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University of Wales College, Newport
Ph.D. Thesis Volume 1

'The Visible Dead: A New Approach
to the Study of Late Iron Age Mortuary
Practice in South-Eastern Britain'
DECLARATION

This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

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Thesis Summary

The Visible Dead: A New Approach to the Study of Late Iron Age Mortuary Practice in South-Eastern Britain

The principal aim of the thesis is to investigate the mortuary practices of the late Iron Age period in south-eastern Britain, focusing on identification of the wider sequence of activity. It is evident that the deposition of the calcined remains and associated objects are just one element in a more complicated pattern of behaviour. A number of contemporary inhumation burials and mortuary-related features drawn from an increasing number of sites illustrate the wider practices in operation.

The identification of pyre-related features and debris lies at the core of this study providing an opportunity to advance understanding of pyre technology as well as the mortuary rituals. This study provides an opportunity to advance late Iron Age mortuary studies in relation to the cosmological, political and ideological structure (Fitzpatrick 1997; Pearce 1997a; 1997b; 1999; McKinley 2000).
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Chapter One

Dealing with the Dead: Introduction

1.1 Definition and Interpretation

Iron Age studies have benefited from renewed interest in the last ten years with a significant increase in research, excavation and publication (Moscati et al 1991; Cunliffe 1991; Champion 1994; Fitzpatrick & Morris 1994; Green 1995; Arnold & Gibson 1995; Gwilt & Haslegrove 1997; Bryant 1997; James & Rigby 1997; Bevan 1999b; Creighton 2000). There has been significant debate over the extent that the late Iron Age represents a significant transformation in the nature of society prior to the Roman conquest (Haselgrove 1982, 1989, 2003; Millett 1990; Cunliffe 1991; Hill 1995). It is evident that large-scale earthwork systems dominated the landscape, while domestic space became more organised demonstrating increased stress on land and a need to define ownership. At the same time changes to dress and appearance, the introduction of coinage and new types of ceramics, along with the treatment of the dead are indicative of shifts in the balance of socio-political relationships. One of the most important changes is the vast increase in visible features and artefacts paralleled by the ways in which they became incorporated into the archaeological record (Gwilt & Haselgrove 1997, 6). A recurring aspect of many Iron Age sites is the appearance of unexplained deposits of material comprising human remains, pottery, metalwork and other debris which signify acts encoded with meaning (Merryfield 1987; Hill 1989, 1995; Cunliffe 1992, 1993; Fitzpatrick 1984; King & Soffe 1998; Fox 1946; Macdonald 2000; Field & Parker Pearson forthcoming). It is suggested that rather than separating these deposits into either secular or ritual activities they can be interpreted as an integral component of everyday life forming an essential element of
a single cosmological structure (Barrett 1991; 1994, 77-84; Brück 1995; 1999; in press; Hill 1995; Barber 2001). The problems of recognising and interpreting ritual practices in archaeology are fraught with difficulty as Orme succinctly states:

_It is apparent that there can be no consistent division of sacred from profane, natural from supernatural, normal from abnormal, which can be applied to all cultures._

(Orme 1981, 219)

Anthropological studies (Van Gennep 1960; Turner 1967; 1969) have pointed out that ritual behaviour can be extremely diverse and is a reflection of personal identity and social cohesion. Some mark stages in an individual’s life, referred to as a rite of passage, and are expressed through ceremonies such as those surrounding birth, marriage and particularly death.

The material remains of death and burial have always been the focus of fascination and archaeological enquiry. The archaeological evidence illustrates the variety of mortuary practices employed and manner in which the dead were treated throughout prehistory. It is noteworthy that human beings are the only species that bury their dead (Ucko 1969, 264); most mammals simply ignore the carcass of other pack or herd members. Human beings have a necessity to impose an element of control and understanding on death to enable them to engage and clarify their own existence and role in life. Mortuary rites conducted over the millennia were probably performed for the veneration of the ancestors, to demonstrate the power and influence of the community and to control the malignant force of death through a complex code of behaviour patterns. It is noted that death in many societies, contemporary and ancient, is not treated with the solemnity of twenty-first century western attitudes (Humphreys & King 1981; Metcalf & Huntington 1991). The rites and events conducted to signify a person’s passing from the earthly to the spirit world can be ones of great vibrancy
and celebration linked to an endless cycle of renewal and regeneration (Bloch & Parry 1982; Parry 1994).

Throughout prehistory, it is clear that most people were disposed of as perhaps they had been for thousands of years - in ways that were highly ritualistic but by methods which leave little archaeological trace. Likewise, the traces of modern contemporary funerals evoke little of the spectacle of the events afforded the dead and this is a factor to consider when analysing prehistoric contexts. In Britain the normative rite of disposal is cremation; figures issued by the National Association of Funeral Directors (1996) state that 72% of the population favour this method (Parker Pearson 1999b, 41). The trend is to scatter the ashes of the deceased in a ‘significant’ spot perhaps a favourite holiday location, the stadium of a cherished sporting team or a garden of remembrance. It is apparent that not only in the prehistoric period but today human cultures dispose of the dead by a variety of means, which in many cases contributes, to the removal of the material remains. In contemporary Balinese traditions a cemetery can undergo continuous use for generations but if considered archaeologically the complexity of the rites and even the act of cremation would not be obvious. Once the various ceremonies are completed careful and systematic clearance of the site is conducted and few visible indications remain even after a short period. Downes comments that

*rather than filling us with dismay about the limitations of the archaeology, the cremation in Bali highlights the importance of considering cremation within the context not only of funerary rituals but in the wider contexts of social practices.*

(Downes 1999, 25)
The adoption of cremation burial in south-east England during the late Iron Age has been seen as one of the defining characteristics of the period but it is evident that the act of cremation clearly belonged to a more complicated mortuary process. A number of contemporary inhumation burials and mortuary-related features drawn from an increasing number of sites illustrate the wider practices in operation. This provides an opportunity to advance late Iron Age mortuary studies in relation to the cosmological, political and ideological structure (Fitzpatrick 1997; Pearce 1997a; 1997b; 1999; McKinley 2000).

1.2 Aims and Objectives
The primary aim of the current research is to investigate mortuary practice in south-east Britain, from the beginning of the first century BC to the late first century AD, with a view to:

i) Examining the nature and sequence of past human activity involved in the disposal of the dead.

ii) Determining as far as possible, the development of social-constructs and cosmology in late Iron society.

In order to achieve these aims, the following objectives are pursued:

- An examination of the different burial rites (cremation and inhumation burial) along with the mortuary-related features and contexts evident in the archaeological record to analysis concepts regarding cosmology and ideology in Iron Age society.
- Consideration of the relationship between cemeteries/mortuary-related monuments and the immediate archaeological known environment, discussing the diversity of architecture, topographic position and association of contemporary Iron Age settlements (chapter 2 & appendix A).

- Identification of elements of the cremation process and as far as possible, the detection of pyre and pyre-related features and resulting debris. Pyre sites and pyre-related features can provide a wealth of evidence regarding the cremated individual, attendant offerings, pyre technology and construction, the retrieval and disposal of remains and subsequent clearing up processes (chapter 3).

- Investigation as to whether it is possible to distinguish between intact unburnt objects and those burnt on the pyre. It is evident that ‘pyre goods’ and ‘grave goods’ clearly represent different actions and recognition of burnt objects may provide detail of the rites employed at different stages of the mortuary sequence (chapter 4 & appendix B).

- An examination of the quantity, typology, and chronology of objects incorporated into late Iron Age mortuary contexts to consider their wider ideological, functional, and technological value in late Iron Age society (chapter 5).

- Consideration of a range of features (postholes, pits, mortuary structures) recorded at a number of cemeteries which offer a glimpse of the possible protracted mortuary activity including spatial organisation of the site and employment of excarnation practices (chapter 6.2).
Investigation of the occurrence of late Iron Age inhumation burials in south-east England to establish chronology and range of rites employed (chapter 6.3 & appendix D).

A detailed examination of human calcined remains to determine whether information regarding retrieval and deposition processes, sex and age determinations, pyre technology and efficiency can be gleaned from the data (chapter 6.4 & appendix E).

1.3 Methodology and Terminology

In total the study incorporates data from over 120 sites, approximately 1200 burials and several hundred mortuary-related features. The research is based upon contextual analysis to identify the wider mortuary practices that result in the deposit of burnt and unburnt human remains and the interment of grave goods in the ground. A detailed picture of late Iron Age mortuary behaviour is beginning to emerge as a result of a number of exceptional discoveries in the last twenty years, paralleled by improvements in scientific and recording techniques. The excavation of cemeteries associated with cremation and inhumation burials, as well as a series of mortuary features including ditched enclosures, pyre and pyre-related features and chambers provide an opportunity for detailed analysis. Cemeteries such as those from Westhampnett, West Sussex (Fitzpatrick 1994, 1997); Folly Lane, Hertfordshire (Niblett 1992; 1993; 1995; 1999); Stanway, Essex (Crummy 1992; 1993; 1997a; 1997b; Crummy & Crummy 2000) form the basis of this study providing scope for a diverse and in-depth study. The archaeological deposits include burnt and unburnt human remains recovered from a variety of formal burials and mortuary-related contexts including:
Furthermore, the research involves the analysis of the grave and pyre goods, the human and animal remains, along with consideration of topography and grave form and associated mortuary features.

Data was collected from a variety of sources, including published reports, and through communication with archaeological units and relevant museums. A comprehensive search of SMR records was conducted contacting the offices for each of the counties incorporated into the research (Essex, Hertfordshire, Hampshire, Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Kent, Buckinghamshire, Suffolk, Berkshire and Sussex). The author also gained access to a number of unpublished site records and papers including those relating to Stansted, Stanway, and Elms Farm (Essex); Biddenham Loop, Salford; Shillington, and Stotfold (Bedfordshire); Thorley (Hertfordshire); Alkham and Ashford (Kent). In addition, the evidence of the other regionally-distinct rites which occur across the British Isles throughout the Iron Age, as well as the early Roman period, have been consulted to identify significant similarities and major differences (Whimster 1997a; 1981; Wait 1985; Wilson 1981; Black 1986; Stead 1965; 1979; 1991; Philpott 1991). It is important to bear in mind, however, the problems inherent in reliance on published data for the kind of contextual study undertaken here. Many of the sites excavated in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, or where the use of less sophisticated recovery techniques were employed, present limitations in regard to the amount of information that can be extracted. For example, there are very few instances where details regarding the recognition of pyre features or debris are
recorded, osteological analysis of the calcined human remains is extremely rare and more specifically grave goods are rarely distinguished from pyre goods. However, these cemeteries and burials are included because in many instances they are important in establishing chronological frameworks, geographical distribution and are useful for comparative purposes. Furthermore, it is likely that a detailed review of archival and unpublished finds from other regions, especially for the middle Iron Age, would add to the existing knowledge, challenging the pre-conception of human remains being absent within the Iron Age landscape of the British Isles.

It is critical to define the terms used in a study of this type and explain exactly what is meant, because imprecise or misleading terminology is often repeated over and over again. The research conducted by Jackie McKinley (1989; 1994; 1997a; 1997b, 2000) into mortuary practice and the use of terminology highlights some of common errors archaeologists make when discussing aspects of mortuary ritual. In many excavation reports the authors discuss grave-goods or cremations when they clearly represent other stages or activities in the disposal process. For example, material deposited in a grave may represent objects which were placed on the pyre and therefore represent pyre-goods rather than grave-goods. Likewise many excavation reports frequently refer to ‘cremations’ when they are discussing the deposition of calcined bone and associated objects in a grave, which clearly represents a cremation burial. This discards many activities including the preparation of the corpse, construction of the pyre, the cremation, the retrieval of the remains and subsequent clearing up process. All of these activities may potentially be deduced from the analysis of the archaeological remains and may increase our understanding of the wider mortuary sequence and not just the burial. Furthermore, throughout the study the term
'mortuary' is used rather than 'burial' since the research is based on the identification of the protracted activities surrounding the disposal of the dead. It is important to try to establish what types of ritual were performed and to look beyond the fragmentary bone and grave-good deposits, if understanding of beliefs systems, organisation of past societies and the perceived boundaries between life and death is to be developed.

1.4 Previous Research

This section begins with a brief outline of the general developments in burial/mortuary archaeology before discussing Iron Age literature to consider the major influences on the discipline. From the 1970s archaeologists attempted to use ethnographic studies of mortuary practices, not for making parallels with specific archaeological evidence, but to establish cross-cultural models relating burial to society. The 'New Archaeology' and the increased use of theory and methodology focused on mortuary evidence as a resource from which social complexity and stratification could be measured (Binford 1971; Saxe 1970; Tainter 1975; 1977). However, over the course of the last twenty years this approach has been subject to sustained criticism and the development of a post-processual approach to archaeology has been advocated by numerous scholars (Hodder 1982; Pader 1982; Parker Pearson 1982; Metcalf and Huntington 1991). Once again mortuary studies, particularly Neolithic and Bronze Age traditions (cf. Barrett 1988; 1990; Garwood 1991; Brück 1995; 1999), have been the central arena for the development of this theoretical position which began to consider burial assemblages in the wider context of mortuary rites. The potential for far greater detailed recording on some cemetery sites means that attention has been paid to the recovery of associated features such as pyre sites, pit deposits and mortuary structures while analysis of pyre goods and calcined bone...
deposits can also increase understanding. There is no reason why the same approach
can not be extended to the Iron Age material and contributions include those by Mike

In turning to examine the previous research undertaken in late Iron Age south-eastern
Britain, the earliest work identified a cremation rite which became known as the
'‘Aylesford-Swarling’ tradition (Evans 1890; Bushe-Fox 1925). Iron Age cremation
burials were recorded on a number of occasions extending across Bedfordshire,
Cambridgeshire, Hertfordshire, Essex, Northamptonshire, and Kent between 1798 and
1885. However, the characteristics of the rite remained unrecognised until Arthur
Evans' discovery of the Aylesford cemetery, Kent towards the end of the nineteenth
century (Evans 1890) (Fig.1.1). This discovery and subsequent related finds from the
Hertfordshire site of Welwyn (Smith 1912); the Kent site of Swarling (Bushe-Fox
1925); and the Cambridgeshire cemetery of Guilden Morden (Fox & Lethbridge 1924;
Lethbridge 1936) began to consolidate the archaeological evidence.

In the middle decades of the last century Iron Age studies were dominated by culture-
historical interpretations and key artefact groups were taken as direct indicators of the
presence of specific peoples. A detailed study conducted by Hawkes and Dunning
(1930) highlighted a lack of Iron Age burials from Britain and they equated the
cremation rites of the south-east with similar practices identified in Northern Gaul.
Hawkes (1959) went on to suggest a tripartite division for the Iron Age, envisaging
successive invasions or migrations from the continent as the principal reason for
change at this time. The interpretation of '‘Aylesford-Swarling’ burials became firmly
embedded in the invasion hypotheses for the next thirty years. However, a growing
Fig.1.1 The Aylesford Bucket Burial (Evans 1890, Fig.1)
realisation of the lack of clear evidence for substantial migrations from the continent cast serious doubt upon the invasion theory and it seemed increasingly likely that the undoubted similarities resulted from regular trading contact between the two regions. During the 1960s, the ‘Aylesford-Swarling’ burials were once again the subject of increased attention and a number of important studies sought to define and develop the chronology and typology of the cremation rite (Allen 1960; Birchall 1965; Stead 1967; 1976). In 1965 Anne Birchall reviewed the ceramic evidence of the ‘Aylesford-Swarling’ burials in light of new material from Britain and the continent. She demonstrated that the introduction of the cremation rite could not, on the basis of the ceramic evidence be any earlier than c. 50BC. Ian Stead’s research from the late 1960s onwards built on Birchall’s work, largely establishing the chronological framework still used for dating the cremation burials of south-east England (Stead 1967; 1976). He has published a number of influential papers and excavation reports which deal with large cemeteries and individual burials, not only in south-eastern Britain but also in East Yorkshire and France (Stead 1971; 1979; 1991; Flouest & Stead 1979; Stead & Rigby 1986; 1989) (See section 1.4 for a full discussion of chronology).

The only comprehensive body of work to draw Iron Age British mortuary evidence together was written almost twenty-five years ago (Whimster 1977a; 1981). Rowan Whimster brought together the material that had slowly accumulated in the archaeological record, identifying a number of distinct regional groups from across the British Isles. More recently, research conducted by Colin Haselgrove (1997), Paul Sealey (1996), John Pearce (1997a; 1997b; 1999), J.D. Hill (1995; 1999), Andrew Fitzpatrick (1994, 1997, 2000), and Mark Atkinson (2001; pers. comm.) have
encouraged the analysis of the different rites and wider sequence of events evident in late Iron Age mortuary contexts. Likewise, a number of important discoveries of Iron Age cemetery sites have been made in the last ten years in south-eastern England including Folly Lane, Hertfordshire (Niblett 1999); Deal, Kent (Parfitt 1995); Stanway (Crummy 1992; 1993; Crummy & Crummy 2000) and Elms Farm, Essex (Atkinson 1995; 2001; Atkinson & Preston 1998); and Westhampnett, West Sussex (Fitzpatrick 1997). At the same time, advances in excavation and recording methods along with improved scientific techniques have significantly improved the recovery of material and enable analysis of artefacts and in some cases associated features. Furthermore, osteological analysis conducted by Jacqueline McKinley (1989; 1994; 1997a; 1997b; 2000) has advocated that it is not only important to consider the demographic and pathological aspects of calcined remains but demonstrates that aspects of pyre technology and accompanying offerings can be deduced from cremation debris.

The research presented in this thesis follows on from the discoveries made by Arthur Evans and Bushe-Fox over a century ago (Evans 1890; Bushe-Fox 1925), whilst building on the work produced by Rowan Whimster (1977a; 1981) and Ian Stead (Stead 1967; 1971; 1976; Stead & Rigby 1986; 1989). Furthermore, recent studies (Fitzpatrick 1997; Pearce 1997a; 1997b; 1999; McKinley 1994; 1997b, 2000) have encouraged archaeologists to focus attention on the recognition of possible patterns of sequence in late Iron Age mortuary contexts. One of the main aims of the research was to examine the notion that deposits of calcined human remains found in formal graves represent only one stage in the complicated disposal process of the dead. The research has identified a range of features associated with mortuary activity, including
ditched enclosures, ring ditches/barrows, mortuary chambers/shafts, pit deposits, posthole structures/platforms, pyres, and pyre-related features.

1.5 Chronological Range of the Research

The chronological period covered by the thesis begins c. 100BC and continues into the early Roman period (c. AD80). During the late 1960s and 1970s research conducted by Ian Stead on the 'Aylesford-Swarling' burials recognised two chronological phases based on the associated pottery and metalwork (Stead 1967; 1976). The earlier 'Welwyn' phase (c. 50–10BC) contained La Tène III brooches and no Gallo-Belgic pottery or local imitations which became common after c. 10/15BC. The later group, the 'Lexden' phase (c. 15/10BC–AD50+) includes a range of late brooch types (e.g. Colchester, Hod Hill and Thistle types) and Gallo-Belgic pottery forms (e.g. platters, beakers and flagons) and their local copies, present after 15/10BC. Stead's chronological framework for the cremation burials is still largely adhered to, though recent discoveries suggest a slightly longer sequence. Evidence of the earliest cremation burials and cemeteries are provided from Westhampnett, West Sussex (Fitzpatrick 1997); Maldon Hall Farm, Essex (Lavender 1991); Hinxton, Cambridgeshire (Hill et al 1999); and Baldock, Hertfordshire (Stead & Rigby 1986, 55-61) which appear to date from the beginning of the first century BC. At the other end of the sequence Iron Age mortuary rites do not disappear as a result of direct Roman influence and during the latter half of the first century AD complex mortuary-related sites appear in the archaeological record. The elaborate depositional activities evident at Stanway, Essex (Crummy & Crummy 2000), Folly Lane (Niblett 1999) and Thorley, Hertfordshire (Last & McDonald 2001) continue to the end of the first century AD. Furthermore, the isolated inhumation burials from Shouldham, Norfolk
(Clarke & Hawkes 1955; Whimster 1981, 349) and Newnham Croft, Cambridgeshire (Fox, 1923; 1958, 11; Cra’ster 1973; Whimster 1981), along with the extensive cemetery from Deal, Kent (Parfitt 1995) suggests a date in the second or third century BC for the occurrence of a visible mortuary rite in south-east England.

1.6 Geographical Range of the Research

The archaeological evidence represents an extensive and widespread mortuary tradition concentrated in south-eastern England with a small number of outlying examples situated further west (Fig. 1.2). The distribution extends from Hampshire and Wiltshire to the Kent and Essex coasts continuing up to the margins of the Cambridgeshire Fens (Whimster 1981; Fitzpatrick 1997; Hill et al 1999). The distribution pattern has changed very little since Whimster’s study with the majority of burials concentrated in the modern counties of Essex and Hertfordshire but the number of sites has dramatically increased. A significant number of these recently discovered cremation cemeteries have been excavated from the counties of Bedfordshire and south Cambridgeshire (Dawson forthcoming; Luke & Dawson 1997; Luke 2000; Steadman 1995; 1996; Hill et al 1999; Shotliff & Crick 1999). Furthermore, two of the earliest known cemeteries, Westhampnett and Hinxton, which date to between 100-50BC are located on the western and northern margins of the known distribution.

1.7 Characteristics of the Mortuary Practices

The cremation burials vary considerably and are characterised by a range of grave forms, from simple circular/oval pits to large square and rectangular cuts including the elaborate mortuary shafts/chambers that have been identified at Folly Lane,
Hertfordshire and Stanway and Lexden (Laver 1927), Essex. The graves can be found as isolated examples, in small clusters or in large extensive cemeteries. They range up to the large King Harry Lane cemetery with over 470 burials (Stead & Rigby 1989) and the Westhampnett cemetery with around 160 (Fitzpatrick 1997). Although the majority appear to have been grouped in small cemeteries of between 3-20 burials, with short chronologies and moderate to poor assemblages. Recently excavated examples include Hinxton Rings, Cambridgeshire (Hill et al. 1999); North Shoebury (Wymer & Brown 1995) and Maldon Hall Farm, Essex (Lavender 1991); along with Salford (Dawson forthcoming) and Biddenham Loop, Bedfordshire (Luke & Dawson 1997; Luke 2000).

Colin Haselgrove (1984) divided the cremation burials of the south-east into three distinct types based on accompanying grave-goods:

- The most common type consists of calcined human remains accompanied by a single pottery vessel derived from a restricted range of pedestal urns, jars, beakers or similar vessels (Fitzpatrick 1997; Stead & Rigby 1989).

- A second band is distinguished by comprising between one and five pots and/or La Tène III brooches. In addition, a range of objects including bronze vessels, buckets and decorated mirrors are often provided. Three of the cremation burials from the Aylesford (Evans 1890) and one from the Swarling cemeteries (Bushe-Fox 1925) were associated with wooden and metal bound buckets along with pottery and brooches. These discoveries were made at the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries but further examples have been found including those from Baldock, Hertfordshire (Stead 1968; 1986; Burleigh 1982; Selkirk
1983) and most recently from Alkham, Kent (Philp 1991; 1993; JD Hill pers. comm.). Bronze mirrors are also associated with a number of graves (Smith 1909; Fox 1948; Fox & Pollard 1973) and the examples from the south-east have increased in the last twenty years with finds from Shillington, Bedfordshire (JD Hill pers. comm.; Chilham Castle, Kent (Parfitt 1998); Latchmere Green, Hampshire (Fulford & Creighton 1998); Dorton, Buckinghamshire (Farley 1983); Billericay, Essex (Weller et al 1974; Weller pers. comm.) and Aston, Hertfordshire (Rook 1982).

- A third group of graves known as ‘Welwyn-type’ burials and named after the discoveries from Welwyn, Hertfordshire (Smith 1912) have been a focus of Iron Age burial studies since the 1960s. They may be characterised as cremation burials placed in large rectangular grave-pits, although circular/oval examples are known, containing a wide range of largely intact grave goods usually including at least one amphora, a quantity of pottery, and imported metal or glass vessels (Stead 1967). There are over twenty recorded examples occurring north of the Thames; the principal sites include Stanfordbury, Bedfordshire (Dryden 1845); Mount Bures (Smith 1852) and Stanway, Essex (Crummy 1993; 1997a; 1997c; Crummy & Crummy 2000); Snailwell, Cambridgeshire (Lethbridge 1953); Dorton, Buckinghamshire (Farley 1983); Hertford Heath (Holmes & Frend 1959; Hüssen 1983), Welwyn (Smith 1912), Welwyn Garden City (Stead 1967) and Baldock (Stead & Rigby 1986), Hertfordshire.

- These three groups can now be extended to include a fourth, the complex ‘Folly Lane’ rites, where mortuary-related shafts or chambers are associated with fragmentary ‘token’ deposits of unusual and rare objects and calcined remains.
The sunken chambers are often situated within rectangular or square ditched enclosures and associated with cremation burials and in some instances pyre features. Only three sites are currently known from Britain which have revealed evidence of mortuary chambers including Folly Lane, Lexden (Foster 1986) and Stanway (Crummy 1992, 1993, 1997a, 1997b; Crummy & Crummy 2000).

In addition, it is apparent that there were a number of ways in which individuals were treated in death in the late Iron Age in south-eastern England. The research evaluates, within the set geographical and chronological parameters, the variety of sites and evidence of mortuary practice. The sites selected for analysis include cremation and inhumation burials along with cemeteries that demonstrate a mixture of both rites. Inhumations appear to occur in small numbers alongside cremation burials particularly within, or aligned upon, the ditches of cremation enclosures. At Verulamium, examples occur at King Harry Lane (Stead & Rigby 1989), Verulam Hills Field (Anthony 1968; Niblett 2001, 45), and Folly Lane (Niblett 1999). Other sites with evidence of mixed rites include Biddenham Loop (Luke & Dawson 1997; Luke 2000) and Stotfold (Steadman 1995; 1996), Bedfordshire; Hinxton Rings, Cambridgeshire (Hill et al 1999); and Owslebury, Hampshire (Collis 1968; 1977; 1994). Several small inhumation cemeteries have also been discovered including those at Mucking (Jones & Jones 1975; Going 1993; Sealey 1996, 58) and Ardale (Wilkinson 1988; Sealey 1996, 58) Essex, along with the larger cemetery from Deal, Kent (Parfitt 1995). There are also a number of inhumation burials distributed across the British Isles which are usually accompanied by swords and other items of weaponry (Collis 1973; Whimster 1981; Stead 1991; Parfitt 1995). A number of
examples have been discovered across the south-east including Kelvedon, Essex (Sealey 1996; pers. comm.), Deal (Parfitt 1995), and most recently a pair of burials from Ashford, Kent (Casper Johnson pers. comm.). Obviously, a cremation burial rite dominates the region but it is important to emphasise that it is not the only practice evident in the archaeological record and that the cremation rite clearly belongs to a more complicated mortuary process. The increase in the number of late Iron Age mortuary sites discovered in the past twenty years from across south-eastern Britain presents a multi-faceted pattern of mortuary activity. The research highlights not only the variety of burial rites (cremation and inhumation burials) but evidence of mortuary-related features including ditched enclosures, ring ditches/barrows, mortuary chambers, pyres, pyre-related features, and mortuary structures. In light of the above discussion the use of the ‘Aylesford-Swarling’ term to describe mortuary activity in south-eastern Britain during the late Iron Age appears outdated since it is apparent that the rite belongs to a complex social construct.

1.8 Regional rites

The evidence for Iron Age burial and mortuary rituals varies both in quality and volume and in its geographical spread across Britain. It is important to note that the evidence currently available from across the British Isles represents a small percentage of the total Iron Age population. In many areas there no physical remains or traces of funerals; some practices may be undetectable, others have suffered disturbance, or excessively acidic or alkaline soils may have resulted in the poor preservation of bone. It is possible to identity a number of distinctive rites practised across the British Isles from the 7th century BC: the ‘Arras’ burials of East Yorkshire, the pit burials of
southern central England, the cist burials that occur across south-western Britain, and
the Durotrigian inhumation burials confined to an area of southern Dorset.

The chalk wolds of East Yorkshire have yielded thousands of inhumation burials
clustered together in extensive cemeteries or smaller groups which appear to have
originated in the middle Iron Age. Many of these graves were explored in the
nineteenth century and are conventionally referred to as 'Arras' burials, after the
Yorkshire cemetery partially examined for the first time in 1815 (Mortimer 1905;
Greenwell 1906). The burials are defined by three separate practices: the grouping
together of small barrows in large cemeteries, the practice of surrounding individual
barrows with a square-plan ditch, and the occasional rite of cart burials (Stead 1979).
The burials were generally without elaborate grave goods, the most common artefacts
being brooches, pots and bones of pigs or sheep. However, a small number of the
burials include personal ornaments, weapons and, in some instances carts were
interred with the dead. The barrows are grouped together in cemeteries, ranging from
small clusters to large groups, along with occasional isolated examples (Stead 1991).
At least seventeen burials are known from East Yorkshire which include a cart and its
fittings amongst the deposited objects: six were excavated between 1971 and 1987
(Brewster 1971; 1975; Dent 1985; Stead 1991), with a seventh recovered from
Wetwang village in the spring of 2001 (Hill 2001b; 2002) and an eighth in December
2003 from Ferrybridge, West Yorkshire (Alex Smith pers. comm.). The others were
recorded during the eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Mortimer
1905; Greenwell 1906; Stead 1959; 1979). The metalwork assemblages from the
graves suggest that the burial rites began as early as the fourth century BC, with the
majority of the burials belonging to the second century and continuing into the first
century BC or even first century AD. It appears that the burial rite was most intensively practised during the second and first centuries BC, when thousands of small barrows were constructed across the Yorkshire Wolds (Stead 1991).

A large number of defended and open settlement sites across southern Britain have revealed storage pits, ditches and postholes which frequently contain large quantities of partial and complete human skeletons along with animal remains, carbonised plant remains, pottery, broken tools and other objects. The so-called 'pit burial tradition' (Whimster 1977a; 1981; Wilson 1981; Wait 1985) has been recognised for a considerable length of time but had been described as 'buried without care' or 'thrown in irregularly' (Pitt-Rivers, 1887, 11). Research by Barry Cunliffe at Danebury, Hampshire suggested that the deposition of human and other remains was essentially concerned with propitiation (Cunliffe 1992). Most recently JD Hill (1989; 1995) has commented that the deposited elements found in pits on sites like Winnall Down, Gussage All Saints, and Danebury were treated in a similar manner and may be interpreted as ritual deposition. At Danebury, Hampshire, for example, approximately 1,700 pits were excavated between 1969-1989 and at least 70 individuals were represented by either complete skeletons or in a variety of partial states. It is suggested that interments were carefully selected and placed in the ground at highly infrequent intervals spanning the period from the seventh to the first centuries BC (Cunliffe 1984; 1993).

There is also evidence of a distinctive inhumation rite characterised by the use of stone-lined cists which occurs sporadically across much of western Britain between the third and the second centuries BC and survived until perhaps the end of the first
century AD (Whimster 1977a; 1981). The burials appear to concentrate in Devon, Cornwall and the Scilly Isles (Ashbee 1954; Dudley & Jope 1965; Mellor 2000) but there are isolated examples known from Gloucestershire, Wales (Hughes 1909; Fox 1925; Boon 1978-80) and the east coast of Ireland (Macalister 1929). Despite the poorly documented nature of much of the evidence, a number of cemeteries are known at Birdlip, Gloucestershire (Bellow 1880; Green 1949; Staelens 1982); Stamford Hill, Devon (Bate 1866; Cunliffe 1988); Harlyn Bay (Crawford 1921; Whimster 1997b) and St. Keverne, Cornwall (Rogers 1873). A limited range of personal objects including pins, brooches, bracelets, mirrors, bronze vessels and weapons usually accompanies the burials.

The Durotrigian inhumation tradition emerged at the very end of the first century BC and is confined to an area of southern Dorset (Whimster 1981; Fitzpatrick 1996). The characteristics associated with the rite include burial in simple earthen graves, often grouped in small cemeteries and the provision of a limited but distinctive range of grave goods. The skeletons were usually placed in a flexed position, on the right side and orientated with heads between north-east and south-west. Grave goods most often include a restricted range of locally produced ceramic vessels, less often joints of meat, and very occasionally personal ornaments such as brooches or bracelets. There are several distinct examples including the ‘weapon’ burial from the cemetery at Whitcombe (Aitken & Aitken 1991), and an isolated ‘mirror’ burial from Portesham (Fitzpatrick 1996).

It is possible to identity a number of inhumation burials that appear to have been deposited between the third century BC, and the first century AD which are associated
with weapons, especially swords (Collis 1973; Whimster 1981; Stead 1991; Parfitt 1995). The graves have been found scattered across the British Isles with examples from Yorkshire, southern England, Wales and Ireland. It was first thought that the rite was limited to a small number of graves in the Yorkshire Wolds (Stead, 1965, 68). However, in the last ten years the numbers have significantly increased providing a larger and much more scattered geographical sample which cross-cuts all of the regional rites. There are also a series of burials, characterised by the presence of mirrors and other personal items which, like the sword burials, cross-cut the regionally specific rites. Over 50 mirrors have been recorded from a variety of contexts across Britain, approximately 40 of which are from inhumation or cremation burials (Smith 1909; Fox 1948; Fox & Pollard 1973; MacGregor 1976).

In the last twenty years at least eight (6 cremations and 2 inhumations) mirrors have been discovered from burial contexts including Dorton, Buckinghamshire (Farley 1983); Billericay, Essex (Weller 1974; pers. comm.); Aston, Hertfordshire (Rook 1982); Portesham, Dorset (Fitzpatrick et al. 1996); Chilham Castle, Kent (Parfitt 1998); Latchmere Green, Hampshire (Fulford & Creighton 1998); Bryher, Isles of Scilly (Mellor 2000) and Shillington, Bedfordshire (JD Hill pers. comm.). The tradition of including mirrors in graves can be traced back to the fourth century BC at Arras (Stead, 1979), where a small number of graves contain iron mirrors. The examples from southern England date from the late first century BC or early first century AD and are generally bronze, though examples occur with iron and bronze fittings. In 1999 the Cornwall Archaeological Unit excavated a cist burial on Bryher, Isles of Scilly which revealed the remains of an adult skeleton accompanied by an iron sword in a bronze scabbard and a bronze mirror (Fitzpatrick pers. comm.; Mellor
2000; Alberge 2000). This is the first example where the two objects have been found together in an Iron Age burial and the sword is believed to date around c. 100BC.

Finally it is important to note that only a few burials are known from northern England, Scotland and Wales (Whimster 1981). This could be due to a number of factors including the lack of excavation and recording in these areas in favour of southern and eastern Britain. It is also possible that the mortuary rites leave virtually no trace in the archaeological record (Ellison & Drewett 1971; Knüsel & Carr 1997), which is exacerbated by the poor conditions of preservation in highland zones and the absence of datable objects.
Chapter 2

Situating the Dead: Burial Monuments, Topography and Settlement

2.1 Introduction

The places where human remains are deposited, along with mode of disposal, treatment and provision of the corpse have changed dramatically throughout prehistory. The archaeological record reveals a variety of mortuary structures and evidence of rites involving the disposal of the dead which survive as testament to an often unrecognisable and distant past. Iron Age mortuary evidence is not associated with the evocative and dramatic barrows and monumental structures of the Neolithic and Bronze Age periods but this does not make study of activity surrounding the Iron Age dead less significant or 'invisible'. Mike Parker Pearson (1993, 1999a), Andrew Fitzpatrick (1997, 2000) and Bill Bevan (1999a) have employed the type of contextual approach applied to Neolithic and Bronze Age data (Barrett 1991, 1994; Brück 1995; Barber 2001) to various Iron Age cemeteries and burials across western Europe. The research conducted for this study aims to build upon the work of the above scholars to illustrate that during the later Iron Age a complex ritualised landscape is recognisable and elements of the protracted mortuary sequence (chapters 3, and 4) are identifiable in the archaeological record. A successful study of Iron Age mortuary practice and identification of the various elements involved in disposing of a corpse requires careful consideration, questioning of the data and in some cases re-evaluation of the available evidence.

The principal aim of the chapter is to examine the positioning, spatial arrangement and demarcating features used to locate burials and cemeteries in the late Iron Age
landscape of south-eastern Britain. It investigates the relationship of cemeteries and individual burials to the immediate archaeological known environment, explores the broader typographical context of burial and considers the association with contemporary settlements. It is apparent that the importance of the siting of monuments and cemeteries in the prehistoric period continues into the late Iron Age. However, it is also evident that cemetery or burial location, growth and distribution has no simple patterns, and that sites demonstrate complex and wide-ranging patterns. It has already been noted that Iron Age mortuary and cemetery sites were not associated with the substantial monuments of the Neolithic and Bronze Ages but a proportion were prominent in the surrounding landscape or employed ‘architecture’ to make a visible statement. The research will illustrate that the deposition of the Iron Age dead within ditched enclosures, barrows and often in association with boundary features is a recurring characteristic found across south-eastern Britain. Of the c. 120 sites and approximately 1200 burials analysed during the course of the research at least ten are associated with circular barrows or ring gullies suggesting that elements of Bronze Age mortuary practice continued in the Iron Age period. In addition, a further twenty sites have revealed square or rectilinear ditched enclosures surrounding a range of mortuary-related features. Finally, there are numerous cremation and inhumation burials that are aligned, cut across or deposited in lengths of ditch; in many instances these ditches define earthwork, boundary and field systems.

2.2 Enclosure Features

The number of known late Iron Age mortuary enclosures has dramatically increased in the past twenty years due to improved recording and scientific techniques. The nature of many earlier excavations means that the identification of these ditched
features may have been overlooked on numerous occasions (Haselgrove 1997, 66). The research has identified at least twenty late Iron Age mortuary-related sites with evidence of ditched enclosure features (Appendix A). This is the first time that a study has attempted to draw together the examples to consider their significance in the late Iron Age mortuary record. The earliest known example of enclosing some burials or entire cemeteries, within the geographical and chronological parameters of this study, appears c. 75BC at Maldon Hall Farm, Essex (Lavender 1991) and continues into the second century AD with the example from St. Stephen's, Verulamium (Davey 1933, 1935; Niblett 1999, 400, Fig. 113; 2000, 98). Late Iron Age ditched mortuary enclosures have been recognised across the geographical extent of this study crossing a wide area from Cambridgeshire to Hampshire. The majority are concentrated in Essex and Hertfordshire, though examples occur in Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Buckinghamshire, Kent, West Sussex, Hampshire and Dorset. There are numerous examples of multiple-interment enclosures, and a handful that demarcate individual deposits however both cremation and inhumation rites are represented. Eleven of the sites are associated with cremation burials, three others enclose inhumation burials and a further seven contain a combination of both rites often with inhumation deposits recovered from the enclosing ditch fill.

Table 2.1: List of burials and cemeteries associated with ditched enclosures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inhumation burials only</th>
<th>Cremation burials only</th>
<th>Mixed rites</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Viables Farm, Hampshire</td>
<td>Puddletown, Bedfordshire</td>
<td>Stotfold, Bedfordshire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashford, Kent</td>
<td>Ward's Combe, Buckinghamshire</td>
<td>Mucking, Essex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maiden Castle Road, Dorset</td>
<td>Colne, Cambridgeshire</td>
<td>Oswestbury, Hampshire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Handley, Dorset</td>
<td>Folly Lane, Hertfordshire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maldon Hall Farm, Essex</td>
<td>King Harry Lane, Hertfordshire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mucking, Essex</td>
<td>Hertfordshire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>North Shoebury, Essex</td>
<td>Verulam Hills Field, Hertfordshire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stansted, Essex</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stanway, Essex</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Baldeck, Hertfordshire</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Westhampnett, West Sussex</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

28
Some of the recently excavated earthworks have revealed not only cremation and inhumation burials but also a range of features including pyres, mortuary chambers, mortuary-related structures and pits suggestive of complex mortuary activity.

Table 2.2: List of burials and cemeteries associated with mortuary-related features

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Feature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Puddlehill, Bedfordshire</td>
<td>Pyre features</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ward's Combe, Buckinghamshire</td>
<td>Pit deposit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handley, Dorset</td>
<td>Pyre feature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stanway, Essex</td>
<td>Pyre features, mortuary chambers, mortuary structures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baldock, Hertfordshire</td>
<td>Pyre feature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Folly Lane, Hertfordshire</td>
<td>Pyre feature, mortuary chamber</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thorley, Hertfordshire</td>
<td>Pit deposits, mortuary structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashford, Kent</td>
<td>Possible mortuary structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Westhampnett, West Sussex</td>
<td>Mortuary structure</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The enclosures are generally square or rectilinear in form and vary in size from the 4m² example found at Westhampnett, West Sussex (Fitzpatrick 1997, 40-2) to the enormous Folly Lane enclosure which extends over two hectares (Niblett 1999). The largest number of burials recorded from a single enclosure comes from the King Harry Lane cemetery, where one of eight ditched features contained 47 cremation burials (Stead & Rigby 1989). In general the enclosures appear to surround only small groups of burials usually numbering between three and nine examples. In some cases the enclosures are set apart from areas of contemporary domestic occupation, while others are positioned close to earthwork and boundary features or integral to settlement sites. Many of the ditched enclosures are situated in a dominant position clearly demarcating the associated mortuary features (burials, pyres etc.) creating a visible architecture within the immediate landscape. In many instances they are located on high ground with extensive views of the surrounding area, near to or at least with a line-of-sight to a watercourse and in some cases positioned in proximity to important routeways or tracks.
Before moving onto discuss the sites and enclosures themselves it is noteworthy that cremation burial was not the only method of disposal employed at the end of the late Iron Age. Small inhumation cemeteries or examples found amongst cremation burials are being found in increasing numbers, particularly within, aligned upon, or in the ditches of enclosures. At the three main Verulamium cemeteries, King Harry Lane (Stead & Rigby 1989), Folly Lane (Niblett 1999) and Verulam Hills Field (Anthony 1986), inhumations occur in the enclosure ditches or on the margins of burial clusters. The practice was not confined to Hertfordshire as inhumations have been recorded either placed in, aligned upon, or cutting through enclosure ditches at Mucking, Essex (Thompson 1982 783; Going 1993 19); Stotfold, Bedfordshire (Steadman 1995; 1996); and Owslebury, Hampshire (Collis 1968; 1977; 1994).

The discussion of mortuary-related enclosure features begins with the Westhampnett cemetery (Fitzpatrick 1994; 1997; 2000). The site is one of the most important Iron Age discoveries in the last 20 years and reveals evidence not only of the burial rites but also of the actual cremation process. Over 160 cremation burials, 45 pyre and pyre-related features and five small ditched enclosures were excavated. The site is set on a low (23m OD contour) but prominent hill with the South Downs rising only 2km to the north. The area surrounding the cemetery is thought to have flooded seasonally which would have associated the site with a watery context at certain times of the year (Fitzpatrick pers. comm.). Five small ditched features are situated on the eastern periphery of the cemetery but only one of them is clearly associated with a cremation burial. The enclosure (20706) (Fig.2.1) consisted of a square ditch with rounded corners, measuring c. 4.4m square with a centrally placed cremation burial (20566). The ditch was between 0.4m and 0.5m wide and up to 0.15m deep with shallow
Fig. 2.1 Cremation burial (20566) set in the centre of a small square ditched enclosure (20706) from Westhampnett, West Sussex. Note the posthole in each of the four corners (After Fitzpatrick 1997, Fig. 33)
sloping sides. In each corner of the enclosure, a small post-hole was revealed averaging 0.6m in diameter and 0.25m deep. Similar examples of probable middle Iron Age date are known from Maxey, Cambridgeshire (Pryor *et al* 1985) and Wanlip, Leicestershire (Beamish 1998) (Fig. 2.2). The Wanlip example consists of a rectangular post-built structure (6.70m x 4.70m) with a centrally placed cremation burial (1096). The Maxey feature (Structure 17) is one of a group of nine small square ditched enclosures. It consists of a sub-square enclosure ditch with rounded corners, distinguished by four small pits or post-holes, located at each corner. The group is likely to represent a small cemetery of early/middle Iron Age date but the area had suffered severe truncation and none of the features revealed burials or datable finds.

Four-post structures and small ditched mortuary structures known from a number of sites are discussed elsewhere in more detail (Chapter 6.2); in brief it is suggested that they represent raised platforms used to display the corpse or formed part of a structure associated with mortuary activity (Ellison & Drewett 1971; Carr & Knüsel 1997; Fitzpatrick 1997, 236).

There are only four other enclosures which surround single cremation burials represented by examples from Baldock (Burleigh 1982; Selkirk 1983) and Folly Lane, Hertfordshire (Niblett 1999); Stotfold, Bedfordshire (Steadman 1995; 1996); and Mucking, Essex (Going 1993, 20). Large-scale excavations carried out over a twenty year period produced evidence of multi-period settlement activity at Mucking, Essex. Aerial photography identified an extensive crop-mark site situated on the 30m gravel terrace overlooking the Thames (Jones 1974a; 1974b; 1975; 1978; Jones & Jones 1975; Clark 1993). At least six separate groups of late Iron Age burials were found scattered across the site including two linear arrangements of small square-ditched
Fig. 2.2 Iron Age ditched enclosures and associated post structures from Britain: 1. Structure 17 Maxey West Field, Cambridgeshire (After Pryor & French 1985, Fig.44); 2. Wanlip, Leicestershire (After Beamish 1998, Fig.17)
barrows (Group 1: 1010-1013; Group 2: 15060, 15058, 10567, 15069) (Going 1993, 20 and site plan 14 and 11; Jones 1975, 35; Thompson 1982, 783; Whimster 1981, 128). The first group (1010-1013) (Fig.2.3) of conjoined enclosures surrounded central cremation burials of the first century BC and each measured roughly 5m x 4m. The second group had suffered some truncation with only two of the enclosures revealing cremation burials (15060, 15069), they varied between 3.6m-5.1m long by 4.0m-5.1m wide. In 1981 Whimster (1981, 128) questioned whether similar features may have escaped notice in the course of excavation elsewhere in south-eastern England, in view of the numbers now recognised his initial thought appears correct.

Many of the enclosures are associated with multiple interments but in a number of instances this consists of less than five burials. A rectangular enclosure associated with just three cremation burials is known from North Shoebury, Essex (Wymer & Brown 1995) (Fig.2.3). The three late Iron Age cremation burials were excavated in a linear arrangement equally spaced at 7m intervals. The remains of narrow gullies on three sides appear to outline a small rectangular enclosure that surrounded a central burial (1232). The enclosure measured roughly 8.5m long by at least 7.5m wide; the shallow ditches containing small quantities of late Iron Age pottery. The burial enclosure appears to have marked the eastern boundary of a contemporary settlement and field system (c. 50BC-AD 43) demarcated by a major east-west boundary ditch (1469). During construction work at Stansted Airport over 40 cremation burials dating from the late Iron Age to the mid second century AD were found widely scattered in small groups across the site (Havis & Brooks forthcoming). A sub-rectangular enclosure containing three fragmentary cremation burials (36-38) was attached to a substantial field boundary with a double ditched trackway located to its
Fig.2.3 Square/rectangular ditched enclosures: 1. Mucking, Essex (1010-1013) (After Clark 1993, Atlas Plan 14); 2. North Shoebury, Essex Grave 1232 contained a small quantity of pyre debris (After Wymer & Brown 1995, Fig.28)
immediate south (Brooks 1989; Havis & Brooks 1991b; Havis & Brooks forthcoming). It is apparent that the enclosure and therefore the dead were an integral element of the wider contemporary living and working landscape. The rectangular enclosure first identified by aerial photography at Maldon Hall Farm, Essex was situated on the highest local ground (c. 39 m OD) providing commanding views across the Chelmer Valley (Lavender 1991). The cropmark was subsequently excavated revealing a rectilinear ditched enclosure measuring 23.5 m by 15 m (Fig. 2.4). Fourteen sherds of late Iron Age pottery were recovered from the ditch fill, although three abraded sherds of late Bronze Age/early Iron Age flint-tempered pottery were found in the lowest level. Six of the nine pits within the enclosure contained few or no finds, with the remaining three revealing cremation burials dating to the second half of the first century BC. This particular enclosure with no entrance and a series of largely empty pits highlights the difficulties of identifying mortuary-related features of this type, which may have precluded their identification as burial monuments in the past.

Returning once again to the site of Mucking, Essex a ditched enclosure (6733) (Fig. 2.4) of similar dimensions to the Maldon Hall Farm example is situated on the north-western margins of the site (Going 1993, 19 and site plan 9 and 12; Lavender 1991, 209). The enclosure consisted of an almost square earthwork measuring c. 19 x 23.5m with a narrow entrance on the south-west side. Three cremation burials (85, 95, and 96) were recovered from the enclosure interior similar to the discoveries at North Shoebury, Stansted and Maldon Hall Farm. However, there are significant differences because the enclosure ditch was also used to deposit human remains; two cremation burials (97 and 98) and three inhumation burials (94, 109, 110) were recovered from
Fig. 2.4 Square/rectangular ditched enclosures: 1. Mucking, Essex (6733) (After Clark 1993, Atlas Plan 9 & 12); 2. Maldon Hall Farm, Essex, Grave F28 contained pyre material (After Lavender 1991, Fig. 2)
the ditch fill. Chris Going suggested a date of 75-50BC for the cutting of the ditch and the earliest use of the cemetery.

The presence of cremation and inhumation burials in the ditch of the Mucking enclosure can be compared with a number of contemporary sites. Two ditched enclosures of pre-Roman date, visible on aerial photographs, were excavated within an area of known Roman settlement at Colne Fen (Regan & Evans 1997). The main enclosure was associated with a cluster of post-holes and a series of linear divisions, whilst a single cremation burial had been cut into the silted enclosure ditch (Cambridgeshire SMR Records; Hill et al 1999). A series of cremation burials have been found widely scattered across the late Iron Age settlement and Roman small town of Billericay, Essex (Medlycott 1998). During construction work at the local secondary school an area of late Iron Age/Romano-British activity revealed a variety of features (Rudling 1990). This included a badly truncated ditch (context 6/104) yielding a number of distinct concentrations of calcined human remains, pottery and charcoal. It is possible that a number of cremation burials or pyre-related debris was placed on, or near, the bottom of a north-south orientated ditch that probably formed part of a much larger rectangular enclosure.

In addition to the cremation burials, there are instances of inhumation burials and even pyre features either aligned or cutting boundary ditches and mortuary enclosures. One site in particular has produced evidence that suggests that the enclosure ditch was utilised to cremate the dead. At Puddlehill, Bedfordshire a square ditched enclosure measuring roughly 27.5 x 28.75m contained six cremation burials grouped closely together towards its centre (Mathews 1976, 163-170) (Fig.2.5). Some 18m east of the
Fig. 2.5 Square/rectangular ditched enclosures. 1. Puddlehill, Bedfordshire with cremation burials (1-6 and 9) and pyre features (7 and 8) (After Mathews 1976, Fig. 111); 2. Stotfold, Bedfordshire with central cremation burial (G1204) and inhumation burials (G1999) (Kindly supplied by Sean Steadman in prep)
main group of cremation burials, the *in situ* remains of a cremation were found cut into the base of the enclosure ditch close to the south-eastern corner. A second pyre feature and a seventh cremation burial were found approximately 145m south-west of the mortuary enclosure. Furthermore, a series of pyre features had been aligned and in some cases cut through a defunct boundary ditch (25102) running across a site recently excavated at Elms Farm, near Heybridge, Essex (Atkinson pers. comm. see chapter 3 for a full discussion). Finally, aerial photography revealed a vast complex of ditches and earthworks concentrated on Wickham Hill, near Puckeridge. They form the postulated boundaries of a late Iron Age settlement located on the boulder clay plateau of the River Rib valley. Excavation revealed a wide linear V-shaped ditch (F1) running approximately east-west for at least 75m in a slight curve around the end of the hill (Partridge 1979; Bryant & Niblett 1997, 276). A limited investigation of the ditch revealed considerable quantities of pottery and metalwork, as well as the unburnt, disarticulated human bones of at least fourteen individuals. The bones do not appear to have been deposited in any regular order and were scattered throughout the fill with food refuse and other debris. Two late Iron Age cremation burials were discovered lying c. 8.5m north of the ditch towards its western extent, these are the only *in situ* burials known from the Puckeridge area.

It is evident from the examples already discussed that ditched enclosures are associated with a range of mortuary-related features that include cremation and inhumation burials. The following examples illustrate the variety of inhumation deposits that have been recognised across the geographical area of the study. Excavations at Stotfold, Bedfordshire revealed Iron Age and Romano-British enclosure ditches, field boundaries, and other features relating to settlement, ritual and
industrial activity (Steadman 1995; 1996). A single cremation burial (L128) was
discovered at the centre of a sub-rectangular enclosure, defined by shallow gullies on
three sides (Fig.2.5). Four inhumation graves (G1199-1202) aligned roughly north-
south were deliberately cut through three sides of the enclosure ditch and a fifth
individual (1203) was discovered in a pit where the eastern side of the enclosure
probably existed. It is often difficult to date these secondary interments, since very
few contain datable objects, but it is interesting that human remains continue to be
deliberately deposited after the initial cremation burial (see chapter 6.3).

Eight kilometres southeast of Winchester near the southern edge of the chalk downs
lies the Iron Age and Romano-British settlement of Owslebury (Collis 1968; 1970;
1977; 1994). The earliest phase of activity comprises a banjo enclosure and a
multiple-ditched trackway system established sometime in the fourth/third century
BC. During the late second-early first century BC the site was completely remodelled
and a ditched enclosure housing a small cemetery was incorporated into the linear
earthworks (Fig.2.6). Towards the centre of the eastern rectangular enclosure a
cremation burial (10) was surrounded by a group of twelve cremation burials. An
inhumation burial (51) was cut into the north-eastern corner of the enclosure
apparently during the second century AD. The western enclosure was slightly larger
and contained a centrally placed inhumation burial (39) associated with three
cremation burials. Like, the eastern enclosure two inhumation burials (40, 63) were
cut into the south-western sector of the enclosure ditch probably during the second
century AD. The inhumation burial was accompanied by a group of weapons
including an iron sword in a wooden scabbard, a bronze shield boss, an iron
spearhead, an iron ferrule, 2 bronze suspension rings, and a tinned or silvered belt-
Fig. 2.6 Plan of the Owslebury cemetery enclosures (Collis 1994, Fig.30.1)
hook. This is an example of the distinctive 'weapon-type' burials, which are distributed over the British Isles, and cross-cut all of the known burial traditions. Over forty examples have been found scattered from the Scilly Isles in the south-west to east Yorkshire in the north (Mellor 2000; Stead 1991; Collis 1973; Whimster 1981, 129-46) (see also chapter 5, table 5.11 and chapter 6.3).

Until recently the only example of an inhumation burial from southern Britain accompanied by a series of weapons and positioned within a ditched enclosure was the Owslebury burial. However, not just one but two examples have been excavated at Brisley Farm on the outskirts of Ashford, Kent. An intensively developed Iron Age site appears to have occupied the area with evidence for activity continuing into the early Roman period (c. 250BC to AD100). Two small square ditched enclosures measuring approximately 6m² each contained a centrally placed north-south orientated inhumation burial accompanied with a range of objects including iron swords (Casper Johnson pers. comm.). The burials are very similar although it appears that the western example, the more monumental of the two, became a focus for ritual offerings including quantities of broken pottery and animal bone. There is a slight suggestion that the graves were sealed beneath barrows, evident in the manner in which the fill entered the surrounding ditches. A number of post-holes were also excavated but it was difficult to establish any pattern of association and so it was not possible to determine whether revetted structures were associated with the graves. The likely date range for both burials is between AD30-50.

The range of late Iron Age mortuary enclosures excavated from across the south-east demonstrate considerable variety in size, form and in associated features and deposits.
Late Iron Age and Roman Baldock located along the chalk spine of the Chiltern hills in northern Hertfordshire typifies the variety displayed. Archaeological investigation of the area has been conducted since the 1920s (Westall 1931; Applebaum 1932; Westall & Applebaum 1933) with extensive excavation carried out during the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s (Stead & Rigby 1986; Burleigh 1982; 1993; 1995a; Selkirk 1983; Mathews 1999). The site appears to have been a focus of ancient activity due to its proximity to the source of the River Ivel and position on the Icknield Way linking it with settlements at Sandy, Braughing, Welwyn and Verulamium. The Iron Age settlement area was delimited on its eastern side by a string of burial enclosures and cemeteries sited along the low southeast-northwest ridge. On the west, the settlement was again defined by burials although fewer in number than those on the east. The emerging picture of Baldock during the late Iron Age is one of similar dimensions to the later Roman town (20-28 hectares). However the density of occupation was less intense suggestive of an agglomeration of enclosed farmsteads, field system and trackways, rather than an urban environment (Burleigh 1995b, Fig.16.2-3; Bryant & Niblett 1997, 276-78).

There are at least six cemeteries or individual graves at Baldock which are surrounded by rectilinear or square enclosures. At least three of these centre on the Upper Walls Common area including a large 33m² enclosure (Burleigh 1982; 1995a; Selkirk 1983) and two smaller examples (Stead & Rigby 1986, 61, Fig.25) (Fig.2.7). All three seem to have been more-or-less-contemporary; they share the same orientation, have an entrance towards the middle of the south-east side and appear to be incorporated into the surrounding earthworks. At the centre of the largest enclosure (UWC1) two rectangular shaped pits were found; one contained the remains of the cremation pyre.
Fig. 2.7 Square ditched burial enclosures from Baldock: 1. Upper Walls Common UWC1 (After Burleigh 1982, Fig.3); 2. Upper Walls Common enclosures A474 and A497 (After Stead 1986, Fig.4)
and the unburnt grave deposit was recovered from the second. The central features were surrounded by a number of satellite burials which appear to have formed a partial ring, probably once complete, around it. The excavator of the site suggested that a mound or barrow originally covered the central deposits (Burleigh 1982, 7-14; 1995a; Selkirk 1983, 71-2). To the immediate north of this enclosure, two smaller but very similar burial enclosures probably associated with single cremation burials were excavated during the early 1970s (Stead & Rigby 1986) (Fig.2.7). The first example (A474) measured some 7-7.5m² and was found to contain a central cremation burial. A similar but slightly larger example (A497) was found to the immediate west measuring 10m by 12m. A cremation burial was not recovered from this feature but it is evident that a burial central to this enclosure would have been destroyed by road construction. At the northern extent of the site, alongside the main branch of the Icknield Way, a square ditched enclosure measuring roughly 20m² produced c. twelve cremation burials (Burleigh 1995a; Mathews 1999). In the south-western part of the Upper Walls Common area a series of late Iron Age ditched enclosures were revealed. These enclosures contain the remains of timber buildings and other evidence of domestic occupation, as well as a few cremation burials (Burleigh 1982).

An enclosure which shares broad similarities with those from Baldock lies just outside the geographical range of this study and is included in light of the comparison that can be made. A 15m² square ditched enclosure surrounding a small round barrow and sealing a cremation pyre was recorded at Handley, Dorset (White 1970). The earthwork is situated on the northern slope of Gussage Hill and there is a good view from the site northwards to Handley, Woodcutts, and Tollard Royal. The barrow had suffered serious erosion as a result of ploughing and when it was excavated in 1969 it
was barely 0.45m high, although it was possible to establish that its original diameter was 8.84m. Uniquely the barrow appears to have sealed the site of a cremation pyre rather than a formal burial. The Handley enclosure is much smaller than the Baldock example (UWC1) but both enclosed pyre-related features which appear to have been sealed beneath small barrows. The Handley enclosure was attached to an irregular earthwork system and during the archaeological excavation a small trench was cut through the banks and intermediate ditch to investigate the relationship between the features. It is clear that the enclosure and the earthwork were aligned with one another and the evidence suggests that the latter was probably the earlier feature; since the barrow had not suffered damaged by the construction of the earthwork. This raises further similarities with numerous sites including Stansted, Essex, Baldock, Hertfordshire, and Owslebury, Hampshire where the mortuary enclosures are attached to field and earthwork systems.

Additionally, a second square enclosure with a central inhumation burial has recently been published from Dorset, found at Maiden Castle Road (Smith et al 1997, 61 and 291). It is located on the spur of a low ridge north of Maiden Castle hillfort. The ditched enclosure was at least 10.5m wide internally and the corresponding ditch was no more than 0.2m deep. A rectangular grave had been cut into the centre of the enclosure, while the enclosing west ditch revealed fragmentary remains of an adult and infant. The central grave, aligned almost east-west, contained the flexed skeleton of an adult of indeterminate sex. The size and form of the enclosure ditch is similar to Handley but there is no evidence for an internal mound covering the grave. Detailed interpretation of the enclosure and the associated burials is hindered by the lack of excavated finds, with only six sherds of Black Burnish ware recovered from the
enclosure ditch. However, the enclosure was respected by a series of Romano-British features, and was cut across by a ditch contemporary with a late Roman cemetery situated to its north. It appears to represent an isolated feature positioned on the periphery of a contemporary settlement of early Romano-British date.

Attention now turns to St. Albans, Hertfordshire where the largest number of late Iron Age ditched mortuary enclosures have been excavated. At least eight enclosures were excavated from the King Harry Lane cemetery (Stead & Rigby 1989; Niblett 2001, 43-45), and two further examples have been identified to the south-west of Stead's excavations (Niblett 1999, 400). There are also examples from the St. Stephen’s (Davey 1933; 1935; Niblett 1999, 400; Niblett 2000, 98) and Verulam Hills cemeteries (Anthony 1986), while the Folly Lane site has uncovered the largest single example covering just over 2 hectares (Niblett 1999). There are nearly 1200 recorded burials scattered across Verulamium spanning the period from the first to the early fifth centuries AD. First, second, and early third century burials concentrate south and south-west of the Roman town, in a wide arc from the west end of King Harry Lane to St. Stephen’s Hill. The pre-Roman pattern of occupation at Verlamion seems to have consisted of settlement sites on the plateau edge along with some industrial activity. The lower slopes and the valley floor, together with the area around the St. Michaels enclosure, were associated with metalworking and burial activity (Bryant & Niblett 1997, 273-4; Niblett 2001).

The King Harry Lane cemetery is the most extensive late Iron Age/early Roman burial cemetery in Britain with over 470 burials (Stead & Rigby 1989). The remains of at least eight rectilinear ditched enclosures were excavated, each with a prominent
central burial, surrounded by groups of burials within or adjacent to the enclosures (Fig.2.8). The cemetery is situated on the western side of the Roman town, approximately 700m from the River Ver between the later defences and the Iron Age earthworks in Prae Wood. It is positioned c. 1km south-west of the Folly Lane site and the cemetery at Verulam Hills Field lies roughly 700m to the north-east. The enclosures seem to have been arranged in two rows, with a 5m wide ‘corridor’ between them bounded on the south-west side by a major ditch (known as ditch 60 or Wheeler ditch). Enclosures 1, 2, 3, and 4 form a northern group and Enclosures 5, 6, and 7 a southern group with Enclosure 8 spanning the corridor area. In addition to the 453 cremation burials excavated from the cemetery, seventeen inhumation graves were uncovered. Ten were scattered unenclosed across the extent of the site, four were found within the actual ditched enclosures (36, 261, 286, 326), and three (254, 318, and 319) marked the entrance of two of the ditched enclosures (3 and 8). In direct contrast the cremation burials largely avoided the ditches with just two examples recovered from enclosure ditches (22 and 195).

The largest enclosure (1) was defined on three sides and measured up to 18m wide by 20m long. It contained a central cremation burial (41) surrounded by eighteen additional cremation burials and a single inhumation burial. It had been either subdivided or provided with a small annexe in the north sector. The inner square seemed to have an entrance in the north-east side, but the outer part was entered from the south-east. It should also be noted that a single cremation burial (22) cut the western enclosure ditch. A rectangular enclosure (2) situated to the east of Enclosure 1 contained 47 cremation burials, the largest number from any of the enclosures. It measured between 14-16 wide by c. 17.5m long with an entrance about 5m wide cut
Key:

- Graves with burnt pyre goods
- Inhumation burial
- Cremation burial

Fig. 2.8 Plan of the King Harry Lane cemetery showing ditched enclosures (1-8), the inhumation and cremation burials (After Niblett 2000, Fig. 10.6)
into the centre of the north-east side. The centrally placed grave (241) is surrounded by 45 cremation burials with an additional grave (195) cut into the northern ditch. A smaller rectangular enclosure (3) joined the eastern ditch of Enclosure 2 measuring 7.5m wide and 13m long with an entrance cut into the north-eastern side. The enclosure contained a central cremation grave (272) surrounded by a further 23 cremation and two inhumation burials. One of the inhumation burials (254) cut the northern ditch marking the entrance with the second (261) positioned a short distance south within the actual enclosure. A short length of a ditch traced a short distance to the east of Enclosure 3 may well define the north-western corner of a fourth enclosure (4). It appears that a cremation burial (309), clearly aligned with those central to Enclosures 1, 2, and 3, represents a central deposit which was closely surrounded by at least five other cremation burials (307-8, 310-12).

In the 'corridor' area of the cemetery there is a suggestion of an enclosure (8), two short lengths of ditch define the south-western corner. It appears that a central cremation burial (117) is surrounded by at least eight others (110-16, 118). A group of three rectilinear enclosures (5, 6, and 7) is positioned in the southern part of the site bounded by the earthwork ditch (60). The westernmost of this group (5) was defined on two sides representing a small enclosure measuring at least 4.5m wide x 5.5m long. A centrally placed cremation burial was surrounded to its immediate south by a group of seven cremation burials. A seventh rectilinear enclosure (6) is situated just to the east of Enclosure 5 defined on three sides, it measured at least 9m wide x 9m long with a narrow entrance in the north-east side. The central interment (299) was surrounded by a roughly circular arrangement of thirteen cremation burials and a single inhumation burial. The final enclosure (7) is positioned to the east of Enclosure
and in comparison with the enclosures from the northern half of the cemetery, a larger area was traced. It measured approximately 9m wide x 13m long with an entrance in the north-east side. The central interment (325) was surrounded by at least eleven cremation and three inhumation burials; two of the inhumations (318, 319) cut the northern ditch of the enclosure marking the entrance (ibid. 80-81).

The second cemetery with evidence of a ditched enclosure from Verulamium is located at Verulam Hills Field. It is situated immediately outside the south gate of the Roman town with the River Ver lying on its eastern side at a distance of c. 250m. The King Harry Lane cemetery is some 700m to the south-west. Only two sides of the enclosure ditch were observed during the excavation, which enclosed a group of 21 cremation burials and eight inhumations (Anthony 1986; Niblett 2001, 43-45). The first length of ditch (I) was traced for c. 30m running down slope from south-west to north-east and the second ditch (II) was over 39m running at a right angle to Ditch I. In addition, to the cremation burials enclosed by the ditches, a small number of inhumations were simply laid in either the base of the ditch or in the banks next to them. A layer of silt c. 0.30m deep had washed into the ditch bottom before the eight shallow graves were dug; three inhumation burials were recovered from Ditch I and five from Ditch II (Anthony 1968, 18). The subsequent layers of the ditch filling contained deposits of occupation debris alternating with natural clay, which appear to suggest that the ditch was used on a regular but episodic basis. Fifteen late Iron Age coins were found scattered across the site, some in the lower levels of the ditch, and others in the fill above the cremation burials. The upper levels of the ditch contained Roman pottery sherds of the third and fourth centuries AD.
It is interesting to note that the sites under discussion reveal evidence of the protracted sequence of events surrounding the disposal process and not just the burial of the human remains. During rescue excavations conducted at Folly Lane a ditched enclosure was discovered which surrounded a number of mortuary-related features including a sunken shaft, a ‘burial’ pit and a probable cremation pyre (Niblett 1992; 1993; 1995; 1999; 2000). It is situated within the area of the pre-Roman settlement on the north side of the river Ver, in a prominent position overlooking the centre of Verulamium. The area appears to have been cleared of a late Iron Age occupation site during the early part of the first century AD and replaced by the large rectilinear ditched enclosure. The enclosure covered just under 2 hectares, defined by a substantial ditch, measuring 170m x 117m, with the long axis running north-east/south-west (Fig.2.9). The lower levels of the ditch fill were largely devoid of material with just 100g of pottery and a small quantity of fragmentary cattle bones recovered. It is apparent that the ditch was kept largely free of rubbish apart from the deposits found in the ditch terminals of the entrance (Niblett 1999, 17-18).

In the eastern terminal of the entrance three inhumation burials contemporary with the construction of the ditch were discovered. Two of them lay, one on top of the other (14 and 15), on the base of the ditch with the third example (16) lying on a shallow step cut into the southern face of the ditch. All three were covered by a deposit of sterile, sandy gravel however it is not clear if they lay exposed for some time or were immediately buried. The western ditch terminal was filled with a base deposit of sand and gravel which was cut through during the second century AD. The resulting pit contained an isolated human humerus that might be all that survived of a possible fourth burial (ibid. 19-20). The possibility cannot be ruled out that the
Fig. 2.9 Plan of Folly Lane, Verulamium showing the ditched enclosure, mortuary shaft, burial pit, pyre site and later Romano-Celtic temple (After Niblett 1999, Fig. 8)
remains in the ditches, both at Folly Lane and other sites such as Verulam Hills Fields represent the first stage in an excarnation rite. It is suggested that prior to cremation, the dead were exposed on the banks or in the ditches until decomposed, and were only then retrieved and cremated; the surviving interments may simply be the bones that were never ‘retrieved’ for cremation.

Over 100m of the Folly Lane ditch was excavated, but it proved extremely difficult to establish the precise chronology between the internal mortuary-related features and the enclosure itself. As already noted the primary and secondary fills were almost completely sterile, except for a small quantity of pottery and the human and animal remains. It is possible that the enclosure ditch delimited a late Iron Age site that predated the mortuary chamber and associated features. Alternatively, the mortuary chamber may have been used for several years before the cremation took place and the ditch may not have been dug until the completion of the rites. However, the excavator suggested that the probable event for such a transformation of the site was most probably due to the mortuary activities performed there in the middle of the first century AD. For instance, the entrance was positioned facing south-west towards the Roman town and the ditch itself was wider and more imposing on this side suggesting that it was designed to be accessible from the valley bottom. A radiocarbon date (2055 +/- 45 BP) obtained from an oven cut into the west terminal of the ditch means that it is unlikely (although possible) that the ditch was significantly later than the mid-first century AD (ibid. 24).

A site that rivals the discoveries at Folly Lane has recently been excavated at Stanway in Essex (Fig.2.10). This complex mortuary-related site was situated in a large
Fig. 2.10 Plan of the Stanway ditched enclosures and associated cremation burials and mortuary features (After Crummy 1997a, Fig. 1)
woodland clearing, lying just beyond the dyke system of Iron Age Colchester. The site covers an area of about 200m² and consists of five ditched enclosures set out side by side as two groups; one of two (Enclosures 1 and 2) situated in the western part of the site and the other of three in the east (Enclosures 3-5) (Crummy 1992; 1993; 1997a; 1997b; Hawkes & Crummy 1995, 169-170). The earliest and smallest of the enclosures (Enclosure 2) represents a probable middle Iron Age farmstead, dating from around 200-100BC. It is the only one that did not reveal evidence of mortuary activity and nothing certain can be said of its function. The adjacent enclosure (1) lying to the immediate north may have started out as a stock enclosure but later assumed a mortuary function. It is the largest of the five enclosures roughly square in shape and covering an area c. 95m long x 92m wide. It does not appear to have an entrance like the other four examples and its ditches are roughly 2.5-3m wide. The internal features comprise a centrally placed mortuary chamber (AF25) and two cremation burials (AF18 and AF48) situated in the northern sector of the enclosure.

On the eastern side of the site Enclosure 3 (post-conquest) forms an alignment of three enclosures situated to the north-east of Enclosure 1. This square ditched enclosure measures roughly 70m² and a very narrow entrance was cut through its eastern ditch. A centrally placed mortuary chamber (BF6) dominated the enclosure surrounded by a number of pyre-related features (BF1 and BF16/17) and two cremation burials (BF67 and BF64) placed to the south-west. Enclosures 4 and 5 share the same alignment with Enclosure 3 and were probably laid out as a pair around AD50. Enclosure 4 is rectilinear measuring c. 64m wide x 78m long and in a similar fashion to Enclosure 3 it has a narrow entrance cut into the eastern ditch. Interestingly, this enclosure did not reveal any formal cremation burials but is
associated with a mortuary chamber (BF24) placed in the north and a rectangular sub-enclosure (BF32) feature positioned towards the southern extent. Finally, a square enclosure (5) measuring c. 63 m² is the third example located on the eastern side of the site. It shares similarities with Enclosure 4 both in the width of the ditches and the position of the entrance. This enclosure produced the largest number of associated features with four cremation burials (CF115, CF72, CF403 and CF47), a centrally placed sub-enclosure (CF43-46) and a mortuary chamber (CF42). Stanway shares many similarities with Folly Lane and demonstrates evidence for the display of the dead (mortuary chambers), the cremation process (cremation pyre features) and at least nine cremation burials. Furthermore, two of the enclosures (4 and 5) revealed curious ditched sub-enclosures which may represent pyre sites or even platforms and/or small buildings where mortuary-related rituals were conducted. The individual features (cremation pyres, mortuary chambers, sub-enclosures etc.) are discussed in chapters 3 and 6.2.

The chapter now turns to examine a site which demonstrates as much complexity as the Folly Lane and Stanway examples. However, the enclosures from Thorley, Hertfordshire exhibit considerable differences in both their form and in the nature of the deposits they are associated with (Last & McDonald 2001). The parish of Thorley lies c. 2 km south-west of Bishop’s Stortford on the west side of the valley of the river Stort. The features of the late Iron Age/Romano-British period comprise three oblong enclosures (A-C) defined by shallow gullies, some with burials or ‘special’ deposits, with limited evidence for domestic or settlement activity. In addition, an extensive rectilinear field system situated in the vicinity of the enclosures belongs to the same period. Two of the enclosures (A and C) consisted of open-ended oblong features
oriented north-west/south-east defined by a series of shallow gullies containing pottery datable to the later 1st century AD. The relative lack of finds and features associated with these enclosures suggest that they were probably short-lived, however they were only partially excavated and had suffered heavy truncation. The most significant find was a cremation burial (1194) situated 17m to the north of Enclosure A dated to the mid-first century AD (ibid. 41).

The most interesting of the three ditched enclosures from Thorley is Enclosure B which demonstrates a number of alignments suggestive of a carefully structured site (Fig.2.11). It lies parallel to Enclosure C a short distance to the south-east and is associated with numerous features, located both within or just outside, including human burials (cremations and inhumations), deposits of animal remains and a small square sub-enclosure (B9). The oblong enclosure was almost completely revealed and found to be oriented north-west/south-east. It measured 48m x 16-18m and was partially enclosed at each end. A series of ditches attached to the eastern side of the enclosure suggests various phases of remodelling, these measure between 0.36-0.96m wide and 0.20-0.24m deep. These shallow ditches revealed few finds although a moderate faunal assemblage including three dog bones was recovered from the eastern ditch (1342). Six pits are situated in the northern part of the enclosure, two (1353, DA25) within the enclosure itself and a further four immediately outside (1497, 1351, 1349, DA73). In the southern half of the enclosure a further three pits with interesting deposits were excavated (1396, 1482, 1486). It appears that 'special' animal deposits were placed at either end of the enclosure, in the ditches or just outside its margins (see Table 2.3). A pit (1486) which cut approximately the centre of the western ditch (1413) was highlighted by the excavators as having particular
Fig. 2.11 Plan of the Thorley ditched enclosure (B) associated cremation and inhumation burials (1406, 1431, 1327, 1245, 1271), mortuary structure (B9) and various pits (After Last & McDonald 2001, Fig. 28)
significance. This roughly circular feature with a single fill produced 700g of pottery, over 500g of daub, almost 200g of smithing slag, sheep/goat premolar, iron nails and a few bone fragments, some of which were burnt and are probably human. The deposit is dated to the early second century AD and may mark the abandonment of the enclosure, perhaps representative of a closure deposit.

Table 2.3: Pit deposits from Enclosure B, Thorley

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1351</td>
<td>Immediately north of the enclosure</td>
<td>Horse femur, cattle skull and pottery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1497</td>
<td>Immediately north of the enclosure</td>
<td>Pottery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1349</td>
<td>Immediately north of the enclosure</td>
<td>Pottery and animal bone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DA73</td>
<td>Immediately north of the enclosure</td>
<td>Horse remains</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1362</td>
<td>Immediately north of the enclosure</td>
<td>Pottery and animal bone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1353</td>
<td>Northern end of enclosure</td>
<td>Pottery, animal bone and iron object</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DA25</td>
<td>Northern end of enclosure</td>
<td>Pottery and animal bone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1396</td>
<td>Placed towards the centre of southern enclosure ditch</td>
<td>2 cattle mandibles, cattle radius, 2 sheep/goat teeth &amp; 142 unidentified fragments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1482</td>
<td>Placed at the junction of the eastern ditches 1342 and 1344</td>
<td>Partial dog skeleton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1486</td>
<td>Placed midway along the western enclosure ditch</td>
<td>700g pottery, 500g daub, 200g smithing slag, iron nails, sheep/goat tooth, probable burnt and unburnt human bone fragments</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the southern half of the enclosure a number of human cremation and inhumation burials were revealed. Two shallow, intercutting graves (1406, 1431) contained disturbed inhumation burials and three cremation burials (1245, 1271, 1327) were situated in the south-east end of the enclosure. A third inhumation burial was located outside the enclosure a short distance to the south-west of the southern ditch (1394) (ibid. 42-44). It is clear that many of the features that at first appear to be randomly scattered inside and outside of the enclosure are in fact carefully aligned in a structured manner. They seem to mark two, possibly three major alignments running north-south through the long axis of the enclosure. These possible alignments link the pit deposits of pottery and animal remains with the cremation and inhumation burials through space and arguably time. It is interesting to note that there are numerous
examples of features forming alignments across cemetery sites including the Elms Farm pyres (Mark Atkinson pers. comm.), the King Harry Lane enclosures (Stead & Rigby 1989) and the North Shoebury cremation burials (Wymer & Brown 1995) (see above and chapters 3 and 4). The ceramic evidence from the Thorley enclosure (B) suggests that it belongs to the mid first century AD and is abandoned some time during the second century AD. The various features, intercutting graves and remodelling of the ditches indicate that the enclosure was in use for some time, perhaps several decades.

In comparison to Thorley Enclosure B a small sub-rectangular ditched earthwork associated with animal deposition and at least three cremation burials is known from Wards Combe, near Ivinghoe Beacon (Dunnett 1973). The site lies only 0.4km east of the main chalk escarpment of the Chiltern Hills and the important prehistoric trackway, the Icknield Way. The ditched enclosure revealed a penannular bank, open on the south-eastern side, with an internal ditch enclosing an area 50 metres in diameter. In all the excavated sections of the ditch numerous pieces of pottery, charcoal and animal bones were found, particularly in the upper levels of the fill. The most prominent feature on the site was a large pit approximately at the centre of the north side of the enclosed area. It had been carefully dug at least 2m deep with steeply sloping sides and contained the articulated skeletons of three horses superimposed one on another (see chapter 6.2). The excavation work was limited and designed to establish the date of the enclosure but the cremation burials, pit and ditch deposits suggest that the enclosure had a mortuary-related context.
The mortuary-related enclosures examined in this section illustrate not only the wide range and form of the monuments but an equally varied range of associated features and sequence of activity involving the disposal of the dead. The enclosure monuments also hint at complex spatial organisation and awareness into which the dead were symbolically and physically incorporated. One of the most interesting aspects is the number of sites, which produced evidence of small ditched or post-hole structures (Westhampnett, Stanway and Thorley) that may have been used to display the dead or perform mortuary-related rites (see chapter 6.2). A number of the sites discussed in this chapter appear to reveal evidence of complex ritual and perhaps religious behaviour demonstrated through a diverse range of features that make-up a ‘ritualised’ late Iron Age landscape.

2.3 Ring ditches and barrow features

Fourteen of the sites included in the analysis (See Appendix A) display evidence of barrows or ring ditches; four of them have already been referred to in the preceding section since they are associated with ditched enclosures (Folly Lane, Baldock, Ashford and Handley). It is obvious that barrow features are not a prevalent Iron Age feature but the examples demonstrate the use of such demarcating methods and perhaps they should be viewed as an extreme variation of grave enclosure. The examples are widely scattered across the geographical area but no obvious distribution patterns are evident. However south Cambridgeshire has the largest concentration, which also marks the northern extent of the burials and mortuary rituals under discussion. The exact date of some of the features is extremely difficult to ascertain because they were either poorly recorded at the time of excavation or as a result of their preservation. The majority appear to date to the later Iron Age and occur singly
or in small groups of between three and five examples. The ring ditches and barrows are employed to seal a variety of features including inhumation and cremation burials, even pyre sites and mortuary chambers in a small number of instances.

One of the most important sites to provide detailed evidence of Iron Age barrows as a result of modern scientific and recording techniques was excavated by the Cambridge Archaeological Unit in 1994. The cemetery is situated in the Cam floodplain at Hinxton, amid the chalk downlands of southern Cambridgeshire (Hill et al 1999). A feature of the Hinxton cemetery is the formality of its layout and the demarcation of most of its graves with ring-ditches (Fig.2.12). The cemetery consists of eight tightly clustered cremation burials, five of which were surrounded by minor ring-ditches, and three associated inhumation burials. Four of the ring-ditches (2, 3, 4, and 5) were roughly aligned in a linear north-south arrangement, with the fifth example (1) set at a right-angle west of ring-ditch 2. The centrally placed cremation burials were enclosed by ditches measuring between 3m-6.7m in diameter. Even though no trace of a barrow or evidence of mound slip was found within the ring-ditch fills, their plan makes it likely that the burials were sealed by slight upcast mounds, probably 1.5m-3.5m in diameter and roughly 0.3m-0.5m high.

Two sites associated with apparent 'Early' Iron Age barrows are known locally but were investigated in the nineteenth century and details are scant. A group of five barrows in two groups, one of three and the other of two, were found roughly 4km north of Hinxton at Whittlesford (Gentleman's Magazine 1815, 27-28; Fox 1923, 77-78, & 44; Whimster 1981, 392-3). The first group consisted of three barrows positioned in a roughly north-south linear arrangement. The middle barrow of the
Fig. 2.12 Plan of the Hinxton Rings cemetery, Cambridgeshire showing the cremation burials (1-8), associated ring gullies and inhumation burials (A-C) (After Hill et al 1999, Fig. 4)
three survived to a height of c. 2.40m and measured c. 24.70m in diameter. It contained four extended skeletons associated with red and black-glazed pottery. The dimensions and content of the others were not described. The second group comprised two barrows situated c. 90m to the north of the first group. Each mound was constructed of flint and gravel covered with earth and surrounded by a perimeter wall 6.7m in diameter. The barrows contained internal vaults, the first 1.5m² and 2.4m deep with a wooden floor containing two superimposed skeletons. The second barrow contained an internal vault 1.2m² and 2.4m deep with two superimposed skeletons in a ‘sitting’ position. The associated objects included an iron spear-head, an iron knife and iron nails. A group of three ‘Early’ Iron Age barrows is known a short distance west of the Whittlesford examples (Fox 1923, 79-80; Whimster 1981, 392). There are very few recorded details but the barrows appear to have covered both cremation and inhumation burials associated with horse remains. The first is thought to have contained a possible Iron Age pottery vessel containing a cremation. The primary deposit of the second barrow was a fire-marked skeleton, associated with a bone pin, possible Iron Age pottery and a horse skull. The third barrow contained a cremation burial associated with unburnt horse bones. The rather limited evidence does at least hint at a tradition of circular enclosure in southern Cambridgeshire which perhaps continued throughout the Iron Age (Hill et al 1999).

A group of three barrows were investigated at Woolley Down, Chaddleworth, located on the southern spur of the Berkshire Downs (Peake & Padel 1934; Whimster 1981, 391-2). The first barrow consisted of a ring ditch but there was no trace of a burial, although Iron Age and Romano-British pottery sherds and an iron knife were found beneath the mound and within the ditch fill. The barrow measured roughly 24m in
diameter and was 2.4m high when excavated. The primary burial pit of the second barrow was empty although a secondary cremation burial was found close to the eastern edge of the barrow and a bent iron spearhead was recovered from the western edge. The surrounding ring-ditch contained a quantity of Iron Age and Romano-British pottery sherds, a smaller iron spearhead and a chape. The third example featured an irregular shaped barrow surviving to just 0.15m in height and roughly 29m in diameter. Only a faint trace of the surrounding ditch survived but Iron Age pottery was found in the fabric of the mound. At its centre a narrow grave contained the headless skeleton of an adult male; immediately above was the remains of an adult female accompanied by the skull of the male. The date of these features is uncertain but the metalwork and pottery evidence suggests a late Iron Age/early Roman date.

Two late Iron Age barrows are situated on the outskirts of modern Colchester; the Lexden Tumulus lies 750m to the west of the probable Iron Age barrow, the Lexden Mount and 3km east of Stanway. The Lexden Mount was excavated in 1910 (Laver & Reader 1912) but it had been badly disturbed and no evidence of a burial was unearthed. Laver excavated the Lexden Tumulus in 1924 (Laver 1927) and using his comprehensive records Jennifer Foster (1986) conducted a re-evaluation of the barrow during the early 1980s. The barrows lie outside the Roman town but were enclosed by the extensive late Iron Age dyke system surrounding Camulodunum. At the time of the Laver’s excavation, the Lexden Tumulus still stood over 2m high, and originally it had been over 30m in diameter surrounded by a circular ditch. The barrow sealed a large pit estimated at 2.15m deep and originally described as oval in shape measuring 6m (east-west) by 5.5m (north-south) (Laver 1927, 242). Foster’s analysis of Laver’s notes led her to suggest that a shaft possibly 8m square originally existed containing a
rectangular timber chamber, approximately 5.5m by 7.5m (Foster 1986, 169-170). In view of the evidence now available from Folly Lane and Stanway, it seems feasible to suggest that a mortuary chamber originally existed under the mound. The chambers associated with all three sites contain broken and fragmentary objects which seem to have been placed on the chamber floor or incorporated at different levels during the backfilling (see chapter 5.8).

The Folly Lane mortuary chamber and burial pit which lie at the centre of a substantial ditched enclosure were sealed by a deposit of turf which probably extended above ground level to form a barrow or turf stack (Niblett 1999, 53-55 and 62). It appears that the mortuary chamber was deliberately demolished and backfilled immediately after the funerary rites had been performed; a number of large boulders lay on its floor covered by a deposit of clean gravel. The remainder of the shaft was filled with a massive deposit of cut turfs which extended from its mouth to seal the burial pit positioned half a metre away. Folly Lane is not the only site where a barrow feature is associated with a surrounding ditched enclosure. The excavator of the Baldock enclosure site found at Upper Walls Common suggested that the centrally placed cremation burial and pyre feature may originally have been sealed by a mound (Burleigh 1982, 7-14; 1995a; Selkirk 1983, 71-2). Similarly there is some suggestion that the recently excavated inhumation burials from Ashford in Kent may have been associated with covering barrows (Casper Johnson pers. com. 2002). Finally, the Handley enclosure contained a small barrow which sealed the underlying pyre surface (White 1970).
More tentative examples include a possible ditch feature surrounding the cremation burial from Hertford Heath, Hertfordshire. Aerial photographs highlighted a small circular outline and the contours of the site showed a slight but distinct rise on the exact site of the grave. The ground immediately surrounding the burial was explored to investigate the hypothesis that an enclosure or barrow surrounded the grave (Holmes & Frend 1959). The excavation revealed a ditch feature but it was not possible to determine if this represented a circular barrow ditch. Hülsen (1983) states in his re-evaluation of the original report that the gullies should probably be interpreted as drainage ditches, but in view of the current discussion it is tempting to suggest that the grave was associated with a ring or barrow feature. Another probable example of an Iron Age barrow comes from Sharnbrook, Bedfordshire situated on the north bank of the river Ouse. The area had been disturbed during gravel extraction and detailed circumstances of the discovery cannot be ascertained but the find spot was described as a barrow, seen as 'a cavity in the gravel several feet up' (Watson 1949).

Furthermore, a small Iron Age barrow is also known from Hurstbourne Tarrant, Hampshire but there are very few recorded details regarding the discovery which limits any discussion of the find. The clay-with-flints barrow covered an area some 8.23m in diameter and when excavated survived to 1.07m high. It sealed a cremation burial accompanied by a wooden bucket, a dozen pottery vessels, a bronze brooch and bracelet (Hawkes & Dunning 1930).

Finally, two further sites are included which demonstrate evidence of ring-ditches and possible barrow features. Excavations at Elms Farm, Heybridge in Essex uncovered an interesting cremation burial associated with at least 34 pyre and pyre-related features (Mark Atkinson pers. comm.) (see chapter 3.4). The site lies to the north of
the main Iron Age settlement and was located upon a slightly higher gravel terrace amongst an extensive field system (Atkinson & Preston 1998). The cremation burial (2379) and pyre features appear to be broadly contemporary, though it is suggested that the cremation burial represents the earliest feature of the group. It comprised a rectangular cut with an assemblage of three grog-tempered vessels and a vessel lid. The burial was located towards the south-western extent of the site, and must have been marked in some way because it was subsequently covered by one of the pyre sites (2934). During the course of the excavation a faint outline of a ring-gully (25230) was detected enclosing the grave (Fig.3.5). The ring ditch measures c. 13.5m in diameter with the cremation burial situated not at its centre but towards the north-west sector. The majority of the pyre and pyre-related features are situated to the north of the cremation burial and are aligned on or cutting a length of ditch (25102). The excavator suggested that the grave which is aligned roughly north-north-west by south-south-east and lying parallel to, and c. 10m west of the ditch (25102) provided a focal point of origin for the subsequent spread of the pyre sites and pyre-related features (pers. comm. Mark Atkinson).

The extensive Mill Hill cemetery is situated on top of a prominent ridge in the suburbs of Deal, Kent. Archaeological finds made since the late nineteenth century (Woodruff 1904; Bushe-Fox 1925, 18-19; Hawkes 1940; Birchall 1965, 304-6, Fig.11-12; Stead 1976, 404, Fig.1-2) coupled by rescue excavations carried out between 1984-1989 have revealed a multi-period complex (Parfitt 1985; 1989; 1990; 1991; 1995). During the recent excavations 43 Iron Age inhumations and five pre-Roman cremations were recovered from three separate areas of the cemetery. A large ring-ditch, some 20m in diameter, situated on the highest part of the site (36m OD) seems to have served as a
general focus for the Iron Age burials. The burials appear to have respected the boundary of the feature with the majority lying to its south. The feature has been interpreted as a destroyed Bronze Age barrow (Parfitt 1995, 17) and although this is not disputed, perhaps it would be advantageous to consider that it still functioned as a monument in the Iron Age. Nothing of the mound or any associated burials had survived ploughing, and the finds from the ditch filling show that it had almost completely silted by the end of the Iron Age. Interestingly, the Westhampnett cemetery is also associated with two ring-ditches, one of probable Bronze Age date and the other interpreted as Romano-British, in both cases the dating evidence was tentative (Fitzpatrick 1997, 10-12 and 242). It is often extremely difficult to date archaeological features but as understanding of Iron Age mortuary practice advances perhaps these ambiguous features will acquire fresh interpretations in light of new discoveries. In addition, a number of the Iron Age inhumation graves from the South-West cemetery at Deal appear to have been sealed beneath barrows. For example, Grave 123 was partially enclosed by ring-ditch measuring roughly 4.50m in diameter. These slight remains probably show that it had been covered by a small mound, and judging from the grave spacing, Graves 46, 114 and 127 could also have been covered by barrows (Parfitt 1995, 156).

2.4 Topography and Settlement Activity

There is growing evidence that cemeteries were being deliberately and carefully situated in the late Iron Age and those traditions concerning the spatial positioning of burials persisted into the early Roman period. Twenty years ago archaeologists still referred to a tradition of cremation burials in flat unmarked graves and cemeteries (Whimster 1981, 149) but it is now possible to present a case which demonstrates that
burials form part of a complex and spatially structured landscape. The initial
discussion concerned the ditched enclosures and limited barrow features which
demarcate many of the individual graves and cemeteries (see section 2.2 and 2.3). The
focus of this section is to analyse the wider topographical significance along with the
contemporary settlement evidence through a series of specific examples. It is
increasingly apparent that many of the burials and cemeteries are preferentially
located on higher ground or valley slopes, often associated with waterways,
earthworks, trackways, and contemporary settlement activity. Each one of these
aspects will be discussed in turn demonstrating that during the late Iron Age
mortuary-related sites and features would have been visible, imposing and integral to
the make-up of the surrounding landscape.

The deposition of human remains and even precious objects in a variety of contexts
(graves, pits, ditches, rivers, marshes, and lakes), especially those located on
peripheral areas, throughout the Iron Age suggests a desire to appease the supernatural
forces at times of crisis or even to give thanks for successes (Merryfield 1987;
Cunliffe 1992; Hill 1995; Green 1998; Field & Parker Pearson forthcoming). It should
be noted that communities at this time were essentially rural and reliant on farming
and successful harvests. The deposition of human remains on boundary locations, in
water or even consumption by fire may have served to reinforce beliefs concerning
transformation, regeneration and fertility. It is suggested that water, earthworks, and
trackways all hold liminal locations and perhaps they were perceived as gateways
between the earthly and the supernatural world. The process of transition may take
place in specially sanctioned locations, demarcated from the world of the living, and
emphasised at different stages by distinct ceremonies. Mortuary practice may have
been an integral element of this activity conducted on a seasonal or episodic basis when
groups negotiated their identities with the surrounding landscape and the spirit world.
Both the place of deposition and the element of disposal involve action which render
human remains both invisible and inaccessible serving as a transformative vehicle
between the living and the realm of the ancestors (Huntington & Metcalf 1979). In
addition, it can be argued that earthworks, watercourses, routeways and even
cemeteries define both the margins of activity and important boundary locations. In a
socially constructed landscape perhaps they served to facilitate access and movement
by groups of people through otherwise restricted areas (Bevan 1999a; Brück 1995;
1999).

There is a tendency for mortuary-related sites to occupy a dominant position within
their immediate landscape, often located on high ground or valley slopes with
extensive views. Visibility of cemeteries and burials is enhanced not only by their
physical location but also by the associated ditched enclosures and covering barrows
which raises their prominence and creates a visible architecture in the landscape. It is
also important to consider that cemeteries and mortuary-related features take land out
of everyday use. In addition, many of the sites are situated close to an actual or
potential watercourse and even those positioned some distance away often have a
line-of-sight of a river or stretch of coastline. The burial enclosure from Maldon Hall
Farm, Essex was located on the highest ground available locally (c. 39 m OD),
positioned below the crest of a small hill with extensive views across the Chelmar
Valley (Lavender 1991). The extensive Iron Age settlement from Mucking, Essex was
positioned on the north bank of the Thames overlooking the river's probable crossing
point (Jones 1974a; Jones & Jones 1975). Likewise on the south bank of the river a
small cremation cemetery at Stone, Kent holds a commanding position looking
towards Grays and Swanscombe (Cotton & Richardson 1941). An isolated cremation
burial situated high up on a small spur (103m OD) on the north-eastern side of Dorton
Hill, Buckinghamshire commanded views across the Vale of Aylesbury (Farley
1983). Similarly the isolated Chilham Castle cremation burial stands on the North
Downs of east Kent, just above the 105m contour, almost on the summit of a chalk
ridge. It is situated next to an ancient ridgeway almost certainly used during the Iron
Age and might have been deliberately placed by the side of a track overlooking the
Stour Valley (Parfitt 1998). The Swarling cemetery lies just 7km east of the Chilham
Castle burial positioned on the North Downs at a height of c. 85m OD with a view
also stretching across the Stour (Bushe-Fox 1925). The earthwork enclosure from
Ward’s Combe, Buckinghamshire was located on relatively flat ground facing north­
east across the upper and now dry valley of the River Gade. The main chalk
escarpment of the Chiltern Hills and the major trackway, the Icknield Way are
positioned just 0.4km to the east of the enclosure (Dunnet 1973). Finally, there are a
number of burials that are situated near to the coast they include a group from eastern
Kent from the sites of Broadstairs (Hurd 1909), Deal (Parfitt 1995) and Folkestone
(Winbolt 1925a, 1925b, 1926) and those situated on the south coast of the Isle of
Wight (Poole & Sherwin 1931, 1932; Jones & Stead 1969).

For many years the British Iron Age was described as being the period of the invisible
dead (Hakes and Dunning 1930; Hodson 1964) and when compared to the impressive
monumental mortuary structures of the preceding Neolithic and Bronze Age periods it
is clear to see how this interpretation was formed. However, in recent years there has
been an explosion in the popularity of Iron Age studies and as a result of sensitive and
detailed analysis a subtle picture is emerging of Iron Age Britain. It is evident that the
earliest recognisable earthworks and evidence of large-scale land management date
from the Bronze Age. During the subsequent Iron Age period across Britain multiple-
ditched earthworks, some stretching over several miles, form major landscape
boundaries often encompassing substantial settlement activity and extensive field
systems. Trackways also begin to form an integral part of the enclosed landscape,
becoming boundaries in their own right as well as directing the movement of people,
livestock and trade along imposed and prescribed routeways.

The dyke and earthwork features represent vast labour intensive works and it is
important to consider the time and resources invested in their construction and
maintenance. They were probably constructed on a seasonal or annual basis with
whole communities gathering to participate in an act which served to renew social and
political ties. Burials and cemeteries are often found situated on the peripheries or
aligned on these boundary and earthwork features. In other instances ditched mortuary
enclosures are clearly incorporated or attached to earthworks or field systems. It is
evident that the disposal of the dead was integrated with other land-uses and was one
element of a complex cyclical range of activities. Cemeteries would have been visited
repeatedly over extended periods of time, perhaps part of a periodic round of events
which saw people crossing the landscape along restricted routes. It is apparent that
these earthwork features operated on both a symbolic and functional basis enforcing
notions of identity, status, territory and control of and access to resources. The
deposition of human remains close to earthwork and dyke systems marked boundary
areas with the power of the ancestors but it also placed the dead in a liminal zone at a
safe distance from the abode of the living.
At Baldock, Hertfordshire a major late Iron Age/Roman settlement situated along the low chalk ridge of the Chiltern Hills is delineated by a series of complex boundary earthworks and a series of burial enclosures and cemeteries. The eastern and western margins of the Iron Age settlement are demarcated by a string of burial enclosures and cemeteries which appear to be incorporated into the surrounding earthworks.

Furthermore, the eastern limit of the settlement is marked by a pit alignment laid out in the earlier first century BC (Burleigh 1982). Aerial photography of the surrounding landscape has highlighted a concentration of linear ditches and boundary features, evidence of an associated complex dyke system (Burleigh 1995a; Bryant & Niblett 1997, 277-78). Similarly, burial enclosures from Owslebury, Hampshire (Collis 1977; 1994) and Handley, Dorset (White 1970) are attached to extensive earthwork systems.

The Lexden cemetery along with the two associated barrows (Lexden Mount and Lexden Tumulus) lie within the dyke system surrounding the Iron Age settlement at Colchester. The Lexden Tumulus was probably deliberately incorporated within the elaborate earthworks, with a cremation burial cemetery set within its boundary and although the Stanway burial enclosures lie outside the extensive earthworks the site is bounded on the west by the southern spur of Gryme’s Dyke (Hawkes & Crummy 1995). At Verulamium, the King Harry Lane cemetery is positioned between the later Roman defences and the Iron Age earthworks in Prae Wood. On the south-west side a major ditch (Ditch 60 or Wheeler ditch) bounds the limits of the cemetery (Stead & Rigby 1989). Finally, the burial enclosure from North Shoebury appears to have marked the eastern boundary of a contemporary settlement marked by a major east-west boundary ditch (1469) (Wymer & Brown 1995).
It is also important to consider the position of cemeteries in relation to surrounding settlement activity. In the past this was limited due to a paucity of settlement evidence but knowledge of the Iron Age sites has dramatically increased in the last fifteen years. A number of cemetery and burial sites, especially those recently excavated in parts of Bedfordshire and Essex, are situated short distances from settlements, dyke systems and field networks. The vast majority of burials are located within small cemeteries sometimes associated with domestic occupation; examples include Stotfold (Steadman 1995; 1996) and Biddenham Loop, Bedfordshire (Luke & Dawson 1997; Dawson 2000). In the case of Biddenham Loop, Bedfordshire and Elms Farm, Essex (Atkinson & Preston 1998) cemeteries have been excavated in the hinterland areas located on the margins of the main settlements. It is suggested that rather than a lack of occupation evidence, excavation strategy may have somewhat blurred the picture and therefore understanding in previous studies.

An increasing number of cemeteries have been excavated recently across Bedfordshire which can be associated with contemporary settlements. In 1990 the site of a small cremation cemetery was discovered to the west of the village of Harlington, Bedfordshire. The site was located in an area of known Iron Age and Romano-British activity situated on the south-east facing slope of the prominent Sheepwalk Hill (Dawson 2001). At Biddenham Loop, Bedfordshire an extensive Iron Age site is associated with a number of occupation sites, at least three cemeteries (L20, L126, and L39) and a number of boundary ditches and trackways which correspond to field systems (Luke & Dawson 1997; Dawson 2000). One group of three cremation burials (L20) and two inhumation burials (L119 and L40) were situated in close proximity to a series of trackways and field/enclosure boundaries. This is evidence of the strong
association between burials and boundaries suggestive of a liminal location between the world of the dead and living. Furthermore, the living would encounter their ancestors on a daily basis when using the routeways, which provides a further link between the world of the living and the dead (Bevan 1999a).

In the past the heavy clay soils of the vale of Marston between Salford and Bedford were noteworthy for the lack of archaeological evidence but together the sites of Salford and Marston Moretaine indicate that the area may have been densely settled from the Neolithic onwards. Burials from these two sites appear to be part of a dense concentration, focused on the Baldock-Hitchin-Letchworth area, but extending westwards to include examples from Old Warden, Stanfodbury and perhaps Kempston (Simco 1973; Shotliff & Crick 1999). The site at Salford is situated on a low gravel hill at the west end of the clay vale adjacent to a small tributary of the River Ouzel which flowed westwards. A small cemetery was established during the late Iron Age characterised by four cremation burials located between the degraded remains of a pair of parallel ditches (G41) which may have bounded the site in the early and middle Iron Age. A ditched enclosure was not traced at Salford, but the position of the cremation burials between and parallel to the ditches (G41) suggests that they were still visible when the cremations were deposited; they probably served as a boundary feature (Dawson forthcoming). A cremation cemetery excavated at Bancroft, Buckinghamshire was an integral element of a settlement that flourished across a small spur during the middle to later part of the first millennium BC. During the early Roman period a major reorganisation of land boundaries was undertaken on the spur and a large ditched enclosure (60) was constructed across the end of the slope. Seventeen cremation burials were positioned to the south of the enclosure.
forming a linear arrangement and a ditch (591) located on the north-east side of the burials may represent a contemporary boundary (Williams & Zeepvat 1994). The relationship of the cemetery to the enclosure (60) is similar to that at Owslebury, Hampshire (Collis 1977) where the ditched burial enclosure was attached to a major ditch surrounding the settlement.

Interestingly, details of inhumation cemeteries associated with settlement sites are also known and two have emerged from Essex. They are situated on the north bank of the Thames at Mucking and 8km to the west at Ardale School (Sealey 1996, 58; Wilkinson 1988). Each consisted of eight graves located immediately outside a late Iron Age settlement perimeter. At Ardale School, the features extended between 4-13m south of an enclosure ditch (1317) on the south-west spur of the site. The features were crowded into a small, unenclosed space with five of the eight pits orientated east-west and parallel to the enclosure ditch. Elsewhere across Essex a number of cemeteries and mortuary-related sites are associated with late Iron Age settlement activity including Stansted, Billericay, Heybridge, Great Chesterford, and Colchester. At Stansted, Essex an extensive settlement associated with cemeteries, field systems and trackways dates from the late Bronze Age to the Roman period. An extensive cemetery was situated on the western side of the airport, with over 40 cremation burials dating from the late Iron Age to mid second century AD. The burials were clustered in small groups and some were found against field boundaries (Brooks & Havis 1991; Havis & Brooks forthcoming; Medlycott 1994).

Turning to Hertfordshire a major late Iron Age focus may exist to the north of the Mimram valley at Aston, where a cremation burial containing a fine bronze mirror
was found associated with a substantial enclosure ditch. The ditch had suffered heavy erosion but it was still found to be 8m wide and 2.5m deep (Rook 1982). An occupation site which produced late Iron Age pottery and Dressel 1 amphorae is known 500m to the east of the cremation burial (Bryant & Niblett 1997, 275-76). The evidence from the Cow Roast/Ashridge complex indicates that the Bulbourne valley was a major centre during the late Iron Age and early Roman periods. The Bulbourne is a tributary of the Colne and the valley was an important prehistoric route through the Chiltern Hills. At Dellfield, situated on the northern slope of the valley, rescue excavation revealed four late Iron Age cremation burials, as well as contemporary pits and lengths of ditch (Thompson & Holland 1976).

The Welwyn settlement consists of a cluster of over twenty occupation sites with at least four ‘Welwyn-type’ cremation burials, which are situated in the valleys of the Lea and the Mimram and on a low plateau between the two rivers. Only a few of the sites have been subject to formal excavation and the evidence is generally of poor quality. This fact, together with the large size of the area covered by the complex, means that only a basic level of understanding of the evidence is possible. Most of the sites were discovered between 1920 and 1970, during the construction of Welwyn Garden City, although late Iron Age remains have been known from the area since the eighteenth century (Bryant & Niblett 1997, 275). An enclosed farmstead discovered at Grub’s Barn appears to be associated with the Welwyn Garden City cremation burial (Rook 1970). The immediate area surrounding the cremation burial was searched for evidence and three anomalies, two shallow pits and part of a small ditch, were detected by a resistivity survey. The ditch located roughly 120m east of the burial was seen as a shallow feature; it was traced for 53m and is thought to be the only feature
which is contemporary with the burial. During the course of a routine archaeological evaluation conducted in 1997/8 a short length of ditch was investigated at Stanborough School, Welwyn Garden City. This almost certainly belonged to an enclosed settlement that was first discovered in the 1930s and partly excavated in the early 1950s (Arnold 1952-54, 128). The site is located on the edge of a flat to gently undulating plateau overlooking the valley of the River Lea which lies to its west less than 250m away. The enclosure measured roughly 46m x 61m yielding little evidence of internal structures but the ditch contained an unusually high concentration of first century AD pottery. Two cremation burials were recorded to the north of the enclosure during the work conducted in the 1930s and 1950s (Hunn 1997; 1998). Welwyn lies to the north of Welwyn Garden City, and it may also have been a major late Iron Age focus. Two cremation burials were discovered there in the nineteenth century and several late Iron Age occupation sites are known from the area. Welwyn developed into an important Roman centre with at least two villas and a small roadside urban settlement (Bryant & Niblett 1997, 276). An additional area of late Iron Age focus is known to the north of the Mimram valley, at Welches Farm (Rook 1974, 170). Limited excavation work supplemented with evidence from field walking and aerial photography revealed a series of linear earthworks and a probable ‘Welwyn-type’ burial (Andrews 1905; 1911; Burleigh 1995a, 107).

2.5 Observations

This chapter has examined the evidence for monuments and features employed to demarcate cemeteries and burials within the late Iron Age landscape of south-eastern Britain. In addition, the relationship and location of cemeteries and burials in relation
to the known archaeological environment was considered. The main points of the
analysis are outlined below:

- It is clear that throughout prehistory the positioning of the dead within the
  contemporary landscape was a deliberate and carefully organised process which
  results in a variety of monuments, features and deposits in the archaeological
  record. The Iron Age is not associated with the large-scale monuments of the
  preceding Neolithic and Bronze Age periods but this does not imply that mortuary
  activity and disposal of the dead was any less significant or absent. In the past Iron
  Age mortuary features may have been overlooked due to the nature of
  archaeological enquiry but advances in methods of detection, excavation and post-
  excavation analysis allow for a detailed interpretation.

- It appears that a considerable range of monuments was employed to demarcate the
  Iron Age dead including square or rectilinear enclosures as well as a limited
  number of round barrows. The enclosures and barrows were used to surround or
  seal a variety of mortuary-related features including pyre sites, mortuary
  chambers, and cremation and inhumation burials. The research also highlights
  numerous instances where pyre features and burials are aligned, cut across or
  deposited in lengths of ditch; in many instances the ditches define earthwork
  boundaries and field systems.

- The construction of enclosures and barrows to demarcate burials and mortuary
  features echoes earlier prehistoric periods and other Iron Age regional and
  continental practices. For instance, one of the distinguishing aspects of the Iron
  Age ‘Arras’ burials of East Yorkshire was the practice of covering individual

- The analysis demonstrates that burials were frequently situated on high ground: often a short distance from a water source; and close to trackways, earthworks or field systems which effectively divided and ordered access to the landscape. It is observed that boundary or peripheral locations, physical and symbolic, are often associated with the deposition of the dead; ditches and entrances, as well as boundary features often yield human remains.

- In addition, some burial and pyre features have been found cut into disused pits and field boundaries which could suggest a link between with the control of fertility and agricultural reproduction. In many societies, mortuary rites are associated with imagery of fertility and rebirth which serves to link life and death through an endless series of transformative cycles (Bloch & Parry 1982; Brück in press). Furthermore, situating a corpse or cremated bone on important boundaries served to reinforce the memory of the dead to the living, whilst demarcating rights over land. Likewise, the deposition of the dead in a liminal space placed a deliberate distance between the living and the dead acting as a constraint against their malign and dangerous nature. Mike Parker Pearson (1999b, 124) suggests that the places where the dead are interred is generally a deliberate and carefully
planned action by which the dead are both remembered and forgotten, and through which the mourners reaffirm attitudes to the dead, the living and their own identity.

- Finally, the chapter highlights that topography, settlement sites, cemeteries, and earthwork features all played an integral role in the structure of the landscape articulated through the social practices of those living at the time. This was firmly embedded in concepts of economic and political control but also embodied Iron Age beliefs concerning cosmology, the afterlife and the natural environment.
Chapter 3

Transforming the Dead: The Cremation Process and Pyre Features

'Tor sinews no longer hold the flesh and the bones together, but the strong might of blazing fire destroys these, as soon as life leaves the white bones, and the spirit, like a dream, flits way, and hovers to and fro'.

(Homer, *Odyssey XI*, 219-222)

3.1 Introduction

The research demonstrates that a range of features associated with cemeteries is recognisable in the archaeological record which include ditched enclosures, mortuary chambers, shrines and pyre and pyre-related features. The focus of this chapter will be an examination of the evidence, collected through the course of the research, relating to the identification of elements of the actual cremation process (burning of the corpse and attendant rites). It is apparent that at least three specific types of cremation-related deposits are detectable including pyre features, pyre-related features and grave fill deposits (the latter is the subject of chapter 4). The following discussion aims to demonstrate that pyre and pyre-related features are detectable in increasing numbers archaeologically, especially with the advances made in excavation and recording techniques. Recent studies (Fitzpatrick 1997; Haselgrove 1997; Pearce 1997a; 1997b; 1999; Pearce *et al* 2000; McKinley 1994; 1997b; 2000; Atkinson 2001) have encouraged archaeologists to focus attention on the recognition of possible patterns of sequence in late Iron Age mortuary contexts.

Traces of activity from cremation rites allow for a different type of analysis compared with remains from inhumation burials. Examples drawn from a number of sites illustrate the potential for the recovery of data of a form which contributes to the
understanding of mortuary activity from the preparation of the body to the final interment of the remains. Key to the interpretation of crematory-related features is the need for archaeologists to adopt an approach to fieldwork that recognises their existence and actively looks for pyre sites when excavating Iron Age sites. Colin Haselgrove (1997) has pointed out that in the past archaeologists may well have failed to recognise features or structures, simply because they and any associated offerings did not seem particularly unusual at the time of excavation. The identification of a pyre site is of great archaeological significance and can provide a wealth of evidence. This includes detail not only regarding the deceased individual and the attendant offerings but can also provide an insight into aspects of pyre technology, mortuary labour and the associated investment of time (cf. McKinley 1989; 1994; 1997a; 1997b; 2000; Downes 1999; Biddulph 2001). Cremation entails many hours of activity involving a number of different rites that require planning, labour and access to resources if it is to be successful. It may be possible to detect detail concerning the preparation of the corpse; the nature of attendant artefacts or offerings; the construction of the funeral pyre; fuel utilisation; information relating to the positioning and tending of the body; the retrieval and disposal of the remains; and subsequent clearing up processes.

Over the last decade there has been a significant increase in the amount of evidence to demonstrate that graves were frequently dug close to pyre sites in late Iron Age southeastern England. However, evidence of these features was relatively scarce until the discoveries at Westhampnett in the 1990s (Fitzpatrick 1994; 1997). The identification of over 40 pyre-related features led to the re-interpretation of some previously excavated features and increased awareness of pyre sites in late Iron Age mortuary
contexts. Recent discoveries have included those from Elms Farm, Essex (Atkinson 2001; pers. comm.) and Ashford, Kent (Casper Johnson pers. comm.), where a number of features initially thought to represent cremation burials have been interpreted as pyre or pyre-related features, largely as a result of the Westhampnett discoveries. In addition, there are examples from sites described in early antiquarian accounts or inconclusively recorded where information of potential pyre features has been lost. However, examination of these accounts has identified a number of sites (Aylesford, and Cheriton, Kent; Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire) where these features probably existed, enabling a degree of recording and re-interpretation. These are generally termed pyre-related features because it is impossible to be certain that they are pyre sites (see below).

The evidence from Westhampnett (Fitzpatrick 1997) along with Jackie McKinley’s work (McKinley 1989; 1994; 1997a; 1997b; 2000) encouraged the author to conduct a systematic search of both recently excavated sites and previously published material to identify possible examples of pyres or pyre-related features. At least nineteen of the sites (Table 3.1) included in the study yielded evidence of pyre or pyre-related features occurring across the geographical extent of the study and demonstrating a significant variation in their location, form and content.

Table 3.1: Sites with associated pyre and pyre-related features

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Town/Region</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Biddenham Loop, Bedfordshire</td>
<td>PS</td>
<td>Stansted, Essex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puddlehill, Bedfordshire</td>
<td>PS</td>
<td>Baldock, Hertfordshire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stotfold, Bedfordshire</td>
<td>PRF</td>
<td>Folly Lane, Hertfordshire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire</td>
<td>PRF</td>
<td>Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handle, Dorset</td>
<td>PS</td>
<td>Lake, Isle of Wight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ardale, Essex</td>
<td>PRF</td>
<td>Ashford, Kent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Billericay, Essex</td>
<td>PRF</td>
<td>Aylesford, Kent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elms Farm, Essex</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Cheriton, Kent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Chesterford, Essex</td>
<td>PRF</td>
<td>Westhampnett, West Sussex</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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3.2 Nature of Pyre and Pyre-Related Features

The late Iron Age pyre features identified in this study vary greatly in both their content and form. The most common type is elongated or oblong in shape, often with rounded corners and examples are known from Biddenham Loop, Bedfordshire (Luke 2000), and Elms Farm, Essex (Mark Atkinson 2001; pers. comm.). The Westhampnett examples demonstrate the greatest variation in form with T, X, Y, L and linear shaped arrangements. In addition, an example recently excavated at Brisley Farm, near Ashford, Kent is a T-shaped variety similar to those from Westhampnett (Casper Johnson pers. comm.). Other incidences include pyres which were sealed by associated structures including those known from Baldock, Hertfordshire (Burleigh 1982; 1995a; Selkirk 1983) and Handley, Dorset (White 1970). At Folly Lane, Hertfordshire (Niblett 1999, 47) and Stanway, Essex (Crummy 1992; 1993; Crummy & Crummy 2000) the burning appeared to cover irregular areas. The overall size and surviving depth of deposits also varies considerably, though the fills are generally shallow with evidence of in situ burning in many instances. The variable quantities of pyre debris consist largely of charcoal; burnt soil; cremated human and animal bone; fragments of charred logs; burnt flint, stone, and clay; and pyre offerings including pottery, metalwork and glass. Pyre sites are generally found in association with cremation cemeteries, although the Elms Farm pyre features are unique in that they were associated with a single cremation burial which appears to become the focus for the subsequent pyre and pyre-related features (Mark Atkinson pers. comm.). They are also frequently located in relation to important local boundaries or earthworks and a number of the examples are surrounded by ditched enclosures.
The second type of feature under examination are ‘pyre-related features’ whose exact nature is often difficult to interpret but which do represent cremation-related contexts (McKinley 1997b; 2000). They are often found scattered across cemetery sites and are clearly associated with the cremation process but in the past they have suffered from misinterpretation or were dismissed as dumps of occupation material. These dumps of pyre debris comprise either (i) deposits of material cleared from pyres and deliberately dumped in features excavated specifically for this purpose or in existing pits, ditches or natural features, or (ii) the remains of pyre features which have suffered truncation or disturbance. The majority of deposits have been recovered from oval or circular pits though debris has been found scattered in enclosure ditches at Stanway (Phillip Crummy pers. comm.) and Billericay, Essex (Rudling 1990). In many instances they are found in association with cremation burials and pyre sites such as those excavated at Westhampnett and Elms Farm. The archaeological components comprise a mix of burnt material including frequent charcoal inclusions with varying quantities of burnt clay, flints, and stone; cremated bone; and fragmentary remains of objects burnt on the pyre. The fills often appear to be thoroughly mixed and there are only a limited number of examples where the content is layered or suggests ordered deposition. It should be noted that not all these features contain cremated bone but this is also the case in a limited number of pyre sites.

3.3 Pyre Technology and Ethnographic Examples

It seems appropriate to include here a discussion on pyre construction and technology and to do this some ethnographic parallels and observations resulting from experimental archaeology are considered. It is often difficult to identify pyre features from a search of the available archaeological literature. However, experimental pyre
cremations conducted by Dr Alister Marshall and Dr Jackie McKinley in 1993/94 revealed a number of interesting results that can be used as a point of reference for ancient activity (McKinley 2000). The experiments helped to identify the range of characteristics that should be looked for including the extent, thickness and patterning of burning over the ground surface; the quantity of pyre debris to be expected; and the nature of geophysical changes induced in underlying sediments. In addition, the experiments also produced useful insights into the process of ancient cremation itself: the problems of constructing an adequate pyre and tending it once lit, the action necessary to burn effectively a corpse, the nature of the final cremated deposit and the methods necessary for efficient retrieval.

In the experimental work (McKinley 1997b; 2000), the pyres were constructed from approximately a tonne of wood arranged by repeatedly placing alternative pairs of timber to form a box-like shell measuring about 2m long by 1.25m wide and 1.5m high (Plate 3.1). In a second experiment the shell of the pyre was built around four uprights to help retain its form and reduce the risk of lateral collapse. This type of 4-post structure is frequently used to support pyres burnt today on the island of Bali (Downes 1999) and even some of the Iron Age features excavated at Westhampnett can be associated with post-holes (Fitzpatrick 1997, 18-32). There is evidence for post built structures found in relation to pyre sites or scattered across ancient cemeteries, this suggests that the display of the dead prior to cremation in the Iron Age should at least be considered (see below).

The quantity of wood ash which remained after the experimental cremation had petered out was surprisingly small, in one of the experiments 900kg of wood left only
Plate 3.1. An experimental pyre conducted by Dr. Alister Marshall and Dr. Jackie McKinley in 1993 at Guiting Power, Gloucestershire. © A.J. Marshall
3.6kg of charcoal dispersed across the pyre site. The outline of the pyre was clearly defined, while the experiment also demonstrated the shallow depth to which the effects of the pyre had penetrated, between 0.10-0.12m (Fig.3.1). The site was left overnight and when visited the following day, the finer wood-ash had been dispersed by the light wind and little visible evidence of the pyre remained (McKinley 1994). At Ashford; Biddenham Loop; Westhampnett; and Elms Farm the in situ burning effects were very slight considering the under-pyre pits would have had charcoal at temperatures of up to 700-900°C falling into them. Truncation and disturbance of such archaeological features must also be taken into consideration: in this event, it is possible that little or no evidence of in situ burning would remain.

The experiments also demonstrated that the most obvious and efficient position for the corpse is on the top of the pyre, and such positioning of the body is supported by both ethnographic and anthropological evidence (Hiatt 1969; Dubois & Beauchamp 1943; Parry 1994), and by osteoarchaeological examination (McKinley 1997a; 1997b; 2000; Barber 1990, 380). In Balinese rites, once the body has fallen through a coffin-type structure and onto the pyre proper, one or two men assist the corpse to burn more quickly by poking it with long sticks and lifting it up to help the air circulate. The Balinese believe that the manipulation and fragmentation of the body during cremation serves to aid the spirit to escape the body. Once the flesh has burnt off and the bones have been reduced through agitation to fairly small fragments, the pyre is quickly quenched with water (Downes 1999, 19-21). Most ethnographic and anthropological observations tend to suggest pyres were left overnight to cool, doused with water, or alternatively the bone fragments may be raked from the pyre, if it was necessary to recover the bone before the pyre was cool. In one of the experiments
Fig. 3.1 Schematic diagram showing the nature of pyre collapse at Guiting Power experimental pyre 1993 (After Fitzpatrick 1997, Fig.46)
conducted by Marshall and McKinley, it took one person approximately four hours to collect the calcined remains in full, a time consuming but relatively simple process (McKinley 1997b).

The research has included the investigation of ethnographic material, which has highlighted the fact that cremation rites and associated religious perceptions are varied and extremely complex in terms of the activity performed across time and geography. The cremation rites employed by Balinese Hindus (Downes 1999) and those observed on the banks of the Ganges at Banaras (Varanasi) (Parry 1994) involve a complex sequence of often lavish public ceremonies. In addition, a common trait appears to be the perceived power of fire as an agent of transformation, which can exact a measure of control over the dangerous nature of death. The north Indian city of Banaras is located in the middle of the Ganges valley attracting Hindus from across the world, as both a pilgrimage centre, and a place to die. Mourners come to dispose of the dead and to perform rites which ensure that the deceased attains a 'good' state. The ghats line the bank of the river, each one a defined area consisting of a series of terraces and steps that lead into the sacred waters of the Ganges (Plate 3.II). Many of them are important places of pilgrimage where people come to bathe and carry out a wide variety of ritual activities. However, there are two burning ghats, the most important is Manikarnika (the other is Harishchandra) believed to be the spot Lord Vishnu carried out his cosmogonic austerities. It is believed to be the place of both the genesis and dissolution of the universe, and the scene of cosmic events which belong to an eternal present that is kept in perpetual motion by the constant stream of cremations which burn throughout the day and night (Parry 1994, 13-15; Parker Pearson 1999, 50 & 144; Green 2001, 67-8). The Hindu faith centres around the concept of a 'good'
Plate 3.11. The burning (Manikarnika) and bathing ghats on the banks of the Ganges, Varanasi. © A. J. Brookes.
death as a voluntary and controlled release of life, resulting in self-sacrifice to the
gods on the cremation pyre. The physical body is cremated in the sacrificial fire and
the ashes are immersed in water; this results not only in the rebirth of the sacrificer but
is also a source of life, fertility and cosmic regeneration. From the moment of death
the deceased is perceived as a disembodied and malevolent ghost who is dangerous to
those who survive him/her. A series of rites are performed over the twelve days
following death which act to place a safe distance between the departed and the living
until the ghost becomes an incorporated ancestor (Parry 1994, 5 & 31).

The treatment of the body after death embodies complex notions regarding the
containment or control over the dead, the afterlife, the ordering of society and the
nature of the human body. In many of the late Iron Age mortuary assemblages
included in the research items that may have been used in the preparation of the body:
nail cleaners; ear scoops; tweezers; shears and razors; have been recovered both burnt
and unburnt (see chapter 5.5). It is suggested that these objects were committed to the
flames of the pyre or deposited in graves because they were associated with the
perceived pollution and dangerous nature of the dead. Management and control of the
corpse starts at the beginning of the mortuary sequence, when the body is prepared for
cremation often in meticulous fashion involving rites of washing, shaving and even
binding the body. The cleansing rites, especially the washing and shaving aspects of
the ceremony, are often extended to those involved in performing the tasks because of
fears of pollution from the dead (Parry 1994; Hiatt 1969; Conor 1995; Downes 1999).
In Indian rites the family barber may tonsure the chief mourner, other male mourners,
and the deceased; and once the cremation ceremony is concluded the mourners go off
to bathe (Parry 1994, 76 & 94).
In both Hindu Balinese and Indian cremation rites the corpse is transported to the cremation ground on some sort of bamboo or wooden bier often elaborately decorated with pennants, fruit and flower garlands, and colourful shrouds. A procession of chanting mourners and one or more bands playing music follow the corpse to the cremation ground. This procession is often associated with activities that are meant to confuse the deceased to prevent them returning to domain of the living or to signify separation between the living and the dead. On the island of Bali, the mourners turn the bier around a number of times before reaching the cremation ground to confuse the spirit should it try to return home (Downes 1999, 22). In Banaras, the mourners carry the corpse through the narrow alleyways towards the burning ghat, stopping to smash ceramic vessels which signifies a break in the relationship between the deceased and the living (Parry 1994, 154).

Jane Downes (1999, 24-5) who witnessed a Balinese cremation returned to its scene on two separate occasions to record the nature and location of the remaining debris. The first visit took place the following day, when she examined the cremation surface recording two sets of post-holes. Four inner post-holes had held the pyre fuel in place, and four larger examples represented a wooden superstructure that had contained the body. In a number of discrete areas around the cremation mound there were spreads of pottery sherds resulting from the different ritual acts; the smashing of vessels during the lustration, and fragments of broken vessels which had been used to wash the calcined bones. The second visit was over a month later and Downes noted that although some broken pottery sherds were still visible most of the material had been removed and placed together with other burnt debris in an open pit. It is clear that the debris was systematically sorted and disposed of swiftly and in a prescribed manner.
The smashing of the pottery and the burning of the ceremonial structures used to transport the copse had been undertaken to destroy those objects which had been polluted by their contact with the dead ensuring that they did not leave the cemetery. Downes (ibid. 27) suggests that although an architectural structure had been created during the mortuary rites, it was ephemeral in nature; after a brief period few traces survived in situ to suggest anything of the spectacle. Interestingly, the site of the cremation is not the place where the calcined remains are deposited; the mourners generally scatter the ashes in a nearby river, identical to the rituals which take place on the banks of the Ganges. It is worth noting that mortuary rites themselves create architecture (Barrett 1994); in the context of late Iron Age traditions this could encompass the place where the body was stored prior to cremation (mortuary chambers, platforms or ditches); the place where the body was burnt (pyres), and the place(s) where the human remains or pyre debris was deposited (graves, water, pyre-related features etc.). The journey taken through these rites made careful and particular use of topography in some instances, with pyre sites carefully positioned so that they were visible from a distance, and imposing at close range (see Folly Lane below). In a number of other examples pyres were located in distinct areas of a particular site (see Westhampnett below), while some appear to be aligned with earthworks or boundary features (see Elms Farm and Handley below).

3.4 Pyre Features and Pyre-Related Features

The most revealing late Iron Age site currently known to provide detailed evidence of mortuary and disposal processes in south-eastern Britain comes from the cemetery of Westhampnett, West Sussex (Fitzpatrick 1994; 1997). It was almost entirely excavated and comprised a host of mortuary related features including pyre and pyre-
related features, rectilinear ditched enclosures, postholes and some 160 cremation burials (Fig. 3.2). Knowledge of Iron Age pyre features and associated material was scarce until the discoveries at Westhampnett; however, they have increased awareness amongst archaeologists which has led to the interpretation of further examples at sites such as Elms Farm, Essex and Brisley Farm, Kent (Mark Atkinson pers. comm.; Casper Johnson pers. comm.). The Westhampnett cemetery, has suffered considerable truncation due to cultivation and as a result it is not possible to categorise each of the crematory-features clearly. A total of 46 non-burial contexts (Table 3.2) containing in situ or re-deposited pyre material was recorded, with the majority situated on the peripheral areas of the cemetery. Eleven of the features were clearly identifiable as pyre sites interpreted primarily on the basis of their X, Y, or T-shaped forms with at least another eight probable examples. In a further 27 contexts it was not possible to distinguish on the basis of either form or content whether they represented truncated pyre sites or other crematory-related features. However, they are clearly associated with the cremation rites and so to avoid confusion the excavators designated them pyre-related features (McKinley 1997b).

The spatial organisation of the Westhampnett cemetery appears to have been structured with similar features grouped closely together within discrete areas. The cremation burials were arranged in a roughly circular arc concentrated at the south-western extent of the site. The pyre and pyre-related features were confined to four distinct areas on the margins of the main concentration of graves with the ditched enclosures marking the eastern extremity of the site. Furthermore, no pyre or pyre-related sites were found within the central burial zone, highlighting the maintenance of separate areas for specific activities relating to cremation and burial rites. This
Fig. 3.2 Plan of Westhampnett, West Sussex showing cremation burials, pyre sites, pyre-related features and small ditched enclosures (After Fitzpatrick 2000, Fig2.7)
spatial patterning was largely adhered to throughout the use of the cemetery, however over time it seems that the burial zone encroached upon the eastern cremation area, with a small number of graves cutting pyre sites. The pyre and pyre-related features were situated in four distinct areas of the site (this section should be read in conjunction with Table 3.2): the majority are located to the north of the cemetery on its eastern perimeter, the only exceptions being the two large pyre sites (Group 1 20645 and 20318) positioned on the south-eastern margins and a single T-shaped pyre (20578) marking a second group located on the western limit of the cemetery. A further eight pyre and pyre-related features are associated with 20578 positioned at a distance of between 13-23m to its south and grouped close to the western concentration of cremation burials. A third group was revealed on the eastern limits of the cemetery comprising fourteen closely clustered features. Eight of the fourteen contexts including three pyre sites (20121, 20717 and 20776) are positioned in a roughly linear arrangement with five pyre-related features (20660, 20128, 20130, 20802, and 20125) in close proximity. One of these features, 20125, positioned c. 6.5m north-west of pyre 20776 was the only example clearly associated with the distribution of cremation burials in the cemetery. A further six features comprise the remainder of this group, located some 7m to the east including an X-shaped pyre (20414), a large irregular pyre (20770) and four pyre-related features (20357, 20681/20416, 20683, 20709).

The final cluster of pyre and pyre-related contexts is scattered across the northern extent of the site with some of them closely associated with the small ditched enclosures. A group of five probable pyres located between the burials and the enclosures are roughly rectangular or linear in shape (20155, 20378, 20258, 20417,
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature No.</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Dimensions/Shape</th>
<th>Fill</th>
<th>Human Bone</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group 1</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>20645</td>
<td>Pyre Site located towards south-east of the cemetery</td>
<td>T-shaped, 1.7m long n-n-w to s-s-e axis, with an arm 0.6m running from the centre of its western side</td>
<td>Charcoal, burnt flint, cremated human bone, copper-alloy fragment, &amp; iron nail shank in western channel</td>
<td>15.4g subadult/adult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20318</td>
<td>Pyre Site located towards south-east of the cemetery</td>
<td>Y-shape, main axis aligned n-s 2m long, with an arm 0.8m long to the west, maximum depth of 0.1m. Base &amp; sides coloured red by burning</td>
<td>Large quantity of charcoal, burnt soil, cremated bone, 6 sherds of burnt pottery, bone toggle, iron nail shank, small iron ring, copper-alloy fragments &amp; pieces of burnt quernstone</td>
<td>368.2g older adult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>20578</td>
<td>Isolated Pyre Site positioned on the north-west limits of the cemetery</td>
<td>Linear cut severely truncated, short arm running east midway along the south side, forming rough T-shape c. 1.8m long x 0.5m wide, c. 0.08m deep</td>
<td>Lumps of charcoal &amp; a large quantity of burnt flint, stone, &amp; cremated human bone, mostly from the n-e end of the feature. Many sherds of burnt pottery &amp; an iron nail shank spread across the surface of the fill</td>
<td>13.5g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20250</td>
<td>Pyre Site situated between 13m south of pyre site 20578 on the western limit of the site</td>
<td>Approximately X-shaped in plan, measuring c. 1m e-w &amp; n-s, up to 0.2m deep</td>
<td>X-shaped spread of large pieces of charcoal, sherds of burnt pottery, pieces of burnt flint &amp; a few fragments of burnt bone. Edge of south arm showed signs of in situ burning</td>
<td>2.3g, infant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20300</td>
<td>Pyre-related feature, positioned directly north of 20250 on western limits of site</td>
<td>Roughly rectangular</td>
<td>Large quantity of charcoal, burnt flint, fragments of an iron brooch, sherds of burnt pottery vessel &amp; human cremated bone</td>
<td>264.3g adult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20295</td>
<td>Pyre Site positioned approximately 2m to the east of 20250 on western margins of the site</td>
<td>Irregular X-shape, long axis 1.5m aligned e-w, &amp; n-s axis 1m long, maximum depth 0.1 m</td>
<td>Small quantities of charcoal, human cremated bone &amp; at centre of cut, sherds from a pottery vessel</td>
<td>94.6g sub-adult/adult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20260/20310</td>
<td>Pyre Site, 2 overlapping features immediately south of 20250, on western margins of the site</td>
<td>Truncated L-shape</td>
<td>Large quantity of charcoal, some burnt flint, &amp; tiny amount of cremated bone. A complete burnt pot was found at the junction of the arms, along with the base of another</td>
<td>0.1g juvenile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20283</td>
<td>Pyre Site positioned 6m south of 20260/20210 on western margins of the site</td>
<td>Small X-shape, axis aligned n-n-w to s-s-e (1.2m long) &amp; e-n-e to w-s-w (1.35m long)</td>
<td>Large pieces of charcoal, gravel on the base of the cut was discoloured, possibly by burning</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20234</td>
<td>Pyre-Related Feature situated 2m to the n-e of pyre site 20283 on western margins of the site</td>
<td>Crescent-shaped cut, c. 1.3m wide &amp; 0.2m deep</td>
<td>Charcoal, cremated human bone, &amp; sherds from at least 2 pots, as well as an iron object, perhaps a latch lifter or key</td>
<td>66.6g sub-adult/adult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site No.</td>
<td>Feature Description</td>
<td>Feature Description</td>
<td>Feature Description</td>
<td>Feature Description</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>20068</td>
<td>Pyre-Related Feature situated between 20260 &amp; 20295 on western margins of the site</td>
<td>Shallow round cut, 1.1m in diameter</td>
<td>Charcoal, cremated human bone, burnt flint, &amp; a fragmentary iron brooch</td>
<td>22.1g older sub-adult/adult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20546</td>
<td>Pyre-Related Feature situated c. 6m west of 20260 on the extreme western periphery of the site</td>
<td>Small spread of charcoal &amp; burnt soil</td>
<td>Burnt flint, sherds of pottery, copper-alloy fragments, an iron ring, &amp; cremated human bone</td>
<td>59.9g sub-adult/adult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 3</td>
<td>Pyre Site most southerly of a group on the eastern periphery of the cemetery</td>
<td>Approximately X-shaped, southern &amp; western arms, 0.8m &amp; 1.6m long, those running north &amp; east 0.4m long. The western arm had a 0.7m long extension running s-s-w</td>
<td>Quantity of cremated human bone near the centre, possibly representing a single cremation burial, with 2 penannular copper-alloy objects &amp; fragments, nail shank, burnt &amp; unburnt pottery sherds in a number of fabric types. Patches of in situ burning through cuts fill</td>
<td>422.7g older mature adult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20121</td>
<td>Pyre-Related Feature situated 2m to the south west of pyre site 20121 on the eastern periphery of the cemetery</td>
<td>Small circular cut</td>
<td>Large quantity of charcoal, tiny amount of cremated human bone, &amp; sherds of burnt pottery vessel in the fill</td>
<td>0.9g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20660</td>
<td>Pyre-Related Feature, one of two adjacent features (&amp; 20130 cut by its northern corner), c. 2 m n-w of pyre site 20121 on the eastern periphery of the cemetery</td>
<td>Irregular-shaped, c. 0.5m by 0.7m, &amp; 0.47m deep with a shallow fan-shaped extension, 1.4m wide</td>
<td>Large quantity of charcoal, burnt soil, burnt flint, cremated human bone, &amp; sherds of burnt &amp; unburnt pottery in several fabric types</td>
<td>99g adult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20128</td>
<td>Pyre-Related Feature, one of two adjacent features (most westerly of the two &amp; 20128), c. 2 m n-w of pyre site 20121 on the eastern periphery of the cemetery</td>
<td>Sub-rectangular cut, c. 1m square &amp; c. 0.4m deep</td>
<td>Spread of pottery sherds from a single vessel, together with 5 sherds from at least 2 other vessels, cremated human bone, large quantity of charcoal, including some large pieces in a spread between the north &amp; south corners</td>
<td>11.4g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20130</td>
<td>Pyre-Related Feature, one of two adjacent features (most westerly of the two &amp; 20128), c. 2 m n-w of pyre site 20121 on the eastern periphery of the cemetery</td>
<td>X-shaped, n-s axis 2.5m, e-w axis &gt;1.6m long. Each arm consisted of a shallow channel averaging 0.3m wide &amp; 0.1m deep becoming wider &amp; deeper towards the centre of feature</td>
<td>Upper part of the feature contained large quantity of pyre debris with charcoal towards the centre, including lengths of burnt poles up to 0.45m long. Cremated human bone was recovered from north &amp; south arms, with a number of pottery sherds towards the ends of these arms</td>
<td>61.1g adult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20717</td>
<td>Pyre Site situated some 3m n-n-w of 20121 on eastern periphery of the cemetery</td>
<td>Small shallow circular feature</td>
<td>Charcoal &amp; small concentration of cremated human bone</td>
<td>14.8g older infant/young juvenile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feature</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Findings</td>
<td>Notes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>20776</td>
<td>Pyre Site situated immediately north of 20717 on the eastern periphery of the cemetery</td>
<td>Irregular arrangement of features, &gt;1.7m wide e-w, the southern arm was cut by grave 20729/20758</td>
<td>Charcoal, burnt flint, 12 fragments copper-alloy, iron structural fitting, &amp; cremated human bone scattered throughout. Short eastern arm comprised circular concave depression (20766), with a central concentration of pyre debris, including 10g of cremated bone</td>
<td>49.3g older subadult/adult &amp; 10g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20125</td>
<td>Pyre-Related Feature located c. 6.5m north-west of 20776 within the distribution of graves in the north-eastern part of the cemetery</td>
<td>Irregular oval shaped cut approximately 1m x 0.7m, &amp; 0.2m deep</td>
<td>Large fragmented sherd of pottery showing signs of burning in top of fill, along with flecks &amp; fragments of charcoal, &amp; small amount of calcined bone</td>
<td>2.6g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20414</td>
<td>Pyre Site situated some 7m to the east of 20776 on the extreme eastern periphery of the cemetery</td>
<td>X-shaped, long e-w axis 2.6m long, &amp; n-s axis &gt;2.0m long cut by feature 20357. Each arm up to 0.2m deep, n-s arm 0.35m &amp; east arm 0.2m wide. Western arm 0.4m wide comprised a circular cut in its base, ?posthole</td>
<td>Flecks of charcoal, small quantity of cremated human bone, 6 iron nails &amp; 10 nail shanks. Pieces of burnt flint &amp; small patches of reddish burnt soil also provided evidence of burning, probably redeposited within the cut rather than being burnt in situ</td>
<td>20g subadult/adult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20357</td>
<td>Pyre-Related Feature cut the southern arm of the pyre site 20414</td>
<td>Linear cut, aligned e-w, 2.2m long, 0.5-0.6m wide &amp; up to 0.25m deep</td>
<td>Large quantity charcoal, with 1 large piece of burnt wood on the base of the cut. Burnt flint &amp; soil, cremated human bone, &amp; a few pottery sherds on the surface at the east end</td>
<td>0.7g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20681/20416</td>
<td>Pyre-Related Feature positioned immediately north-west of 20414 on the eastern most periphery of the cemetery</td>
<td>Roughly circular feature (20681), initially under-excavated &amp; interpreted as posthole (20416), c. 0.7m in diameter &amp; 0.2m deep</td>
<td>Burnt soil, charcoal, &amp; sherds of pottery</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20770</td>
<td>Pyre Site approximately 4m s-s-e of pyre site 20414 on the eastern periphery of the cemetery</td>
<td>Large irregular shaped feature, approximately 2m square, with 3 slightly concave sides &amp; 0.2m deep</td>
<td>Large quantity of burnt soil, with charcoal, &amp; iron nails. Small amount of calcined remains located towards south corner, other fragments distributed throughout fill, near centre was a patch of soil with a concentration of charcoal</td>
<td>359.9g adult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20693</td>
<td>Small Pyre-Related Feature close to feature 20770, 2m to the west on eastern extent of cemetery</td>
<td>Circular cut</td>
<td>Cremated human bone</td>
<td>28.2g adult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20709</td>
<td>Small Pyre-Related Feature positioned close to feature 20770, 7m to the south on eastern extent of cemetery</td>
<td>Circular cut</td>
<td>Cremated human bone</td>
<td>1g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 4</td>
<td>Probable Pyre-Site located at the northern extent of the site, part of a linear arrangement of 5 features placed 1m west of features 20258 and 20417</td>
<td>Narrow linear cut 2.1m long &amp; 0.3m wide aligned n-n-w to s-s-e, 0.25m deep. Two stakeholes, 0.1m diam. found in base, one at southern end &amp; one the near centre, with a further narrow slot in base towards the northern end</td>
<td>Evidence of burning throughout the fill, including charcoal, burnt flint &amp; soil, &amp; tiny amount of cremated human bone. Nail &amp; possible iron brooch pin recovered from top of layer</td>
<td>0.8g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>20378</td>
<td>Probable Pyre-Site placed 1m to the east of 20378 at northern end of the cemetery</td>
<td>Sub-rectangular feature, 2.2m long &amp; 0.9m wide, 0.15m deep aligned, approximately n-s</td>
<td>Patches of burnt soil, large pieces of charcoal, &amp; cremated human bone concentrated at the north end, along with a number of iron nails</td>
<td>369.8g young/mature adult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20417</td>
<td>Probable Pyre-Site placed immediately north of 20258 at northern end of the cemetery</td>
<td>Truncated oval feature, 0.85m x 0.6m, 0.1m deep</td>
<td>Charcoal, high proportion of red burnt soil, &amp; fragment of iron sheet</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20348</td>
<td>Probable Pyre Site c. 1m north-west of 20417 at northern extent of the cemetery</td>
<td>Truncated slot &lt;1.4m long &amp; 0.35m wide, aligned n-n-w to s-s-e, maximum 0.02m depth</td>
<td>Large quantity of charcoal along the base, spread of burnt pottery sherds from 2 vessels &amp; few fragments of cremated human bone</td>
<td>1.9g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20124</td>
<td>Probable Pyre Site immediately north of 20348, extending beyond the northern edge of excavated area</td>
<td>Roughly oval feature, 1.4m long, aligned roughly e-n-e to w-s-w, c. 0.5m wide, &amp; 0.15m deep</td>
<td>Burnt stone &amp; flint, patches of charcoal, fragments of copper-alloy &amp; cremated human bone in top of fill</td>
<td>2.6 g infant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20355</td>
<td>Probable Pyre Site located south-east of the 5 features described above (7m from pyre 20378) and in close association with Enclosure 20277</td>
<td>Irregular T-shape, slot 2.3m long &amp; 0.4m wide aligned approximately n-s, with an arm on the eastern side measuring 0.6m</td>
<td>Charcoal, burnt soil &amp; flint, &amp; 3 tiny fragments of burnt pottery</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20266</td>
<td>Pyre-Related Feature, immediately to the east of 20355, and in close association with Enclosure 20277</td>
<td>Sub-rectangular, 1.1m n-s &amp; 0.6m wide, shallow sloping base 0.15m deep at the south</td>
<td>Large pieces of charcoal lying along line of cut, burnt soil &amp; flint, head of a nail, &amp; small amount cremated human bone</td>
<td>5.6g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20212</td>
<td>Pyre-Related Feature situated in centre of Enclosure 20277 on northern-eastern perimeter of site</td>
<td>Circular feature, c. 1m diameter</td>
<td>Cremated human bone &amp; sherds of burnt pottery</td>
<td>20.4g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20066</td>
<td>Pyre-Related Feature, 3m to the northwest of 20124, and in close association with Enclosure 20277</td>
<td>Spread of burnt soil &amp; charcoal</td>
<td>3 iron nail fragments &amp; tiny amount cremated human bone</td>
<td>2.6g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20212</td>
<td>Pyre-Related Feature located south-east of Enclosure 20277 &amp; grouped around pyres 20702 &amp; 20687</td>
<td>Irregular linear cut aligned n-s 1.8m long &amp; up to 0.8m wide</td>
<td>Large pieces of charcoal on the base, further charcoal, calcined bone, 4 iron nail shanks, &amp; burnt sherds of pottery mixed throughout the fill</td>
<td>12.7g subadult/adult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feature</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Materials</td>
<td>Remarks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pyre-Related Feature</td>
<td>Located south-east of Enclosure 20761</td>
<td>20761</td>
<td>Charcoal, burnt soil, iron joiner's dog, 2 iron nails, 6 nail shanks, &amp; fragments of cremated human bone</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possible natural hollow</td>
<td>2.0m east-west by c. 1.0m wide</td>
<td></td>
<td>Charcoal, burnt soil, iron joiner's dog, 2 iron nails, 6 nail shanks, &amp; fragments of cremated human bone</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20499</td>
<td>2.1m long, aligned roughly n-s, &amp; c. 80cm wide, &amp; c. 0.45m deep. It had slots at either end, possibly for posts or some other timber structure</td>
<td>Enclosure 20761</td>
<td>Charcoal, burnt flint &amp; soil, iron tapering bar &amp; fragments of cremated human bone</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20747</td>
<td>1m long &amp; c. 0.9m wide</td>
<td>Enclosure 20761</td>
<td>Burnt flint, iron needle, 4 nails &amp; 2 nail shanks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20702</td>
<td>0.6m wide</td>
<td>Enclosure 20761</td>
<td>Charcoal, cremated human bone, &amp; number of iron nails</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20687</td>
<td>Truncated oval shape, 1.1m long &amp; 0.6m wide</td>
<td>Enclosure 20761</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20643</td>
<td>Truncated oval shape, 1.1m long &amp; 0.6m wide</td>
<td>Enclosure 20761</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20655</td>
<td>Small shallow circular cut, c. 0.9m diam. &amp; c. 0.12m deep</td>
<td>Enclosure 20761</td>
<td>Not excavated but its shape, &amp; the charcoal &amp; burnt soil visible in fill suggest a pyre site</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20491</td>
<td>Small shallow oval cut</td>
<td>Enclosure 20761</td>
<td>Large amount of charcoal, burnt soil, cremated human bone &amp; nail shanks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20689</td>
<td>Truncated oval shape, c. 5m long &amp; 3.2m wide</td>
<td>Enclosure 20761</td>
<td>Similar materials to feature 20673 including charcoal, burnt soil, &amp; flint, mixed with the silty clay fill. Only the western end was excavated, &amp; no cremated human bone was recovered from the southern side, containing charcoal &amp; burnt soil</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20643</td>
<td>Similar materials to feature 20673 including charcoal, burnt soil, &amp; flint, mixed with the silty clay fill. Only the western end was excavated, &amp; no cremated human bone was recovered from the southern side, containing charcoal &amp; burnt soil</td>
<td>Enclosure 20761</td>
<td>Similar materials to feature 20673 including charcoal, burnt soil, &amp; flint, mixed with the silty clay fill. Only the western end was excavated, &amp; no cremated human bone was recovered from the southern side, containing charcoal &amp; burnt soil</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20749</td>
<td>Small shallow oval cut</td>
<td>Enclosure 20761</td>
<td>Large amount of charcoal, burnt soil, cremated human bone &amp; nail shanks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20689</td>
<td>Truncated oval shape, 1.1m long &amp; 0.6m wide</td>
<td>Enclosure 20761</td>
<td>Similar materials to feature 20673 including charcoal, burnt soil, &amp; flint, mixed with the silty clay fill. Only the western end was excavated, &amp; no cremated human bone was recovered from the southern side, containing charcoal &amp; burnt soil</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20643</td>
<td>Similar materials to feature 20673 including charcoal, burnt soil, &amp; flint, mixed with the silty clay fill. Only the western end was excavated, &amp; no cremated human bone was recovered from the southern side, containing charcoal &amp; burnt soil</td>
<td>Enclosure 20761</td>
<td>Similar materials to feature 20673 including charcoal, burnt soil, &amp; flint, mixed with the silty clay fill. Only the western end was excavated, &amp; no cremated human bone was recovered from the southern side, containing charcoal &amp; burnt soil</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Materials</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20643</td>
<td>Small circular feature</td>
<td>Enclosure 20761</td>
<td>Similar materials to feature 20673 including charcoal, burnt soil, &amp; flint, mixed with the silty clay fill. Only the western end was excavated, &amp; no cremated human bone was recovered from the southern side, containing charcoal &amp; burnt soil</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Additional Notes:**

- **Pyre-Related Feature located south-east of Enclosure 20761 & grouped around pyres 20702 & 20687**
- **Pyre-Related Feature located south-east of Enclosure 20761 & grouped around pyres 20702 & 20687**
- **Pyre-Related Feature, located east of pyres 20409 & 20052**
- **Pyre-Related Feature, positioned in centre of Enclosure 20761 c. 7-10m south-east of pyre sites 20702 & 20687**
- **Probable Pyre Site, positioned 15m north-east of the main cemetery area, along with 20687 the most easterly of the pyre site features**
- **Probable Pyre Site, located 2m north of 20702, the most easterly of the pyre features**
- **Probable Pyre Site, located 2m north of 20702, the most easterly of the pyre features**
It is suggested on account of their shape, lacking the so-called 'arms', that they may have only been used on a single occasion. The ditched enclosures are also positioned in this region of the site and the remaining sixteen pyre and pyre-related features are located in and around their immediate vicinity. Interestingly, in the case of Enclosures 20277 and 20761 both appear to contain centrally placed pyre-related features (20066 and 20747).

The most distinguishing aspect of the pyre sites is their shape, consisting of X, Y, and T-shaped cuts or elongated linear forms (Fig.3.3). The variety of shape may indicate that some were used several times which would explain the various 'arms' of many of the features. The excavator of the site suggested that the 'arms' might have acted as under-pyre ventilation channels in order to aid combustion (Fitzpatrick 1997, 18). Of the nineteen possible examples, twelve are letter-shaped with the remaining seven pyres either linear or elongated in form. A number of the linear or smaller T-shaped pyres from Westhampnett (20155, 20348, 20578 and 20645) resemble the form of those recently recorded at Elms Farm, Essex (Table 3.6). They are similar in dimension, ranging from 1.4-1.8m in length and between 0.35-0.5m wide. In addition, the small ventilation notches cut into the eastern and western sides of the Elms Farm examples draw comparison with the smaller T-shaped pyres from Westhampnett (Fig.3.3 examples 20578, 20645). It is possible that the pyre sites excavated at Westhampnett were reused, this being suggested by the form of the pyres themselves and by the presence of the surrounding pyre-related features. If the pyres were used on numerous occasions they would need to be maintained and cleared of any material from previous cremations if they were to function efficiently. It is possible to suggest
Fig. 3.3 Plan of pyre sites 20414, 20717 and 20578 from Westhampnett, West Sussex (After Fitzpatrick 1997, Figs. 20, 18 and 11)
that the debris was dumped into existing features, redundant pyre sites or specifically dug pits.

The pyre sites were relatively shallow, many suffering truncation with only the bases surviving, varying from just 2mm (20348) up to 25mm (20378). They also vary considerably in size: the largest is a T-shaped example measuring c. 3.2m by 2m (20702) and the smallest is represented by an oval cut just 0.85 x 0.60m (probable pyre site 20417) (Table 3.2). In several examples there were clear signs of in situ burning within and around the features including soil discoloration and inclusions of burnt flint and stone (20283, 20414, 20378 and 20417); however, such evidence was absent from many others. This may be due to disturbance but the excavator considered that this was probably a result of deliberate reworking or manipulation of the pyre debris (ibid.). In at least three examples possible post or stake holes were encountered in the base of pyre features. Slight depressions were recorded in the base of each arm of 20578 (Fig.3.3); a possible posthole had been cut into the western arm of 20414 (Fig.3.3); and probable pyre feature 20378 (Fig.3.4) had two small stake holes cut into the base (one at the southern end, the other towards the centre) and a narrow slot in the northern end (Table 3.2). In reference to modern Hindu cremation rites performed on the island of Bali tentative comparisons can be made with the features recorded at Westhampnett. Downes (1999, 24) states in her description of events that a wooden 4-post structure was used to secure the pyre fuel in place and once the cremation pyre had burnt out the post-holes of this superstructure remained visible upon the ground surface.
Fig. 3.4 Pyre-related features 20258, 20378 and 20266 from Westhampnett, West Sussex (After Fitzpatrick 1997, Figs. 24 and 25)
It is also worth noting here that four small rectangular ditched enclosures were excavated on the north-eastern perimeter of the site (Fig.3.2). At least two of these truncated enclosures (20277 and 20761) were found to have pyre debris deposited almost at their centres. Enclosure 20277 was cut by a Saxon funerary enclosure but its rectangular shape can be detected from the surviving elements. A small spread of burnt soil and charcoal (20066) was found near the centre of the structure and small quantities of charcoal, burnt clay and flint as well as pottery sherds and a nail had become incorporated in the ditch fill. The second example, Enclosure 20761, comprised a small rectangular feature with rounded corners and almost at its centre was a small circular pit (20747) containing calcined human bone (29.1g, adult), a quantity of charcoal and a number of iron nails. These enclosures found in such close proximity to the surrounding pyre features and cremation burials must have some connection with the mortuary rites. They have been interpreted as shrines (Fitzpatrick 1997, 229 & 231), however, it is possible that they represent mortuary platforms used to expose/display bodies prior to cremation. In either case the dumping or deposition of pyre debris may have been a final terminating act performed when these features became redundant or were no longer used in a particular capacity.

The content of the pyre fills comprised variable quantities of predominantly oak charcoal, in number of instances lengths of charred wood survived (20717 up to 0.45m in length Fig.3.3); calcined human and animal remains; burnt flint, stone and clay, and fragmentary remains of objects offered to the pyre. The most frequently encountered metal artefact recovered from the pyre sites consisted of iron nails and in a limited number, iron structural fittings. In the excavation report it was suggested that this may indicate the re-use of timbers as pyre fuel (ibid. 107 & 231). Alternatively
they could derive from wooden superstructures constructed over the pyre or ‘coffins’ committed to the fire housing the deceased. In the cremation rites employed by the Balinese (Downes 1999) both a wooden platform built over the pyre and a structure used to transport the deceased were destroyed during the cremation. In a similar set of practices performed in contemporary India upon the ghats of the Ganges at Banaras, the deceased is generally transported to the cremation area on some sort of wooden structure (Parry 1994). It is therefore reasonable to suggest that comparable structures with metal fittings, especially nails may have been used to transport the dead in Iron Age ceremonies. The remainder of artefacts recovered from the pyres were surprisingly few and in most cases represent the fragmentary burnt remains of pottery vessels, costume fittings and jewellery. Two pyres contained the fragmentary remains of copper alloy objects (20645; 20121); another example comprised twelve small fragments of copper alloy and an iron holdfast (20776); while an iron sheet fragment was recovered from the fill of pyre 20417. Only one feature (20318) was found to contain a larger assemblage of pyre offerings: a burnt bone toggle, an iron nail shank, a small copper alloy ring, numerous fragments of copper alloy, a quantity of burnt pottery sherds and pieces of a burnt quern stone (see Table 3.2) (Montague 1997, 105-7).

The category of pyre-related features includes the base deposits of truncated or less clearly recognisable pyre sites, deliberately cut features, and existing natural hollows containing mixed pyre debris resulting from deliberate deposition or worked in by other processes (Fig.3.4 & Table 3.2). In the majority of cases the pyre-related features were found in close proximity to pyre sites on the margins of the cemetery. They are dominated by circular or oval forms though a small number of rectangular or
linear cuts were also excavated. They contain mixed fills which are largely indistinguishable from the pyre sites with no discernible evidence of ordered deposition comprising a mix of burnt material, calcined human and animal bone and objects burnt on the pyre. Some examples contain frequent inclusions of charcoal with varying quantities of burnt clay and flint. The 27 examples from Westhampnett appear to contain a more varied number of metal artefacts compared to the fills of the pyre sites though they did not all contain calcined bone. Metal artefacts were recovered from a minimum of nine pyre-related contexts including an iron needle (20264), iron brooches (20300, 20378 and 20068), an iron key/latch lifter (20234), iron structural objects (20052 and 20409) and two contexts with copper alloy and/or iron remains (20546 and 20155) (Table 3.2) (ibid.).

The majority of the features contained quantities of cremated human bone, ten of the eleven pyre sites, and all but one of the pyre-related features. The only noticeable exception was that four of the eight probable pyre sites revealed no cremated bone; but two were only partially excavated and the remainder had suffered truncation (Table 3.2). The quantity of calcined bone recovered from the pyre sites ranged from 0.1g (20260/20310, juvenile) to 422.7g (20121, mature adult). The pyre-related features generally contained smaller quantities of bone ranging from 0.7g (20357, indeterminate) to 66.6g (20234, sub-adult/adult). However, there were three exceptions with quantities of cremated bone ranging between 264.3g to 99g (20300, 20128, and 20264), all of which contained the remains of adults. Only pyre-related features 20802 (14.8g) and 20155 (2.6g) contained the remains of infants or juveniles, similarly only two pyre sites contained infant or juvenile bone both in minute quantities; 20250 (2.3g) and 20260/20310 (0.1g). It is evident that infants and
juveniles were accorded cremation rites but these were either far fewer in number or
the calcined bone was deposited in an entirely different manner from that of the adult
population (see chapter 6.3 and 6.4). Furthermore, small amounts of calcined animal
remains, 0.1g to 9.1g, were recorded from three pyre-related features, one pyre site
and two probable pyre sites (McKinley 1997b, 73-77).

Table 3.3: Cremated animal bones recovered from Westhampnett pyre and
pyre-related features

| PRF 20052 | 0.4g  | Unidentified |
| PRF 20128 | 3.5g  | Pig and unidentified |
| PPS 20258 | 1.8g  | Unidentified |
| PS 20318 | 9.1g  | Pig, sheep/goat, small ungulate and unidentified |
| PPS 20348 | 0.1g  | Unidentified |
| PRF 20546 | 0.2g  | Unidentified |

A total of 22 pottery vessels were recovered from the pyre and pyre-related features a
Westhampnett (Tables 3.4 & 3.5). The vessel forms demonstrate a definite correlation
with those deposited as grave goods, with a restricted range of types represented,
consisting of high-shouldered jars (Feature 20234, 20128 and 20717); high-
shouldered necked bowls (Feature 20300 and 20660); and ovoid bead-rimmed jars or
bowls (Feature 20128 and 20250). There is a single rounded jar with tool decoration
(20215), a pedestal base from either a jar or a bowl (20310), and a few unidentified
rim and base sherds. The main difference between those vessels recovered from pyre
and pyre-related features and those from grave contexts is in the condition of the
former. A large proportion of the pyre assemblage (40% by number of sherds) shows
signs of blistering, warping and leaching of inclusions suggesting that they had been
subjected to high temperatures and burning. It appears that some of the vessels were
left at the actual pyre sites, perhaps deliberately smashed, while others were removed
and incorporated into the pyre-related features (Mepham 1997, 134-137). The
quantity of pottery found in the pyre and pyre-related features is small but this is
consistent with the other material recovered including metalwork, human and animal remains, implying that the remainder was disposed of in a manner which is difficult to determine archaeologically. The vessels found in the graves are mainly deposited intact and unburnt representing a separate stage in the mortuary sequence. A clear distinction is recognisable between the ‘grave goods’, which are placed in the graves, and ‘pyre goods’ which in many instances are burnt on the pyre and deposited in different ways (see chapter 4).

Table 3.4: Pottery recovered from the Westhampnett pyre sites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pyre Site</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Burnt</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20578</td>
<td>Quantity of sherds</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20250</td>
<td>Quantity of sherds</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20260/20310</td>
<td>Complete vessel and base of another</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20318</td>
<td>Six sherds</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20121</td>
<td>Quantity of sherds</td>
<td>Burnt and unburnt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20355</td>
<td>Three sherds</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20295</td>
<td>Almost complete vessel</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20234</td>
<td>Two-thirds of vessel</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20546</td>
<td>Sherds from two vessels</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20717</td>
<td>Quantity of sherds</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.5: Pottery recovered from the Westhampnett pyre-related features

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pyre-Related Feature</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Burnt</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20300</td>
<td>Quantity of sherds</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20660</td>
<td>Complete vessel but broken</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20128</td>
<td>Sherds from two vessels</td>
<td>Burnt and unburnt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20125</td>
<td>Quantity of sherds</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20266</td>
<td>Quantity of sherds</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20348</td>
<td>Sherds from two vessels</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20212</td>
<td>Quantity of sherds</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20130</td>
<td>Quantity of sherds</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20681/20416</td>
<td>Quantity of sherds</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20357</td>
<td>Quantity of sherds</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Excavations conducted between 1993 and 1995 at Elms Farm, near Heybridge, Essex revealed a late Iron Age mortuary site, just one element of a much larger settlement site (Atkinson & Preston 1998). It appears that a settlement was established in the late Iron Age and its period of prosperity appears to have continued for around two hundred and fifty years (c. 50BC – AD200). Lying to the north of the main settlement
and located upon a slightly higher gravel terrace additional archaeological features were encountered. The terrace acted as a boundary between the settlement and the hinterland areas and amongst the field system a late Iron Age mortuary site was recorded (Fig. 3.5). At the time of excavation, the features were interpreted as cremation burials but subsequent post-exavagation analysis resulted in the recognition of over 30 pyre-related features, which complements the evidence from the Westhampnett cemetery (this section should be read in conjunction with Table 3.6) (Atkinson 1995, 2001; pers. comm.). Interestingly, only two late Iron Age cremation burials are known from across the settlement; one of which is directly associated with the pyre and pyre-related features. This appears to highlight that at Heybridge the cremation process and dispersal of the calcined human remains were carried out at separate locations or involved archaeologically invisible activities.

The single cremation burial (2379) and pyre features appear to be broadly contemporary with one another, though for a number of reasons it is possible to suggest that the cremation burial represents the earliest feature. It comprised a rectangular cut with an assemblage of three grog-tempered vessels and a vessel lid. The burial was located towards the south-western extent of the site, and the only other features further south are a small group of pyre-related cuts. It appears to have been surrounded by a ring-gully (25230) and was probably sealed by a small mound. It would certainly seem to have been marked in some way because some time later a pyre feature (2934) was placed over it. Furthermore, the grave cut was aligned roughly north-north-west by south-south-east lying parallel to, and c. 10m west of Ditch 25102, which suggests that the ditch may have functioned as a boundary at the time of the interment. The majority of the pyre sites are situated to the north of the
Fig. 3.5 Plan of Elms Farm, Heybridge showing pyre sites, pyre-related features and cremation burial 2379 (Kindly supplied by Mark Atkinson in prep)
cremation burial and are aligned on or cutting Ditch 25102. It is possible to suggest that the grave provided a focal point of origin for the subsequent spread of the pyre sites and pyre-related features.

The pyre sites formed a cohesive group in terms of spatial distribution, form and content and were closely associated with the pyre-related features. The pyre and pyre-related features covered an area c. 120m from east to west and some 140m from north to south. However eighteen of the pyre sites and two pyre-related features were positioned in a distinct north-south linear arrangement over an area some 70m in length (Fig.3.5). These features represent the focal cluster of pyre and pyre-related features and clearly mirror the course of Ditch 25102; Pyre 2906/2910 is the most northerly located feature and Pyre 2934 placed over the cremation burial represents the most southerly located pyre site. The ditch was apparently defunct by the time the pyres were cut, however, they lie in close proximity to either its western or eastern side and may have been sited in relation to its remnants. A number of pyres including 2196, 2254, 2609 and 2673 were recorded as cutting the ditch edges while 2181 was cut directly into its top. Two additional groups of cremation-related features were recorded across the site, one on the southern margins and the other marking the eastern periphery. Pyre-related features dominate both of these smaller groups rather than pyre sites and they are closely associated with Ditch 25194 which runs east-west across the site. The southern group located between 15m and 75m south of the cremation burial (2379) and pyre site (2934) consisted of six pyre-related features (Fig.3.5: 2129, 2202, 2218, 2135, 2119 and 3585 (not on plan)). They form a close group situated north and south of the ditch, though one pyre-related feature (3585) was located some 50m further south. The second group positioned on the eastern
Table 3.6: List of pyre and pyre-related features from Elms Farm, Heybridge, Essex

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature No.</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Dimensions/Shape</th>
<th>Fill</th>
<th>Human Bone</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2906/2910</td>
<td>Pyre Site, most northerly situated of the features lying to the east of Ditch 25102</td>
<td>Irregular oblong cut with pronounced notch on western side, 1.6 x 1.0m</td>
<td>2 fills: lower charcoal-rich with burnt pebbles. Burnt grog-tempered &amp; butt beaker sherds, large base sherd in notch</td>
<td>2g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2705</td>
<td>Pyre Site, positioned c. 10m south-west of 2906/2910 to the east of Ditch 25102</td>
<td>Oblong cut with a bulge on western side, possibly a notch, 1.3 x 0.6m, &amp; 0.22m deep</td>
<td>3 charcoal-rich fills including many burnt pebbles, 3 iron nails &amp; a flint flake</td>
<td>26g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2672</td>
<td>Pyre Site, located c. 4.5m south-east of 2705 on the east side of Ditch 25102</td>
<td>Oblong cut with integral notch on the western side, 1.4 x 0.5m, &amp; 0.16m deep</td>
<td>3 fills: upper charcoal-rich including many burnt pebbles, daub fragment &amp; 2 iron nails</td>
<td>32g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2254</td>
<td>Pyre Site, cut Ditch 25102 on eastern side, situated c. 8m south-west of 2705 &amp; c. 5m from 2672</td>
<td>Slightly irregular oblong cut, 1.6 x 0.8m, &amp; 0.25m deep</td>
<td>Single charcoal fill including many burnt pebbles, traces of in situ burning, burnt fragments of a grog-tempered bowl</td>
<td>88g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2609</td>
<td>Pyre Site, cut Ditch 25102 on eastern side, located south of 2609, c. 1.5m</td>
<td>Oblong cut with notch on eastern side, 1.45 x 0.55m, &amp; 0.25m deep</td>
<td>2 fills: lower charcoal-rich including burnt pebbles &amp; slag</td>
<td>103g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2673</td>
<td>Pyre Site, located immediately south of 2609, c. 1.5m, lying on the eastern side of Ditch 25102</td>
<td>Slightly irregular oblong cut, 1.3 x 0.6m, &amp; 0.15m deep</td>
<td>2 charcoal-rich fills including many burnt pebbles. Iron corrosion/panning may represent poorly surviving objects &amp; flint burin. Large lumps of charcoal, retaining wood structure lined the sides of the cut</td>
<td>112g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2606</td>
<td>Pyre-Related Feature, only example from north associated with pyres. Situated to west of Ditch 25102 closely associated with 2443, c. 2.5m south</td>
<td>Circular cut, 0.60 diam., &amp; 0.11m deep</td>
<td>2 charcoal-rich fills including burnt fills &amp; slag</td>
<td>2g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2443</td>
<td>Pyre Site, situated to the west of Ditch 25102, c. 3m south-west of 2673</td>
<td>Oblong cut with integral notch on eastern edge, 1.25 x 0.65m, &amp; 0.25 deep</td>
<td>5 charcoal-rich fills containing many burnt pebbles, burnt sherd grog-tempered, early shell-tempered &amp; terra nigra pottery, baked clay, iron plate, &amp; slag</td>
<td>83g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2422/2465</td>
<td>Pyre Site, situated to the west of Ditch 25102, c. 9.4m south of 2443. 1 of 5 pyre sites which appear to be aligned roughly north-south</td>
<td>Oblong cut notch on west side, stepped base, 1.3 x 0.5m, &amp; 0.27m deep</td>
<td>2 charcoal fills including many burnt pebbles &amp; small glass sherd</td>
<td>&lt;2g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2533</td>
<td>Pyre-Related Feature, associated with this group of pyres, located c. 4m west of 2465/2422</td>
<td>Oval cut, 0.31 x 0.18m, &amp; 0.04m deep</td>
<td>Single fill containing charcoal fragments</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2455</td>
<td>Pyre Site, lying to the west of Ditch 25102 &amp; c. 3m south-east of 2465/2422</td>
<td>Oblong cut notch on west side, 1.4 x 0.6m, &amp; 0.18m deep</td>
<td>2 fills: lower charcoal-rich &amp; included burnt pebbles. Burnt grog-tempered base &amp; wall sherds from a single vessel, burnt flint flake &amp; a glass bead, towards north end of cut</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2332</td>
<td>Pyre Site, lying to the west of Ditch 25102 &amp; c. 3m south of 2455</td>
<td>Irregular, oblong cut with wide notch on west side, 1.3 x 0.8m, &amp; 0.17m deep</td>
<td>3 charcoal-rich fills with burnt pebbles, base &amp; sides of the cut scorched &amp; reddened, suggesting in situ burning. Base &amp; body sherds of a grog-tempered vessel &amp; 2 copper-alloy brooches (Langton Down) toward the north end of the cut, all of which burnt</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2237/2908</td>
<td>Pyre Site, lying to the west of Ditch 25102 &amp; c. 3m south of 2332</td>
<td>Irregular, oblong cut with a tail extending off to the south-east &amp; trace of a notch on its eastern side, 1.76 x 0.8m, &amp; 0.5m deep</td>
<td>5 fills: the upper 2 charcoal-rich with burnt pebbles. Burnt Dr. 2-4 amphora sherds &amp; a copper-alloy brooch</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2189</td>
<td>Pyre Site, lying to the west of Ditch 25102 &amp; c. 3m south of 2337/2908</td>
<td>Oblong cut with integral notch on western edge, 1.3 x 0.8m, &amp; 0.2m deep</td>
<td>2 charcoal fills with burnt pebbles &amp; white flecks, probably cremated bone. Large charcoal fragments, &gt;80mm long, lying against the sides of cut, interpreted as collapsed pyre fuel. Burnt grog-tempered pottery &amp; CAM 165 flagon sherds, 2 flint blades &amp; a flake</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2169</td>
<td>Pyre Site, cut into Ditch 25102, positioned c. 3m east of 2189 &amp; roughly aligned north-south with 2490 &amp; 2181</td>
<td>Slightly irregular, oblong cut with notch on western side, 1.3 x 0.8m, &amp; 0.2m deep</td>
<td>3 charcoal fills including burnt pebbles, burnt terra nigra bodyshter &amp; a flint flake</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2201</td>
<td>Pyre Site, northern end cut by pyre-related feature 2195, situated c. 3m north-east of 2169 on eastern side of Ditch 25102</td>
<td>Truncated oblong cut, 0.8m+ x 0.5m, &amp; 0.13m deep</td>
<td>3 charcoal-rich fills including burnt pebbles. Lower part of burnt grog-tempered jar &amp; 4 or 5 burnt brooches (1 Lion &amp; 4 Langton Down), iron nail, burnt Dr. 1 amphora sherds in top fill</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2195</td>
<td>Pyre-Related Feature, cut northern end of 2201, situated c. 3m north-east of 2169 on eastern side of Ditch 25102</td>
<td>Circular cut, 1.18 x 0.9m, &amp; 0.14m deep</td>
<td>5 fills: some charcoal &amp; ash-rich, including burnt pebbles &amp; human bone. Large burnt wood fragments lined upper part of cut. Some cremated bone was apparently within an unburnt CAM 165 flagon, burnt Dr.1 or 2-4 amphora bodysherd, iron nail, flint flake &amp; baked clay</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2490</td>
<td>Pyre Site, cut across Ditch 25102 placed between 2169 &amp; 2181</td>
<td>Oblong cut, 1.3 x 0.5m, &amp; 0.22m deep</td>
<td>4 fills: upper charcoal-rich including burnt pebbles. Small burnt grog-tempered &amp; Dr. 2-4 amphora sherds &amp; copper-alloy brooch</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>421g</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1g</td>
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<tr>
<td>&lt;2g</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Dimensions</td>
<td>Features/Contents</td>
<td>Weight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2181</td>
<td>Pyre Site, cut directly into top Ditch 25102, aligned roughly n-s with 2169 &amp; 2181 situated c. 2.5m north &amp; south</td>
<td>Oblong cut, 1.25 x 0.60m, &amp; 0.18m deep</td>
<td>Single charcoal fill containing burnt pebbles, grog-tempered pottery sherds from 2 vessels</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2934</td>
<td>Pyre Site, cut into the top of Cremation Burial 2379, apparently following its western edge. Situated c. 7.75m south-west of 2189 &amp; c. 9.5m west of 2181</td>
<td>Oblong cut, 0.8 x 0.6m, &amp; 0.28m deep</td>
<td>2 fills: lower charcoal-rich with burnt pebbles, copper-alloy fragments, burnt pottery &amp; flint flake</td>
<td>262g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2212 Eastern Group</td>
<td>Pyre-Related Feature, positioned to the north of 2201/2195 &amp; 2164, c. 10m &amp; c. 6m respectively</td>
<td>Oval cut, 0.55 x 0.38m, &amp; 0.16m deep</td>
<td>Single charcoal-rich fill including burnt stones</td>
<td>&lt;1g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2164</td>
<td>Pyre Site, located on the eastern side of Ditch 25102 &amp; c. 6m south of 2212</td>
<td>Irregular oblong cut, 0.85 x 0.55m, &amp; 0.3m deep</td>
<td>Single fill containing charcoal concentration including horizontal charred timber, 2 small ?burnt pottery sherds, &amp; many burnt pebbles</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>526</td>
<td>Pyre Site, located c. 70m east of Pyre Related Feature 2212</td>
<td>Rounded T-shaped cut, c. 1m in each direction &amp; 0.25m deep</td>
<td>4 fills: weathering of sides, near-continuous layer of charcoal, closely related with the second includes charcoal, burnt pebbles &amp; other finds, post-use accumulation. Burnt grog-tempered sherds, slag &amp; lava quern fragment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>561</td>
<td>Pyre-Related Feature, found c. 60m east of 2212 &amp; c. 9m south-west of 526</td>
<td>Irregular oval cut (possibly 2 features), 1.25 x 1.2m, &amp; 0.28m deep</td>
<td>Single charcoal-rich fill containing burnt pebbles, markedly deeper at one than the other. Charred timber fragment, burnt grog-tempered pottery &amp; daub fragment</td>
<td>1g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>513</td>
<td>Pyre-Related Feature, situated c. 7m south-east of 526</td>
<td>Oval cut, 0.8 x 0.35m, &amp; 0.07m deep</td>
<td>Single fill containing charcoal concentrations towards centre</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>510</td>
<td>Pyre-Related Feature, situated c. 52m south-west of Pyre 526 to the north of Ditch 25194</td>
<td>Oval cut, 0.57 x 0.5m, &amp; 0.13m deep</td>
<td>3 fills: middle charcoal-rich &amp; containing burnt human bone, grog-tempered sherds &amp; 5 iron nails</td>
<td>160g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>581</td>
<td>Pyre-Related Feature, located c. 34m east of 510, c. 36.5m south of 526 to the south of Ditch 25194</td>
<td>Oval cut, 0.5 x 0.3m, &amp; 0.12m deep</td>
<td>2 charcoal-rich fills: part of a burnt CAM 210 tazza bowl contained burnt human bone</td>
<td>8g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>537</td>
<td>Pyre-Related Feature, found to the south of Ditch 25194 just over 2m north-east of 581</td>
<td>Oval cut, 0.76 x 0.5m, &amp; 0.2m deep</td>
<td>Single charcoal-rich fill containing burnt human bone, grog-tempered bodysherd &amp; residual prehistoric pottery</td>
<td>12g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site</td>
<td>Feature Description</td>
<td>Cut Details</td>
<td>Finds Description</td>
<td>Quantity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2135</td>
<td>Southern Group&lt;br&gt;Pyre-Related Feature, aligned on Ditch 25194, 1 of a group of c. 5 such features located at the southern extent of site</td>
<td>Shallow oval cut, 1.18 x 0.9m, &amp; 0.14m deep</td>
<td>2 charcoal-rich fills containing burnt pebbles. Slag, burnt bone, 1 iron nail, heavily burnt grog-tempered &amp; Roman pottery</td>
<td>Present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2218</td>
<td>Pyre-Related Feature, situated c. 4.5m north-east of 2135</td>
<td>Circular cut, 0.65m diam., &amp; 0.53m deep</td>
<td>2 fills: the upper charcoal-rich. Burnt base sherds grog-tempered jar, the breakage of which was probably the result of pyre-damage</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2129</td>
<td>Pyre-Related Feature, positioned c. 3m north of 2218</td>
<td>Oval cut, 1.0 x 0.7m, &amp; 0.27m deep</td>
<td>4 charcoal-rich fills including burnt pebbles, possible signs of in situ burning, burnt sherd of a grog-tempered jar in top fill</td>
<td>18g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2119</td>
<td>Pyre-Related Feature, located to the south of Ditch 25194, some 19m east of 2135</td>
<td>Oval cut, 0.75 x 0.66m, &amp; 0.35m deep</td>
<td>Single charcoal-rich fill containing burnt pebbles, slag, briquetage, ?tile &amp; Roman pottery (samian)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2202</td>
<td>Pyre-Related Feature, situated c. 18m east of 2129</td>
<td>No cut recognised, 0.17 x 0.14m, &amp; 0.09m deep</td>
<td>Small charcoal-rich deposit</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3585</td>
<td>Pyre-Related Feature, located some 50m south of Ditch 25194 and the cluster of pyre-related features (2119 etc)</td>
<td>Irregular-shaped cut, 0.93m x 0.76m, &amp; 0.16m deep</td>
<td>Cut comprises 2 scoops with a single fill including burnt sherds of up to 6 small beakers, some with burnt bone adhering, copper-alloy brooch fragment, iron nail, glass sherd &amp; charcoal</td>
<td>&lt;1g</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
margins consists of a pyre site (2164) and a pyre-related feature (2212) recorded some 13.5 and 16m east of Ditch 25102 and the main linear group. Furthermore, five pyre-related features (561, 513, 510, 581 and 537 not illustrated) and a single pyre site (526 not illustrated) were positioned c. 70m east of pyres 2212 and 2164, and are located in the proximity of the extension of Ditch 25194. This second ditch (25199/25194), a probable field boundary, contemporary with the cremation-related features runs parallel to the main linear group before continuing south-east in the direction of the two minor clusters. Only four pyre-related features (2911, 3585, 581 and 537) are situated outside the confines of this apparent boundary.

The pyre sites comprise a consistent oblong shape with rounded ends, near-vertical sides and generally flat bases (Fig. 3.6 & Table 3.6). They vary between 0.8-1.4m long by 0.5-0.8m wide; the largest measuring 1.76 x 0.8m (2237/2908) and the smallest (2164) just 0.85 x 0.55m. In general they survived to a greater depth than those did from Westhampnett ranging from 0.13m (2201) to 0.30m (2164), though one pyre site (2237/2908) was exceptional being 0.5m deep. In a number of examples an integral notch projection had been cut in one side (Fig. 3.6 pyre 2465); the majority on the west, though two pyres (2237/2908 and 2443) had notches cut on the eastern side. In contrast to the Westhampnett pyre sites the deposits appear to be largely in situ suggesting that they had suffered limited disturbance. The cuts contained between one and five (Table 3.6 pyre site 2443) charcoal rich fills with some displaying evidence of in situ burning, particularly those with the additional notches (2332). The fills contained a mixture of pyre debris, particularly large fragments of charred wood, which probably fell through the pyre at an early stage before becoming covered in ash, and therefore preserved (Mark Atkinson pers. comm.). At least three of the pyre
Fig. 3.6 Plans of pyre and pyre-related features 2490, 2673, 2465 and 2606 from Elms Farm, Heybridge (Kindly supplied by Mark Atkinson in prep)
sites (2673, 2189 and 2164) were found lined with charcoal retaining its wood structure; in the case of 2189 large charcoal fragments at least 80mm long were recorded lying against the sides of the cut. Many of the features were also found to contain primary silting fills suggesting that the pyres probably remained open for a period before their initial use. In addition, backfill deposits were recorded over the burnt debris in a number of cases (526), although plough truncation is likely to have disturbed the upper sector of some features.

The fills of the pyres (Table 3.6) comprised a mixture of burnt debris, dominated by charcoal and burnt pebbles; other elements included burnt flint, quantities of human cremated bone, slag and burnt clay. Artefactual remains comprised pottery and amphorae sherds, fragmentary iron and copper alloy objects (including brooches and nails) (Fig.3.6 2490), as well as glass and quern fragments. Sherds from burnt pottery vessels and amphorae (Dressel 1 and 2-4) dominated the assemblage with fourteen of the nineteen pyres containing such material. Iron nails were recovered from three of the pyre sites (2705, 2672, and 2201) with associated metalwork including the fragmentary remains of copper alloy brooches recorded in at least five features. Pyre 2201 revealed the fragmentary remains of five brooches, whereas only two features (2673 and 2443) contained unidentifiable iron objects. Interestingly, six pyres were found to contain burnt flint tools including burins, flakes and blades (2705, 2673, 2455, 2934, 2189 and 2196), as well as one with a lava quern fragment (526) and a further two comprised a glass sherd and a bead (2422/2465 and 2455). Quantities of highly calcined human bone ranging from just 1g (2237/2908 and 2196) up to 593g (2201) were recorded from fifteen of the pyre sites. In nine cases the bone recovered
weighed less than 90g and in a further four examples no calcined bone was recorded from the features (2189, 2181, 2164 and 526).

A further fifteen contemporary features were found scattered across the site (Fig.3.6 2606) apparently containing pyre material but lacking the distinctive oblong form of the pyre sites. They comprise small oval or circular cuts and are referred to as pyre-related features after those identified at Westhampnett, West Sussex (McKinley 1997b; 2000). They consist of ten oval, three circular and two irregular shaped features with depths of between 0.04m (2533) and 0.53m (2218) and up to five recorded fills (2195). They also vary considerably in size ranging from 0.31 x 0.18m (2533) to 1.18 x 0.9m (2195); there is one feature which is larger (561) but it probably represents two intercutting features. The content of the pyre-related features share common characteristics with the pyre sites although they appear less artefact-rich and less structured. As previously noted, most of the pyre-related features were located on the margins of site with five cuts comprising single fills of charcoal, burnt pebbles, stone and slag (2212, 513, 2533, 2202 and 2606 (2 fills). Three other features of this type are particularly noteworthy (2195, 3585 and 561) due to their large size and quantity of accompanying material which included charred wood, pottery and amphorae sherds, iron nails, copper alloy fragments and glass. Ten of the pyre-related features contained pottery or amphorae sherds; four were found with iron nails but there were single occurrences of a copper alloy brooch fragment and glass sherd (3585) and a flint flake (2195). The pyre-related features were also found to contain varying amounts of calcined bone ranging from <1g (2212 and 3585) to 307g (2195) with five features containing no remains (2533, 513, 2218, 2119 and 2002).
It is evident that the pyre sites contained more artefactual objects than the pyre-related features. However, both types of feature were dominated by pottery and in lesser numbers amphorae sherds with 24 of the 34 features containing ceramic material. The remains of iron nails were recorded from three pyre sites and four pyre-related features but there is only limited evidence of flint tools or metalwork from the pyre-related features. There are also significant differences both in the form of the pyre-related cuts and their distribution across the site compared to the pyre features.

However, the features from Elms Farm date from the late first century BC to the early first century AD and closely parallel those identified at the Westhampnett cemetery. The identification of sites with pyre and pyre-related features, such as Elms Farm and Westhampnett, have dramatic implications for the understanding and interpretation of mortuary practices in the late Iron Age. It is also apparent that these features are archaeologically detectable over an increasing area of south-eastern England.

It is clear that in many cases the cremation process leaves few or even no archaeological trace but in some instances pyre sites have been found where they have been protected beneath later deposits. At Handley in Dorset (White 1970), a pyre site was found under a small round barrow measuring c. 8.80m in diameter erected to cover the deposit (Fig.3.7). The round barrow itself was surrounded by a square ditched enclosure with sides c. 15m in length. The barrow is situated on the northern slope of Gussage Hill and to its immediate south are the banks and ditches of a complex earthwork system. The pre-barrow surface was covered with a concentration of cremated bone, ash, and charcoal which was spread thinly over an area c. 3.0m square with the ash and charcoal as thick as 6mm in places. Several burnt and broken potsherds from a single pottery vessel were found scattered across the area, as well as
Fig. 3.7 1. Plan of the enclosure ditch, barrow and pyre surface from Handley (After White 1970, Fig.2); 2. Plan of the Biddenham Loop cemetery showing cremation burials and pyre feature (After Luke 2000, Fig.63)
part of a sheep jaw. The cremated remains (115g) were found lying on the ground surface, concentrated in the north-eastern sector of the barrow. It is suggested that they represent a single adult of about 30 to 35 years, possibly male. Some similarities can be drawn between the findings from Handley and the much larger ditched enclosure unearthed at Upper Walls Common, Baldock in Hertfordshire (Burleigh 1982; 1995a; Selkirk 1983). At the centre of a square ditched enclosure measuring some 33m, two rectangular shaped pits were found partly overlain by a later T-shaped kiln which had helped to preserve the deposit (Fig.2.7). One of the pits contained the remains of the funeral pyre and in the second the unburnt grave deposit was recovered. Among the ashes of the cremation pyre was a large quantity of burnt material, including human and animal bone, charcoal, numerous fragments of melted and crushed bronze objects, and several cut fragments of high quality iron mail. Post-excavation work yielded a considerable amount of similar material, with some of the larger fragments of bronze appearing to resemble melted ornaments, such as bracelets or brooches. On the east side a second sub-rectangular shallow pit was positioned which housed the cremation burial. It contained the articulated remains of three partially complete pig skeletons, the crushed remains of a pedestal urn and a small bronze-bound wooden bucket. The excavator of the Baldock site suggested that the central deposits may originally have been covered by a mound (Burleigh1982, 7-14; 1995a; Selkirk 1983, 71-2), another possible similarity with the Handley discovery. The Baldock enclosure was the largest known example until the discovery of the complex mortuary site of Folly Lane, Hertfordshire where the enclosure ditch covers an area of c. two hectares.
Rescue excavations carried out in 1991/2 at Folly Lane, Verulamium in Hertfordshire revealed a rectilinear ditched enclosure surrounding a mortuary shaft, remains of a pyre and a cremation burial deposited c. AD55 (Niblett 1992; 1993; 1995; 1999) (Fig.2.9). The site lies in a prominent position overlooking the centre of Verulamium on the north side of the river Ver, 500m north-east of the Roman town. The actual cremation pyre is thought to have been placed c. 18m north-west of the mortuary shaft/burial pit more or less in the centre of the enclosure, on the top of the upcast material resulting from the digging of the shaft. The deposit extended over an area approximately 22m in diameter and formed a low mound up to 0.7m thick. The excavator suggested that the cremation site was deliberately chosen for its commanding position, making it visible for a considerable distance beyond Verulamium. In addition, the siting of the pyre would also have increased the visual effect enabling large numbers of people to witness the ceremony at the site itself. If the enclosure banks flanking the ditch were used as a raised viewing platform, it is possible that several thousand spectators could have attended the ceremony.

The pyre surface showed several areas where evidence of scorching or baking survived, and embedded in it were fragments of solidified molten silver and copper alloy. The numerous pieces of burnt clay, fused metal and gravel that were found in the ‘burial pit’ suggest that the base of the pyre had been removed and deposited there. The surviving area of burning lay near the north edge of the mound, probably all that remained of a much larger area of the original pyre. There was no sign of a pit or slot, comparable to the pyre features found at sites including Westhampnett, Elms Farm and Ashford. The pyre itself seems to have been constructed largely of oak, ash and hazel, along with bracken and a number of plant remains, all of which may have
been used as kindling material (Gale 1999, 393). On the surface of the pyre mound, a small post-pit was revealed during the course of excavation measuring 0.45m in diameter, and 0.3m deep. On its base were two fragments of molten silver, part of a bronze ring, a fragmentary moulding of bird's feet, possibly from a head-dress and an unidentifiable iron object. These objects were contained in a deposit of burnt daub, similar to the daub fragments found in the burial pit, all this material was presumably derived from the funeral pyre. The pyre site appears to have been initially marked by a standing post however during the early Roman period a temple was constructed to commemorate the site. This area became the focus of an extensive religious site, incorporating a large suite of baths, numerous apparently ritual shafts, with a direct road link to the Verulamium theatre by the end of the second century AD (Niblett 2001). This again suggests comparison though in a much more elaborate fashion to the Handley and Baldock examples with the site of the pyre singled out for commemoration.

It is important to note here that the small kidney-shaped pit found situated just 0.5m north-east of the Folly Lane mortuary shaft has created some interpretative difficulties. The excavator interpreted the feature as a burial pit (Niblett 1999) but Fitzpatrick (pers. comm.) has suggested that it represents the actual pyre site. The author feels that both these descriptions appear unsatisfactory and it would be better described as representing the deliberately deposited remains of the pyre and should probably be interpreted as a 'pyre-related' feature. This would seem to suggest that it was the actual burning of the body and associated offerings that was considered important, rather than the deposition of the remains in a formal grave.
The complex funerary site of Stanway, near Colchester, Essex can be closely compared with the Folly Lane site (Crummy 1992; 1993; 1997b; Crummy & Crummy 2000). Four of the five enclosures (1, 3, 4 and 5) are associated with mortuary features including cremation burials, mortuary chamber, as well as several pyre or feature-related features (Fig. 2.10). A number of deposits that could be interpreted as pyre or pyre-related features were found close to the centrally placed mortuary chamber (BF6) in Enclosure 3 (Crummy 1992, 4; Crummy & Crummy 2000; Mays 2001). Irregular shallow depressions of burning (BF16) close to the west side of the chamber contained fragments of cremated bone, charcoal and tiny pieces of melted copper alloy, suggestive of a pyre located in this area (Crummy 1993, 493; Crummy & Crummy 2000). Analysis of the feature resulted in the identification of two fills: the upper one was found to contain possible pyre waste and calcined bone (16g) including fragments of a fibula and some fragments which appear to be unidentifiable animal bones. The lower fill contained a small amount of possible pyre debris and calcined human bone (2.1g). This feature provides the only evidence for mortuary activity relating to the cremation of sub-adult remains on the site; yielding a burnt fragment from a mandible of a child (Mays 2001).

However, the dating of the mortuary shaft (BF6) and this possible pyre site (BF16) are providing the excavators with some interpretative difficulties over the relationship between the two features. They are situated very close to one another and it seems that the chamber cuts the pyre site. Initially the excavators thought that the chamber had been burnt and that the two features were perhaps contemporary. However analysis has since proved that the black staining was the result of a natural process and not the result of the chamber being set alight. Phillip Crummy (pers. comm.) suggested that the
probable pyre site (BF16) may relate to an earlier set of rites and sometime later the chamber was constructed and the cremation burials deposited. In addition, a scorched area (BF1) situated on the western side of the chamber and immediately south-east of pyre feature BF16 was scattered with flecks of copper alloy probably representing the base of a shallow scoop or pit. On the eastern side of the chamber (BF6), just beyond the position of the wall, a small pit (BF17) was filled almost entirely with a concentrated charcoal and ash fill. The sides of the pit were uniform and clearly defined, as if it had been wicker-lined or had once contained a barrel or bucket. There was nothing to match this in the backfill of the chamber or elsewhere and close analysis of the material revealed not the tiniest fragment of bone (Crummy 1992; Crummy & Crummy 2000). These deposits probably represent dumped pyre debris and could be interpreted as pyre-related features similar to those from Elms Farm and Westhampnett.

A rectangular ‘sub-enclosure’ (BF28-31) which took the form of a shallow ditch dominated the southern part of Enclosure 4 (Fig.2.10). It appears to represent a pyre-type feature that enclosed an area c. 6m square. In its centre was a slightly shallow burnt depression containing charcoal and numerous tiny fragments of molten copper alloy, as well as some iron nails and sheet fragments (Crummy 1993, 493-94; Crummy 1997a; Crummy & Crummy 2000). The eastern ditch of this sub-rectangular enclosure, contained 0.7g of cremated bone (Mays 2001), along with burnt material and pottery (Gilman 1992, 108). The centre of Enclosure 5 (BF 43-46) was found to be occupied by a similar but smaller version of the ditched feature unearthed in Enclosure 4. It took the form of a shallow square ditch enclosing an area about 4.5m square. However, there are no burnt areas or features inside it to give clues as to its function (Bennett 1997, 221; Crummy & Crummy 2000). Similar features have been
recorded from a number of sites and it is suggested that perhaps they represent mortuary structures associated with display or containment of the dead (see chapter 6.2).

The discovery of pyre and pyre-related material from Elms Farm and Westhampnett prompted the author to conduct a search for further examples and a number of recent and older archaeological investigations produced results. Pyre-related features were identified from Biddenham Loop (Luke & Dawson 1997; Luke 2000), Bedfordshire, Ashford (Casper Johnson pers. comm.), Kent along with Puddlehill, Bedfordshire (Mathews 1976) and Lake, Isle of Wight (Poole 1931; Poole & Sherwin 1932). A cemetery (L39) consisting of fifteen cremation burials and an associated pyre feature was recently excavated at Biddenham Loop, Bedfordshire (Fig.3.7) (Luke & Dawson 1997; Luke 2000). Eleven of the graves, with one (S350) either containing two cremations within the same grave or two separate intercutting ones, were recorded clustered in a roughly circular arrangement in an area 5m by 5m. In addition four outlying graves were situated to the west and north of the main grave cluster, up to 9m away. The pyre-related feature was located immediately north of the main group of graves. It comprised a rectangular feature with slightly rounded corners, measuring 1.6m by 0.4m and 0.14m deep. The Biddenham Loop example is very similar to some of the pyre features identified at Elms Farm, Essex (Fig.3.6 and Table 3.6 Pyre Sites 2673, and 2490) in both its elongated shape and dimensions. The Biddenham Loop feature was aligned south-west to north-east and its filling deposit contained a quantity of charred wood, dominated by oak and pomoideae, as well as 150g of human cremated bone and an eroded horse mandible fragment. The sides of the feature showed no evidence of in situ burning but it is very similar, as already
suggested, to features discovered at Elms Farm and some of those from Westhampnett. At Brisley Farm, located c. 3km to the south of Ashford, Kent fieldwork conducted since 1999 has revealed an extensive and intensively developed late Iron Age site with evidence for activity continuing into the early Roman period (Casper Johnson pers. comm.). One of the excavated areas unearthed a small group of late Iron Age cremation burials associated with at least one T-shaped pyre feature situated approximately 150m north-west of two late Iron Age/early Roman inhumation burials accompanied by weapons. The site is in the initial stages of post-excavation work and information is limited at present, although the features are thought to be late Iron Age in date and suggest similarities with the Biddenham Loop cemetery.

At least two *in situ* pyres were recorded from a small cemetery excavated at Puddlehill, Bedfordshire (Mathews 1976) (Fig. 2.5). The pyre features are associated with seven cremation burials; six grouped closely together in a square ditched enclosure and a seventh recovered from a circular pit. The remains of a human cremation were found in the silt filled ditch of the small enclosure towards its south-eastern corner, some 18m east of the main group of cremation burials. An elongated rectangular feature had been cut into the ditch measuring 1.46m long by 0.60m wide and 0.38m deep. The fill contained a spread of calcined human bone (369g) covering the length of the cut mixed with dark ashy loam and large fragments of charcoal, all of oak. A second pyre feature was situated approximately 145m to the south-west of the example in the ditched enclosure and c. 2m from an outlying cremation burial. It appears that advantage had been taken of a slight hollow caused by the subsidence of an earlier Iron Age storage pit to situate the pyre. Unfortunately the report does not
record the shape or dimensions of the feature, although broad similarities can be
drawn with the first feature including a stratum of ash and charcoal containing
calcined human bones and remains of a burnt brooch spread across the length of the
feature. It is also worth noting that both pyres took advantage of pre-existing features;
a disused pit and the ditch of a mortuary-related enclosure.

There are a number of sites included in the research which have revealed evidence
that suggest pyre features may originally have existed. These features were not
identified at the time of discovery for a variety of reasons including insufficient
recording, the disturbed nature of the find or simply because they were not
recognised. Many of the deposits are inconclusive in nature but it seems appropriate
to consider them to highlight the range and nature of deposits that may be encountered
on Iron Age mortuary sites. Two sites excavated during the 1930s and 1940s have
been re-examined and it is suggested that they may have been associated with pyre-
related features originally. The first is a small cemetery at Cheriton, Kent which
comprised a group of at least nine cremation burials clustered in a circular
arrangement (Tester & Bing 1949). There are also scant details of two areas of burnt
deposits (Fig.3.8 A and B) but unfortunately the conditions of excavation did not
permit a thorough examination of the extent or nature of the features. One of the areas
(A) located to the north-east of the cremation burials comprised a burnt deposit of
charcoal containing a mixture of animal bone, fragments of pottery, and an iron knife
blade. The second feature (B) was central to the cluster of cremation burials and
consisted of a deeper deposit of charcoal and fragments of iron. In addition, two
deposits of burnt material containing animal bones and pottery were recorded c. 55m
to the east and north of the burials. These features were interpreted as occupation
Fig. 3.8 Plan of the Cheriton cemetery showing cremation burials and associated pyre-related features (A and B) (After Tester & Bing 1949)
debris at the time of excavation and although this is plausible it is probable that they are a result of mortuary activity. Likewise an isolated cremation burial recorded from Lake on the Isle of Wight appears to have been associated with a burnt deposit of material. The report of the discovery consists of two brief notes and there is no accompanying plan of the site but from the description it appears that the burnt deposit began a short distance to the east of the cremation burial. It consisted of a thin layer of black earth with fragments of charcoal and small natural blocks of reddened and fire-cracked flint. The area was traced for about 4.5m and at the time of excavation it was suggested that it appeared to represent a pyre feature (Poole 1931; Poole & Sherwin 1932).

In addition, Arthur Evans’ famous exploration of the Aylesford cemetery and his subsequent account of the findings recorded that:

about the middle of the quarry a large circular pit...entirely filled with animals’ bones...several small pits...were also met with, the bottom of which contained charcoal and broken pottery.

(Evans 1890, 320)

He placed little significance on these features and they are discussed very briefly in the report. However, it is interesting that the large pit measuring approximately 2.44m in diameter and from 3.65m and 4.55m deep was entirely filled with animal remains. The small pits, which are alluded to, contained deposits of charcoal and pottery similar to that encountered in the actual graves. Evans suggested that these features were ‘baking holes’ for the manufacture of pottery but in view of the discussion it is likely that they are associated with mortuary activity and represent deposits of dumped pyre material. Archaeological investigation undertaken during the 1980s at Billericay Secondary School revealed a number of late Iron Age and Roman
features including cremation burials, ditches, pits and at least two wells (Rudling 1990) (Fig.3.9). In particular a ditch feature (Area A 6/104) produced a number of distinct concentrations of calcined human remains, charcoal and pottery sherds which were interpreted as the remains of cremation burials deposited at or near the bottom of the ditch. Other noteworthy finds from the ditch fill included small pieces of salt briquetage, fragments of possible triangular loomweights, and a handle from a copper alloy nail cleaner. The deposits of calcined bone range from 0.73g – 6.51g and were recovered from the upper fills of the ditch suggesting that this material represents re-deposited pyre debris rather than formal cremation burials. However, the site has suffered heavy truncation caused by ploughing and it is difficult to determine these deposits as one or the other. Furthermore, two shallow pits (34 and 48) located some 35m south-west of the ditch contained quantities of charcoal and fragments of burnt bone and are probably best described as pyre-related features.

At Ickleton Road, Great Chesterford, Essex a number of inhumation and cremation burials, as well as a number of pits, post-holes and other features were discovered during limited excavation work in 1989 (Fig.3.10). The deposits of cremated and inhumed bone along with a number of pottery vessels were concentrated in the western sector of the site and date to the late Iron Age/ early Roman period (1-15 and 52). The eastern part of the site was dominated by a number of occupational pits dating to the second century AD (50, 51, 53, 54 and 55). A substantial pit (52) situated between 12-28m from the deposits of human remains and pottery vessels contained a large quantity of ash, three heavily burnt fragments of human skull and a number of iron nails. The excavators state that the burning of the bone appeared to
Fig.3.9 Plan of the 1987/8 excavations at Billericay Secondary School, Essex showing probable pyre-related features (34 and 48) and cremation burials (2, 3, 6, and 8) and a length of ditch (6) associated with deposits of cremated human bone and pottery vessels (After Rudling 1990, Fig.3)
have taken place in the pit itself and suggest that it represents an pyre-related deposit (Crossan, Smoothy & Wallace 1990). Many of the cremation burials excavated from Stansted Airport were close to the surface and had suffered considerable damage, some with only the very bases of the associated pottery vessels surviving (Brooks 1989; Havis & Brooks 1991a; 1991b; Havis & Brooks forthcoming). At least three features (33-35) dated to the late Iron Age/Early Roman period and identified as cremation burials could be re-interpreted as pyre-related features (Fig.3.10). Two shallow pits (34-35) were situated some 30-40m north-east of a concentration of late Iron Age/early Roman cremation burials (DFS 8-13 and 32) and 25m from one another. Evidence relating to the features is limited and it has been suggested that they represent disturbed cremation burials but there was no evidence of pottery or metalwork and they contained only tiny amounts of cremated bone and charcoal. A third shallow pit (33) associated with two cremation burials (7 and 19) contained minute fragments of cremated bone and a quantity of charcoal and could be either a heavily disturbed cremation burial or a dump of pyre-related material. All three features had suffered disturbance or had been rapidly excavated adding to the difficulties of interpreting the deposits.

Recent archaeological investigation undertaken along a new pipeline route near to Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire has revealed several sites of interest (Taylor 2000; Kate Taylor pers. comm.). In two separate areas, Chilton Grove South and Peppershill Farm, features resembling cremation burial/pyre debris were recorded but it was not possible to date them securely. At Chilton Grove South a number of pits and ditches of middle and late Iron Age date were found, however, due to the lack of chronologically diagnostic finds or stratigraphic evidence, a number of excavated
Fig.3.10: 1. Ickleton Road, Great Chesterford showing deposits of cremated and inhumed bone, various pits and a pyre-related feature (52) (After Crossan, Smoothy & Wallace 1990, Fig.2); 2. Duckend Farm, Stansted showing the pyre-related features (33-35) and the associated cremation burials (After Havis & Brooks forthcoming Fig.135)
features remain undated. One of these features, a shallow pit (1019) was found to be charcoal-rich and contained a moderate quantity of calcined bone (400g adult). The deposit had suffered truncation both in antiquity and during machine stripping of the site and so there is a possibility that some bone and other archaeological components may have been lost. However, the nature of the deposit suggests the possibility that it represents redeposited pyre debris. At Peppershill Farm two main phases of activity can be identified on the site comprising deposits of Iron Age and Roman date. A deep pit (1000/1050) located approximately 100m away from the main focus of activity contained a single sherd of Iron Age pottery and is tentatively considered to belong to this period. It also produced a small quantity (68g adult) of calcined bone fragments and a minimum small amount of burnt flint (18.5g) dispersed within a charcoal rich fill. The content is characteristic of pyre debris and distribution within the fill is not typical of a burial deposit where the remains are generally concentrated in one part of the grave. In this and the Stansted examples it is possible that the deposits represent deliberately redeposited pyre debris rather than burials. The rectangular enclosure excavated at Maldon Hall Farm was associated with three cremation burials and a further six enigmatic pits. Five of the pits contained few or no finds but a sixth (context 54) produced a large amount of late Iron Age pottery sherds, fired clay and burnt flint (Lavender 1991). On a domestic site this would be viewed as typical occupation material but the association with a small cemetery suggests the features played some unfathomable part in the rites surrounding the cremation and burial of the dead.

Just two further sites deserve a brief comment in connection with the evidence discussed so far which could be indicative of activity relating to the cremation
process. The Iron Age and Romano-British farmstead recorded at Stotfold, Bedfordshire revealed a series of features relating to settlement, burial and industrial activity (Steadman 1995, 1996). A group of sub-circular pits and heavily truncated structures were clustered to the south of the small burial cemetery and ditched enclosure (see chapter 2). One particular group of features (G1058) included a steep-sided pit (S962) containing a partially articulated skeleton of a dog and a stony, charcoal flecked deposit of silty clay which had been dumped in the pit above the skeleton. The nature of this deposit and its close proximity to the cemetery is characteristic of pyre debris and there is every possibility the upper fill represents redeposited pyre material. Finally, following the discovery of the small cremation cemetery at Welwyn Garden City (Stead 1967) a close watch was kept upon subsequent building works by the Lockleys Archaeological Society (Rook 1970). A number of contemporary late Iron Age features including a length of ditch and at least two shallow pits were investigated. The pits described as ‘hearths’ in the original report held a large quantity of charcoal and traces of pottery. They are located some 200m from the cemetery but in view of the present discussion it is not unreasonable to suggest that they may represent dumps of material associated with pyre debris.

3. 5 Observations

This chapter outlines the nature and characteristics of the features and deposits which provide evidence for the cremation of the dead within the chronological and geographical parameters of the study. A number of points are highlighted regarding the cremation process which was clearly a key element in the sequence of activity surrounding the disposal of the dead. This short observation section draws together some of the thoughts and preliminary conclusions resulting from the analysis.
• It is obvious that the rites associated with the cremation process involved lavish visible ceremonies but evidence of such activity leaves few or no trace in the archaeological record. The physical remains of the dead, inhumed or burnt, along with pyre and grave offerings are more likely to reveal something about the life of an individual but not necessarily their death. However, features such as pyre sites and cremation-related deposits of material do shed light on the types of rites performed. In light of this the identification of pyre sites and other mortuary-related features was one of the main aims of the research to establish the wider sequence of mortuary activity conducted during the late Iron Age.

• It is apparent that Iron Age pyre features did not conform to one specific type demonstrating variety both in form and content. Those identified during the course of the research include: the elongated examples discovered at sites such as Biddenham Loop and Elms Farm and the X, Y, and T-shaped forms unearthed at Westhampnett and Ashford. The examples recorded from Puddlehill had been cut into pre-existing features, whilst those from Handley and Baldock were sealed by covering mounds and at Folly Lane and Stanway burning appeared to cover a large irregular area.

• The identification of pyre-related features is also interesting and has made sense of some deposits which in the past may have been dismissed as of little interpretative value. The majority of deposits have been recovered from oval or circular pits although debris has been found scattered in ditches at Stanway and Billericay. It is evident that in some cases pyre features were cleared of the
remaining ash deposits and dumped into pre-existing features, ditches and pits. These features have also been helpful in re-evaluating some of the older reports were it is now possible to suggest that some of the deposits may have represented pyre debris including those at Aylesford and Cheriton.

- The content of the majority of the pyre features is quite remarkable, most contain very little in the way of artefacts or calcined bone and generally survive to very shallow depths. This may be suggestive of clearing after use ready for the next cremation or the deliberate retrieval of the majority of the remaining deposit for use in secondary rites.

- The location and positioning of many of the pyre and pyre-related features demonstrate interesting patterns of distribution. Many of them are located in prominent positions, surrounded by ditched enclosures or aligned with boundary and earthwork systems. At Elms Farm the main cluster of pyres are aligned on a defunct ditch and lie within the confines of a contemporary field system. The enclosure surrounding the Handley barrow is connected to a complex earthwork system, the Stanway site is located just beyond the dyke system of Iron Age Colchester, and the pyre-related debris from Billericay lie within the ditch of a possible enclosure. The Westhampnett and Folly Lane sites are located in prominent local positions, while the latter is surrounded by a rectangular enclosure covering c. 2 hectares. It can be argued that mortuary sites create both architecture and make particular use of topography. The pyre features discussed here demonstrate that in numerous cases they were deliberately sited to maximise
visible impact on the surrounding landscape and are thus embedded in human life ways.

- The use of architectural structures to seal or commemorate the location of earlier pyre sites can be seen in several instances: at Baldock the mortuary features are sealed beneath a later Roman kiln, at Folly Lane the pyre site is initially marked by a wooden post and is commemorated in the second century AD by a Romano-British temple and at Handley the cremation pyre was sealed beneath a small barrow.

- At least three of the Westhampnett pyre sites are associated with postholes which were cut into the base or in close proximity to the features suggesting that wooden structures may have been used to secure the pyre fuel in place or that a superstructure was constructed over the pyre on which the corpse was placed. This draws parallels with the ethnographic and experimental material.

- Two of the sites included in the analysis revealed evidence of small ditched enclosures associated with pyre debris. At Westhampnett two of the four small rectangular ditched enclosures were found to have pyre debris deposited almost at their centres. At Stanway rectangular enclosures were excavated towards the centre of Enclosures 4 and 5, one of which was associated with shallow burnt depressions. These structures appear to share broad similarities with one another and it is possible that they represent mortuary platforms used to expose or display bodies prior to cremation.
Cremation rites involve far more preparation and organisation than inhumation ones implying that a mortuary labour force, technological knowledge and management of resources was well established in the Iron Age. In modern day Banaras death and disposal of the deceased is big business and the division of labour is shared between various groups who are concerned with the disposal of the physical remains, the fate of the soul and the purification of the mourners (Parry 1994). Archaeologists needs to take into consideration the physical exigencies involved in organising a cremation and that the practice is heavily influenced by practical considerations:

1. Accessibility and transportation of large quantities of fuel required to carry out an efficient cremation.

2. The amount of time and energy (labour-intensive method) it takes to effectively burn a human body compared to other body-disposal methods and the subsequent clearing up and depositional processes involved.

Even in modern day India, the above make cremation an expensive process, so there is a tendency, historically, for higher castes to be cremated and for lower castes to do the actual work of cremation (Parry 1994).

The use of fire as a transformatory agent may be particularly significant, it is a powerful and highly visible act that transforms the dead into clean white bone. An interesting observation can be made here in relation to the burnt remains of metal, pottery and glass objects recovered from Iron Age pyre features. It can be argued that the use of fire, employed to transform and purify the dead, was inextricably linked to the manufacture of objects from raw material to functional object. Fire
and heat have a powerful dual function; they can manipulate and change material in both a creative ‘life-giving’ and destructive ‘life-taking’ manner.

- It is evident from the ethnographic and archaeological material examined in this chapter that disposal of human remains by burning provides a dramatic and effectual spectacle. Fire is used as a transformative agent which consumes and changes the physical body and the associated material into an unrecognisable purified state. Green (2001, 65) has outlined that the differences in treatment of human remains may relate to specific cosmological beliefs concerning the nature of death, the afterlife, and the role of the ancestors. In ancient times like in many contemporary societies today it is possible that cremation functioned as an act that transformed the physical earthly body, separating the soul from the corpse, allowing it to disperse safely into the afterlife (Gramsch 1995; Barber 1990). It is also worth mentioning the visual spectacle that a raging pyre set in an open landscape would have created and the dramatic yet sensually engulfing experience that the mourners would participate in. These themes will be developed further in the concluding chapter.
Chapter 4

Adorning the Dead: Pyre Goods and Debris

'Archaeologists cannot dig up funerals, only the deposits resulting from their terminating practices' (Parker Pearson 1999, 49).

4.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to investigate whether or not pyre debris (charcoal and wood) and 'pyre goods' (artefacts and cremated animal remains) were incorporated into grave fills. Pyre debris or 'pyre goods' were identified in at least 153 (c. 13%) of the cremation burials included in this study (c. 1200), and even though this is only a small percentage of the total number of graves, the difficulties in identification were ones of a 'non-recorded' nature. One of the aims of the study is to increase awareness of this type of material in late Iron Age graves and to highlight the need to look for this material when excavating cemetery and burial sites. It is important to record its presence or absence in grave fills because this is one way to measure the activity that took place, which can only be beneficial to understanding late Iron Age mortuary rites and rituals. The objects incorporated into the funeral repertoire should also be carefully considered. There is a restricted range of material, which appears in varying quantities according to the funeral rites.

4.2 Cremation Burials Containing Pyre Goods (See Appendix B for complete list)

The identification of objects subjected to burning with the copse at the time of cremation and their subsequent identification in pyre and pyre-related features prompted the author to question whether they may appear in other contexts, such as grave fills. The research undertaken set out to investigate whether it was possible to distinguish between intact objects placed with the cremated remains at the
burial/interment stage and those incorporated into the sequence during the actual cremation. This resulted from the recovery of pyre goods from the pyre and pyre-related features from sites at Westhampnett, West Sussex and Elms Farm, Essex. Subsequently, all the graves included in the study were examined to distinguish between ‘pyre-goods’, the items committed to the fire along with the corpse, and those deposited intact at the burial stage.

It was also important to identify the type and range of objects used in cremation rituals, and to investigate similarities and differences in terms of those artefacts deposited as ‘grave goods’. Objects that accompany the body on the pyre are more profitably interpreted as symbols used in ritual/ceremonies rather than being representative of the possessions of the deceased (Downes 1999, 26). The aim was to recognise and distinguish between those objects that accompanied the body in the cremation rites and those deposited as part of the interment of the human remains. It is evident that ‘pyre goods’ and ‘grave goods’ clearly distinguish different stages in the sequence of rites associated with the disposal of the dead. However, it is also apparent that on occasion part of the ritual involved the accompaniment of ‘pyre goods’ with the actual deposition of the human remains. This appears to have been reserved for only a limited number of graves in a cemetery and the possible significance of this action is one of the issues addressed in this chapter (see section 4.3).

The analysis identified 23 sites consisting of artefacts that had been subjected to burning and eleven which yielded evidence of cremated animal remains. In total 25 sites were recognised with pyre debris since many of those containing burnt artefacts also included calcined animal remains (see section 4.6 for calcined animal remains).
There appears to have been a fairly restricted range of items that were burnt on the funeral pyre, animals were frequent sacrificial offerings but otherwise the most frequently detected objects include personal ornaments, glass vessels and structural objects. Personal objects include brooches, bracelets, buckles and knives or razors. These objects portray an important set of images and are all part of the process of ceremonial display. The production processes of such objects should not be regarded as mundane, but viewed as embodying notions of ritual and craft knowledge (Aldhouse-Green 2002). The ability to transform substances would have been a powerful skill and as in many cases these objects involved the use of fire in their production; repeating the powerful image of fire, its transformatory nature and therefore symbolism of the object.

Brooches are the most common burnt objects deposited in grave fills and they have been found in the majority of the burials included here. Examples include Harlington, Bedfordshire (Dawson 2001) (Fig.4.1.1); Hatfield Peverel (Stead 1976, 413), Stansted Airport (Havis & Brooks forthcoming) (Fig.4.1.2), Essex; Hitchin (Westell, 1928; Stead 1976, 407-8), and King Harry Lane (Stead & Rigby 1989) (Fig.4.3.4-5), Hertfordshire; Bancroft, Buckinghamshire (Williams & Zeepvat 1994) (Fig.4.1.3-4); Westhampnett, West Sussex (Fitzpatrick 1997) (Fig.4.3.2), and Latchmere Green, Hampshire (Fulford & Creighton 1998). Whilst burials from Boxford, Suffolk (Owles 1967) and Hurstbourne Tarrant, Hampshire (Hawkes & Dunning 1930) yielded a melted buckle and bracelet respectively. At Latchmere Green, Hampshire a late Iron Age pedestal jar filled with cremated bone and associated with a bronze mirror was found in a shallow circular grave. It was made on the south-facing slope of a low hill, at about the 75m contour, some 2km south-south-west of the Roman town Silchester.
Fig. 4.1 Burnt and distorted brooches from various sites: 1. Iron chain, ring, and fragmentary pair of Feugere’s Type 8a brooches, Harlington Grave 9 (Dawson 2001, Fig. 9.25);
2. Copper alloy Colchester brooch Grave 12, Stansted (Havis & Brooks in press Fig. 140);
3. Molten remains of an unclassified brooch Grave 10 Bancroft (Williams & Zeepvat 1994, Fig. 134.2); 4. Copper alloy Colchester brooch, Grave 4 Bancroft (Williams & Zeepvat 1994, Fig. 131.1) (Scale 1:1)
which overlies the heart of the late Iron Age oppidum of Calleva. The calcined remains of two individuals, an adult and a young child, were mixed together with a large quantity of calcined pig bone (790g) and the fragmentary remains of a pair of burnt iron fibulae. The pedestal jar appeared to have been partially reburnt, or placed close to a heat source, with evidence of blackening on one side (Fulford & Creighton 1998). Two graves (12, 13) from Stansted, Essex (Fig.4.2.4-5), another from Snailwell, Cambridgeshire (Lethbridge 1953) (Fig.4.2.1), and two examples (Graves 200043, 20484) (Fig.4.2.2-3) from the Westhampnett cemetery, West Sussex are all associated with burnt worked bone objects that probably represent toggles for clothing. These are the only cremation burials where these objects have been found and they are probably associated with garments in which the deceased were clothed when placed on the pyre.

The large rectangular grave discovered at Snailwell contained a variety of grave goods often found in association with ‘Welwyn-type’ graves including three amphorae and fourteen pottery vessels (Lethbridge 1953; Stead 1967). A wooden construction, which had lain approximately east-west along the major axis of the pit had taken up the main floor space of the tomb. The cremated remains were found in the centre of this wooden structure, and mixed with them was an unburnt bronze armlet, and buckle and burnt worked bone fragments. The worked bone (Fig.4.2.1) comprised eight lengths of elaborately decorated bone distorted and broken due to being burnt on the pyre, representative of at least five toggle-type objects. It is suggested that the bone objects may well have been garment fittings adorning a costume in which the deceased was dressed when placed on the funeral pyre.
Fig. 4.2 Burnt bone artefacts: 1. Snailwell (Lethbridge 1953, Fig. 2.1-8) (Scale 1:1); 2. Grave 20043 Westhampnett (Fitzpatrick 1997, Fig. 66) (Scale 1:2); 3. Grave 20484 Westhampnett (Fitzpatrick 1997, Fig. 95) (Scale 1:2); 4. Grave 12 Stansted (Havis & Brooks forthcoming Fig. 140); 5. Grave 13 Stansted (Havis & Brooks forthcoming Fig. 143)
Only one other ‘Welwyn-type’ grave was found to contain pyre material and that is the example from Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire (Stead 1967). The main grave of a cluster of seven was rectangular in shape with rounded corners and contained a large variety of intact grave-goods. The calcined bones were heaped together towards the centre of the northern end of the grave. Fragments of a distorted bronze object, possibly a brooch and the burnt terminal phalanges of a bear were found mixed with the cremation. The area immediately surrounding the burial appears to have been kept clear, although it may have been filled with organic material. In the southern part of the grave, the grave goods particularly the pottery vessels were grouped together on the floor.

Glass objects also appear to have been incorporated into the cremation process and examples have been found in a limited number of graves. Molten glass was recovered from grave fills as pyre debris at Bancroft, Buckinghamshire (Fig.4.3.3); King Harry Lane, Hertfordshire; and Stanway (Crummy & Crummy 2000), Essex. It also seems that structural objects such as funerary litters, couches and boxes may have been placed on pyres: there is limited evidence from Folly Lane (Niblett 1999) and King Harry Lane, Hertfordshire, Westhampnett, West Sussex, and Stansted, Essex to suggest this. At the Westhampnett (Fig.4.3.2), King Harry Lane and Stansted cemeteries, nails and structural fittings which have been damaged by fire have been found in some graves. At Stansted, Essex three cremation burial features (39, 40, 42) from a small cluster of five graves were found to contain burnt iron nails (Havis & Brooks forthcoming). The grave pits were lined with charcoal and contained unurned calcined human remains associated with between eight and seventeen burnt iron nails (see Appendix B for further details).
Fig. 4.3 Various pyre goods 1. Iron bracelet Grave 20039 Westhampnett (Fitzpatrick 1997, Fig. 66); 2. Unidentified iron brooch, nail, & 5 staples Grave 20253 Westhampnett (Fitzpatrick 1997, Fig. 83); 3. Glass bead Grave 4 Bancroft (Williams & Zeepvat 1994, Fig. 183.382); 4. Brass Colchester brooch Grave 196 King Harry Lane (Stead & Rigby 1989, Fig. 123); 5. Brass Colchester brooch Grave 324 King Harry Lane (Stead & Rigby 1989, Fig. 156); 6. Bone handle Grave 9 King Harry Lane (Stead & Rigby 1989, Fig. 90); 7. Bone dice Grave 20 King Harry Lane (Stead & Rigby 1989, Fig. 92) (Nos. 1-2 Scale 1:2; Nos. 3-7 Scale 1:1)
Finally, at Folly Lane, Hertfordshire, and Stanway, Essex it is evident that a range of objects accompanied the deceased on the funeral pyre in what appear to be complex rituals (Niblett 1999; Crummy 2000 & Crummy). Objects from these sites include pottery vessels, mail tunic, horse gear, furniture and bronze vessels. This perhaps suggests that it was the pre-funeral rituals, and above all the cremation itself that was the most important aspect of the mortuary process. This is in marked contrast to the rite characterised by the ‘Welwyn-type’ graves, which have a wealth of largely intact grave-goods including hearth furniture, bronze vessels, amphorae, glass objects and a vast array of pottery vessels. It would appear that the grave-goods were not burnt on the pyre but deposited largely intact in these graves (Niblett 2000, 100). The rectilinear ditched enclosure at Folly Lane was occupied by a variety of features including a mortuary shaft which revealed the remains of a rectangular timber chamber. The function of the shaft can only be speculated on but the most likely explanation is that it was used to house the dead before the cremation rites. Philip Crummy has suggested a similar use for the smaller but more or less contemporary timber lined pits that he has excavated at Stanway, Essex (Crummy pers. comm.). At both the sites, the large pits with timber structures contained only a token amount of human cremated bone and the remnants of broken or burnt artefacts from the funeral pyre which were scattered throughout the backfilling of the shafts.

The floor of the shaft at Folly Lane had a substantial quantity of pottery, fragments of metalwork, and a small quantity of cremated bone lying scattered across it. Fragments of at least forty vessels were recovered but only three sherds show signs of burning and all of these came from the backfilling of the shaft. Only a small quantity of calcined bone was found (31.4g) and it was not possible to determine whether it was
animal or human. Over 60 fragments of metalwork were found, the majority consisting of small pieces of iron (8 fragments, 15 nails) and tiny fragments of silver and copper alloy, including 22 droplets of solidified molten bronze. However, apart from the droplets none of the copper alloy from the floor of the shaft showed signs of burning, while in the case of the ironwork the question as to whether it had ever been burnt was not determined (Niblett 1999, 44-5). It appears that the material on the floor of the shaft had been used during rites that took place before the pyre was lit. This material was not burnt, suggesting that before the actual cremation took place, the pottery and other objects were broken up and that only a very small proportion were left on the floor, either deliberately or accidentally. Once the cremation had taken place, a small quantity of cremated bone and a few fragments of burnt pottery and metalwork were collected from the pyre and scattered in the shaft as it was being backfilled. This demonstrates that the shaft was incorporated into a sequence of mortuary-related activities involving the use of the shaft prior to and after the cremation.

A mass of heavily burnt debris, up to 40mm thick, was recovered from a pit positioned in the north side of the mortuary shaft including charcoal, solidified molten copper alloy and silver, numerous fragments of iron, burnt clay, amphorae and pottery sherds, numerous fragments of burnt ivory, and at least two fragments of wooden objects represented by charcoal. The bulk of the material consisted of the remains of a large collection of high status objects of iron, copper alloy (Fig.4.4.1-4), silver, ivory and worked wood representing furniture and box fittings (Fig.4.5.3), horse gear (Fig.4.5.1), cart fittings (Fig.4.5.2), and iron mail. Small quantities of cremated human and animal bone were found scattered throughout the deposit, with no concentration
Fig. 4.4 Various burnt metal artefacts from Folly Lane: 1. Fragment of a sheet metal face mask; 2-3. Fragments of copper alloy binding possibly from a box or casket; 4. Copper alloy cylinder of unknown use (Scale 1:1) (After Niblett 1999, Figs. 60.23; 59.20, 59.21 and 59.19)
in any one place. This material had been heaped up in the middle of the pit, where it covered an area approximately 1m in diameter. The pit contained 1428g of body sherds from at least two Dressel 2-4 amphorae. The sherds in the pit all show signs of burning, in contrast to the unburnt sherds in the shaft. Other pottery from the pit was confined to four small sherds, all heavily burnt and two of which may have come from cups also represented on the floor of the funerary shaft. Only a small amount of calcined bone was recovered (164.3g), of this 23.7g represented animal remains. Burnt animal remains are found mixed together with human calcined remains in a small number of burials (see 4.6), however the Folly Lane burial was exceptional in the number of species represented with cattle, sheep/goat, pig and hare/cat present (ibid, 50-1). Beside the recognisable and discernible objects, a large amount of metal was either totally melted or had been fused to an extent that made it unrecognisable. It appears that c. 2.5kg of silver might have been present on the pyre, and could originate from object such as silver vessels similar to those known from the ‘Welwyn-type’ burials and/or from pieces of furniture since silver handles and mounts were recovered. A total of 2.21kg of copper alloy was recovered from the pit (Northover 1999, 176-180). It is equally apparent that not all the pyre offerings were placed in the burial pit. Even allowing for the fact that the copper alloy components could have melted beyond recognition, there were insufficient fragments of the iron elements from the furniture, fire-dog, and cart to suggest anything other than token portions of these objects.

The five ditched enclosures from Stanway, Essex (Fig.2.10) appear to have been laid out side by side as two groups between the second/third century BC and the late first
Fig. 4.5 Burnt horse gear and cart fittings from Folly Lane: 1. Fragments of a cast bronze harness brooch; 2. Copper alloy sheet fitting, possibly from a cart pole end; 3. Copper alloy fitting for a wooden leg of a couch or chair (Scale 1:1) (After Niblett 1999, Figs. 53.3, 58.12 and 58.15)
century AD (Crummy 1992; 1993; 1997a; 1997b; Crummy & Crummy 2000). Four of the enclosures contained a central shaft, with cremation burials, pyres and sub-enclosure features set in close proximity. The rites appear complex, involving a below-ground chamber and the destruction of the associated objects apparently at the time of cremation. The deposits recovered from the four chambers resulted from involving the breaking of objects and depositing only a small quantity of the debris in the shaft fill. Despite the damage caused to the objects, it is apparent that a range of high quality objects was originally involved. They each produced fragments of unburnt, burnt or scorched metal objects, deliberately broken pottery vessels, organic material and other damaged objects which have been in or near the funeral pyre. The amount of debris incorporated in each chamber varies considerably with those in Enclosures 1 and 5, producing very little material, while the shafts associated with Enclosures 3 and 4 contained quite large quantities of burnt copper alloy. However, the objects deposited in the associated graves were largely intact and ranged from a cremation burial with a single pottery vessel (AF18) to the well-documented doctor’s grave (CF47). Only one of the cremation burials (BF64) from the site yielded any evidence of material originating from the funeral pyre. The large rectangular grave contained amongst the objects a heat-distorted glass sherd, presumably from a vessel burnt on the pyre (Crummy & Crummy 2000).

4.3 Cremation Burials Containing Token Deposits of Pyre Goods
In addition, to the examples already discussed there appear to be a number of graves particularly from cemetery sites rather than from individual burials which suggest a more complex set of rites involving the deposition of pyre debris. The study identified at least ten sites where there is enough evidence to suggest that rectangular or circular
graves in a central or isolated position including a token amount of pyre debris acted in distinguishing some burials from others in a cemetery (Niblett 2000, 100). Rosalind Niblett noted this at the King Harry Lane cemetery, which promoted a search for further examples. In examining the total number of cremation burials (455) from King Harry Lane it is evident that 6.8% (31 graves) of the graves contained a token amount of pyre debris, either molten copper alloy, burnt worked bone, or melted glass, deposited in the grave. Niblett suggests that it was a mark of relatively high status within a particular group of people; the author would agree that it does act to mark these burials out as different, however this does not necessarily imply ‘high status’.

Some of the Westhampnett burials (Fitzpatrick 1997) demonstrate similar characteristics and there are also examples from smaller, more modest cemeteries where some graves appear to be in a more central position and include a different repertoire of deposits from those they are associated with. Examples include burials from the Maldon Hall Farm (Lavender 1991) and North Shoebury (Wymer & Brown 1995) cemeteries in Essex. It can be suggested that these burials like the King Harry Lane examples (Stead & Rigby 1989) followed a different set of rites from the other burials and that again the pre-deposition rituals were more important in these circumstances. One last point to consider before examining some of these sites in more depth is that there are a number of graves with token pyre deposits that appear to share similar alignments. Examples are known from King Harry Lane, Hertfordshire; Stansted, Essex; and Bancroft, Buckinghamshire.

At Biddenham Loop, Bedfordshire the majority of the fifteen cremation graves from the small cemetery (L39) were clustered in an area 5m by 5m, to the south of the
pyre-related feature (Fig.3.7) (Luke & Dawson 1997; Luke 2000). The main cluster consisted of twelve small circular or oval grave cuts. In addition, four large circular or oval graves were situated to the west and north of the main grave cluster. Of the four peripheral graves, Burial S358, contained pyre debris and was situated at the western extent of the cemetery in an isolated position but only a short distance from the main cluster. This is the only grave from Biddenham Loop to contain pyre goods and debris (Appendix B). One of the burnt items resembles a brooch pin, which was probably worn or placed on the body prior to cremation. It consisted of a tapered point and circular section of wire, which was recovered from a charred timber deposit which included a quantity of cremated human bone (365g). An additional tiny burnt deposit, associated with c. 3g of cremated human bone contained the remains of a piece of curved copper alloy sheet, possibly part of knife handle. These items were recovered from charred deposits including bone and are interpreted as pyre debris. Importantly, this grave was also associated with a number of objects that could have been used in the preparation of the body for cremation; an iron knife, a copper alloy ear-scoop and nail cleaner. The content of this grave is representative of a number of stages in the mortuary sequence and stands out as different to the others in the group.

The archaeological evidence at Salford, Bedfordshire comprised over 4000 contexts, most of which relate to activity in the Iron Age. The latest period of activity in the Iron Age is characterised by the founding of a small cremation cemetery located close to the remains of a boundary ditch which may have demarcated the limit of the site in the early and middle Iron Age. Four cremation burials each placed in shallow sub-circular to oval pits were positioned in a line covering a distance of 7.5m (Fig.4.6) (Dawson forthcoming; Hill 1999 et al). The burials were situated parallel to the ditch.
Fig. 4.6: 1. Bancroft cemetery Graves 4, 9, 10, 11 contained pyre debris (After Williams & Zeepvat 1994, Fig. 4.6) and 2. Salford cemetery Grave 4 contained pyre debris (Kindly supplied by Mike Dawson forthcoming)
suggesting that it was still visible when the cremation burials were deposited; this may indicate that it functioned as a boundary marker for the cemetery. All the cremations were similar in form, each containing two ceramic vessels and two or three brooches. However, Grave 4 was different from the others in a number of ways. It comprised an oval grave surviving to a very shallow depth containing two badly damaged ceramic vessels, and three unburnt copper alloy brooches. It contained the least amount of cremated human remains with just 55g, whilst the other three contained substantially more weighing between 160-780g. In the other three examples the cremated bone was contained in a pottery vessel, whereas in Grave 4, the cremated bone was found scattered loose in the pit. Finally, and most importantly this burial is marked as being different by the inclusion of pyre goods. In all four of the graves, brooches had been deposited intact after the cremation had taken place. However, in the case of Grave 4 the partially melted remains of an iron and copper alloy object were recovered indicating that it had accompanied the body on the funeral pyre. It was not possible to identify the object, and it is not known whether it represents a personal accessory, such as a brooch or other object.

At Bancroft, Buckinghamshire settlement activity situated on top of a small spur flourished over two millennia (Williams & Zeepvat 1994). During the middle to later part of the first millennium BC, an unenclosed settlement consisting of no more than two or three circular buildings dominated the landscape and occupation continued until the start of the first century AD. During the mid to late first century AD a major reorganisation of land boundaries was undertaken on the spur, and a large trapezoidal ditched enclosure (60) was constructed. A cremation cemetery of seventeen burials was discovered to the south of this enclosure (Fig.4.6). The cremation burials within
this small cemetery demonstrate the whole gamut of burial types associated with cremation burials of the first century AD. They include examples with a single pottery vessel with no accompanying grave-goods (2, 3, 14, 15); unurned bone deposits (5 and 7); burials with modest assemblages including several pottery vessels (1, 6, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 16, and 17); a single lavishly accompanied grave (4); and a grave containing ten pottery vessels (9). However, for the purposes of this discussion it was noted that four of the seventeen cremation burials (23.5%) included objects burnt on the funeral pyre and deposited as part of the burial assemblage. The graves (4, 9, 10, and 11) exhibit considerable diversity in content and position. The pyre goods include copper alloy and iron brooches (Fig. 4.1.3-4), and glass beads (Fig. 4.3.3); two of the graves (10 and 11) contained small amounts of vitrified fuel-ash slag adhering to fragments of pottery and fusing fragments of bone. Experimentation (Henderson et al. 1987) has demonstrated that this residue represents a high-temperature fusion of silicaceous matter, with materials in the funeral pyre when particularly high temperatures are produced. The position of these burials in relation to one other and the remainder of graves in the cemetery was examined. The graves form a linear arrangement contained within an area 14m long on the east-west axis and 4m wide on the north-south axis. No obvious boundary was located, although Ditch 591 on the north-east side may be contemporary. It is possible that a small bank or fence, of which no trace has survived, may originally have marked out the cemetery. Grave 10 is situated in a focal position with seven other graves forming a circular arrangement around it. Grave 4 forms part of this cluster but is located in a fairly isolated position at the southern extent of the cemetery. Grave 11 is located to the east of the circular arrangement in relative isolation and Grave 9 is positioned on the easternmost
periphery of the cemetery. Interestingly, Graves 9, 10 and 11 are aligned on an east-west axis across the extent of the cemetery.

Two ditch enclosed cemeteries from Essex, Maldon Hall Farm and North Shoebury both contain just three cremation burials. At each site only one of the graves had metal objects deposited as part of the assemblage, a proportion of which originate from the pyre. At Maldon Hall Farm, Essex a grave (3) containing pyre debris is the most distinctive in content and is placed almost centrally along the north-south axis of a ditched enclosure with a largely empty space surrounding it (Fig. 2.4) (Lavender 1991). Eight further pits are positioned within the enclosure, only two of which yielded cremation burials containing just pottery vessels suggesting that they were subsidiary in nature. The large rectangular grave (3) contained eight pottery vessels; the largest held the cremated bone along with a quantity of melted copper alloy objects. A broken silver trumpet brooch (unburnt) was recovered, along with an iron disc (unburnt) which lay beneath the ceramic urn. The other metal from the fill of the grave pit comprised a fragment of a silver pin; two small fragments of copper alloy; and part of a burnt iron rod or nail. Numerous small fragments of burnt copper alloy were mixed with the calcined remains contained in one of the pottery vessels. It had melted to form nondescript lumps, but some were still recognisable, although heat-distorted. The fragments are evidently from sheet fittings of some description, reconstruction is not possible but it could be from a box or couch type object placed on the pyre. At North Shoebury, a small late Iron Age cemetery consisted of three cremation burials set in a line, equally spaced at 7m intervals which appear to mark the eastern boundary of the settlement (Fig.2.3) (Wymer & Brown 1995). The central grave (1232) was placed within a small rectangular enclosure marked by the remains
of narrow and shallow gullies that contained a few late Iron Age pottery sherds. A number of significant differences are displayed by the central burial (1232) when compared to the other examples (1367, 1161). The grave itself was rectangular and in a focal position surrounded by a small enclosure feature, the other two graves comprised small circular unenclosed pits. Each grave contained pottery vessels and a quantity of animal remains, however, Grave 1232 contained the most vessels and a very small scrap of probable burnt copper alloy.

Four of the thirteen cremation burials located at the western extent of the Duckend Farm site, Stansted Airport contain pyre debris (Graves 9, 12, 13, 32) (Fig.4.7) and date to the late Iron Age whereas the remainder of the cluster are later in date (Havis & Brooks 1991a; 1991b; forthcoming). The pyre goods recovered from these graves incorporated brooches (Fig.4.1.2), copper-alloy plating, a possible copper alloy vessel, an iron ring and bone toggles (Fig.4.2.4-5). In addition, two of the graves (9, 13) contained a sequence of burnt planks forming a criss-cross pattern covering the grave goods, and Grave 32 yielded a large quantity of charcoal mixed with both the cremated bone and metalwork. One of the cremation burials (12) had been extensively damaged by two later ditches, although some grave goods were still found in situ. Mixed together with the unurned cremated bone were a series of fragments of worked animal bone, representing a minimum of five burnt and distorted bone toggles (Fig.4.2.4). The other pyre objects deposited in the grave included a burnt Colchester brooch (Fig.4.1.2), and fragments of burnt copper alloy plating. Burial 13 had some similarities with Burial 12, it also contained unurned calcined human remains mixed together with a minimum of three burnt bone toggles (Fig.4.2.5). The other objects burnt with the body include a probable copper alloy vessel, and an iron ring
Fig. 4.7 A small cluster of cremation burials on Duckend Farm, Stansted. Late Iron graves 9, 12, 13, 32 all contained pyre debris (After Havis & Brooks forthcoming)
with a pin attachment. The pyre goods included both items of personal adornment (toggles) and functional objects. Finally, an unurned cremation burial (32) with a substantial amount of calcined remains (1177g), and metalwork but no pottery was identified cut into the surface of a prehistoric pit. All the metalwork had been burnt including a Colchester brooch, fragments of a possible penannular brooch, and numerous copper alloy and iron fragments. These burials (9, 12, 13 and 32) form a group of fourteen cremation burials located at the western extent of the Duckend Farm site, dating from the late Iron Age and into the early second century AD. It could be argued that these four burials represent focal founding burials (Fig.4.7). Three of them (9, 12 and 13) are clearly aligned on a north-south axis through the centre of the group, and the fourth is situated a short distance to the east in an isolated position (Havis & Brooks forthcoming).

At Dellfield, Hertfordshire four cremations burials were discovered during rescue excavations, three grouped close together and the fourth approximately 150m to the east. One of the burials (2) contained four pottery vessels, an iron brooch and a fragment of heat distorted bronze which might originally have been a brooch. There is little more to say about this group but it is interesting that only one of the burials was found to contain material recovered from the pyre (Thompson & Holland 1976). Likewise, at Swarling, Kent one of the nineteen cremation burials discovered during gravel-quarrying in 1925 contained pyre debris (Bushe-Fox 1925). The grave in question (13) was situated quite centrally within the western cluster of graves and is the most distinctive burial in the cemetery in terms of accompanying objects. The grave comprised a circular pit containing six pottery vessels and the remains of a wooden bucket with iron hoops and handles. The calcined human bones, two small
bowls and two bronze brooches were found contained in the bucket. Two pedestal urns, and two further small bowls were arranged around the outside of the bucket. Placed on top of the cremated bone was one of the two fibulae, and close by was a 'shapeless lump of bronze' representing an object melted during the actual cremation.

The King Harry Lane cemetery lies to the south-west of the walls of later Roman Verulamium and one of its main features is the use of ditched enclosures for the deposition of groups of cremation burials. Eight rectilinear enclosures were identified arranged in two rows, with a 'corridor' 5m wide between them (Fig.2.8) (Stead & Rigby 1989). It can be suggested that the cemetery comprised several enclosed or unenclosed clusters of burials, often with a prominent focal grave. The central burial is usually in a larger pit, either circular or square/rectangular in shape, and tended to have larger groups of pottery vessels and in some cases additional grave and pyre objects compared to the surrounding burials. Of the 455 cremation burials deposited in the cemetery, 71 (15.6%) were found to contain material originating from the cremation pyre, of these 40 contained burnt iron nails only. In examining the remaining 31 graves it is evident that they contained a token amount of burnt debris presumably remnants of pyre offerings that were then deposited in the grave. Pyre debris, other than animal remains (see section 4.6), was represented primarily by unidentified fragments of molten metal and glass and burnt worked bone. This material was deposited in 6.8% of the cremation burials and where the cremated bone could be given an age determination it was exclusively those of adults.

At least five graves were found with the remains of burnt bone objects including 'gaming' pegs (Graves 38 & 148), a possible handle (Grave 9 Fig.4.3.6), die
fragments (Grave 20 Fig.4.3.7), and a small cylindrical box (Grave 118). Five graves contained evidence for probable glass vessels that had been completely destroyed on the funeral pyre. The amount of molten copper alloy identified in nineteen of the burials varies from as little as 0.2g (Grave 146) to the 202g from Grave 325, which may represent a strainer vessel. In addition, a minimum of four graves (Grave 196 Fig.4.3.5 and Grave 324 Fig.4.3.4) contain bronze brooches which display signs of being subjected to burning on the pyre.

Table 4.1: List of cremation burials from King Harry Lane containing pyre goods/debris

| Molten glass and burnt nails | Graves 25 and 153 |
| Molten glass               | Graves 41, 217 and 445 |
| Burnt worked bone and burnt nails | Grave 38 |
| Burnt worked bone          | Graves 20 and 118 |
| Burnt nails and molten copper-alloy | Graves 373 and 280 |
| Burnt worked bone and molten copper-alloy | Graves 9 and 148 |
| Burnt Brooches             | Graves 196, 270, 306, 324 |

The remainder of the graves contained burnt iron nails (Appendix B), which were found amongst the cremated bones and may represent wooden objects that had been burnt on the pyre. In most examples a single nail was recovered but occasionally there were instances of burials containing two, three or four nails.

1 nail  2 nails  3 nails  4 nails
26 Graves 12 Graves 3 Graves 4 Graves

It is also briefly worth mentioning here that a number of graves from King Harry Lane are associated with wooden planks or boards covering the base or grave tops. In most cases these were seen as no more than black streaks, but in others they were relatively substantial with clear marks of wood grain (ibid. 81-82). At least ten of the 31 graves associated with token deposits of pyre material revealed evidence suggesting they originally contained wooden structures or boards. These wooden boards seem to have
acted in the majority of cases as covers sealing the graves, examples are known from Graves 72, 241, 280, 299, 309, 370 and 416. Those from Graves 299 and 309, show evidence of considerable subsidence, where the remains of substantial wooden boards had collapsed and were draped over the pottery vessels. Only two graves (148, 295) are associated with more substantial structures, which may suggest that they contained boxes.

As already stated 31 of the graves from the cemetery contained a token amount of pyre debris, these deposits appear to be deliberate in both content and in many cases their position (Niblett 2000, 101) (Fig. 2.8). It is suggested that at least twelve of them producing pyre material are located in a focal position either within enclosures or surrounded by a cluster of cremation burials. Each of the eight enclosures had a ‘pyre debris’ cremation burial in a central position (Graves 41, 241, 272, 309, 118, 148, 299, and 325). Furthermore, these seem to be aligned in three distinct clusters; in the enclosures situated in the north and south of the cemetery and in a corridor area 5m wide dividing the enclosures. The corridor gap was spanned only by the ditch defining the south corner of the enclosure around Burial 117, this particular burial was badly disturbed and it is not known if it originally contained pyre material. The northern enclosures included Graves 9, 41, 241, 272 and 309 which appear to be aligned with one another. A similar positioned is detectable within the southern enclosures with Graves 148, 299 and 325 all being aligned. In the corridor area, a number of graves with pyre goods and a central alignment can also be distinguished (118, 146 and 280). There is one further burial that should be mentioned, Grave 346, since it appears to be aligned with the northern group (Graves 9, 41, 241, 272, 309). It does not appear to have contained pyre debris but it held ten pottery vessels and the only associated
metal object, was an iron bar, which had been deliberately bent. It is no clear from the published material if this object had been burnt but it seems significant that it was broken and it is therefore possible that it represents a token deposit. All the central burials were in large graves, and they are accompanied by between one and nine pottery vessels. Of those situated in central positions either enclosed or unenclosed, Burials 9, 118, 241, and 325, were certainly among the richest in the cemetery; 41 had suffered substantial disturbance; and 272 was distinctive in being the only burial accompanied by a complete amphora. Burial 309 produced four pottery vessels, 299 yielded a pair of very large imported flagons and 148 contained two pottery vessels, burnt worked bone and copper-alloy objects. Of the burials containing pyre debris not in ditched enclosures, three - 280 with nine pots; 373 with three or four vessels; and 146 with two pots - were located in the 'corridor' between the two groups of enclosures.

Table 4.2: List of central/focal graves from the King Harry Lane cemetery

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Northern Group</th>
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<tr>
<td>Grave 241, a large and roughly square grave was situated at the centre of a large enclosure measuring 14m wide by 16m long. It was surrounded by the greatest number of burials in the cemetery numbering 46. At least six of the graves found clustered around the focal burial contained pyre goods (Graves 196, 206, 217, 229, 234 &amp; 235)</td>
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<tr>
<td>A square grave (41) was positioned at the centre of the largest Enclosure B41, it measured up to 16m wide by 18m long, and was surrounded by c. seventeen cremation burials, four of which were located in a small annexe. Four of these surrounding burials also contained pyre debris (Graves 32, 38, 40 &amp; 44).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Located immediately to the west of Enclosure B41 was a distinct unenclosed cluster of c. 23 cremation burials with a central rectangular grave (9). Three of the associated graves were found to contain material which had been burnt upon the funeral pyre</td>
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<tr>
<td>A roughly rectangular shaped grave (272) was located within the centre of a ditched enclosure (B272) measuring c. 8.5m wide by 12.7m long it was densely packed by c. 23 burials, though the immediate area was relatively empty. Two of the associated graves was found to contain pyre debris (Graves 270 &amp; 278)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Situated a short distance to the east of Enclosure B272, was a large circular grave (309) associated with at least five other graves. The north-west corner of a ditch feature was excavated which could have been an enclosure that originally surrounded this grave and possibly Grave 308 which also contained material originating from the funeral pyre</td>
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<th>Southern Group</th>
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<tr>
<td>A circular grave (148) positioned in the centre of a small ditched enclosure (B148) and surrounded to the south by seven cremation burials. Two of the burials grouped around the central interment were found to contain molten glass and burnt nails (Graves 153 &amp; 154)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Situated next to Enclosure B148 was another ditched enclosure represented on three sides, it contained a</td>
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central interment, Grave 299. A large circular grave that was surrounded by thirteen cremation and one inhumation burials.

Grave 325, a circular grave situated at the centre of Enclosure B325 and surrounded by at least 11 cremation burials (three inhumation burials were also associated with this enclosure). Only one of the associated graves was found to contain pyre goods (Grave 295).

<table>
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<th>Corridor Group</th>
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<td>It was not possible to recognise the pit for Grave 118, since it was badly disturbed but it was situated within Enclosure B117 that crosses the 'corridor' area. It was positioned c. 0.2m from the central Grave 117, no pyre material was recorded from this grave, however, it to had suffered considerable disturbance and may have originally.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Two unenclosed focal graves (146 &amp; 280) were found located in the 'corridor area' between the north and south group of ditched enclosures. They were both associated with molten copper-alloy material.</td>
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<tr>
<td>To the immediate north-east of Enclosure B325 and on the same general alignment as the 'pyre-debris' burials situated in the corridor area was a large cluster of unenclosed cremation burials. At least six were found to include pyre material (Graves 351, 365, 370, 372, 373 &amp; 375), however, only Grave 373 contained molten copper-alloy, the others contained varying numbers of burnt iron nails.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

It is possible to suggest from the evidence presented above that the cemetery started with some of the focal burials placed at the centre of ditched enclosures or prominent clusters. Enclosures 2, 3, 4, 6, and 7 were established no later than the first decade of the first century AD (Phase 1). Phase 2, with Tiberio-Claudian burials spanning the conquest, sees the cemetery spread to its maximum extent with the addition of Enclosure 5 to the southern range. In the post-conquest period (Phase 3), the large Enclosure 1 is added to the north-west, along with a distinct cluster of burials (B9) and Enclosure 8 which crosses the 'Corridor' area (Stead & Rigby 1989).

Of 161 cremation burials excavated from the Westhampnett cemetery a total of 51 were found with either grave or pyre goods (excludes calcined animal remains see section 4.6); 43 of which contain just pyre goods; five with grave goods (20001, 20140, 20185, 20471, 20622); and three examples containing both (20055, 20253, 20493). It was not possible to determine whether all the metal objects recovered had been subjected to burning, except in the case of the molten metal and burnt bone. However, the majority of metal objects were in a fragmentary state, particularly the
brooches, and it was determined that they were more likely to have been pyre goods, especially since the majority of objects were found mixed together with cremated bone deposits. Whereas, the grave goods seem to resemble containers or boxes, there may have been many more such objects originally placed in graves but no archaeological detectable traces survive. In addition, Grave 20622 contains a largely complete silver brooch which does not appear to have been subjected to burning (Northover 1997, 91).

The most frequently recovered metal artefacts were fragmentary brooches and brooch accessories (24 examples of brooches, rings & chains only); a single grave was associated with an iron ring (20039) (Fig.4.3.1), and another contained an iron knife (20055). There are also six graves (20237, 20253, 20599, 20637, 20680, 20729/20758) (Fig.4.3.2) with evidence of nails or structural fittings (one of these also contained a brooch 20253), which originate from objects placed on the pyre. Andrew Fitzpatrick, the excavator of the site (1997) suggested that they probably originate from timbers used for the pyre material but they could also originate from furniture or funerary litters used to transport the deceased to the cremation site. Interestingly, brooches seem to have been the most common object collected from the pyre debris and this compares with other sites (Bancroft, Hatfield Peverel, Latchmere Green, Puddlehill, Stansted, Harlington, and Hitchin), suggesting that the deceased individuals were dressed in garments adorned with metal and in a limited number of cases bone accessories. Some of the brooches are very fragmentary and consists of minute pieces; these must have been incorporated into the burials after being collected from the pyre remains, rather than as actual grave goods. At Westhampnett a number of the graves (20089, 20132, 20134, 20169, 20170, 20541, and 20571) contained
complete or largely intact brooches, in these cases it is difficult to determine whether they were subjected to burning or not on the pyre.

The remaining fourteen graves (Fig.4.8) were found to contain small quantities of molten metal, tiny sheet metal fragments or burnt bone accessories and occur in a number of distinct locations across the site. They are positioned in four groups across the extent of the site: the north (4 examples), south (3 examples), east (1 example) and within an area towards the centre of the site which contains the highest concentration of graves from the cemetery (6 examples). They are either spatially isolated (Graves 20252 & 20566) or appear to be focal graves to a larger surrounding cluster (Graves 20095 & 20484). Seven of the graves contained small amounts of molten copper-alloy or iron with no other evidence of objects burnt on the pyre (20029, 20083, 20097, 20142, 20245, 20566 and 20750); two examples (20043 and 20484) contained melted metal globules, burnt bone objects and brooches; another had a coin placed as a grave good (20493); one was found with a burnt brooch (20338) and only Grave 20571 was associated with a wider variety of possible pyre goods, including a key, a knife and a brooch. Two further graves are included which contained either token deposits or pyre-related debris, Graves 20252 and 20095 (Appendix B and Fig.4.8). The central group consists of five burials (20029, 20043, 20083, 20095 and 20097) positioned close together within the area of highest grave concentration in the cemetery. Cremation burials 20029, 20043, 20083, comprised small circular graves, however, a grave pit was not recognised for Grave 20097 but the excavation plan suggests that it was probably circular (Fitzpatrick 1997, Fig. 38). All five of the graves contained metal globules or fragments, including the gold fragment in Grave 20095. Grave 20029 and 20083 contained copper alloy globules weighing less than 1g; a melted
Fig. 4.8 Plan of the Westhampnett cemetery showing graves containing pyre debris (After Fitzpatrick 2000, Fig. 2.7)
iron globule (1g) was found mixed with the cremated bone in Grave 20043; and a small iron sheet fragment was mixed with the calcined bone in Grave 20097. In all of the graves except 20097, where no bone was recorded, the fragmentary artefactual remains were found mixed with the human calcined bone suggestive of being recovered from the pyre site when the bone was collected. In Grave 20043, the calcined bone was scattered on the grave floor north of three pottery vessels, an iron brooch, melted iron globule (1g), and burnt bone fragments were mixed together with the human remains. The bone fragments are most likely to represent a pair of decorated bone toggles that may well have been associated with costume fittings attached to garments in which the deceased was cremated. Similar bone toggles were recovered from a grave (20484) and examples already discussed include those from Stansted, Essex and Snailwell, Cambridgeshire (see above).

At King Harry Lane, it was evident that within each cluster of graves, whether enclosed or unenclosed, a focal grave was set apart by its location, form, and contents. This practice is also observed in at least four cases at Westhampnett; within the Central Group, Grave 20095 was set apart in a number of ways from the surrounding graves. It differed in its form being a large square grave rather than the dominant circular shape and it was placed in a focal position within the area of highest grave concentration in the cemetery. The grave was surrounded by a small empty space, with only one grave (20097) within 1m of it. A rare find of gold foil fragment, possibly from a tubular torque or bracelet, was mixed together with the unurned calcined bones of a dual cremation burial of an infant/juvenile and a sudadult. This grave is included in the discussion, since it is likely that the gold fragment results from activity associated with the pyre rituals. It is an extremely rare inclusion and in
comparison with the other graves only a 'token' fragment of the original object appears to be sufficient in the burial rituals. It is as distinctive as the burials with only token amounts of pyre goods and therefore most have some significance in the mortuary rites accorded certain individuals. Furthermore, it is the only example to be associated with the calcined remains of a child and an adult, in the other graves where it was possible to identify the human remains they are exclusively those of adults.

Finally, there is one other grave which is associated with this group, Grave 20252. A large square grave situated to the immediate south of the five graves discussed above, at a distance of between c. 7-12m away. This grave also appears to been a focal grave though it was more isolated in its position than Grave 20095. It was surrounded by a much larger empty area, though a group of smaller graves were positioned in a rough arc around it roughly 3.5-5m away. It is the only grave of this type to contain a more varied group of possible pyre goods including an iron belt-hook, a small iron ring, and a pair of iron brooches, with a fragmentary iron chain. The grave does not contain a deposit of molten metal but is further distinguished by placing the cremated remains in its four corners and in containing a large quantity of pyre debris (1150g of charcoal) that was spread over the entire grave.

The Eastern Group consists of only one grave (20566), but it is unique to the cemetery in form, content and location. The grave itself is a small circular feature, in direct contrast to the other focal graves that are square in shape. However, it is distinguished by being set in the centre of a square ditched enclosure (20706) with rounded corners (4.4 m²). A posthole was situated in each of the four corners of the enclosure suggestive of some sort of platform or structure above the burial. The calcined
remains were mixed together with copper alloy globules (1g), and iron sheet fragments (<1g) which had been placed in a unique red-slip covered pottery vessel placed in the centre of the grave. Furthermore, this enclosure is positioned on the was extreme eastern boundary of the cemetery.

Located towards the northern extent of the cemetery, a further small group of four cremation burials (20142, 20245, 20338, and 20750) containing molten metal debris was recorded. In stark contrast to the other groups, two, possibly three of the four graves were square in shape, only Grave 20750 comprised a small circular grave pit. These four graves form a rough arc arrangement running north-south closely aligned with numerous other cremation burials, with Grave 20388 at the northern extent and Grave 20750 at the southern extremity. All four of the graves contained tiny amounts of molten copper alloy or iron globules; the melted metal fragments from Graves 20750 and 20338 were mixed together with the calcined remains but in Graves 20142 and 20245 the metal fragments were placed a short distance away from the cremated bone and pottery vessels. Square shaped Graves 20245 and 20388, are perhaps both focal graves of this cluster; Grave 20388 represents the mostly northerly located cremation burial (though not feature) from the site and Grave 20245 seems to be centrally located with a small number of burials surrounding it.

Finally, the southern group consists of just three burials (Grave 20484, 20493 and 30571) containing molten metal fragments. They form part of a roughly circular cluster of cremation burials located at the southern extreme of the cemetery with a large square grave (20484) centrally placed within the cluster. Grave 20484, consists of a focal cremation burial which was surrounded by an empty area, with smaller
graves being placed around it in a rough arc between 3m and 5m away. It also appears to be aligned with Grave 20571 (c. 3.5m away) and is c. 5m south of Grave 20493. The metalwork recovered from the grave pit consisted of three copper alloy brooches, and tiny fragments of molten copper alloy, as well as a pair of fragmentary, possible antler toggles, which are decorated with simple ring-and-dot motifs. They have been subjected to burning and like those found in Grave 20043 probably represent costume fittings. All these items were found mixed together with the calcined remains. The two remaining graves 20493 and 20571 were oval and circular in shape respectively, and both contained small amounts of molten copper alloy mixed together with the cremated bone. Grave 20484 contained the only coin recovered from the site, an Iron Age Mack 44 gold quarter stater (most probably a grave good and found with the cremated bone). A number of additional metal objects were deposited in Grave 30571 comprising an iron broad-bladed knife; an iron latch lifter/key; and an iron brooch.

In conclusion, it can be suggested that the focal graves from Westhampnett are usually square and, even though the grave pit of burial 20566 was circular, it was deposited at the centre of a small square ditched enclosure (20706). Each of the groups discussed above contained at least one square and perhaps arguably focal burial: 20095-central group; 20245 and 20338-northern group; 20484-southern group; and Enclosure 20706-eastern example. Of the 161 cremation burials excavated at Westhampnett, just fourteen can be identified containing ‘token’ pyre debris (8.7%) and this can be compared with at least nine other sites identified during the course of the research.

There are a number of common traits that these cremation burials display: (i) large square or circular grave pits; (ii) token amount of pyre material usually in the form of molten copper-alloy, though gold, iron, bone and charcoal are known; (iii)
almost exclusively associated with adult cremated remains; (iv) a focal location also appears important, graves can be isolated, or central to an enclosed or unenclosed group.

Table 4.3: List of sites, number of cremation burials, and percentage totals of graves containing fragmentary 'token' pyre debris from the study area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Number of Burials</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Biddenham Loop</td>
<td>1 of 16</td>
<td>6.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salford</td>
<td>1 of 4</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bancroft</td>
<td>4 of 17</td>
<td>23.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maldon Hall Farm</td>
<td>1 of 3</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Shoebury</td>
<td>1 of 3</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stansted</td>
<td>4 of 14</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dellfield</td>
<td>1 of 3</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>King Harry Lane</td>
<td>31 of 455</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Westhampnett</td>
<td>14 of 161</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swarling</td>
<td>1 of 19</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. 4 Cremation Burials Containing Charcoal/Pyre debris

The graves included in the study were also examined to determine whether pyre debris (charcoal and wood) had been incorporated into grave fillings or accompanying pottery vessels in addition to the 'pyre goods' described in 4.2. Debris in the form of 'pyre goods' (artefacts and animal remains), charcoal and charred timber were identified from a total of 35 sites and c. 267 graves. A range of sites were identified that produced evidence for charcoal and pyre debris which was either found mixed with cremated human remains or incorporated into grave fills. Charcoal from archaeological sites is important since its identification can indicate the regional woody vegetation and contemporary forest technology. It can also provide artefactual information, and it is that detail that is particularly relevant in this study. Charcoal has been found in a number of graves including examples from Westhampnett (Gale 1997, 77-82), Lexden Tumulus (Foster 1986), and Stansted (Havis & Brooks forthcoming). It is suggested that it was deliberately selected and incorporated into the burial deposit as part of the mortuary rites for reasons that can only be guessed at.
There were at least four pieces of charcoal within the Lexden Tumulus shaft pit (Foster 1986, 147-8); the largest piece having an overall length of 80mm and the smallest piece being 30mm long. Three of the four oak pieces of charcoal possibly came from the same piece of wood originally, but it had been broken in antiquity. The size of these pieces makes it probable that they were selected from the funeral pyre. There is no positive evidence from the Lexden Tumulus excavation that the cremation took place in situ and presumably these pieces of charcoal were deliberately selected from the remains of the pyre along with the bones. Charcoal fragments were also recovered from the soil samples that were taken at the time of excavation, which contained cremated bones; this probably represents the remains of ashes from the pyre, which were adhering to the bones when they were buried. At Folly Lane, Verulamium two pits occupied the centre of the ditched enclosure; the largest, the remains of a sunken mortuary chamber and the second a much smaller example containing a quantity of cremated bone and heavily burnt material. Five samples of charcoal came from the burial pit (Context DAB burial pit burnt turf samples 23-25; Context DAC burial pit pyre debris samples 89 and 93) and one from the mortuary shaft (Context DAS mortuary shaft floor). Three samples were thought to have been artefactual in origin; tool marks were clearly visible on one sample but the remaining two were more conjectural. The charcoal was well preserved and very firm (Gale 1999, 388 and 393).

Table 4.4: List of charcoal samples taken from the burial pit and mortuary shaft Folly Lane

| Sample 23 | Several fragments: 3 ash, 1 hazel, and 1 oak |
| Sample 24 | One worked fragment of ash: possibly from part of an artefact, but since there are no obvious tool marks, it is more likely to have arisen from a natural fracture |
| Sample 25 | One worked fragment Pomoideae: this type of wood is hard and has been traditionally used for tool handles, turnery and small items. The exceptionally smooth, hard and rounded surface of the charcoal suggests an artefactual origin from a handle or similar item |
| Sample 89 | several fragments 13 ash: 11 oak, 11 hazel, 7 blackthorn, 3 bark unidentified, 3 fragments unidentified |
At Stansted Airport, Essex four of the cremation burials contained charcoal deposits including Grave 32 found on Duckend Farm Site and a small group located on the Social Club Site (Burials 39-43). The burials recovered from SCS contained small quantities of cremated human bone, varying numbers of fragmentary burnt or unburnt iron nails, and all but one of the grave pits (Burial 42) was lined with charcoal (Havis & Brooks forthcoming). A group of three small unurned cremation burials from the extensive Biddenham Loop site also yielded deposits of charcoal. Grave S470 contained the unurned cremated remains of a juvenile (2-10 years, 185g), frequent oak charcoal, three burnt animal bones (one fragment identified as the shaft of a right *Sus* humerus) and an iron nail (Luke 2000). One of the sixteen pottery vessels recovered from drainage excavations at Great Chesterford, Essex revealed charcoal in its contents (context 15). It consisted of an almost complete high-shouldered cordoned jar containing charcoal mixed together with copper alloy fragments, calcined human bone and unburnt pig and chicken bones (Crossan, Smoothy & Wallace 1990). The single cremation burial from Latchmere Green, Hampshire was also associated with charcoal. The pedestal jar contained approximately 1255g of calcined human and animal bone, the burnt remains of a pair of iron brooches, as well as traces of charcoal (Fulford & Creighton 1998).

At Westhampnett, West Sussex eight of the 161 graves included charcoal deposits; oak, ash, hazel, pomoideae and *prunus* were all present (Gale 1997, 79). Five grave fills comprised high percentages of charcoal, and they were distributed across the cemetery with only one (20719) being in the vicinity of a pyre site. This may imply
that the inclusion of pyre debris was probably deliberate rather than being accidentally incorporated from material dumped adjacent to a grave (Fitzpatrick 1997, 71).

Table 4.5: List of charcoal samples from Westhampnett cremation burials

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Description of Burial</th>
<th>Charcoal Content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20053</td>
<td>Urned cremation burial associated with a quantity of calcined animal remains</td>
<td>Hazel, ash, <em>prunus</em> (blackthorn/cherry), and oak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20089</td>
<td>Unurned cremation burial containing an iron brooch, animal remains and two pottery vessels</td>
<td>Hazel, ash, and oak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20095</td>
<td>Focal cremation grave containing a gold fragment, mixed with the unurned calcined bones of two individuals and five pottery vessels</td>
<td>Hazel and oak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20142</td>
<td>Unurned cremation burial containing molten copper-alloy, two pottery vessels and calcined animal remains</td>
<td>?Hazel, pomoideae, <em>prunus</em> and oak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20169</td>
<td>Unurned cremation burial containing an iron brooch and a single pottery vessel</td>
<td>Oak, and rosaceae</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20196</td>
<td>Unurned cremation burial accompanied by two pottery vessels</td>
<td>Hazel, ash, <em>prunus</em> and oak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20252</td>
<td>Unurned cremation burial accompanied by a quantity of metalwork, two pottery vessels</td>
<td>Ash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20719</td>
<td>The majority of the charcoal was collected from around a pottery vessel</td>
<td>Ash and oak</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Grave 20252 (Fig.4.9) is a very interesting example, the square cut grave contained two pottery vessels and a variety of pyre goods (see 4.3). This grave is unusual in that pyre debris was spread over the whole grave. The charcoal is notable not only for its quantity (1150g) but also, in contrast to the other graves, for having only one species present; ash (Gale 1997, 79).

4.5 Burials Containing Burnt Wooden Planking

Seven graves were identified that had charred wood incorporated into the fills of the graves, all were probably originally from objects burnt on the funeral pyre. The sites include Welwyn Garden City (Stead 1967); Ward’s Combe, Buckinghamshire (Dunnet 1973); Hinxton, Cambridgeshire (Hill *et al* 1999); and Stansted, Essex (Havis & Brooks forthcoming). In five instances the charred wood appears to have been used as covers to seal the graves and in the remaining two examples it is possible to
Fig. 4.9 Plan of Grave 20252 from Westhampnett. Note the calcined bone piled in each corner of the grave (After Fitzpatrick 1997, Fig. 82)
suggest that they derived from funerary litters or couches. This again highlights the
connection between the different stages in the mortuary sequence indicating that in a
limited number of cases it was necessary to incorporate pyre material into the grave
deposit. At Dorton, Buckinghamshire a pipe trench disturbed a cremation burial,
removing about half of the original deposit (Farley 1983). The majority of the finds
including three amphorae, two double-handled flagons, a bronze mirror in a wooden
box with associated cremated bone were removed by the pipe trench (Fig.4.10).
However, a total of eight pieces of timber were traced in the grave fill. Two pieces,
although separate timbers, were clearly structurally related, four other pieces grouped
together may originally have derived from one piece. The remaining two appear to
have been separate. In addition there were two lines of charcoal which almost
certainly represent timber now vanished that had been charred on one side before
deposition, and two other charred fragments. It was noted at the time of excavation
that some of the planks lay at right-angles to others, making in effect two sides of a
box-like structure which had been thrown into the grave before it was backfilled. It is
not impossible to envisage some form of bier, which had been partially burnt on the
pyre. Charred timber was also recovered from the backfill of the Welwyn Garden City
grave although its form was not recoverable (Stead 1967, 28-29), though it is likely
that it originates from the funeral pyre.

At Wards Combe, Buckinghamshire excavations at a small but pronounced earthwork
enclosure, revealed among a number of features at least three cremation burials. One
of them (1), set in a carefully cut pit, contained cremated human remains and an iron
brooch in a pottery vessel, accompanied by three pottery vessels, unburnt animal
remains and a triangular iron knife. The entire deposit had been sealed by two
Fig. 4.10 Graves with evidence of charred planking: 1. Dorton (After Farley 1983, Fig. 3); 2. Little Waltham (After Dury 1978, Fig. 28)
burnt timber planks (Dunnett 1973). A similar occurrence is known from Little Waltham in Essex (Fig.4.10) where an isolated cremation burial was found in a square cut grave. On its base were arranged eight pottery vessels and a small pile of unurned human cremated bone lay in the north corner. A significant quantity of unburnt animal remains had also been placed in the pit including sheep, domestic fowl, pig and fragments of an ox-skull. The contents of the pit had been covered by partially charred timber, resembling planking. The excavator suggested that the charring may have been deliberate or alternatively the material could have been retrieved from the pyre site (Drury 1973; 1978).

At Hinxton, Cambridgeshire a small mixed rite cemetery of eight cremations, five of which were surrounded by minor ring-ditches, and three inhumations was excavated in 1994. The cremation burials are tightly clustered and the arrangement of the ring-ditches was roughly linear. The unurned cremated bones had been deposited in the base of the pits, and accompanied by between one and nine pottery vessels, just three of the graves contained metal artefacts. In the case of Cremation 1, the remains of a large burnt, possibly oak plank measuring 0.30m wide, >0.60m long and 10mm thick, were bedded down over the calcined remains. The excavators suggested that all the cremation burials had probably originally been sealed with some manner of a lid to prevent the crushing of their contents. The detection of this timber was evidently due to its charring, which suggests once again that its was retrieved from the cremation pyre (Hill et al 1999). Finally, the Stansted cemetery revealed two cremation burials with evidence of burnt timber planking; Burials 9, and 13. Burial 9 was identified as a ring of charcoal visible on the surface and excavation revealed the presence of a cremation burial with pottery vessels and metalwork covered by a series of charcoal
planks forming a criss-cross pattern. Burial 13 also revealed evidence of charcoal indicating the presence of burnt planks covering the cremation burial. In addition to a number of pottery vessels and animal bone, the grave contained a number of artefacts burnt with the body. These included at least three bone toggles, a copper alloy vessel, and an iron ring. The charred planks from Stansted were less than 10mm thick and it appears were used to cover the burials, probably using timber recovered from the pyre (Havis & Brooks forthcoming).

4.6 Burials Containing Calcined Animal Remains

It would appear that the inclusion of calcined animal remains was deemed necessary and included in the rites appropriated in a limited number of the cremation burials examined in this study. Philpott (1991) and Williams & Zeepvat (1994) both commented that the evidence for the inclusion of calcined animal remains in late Iron Age cremation burials in the south-east of England is slight. The number of sites with such evidence has increased since their studies, and the significance of their inclusion should not be underestimated. However, the most frequent occurrence of animal remains in graves of this type is the provision of unburnt carcasses, usually of pig, apparently representative of a grave rather than pyre offering. In the ‘Welwyn-type’ burials, the inclusion of burnt or unburnt animal remains is rare with only the Snailwell and Baldock examples containing unburnt animal remains.

Burnt bear claws were recovered from the ‘Welwyn-type’ cremation burial excavated at Baldock and Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire suggesting that the bodies were placed on the pyre wrapped in a bear-skin. Their inclusion in cremation burials of the late Iron Age period in Britain is restricted to these two instances at present. However,
the distribution of these graves covers a large part of Europe, distributed across Scandinavia and Germany with c. 27 examples known in total (Schönfelder 1994). All of the graves are cremation burials and usually contain several burnt bear claws. Some of the deposits have produced claws from more than two paws, suggesting perhaps that the deceased was wrapped in complete bear skin before being laid upon and burnt on the funeral pyre. It is possible that bear claws may not have been recognised in many excavations, since the action of the pyre causes the bones to become so fragmented and brittle that they are difficult to identify. At The Tene, Baldock a circular grave pit 1.6m in diameter contained a bronze cauldron at its centre within which were scattered 10.5g of calcined bone (Stead & Rigby 1986). This tiny sample included three third phalanges of a brown bear (*Ursus arctos*) similar to those found with the cremation at Welwyn Garden City (Stead 1967). At Welwyn Garden City the calcined human remains were mixed together with fragments of a distorted bronze object and the terminal phalanges of a bear in a heap towards the centre of the grave.

At Biddenham Loop, Bedfordshire three areas across the site revealed cremation burials but only a single grave of the twenty examples was associated with calcined animal bone. Grave S470 contained human cremated remains mixed together with oak charcoal and an iron nail. Three burnt animal bones were also recovered from the grave fill, one of which was identified as the shaft of a right *Sus* humerus (Luke 2000). All three of the graves discovered at the late Iron Age cemetery of North Shoebury, Essex contained animal bones but only one (1367) contained burnt remains. The burnt animal bones included vertebra fragments, epiphyses and tooth of a small ungulate such as a sheep (Wymer & Brown 1995). At Bancroft, Buckinghamshire fourteen of the seventeen recorded cremation burials were
accompanied by animal remains, however, in only two instances did they appear to have been cremated with the corpse. Examination of the cremated human bone from one particular grave (14) revealed that part (30 g) of a calcined young pig had been mixed with the remains of a probable adult male. In another example (10) 1110 g of cremated bone was recovered from the grave including 200g of a young unbutchered pig. Although the animal bone had been burnt it was bluer than the human bone, and may have been burnt either for a shorter time or at a lower temperature. Several fragments of unburnt pig bones were also mixed in with the cremated bone (Williams & Zeepvat 1994). An isolated cremation burial discovered at Latchmere Green, Hampshire contained approximately 1255g of mixed human and animal calcined bone. The calcined animal bone weighed 790g and all the identifiable fragments were of Sus. The bone appeared to be from the right side of the animal except for a metapodial fragment which could not be assigned to side (Fulford & Creighton 1998). Another isolated cremation burial discovered at Cunning Man, Berkshire contained a group of five pottery vessels; one of which held the cremated human bone (c. 100g) mixed together with it were two or three fragmentary calcined limb bones of a small bird (Boon & Wymer 1958).

The funerary sites of Folly Lane, Hertfordshire and Stanway, Essex once again display a complexity in their content, with both sites containing a more varied selection of chosen species. At Folly Lane, the roughly kidney-shaped ‘burial’ pit contained small quantities of cremated human and animal bone scattered throughout the deposit, with no concentration in any one place. The cremated bone amounted to 164.3g in total, 23.7gg of which came from cremated animals. It is not unusual to find animal remains mixed together with human calcined remains, but Folly Lane was
exceptional in the number of species represented with cattle, sheep/goat, pig and hare or possibly cat present (Niblett 1999). At Stanway, the soil is fairly acidic and bone preservation was poor with only small quantities of calcined bone surviving. The key contexts included mortuary chambers AF25 and BF6, although small quantities were recovered from mortuary chamber CF42 and one of the ‘Welwyn-type’ graves (BF64). Only 5.4g of burnt animal bone including cattle/horse teeth, and a pig molar were recovered from Chamber A (AF25). The calcined animal bone from Chamber B (BF6) included c. 111g of horse-tooth fragments which had probably been subject to burning before being incorporated in the backfill (Mays 2001; Crummy pers. comm.).

At the late Iron Age/early Roman cemetery at King Harry Lane at least 85 of the cremation burials contained calcined animal remains. Graves 58 (cattle) and 287 (dog and indeterminate mammal) included in the original post-exavation analysis (Davis 1989) contained unburnt species and are not included in the discussion here. This equates to calcined animal remains being found in 18.7% of the cremation burials (all phases) and there was a clear trend (c. 82%, all phases) for animals to be cremated with adults. The percentage of different human age groups from each grave containing cremated animal bone is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adults</td>
<td>82.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indeterminate</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Mixed deposits</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child/Adolescents</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Two dual cremations were included with adult/child deposits

The unburnt animal bones were lost during the excavation, this is unfortunate since this would have allowed a comparison to have been made between the unburnt and burnt species (Davis 1989, 250). 87.1% of the graves with cremated animal bone were identified as parts of pigs, either found individually or mixed with other species.
Davis notes that it is likely that the vast majority of the bones identified as 'mammal' or 'artiodactyl' are also pig. It is therefore apparent that pigs and to a lesser extent birds, probably chicken, dominate the assemblage. Only four other graves were represented by different species; Graves 186 and 354 with sheep/goat, Grave 201 with cattle, and Grave 317 with pig and sheep/goat. The percentage of different animal species present from each grave is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Animal Type</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pig</td>
<td>70.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birds</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pig &amp; bird</td>
<td>15.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pig &amp; sheep/goat</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goat/sheep</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cattle</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each of the individual deposits of pig remains was examined to see if it was possible to indicate whether whole or specific parts of the animals were placed on the funeral pyre. Davis' analysis noted that there appeared to be a practice of depositing only restricted parts of the animal – a single limb, joint, or head, and that in general heads seemed to be preferred. Where limbs were present there was an apparent preference for the right side, although the sample was insufficient to claim this statistically.

Unlike the pig, bird remains in many burials include elements from more than one limb and it seems probable that whole birds were included with the burials for cremation. Analysis of the pig bone epiphyses indicated that many of the pigs were slaughtered between one and three years old and the bird bones appear to derive from adults (i.e. older than c. 6 months).

Table 4.6: List of cremation burials from King Harry with calcined pig/mammal remains

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Burial No.</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Burial No.</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Pig</td>
<td>311</td>
<td>Pig</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Pig &amp; mammal</td>
<td>316</td>
<td>Pig &amp; mammal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Pig</td>
<td>322</td>
<td>Pig</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Pig &amp; mammal</td>
<td>323</td>
<td>Pig &amp; mammal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>Mammal</td>
<td>335</td>
<td>Pig &amp; mammal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burial No.</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Pig, mammal &amp; bird</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Pig, mammal &amp; bird</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>Pig &amp; galliform</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>73</td>
<td>Mammal, artiodact, pig, galliform, &amp; bird</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>156</td>
<td>Pig &amp; bird</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>170</td>
<td>Pig &amp; bird</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>212</td>
<td>Pig &amp; ?galliform</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>235</td>
<td>Pig &amp; ?galliform</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>315</td>
<td>Pig, mammal, &amp; bird</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>352</td>
<td>Pig, mammal, bird, &amp; galliform</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>359</td>
<td>Pig &amp; ?galliform</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>373</td>
<td>Pig, mammal, &amp; galliform</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>399</td>
<td>Pig, mammal &amp; galliform</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

List of cremation burials from King Harry with calcined bird remains

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Burial No.</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>?Galliform</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>72</td>
<td>Galliform</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>274</td>
<td>?Galliform</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>281</td>
<td>Galliform</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>314</td>
<td>?Galliform</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>412</td>
<td>?Galliform</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>414</td>
<td>?Galliform</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>415</td>
<td>Bird</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The excavations at the Westhampnett Iron Age cemetery produced cremated animal bone fragments from 44 cremation-related contexts (Fitzpatrick 1997, 73-77). Thirty-six of the contexts were from graves, but material was also recovered from two postholes and six pyre-related features. The bone was recorded to species wherever possible, where this was not feasible the fragments were assigned to either ‘small ungulate’ or ‘large ungulate’ groups. In the remainder of cases where it was not possible to distinguish neither species nor elements, the remains were designated as 'animal unidentifiable'. The quantity of bone from each context ranged from 0.1g to 51.5g, with a mean of c. 4g. The maximum weight of animal bone was recovered from cremation grave 20021 represented by two species, pig and sheep/goat. This, however, was an exception, as in the majority of contexts the weight of identified animal bone ranged from 0.1-14.0g. Only grave 20252 contained a quantity somewhere between the two, with a weight of 22.7g from sheep/goat and a small ungulate. Pig and/or sheep/goat were each identified in 22.2% of the grave contexts and cattle in 5.5%; small ungulates were identified in 27.8% of contexts where neither pig nor sheep/goat had already been noted and large ungulate in a single context (2.8%). In 34.1% of contexts the animal bone could not be identified. The majority of
contexts contained a minimum of one species, four (11.1%) contained a minimum of two species of which three comprised pig and sheep/goat, and one pig and cattle.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Animal Type</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cattle</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cattle and pig</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheep</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pig and sheep</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pig</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ungulates</td>
<td>27.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unidentified</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.7: List of cremation burials from Westhampnett with calcined animal remains identifiable to species

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Burial No.</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20021</td>
<td>51.5g immature pig, sheep/goat &amp; small ungulate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20035</td>
<td>3.2g sheep/goat, small ungulate &amp; unid.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20053</td>
<td>6.9g pig, immature small ungulate, cattle &amp; unid.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20073</td>
<td>1.9g pig &amp; unid.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20132</td>
<td>3.2g immature sheep/goat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20142</td>
<td>3.2g immature sheep/goat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20252</td>
<td>22.7g immature sheep/goat and immature small ungulate &amp; unid.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20253</td>
<td>7.8g pig, sheep/goat and small ungulate &amp; unid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20274</td>
<td>1.3g cattle and large ungulate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20364</td>
<td>1.4g pig &amp; unid.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20459</td>
<td>1.2g immature pig &amp; immature unid.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20469</td>
<td>2.4g mature pig &amp; unid.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20471</td>
<td>10.5g sheep/goat, immature ungulate &amp; unid.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20479</td>
<td>4.8g pig, sheep/goat &amp; unid.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

List of cremation burials from Westhampnett with indeterminate calcined animal remains

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Burial No.</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20008</td>
<td>1.5g immature unid.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20018</td>
<td>0.5g immature unid.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20039</td>
<td>0.1g unid.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20045</td>
<td>0.1g immature unid.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20051</td>
<td>0.4g immature unid.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20057</td>
<td>1.1g immature unid.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20071</td>
<td>0.2g mature unid.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20089</td>
<td>0.5g unid.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20091</td>
<td>0.6g immature unid.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20092</td>
<td>0.4g unid.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20235</td>
<td>0.1g unid.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20280</td>
<td>0.9g unid.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

List of cremation burials from Westhampnett with calcined remains identified as ungulates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Burial No.</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20001</td>
<td>2.1g cremated immature small ungulate &amp; unid.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20023</td>
<td>2.2g mature small ungulate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20025</td>
<td>1.9g immature small ungulate &amp; unid.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20202</td>
<td>1.7g immature small ungulate &amp; unid.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
At King Harry Lane, it was noted that in eight of the graves containing calcined animal remains (9.4%) they were associated with the bones of children/adolescents and two (2.4%) were found with dual cremation burials. At Westhampnett calcined animal bone was found in the majority of cases with the remains of adults (91.6%). However, in two graves (5.6%) age was not determined and in another animal remains was found associated with a dual cremation (20459) of an older adult with an infant/juvenile (2.8%). At Westhampnett, again, there is evidence for the inclusion of joints and, in particular, for the deposition of more than one joint in a single cremation burial (Fulford & Creighton 1998). In Grave 20021, front and back leg portions of both a pig and sheep/goat were present, indicating that a substantial proportion of the animals must have been placed on the pyre. It is also clear, as at King Harry Lane, that piglets and lambs were specially chosen for sacrifice, and that this rite was appropriate only to adults (Fitzpatrick 1997).

It should be noted that the amount of human bone found in the graves included in the discussion ranges from 15.6g (Westhampnett 20337) to 990g (North Shoebury 1232). This suggests that only a portion of the expected bone (1000-2400g from modern crematoria; McKinley 1997, 68) was collected for burial and therefore correspondingly low percentages of animal remains may also be envisaged. In the majority of examples this was found to be the case, but two graves are clearly different. One of the cremation burials from Bancroft (10) contained 200g of cremated pig remains this was thoroughly mixed with a large quantity of human calcined bone.
(900g) (Williams & Zeepvat 1994). It is possible that in this particular grave the collection of a quantity of both animal and human remains was deemed important. However, a unique example is represented by the isolated ‘mirror burial’ from Latchmere Green, the mixed deposit of human and animal remains weighed 1255g (Fulford & Creighton 1998). Upon examination it was revealed that 465g of the remains came from an adult human and 790g from species of pig. Not only is this the largest deposit of calcined animal bone from the study but it is almost double the weight of the human bone. This could be symbolic of the person’s status; the isolated grave was found on the south-facing slope of a low hill and was associated with a bronze mirror, or perhaps it is indicative of the associated rituals and feasting that may have taken place?

Pig remains appear to dominate the assemblage of calcined animal bone deposited with cremation burials in the late Iron Age/early Roman period. Of the eleven mortuary sites with evidence of cremated animal bone, four are dominated by pig: King Harry Lane, Bancroft, Biddenham Loop and Latchmere Green. However, it should be taken into account that not only is this a small sample but the material from King Harry Lane dominates it. Other species are present and at Westhampnett, the tendency to select sheep/goat as well as pig to accompany human cremations is reflected in the analysis, where sheep/goat is present in 8 of the 36 (22.2%) cremation burials containing calcined animal remains. Sheep remains were also recovered from the North Shoebury cremation burial and in three examples from King Harry Lane (3.5%). Interestingly, the second most frequent species found in association with the cremation burials at King Harry Lane is bird, most probably chicken. At Westhampnett, even in a small sample the absence of domestic fowl bones is notable
in comparison. At King Harry Lane birds were included in 24.7% of the total of burials (13 pig & birds; 8 birds only) with cremated animal and bird remains, and this also compares with late Iron Age cemeteries in France (Méniel 1993). Fitzpatrick (1997) suggested that the absence of birds from the Westhampnett burials may be due to chronological factors rather than species selection.

Finally, at the four remaining sites included in the analysis very different activities appear to have taken place. At Baldock and Welwyn Garden City, the inclusion of the bear phalanges appears to be connected with the disposal of the deceased, with the individual wrapped in a bear skin when placed on the pyre. Furthermore the number and types of species represented at the Stanway and Folly Lane sites is perhaps indicative of more complicated rituals perhaps associated with feasting. Pigs, birds and sheep dominate the assemblages, large mammals are present in restricted numbers, however it is possible that their large size counted against them being incorporated into the mortuary rites. Perhaps most important is the fact that the analysis highlighted that many graves containing calcined animal remains are associated with other types of pyre objects (Biddenham Loop, Bancroft, King Harry Lane, Westhampnett, Latchmere Green, Stanway, Folly Lane, Welwyn Garden City, and North Shoebury).

Table 4.8: List of cremation burials with calcined animal remains (excluding King Harry Lane and Westhampnett)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Burial No.</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Biddenham Loop S470</td>
<td>Calcined pig remains including the right shaft humerus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cunning Man 1</td>
<td>Calcined bird remains</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bancroft 10</td>
<td>200 g calcined pig remains and several unburnt pig bones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bancroft 14</td>
<td>30 g calcined pig remains</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Shoebury 1367</td>
<td>Calcined vertebrae fragments, epiphyses and tooth of ?sheep and unburnt chicken bones, small mammal rib and articulated pig vertebrae</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stanway Chamber AF25</td>
<td>5.4g calcined cattle/horse teeth (context 512) and (context 528) additional small amount including pig molar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stanway Chamber BF6</td>
<td>111.4g of probable burnt horse tooth fragments</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Observations 4.7

This chapter has demonstrated that it is possible to distinguish between objects committed to the pyre and those deposited intact at the interment stage. The following points outline the preliminary conclusions resulting from the analysis.

- A minimum of c.265 graves from 35 sites yielded evidence of burnt metalwork, glass, pottery, animal remains, wooden structures and worked bone objects. This represents a small proportion of the total number of graves (c.1200) but it is difficult to draw clear distinctions due to the inherent problems of the data. Unfortunately in many instances detailed recording and analysis of grave fills and calcined bone deposits was not conducted and information regarding the presence or absence of tiny quantities of debris is unknown. However, one of the main aims of the study was to draw attention to this type of material and to highlight the need to distinguish between different deposits. The discovery of numerous cemeteries over the last ten years paralleled by the adoption of detailed analytical enquiry (McKinley 1997b; 2000; Pearce 1997b) has advanced the development and interpretation of late Iron Age mortuary behaviour. For instance objects which accompany the deceased on the pyre clearly represent a different set of rituals to those conducted later in the sequence. They may originate from garments the body was clothed in, offerings from the assembled mourners or objects used in the preparation or transportation of the corpse.
It is evident that graves of all types included pyre material ranging from small, shallow pits accompanied by a single pottery vessel and deposits of calcined remains, to the ‘Welwyn-type’ burials, and the mortuary chambers from Stanway and Folly Lane. Furthermore a minimum of ten sites share a number of distinct alliances: the deposit of a ‘token’ quantity of burnt material, a focal or isolated position, and a large circular or square grave pit. In the instances where one or more graves containing pyre debris occur in the same cemetery they appear to share common patterns of alignment. The inclusion of this type of material in grave fills could be viewed as purely coincidental but the specific nature of the similarities between the sites can not be easily dismissed. It is suggested that the inclusion of ‘token’ burnt objects is comparable to the incomplete nature of the majority of calcined bone recovered from many of the graves. These deposits make a symbolic statement of the transformative properties of fire and the successful incorporation of the deceased into the Otherworld (see chapter 6.4 and 7).