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AN UNUSUAL EARLY 17TH CENTURY BURIAL AT THE ROMAN VILLA AT PINGLESTONE FARM, OLD ALRESFORD

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with contributions by B J COOK, JACQUELINE I MCKINLEY, *and* NICHOLAS A WELLS

ABSTRACT

A watching brief on the site of a Roman villa at Old Alresford (NGR SU 582 334) recorded a small number of features of Roman date and a single inhumation burial of an early 17th century A.D. date buried on a remote hillside, far from consecrated ground. The 30–45 year old man had malformed legs and was buried in a shallow grave, perhaps partly dressed, and with a purse of silver coins by his waist.

INTRODUCTION by A P Fitzpatrick

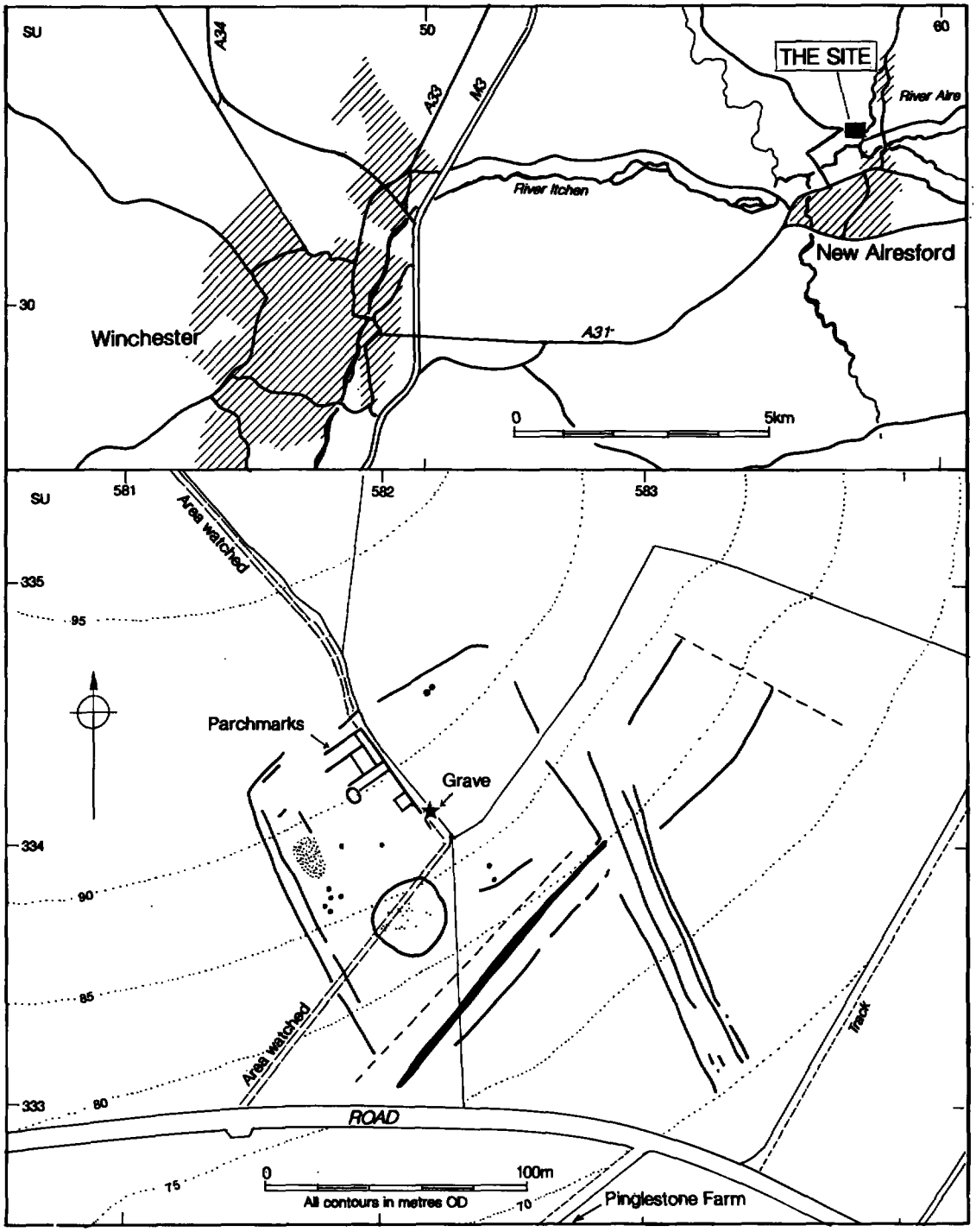
A small number of archaeological features of Roman date and an unusual early 17th century burial were found in 1997 during an archaeological watching brief north of Pinglestone Farm, Old Alresford, which lies *c.* 11 km to the east of Winchester. The watching brief was undertaken during the installation of a new telecommunications site on the northern side of the Arle valley, which rises from 75 to 95 m above Ordnance Datum at this point (NGR SU 582 334) (Fig. 1, a–b). The underlying geology is of chalk with flint nodules and the crest and some of the slopes of the hill are capped by clay with flints.

The watching brief was requested by Winchester Museums Service on the basis of investigations made by Canon A B Milner in the 1940s which revealed the presence of a substantial masonry building of Romano-British date whose extent and preservation is largely unknown. As the telecommunications establishment lies on the crest of the slope, the only damage to the Roman remains was likely to be caused in the laying of cables in a trench 1 m deep and 0. 5 m wide, and the building of the track leading to it. In order to reduce the likelihood of damage, the cables and track were routed as close as possible to the existing hedgerow and areas considered to be most vulnerable archaeologically were stripped of topsoil under archaeological supervision before construction work began. A watching brief was maintained over the remaining length of the cable trench and track and the construction of the aerial masts and cabins. Full details of the observations are presented in the unpublished client report (Wessex Archaeology 1997) and in the project archive.

THE ROMAN SETTLEMENT
by M Laidlaw and A P Fitzpatrick

Canon Milner (1941–3) first identified Roman remains on the site in 1940 and they were further examined by trial excavations in 1948 (Milner 1948–50). Substantial masonry walls, box-flue tiles, roof tiles, painted plaster, and tessellated floors, pottery and oyster shells, all indicate the presence of a large Roman building. A series of walls aligned at right angles was also plotted from parch marks by Canon Milner in 1940. In addition to the published notes, sketch plans of Milner's work are held by Winchester Museums Service (History File) and the annotations to these indicate that the pottery found ranges in date from the 1st to 4th centuries A.D.

Air photographs of the site that became available after the completion of the watching brief confirm the location of these buildings. They also indicate that the buildings lie within a large sub-rectangular enclosure with an associated field system and droveways (Fig. 1, b). confirming the suggestion (Schadla-Hall 1977, 134, no. 7; Scott


SU
A34
50
A33
M3
60
THE SITE
River Aire
River Itchen
New Alresford
30
Winchester
A31
0
5km
SU
581
582
583
Area watched
335
95
Parchmarks
Grave
334
90
85
Area watched
333
80
ROAD
Track
0
100m
All contours in metres OD
75
70
Pinglestone Farm

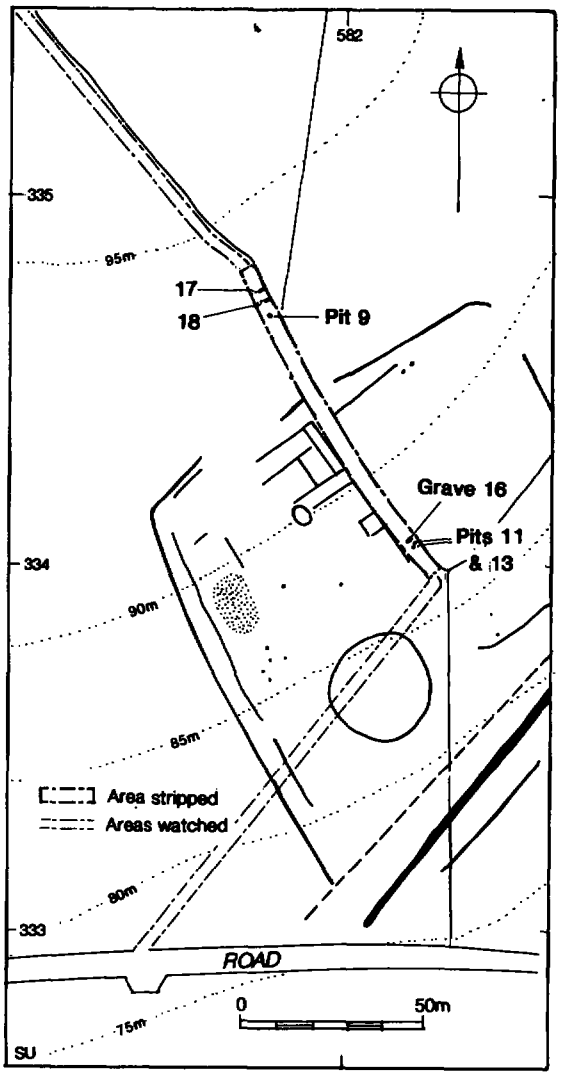


Fig. 2 Pinglestone Farm, New Alresford: areas monitored archaeologically and location of features. Drawn by S E James.

1993, 1–7, 86), that the remains are those of a Roman villa.

Three features certainly of Romano-British date were recorded during the watching brief (Fig. 2). Two were shallow intercutting pits (features 11 and 13), while the third feature (9) was 1.6 m in diameter and lined with flint. As this feature was not going to be damaged by the construction work it was not excavated, but it may be a well.

Two other possible features were also recorded. Both (17 and 18) were approximately 1 m wide and comprised of large flint nodules in a pale greyish brown silty clay matrix which may represent the remnants of flint walls aligned east-west. If these features are Romano-British in date their orientation is consistent with the parch marks recorded by Canon Milner, while the walls he examined in trenching were described as being 2 feet wide [0.6 m] and made of flint rubble.

All the features lay within the area stripped under archaeological supervision and this may account for the fact that no features were seen elsewhere. The apparent absence of the enclosure ditch is curious but it may not have been possible to identify it amongst the clay and flint natural in a narrow trench.

FINDS by M. Laidlaw

Prehistoric

A small quantity of finds indicates prehistoric activity in the vicinity. Eleven certainly or possibly struck flint flakes were found, most of which were undiagnostic patinated flakes. All but one was recovered from the topsoil, with one in Romano-British pit 11 along with a single sherd of flint-gritted pottery likely to date to the late prehistoric period. A large fragment of burnt flint was recovered from the fill of the 17th century grave (see below).

Romano-British

Only a small quantity of pottery (16 sherds weighing 172 g) was recovered, with most belonging to

Fig. 1 (opposite) Pinglestone Farm, New Alresford: a) general site location and b) the site in its local setting and the evidence from parchmarks and cropmarks (transcribed by Christine Cox). Drawn by S E James.

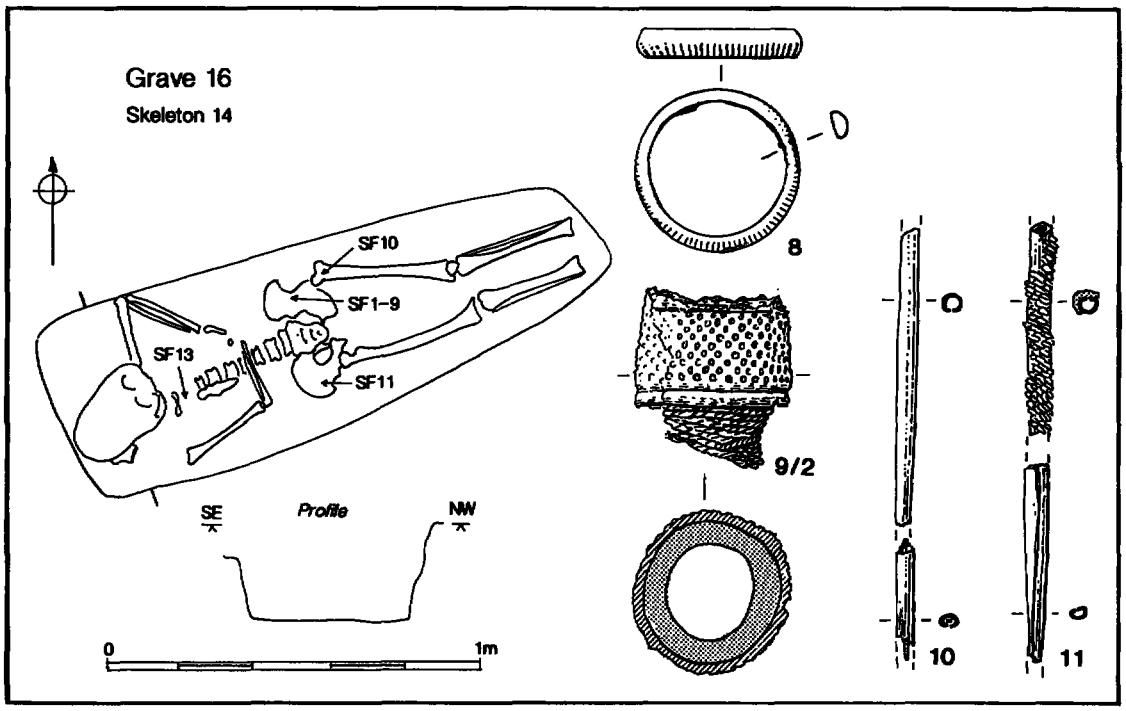


Fig. 3 Pinglestone Farm, New Alresford. 17th century burial and accompanying finds. Drawn by S E James.

the 1st–2nd centuries A.D. The majority of the small and rather abraded sherds are coarsewares including oxidised and unoxidised sandy fabrics, Black Burnished ware, and two fine grey ware sherds derived from a poppy head beaker. A small quantity of ceramic building material was also recovered from stratified contexts (19 fragments weighing 1,619 g), including a number of fragments of *tegulae*. Three fragments of iron nails were also recovered from pit 11.

THE EARLY 17TH CENTURY BURIAL
by A P Fitzpatrick and M Laidlaw

The burial (Fig. 3) was found during the removal of topsoil under archaeological supervision in advance of construction and was excavated under the auspices of a Home Office Licence. The grave (16) contained the almost complete skeleton of an adult male. The grave was shallow and appeared to be very small (Fig. 3). No setting for a grave marker was observed. The man's feet are missing and although this could have occurred during the machining, in view of the size and shallowness of the grave it is more likely that they were removed by ploughing.

The dead man was buried lying on his back in an extended position aligned approximately south-west to north-east. The bones are in a moderately poor condition. The grave was 1.5 m long, 0.5 m wide and with a maximum depth of 0.25 m towards its western end. The grave fill (14) was a brown silty clay containing occasional small fragments of chalk.

Two copper-alloy lace tags or lace ends were found on the body, one, SF 10, under the left femur, the other, SF 11, on the right hand side of the pelvis. Copper alloy staining on the skeleton indicates that both originally lay by the dead man's waist. Eight silver coins (SF 1–7, 9/1) and a copper-alloy ring (SF 8) were recovered below the left

side of the pelvis. One of the coins (SF 9/1) was next to an iron sewing ring (SF 9/2) which had corroded onto it but which was separated during conservation. A ninth coin (SF 13) was retrieved from a bulk soil sample taken from the region of the throat. As finger bones were found by the head it is possible that this ninth coin had been displaced in the grave, perhaps by animal disturbance, and also originally lay by the waist. The composition of the group of coins and the wear on them suggest that they were buried early in the 17th century.

HUMAN BONE by Jacqueline I McKinley

Age was assessed from the stage of tooth development (van Beek 1983) and ossification/epiphyseal bone fusion (Gray 1977; McMinn and Hutchings 1985; Webb and Suchey 1985) and age-related degenerative change to the bone (Brooks 1955; Brothwell 1972; Iscan et al 1984; Bass 1987). Sex was ascertained from the sexually dimorphic traits of the skeleton (Bass 1987). Cranial, platymeric and platycnemic indices were calculated according to Brothwell (1972) and Bass (1987). Stature was estimated using Trotter and Gleser's regression equations (1952; 1957). Pathological lesions and morphological variations were recorded and diagnoses suggested where appropriate.

Results

c. 98% skeletal recovery
AGE/SEX: Adult male 30–45 yr.
PATHOLOGY SUMMARY: calculus; caries; abscess; hypercementosis; Schmorl's nodes – T7-L3; osteoarthritis – costo-vertebral T1, 9, 11 & 13; periosteal new bone – right buccal mandible; pitting – C4, T4–5, L5, T2 rib, T10 rib, lateral clavicles, left medial clavicle, right proximal humerus; calcified thyroid cartilage; osteophytes – C1–2 anterior, T3–9 body surface margins, T3–8 transverse processes, T12 rib, L1, 3–4 body surface margins, right proximal humerus, scapulae, acetabulae, left proximal femur, right distal femur, right patella, sacro-iliac; destructive lesion – left distal radius; infection – right temporo-mandibular; exostoses – left patella, left distal tibia, right proximal tibia, iliac crest; malformations – proximal femurs and tibiae shafts, left radius and ulna shafts, T3 right rib facet absent, groove in right auricular surface; morphological variation – T13, 13 ribs, L5 sacralised, atlas groove

Cranial Index: 73.83 (Dolichocrany)
Estimated Stature: 163.43m (5′ 4¼″)
Platymeric Index: 93.17 (Eurymeric)
Platycnemic Index: 76.5 (Eurycnemic)

The bone was generally in good condition, though the skull and ribs were very heavily fragmented in consequence of the very shallow grave. There was green staining over a 38 mm length of the left tibia proximal dorsal surface, on the dorsal side of the left ischial spine and in the centre of the right anterior iliac fossa (pelvis), and on the ventral surface of a left lower rib shaft. The staining derived from the lace-tags which on excavation were recovered from below (left side pelvis) and resting on (right side pelvis) the body.

Other than the accidental removal of foot bones either during the current works or earlier, there was no visible disturbance to the grave fill. However, the recovery of some hand bones from around the skull indicates some level of disturbance by animals at least. The discovery of a coin found in a soil sample taken from the region of the throat may also suggest this.

The presence of a 12 mm long meso-lateral cut mark (?knife size) in the dorsal side of the right ischium (pelvis) is indicative of human disturbance, the cut having been made in dry bone some years after burial, but not recently.

Tooth wear was light, indicating a younger age than suggested by the other ageing criteria. Calculus deposits (tartar) and periodontal disease (gum infection) were slight, however, the rate of dental caries (35%) and dental abscesses (12%) were fairly high. The carious lesions were unevenly distributed with a 67% rate in the left maxillary teeth. Infection from one mandibular dental abscess had spread to the buccal body of the mandible, indicated by the formation of periosteal new bone.

Schmorl's nodes, destructive lesions resulting from a rupture in the intervertebral disc allowing the nucleus pulposus to protrude into the vertebral body, were noted in 38% of the vertebrae,

Fig. 4 Medial view of femora (centre) and anterior view of tibiae (lateral); showing the bowing-effect produced in the mid-proximal ends of the bones as a result of exaggerated development of the anterior medial borders in the femora and medial borders of the tibiae. Photograph by Elaine A. Wakefield.

lesions being concentrated in the lower thoracic and upper lumbar. Osteoarthritic lesions (Rogers and Waldron 1995) were limited to the costo-vertebral joints, a minimum of four joints either side being affected (31%).

Both femurs and tibiae are slightly malformed (Fig. 4). All the changes are limited to the proximal ends of the bones which retain a generally 'normal', non-pathological appearance. The femurs appear to be angled acutely anterior from the proximal ends, the distal half of the shafts being normal. Both have strong *linea asperae* and very pronounced gluteal tuberosities creating a substantial (4.7 mm) lateral bulge in the lateral line of the shafts when viewed anteriorly. Both have strong, pronounced anterior medial borders in the proximal half from 1 mm inferior to inter-trochlear tuberosities (inferior to head) down to the mid-shafts; this has resulted in pronounced concave dorso-medial surfaces between the *linea asperae* and the medial borders, the general effect being medio-lateral flattening of the bones but with pronounced upstanding gluteal tuberosities and almost grooved dorso-medial surfaces. In addition, the right has a smooth, shallow groove along the anterior medial aspect possibly delineating what would normally have been the medial side of the shaft. The proximal halves of the tibiae shafts have a pronounced lateral angle which give the appearance of having been 'pulled-across' to the medial side. The medial anterior surfaces are curved to give convex profiles, the lateral-anterior surfaces having pronounced concavities with sharply-ridged dorso-lateral borders. The posterior surfaces have extra-strongly ridged borders extending from the distal ends of the soleal lines laterally to join the lateral border just above the mid-shafts, a separate border extending from the soleal lines to the medial borders forming acute v-shaped grooves between the two borders.

The bi-lateral nature of the changes and lack of associated lesions indicates that the variations in morphology are developmental defects, probably activity related, but quite what form of activity would result in such changes is not currently clear.

COINS

Identifications by Nicolas A Wells

Nine coins were found with the burial, all are of silver and date to the late Tudor period (Tab. 1; Fig. 5). With the exception of the coin recovered from the soil sample (SF 13), eight of the coins were found together and clearly associated with the burial, lying beneath the left pelvis of the skeleton. It seems likely that they were all in some sort of container, perhaps of leather or textile.

Fig. 5 Pinglestone Farm, New Alresford. Coins from 17th century burial. Photograph by Elaine A. Wakefield.

Discussion By B J Cook

The coins are all undoubtedly official English issues produced to the traditional fine silver sterling standard. In 1560–1 Elizabeth I restored this standard after the hiatus of the Great Debasement begun by Henry VIII in 1544, recalling and recoining all the old debased money. The only coins permitted to survive in currency after this date were the fine silver issues of Edward VI and Mary, represented in this group by three groats of Mary. Mary produced substantial quantities of silver groats during her reign, and her issues appear to have predominated in this denomination for the rest of the 16th and into the 17th century (*cf.* Cook 1994, 79–80).

The denominations found represent a range of Elizabethan low denomination money, from a single sixpence down to the halfpenny, but lacking two denominations, the three-halfpence and three-farthings. This range is typical of small finds of late Tudor coins and the inference taken from these is usually that they represent accidental losses, probably of purses holding ready money for daily business. The sum involved in this find was 2*s*.4½*d*., assuming the halfpenny (SF 13) to have been part of the original group.

The coins have for the most part experienced considerable wear and, overall, they weigh a little over 83% of the official standard. This is not an uncommon level for low denomination coin deposited in the late 16th or early 17th centuries. Virtually all silver coins of this period are to some degree underweight and the lower the denomination the more this is the case: lightweight specimens enjoyed a level of toleration that would not have been extended to the larger silver or, especially, to the gold coinage. A comparable recent find of 14 coins from Hoxne, Suffolk (denominations from the penny to the groat, latest coin 1592) weighed on average 80% of the standard (Cook 1994, 81).

Table 1 Coins from the burial

Special Find	*Issuer*	*Denomination*	*Initial mark*	*Issue date*	*Weight (g.)*	*Diameter (mm)*	*Reference (North 1991)*
1	ELIZABETH I (1558–1603) Bust very worn.	Groat (4d)	Cross crosslet	Issued 1560/1	1.63	24	NORTH II 1986
2	ELIZABETH I (1558–1603) Bust very worn.	6d piece	Lion	Issued 1566>	2.77	25	NORTH II 1997
3	PHILIP & MARY TUDOR (1554–1558) Bust very worn.	Groat (4d)	Lis	Issued 1554–8	1.49	23	NORTH II 1973
4	MARY TUDOR (1553–1558) Bust very worn and incised.	Groat (4d)	Pomegranate	Issued 1553/4	1.71	23	NORTH II 1960
5	ELIZABETH I (1558–1603)	3d piece	Ermine	Issued 1572–3	1.28	19	NORTH II 1998
6	ELIZABETH I (1558–1603)	2d piece	Woolpack	Issued 1594/5	0.91	16	NORTH II 2016
7	ELIZABETH I (1558–1603) Obverse inscription very irregular	1d piece	Ermine	Issued 1572–3	0.45	14	NORTH II 2001
9/1	MARY TUDOR (1553–1558) Bust very worn. Adhering to corroded iron	Groat (4d)	Uncertain	Issued 1553/4	Not more than 1.91	24	NORTH II 1960*
13	ELIZABETH I (1558–1603)	½d	Hand	Issued 1588–1592	0.29	10	NORTH II 2018

The state of wear has implications for the date of the coins' deposit, and hence for the burial. The latest datable coin was struck in 1594/5, but the group could easily have been deposited into the 17th century, perhaps as late as the 1620s, as mint output under James I was not such as to guarantee the presence of his issues in such a small group of material. One can point to some early Jacobean hoards as evidence here. A hoard of 59 coins from Barrow Gurney, North Somerset, deposited around 1605, included just three coins of James I, alongside 10 (all groats) of Mary (average weight 78% of standard), and the rest of Elizabeth (half-groat to shilling) (Cook 1990, 87–8); and the Wistow, North Yorkshire, hoard of similar deposit date, had seven Jacobean coins out of 119 pieces, including 30 groats of Mary (Recent Finds 1943, 107). The level of wear on the current group suggests decades of currency along these lines, and a deposit date of *c.* 1605–15 can be suggested.

COSTUME FITTINGS By A P Fitzpatrick

A plain copper alloy ring with a rounded outer face (SF 8) was found with the silver coins in burial 16. It is 22 mm in diameter and 4 mm thick. Two lace tags were also found, one (SF 11), under the left femur bearing extensive traces of mineral replaced textiles, the other (SF 12) on the right hand side of the pelvis. The tags are both broken but were both probably originally *c.* 70 mm long and *c.* 2 mm in diameter (Fig. 3). The tags are probably from the laces of a doublet and in conjunction with the mineral replaced textile remains suggest that the man was buried either partly clothed or with an item of clothing laid over him. What is possibly an incomplete iron thimble or more likely a sewing ring (SF 9/2) with extensive mineral preserved textiles inside it had rusted to one of the silver coins (SF 9/1) but was separated during conservation. As the object survives it is 15 mm high, with relatively large indentations (known as holes), and it now weighs 5 g. (Fig. 3).

DISCUSSION By A P Fitzpatrick

The discovery of an early 17th century burial outside a churchyard or consecrated ground is unusual, particularly as the churches of the well-

established town of New Alresford and the village of Old Alresford lie only 1 km to the south-east and the east respectively (Robertson 1969). The coins date the burial to well before the English Civil War and the nearby Battle of Cheriton Down of 1644. Buried in a small, and shallow grave, the presence of lace tags by the waist, suggests that the man was at least partly clothed or that a piece of clothing was placed over him so that he was not afforded the indignity of being buried naked. By the time of his death at an age of between 30 and 45, his legs (femurs and tibiae) had become slightly malformed. The bi-lateral nature of the changes and the absence of associated lesions suggest that the malformations were developmental defects, although what activity would have caused these changes is not known. The presence of a single cut mark, possibly from a knife, in the right side of the pelvis but apparently made into dry bone is enigmatic.

The eight coins found by the left hip, with a finger ring and sewing ring may well have been in a small container. It is uncertain if the ninth coin found by the throat was originally placed with the other coins and was disturbed by, for example, burrowing animals or plough damage, or whether it was originally placed in the mouth.

The coins also provide the clearest indication of the unusual nature of the burial. Early in the 17th century, unless they had forfeited the right by suicide or irreversible excommunication, burial in a churchyard could be expected by all whether they had experienced a good death or not. Catholics, and even those who were excommunicated, would usually be buried in a Church of England churchyard (Cressy 1997, 465–6). At a later date the same applied to non-conformists. Graves were to be six foot deep, oriented east-west and the dead to be buried facing upwards. Suicides or criminals who had been executed would be buried in a prone position at crossroads – which is not the case at Pinglestone Farm – and it seems unlikely that such individuals would be buried with money about their body. If nothing else, the coins at Pinglestone Farm might have been taken as an undertaker's fee, for the dead man would have had enough money about him for a winding cloth or burial shroud to be bought and for a funeral service to have been held (Cressy 1997, 429–30).

The location of the burial, on a hillside outwith consecrated ground, the shallowness of the grave, and the possibility that the man was buried at least partly clothed, all suggest that the burial was made rapidly. As the man does not appear to have been robbed, foul play seems unlikely. Instead, it may be that the man died of a particularly virulent or infectious disease and that, whether through decay of the cadaver or for other reasons, the speed with which the burial was made was important. New Alresford was no stranger to such circumstances and on at least one occasion pestilence so raged that the place was said to be deserted (Robertson 1969, 22), and the Borough had one of the earliest Pest Houses in England. Be that as it may, the actual circumstances surrounding the death and burial of the man whose remains were found at Pinglestone Farm remain unknown.

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A P Fitzpatrick managed the project for Wessex Archaeology.

The archive (site code OLP 97 (Wessex Archaeology project number 43734)) is deposited with Winchester Museums Service, 75 Hyde Street, Winchester SO23 7DW having been gifted to the Service by the landowner Mr Isaacs. The County Coroner confirmed that the silver coins found with the burial are not regarded as Treasure Trove and therefore no inquest was required.

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