

G. N. Clarke, *Pre-Roman and Roman Winchester 2. The Roman Cemetery at Lankhills*. Winchester Studies 3. Oxford University Press, Oxford 1981. XL and 468 pages, 17 plates.

Unlike scholars in many of the continental provinces of the Roman Empire, students of Roman Britain have been curiously neglectful of the wealth of information to be gained from cemeteries. Over the last two decades this detrimental state of affairs has been changing for the better, with extensive excavation of urban cemeteries at Ancaster, Chichester, Cirencester, Colchester, Dorchester (Dorset) and Winchester. Apart from the site at Chichester, these cemeteries all date to the later Roman period, and Lankhills is the first of them to be published. Accordingly this report is of great potential importance, for the evidence from the site itself, for the methodology and interpretation, for the effect it has on subsequent work and publication, and for demonstrating the importance of cemetery archaeology to our understanding of society.

Seven cremations and four hundred and eight inhumations were completely or partially excavated at Lankhills. This provided a large enough sample for conclusions on changing burial rite and on dating to be drawn. These were made possible by the large number of objects, including coins, placed in the graves, the absolute coin dates being augmented by the relative chronology of intersecting graves. The details of the graves are laid out in a standardised format (Table 2). Unfortunately the format only allows the briefest of entries under each heading, anything over and above this relegated to footnotes at the end of the page of the table, a cumbersome and unsatisfactory system. Furthermore the plans of various types of grave (Figs. 46–66) – some graves appearing more than once – are at the other end of the volume. A more useful and usable format would have had a grave-by-grave Inventory to a standardised pattern, with accompanying plans of all the graves.

There follows a detailed consideration of the lay-out both of individual graves and of the cemetery as a whole, establishing the proposed types of burial and the chronology of the rites and of burial in the various parts of the cemetery. A major and damaging omission is that of a report on the human skeletal material of a standard to match those on artefacts. Rough ageing and sexing data are given, though there are significant differences of opinion here which may affect interpretation, e. g. of the decapitated burials. This is the more unfortunate as identification of palaeopathological traits, or the use of the techniques of multivariate analysis now available might have yielded valuable data on the question of relationships in the graves associated with Feature 6, or in some of the rows.

There is an extensive and important series of descriptions and discussions of the different classes of finds, one of the largest and most notable from late-Roman Britain. The sections on the glass, the beads, and the various classes of metalwork will be required reading for those dealing with such material from other sites. There are, nevertheless, points which require consideration. As Brown (p. 297) notes, commenting on the pewter objects, 'it would be presumptuous to suggest dates for any of the Lankhills pieces when they are so well dated by their own contexts and associated material', a sentiment echoed by Harden (p. 211) on the glass, and Guido (p. 293) on the beads. Yet in discussing the formidable collection of crossbow brooches Clarke insists on applying the typological and chronological system worked out by Keller for the material in south Bavaria. Up to c. A. D. 370 there is broad agreement between the two groups, but thereafter, as Keller himself notes, the evidence in Bavaria, particularly for dating, is thin. The Lankhills evidence is better and should be allowed to speak for itself. A further point about the brooches which deserves to be brought out is that three of them are of sheet bronze, not solid-cast. They can only have been used with or for cloaks of a fine, lightweight material, which, with the elaborate appearance of the brooches in question, must have proclaimed high status for the wearer. Appreciation of this point, interesting in itself, would have strongly reinforced the suggestion about the graves containing these brooches being in high-status areas of the cemetery (p. 387).

The constituent elements of the belt-suites are examined and discussed in detail. This again brings out the apparent British tradition in certain types. We shall need further excavation in the areas of the western provinces away from the frontiers, areas comparable to the findspots for the British variants, before we can be sure whether these are an isolated as well as an insular phenomenon, let alone their explanation. In discussing the strap-ends a new classification is proposed, the Tortworth type, with some of the Lankhills exam-

ples being prototypical of this. Yet it is difficult to be convinced that Fig. 36 nos. 489 and 128 are really two different types. Indeed the Tortworth piece itself looks more like an elaborate 'nail cleaner' than a strap-end.

It is in the discussion of the significance of these belt-suites that Clarke proposes the first of three groups he sees as distinct from the general run of Romano-British burials. Briefly these three groups are a Romano 'militia' (p. 286 ff.), an intrusive group of people probably originating in the area of the middle Danube (p. 377 ff.), and a group postulated as having Anglo-Saxon affinities (p. 389 f.). There are two stages in the presentation of these groups. The first lays down the criteria by which they are differentiated from the majority of burials; the second attempts to assess their origins and historical context.

The first group is distinguished by the presence of an official-issue belt-suite placed in the coffin with the body in the general Romano-British fashion at Lankhills.

The second group, containing both male and female graves, is distinguished from the rest of the cemetery population by its burial rite. This is distinctive in two main respects. The first is the consistency in the layout of these graves, and the second is that some of the grave-goods, namely crossbow-brooches and belt-suites for the men, and bracelets for the women, were 'worn'. That is, the body was clothed at burial. Furthermore these burials first occur c. A. D. 350 and have no antecedents in the cemetery. As to the objects being worn at burial: for some of the female burials this was undoubtedly the case as the bracelets still encircled the bones of the lower arm. But examination of the plans of the male graves (Fig. 61) raises serious doubts as to the validity of the claim in respect of them. From late-Roman representations such as the bridal casket of the Esquiline Treasure, the consular diptychs of Probianus and Stilicho, or the tomb-paintings at Durostorum we know that crossbow-brooches were used to fasten a cloak at the right shoulder, and that what is termed in English the 'foot' pointed upwards. Of the seven crossbow-brooches in the graves under consideration only two (Graves 13,234) are foot-up by the right clavicle. Two are foot-down, one at either side of the cranium (G. 81,106). Two others are in the chest area, one foot-up, one foot-down (G. 23,426). The final one (G. 322) is foot-down between the cranium and the top of the coffin. The positions of some of the belt-fittings also accord ill with their having been worn at burial. The belt implied by the buckle and strap-end in G. 426 would appear to be hobbling the wearer (Clarke's suggestion about this – p. 87 n. – does not convince). The position of the buckle on the lower left arm in G. 106 would seem to imply a belt pinioning that arm to the body. In two cases the strap-ends appear to be the wrong way up (G. 106,366). Post-interment movements of the grave fill would not have been extensive enough to cause these displacements, and furthermore one would expect evidence of it in other graves.

The contention that these objects were worn at burial is vital to the argument, yet never adequately demonstrated or defended, and as we have just seen may well not be the case. Furthermore the significance of the difference between worn and unworn objects is presented as 'a major difference in funerary practice' (p. 153). To modern eyes it may be so, but again there is no defence of this statement by reference to documented or ethnographically attested parallels. When on p. 128 we have been told that the difference between cremation and inhumation is 'The most obvious, although not necessarily the most significant aspect of funerary practice . . .' we may wonder at the emphasis placed on a variation within the rite of inhumation. Both in the identification of 'worn' objects, and of their significance, working hypotheses seem to have become untested assumptions.

If then this equipment was placed about the corpse rather than worn, it not only makes objects such as the non-functional brooch in G. 106 easier to understand, but, more importantly, we must revise our assessments of the relationships of these burials to others. For instance in G. 37 (supposedly of the native militia class) the belt-suite is not worn, but it is placed by the right foot, interestingly the place for offerings in the intrusive graves. It may also bring later graves such as 373 and 376 more into line.

After c. A. D. 370 Clarke sees changes in the burial rite in these intrusive graves as indicating the assimilation of the new folk to the existing population. At the same time he sees the appearance of a third group of distinctive burials differing both from the Romano-British citizens, and the intrusive graves. These he sees as being best paralleled amongst early Anglo-Saxon burials. Reviewers versed in Anglo-Saxon archaeology have already contested this ascription from the Anglo-Saxon end. Here one might make two points connected with these graves within the context of the Lankhills cemetery. The first is that we are dealing with a sample of only six graves (four if Graves 373 and 376 can be ascribed elsewhere as mentioned above). The second is that, as Clarke demonstrates (cf p. 144), by this date the regularity of all features of burial rite

was breaking down and many new variations appearing. To try therefore to differentiate these graves from a background which is itself fluid is an exercise of dubious practicability and worth.

Having established his three groups, Clarke further discusses their origins and functions and attempts to place them in the context of what is known of the history of Roman Britain in the fourth century. The first group, the 'militia' is identified by the belt-buckle types, occurring only, it seems, in Britain, and there mainly away from known military installations. Also followed are Frere's and Stevens' suggestions that because the insignia of the vicarius Britanniarum in the *Notitia Dignitatum* show fortified towns rather than a personification, that official had military functions. The distribution of these buckles in Britain is primarily civil, and some from Lankhills are from intrusive graves, but their significance needs further research. The cingulum was a sign of civil as well as military office from Diocletian onwards, so the buckles, official or imitation, do not necessarily have a military significance. The reason for the British imitations is as yet unclear, it could even be civilian copying of a prestige item. The suggestion about the insignia of the vicarius is, like so many of Stevens' suggestions, an ingenious and attractive mirage. It ignores the presence of similar motifs on other folios, let alone the problems of manuscript tradition, and the fact that what little we do know about vicarii of the diocese in the fourth century points to an exclusively civilian role for them.

The discussion and identification of possible sources for the intrusive graves is one of the most original contributions of the report to late-Roman archaeology. It surveys the burials and burial-practices in a large swathe of territory around the Rhine and Danube frontier. The graves with the greatest similarities occur within the Empire in southern Bavaria, and on either side of the imperial frontier in the area of Pannonia. Support for links with this area is provided independently by Mrs. Guido in her study of the beads, particularly the presence of cornelian beads (a note on sources for this stone would have been helpful). It is naughty, though, to bolster the identification of foreigners by use of the silver plate from G81 'seemingly impossible to parallel in Romano-British contexts' (p. 378), when on p. 321 it is admitted there are no continental parallels either. In the light of what has been said above about the question of 'worn' objects, it will be necessary to re-examine not only the Lankhills' scheme, but also the criteria by which these distinctions were made in the examination of the continental burials. This may also help further the resolution of the divergences within the continental material and between these groups and the Lankhills group. For the general similarities in lay-out of these groups of graves remain impressive. It is to be hoped that the approaches pioneered here will be taken up, checked and refined by workers on the continent. It could prove a powerful tool for disentangling archaeological groups within the later Empire. One also looks forward again to more information from areas such as Gaul, about which Clarke is perhaps unduly dismissive (cf. pp. 386, 396 where unfurnished inhumation is assumed).

The discussion of historical contexts is, as with the 'militia', less happy. The first problem is whether such historicist interpretations of archaeological evidence should be attempted. Efforts to link the two types of evidence have often been the bane of Romano-British studies. One only has to look at the unwarranted accretion of archaeological events around the year A. D. 367 to have a salutary warning of where this can (mis)lead. There is only a handful of historically attested events in fourth-century Britain. Is it wise, therefore, to link these archaeological phenomena dated to A. D. 350 and later to the activities of the notarius Paul after the suppression of Magnentius simply because it is the historical date that is to hand? Far better, surely, we should wait till further evidence permits of an archaeological rather than a pseudo-historical construct.

The discussion of the Anglo-Saxon burials also leads to much historicist speculation (pp. 402-3). Given the scanty and ambiguous nature of the historical record for this period, one would like to see the archaeological evidence, which is increasing, less constrained by political or genealogical sources for the fifth century, and more used to tell us of developments to which such evidence is sensitive.

The above remarks have concentrated on certain aspects of the report, and neglected some useful and stimulating portions. In so doing it is hoped not only to stimulate consideration of the sections discussed, but also to show that, by extension, the whole work deserves similar attention. It is a bulky and impressively produced volume, and the temptation is to skim through and extract the conclusions. This would not be do

it or its subject justice. It is an important work both for its methodology and its conclusions, and it deserves close reading and thought. That way it will be the useful starting point for all those concerned with cemeteries and late-Roman archaeology that it indeed is.

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