
5 CONCLUSION

The limited scale of the Kingston Common project hampers firm conclusions and there is clearly the potential for further targeted fieldwork. Although the site was discovered by accident and lies in a situation unsuited to either farming or commercial development, it shares many traits with those first recorded during these activities and is therefore not an atypical location for an early medieval burial site.

Early medieval cemeteries have been effectively discussed by Greig et al (2000), Henshall (1956), Proudfoot (1996; 1998), Rees (2002), Rees & Finlayson (1997) and Yeoman (1998). They are considered by many authorities as being a manifestation of the spreading of Christianity (see eg Alcock 1992; Close-Brooks 1984) although Greig et al (2000, 606) note that non-Christian Romano-British burials share many traits with long-cist burials. These cemeteries have also been viewed as a symbol of territorial arrangements (Proudfoot & Aliaga-Kelly 1998).

The radiocarbon dates from these cemeteries in south-east Scotland demonstrate that they were in use generally between the 4th and 8th centuries AD, and although more recent excavations may be increasing this date range, the efficacy of several early dates has been questioned (Greig et al 2000; Rees 2002). The single date from the cemetery at Kingston sits comfortably within this framework. The single date from the overlying dug burials has few parallels but also confirms the accepted

sequence of stone cists giving way to unlined dug burials.

The fieldwork at Kingston Common has therefore reinforced existing assumptions regarding the location, layout and dating of these cemeteries and that they often occupy burial sites of much greater antiquity. It has also led to the discovery of unusual features, due largely to the beneficial effects accorded to the site by the lack of modern activity on the knoll. Chief amongst these is the possible chapel, a most unusual discovery and one that may repay further work. Due to its vestigial nature, such remains would be rapidly destroyed by agricultural work on many more accessible sites. This further suggests that had overlying cairns existed as at Lundin Links, evidence would have survived.

The aims of the project were intended to be limited and have been fulfilled. The status of the field wall has been established, and does not form a boundary relating to the cemetery. Instead, a date in the 17th or 18th centuries may be proposed for its construction, either contemporary with the post-medieval settlement or somewhat before it. The boundaries of the cemetery to the east and south have been established, and respect the topography of the knoll. The original cemetery boundaries to the west and north may have been lost, but, within the constraints of the limited trench coverage and the widths of the trenches as against the spacing of the burials, the current limits of the site are now known with a degree of certainty.