The Anglo-Saxon Burial at Coombe (Woodnesborough), Kent

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HISTORY OF THE FIND*

THE grave at Coombe was excavated by an amateur collector of antiquities, William Wakeling Boreham of The Mount, Haverhill, Suffolk, in 1845 or soon after. Some of the objects found were displayed to members of the Bury and West Suffolk Archaeological Institute on 14 September, 1848, and an account of the discovery was published in the *Proceedings* of the Institute in 1853.[1] Subsequent references may mostly be traced back to this, apart from some additional information concerning individual objects.

According to this account we learn that:

> '. . . Six feet below an artificial surface of a kind of clay, of about 20 yards diameter, were found in a kistvaen or grave a copper urn containing some human bones (burnt) portions of which have been identified as parts of the cheekbone or orbit and lower jaw. Beside this were found two swords, an iron spear-head, glass and amber beads, and part of a pendant set with garnet or coloured glass.'

It is further stated that the swords were wrapped in cloth, and that:

> '. . . a veil of cloth appears to have been placed over the urn, portions of which are still adhering to its edges . . . in the exact position it was placed by the affectionate hand of the mourning relative.'

The copper vessel described as the urn was stated to have two handles which came loose on removal, and feet on a circular 'rim', which had been soldered on to the base and also became detached. The fine hilt of one sword, the strange bowl with handles and the cloth round it were the points which appealed to the imagination of Mr. Boreham, and other facts about the burial were left unrecorded. The assumption at this point was that the grave was a British one of the 4th century A.D.

The objects mentioned were on view at Ipswich, except for the second sword, if it was a sword, which was never heard of again. It was probably judged not worth keeping. The decorated sword was taken to London to be exhibited to the Society of Antiquaries on 23 November, 1854. In the *Proceedings* of the

* Many books and articles are cited in the footnotes by author's name and date of publication, or by other abbreviations; for the explanation of these see the Bibliography, p. 40.

[1] *Proc. Bury and W. Suffolk Institute*, I (1853), 27.

Society we are told that the hilt was in a fair state of preservation.[2] The cloth over the bowl is again mentioned:

> 'The whole, it is said, were covered with a coarse cloth, portions of which may be seen still adhering to the edge of the bowl. This cloth is shown by the microscope to be woollen. Fragments of a fibula set with garnet, and a few beads, were found at the same time.'

At the same meeting W. H. Spiller exhibited a glass cup, stated to have been found 'many years since' in an Anglo-Saxon grave at Coombe, presumed to be the same from which the sword and other objects mentioned were taken.

The Coombe sword was drawn for several publications of the middle of the 19th century. It first appears in 1853 in C. Roach Smith's *Collectanea Antiqua*,[3] where he published a drawing of the hilt with some other objects, done by Thomas Frye of Saffron Walden (PL. I). Roach Smith himself had not seen these, but stated that they were in the possession of W. W. Boreham 'who got them from a barrow in Coombe, Kent, about three years ago'. Frye shows the hilt, the brooch, eleven beads (six of them threaded), an object described as a brass stud, and one other item of considerable interest, namely a sword-ring, said to be 'in bronze, very thickly gilt', but not otherwise commented on. Unlike most ring-attachments from Kent, it is not fitted with a loose ring, but is in the form of a fixed half-circle.

In 1854 J. Y. Akerman produced a full-scale drawing of the hilt with part of the blade in his *Remains of Pagan Saxondom*, giving the measurements and a brief description, and noting that fragments of a wooden sheath still adhered to the blade below the hilt. He showed another object said to come from Coombe, the glass cup belonging to W. H. Spiller, which must be the one exhibited to the Society of Antiquaries. Akerman states that this presumably came from the same grave as the sword, and that it was found at the same time. A second glass vessel was found with it, but was broken; this resembled a claw-beaker found at Reculver, but was colourless. In Akerman's own copy of *Remains of Pagan Saxondom*, now in the library of the Society of Antiquaries, a drawing of the two glass vessels has been bound in, showing also a single bead which must have been found with them (PL. II). There are also two drawings of the Coombe hilt in a scrap-book formerly in the possession of Frederick Hendriks, and now in the library of the Society of Antiquaries. One, which includes a ring-knob, beads, a brooch and a stud, is signed by Akerman; the other, unsigned, shows the ornament on the hilt in considerable detail.

A drawing of the Coombe sword was included in J. M. Kemble's *Horae Ferales* in 1863, along with a number of other Anglo-Saxon swords, but no new facts were given about it.[4] In 1908 Reginald Smith included a drawing of the hilt in his article on Anglo-Saxon antiquities in Kent,[5] and states that the sword had a ring ('attached to one side of the ogee pommel, perhaps for a sword knot'), although this is not shown in the drawing. This implies that he had seen the ring-mount drawn by Frye. When however Baldwin Brown included a photograph of the hilt

[2] *Proc. Soc. Antiq., Lond.*, III, 121. Mr. Boreham's name is printed as Barcham, and his initials given as W.H. The name is spelt correctly in the original record.

[3] *Coll. Antiq.*, II (1852-3), 164, pl. xxxviii.

[4] J. M. Kemble, *Horae Ferales* (1863), pl. xxv.

[5] *V.C.H., Kent*, I, 355.

in his *Arts in Early England*,[6] he noted that the hilt had no ring. On the basis of the interlacing and the wide plates on either side of the grip he estimated that the sword must be late 7th or even early 8th century in date. On the other hand, the existence of the ring seems to have been known to Montelius some years later, since he mentions the Coombe hilt in his famous article on ringed swords, published in 1924.[7]

We hear of one more find from Coombe, an axe-head. Akerman shows a drawing of this in 1852 in *Archaeologia*,[8] together with two other axes from Ozingell and Richborough Castle. He states that this axe was found at Coombe along with a bronze dish, some glass, and a sword 'of extraordinary size and beauty', but that 'since it was an unsightly object, it was thrown aside as worthless' (indicating Akerman's opinion of Boreham's qualities as an antiquary). The axe however was retrieved by W. H. Rolfe of Sandwich and put into his collection, and it was he who exhibited it to illustrate Akerman's paper.

In course of time the scattered finds from Coombe came to rest in various museums. In 1865 the glass cup, broken claw-beaker and single bead were presented by W. H. Spiller to the British Museum. The axe may well have found its way to Liverpool along with other objects from Rolfe's collection acquired by Joseph Mayer and subsequently given to the museum there. Among the surviving ironwork from the Mayer collection, Mrs. S. Hawkes has found a fragmentary axe closely resembling that drawn for *Archaeologia*, but she points out that a very similar axe-head is figured by Roach Smith in *Collectanea Antiqua*[9] as coming from Ozingell on Thanet, a site from which many of Rolfe's finds were acquired. The fact that two leading antiquaries of the time could in the same year publish similar axes from the Rolfe collection under different descriptions suggests that there may have been confusion in the labelling, and this makes it impossible to identify the Coombe axe with any certainty.

The main finds from Coombe—sword, spear-head, bowl, brooch and beads—remained in the possession of William Boreham until his death in 1886 at the age of 82. A few years later his widow, Jane Chalklen Boreham, was persuaded by Joseph Clarke to give some of the objects from his collection to the museum at Saffron Walden. A cutting from a local paper, unfortunately undated, is preserved in the museum accessions book, where the gift is recorded in the year 1891, giving this information:

> 'At the end of last month Mrs. Boreham of Haverhill, through Mr. J. Clarke, very kindly presented to the museum some very interesting Saxon relics found at Coombe in Kent. The articles, which were discovered in 1845, were found at six feet below the surface in a kind of grave. They consist of a copper bowl, which contained burnt human remains, an ancient sword, and a spear head, and other things, which were found by the side of the bowl. The sword is 3 ft. 8 ins. long, although it is very much dilapidated and broken, but the whole of the articles will be renovated by the skilful hand of the curator, Mr. Maynard.'

[6] Baldwin Brown (1915), III, pl. xxvii (3).

[7] O. Montelius, 'Ringsvard och narstaender Typer', *Antik. Tid. f. Sverige*, XXII (1924), 5, 18. Cf. R. F. Jessup, *Anglo-Saxon Jewellery* (1950), p. 140.

[8] *Archaeologia*, XXXIV (1852), 179.

[9] *Op. cit.* in note 3, p. 5, pl. i (2).

Evidently the sword had deteriorated since it was shown at Ipswich nearly fifty years earlier. It was now put into a glass case, and the woven material from the bowl, still reasonably well preserved, was mounted between glass. Mrs. Boreham gave a few additional objects to the museum, including an 'iron key, probably Roman', and 'pieces of bone dug up in the Clifford Tower, York', but everything which came from Coombe was carefully specified in the accessions book. Some confusion was caused because the miscellaneous objects were mounted on a card and displayed for many years as finds from Coombe, and the matter was not cleared up until in 1965 Miss Susan Nicholson, Assistant Curator at Saffron Walden, made a detailed investigation of the records. The object described in the book as a spear-head and two of the larger beads drawn by Frye are now missing, although recorded in the accessions list of 1891.

The objects from Coombe were cleaned and examined in the British Museum Research Laboratory in 1965. The textiles have been examined by Miss Crowfoot and Dr. Ryder (see Appendixes, pp. 37 ff.), and the sword, bowl, brooch and beads have been drawn (FIGS. 3–4) by Mrs. Marion Cox. The group of objects presents many points of exceptional interest, and poses not a few problems.

THE SITE

The position of the burial is not easy to determine with certainty. According to the records of the Ordnance Survey, it was close to the hamlet of Coombe, not far from the ruins of Coombe Farm and the road which runs southwards to Woodnesborough.[10] The most probable position is, therefore, somewhere in the area of the old sandpit, as indicated in the sketch-map (FIG. 1). This sandpit has been in use for a long time, and the grave may have been discovered by labourers digging there.

A possible alternative is a place near Ringleton Manor a little farther south, where remains of a mound were still visible until the building of the R.A.F. station during the war of 1939–45. Several people who saw this describe it as a low circular mound with a central depression,[11] and it is marked on the 6-in. O.S. maps of 1877 and 1899. It is tempting to assume that this was the remains of a tumulus over the Coombe grave, but Dr. J. D. Ogilvie, to whom I am indebted for much information about this locality, tells me that he believes the mound to be one on which a mill stood from 1737 to 1818, when it was moved to Mt. Ephraim near Ash.[12] This mill is marked on a large-scale map of 1769,[13] although here it is shown a little way to the north of Ringleton Manor. The mound visible before the war was opposite the Manor, on a ridge of high ground surrounded by old trees,

[10] Nat. Grid. Ref. TR/2975/5750.

[11] It is so described by an elderly resident at Coombe, and by Ronald Jessup, who visited it with O. G. S. Crawford and believed it to be an Anglo-Saxon tumulus.

[12] Dr. Ogilvie has most kindly obtained information from Mr. Percy Clayton about the mill. It was built by the Hudson family (still millers at Ramsgate), and after being moved to Mt. Ephraim became derelict and lost its sweeps, but was repaired about 1850 and continued in use until 1938. It has since been blown down, and the wreckage can still be seen, the timbers bearing the dates of its building in 1737 and removal in 1818. An old carpenter in Ash known to Mr. Clayton claimed to have seen a picture of the mill being drawn up the lane from Coombe by sixteen oxen.

[13] *A Topographical Map of the County of Kent*, published by Andrews, Dury and Herbert (London, 1769). The scale is 2 in. to the mile.

now lopped because of interference with the radar station which has been placed on the highest point. In spite of this slight discrepancy, however, there seems little doubt that the mound marked the position of the mill. It is possible that an existing tumulus was chosen as a convenient spot on which the mill could be placed in 1737,[14] but since it was a post-mill it would have been necessary to dig

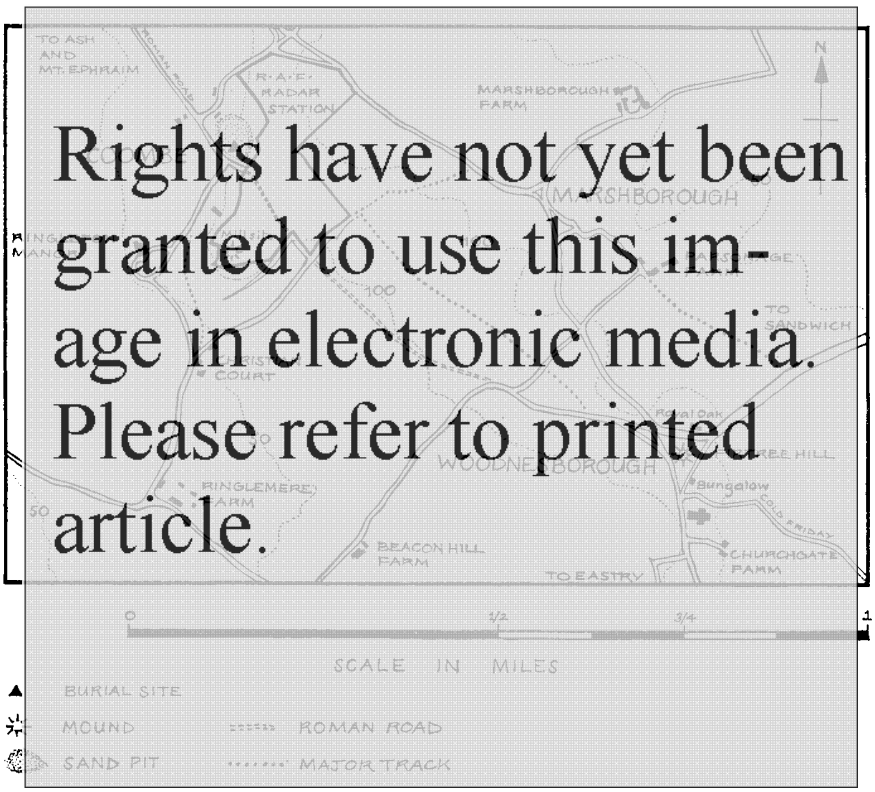

FIG. 1

COOMBE, KENT

Sketch-map showing district and probable site of burial (pp. 4 ff.)

deep to fix the central post, and the burial would probably have been revealed. It seems strange also, were this the case, to find no mention of the mill in the records of the find.

It seems impossible now to decide whether the grave was originally marked by a tumulus or low mound of earth. If its position was in the old sandpit, such marks may have been destroyed long before the burial was discovered. Several rich graves in Kent were found accidentally when men were digging for sand or gravel, and the grave at Coombe is said to have been discovered by a 'simple labourer'.

That the site lay not far from Ringleton Manor is interesting. Ringleton

[14] This suggestion was made by Mr. Clayton, who himself put forward the arguments against it.

(*Ringetone, Ringetun*) is mentioned in Domesday as one of the estates given to Odo, bishop of Bayeux, at the Norman Conquest.[15] After the bishop fell from favour, it passed to one of William's knights, whose son became the earl of Arundel. In his *History of Kent*[16] Hasted traces the subsequent history of the manor, which was held by members of this noble family or their relatives by marriage until Tudor times, when it was sold to raise money for a charity and afterwards belonged to members of the merchant class. In the time of James I it was an estate of 226 acres. It seems likely that an Anglo-Saxon hall once stood here, since we know that the estate was worth £8 in Edward the Confessor's time, and was paying £13 when recorded in Domesday.

The ridge on which the radar station now stands curves round behind Coombe to Gilton (Ash), where the rich Anglo-Saxon cemetery dug by Faussett was situated, about a mile from Coombe hamlet. From the ridge it is possible to look over the marshland to the sea, which was probably nearer in the 6th century than now (FIG. 2).[17] Mrs. S. Hawkes has pointed out the resemblance between the Coombe site and that at the Witherdens, Wingham, about three miles farther west, where there was again a rich aristocratic male burial on a hill overlooking a spring and a medieval house site, with a small 7th-century cemetery. The rich grave at Stodmarsh, as described by Akerman, also stood on the brow of a hill near the old Jacobean mansion of Stodmarsh Court.[18] The main Roman road passed through Ash and Coombe and then over the ridge to Woodnesborough, where there was another small Anglo-Saxon cemetery behind the Royal Oak.[19] Although little can be seen at Coombe now, it was fairly populous in the 18th century, as may be seen from Dury's map and Hasted's description of it as a hamlet of nine houses. It goes back to medieval times, and was held by Thomas, son of 'John at Coombe', in the reign of Edward III.

The Roman road from Canterbury to Richborough, described by I. D. Margary[20] as one of the most important in Roman Britain, passed directly through Coombe (FIG. 2). Traces of it were found along Coombe Lane when the telephone line was laid from Ash to the R.A.F. station, and it continued from there along the ridge, following still existing paths, past Woodnesborough forge and west of Firtree Hill to the high point south of the church, where it was realigned to run through Poison Cross to Eastry.[21] Thus in Anglo-Saxon times the Coombe grave lay close to the main highway joining Canterbury to Richborough and Dover, and the isolated position of the place must not lead us to forget its former accessibility.

Woodnesborough, not far from the burial, is in itself of interest as an Anglo-Saxon site, although it has yielded no major find or large cemetery. The name is given as *Woodnesbrough* in an 11th-century document, and *Wodnesbeorge* in one of

[15] *V.C.H., Kent*, III, 239, 241.
[16] Hasted (1799), IV, 230.
[17] Chadwick (1958), pp. 3-7.
[18] *Archaeologia*, XXXV (1855), 179.
[19] *V.C.H., Kent*, I, 356, 387.
[20] Margary (1955), pp. 32-3.
[21] Information supplied by Dr. Ogilvie.

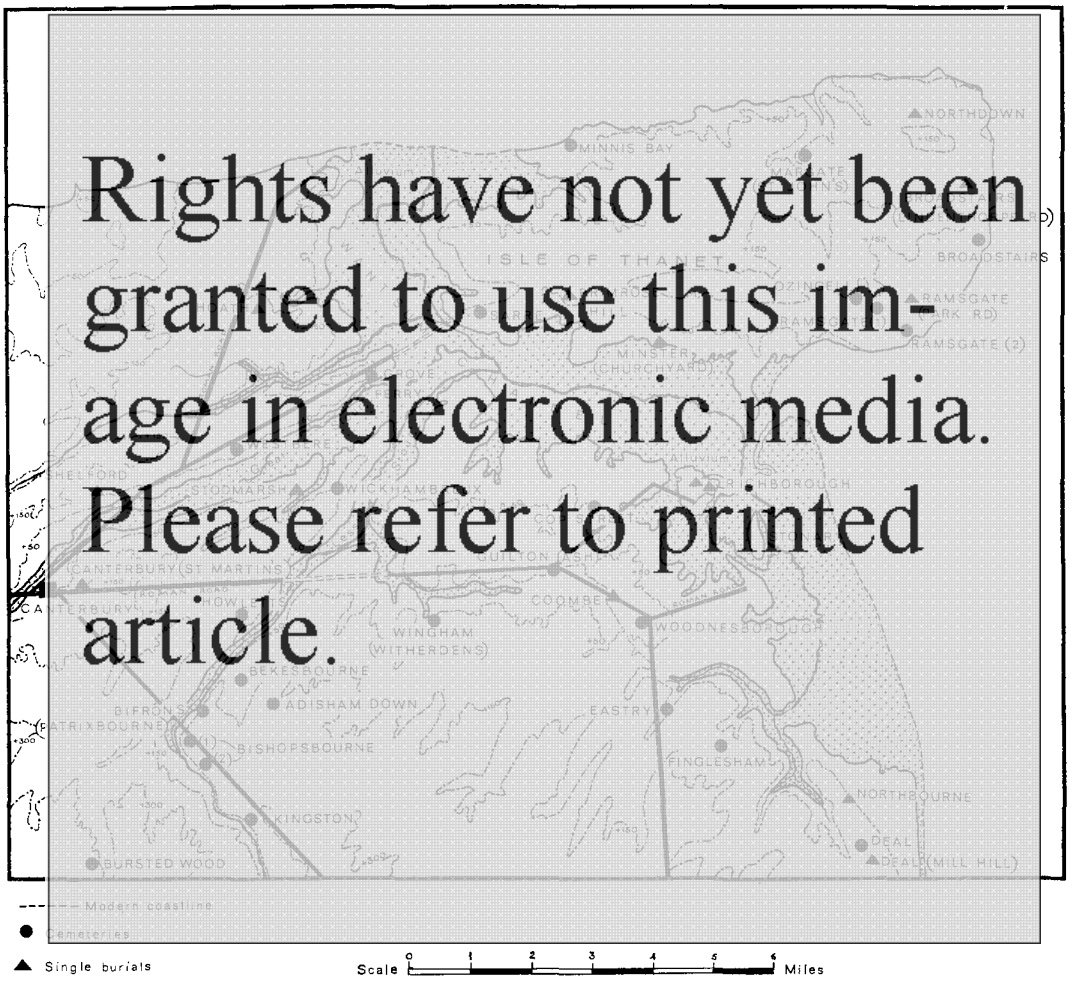

FIG. 2

MAP OF NE. KENT

showing Anglo-Saxon burial sites, the Roman roads, and the probable coast-line in Anglo-Saxon times (p. 6)

Based on the O.S. map with the sanction of the Controller of H.M. Stationery Office. Crown copyright reserved

about 1100, and the interpretation 'Hill of Woden' is accepted by Ekwall and Stenton.[22] Not far from the church stood what Hasted describes as 'a high conical mound, seemingly thrown up by art, and consisting of sandy earth'.[23] The illustration in the second edition of Hasted's *History* shows this mound close to the church, but this may be slightly misleading, since the map of 1769 and the 6-in. O.S. map of 1899 show a tumulus (marked by the O.S. as an ancient monument) on the slope of Firtree Hill on the church side. This probably stood near the small

[22] E. Ekwall, *Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Place-names* (4 ed., 1960); F. M. Stenton, *Trans. Royal Hist. Soc.*, XXIII (1941), 19.

[23] Hasted (1799, 1800), IV, 238.

bungalow which has now been built on the north side of the church.[24] Building is now taking place on Firtree Hill, but neither now nor in recent times have any finds been made there. According to Hasted grave-goods were found there in the late 18th century, consisting of a glass vessel, fibula and spear-head, as well as what he calls fragments of Roman vessels. There is also the tradition mentioned by James Douglas in 1793 that thirty glass vessels were found 'very near the conical hill there some years back'.[25] It was generally believed in the 19th century that these cups were found unbroken and still usable.[26] The most detailed account comes from Akerman, who gives a drawing of a glass cup in his *Remains of Pagan Saxondom*, stating that this is in the possession of a Mrs. Harrison from Sandwich:

> '. . . who inherits it from her father, a farmer of Wodnesborough, in the neighbourhood of that town, upon whose land it was found at the end of the last century. About 30 others, it is said, were discovered in the same locality, and they were kept at the farm to be used at harvest homes and other special occasions by the farm labourers. In such hands they were of course doomed to destruction, and the example here engraved is the only one that has escaped.'

The farm concerned is believed to be Parsonage Farm, near Woodnesborough. Possibly this may be no more than a piece of archaeological folklore, based on the discovery of a glass cup and fragments of Roman vessels either on Firtree Hill or behind the Royal Oak. Akerman's account however has a convincing ring, like most of his work. If he is correct, the evidence would seem to point to some kind of hoard rather than a cemetery, and such a find would be unique.

Another find was made not far from the church in 1902, when a farmer, draining a field at Walton, about 500 yards away, discovered what is described as a 'large funeral pile'. A little way below the surface he cut through a layer of earth 'full of fragments of calcined bone over an area of 100 ft. square', and more burnt bones were found farther away, about 4 ft. down.[27] This was assumed to be a Romano-British burning-place for cremating bodies, but no evidence is given to indicate any particular period. It is certainly a strange coincidence, if no more, that the area round Woodnesborough should be associated both with burnt remains and with an unusually large number of drinking-cups, when cremation and drinking are traditionally associated with the cult of Woden. The finds at Walton may indicate sacrificial feasts at the sacred place.

There are several mounds associated with Woden's name in central and southern England.[28] At Wednesbury in Staffordshire the church is built on a hill which may be the remains of an iron-age fort. Wenslow in Bedfordshire probably means Woden's *hlaw* or tumulus, and *Wodnesbeorge* in Wiltshire is a neolithic long barrow. The name *Othenesberg*, hill of Odin, recorded in 1119 as a name for Roseberry Topping, a hill at Newton in the North Riding of Yorkshire, must

[24] Dr. Ogilvie confirms this, and Mr. A. G. Southam, to whom we are indebted for much local information, tells us that the earth was seen to have been disturbed when the bungalow was built.

[25] Douglas (1793), p. 71.

[26] Roach Smith, for example. in his introduction to Faussett (1856), p. xliv: 'In the neighbourhood of Sandwich, numerous glass vessels have been found in past times. At Woodnesborough, in particular, it is said so many were dug up that for years they were used in a farmhouse for their original purpose, beer drinking.' cf. G. Payne, *Collectanea Cantiana* (1893), p. 171.

[27] *Archaeol. Cantiana*, xxv (1902), lxvi.

[28] Gelling (1962), pp. 15-16.

date from Viking times. Another interesting example of a conspicuous mound beside a church is that of Taplow in Buckinghamshire. This contained a rich aristocratic Anglo-Saxon burial, and the church was later built within the enclosure surrounding the mound.[29]

Finally it may be noted that one 'borough' or section of the village of Woodnesborough, that lying along the road between the church and Firtree Hill, near where the mound appears to have stood, was known as Cold Friday at the time when Hasted was writing.[30] This suggested to early antiquaries a connexion with Frīg or Frēo, goddess of fertility, who appears as the wife of Woden in Germanic tradition, and who gave her name to Friday (OE *Frigedæg*). Doubt has been expressed whether the name of this goddess ever occurs in English place-names, since although names like Freefolk, Frobury and Froyle in Hampshire might be derived from it, no Old English spellings for them survive.[31] Various 'Friday' names in southern England are explained by A. H. Smith as associated with fasting or the Crucifixion, and he suggests that Cold Friday was used for lonely roads or unproductive lands.[32] However Audrey Meaney has drawn attention to 'Friday's Church', on Wepham Down, Sussex, where there seems good reason to think that local folklore preserves the memory of a holy place. Here, as at Woodnesborough, there is an artificial mound, and on its summit a platform of large flints in puddled clay; it was said to be dedicated to St. Friga, and it had a pool of water reputed never to dry up.[33] It is thus possible that other Friday names may mark places once sacred to Frēo, and the survival of one at Woodnesborough in the vicinity of Woden's Hill and an artificial mound may well be significant. The cumulative evidence for Woodnesborough as a sacred place before the Christian church was built there gives additional significance to the discovery of a pagan cremation-burial at Coombe, a short distance away.

THE BURIAL

Our knowledge of the Coombe excavation is woefully incomplete. We depend chiefly on information given by a man who was collector rather than antiquarian, whose practice was to retain only what appeared elegant or interesting, and who allowed the objects from Coombe to deteriorate at his house after they had been exhibited in Ipswich and London.

Roach Smith in 1853 was under the impression that the grave-goods came from a mound (p. 2 above), but this may have been mere conjecture. Boreham mentions a special clay filling through which the men dug to reach the sword and bowl. It is interesting to compare this with the clay 'libation pan' in the royal ship-burial at Sutton Hoo, and with other instances of special filling in Anglo-

[29] *V.C.H., Bucks.*, I, 199.

[30] Hasted (1799), IV, 230, 238.

[31] Gelling (1962), p. 19.

[32] A. H. Smith, *English Place-name Elements* (E.P.N.S., XXV, 1956), p. 187.

[33] H. C. Collyer, 'Notes on the opening of some tumuli on the South Downs', *Proc. Croydon Nat. Hist. Soc.*, IV (1895), 179-84; E. and E. C. Curwen, 'Notes on the archaeology of Burpham', *Sussex Archaeol. Colls.*, LXIII (1922), 26-7.

Saxon graves.[34] The splendid sword and other weapons, said to include a second sword, spear and axe, imply that this was the grave of a warrior leader, buried with care and ceremony. It must rank with a number of outstanding Anglo-Saxon burials such as Broomfield (Essex), Taplow (Bucks.), Asthall (Oxon.) and Caenby (Lincs.).

There seems no reason to doubt that this was a cremation-burial, for the account states that burnt human bones were found in the bronze bowl and such an explanation is to some extent corroborated by evidence from other Anglo-Saxon graves, as will be indicated below. The objects recovered suggest that it was a double interment of a man and woman, as beside the weapons there were beads and a brooch, and it is specifically stated that all lay together beside the bowl.

For reasons given below (p. 35 f.) we have concluded that the Coombe grave-goods were buried in the last quarter of the 6th century. It is astonishing, at first sight, to find a rich cremation-grave at this date in Kent. However, although cremation is rare in this area, it is not unknown. There are instances from the Bayle, Folkestone,[35] from two mixed cemeteries at Westbere,[36] and Hollingbourne,[35] and possibly from Howletts[37] and Gilton.[38] In the last two, cremation-burials were disturbed by inhumations, and it was assumed that the urns were Roman, but it is conceivable that they were pagan Anglo-Saxon burials. Isolated examples of cremation occur in several parts of Anglo-Saxon England relatively late in the pagan period. The Asthall cremation-barrow in Oxfordshire was raised in the 7th century, as the presence of a handle-loop from a Coptic bowl shows;[39] there were cremation-burials in two of the mounds at Sutton Hoo, one of which has been recently ascribed to the late 6th century;[40] while at Loveden Hill, a large cremation-cemetery in Lincolnshire, two cremation-burials in hanging bowls probably belong to the early 7th century.[41] It is thus clear that cremation was still practised by some important families in England well after the first phase of the settlement. It should be remembered that in the 6th century Swedish kings were still being cremated with rites including animal sacrifice at Old Uppsala.

There is no indication that sword, glass vessels, beads or brooch were subjected to burning. They were said to lie beside the bowl, with the swords wrapped in cloth, while cloth covered the bowl that held the burnt bones. The analysis of the textile fragments (pp. 37 ff.) shows that there were two distinct kinds of woven woollen cloth, one of finer quality than the other. The two glass vessels and one bead appear to have been discovered separately by a labourer, and may therefore have been placed in a different part of the grave.

[34] For the 'libation pan' at Sutton Hoo see *Antiquity*, XIV (1940), 12; for clay layers in the other mounds there, Bruce-Mitford (1964), pp. 10, 13, 38. There was a layer of hard, stiff clay in grave 103, Kingston Down (Faussett (1856), p. 59); at Asthall barrow the floor, 12 ft. down, was covered by a layer of yellowish clay, which Leeds believed had been brought from the Windrush valley, nearly a mile away (*Antiq. J.*, IV (1924), 115); Hillier noted that the chalk had been stamped hard until it resembled cement at Chessel Down (*History and Antiquities of the Isle of Wight* (1885)).

[35] *V.C.H., Kent*, I, 364 (Folkestone); *ibid.*, 387 (Hollingbourne); cf. *Archaeol. Cantiana*, LXV (1952), 160.

[36] *Antiq. J.*, XXVI (1946), 10.

[37] *Proc. Soc. Antiq., Lond.*, 2 ser., XXX (1917-18), 103.

[38] Faussett (1856), p. 4 etc.

[39] *Antiq. J.*, IV (1924), 113.

[40] Bruce-Mitford (1964), p. 113.

[41] *Med. Archaeol.*, IV (1960), 127-8.

Cremation indicates a pagan burial, and is in accordance with what is known of the cult of Woden, although not in itself evidence for his worship. It was associated with Odin's cult in Old Norse literary sources of a much later date, but this must not be pressed too far, since the rite of cremation does not appear to have been the prerogative of any one heathen god. It seems sometimes to have been associated with Thunor/Thor, and probably also with the god Tīw in Anglo-Saxon England, since both the swastika and the T-rune have been found on cremation-urns.[42] Cremation was in keeping with any god connected with the sky, and Thunor, Tīw and Woden might all lay claim to it on these grounds, although in practice partial burning of the body or fires within the grave might be preferred to complete destruction of the body on a funeral pyre. The deciding factor must have been family or local tradition, and the more we learn of cremation in the heathen Anglo-Saxon period, the more mixed and complex funeral practices appear to have been.

Apart from the burning of the body, the placing of the remains in a bowl, the laying of unburnt goods beside this, and the inclusion of two drinking vessels, as well as the special filling used for the grave, we have no clear evidence for ritual. There is no sign of deliberate destruction of grave-goods, and indeed they seem to have been deposited with every care for their preservation. One of the most tantalizing gaps in the evidence is our ignorance of the contents of the bowl, so that it is impossible to say whether it contained animal bones as well as human ones. The presence of women's ornaments also raises the question whether a woman was cremated with the owner of the sword, and if so, whether this could be the sacrifice of a wife or a slave, which would be in accordance with the traditions of Woden's cult. As the evidence stands, however, this can be suggested only as a possibility.

There are a number of other instances of a rich metal bowl being used as a cremation-urn in Anglo-Saxon graves. A possible parallel to Coombe is the 6th-century grave at Stodmarsh, although it is not possible to prove that this was a cremation-burial. The grave was in a mound which stood near the road on the brow of a hill close to Stodmarsh Court, and a labourer broke into it while digging for gravel in 1848.[43] The finds were said to include bronze bowls, spear-heads, a shield-boss, buckles, brooches and other ornaments, as well as a silver spoon with perforated bowl. They were taken to Mr. Collard of Stodmarsh Court, but by the time Akerman heard of them, the bowls, weapons and beads had been thrown away. The other objects which were recovered and are now in the British Museum (PL. III) consist of a brooch, closely resembling that of Coombe, another set with garnet, a stud with a green stone, a fine buckle with gold filigree ornament, two plain buckles and belt mounts, and the spoon with garnet set in the handle. This grave was clearly a rich one, and the goods suggest that both a man and woman were buried there. There is no mention of human remains, and it is possible that there were burnt bones in the bowl or bowls.

[42] Examples of the swastika at Lackford (*Cambridge Antiq. Soc. 4to Publ.*, n.s. VI (1951)); the T-rune appears on an urn from Loveden Hill (information from K. R. Fennell and J. N. L. Myres).

[43] *Archaeologia*, XXXVI (1855), 179. Dowker (*Archaeol. Cantiana*, XVII (1887), 9) remarks that there was some doubt about the locality whence Akerman derived his specimens.

A well-authenticated example of a bronze vessel used as a cremation-urn is that from the tumulus on Brightwell (or Martlesham) Heath in Suffolk, a few miles from Ipswich along the Woodbridge road. Here a small group of mounds stood on what seems to have been the site of a bronze-age cemetery, since pieces of bronze-age pottery were found when the tumulus was excavated in 1942.[44] However the finds made by Reid Moir in 1921 indicate that the tumulus was an Anglo-Saxon one.[45] The primary interment consisted of a thin bronze bowl with lugs, holding burnt bones, both human and animal, a bone disc with simple decoration in circles, a dried seed, and a curved piece of ivory which may have been the handle of a bag.[46] The burnt remains were said to include bones from an adult skeleton and pieces of the skull of a woman, a new-born infant and an unborn child. The last two suggestions may perhaps be discounted, as thin flakes of adult skull are known to peel off during cremation, and may resemble baby's or foetal vaults.[47] The animal remains included bones of a small ox and dog. The bowl had been covered with linen, like the one from Coombe, and much of this can still be seen (p. 38). The material went over the top of the bowl and down the sides, and was tightly fastened round the rim with a string, part of which survives. No weapons are recorded from this burial, and it may well have been a woman's grave.

One of a series of burials at Wickhambreux (Kent) held a bronze bowl, a sword and a glass cup, thus bearing some resemblance to the Coombe grave. It is described as a large grave without a mound, and an iron spear-head, two shield-bosses and other iron objects are said to have been found together with the sword. Unfortunately Dowker, who recorded the find, was not there at the time of the discovery.[48] The sword lay at the bottom of the grave in its scabbard, traces of the leather covering of which could still be seen. A gold stud under the hilt was set in a circular piece of ivory, and there was a buckle with ornament of gold and coloured glass. A claw-beaker stood at the eastern end of the grave, near the point of the sword. There is no mention of human remains, but bones may have disappeared owing to the action of soil acids.

Another grave containing sword and metal bowl was found in the Trent valley, at the Upper House, Barlaston (Staffs.).[49] This was discovered when a hill was being planted in 1850 or soon afterwards, and the grave was 7 ft. long, with a shallow 'basin-like' cavity at the northern end, cut in the rock floor. This held the remains of a hanging-bowl, which was broken by the spade, as was also the sword, which lay along the west wall. The only other find recorded was a knife,

[44] G. Maynard and H. E. P. Spencer, 'Report on removal of a tumulus on Martlesham Heath, Suffolk', *Proc. Suffolk Inst. Archaeol.*, XXIV (1942), 36 ff. Cf. R. L. S. Bruce-Mitford, 'Saxon Rendlesham', *ibid.*, p. 234, note 4.

[45] J. Reid Moir, *Antiquity of Man in East Anglia* (1927), p. 154, and *J. Ipswich and District Field Club*, VI, (1921), 1 ff.

[46] Thought at the time to be part of a bracelet. The suggestion of a bag comes from Miss Barbara Green. who has other examples of these 'handles' from women's graves in the Anglo-Saxon period.

[47] Dr. Calvin Wells kindly gave information on this point. Thin flakes can also be produced from iliac bone and scapula.

[48] G. Dowker, 'A Saxon cemetery at Wickhambreux', *Archaeol. Cantiana*, XVII (1887), 6.

[49] L. Jewitt, *Grave Mounds and their Contents* (1870), pp. 258-9. He assumed the bowl to be a helmet. Cf. L. Wedgwood, 'Notes on Celtic remains found at the Upper House, Barlaston', *Trans. N. Staffs. Field Club*, XL (1906), 148, *V. C. H., Staffs.*, I, 209–10, and *Med. Archaeol.*, VI–VII (1962–3), 41–3. The bowl is now in the British Museum.

and it was stated that neither bones nor ashes were found, nor any sign of other graves near by. No account was published, however, until about twenty years later.

At Loveden Hill (Lincs.) a large number of cremation-urns and a few inhumation-burials have been excavated from 1955 onwards, including two cremations in metal hanging-bowls.[50] The grave holding the larger of these is of special interest, since beside the bowl lay an unburnt sword, bent in two places, and pieces of twisted bronze believed to be mounts from a bucket. Above was a plain bronze bowl, disturbed by the plough, which may have been inverted over the find. Traces of cloth were noted on the sides of the hanging-bowl. It held about 2,500 bone fragments, identified as human bones of an adult male and animal bones from ox, dog and bird. A glass palm-cup, fused by the fire, some amber-coloured glass and pieces of a comb were found with the burnt remains. Holes had been deliberately made through the bowl, and both sword and bucket had been extensively damaged before being laid in the grave. The second hanging-bowl held human and animal bones, but no grave-goods.

Another instance of a metal bowl in a cremation-cemetery comes from Illington (Norfolk).[51] It was probably a bowl with lugs, but only the base was recovered, with some of the bone content adhering to it.

A fine hanging-bowl, which may have come from a burial, and which had traces of cloth on the rim, was found at Manton Common, Scunthorpe (Lincs.), by men digging for sand in May, 1939. Unfortunately it was six weeks before it reached Scunthorpe Museum, and it was then too late to investigate the site.[52]

One of the two cremation-graves in mounds at Sutton Hoo (Suffolk), excavated by Basil Brown in 1938, appears to have held a thin metal bowl used as container for human and horse bones. Barrow 4 held fragments of bronze and burnt bone, but had been looted and the contents disturbed.[53]

Certain points may be established from this group of graves, in spite of grievous gaps in the evidence. In a number a metal bowl was used as container for burnt remains, both human and animal, and several of these were covered with cloth, like the one at Coombe. Most of them were accompanied by unburnt grave-goods, and in some a metal bowl was accompanied by a sword, although it cannot now be established how many of these bowls had held cremations. Some of these graves were isolated, some formed part of a small group, and three were in cemeteries. All give the impression that they were graves of people of importance, and they are for the most part graves of men, although the tumulus at Brightwell was probably a woman's grave. Variations in funeral practice within the group prevent us from using the evidence to establish exact procedure in graves of this type, while it does not seem possible to date the series with any degree of accuracy. They serve to show, however, that the burial at Coombe was

[50] *Med. Archaeol.*, IV (1960), 127–8, for description of bowls. We are much indebted to Mr. K. R. Fennell for permission to read an unpublished account of the excavation, and to use information from it.

[51] We are grateful to Group-Captain G. M. Knocker, who excavated the cemetery, for information about this. A full account is not yet published, but evidence relating to cremation there is discussed by Calvin Wells in *Antiquity*, XXXIV (1960), 29 ff.

[52] *Antiq. J.*, XXI (1941), 236; *Archaeol. J.*, CIII (1946), 91.

[53] Bruce-Mitford (1964), pp. 1 ff.

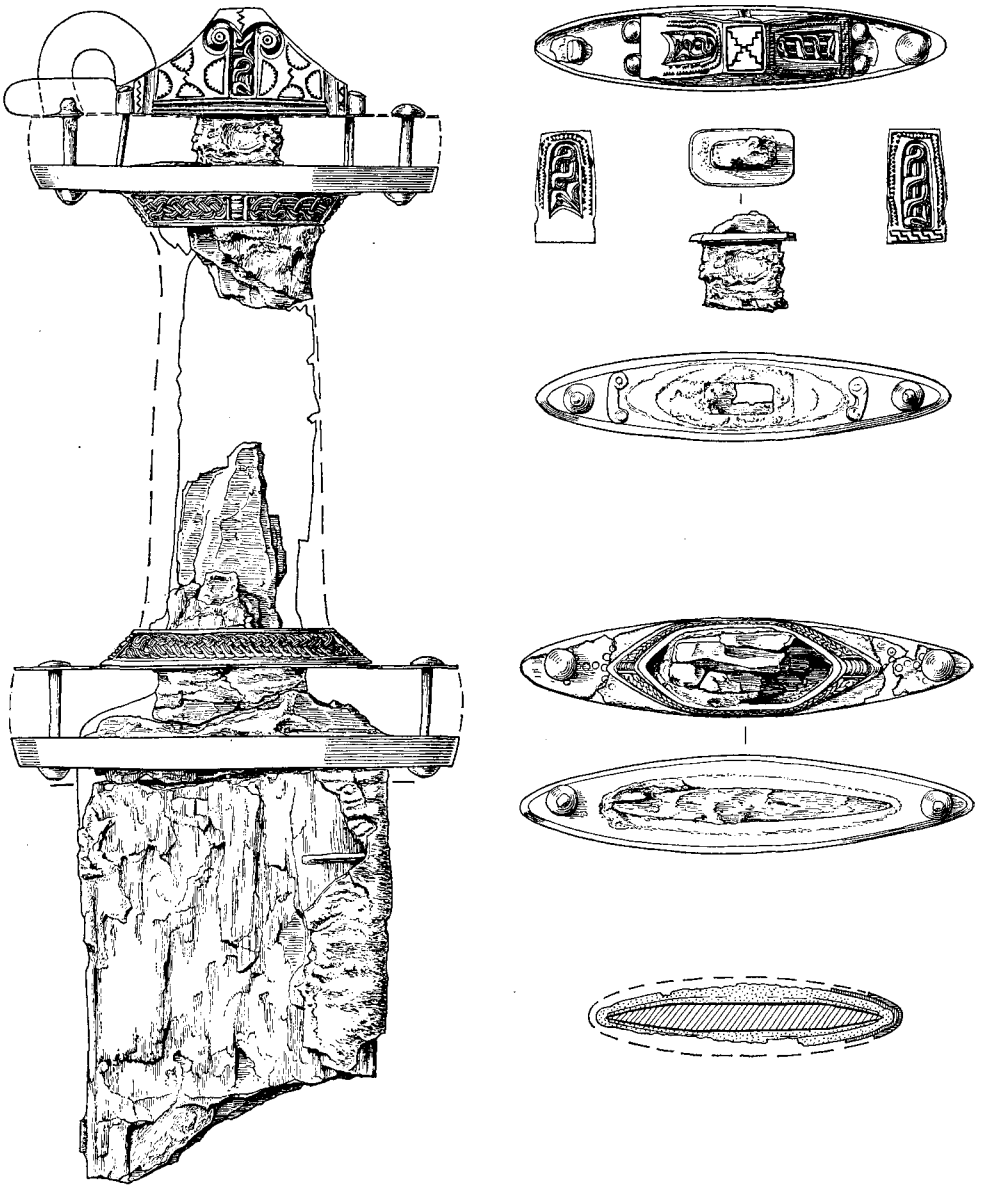

FIG. 3
COOMBE, KENT
Front view of sword, and details of pommel and guard (pp. 16 ff.). Sc. $\frac{2}{3}$

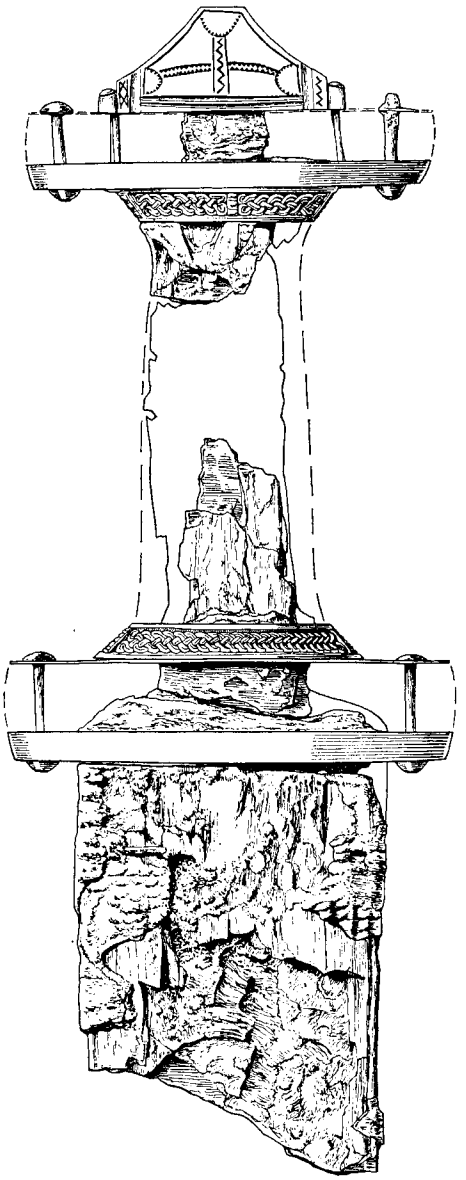

FIG. 4
COOMBE, KENT
Back view of sword (pp. 16 ff.). Sc. $\frac{2}{3}$

not unique, but falls into a general pattern for graves of important people in the Anglo-Saxon period. All appear, moreover, to belong to the later period of heathenism, and not to the early phase of the settlement.

The bowls in these graves were objects of some value, and their cloth covering may have been used for protection, just as it was customary to bury swords in their scabbards and sometimes to provide them with extra protection as well, as at Coombe. On the other hand it is conceivable that the cloth was used in imitation of the shroud which covered the body in inhumation-burials, as in a number of Danish graves from the bronze age, when the transition from one rite to another was taking place.[54] Metal bowls are also found with inhumation-burials, usually placed in a prominent position in the grave, sometimes on the lap or breast of the dead or at the feet. One at Faversham held hazel-nuts,[55] and parallels for this can be found in continental graves.[56] It is unlikely here that the motive was that of supplying the dead with food, for nuts seem to have been used in pagan times as a symbol of fertility and perhaps of rebirth.[57] At Sarre (Kent) a bowl was filled with animal bones, and this again suggests a ritual offering, possibly a continuation of the old practice of burning animals with the dead.[58]

The evidence, therefore, from Coombe and from the group of graves which resemble it indicates that for certain people of importance an elaborate cremation-funeral was still felt to be necessary in the late 6th century in southern England, even in an area where cremation was not the general fashion. The warrior leader with his splendid sword who was buried there lived close to what appears to have been a holy place connected with Woden's cult. It seems likely that the warrior at Coombe was a worshipper of Woden, buried with appropriate rites on his family estate, only a short time before the arrival of St. Augustine in Thanet to convert the royal family of Kent.

THE GRAVE-GOODS

The following discussion will concentrate on those objects from this burial which are known to survive today, together with the ring-knob illustrated by Roach-Smith and Akerman.[59] The glass and decorated bead, though associated with this burial beyond all reasonable doubt, are treated as secondary evidence.

THE SWORD (FIGS. 3 and 4; PLS. IV–VI, A, B)[60]

The blade is iron, the pommel and other hilt fittings bronze, and silver-gilt inlaid with niello. The blade is at present too fragmentary to permit accurate measurement, but, following Akerman, its total length was originally 92·8 cm., of

[54] J. Brøndsted, *Danmarks Oldtid*, II, *Bronsealderen* (1958), p. 107.

[55] *Coll. Antiq.*, VI (1868), pl. xxvii, 1.

[56] Hazel-nuts were found in a bowl in grave 31 under Bonn Cathedral, together with a plum-stone and a pottery bowl holding the bones of dove, hen and fish (*Bonner Jahrbücher*, CXXXVI-VII (1932), 22). A bowl of nuts was also found at Selzen.

[57] H. R. Ellis Davidson, *Gods and Myths of Northern Europe* (Penguin Books, 1964), pp. 165-6.

[58] *Archaeol. Cantiana*, III (1860), pl. iv; *Gentleman's Magazine*, Nov. 1860.

[59] *Coll. Antiq.*, II (1856), pl. xx.

[60] Throughout this paper 'front of sword' denotes the more elaborate side of the hilt. This is no doubt the side intended to be seen when the sword was worn.

which the blade comprised 78·1 cm. The width of the blade varied from 6·4 cm. just below the hilt to 6·7 cm.[61]

The blade. The fragmentary iron blade is now completely oxidized. X-ray examination failed to reveal any traces of pattern-welding. It is possible to discern traces of the original wooden scabbard just below the hilt, and at several points on other fragments of the blade. The blade is now completely detached from the hilt, and in its horizontal section (FIG. 3) the four layers that can be distinguished (beginning with the outermost) probably represent leather casing, wooden scabbard, lambskin lining and the blade itself.[62] It has not been possible to confirm this scientifically. In addition there seems to be some indication of bracing or pinning the scabbard at one side of the blade about 3·9 cm. below the hilt (FIG. 3). This may represent an ancient repair.

The hilt. Akerman's and Roach Smith's original engravings show traces of the grip and scabbard which have long since vanished (PL. I). Some traces of the original substance and covering of the grip remain at its base. Microscopic analysis suggests that these are vegetable fibres, presumably wood. The guard and pommel-bar were made of wood, sandwiched between a tray below and a plate above, both gilt-bronze.[63] Each sandwich had a bronze gilt-headed rivet at the extremities though one rivet on the pommel-bar has a plain tang instead of a head. The pommel is secured to the pommel-bar by four silver rivets, two at each end. The plate belonging to the pommel-bar is almost entirely decayed, save for a tiny portion attached to the headless rivet and another fragment at the other end of the bar, but the guard-plate is ornamented at both ends with a lightly-punched design of annulets in rough H-formation.

The gilt-bronze mounts which secured the grip and its binding are roughly elliptical and elaborately carved with a series of densely-woven interlaces. The interlaced bands on the front of the hilt are horizontally grooved.

The lower mount is divided by a narrow bar at each end of the mount into two long panels, one at the front and one at the back, the right-hand bar being somewhat wider. These bars are divided horizontally into three broad and two narrow alternating ribs. The interlaced ornament on the front panel of this mount is a regular four-strand type, compact and deeply carved, recessed in a narrow frame of plain metal. At each end three of the strands turn back into themselves or disappear, while the fourth bifurcates into a feature like a Style I leg (cf. FIG. 8, *a*, *e*) with its forked paw. The rear panel is similar, though the interlace is not grooved and the loose strands at each end of the pattern are simply curled back on themselves with no hint of zoomorphism.

The upper mount is divided into four panels. The two main fields are sub-divided centrally by billeted bars, like those at the end of the mount, and all four bars consist of three broad and two narrow alternating horizontal bands. In addition, the centre bar on the front is flanked by two plain uprights, both quite separate from the border of the panel.

[61] Akerman (1855), p. 47.

[62] As was found on blades from the Finglesham and Holborough cemeteries: Chadwick (1958), p. 28.

[63] This arrangement no doubt acted as a shock absorber as well as a protection for the hand. Traces of the wood may clearly be seen in Akerman's drawings and early photographs (PL. IV).

The left-hand front panel is occupied by a regular four-strand interlace, a small weaving mistake occurring towards the left end. Most of the strands disappear or bend back at the end of the pattern, but one, at the top left-hand corner, develops into an animal leg and paw, and balancing it in the top right-hand corner, a similar foot extrudes from the upright between this panel and the central bar. The equivalent upright between the right-hand panel and the central bar also develops into an animal leg at its upper end, but in this panel the interlace is of a quite different kind, consisting of a central band around which coil a succession of loosely-curved strands. Each of these strands begins abruptly, and ends in a bifid formation suggesting an animal foot. An extra paw appears in the upper right-hand corner where the design terminates.

The two back panels of the mount are composed of four-strand interlaces similar to each other but running in opposite directions. All loose ends in both runs are tied in, except for those at the extreme top corners, which develop into zoomorphic features.

The pommel is cast silver, with certain gilded features, and of characteristic 'cocked-hat' shape. The centre of the front is occupied by a bifurcate design, deeply sunk into the silver and brightly gilded. It consists of a vertical groove, containing a crouching Style I animal (FIG. 8, *k*) from the top of which a gilded groove furls off to each side, leaving a peninsula of silver within each scroll thus formed, in which are two nielloed *oculi*. An irregular zigzag of niello joins the top of this feature to the crown of the pommel.

Flanking this central motif are two ornamental panels. Each contains four semicircles outlined in niello, set in roughly opposing pairs, so that their straight sides abut on the four main edges of the field. The arcs of the semicircles are dog-toothed, their diameters plain. The upper and lower semicircles in both panels are united by a small niello zigzag.

The whole central area is bordered at each side by a broad gilded groove, and below by a gilded triple groove.

Between the rivet-shafts at the ends of the pommel and the lateral gilded borders are two narrow rectangular panels of niello ornament: to the right, a botched criss-cross chain in a border, to the left, a zigzag.

The back of the pommel has a central design bounded on the bottom and lower sides by gilded grooves; in addition, the ornament of the field itself is bordered, except on the bottom, by a continuous line of niello. Within this frame, there is an irregular cruciform motif in niello. The cross-band, which is overlaid by the upright, is a crude zigzag of silver reserved in a niello band. This band, which droops slightly at each end, terminates a semicircular feature in the form of a dog-toothed arc facing inwards.

The upright is a zigzag between plain borders; its base meets the lower edge of the panel abruptly, while the top ends in a dog-toothed semicircle, like the cross-band terminals.

Between the pommel-rivets and the gilded grooves are two small rectangular nielloed panels: on the left a vertical, bordered criss-cross chain, on the right, a zigzag.

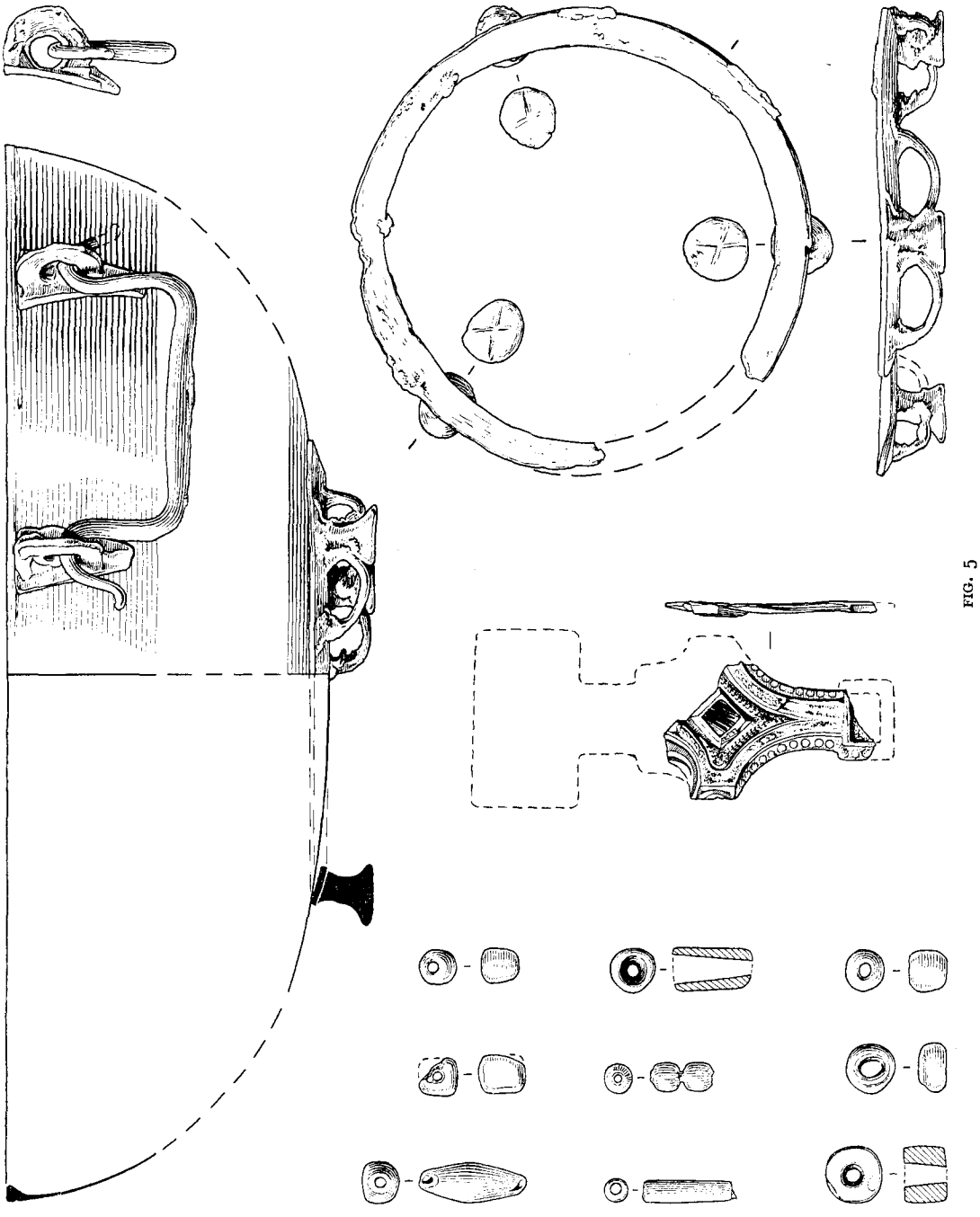

FIG. 5
COOMBE, KENT
Bronze bowl, fragment of square-headed brooch and beads (p. 20 f.). Sc., of bowl ⅓, of rest ½

The top of the pommel has three fields all decorated with niello. On the crown there is a cruciform design in step-pattern, in a square frame. On the left shoulder there is a sunken subrectangular panel containing a gilded Style I crouching beast (FIG. 8, *m*). The left-hand wall of this panel bulges into the decorative area so that a platform of plain metal remains at its outside end. On the other three sides the panel is framed by a roughly reserved silver zigzag.

On the right shoulder is a similar panel containing a highly schematic beast (FIG. 8, *l*). The outside wall is not cut away, and the panel is bordered on this side by a niello step-pattern design, and on the other three by a crudely reserved silver zigzag. The larger dimensions of this panel have enabled the artist to expand the animal, which, like the pseudo-interlace on the upper grip-mount, consists of a looped band.

THE BOWL (FIG. 5)

The bowl (Diam. 31·37 cm.; H. 9·53 cm.) is in a very poor state of preservation, most of the belly being fragmentary, though the rim and base have fortunately remained intact enough to allow accurate reconstruction.

It is made of cast bronze, and the metal is very thin. It was fairly shallow with a gently swelling profile and a straight and slightly thickened rim. It bears a pair of plain, roughly omega-shaped drop-handles suspended from shield-shaped escutcheons.

The bowl is set upon a low tripod of cast bronze (External diam. 14·22 cm.; H. 2·91 cm.). The hoof-shaped feet have waisted shanks, and at either side they are looped to the under side of the tripod rim. The base of each foot bears a shallow incised cross, perhaps a device for ensuring a good grip upon a plane surface. In such a position it can scarcely have been decorative or symbolic.

THE BROOCH (FIG. 5; PL. VII, D)

Only a fragment (L. 3·05 cm.) of the square-headed brooch remains. It is silver, with traces of gilding about the lower edges. The diamond-shaped central field contains a sliced garnet, and the small square foot also originally had one. Three zones of ornament surround the central garnet: next to the cell is a plain gilded setting, then a zone of silver lightly pricked with a sharp tool, and finally another zone of silver, possibly once decorated with niello dog-toothing, but now too abraded to be clear. On the lower edges of the brooch is a flat gilded zone with punched circles; on the upper edge of the remaining arm is some grooving, which also appears on the end of the arm. But these surfaces are too worn for us to be sure that this represents the original schema.

THE TEXTILES (FIGS. 6 and 7; PL. VII, A–C) (See Appendixes, pp. 37 ff.)

Portions of the blade also have traces of textile adhering. Some Z-spun threads can be seen but the surface is too deteriorated for the fabric to be identified.

THE BEADS (FIG. 5; PL. VII, D)

All the beads originally discovered do not appear to have survived the vicissitudes of the last 110 years. Nine still exist at Saffron Walden Museum, and a

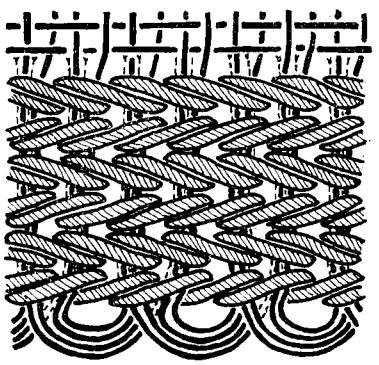

FIG. 6
COOMBE, KENT
Diagram of tablet-weave finishing border
(pp. 20, 38)

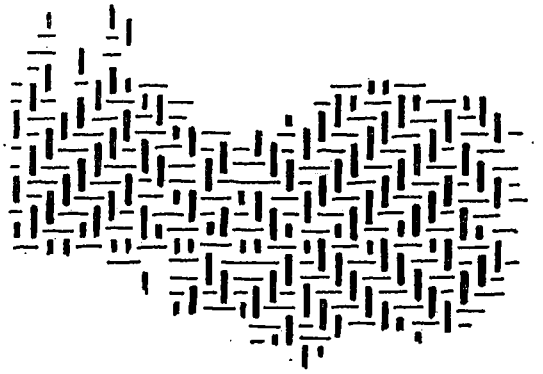

FIG. 7
COOMBE, KENT
Diagram of broken diamond twill
(pp. 20, 38)

further two are illustrated in the accession book there; two other bead-like objects are illustrated by Roach Smith (PL. I).[64] Those still surviving are:

a. Amber, biconical
b. Amber, cubed
c. Amber, ring-shaped
d. Blue transparent glass, cylindrical
e. Pearly white glass, segmented (two segments only)
f. Red opaque glass, cylindrical, irregular hole
g-i. Red opaque glass, ring-shaped.

A further bead, spherical, opaque red glass, with a white marvered trail in guilloche pattern,[65] associated with the two glass beakers from Coombe, is illustrated with these nine on PL. VII, D.

THE GLASS (PLS. II, and VIII, A–B)

1. Olive green *palm-cup* (H. 8·89 cm.) of Harden's type Xa(i) with vertical ribbing and a moulded cross design on the base. The rim is round in section and not everted. The metal itself is of a heavy, robust character, and very full of large and small air bubbles. There is a minor flaw on the internal surface. It also bears a double crack extending from the rim about an inch and a half into the body but is otherwise sound.

2. Pale grey-green *claw-beaker* (H. as extant 6·99 cm.), the lower parts only surviving, of Harden's type IIc. It has a slightly unsteady base, and a slender horizontal spiral trail decorates the lower half of the body. One claw remains intact, and the lobe of another survives. Both are flattened in profile, and it would seem, from what remains, that the claws were concentrated into the lower half of the vessel. The metal is of a delicate, pellucid character, exceptionally thin and clear.

[64] One is below the ring-knob, the other is uppermost on the thread to the right of the guard.
[65] British Museum, reg. no. 1865, 12-14, 3.

DISCUSSION

THE SWORD

The Coombe sword has hitherto been published under a variety of descriptions. Boreham, for instance, first exhibited it as 'undoubtedly of ancient British origin', while Baldwin Brown assigned it to the late 7th or early 8th century.[66] They, of course, saw it only in its excavated state (PL. IV), in which it languished for many years. In that condition, none of the niello decoration on the pommel was visible, the zoomorphic ornament was grossly obscured, and the finer details of the interlace were so indistinct as to give a credible impression of the later plait-work of the 7th and 8th centuries. It was Akerman who first recognized its proper place in the English sequence, by comparing it to the well-known ring-sword from Gilton.[67] It is in this context, as a Kentish ring-sword, that the sword from Coombe must first be considered.

These swords come chiefly from the rich Kentish cemeteries at Gilton, Sarre, Faversham, Bifrons and Dover, and either carry a ring or bear clear traces of its former attachment. The sword ring is a small double link of metal, usually silver-gilt with niello zigzag decoration, which is riveted to the pommel-bar, and rests on the pommel. Two basic types exist, the free-moving and the fixed ring, hereafter referred to as a ring-knob. The usual way of attaching the ring unit to a pommel was to leave a special cut-out between the two rivets at one end of the pommel, over which one end of the vertical ring fitted, while a dummy rivet sometimes replaced it at the other end of the pommel.[68] The other end of the vertical ring was then pinned through the pommel-bar. Sometimes there is a slight cushioning of the pommel-shoulder where it would be overlaid by the horizontal ring, as on a sword from Gilton and one in the Mayer collection at Liverpool (M 6061).

Although no ring survives with the Coombe finds today, and although Boreham gives no account of it, there are good reasons for believing that the sword originally bore one, and that it was probably a ring-knob. In his account of the burial, C. Roach Smith illustrates a ring-knob (PL. I) which fits almost exactly the 1/1 scale drawing made of the sword (FIG. 3). It seems unlikely that such a knob could have been associated with the sword by accident, even though it is nowhere mentioned in the accounts. Secondly, two structural features of the pommel suggest that it once bore a ring—the tang on the headless pommel-bar rivet, which must have been fixed into the vertical ring, and the little 'platform' of undecorated metal on the shoulder nearest it, which shows where it rested on the pommel. Although this technique of fixing differs somewhat from that generally used on Kentish swords, the 'platform' obviously recalls the cushioning effect referred to above, and the abraded area on the sword from Dover, grave C.[69] It

[66] Baldwin Brown (1915), III, p. 222, pl. xxxvii.

[67] Akerman (1855), p. 47, pl. xxiv.

[68] This can clearly be seen on the swords from Bifrons (grave 62), Gilton (M 6650), and an unprovenienced sword in the Mayer collection (M 6061) (all at Liverpool Museum) and on one from Chassémy (grave 40) in the National Museum of Antiquities at St.-Germain-en-Laye. A different method of attachment can be seen on the Faversham pommel (951 '70) and on the Snartemo sword, on which the ring hangs from the guard: Behmer (1939), pl. xxix.

Miss V. I. Evison's most useful article, 'The Dover ring-sword and other sword-rings and beads', *Archaeologia*, CI (1967), 63-118, is considered in the Addendum (p. 39 f.).

[69] Evison, *op. cit.* in note 68, pp. 63 ff., fig. 4, pl. viii.

suggests, too, that the ring was a large one, as does the use of a tanged rivet to fix it to the pommel-bar. Only a ring of considerable bulk could sustain such an insertion, and a ring-knob seems the probable answer.

Ring-knobs are very rare in England. One not thought to come from a sword was found at Sutton Hoo,[70] and another exists on a sword from Sarre (grave 88).[71] But these are of the totally solidified type, unlike that from Coombe, which seems to have been much closer in shape to the fixed rings seen on the Mainz-Kastel and Orsoy swords. Before the recent discovery of the *Fürstengrab* at Krefeld-Gellep in the Rhineland[72] it had generally been assumed that the free-moving version, found almost exclusively in England, preceded the fixed rings found on Swedish, Italian and Frankish pommels. Behmer, for example, felt it necessary to contend that the fixed rings on the two Frankish swords from Chaouilley and Mainz-Kastel, ascribed to the 6th century by R. Pirling,[73] are much later than the swords themselves.[74] But the sword from Krefeld-Gellep has a ring-knob, and was buried around 535; so this type of fixed ring is certainly the contemporary of the free ring, which seems to be an insular archaism. The development of both types is well established by the middle of the 6th century.

It has been demonstrated that the ring itself is a mark of special distinction over and above that denoted by ownership of the sword—perhaps a token of special valour, perhaps a mark of leadership.[75] Certainly the Coombe sword has, in common with other ring-swords, a splendour of decoration not found on ordinary swords of the period. What seems especially curious is that the pommel and other hilt-trappings, in comparison with the smoothed and worn pommels of most other ring-swords,[76] were buried in pristine condition. The edges are as crisp and new as if cut yesterday, the niello is not chipped or worn, and the gilding is thick and clear.

Pommels, as one might expect, received more wear and tear through handling than any other part of the sword; and evidence for refitted pommels and stray ones (such as that from Sarre, probably grave 104)[77] amply confirms this. Where swords are known to have been hoarded for generations, like King Offa's sword, apparently handed down for three hundred years at least,[78] it is possible that the original blade was fitted with a succession of pommels. The Coombe hilt must, then, have been buried very shortly after its manufacture. Possibly it was intended as a ceremonial sword, as Böhner has argued for Childeric's sword,[79] brought out

[70] R. L. S. Bruce-Mitford, *Guide to the Sutton Hoo Ship Burial* (1964), p. 26, fig. 8.

[71] *Archaeol. Cantiana*, VI (1864-5), 172.

[72] Pirling (1964), p. 188.

[73] *Ibid.*, p. 210.

[74] Behmer (1939), p. 27.

[75] See e.g. Böhner (1949), pp. 164-170; Davidson (1958), p. 211; Davidson (1962), p. 7.

[76] For instance, those from Bifrons (grave 39), Chessel Down (I.O.W.), Dover (grave c), and two of the Faversham pommels (954 '70 and 951 '70).

[77] *Archaeol. Cantiana*, VI (1864-5), 32. We are indebted to Mrs. Hawkes for the information about its probable grave.

[78] D. Whitelock, *English Historical Documents, I, c. 500-1042* (1955), p. 58.

[79] Böhner (1948), pp. 219 ff.

only on special occasions and therefore not subject to much wear.[80] Its imposing size and sumptuous decoration, when compared with other Kentish hilts, also imply this. There are, as we shall see, other grounds for believing the hilt to be less than fifty years old when buried.

Despite its unusual size and magnificence, the decoration on the Coombe sword essentially resembles that of the other Kentish ring-swords. Its basic techniques, parcel-gilding, chip-carving and simple niello inlay,[81] and the ways in which they are used, are characteristic of fine metalwork in 6th-century Kent. They can be seen, for example, on the Kentish square-headed brooch and simple disc-brooch series, on the Faversham belt-mounts and on the Chessel Down buckle, all made during the 6th century. As on the Coombe sword, gilding occurs in sunken chip-carved panels on the shoulders of pommels from Faversham (952 '70 and 951 '70), from Bifrons (grave 62), from Dover (grave c), and from Sarre (grave 88). Gilding is also typically found in grooves bordering the lower edges of the central area on pommels, as on those from Faversham (954 '70 and 951 '70) and Gilton (M 6650), and on many others. Enrichment of the central motif with gilding, however, only occurs on the pommel from Sarre (grave 88), and on the Coombe pommel.

The use of niello at Coombe is highly typical. The loosely-reserved silver zigzags on the pommel-shoulders, the niello zigzags and jerky dog-tooth edging recur again and again as space fillers and borders on hilts of this group. The more emphatic zigzag which appears on the cross-upright on the back of the Coombe pommel is another fairly common motif, appearing bordered, as on the Coombe hilt, on the pommels from Bifrons (graves 39 and 62), and on the shoulders of a pommel in the Mayer collection at Liverpool Museum (M 6061), which was probably made by the same hand as the well-known Gilton ring-sword (M 6650).[82]

Certain other themes recur in the repertoire of the Kentish sword-makers. The stepped design on the crown of the Coombe pommel is also found in simpler form on the Gilton runic pommel (M 6402) and on one of the Faversham hilts (954 '70). Despite a certain resemblance to the complex swastikas of the sword and belt-plate from Bifrons (grave 39), this motif is probably a translation of the elaborate cell-work of continental cloisonné pommels, such as those from Krefeld and Italy.[83] The stray pommel which is probably from grave 104 at Sarre[84] is liberally decorated with this mock-cloisonné. We know that complex cloisonné work was being made in western areas of the continent as early as the late 5th century,[85] and in the

[80] This is not inconsistent with the apparent repair of the scabbard, the leather of which might have rotted during periods of disuse such as a ceremonial sword might undergo. Alternatively, if the blade is an old one (it is curious that it is not pattern-welded) perhaps the scabbard was not renewed at the same time as the hilt-fittings.

[81] This early niello-work is almost entirely restricted to linear decoration, in contrast to the use of large fields of niello background in 9th- and 10th-century metalwork, such as the Fetter Lane pommel, the Fuller brooch and the Trewhiddle mounts.

[82] The decorative repertoire is almost identical.

[83] Pirling (1964), pl. xlvii, 3; Smith (1923), fig. 209.

[84] See note 77.

[85] The magnificent cloisonné jewellery from the grave of the Frankish king Childeric (d. 481) is of superb standard: Davidson (1962), pl. iii, 9.

2nd half of the 6th century we see Kentish disc-brooches of Leeds's class I*c* stepping their cloisons.[86]

It is probably as mock-cloisonné that we should interpret the semicircular features flanking the central device on the front of the pommel. We know of no clear parallel other than this, unless they are an ideogram for an animal figure. They are, however, obviously associated with the cross-terminals on the back of the pommel. This motif seems unlikely to have any Christian significance here; its proportions and sagging cross-band are quite inappropriate.[87] Mrs. Hawkes has suggested that this is a reflection of the cruciform pattern of the footplates of several small Kentish square-headed brooches. Typical examples are the pair from Bifrons (grave 42)[88] and the brooch from Sarre (grave 4).[89] The cross-bars on these brooches are decorated with a niello zigzag on a raised band, and end in a semicircular garnet setting at the sides, which could well be the inspiration for the Coombe motif. The upper semicircle on the pommel would then be an artistic licence, but an obvious one.

The central device on the front of the pommel is more difficult to explain. It is clearly associated with the masks so popular on saucer- and applied brooches, particularly on brooches from Kempston (Beds.),[90] grave 5, Alveston (Warws.), Aston (Berks.) and Fairford (Glos.).[91] These mantic faces also appear in the later 6th century on the foot- and head-plates of several florid cruciform and great square-headed brooches, such as those from Sleaford (Lincs.), Kenninghall (Norfolk), West Stow (Suffolk) and Hornsea (Yorks.).[92] But although the mask appears as a popular motif on later Scandinavian swords,[93] it is not found elsewhere in the English ring-sword repertoire, unless the curious involuted carving on the Sarre (grave 88) pommel has anything to do with it.[94] The Coombe mask has a more obvious link with the other ring-swords in the emphatic placing of the design. Its position on the front of the pommel, where it would be seen by all, is one of great power; and it is an impressive sight, with its compelling stare, and glittering contrast of sunken gold and matt silver. The swastika on the Bifrons (grave 39) pommel occupies a similar position. So, too, does the equivocal zigzag on both pommels from Bifrons.[95] While the pommel is a natural site for bold workmanship, it is also the obvious position for powerful symbols, as the Gilton runic pommel and the Bifrons swastika demonstrate. The face has always been a powerful religious symbol,[96] and with examples like the awesome faces from the Sutton Hoo shield

[86] E.g. Kendrick (1933), pl. ii, nos. 7-8; Leeds (1936), pl. xxxii, 9, 11, 12.

[87] This is borne out by a close parallel on a fine gold and garnet buckle from the 7th-century grave at Endrebacke, Gotland: J. Werner, 'Imola, Herbrechtingen und Endrebacke', *Acta Archaeologica*, XXI (1950), pl. vii, 8. Cruciform designs are plentiful on saucer- and applied brooches from pagan contexts.

[88] Åberg (1926), fig. 135; *Archaeol. Cantiana*, X (1876), 315.

[89] *Archaeol. Cantiana*, V (1862-3), pl. ii, 1.

[90] British Museum reg. no. 91, 6-24, 243.

[91] Akerman (1855), pl. xix, 1–2; E. T. Leeds, 'The distribution of the Anglo-Saxon saucer brooch in relation to the battle of Bedford, A.D. 571', *Archaeologia*, LXIII (1912), fig. 6.

[92] Åberg (1926), figs. 88-90.

[93] Three Finnish pommels in the Helsinki Museum, from Vöra-Lagpeltkangas, Vöra-Gulldynt and Eura-Pappilanmaki, show faces flanked by beasts, the first hilt being embellished with two startling garnet *oculi* in a panel of interlace. These swords all belong to the Vendel period.

[94] *Archaeol. Cantiana*, VI (1864-5), 172 and fig.

[95] Davidson (1962), p. 67. [96] E. Salin, *La Civilisation mérovingienne*, IV (1952), 276 f.

and whetstone in mind, it is not impossible that the face on the Coombe pommel bore some further significance which we cannot now interpret. The swastika on the Bifrons (grave 39) pommel and belt-plate is an ancient sun-symbol, and may have been intended to call Woden or Thunor to the warrior's aid.[96a] Miss V. I. Evison has published a spear-head from Holborough (Kent)[97] with an inlaid device possibly suggesting the runic symbol for Tīw, the Germanic war-god; and a pommel from Faversham[98] bears the T-rune twice on its shoulders, a possible invocation to the same god. In the light of this, it is not impossible that the face on the Coombe hilt was considered to be of prophylactic or luck-bringing value.[99]

Thus, the Coombe sword, though in many respects a bolder and more lavish piece than any other Kentish sword, resembles most closely in its structure and its decorative techniques and formulae the 6th-century ring-swords of Kent, as Akerman recognized in 1855. Nevertheless, although reflecting many of the decorative fashions current in the 6th century, it is unique among the swords in bearing zoomorphic ornament and interlaced work.[100] This decoration deserves special consideration. As it is necessary to tackle this question in some detail, it will be useful to set out briefly the current theory about Germanic animal ornamentation in England.

The classic exposition of this was made by the Swedish scholar Bernhardt Salin in 1904,[101] and although his theories have been modified by later scholars[102] the system used today is still basically his. He isolated four main successive types, whilst admitting certain national and local variations, and it is the first two, Styles I and II, that concern us.

Style I in England is characterized by a highly schematic presentation of the animal in which individual anatomical features, head, haunch, belly, jaws, and so on, are treated as separate codes. This, especially in its later stages, often gives an impression of exploding chaos. Nevertheless, each animal remains a discrete unit, no matter how incoherent the design or how crammed with detail; there is no attempt to give coherence or logic to the design by intertwining the beasts. Individual animals are often carved in a forward-facing crouching posture. Certain minor features are also characteristic of Style I in England. Åberg has drawn attention to 'the large hip borders, the eye surroundings and the patterning lines and groups of transverse hatchings'.[103] We should also note the bifid feet and the pear-shaped haunch. A typical range of Style I beasts may be seen in FIG. 8, *a-f*.

[96a] Note also the use of the swastika on cremation-urns (see p. 11).

[97] V. I. Evison, 'An Anglo-Saxon cemetery at Holborough, Kent', *Archaeol. Cantiana*, LXX (1956), 97-100.

[98] British Museum reg. no. 954 '70: we are grateful to Mrs. S. Hawkes for bringing this to our notice.

[99] The Anglo-Saxon attitude to contest and fame finds vivid expression in the heroic literature.

[100] The pommel, which is probably from grave 104 at Sarre, bears something like a crude interlace on its shoulders; but this pommel is rather different from the others, and, in any case, bears nothing like the lavish interlacing we see on the Coombe sword.

[101] Salin (1904).

[102] Notably in the English field by Sir Thomas Kendrick, whose succinct reappraisal and renaming of the ornament in *Ipek* (1934), is a classic.

[103] Åberg (1926), p. 168.

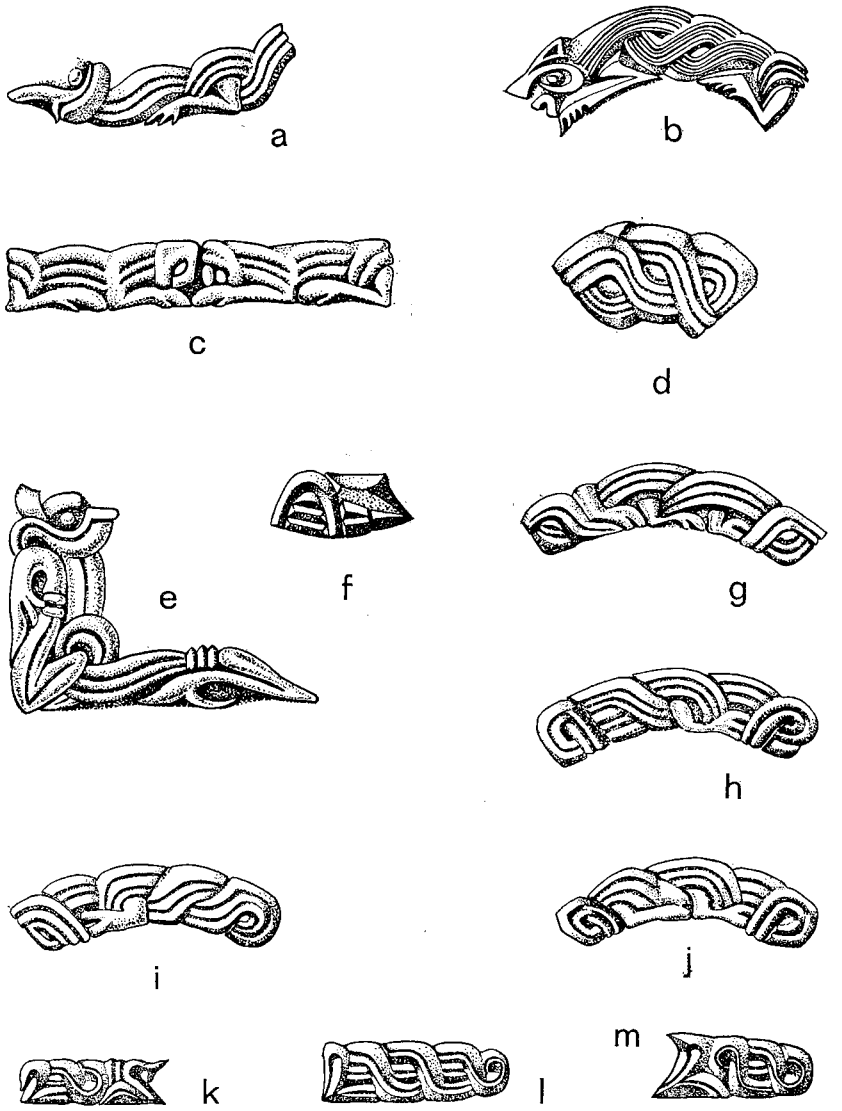

FIG. 8

DETAILS OF STYLE I ANIMAL ORNAMENT IN S. ENGLAND (pp. 26, 28 ff.). Sc. $\frac{3}{2}$

a, applied brooch, Kempston, Beds.; *b*, saucer-brooch, grave 46, Long Wittenham, Berks.; *c*, square-headed brooch, Suffolk (after Åberg (1926), fig. 123); *d*, stud, Faversham; *e*, buckle-plate, Gilton (after Åberg (1926), fig. 208); *f*, disc-brooch, Faversham; *g-j*, disc, Chichester, Sussex; *k-m*, sword, Coombe

Style II is immediately distinguishable from its precursor, despite many common elements, by its sinuous, harmonic rhythm. The fragmented turbulence of Style I is replaced by a smooth ribbon-like interlacing pattern made up of the bodies of individual animals. The crouching beast is still popular, but the animal is often shown bending backwards to interlace with its own body (FIG. 9, *a*). The beast itself ultimately becomes the complete formula that we see on the shoulders of the Crundale pommel (FIG. 9, *b–c*), and on the Taplow shoulder-clasps[104] and horn-mounts (FIG. 9, *d*). Typical Style II beasts are shown in FIG. 9.

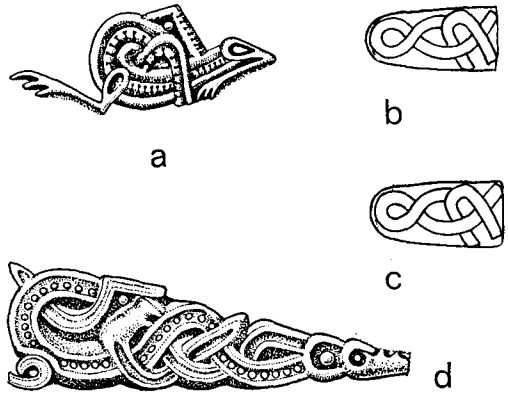

FIG. 9

DETAILS OF STYLE II ANIMAL ORNAMENT IN S. ENGLAND (pp. 26, 28 ff.). Sc. $\frac{3}{2}$
a, disc-brooch, Faversham; *b*, *c*, pommel, Crundale Down; *d*, horn-mount, Taplow, Bucks.

The relationship of these two styles to each other is visually clear, but historically obscure. Style I is found on 5th- and 6th-century objects, while Style II has been traditionally regarded as a 7th-century phenomenon.[105] But was the change-over as strictly successive as this implies, and what brought about the change? Sir Thomas Kendrick offered one answer when he suggested that the two were contemporary, and identified a 'fusion style' which can be seen for example, on the Taplow horn-mounts alongside Style I and Style II decoration. But, although the examples he cites show sophisticated versions of Style I, they are nothing like Style II animals (FIG. 9).[105a] Many are essentially indistinguishable from beasts he classifies as Style I.[105b] Style II seems rather to have developed from continental models. The interlace which plays such an important part in the transformation evidently has its origin in classical ornament. It undoubtedly reached England from the continent, almost certainly by way of the Frankish kingdom, where the earliest datable examples of interlace on Germanic metalwork are known. Here, the recently-discovered royal graves at St. Denis and

[104] Smith (1923), pl. v, 1, 3.

[105] Though there have been attempts to challenge this by several scholars including Kendrick, Lindqvist and Werner.

[105a] The 'fusion' motives on the Taplow horn-mounts and the Faversham belt-mounts are insular versions of a Scandinavian Style I.

[105b] E.g., 'Style in early Anglo-Saxon ornament', *Ipek* (1934), fig. 6(iv); cf. fig. 5(v).

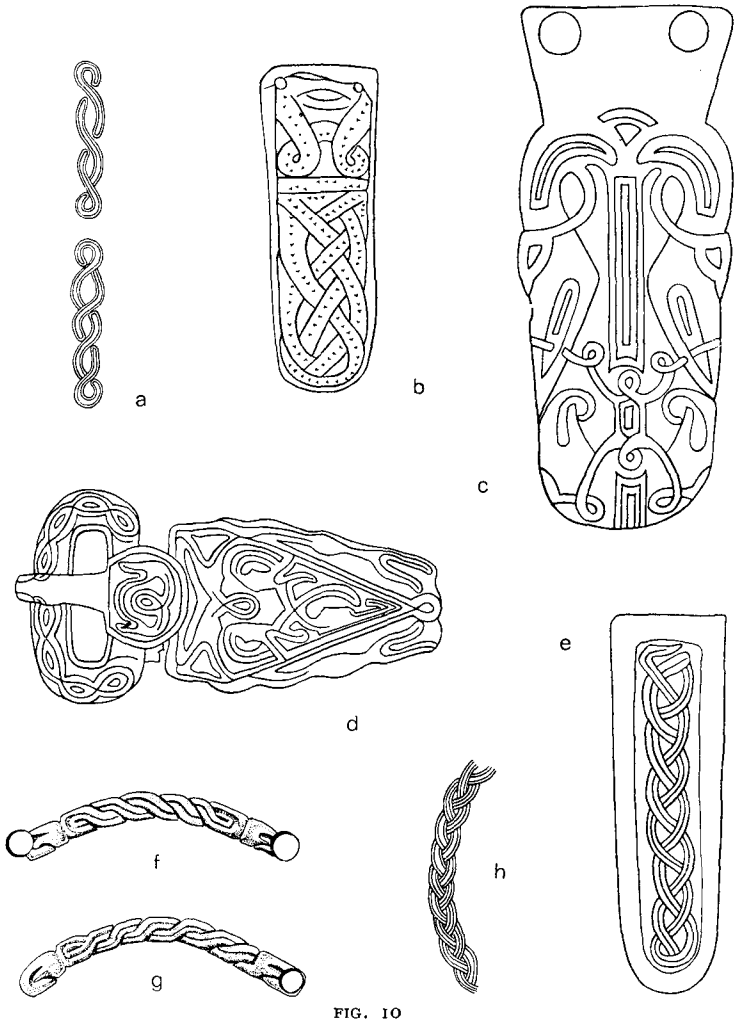

FIG. 10

INTERLACED ORNAMENT ON METALWORK FROM THE CONTINENT AND S. ENGLAND (pp. 29 ff.). Sc. $\frac{1}{1}$

a, strap-ornament, Cologne (after Doppelfeld, *op. cit.* in note 107); *b-d*, strap-tags and buckle, St. Denis (after Fleury and France-Lanord, *op. cit.* in note 107); *e*, mount, Eastry (after Åberg (1926), fig. 307); *f*, *g*, disc, Chichester, Sussex; *h*, saucer-brooch, Fairford, Glos. (after Åberg, *loc. cit.* in note 113)

Cologne Cathedrals have emphasized that Style II was emergent in the Frankish area by the middle of the 6th century.[106] The grave of Arnegunde at St. Denis, in which were found silver strap-tags with a pattern of intertwined boar and bird heads, and other strap-ends and buckles with interplaying animals and plain interlace[107] (FIG. 10, *b–d*) is dated 565–570 on historical grounds. The

[106] Usefully summarized by J. Werner (1964).

[107] O. Doppelfeld, 'Das Fränkische Frauengrab unter dem Chor des Kölner Doms', *Germania*, XXXVIII (1960), pl. xviii, 17, pl. xxi, 17; A. Fleury and J. A. France-Lanord, *Germania*, XL (1963); J. Werner (1964), pl. xxxi, pl. xxxiii, 17 (*g*).

golden fittings from the knife-strap on the Cologne princess's grave are decorated with a simple interlace (FIG. 10, *a*). The coins deposited in this grave indicate a burial date in the 2nd quarter of the 6th century. This simple motif is not yet Style II, but it clearly points the way to the early Style II we find in Arnegunde's grave only twenty or so years later. Satisfactorily dated earlier examples of Style II are not known, although interlace of a kind appears on a late 5th-century brooch from grave 2, Heilbronn-Böckingen in Germany,[108] and at an early date on Langobardic jewellery.

FIG. 11
BIFRONS, KENT
Belt-mount showing interlaced ornament (p. 30). Sc. $\frac{2}{1}$. *Ph.*: Mrs. S. Hawkes

The evidence of the Frankish graves clearly demonstrates that continental Style II was a viable concept by the middle of the 6th century, and was not, as was formerly supposed, a 7th-century innovation. Relations between Kent and the Frankish kingdom during the 6th century were very close[109] and during the 2nd half of the 6th century we can begin to trace the hesitant appearance of the first Style II and associated interlace in England.

A simple grooved interlace appears on a pair of unassociated belt-mounts from Bifrons[110] (FIG. 11). They are chip-carved and silver-gilt, techniques that point to 6th-century Kent, and it is worth noting that all the other known finds from the Bifrons cemetery are of 6th-century date. Another set of gilt-bronze mounts with interlace decoration was found at Eastry, not far from Coombe itself, in the last century[111] (FIG. 10, *e*). They are perhaps from a shield or harness. Three of them, two strap-tags and a strange legged mount, all have a loose three-strand interlace, while three smaller mounts have tiny central panels with grooved strands that look like part of a similar interlace. Their chip-carving, large areas of brash gilding, and flat silver-plated edging, place this group in a 6th-century context. Other pieces in this group show Style I birds' heads, whilst others have strong affinities with Frankish bird and fish brooches.[112] They probably date from around 550.

[108] *Fundberichte aus Schwaben*, XV (1959), pl. E.

[109] C. F. C. Hawkes, 'The Jutish problem', in *Dark-Age Britain: studies presented to E. T. Leeds* (ed. D. B. Harden, 1956), p. 109. The apparent appearance of a fixed ring of continental type at Coombe is a significant detail.

[110] Nos. 164-5 in the Conyngham collection at Maidstone Museum. We are greatly indebted to Mrs. S. Hawkes for bringing these to our notice.

[111] First published by Baldwin Brown (1915), III, pl. xxiv.

[112] For instance with those from Herpes illustrated by M. P. Delamain, *Le Cimetière d'Herpes* (Angoulême, 1892).

It is also worth noting that a well-developed grooved interlace appears on some of the applied saucer-brooches of the south central midlands, which also carry Style I ornament. That from Fairford[113] (FIG. 10, *h*) is typical and belongs to the later 6th century. All these interlaces show a strong family resemblance to those on the Coombe hilt. The Coombe examples, however, with their tendency to error and their uncertain handling of the space available, suggest the work of a novice at the craft, which contrasts oddly with the professionalism exhibited elsewhere on the sword. They seem to be early work, unlike the perfect plaitwork of the Faversham horse-trappings or Crundale grip-mounts.

Particularly interesting in connexion with the Coombe sword is a gilt-bronze disc from Chichester (Sussex) (FIGS. 8, *g-j*, and 10, *f*, *g*).[114] Like the Eastry mounts, the disc, which is pierced by three holes, was probably a harness-mount. Its basic framework consists of concentric circles and radii once plated with silver, a design which has something in common with openwork discs of this type from Alamannic contexts at Holzgerlingen[115] and Papiermühle[116] ascribed by Veeck to the 2nd half of the 6th century. The chip-carved decoration is in three sunken, gilded zones: the outermost has simple two-strand interlaces terminating in birds' heads, two of them with grooved strands, two plain (FIG. 10, *f*, *g*); the middle one contains four Style I animals, whose looping bodies and coiled heads are very close to the Coombe beasts, both in design and in technical competence (FIG. 8, *g–j*); the innermost contains four faces essentially akin to those of the button-brooch series.

This disc has no known associations, but the button-brooch faces, the chip-carving, gaudy gilding and silver-plating that appear on the Eastry mounts and on the Ipswich/Kenninghall great square-headed brooch series clearly indicate a date not long after the middle of the 6th century.

The similarity of the curious animal ornament on this piece to that on the Coombe hilt is significant. The latter is undoubtedly Style I (FIG. 8, *k–m*), and the forward crouching pose, pear-shaped hip and forked leg can be seen in the Kempston, Long Wittenham (Berks.), Suffolk and Faversham beasts in FIG. 8, *a–c* and *f* respectively. The rudimentary collar behind the head of the beast on the mask recalls that on the Kempston animal (FIG. 8, *a*), and on a frieze of animal heads on some unassociated discs from Faversham (FIG. 8, *d*). And, though very relaxed in manner, the ogival bands on the beasts from the pommel-shoulders are the 'short transverse hatchings' that Åberg remarked on, and which can be seen in FIG. 8, *a*, *e*. The same looping shoulder can be seen on a buckle from Gilton (FIG. 8, *e*). Nevertheless, the Coombe animals are exceptionally suave; many of the standard Style I features are stream-lined beyond even the ideographic beasts on some of the Kentish disc-brooches[117] (FIG. 8, *f*). Their looped, redundant heads and coiling bodies look forward rather to the shorthand ribbon animals on the shoulders of the late 7th-century pommel from Crundale (FIG. 9, *b*, *c*).

[113] Åberg (1936), fig. 28. [114] British Museum reg. no. 83, 4-24, 1: *Antiq. J.*, XII (1932), 173, fig. 1(b).
[115] W. Veeck, *Die Alamannen in Württemberg* (1931), pl. xlii, 1.
[116] O. Tschumi, *Burgunder, Alamannen und Langobarden in der Schweiz* (1945), p. 100 and fig.
[117] Compare the similar pair from Sarre (grave 4), which Leeds puts in the 2nd half of the 6th century: Leeds (1936), p. 115.

At the same time there is a significant bond between these animals and the interlace on the grip-mounts. The looped heads of the animals reflect the looped ends of the interlace as it doubles back on itself; the bifid foot of the creature on the mask often recurs at the ends of the interlace panels; and, most important of all, the irregular pseudo-interlace of the upper front mount is almost a twin to that of the animal on the right-hand shoulder, and reflects central details, like the spine and forked paw, in the other animals.

As we have seen from the evidence accumulated above, interlace, though not of itself Style II, was essential to its conception, and had already made an appearance in England in the 2nd half of the 6th century. The decoration on the Coombe hilt adds a new dimension to this picture, for here we see a late, and remarkably elliptical, Style I in harness with an early, unpractised and faintly zoomorphic interlace. This decoration was made by a craftsman who was evidently endeavouring to adapt himself to a new mode of expression. The Coombe hilt is, therefore, poised on the great divide between Styles I and II.[118]

Since both continental and English evidence suggests that Style II and interlaced ornament could have been established in England in the 2nd half of the 6th century, and since in its structure, techniques and formulae of decoration it resembles most closely the 6th-century Kentish ring-swords, the Coombe sword was most probably made at some time between 550 and 590. This will be seen to tie in with the evidence of the other grave-goods.

THE BOWL

The bowl belongs to that general class of continental bronze vessels with drop-handles and tripod-rings such as those from a prince's grave at Morken,[119] from Lommersum (grave 48),[120] from the two royal graves at Cologne Cathedral,[121] from Dourvallier (grave 2),[122] Ulm-Söflingen,[123] Thaining (grave 3),[124] Köln-Junkersdorf (grave 71),[125] and from the *Fürstengrab* at Krefeld-Gellep.[126] As a group, these bowls belong to the 6th century, the latest examples being Morken, coin-dated after 578,[127] and Thaining (grave 3), which was found in a grave of the last years of the 7th century.[128] They are quite distinct from the three-legged

[118] It might, however, be plausibly argued that the hilt-trappings are later additions to a 6th-century pommel. This type of hilt-fitting is known in later contexts—on, for instance, the late 7th-century Crundale hilt, and on 9th-century swords such as those from Wensley, Dolven and Hoven. But they also appear on one of the Nocera Umbra hilts and on one from Dover (grave 98), both of the 6th century. Admittedly, other Kentish swords, such as Gilton (M 6560), bear instead simple wire loops which secure the grip-binding. But the decorative links between the Coombe hilt-mounts and pommel are too strong to admit of any disparity in age.

[119] Böhner (1959), p. 48, pl. xv, 2.

[120] *Bonner Jahrbücher*, CLX (1960), 246, fig. 15, nos. 2-6.

[121] *Germania*, XXXVIII (1958), 89 ff., and XLII (1964), fig. 13 (*a*), pl. xli, 1.

[122] *Bull. Soc. Archaéol. Champenoise*, XXXII (1938), 109 f.

[123] *Fundberichte aus Schwaben*, XV (1959), 193, pl. xlviii, 3.

[124] *Germania*, XL (1960), 48.

[125] *Bonner Jahrbücher*, CXLVI (1941), pl. lxxii, 1.

[126] Pirling (1964), p. 214, pl. lix, 2.

[127] The presence in this grave of a fine buckle with advanced mushroom-form *tauschierung* suggests a date for the actual deposition somewhere nearer 640.

[128] This grave is thought to have been deposited at the end of the 7th century, largely on the evidence of two metal inlaid tags of south German workmanship.

vessel of Coptic type, found in exclusively 7th-century contexts on the continent.[129] Among the early examples is the closest parallel to the Coombe bowl, a bowl with the same looped features on the tripod foot from the Krefeld-Gellep grave, probably buried around 535. In shape and structure it resembles the Coombe bowl more closely than either of the two English examples with the same characteristic winged tripod foot, those from graves 8 and 19 at Gilton.[130] The bowl from grave 19 was never illustrated, though its trivet was, and only parts of it—the escutcheons, handles, and fragments of rim and base—survived. That from grave 8 has a pronounced carination at the base. The dating of this bowl, found with ironwork and a pin of uncertain years, is ambiguous, but the grave probably belongs to the early 7th century. The bowl, however, had been extensively repaired before burial, and could have been made a hundred years earlier. The bowl from grave 19 was found with a disc-brooch of Leeds type I*b*, and may be assigned to a 6th-century context.[131] Judging from both the English and continental evidence, the bowls with plain tripod feet tend to be later than the others. Those from Morken and Thaining, as we have seen, are latest in the sequence, while most datable ones, like the bowl from Eltville, are coin-dated in the 2nd half of the 6th century.[132] The lavish and sophisticated bowl from Kingston (grave 205) was associated with the Kingston brooch, and therefore buried in the 7th century. The bowl from Coombe itself appears to have been of some age when buried.

The type as a whole is rare in England; in addition to the two examples already mentioned, an unassociated one is known from Faversham, [133] and there is a possible example from Sarre (grave 88). A very similar bowl from a barrow at Ash, which may have lost its trivet, and which was found placed on an inverted patera, also seems relevant in this context.[134] All were found in Kent, and, as one might expect of such costly imports, in rich graves. They came to England from the Frankish region, probably from the north Rhineland, where the workshops producing them have been roughly localized by C. Müller.[135] A late Roman model appears to have been the prototype, and was no doubt that of the Coptic three-legged bowls too.

In the other English graves, and as far as we have been able to ascertain, in the continental graves in which they occur, bowls of this type are invariably simple grave-goods or, occasionally, accessory vessels. At Morken, cloth and bird feathers were found in such a bowl,[136] while in grave 31 at Bonn Cathedral, hazel nuts and a plum-stone were in a bowl accompanying an adolescent boy.[137]

[129] J. Werner, 'Zwei gegossene Koptische Bronzeflaschen aus Salona', *Vjesnik za Archeologiju i Historiju Dalmatinsku*, LVI-LIX (Split, 1954-57) [= *Antidoron Michael Abramic*, I], 121.

[130] Faussett (1856), pp. 6, 16, pl. xvi, 1-3.

[131] A glass vessel from the same grave which was broken during the excavation sounds from its description to have been a cone- or bell-beaker.

[132] *Germania*, XXXIII (1955), 109.

[133] British Museum reg. no. 1294 '70.

[134] Douglas (1793), pl. xii. This was buried in the 7th century, judging from its association with amethyst beads.

[135] Müller (1960), p. 220.

[136] Böhner (1959), pl. xv, 25; *Bonner Jahrbücher*, CLVII (1957).

[137] Bader (1932), p. 22.

THE BROOCH

The brooch from Coombe, though only partially preserved, belongs to the same class as that from Stowting, and the twin brooches from Finglesham grave E2.[138] These all bear the same undivided foot and square terminal, and the same simple decorative elements around the foot-plate—niello zigzags, and narrow gilt borders to the plate itself. The brooches from Finglesham were found with a large square-headed brooch of late 6th-century manufacture, and a disc-brooch of Leeds's I*a* type. They were dated by Mrs. Hawkes to the last phase of the 6th century. It is true that this dating was in part based on the evidence of the head-plate, which no longer survives at Coombe; but so close is the relationship of the distinctive foot-plates that a date around the same time may be suggested for the Coombe brooch.

THE BEADS

Beads are only dated with the greatest difficulty, and even where dating is possible it is of little value to the series, since the individual type tends to remain unchanged over several hundred years. Roman melon beads, for instance, were found at the late 7th-century cemetery at Leighton Buzzard (Beds.).[139]

Of those now remaining from the Coombe burial the cylindrical blue glass bead has parallels from the late 6th-century grave 48 at Lommersum[140] and from graves 27 and 260 at Sarre.[141] The segmented bead in pearly white glass is paralleled by similar ones from Broadstairs, Newnham (Cambs.), Driffield (Yorks.), and Bassett Down (Wilts.).[142] The remaining amber and glass beads are impossible to date with certainty, though identical beads are known from 6th-century contexts at Bifrons, Long Wittenham, Finglesham (grave D3) and elsewhere.

The red glass bead with the white marvered trail found with the glass vessels is a type known from late 6th- and early 7th-century contexts, such as Leighton Buzzard and Sarre.

THE GLASS

The *palm-cup*, with its rounded rim, ribbing, and moulded feet, is not an indigenous type. The existence of individual Kentish glass factories, producing predominantly insular types like squat jars and bag-beakers, is suspected but not yet proved archaeologically. This example from Coombe was probably made in the Rhineland and imported along with many others of its kind.

Palm-cups, as a group, are not infrequent in English contexts. Twenty are known from Kent alone.[143] The version with folded rim and plain rounded base (which is commoner) is ascribed both on the continent and in England to a date after the beginning of the 7th century. The specimen from Coombe, on the other

[138] Chadwick (1958), pp. 57-8, fig. 11(*b*).
[139] Grave 40: Hyslop (1963), p. 181, fig. 14(*e*).
[140] Müller (1960), p. 247.
[141] *Archaeol. Cantiana*, VI (1864-5), pl. viii.
[142] *Proc. Soc. Antiq., Lond.*, 2 ser., XXIII (1910-11), 276.
[143] D. B. Harden, 'Glass vessels in Britain A.D. 400-1000', in *Dark-Age Britain* (ed. D. B. Harden, 1956), p. 160.

hand, belongs to the group ascribed generally to the 6th century. An identical example from Zemmer (grave 37/7) was placed by Böhner on the watershed between the 6th and 7th centuries.[144]

The *claw-beaker* is also a foreign type, especially popular in England from the 5th century onwards. Its gradual decline from the full-bellied nobility of the Reculver and Castle Eden (co. Durham) specimens has been traced by Harden, who accordingly placed the Coombe fragments in the first period of degeneration which set in during the course of the 6th century.

CONCLUSION

Everything from this grave indicates a burial of some importance in its own time. The bronze bowl, the glass, and the sword are all possessions of a wealthy man. The bronze bowl from Kingston (grave 205) was found with the Kingston brooch[145] and those from the princes' graves at Krefeld[146] and Morken[147] have already been mentioned. A fragile material such as glass is generally the perquisite of the rich (as at Taplow and Sarre, grave 4) and the sword, by virtue of its own nature, its decoration, and the ring once attached to it, suggests considerable social status for the owner. This too is borne out by the prominent siting of the burial near the important Roman road from Canterbury to Richborough[148] and close to the pagan site at Woodnesborough, and again by the singular usage of cremation. The significance of this has been discussed in connexion with the burial rites, and we have seen that this appears to be a heathen burial of a member of the warrior class towards the end of the 6th century. Whoever was buried here had profited by the Kentish contact with Frankish territory sufficiently to acquire not only the distinctively Frankish bowl (and no doubt the glass as well) but also the new continental style of embellishment on his sword and possibly its ring-knob also. He was of sufficient importance to possess the material evidences of the new culture, and at the same time to be buried in a distinctive and archaic way. This burial, an outlier both by ritual and geographically, suggests a member of a rich family of eclectic taste and traditional sympathies. Its closest affinities are with the near-by cemetery at Gilton, and its prominent isolated setting suggests that it might be an aristocratic grave set apart from the rest of the cemetery, by way of honour and distinction. This is to some extent confirmed by the roughly contemporary examples of rich bowl-cremations in other parts of the country.

Any final date for the deposition is subject to all the hazards of typological dating, but even within the still flexible structure of 6th-century chronology, a fairly firm absolute date for the deposition of the burial can be made.

First, the grave-goods all fall within the span of the 6th century. The bowl, by its closeness to that from the Krefeld-Gellep *Fürstengrab*, may be assigned to the 2nd quarter of the century. The brooch, paralleled by the pair from Finglesham

[144] Böhner (1958), I, pp. 226-7, II, p. 182, pl. lxiv, 1.
[145] Faussett (1856), p. 77, pl. xvi, 4.
[146] Pirling (1964), pl. lix, 2.
[147] Böhner (1958), p. 148.
[148] Margary (1955), I, 31-3.

grave E2, was probably made about the middle of the 6th century. The beads could well be of 6th-century date. The sword can be dated by its formal relationship to the other English swords, which suggests that it belongs stylistically with the ring-swords from Gilton, Bifrons, Faversham and Dover, all of which were probably made around the middle of the 6th century. The Coombe pommel is a little heavier and more peaked in form, which seems to bring it closer to the later English pommels, while the other Kentish pommels are slightly smaller and flatter. Taking this into consideration the Coombe sword was probably made shortly after the middle of the 6th century.

Secondly, it has here been argued that the decoration of the hilt of this sword represents a tentative transition from Style I to Style II, and that the master who made this hilt was a man trained in the decorative vocabulary of Style I essaying the more fluid Style II. In Frankish territory, in view of the new evidence for early Style II from Cologne and Saint Denis, this would imply the 2nd or 3rd quarter of the 6th century. But there was of course an inevitable lag before innovations of this sort reached England. Nevertheless, a flourishing interlace was established in England in the 2nd half of the 6th century, and Style II itself must have been known in England by the time that the Christian Bertha with her Frankish retinue came from France to marry Ethelbert of Kent about 588. No doubt, like Frankish glass and other imports, it had all reached Kent some time before. In the light of all this, the Coombe hilt was probably made in the period between 550 and 590.

Thus the individual evidence of each item of burial furniture tends towards a deposition-date in the later part of the 6th century. The bowl was imported, and appears to have been in poor condition when buried. The brooch was worn and possibly broken before burial. The beads could fit in with this. By comparison with other Kentish swords, the Coombe sword appears from its crisp condition to have been buried not very long after it was made. The glass also fits into the pattern established by these goods. The palm-cup is of a 6th-century type, the claw-beaker of the 'degenerate' type (*c*), as described by Harden. Similar burials at Stodmarsh, Sutton Hoo (mound 4), and Brightwell Heath, Martlesham, are also probably 6th-century in date.

Arguments from negative evidence are never very satisfactory, but it is noteworthy that none of the customary accessories of 7th-century Kentish burials are present—the triangular buckle-plates, union pins, pendants, amethyst beads, rich filigree and cloisonné work, and all the other characteristic features that one might expect if the burial itself were much later.[149]

It seems, then, from the cumulative evidence of the associated goods that the cremation and deposition at Coombe took place at some point in the last quarter of the 6th century. We have important evidence here for the beginnings of Style II in England. Coombe also illustrates the growing influence and power of east Kentish culture in this period, which finds its ultimate expression in the great 7th-century graves at Kingston, Sarre and Faversham. Whatever reconsiderations of the earlier stages of Kentish art and culture are made in the future, there is no doubt that the evidence of this burial will remain of far-reaching importance.

[149] Hyslop (1963), pp. 190-1.

APPENDIX I

THE TEXTILES

By Elisabeth Crowfoot

The textiles (FIGS. 6-7; PL. VII, A–C) from this burial are only a collection of tiny pieces, but though the fragments are brittle they still retain enough of their original quality for their weaving to be studied. The report of the original excavation (1853)[150] says that 'a veil of cloth appears to have been placed over the urn, portions of which are still adhering to its edges', and describes the cloth as of 'good workmanship, woven in a sort of twill'. The swords are also described as being wrapped in cloth, and the fragments preserved come from two different fabrics.

Both these fabrics are of wool.[151] A few pieces remain of a coarse undyed plain weave, originally white or natural, which perhaps was that used to wrap round the swords; most of the scraps obviously belong to the cloth described as covering the urn, and are of fine dark brown twill in a broken diamond or lozenge pattern; they include one fragment of a closing-border in tablet-weave.

Recent research has made it clear that the broken diamond twill was a favourite with the Anglo-Saxons and Scandinavians[152] for the best quality of fine woollen cloth; from English sites there are also some linen examples. The pattern on the fragments from Coombe seems to vary, though it is difficult to be certain, as the scraps are small and all have decayed patches and broken threads. Two slightly different diamonds can be distinguished, both on 18 wefts, but one on 20 warps (as in the three examples from Sutton Hoo, SH 1, 9, 12, and one from Broomfield barrow, B 2) and one on 12 warps (as in Broomfield B 1). But variations in pattern have been found on other sites, combinations of broken diamonds with chevrons, or the combination of two different diamonds,[153] and there is no reason to doubt that all the fragments preserved come from the same fine cloth.

The piece of closing border is of particular interest, as it is only the second example found in England, the other being on the broken diamond twill from Broomfield mentioned above (B 2). The Broomfield border is narrower, woven with 4 tablets instead of 6, but otherwise similar to the piece shown here. The same type of closing border is found on fragments from Snartemo (Norway)[154] and Corselitze (Denmark),[155] where the tablet-twists match those of the starting border and side borders. Its presence here suggests that the cloth over the bowl may have come from a fine blanket or a garment.

Coombe 1. Two pieces, *c.* 3·5 by 1·2 cm. and 1·5 by 1·7 cm., and some tiny scraps and threads. The Wool Industries Research Association report this fabric to be made from fine, non-pigmented animal fibre. For Dr. Ryder's detailed analysis see Appendix II. The pieces are now light brown.

Spinning Z warp and weft, uneven in both systems, though one is harder and finer than the other; coarse plain weave (tabby), the weaving also variable, giving counts of 10 by 5 and 8 by 6 threads per cm. No selvedge preserved.

[150] *Proc. Bury and W. Suffolk Institute*, I (1853), 27.

[151] I am very grateful to the Wool Industries Research Association for their examination of the fibres in these samples; to Dr. M. L. Ryder of the Animal Breeding Research Organization, Roslin, for detailed study of the type of wool (see Appendix II); and to the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, for examination of flax.

[152] See especially Marta Hoffmann, *The Warp-weighted Loom* (Oslo, 1964); Margrethe Hald, *Olddanske Tekstiler* (Copenhagen, 1950).

[153] Sutton Hoo, SH 9; Hald, *op. cit.* in note 152, figs. 70, 87, 141.

[154] Bjørn Hougen, *Snartemofunnene* (Oslo, 1935), p. 69.

[155] Hald, *op. cit.* in note 152, figs. 48, 50 (Vejen), fig. 59 (Corselitze).

Coombe 2. A number of small ragged pieces, one, *a*, 3·3 by 1·8 cm. overall, with a piece of finishing border; the best of the others, *b*, *c*. 3 by 2 cm. at widest. The fabric is dark brown, and the Wool Industries Research Association report describes the fibres as nearly all naturally pigmented. For Dr. Ryder's study of the wool see Appendix II.

Warp, Z-spun, weft S-spun, both regular; weaving also regular, broken diamond twill, count 14 by 12 per cm.

a (FIG. 6; PL. VII, A, B). Finishing border in tablet-weave, made with six 4-hole tablets threaded left and right. The warps pass through the border in pairs, and then the cut ends are grouped in bunches of four and turned and threaded back through the border. The six tablet-rows of the border measure 1 cm., with 7 twists per cm., i.e. 14 warps; there is a small piece of frayed twill weave attached, with the start of a diamond.

The weave on all the other fragments shows broken diamonds. On the best piece, *b* (FIG. 7; PL. VII, C), and some others there are parts of a diamond repeating on 20 warps and 18 wefts; the rest of piece *b* has several mistakes. On two small pieces the diamond seems to be only on 12 warps and 18 wefts.

The textiles associated with two other cremation-burials in bronze bowls referred to above (p. 12 f.) have recently been re-examined:

1. Brightwell Heath, Martlesham, Suffolk

Many pieces of this bronze bowl have small fragments of textile adhering to the surface, a larger piece is caught under the rim with a string, and there are several loose pieces. The cloth must have been used to cover the top of the bowl, and tied under the rim to keep it in place, as described in the excavation report.[156] The loose pieces of the fabric are still white and flexible, a fine undyed linen; the spinning is Z in both systems, weave plain (tabby) with no selvedge present, counts of 26 by 14, 21 by 15, 22 by 16 per cm. on different pieces; the thread is variable, particularly in the less closely-packed system. The fibre was identified by Dr. M. L. Ryder as flax and confirmed by the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, as common flax, *Linum usitatissimum*. The string fastening the cloth under the rim is made of a bundle of at least 14 pieces of Z-thread similar to that used in the weaving, not twisted into a cord.

2. Sutton Hoo, Mound 4 (Tumulus E), 1938 Excavations

On and with the remains of the bronze cremation-bowl there are fragments from three textiles. The rim has an iron bar under it, and the surface of this iron is covered with layers of replaced textile:

a. Plain weave, Z, Z, count *c.* 26 by 15 threads per cm., next to the iron.

b. Lying over this, some fragments of twill weave, Z, S. The clearest areas are only *c.* 8 mm. square, and show what seems to be a broken diamond, but the surface is too damaged to be certain. The count is *c.* 24 (Z) by 18 (S) per cm., taken as 12 by 9 on 5 mm., considerably finer than the Coombe twill.

Traces of *a* occur on a number of bronze scraps, and there are also some detached pieces, the best *c.* 9 by 8 mm., Z, Z, count estimated 24 by 14 per cm., cream coloured (undyed). The fibre is described by Dr. Ryder as very fine flax.

c. Also detached, one tiny fragment of twill, roughly 5 by 5 mm., identified as flax by Dr. Ryder, Z, Z, count 9 by 7, i.e. 18 by 14 threads per cm. The fragment shows a displaced meeting, and could come from a broken diamond or chevron. This is probably the same twill that is present, replaced, on a piece of bone; the best area measured *c.* 1 cm. by 6 mm., Z, Z, count 20 by 16 threads per cm. (taken as 8 on 5 mm.). The fragment seems to show a broken diamond, but the surface is too much deteriorated to be certain.

[156] J. Reid Moir in *J. Ipswich & District Field Club*, VI (1921), 12.

From its position next to the rim it seems likely that the plain weave, *a*, was the covering; the two twills may have been wrapped round outside. There are, however, some scraps on other bronze pieces that seemed to be deteriorated textile but were identified by Dr. Ryder as feather. It is just possible that these indicate the presence of a pillow. In the Sutton Hoo ship-burial the pillow had a linen cover in broken diamond twill (Z, Z spinning) and outside this a fine plain linen weave like a pillow-case. There was also a wool twill, an irregular broken diamond (S, Z spinning) associated with them. The comparison suggests that in this case a pillow may have been placed over the urn.

APPENDIX II

THE WOOL FROM THE CREMATION BURIAL AT COOMBE

By M. L. Ryder

The fibre measurements (in microns) were:

	Diam. range	*Mean*	*Distribution*	*Most frequent diam.*	*Apparent fleece type*
1. Yarn *a* ..	12–44 one @ 50 one @ 56	21	skewed-to-fine	16	hairy medium
Yarn *b* ..	8–44	21	skewed-to-fine	18	generalized medium
2. Yarn *a* ..	8–44 one @ 64	22	skewed-to-fine	16	hairy medium
Yarn *b* ..	10–46	22	skewed-to-fine	16	generalized medium

All four wools are therefore of similar type, belonging to the generalized medium class that was common until the middle ages, and which remains today in the fleece of the Soay sheep (M. L. Ryder, 'Fleece evolution in domestic sheep', *Nature*, 204 (1964), 555-559). The very few fine hairs in yarns *a* of each specimen indicate the variability of this fleece type, and suggest that these really belong to a type that I have described as 'hairy medium'.

ADDENDUM

When the Coombe grave-goods were being cleaned at the British Museum in 1964, the authors were invited by the British Museum to publish the Coombe burial, with the permission of the Museum at Saffron Walden. Recently, Miss V. Evison has published a drawing and description of the sword from this burial in her important article 'The Dover ring-sword and other sword-rings and beads', *Archaeologia*, CI (1967), 63–118, pls. viii–xv. The delay in publication of our paper gives us an opportunity to comment briefly on some of the points made in Miss Evison's article.

Miss Evison's proposition that the sword, and possibly the manner of its burial, suggest Swedish influence at work, is not, in our view, supported by the evidence. The affinities of the Coombe sword, both in construction and decoration, with the other Kentish ring-swords far outweigh any differences. The silver parcel-gilt pommel, the use of niello, especially in bordering, and in step, zigzag and toothed patterns, and the gilded grooving around the central area of the pommel, are all entirely typical of the decorative repertoire of the Kentish group. This, and the nature and style of the animal ornament on the Coombe sword, make any question of development from the animal ornament on the Valsgärde-8 hilt impossible on chronological grounds alone. The forked elements on the upper right front grip-mount, which Miss Evison interprets as jaws, showing a 'close connection' with the biting animal heads on the

Valsgärde-8 mount, are too similar to Style I feet of the type shown, e.g., in Miss Evison's illustration of the Lower Shorne pommel (*Archaeologia*, CI (1967), fig. 6, *d*, p. 109), for the resemblance to be ignored.[157]

The close relationship of this grip-mount design to the animals shown on the pommel would support its identification as highly formalized bodies and legs. That the sword is late in the Kentish series seems certain: Miss Evison has justly emphasized features such as sunken shoulder-tongues in this connexion. But her implied date of middle 7th century (suggested by the comparisons with Valsgärde-8 and Herbrechtingen, and by the place allotted to the sword in her chronologically arranged catalogue) is also unlikely on the evidence of all the associated grave-goods, which point to a 6th-century date. Features characterized as probably late—the large ring and deep guard-plates—are surely by-products of the large size of the sword itself, which has no certain chronological significance. Indeed, the ring belongs typologically with the fixed rings of Orsoy and Mainz-Kastel (both of the 6th century) rather than with the huge solidified ring-knobs of the later Swedish pommels.

Reasons for accepting the grave-goods from Coombe as belonging to one cremation-burial, a possibility rejected by Miss Evison in her note (on p. 90), have been fully discussed here. It would certainly be unwise to base conclusions, either for Swedish influence or for the remains of more than one man at Coombe, on the existence of a second sword, for which we have no corroborating evidence, and which was not displayed with the other grave-goods in 1848.

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[157] *Archaeologia*, CI, fig. 12, *a* (the front of the sword), shows three looped and footed elements instead of the existing four in this design on the upper grip-mount. Other details also not shown on the pommel were revealed after further cleaning.

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