ROMANO-BRITISH REMAINS AT COBHAM.

BY

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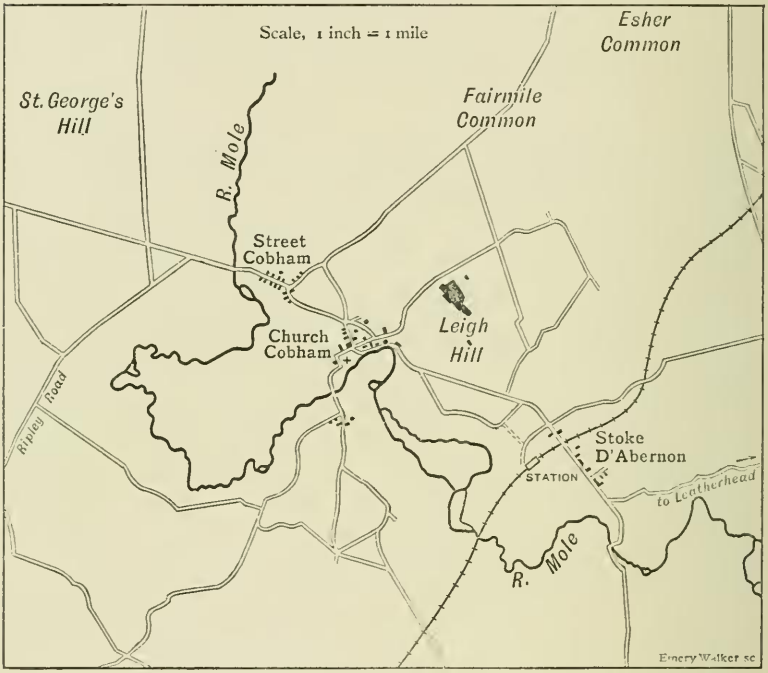
THE former report, published in the last number of the *Collections*, dealt with the work of exploration down to the end of 1907. Since then the excavations have been continued on sixteen days between March and November, 1908, and the task of supervising the workmen has devolved, as before, principally on Mr. Frank E. Spiers, whose patience and enthusiasm deserved a richer reward in the way of interesting finds. He was assisted on many occasions by Mr. Henry Horncastle, who represented the Council of the Surrey Archæological Society, and the present writer, while visits were paid from time to time by the Honorary Secretaries, Mr. Giuseppi and Mr. Jenkinson. Mr. Fred. Higgs' courtesy in allowing access to the ground and facilitating the provision of labour is worthy of special recognition.

Among those most interested in the progress of the work was Lieut.-Col. Gordon Clark, whose residence adjoins the site, and whose constant hospitality was largely appreciated by all those in charge of the excavations. His generous subscription practically covered about half the expenses, and the opportune loan of rooms in his stables for cleaning, sorting and storing the finds, puts the Society and those associated in the work very deeply in his debt. Perhaps the most pleasing outcome of the undertaking was the enrolment of Lieut.-Col. Gordon Clark himself, and several others affected by his enthusiasm, as members of the Society.

Last year's report described the pits discovered during the construction of the carriage-drive running east from Leigh Hill road, past "Appletons." On the completion of the roadway, leave was readily obtained from Mr. Fred. Higgs to excavate in the ground adjoining the road, on its north side, the only stipulation being that the bank, with its newly-planted hedge, should not



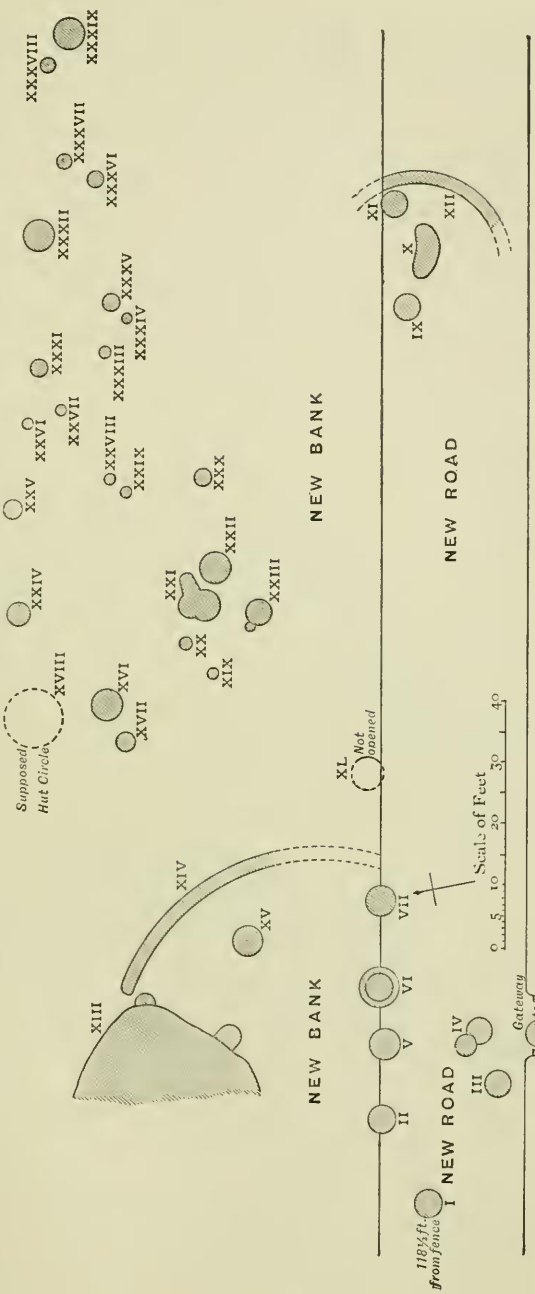
Environs of Cobham, Surrey.
(Site of Excavations marked on Leigh Hill.)

be disturbed. Except for a belt about 14 ft. wide, the excavations here described were therefore continuous with those of last year.

The large Pit XIII was exceptional, and contained the most interesting pottery of all. Fragments of the "Aylesford" type (fig. 23) came from this spot in two groups beside, and a little west of, the supposed entrance. With the latter were associated portions of a large vessel with heavy rolled lip, frequently found on

Roman sites, and suggesting a corn-bin or receptacle for oil or wine (*see* fig. 24). The ware is hard and smooth, well turned on the wheel, but containing a large proportion of white grit, no doubt added to make the ware refractory in the kiln.

This large pit was entered by two broad steps at the south-east corner. The smaller circular recess (*see* plan), which was about 2 feet above the floor of the pit, would have been overhung by the roof, and was possibly



Plan of Excavations, Leigh Hill, Cobham.

used as a cupboard.[1] A space measuring 30 ft. north and south and 15 ft. east and west was excavated, and no doubt formed part of the floor of this sunk chamber, but further west the filling differed in character and evidently consisted of screenings from a modern gravel-pit that seems to have been opened here. The walls were weathered in places, and were not complete enough to prove whether the excavation had been circular or rectangular, but, with the possible exception of Pit XLI, which may likewise have been partially destroyed by gravel-digging, this was the only large pit discovered on the site.

A parallel instance of a large pit associated with a number of smaller ones is recorded from Wiltshire. On the eastern slope of Martinsell Hill two tiers of pits were noticed separated by terraces. "The pits run into one another and out on to the terraces by what may once have been round pits, but have now as much the appearance of passages in many cases. Round to the south is a pit much larger than the rest, measuring 30 ft. across."[2] The explorers added, that as no relics of human habitation were found, and the situation was an exposed one, there was little probability that the pits were ever used for dwellings, though they might have been constructed as shelters for look-out men in times of danger. A pit 4 ft. deep and 5 ft. in diameter was found at Oldbury Hill in the same county.[3]

Pits varying from 20 to 27 ft. in diameter were found in considerable numbers on the west side of the hill within the rampart at Cissbury, Sussex,[4] and one with the exceptional diameter of 70 ft. was also found.

The curved trench to the east of the large pit was traced as far as the recently made bank permitted on

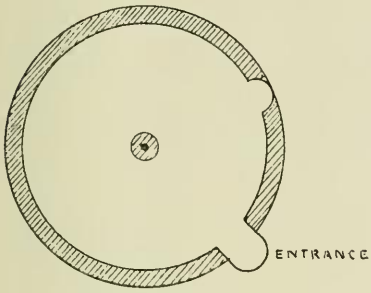
[1] A recess lined with stone slabs, and used as a fire-place, was found in one of the Holyhead hut-circles of stone by Hon. W. O. Stanley (*Archæological Journal*, XXVI, 302); but there was no trace of fire or stone lining here.

[2] Col. Dunn and Mr. H. B. Cunnington, *Wilts. Arch. Mag.*, XXVIII, 257.

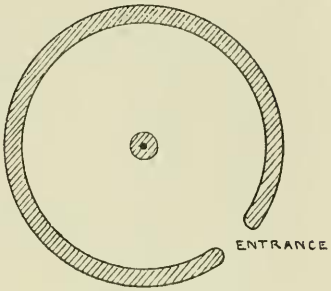
[3] *Wilts. Arch. Mag.*, XXIII, 217.

[4] *Archæologia*, XLII, 45, 59.

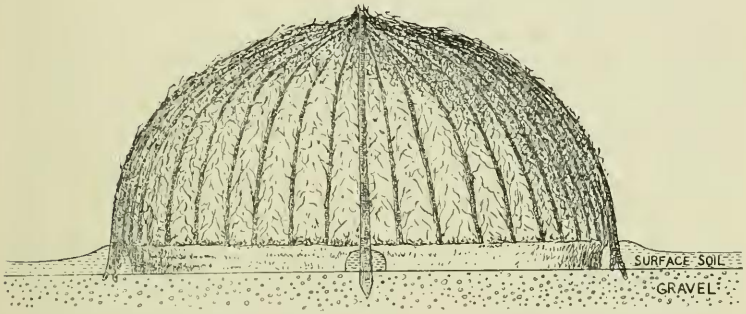
the south, and at the other end stopped suddenly just outside the "cupboard" already mentioned. It was



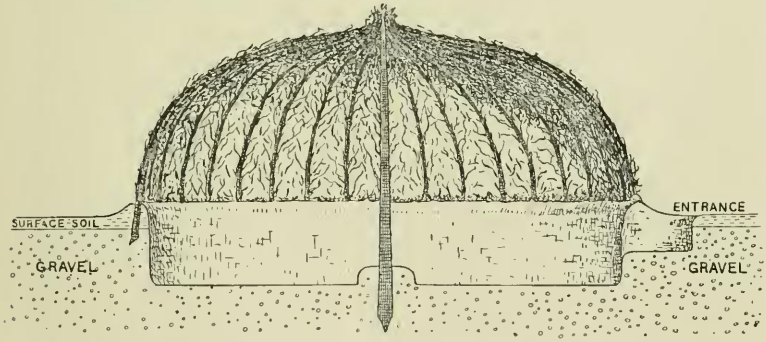
PLAN OF PIT DWELLING



PLAN OF HUT CIRCLE.



Section showing conjectural restoration of a Hut-circle, Hayes Common, Kent. (G. Clinch, *Jour. Anthrop. Inst.*, N. S. ii.)

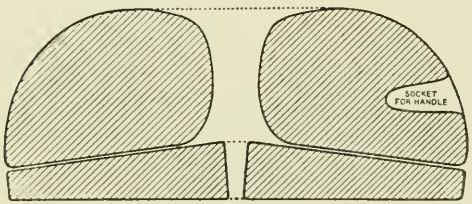


Section showing conjectural restoration of a Pit-dwelling, Worms Heath, Surrey. (Johnson and Wright, *Neol. Man in N. E. Surrey.*)

uniformly 2 ft. deep, forming a soak-pit; and may have been cut in order to intercept and divert from the

entrance the surface-water during a storm, as there is here a gentle rise from W. to E. As the whole settlement was on gravel, it was unnecessary to take more elaborate precautions against floods. It was noticed during the work of excavation that nowhere on the site did the rain-water stand on the surface, and the porous soil no doubt attracted primitive settlers who were not experts in drainage.

About 45 ft. north-east of the large trench was found a large quantity of rough hand-made pottery, portions of loom-weights, and quern (*see* fig.), all lying on the gravel, about 9 in. from the modern surface. This (No. XVIII) probably formed the floor of a hut-circle, a much shallower form of dwelling than the surrounding pits (*see* figs.). Some of the pottery was a good buff, with boldly-marked profile, and, unlike the fragments found in the pits, can probably be pieced together. In this case the fragments seem to have remained in position after the vessels were broken, and there is some indication that many of them lay exposed on the surface and acquired a covering of moss or lichen, after being bleached to some extent by the weather. Those lying just below the surface were, on the other hand, quite clean and unchanged in colour.



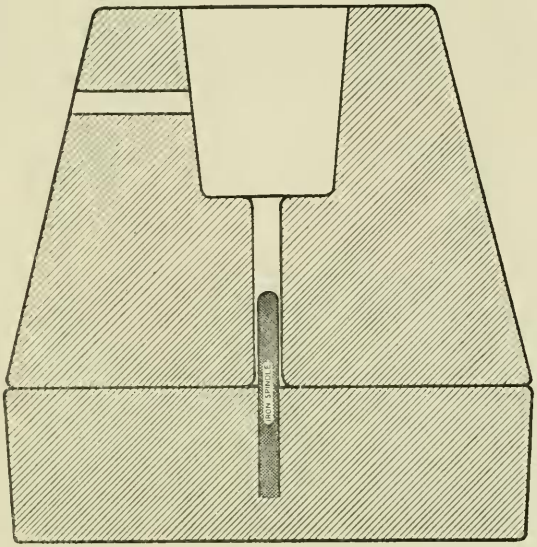
Stone Quern.

Lower stone from Cobham ($\frac{1}{5}$), upper stone after specimen from Hambleton Hill, Dorset (British Museum).

The classical site for querns of this period in England is Hunsbury, or Dane's Camp, near Northampton, excavated by the late Sir Henry Dryden.[1] About 150 upper or lower stones were found in the pits there, 11—14 in. in diameter, the lower 5—7 in. thick, and the upper

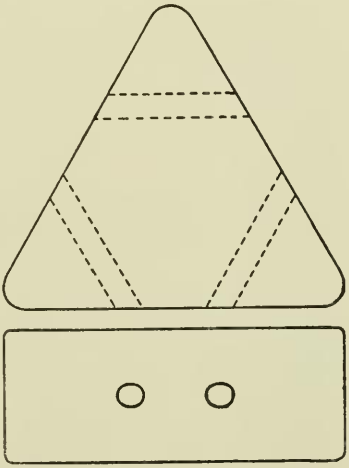
[1] *Assoc. Archit. Socs. Report*, XVIII, Northants., Pl. VII, p. 61. Others have recently been found at Desborough, in the same county. The British and Roman types are distinguished by Professor Boyd Dawkins, *Melandra Castle* (Manchester Classical Association Report, 1905), p. 8, figs. 1, 2.

9—10 in. high. All these querns were of the same pattern, with an iron spindle, and hole for one handle for turning. The cavity for introducing the grain was $4\frac{1}{2}$ in. across and 5 in. deep, while the spindle-hole was $\frac{3}{4}$ in. in diameter. Fragments of one of this type (*see* fig.) were found in the large pit (No. XIII).



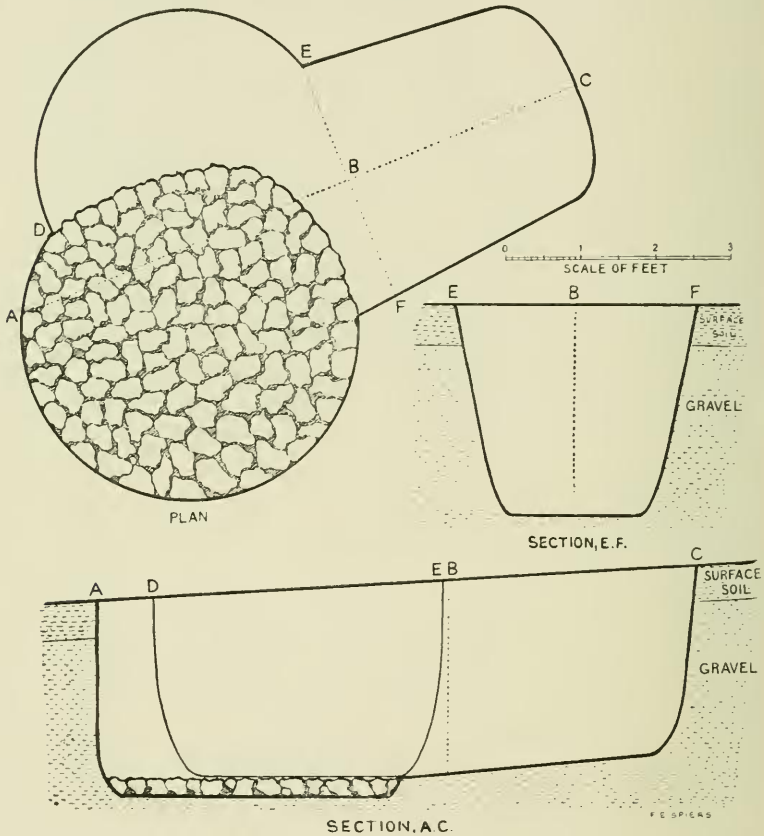
Restoration of Stone Quern, Cobham. ($\frac{1}{5}$)

Loom-weights of the same type as the fragments found at Cobham were also found at Hunsbury, and are illustrated by Sir Henry Dryden.[1] Others of this triangular form have been found in various parts of the country, but are rarely seen abroad. One is in the Namur Museum, from a refuge-camp at Pry in the neighbourhood, and another in the Leyden Museum, found presumably in Holland. They consist of thick triangles of baked clay, with holes pierced across each of the angles, as indicated in the diagram. Two sizes are represented at Cobham, with


Restoration of Clay Loom-weight, Cobham.

[1] *Ibid.*, Pl. V, fig. 3.

sides of 9 × 3½ in. and 6½ × 2½ in. respectively. Their purpose has been variously explained, but loom-weight seems a better description than either net-sinker or sheep-hobble, and they would serve to stretch the warp threads on an upright loom, such as was doubtless in use during the pre-Roman period.[1] Another pattern of



Plan and Sections of Pit XXI, Cobham.

clay weights, a truncated pyramid with a single hole through the top, is common in Britain, and also frequently found abroad.

East of Pit VII another (No. XL) was found in section on the north bank of the drive, but was not opened

[1] *Early Iron Age Guide* (British Museum), p. 139.

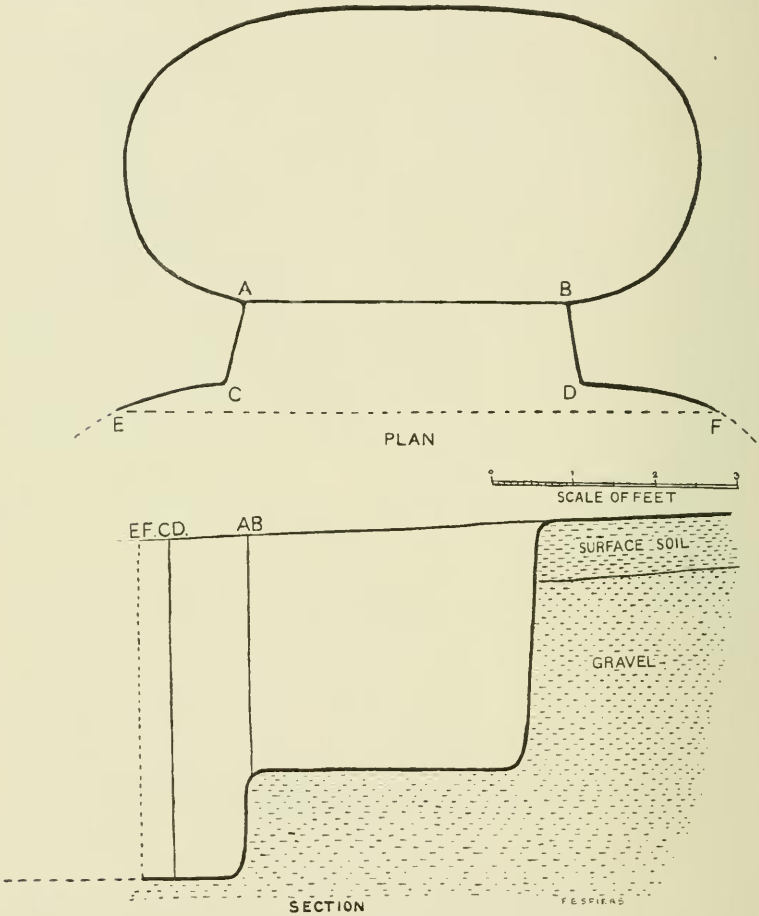
up, though fragments of pottery (belonging to Fig. 15 of Plate II, *Collections*, Vol. XXI) were picked out from the face of the cutting, while other pieces of the same urn came from a pit on the drive. In view of the irregularity of the pits north of the drive, it is peculiar that so many lay exactly along the line of its north bank.

Pit XXI was probably a kiln for firing earthenware that may also have been mixed in the same pit. A quantity of prepared clay was found that looked like the raw material for moulding the loom-weights that were used in some quantity in this settlement. Here was also found a large fragment of a partly-fired loom-weight, 4½ in. thick, that may represent the larger size here figured before shrinking in the kiln. All over the bottom of the pit were flints forming a circular floor, 4½ ft. across, and all blackened with soot. The rounded extension would, on this hypothesis, have afforded standing room for those firing the earthenware, while the angular extension would have served as a flue for the furnace.

The other pits, of various sizes, ranging from 1½—5 ft. in diameter, and from 1½—3½ ft. in depth, scattered irregularly over the excavated area, contained very little of interest, and the few scraps of hand-made pottery recovered must be ascribed to accident. There was hardly enough to suggest rubbish pits, though it is difficult to see what other use could have been made of the pits not showing traces of fire. Mention should be made especially of Pit XXVIII (21 in. diam. and 24 in. deep), which yielded a large fragment of hard Roman buff-ware with rolled rim, and two black pieces, more British in character, one being hand-made with the burnished surface frequently found on native ware, and also on Gaulish pottery from the Marne, dating from the 3rd and 4th centuries B.C. One Pit (No. XXXIX), at the extreme north-east angle of this site, was a shallow saucer-shaped depression, 5 ft. in diameter at the top, and about 2 ft. 3 in. deep at the centre, but nothing particular was found in it to explain its

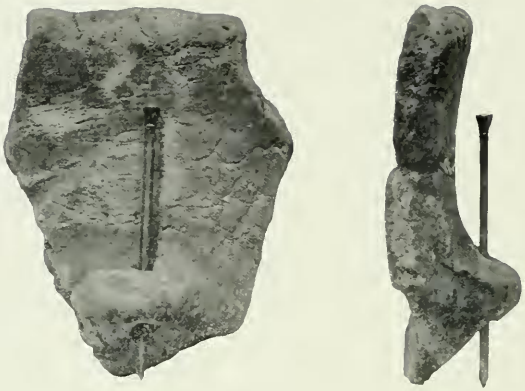
purpose. All the other pits were more or less straight-sided.

A more interesting Pit (No. XLI) was found by accident about 100 ft. due north of the large pit marked XIII, and about 53 ft. from the western hedge which



Plan and Section of Pit XLI, Cobham.

borders the road to Esher. There was a broad oval entrance, 7 ft. by $3\frac{1}{2}$ ft., which extended 3 ft. below the modern surface. From this floor there was a further drop of 1 ft. 3 in. at the line A B (*see* plan), which formed



Fragments of Hanging Bowl, with Vertical Perforations. $(\frac{2}{3})$
From gravel-pit N.E. of the site, Cobham.

Bronze Age Urn, found at Leigh Court, Cobham. $(\frac{1}{2})$

an opening 4 ft. wide, apparently leading into a large chamber. This could not be defined, as the walls (except at C D, where the angles were well preserved and the splay clearly shown) disappeared altogether, as indicated by the dotted line E F. Beyond this it appeared to have been disturbed in recent times, and filled in with gravel screenings in the same way as the eastern half of Pit XIII. A small quantity of black pottery was found of a decidedly interesting character, one piece closely resembling in paste and decoration vessels found in the British lake-village at Glastonbury. Other fragments of dark brown bore a finely incised lattice-pattern.

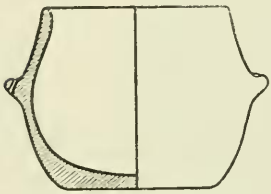
In spite of the fact that the pottery fragments were as a rule scattered and of insignificant dimensions, a certain rough classification has been found possible; and it is noticeable that the British hand-made ware, such as figs. 1—5, Plate I of last report (*Collections*, XXI, 202), was found apart in Pits IX—XII, at the south-eastern extremity of the area explored. The finer British vessels, of late-Keltic type, made on the wheel and of fine brown clay (as figs. 8, 9 of same plate), as well as the hard grey Romano-British ware (as Plate II of last report), were found sporadically over the rest of the diggings and were no doubt contemporary.

Quite apart from the 1st-century settlement at Leigh Hill, but still close enough to justify its inclusion in this report, is a Bronze-Age burial found in laying out the grounds of the house known as Leigh Court.[1] Near the east-end of the carriage-drive that leads past Appletons, and about 150 yards beyond the eastern limit of the excavations, was found a circular pit that had been filled in with fine black earth unmixed with flints or other stones, and apparently screened with some care. It was about 2 ft. deep and the same in diameter, and contained a small cinerary urn (Plate I) which stood upright on the bottom. Whether it actually contained burnt human bones, as was most likely, cannot

[1] Other pits containing hand-made and turned pottery have been found in these grounds.

now be ascertained, as it was at once emptied by the workmen in the vain hope of treasure; but the type is well known and may be assigned to the later Bronze Age, when cremation and urn-burial were generally practised in this country. The urn measures 4·8 in. in height and is 5 in. in diameter at the widest part. It has the usual overhanging rim, and is ornamented, on the rim only, with impressions of a twisted thong or cord, as is frequently the case in the Bronze Age. Though the ware is pale in colour and fairly soft, it should not be described as sun-dried or unbaked, as the sun could never have been sufficiently powerful to bake an ancient British urn enough to preserve it in moist surroundings for about 25 centuries. Its preservation is due to baking in an open fire, in embers, or in an oven made of clay. An example of this last method, dating from about the period of the Cobham settlement, has been found in the county and illustrated in the *Collections*.[1]

Another find of special interest, but a little distance north-east of the site, in Mrs. Bennett's gravel-pit, consisted of two fairly large fragments of a hanging vase (Plate I). The paste is pale brown and friable, and though the entire profile is not preserved, the two pierced lugs for suspension on the shoulder are still complete. Whether there was a third to increase the stability of the vessel when suspended is uncertain; but the top edge is intact in both fragments, and the vertical position of the perforations is therefore evident. Such an arrangement is by no means common in prehistoric pottery, and especially rare in this country, though several of our so-called "incense cups" were also suspended by cords. In the photograph a nail has been passed through each perforated lug to render its position clear, and a diameter of about 5 in. at the mouth can be deduced from the fragments, which include



Conjectural restoration of hanging urn. ($\frac{1}{5}$)

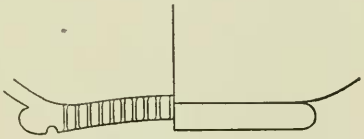
[1] At Farnham, Vol. XX, p. 231.

part of the base. The height would probably be about the same, but the date is not easily determined. The ware, though soft, is free from gritty particles, and is probably of the Bronze Age.

Such perforations in groups of two, three or more, are common on neolithic pottery found in the camp at Chassey, Saône-et-Loire,[1] and the same system is found during the same period in Denmark,[2] but perhaps the closest parallel is to be found in a group from Wilts. and Dorset, now in the British Museum.

One urn from Chavenage Furze, near Kingston Deverill in the former county, has four such pierced lugs or bosses;[3] another from Lake has two opposite, like a third from Rokedown, Dorset. Another vase, $3\frac{1}{2}$ in. high, with somewhat similar perforated lugs, was found on Wykeham Moor, N. R. Yorks.,[4] and the same device has been noticed in Cornwall.[5]

One perforated base (*see* fig.) of a vase of good red pottery came to light, and may have been used for straining honey from the comb. The holes are comparatively small and close together, covering the whole of the base, and were made before the clay was fired.[6] One was found in the Roman pottery kiln recently opened at Farnham, Surrey, in hard grey Roman ware of the first century, and a very similar example is published from the Early Iron Age stronghold (Hradischt) of Stradonitz, Bohemia.[7] Yet another[8]



Perforated base of urn. ($\frac{1}{2}$)

[1] Déchelette, *Manuel d'Archéologie préhistorique*, I, 558. *Congrès préhistorique de France, Chambéry*, 1908, p. 737.

[2] S. Müller, *Nordische Altertumskunde*, I, 153 (top right figure).

[3] Hoare, *Ancient Wilts.*, I, 45.

[4] *Archæologia Cambrensis*, Ser. III, XIV, Pl. 5, fig. 3; *Archæological Journal*, XXII, 246.

[5] Borlase, *Nænia Cornubiæ*, 169.

[6] Several examples are known of Iron Age urns, with one, two or three large circular holes knocked in the base after the vessel was fired. *Cf.* specimen from Dorset in the British Museum.

[7] Pic, *Hradischt de Stradonitz*, Pl. LIV (trans. Déchelette).

[8] *Mém. Soc. Antiquaires du Nord*, 1905–6, 347, fig. 47.

occurred on an inhabited site in Denmark, where the conditions of life seem to have been very similar to those at Cobham in the pre-Roman period.

The Romano-British village on Woodcuts Common, Dorset, excavated by the late General Pitt-Rivers, presents several points of resemblance to the Cobham settlements. Wattle-and-daub evidently formed the superstructure of many of the huts on both sites, as fragments are found, sometimes burnt, in the pits. Several iron nails were also found at Cobham, measuring $1\frac{1}{2}$—3 in. in length, with square section and spreading head, much like Dorset specimens, which were regarded as proof that squared timbers were used in some of the better dwellings.[1] Small fragments of wood were found in the Surrey pits, but specimens from Woodcuts were sufficiently well preserved to be identified as oak, ash, willow, birch, hazel, and Spanish chestnut, the last being in a position indicating that it had been used for furniture. The pits on Woodcuts Common were of various sizes, and were irregularly grouped by means of ditches about 6 ft. deep and 7 ft. wide at the top. The trenches at Cobham were not of this character, but corresponded more closely to some recently found in the neighbourhood of pits on the cliff at Broadstairs.[2]

The reader must not be misled by the restored outlines of the vessels to which many of the fragments of pottery belonged. Though there is more than a presumption in each case that the parallel chosen is correct, some allowance must be made for individual variation; and it was thought more useful to suggest a restoration than to publish the fragments, which would convey little information. The decoration is scanty, and the important elements are the paste and colour that can be appreciated only by handling the specimens. It is hoped, therefore, that a typical selection will be placed, for purposes of future reference, in the Society's museum at Guildford.

[1] *Excavations in Cranborne Chase*, Vol. I, p. 15; plan of village, Pl. II. [2] *Proc. Soc. Antiq. Lond.*, XXII, pt. ii.

The discovery of sherds in considerable quantity not belonging together is not an unusual experience, and has been explained in a recent paper[1] by Dr. Sophus Müller, of Copenhagen Museum. With the thoroughness characteristic of Scandinavian archæology, he has superintended the excavation of a large number of early habitations on various sites, and frequently noticed the occurrence of pottery fragments belonging to almost as many different vessels in the same pit. Occasionally a few fragments of a single vessel were found in the same pit, sometimes in different pits and in different condition; for instance, one fragment had been burnt, while the adjoining fragment showed no signs of fire.

These details convinced the Danish excavators that the pottery had not been broken in the pits, but elsewhere, no doubt in the course of culinary operations, and perhaps left on the ground or thrown on to a rubbish pit, which was subsequently removed to fill up pits in the neighbourhood that had been excavated for another purpose—generally, it was supposed, for the extraction of clay. At Cobham, the gravel was reached in all the pits, and may have been taken out for improving pathways in the settlement, the ground being levelled later by shooting rubbish from the middens. In Denmark, as in Surrey, the absence or scarcity of metal in the pits was noticed, and the conclusion seems inevitable that in both areas the population of the period was, if not squalid, at least poor and ignorant of the arts and amenities of life. The single piece of Gaulish red-ware, if such it should be called—the glaze has nearly disappeared, and one can judge only by the paste—cannot be held to show any close contact with Roman civilisation, though some of the grey ware is of fine Roman quality; and, if made under Roman influence, might well have been found associated with the glazed ware that was imported from Gaul, certainly at the time of the Claudian conquest and possibly some years before.

[1] *Mémoires de la Société des Antiquaires du Nord*, 1905–6, 233. *See* especially pp. 250, 261, 325.

The absence of coins, and the rarity of metal generally, make the pottery all the more important, and the Cobham site has at least proved that rough ware, which alone might have been assigned to an earlier period, was contemporary with the pear-shaped urns of the "Aylesford" type, which seem to attest a Belgic occupation of south-eastern Britain. Derived from pottery of the 4th and 3rd centuries B.C. in the Marne district, this type was apparently introduced with the coinage by a Belgic tribe or association of tribes in the 2nd century B.C.; and it is no doubt to this Belgic invasion, otherwise known from history, that we can attribute the rite of cremation that was practised in south-east Britain, while inhumation was still in favour further west and north.

Another point illustrated by the Cobham finds is the overlap of British (late Keltic) and Roman patterns in pottery. The paste as well as the profile can be easily recognised in each case, and while at Cobham the two styles are somewhat confused, the kiln discovered at Farnham contained only the Roman grey ware, in many different forms but quite distinct from native models. It is on these grounds that the British settlement at Cobham may be considered to have come down to the middle of the first century of our era, the time of the invasion by Claudius and the creation of the province of Britain; and though earlier finds have occurred in the immediate neighbourhood, it is unlikely that the ground excavated by the Society contains relics dating much before the Christian era.

Postscript.—A selection from the pottery fragments found at Cobham is to be made for the Society's Museum in the Castle Arch, Guildford, and the exhibit will be placed in a special case generously provided for the purpose by Lieut.-Col. Gordon Clark and Mr. Fred. Higgs.

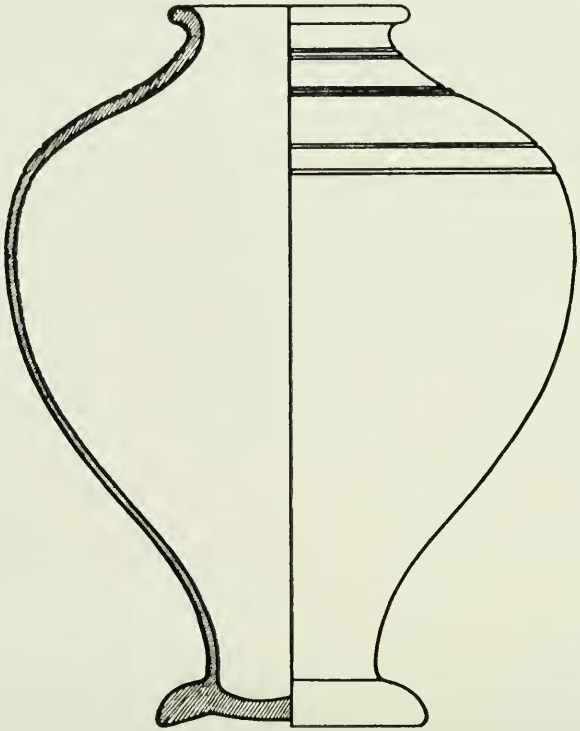


Fig. 23.

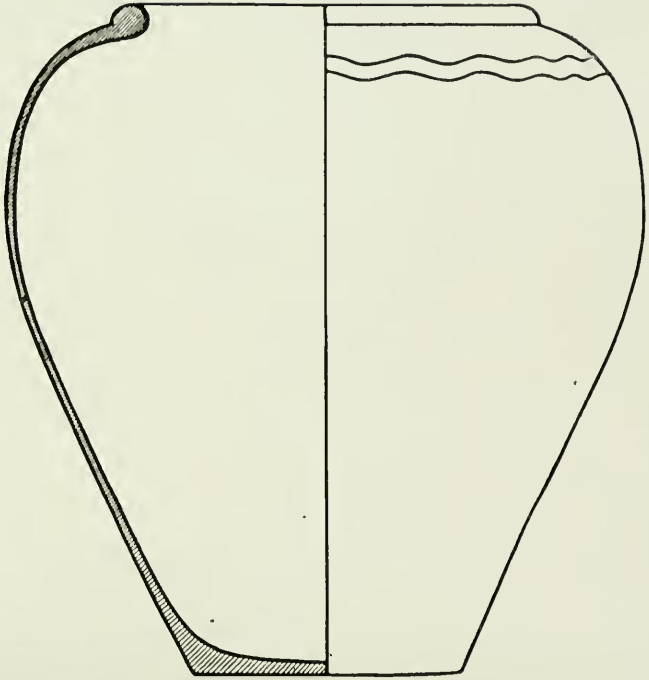


Fig. 24.

IDEAL RESTORATION OF POTTERY FRAGMENTS found at Cobham, Surrey. $(\frac{1}{5})$

face 153.

Fig. 23.—Portion of shoulder, evidently belonging to a pear-shaped urn of the "Aylesford" type: smooth brownish-black ware, wheel-made, lower part of body probably ornamented with grooved bands as shoulder. Restored from an almost perfect specimen found at Welwyn, Herts., which has the foot slightly hollowed but not of the true "pedestal" form.

Fig. 24.—Hard grey ware, with roll-moulding on lip, the ornament executed in faint impressed lines; whole of rim and great part of the body of a very large vessel, probably for storing wine, oil, or grain.

Restored from an olla used as cinerary urn, found in a barrow at Youngsbury, near Ware, Herts. (*Archæologia*, LII, 290.)

Fig. 25.—Pale brown ware, coarse hand-made, with white, reddish, and black gritty particles in the paste, and thumb-nail decoration on the shoulder. Compare figs. 2—5 in previous report.

Fig. 26.—Thick hand-made vase with incurved lip, pale brown paste baked hard, the outside partly blackened by fire.

Fig. 27.—Black fragment of special interest, as resembling ware found in the purely British lake-village at Glastonbury. Outside surface smoothed and decorated with incised lines and shallow circular saucer-shaped depressions. Restored from a Glastonbury urn in British Museum.

Fig. 28.—Light grey ware, neck and shoulder of urn, baked hard and distorted before firing: resembles the ware found in kiln at Farnham, Roman manufacture. After a Roman urn without locality (Brit. Mus.) that differs in the form of lip and is of darker grey colour.

Fig. 29.—Neck and shoulder of hard red-ware vase, wheel-made, with particles of mica; surface the same inside and out.

Fig. 30.—Similar ware to last, the body bright red, surfaces darker; wheel-made, baked hard.

Fig. 31.—Coarse red ware, fragment of bowl with hollow moulding below lip; comparatively thick body.

Fig. 32.—Black ware, probably native as fig. 23; surface slightly polished.

After a Roman urn in British Museum, locality unknown, greyer but otherwise identical, with burnished chevrons on shoulder.

Fig. 33.—Hard grey ware, typically Roman, resembling the ware from Farnham kiln.

After Roman urn in British Museum from Felixstowe, Suffolk.

Fig. 34.—Similar ware to fig. 32.

Common type, restored from Dorset specimen in British Museum, which has burnished lattice-pattern over the body.

Figs. 35, 36.—Shallow vessels of black ware, brownish body, probably used as covers of large urns. Fig. 36 probably belonged to fig. 23 with which it was found.

The ware resembles that from Aylesford.

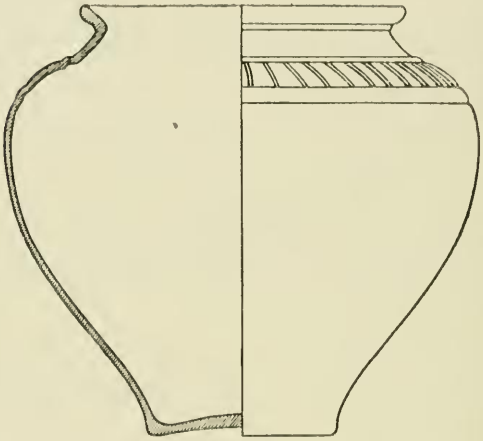


Fig. 16, with ornament added.

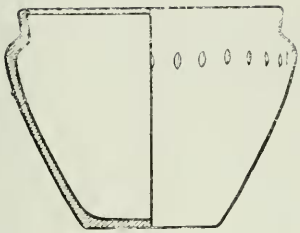


Fig. 25.

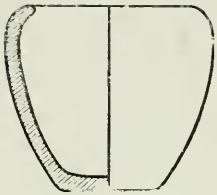


Fig. 26.

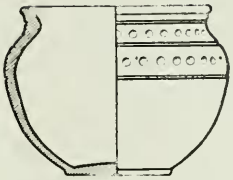


Fig. 27.

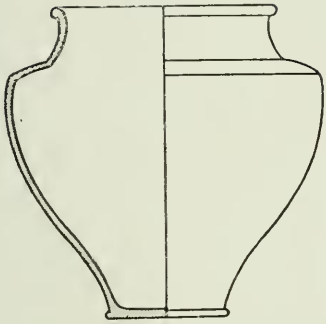


Fig. 28.

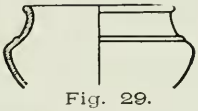


Fig. 29.

Fig. 30.

Fig. 31.

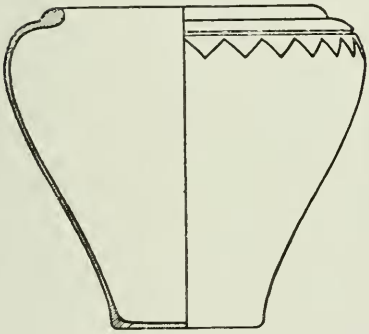


Fig. 32.

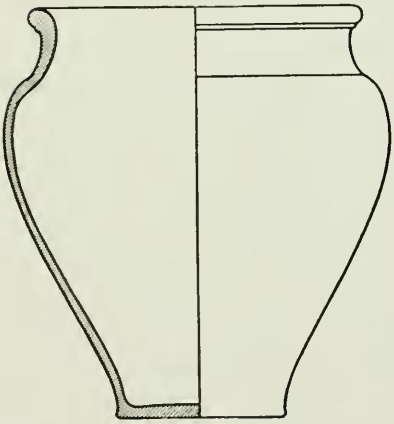


Fig. 33.

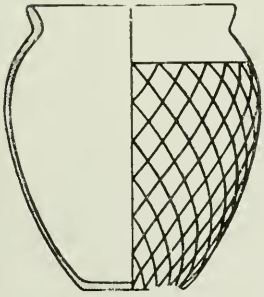


Fig. 34.

Fig. 35.

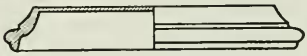


Fig. 36.

IDEAL RESTORATION OF POTTERY FRAGMENTS
found at Cobham, Surrey. $(\frac{1}{5})$