THE EXCAVATION OF THE COP ROUND BARROW, BLEDLOW

BY

J. F. HEAD, F.S.A.

Introduction

From the Thames to Oxfordshire's eastern borders, the Icknield Way pursues its course under the escarpment of the Chiltern Hills. The Saxons' 'be Cilternes efese'—by Chiltern eaves—would be hard to better as descriptive phrase for this part of the route. No inviting valley breaches the long line of chalk hills, and their recurring cappings of clay, covered no doubt in early times with a dense scrub, must have presented an unattractive spectacle to intending settlers equipped with but the most primitive implements of agriculture. Nor, in prehistoric times, can the low lying lands on the other side of the Way have tempted the immigrant from his path. To-day, well cleared, cultivated and drained, these lands are still at times waterlogged and in winter often impracticable except by established paths; in earlier times, when a damper climate prevailed, the vegetation and streams must have conspired often to render them little better than a morass. But at Bledlow, a few hundred yards over the Buckinghamshire border, the Way emerges upon a more attractive scene; attractive, that is to say, from a point of view of a prehistoric immigrant in search of land where he may settle. The hills recede abruptly to the South. The soil becomes a light and chalky marl. The Way continues, to form the base, some three and a half miles in length, of a triangle of pleasant open valley with its apex on Bradenham, and its eastern side sheltered by the hills. These, turning abruptly at Whiteleaf Cross, resume their north-easterly march to the Hertfordshire borders. This valley, therefore, although like most of the

Chilterns at present a blank on the prehistoric distribution maps, has long appeared to the writer as essentially worthy of archaeological attention. As a preliminary, it was felt that a round barrow, flanking the western entrance to the valley, and situated directly above the Icknield Way, should be examined.

The mound itself presented a melancholy spectacle. It was known locally as ' the Basin ' for, in addition to obvious disturbances around its flanks, the centre of the barrow had been completely removed down to the natural chalk rock. Such, in fact, was the destruction, that some hesitation was felt as to the utility of investigation. Happily, excavation proved that sufficient evidence remained to confirm a remarkable continuity of occupation from Early Bronze Age to Saxon times, and to enable certain conclusions to be formed in connection with the prehistoric occupation of this part of Buckinghamshire. Our grateful acknowledgments are due to those friends who by their assistance have contributed to these results.

Col. O. P. Serocold co-operated throughout the campaign, and joined from day to day in the actual work of excavation. His advice and suggestions were invaluable; and any merit the work may be thought to possess is largely the result of his collaboration. Col. Serocold also generously shared the whole of the expenses of the undertaking, including the cost of the illustrations, plans, photographs and the restoration of the pottery.

To the Authorities of Eton College, the owners of the land, and to H.M. Office of Works, we are indebted for permission to excavate the site. Our thanks are due to Mr. C. O. Skilbeck for his assistance and continued interest throughout the excavation; to Mr. O. G. S. Crawford, who made a special visit to the site; to Dr. R. E. M. Wheeler for suggestions in connection with the pits; to Dr. Grahame Clark for his remarks upon certain of the flints; and to Mrs. Head for much practical assistance in the field and with the pottery. Our thanks are also due to those experts

whose reports we are privileged to quote, namely, Professor F. G. Parsons, Mr. A. S. Kennard, Mr. F. C. Fraser, Mr. C. J. Maby and Mr. W. F. Grimes. Mr. Fraser paid a special visit to the site, and Professor Parsons personally assisted with the excavation of the Saxon inhumations. Finally, it would be difficult to express adequately our indebtedness to Mr. W. F. Grimes, who not only found time after his manifold duties at the National Museum of Wales to consider and report upon the pottery and to make the beautiful and highly informative drawings of the ' Finds ,' but also to support and encourage us with many helpful suggestions and good advice.

The Site

(Latitude 51° 42′ 10″ N. Longitude 0° 52′ 50″ W. 710 feet. O.D.

Ancient Monument, Bucks No. 3/18291).

The barrow had been erected upon a natural knoll at the western end of a small hill formed from the lower part of the Upper Chalk, known locally as the Cop. On the north and north west sides of the hill the ground falls sharply to the Upper Icknield Way 200 feet below, whence in turn there is a gentle decline to the village of Bledlow, a quarter of a mile away in a north easterly direction. Attached to the Cop and rising 100 feet directly behind it, is Wain Hill; its clay capped summit now covered with beechwoods. Such barrow sites as are known along the Chiltern escarpment appear to have been chosen for the prominence of their position; and although an extensive view over the Vale of Aylesbury is discovered from the Cop, neglect of the even more prominent skyline of Wain Hill behind may perhaps be regarded as confirmatory evidence of the presence, in prehistoric times, of close wooding upon these clay capped heights. The small area of downland adjoining the barrow bore no signs of disturbance by cultivation.

The Mound before Excavation

A fine compact downland turf covered the whole of the mound which displayed manifest signs of past intrusions. The most destructive incursion was clearly an occasion when the entire central portion of the barrow had been systematically removed for a radius of 14 feet down to the chalk rock; the latter had then remained exposed until such time as a deposit of leaf mould and other silting had accumulated to the depth of one foot, to be covered in turn by a spread of friendly turf. Much of the original material had been thrown out unevenly over the flanks of the mound, thus rendering purposeless any contoured survey of the site. It was found later that this major disturbance might well be assigned to the middle of the 17th century, for fragments of a brown glazed pitcher and several clay pipe stems and bowls, all attributable to that period, were found scattered throughout the area and over the chalk floor.

The Construction of the Mound

The barrow, averaging 60 feet in diameter, when first erected had probably attained a height of 7 feet, and the comparative regularity of its circumference indicated a careful layout of the site, with perhaps the use of a stake and line. In type, the mound was a 'bowl-barrow'; that is to say, it resembled an inverted shallow bowl, with no retaining berm to intercept the downward spread of soil. Unexpectedly, no indication was seen of the usual encircling ditch, dug by way of ritual or to provide material for the mound; and it has been suggested,[1] (but not proved), that the absence of such a ditch is indicative of the earliest type of round barrow. In the example under review, it was proved by excavation that, except for a small 'squatting' site quarried on the north-east outskirts of the mound and to be referred to later under section Q, there had been no disturbance at any time in the surrounding chalk rock, below the level of the natural top soil. The

1 L. V. Grinsell, *The Ancient Burial-mounds of England*, p. 19.

material, then, in the upper main portion of the mound consisted of tips of chalk rubble and mould obtained no doubt by surface scrapings from the immediate vicinity, and quantities of clay surface soil brought in, as the patina of the attendant flints confirmed, from the adjacent 'clay-with-flints' area of Wain Hill some 20 yards away.

On the outskirts of the mound, 16½ feet due west of the centre, we were fortunate enough to find a small section, which, although ravaged by the roots of nearby beech trees, had escaped the general disturbance elsewhere apparent. From this area it was possible to infer to some degree the original construction of the mound. As will be seen from the plan, Section A-A, the old turf line, upon which the tumulus had been erected, was visible in an irregular dark line, averaging 2 inches in depth, and its disappearance 4 feet from the western margin of the mound, may have been due to either the sharp fall which occurs here in the natural ground level, or to the removal of the turf for material for the mound. To the east it had continued no doubt towards the centre, and a slight thickening of the line may perhaps be a preliminary to a retaining bank of turves, or some other turf construction around the centre. This possibility was strengthened by a substantially greater proportion of dark masses among the disturbed material toward the centre at this level; but not apparent elsewhere in the mound.

A more definite constructional feature was a layer of compressed clay above the old turf line, and resting directly upon it. It increased rapidly in height in the undisturbed section as it approached the centre (see plan), and had evidently been brought from the adjoining Wain Hill, and selected from some depth as no admixture of surface soil was present among it. Throughout all the disturbed material fringing upon the central area this clay was found in irregular patches at floor level; and there can be little doubt that it had originally extended in unbroken formation over the greater part of the mound above the old turf

line, forming a nucleus over which the remainder of the barrow had been erected. It has been remarked that this clay core increased rapidly in height as it approached the primary burial in the centre of the mound, but what form it had taken there originally it is now, of course, impossible to say. It is of interest however to recall that a similar constructional feature was observed by Mortimer in some of the Yorkshire Wold barrows,[2] and he ascribed the use of this almost impervious material, which he noted had been frequently brought from a distance, to a desire to protect the interment from water, or for some other definite purpose.

Scattered promiscuously throughout the mound were large numbers of pottery sherds, animal bones, 240 struck flakes of flint, 8 flakes of sandstone and 19 fragments of iron pyrites. The animal bones, as will be seen from Mr. Fraser's report, were generally broken, probably for the marrow; although two complete jaws of a very small type of ox were recovered from disturbed material in the S.E. quadrant.

Undisturbed, and lying together on the old turf surface in the S.W. quadrant, were some burnt bones of a very young pig.

The majority of the animal bones relate to the ox and other domesticated animals, although Mr. Fraser, remarking on the teeth from pigs, suggests the likelihood of some of them having been derived from wild animals. The presence of the red deer and roe deer was also observed.

The Primary Interment

As soon as the accumulation of silting in the central area had been removed, a rectangular pit filled with clay mould and chalky rubble was seen outlined in the natural chalk rock floor. It had been quarried with almost vertical sides to a uniform depth of 2 feet 3 inches in the chalk; its long axis lay N.30° E.; and

2 J. E. Mortimer, *Forty Years' Research in British & Saxon Burial Mounds of East Yorkshire*, p. xl, Introduction.

PLATE 1 Primary Grave with partly superimposed Saxon Burial.

its dimensions at the bottom were 5 feet 2 inches by 2 feet 8 ins. with slightly rounded corners. On the surface its edges had been widened and broken by later digging. The rough and irregular sides of the walls indicated the use of a pick, probably of deer-horn; certainly no metal tool had been employed. Resting on the floor of the grave in the angle formed by the south-east and south-west walls, 2ins. from the former and 11ins. from the latter, was a fragment of upper jaw, which as will be seen from Dr. Parson's report, he identifies as belonging probably to a young woman. But whether this was *in situ*, or whether it was derived from a super-imposed Saxon burial (to be referred to later) it was impossible to say. The whole of the contents of the pit appeared to have been removed at the time of the major disturbance described above, and the pit afterwards refilled with material from the mound since fragments of clay pipe stems were found throughout the filling, together with such diverse objects as fragments of Romano-British pottery (one part of a lid), two small sherds of late Bronze Age type, two small pieces of 'native' Bronze Age pottery, and part of the lower jaw of an ox. No other human bones were recovered, neither with the exception of the above mentioned sherds was there any pottery or other grave furniture present which might be associated with the original burial. No indication of charcoal was seen either on the floor, or in the walls; neither, for that matter, among the derived filling.

There can be little doubt that this grave had been constructed to contain an inhumation, and it was ascertained by experiment that it would comfortably accommodate an individual of average height resting on his side with his legs in the well-known contracted position.

We may, therefore, with some probability, ascribe the burial and the mound erected over it to Early Bronze Age times, before the practice of cremation and the deposit of ashes in urns came into vogue. Mr. Grimes suggests that it is just possible that the fragments of

'native' Bronze Age pottery referred to above may have been part of a 'food vessel' associated with the burial. But the sherds themselves are entirely without distinctive features, and because of the disturbed nature of the deposit he would not place too great a stress on their presence.

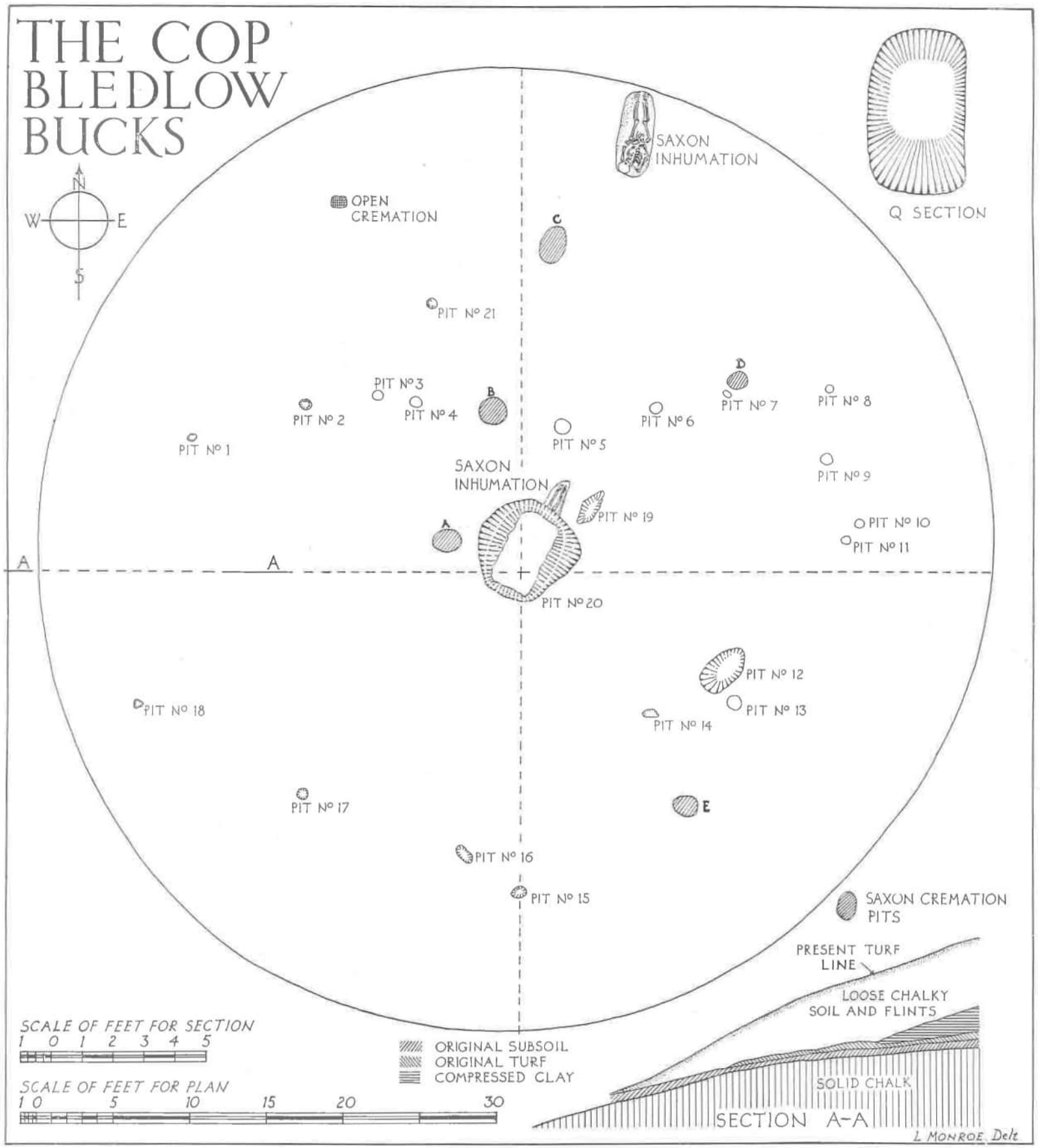
Should a date be demanded we would suggest 1800 B.C.; tentatively, however, and with hesitation; for the dating of prehistory is uncertain and liable to revision in the light of future knowledge.

THE SECONDARY BURIALS (see General Plan).

In the N.W. quadrant of the mound, 27 feet from the central datum, and lying on the chalk floor in a hollow scooped in the old turf line, was a quantity of cremated bones too fragmentary to permit of definite identification. No urn or other protection from the surrounding soil was present, but among the bones were six struck flint flakes and the end of a bronze hook, or clasp; all shewing evidence of scorching. The hook may have originally secured the cloth or other material in which the bones were carried from the place of incineration. It consists of a narrow strip of metal bent at one end to form an angular hook (total length 1.1. inches), which is evidently not accidental. But it cannot be dated.

Pit No. 12.

This pit, roughly 'picked' in the chalk rock formed a shallow depression averaging 8″ in depth, and contained a number of small sherds, of which the most distinctive was a fragment with finger tip ornament of the late Bronze Age type, concentrated around the centre. The filling consisted of fine chalky soil with a considerable amount of very small osteoid ashes too indefinite for identification. The tooth of an ox was among the material; and in the north east angle of the pit a quarter of an inch below the surface, was a broken bronze ring 1.55 inches in diameter, with slightly flattened inner face. The material around the pit had all been disturbed, but several fragmentary pieces


THE COP
BLEDLOW
BUCKS
N
W
E
S
SAXON INHUMATION
Q SECTION
OPEN CREMATION
C
PIT Nº 21
PIT Nº 3
PIT Nº 2
PIT Nº 4
B
D
PIT Nº 7
PIT Nº 8
PIT Nº 6
PIT Nº 1
PIT Nº 5
SAXON INHUMATION
PIT Nº 9
A
PIT Nº 19
PIT Nº 10
PIT Nº 11
A
A
PIT Nº 20
PIT Nº 12
PIT Nº 18
PIT Nº 13
PIT Nº 14
PIT Nº 17
E
PIT Nº 16
PIT Nº 15
SAXON CREMATION PITS
PRESENT TURF LINE
LOOSE CHALKY SOIL AND FLINTS
SOLID CHALK
SECTION A-A
SCALE OF FEET FOR SECTION
1 0 1 2 3 4 5
SCALE OF FEET FOR PLAN
1 0 5 10 15 20 30
ORIGINAL SUBSOIL
ORIGINAL TURF
COMPRESSED CLAY
L. MONROE. Delt

of bronze and a pair of bronze tweezers (referred to under Finds) were recovered 2 feet away at the same level. It seems probable that the pit was associated with a secondary cremation burial for which the most likely date, on the evidence of the pottery, would be late Bronze Age, but every allowance has to be made for the disturbed character of the site.

Saxon Inhumations.

1. In a shallow trough, projecting at surface level from the north-east wall of the primary burial grave and continuing the line of its long axis (see plan), were the lower leg bones of a young woman of not more than 18 years of age. The remainder of the skeleton must have originally extended over, and rested immediately upon the filling of the primary grave, following the same orientation; it had no doubt been carried away with the central portion of the mound at the time of the major disturbance previously mentioned. The cutting in the chalk to accommodate the leg bones narrowed toward the feet and averaged only 6 ins. in depth, and had been excavated in width only to the extent necessary to receive the interment.

No associated objects were present, but the position of the bones showed that the skeleton had lain upon its back in the extended position, and we think this fact, together with the typically Saxon nature of the grave, permits the burial to be assigned without difficulty to the Saxon period.

2. In the N.E. quadrant, 27 feet from the central datum, was a grave quarried in the chalk rock, containing the undisturbed skeleton of a man oriented N. 10° E., or almost due North and South; the head lying towards the south. The grave averaged but one foot in depth and measured 5 feet 8 ins. by 2 feet, and was filled with the clean chalk rubble derived originally from its excavation. A full description of the skeleton and its position in the grave will be found in Dr. Parson's report, and it will be sufficient here to note that it lay upon its back in an extended position with the head raised and bent forward on the chest to the

N.W. (plate No. 2), with the right hip bent against the east side of the grave and feet pressed against its northern end. The raising of the head was not due to a chalk pillow, but was, together with the position of the trunk and feet, attributable to the grave having been dug insufficiently in length. The teeth were all present and in excellent condition; but both arms had been fractured during life and reset.

An iron spearhead (plate 12, No. 2) of the usual open socketed type without a midrib lay 3 ins. to the west of the skull and 4 ins. below the surface of the grave; it was inclined upwards, but owing to the total decay of the wooden shaft the spearhead had settled in the chalk, and its exact original position was doubtful. The butt had had no ferrule of metal and we were therefore unable to determine the length of the shaft. Beneath the skeleton, behind the lumbar vertebrae and extending to the left os innominatum, was an iron knife, 5.7 ins. in length, the handle decayed, but a rivet remaining in place (plate 12, No. 1). Immediately beneath the knife was a pair of bronze tweezers, 2.25 inches in length, but broken apart at the spring. While the ends of the tweezers inclined downwards, the point of the knife lay pointing upwards towards the right shoulder blade, and was enveloped by traces of a dark substance which proved to be leather, and probably the remains of a scabbard. No indication was found of a belt or its fastenings; nor brooch, pottery, or other datable objects.

Among the chalk filling were three struck flint flakes, and since no admixture of surface or other soil was present, they must be presumed to be contemporary with the digging of the grave. No indication was found of a bier or other wooden construction; and in this connection Dr. Parsons states that the position of the shoulders points to the body having been lowered into the grave by someone whose hands were under the armpits.

The spearhead and knife had, of course, a long life in Saxon times, but the types here noticed (described under Finds), and taken perhaps in conjunction with

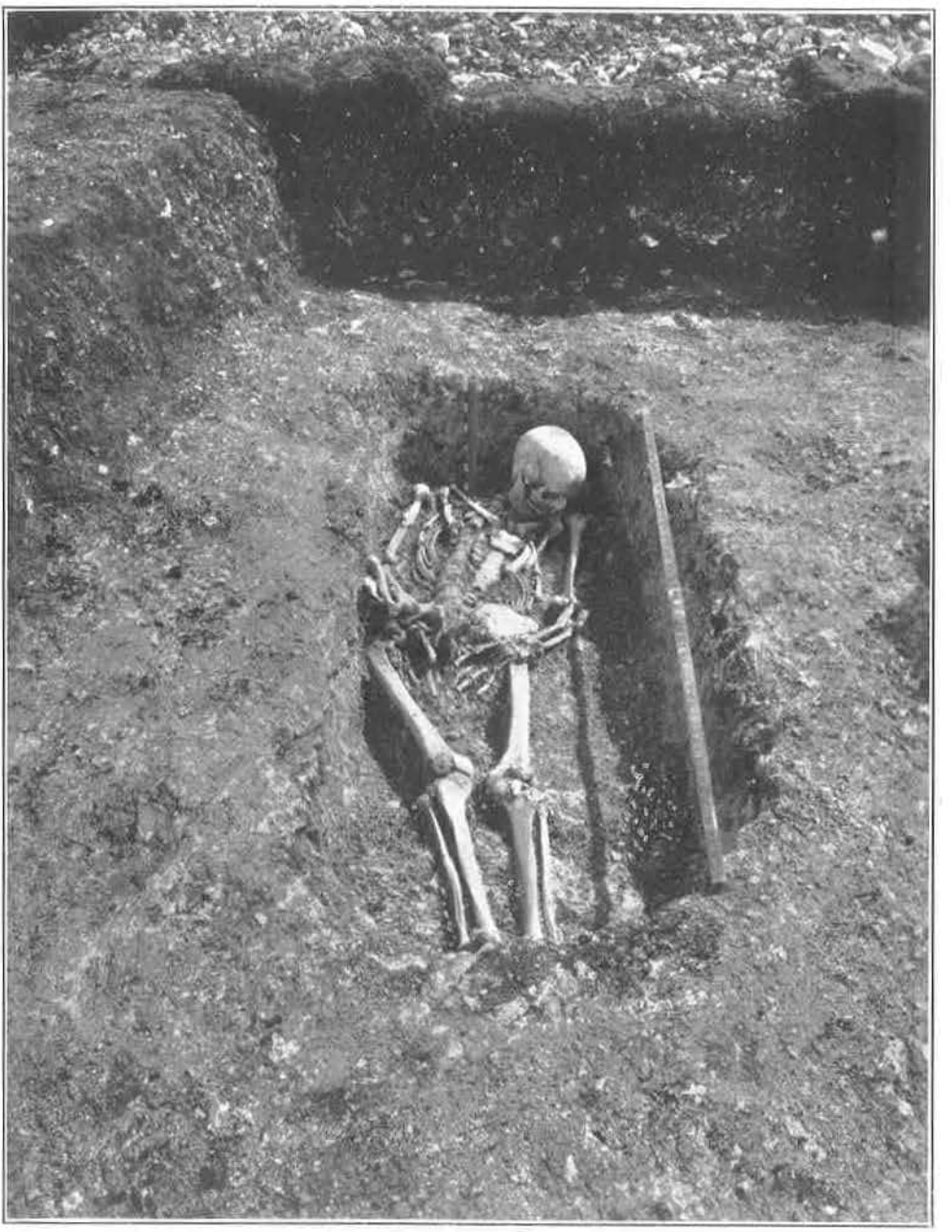


PLATE 2 Saxon Inhumation No. 2

an inhumation situated on the outskirts of the mound, (the majority of the Saxon cremations being confined, as will be seen, to the more central area) are more likely to belong to the 5th or 6th century A.D., than to any other time. This inhumation had probably disturbed an earlier cremation burial of the Saxon period, remains of which, in the form of sherds of urn and cremated bones, were found scattered over a limited area near the edge of the grave.

Saxon Cremations.

Five pits dug to contain Saxon cremation urns will be observed on the plan, marked A to E and hatched with diagonal lines. These pits varied in depth from 1 foot 3 inches to 2 feet, and all had smooth vertical sides cut in the chalk with a metal tool. Pits A and C contained urns *in situ*, but the remaining pits had been despoiled. Fragments of an urn, obviously derived from Pit B, were found on the ground thrown out 2 feet in front of the pit; among the sherds were fragments of burnt bone and a broken comb. The urn and comb have both been restored under Mr. Grimes' care, and the comb is seen illustrated in plate 11. Pit D contained nothing but a comb (plate 11, No. 3), and there being no fragments of bone or sherds in the filling of the pit, it would appear that the urn had been removed, and the comb extracted and thrown back into the pit from whence it was recovered, lying just below the surface. When found, all the combs—and particularly their teeth—were in an exceedingly frail state, and could be moved only with the utmost care; and the example from this pit, although found in a fragmentary condition from decay, appeared, from the position of the fragments, to have been whole when returned to the pit, indicating that this disturbance took place at a time when the comb was in a sufficiently firm condition to permit of such handling without injury.

Pit E contained nothing but its filling of soil. But the size of the pit, and its construction and appearance were so similar to the other Saxon pits observed, and

so unlike any other pits beneath the mound, that we have no hesitation in assigning its origin to the Saxon period.

The urn in Pit A had been placed closely against the outer (western) wall; its base had decayed causing it to fall over towards the centre of the mound. In this position it had been much crushed by the superincumbent weight of material, while part of its rim had been broken off and removed, presumably at the time of the major disturbance in this area. The urn contained the burnt bones of a male person, not more than 40 years of age, but despite a microscopic examination, no associated objects were found.

In Pit C, the urn had also been placed against the outer (and in this case, northern) wall of the pit in an upright position, and contained a comb (plate 11, No. 2), and burnt bones too fragmentary for identification. A layer of chalky soil $\frac{1}{2}$ an inch in depth separated the base of the urn from the chalk floor of the pit.

The small oval pit, No. 7, six inches deep, situated 5 inches away from Pit D, may conceivably have been a hole originally containing a post to mark the site of the burial, although it should be mentioned that no carbonised wood was seen among the filling.

As described under Saxon Inhumation No. 2, there was evidence of a further Saxon cremation urn burial in the vicinity of that grave.

Since the only material for dating these burials is the pottery and combs, it follows that they cannot be dated very closely. The urns are of the plain globular variety which enjoyed a long life without significant alteration. Of the combs, two in particular are of a type which first appeared in the Roman period and lasted unchanged into medieval times. The third, though more distinctive, and attractively ornamented, also defies any attempt at greater definition. No great value for dating purposes can now be attached to the cremation-rite as such, and the most that can be said is that the burials which they accompanied belonged to the pagan period, of the 5th—7th century A.D.

THE OTHER PITS BENEATH THE MOUND

Pit No. 19.

This elliptical pit with its long axis N.E. and S.W. had been 'picked' out of the chalk to a depth of a foot, with sloping and irregular walls; and was filled with an undisturbed fine dark earth. At the depth of 8½ inches, evenly distributed over the centre of the pit, were three rib-bones, a portion of the orbital region and a few other bones (see Mr. Fraser's report) of a very small type of ox standing less than 4 feet high at the shoulder. In the centre of these animal bones, but laid 2 inches above them, was a piece of Red Deer antler, neatly carved and pierced in the centre and at both ends (figure 8, No. 2) to form the cheek piece of a bridle. No other objects were present in the pit.

This type of cheek piece (described under Finds) makes its first appearance in this country in the late Bronze Age deposits at Heathery Burn Cave, where it is associated with the nave collars of chariot wheels, and other objects, all to be assigned to the intrusive culture which first began to appear in Britain from about 1000 B.C. onwards.

Any suggestion as to the purpose of this burial must, in the absence of other evidence, be regarded as conjectural; but, recalling somewhat analogous interments recorded elsewhere, we shrewdly suspect that both this pit and its contents may well owe their presence to some ritual, or other ceremonial observance.

Pits Nos. 1, 2, 14 to 18 inclusive, and 21.

These pits consisted of shallow and dish-shaped hollows 'picked' in the chalk rock with irregular edges and walls, and averaged 6 inches to 1 foot in diameter, and 3″ to 8″ in depth. There was nothing in their appearance to suggest that they had served as post-holes, neither with the exception of No. 15, which yielded a few fragments of charcoal, was there any carbonised wood present in the chalky mould which constituted their filling. Pit No. 2 was barren; the others each yielded a few small fragments of animal

bones, often burnt, together with one or more small struck flint flakes, also frequently showing evidence of burning.

No. 16, in addition, yielded a single sherd of late Bronze Age type. No metal tool appeared to have been employed in the excavation of the pits, and in no case was the old turf line apparent above them. Beyond remarking that these pits appear to relate to Late Bronze Age times, we are unable to offer any suggestion as to their use or purpose.

Pits Nos. 3 to 11 inclusive, and No. 13.

These pits were of quite different type to those previously noted, and had been symmetrically cut in the chalk rock with smooth and vertical sides to an average depth of 10 inches. They were all (with the exception of No. 7 referred to under Saxon cremations, Pit D), approximately circular in shape, with the same diameter at the base as at the surface, and appeared to have been excavated with the aid of a metal tool. The fillings consisted of fine chalky soil shewing, with the exception of No. 3, no admixture of charcoal; and incorporated among the material were fragments of bone, usually burnt, which when identifiable, proved to have been derived from an ox or pig. No. 10, however, yielded also part of the scapula of a deer. No 6 had 3 fragments of ox pelvis, lying 1 inch below the surface, extending from one side of the pit to the other, and the undisturbed position of these bones precludes, we assume, the interpretation of the pit as a posthole. No. 9 contained a single large sherd *in situ*, of late Bronze Age date; unbroken and resting on edge against the side of the pit. No. 10 yielded 7 fragments of late Bronze Age sherds concentrated around the centre at a depth of 1 inch, in addition to the fragment of deer bone previously noted; there was also present, among the material, part of a dorsal vertebra of an ox and a number of burnt bone fragments too small for identification.

In no instance did the original turf line extend unbroken over these small pits, and beyond noting that

they occur in disturbed areas, and in two instances appear to be of Late Bronze Age origin, we are again unable to offer any suggestion as to their use or purpose.

Q Section (see General Plan).

To the north-east of the mound and directly outside it was a shallow depression in the turf, 11 feet by 6½ feet, which upon excavation proved to be due to the artificial deepening of a natural hollow in the chalk to a depth of 1 foot 9 inches below the present turf level. This appeared to have been effected at the time of the erection of the mound, for the hollow had been rapidly filled to the depth of 1 foot with primary silting, comprising loosely packed large and coarse chalk rubble, probably derived, in the main, from the slopes of the mound above it. We may, perhaps, assume the bulk of this primary silting took place before the turf had had time to cover the mound. When 6 ins. of this coarse material had accumulated, the hollow appears to have been used as a small squatting site, as charcoal, fragments of animal bone, 5 scrapers with bluish white patination and a sherd of a Wessex B beaker were found at this level. The site was evidently again in use during the late Bronze Age period, as in the final and uppermost silting consisting of fine dark mould, were numerous coarse gritted late Bronze Age sherds, animal bones and scrapers.

ADDENDUM To page 324

The backing of those from Pits A and C consisted of chopped straw, although a fine sandy grit was present in the few sherds near Pit D (containing the decorated convex comb) which may well have been derived originally from that pit.

THE FINDS

By W. F. GRIMES

Palaeolithic

A surprising discovery was a flint ovate (plate 4) bearing every resemblance to a hand axe of St. Acheul type. It has a white patination, with a suggestion of the glaze often seen on palaeolithic implements from the brickearth. Its edges and flake-ridges are comparatively fresh and unabraded. The ovate lay 17 feet from the central datum in the S.E. quadrant of the mound in disturbed material 5 ins. above the solid chalk floor. Mr. Head states that around and above it were quantities of the compressed clay brought in from the adjoining clay with flints area noticed under "the construction of the mound"; and although it appeared likely that the implement had been brought in with this clay, it was not possible, owing to the disturbances that had taken place in the surrounding material and the absence of any indication at this point of the old turf level, to be sure of this. If a true St. Acheul ovate, derived from the 'clay with flints' (sometimes referred to as brickearth) on Wain Hill at 720 feet O.D., its occurrence is remarkable, and of importance. Alternately, we can only regard it as a

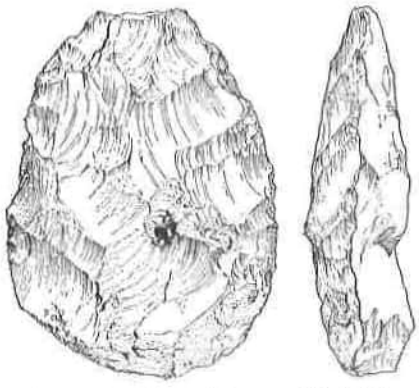


Plate 4. Acheulcan Ovate (D 152). ($\frac{1}{2}$).

pseudo-palaeolith, of neolithic date, like those which are found from time to time in the flint mines of East Anglia and Sussex.[1]

Neolithic

The blade of a polished axe of 'greenstone' illustrated in plate 5 (in which the broken line is intended to show the relationship of the fragments to the complete implement, and not to indicate necessarily its original form) is conventionally placed in the neolithic period. It is quite typical, with a flattened oval section,

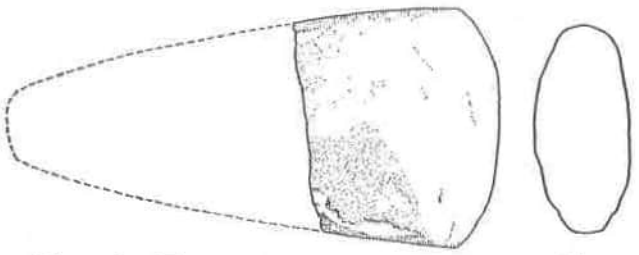


Plate 5. Fragmentary greenstone axe. (½).

regarded typologically as an advanced feature.[2] But the polished axe had a high survival value, which often led to its remaining in use long after the end of the neolithic period so-called.

Bronze Age.

Included in the small fragments of pottery from the previously disturbed central burial pit, there are two pieces of normal Bronze Age ware (16B, 17B), quite featureless except that one on the inside exhibits the commencement of the inturning of the base. If these were associated with the primary burial, which Mr. Head reasonably suggests was by inhumation, they would presumably be part of a food

1 Curwen, *Archaeology of Sussex*, fig. 31.

2 The petrological analysis of a section of the material (foreign to this locality) of the axe is not available in time for publication, but will be communicated later. It is hoped that it will be possible to determine the original provenance of the implement, having regard to the Icknield Way trade-route passing below the barrow. J.H.

vessel. Since, however, the pit was so completely disturbed, and contained even Romano-British and medieval pottery amongst its material, these small fragments are of quite uncertain value. At the same time it is perhaps something more than a coincidence that the one distinctive flint in the large series found is a plano-convex knife. Dr. J. G. D. Clark has shown that this type is especially characteristic of the food-vessel groups.[3]

More definite is the area, Q section, on the north-east side. The lowest level here produced five sherds representing in all probably three pots (plate 7). The first, which is plain, is part of a small bowl or cup, 4½ ins. across and rather more than 1½ ins. high. The second, also plain is a fragment of normal beaker rim. The third, composed of three fragments, is part of the wall of a beaker, decorated with bands of lattice pattern defined by horizontal lines in the characteristic notched technique. The decoration and curvature of the wall are clear indications that the original beaker must have belonged to the Wessex B group. Its associations are with the south, rather than with East Anglia, where such beakers do not occur. With the pottery were several convex scrapers (Q 148-151), which are illustrated in plate 6.

The same layer also yielded a small fragment of green-patinated bronze (Q 122). Mr. Head suggests that this may have worked down, and I am inclined to agree, because while it is not definitely identifiable it resembles more than anything part of a small bronze tweezers, which would probably be of Romano-British or Saxon date.

The abundant Late Bronze Age material consists mostly of pottery, which may be considered as a whole before relating it to the features of the site itself.

The fragments are usually small, and seldom allow of even approximate restoration. Two main classes of ware can, however, be recognised. The first is thick and heavy, very coarse, and containing large quantities

3 *Antiquaries' Journal*, XII, 1932, 158ff.

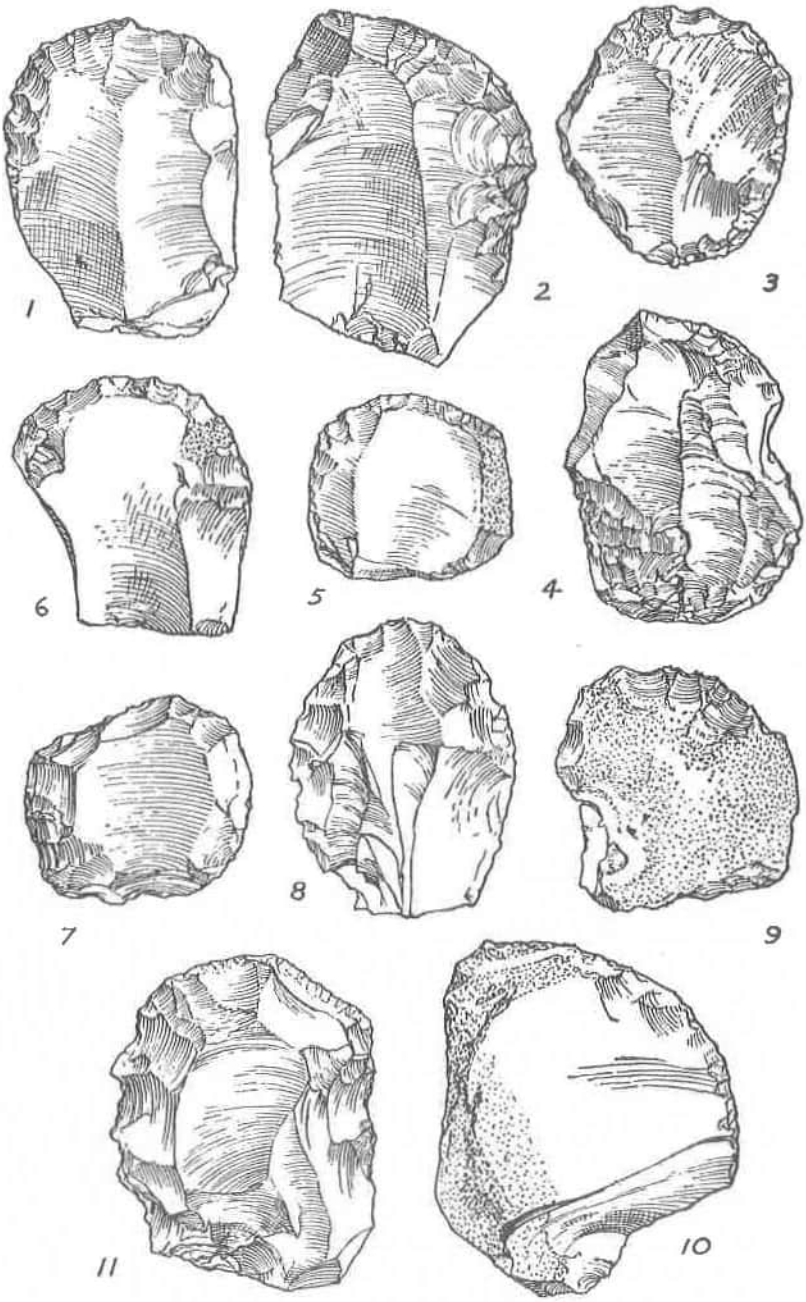


Plate 6. Worked flints. ($\frac{1}{1}$).

1-5 (Q 148-152) Early Bronze Age (beaker deposit).
6-11 (Q 132-3, 136, 140-1, 144), Late Bronze Age.

of grit, mostly calcite, in large grains. The external colour varies from red-brown to grey, and while the surface sometimes shows signs of having been more or less carefully finished (an occasional feature being broad shallow grooves evidently smoothed with the finger-tips) usually it is very rough owing to the presence of so much coarse backing.

It is not possible to reconstruct a single vessel belonging to this first class of pottery. In most cases obviously the sherds were derived from fairly large pots. Several bases give diameters ranging from 4 to 6½ ins., and they sometimes have a more or less pronounced foot, with the wall curving outwards over it, while sometimes the wall appears to have been more or less vertical, and forms a rounded angle with the base. Of the remainder of the body little can be said, but some pots evidently had more or less angular shoulders, which with the rims were often decorated with finger printing, while others had straight walls with a row of finger-printing below the rim. Two exceptional pieces—exceptional, that is, on this site—have applied strips, and one of these, which is very pronounced, is ornamented with finger-printing.

The second class of ware is less coarse than the first. It is thinner and harder, and while it contains a large quantity of backing, the grit is never as coarse as in the other group. It tends also to be darker in colour, being usually black or dark grey. Here, too, owing to the small size of the fragments the original complete forms are uncertain; the distinctive pieces suggest wide-bellied jars narrowing to a comparatively small mouth, with vertical or slightly everted rims.

Both groups are evidently contemporary; fragments representing each were found associated with bones and flints (plate 6, Nos. 6-11) in a hearth which on the north-east margin overlay—with a barren interval—the beaker level already described. Their actual date, however, calls for some discussion, for the finger-printing which is the outstanding feature of the pottery as a whole, may belong either to the Late

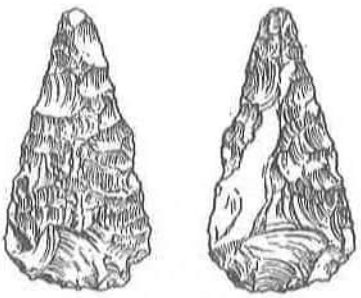


Plate 6A. Plano-convex knife. (⅔).

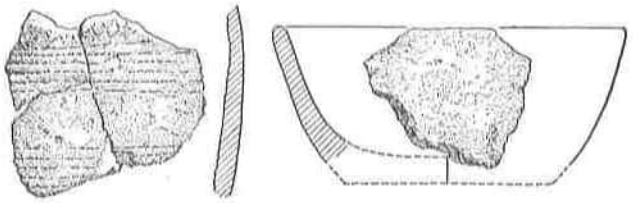


Plate 7. Sherds from beaker occupation layer. (½).
Left: B beaker (Q 147).
Right: bowl (Q 127).

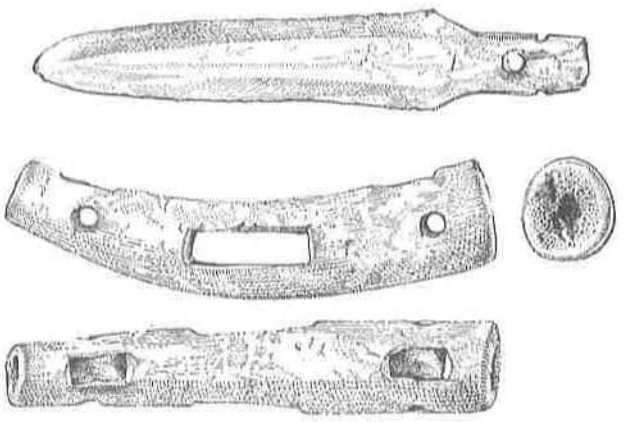


Plate 8. Bronze dagger and antler cheek-piece. (½).

Bronze Age, or to the first (All Cannings Cross) phase of the Iron Age.

Several considerations suggest that a Late Bronze Age date is the more likely. In the first place, there is an almost complete absence of the finer haematite-coated and other wares, which are characteristic of the All Cannings Cross culture—an absence which must be significant, in view of the quantity of the pottery found.[4] Secondly, the ware does not in itself closely resemble the coarser finger-printed class at All Cannings similar sites, and its excessively coarse character in itself favours a Late Bronze Age origin.

Finally, there is the evidence of other finds, in particular a biconical pottery spindle-whorl and bead (plate 13, Nos. 1-2), a bronze knife dagger, and a bone cheek piece (plate 8, Nos. 1-2). Of these the least reliable are the first two, which seem to occur in Late Bronze Age and All Cannings Cross deposits alike. The dagger, on the other hand, is a well-recognised Late Bronze Age form, and the only evidence of date available in this country places cheek pieces of the Bledlow type in the same period. The obvious and well-known parallels to both are the knife-dagger and cheek-piece associated with the Late Bronze Age deposits in the Heathery Burn Cave, Durham.[5]

The probabilities may therefore be said to favour a Late Bronze Age date for this pottery; and to that extent is established the period if not the purpose of many of the pits in the disturbed area of the barrow which have been described in the excavation report. Such pottery was found in pits nos. 9, 10, 12, 15 and 16.

In the illustration (plate 9) a selection of the more distinctive pieces is illustrated, and the details of their finding are added in the caption.

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4 Mr. Head tells me that a neighbouring occupation site (at Lodge Hill, Saunderton) 1½ miles away has produced both types of Iron Age A pottery, together with a ring-headed shouldered pin; but at another site, on the same hill, pottery of the coarse-gritted Bledlow variety is found without the finer wares. Some difference in date and origin seems to be indicated, and Mr. Head suggests that the latter may be the earlier, but excavation will be necessary before this idea can be finally accepted.

5 British Museum *Bronze Age Guide*, 46ff.

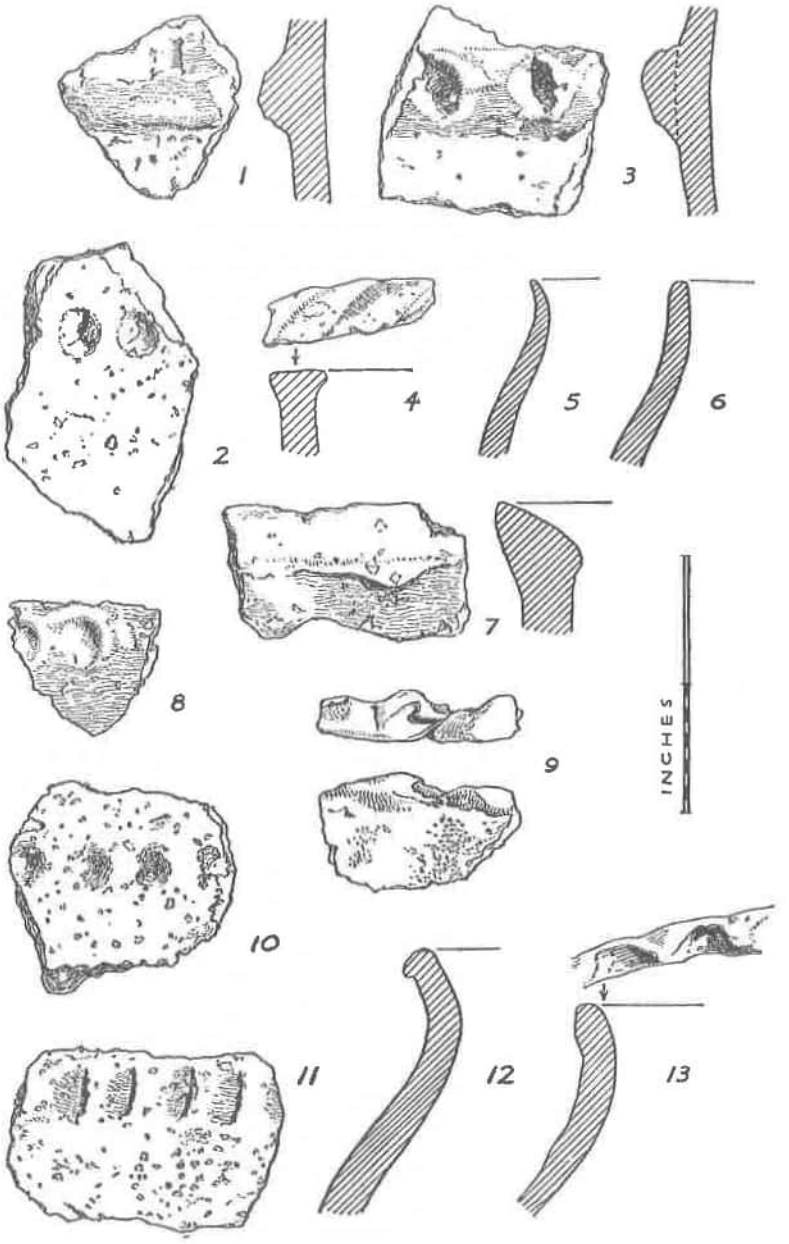

Plate 9. Representative series of late Bronze Age potsherds. ($\frac{2}{3}$).

1-7 from various parts of mound; 8, Pit 16; 9, Pit 15; 10-13, Later Bronze Age occupation layer on N.E. side of barrow.

Early Iron Age and Roman Period

The only definite signs of Early Iron Age occupation are a few sherds from the disturbed body of the mound. These—four or five in all—are small, but may be derived from small carinated bowls of All Cannings Cross type. The ware is a good deal finer than that of the Late Bronze Age pottery described above.

The almost inevitable scraps of Roman pottery present themselves, but are unimportant; one fragment comes from beneath the turf immediately above the Late Bronze Age horizon in the north-eastern disturbed area; and others—including part of a lid of a rouletted manganese-slipped bowl—were found in the disturbed filling of the primary burial pit. There is also a third brass of Tetricus I (267-73 A.D.) with Pax Aug reverse,[6] which was found in the south-west quadrant ten inches below the modern turf-line. Some of the miscellaneous objects listed below might also belong to this period.

Anglo-Saxon Period

The excavation report enumerates seven secondary burials of the Anglo-Saxon period, five by cremation, two by inhumation. With the exception of one of the latter, which had been almost completely destroyed, all had associated finds.

Of the cremation urns from pits A, B and C, little can be said. The two more complete (from A and C) are illustrated in plate 10, Nos. 1-2, and all three are of the characteristic plain type, hand-made, of grey-black smooth-faced ware with curiously laminated structure. Fragments of a fourth plain urn and scattered cremated bones were found near the complete inhumation burial by which probably they had been disturbed. The ware of this urn is rather more sandy than that of the others, but the many small fragments defy attempts at reconstruction.

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6 Mattingly and Sydenham, *Roman Imperial Coinage*, No. 100ff.

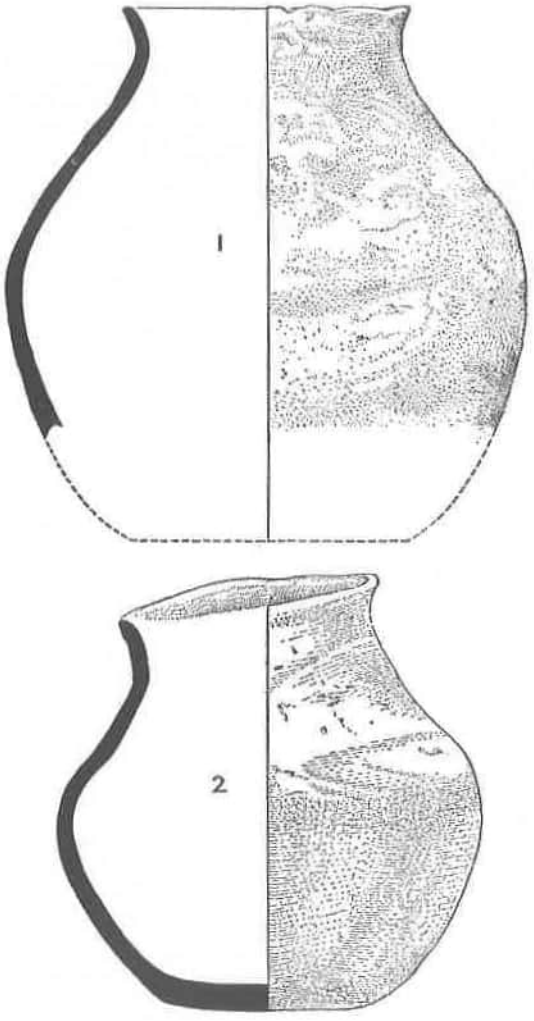

Plate 10. Anglo-Saxon urns. ($\frac{1}{3}$).
1 from Pit A; 2 from Pit C with fig. 11, 2.

There are three Saxon combs, two associated with the urns from Pits B and C (plate 11, Nos. 1-2), the third from Pit D (plate 11, No. 3), without associations. Of the first two little need be said. They are of the plain double type strengthened by bars rivetted along their middles on each side, which first appeared in the Roman period and lasted into medieval times. The third comb is much more distinctive in character. It is of the single type, made up as usual of narrow pieces of bone held in place between flat plates by iron rivets. The back of the comb is convex in plan and rounded in section, terminating in triangular extensions, one of which is perforated for suspension. The plates are decorated with a simple but attractive incised fret-pattern, which is essentially the same on both faces.

Unfortunately, none of these finds can be closely dated. Such plain urns persisted over a long period, and it is doubtful whether the slight changes in form to which they were subjected have any significance in this country. Mr. Head states the argument for early dating elsewhere. The only evidence from the site which bears upon the date is the relationship of the third cremation referred to above to the second of the Saxon inhumations. The inhumation burial was accompanied by a pair of tweezers, an iron knife, and an iron spearhead. The knife (plate 12) is 5.7 inches long, with a simple triangular-sectioned blade and short tang retaining one rivet; the spearhead (5.5 inches long) is of the usual open-socketed type; its blade is plain and without midrib. As far as such unspecialised forms can be dated at all, they are more likely to be early than late, a circumstance which would involve a correspondingly early date for the cremation which this inhumation burial had disturbed.

Miscellaneous

Finally—in addition to two medieval iron arrow-heads found immediately beneath the modern turf—there are various small finds (plate 13) from the

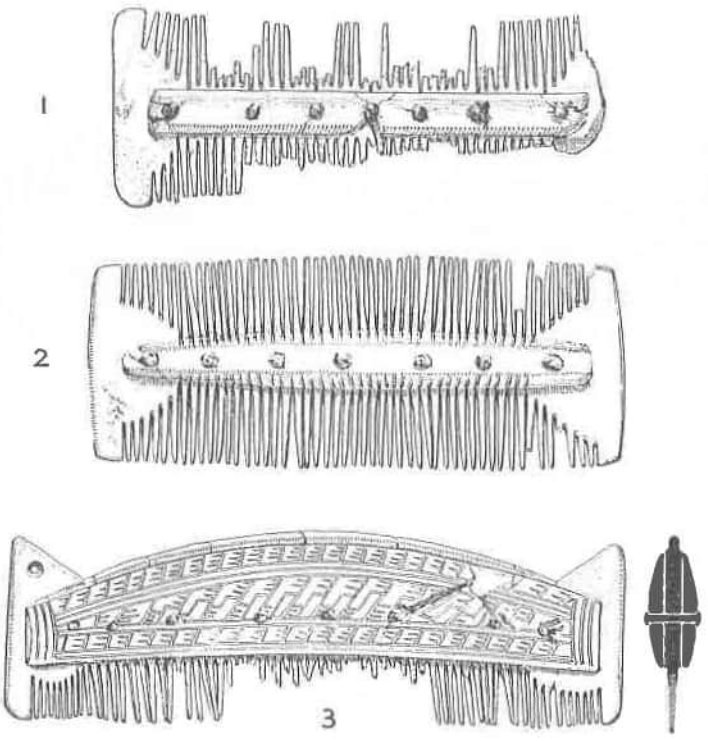

Plate 11. Anglo-Saxon combs. ($\frac{1}{2}$).
1 from Pit B; 2 from Pit C with fig. 10, 2; 3 from Pit D.

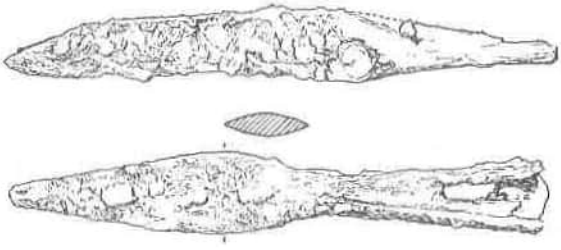

Plate 12. Anglo-Saxon knife and spearhead. ($\frac{1}{2}$).

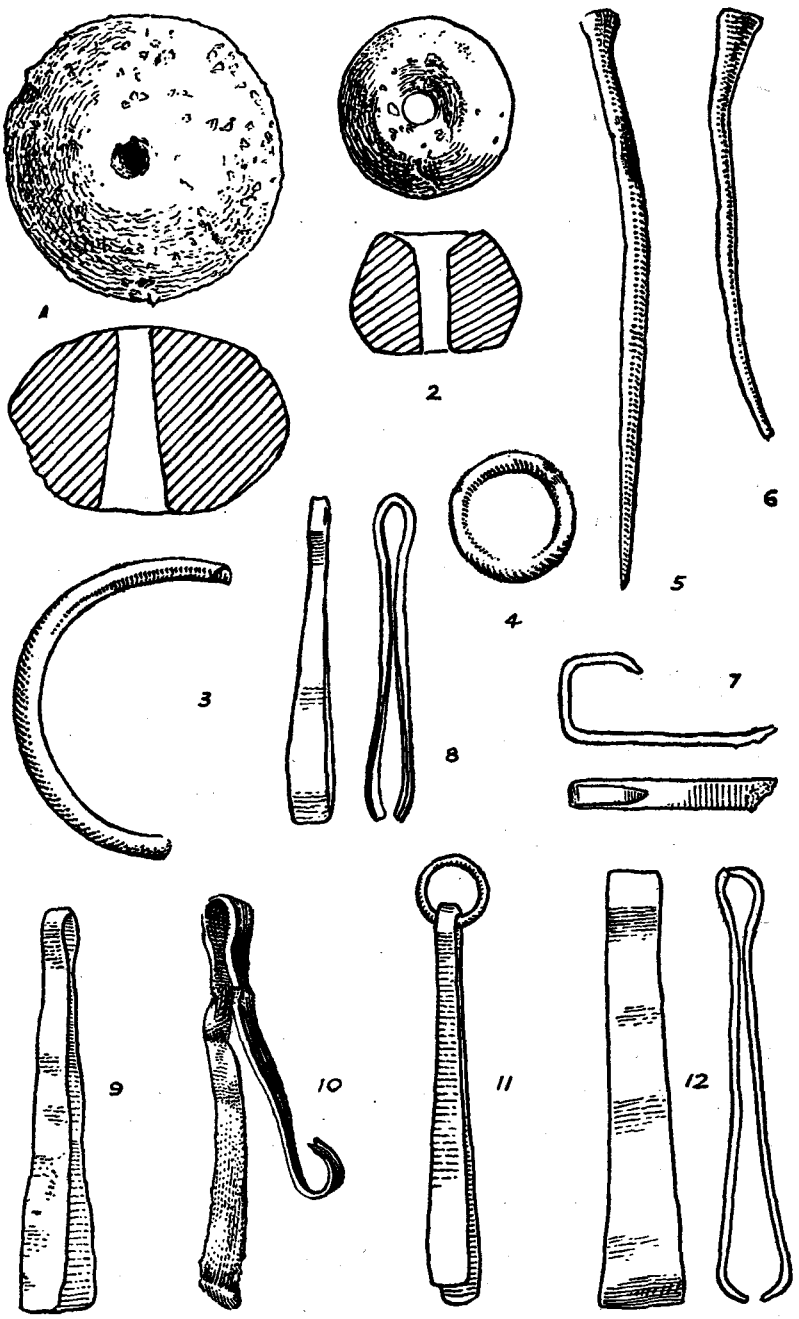

Plate 13. Various small objects. ($\frac{1}{1}$).

1, Pottery spindle-whorl (N.E. quadrant, disturbed); 2, pottery bead (N.W. quadrant, disturbed); 3, bronze ring (Pit 12); 4, bronze ring (S.W. quadrant); 5-6 bronze pins (S.E. quadrant adjoining Pit 12); 7 bronze hook (secondary cremation, N.W. quadrant); 8-12, bronze tweezers (8, S.W. quadrant; 9, 11, S.E. quadrant adjoining Pit 12; 12 Saxon inhumation 2).

disturbed material, about which, in the absence of more definitely datable associations nothing much can be said. They consist of a small bronze ring from the south-west quadrant; three pairs of tweezers, of which one comes from the south-west quadrant, the other two from the south-east quadrant adjoining Pit 12; two bronze pins from the same area; and an iron ring and indeterminate fragments of bronze from the silting in the central area.

REPORT ON THE BONES (human) FROM THE COP ROUND BARROW, BLEDLOW

BY

F. G. PARSONS, D.Sc., F.R.C.S.,

Fragment of right upper jaw from floor of central grave, and bones of both legs below the knee from a partly superimposed Saxon Burial.

The photograph of the leg bones in situ shows that the skeleton to which they belong lay upon its back, in the extended position. Neither of the Tibiae (shin bones) were perfect, but enough was present to allow me to estimate the height of the owner as from 5 ft. 5ins., to 5 ft. 6 ins. These bones showed the characteristic narrowing of the shaft, from side to side, (Platycnemia) and the presence of the "squatting facet" on the front of the lower end which is almost constant in Anglo-Saxons, but is often found in earlier or later races when the individuals have been in the habit of adopting a squatting posture. The lower ends of the tibiae show that the epiphysis has not yet completely united with the shaft, a thing which takes place at about 18 years of age.

The heel bone (Calcaneum) has a completely united epiphysis, while the metatarsals are completely ossified and are of slight and delicate proportions. The remains of the small bone of the leg (Fibula) have the muscular ridges very well developed, suggesting active use of the limbs in running and walking.

The fragment of the upper jaw contains the right lateral incisor, canine and the two premolar teeth. These are very little worn and suggest that they belonged to a youthful person; the incisor, however, shows slight grinding of the cutting edge, a fact which will be referred to later. Whether this fragment belonged to the same individual as the leg bones I am unable to say, but its appearance suggests its having done so; in any case, the small size of the teeth and the wearing of the incisor edge make me think that they belonged to a young Saxon woman.

From the slightness of the bones, the ununited epiphysis of the tibiae and the size of the teeth, assuming that they all belonged to the same person, I should regard the remains as those of a young woman under 18 years of age, but I must point out that no parts of the skeleton upon which the anatomist usually depends for determining sex are present.

One characteristic alone is not so well marked as I should have expected, in that the only incisor tooth remaining does not show the amount of grinding at its edge which one looks for in Saxons. This is caused by the "edge to edge" bite of these people. Still it is there, if looked for carefully, and I have no doubt would have become more marked had life been longer.

Saxon Inhumation from North side of barrow. Plate 2.

On the North side of the tumulus the intrusive burial of an Anglo-Saxon man was found. The skeleton, as is usual among Saxons, lay upon its back in the extended position, with the head bent very much forward and the trunk bent laterally, suggesting that the grave had not been made quite long enough for the body to lie at full length. The shoulders were pulled up as much as possible, and this I think is due to the body being lowered into the grave by someone whose hands were under the armpits. This I have noticed often in Saxon burials.

There is no doubt about the body being that of a male. His height was about 5 ft. 8ins., and, like so many Saxons, he had met with accidents during his life, for his right arm bone had been fractured and quite well set, while one of his left forearm bones (ulna) had also been broken and badly set.

The thigh and shin bones (femur and tibia) showed the characteristic flattening (platymeria and platyenemia), usually found in people who rest a good deal in a squatting position, and the "squatting" facets on the lower end of the tibia and astragalus were well marked.

The breast bone (sternum) had a small perforation (of no racial importance) and there was slight lipping in the lumbar vertebræ, but no other rheumatoid changes, for his joint surfaces seemed quite healthy.

The most interesting anatomical point was that the main cartilage (thyreoid) of the larynx was completely ossified, a thing which usually accompanies advancing age, though otherwise I should have described him as in the prime of life.

The skull was sent to the R. College of Surgeons and a full, though necessarily, very technical, report was received. Like most Saxon skulls, it was long and narrow (dolichocephalic) with a cranial index of 74.5. It was remarkable for the way in which the hinder (occipital) part projected farther back on the left side. The teeth were all present and perfect, and as is usual with Saxon teeth, the crowns were deeply worn down, probably by meal ground in a soft stone quern or mill and thus containing a good deal of powdered stone. The "edge to edge bite" was well marked.

The full text of Dr. Parsons' report, with osteometric data of the skull, will be lodged with the Museum at Aylesbury.

ANIMAL BONE REMAINS FROM ROUND BARROW, BLEDLOW, BUCKS

BY

F. C. FRASER, D. Sc.,

British Museum (Natural History).

In the collection of skeleton remains from the disturbed mound complete bones are exceedingly rare, and the greater number are broken up into small fragments—probably for marrow.

There are represented in the collection the following animals:—Ox, pig, sheep, roebuck, red deer, horse, dog, badger, hare. In this list the animals are arranged in descending order of abundance.

Ox Ox is represented chiefly by fragments of limb bones and teeth, two complete jaws and fragments of jaw scapulae and pelvic bones. Ribs and vertebrae are almost completely absent. Some idea of the abundance of ox in the collection may be gathered from the number of astragalus bones. There are thirteen of these all of approximately the same size, so that from this the number of oxen represented is either thirteen or seven, if for the latter number we assume that the bones are in pairs from the right and left leg of the same animal.

Compared with corresponding bones in the skeleton of a Chillingham cow in the British Museum collection, all the Round Barrow specimens are smaller in size. The Chillingham ox is a very small breed standing only about 4 feet high at the shoulder, so that the Bronze Age animals here represented must have been creatures of very small proportions. Further evidence of this may be gathered from the complete right metacarpal from a full grown animal included in this collection. It measures 165 mm. as compared with 171 mm. in the Chillingham skeleton. There are some distal ends of metapodials which suggest animals of somewhat larger size, but none of them equal the dimensions of the Chillingham bull, which is in stature only slightly larger than the cow.

The complete lower jaws are the right and left rami of one animal. All the permanent cheek teeth are in position, the incisors are missing, and the jaws are those of a mature, though not aged, animal. The length of the ramus is 345 mm., or probably a little

greater, because the tip of the jaw is slightly broken. In the skeleton of the Chillingham cow already referred to, the same measurement is 361 mm. Thus from the jaws again we have an indication that the oxen were quite small creatures. The remaining bones and teeth contribute nothing which is contrary to this view.

Pig. The specimens of pig bones are very fragmentary, consisting chiefly of pieces of limb bones and of jaw. There are several incisors, canine and molar teeth, and of the latter three of the third molars are considerably worn down, suggesting the possibility of their belonging to wild animals, on the assumption that were they domesticated they would have been used for food before the third molars—the last to appear—had time to be very much worn down.

Sheep. The sheep bones, like those of pig, are very fragmentary and permit one to say nothing except that in general they indicate that the animals were, like the oxen, of small size. A fragment of skull, two incomplete jaws, some limb bones and about two dozen cheek teeth, are the chief items upon which the presence of sheep was made evident.

Roe Buck. A larger and smaller portion of antler confirm the presence of roe buck. The bigger portion is a shed antler.

Red Deer. This species is represented by two antler tine tips and one astragalus.

Horse. The only trace of Equus in the collection is the distal end of a metapodial bone. In its dimensions it comes in size between a New Forest pony and an Arab horse.

Dog. Dog is represented by a humerus and a fragment of a humerus, an ulna, a right and left femur, a tibia, a cervical vertebra, a small portion of scapula and a piece of cranium. The bones are all of proportionate size, and it is not likely that more than one animal is represented. The animal, which was mature, was of very small size. Some idea of its proportions may be obtained from the following comparative measurements.

	Length in mm.		
	Fox Terrier (D. 74).	*King Charles Spaniel.*	*Round Barrow specimen.*
Humerus	131.	75.	88.
Femur	130.	81.	90.
Tibia	140.	75.	95.

Badger. Badger is represented only by a small fragment of lower jaw with a molar in situ.

Hare. A fragmentary tibia has been identified as belonging to this species.

None of the bones examined show any trace of having been worked by tools.

From Pit No. 19.

Ox. Ribs, a few vertebrae, portion of sacrum, portion of orbital region, two right metacarpals, one of them very fragmentary, portion of metatarsal and a tooth. The metacarpal measures 162 mm., as compared with 171 mm. in the Chillingham ox.

The full text of Mr. Fraser's report, specifying in detail the animal bone fragments from the other pits, will be lodged in the Museum at Aylesbury.

REPORT ON THE NON-MARINE MOLLUSCA

BY

A. S. KENNARD, A.L.S., F.G.S.

I have been able to examine material from five different loci:—

1. From a cinerary urn of much later date than the construction of the barrow. (Saxon Urn from Pit A).
2. From the original turf line beneath the barrow (Section A-A).
3. Clay resting on the original turf line. (Section A-A).
4. From pit 19, a shallow pit near centre of the mound.
5. From a silting near the barrow yielding a small fragment of beaker pottery. (Primary Silting, Q. Section).

Mollusca were not common, but a fair number were detected and the results are tabulated. It will be noted that the larger species in 1, 2 and 3, are only represented by fragments clearly indicating the presence of the hedgehog.

TABLE

	1	2	3	4	5
Pomatias elegans (Müll.)	f	f	f	2	8
Carychium tridentatum (Rosso.)				1	
Pupilla muscorum (Linn.)	14	6	17	1	2
Vertigo pygmaea (Drap.)			3		
Cochlicopa lubrica (Müll.)			2		
Punctum pygmaeum (Drap.)			1		
Arion sp.	10	121	75	8	256
Vallonia pulchella (Müll.)					1
Vallonia excentrica (Sterki.)	1	4	6		
Vitrina pellucida (Müll.)				1	
Helicella cellaria (Müll.)					1
Retinella pura (Ald.)				1	
Xerophila itala (Linn.)	9		2		3
Trochulus hispidus (Linn.)		4	12		1
Arianta arbustorum (Linn.)				3	
Cepaea nemoralis (Linn.)	f	f		4	5
Marpessa laminata (Mont.)		1			
Cecilioides acicula (Müll.)	1				1

f=fragments.

The numbers quoted are the number of specimens determined. The slugs arion sp. have several granules in each individual, and it is impossible to say how many specimens are represented for the numbers are those for detected granules, but the figures show the proportion on each sample.

CONCLUSIONS

The faunule from the intrusive cinerary urn would appear to indicate similar conditions to those of to-day, but it should be noted that the fragments of *Pomatias elegans* and *Cepaea nemoralis* are certainly not contemporary, but are derivatives. Open grass down with probably a little coarser herbage and a rainfall as at present would appear to have been the conditions at the time of the secondary interment. The other four loci have similar faunules indicating similar conditions and presumably of the same age.

From the abundance of slug remains and the presence of damp loving species, it is clear that much damper conditions were in existence. One would not get these species there to-day. Grassland with scrub was probably the condition of the hilltop. One can only account for the damper conditions by a much heavier rainfall. On similar evidence this has been postulated for Norfolk, Lincolnshire, Essex, Kent, Sussex, Hampshire and Wiltshire in Beaker times, and one can now say that Buckinghamshire shows similar evidence.

CHARCOALS

Identified by J. CECIL MABY, B.Sc., A.R.C.S.

From Q. Section. Late Bronze Age Silting.		
Fagus silvatica (beech)	Fragments of twigs and small branches	12
Prunus sp. (plum or cherry)	Part of small twig	1
Charcoal from Floor.....	Central Area.	
Crataegus oxyacantha (hawthorn)	Wood from near centre of stem or branch, immature	1
Fraxinus excelsior (ash)	Flakes of mature wood; may come from good sized timber	2
PIT 15.		
Aesculus hippocastanum (horse chestnut)	Immature wood from near growth centre	1
Crataegus oxyacantha (hawthorn)	Mature wood	2
Corylus avellana (hazel)	Immature wood, as above	2
Fraxinus excelsior (common ash)	Mature wood, perhaps from periphery of large branch	2
Prunus sp. (cherry or plum)	Probably cherry. From small branch	1
Acer or *Pyrus sp.?* (maple or apple)	Uncertain. May be maple	2

PIT 3.

Pyrus sp. (apple, pear, rowan, service, beam, etc. ..... Mature wood, and a small twig fragment 2

Most of the fragments seem to be from brushwood only.

CONCLUSIONS

There is sufficient evidence existing to confirm that the mound was not erected in Middle or Late Bronze Age times when cremation and the disposal of ashes in cinerary urns was the customary mode of sepulture. From the nature and size of the primary grave we must suppose that it was dug to contain an unburnt burial; and as the practice of inhumation in the contracted position in Round barrows is generally accepted as preceding the vogue of cremation, we may with probability assign the burial and mound to the Early Bronze Age period. This suggestion is strengthened perhaps by the presence, in the filling of the primary grave, of the two small fragments of 'native' pottery which Mr. Grimes suggests may be of the 'food-vessel' class; and although, as he points out, the disturbed nature of the filling will not permit too heavy a burden to be placed upon such evidence, it may be that we have here an indication as to the phase of the Early Bronze Age in which the erection of the mound took place. But in any case the beaker sherds from the primary silting of Q. section confirm an Early Bronze Age occupation round about, while the absence of a skeleton from the primary burial grave in this instance is probably the result of subsequent disturbances.

No datable objects that could be attributed to the Early Bronze Age were found within the mound, *in situ*, although the small plano-convex flint knife recovered from disturbed material thrown out over the flanks of the mound, may perhaps have been originally derived from the primary burial grave.

As will be observed from Mr. Grimes' report, the heaviest occupation period was during the Late Bronze Age.

The nature and number of Saxon burials indicate, we think, a settlement in the vicinity rather than chance and casual interments; and it is of interest to note that, with one exception, they tend to concentrate on the northern side of the mound, overlooking the present village of Bledlow (Bleddanhlaew, 1012—Bledda's hill or barrow[1]), while the feet of both inhumations were laid in that direction. The proportion of cremations to inhumations is certainly not less than 5 to 2; and, if the empty pit be admitted, as we think it should be, the figure rises to 6 to 2. Mr. Leeds has remarked[2] that there is no reason to attribute cremations along the line parallel to the Icknield Way to the Angles rather than the Saxons; and if the site under consideration be regarded as a West Saxon cemetery, the proportion of cremations is unusually high. It is unfortunate that no closely datable objects are available from the site, while cremation, the almost universal rite of the Anglo-Saxons in their native lands, cannot, in this country, in itself be considered as conclusive proof of early date; indeed, examples occur until almost the close of the pagan period, and the short break preceding churchyard burial. The well-known Bishopstone brooch, or girdle-plate, has been thought to connote an early date for that cemetery (some 7 miles to the N.E. in the Vale), and the majority of the burials there appear to have been by inhumation,[3] falling just outside Dr. Wheeler's triangular area indicating the extent of the influence of persisting Roman culture in this district upon the traditional rite of the immigrants.[4] At Kingsey, a riparian cemetery, 4 miles from Bledlow, cremation was represented, but in what proportion is not recorded. The cremations at Bledlow itself, which falls within the above-mentioned triangle, may perhaps be explained by its situation on the Icknield

1 Place-Name Society, Bucks, p. 168.

2 E. Thurlow Leeds, "The West Saxon Invasion and the Icknield Way." *History* (July, 1925), p. 104.

3 Rev. C. Lowndes, *Records of Buckinghamshire*, 1878, Vol. V., No. 1, 23ff.

4 R. E. M. Wheeler, *London and the Saxons*, London Museum Catalogues, No. 6, 50ff.

Way traffic-route, and possibly by Anglian influences. On the whole, and remembering the cremation urn disturbed by the inhumation furnished with a small knife and spearhead, we are not disinclined to assign them to an early period,—late 5th or early 6th centuries—and to interpret them as indicative of an early settlement thrown off, as described by Mr. Leeds,[5] by invaders from the Wash on their journey along the Icknield Way to the Upper Thames Valley. To this suggestion may be opposed the scarcity of '—ing' place-names in the district, and the written account in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, (compiled more than 200 years after the event) assigning the date of the invasion, and capture of Aylesbury and the three other towns to the year 571. These problems have been discussed very fully elsewhere,[6] and we must now await the further evidence that we may reasonably expect will come to light in Buckinghamshire from time to time. To the research worker the problem of Anglo-Saxon combs, the latest example of which, circa 1020 A.D., was found in the tomb of St. Cuthbert at Durham, would appear to offer scope for investigation.

Finally, to those who are not convinced that an occasional flight of speculation must inevitably result in disaster, it may be of interest to mention that evidence exists elsewhere to indicate a 10th century Saxon occupation of Bledlow, which they may like to think originated from the above-mentioned early settlement and persisted in this Buckinghamshire village until comparatively modern times.

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5 E. Thurlow Leeds, op. cit., p. 102.

6 M. W. Hughes, "Grimsditch and Cuthwulf's Expedition to the Chilterns in A.D. 571." *Antiquity* (Sept., 1931), v. 19, 291ff.