

Some of the Late Keltic Pottery found at Haslemere in 1905.
Scale denoted by the foot-rule on the lowest shelf.

NOTE ON A LATE KELTIC BURIAL GROUND RECENTLY DISCOVERED AT HASLEMERE.

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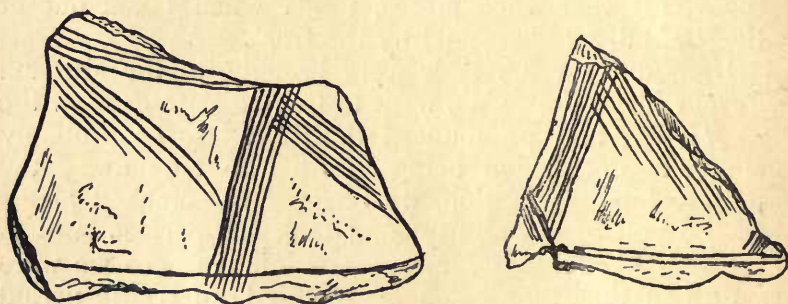
ON the 4th of November, 1903, a gardener in the employ of Miss Harrison, at Coombe Cottage (about a quarter of a mile from the town on the Godalming Road), discovered some pieces of pottery, one foot below the surface, whilst planting trees in the garden.

At first the pottery was not viewed with much interest, and unfortunately was allowed to remain out of doors all night, filled with damp earth as found, with the result that some pieces, intact when taken out of the ground, were cracked by the frost.

Next day three vessels were brought to the Museum for our inspection. We went to Combe Cottage, saw the remainder, and pronounced the "find" to be probably Roman. Permission being granted to take away the pottery for examination, we restored the cracked pieces to the best of our ability, and took the perfect ones to the British Museum for expert opinion, where we were informed that they belonged to the Late Keltic period (Early Iron Age), with approximate date of B.C. 200.

The vessels were all made on a potter's wheel. Careful examination of the fragments points to the interment of no less than twenty-two vessels at the one spot. The following notes were taken at the time. By measuring the larger rim fragments the diameter of the mouth of an urn was easily ascertained.

- (1) Calcined human bone.
- (2) Fragments of a large cinerary urn (black ware), which probably contained the above.
- (3) Cup-shaped vessel of reddish ware, measuring four inches in diameter by two in height. In a perfect condition.
- (4) Vessel similar to preceding, of slightly smaller dimensions, also
- (5) Another of the same pattern, not quite intact. [perfect.]
- (6) Fragments of red ware. These consisted of remains of another vessel of similar design to number 4, and fragments of at least three others.
- (7) A shallow saucer of coarse red ware, much resembling in shape, etc., an ordinary flower pot stand. Not quite perfect.
- (8) Fragments of another vessel similar to the preceding one.
- (9) Shallow saucer-like vessel of black ware, unbroken; measuring seven inches in diameter and nearly two inches in depth.
- (10) A drinking vessel (?) of black ware (much broken), five inches in diameter, and nearly three inches in height. Of very neat design. Fragments of another of similar size and design.
- (11) A bottle or jug in black ware, standing about six inches high, and five inches in maximum diameter. It was in many fragments, and was with much difficulty partially restored. The handle was broken off and has not been found.
- (12) Part of base of small urn in dark brown ware.
- (13) Two small fragments of a vessel. These were of special interest as showing ornamentation of similar design to that of vessels disinterred from the British Lake Dwellings at Glastonbury, also of the Late Keltic period. Thin dark ware.

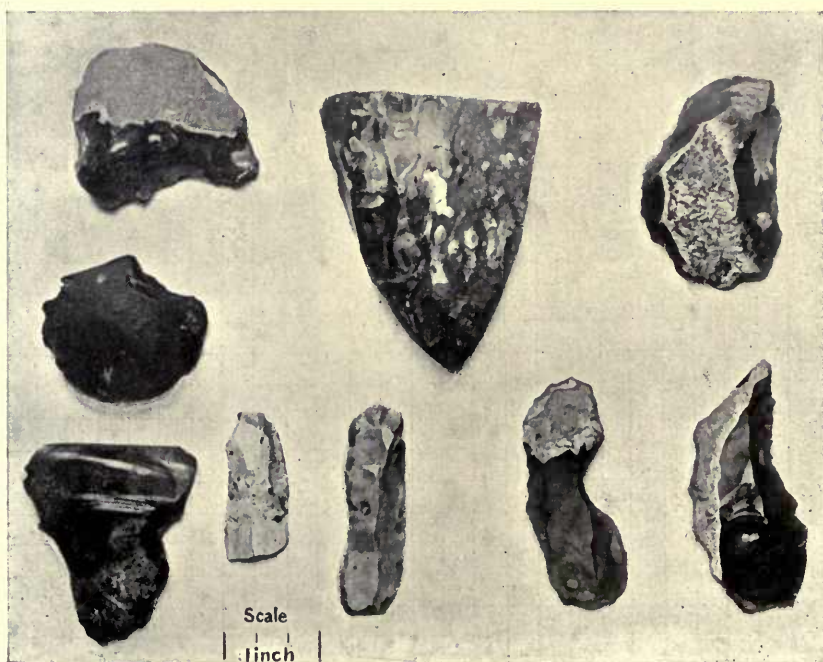


Fragments with ornamentation similar to that on pottery found in the Lake Dwellings near Glastonbury, Somerset.

- (14) Fragments of rim of an urn of 8-inch diameter at the mouth. Thick, coarse dark ware.
- (15) Fragments of another, of 7-inch diameter.
- (16) Many fragments and the base of an urn, in dark ware.
- (17) Base of an urn or drinking cup, also dark ware.
- (18) Fragmentary base of an urn.
- (19) Fragments of another urn of thick dark ware.



Remains of a Late Keltic Burial Urn, found at Haslemere in 1903.



Worked Flints found in association with Late Keltic interments, Haslemere, 1903.

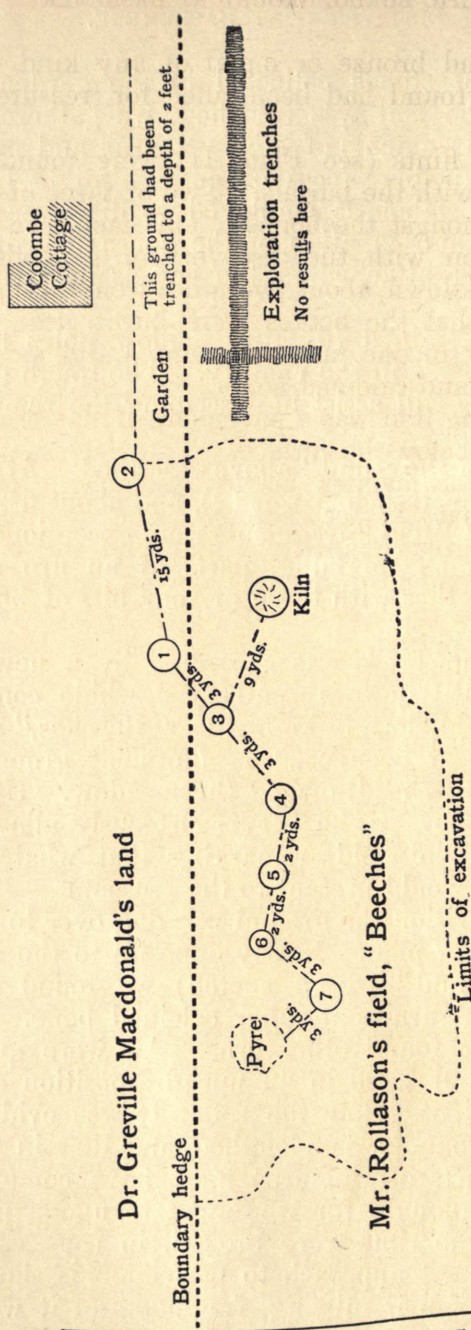
From a heap of stones collected in the garden at the time when the soil was trenched, we gathered a large number of fragments of cinerary urns and other vessels. Many valuable pieces of pottery might have been saved if the labourer employed to dig over the ground (prior to the occupation of the house) had only known the interest attached to the vessels he treated so ruthlessly.

We carefully examined (digging shallow holes here and there) the ground in the vicinity. The rough plan given on next page will assist in describing the remainder of the operations.

Site (1) is that of the "find" above described. At the extreme end of the trenched soil (2), and about fifteen yards from the first "find," fragments were exceptionally numerous. A trench was dug, parts of an urn and another vessel, together with three or four bits of burnt bone, were found.

The adjoining meadow was separated by a newly-made hedge. Until quite recently the whole constituted one large field, locally known as "Beeches," and for a long time had been used as allotment grounds. Mr. Rollason, of Hindhead, owned the meadow. Upon hearing of the discovery, he very courteously allowed us to excavate in the field, remarking that whatever might be found he would present to the Museum.

Under our supervision the ground was dug over to the extent as marked on plan. Nearly opposite to the site of the original "find" (3 on sketch) we found the remains of a burial urn containing calcined bone. At 4, 5, 6, and 7, we found other urns. All were quite near the surface, all were in an upright position and not more than a foot below the soil. It was evident that when the ground was ploughed and dug in the past, the upper parts of the urns must have come in contact with the plough, for we failed to find a perfect one; in all the rims were broken, in some cases missing. The nearest approach to perfection is shown in Plate II. The rim is missing, fragments of it were found in the ground close by.



Sketch Plan of the Excavations of the late Keltic Burial Ground at Haslemere.

We failed to find bronze or metal of any kind. It may be that the ground had been rifled for treasure in the past.

A few worked flints (see Plate II) were found in direct association with the burials. Two or three of the flakes occurred amongst the bones. This fact is of interest in connection with the discovery of a neolithic settlement on Blackdown, about two miles from this spot.

We may infer that the bodies were burnt close by, from the discovery in one place of many burnt stones, pieces of charcoal, and calcined bone.

A very interesting find was a pavement of flat stones, three feet or more below the surface. These stones were arranged in such a manner as to resemble a huge shallow saucer about six feet across. The depression was filled with a great quantity of fine sand and charcoal, which had evidently been subjected to intense heat. Amongst the sand were large pieces of charcoal and fragments of pottery, but not a trace of human bone. In all probability it was the spot where the cinerary urns were baked. Mr. Jonathan Hutchinson, F.R.S., examined the "pavement" and its contents, and supports this conclusion. In every case we may suppose that the interment was originally at a greater depth, though not surmounted by a mound of stones and earth. The erosion of sandy soil (Hythe Beds, Neocomian) during a period of two thousand years—perhaps longer—must have been very great.

We are informed, on good authority, that some workmen, while digging the foundations of a house on Hindhead in 1897, unearthed a vessel containing bones. It fell to pieces and was thrown away. There is little doubt that it was a late Keltic cinerary urn. It is very desirable that workmen employed in digging trenches, wells, or quarrying stone, should be more generally advised to keep a careful look-out for remains of antiquarian and geological interest. The promise of a small fee for anything found would secure its safe removal.

Plate III depicts some of the vessels found in site (1). The vessel in the centre on the right hand, the lowest on the left, and that on the card, are all made of sandy clay, and are of a red colour. In shape they much resemble some Keltic pottery from the Ticino Valley, Switzerland, which may be seen in the British Museum. The others are of dark colour, and contain large grains of silica. It will be observed that the smaller vessels, through their shallowness, escaped destruction from the plough. No particular attention was paid to the position of these vessels; the gardener asserts, however, that they were arranged around some of the larger fragments.

At the moment of going to press another find of late Keltic pottery of exceptional interest has been made at about 300 yards from the site of the original find. The owner of the land, Mr. Deas of Haslemere, very generously allowed us to excavate the spot with the object to secure for the Museum anything that might be found. We ascertained that at least fifty-six vessels had been deposited within a circle of about six yards diameter, including three almost perfect cineraries, the fragments of nine others; twenty-eight bowls and pateræ (some in a perfect condition); and the fragments of sixteen others. One of the cinerary urns and some of the vessels are depicted in the accompanying illustration (Plate I). Two of the cineraries contained pieces of rudely chipped flint; we also found in one of them a burnt fragment of a bronze fibula. All the bowls and pateræ were arranged around the three cinerary urns, and are of very diversified shape, no two being exactly alike. The ware is of five or six different qualities. It is hoped that in the near future further discoveries will be made. The objects found may be seen in the Museum.

The finding of a curious lead plug in the base of one of the cineraries would make it appear that this urnfield is of a later date than at first supposed. It was probably contemporary with the Roman invasion.

A black and white photograph showing a collection of ancient pottery fragments and vessels arranged on a dark, textured surface. The items include a large, shallow bowl on the left; a small, rounded jar with a short neck in the center; a small, fluted bowl on the right; and several other smaller fragments and shards scattered around. The pottery appears to be made of a light-colored material, possibly clay or stone, and shows signs of wear and cracking. The background is dark and uneven, suggesting an outdoor or archaeological setting.

face p. 38.