

LIVING AND DYING IN CAMBRIDGE
AFTER ROME

THE EARLY MEDIEVAL CEMETERY AT
KING'S CROFT GARDENS

KING'S COLLEGE
CAMBRIDGE





Cambridgeshire

King's College

Petersfield

Newnham College

Mill Pond

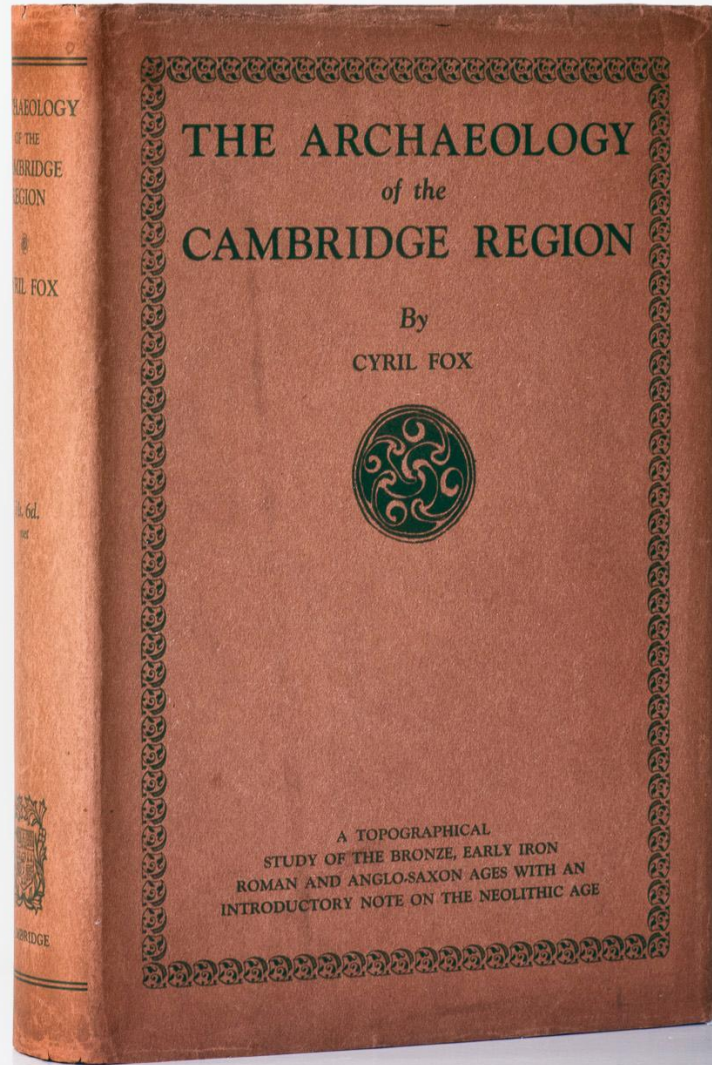
Croft Gardens

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Google Earth



(1903) are of little intrinsic interest, but are evidence of one or more interments at these points.

(vii) *Newnham Croft*. A third site, Newnham Croft, is of greater importance. In the garden of Croft Lodge two interments were found in 1910: wrist-clasps and a cruciform fibula with one; three fine cruciform fibulae with another. The former group-find is drawn on Plate XXXIV; and one of the latter is figured on Plate XXVII.

The date of each is probably not earlier than mid-VI. An equal-armed fibula from the site, dating in V, is also in the Cambridge Museum; it is very similar to a Norwegian form figured by Salin (1904, figs. 174 and 176). Two typical large cinerary urns from "Newnham," in the British Museum, and spearheads, labelled "Barton Road 1893" (Cambridge Museum), are doubtless from the same cemetery.

(viii) *Coldham*, (ix) *Mill Road*, (x) *Newmarket Road and Barnwell*.

C. Fox, *The Archaeology of the Cambridge Region* (1923), p. 244

Archaeological remains were known in the area, having been firstly noted in the late 19th century, and then when the buildings of Croft Gardens went in, in the first 20th century. The Anglo-Saxon period occupation at Newnham was noted in C. Fox's landmark book, and objects can be traced in the British Museum and the Museum of Anthropology and Archaeology.

Further finds came to light through the 20th century, making clear that there was an early medieval burial ground with both inhumations and (at least a few) cremations.

In 1936, Mrs. Laurie Wyatt offered to sell 'a complete "Grave Set" found at Cambridge' at 'the site in Barton Road now has three blocks of new flats with bright green roofs built over it.'
Archive correspondence,
<https://collections.maa.cam.ac.uk/objects/415357/>

MAA, 1936.357-.366



ALBION ARCHAEOLOGY

David Ingham: Project Manager

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Ernie Rizzo: Archaeological Supervisor

When the building work was begun, King's College undertook an assessment of the preservation of archaeological remains and embarked on the scientific excavation of the entire building site (in accordance with legal requirements and stipulations for planning permissions). A commercial team, Albion Archaeology, undertook the work in the summer of 2020.

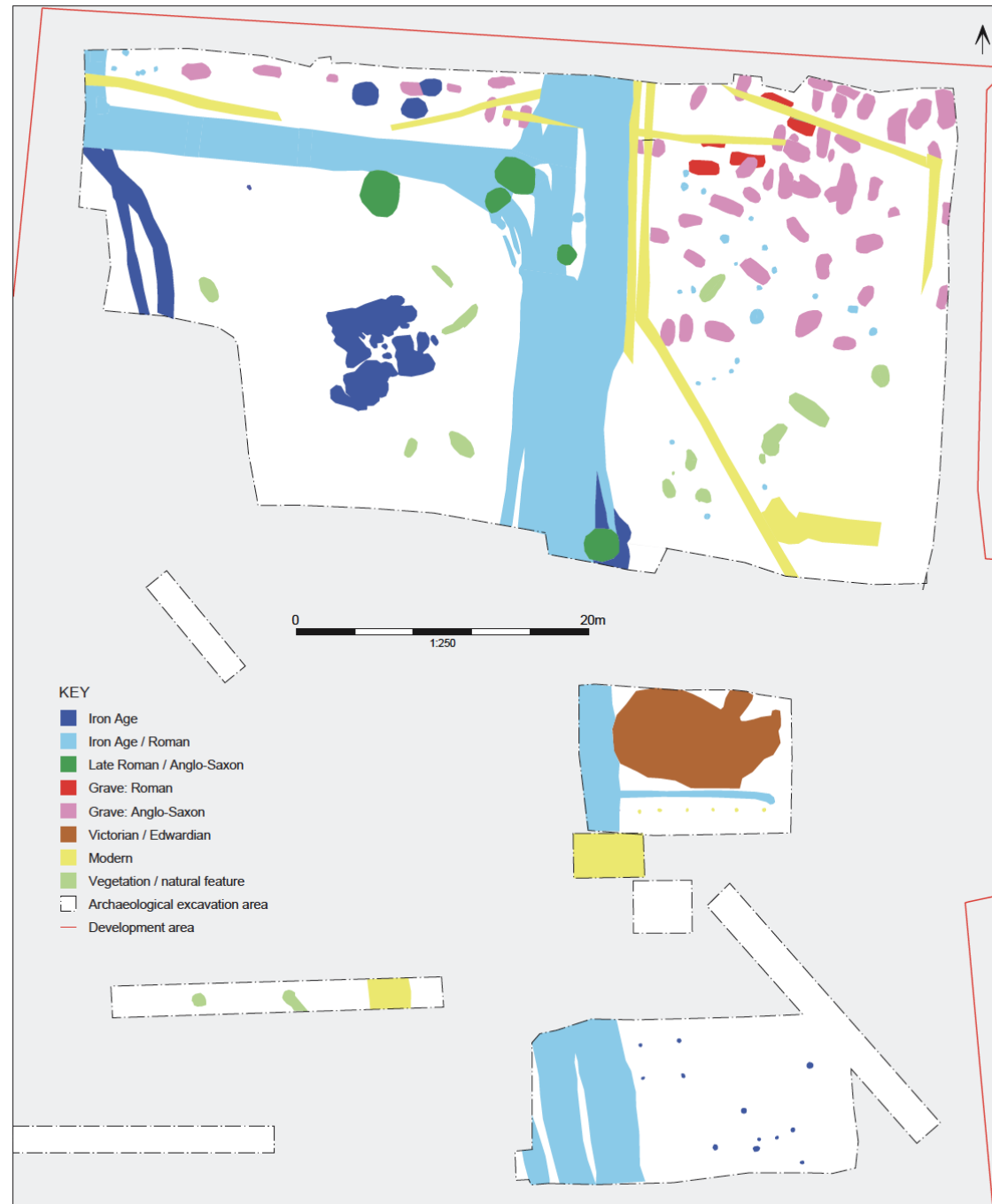




The early 20th-century buildings had relatively shallow foundations which did not destroy the archaeological stratigraphy extensively.



The site comprises large ditches running N-S and W-E on the Eastern side of these ditches are about 60 graves, with no specific orientation.



Within these graves, some look to be earlier than others. Red graves here have a typology which looks to be Romano-British, while the pink ones look to be early medieval.

King's Croft Gardens, plan
of excavated features
(plan: Albion Archaeology)

Figure 1: Phased plan of archaeological features

The earliest graves have nothing in the way of grave goods (unfurnished), and were sometimes lined with stones.



King's Croft Gardens, HS 2386, unfurnished stone-lined grave. Roman?
(photo: Albion Archaeology)



The subsequent graves often include grave goods, whether they were objects placed in the grave with the dead or jewelry and objects of personal adornment, with which the corpse was dressed when buried. Here the skeleton was buried wearing two brooches at the shoulders to hold her garment and a strand of beads between them. The brooches are bronze, which has oxidized to a grey-green colour.



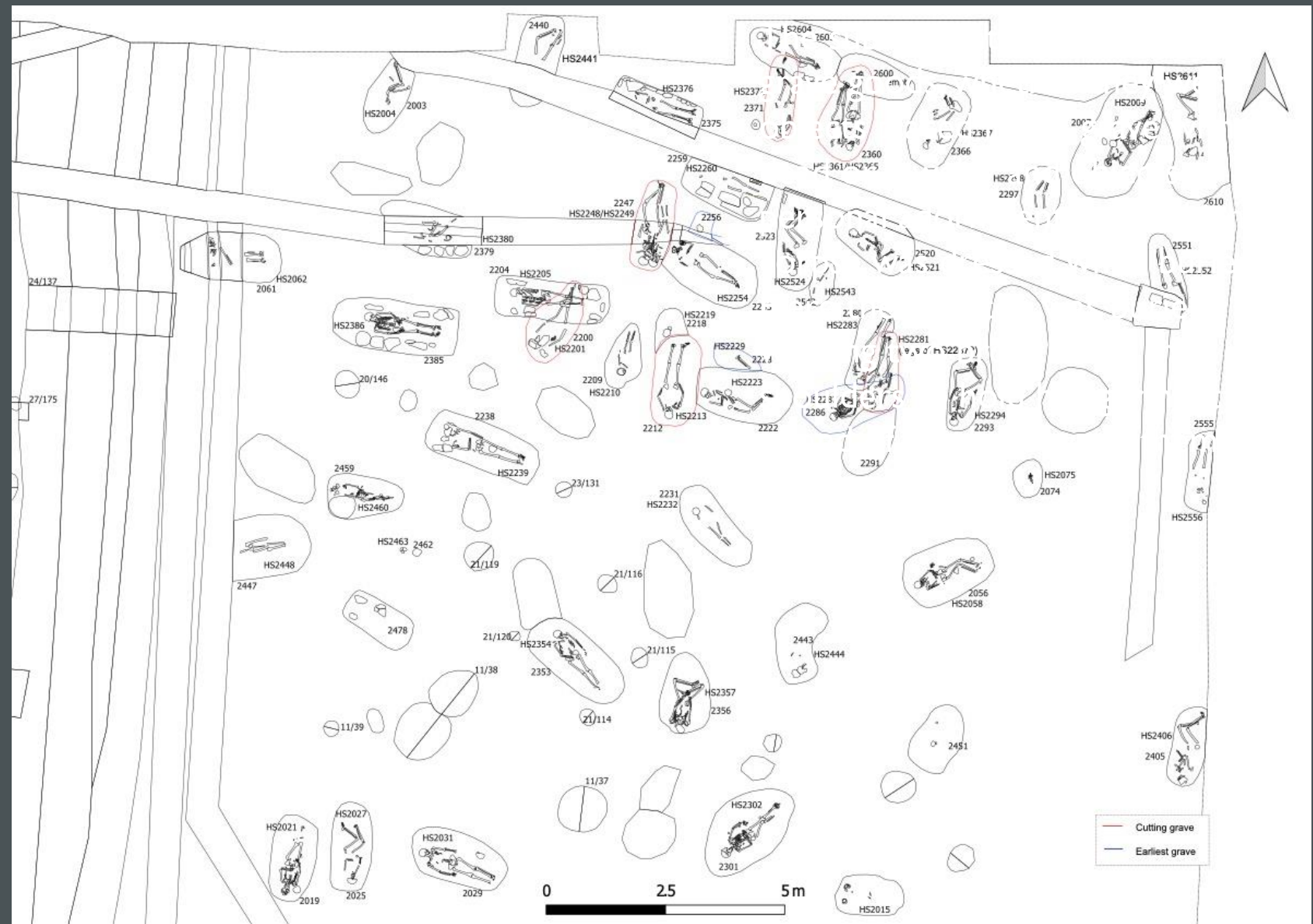
King's Croft Gardens, Early medieval beads (photo: Albion Archaeology)

ALBION ARCHAEOLOGY

King's Croft Gardens, furnished grave. HS 2524, SF 277, 278, Early medieval. (photo: Albion Archaeology)



The ditches may have been cut in the Iron Age and then recut in the Roman period. The graves appear to respect the limits of the ditches. Some are clearly buried with respect to other graves, along the same orientation for instance.



King's Croft Gardens, plan of excavated features (Albion Archaeology)



Fig. 3.7. Reconstruction of Anglo-Saxon female costume (after Owen-Crocker 1986: fig. 30).

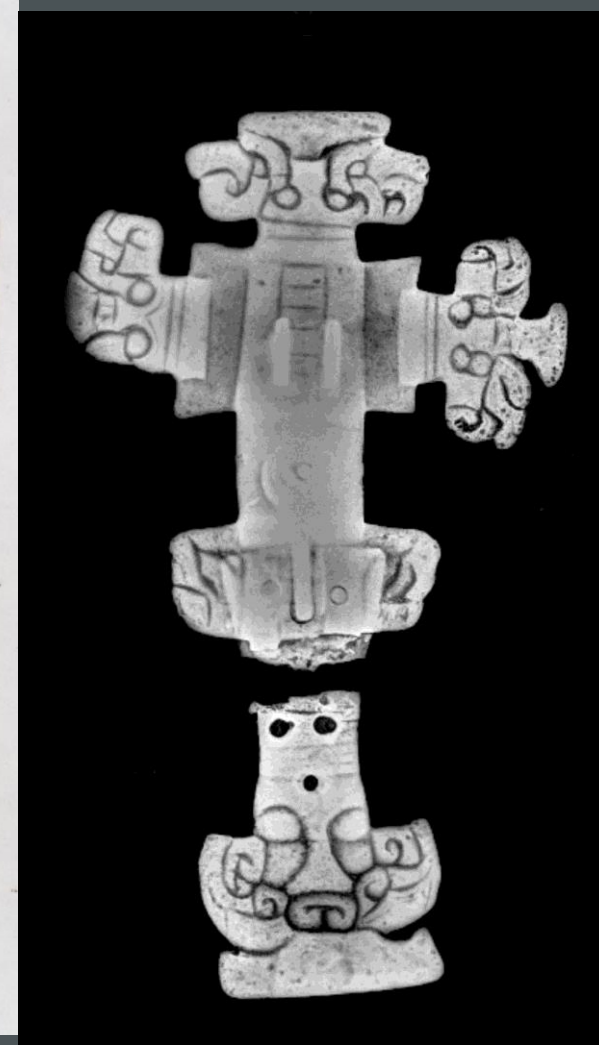
Anglo-Saxon dress (drawing: Lucy, *The Anglo-Saxon Way of Death*, fig. 3.7)

Some individuals were buried wearing brooches, buckles, wrist-clasps and other objects. We understand quite a lot about the way that brooches in particular changed over the fourth, fifth, and later centuries. These changes are related to migration patterns from the Continent and within Britain, technological developments, as well as local tastes.



King's Croft Gardens, SF 342

(left) before conservation (right) x-ray prior to conservation
(photo: P. Greaves, Drakon Heritage (twitter: @drakonheritage))



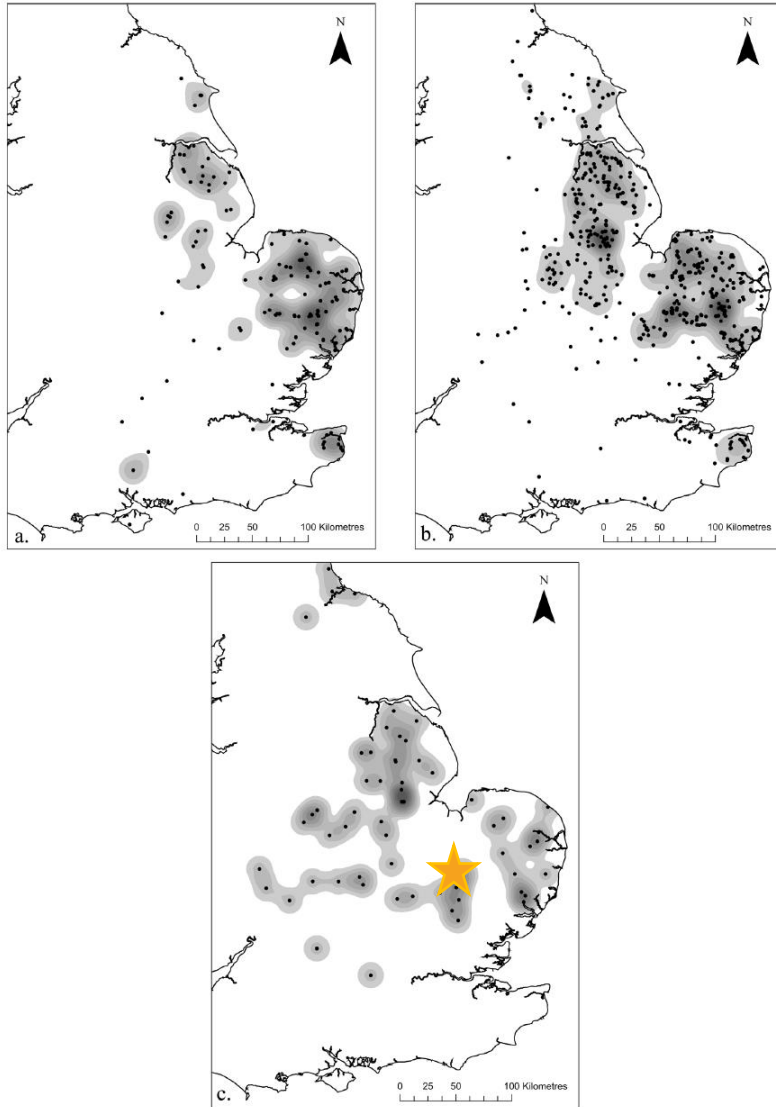


Figure 2. Chronological distributions of cruciform brooches subjected to kernel density analyses (taking number of brooches from each find-spot into account). (a) Phase A, c. 450-75 (181 find-spots). (b) Phase B, c. 475-550 (1,206 find-spots). (c) Phase C, c. 525-75 (eighty-six find-spots).

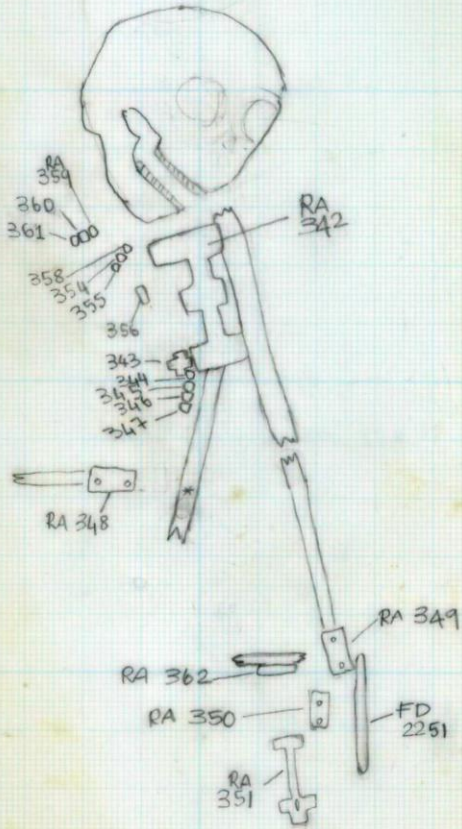
T. Martin, 'Women, knowledge and power: the iconography of early Anglo-Saxon cruciform brooches', *Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology and History* 18 (2013) pp.1-17

The changes in the ways in which these objects were made sometimes speak to wider connections between people across a distance and cultural connectivities, and they were key parts of presentation of gender and status of the deceased.

King's Croft
Gardens, SF 342
in conservation
(photo: P. Greaves,
Drakon Heritage
(twitter:
@drakonheritage)



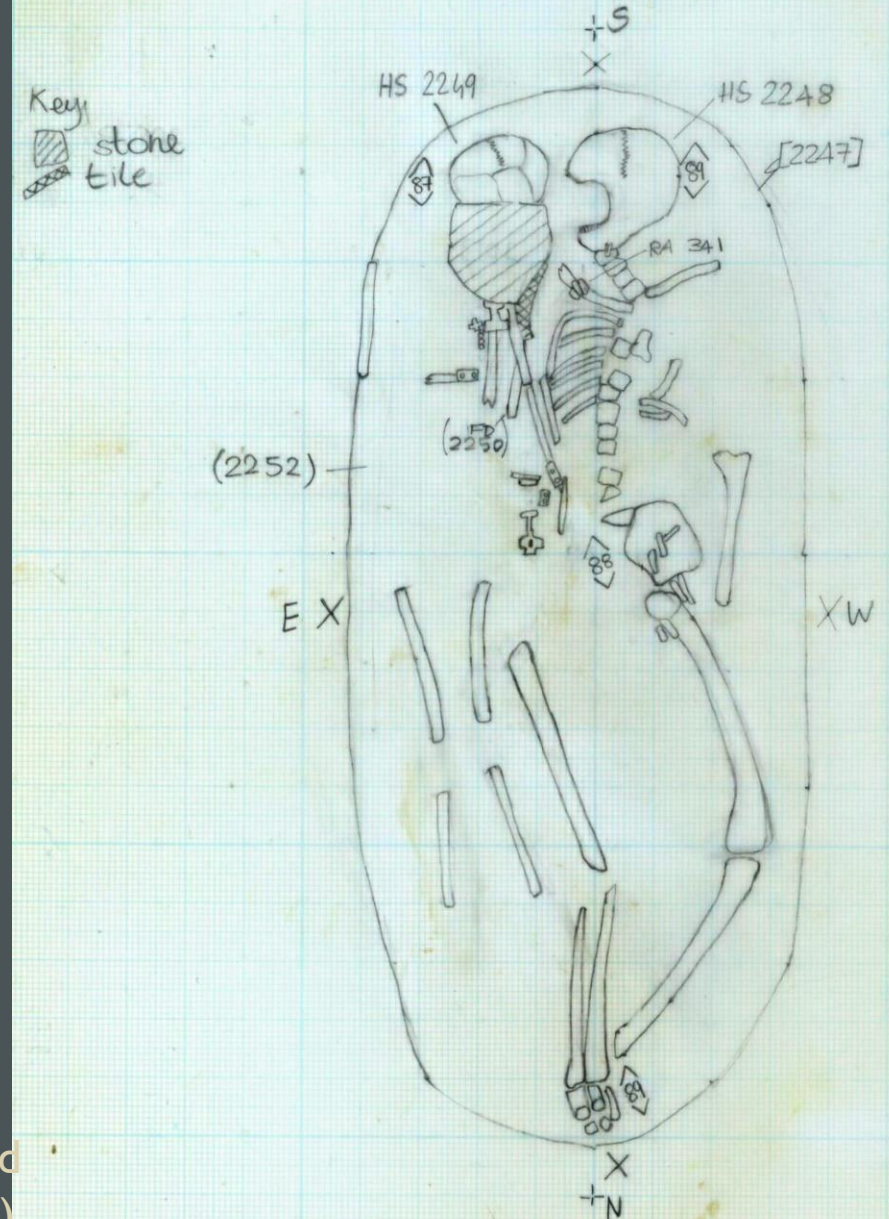
S# 122 HS 2249
WITH GRAVE GOODS (RAs 342 to
FM 19/10/20 1.5 362 & FD
2251)



Field drawing of burial 2249 with grave goods: amber beads, gilded cruciform brooch, and other jewelry (Albion Archaeology).

The person wearing the brooch we just looked at was a young woman, about 18 years at death (based on data provided by Dr Corinne Duhig, who is carrying out the preliminary skeletal inventory and analysis). She was also wearing amber beads and wrist clasps. At some point after the decomposition of soft tissues, her grave was opened up and another corpse was added, a young man aged 18-25. What was their relationship? How do the objects they were wearing relate to their identity? New methods of analysis might permit some answers to the first of these questions: isotopic analysis and aDNA.

S# 121 PLAN OF HS 2249 & HS 2248 (W
INTO GRAVE [2247]
FM 16/10/20 1.10 FILM



Field drawing of burial 2249 and 2248 (Albion Archaeology).

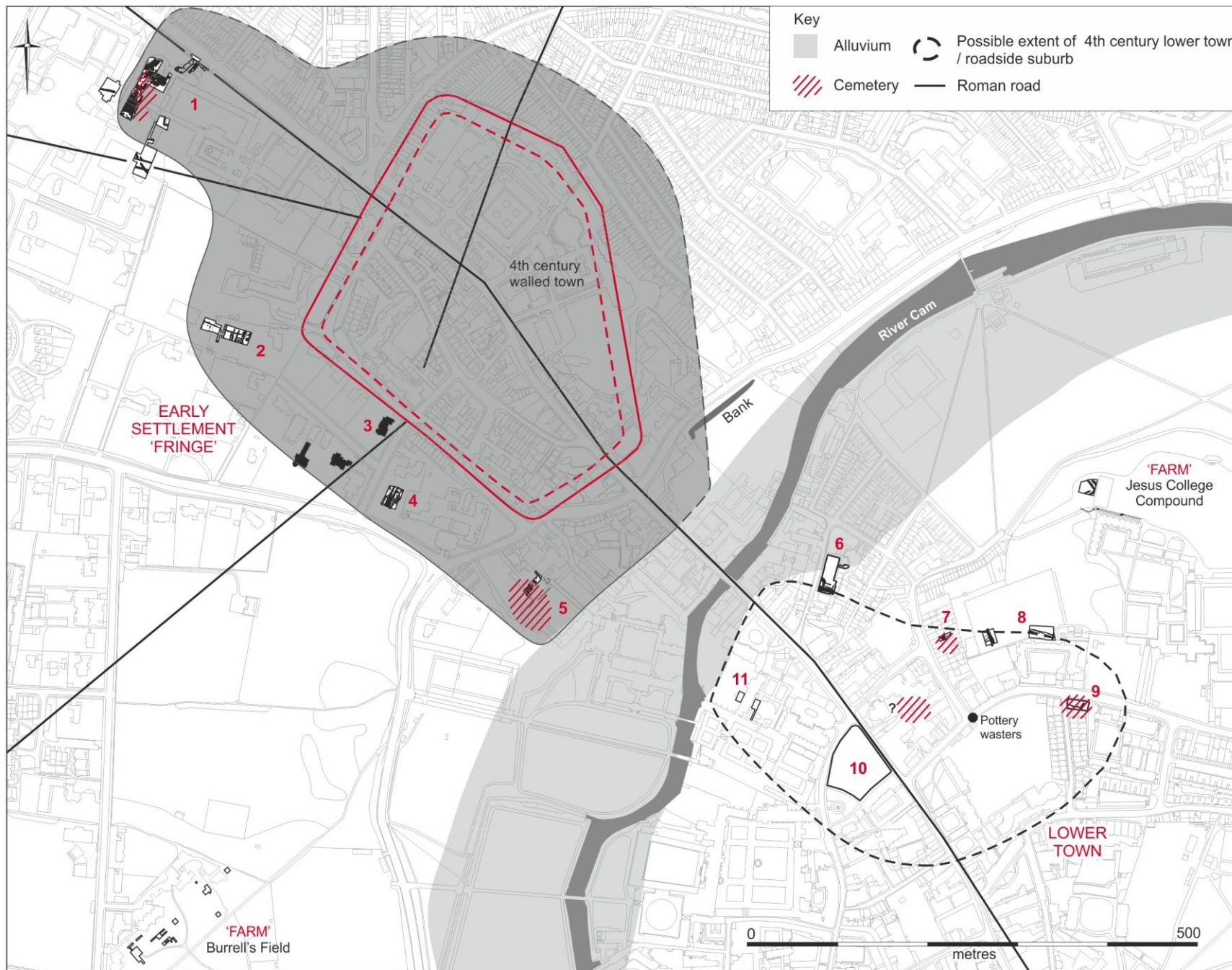


Another person, most probably male and under 30 at time of death, was buried with a glass vessel (claw beaker), a shield (the iron boss is preserved), a spear, and a pottery vessel.

The claw beaker, while not extremely rare, is not common either. It is currently being conserved and studied, and may be able to tell us about technology and glass manufacture and trade in early medieval Britain.



King's Croft Gardens, SF 321
(photo and video: P. Greaves,
Drakon Heritage (twitter: @drakonheritage))

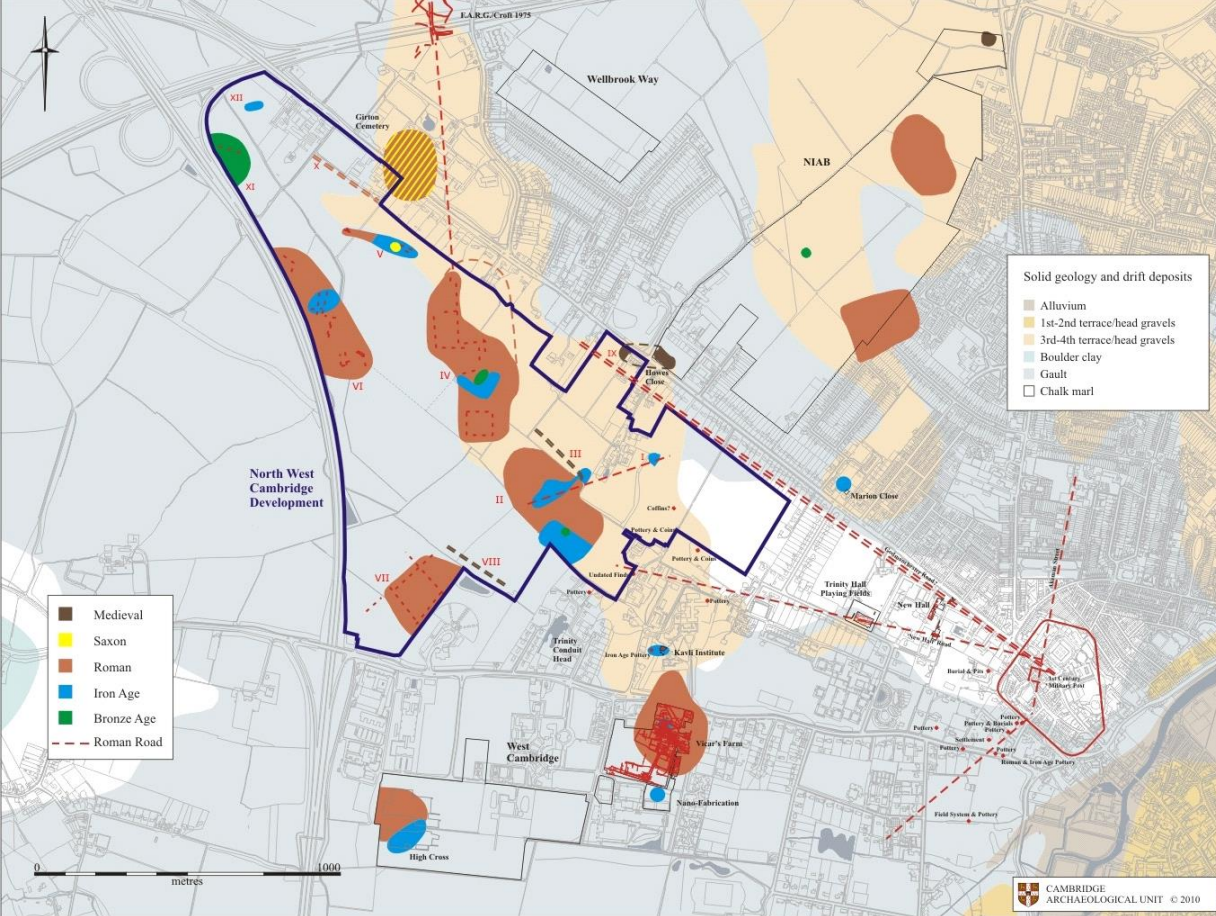


Roman 'Cambridge' was in the area of the castle, north of this part of Newnham. There is little evidence of early medieval life in the Roman town, but a number of sites (mostly cemeteries) along the western side of the river Cam [next slide]. Bede, writing about 730, reported that monks from Ely came by boat to a deserted city nearby looking for a sarcophagus appropriate for an abbess.

(plan: Evans and Lucas (eds.), *Hinterlands and Inlands: The Archaeology of West Cambridge and Roman Cambridge Revisited* (Cambridge, 2020), fig. 2.4 I, with thanks to Chris Evans and Andrew Hall.

[Looking for stone for a sarcophagus for Aethelthryth, sainted abbess and former queen, the monks from Ely] 'got into a boat (for the district of Ely is surrounded on all sides by wates and marshes and has no large stones) and came to a small deserted fortress not far away which is called Gratacaestir in English [usually taken to mean Cambridge, not modern Grantchester], and near the walls of the fortress they soon found a coffin beautifully made of white marble, with a close-fitting lid of the same stone. Realising that the Lord had prospered their journey, they brought it to the monastery.

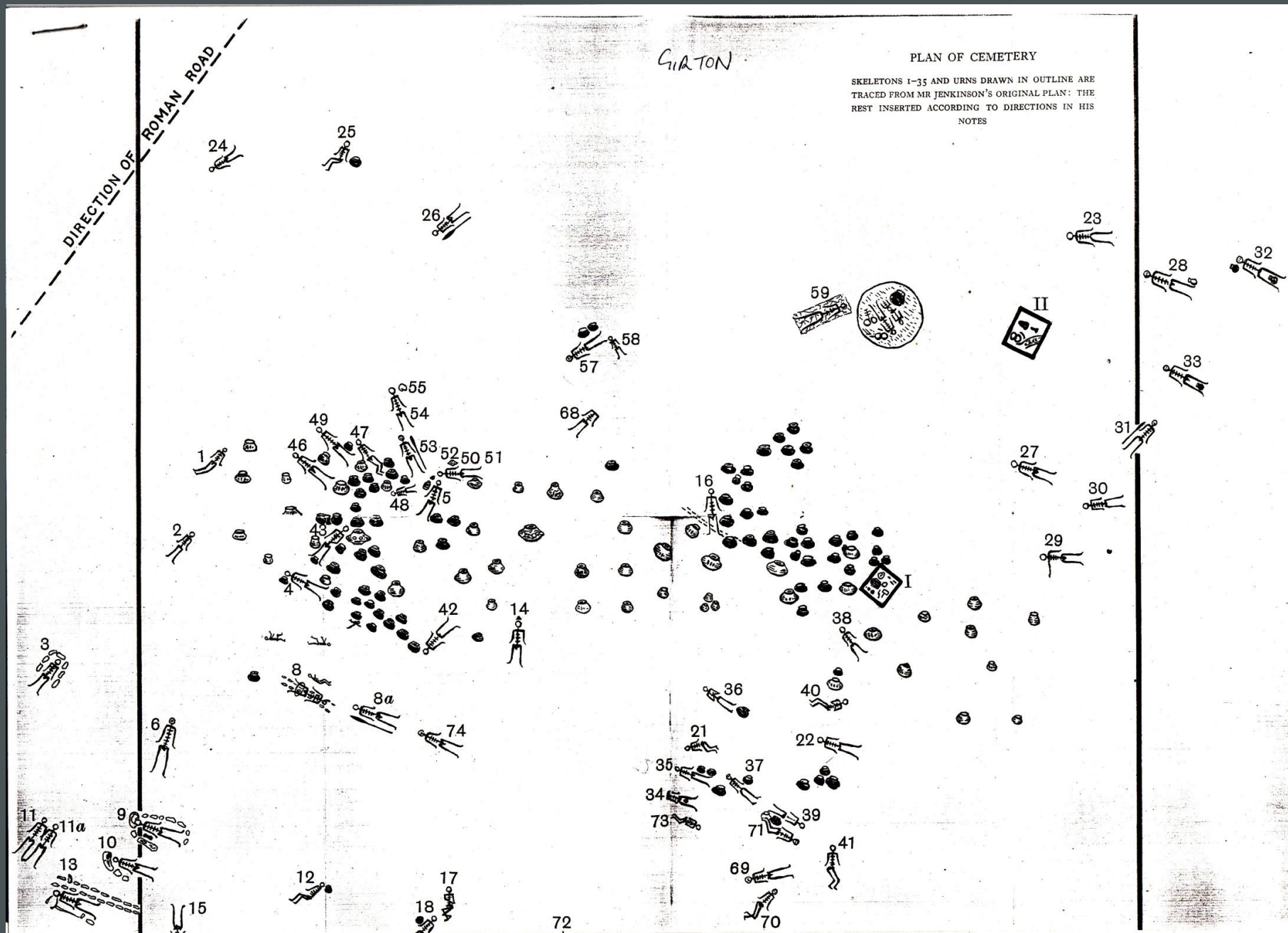
Bede, *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, written about 731. Book IV, ch. 19, trans. from the Latin by B. Colgrave (Oxford, 1969).



Recent excavations in northwest Cambridge showing location of the Girton cemetery under the College building and grounds

Image © Girton College





Published plan of the
Girton cemetery
(Hollingworth & O'Reilly
1925 frontispiece)



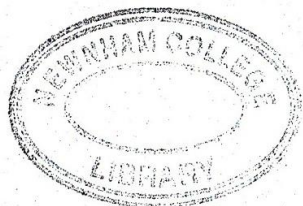
Roman glass vessels and
5th/6th century cremation
urns from Girton College



THE ANGLO-SAXON CEMETERY
AT
GIRTON COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE

A Report based on the MS. notes of the excavations made by the late F. J. H. Jenkinson, M.A.

BY
E. J. HOLLINGWORTH
AND
M. M. O'REILLY



CAMBRIDGE
AT THE UNIVERSITY PRESS
1925.

First page of Jenkinson's notes on the Girton excavations (used as the basis for the publication in 1925)

(1) Girton 1882

Grave No. 1.
Head to W. Depth about 25 ft.
Head rather detached from spine
along left shoulder.
Three fibulae (2 a pair), bronze
with clasps. Bronze comb-
brush. Beads of amber,
blue glass, pottery, more
or less vitreous.

Grave No. 2.
Head to W. by N. Depth about 25 ft.
One shoulder amputated.
(Roman) fibula with bronze
pin, with a perforated projection
at the top. The front was inlaid
with squares of alternate
red & white enamel in a
file. On the other shoulder
was a common Saxon
fibula.

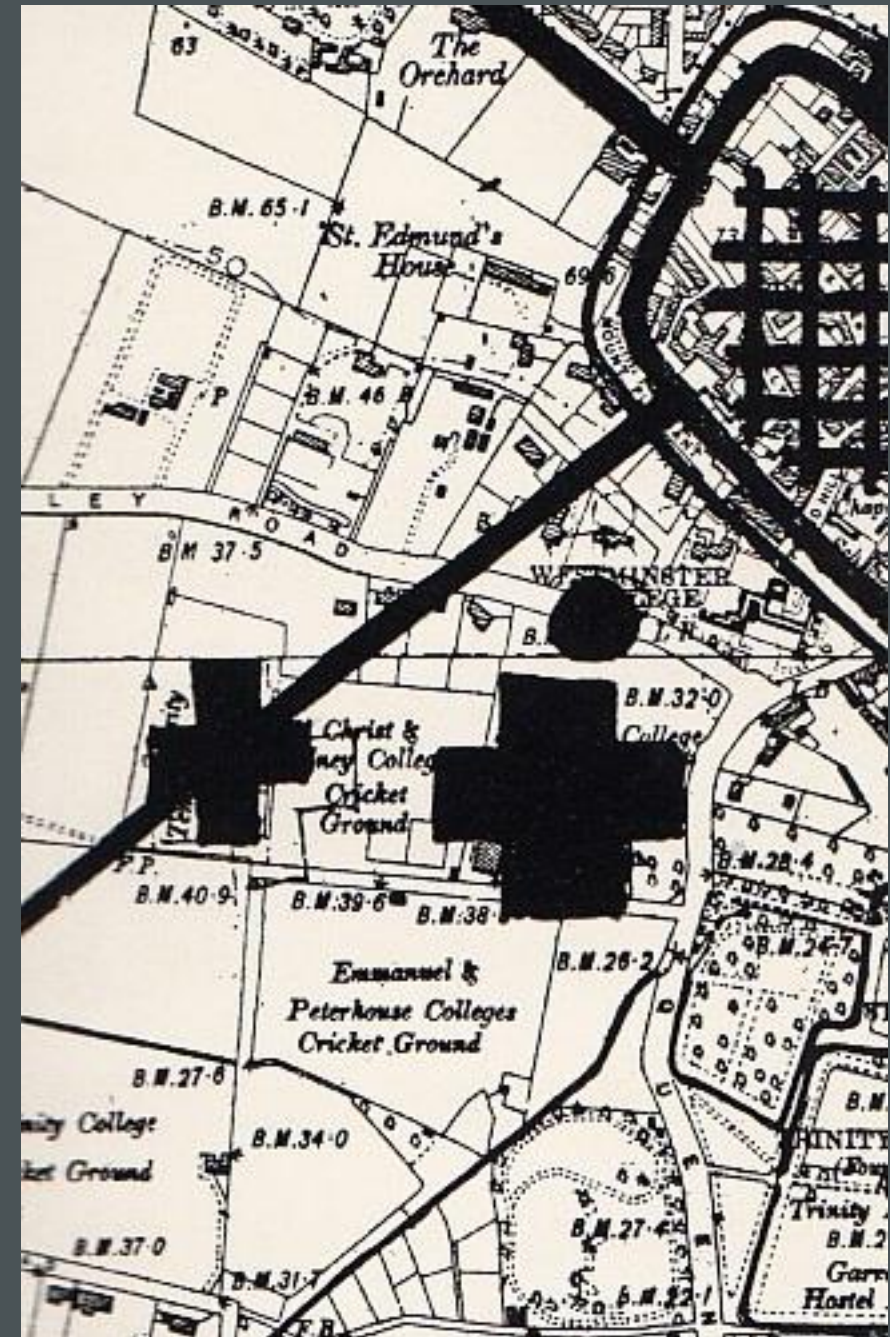
No. 3.
March 28. 1881.
Head to N.W. Depth 3 ft.
Covered by large mass of stones
some of which seemed to have
belonged to some building,
as they showed signs of arch-
angular form here & there.
One cylindrical. Over the
head stood a plain iron, un-
figured, a large stone above
the head & another below.
The head lay on its right
side with the mouth wide open.



© Cambridge 2000.com

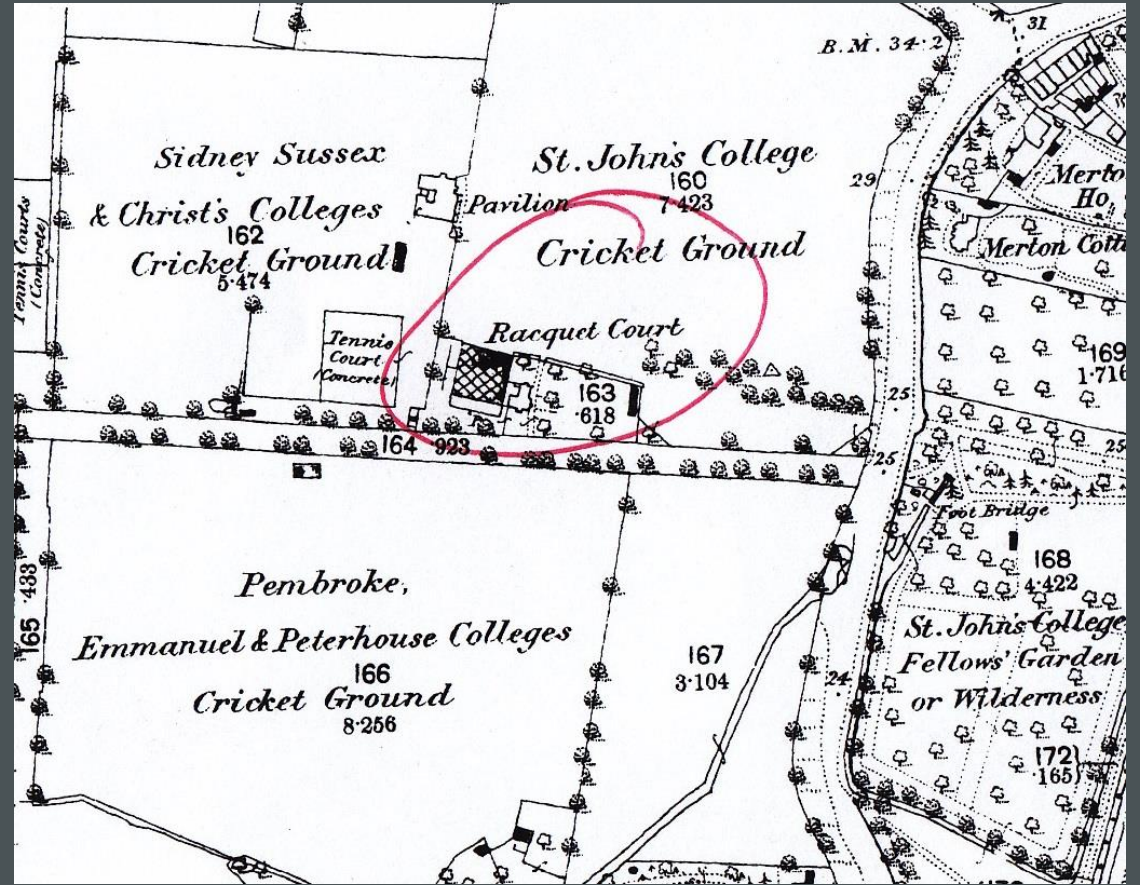
Photograph and location of Saxmeadham, 71 Grange Road (childhood home of Jacquetta Hawkes) where Anglo-Saxon burials were found in 1912 during its construction, close to the larger cemetery on St John's cricket pitch

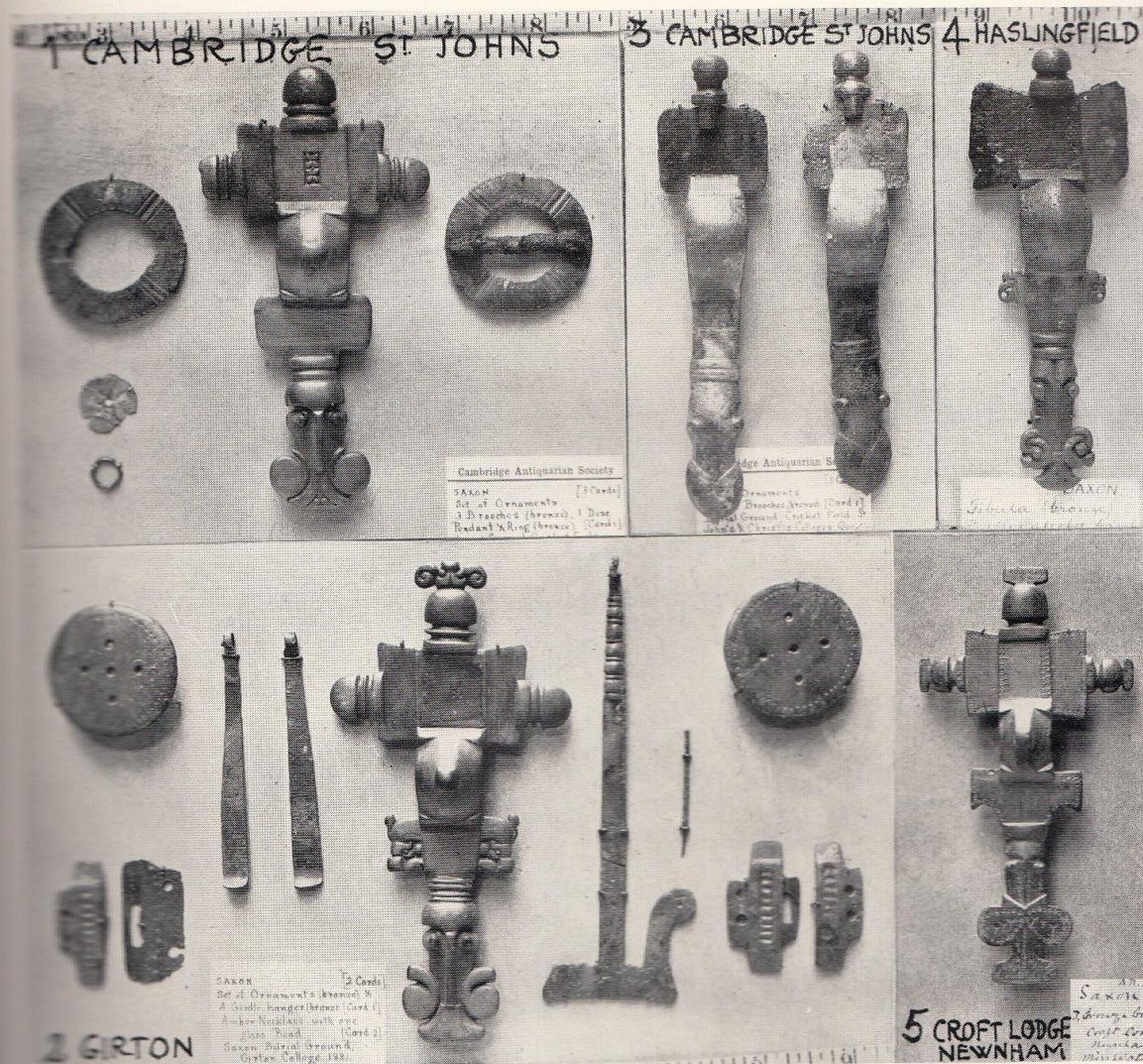
After Fox 1923





Location of the St John's cricket pitch cemetery, excavated in 1888 during the building of the Racquet Court





ANGLO-SAXON AGE. GRAVE-FURNITURE OF THE PAGAN PERIOD

The scale is in inches.

No. 1, pp. 243, 248, 270; No. 2, pp. 248, 271 (two refs.), 280 (footnote); No. 3, pp. 243, 269, 276; No. 4, pp. 257, 268; No. 5, p. 244.

NOTE. One 'ward' of the girdlehanger in No. 2 is broken off, and the side knobs of the cruciform fibulae, Nos. 3 and 4, are lost.

Finds from Girton, St John's and Croft Lodge, published as Fox 1923, pl. XXVII

Feb

scrap of bronze: 5 beads (2 long blue - 2 round yellowish-bronze, + 1 round amber) + a flat drop of dark green glass

Mar. 3. ♀, WSW, (behind found by workmen), Ride fibula on each shoulder: a few amber beads at the neck. ?Clasp on rt wrist: knife at left hip.

12. ♂ Boss

13, ♂.

14. ♀. SW. age about 22, Silver ring on finger of left hand. Necklace of large amber beads, + one cylindrical glass + pottery.

♀. S. 2 annular brooches: 5 Roman brass coins at waist. Blue ~~xxx~~ glass etc. beads. A cowrie (*C. tigrina*) on her breast. C'asps.

16. ♀ WNW. many stones. Food vessel above left shoulder, 2 poor fibulae, not a pair.

21. ♀ WSW. [Comb between 2nd & last) Two perianthular fibrillae; many beads of pottery, amber etc. a silver disc with them.

? ♀: W: nothing except possibly a food vessel.

22. ♀, W: scraps of iron.

24

267

27

28. ♀. SW. Fine set of 5 gilt belt-plates: 40 or 50 beads. Bronze pin.

(41a) A child - 2 pierced Roman coins - same as (4)

29. Roman pots & skeleton. SW.

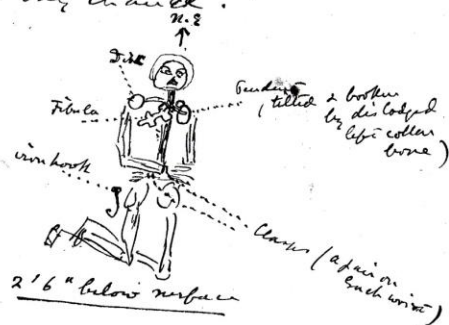
10408 10742 12360, 50

• 1996-1997 0.3

7 For these one, alas! the
disc in very poor condition, then
I saw something else under the
fibula (by the way not one of the
large ones). A fine 7 that it
was the other circular brooch,
but then I soon noticed that
it had a projecting bronze ring
round it, a band, $\frac{1}{4}$ of an inch
wide, and a ring at the top.
The wreath

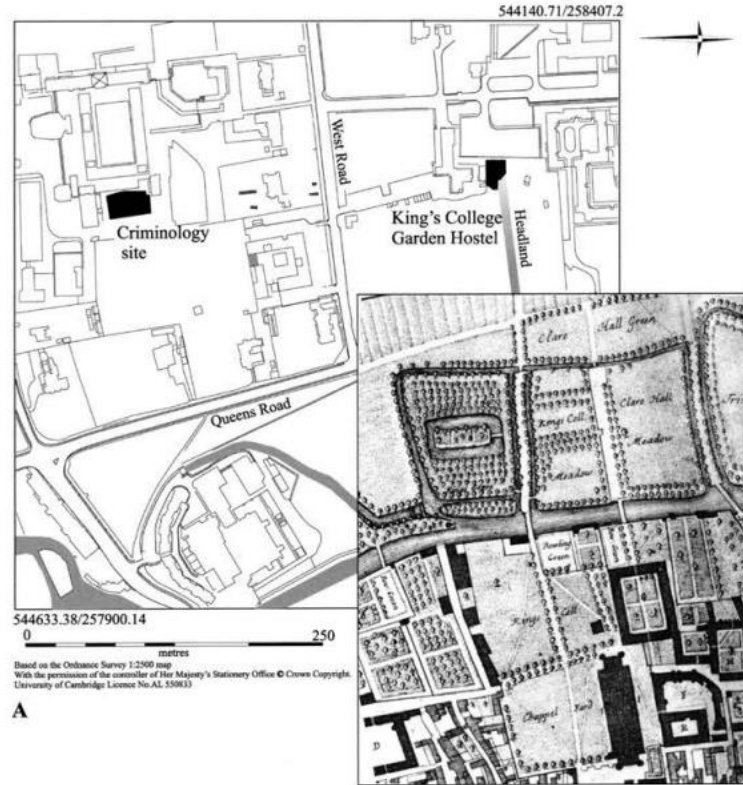
The skull was a pendant.
 This also is in a poor way for the
 skull having in being crushed ^{had} ~~been~~
 dislocated the collar bone (the left)
 which had protruded right in it.
 The diameter of the disc must be
 over two inches, but I fear that
 it will never be satisfactory,
 although I am going to send it off.

as it is to be ready, as there is
its only chance.

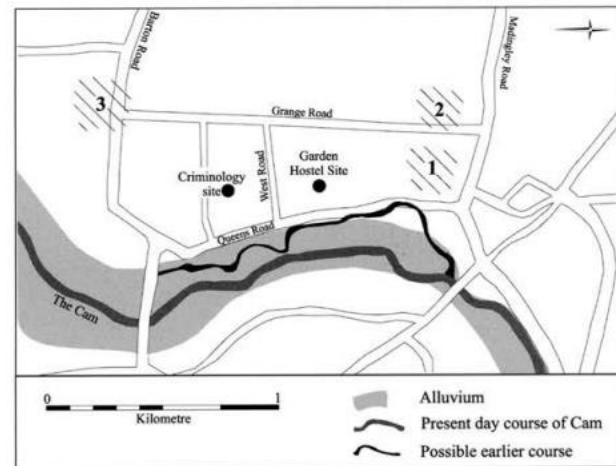


I finished this skeleton in the morning rain (by the way is not its position head N.E. curious?) just before lunch, the hair came out on the N. face; and almost as soon as I ~~went~~ came back we found another skeleton. It was very near

Original records from the St John's cemetery excavations: excerpt from Jenkinson's unpublished manuscript and one of the postcards sent during the excavations from von Hugel to Jenkinson reporting on discoveries during the latter's absence from Cambridge



A



B

Figure 1. A) Location map, with Loggan map of 1688 inserted, showing position of the King's College bridge crossing along the projected line of the headland. B) Main Cambridge western Cam-side Anglo-Saxon cemeteries: (1) St John's playing fields (2) 71 Grange Road (3) Newnham Croft.

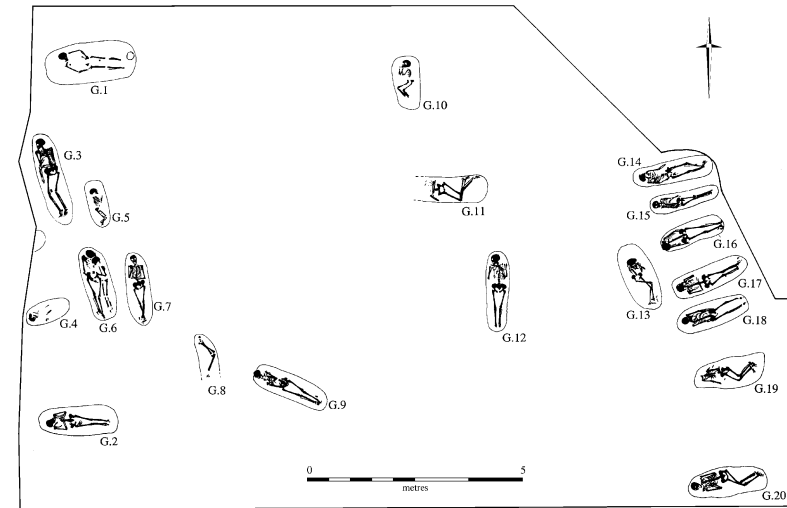
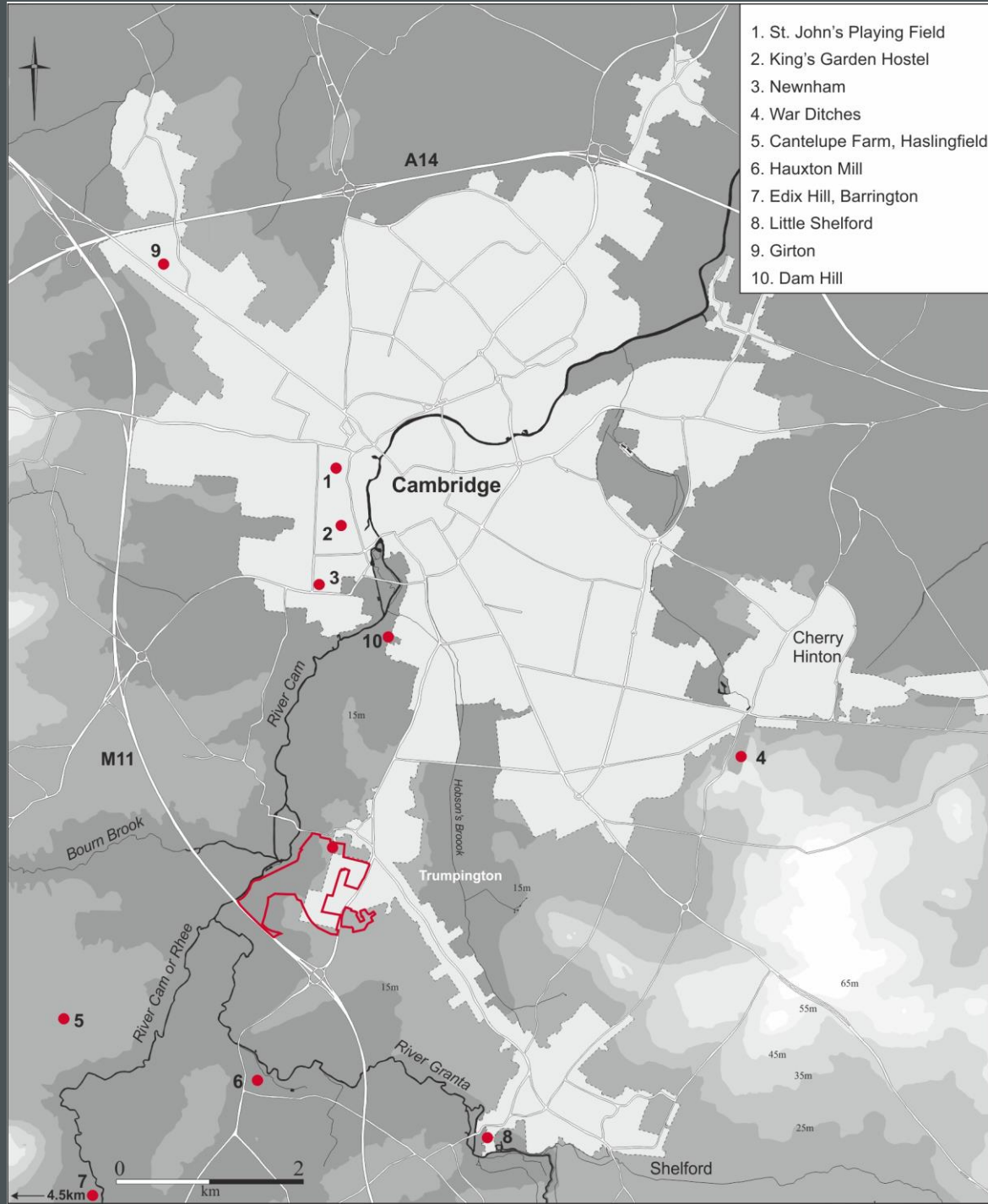


Photo of the
Criminology
site © CAU

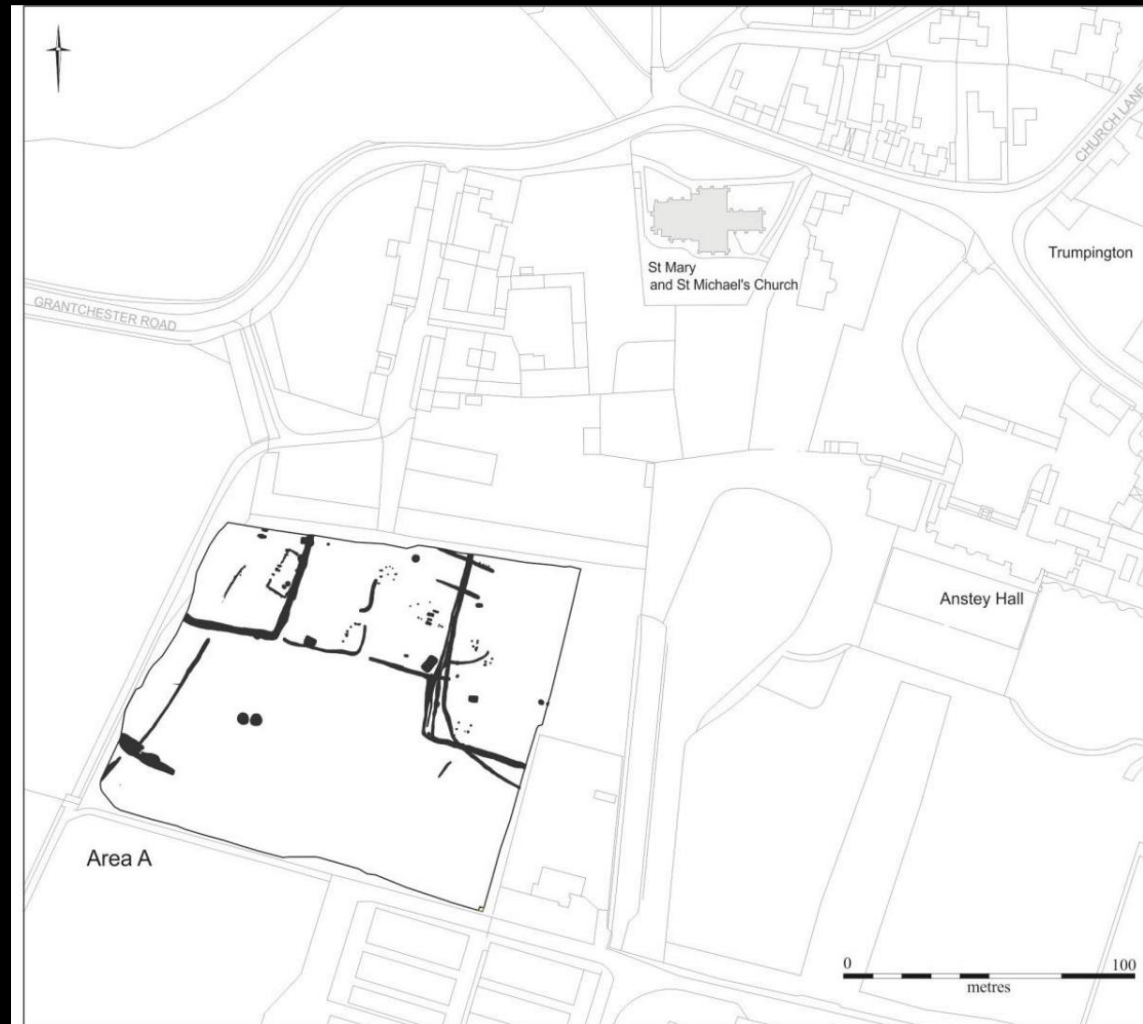
King's Garden Hostel
(plan: Dodwell, Lucy and Tipper,
'Anglo-Saxons on the Cambridge
Backs: the Criminology site
settlement and King's Garden
Hostel cemetery', *Proc. of the
Cambridge Antiquarian Society*
XCIII (2004), figs. 1 & 3.)





Location of Anglo-Saxon cemeteries in the Cambridge area – note the distribution mainly along river valleys

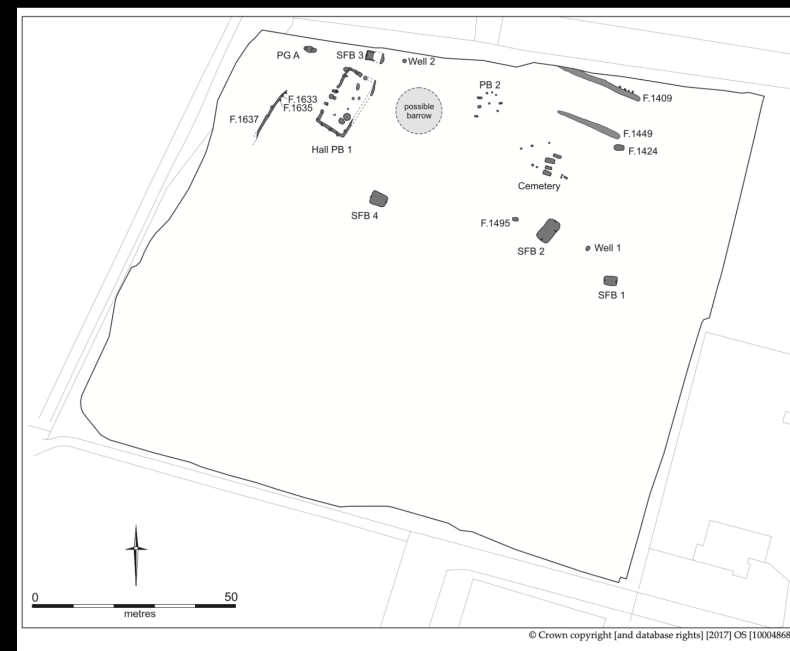
Evans, Lucy & Patten, *Riversides: Neolithic Barrows, a Beaker Grave, Iron Age and Anglo-Saxon Burials and Settlement at Trumpington, Cambridge*. (Cambridge, 2018), fig. 5.42



Evans, Lucy & Patten, *Riversides: Neolithic Barrows, a Beaker Grave, Iron Age and Anglo-Saxon Burials and Settlement at Trumpington, Cambridge*. (Cambridge, 2018), fig. 5.1-2



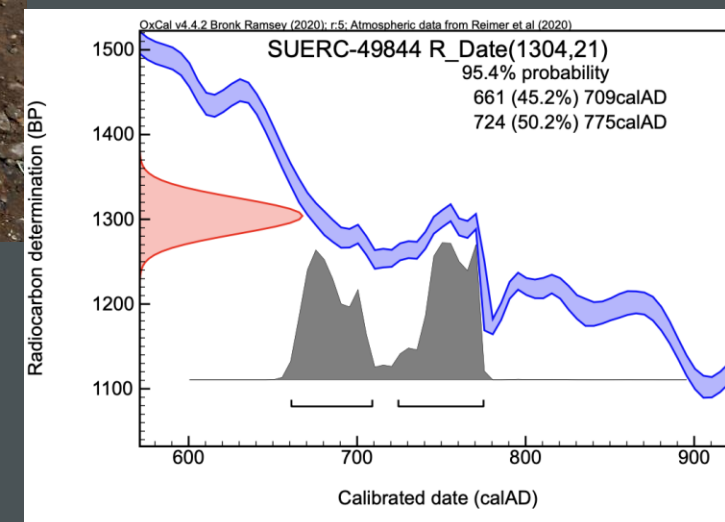
Evans, Lucy & Patten, *Riversides: Neolithic Barrows, a Beaker Grave, Iron Age and Anglo-Saxon Burials and Settlement at Trumpington, Cambridge.* (Cambridge, 2018), fig. 5.3





Evans, Lucy & Patten, *Riversides: Neolithic Barrows, a Beaker Grave, Iron Age and Anglo-Saxon Burials and Settlement at Trumpington, Cambridge*. (Cambridge, 2018), fig. 5.4

Grave I: possible female, 14/16-18 years and C14 date





Evans, Lucy & Patten,
*Riversides: Neolithic Barrows, a
Beaker Grave, Iron Age and
Anglo-Saxon Burials and
Settlement at Trumpington,
Cambridge.* (Cambridge,
2018), site photo and fig. 5.13

Evans, Lucy & Patten, *Riversides: Neolithic Barrows, a Beaker Grave, Iron Age and Anglo-Saxon Burials and Settlement at Trumpington, Cambridge.* (Cambridge, 2018), fig. 5.5 and archive photos

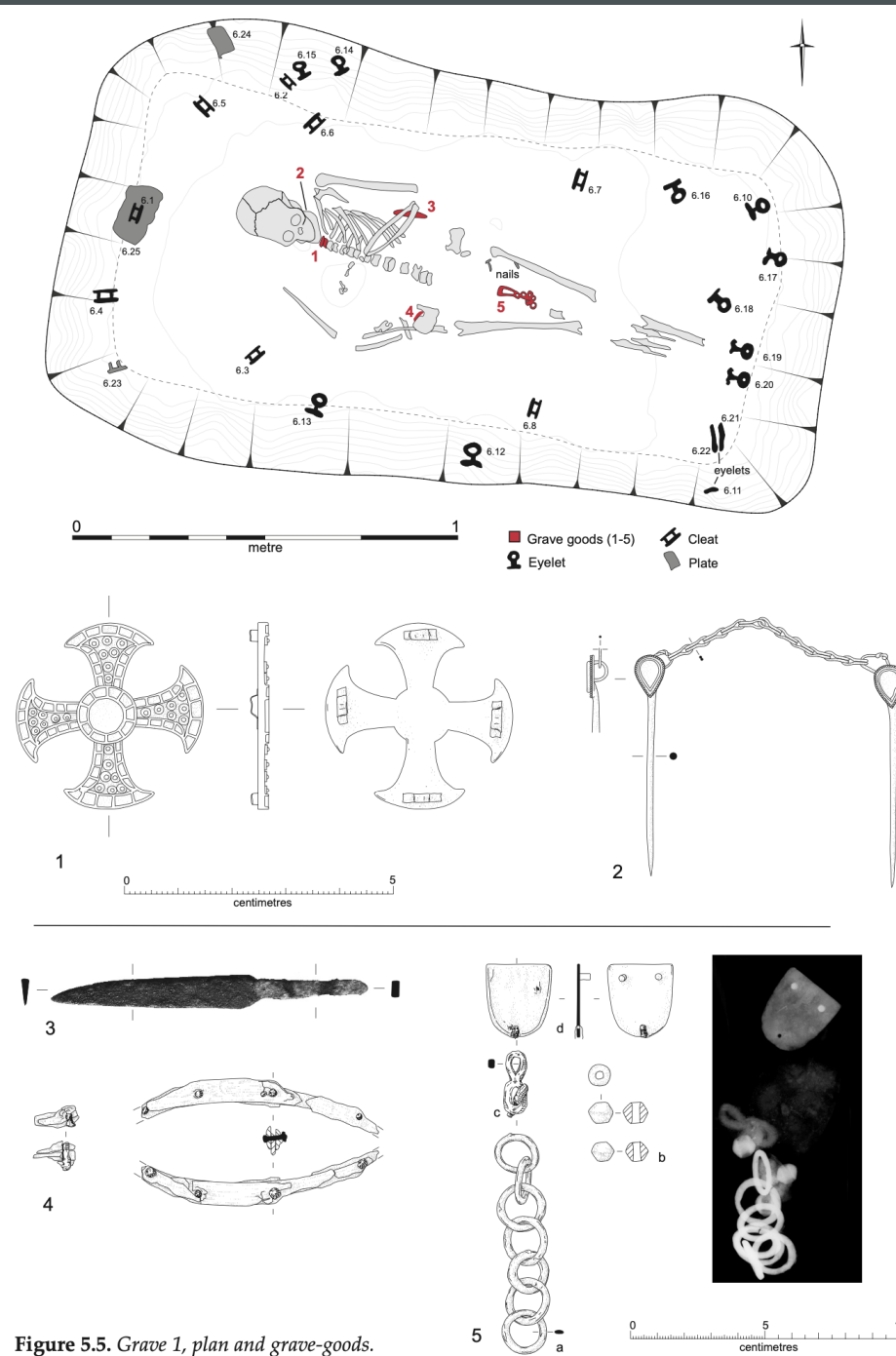
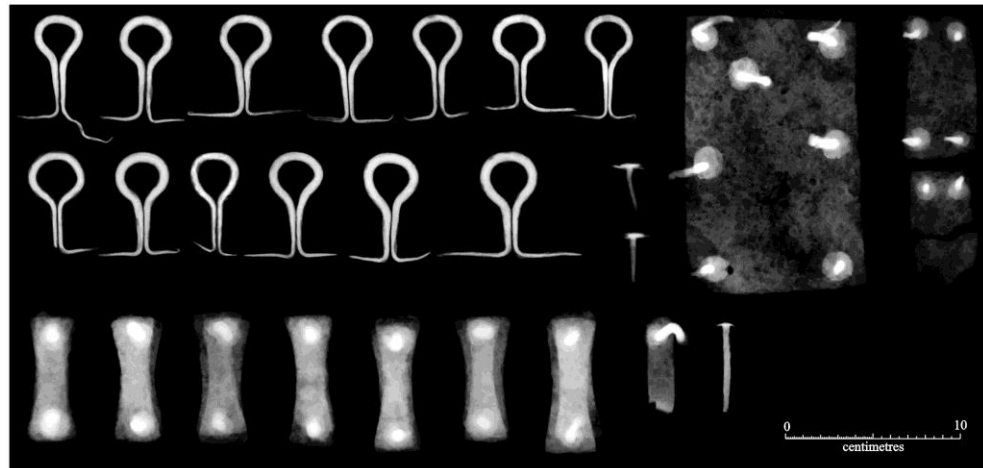
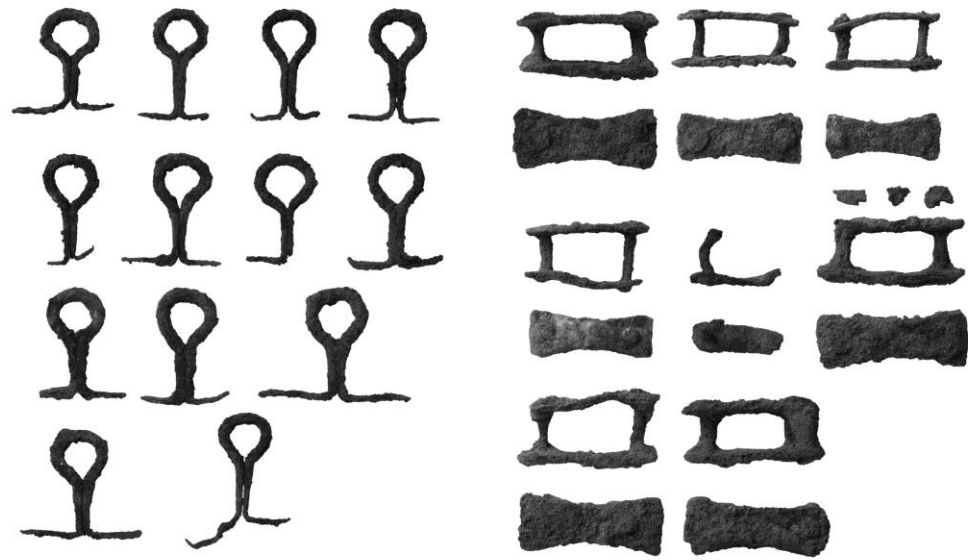


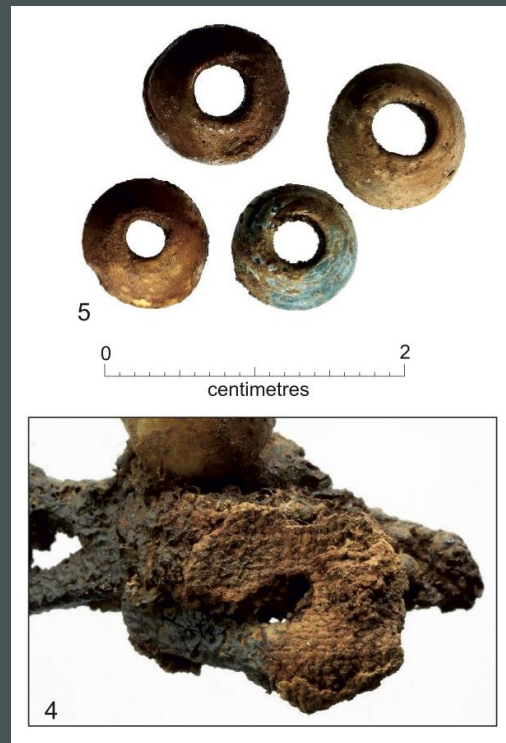
Figure 5.5. Grave 1, plan and grave-goods.



Bed-fittings from Grave I



Evans, Lucy & Patten, *Riversides: Neolithic Barrows, a Beaker Grave, Iron Age and Anglo-Saxon Burials and Settlement at Trumpington, Cambridge*. (Cambridge, 2018), figs 5.6-7



Evans, Lucy & Patten, *Riversides: Neolithic Barrows, a Beaker Grave, Iron Age and Anglo-Saxon Burials and Settlement at Trumpington, Cambridge*. (Cambridge, 2018), fig. 5.15

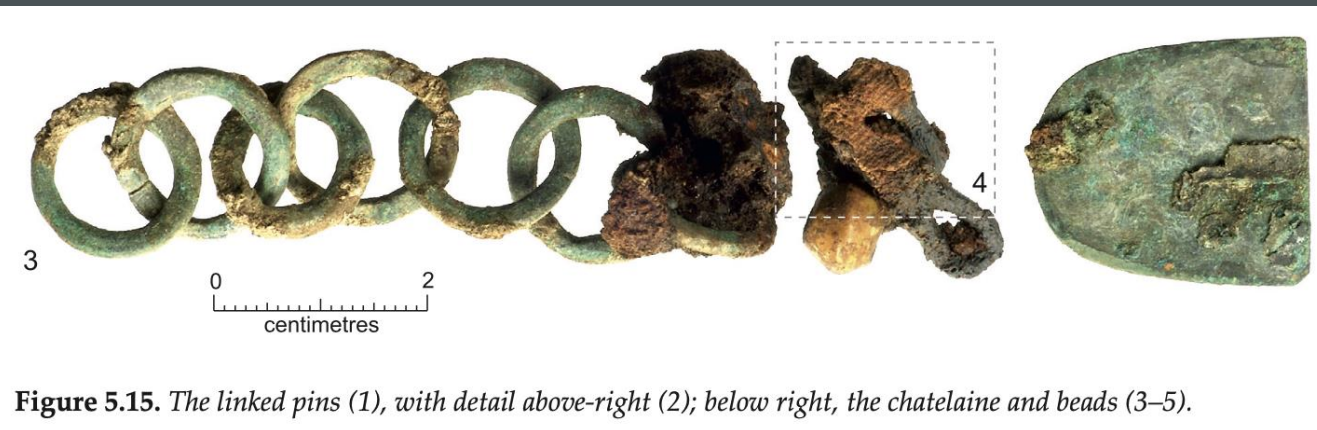


Figure 5.15. The linked pins (1), with detail above-right (2); below right, the chatelaine and beads (3–5).

Evidence for linen chemise, wool dress and large linen shawl/veil in Grave I