COLDRUM REVISITED AND REVIEWED

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INTRODUCTION

Coldrum (N.G.R. TQ 654606), in Trottiscliffe Parish, is Kent’s least damaged megalithic long barrow. It takes its name from a nearby, now demolished, farm, Coldrum Lodge. The massive sarsen-stone chamber, and the low mound, bounded by prostrate slabs, stands obliquely upon the scarp-edge of a high lynchet (Fig.1). The field system was already old when Coldrum was built. It is about 100 ft. (30 m.) in length, the eastern, proximal, chambered, end is 60 ft. (18 m.) in breadth with a western, distal, of about 40 ft. (12 m.), and may be the principal, remaining, part of a larger entity. Medieval, religiously motivated, slighting accounts for its tumbled eastern end. Some early antiquaries considered Coldrum a circle.

Although apparently isolated, Coldrum may be the lesser of two long barrows. A huge, spread mound more than 300 ft. in length and 90 ft. in breadth, of E–W orientation, lies just under a quarter of a mile to the north. Its eastern end is almost upon Coldrum’s lynchet’s northern continuation (N.G.R. TQ 653610 approx.). There are no signs of sarsen stones, although some may still be buried. This near-obliteration may have led to the survival of rather more of Coldrum than might be expected.

In 1910, F.J. Bennett (1913) excavated the upper part of Coldrum’s chamber, finding the skulls and bones of some twenty-two people. In this he was assisted by E.W. Filkins, who, after the 1914–18 war, dug to the bottom of the chamber finding soil and further bones (Filkins, 1924; 1928). The bones were examined and described by Sir Arthur Keith (1913; 1925). Filkins bared the sarsen stones of the kerb and the monument assumed its present-day appearance.

In 1926, Coldrum, cleared of brushwood and brambles, was vested in the National Trust as a memorial to Benjamin Harrison, the Ightham prehistorian and eolith protagonist (Harrison, 1928, 333; Gaze, 1988, 52). An imported stone bears a plaque describing it as a circle (Grinsell, 1953, 154). Although an Ancient Monument (Jessup, 1948), it is now tree-smothered, defaced, and difficult of access.
Fig. 1. Coldrum sited obliquely upon the scarp-edge of the large lynchet at its junction with the lesser

PART I

Retrospection

Sadly, the earliest accounts of Coldrum are unpublished. During the first years of the nineteenth-century, the Rev. Mark Noble, F.S.A., Rector of Barming, is reputed to have prepared a plan and description for the Gentleman’s Magazine, neither of which can be traced (Evans, 1950, 69). However, between 1842 and 1844, Beale Poste detailed Druidical Remains at Coldrum, an account which supplemented his plans, sketches and reconstructions (Evans, 1949, 137). He recorded that skulls were found in the terrace, close by the chamber, in 1804 and 1825, these, presumably, surviving its partial voidance. His final
plan, which shows the position of the skull found in 1825, depicts, except for buried stones, a structure much the same as today.

After Beale Poste, active until 1871 (Roach Smith, 1886, 15; Evans, 1949, 131), Albert Way (1845, 63) and Thomas Wright (1854, 181) said of it that ‘....adjacent to a farm named Coldrum Lodge is another smaller circle of stones, and similar appearances of a subterranean cromlech in the middle’. As at Addington, they saw a circle, but it is possible that, at the time of their visit, something of the barrow remained partially concealing the chamber’s stones. They also said that ‘Proceeding from the circle at Coldrum, towards the east, we observed single stones, of the same kind and colossal magnitude, scattered over the fields for some distance, and it is the tradition of the peasantry that a continuous line of stones ran from Coldrum direct to the well-known monument called Kit’s Cotty House ..... Mr. Larking and myself have indeed traced these stones in the line through a great portion of the distance, and the existence of these stones probably gave rise to the tradition’

In 1856, digging was undertaken by J.M. Kemble, the Late Celtic and Anglo-Saxon scholar (Daniel, 1975, 110; Levine, 1986, 25) and the Rev. Lambert Larking, Vicar of Ryarsh (Roach Smith, 1891, 51; Jessup, 1956), the first Honorary Secretary of the Kent Archaeological Society. A brief report to the Central Committee of the British Archaeological Association (Way, 1856, 404) stated that ‘Mr Kemble also gave some details of an excavation made by the Rev.L.B.Larking and himself on the site of the cromlech .... called “THE ADSCOMBE” or “COLDRUM” stones in Kent, with the adjoining magnificent stone circle, and exhibited specimens of the pottery exhumed by them, some of which was undoubtedly of Saxon manufacture ... the excavations will be resumed next year ....’. It seems likely that they encountered a deposit covering the bones that were to be disinterred half-a-century later (Bennett, 1913).

‘The Adscombe’, considered by Kemble (Way, 1856, 404) as an alternative name for Coldrum, is an assumption from early literary sources. He stated (1857, 138-9) that ‘.... the Anglo-Saxons used the stone kists which they found erected by the earlier races .... the “Coldrum Stone Kist, in Kent. I reminded you that the earliest name of this cromlech is the Adscombe stones, in other words, the hill of the ad or funeral fire; and such a structure as it is would be admirably adapted for the purpose’

Under the guidance of Charles Roach Smith, the Archaeological Institute (Royal in 1866) visited Coldrum on Monday, 3 August, 1863, the penultimate day of their Rochester Meeting (28 July-4 August, Arch. Journ., xx (1863), 398). It was reported that ‘MR
ROACH SMITH kindly undertook the guidance of a party to the early remains at Coldrum and Addington. At the former there exists a stone circle, well defined, and a chamber, originally composed of sixteen or more large stones, of which only two stand in situ; the others have been undermined and lie in a hollow below.' At various later meetings, the nature and siting of Coldrum, and the other Kentish stone-built long barrows, were emphasised by F.J.C. Spurrell, also a member of the Kent Archaeological Society, and Sir Henry Howorth, the President (Arch. Journ., xxxviii (1881), 233; lxii (1905), 184). However, a century passed before the Royal Archaeological Institute again visited Coldrum (Warman, 1969, 240).

Charles Moore Jessop (1863, 637), the Yorkshire antiquary (Roach Smith, 1886, 70), described Coldrum in detail, giving dimensions but no plan, was convinced that were the fallen stones upright they would be in a circle. He wrote 'The remains at present consist of about 17 stones in a horizontal position in oval form, though I doubt not, when the stones were upright, the form was circular. Mr Warne (Charles Warne, the Dorset antiquary, author of The Celtic Tumuli of Dorset (1866)) conjectured that the present shape has resulted from the decline of the stones within and without the present setting. They are partially covered with earth. The stones of this oval approach close to the edge of the quarry, and at one point two large blocks of stone set on edge, and as if forming two of the stones of a chamber, project over the precipice; they are almost parallel, and, on a rough measurement, are about 3 yards long, 1 1/2 yards deep, and 2 feet thick; at their inner end and next the circle, a space of about 3 1/2 feet is blocked up by a foot-stone; the overhanging ends towards the road are 5 feet apart. In the quarry below are fourteen huge blocks of stone - one triangular, more than 8 feet long, and well calculated to form a capstone, some square but the majority oblong'. Jessop and Warne were accompanied by Charles Roach Smith. They had travelled from Strood to Snodland, on the line opened in 1856. 'After a cheery lunch at a Royal Hotel' they walked to Addington and Coldrum.

Benjamin Harrison, better known for his discoveries of palaeoliths and eoliths, was also an accomplished field archaeologist. On 10 April, 1864, he made a sketch plan of Coldrum and a record of the dimensions of the two great vertical side-stones of the chamber (Harrison, 1928, 50). Sadly this and similar records did not survive among his papers.

Edwin Dunkin's description (1871, 79, Pl.X. 5) was accompanied by a plan from which the displaced stones at the foot of the steep slope were omitted. He said that 'Although ranking next to Kit's
Cotty House, this Coldrum monument lacks much of its pristine character, a portion of the elevated ground on which the stones are placed having apparently been cut away when constructing the adjacent farm road. This has caused many of them to topple down from their elevated positions, while the two gigantic blocks (a and b, Pl. X, fig. 5), which form the side stones of the cromlech, overhang, as it were, a precipice. Those of the stones that have fallen below, lie in a confused state, some being of prodigious size. They are fifteen in number; one standing upright, and of a triangular shape, is very noticeable. On these stones we found traces of weathering and long exposure in the small circular holes, counterparts, in fact, of those at Kit's Cotty House and Addington Park.

On examining the slope immediately below the huge side stones of the cromlech, it will be observed that, by the judicious use of flint masonry, these weighty masses are now kept in their present positions. This, we believe, is the work of the Rev. L.B. Larking who made certain excavations here, about fifteen years ago. But for this precaution, it is probable, that long ere now, they would have been precipitated below, and this noble cromlech would have become a greater ruin than it now is. (Larking's '... judicious use of flint masonry' was a considerable retaining wall, 10 ft. in height, which secured the eastern, proximal, end of the chamber (Lewis, 1873-6, plan (Fig. 2)). Had it not been constructed the chamber could have fallen. Thus we are indebted to his prescience. It would have involved excavation but there is no record of anything found.) ....Bereft of its capstone, it now consists of two uprights with two smaller stones placed between them, to keep them in position. There are also two other stones at the west end. The uprights are of immense size, of a rectangular form, slab-like. One (a) is 10 ft. 4 in., the other (b), 8 ft. 11 in. in length. In width, they vary from 1 ft. to 1 ft. 6 in. At C, where they overhang, the longest (a), measures 6 ft. 10 in. in height; the other (b) is 7 ft. 4 in. high.

To the west of this cromlech (vide Plan), are about twenty stones, arranged, as will be seen, in a somewhat circular form. They are now all prostrate, but, whether originally some may have stood upright is an open question. Most of them lie very close together, excepting on the east side, where the stones adjoining the cromlech are missing, having, most likely, fallen below. The diameter of the circle was about 45 ft. The plan annexed (Dunkin, 1871, Pl.X, 5), will show the relative positions of the stones.

Of the sepulchral purport of this group there is no reason to doubt. In 1856, when Messrs. Larking and Kemble excavated beneath the cromlech, fragments of pottery were discovered which, when viewed
Fig 2. Plan of Coldrum made by A.L. Lewis in 1870 (*Anthropologia*, 1873-6, opp. 512)
in connection with the ossiferous remains so frequently found on the spot, confirm the idea that it was a place of sepulture.'

Dunkin's work was closely followed by a sketch plan and description of Coldrum, the title *The Kentish Group of Rude Stone Monuments* (Lewis, 1873-6), having presumably been inspired by James Fergusson's *Rude Stone Monuments in all Countries: their Age and Uses* (1872), the first general survey of megalithic structures (Daniel, 1981, 96). In this influential work Coldrum is not mentioned, the monuments on the Medway's west bank are considered circles (Fergusson, 1872, 118) and one is guided to them by the comments of Thomas Wright (1854, 175, *et seq.*). Lewis a devotee of megaliths, especially circles (Burl, 1976, *passim*), was a zealous supporter of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland (it became Royal in 1907) which published an abstract of his earlier note.

Flinders Petrie (1880, 14) was dismissive of the stone circle assertions regarding Coldrum and Addington. He remarked that 'Plans were exhibited at Bromley of the stones at Addington, which with extraordinary perversity have been hitherto described as forming a circle, though they appear to be very plainly in two lines; also of the stones of Coldreham, one mile to E.N.E. of Trottescliffe, in which one explorer has seen an oval, not including the cist or chamber, though they seem to form a rectilineal enclosure around the chamber.

There seems to be a type in these Kentish works; at Kits Coty in Stukeley's time, there was a long mound, with the chamber at one end; at Addington, there is a chamber at one end of a long mound, which has a row of stones along it; and at Coldreham there is similarly a chamber, and a row of stones leaning in against a slight elevation of earth around it, in both cases the chamber being at the East end of the long group.' Regarding his plan (1880, opp. 16), Petrie was an accomplished surveyor (Wheeler, 1955, 4; Drower, 1985, 21) his comments were 'Coldreham. None of the fallen stones on the E. side were surveyed, except the two northern; the rest only sketched, as they are all displaced having fallen from the field above. The side slabs of the central chamber are upright, 7 feet 3 inches and 7 feet 5 inches high. Hardly any probing has been done, so the buried parts of the stones are uncertain. The arrows on the stones show the direction of their dip.' Petrie's comments moved Coldrum (and the Addington long barrow) away from the stone circle concept in which they had lingered since the eighteenth century (Ashbee, 1993a, 89).

George Payne (1893, 137-40) was distressed at the overgrown condition of Coldrum, for him a *cromlech*, a 'dolmen environed with
nearly forty large megaliths’, and that it had been neither recorded nor planned. This last is a curious statement in that he had been a member of the Kent Archaeological Society since 1872 and would have had the volume (XIII), containing Petrie’s plan, on his shelves, while Dunkin’s (1871) paper in The Reliquary was in the Society’s library. He wrote to Pitt Rivers in an endeavour to get the protection of the 1882 Ancient Monuments Act, and enlisted the Royal Engineers to carry out a survey. This was undertaken on 20 August, 1892, by Major A.O. Green, Instructor in Survey, whose son ‘a promising draughtsman of fourteen years of age’, sketched Coldrum’s chamber from the East (Payne, 1893, Pl. XXV, Fig. 2) (Fig. 3). The sketch, which includes no trace of Larking’s wall, put up in 1856, shows the size of the chamber’s dividing stones, or, perhaps, as Payne observed, broken capstones. The larger appears to be that which now lies prone on the slope in front of the chamber. He recalls that a skeleton dug up from ‘... the centre of the dolmen’ had been buried in Meopham churchyard and that the declivity in front was the result of chalk digging, while stones had been removed. Several
kerb-stones were partially buried. In the same year as Payne's publication of this work at Coldrum (1893, 137-40), the first photograph of it appeared (Fielding, 1893, opp. 4). This, a view from the north-west, shows fallen kerb-stones and the rear of the chamber.

The first decade of the present century saw further attention to Coldrum, its character and affinities. George Clinch, from Borden, Clerk and Librarian of the Society of Antiquaries of London (Antig. Journ., i (1921), 145), reproduced Dunkin's plan, a photograph of the chamber flanked by coppice wood, and considered the monument as similar to '....the cromlech at Sievern, Hannover' (1905, 156). When writing for the Victoria County History, i (p. 320) he described Coldrum as '....a quadrangular enclosure round a central chamber of which the two massive upright stones still remain' and reproduced two photographs. These, labelled 'Megalithic Remains at Coldrum, Trottscliffe' are the earlier view of the chamber, flanked by coppice wood, and the great stone at the northwest corner of the kerb. Division of the chamber by two transverse stones is contrasted with Kit's Coty House which, it is said, has only one.

Despite Petrie's (1880, 14) paper, F.J. Bennett, who had retired from the Geological Survey, settled in West Malling, and had become one of Benjamin Harrison's 'Ightham Circle' (Harrison, 1928, 231), saw Coldrum (Bennett, 1907, 47, plan opp. p. 48) once again as a 'Dolmen and Stone Circle'. He repeated the substance of George Payne's account which was illustrated by a sketch-plan, upon which the stones were numbered, and a plate of the chamber, from the south-west, which is a frame for a winter view of the landscape to the east. In 1910, in collaboration with E.W. Filkins, A.R.I.B.A., from Gravesend, who drew the plans and sections, based upon detailed triangulation, Bennett excavated within Coldrum's chamber. The bones of some twenty-two individuals, with a sherd of pottery and a serrated flint-flake were found at the inner end.

F.J. Bennett's work was preceded by the Maidstone Megalith Meeting on the 10 March, 1910, which he opened. He records that his views differed very much from those expressed at this gathering. He had been asked to prepare a large plan of Coldrum for it, but the notice was too short. Indeed, he emerges as needing to verify his Sarsen Stone Survey, made from Malling, after 1889. Nonetheless, he resolved to make a large plan and also a model on the same scale. These, together with a part of what would be, today, termed his site archive, were deposited in the museum at Maidstone. An account of Coldrum, its excavation, and the results thereof, was embodied in two papers (Bennett, 1913; Keith, 1913) read before the Royal Anthropological Institute on Tuesday, June 11th, 1912, by F.J.
Bennett, followed by Sir Arthur Keith, who described the human bones from the chamber. In 1922 after Bennett’s demise, E.W. Filkins (1924; 1928) cleared the bushes and brambles that had grown since 1910, bared the sarsen stone kerb and dug, once again, within the chamber, finding further bones. These were handed to Sir Arthur Keith, at the Royal College of Surgeons, to be preserved with those unearthed in 1910, but were largely lost during the 1939-45 war (Jessup, 1970, 110). Sir Arthur devoted the initial chapter of his *Antiquity of Man* (1925, 2nd ed.) to a *Neolithic Community of Kent*, a broad consideration of the bones. Sadly, he involved Coldrum in the hyper-diffusionism of Grafton Elliot Smith (Daniel, 1981, 115; 149). Filkins was in receipt of monies from the British Association for the Advancement of Science and the Society of Antiquaries of London, and the chamber was made safe with concrete.

John Ward, in his report on the St. Nicholas Chambered Tumulus, Glamorgan, one of the Cotswold-Severn series, now called Tinkinswood (Darvill, 1982, 100, GLA 9), excavated just before the First World War, considered Coldrum as a counterpart (Ward, 1916, 239). Despite the declivity, he gave it, upon an adaptation of the E.W. Filkins plan, a cuspatc forecourt, saying that the stones would creep downhill, while applying hyper-diffusionistic notions. O.G.S. Crawford used the Filkins plan to illustrate his *Ordnance Survey Professional Paper, N.S. No. 8* which re-examined the long barrows of Kent and Sussex, in which he gave, location O.S. map details and principal references. William Coles Finch, the topographer, described Coldrum in detail, with photographs, one of it smothered by ‘....elder, bramble and other wild vegetation’ (Coles Finch, 1927, 306, pls. opp. 115, 282). A year later, Evans (1928), noted a slight mound, used the Filkins plan once again, and ventured a definition of a typical Medway megalith. Shortly afterwards, however, Ronald Jessup (1930, 73) published the succinct description, complemented by an account of the monument’s vicissitudes and problems, as seen at that time. Glyn Daniel, who had visited Coldrum during the later 1930s, saw it as a rectangular long barrow revetted with orthostats, and with a rectangular chamber. He reproduced the Filkins plan and was of the view that there had been extensive quarrying at the eastern end (Daniel, 1950, 233, fig. 22,3). Following Stuart Piggott (1935, 122) he was inclined to look to northern Europe for its homeland (Daniel 1950, 161). L.V. Grinsell (1936, 178; 1953, 194, Pl. XX) summarised what was known of Coldrum and drew attention to other sarsen stones in its vicinity. More recently it has been the subject of general notices (Warman, 1969, 240; Jessup, 1970, 108, figs. 35, 36, Pls. 35,36; Clarke, 1982, 28, fig. 10,b; Drewett, *et al.*, 1988, 57, 2, 8)
and more detailed considerations (Holgate, 1981a, 11, fig. 5, Pls. 5, 6; 1981b, 231, fig. 2; Philp and Dutto, (1985, 1). Elizabeth Warman, for the 1969 visit of the Royal Archaeological Institute, called attention to the speculation and argument concerning its origins and featured the reconstruction proffered by J.H. Evans (1950, fig.4). R.F. Jessup stressed that it was an entity and not associated with various avenues and alignments, as has sometimes been claimed. He reproduced the resurvey by W.G. Gitsham for Evans (1950, fig. 3). Clarke (1982, 28) also reproduced the Evans reconstruction and inclined towards earthen long barrows, with timber features, as a possible explanation for the form and affinity. Robin Holgate (1981b, 225) had already urged the study of monuments such as Coldrum in relation to economic strategies and settlements rather than isolating them as types. This general notion was in mind when the present writer (Ashbee, 1982) saw long barrows, at the fringe of the great area in the occupancy of the mainland European Linear Pottery people, as imitations of long houses.

PART II

Coldrum: the stone-built long barrow

Coldrum (Fig. 4) is an apparently isolated member of the group of substantial stone-built long barrows east and west of the Medway, where this river cuts through the North Downs, the Maidstone Gap. It stands obliquely upon the edge of a massive, positive, lynchet scarp, at its junction with one of lesser height. The fields now impossible to separate, must have been well-established when it was built. The Medway's long barrows are close one to another (Ashbee, 1993a, 61) and Coldrum's nearest neighbours, Addington and the Chestnuts, are almost side by side (Alexander, 1961). Coldrum may well have had such a close companion as a considerable, razed and spread, elongated mound, with the same East-West orientation, lies in a hollow at the foot of the Downs, just under a quarter of a mile to the north. Its mixed, chalky, nature, when seen from afar, separates it from the plough-soil around it. Its stones may have been completely removed, although some might remain buried. The removal of these stones might have ensured the survival of rather more of Coldrum's fabric than might have been expected. Several large sarsen stones which lie to the south of Coldrum, in a damp, clayey, meadow, may remain from yet another structure (Grinsell, 1953, 194). Coldrum's present condition, a near effaced barrow with prostrate encompassing
stones, the de-roofed, truncated, chamber above a steep scarp, with damaged stones at its foot, results from medieval religiously-motivated slighting (Ashbee, 1993a, 63-6). Coldrum has three fundamental elements; its chamber, the barrow and the sarsen stone surround. The steep slighting incut, with fallen, diminished, stones at its foot is, however, singular.
Coldrum: the chamber from the east, April 1946. The side-slabs are more than seven feet in height

The Chamber

Coldrum’s chamber (Plate I), possibly the major remnant of one even longer, is about 13 ft. (4.5 m.) in length and, internally, 5 ft. 6 in. (1.7 m.) wide. Its internal height was more than 6 ft. 6 in. (2 m.). The northern side of this chamber comprises two slabs, the larger 8 ft. long, 7 ft. 6 in. deep and 1 ft. 9 in. thick and a smaller, 5 ft. long, almost 6 ft. deep and 2 ft. in thickness. Its southern side is one enormous slab, 11 ft. 4 in. long, 7 ft. 3 in. deep and 1 ft. 9 in. thick at its outer, eastern, end, though less at its inner western end. A single slab 4 ft. 6 in. wide with, probably, a depth of more than 8 ft., and a thickness of 1 ft., closes the inner, western, end (Plate II). A modest stone, about 1 ft. 6 in. in breadth, links them with the great slab which forms the southern side. This minor block, and the concave inner face of the western slab, together with the inner face concavities of the lesser slab on the northern side, combine to give the chamber’s inner end a marked incurvation. These blocks at the
Coldrum: the structure of the chamber, with a remnant of the razed barrow in the foreground, seen from the southwest, April 1946

western end are likely to have been selected because of concavity; the discrepancies of height would have been redressed by walling. The modest block at the south-west corner of the chamber could also have been the base for appropriate walling. An elongated annulate slab, much broken, and from which pieces have been detached, still lies in front of the eastern, open, end of the chamber, and may remain from a one-time division. Had it been so employed, small-stone walling could have supplemented its irregularities. Until 1908 there were, it is alleged, two medial stones, dividing the chamber into two areas, Payne (1893, Pl. xxv) depicts a lunate hollow in the upper edge of one of these. Thus Glyn Daniel (1950, 45) thought a perforated septal slab possible.

One, more or less, rectangular slab at the slope bottom could have come from the eastern end of the chamber which would thus have had an internal length of about 17 ft. It should be observed that the eastern ends of the principal chamber slabs are asymmetrical in that the northern slab projects further forward than the southern. This, noted
by Bennett (1913, opp. 76), by Evans (1950, fig.3) and, more recently Philp and Dutto (1985, fig.2). support the notion of a longer chamber. There is, however, the possibility that this structural irregularity was masked by the façade.

Coldrum's chamber's great side stones have been underpinned at their eastern, proximal, ends where they almost overhang the slope. Already, in 1870, it was seen that the flint masonry secured the chamber (Fig. 2). Bennett (1913, 84) recounts how he infilled his excavation with Kentish ragstone and later, further consolidation, using concrete, was carried out by E.W. Filkins (1928). The fresh character of this reinforcement was still evident in the 1930s (Grinsell, 1936, 182, Pl. XIX) and it is likely to have been further consolidated by the Office of Works just before the 1939-45 war. At the present time there are eroded areas at the edges and it may no longer be totally effective. Records of work carried out upon monuments such as Coldrum are no longer available.

The Mound and Kerb

The mound, which at one time covered the rear of the chamber (Jessop, 1863, 637) and concealed some of the prostrate stones of the kerb (Plate III), appears to have been largely dug away by E.W. Filkins (1924; 1928), who unearthed a number of buried kerb-stones. Further levelling may have been carried out as a part of the clearance process prior to the monument's dedication to Benjamin Harrison (Harrison, 1928, 333). At the present time it is detectable as an undulation, no more than 1 ft. 6 ins. in height, constrained by the fallen kerb. A barrow remnant may, however, remain against the northern, extraneous, side of the chamber. It is possible that the trapezoidal stone setting was something akin to the enclosure beneath the Nutbane earthen long barrow (Morgan, 1959, 31, fig. 6, 32, pl.1) or, perhaps the first phase of a long barrow comparable in length with others of the series (Masters, 1981, 106). It must be emphasised that distinct building phases are only revealed by ruin (of long cairns) or comprehensive excavation, as at Nutbane.

A mound, such as was once at Coldrum, or one even longer, is likely to have been flanked by quarry ditches. Indeed, at Kit's Coty House, the kerb-stones, and perhaps the façade, were thrown down into the ditches and buried (McCrerie, 1956), by, in great part, the razing of the barrow. Something of the likely relationship of ditches with a stone-kerbed long barrow can be seen at Wayland's Smithy, where the berm was some 25 ft. in breadth (Whittle, 1991, 65, fig. 2).
Coldrum: the north-west corner of the uniformly slighted kerb, seen from the east, April 1946

At Coldrum, flanking ditches, or, perhaps, quarry scoops, could be beneath or beyond the present fences, in the area of improved pasture. Such ditches are likely to have been buried to some depth when the barrow was slighted, and further concealed by ploughing and soil creep. Early in the century this part of Coldrum was bounded by an orchard. Scrutiny of the site, over the years, has failed to detect them but it must not be overlooked that they could be revealed by extreme conditions. A belief that the absence of crop-marks or soil-marks indicates the absence of a barrow’s ditches is often erroneous.

Although a good proportion of Coldrum’s kerb-stones were visible in the nineteenth century (Dunkin, 1871, 79, Pl. X; Fielding, 1893, 4, opp.), today’s totality was bared by E.W. Filkins (1924; 1928). His work, to be discussed below, was comprehensive and, sadly, stone holes, packing stones, and mound relationships were disregarded. Apart from an oval stone (A, on the Evans (1950, fig. 3) plan)) and three more at the top of the slighting incut on the northern side, there are twenty-one stones which have been toppled and now lie, more or
less adjacent to their erstwhile vertical positions. Their slighting involved burial, prior to the spreading of the barrow, and Filkins (1924; 1928) may have unwittingly emptied the trench which had been dug along and around them. They would perforce, have fallen outwards. Reconstruction, with cognizance of this circumstance, gives us an irregular trapezoidal, kerbed, long barrow, or part thereof, about 65 ft. (20 m.) in length, 50 ft. (15 m.) in breadth at the broader, chambered, eastern end and 40 ft. (12 m.) at the distal, western, end. Stones are missing from a length of the southern side where they could have been expected to survive.

The surviving, fallen, stones of Coldrum’s kerb can be seen to display a degree of matching and patterning. On the northern side, the patently selected sarsen stones are for the most part rectilinear, while on the southern side they are mostly irregular with smaller blocks. It is also manifest that on both sides pairing was involved. This, apparent as they lie today, could have been arresting when they stood upright. By contrast, at the distal, western, end of the trapezoid the sarsen kerb was an alternation of irregular slabs with longer, more or less parallel-sided stones. These, when standing, would have been higher than the others, but any discrepancy could, if desired, have been corrected by the use of small stones for walling. Such pieces would have been much sought after, for the smashing of substantial sarsen stones, even with the use of fire (Ashbee, 1993a, 67) is an exacting task. There is also the probability that much of Coldrum’s ancilliary dry-stone walling was executed using, as at the Chestnuts (Alexander, 1961, 8), blocks of ironstone from the Folkestone beds. Like the oolite used at West Kennet (Piggott, 1962, 58) it may have been quarried, as such pieces are rare on the surface. As will be seen below, one of the skulls from Coldrum’s chamber had lain between two such blocks (Bennett, 1913, 81). A further feature of note is that on the northern and southern sides of the toppled kerb the largest paired blocks are more or less opposite one another and are each the last surviving ones of their line. This may show that, originally, the stone kerb was graduated, the greater blocks to the fore and the lesser at the distal end.

One central slab (12) of the western, distal, end of the kerbed part of the barrow has upon it a line of concave abrasion and polishing. A diffused area of similar polishing is also to be seen on another stone (40). These can be explained as the results of the sharpening of stone and flint axe-blades on the sarsens (Jessup, 1930, 74). The construction of Coldrum would have involved the use of numerous timber levers, struts and blocks, which would have required cutting and fashioning. Axe sharpening and re-sharpening would thus have
been a recurrent necessity. Axe-sharpening traces have been noted at West Kennet (Piggott, 1962, 19), while at Wayland’s Smithy sarsen rubbers, termed querns, were used (Whittle, 1991, 87). Axe-sharpening traces have been noted upon some of Stonehenge’s sarsen stones and among the sarsen spreads on Overton Down, east of Avebury. Similar sharpening patches and grooves may exist on some of the stones of the Kentish series. Timber in quantity would have been needed for stone transport.

*Slighting and the Slope*

At Coldrum the kerb-stones were uniformly toppled, left prostrate and buried after the barrow had been razed and spread. This was the work of the Christian zealots of the early fourteenth century (Ashbee, 1993a, 64–7). Evidence of a similar process, stone-toppling and burial, can be seen at Addington and has been found by excavation at Kit’s Coty House (McCrerie, 1956). Unlike Kit’s Coty House and the other stone-built long barrows on the eastern side of the Medway, as well as Addington and the Chestnuts (Alexander, 1961), the chamber, and a part of the deposits that it had contained, in great measure survived. Part of the chamber, and the façade, were brought down by the device of digging away the bluff, the great lynchet, in front of the eastern end. Indeed, the skulls and the bones found in the slope, in front of the great chamber, may have reached the position in which they were found when it was assailed. It is notable that the broader northern end of the ostensible earthen long barrow, Julliberrie’s Grave, at Chilham (Jessup, 1937, 125, PL. XXXIII), was also removed, seemingly by a similar method, long before the development of the chalk pit, initially recorded by Stukeley (Ashbee, 1997). Later ages would have taken advantage of Coldrum’s slighting, for it facilitated the removal of loamy chalk, as elsewhere along the great lynchet, and stone for building (Jessup, 1930, 75; Evans, 1950, 71; Jessup, 1970, 108).

Few of the sarsen slabs at the foot of Coldrum’s steep slope can, with any confidence, be related to what has survived of the original fabric. Indeed, the majority are, because of partial breakage, smaller than those *in situ* and thus their survival is puzzling. Except for a vertically standing slab (there were two half-upright slabs in 1870 (Lewis, 1873-6, plan)) there is nothing that would match, and extend, the massive rectangular stones of the chamber. The chamber’s southern side could have extended almost 6 ft. while another more modest slab, of the same character, on the northern side, could have
ensured an even eastern end. The great block 10 ft. in length and 7 ft. in breadth, prone at the north-eastern corner could be from the façade and is likely to have been a principal. It is comparable with the façade stones of, for example, West Kennet (Piggott, 1962, 17, P1. XII) and Wayland’s Smithy (Whittle, 1991, 83). A portal stone as at West Kennet or the Lower Kit’s Coty House (Stukeley, 1776, P1. 34) is also a possibility. The long, at least 10 ft., stone with a pointed end, lying at the south-eastern corner, may also be from the façade. Had it been so employed, there would have been a more positive and imposing presentation of the alternation observed at the western, distal, end of the kerb. Two substantial trapezoidal slabs, in this quarter, could have been from the chamber’s cover. Another, rather more irregular slab, slightly smaller, lying at the top of the slope, opposite the southern side of the chamber might also have been a cover stone. The survival of so many stones of modest size is, as observed above, puzzling as, apart from two of commensurate size in the toppled kerb, they are all distant from what may have been their initial locations. Two at the south-western corner of the enclosure have been dragged from their original positions, as have three at the eastern end of the northern side. The remainder have been assembled at the bottom of the slope, possibly for a use which never arose. Indeed, some of these may be blocks cleared from the fields in time past. However, it is also possible that the builders of kerb and façade may have been faced with a shortage of stones of the character that was fundamental to the monument. This, however, is unlikely as substantial stones are still to be found in the locality (Alexander, 1961, 55; Ashbee, 1993a, 109).

General Considerations

These comments upon Coldrum are based upon field assessment (Fowler, 1977, 35-69), subsequent to Bennett’s excavation and Fulkins’ unveiled of kerb-stones. From Beale Poste (Evans, 1949, 137) onwards, plans were made (Appendix) and, in some measure, its earlier appearance can be gauged. In the mid-nineteenth century fewer kerb-stones were to be seen and only the tops of the great slabs, the sides of the chamber, were visible. Apart from such detail, the general lineaments have been constant for almost two centuries, subject only to such measurements as were taken of an overgrown monument. All these plans depict, to a greater or lesser extent, the angularity of Coldrum’s kerb, yet despite Thurnam’s magisterial paper (1868) which had defined the nature of long barrows, earthen
and stone-built, it was though of by many as a stone circle. This may have been, in part, because Coldrum did not conform to accepted notions and that the barrow’s remnant was scarcely obvious. Nonetheless, it is difficult to envisage why Addington was also considered a circle, for there the long barrow was almost 5 ft. in height (Petrie, 1880, 16).

From field scrutiny a number of problems arise, some of which cannot be resolved without recourse to subsoil survey or limited excavation, designed to elucidate specific questions. Indeed, both may be necessary. In general, it emerges that the chamber might have been longer, although the staggered ends of the slabs might have been so designed to accommodate a portal stone. The long barrow, a low remnant of which survives within the prone kerb-stones, could have been longer and thus Coldrum, and its great chamber, would have been commensurate with others of the Medway group. Thus, the prone kerb may only define a phase of a larger entity. Indeed, further buried stones may lay beyond what is currently visible. A ditch is also likely, massively masked by material from the razed mound augmented by plough soil. Slighting brought down the façade and chamber, which was, in good measure, gutted. The skulls and bones found in the slope suggest this. Later depredations may have removed the stones which formed the façade. Some, at the bottom of the slope may be from neighbouring fields. All have been considerably diminished in size because of the detachment, by percussion (presumably a heavy sledge-hammer), of numbers of pieces.

PART III

F.J. Bennett’s 1910 excavation, Sir Arthur Keith’s bone evaluation, and the work by E.W. Filkins, 1922-26

Introduction
F.J. Bennett’s excavation within Coldrum’s chamber (Fig. 5), in his own words (1913, 82) of ‘...a very small area, 27 square feet on first platform, and less on second...’ is important in that, until recently, Coldrum was one of the few stone-built long barrows which had yielded a significant quantity of human bones (Daniel, 1950, 100). They were the remains of some twenty-two people, excavated in controlled circumstances, and subjected to meticulous anatomical examination (Keith, 1913; 1925, 1-32). His Exploration and Sir Arthur Keith’s account of the Human Remains were a joint delivery to the Royal Anthropological Institute on Tuesday, June 11th, 1912.
Fig. 5. Plans of Coldrum's chamber showing F.J. Bennett's 1910 excavations (after F.J. Bennett, *Journ. Royal Anthropol. Inst.*, xliii (1913), Plan D, opp. 79)

At the end there was a discussion which began with A.L. Lewis recalling his visit to Coldrum in 1869, his plan made in 1870, and a site meeting with Flinders Petrie in 1878.
After the Maidstone Megalith Meeting, on 10th March, 1910, Bennett resolved to produce the comprehensive plan which had previously been impossible because of short notice. Thus, during Easter (Easter Day was 27 March) he, with E.W. Filkins, prepared the plan of Coldrum (Bennett, 1913, 77) that has been reproduced for much of this century. It is likely that there was stone clearance, preceding the post 1914-18 war work carried out by Filkins, which led to a reconstruction, copied forty years later by Evans (1950, 73, fig. 4). In addition to a section of the slope in front of the chamber, there was fieldwork and a profile showing the character of the ancient fields upon which Coldrum stands. Some two weeks later Bennett dug within the chamber.

F.J. Bennett's excavation

As the greater part of F.J. Bennett's paper (1913) is historical, circumstantial, and organisational, it is best that the details of the excavation, within Coldrum's chamber, be narrated in his own words. He wrote:

'Exploration, 1910 - My finds of Neolithic flakes, etc., under the Addington megalith, led me to try what I might find within the Coldrum dolmen. My first attempt was made on April 16th, 1910, and no sooner had I put my fork in near the west wall than I at once turned up, and under only a few inches of chalky soil, some human bones. This find I kept to myself and determined to do no more without someone present to keep and record further finds, in an area apparently so full of human remains.

.... on August 16th of same year ... we started to dig close to the south wall of the dolmen, and soon, under, say 6 inches of soil and slabs of stone, we found Skull 1, Platform 1 (see Plan D), with teeth and bones; this was all that was found that day. This skull was most carefully put together (it was found in many pieces) ....

.... I wrote to Mr Filkins, and on the 18th we met at Coldrum and started work at the north-west corner of the dolmen, and he soon found bones and also the flint saw, the only implement of the kind found; and the only other finds were small portions of rude pottery .... We carefully sifted the removed earth and soon finally came on a stone pavement, and on brushing away the soil found Skull 2, Platform 1 (see Plan D), lying between two blocks of (local) iron sandstone of the Folkestone Beds.

Two photographs were taken of this ..... before the skull was disturbed.
On the 19th some further work was done and what seemed a trench was disclosed, 2 feet long along the north and south sides of the dolmen, and stopped at the east and west by pieces of stone, this may, however, have been a burrow ....

.... work was resumed on the 3rd and 5th and completed on September 7th as far as our explored portion of the second platform, etc., was concerned.

To Miss Harker (a friend of Mr. Boyd of Malling, who was acquainted with Sir Arthur Keith) is due the finding in my presence of most of the remaining skulls; she most carefully and deftly worked round them, and the many pieces into which they fell were duly numbered with the accompanying bones and removed to my house (Acacia House, West Malling) ....

Miss Harker and Mr. Boyd took photos of some of the skulls in position; circumstances prevented this being done with all of them .

Mr Boyd helped me to take measurements of their location and Mr Filkins afterwards from these made the plans ..... 

General remarks - As the plans (Plan D in the paper consisted of two plans of the chamber's interior, one, at ground level showing the first discovery and a second, the remains at a lower level . A section was also made. The scale was 1/24 and, besides the plans, it is over-reduced in the publication) show, the whole excavation took place in a very small area, 27 square feet on first platform, and less on second platform, and to the west of the once dividing stone, and there still remains much the same area to be explored, besides a possible third platform.

Most of the unexplored area is to the east of the once dividing stone, and when this slipped it may have pushed in front of it any burials to the east of it ..... we found some finger bones, etc., on the slope when Mr. Filkins and I had the earth cleared from the stones there on making the plans and model (Plan C of the report was a general plan, and section, surveyed and plotted in 1910). A piece of jaw was given to me some three years ago, so found, and is now at Maidstone Museum ....

Calcereous deposit on the platform stones - .... the stones of both platforms are all coated with a deposit of carbonate of lime, and the red colour of these iron sandstones is thus quite disguised ......

Arrangement (?) of the Remains - The only evidence of any definite arrangement would seem to be indicated by the position of the skulls, and most of these would seem to have been placed on their faces, near to and almost touching the west wall of the dolmen, and also as regards No. 1 and No. 2 skulls of the second platform these may have been placed against the wall of the once dividing stone. In the middle
space we found the bones, disposed at all angles, and all those on the second platform were in a very moist condition. They also proved most difficult to extract as the soil was very compact and even hard in places, and being so near to the colour of the soil this made it difficult both to distinguish and to extract them. The burrowing also of animals, rabbits, etc., had caused disturbance of the remains in those places ......

As Dr. Keith will tell you, the remains of those on the upper platform mostly belong to young persons, two only being old ones, and one bone that of a newly born child, and all possibly belonged to one family ......

...... there must have been great intervals of time between the different platform interments, sufficient perhaps to have caused differences in the purport of the burials, and if there be any remains on the third platform, these might add much to our knowledge, so that the story of Coldrum appears far from complete till further exploration takes place.

.... I have replaced all the soil turned out, and have also filled up the excavated floor with Kentish Rag, leaving it all indeed more compact, etc., than before.'

As a conclusion to his paper, Bennett disposed of the long-standing notion of a dolmen in a circle, considering the stones at the slope-bottom to be there for reasons other than recent chalk digging, and contemplated a lower-level, slope-bottom, sarsen stone structure and was adamant that Coldrum had stood upon a cultivation terrace. His comment about a parapet may have influenced later reconstructions (Evans, 1950, 73, fig. 4). The excavation of Coldrum's chamber was, in terms of 1910, a not unreasonably conducted undertaking. Indeed, Bennett's plans and model show that he had the methodologies of Pitt Rivers in mind (Thompson, 1977, 83-4; Bowden, 1991, 76-7, passim). This account of Coldrum was followed by Sir Arthur Keith's detailing the nature of the skulls and bones and the number of people that they represented (1913; 1925, 1-22). It became an exemplar for the more recent assessments of long barrow skeletal assemblages, such as those from Lanhill (Cave, 1938), Fussell's Lodge (Brothwell, 1966) and Wayland's Smithy I (Brothwell and Cullen, 1991).

In his paper Bennett (1913, 81) refers to '....the flint saw, the only implement of the kind found; and the only other finds were small portions of rude pottery'. Within the present writer's memory, the case containing the model of Coldrum (Plate IV), in Maidstone's Museum, had within it the flint saw, a rim-sherd of dark-faced pottery and an incomplete jaw-bone. The flint saw was a substantial hog-backed flake with denticulation. Today, only the sherd designated
'Western Neolithic' remains (Jessup, 1970, 110). This was at one point (Jessup, 1930, 77) thought to be Iron Age, and it seemed uncertain whether or not it was from the chamber. It emerged as 'probably Class A ware' in Stuart Piggott's (1931, 138) prescient paper and has so remained (Piggott, 1954, 269).

Sir Arthur Keith's report on the bones

Any assessment of the bones from Coldrum examined by Sir Arthur Keith must not overlook the fact that they are a remnant of the erstwhile contents of the chamber. When slighted, its infill was tipped down the slope, which accounts for the various pieces that have been regularly found therein. From the scale of this remnant (15 per cent) it is possible that, even with deposits commensurate, for example, with Fussell's Lodge (Brothwell, 1966); Coldrum's chamber could have housed the remains of more than a hundred people.

F.J. Bennett's excavation produced what proved to be the bones of some twenty-two individuals of both sexes and widely spread ages;
indeed Sir Arthur Keith (1913, 86) used the term ‘birth to senility’ He considered their condition as ‘good’, as ‘having a metallic ring and being of a grey chalky colour’, comments which scarcely accord with Bennett’s (1913, 83) observations upon their condition at the time of their excavation. In the chamber the skulls and bones were upon what were termed ‘platforms’ (Bennett, 1913 plan D, section), layered slabs separating specific deposits. ‘Platform 1’ was the upper and ‘Platform 2’, the lower.

Sir Arthur Keith’s paper described the bones and, as he examined each of the designations, he made comparisons with other such material known to him. Thus, no more than their nature and condition will be discussed as the comparisons were, perforce, those of the first decade of this century (Zeuner, 1956). The Coldrum bones comprised nine skulls, some fragmentary, the femora of twenty-two individuals, tibiae representing twenty persons, ten astragali, humeri from fourteen people, radii of ten and ulnae from seventeen persons. There were also parts of six clavículae and pieces of the pelvic bones of eleven people.

The nine skulls from Coldrum’s chamber were five male and four female. The three upper (Bennett’s Platform 1) skulls were, respectively (numbers follow Keith’s (1913, 87) list), 2, a man, aged 50-70 years; 3, a woman, aged 50-70 years, and 9, a young man aged 20-25 years. Six skulls were at a lower level upon a stone slab spread (Bennett’s Platform 2). They were, respectively, 1, the frontal fragment of a young woman; 4, temporal and parietal fragments, probably male; 5, an aged woman, with the frontal bone, face and base absent; 6, a young man, aged 18-20 years; 7, a young man, aged 30-40 years, with the occipital bone absent and 8, a woman, aged 20-25 years. The teeth of the older people were worn and dentine was exposed on the chewing area of the crowns. Unlike a modern bite, the incisor teeth met edge to edge. In general, incisors were rather larger and upper molars smaller than in modern (first decade of this century) dentitions, and the palate slightly shorter and wider. Caries were absent from the Coldrum sample. Males and females had rather slender necks.

Twenty-two individuals were represented by Coldrum’s femora and the right and left bones for seven persons had survived, although only four femora were complete. Eight denoted adult males, four adult females. One adult was of indeterminate sex, six were between sixteen and twenty-five years of age, while there were young people of between eight and sixteen years. Only one pair of the tibiae of twenty persons was complete and four of them allowed an estimate of length to be made. About a half of these were from immature
subjects. The fragment of twenty-six fibulae and seven patellae were present as well as ten astragali. These last were of seven males and three females but only six of the former and one of the latter were complete enough for measurement.

Coldrum’s humeri represented only fourteen individuals, a contrast with the femora. Three were almost complete, seven were fragmentary, four were of adolescents or younger, one under a year old. Sir Arthur was able to say that three complete humeri were probably of males. There was one complete radius and parts of the radii of ten people, two of which were adolescents. Fragmentary ulnae, however, represented ten adults, four adolescents and three children. Shoulders and pelvic girdles also spanned a surprising number of persons. Parts of six claviculae were from seven adults and a newly born child while pelvic bone pieces were from eleven persons of all ages. Surprisingly, the os innominatum was almost complete in two males.

Although Sir Arthur estimated the numbers of people represented by the designations, he did not make any positive statement regarding numbers in terms of the complete assemblage, at least to the Royal Anthropological Institute. Nonetheless, at a later juncture (1925, 8) he wrote, regarding Coldrum’s bones that ‘When I had arranged all the fragments, I found that at least twenty-two individuals were represented; they were of all ages, from newly born children to old men and women.’ He had said (1913, 88) that ‘....certain cranial features....suggest that we are dealing with members of the same family’ and, later (1925, 8), of the skulls, he considered that ‘....there were present peculiarities in their formation which could only be accounted for by supposing that the people buried in the tomb were of one family or of nearly related families.’ These observations and those made regarding the bones encountered elsewhere (Daniel, 1950, 106) have for long been cited as evidence of family groups and chambers regarded as family vaults (Ashbee, 1966, 41). The circumstances surrounding assemblages, such as the substantial remnant from Coldrum’s chamber, have given rise to various contentions regarding the bodies or bones prior to their deposition (Daniel, 1950, 96-115). In the light of Keith’s comment upon the condition of the bones, disinterment from chalk-cut graves should not be dismissed. Thought has been given to the people whose remains were deposited in Coldrum’s chamber (Jessup, 1970, 110). Family traits apart, they were long-headed, short in stature, and of moderate muscular strength, with wide feet, free in movement. They had healthy teeth, with an edge-to-edge bite. The aged suffered from rheumatism which was not helped by the constant squatting posture,
deduced from a characteristic flattening of the shin-bones. This is a perceptive assessment, culled from Keith's initial paper (1913) and subsequent consideration (1925, 1-22), but it must not be forgotten that the assemblage may have been less than a tenth of what was originally in Coldrum's chamber. At Fussell's Lodge, a commensurate timber structure housed the remains of more than fifty people (Ashbee, 1966, 9), while West Kennet's side chambers had in them those of some forty individuals (Piggott, 1962, 24). Here, in Wiltshire, separate compartments may have replaced layering, as detected at Coldrum. However, on the European mainland a long parallel-sided stone chamber (an allée couverte), at la Chaussée Tirancourt, Somme, had in it the successive interments, in layers, of more than two-hundred-and-fifty individuals (Sherratt, 1994, 189). Coldrum's chamber at its outset could have contained the disarticulated remains of a considerable number.

Excavations by E.W. Filkins

In 1922, 1923, and 1926, work was resumed at Coldrum (Fig. 6). The bushes and brambles, grown up since 1910, were cleared and the recumbent sarsen stone kerb bared. There was also selective excavation (Filkins, 1924). Further work, continuing that of 1910, was carried out within the chamber, as well as provision for its support. This is best described in the words of E.W. Filkins (1928). He wrote 'The dolmen itself was undermined with animal burrows and a large stone in the foreground was slipping. Shoring was erected, concrete inserted under all the stones where necessary, and the dolmen (the chamber) made safe. This work completed, the excavation of the interior was begun at the stage at which the 1910 attempt was stopped. A few human bones were found mixed with the soil, some resting upon a large oval-shaped stone spanning the width of the dolmen, near the west end. A trench appeared to run under this stone, which was raised, revealing a cross-shaped trench underneath, in which were a few human bones. Gradually, the whole of the interior was excavated, and more bones found. They have been handed to Sir Arthur Keith, F.R.S., at the Royal College of Surgeons, in whose keeping are the human remains found in 1910. Excavations were made externally round the back and sides of the dolmen, but I am reserving details until the exploration has been completed.'

Ultimately, all the fallen kerb-stones were fully exposed to view, including five that had been buried. Several were raised, but nothing was found beneath them. In 1926, another buried stone of the kerb
Fig. 6. Plans of Coldrum's chamber showing E.W. Filkins' 1922 excavations (after E.W. Filkins)
was unearthed and steps were taken to clear the site as it was, in that
year, vested in the National Trust, as a memorial to Benjamin
Harrison. Filkins intended further work in 1927, but bad weather
intervened while the plan to do more in 1928 was never fulfilled.
Apart from brief published notes (Filkins, 1924; 1928) there has been
no publication of the post-1914-18 war work at Coldrum. However,
recourse to the F.J. Bennett archive in Maidstone’s Museum
(Bennett, 1913, 84) revealed that drawings and papers pertaining to
the subsequent work by E.W. Filkins had been added to it.

The documentation, by E.W. Filkins, of the post-1914-18 war work
at Coldrum consisted of a file of basic chamber sketch plans, copies
of letters, and replies from grant-giving bodies, besides six drawings.
Although the site notes, and sketch plans of the chamber’s interior
recorded the progress of its examination, it is the drawings that have
allowed a tentative reconstruction of the work. Notes and various
plots of theodolite triangulations attest, as has field inspection, to the
accuracy of the drawings made in 1910 and 1922. The general plan
made in 1910 (Bennett, 1913, 77, Plan C) had been the basis of a
broader appraisal and, following Bennett’s earlier sketch plan (1907,
48, 2nd opp.) a numbering system for Coldrum’s stones had been
developed (Fig. 4). Undoubtedly, an account of the work had been
written, it is referred to in a letter (25 November, 1940), but neither
this nor any drafts were found. However, a section of the chamber and
a series of plans had been drawn, which would, with a general plan,
have been its nexus.

From the section, redrawn from that made in 1910 (Bennett 1913,
78, Plan D), it can be seen that the method of excavation, by levels,
and their planning, was continued (Smith, 1965, 2). Thus, following
enhanced plans of the 1910 work, there was a longitudinal chamber
section, and three further plans of the chamber’s interior which
show the position, although not the identity, of the bones found
therein. Its nature (Fig. 7) is best indicated by rehearsing Filkins’
title and captions. Following the title ‘PLANS OF DOLMEN,
COLDRUM, KENT, SHOWING POSITIONS OF VARIOUS FINDS
OF HUMAN BONES ETC., DURING EXCAVATIONS MADE IN
A.D. 1910 AND A.D. 1922.’ There were five plans and the section
as follows:

(1) Lower left: Plan showing the positions of skulls found at 4 ft.0 in.
level, 1910;

(2) Upper left: Plan showing positions of skulls found at 5 ft. 0 in.
level, 1910;
Fig. 7. Section of Coldrum's chamber showing F.J. Bennett's 1910 excavations and those of E.W. Filkins, 1922 (after E.W. Filkins)
(3) Upper centre; Cross section looking south (this shows that Filkins dug and recorded levels, following the procedure of 1910, at 6 ft. 0 in., 6 ft. 8 in., 7 ft. 4 in. and 8 ft. 6 in. He cleared the chamber’s interior down to the chalk and dug behind its western vertical slab. Finds are shown by numbered circles);

(4) Lower centre: Plan showing positions of first finds at 6 ft. 0 in. level 1922 (this shows that the area below Bennett’s work was quartered and dug in sequence. Finds 1, 2, 3, 4 are recorded);

(5) Upper right: Plan showing position of finds at 6 ft. 8 in. level 1922 (Finds 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 are shown);

(6) Lower right: Plan showing positions of finds at 7 ft. 4 in. and 8 ft. 6 in. trench levels 1922 (Finds 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18 are shown, as is the ‘cruciform trench’, perhaps rabbit burrows, as mentioned in the published (Filkins, 1928) account).

Filkins (1928) records that the bones, from the completion of the chamber’s excavation, were sent to Sir Arthur Keith, at the Royal College of Surgeons, to join those unearthed in 1910. Here they were destroyed during the 1939-45 war (Jessup, 1970, 110), although material which had passed to the British Museum (Nat. Hist.) and the Duckworth Laboratory at Cambridge is still extant. A quantity of Coldrum’s skulls and bones were, until the 1939-45 war, preserved in the Trottiscliffe church porch. A visit was made in 1958 as it was thought that the assemblage, which had escaped destruction, would be comparative material for the bones from the Fussell’s Lodge long barrow (Brothwell and Blake, 1966). The then incumbent averred that all the bones from the porch had been interred in the churchyard, but he knew not where. Bones and a skull from Coldrum have, however, been found in Trottiscliffe church and, after examination in the Ancient Monuments Laboratory, are now in Maidstone Museum’s store. The bones found by Filkins in 1922, when considered together with the skulls, and other bones unearthed in 1910, show something more of the nature of the original deposit within the chamber. This was an assemblage of bones, brought from elsewhere, sealed by soil and occupation debris.

Filkins’ excavation within the chamber involved the removal of some 80 cubic feet of soil which was undermined by rabbit burrows. The ‘cross-shaped trench’ encountered at the bottom of the chamber is probably their doing. Despite the burrows, the chamber deposit, at its lower level, was for the most part soil, which makes it likely to
have been of bones dug up and brought to the barrow. These had been deposited in the soil and the skulls, encountered in 1910, were above them. The deposit would have been subjected to earthworm action which would have infilled cavities. His work extended that of 1910 and, even from what is essentially a remnant, the character of Coldrum’s chamber’s contents emerges with a measure of clarity.

After his emptying of the chamber, Filkins’ subsequent work was upon the kerb and the stones at the foot of the slope. In his words (Filkins, 1928, 357):

‘Excavations were also made along the base of the only vertical stone (exclusive of dolmen) at the foot of the bank north of the dolmen. There is evidence that it has always occupied this position, and has not slipped down the bank from a higher level, as has often been surmised. In 1923 the recumbent stones at the rear of the dolmen claimed our attention. They form roughly three sides of a square, some stones being partially buried. They have now been fully exposed to view, and in addition, five other stones previously buried have been revealed. Several were raised but nothing was found below them. This completed the season’s work, and, beyond keeping the site cleared, nothing further was done until 1926, when another buried sarsen was unearthed. Last year (1927) the weather did not permit further work, but it is hoped during the coming summer (1928) to complete the explorations.’

Although there is no record of the evidence that convinced Filkins of the antiquity of the standing stone at the foot of the bank, the nature of his clearance and investigation of the kerb can still be seen. He bared stones, 1, 2, 8, 12a, and 19 while a broad trench followed the prostrate kerb. By this device he was able to raise several stones, although sockets and packing pieces may have been destroyed and displaced. As he remarked at the outset of his note, Coldrum’s chamber was concreted and consolidated. Coldrum today is largely the creation of E.W. Filkins.

PART IV

Envoy

Coldrum is the least mutilated of the Medway’s long barrows in that most of its chamber still stands, although the façade was thrown down, the kerb toppled and partially buried by the razing and spread of the barrow. Mutilation along these lines was a standard slighting procedure; the Kit’s Coty House kerb was buried (McCrerie, 1956)
and the Chestnuts' façade brought down, with its chamber (Alexander, 1961, 5-11), while both barrows were levelled. Coldrum’s chamber was spared, although the destruction of its façade brought its portal down. The chamber could thus have been longer when first constructed.

Coldrum’s chamber’s contents may have been the prime objective. The pottery unearthed by Kemble and Larking, plus the bones found by Bennett in 1910 and Filkins in 1922, attest to the nature of the original deposit - human bones capped by occupation debris - a formula encountered widely in southern England (Piggott, 1962, 21-30, Fig. 9). Because of the soil and the few bones found by Filkins at the bottom of the chamber, the deposit, as at Fussell’s Lodge (Ashbee, 1966, 37), was probably of bones dug up and brought from elsewhere. The groups of bones and the soil were put in first and the skulls arranged over them. Skulls protected by stones were encountered at West Kennet (Piggott, 1962, Pl. XIV,a). After use, i.e. the deposit and, probably, the periodic removal of bones, the chamber would have been sealed and superseded.

The bones, a remnant which represented some twenty-two or more people, show something of the considerable assemblage that Coldrum’s chamber could have housed. Originally, there could have been bones representing even more than the fifty to fifty-five people from Fussell’s Lodge (Ashbee, 1966, 9), and possibly comparable with the contents of a European mainland allée couverte (Sherratt, 1994, 189). It is likely that Coldrum’s chamber’s contents were layered and compartmentalised by medial slabs. Kit’s Coty House, a chamber remnant, preserves such a dividing slab. In principle, these divisions would have fulfilled the same functions as the elaborate side-chambers of West Kennet (Piggott, 1962, 15, fig. 4) and Wayland’s Smithy II (Whittle, 1991, 83, fig. 8).

Sir Arthur Keith’s anatomical analysis of Coldrum’s human bones (1913; 1925, 1-32), for long unsurpassed, suggested family relationships of a kind detected, in Wiltshire, at Lanhill (Cave, 1938; Keiller and Piggott, 1938; Daniel, 1950, 106). There is also a claim that, before 1893, digging into Coldrum’s chamber revealed a skeleton, subsequently interred in Meopham churchyard (Fielding, 1893; Payne, 1893, 140). This should be treated with caution as it could have emerged from the disinterment of a skull and some bones. Notwithstanding, there is the possibility that articulated remains might have been encountered, as they have been recorded from frontal positions in long barrows, earthen and stone-built (Keiller and Piggott 1938. 130; Daniel, 1950, 104; Piggott, 1954, 140; Ashbee, 1984; 62-3; Kinnes, 1992, 99). The sculls recorded by Beale Poste
(Evans, 1949, 137), the finger bones found during the 1910 survey, and the jawbone brought to Bennett, may have survived from the chamber’s clearance when slighted.

Assessment of Coldrum must take into consideration the nature of its investigation by Messrs. Bennett and Filkins. With a present-day perspective, it is possible to see shortcomings, yet, in terms of the general standards of the early part of this century, there is much to commend. The general plan (Bennett, 1913, Plan C), surveyed and plotted by Filkins, is of a good standard and one regrets that the post 1914-18 work, which includes various amendments, was not fully published. Notebook measurements were the basis of the plans of the chamber, as was the section which depicted observed layers. Although on a modest scale, only twenty-seven square feet were uncovered, the excavation technique employed by Bennett, and later Filkins, was, in embryo, that insisted upon by Alexander Keiller on Windmill Hill, in 1926 (Smith, 1965, 2). Filkins was able, despite disturbances, to reveal the full nature of the deposit remnant, still considerable, when the initial investigation ceased.

Coldrum’s length and nature, now that the notion of long and short Medway long barrows is no longer tenable (Ashbee, 1993b), is uncertain. Although the prostrate kerbstones, surrounding the barrow remnant, could indicate a monument comparable with the more modest of the series (Ashbee, 1984, 26; Kinnes, 1992, 66), it is possible that it was a phase of a long barrow of greater length. Such a barrow, and also the emmoundment within the stone kerb, is likely, as elsewhere, to have had quarry-scoops or -ditches, beyond an appropriate berm. Presumably they are deep beneath the spread mound and plough-soil, a reason why they have not as yet been revealed by aerial photography.

Coldrum’s chamber’s great rectilineal slabs are comparable with the Coffin Stone, which remains from a similar, even more grandiose, structure. This mode of construction sets them apart from the remainder which are similarly massive but built with mostly smaller, elongated, sarsen stones. Something of the character of Coldrum’s chamber is echoed in the selected, massive, rectangular kerbstones, which differ markedly from the more modest kerb blocks remaining at Addington. It is possible that the chambers of Coldrum and the Coffin Stone were of especial significance for their builders as rectilineal slabs of such magnitude may have been rare among the sarsen stone spreads. Slab construction, of modest dimensions was the method used for the Warren Farm chamber (Ashbee, 1993a, 84, P1.IV).

Environmental archaeology has not as yet been brought to bear upon the Medway’s long barrows. Remains of the ancient pre-barrow
soil may still remain at Coldrum and elsewhere and could provide evidence of tillage (Cornwall, 1966) or deterioration (Dimbleby, 1967, 150; Simmonds and Tooley, 1981, 106, 125-9). Pollen data from east Kent (Godwin, 1962) show the clearance of woodland from the Downs by Early Bronze Age times, if not before. Land snail fauna from the ancient soil beneath Julliberrie's Grave (Evans, 1972, 363; 1975, 120) indicate an open environment before the long barrow was built. This could, because of the formation of the great lynchet, have been the situation at Coldrum.

When discussing the excavation of the Chestnuts, the present writer (Ashbee, 1993a, 95) said that accelerated radiocarbon dates could have been obtained from the chamber's human remains, preserved in Maidstone's Museum, had it not been for the fire which destroyed much of them. Remnants of Coldrum's human bone deposit survive in London (British Museum (Nat. Hist.), in Cambridge (Duckworth Laboratory, Jessup, 1970, 110) and in Maidstone Museum. Accelerated radiocarbon techniques have made it possible for dates to be obtained from as little as a gram of bone (Gillespie, et. al., 1984; Gillespie and Gowlett, 1983). The excavation of modest ditch sections at Kit's Coty House and Addington might well produce animal bones or charcoal, datable material.

The Medway's stone-built long barrows had close affinity with the timbered earthen series (Manby, 1970, 21; Clarke, 1982, 28; Ashbee, 1984, 45-54). Such constructions were sometimes replaced by stone (Ashbee, 1984, xxiv; Britnall and Savory, 1984, 53, fig. 14, 146; Whittle, 1991), illustrating enhancement for a similar purpose. At Haddenham, in Cambridgeshire (Hodder and Shand, 1988, Shand and Hodder, 1990; Morgan, 1990) a rectangular timber-slab built long barrow chamber, preserved by anaerobic conditions, matches in principle and plan the Medway's stone chambers. Here, however, suitable stone was available and may have been used from the first. Nonetheless, the possibility of megalithic enhancement by the Medway should not be overlooked.

Since James Fergusson (1872, 117, end map), a northern European mainland origin has been envisaged for the Kentish megalithic long barrows (Ashbee, 1993a, 57), notably Coldrum (Piggott, 1935, 122, fig. 4). The northern polished flint axe from Julliberrie's Grave (Piggott, 1939; 1955, 101) gave substance to this notion. When first built they would have resembled European mainland Linear Pottery long houses (Ashbee, 1982) as did their earthen analogues (Ashbee, 1966, 31, fig. 9) of similar intent. The proximity of the indigenes to the Neolithic Linear Pottery people, only fifty miles away, across the Dover Straits, brought about, in the natural course of time, the
group's construction (Alexander, 1978; Sherratt, 1990). They are likely to have been some of the first of their kind, preceding the long barrows of the Sussex Downs, Wessex and the distant Cotswold-Severn area (Ashbee, 1984; Darvill, 1982).

Coldrum has suffered from early, largely unpublished, excavation, as well as sporadic unrecorded safeguarding and restoration. Nonetheless, the chamber's excavation in 1910, and the further work in 1922, was superior to many undertakings at that time, and a not entirely unsatisfactory record was made. Many problems, however, remain; the flanking ditches, length and environmental considerations, are pertinent.

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APPENDIX: PLANS OF COLDRUM

(1) Mark Noble, c. 1810 (Evans, 1950, 59). This cannot be traced;

(2) Beale Poste, c. 1843 (Evans, 1949, 137), plans, sketches, and a reconstruction which presents three chambers;

(3) Benjamin Harrison, 10 April, 1864. In a missing notebook, a sketch-plan and a record of the dimensions of the side-stones of the chamber (Harrison, 1928, 50)

(4) E.H.W. Dunkin, c. 1870. A not inaccurate plan showing the fallen kerb-stones, visible at that time, and the chamber. The slope and its fallen stones are not shown (Dunkin, 1871, 79, Pl. X, 5)

(5) A.L. Lewis, July 1870. A sketch plan, reproduced at a scale of 15 feet to one inch, which considers the fallen kerb-stones as a circle. The chamber's side-stones and something of its rear are indicated although any remnants of the barrow were not detected. Larking's retaining wall of flint is noted as 10 ft. in height and two of the stones at the slope bottom are noted as upright and leaning. There is also an indication of the brushwood cover of the slope (Lewis, 1873-6, opp. 512);

(6) Flinders Petrie, c. 1870. He observed of his plan (1880, 16, opp.) that none of the fallen stones on the eastern side were surveyed, except for the two northern; the rest only sketched. The side-slabs of the chamber are noted as upright while, on the fallen stones of the kerb, arrows show the direction of their dip;

(7) George Payne (1893, 137-40, Pl. xxv). Plan made on 20 August, 1892, by Major A.O. Green, Instructor in Survey, Royal Engineers. The character of the slope is shown by hachuring and fewer fallen stones are visible than in later surveys. There is also an elevation of the chamber within which dividing slabs are apparent. Accurate depiction of the kerb and the fallen stones show their character and direction of dip;

(8) F.J. Bennett (1907, 47, opp.), an undated sketch plan with a numbering system for the stones and the slope indicated by hachuring. The monument is considered as a circle;

(9) E.W. Filkins, 27 March, Easter 1910. The stones were surveyed and plotted and the nature of the slope indicated. Something of the slighting incut can be seen. There is also a section of the immediate slope as well as one of the nature of the field system upon which the monument stands. This eminently accurate plan has been successively reproduced for much of this century (Bennett, 1913, Plan C);
(10) O.G.S. Crawford (1924, Pls. 1,2), reproduction of plan of E.W. Filkins (9);

(11) R.F. Jessup (1930, 74), reproduction of plan by E.W. Filkins (9);

(12) Stuart Piggott (1935, 120, fig. 4, D), plan after O.G.S. Crawford (1924, Pls. 1,2);

(13) G.E. Daniel (1950, 81, fig. 22,3) reproduction of plan after F.J. Bennett (1913, Plan C);

(14) J.H. Evans (1950, fig. 3) an accurate plan by W.G. Gitsham made in 1949. It depicts the stones unearthed by E.W. Filkins. Its character shows the manner in which the prescriptions of E.W. Filkins were followed;

(15) R.F. Jessup (1970, 109, fig. 35), plan after Evans (1950, fig. 3);

(16) R. Holgate (1981a, fig. 5), plan after Gitsham (14), slope hachured;

(17) R. Holgate (1981b, 224, fig. 2). plan as 16;

(18) B. Philp and M. Dutto (1985, 2, fig. 2), a re-survey and trapezoidal barrow outline indication. Only the top of the slope is shown;

(19) P. Drewett, et. al. (1988, 57, 2.8), plan after Holgate.