APPENDIX B: THE HUMAN CREMATIONS

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This material consists of 9 cremations, without exception all the lots are in exceedingly poor condition. The following is a brief description of each.

Burial 1. Probably female. Adult or possibly adolescent. This consists of a few hundred minute fragments: the largest (? tibial shaft) is 27·5 mm long. A few pieces are identifiable and include fragments of the proximal end of a humeral shaft (this scrap is bronze-stained); of a carpal lunate bone; of the head and condyles of a femur; a few millimetres of linea aspera and some slivers of tibial shaft. Firing has been carried out efficiently. Collection of the remains was bad. Only one individual can be identified. Animal bones were not found.

Burial 2. Male. Young adult. This consists of a few hundred very small fragments. The largest (64 mm) is a sliver of tibial shaft. Also identifiable are: small fragments of cranial vault (some with unfused sutures); part of a R. petrous temporal; vertebral and rib fragments; a scrap of acetabulum; splinters of long bone shafts. The firing was efficient. Collection poor. Only one body identified. No animal bones found.

Burial 3. Unsexable. Infant. Several hundred, mostly minute, scraps. The largest (47 mm) is part of a femoral shaft. Only 2 fragments more than 30 mm long. Identifiable are: many flakes of cranial vault; the L. petrous temporal; 2 crowns of deciduous teeth (a molar and an incisor); fragments of vertebrae, ribs and long bone splinters. Firing was efficient. Collection moderately competent. One small fragment of the shaft of an adult bone (? tibia) was present among these infant bones. The age of the infant was probably about 9-10 months. No animal remains were recognised.

Burial 4. Unsexable. Infant ?3 - 6 months. A few dozen minute scraps, the largest (23 × 21 mm) is part of the occipital squama. Nothing else is more than 17 mm long. Identifiable are: tiny flakes of cranial vault; scraps of both petrous temporals; the partly formed crown of an unerupted molar; pieces of vertebrae, ribs and long bone shafts. Firing was efficient. Collection moderately so. Only one individual present. No animal bones identified.

Burial 5. Unsexable. Adult. About 20 fragments, mostly very tiny. The largest fragment is part of a petrous temporal. Nothing else is identifiable except a scrap of cranial base and a few flakes of long bone shafts. Firing was efficient. Collection bad. Only one body identified. No animal bones recognisable.

Burial 6. Probably female. Adult. Several hundred very tiny scraps, the largest 60·5 mm and 58 mm are from the tibial shaft and are the only pieces more than 35 mm long. Identifiable are: flakes of cranial vault (some with unfused suture); part of a temporal glenoid fossa; fragments from the proximal end of an ulna; the head of a femur, of a tibia and of a 1st metatarsal; half a finger phalange; slivers from most long bone shafts, scraps of vertebrae. Three fragments of long bone shaft, one probably the tibia, show clear evidence of chronic periostitis. There is longitudinal striation of the kind which is commonly found in early, especially Anglo-Saxon, leg bones. Between these striae, which lie about 2 mm apart, are occasional fine pits (0·25 mm or less in diameter). This appearance indicates a reaction to low grade inflammation or vascular congestion. There is a slight underfiring of several fragments. Collection of the remains has been poor. Only one individual present. A few very small unidentifiable fragments may perhaps be of animal origin.

Burial 7. Male (? youngish adult). Many hundreds of fragments. Identifiable are: pieces of cranial vault (some with unfused sutures or barely starting fusion); a short length of mandible showing that 3 incisors had been present at death although none now survive; scraps of vertebrae, sacrum and ribs; fragments from the heads of humerus, radius and femur; a distal articular fragment of radius; a flake of talus; splinters of metatarsals and slivers of most long bone shafts. Firing was efficient. Collection moderately poor. No animal bones were detected. One tiny fragment of superior orbital margin of a young child is present among these remains.

Burial 8. Unsexable. Infant ?8 - 12 weeks. A few hundred minute fragments, mostly cranial vault. The largest is 31 mm long. Almost nothing is precisely identifiable here but there are splinters of long bone shafts. Firing was efficient. Collection fair, in view of the youth of the subject. No animal bones were found. Two very small fragments of adult long bone shafts (radius or ulna) are present with these remains.

Burial 9. Probably female. Adult (? young). A few dozen tiny scraps. The largest (36 mm) is probably femoral shaft. Identifiable are: a few fragments of thin cranial vault (some with unfused sutures); a fragment of rib; several splinters of long bone shafts. Firing was efficient. Collection bad. Only one body recognised. No animal bones found.

Summary

Sex. Nothing especially remarkable was found here. Two cremations were apparently male, 3 female or probably female. One

adult and the 3 infants were unsexable. This 3 : 2 ratio of females to males is quite insignificant in view of the small numbers and bad condition of the material.

Numbers. All 9 cremations appeared to consist essentially of single burials only. The presence of 2 additional fragments in one cremation (no. 8) and one in each of nos. 3 and 7 is insufficient to accept these as deliberate double cremations or burials. The intrusive element must, however, raise archaeological questions about the technique of cremation. They may, perhaps, suggest that these bodies had been cremated on a floor where previous cremations had taken place. Other explanations are no doubt possible.

Firing. Virtually all fragments had been efficiently fired. Very slight underfiring was found only in no. 6 but this was trivial. In view of the very small percentage of each burial which survived it is difficult to accept this finding as representative of what really occured.

Collection. In all cremations the collection of fragments had been done with gross inefficiency – if we may judge from what survives. If this does indicate what really happened, it must throw some light on these people's attitude towards the ritual, or perhaps the morticiens' slovenliness in the execution of their duties. Alternatively, collection of fragments may have been efficient but much was thereafter dispersed, perhaps as souvenirs among friends of the departed. It is noteworthy that, proportionately greater care seems to have been taken to recover the infant remains than those of the adults.

Anatomical selection. Unlike many cremation series, it is difficult to distinguish a pattern of anatomical selection and preservation of the remains. Sometimes, cranial fragments are strikingly absent; occasionally they almost monopolise the urn. Here, despite the overall paucity of the remains, fragments seem to have been preserved randomly from most parts of the body, as far as it is possible to judge. Again, some exception to this is found with the infants, among whom cranial vault predominates.

Pathology. The only pathological condition to be recognised was the case of tibial periostitis (no. 6). This is a common finding in early burials. Its cause is always uncertain and probably multifactorial. In Anglo-Saxons it is likely often to be due to trauma from agricultural and other occupational injuries.

Animal bones. Unlike some cremation series, animal bones were not obtrusive here. Burial 6 had a few fragments of mammalian bone but identification was not possible.