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# Burial in Later Anglo-Saxon England *c.* 650–1100 AD

*Edited by*
*Jo Buckberry and Annia Cherryson*

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# 8. Burying the Socially and Physically Distinctive in Later Anglo-Saxon England

*D. M. Hadley*

This paper examines evidence for the differential treatment of individuals buried both within and outside of Anglo-Saxon churchyards, *c.*700–1100. In particular, it addresses examples of especially elaborate burial, burials in distinctive and prestigious locations, and, conversely, examples of exclusion from normal churchyard burial. The age and sex profile of individuals treated differently will be discussed, as, in selected cases, will osteological evidence for their life experiences. This paper will also consider how and where those exhibiting 'difference' in terms of health, physical capacity or manner of death were buried. It will be argued that in the later Anglo-Saxon centuries disproportionate numbers of adult males were buried in prominent locations or afforded particularly elaborate funerary treatment, yet adult males were simultaneously more likely to be excluded from normal funerary treatment and from consecrated ground. In contrast to cemeteries of the earlier Anglo-Saxon period, the burials of infants and young children are considerably more numerous in later cemeteries, and are often found in prominent locations, adjacent to or within churches and near to prominent male burials. Finally, the paper argues that although distinctive funerary treatment was sometimes afforded to physically impaired individuals, they were not routinely differentiated from the remainder of the population in death.

### *Normality in the Anglo-Saxon Churchyard*

Churchyard burial began to emerge as an option for members of religious communities, royalty and at least some of the laity from the later seventh century in most parts of Anglo-Saxon England (Blair 2005, 58–73, 228–45), although it probably did not become the norm until the tenth century (Blair 2005, 463–71; Hadley 2000, 209–15). The burials of the later seventh to eleventh centuries are largely west-east aligned, supine and unaccompanied by grave goods (Hadley and Buckberry 2005, 132–43). Yet, while not exhibiting such striking variations as earlier Anglo-Saxon burials, recent research (White 1988, 18–27; Kjølbye-Biddle 1992, 222–33; Boddington 1996, 37–48; Hadley 2000; Hadley and Buckberry 2005; Buckberry 2004, 2007; Cherryson 2005) has revealed that later Anglo-Saxon burials were diverse, and included assorted types of coffin and grave linings, including charcoal, and, in the tenth century, were increasingly marked by stone slabs and crosses (Bailey 1980; Stocker 2000). Finally, while grave goods had essentially ceased to be deposited by the early eighth century, later graves occasionally contain dress accessories, jewellery and knives, while good organic preservation sometimes reveals wooden implements and textiles (Hadley and Buckberry 2005, 138–40; White 1988, 24; Rodwell and Rodwell 1982, 312; Bateman 1997, 117). The significance of some of these variations has been sought in the context of theological debate. Birthe Kjølbye-Biddle (1992, 231) has, for example, written of the potential associations between charcoal burial and penance and humility, while Victoria Thompson (2004, 122–6) has suggested that contemporary ecclesiastical fears of the corruption of the body may account for the increasingly enclosed nature of some later Anglo-Saxon graves. 'Superstitious' belief is another plausible explanation for some grave variations, including the occasional provision of artefacts that may have had a personal resonance for the deceased or which may have had amuletic or apotropaic qualities (such as white quartz pebbles and wooden rods; Bateman 1997, 120; Hadley and Buckberry 2005, 140; Hadley 2009; Gilchrist 2008).

Whatever motives lay behind them, there has been only limited consideration of who was accorded particular forms of burial. Influenced by studies of earlier Anglo-Saxon cemeteries,

which have highlighted the frequent correlations between the age and sex of the deceased and particular assemblages of grave goods (Stoodley 1999a, 74–90, 105–18; Lucy 2000, 87–90; Gowland 2006), a few recent studies of later Anglo-Saxon cemeteries have begun to reveal that the provision of diverse forms of grave furniture do not normally or consistently correlate with the sex of the deceased. They do, however, sometimes become more common with increasing age; for example, it has been demonstrated that at Barton-upon-Humber (Lincolnshire) the graves of older adults (46 years and older) more commonly contained evidence of a coffin than was the case for young adults (13–25 years) and mid-adults (26–45 years) (Buckberry 2007, 123–4). Nonetheless, there are few variations that never occur in infant graves and there is little to suggest that any age group or either sex was routinely denied particular types of provision (Buckberry 2004, 203–12; Hadley and Buckberry 2005, 141–2; Buckberry 2007, 121–5; Hadley in press). The contrast with the funerary practices of earlier centuries is, thus, marked (Hadley 2004, 302–04; Hadley in press). It has long been suggested that conversion to Christianity prompted changes in funerary practices from the seventh century (*e.g.* Meaney and Hawkes 1970: 51–2; reviewed in Samson 1999), although there is little written evidence that the Church actively concerned itself with burial practices (Bullough 1983, 185–6). Accordingly, it is now thought that other factors, such as the emergence of more stable social hierarchies, were equally, if not more, important factors accounting for the transformations in burial rite evident from the seventh century (Boddington 1990). These transformations include a transfer of emphasis away from gender-distinctive grave assemblages, commonly restricted to prime age adults, towards a tendency for similarity of funerary provision that was largely unrelated to age or sex (Stoodley 1999b, 101–06; Hadley 2004, 302–05). In the later Anglo-Saxon period grave variation was probably dictated by a combination of wealth, family status (Hadley 2004, 302–05; Buckberry 2007, 126) and access to learned ideas about appropriate burial form (Thompson 2002). Such ideas are unlikely to have been evenly disseminated throughout later Anglo-Saxon society, and it is, indeed, notable that the greatest concentrations of, for example, charcoal burials and enclosed graves are to be found in the churchyards of major minsters and cathedrals, where both learned ecclesiastical ideas and the people with the wherewithal to respond to them were concentrated (Kjølbye-Biddle 1992; Phillips 1995, 75–92; Buckberry 2007, 119; Hadley in press).

### *Exceptions to the Norm: Men*

Exceptions to the general pattern of burials thus far discussed can, however, be found, especially with respect to burial location and innovative and elaborate grave forms, which are typically provided for adult males. For example, at both St Oswald's, Gloucester, and Old Minster, Winchester, males were more commonly accorded the most elaborate funerary provision. Among the tenth-century burials in iron-bound coffins, all located very close to the church of St Oswald's, there were eight males but only one female (Heighway and Bryant 1999, 208–15), while at Old Minster most of the 16 burials near to the supposed grave of St Swithun contained adult males, and all of the adults for which sex could be determined in charcoal burials pre-dating the mid-tenth century were males (Kjølbye-Biddle 1992, 228, 231–3). In both cases it is probable that these male burials were of members of the religious communities of the respective churches, and that, therefore, the form and location of burial was determined by a combination of occupation and the articulation of monastic ideals about burial (Hadley in press). Nonetheless, male burials are also sometimes more numerous in prominent locations in parish churchyards, including among the tenth- and eleventh-century burials nearest to the church, especially on its south side, at Raunds (Northamptonshire) (Boddington 1996, 54–6; Hadley in press). Similarly, exceptionally elaborate funerary provision is typically reserved for males. Examples include a lead-lined coffin from a cemetery radiocarbon dated to between the later ninth and early eleventh centuries at Staple Gardens, Winchester (Kipling and Scobie 1990), a tenth-century burial placed in what appears to have been a boat at York Minster (Kjølbye-Biddle 1995, 500–05), and the burial under the only decorated grave slab at Raunds (Boddington 1996, 51). At Raunds the burials of ten adult males have been interpreted as indicating distinctive funerary provision. The skeletal remains were notably disturbed (described in the report as 'external bone tumble'), with, for example, the vertebrae dispersed and, in one case, the sacrum displaced over the arm, and it has been suggested that this resulted from considerable putrefaction having commenced within the coffin before interment (Boddington 1996, 36–7, 48). It has recently been suggested that this indicates the protracted nature of funerary rituals for a group of males of apparently high status (Williams 2006, 108), since the burials concerned are located close to the south and east sides of the church in what was presumably a prestigious location, given the concentration there of coffins, grave covers and markers (Boddington 1996, 54–6; Craig and Buckberry this volume).

In contrast, some later Anglo-Saxon burials were differentiated, if not excluded, from normal modes of burial. A disproportionately high number of these were also of adult males, some of whom have evidence for physical impairment. For example, an adult male (inhumation 10) buried just beyond the boundary wall of the eleventh-century cemetery at North Elmham (Norfolk) had an extensively remodelled left tibial head, with bony outgrowths into the knee joint, possibly the result of a penetrating wound (Wade-Martins 1980, 189; Wells and Clayton 1980, 274) (Figure 8.1). This was the only burial in this cemetery with the head placed to the east rather than the west (Wade-Martins 1980, 189). In addition, there were cuts, probably inflicted by a sword, on the cranium, fourth

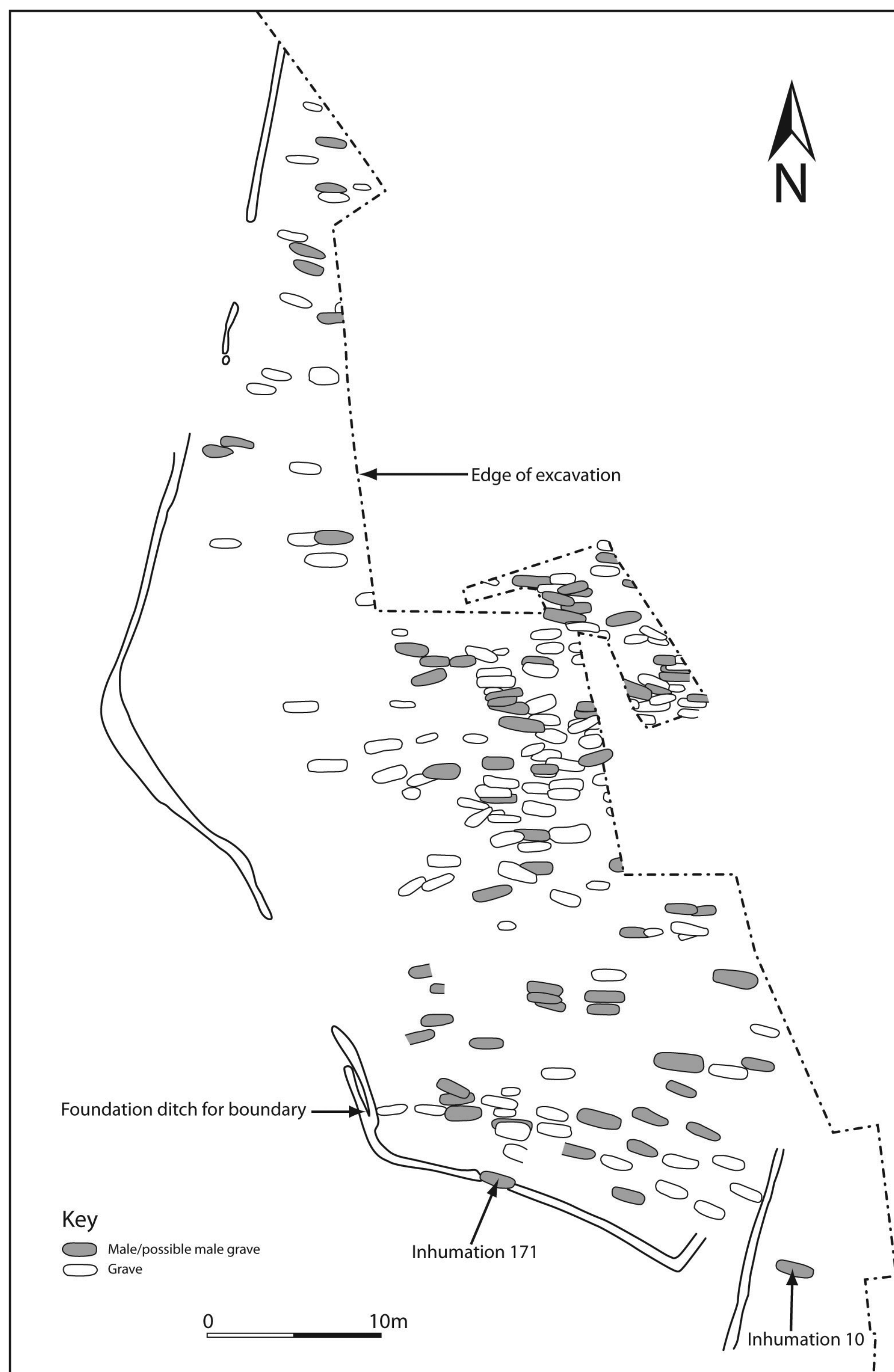


*Figure 8.1: Plan of the eleventh-century cemetery excavated at North Elmham (Norfolk). Note the position of inhumation 10 outside of the cemetery boundary, and inhumation 171 in the line of the perimeter foundation ditch. Most of the adult burials that could be assigned a sex in the southern part of the cemetery are males (Oliver Jessop after Wade-Martins 1980, 186).*

vertebra and right humerus of an adult male (inhumation 171) who had probably met a violent death and who was buried in the boundary ditch of the same cemetery (Wade-Martins 1980, 189; Wells and Clayton 1980, 365–6). Burials thin out towards the edges of the North Elmham cemetery, but there is a cluster of mainly adult male burials near to inhumations 10 and 171, and this is suggestive of differential treatment. However, in the absence of any further striking pathologies, or

*Figure 8.2: Grave 5218 at Raunds (Northamptonshire) (photographed from the south). This individual, one of three notably physically impaired individuals in this cemetery population, had a stone placed in the mouth, in a rite unique in this cemetery (reproduced courtesy of Northamptonshire Archaeology, Northamptonshire County Council).*

*Figure 8.3: Grave 5062 at Raunds (Northamptonshire) (photographed from the north). Note the shortened and atrophied left humerus (reproduced courtesy of Northamptonshire Archaeology, Northamptonshire County Council).*

distinctive grave features or alignments, it is difficult to assess the significance of this cluster of burials; inter-cutting of some of the graves indicates that they were not all contemporary (Wells and Clayton 1980, 249; fig. 192). At Raunds there are three physically impaired adult males located at the limits of the churchyard. These include a male buried on the northern edge of the churchyard who had a shortened left humerus and shortened and atrophied right femur, with limited mobility in the right knee suggested by destruction at the distal end of the femur and 'fusion of a much distorted patella' (Powell

1996, 120). He had a stone placed in the mouth, in a rite unique in this cemetery (Boddington 1996, 41–2, fig. 25) (Figure 8.2). At the south-eastern limits of the churchyard was a burial exhibiting signs of leprosy (Boddington 1996, 69, fig. 25; Powell 1996, 120) and an individual with a shortened and atrophied left humerus (Boddington 1996, fig. 25; Powell 1996, 118). The latter condition was probably the product of arrested growth deriving from a childhood fracture or infection, with subsequent osteoarthritis in the joint rendering the upper limb largely immobile; this individual also had an 'end stage' osteoarthritic right hip which would have limited mobility (Powell 1996, 118; Craig and Buckberry this volume; Buckberry *pers. comm.*) (Figure 8.3). All three of these individuals were certainly buried within the churchyard, but it is striking that – as far as the skeletal evidence permits us a reliable insight – the three most physically distinctive individuals among this burial population were interred at the very limits of the consecrated ground. Another cluster of unusual male burials has been excavated in the tenth-century phases of the former monastic cemetery at Ripon (Yorkshire). First, there was the burial of a young adult male with a pronounced distortion of the lower vertebral column, caused by collapse and fusion of the lumbar vertebrae, possibly resulting from spinal tuberculosis, who was buried with the head to the east. Second, there was a multiple burial of three adult males, and, finally, there were three other male burials on diverse alignments (Hall and Whyman 1996, 76–8, 98). The excavators suggest that by the tenth century the cemetery was the burial place of the socially excluded (Hall and Whyman 1996, 123–4).

Other forms of apparent exclusion from normal funerary provision in the later Anglo-Saxon centuries include burial in ditches. Examples have been excavated at the Cook Street site in *Hamwic* (Southampton, Hampshire) (Garner 1993, 88; Garner 2001, 172–7, 181), the Upper Bugle Street site in Southampton (Cherryson 2005 (Appendix), 77–8; and this volume), Milton Keynes (Buckinghamshire) (Parkhouse *et al.* 1993, 201), Yarnton (Oxfordshire) (Hey 2004, 75, 163), and at Winchester, where two burials dated to *c.*700 were located in the ditch outside the wall which blocked the Roman south gate of the city, one of which exhibits signs of leprosy and was buried on its side (Kjølbye-Biddle 1992, 221). Other irregular burials from the later Anglo-Saxon centuries include two apparently isolated male burials in unoccupied and probably marshy ground at The Brooks in Winchester (Scobie *et al.* 1991, 37, 39, 64–5), and burials on the Thames foreshore in London (Ayre and Wroe-Brown 1996, 20; Bradley and Gordon 1988; McCann and Orton 1989). A small number of prone interments among otherwise regular burials are known, some of which suggest that unusual circumstances surrounded the manner of death of the individual interred in this way. For example, a single prone interment, partly buried on its right side, was excavated in a cemetery radiocarbon-dated to the late seventh or early eighth century at Great Houghton (Northamptonshire); the adult male had an un-united arm fracture, likely to have occurred shortly before death (Chapman 2000–01, 17–18, 38). At Cherry Hinton (Cambridgeshire) a prone burial was encountered close to the church. This adult male appears to have been severely burnt, as much of the lower body was missing, and the remaining elements reveal clear signs of charring. He was certainly included among the faithful for burial, but it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the prone position must have been related in some way to the apparent manner of his death (Ferrante di Ruffano and Waldron n.d., 88–90).

It is striking that the majority of the examples of unusual burial treatment in the later Anglo-Saxon period – for which sex could be assigned and where it is recorded in the relevant published or unpublished reports – occur in the graves of males. The numbers of such burials is admittedly limited, but the proposition that it is a representative sample is supported by the fact that males also predominate among the burials in execution cemeteries, which are the most overtly excluded burials of the later Anglo-Saxon centuries, typically remote from churchyards and contemporary settlement and often on territorial boundaries (Reynolds 1997; Hayman and Reynolds 2005; Buckberry and Hadley 2007). Apparently, males who differed from the norm, or who failed to meet the expectations that society placed on them, were considerably more likely than females to have been excluded or distinguished from the wider community in death (Hadley in press).

In the majority of cases discussed thus far it was either not possible to determine the age of the individual concerned, or such information is not reported in the relevant published or archival accounts. This is especially regrettable in the light of recent studies demonstrating the differential treatment that adults at varying stages of the life course were accorded in death; in this respect, it has been argued, age, as much as gender, is a dimension of social identity (Gowland 2006, 143). Yet despite the deficiencies in the evidence, some suggestive patterns emerge. It is, for example, notable that the males buried in non-normative fashion are typically younger adults (*i.e.* aged 15–30 years), which mirrors the evidence from execution cemeteries, which overwhelmingly consist of young adult males (Hayman and Reynolds 2005, 232; Buckberry and Hadley 2007, 316). Adult males of this age group were, perhaps, more likely to engage in the kinds of behaviour that resulted in them being excluded from normative burial. However, the range of potential mourners also has to be taken into account, as these are not static throughout the life-course (Gowland 2006, 152), and younger adults may have been more socially mobile and with fewer family ties to ensure burial in regular fashion among the Christian faithful, especially if they had transgressed.

We do, however, have to take care to examine non-normative burial rites in their appropriate context. Prone burial, for example, may often be indicative of hasty or careless burial, especially at execution cemeteries, however this rite occasionally appears to have been a marker of some

*Figure 8.4: Skeleton 442 from Black Gate, Newcastle-upon-Tyne. This individual had scoliosis of the spine and a range of skeletal markers indicative of paralysis (see p. 110) (photographed from the south) (reproduced courtesy of Newcastle City Council).*

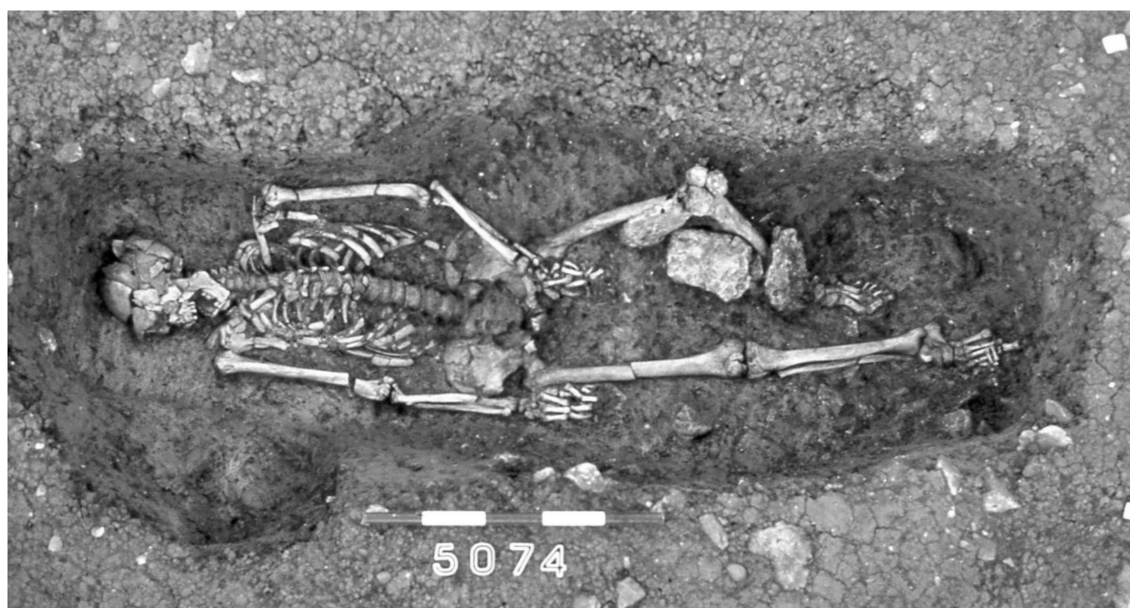


*Figure 8.5: Grave 5074 at Raunds (Northamptonshire) (photographed from the south). The left leg was positioned flexed at the knee in the grave with stones packed around it (reproduced courtesy of Northamptonshire Archaeology, Northamptonshire County Council).*

status. For example, at Beckery chapel near Glastonbury (Somerset) six prone burials have been excavated among a group of around 64 mainly male burials probably dating to the eighth century; the cemetery is thought to have served a monastic community (Rahtz and Hirst 1974, 27–34). Prone burials have also been excavated in the cemeteries adjacent to the religious communities of Wearmouth (McNeil and Cramp 2005, 82, 85) and Jarrow (Lowther 2005, 176), while several of the ninth-century burials excavated near to the minster church at Shipton-under-Wychwood (Oxfordshire) were reportedly prone (Blair 1992, 8). Given that prone burial is seemingly most common in the churchyards of major religious communities, especially between the seventh and ninth centuries, it seems improbable that it was a sign of damnation or even simply of careless or hasty burial, and it is more plausible that the rite had some penitential significance. Indeed, two of the prone burials at Wearmouth were furnished with upright stone markers, and one was provided with a stone setting around the head, suggesting that these burials were otherwise normal for this cemetery (McNeil and Cramp 2005, 85; see also Groves this volume).

### *Exceptions to the Norm: Children*

A notable characteristic of later Anglo-Saxon cemeteries is the

high numbers of burials of infants (up to 1 year old) and young children (up to 5 years) in comparison with earlier Anglo-Saxon cemeteries. While taphonomic factors may partly account for the disproportionately low numbers of infant and young child burials in early Anglo-Saxon cemeteries (Buckberry 2000), nonetheless it seems difficult to avoid the conclusion that they were frequently buried in locations other than the communal cemetery, and, indeed, some infant and young child burials have been encountered in settlement contexts (Hamerow 2006, 4–7). The increased visibility of infants and young children in later Anglo-Saxon cemeteries has generally been assigned to the influence of the Church (Crawford 1999, 87–9). Indeed, not only are such burials much more numerous in later Anglo-Saxon cemeteries, but some were in distinctive locations. For example, the practice of burying the very youngest members of communities – typically neonates and young children under the age of 2 years – clustered around the walls of churches has been identified at Raunds (Boddington 1996, 54–5), Cherry Hinton (Ferrante di Ruffano and Waldron n.d., 15) and Tanners Row in Pontefract, (Yorkshire) (Lee n.d). It has been suggested by Andy Boddington (1996, 69) that burial adjacent to church walls had baptismal resonance, as the rainwater dripped onto the graves from the eaves of the church (see also Crawford 1999, 87–8). This is speculative but not inherently implausible, since, as Sally Crawford (forthcoming) has observed, there was a link between baptism and death in the view of St Paul that baptism was not merely rebirth but also resurrection (Romans VI: 3–4), and there are physical links between baptisteries and burial places, such as at Repton (Derbyshire) where the crypt has a drain which may reflect its use for baptism (Biddle 1986, 16). Crawford (forthcoming) suggests that the clustering of infants close to church walls may reflect anxiety about both the availability and efficacy of baptism. Alternatively, the fact that the souls of infants immediately after baptism were regarded as being especially pure (Thompson 2004, 71–2), may have rendered the burial of infants close to the fabric of the church especially appropriate. The burial of infants and young children in special places may also have been a means by which families made specific social and spiritual commitments to their local church. That infants had a special place in the community of the church is reflected in the intra-mural burial of infants. For example, at Raunds the only intra-mural burial is of an infant (a precise age is not given in the report, but analysis by Lizzy Craig suggests the infant was aged 1–3 months) located beneath the arch of the chancel added to the original single-celled church, and near the probable location of the altar (at least before the addition of the chancel to the first church) (Boddington 1996, 8), and the sole burial within the chapel at Burnham (Lincolnshire) is also of an infant (a more precise age is not cited; Coppack 1986, 39).

Infant and young child burials can also be found in close proximity to prominent adult burials. For example, at Raunds two young children (the report states only that they were younger than 6 years, but reanalysis by Lizzy Craig suggests that one was 5–6 years and the other was a neonate) were buried close to the adult male buried beneath a decorated slab, in what has been dubbed the 'founder's grave' (Boddington 1996, 51), while at Great Houghton there was an adult male in a grave with post-holes at each corner suggesting some form of above-ground marker or canopy, which lay around 4 metres from the other burials of the cemetery with the sole exception of the burial of a child aged 4–5 years (Chapman 2000–01, 16–19). In such cases a familial relationship between the adults and children is possible, but the practice may also have served as both a protective and commemorative strategy. Burial close to an adult burial may have rendered tiny graves less likely to be subsequently disturbed (although that is not to suggest that infant and child burials were never marked above ground: Phillips 1995, 89; Rodwell 2001, 106; Stocker 2007, 286), and there may also have been a desire to afford the very young the care and protection of adult family members in death.

Anglo-Saxon written sources reveal little about contemporary responses to the death of children, either emotional or practical, except in the most general of terms (Thompson 2004, 9–11). Nonetheless, Victoria Thompson (2004, 10–11) has suggested that the deaths of the very young, at least, were regarded as a particular cause for grief, noting that Ælfric of Eynsham distinguishes between the 'natural' death of the old, the 'unripe' death of the young and the 'bitter' death of children. Moreover, she points out that while Anglo-Saxon leechbooks offer little guidance on preventing death, the main exception concerns unborn children (Thompson 2004, 94–5), with charms to protect against stillbirth revolving around rituals to be performed at a graveside, the marital bed and the church altar (see also Crawford 1999, 59). In such contexts, the burial of neonates, infants and young children in distinctive locations, such as within the church, against the church walls and near to prominent adult burials, may conceivably have been part of the emotional and spiritual response to the deaths of the very young. Studies of medieval childhood are generally reluctant to deal with emotions. In part this is because some of the most influential broad-ranging studies of childhood, mainly focussing on the early modern period (Ariès 1962; Stone 1977), presented the Middle Ages as a period with little concept of childhood as a social category and cast parents as indifferent towards their children (Stafford 2001, 260). Yet, there are brief insights into affective bonds between parents and children in early medieval texts, of which the most famous is the manual written by the ninth-century Frankish noblewoman, Dhuoda, for her 15-year-old son, William, in which both concern to educate her son as he makes his entry into the adult world and also grief for separation from another child, a small baby, are expressed (Neel 1991; Stafford 2001, 262–4). However, such insights are not straightforward guides to parental feelings about their children as they are laden with biblical overtones, and influenced by the uses to which early medieval ecclesiastical authors had put

child-rearing, birth, motherhood and parenting as metaphors for power and authority within the Church (Walker Bynum 1982). Archaeological evidence offers an important alternative insight into attitudes to children, and it suggests that in death children were afforded special provision and care through place of burial. While it is difficult to infer affective bonds from this evidence, nonetheless it does strongly suggest that parents in later Anglo-Saxon England were not indifferent to their dead children.

Having said this, not all children were buried in prominent locations within churchyards, and it is plausible that responses to their death and the types of burial they were accorded were shaped by a variety of factors. These doubtless included both the sex of the child and their position within the family, both of which will have had implications for, in particular, capacity to inherit and potential future social advancement through marriage strategies (Stafford 2001, 259–62, 269). The written record implies that infants were regarded similarly, irrespective of sex, and it is arguable that they were 'ungendered' (Stafford 2001, 262), yet the social networks within which families were situated may have placed different expectations on baby boys and girls, and there may accordingly have been a differential reaction to their premature death. It is, thus, unfortunate that the sex determination of sub-adults from their skeletal remains is unreliable, and other methods, such as the analysis of ancient DNA, are rarely applied (Lewis 2006, 47–55).

In later Anglo-Saxon cemeteries there are much higher levels of both simultaneous and consecutive multiple burial than in the earlier Anglo-Saxon period. The careful re-opening of graves to accommodate subsequent interments, especially of infants and young children, has been noted at many cemeteries (*e.g.* Boddington 1996, 49–53; Rodwell and Rodwell 1985, 82; Bateman 1997; Graham and Davies 1993, 39; Potter and Andrews 1994, 76). Inevitably, in a churchyard context space constraints will sometimes have made the insertion of later burials into pre-existing graves a practical necessity. However, Nick Stoodley's (2002) recent study of multiple burials in the earlier Anglo-Saxon period reveals that they became increasingly common in the seventh century, and multiple burial later occurs even in cemeteries seemingly not constrained for space, such as the seventh- to ninth-century cemetery at Bevis Grave, Bedhampton (Hampshire) where there are at least eleven burials reopened for subsequent interments (Rudkin 2001). Thus, it seems plausible that multiple burials were a meaningful funerary strategy, perhaps linked to the aforementioned emphasis on family status. In earlier Anglo-Saxon multiple burials infants and young children were most likely to be interred with an adult female (Stoodley 2002, 112–13; Crawford 2007), but in later Anglo-Saxon cemeteries there is a higher percentage of infants and young children (typically below the age of 7 years) buried in adult male graves (*e.g.* Boddington 1996, 52–3; Rudkin 2001; Waldron 2007, 19–20; and Swales in prep.). In the context of the aforementioned clustering of male burials in prominent locations, and the provision of the most elaborate burials for males, it may be that the burial of infants and young children both within and adjacent to the graves of adult males was another indication of the privileging of adult male graves in later Anglo-Saxon cemeteries. Some adult male graves seem to have become focal points for subsequent child burials, and they may have simultaneously enhanced the significance and prestige of the adult male graves with which they were associated.

### *Physical Impairment and Funerary Provision*

This paper has discussed a small number of examples of the different funerary treatment accorded to physically distinctive individuals, but it is important to recognise that these appear to be exceptional cases. Frequently, individuals with physical impairment were *not* treated differently in death. Examples include an individual aged between 25 and 35 years with a fused vertebral column and ribs at Swinegate in York resulting from ankylosing spondylitis who was buried in a wooden coffin, and thus in similar fashion to other adults in this cemetery. Ankylosing spondylitis is a condition that develops mainly in males and usually in the second or third decade of life, and this person may have spent the latter part of their life bent forward at an acute angle which will have limited mobility considerably (Buckberry 2004, 273–4; Buckberry 2006). Buried apparently normally in the cemetery at Black Gate in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, there is an adult male who appears to have suffered from long-term paralysis of the upper and lower limbs (Figure 8.4). The skeleton has scoliosis of the spine and atrophied ribs, the humeri and tibiae are light and thin with faint or non-existent markings for muscle attachments, which is also the case for the pelvis, and the proximal hand phalanges have U-shaped palmar grooving suggestive of permanent flexion of the fingers, perhaps the result of ulnar nerve paralysis (Boulter and Rega 1993, 46–50). Several possible causes of these skeletal abnormalities have been suggested, including cerebral palsy, muscular dystrophy or traumatically-induced post-paralytic scoliosis (Boulter and Rega 1993, 49–50). Whichever explanation applies, it is apparent that this individual would have required considerable assistance to survive (Boulter and Rega 1993, 49–50). Other physically distinctive individuals buried in normal fashion in Anglo-Saxon churchyards include a female in her late 20s at Jarrow who was of very short stature (1.32m) possibly as a result of 'primordial dwarfism' or Ellis-van Creveld syndrome (Wells 1979; Anderson *et al*. 2006, 500), and an adult male at Tanners Row, Pontefract with the right internal auditory meatus in-filled with compact bone, which will have prevented the passage of the auditory nerve and caused deafness on the right side (Lee n.d; in the absence of the left temporal bone it is, however, impossible to be certain that this individual was completely deaf). Two adult males at Cherry Hinton displayed a form of skeletal dysplasia, with the length of the right

humerus of one measuring 79mm less than the left humerus, and in the other instance there was a disparity of 43mm between the lengths of the humeri. One of these males was one of the few in this cemetery to be provided with stones around the head, which is normally taken as a mark of some status (Ferrante di Ruffano and Waldron, n.d.). Finally, the skull of a child aged 3–5 years in the cemetery excavated beneath York Minster exhibited endocranial surface convolutions indicative of hydrocephalus (Lee 1995, 571), which results from abnormal amounts of fluid in the cranium (Cox and Roberts 2003, 115). This condition can be both congenital and acquired, and often results in an abnormally-sized cranium and some level of both physical and mental impairment, although it is difficult to ascertain the extent of this impairment from skeletal evidence (Cox and Roberts 2003, 115). This particular child was buried beneath a carved grave slab and was presumably a member of one of the wealthier families in York, which may have played a significant factor in the child's initial survival (Phillips 1995, 89).

There is also evidence suggestive of concern with the physical suffering of individuals in the grave. For example, the swelling of the left tibia of skeleton 5074 at Raunds suggests that it probably could not be extended and the limb was positioned flexed at the knee in the grave with stones packed around it (Boddington 1996, 42, 44) (Figure 8.5). Howard Williams (2006, 111) has recently argued that this treatment perhaps indicates that for the mourners 'the cadaver still held elements of the deceased's personhood bound into its flesh and bones', and that the provision of stones may also allude to the prospect of salvation and healing at the Day of Judgement. Indeed, Ælfric of Eynsham wrote that at the resurrection 'even if he were formerly lame when alive, yet his limbs will be all healthy for him' (Pope 1967, 432). Such beliefs may have informed the preparation of this burial at Raunds (Thompson 2004, 124). Recent study of later Anglo-Saxon homilies suggests that the corpse was perceived as retaining a degree of consciousness (Thompson 2004, 50–2), and this archaeological evidence suggests that in some cases this belief was acted upon in the preparation of the grave and the corpse for burial.

The presence in later Anglo-Saxon churchyards of individuals with significant physical impairments is potentially important evidence for the nurturing by families and communities of individuals who required considerably greater levels of care and whose contribution to society must have been restricted, at least on a physical level (for early Anglo-Saxon examples see Crawford 1999, 94–6). Certainly, we must be cautious in making assumptions about the level of tolerance, compassion, care or, conversely, discrimination that physically and mentally impaired individuals may have experienced in Anglo-Saxon society (Roberts 2000, 57; Metzler 1999, 63). Nonetheless, at least at the point of interment they were not normally treated any differently from the rest of the population, and it is also significant in this respect that those consigned to burial in execution cemeteries do not demonstrate evidence of significant physical impairments (see, for example, Hayman and Reynolds 2005; Buckberry and Hadley 2007). Individuals with physical and mental impairments can, of course, make important contributions to society in various ways, and ethnographic studies inform us that we must be careful not to impose modern perceptions of the 'value' of individual contributions onto other societies (Hubert 2000; Murphy 2000, 73–5). While ethnographic parallels indicate that physically impaired individuals may sometimes be treated as akin to criminals (Waldron 2000, 31, 40; Murphy 2000, 74–5), in contrast physical impairments can, in other contexts, be valorised. Indeed, the contemporary written record suggests that in later Anglo-Saxon England disease and the capacity to overcome it could be indicators of authority and a sign of God's intervention to ward off sins such as pride (Crawford this volume; Thompson 2004, 96–8). Given the emphasis placed by later Anglo-Saxon legal and ecclesiastical sources on the importance of appropriate burial for the good of the soul (Thompson 2004, 26–91), this normative funerary provision for the physically impaired seems an important statement about Anglo-Saxon attitudes.

In the later medieval period disease was linked explicitly with sin and this may explain why in that period sick individuals, especially those with leprosy, were frequently buried separately from the rest of the community (Gilchrist 1992). However, in the Anglo-Saxon period such connections between sin and disease do not appear to have been made (Thompson 2004, 96–8; Crawford this volume). The earliest known separate provision for individuals with leprosy in England occurs at the cemetery of St John at the Castle Gate in Norwich, which has been radiocarbon-dated to the late tenth to mid-eleventh century, where 35 individuals had signs of leprosy among a total cemetery population of 265 (Shepherd Popescu forthcoming). Nonetheless, the fact that some of the leprous individuals were provided with stone settings, similar to the provision in many other contemporary cemeteries, suggests that they were not being stigmatised in death (Shepherd Popescu forthcoming). There is, then, little to suggest that in later Anglo-Saxon society physically impaired and diseased individuals were routinely excluded from normal Christian burial. Nonetheless, the burial of physically impaired individuals outside of churchyards or, as at Raunds, at the limits of consecrated ground requires explanation. It may be that issues such as personality and behaviour contributed to decisions about appropriate burial location, but it is equally possible that in spite of the lack of association made between disease and physical impairment and sin within learned circles, there was still nervousness within the wider population about physically impaired and diseased individuals and about the appropriateness of their burial among the rest of the Christian faithful. The contemporary written record suggestively indicates that physical imperfection was a bar to the holding of office, fulfilment of military duties, participation in religious life and representation before the law (Crawford this volume), all of which were, in particular, major components of the construction of Anglo-Saxon masculinity.

This may have been another factor that determined the burial rite and location provided for those with physical impairments, especially males.

### *Physical Impairment and the Limitations of the Evidence*

When exploring evidence for the treatment of physically impaired individuals in death, it is important to remember, firstly, that we can only identify the physical conditions they experienced if they left a mark on the skeleton, although advances in biomolecular techniques may eventually enable us to identify the presence of diseases that affect only the soft tissues (Cox and Roberts 2003, 20). Many of the physical impairments mentioned in the contemporary written record and discussed by Sally Crawford elsewhere in this volume are not identifiable osteologically (Cox and Roberts 2003, 13–22). Secondly, caution needs to be exercised in relying upon older osteological reports, which may not conform to the conventions of osteological recording expected today, and it should also be remembered that some conditions are extremely difficult to identify confidently, even by experienced osteologists. For example, a second possible case of leprosy tentatively identified at Raunds (Boddington 1996, 69; Powell 1996, 123) is now thought unlikely to be leprosy (Craig and Buckberry this volume), and therefore attempts, however measured (*e.g.* Thompson 2004, 97), to use this example to discuss Anglo-Saxon attitudes are misleading. Similarly, the possible case of a child aged 8–9 years with a cleft palate at Raunds (Powell 1996, 123) is now recognised as the product of taphonomic loss of the palatine bone at the back of the hard palate of the maxilla (Buckberry, *pers. comm.*).

Thirdly, we must be careful about assuming that conditions identifiable on the skeleton necessarily had a detrimental effect on the life of the individual. For example, a condition such as diffuse idiopathic skeletal hyperostosis (DISH), involving the fusion of at least four vertebrae, and associated with obesity and diabetes (Cox and Roberts 2003, 32), can produce severely distorted spinal columns, but it may have been manifest only as a bad back during lifetime, or have resulted in limited mobility, not necessarily as a debilitating condition. Fourthly, we cannot easily assess the pain that would have arisen from certain conditions, still less can we be certain about the pain thresholds of individuals. Finally, in interpreting the funerary treatment of physically impaired individuals we must acknowledge that equality of treatment in death does not necessarily equate to equality of treatment in life.

### *Conclusion*

This paper has argued that concurrent with the superficially equal funerary treatment accorded to men, women and children that there is evidence for some individuals, in particular adult males and children, being provided burial in particularly prestigious locations or elaborate form, and for some individuals conversely being excluded from normal treatment, in particular younger adult males. It appears that there was a disproportionate emphasis on adult male burials as a means of expressing status, and that males, in particular young adults, were simultaneously more vulnerable to exclusion after death. Yet, it should be stressed that it is important to assess unusual burial rites in their broader context. Certainly, for example, males who had met a violent death, whether as a result of execution or warfare, were often buried in distinctive locations. However, individuals who exhibit evidence of apparently fatal weapon wounds are also encountered alongside the burials of the wider population (Hooper 1976, 240–2; Boocock *et al.* 1995, 9–12; Hall and Whyman 1996, 96), and it appears that there were a variety of responses to violent death and these were perhaps dictated by the circumstances in which the individual died. Similarly, prone burial can be assigned to a range of factors, including both an act of penance and a sign of damnation. Finally, while some physically impaired individuals were given distinctive burials, the majority were not and this suggests that in death they normally took their place among the rest of the Christian faithful to await their judgement with equal prospects of salvation.

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