

# DEATHWAYS OF THE DUROTRIGES: RECONSTRUCTING IDENTITY THROUGH ARCHAEO THANATOLOGY IN LATER IRON AGE SOUTHERN BRITAIN

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## **Introduction**

Through its careful and systematic observations of funerary deposits and their content, archaeo thanatology lends itself well to the reconstruction of funerary practices and rituals, and, in the process, to establishing normative patterns of the funerary ritual through which a community expresses its identity. Despite debate on whether or not it is possible to accurately reconstruct such intangible aspects of life as behaviour and identity using archaeological evidence (Hodder, 1982, 1994; Metcalf and Huntington, 1991; Jones, 2002), ethnographic, sociological, and even forensic studies demonstrate that the conduct of peoples and the identities it reflects leave material traces in patterns that are at least broadly consistent. It is therefore possible through such observations to reconstruct, albeit partially, past actions and consequently the identities they express.

The current chapter presents an exceptional assemblage from the modern county of Dorset (United Kingdom), where local geology, mainly chalk, offers excellent conditions for bone preservation, whilst the Iron Age communities of the region, in the late pre-Roman Iron Age

known as the Durotriges, practised a more formal tradition of burying their dead than was common to much of Britain at the time. The discovery at Winterborne Kingston (Dorset; Figure 1) of human burials dating from the later Iron Age to the late Roman period enabled the application of an archaeothanatological approach not previously brought to bear on British burials for these dates. This series of inhumations also permits comparisons through time, revealing a range of nuances and variations in treatment that would otherwise have remained undetected.

### *The British Iron Age*

The British Iron Age is a rather paradoxical time from the viewpoint of biological anthropology. Archaeological remains from this period (conventionally regarded in southern Britain to date from c. 750 BC to the Claudian invasion by Rome in AD 43) present the most rich and comprehensive picture of life available for any specified time in British prehistory. The data presented by earthwork structures, domestic dwellings, landscape divisions, artefacts of all kinds, faunal remains and environmental deposits combine to reveal a rich and complex society occupying a landscape that was both densely settled and, with many regions providing evidence for landscape divisions, consistent with a large and thriving population. The rich nature of the overall archaeological record for the time is equalled only by the relative paucity of human remains from Iron Age Britain. Human burials are all but unknown for many regions, despite geological conditions that are conducive to bone survival in areas where the burial record for other periods is comprehensive. The most commonly accepted explanation for this absence of evidence assumes people must have disposed of their dead by means that are not obvious archaeologically, such as cremation (without subsequent collection and burial of the burned bone) or excarnation (Carr and Knüsel, 1997). Some support is given for the latter by the phenomenon of 'stray' human bones and bone fragments that often occur in

anthropogenic contexts on Iron Age sites in the absence of any signs of formal burial. In consequence of this general dearth of skeletal remains, the overall contribution of biological anthropology towards understanding Iron Age life has been less comprehensive than for other periods which have a more abundant burial record.

Moreover, as is often the case in Britain, a large proportion of the sample of skeletal material from Iron Age contexts that exists in museum collections, was excavated during the earlier and middle twentieth century and recorded to varying standards during recovery (for examples see: Wheeler, 1943; Cornwall and Bennett-Clark, 1954; Brewster, 1971; Keepax, 1979; Cunliffe, 1984; Dent, 1984; Aitken and Aitken, 1990). Opportunities to apply modern standards and approaches to the recording and interpretation of Iron Age burials *in situ* are relatively infrequent and often comprise only single examples when they occur.

#### *The Durotriges: a people apart?*

Ptolemy's *Geographia* Book II, Ch. 2 (second century AD) cites a people referred to as the Durotriges living in an area that would place them broadly within the modern English counties of Dorset and southern Wiltshire. The notion that groups named by Ptolemy as occupying parts of Britain at the time of the Roman conquest might be distinguishable through archaeological investigation on the basis of differences in material culture has proved difficult for much of Britain, leading some authors to conclude that such 'tribal' identities may be a Roman invention aimed at dividing the population for administrative purposes rather than reflecting the lived reality of first century AD Britons (Wigley, 2001; Mattingly, 2004; Moore, 2011). However, such post-modern re-appraisals of classical sources can, in turn, be challenged, at least in the above-named counties where, among the named tribes in southern Britain, the Durotriges are probably the most archaeologically distinctive. Across an

area roughly equal to modern Dorset, the coinage, pottery, settlement-forms and burial practices of the Durotriges distinguish them from their immediate neighbours (Gale, 2003, 125-26; Papworth, 2011, 9; Stewart and Russell, 2017, 1-5). Arguably, however, it is their distinctive burial rite which is most commonly deployed to define and categorise Durotrigian identity.

Unlike the majority of other later Iron Age societies, the Durotriges appear to have preferred inhumation, rather than less archaeologically detectable forms of body disposal, such as cremation or excarnation (Whimster, 1981, 37; Papworth, 2008, 82-6; Sharples, 2010, 277-80). Although there is variation in orientation and associations, the 'typical' Durotrigian burial is set in a flexed position, usually on the right side with lower limbs drawn up towards the chest and cardinal orientation of the head towards north (Whimster, 1981; Papworth, 2008, 83; Sharples, 2010, 227-8; Russell *et al.*, 2014, 220-1; Harding, 2016, 85). Grave goods are comparatively rare but, where found, principally comprise locally manufactured handled tankards and bead-rim bowls (Papworth, 2008, 83-4; Harding, 2016, 84), perhaps originally containing food or drink for the deceased, as well as imported Gallo-Belgic and Samian wares of the early and mid-first century AD (Whimster, 1981, 50; Aitken and Aitken, 1990, 79; Russell *et al.*, 2017, 108-9). Dress accessories, where encountered, include simple copper alloy brooches at the head or chest, bangles and finger or toe rings and, occasionally, glass beads (Wheeler, 1943, 351-60; Bailey, 1967, 147-59; Aitken and Aitken, 1990, 76-9; Russell *et al.*, 2014; 2017). In exceptional cases, more unusual forms of metalwork, such as decorated bronze mirrors, toiletry sets, swords or other weapons such as spearheads, have been noted (Bailey, 1967; Aitken and Aitken, 1990; Fitzpatrick, 1997; Russell *et al.*, 2019).

Inclusions of joints of meat, when included, may have been subject to a degree of gender selection. At Whitcombe, for example, it has been suggested that sheep / goat was associated exclusively with male interments whilst pig was more common with females (Aitken and

Aitken, 1990; Harding, 2016, 85, 181). In Maiden Castle, only male graves appear to have included cattle bone, whereas joints of lamb were found with males and females (Harding, 2016, 181). Notwithstanding, this gender distinction around food offerings does not appear to be the case for other burials identified elsewhere (Aitken and Aitken, 1990; Davies *et al.*, 2002, 122; Murden, 2014; Harding, 2016, 181).

Durotrigian inhumations, in both shallow, oval-shaped grave-cuts and stone-lined cists (Papworth, 2008, 83; Harding, 2016, 84) can be found as apparently isolated single burials or clustered together in small cemeteries (e.g., Bailey, 1967; Aitken and Aitken, 1990; Davies *et al.*, 2002; Valentin, 2003). Sometimes these burials appear to have deliberately targeted earlier features, cemeteries being placed within the partially backfilled remains of long-abandoned monuments, such as at Winterborne Kingston (Dorset, UK) (Russell *et al.*, 2014, 220-1; Russell *et al.*, 2017, 106-8), at Maiden Castle (Dorset, UK) (Wheeler, 1943, 357-58) and probably also at Spettisbury Rings (Dorset, UK) (Akerman, 1859, 188; Gresham, 1939). Perhaps the appropriation of disused monuments for burial was an effective way of re-writing the meaning of earlier monuments and laying claim to them as their own.

Dating the so-called 'Durotrigian cultural package' has proved particularly difficult for the archaeological indicators comprising distinctive artefacts, settlement-types and burial practices, which vary in both quality and quantity across the region, making it difficult to consider the Durotriges as a wholly unified tribal group (Papworth, 2008, 374). The development of a distinctive identity on coins, from the mid-first century BC, however (Cottam *et al.*, 2010, 110-13), may indicate the late evolution of a common economic and political structure, possibly due to a strengthening of social relationships and alliances (Papworth, 2008, 375).

Quite how long the cultural traits of the Durotriges were maintained, following the Roman invasion, is unclear, although the distinctive burial practice seems to have continued at least until the latter second century AD (Papworth, 2008, 376). Some evidence suggests that Durotrigian coins were still being minted into the second century AD (de Jersey, 2000; Papworth, 2008, 377), whilst regionally distinctive black-burnished ware pottery continued at least into the fourth century AD (Allen and Fulford, 1996, 223-81).

*Tracing transitions: the Durotriges project 2009-2017*

The Durotriges Project (Bournemouth University 2009-2017) was designed to investigate native and Roman settlement in central southwestern Britain. The project examined the transition from 'Durotrigian' (native) occupation to a more securely 'Roman' settlement footprint, the possible survival of native culture patterns into the Roman period, and the extent of both native and Roman influences into the fifth and sixth centuries AD.

Fieldwork was conducted in four stages. Stage 1, on land near Winterborne Kingston in Dorset, focused upon an Early Iron Age 'banjo' enclosure (these are small ditched enclosures, broadly circular with a single elongated entrance) and Durotrigian cemetery (Russell *et al.*, 2014), whilst stage 2 investigated a small, stone-built Roman villa and a sub-Roman longhouse with associated agricultural features and cemetery (Russell *et al.*, 2015). Stage 3 commenced in 2015, concentrating upon an extensive area of Iron Age roundhouse settlement and associated burials (Russell *et al.*, 2016) and stage 4, with a final season in 2017, focusing on an enclosed Durotrigian farmstead and associated prehistoric features (Russell *et al.*, 2017). Formal human burials were found throughout the project, facilitating a diachronic analysis of both burial treatment and the individuals represented in a specific area of

landscape over a period of centuries, as well as permitting a comparison with other examples recorded from the region of southern Britain that appears to represent Durotrigian territory.

The form of inhumation burials encountered divide into four phases that equate roughly with successive phases of occupation across the excavated areas. The first of these (phase I) comprised the re-use of five storage pits cut into the chalk in and around the banjo enclosure as funerary contexts, into which human bodies were placed (Russell *et al.*, 2014, 200). These inhumations date from around 250-100 BC and are more correctly characterised simply as 'later Iron Age' or proto-Durotrigian, rather than Durotrigian burials *per se* as they lack the aspects of material culture that unambiguously identify the latter. Phase II is represented by eight human burials close to Later Bronze Age ditch systems and Middle Iron Age roundhouses. These appear to be early examples, perhaps the earliest yet discovered, of Durotrigian style burials, placed in formally dug, shallow graves. Later, at a time when the Middle Iron Age banjo enclosure was no longer in use and the ditch bounding this feature had largely filled in, the now defunct site came to be re-used as a burial ground into which a further 17 inhumations were placed in formal grave cuts rather than pits (Phase III). The boundary of this new 'cemetery' appears to have been defined by the course of the old enclosure ditch with all but two of the 17 burials recovered being found within (Russell *et al.*, 2014, 220). The phase IV burials encountered during the project were six formal, supine inhumations wearing Roman style hobnailed footwear and buried in coffins. This latter group, five of whom were buried in a small square enclosure close to the villa, appear to date from the mid-fourth century AD (Russell *et al.*, 2015, 158-61). Whilst a variety of comparisons between this group and those of the earlier phases are warranted, these Romano-British style burials have not been included in the current consideration of funerary taphonomy. Two further Early Bronze Age burials and a disturbed burial containing only two forearms with hands and no other contextual information have also been excluded from this study.

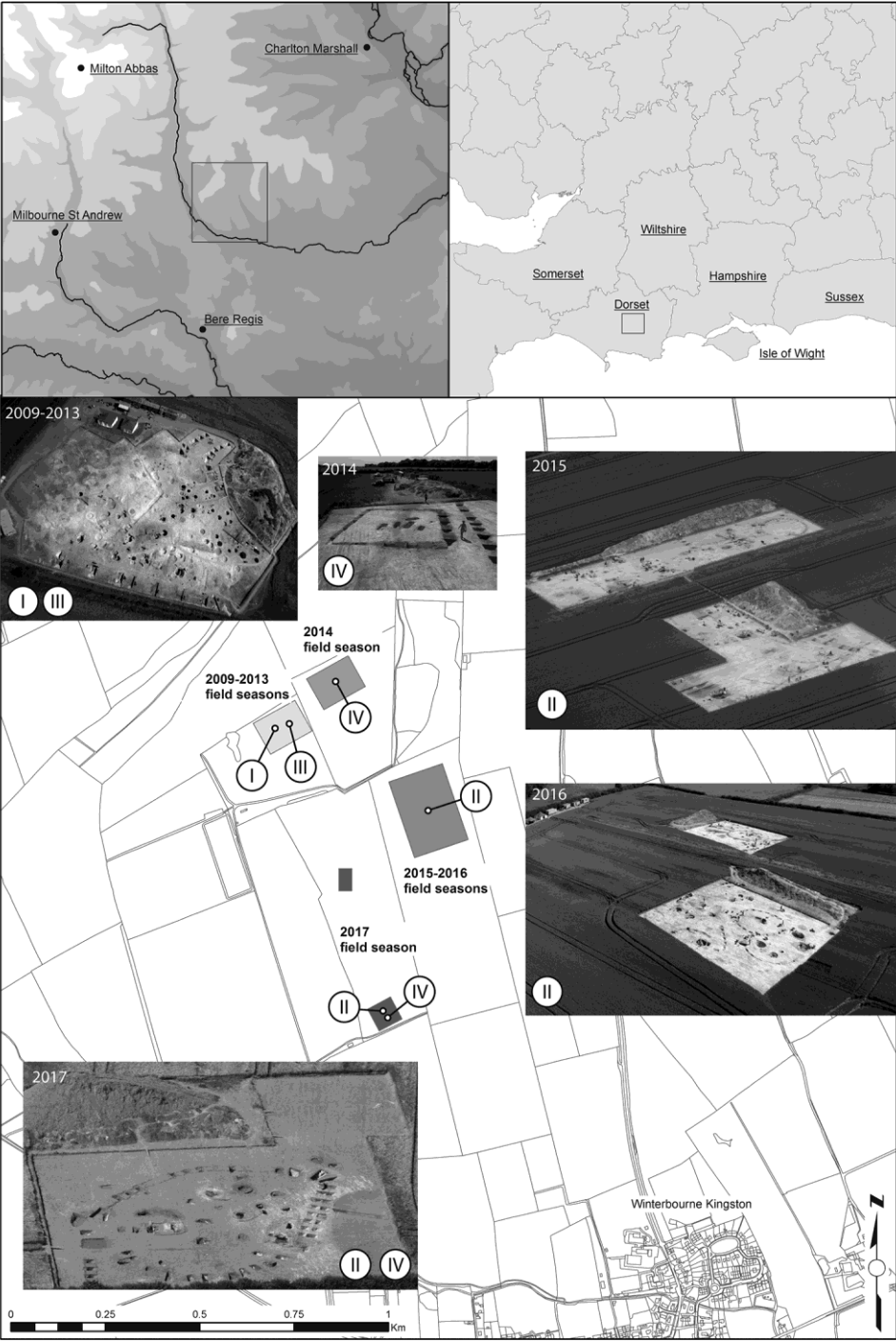


Figure 1. Site map showing the location of Winterborne Kingston (Dorset, southwest Britain), and the different excavation areas and the types of burials by phase within each area.



## Methods

### *Archaeoethanatology*

The reader should refer to the first part of the book for details on archaeoethanatology and its methods. The archaeoethanatomical approach was applied both in the field (2015-2017) and to archival material from the excavations. Individuals were considered flexed if both lower limbs were flexed at an angle equal or inferior to  $90^\circ$  at the hip and the knee joint or semi-flexed if at least one lower limb was flexed at an angle superior to  $90^\circ$  at either the hip or the knee joint.

### *Osteological data collection methods*

To assess the morphological variations in the pelvis, Klales, Ousley and Vollner's (2012) revised version of the Phenice (1969) method was employed, alongside an assessment of the expression of the greater sciatic notch (Walker, 2005). The morphological variations of the cranium and mandible were assessed using Buikstra and Ubelaker's (1994) descriptions and comparative illustrations as modified by Walrath, Turner and Bruzek (2004).

Age assessment was based upon skeletal and dental development and degeneration, applying multiple methods where possible, but with the greatest emphasis placed on the pubic symphysis, auricular surface and sternal rib ends (Loth and İşcan, 1989; Brooks and Suchey, 1990; Scheuer and Black, 2000; Yoder, Ubelaker and Powell, 2001; Buckberry and Chamberlain, 2002). For the purposes of the current study, individuals assessed to have been less than 15 years old at death were excluded, with those aged 15 or above considered 'adults' on the basis that pre-modern societies are likely to have placed more emphasis on reproductive status than chronological age in defining such socially constructed categories (Laz, 1998; Clark-Kazak, 2009).

## **The proto-Durotrigian and Durotrigian burials**

### *Phase I: Individuals in pits*

These comprised five re-used storage pits, each containing the remains of one individual: one female, three males and one juvenile of unknown sex. All adults were assessed as being over 25 years old. The disposition of the individuals varied (Table 1). The female (5059) (Figure 3A) and one male (413) (Figure 2A) were laid on a north (head) – south (feet) axis, with their bodies facing west. The two other males and the juvenile, were oriented on an east (head) – west (feet) axis, their lower limbs and cranio-facial skeleton turned towards the north, except for 741 whose cranio-facial skeleton was turned toward his abdomen, while his lower limbs were turned north (Figure 2A). Four individuals were flexed (Figure 2A-D). Female 5059 had one lower limb flexed and the other semi-flexed (Figure 3A). One male (413) was lying on his right side (Figure 2A). Three individuals were supine, but slightly tilted towards their right sides, two of whom had their heads and lower limbs turned towards the same side, the third, as already mentioned, had his face turned towards his chest and abdomen (741; Figure 2B). The female (5059) (Figure 3) was prone, with her head and flexed lower limbs towards the left. Upper limbs presented a wider range of degrees of flexion (Table 1; Figures 2 and 3), with four individuals presenting flexed or semi-flexed upper limbs, and one individual having one extended upper limb and the other flexed (413) (Figure 2A).

The female in deposit 5059 lay prone at the bottom of the pit on a bed of refuse of animal bones which showed signs of weathering (Figure 3A). Her head was tilted towards her left shoulder.

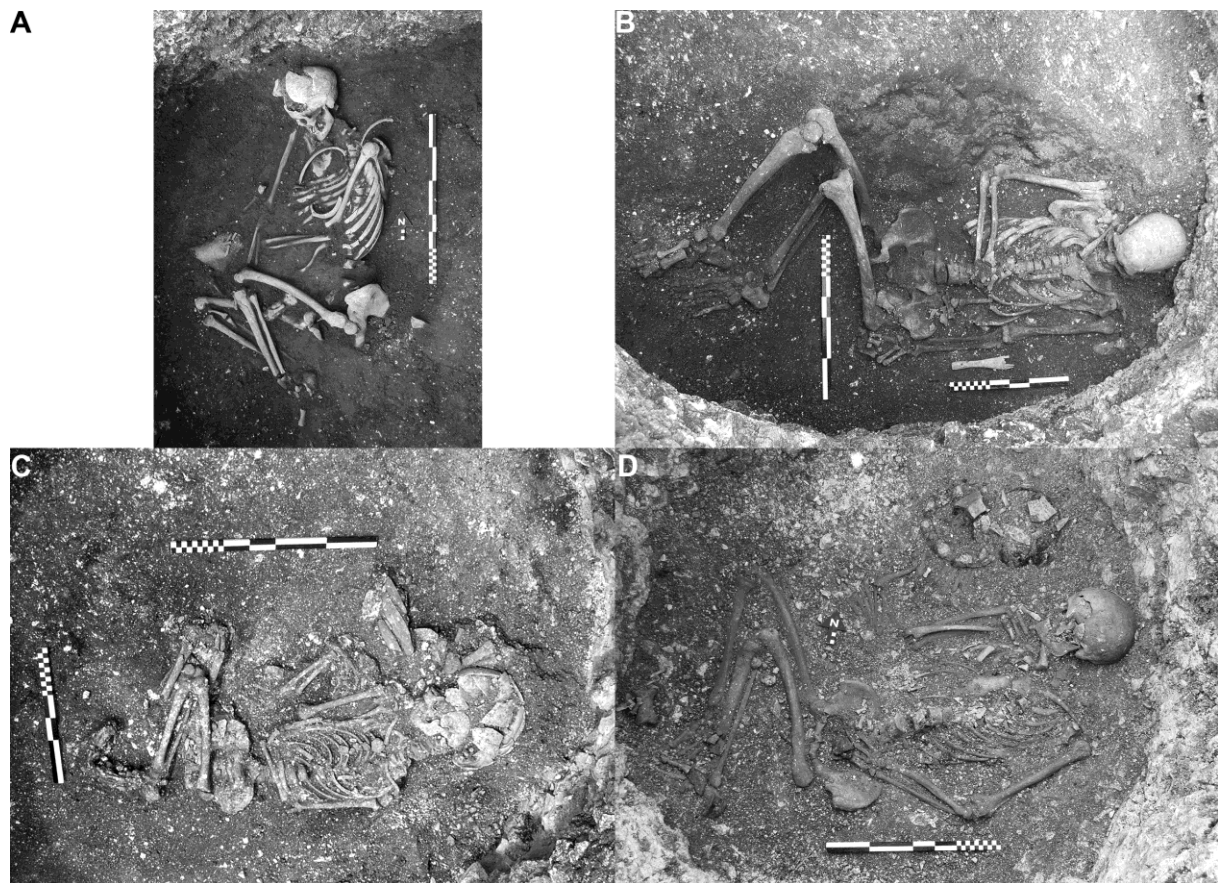


Figure 2. Four pit burials. A 413; B 741; C 1076; D 11017. North is up.

Her upper limbs were flexed at the elbows with her hands resting anterior to her abdomen. Her right lower limb was flexed (angle inferior to  $90^{\circ}$ ) and left lower limb was semi-flexed (angle superior to  $90^{\circ}$  at the hip). The right flexed elbow touched the distal right ribs.

With one notable exception, none of the skeletal elements of any of the individuals were located outside of the original volume occupied by the body, indicating decomposition occurred in a filled space (Figure 2). The exception was one rib of individual 413, which had been displaced superiorly and posteriorly to the left shoulder of the individual, outside the body's original volume. This skeletal element was found displaced and its position, as recorded by the image, is therefore not a consequence of excavation but of some previous taphonomic process. Furthermore, other upper torso bones (two additional ribs, the hyoid, the sternum, the left clavicle) were also displaced but within the original body's volume, in a

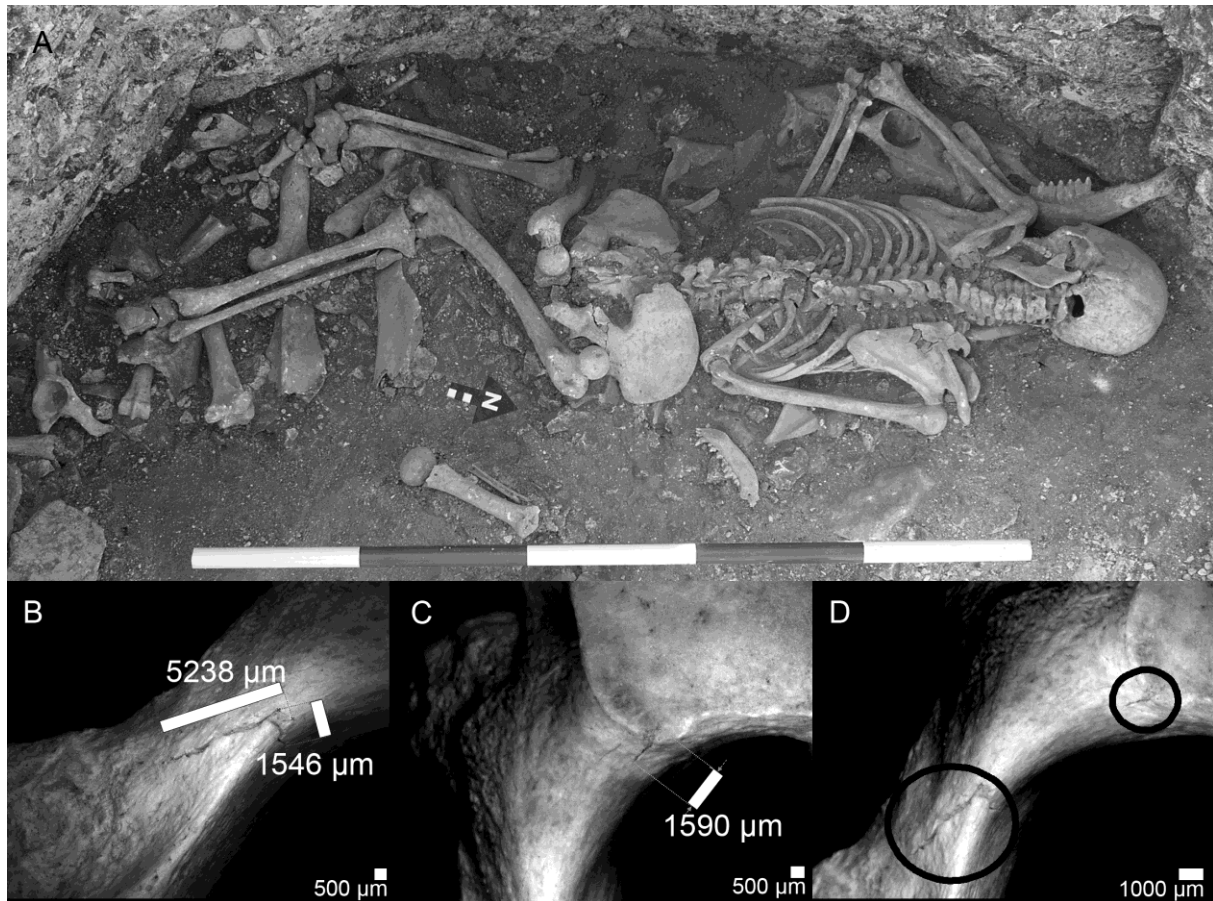


Figure 3. A. Individual 5059 in a refuse pit (north to the right). B-D. Perimortem cut marks on the superior left aspect of her axis, superior views. B. Anterior is towards upper right corner. C. Anterior is up. D. Anterior is towards upper right corner.

space delimited superiorly by the neck, to one side by the left ribcage and hip, to the other side by the right upper limb and both knees, and inferiorly by the right leg. The left clavicle, for example, was in the area of the abdominal cavity and the sternum in the angle between the left thigh and the left leg. The most plausible explanation is that the displacement is a consequence of animal burrowing.

It is also possible the bodies were wrapped or fully clothed but buried in an empty space, as the pit could have been covered by a lid, and the shroud or clothing would have limited the displacement of the skeletal elements. Two individuals had a brooch each (11017 and 413). The brooch of 11017 was within 2 to 4 cm of the individual's facial skeleton, anterior to the

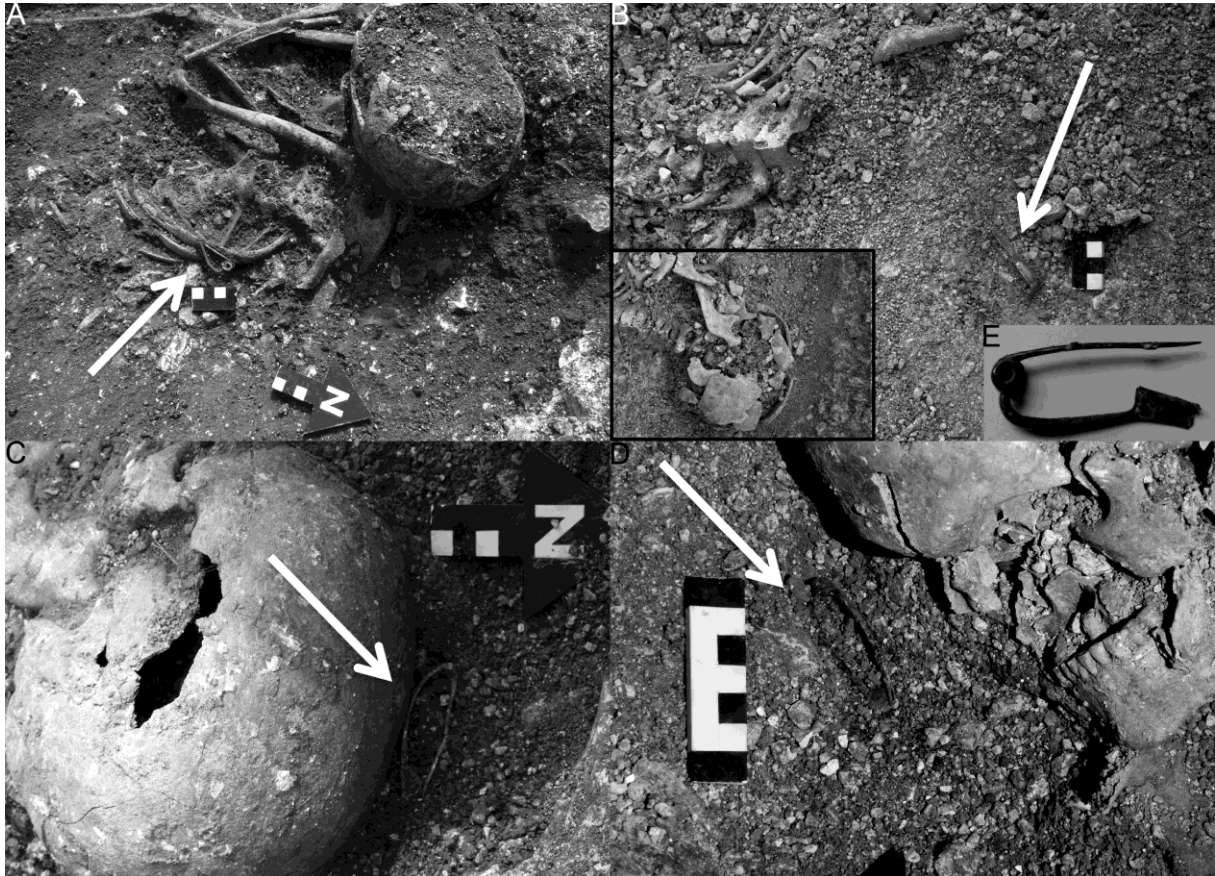


Figure 4. The placement of four of the brooches recovered. A. DBD12 1005; B. 10007; C. 10060; D. 11017; E. Brooch.

nose (Figure 4D). The brooch for 413 was lateral to the right arm. Given these unusual positions it is unlikely the items were worn on clothing, but may have been used to fasten a shroud around the body.

All individuals but one (5059 F) were buried with grave goods, in the form of a joint of meat (pork) and/or later Iron Age vessels. One also had a decorated 'weaving comb' carved from animal bone (741) and two, as previously mentioned, had a brooch each (11017 and 413).

The female in deposit (5059) had no grave goods but lay on a 'bed' of refuse which included pottery, shale, pebbles and cattle, horse and dog bones showing signs of weathering. Additionally, this individual displayed signs of perimortem sharp force trauma to her first and second cervical vertebrae (Figure 3B-D).

Table 1. Deposits by phase, listing the sex, age category, orientation, position and degree of flexion.

Burial Number	Sex	Age	Orientation*	Position**	Degree of flexion	Comments
<b>Phase I</b>						
741	M	Ad	E-W/N/W	S-R	elbows 90°; hips 90°; knees 45°	
1076	?	Juv	E-W/N/N	S-R	R elbow 90°; L elbow 45°; hips 90°; knees <45°	
5059	F	Ad	N-S/W/W	P-L	elbows <90°; R hip and knee >=90°; L hip and knee <90°	
11017	M	Ad	E-W/N/N	S-R	R elbow >90°; L elbow <45°; hips 90°; knee 45°	
413	M	Ad	N-S/W/W	OR	R elbow extended; L elbow >90°; hips 90°; knees 45°	
<b>Phase II</b>						
348	F	Ad	SE-/NE/NW	OR	R elbow extended; L elbow >90°; R hip 90°; L hip 45°; knees <45°	
699	F?	Ad	E-W/N/N	OR	elbows, hips, knees <45°	over 782
721	?	Ad	SW-NE/S/?	S-R	R elbow <45°; L elbow 90°; hips 45°; knees <45°	disturbed; cranium, mandible and upper torso missing
782	M	Ad	E-W/S/S	OL	elbows extended; hips 90°; knees <45°	under 699
787	F	Ad	E-W/N/N	S-R	elbows 90°; hips 90°; knees <=45°	over 803
803	F?	Ad	E-W/N/W	S-R	R elbow <45°; L elbow 45°; hips <45°; knees <45°	under 787
966	M	Ad	E-W/N/W	S-R	R elbow 90°; L elbow 45°; hips <45°; knees <45°	
1005	?	Juv				Not included in analysis
<b>Phase III</b>						
5251	M?	Ad	SE-/NE/NE	S-R	R elbow 45°; L elbow 90°; hips 90°; knees 45°	
5333	M?	16-18yrs	S-N/NW/NW	S-R	elbows 45°; hips 90°; knees <45°	
6136	M?	Ad	S-N/NW/NW	P-L	elbows 45°; hips 45°; knee <45°	
7089	M?	15-18yrs	N-S/NE/NE	S-R	R elbow <45°; L elbow 90°; hips 45°; knee <45°	
10007	F?	Ad	N-S/W/W	P-L	elbows?; hips <45°; knee <45°	
10053	M	Ad	E-W/N/N	S-R	elbows <90°; hips 45°; knees <45°	
10060	F	Ad	NE-W/NW/W	S-R	R elbow <45°; L elbow 90°; hips 90°; knee 45°	
10148	M?	Ad	N-S/W/W	OR	elbows 45°; hips <45°; knee <45°	
11048	F	Ad	N-S/W/W	P-L	R elbow 90°; L elbow 45°; hips <45°; knees <45°	
11069	F	Ad	E-W/N/N	P-L	elbows <45°; hips 45°; knee <45°	
13002	F?	Ad	E-W/N/N?	S-R	R elbow <45°; L elbow?; hips 45°; knees <45°	Cranium, mandible and upper torso missing
066	?	Ad	E-W/N/N	S-R	R elbow <45°; L elbow 90°; hips 90°; knees 45°	
503	?	?				Disturbed; information missing
540	?	Ad	N-S/W/W	P-L	elbows 45°; hips <45°; knees <45°	
1005	?	Adol./YAd	N-S/W/W	OR	R elbow extended; L elbow 45°; hips >90°; knees 45°	
1007	?	Ad	N-S/E/E	P-R	R elbow <45°; L elbow 45°; hips 45°; knees <45°	
1070	?	Ad	SE-NW/NE/NE	OR	R elbow <90°; L elbow 90°; hips 90°; R knee <45°; L knee 45°	

\*Head-feet/ Torso and limbs /Face; \*\*S-R=supine to right; P-L=prone to left; OR= on right; OL=on left, M=male; F=female, Ad=adult, Juv=juvenile, YAd=young adult, Adol.=adolescent

## *Phase II*

This phase comprised seven adults (four females, two males and one undetermined individual) and one juvenile buried in purposefully dug-out individual graves. An archaeoanthatological analysis was not conducted in the field on the juvenile burial (1005), and it was not possible to carry out the analysis from the archival material pertaining to this burial. This burial is therefore excluded from the subsequent analysis and discussion. One burial had been partially cut by subsequent developments and the complete skull and part of the torso were missing (721). The adult deposits broadly conform to the distinctive style of Durotrigian burial (Papworth, 2008, 82-6), flexed bodies lying on their right sides or supine with limbs to the right, with one exception, a male with the limbs to the left (782; Figure 5B). All are flexed, five have their heads to the east and feet to the west, one is aligned southeast to northwest (348), and one is aligned southwest to northeast (721; Table 1). All but two (721 and 782) have their torsos facing north, with the heads turned to face north or west. Individual 782, turned towards his left, was facing south, as is what remains of 721 (Table 1). Female 803 (Figure 5C), whose head had tilted posteriorly and appeared in an inferior view, was looking west towards her feet, but the rest of her body is turned northwards. As for the individuals in phase I, there is variation in the degree of flexion of the upper limbs (extended to flexed; Table 1), but the lower limbs are systematically flexed at the hips at an angle equal or inferior to 90° and at the knees at an angle inferior or equal to 45°.

Unusually, in two cases, pairs of burials were set directly one above the other (699 over 782; and 787 over 803; Figure 5A). The uppermost interments of each of these pairs appear to have been intentionally placed over the previous occupants, not disturbing in any way the lower burials. Stratigraphically, in both cases, the pit for the upper burials cuts into the fill of the lower burials. So the burials are sequential. Yet, at this time, nothing about the disposition of



Figure 5. Four phase II burials. A 699 and the cranium of 782 to the east; B 782; C 803; D. 966. North is up.

these burials can help determine more precisely the relative timing between each burial.

Clearly, the people burying the later individuals knew about the earlier burials and respected them. There may have been some sort of grave marking indicating the location, but they must have also known more or less how deep the earlier bodies were as these were not disturbed, the sediment protecting the earlier burial from any disturbance the second burial may have caused. The length of time between the burials – days, weeks, months, years – is as of yet undetermined.

What few grave goods were identified comprised a black-burnished ware pot, placed at the feet of one burial (721) and a locally produced Gallo-Belgic type butt beaker, a large drinking vessel more commonly manufactured in the early half of the first century AD (Russell *et al.*,



2016, 108-9), placed in the vicinity of the head of another (966). A single fibula copper brooch was found with burial 878, appearing on the lateral side of the left cheek of this individual. He was also buried with a joint of pork placed anterior to his face.

As with the individuals in the pit burials, except individual 803, none of the skeletal elements of the individuals were located outside of the original volume occupied by the body. This is indicative of burial in a filled space. Furthermore, the location of the brooch found on the cheek of 878, is again suggestive of a brooch fastening a shroud or garment used to wrap the body, rather than a piece of clothing worn by the deceased. The shroud would provide a 'wall effect' to contain the skeletal elements within the original volume occupied by the body. In the case of burial 803, the cranium had tilted posteriorly and slipped inferiorly towards the upper chest. This movement, however, as discussed below, is not necessarily contrary to the notion of use of a shroud or of a body in a filled space.

### *Phase III*

This phase comprised the largest number of burials, 17. The individuals were placed in formal dug-out graves in and around the banjo enclosure and consisted of five adult females and four adult males, six undetermined adults, and two male teenagers (over 15 years old). One of the burials (503) was disturbed and only a partial set of remains was recovered representing mainly the torso; it has therefore been left out of the subsequent analysis. The upper and lower limbs of the remaining sixteen individuals were flexed. Seven individuals were placed in a north-south axis (head to feet), two were south to north, four were laid east to west, two southeast to northwest and one was northeast to southwest (Table 1). The head was always turned towards the same side as the limbs, with two exceptions: individual 066 who was supine with his upper and lower limbs turned right but his head turned to face towards his abdomen and his hips, and individual 13002, whose upper torso and cranium and mandible



Figure 6. Four phase III burials. A. 1070; B. 5333; C. 1053; D. 11048. North is up.

were missing, and for whom it was thus not possible to ascertain the orientation of the head. All individuals but one (15/16) were facing (torso and cranio-facial skeleton) a point between the northeast and the west, with only one individual facing towards the east (torso and cranio-facial skeleton; 1007). Six individuals were prone with their limbs to their left (5/6) or to their right sides (1/6), two were lying on their right sides, and the remainder were supine with their limbs to their right sides (8/16).

Associated finds consisted mainly of complete or fragmented ceramics, lithic and metal items, and a range of non-human bone. Black Burnished Ware pots accompanied four burials, whilst

a further two had been deposited with a joint of pork and one with a joint of beef. In all but one case (5333), the vessels were placed anteriorly to the body, with the individual facing the item (Figure 6). In burial 5333, however, the pot was placed posterior to the head of the individual and superior to his left shoulder (Figure 6B). The same applies to the joints of meat that were placed as grave inclusions (Figure 6). These tend to lie anterior to the body of the individual, except in the case of burial 1070, where the non-human remains have been placed lateral to the left shoulder joint of the individual, and appear on the shoulder (Figure 6A).

Four individuals (two females, one male and one individual of undetermined sex) were buried with a single bronze fibula brooch, usually worn to fasten a clothing item. Two brooches were found around the head, lateral to the right temporal region (10007 F) and superior to bregma (10060 F) (Figure 4B and 4C, respectively). One brooch was found dorso-lateral to the left ribcage (1005; Figure 4A.) and the other one lateral to the right elbow (5333 M).

As with the burials from the previous phases, the skeletal elements of all individuals were located within the original volume occupied by the body (Figure 6). This is particularly striking of the individuals who have been buried on their right sides (1005, 1070 and 10148). Their vertebrae have maintained anatomical connections and have not been displaced posteriorly, nor have the scapulae (Figure 6A). This is suggestive of burial in a filled space. Furthermore, the position of the brooches (Figure 4) around the head (10007 and 10060), against the back of an individual (1005), or beside the elbow (5333) is suggestive of a brooch used to fasten a shroud wrapping the body, rather than a decorative item on clothing or used to secure clothing (see discussion below).

## Discussion

### *Durotrigian funerary rites and identity*

The phase II and III burials consolidate the notion of a Durotrigian identity which pre-dated the Claudian invasion of Britain, as also attested by the evidence from the coinage, ceramics, and settlement patterns found in Durotrigian sites. Funerary rites are a means to maintain and augment cohesion within a community and to assert its identity as well as that of its dead. The Durotriges also used their formal burial rite as a way to appropriate pre-existing abandoned settlements by depositing their dead in and around these sites, particularly within points of entrance. At Winterborne Kingston, seven burials (phase II) were added to the backfill of a boundary ditch dating to the Late Bronze Age, while the interior of an Early Iron Age banjo enclosure gave way to organised forms of burial (phase III) at some point in the late pre-Roman Iron Age. Such depositions, with burials set down inside and across defunct monuments, also occurred at Maiden Castle (Wheeler, 1943, 357-58) and probably also at Spettisbury Rings (Akerman, 1859, 188; Gresham, 1939), hillforts largely abandoned by the start of the first century BC (Sharples, 1991, 116; Stewart and Russell, 2017, 155-70). Perhaps the appropriation of disused hillforts, banjo enclosures, and Bronze Age ditches for burial was a defining element of Durotrigian inhumation, social groups effectively rewriting the meaning of earlier monuments and claiming them as their own.

The Durotriges had a standard burial practice which consisted of depositing the corpse of an adult in a formal dug-out grave only big enough to fit the body in a flexed position, usually with only a few grave goods such as a pot or a single joint of meat. It is likely individuals were wrapped in a shroud, or perhaps a garment they had worn in life, such as a cloak. The placement of brooches around the head or towards the back of the individuals (Figure 4) is suggestive of fastenings for a shroud held in place around the body, rather than an item used to adorn or fasten clothing. The brooch would have been placed where needed to secure the

garment, at the top of the head in one case, for example. Once a body was wrapped, it would have been easier to transport and the flexed position better maintained.

In the case of burial 803 (Figure 5C), whose head had tilted posteriorly and slipped inferiorly towards the upper chest, this movement may have been due to an empty space beneath and behind the cranium, and anterior to the upper torso. If individuals were buried in a shroud and then covered with earth, the shroud could have filled the space behind and beneath the head of individual 803, even cushioning it, as well as a filling in the space in front of the head, anterior to the upper torso. Once the cloth decomposed after skeletonisation of the individual, the cranium was free to tilt backwards and slip inferiorly towards the chest. Additionally, there is no evidence for cutmarks to indicate that the head may have been placed in that position on the chest after it was intentional severed from the body.

The use of a shroud also explains certain variations in the disposition of the dead and their accoutrements. Bodies were meant to be supine with the head turned towards the same side as the lower limbs (preferably right) and the grave goods placed anterior to the body. However, once wrapped it may have been difficult to ascertain which was the front or the back of the corpse and even the top and the bottom. Hence, some individuals came to be prone, on the side or turned left. Nothing in the position of the accoutrements suggests that these would have been placed within the shroud. Furthermore, the position of one of the pots, wedged between the shoulder and cranium of an individual (5333; Figure 6B) but posterior to the cranium, is again suggestive of the use of a shroud. Except for three exceptions, including individual 5333, accoutrements are found anterior to the bodies with the cranio-facial skeleton directed more or less towards these objects.

Orientation was only important in a general sense. Whereas in phase II all burials but one (721) were clearly aligned according to an east (head) – west (feet) axis<sup>1</sup> and, but for one exception, the ventral aspect of the torso was turned to the north (Table 1), the phase III burials displayed much more variation. The ventral surface of the bodies faced a point between north and west, which meant most corpses were placed in a somewhat north-south axis, yet a third are east-west (Table 1). Arguably, these variations could be a product of body treatment and not something more ritualistic. Additionally, these variations do not appear linked to sex-based differences. Finally, if individuals were shrouded, the burials could have occurred in an empty space, with only a lid covering the grave, as the shroud would limit the displacement of the skeletal elements once decomposition started. However, for the dug-out graves the most likely explanation is that the shrouded bodies were covered in sediment at the time of burial, as no evidence for a cover has been found.

The size of the graves may be further linked to the choice of burying individuals in a flexed position. Though most of the grave walls do not hug the body tightly, they provide only space enough to place a corpse and a few accompanying items. Originally, the choice may have been purely practical, possibly acquiring ritual meaning only later. It is easier and faster to dig a small grave for a flexed body than a larger grave for an extended one. It is also worth noting that the compacted chalk subsoil of south Dorset remains challenging to dig through using modern tools and excavating a grave of any proportions would involve substantial effort.

The burials are similar to those from other Durotrigian sites, such as recorded from Alington Avenue, Dorchester (Davies *et al.*, 2002), Litton Cheney (Bailey, 1967), Maiden Castle (Wheeler, 1943) and Tolpuddle Ball (Hearne and Birbeck, 1999) (all in Dorset, UK), and emphasise that the Durotriges were much more than an administrative division from the

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<sup>1</sup> Though burial 348 was aligned along a southeast-north-west axis, it can still be construed as broadly conforming to an east-west lay-out.

perspective of the Roman occupiers. They seemed to have retained their distinctive identity at least in the early phases of Roman hegemony.

### *Pit Burials – proto-Durotrigian?*

Despite the similarities in body treatment and accoutrements, the pit burials stand out as different from those of phase II and III due to the choice of burial space: re-used storage pits. Again, whilst all aspects of funerary treatment may acquire symbolic meaning over time, it is important to remember that any specific practice may have initially been rooted in practicality. The position of the bodies in the pits may, in fact, have been a product of the size of the 'container'. It is not possible to inhumate an extended adult corpse in these pits and hence the body needed to be flexed to some degree. Orientation is also variable with two being placed along a north (head) – south (feet) axis, with the ventral surfaces of the bodies turned westward, and three placed along an east-west axis, like the phase III burials.

The pit burials also stand out for what is known about treatment of the dead at the time. As previously mentioned, there is a dearth of human remains for the Iron Age, in particular, and British prehistory, in general, as opposed to later periods, which seemingly has more to do with treatment of the dead (cremation with no collection of the remains or excarnation with no defined disposal) than with preservation of the remains. As such, finding a select few individuals (five) buried within re-used storage pits makes these burials non-normative for the time period. Moreover, it is unclear whether the selection is a positive one, outstanding members of the community entitled to special treatment, or, on the contrary, a negative selection consisting of individuals denied the community's funerary treatment and access to the funerary space, but whose relatives and friends had sought to somehow honour them after their death and have therefore performed a ritual (possibly private) and buried them in a dis-used storage pit (see Schmitt, this volume).

Deposits in pits occur at other sites in Dorset and Hampshire for the same time period, for example Gussage-all-Saints (Wainwright, 1979), Maiden Castle (Wheeler, 1943), and Danebury (Cunliffe, 1984; Cunliffe and Poole, 1991; Cunliffe 1992). The deposits have the appearance of formal burials and are usually found supine, in flexed or semi-flexed positions, invariably associated with items that can be interpreted as grave goods, such as pottery vessels. At these sites, the pit burials also stand out as non-normative, raising the question once more whether these are the product of a positive or a negative selection. Similar arguments have been proposed for certain French prehistoric burials identified as non-normative, where the individuals may have been denied funerary treatment and access to a formal burial space but not denied a burial *per se* (Boulestin and Baray, 2010) as well Iron Age burials in other parts of Britain, where King (2013) suggests that violent deaths might have selected individuals for exceptional forms of mortuary practice. Cunliffe (1992) suggested the human remains found in the pits in Danebury were offerings to the chthonic deities as they were found in former grain storage silos and because deposits of animal meat and other items had been found in other disused storage pits, seemingly as votive offerings to these deities. With the current available data any of these proposed interpretations are possible (exceptional burials, sacrifices, non-normative). Notwithstanding, because the differences in Winterborne Kingston between the pits with human remains (excepting 5059) and the phase II and III burials are limited to the use of a pre-existing pit, these appear as burials, and it is therefore tempting to see a continuum from these pit burials to the later more commonly encountered Durotrigian funerary practice. The pit burials may have inspired the Durotrigian burials, regardless of whether the former were normative or not. However, just as with the adoption of previously occupied sites as burial grounds, the appropriation and elaboration of such a burial practice need not imply any continuity of population. The Durotriges may, in fact, in this respect be an immigrant group seeking to legitimise their rights of occupation.



Their mode of settlement, small individual farmsteads in polygonal enclosures often set within earlier settlement types, for example at Gussage All Saints (Wainwright, 1979), could also support the possibility for an incoming cultural group.

Furthermore, the individuals in pits might on one hand appear to have been buried in a filled space because the skeletal elements have not moved outside of the original volume once occupied by the body. However, if the bodies were also in a shroud, it is possible they could have been buried in an empty space, with the pit being covered by a lid. The shroud would have thus limited the movement of the skeletal elements, and the lid would have permitted delayed or gradual infilling of the burial space.

Finally, deposit 5059 at Winterborne Kingston stands out, even among the pit burials (Figure 3). This female was placed in a disused storage pit which contained a sheet deposit of waste beneath the body. She was not provided with any accoutrements, and her position does not show the same treatment as do the other interments. Whereas the other four individuals have been buried with pots or joints of meat and have been carefully positioned in a flexed pose, supine, to ensure they comfortably fit in a pit previously emptied of its content, individual 5059 was placed prone in a pit containing the weathered bones of horse or cow, her lower limbs appearing flexed (left) and semi-flexed (right) because she did not fit extended in the pit (Figure 3A), her left knee and both her feet sinking into the refuse beneath her body. Additionally, the unhealed cut marks on the lateral left surface of her axis (superior) and atlas (inferior Figure 3B-D) indicate she had been subjected to violence shortly before or at the time of her death. She may have been executed, murdered within her own community, or attacked and killed in an episode of conflict with another group. Whatever the cause, the woman was disposed of in a refuse pit. As a consequence it is difficult to view this evidence as funerary treatment, and it is instead suggestive of an example of 'non-funerary treatment' as proposed by Schmitt (this volume). Certainly, this individual presents a significant

exception with regard to the absence of grave goods and the general lack of evidence for signs of care and respect. It is hard to reconcile such treatment with 'positive' selection. On one hand, if this woman was subjected to judicial killing for some perceived crime or ritual killing for sacrificial reasons, as Cunliffe (1992) suggested for the deposits in pits at Danebury, she might represent a local version of the sort of treatments apparent for various European bog bodies dating from the later Iron Age (Lynnerup, 2009; Brothwell and Gill-Robinson, 2002). In discussing non-normative burials from Iron Age Britain, King (2013) notes the potential parallels with Native American practices where slaves were ritually killed for a variety of reasons in order to serve wider community concerns. Knüsel and Glencross (2017) cite an interesting example from an earlier period at the Neolithic site of Catalhöyük (Turkey) where an individual suffering from debilitating pathology (fibrous dysplasia) and bearing multiple healed cranial injuries was deposited in a midden after death rather than afforded the normative funerary treatment observed in other burials at the site. A possible interpretation suggested for the latter is that this man was treated as a sacrificial scapegoat, with his death providing social catharsis that restored or affirmed group cohesion at a time of perceived crisis. Returning to burial 5059 at Winterborne Kingston, an alternative possibility is that her violent death might have conferred a distinctive status as one of the 'dangerous dead' who having met her demise through unnatural circumstances, then required special funerary measures to protect the living against supernatural repercussions that her body might otherwise present.

## **Conclusions**

The archaeoethanatomical approach, with its attention to detail, its focus on articulation patterns and on the spatial relationship of all items and individuals in a tomb, has added detail to the Durotrigian burial style previously identified in other sites from southern England. The practice was broadly construed as that of adult individuals buried in small purposefully dug-

out individual graves big enough to fit one flexed body and a few accoutrements, such as joints of meat and ceramic vessels. Individuals were flexed, placed on their right sides and facing north (i.e. cranio-facial skeletons; Whimster, 1981; Papworth, 2008, 83; Sharples, 2010, 227-8; Harding, 2016, 85). The current study has demonstrated individuals were buried wrapped in a shroud, which in some cases was fastened with a single bronze fibula brooch. Orientation was only vaguely important, most individuals were placed in a somewhat north-south axis, facing somewhere between the north and the west, but this was not a fixed parameter. Individuals were apparently intended to be flexed and supine, slightly turned to their right.

The study has also highlighted the non-funerary treatment of a female (5059) who possibly suffered a violent death. Though the individual was also found in a pit like other proto-Durotrigian burials identified (phase I), she had been buried on refuse, and the disposition of her body did not display the same repetitive pattern as reflected in the other burials.

Future research will endeavour to ascertain whether the proto-Durotrigian burials identified here are examples of non-normative Iron Age funerary treatment, representing either a positive or negative selection of the individuals inhumed (in this instance, all males), as for example suggested by King (2013). The project also seeks to identify whether the Durotriges were a local group adopting a distinctive form of burial or incomers settling in the area and bringing their culture and habits from elsewhere in the British Isles or from mainland Europe, using their dead to claim possession of the lands for their descendants.

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