine extended	
	Staple Gardens (Ha)	9 <sup>th</sup> -11 <sup>th</sup> century	Grave 1147	285	2 male & 1 unknown	2 adults & 1 unknown	Unclear	
	Quadruple?	Camerton (So)	7 <sup>th</sup> century?	Skeletons 82 & 83	116	1 male? & 1 female?	2 adults & 2 immature individuals	1 on left side 1 supine with legs flexed to left
						2 "infants" lie under adults, probably part of same burial		
Quadruple/Double?	Manor Farm, Portesham (Do)	Late 7 <sup>th</sup> – early 8 <sup>th</sup> century	Inhumations 1039, 1060, 1100 & 1101	9	3 females & a child	2 older adults, 1 mature adult & a child	Supine extended	