

THE ROUND BARROWS OF EAST KENT

By P. ASHBEE, F.S.A., and G. C. DUNNING, F.S.A.

IN East Kent there is a gradual widening of the Chalk plateau (Fig. 1), so that between the Stour and the Strait of Dover it reaches its greatest width. The dip slope extends almost to the limits of the former Wantsum channel, while chalk is the bedrock of Thanet. Much of the area is covered by "clay-with-flints", but in many places this is absent. The chalk country has a gently rolling, open character, and in a limited manner the environment resembles that of Salisbury Plain.

On, for the most part, the eminences of the district a number of round barrows have long been known. Many have been dug into, perhaps even in medieval times, when barrows were rifled for relics to stimulate the piety of the faithful¹ or for gold to swell royal coffers², but few records have been made. Those available range from the notice of "urns of earthenware" found when the Hackendown Banks, two barrows near Kingsgate, were opened in 1743, to the tolerably orderly account of the mid-nineteenth century excavation of the barrows at Ringwoud. The plan and section drawn to illustrate this report must be among the earliest of their kind in British archæology. There has not been, to date, a modern critical excavation of a round barrow in East Kent.

All the barrows appear to be, or were, of modest proportions. They are for the most part singly sited, but there are groups of two, three, and in one instance, perhaps four. The extent of the destruction of barrows in the region is not known. It is possible that fieldwork might reveal a few more single mounds, but it is unlikely that groups of any size would have escaped detection.

Digging has shown that certain barrows in the area are most probably Roman or Saxon. In the absence of excavation it is impossible to say how many mounds on the map and in the provisional list may be of this origin.

The importance of this little-known region lies in the fact that elements of advanced Early Bronze Age character, normally associated with the so-called Wessex Culture, are known from it. Also, geographically, it lies athwart the presumed trade routes linking Wessex

¹ Roger of Wendover, *Flowers of History* (Rolls Series, 1886, i, 109) ; cf. *V.C.H. Herts.*, I, 256-8.

² *Proc. Isle of Wight Nat. Hist. and Arch. Soc.*, III (1941), 185-6 ; Grinsell, *Ancient Burial Mounds of England*, 110. Nascent antiquarianism may have been the reason for the opening of a large barrow at Barham, near Dover, in the time of Henry VIII ; see Appendix, (1).

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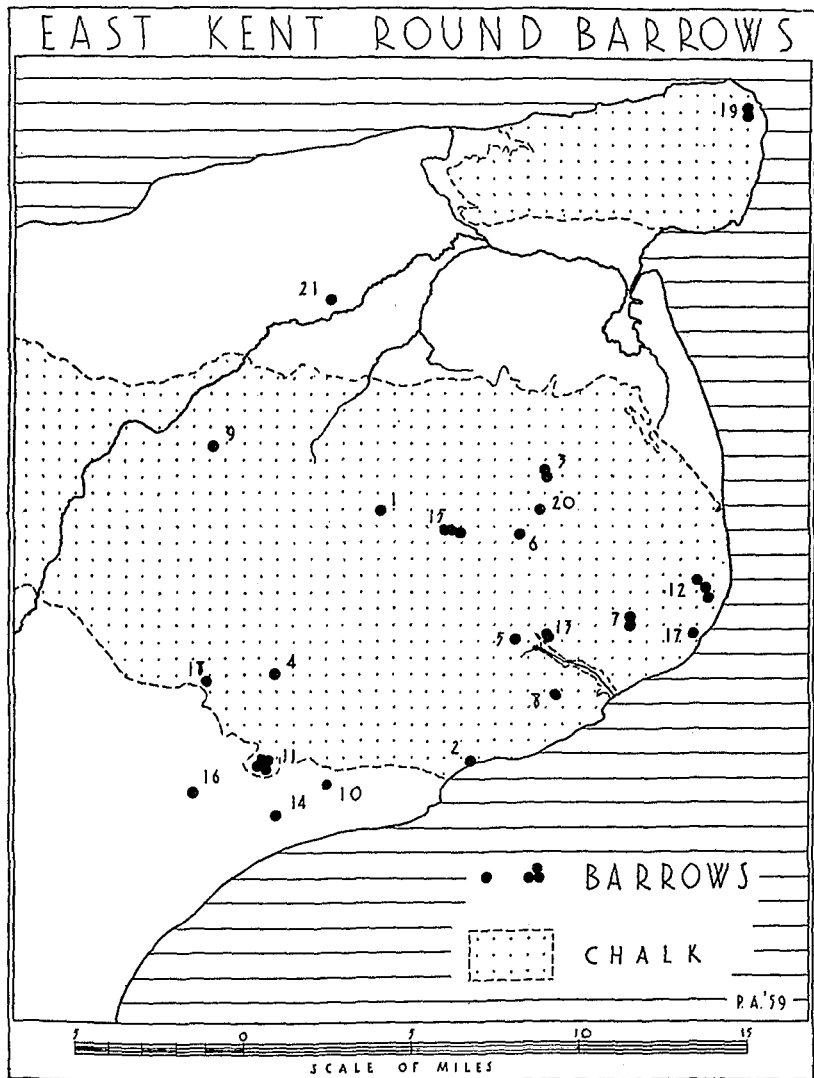


FIG. 1. Distribution of round barrows and the Chalk plateau in East Kent. The numbers refer to the list of barrows in the Appendix (p. 55).

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to the Netherlands and Germany. Indeed, in recent years traces of an immigrant group from Britain in the Netherlands, defined in part by urns similar in character to those from Capel-le-Ferne and Ringwold, have been isolated and defined.¹ While the Thames estuary was no doubt a principal route for such traffic as must have passed between the regions, an argument for passage along the coasts of Sussex and Kent, and so to the Netherlands and beyond, could be to some extent sustained.

We may now discuss some of the more characteristic finds from the barrows of East Kent.

Faience beads accompanied the Ringwold burials beneath an oval bowl barrow. There were three small segmented beads of light green colour, and one oblate bead of the same material and colour. The four urns, each of which was inverted over a cremation, in all perhaps the burials of a specific social group, were in graves beneath the barrow. One urn contained, besides the cremation, a miniature vessel, and another urn contained two miniature vessels, one of which is alleged to have contained a burnt substance, and the faience beads.

Of considerable importance is a slotted "incense" cup (Fig. 2)

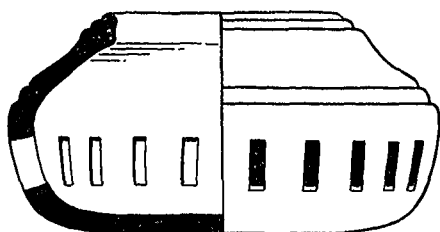


FIG. 2. Slotted cup from Tilmanstone ($\frac{1}{2}$).

from a small barrow, which apparently contained an inhumation, destroyed during an extension of Tilmanstone colliery early in the century. Another very similar cup is known from Luddington Wood, between Bekesbourne and Littlebourne.² Whether or not this latter vessel was from a barrow is not known. Penwork on the original sketch, on which Fig. 2 is based, is suggestive of lines of cord ornament below the rim and above the shoulder, but there can be no certainty on this point.

The records of cinerary urns are, with few exceptions, unfortunately rather meagre. In Canterbury Museum is a large fragment of overhanging-rim urn, possibly from a destroyed barrow at Stodmarsh,³

¹ *Palaeohistoria*, II, 1-131, III, 1-204; *Antiq. Journ.*, XXXV, 235-6.

² *Arch. Cant.*, XLVIII, 243.

³ *Arch. Cant.*, XLIII, 296. "Lutinton Wood" is Luddington or Luddenham Wood, the site of the Anglo-Saxon cemetery northeast of Howlets, now known as Rufflans. We are indebted to Mr. Frank Jenkins for this identification.

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while a similar urn was recovered from a barrow at Westbere. It is likely that the urns from the Nackington barrow were also of this type ; they appear to have been inverted over cremations, as at Ringwoud. All that is known of a barrow at Stowting is that it contained " portions of a British urn of reddish clay slackly burnt ", a description less informative than the " several urns made of coarse earthenware, capable of containing about two or three quarts each " that comprises the record of the contents of one of the Hackendown Banks in Thanet.

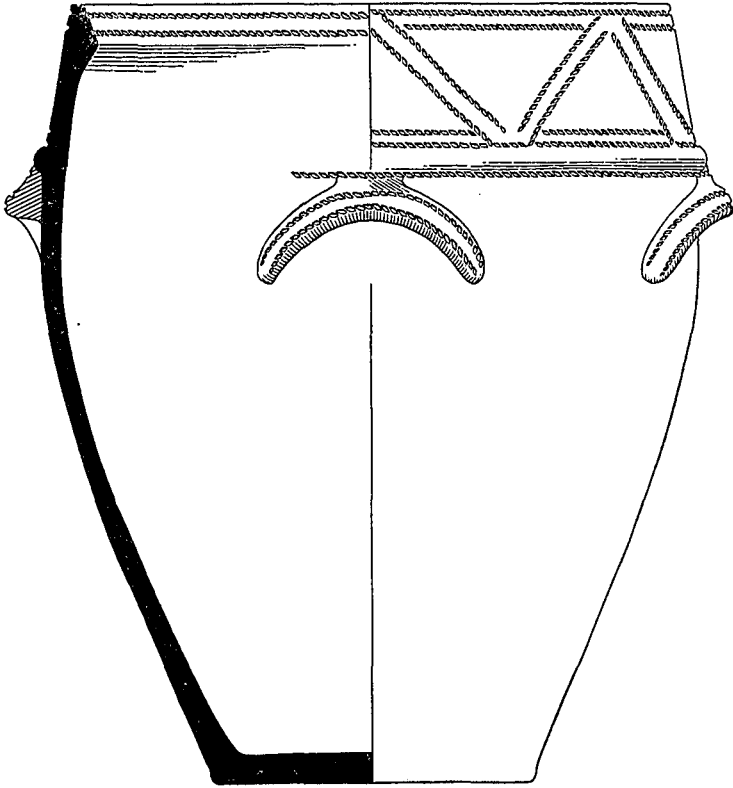


FIG. 3. Urn from Ringwoud ($\frac{1}{4}$).

One urn and part of another from the Ringwoud barrow are in Maidstone Museum. The urn illustrated (Fig. 3) has a zone of cord-impressed chevrons between the rim and the cordon, and also corded lines on the four applied " horseshoes " below the cordon, and on the top and inner slope of the rim. The pot, 16 in. high and $13\frac{1}{2}$ in. shoulder diameter, is made of coarse brown ware, black in the core, with flint grits.

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Another urn of this type was excavated from the top of the barrow at Capel-le-Ferne, on the south side of the Dover-Folkestone road, in 1952. It was inverted over a cremation, with the base only 12 in. below the top of the mound, and so clearly was a secondary burial inserted into the barrow in a hole lined at the bottom with large flints. This urn (Fig. 4) is biconical, with a constriction at the level of the applied "horseshoes". The upper part appears to have been plain,

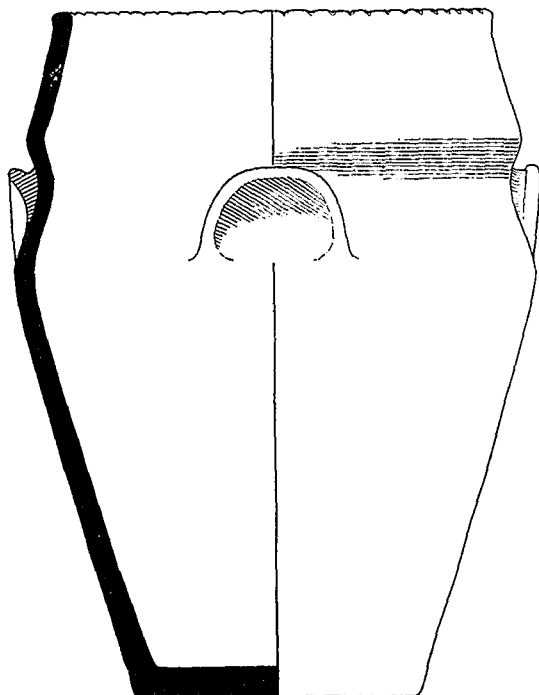


FIG. 4. Urn from Capel-le-Ferne ($\frac{1}{4}$).

apart from finger-nail marks on top of the rim. As reconstructed the pot is 14 in. high and $10\frac{3}{4}$ in. shoulder diameter, and is made of coarse brown ware, black in the core, with much flint grit. The urn has been deposited in Canterbury Museum by kind permission of the owner, Lieut.-Colonel R. L. Murray-Lawes.

The Ringwoud and Capel-le-Ferne urns belong to Abercromby's Type 3, Group 2, with applied "horseshoes" on the upper part.¹ The series has recently been the subject of a study² in which the conventional

¹ Abercromby, *Bronze Age Pottery*, II, 39.

² J. J. Butler and I. F. Smith, "Razors, Urns and the British Middle Bronze Age", University of London Institute of Archaeology, *Twelfth Annual Report* (1956), 20-52.

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late dating is shown to be without foundation. It now seems clear that these urns appeared at the latest immediately after the end of the floruit of the Wessex Bronze Age, as indeed the association of faience beads with the Ringwold urn has long suggested.

The applied "horseshoes" on these urns fall into two classes; shallow crescents, as on the Ringwold urn amongst others, and deeper and more penannular ornaments as seen on a small series chiefly from Wiltshire and on an urn from Holland.¹ In the paper already quoted it is suggested that the decorative features of Southern relief-decorated urns, namely Type 3, Groups 1 and 2, and all the Deverel-Rimbury urns, excluding the Globular series, originate from Late Neolithic pottery of the Rinyo-Clacton class. More recently a generic relationship has been shown between certain horseshoe-handled urns in Dorset and food-vessels,² which brings yet another element into the complexity. Although precisely similar horseshoes are not to be found amongst the motifs of the earlier series, it is claimed that they fit reasonably into this background.

The significance of faience beads is well known,³ and their integral role in Wessex scarcely needs emphasis. It seems likely that the deposition of such beads in graves was a custom observed for but a brief time, which gives close limits to the estimated age of objects associated with them.

Less well known are the general affinities of slotted "incense" cups such as those from Tilmanstone and Lutinton Wood. A cup of this type accompanied a cremation in the great bell-barrow Wilsford G.8, near Stonehenge.⁴ Also in the grave were two of the celebrated gold-bound amber discs,⁵ a gold-covered conical button with V-perforation, gold ingot-torque pendant,⁶ a halberd pendant, a circular bone object (probably a split cranial roundel) covered with thin gold, and two amber pendants. This assemblage is usually considered to be one of the richest groups from a female burial.⁷

Outside Wiltshire four slotted cups are known from the coastal regions of Hampshire and Sussex. On Hengistbury Head, Barrow I produced a cup in association with small gold cones, amber beads, and a halberd pendant.⁸ Another slotted cup accompanied a gold covered

¹ *Ibid.*, 41, fig. 8.

² *Proc. Dorset Nat. Hist. and Arch. Soc.*, LXXXI (1959), 118-9.

³ *Arch.*, LXXXV, 203-52; *Antiq. Journ.*, XXXI, 25-31; *Proc. Prehist. Soc.*, XXII, 37-84; *Ipek*, 17 (1943-8), 43-6.

⁴ *Proc. Prehist. Soc.*, IV, 105 (no. 71), pl. IX.

⁵ The significance of these is discussed by Prof. V. G. Childe in *Festschrift für Otto Tschumi* (1948), 70-6.

⁶ Compare with Ebert, *Reallexikon*, II, taf. 192.

⁷ University of London Institute of Archaeology, *Tenth Annual Report* (1954), 53.

⁸ Bushe-Fox, *Hengistbury Head Report*, 16, pl. III.

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V-perforated button, and amber and shale beads in a cremation that may well have remained from a destroyed disc-barrow on Portsdown, near Portsmouth,¹ excavated in 1948. Two more cups are known from the South Downs in Sussex, where they probably came from destroyed barrows; one is from Lancing and the other from Clayton Hill.²

The Buckland hoard of bronzes must be considered with the foregoing. The hoard was found in 1856 in a brick field on the Union Road, Buckland, near Dover, but it was not published until 1938.³ Apparently it consisted of three flanged axes and a short-bladed tanged spearhead of the form usually termed "Class I".⁴ Two of the axes have decoration characteristic of the type, while two have an incipient stop-ridge.

The Buckland hoard is an example of the hoards, votive or prestige, current at this time.⁵ The blade of the spearhead is difficult to match among the examples of this type extant. The fluting of the blade suggests a distant affinity with certain Irish early socketed examples,⁶ though their methods of finish differ widely.

A flanged axe in Liverpool Museum is reputed to have been found in 1856, at Buckland also.⁷ Whether or not it was associated with the hoard is not known. A heavy, flanged and wide-bladed axe in part corroded was found near Reculver⁸ in 1854, while a flanged axe of atypical form from Wye Down is possibly an import from Northern Europe.⁹

Also relevant in the present context are a number of Scandinavian flint axes and daggers from the area.¹⁰ One, indeed, was recovered from the core of Julliberrie's Grave,¹¹ the long barrow at Chilham. Besides this, there is a similar axe from Canterbury,¹² and two more from Ramsgate.¹³ A dagger was allegedly found at Ramsgate at the same time as the axe.

These thin-butted and expanded cutting-edged flint axes, and the flint daggers which are copies of metal daggers in use in Central Europe are broadly, of Middle and Late Neolithic date in Northern Europe.¹⁴

¹ *The Portsmouth Reader*, 11 (1948), 39. A full report is in preparation.

² Curwen, *Arch. Sussex* (1954 ed.), 157, pl. XII, 5 and Fig. 44.

³ *Proc. Prehist. Soc.*, IV, 283-4.

⁴ *Arch.*, LXI, 471.

⁵ *Op. cit.* in note 13, 62 (list).

⁶ Coffey, *Bronze Age in Ireland* (1913) 29, Fig. 24.

⁷ Evans, *Bronze Implements*, 88; Jessup, *Arch. Kent*, 97, pl. V, 11.

⁸ Jessup, *Op. cit.*, 97.

⁹ *Arch. Cant.*, LXV, 182.

¹⁰ *Proc. Prehist. Soc.*, IV, 101, Fig. 16.

¹¹ *Antiq. Journ.*, XLX, 267.

¹² Jessup, *Op. cit.*, 52.

¹³ *Arch. Cant.*, XII, 14.

¹⁴ Childe, *Dawn of European Civilization* (1957 ed.), 175-202 for a general statement regarding the North.

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The general connections between the finds in Kent and in Wessex need no emphasis here, but serve to underline the relations between the two regions that have been discussed above.

The exotic elements which are a constant feature of the barrows clustered around Stonehenge¹ on the geographically transinsular Salisbury Plain show the nucleus of a society which, politically as well as culturally, must have dominated Southern Britain in the second millennium B.C. There are, however, satellite regions some way removed from Wessex, where to a lesser degree the same or similar elements are to be seen.² The material assembled in this paper demonstrates that East Kent should be associated with these.

APPENDIX

PROVISIONAL LIST OF BRONZE AGE ROUND BARROWS IN EAST KENT

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|--------------------|--|
| (1) BARHAM | Barrow opened in reign of Henry VIII. Sir Thomas Browne's <i>Works</i> (ed. Bohm, 1884), Vol. III, 244-5. |
| (2) CAPEL-LE-FERNE | Present paper, p. 52. |
| (3) EASTRY | Two barrows east of earthwork at Shingleton. <i>V.C.H.</i> (Kent), I, 331. |
| (4) ELHAM | In barrow at Rhodes Minnis "Capt. North found sherd of Bronze Age pot, bones and flints". <i>K.A.S. Index</i> . |
| (5) EWELL | Single mound shown on Kent 6 in. O.S. Map, LXVII, N.E. |
| (6) EYTHORNE | A large barrow near Eythorne Court. <i>V.C.H.</i> (Kent), I, 331. |
| (7) GUSTON | Two barrows on Famine Down, one destroyed by light railway. Kent 6 in. O.S. Map, LXII, N.E. |
| (8) HOUGHTON | A barrow on Whinless Down. <i>Arch. Cant.</i> , LI, 211. |
| (9) NACKINGTON | Iffin's Wood: a bowl barrow, still extant and much mutilated, covered five overhanging-rim urns inverted over cremations. <i>Arch.</i> , XXX, 57; <i>Arch. Cant.</i> , IX, 18. |

¹ S. Piggott in *Aspects of Archaeology* (Essays presented to O. G. S. Crawford, 1951), 287, Fig. 61.

² *Proc. Prehist. Soc.*, IV, 92. Aileen Fox, "The Broad Down (Farway) Necropolis and the Wessex Culture in Devon", *Proc. Devon Arch. Expl. Soc.*, IV (1948), 1-19. See also Paul Ashbee, "Some Wessex Barrow Forms in South-west England", *Proc. West Cornwall Field Club*, N.S.I. (1955-6), 132-5.

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- (10) NEWINGTON-NEXT-HYTHE A single barrow (no trace now exists). *V.C.H.* (Kent), I, 331.
- (11) POSTLING A small cemetery of four barrows on top of Tolsford Hill. *Arch. Cant.*, LXIII, 150 (called Brockman's Bushes in this account).
- (12) RINGWOULD Free Down: bowl barrows on the chalk excavated in 1872. No ditches were found. One barrow covered four inverted urns containing cremations. Miniature vessels and faience beads were also recovered from the urns. Another barrow yielded a fragment of cinerary urn only, while a third (the founder's barrow of this group?) covered a grave over which flint nodules had been heaped. This may have contained an inhumation burial (? contracted) accompanied by sea shells and an "ironstone" pebble (? iron pyrites). *Arch.*, XLV, 54; *Arch. Cant.*, IX, 21; Jessup, *Arch. Kent*, 119.
- (13) RIVER Several (two) barrows in a wood on the north side of the road at Temple Ewell. *V.C.H.* (Kent), I, 331. Kent 6 in. O.S. Map, LXVIII, N.W.
- (14) SALTWOOD A single barrow. *V.C.H.* (Kent), I, 331. (Kent 6 in. O.S. Map, XXVI, N.W., records a tower on the site of this barrow.)
- (15) SHEPHERDSWELL Three barrows, two of some size, set in a line. Faussett, *Invent. Sep.*, 121, 127.
- (16) STANFORD A barrow by the race-course. Dug into in 1931 and a scrap of red ochre found. K.A.S. *Index*.
- (17) ST. MARGARETS AT CLIFFE A barrow on Bay Hill contained the remains of a contracted burial associated with flint flakes and marine shells. *Proc. Soc. Antiq.*, X, 29-30; *V.C.H.* (Kent), I, 331.
- (18) STOWTING A barrow on Swingard Hill. Kent 6 in. O.S. Map, LVIII, N.W. This was the barrow opened by John Brent in 1870. *Proc. Soc. Antiq.*, V, 126; *Arch. Cant.*, IX, 20.
- (19) ST. PETERS Isle of Thanet. Hackendown Banks. "One of these banks was opened on the 23rd May, 1743, by Mr. Thomas Reed, owner of the lands, in the presence of many hundreds of people. A little below the surface were

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found several graves, cut out of the solid chalk, and covered with flat stones. They were not more than three feet in length, into which the bodies had been thrust, bent almost double. Several urns made of coarse earthenware, capable of containing about two or three quarts each, had been buried with them, which crumbled into dust on being exposed to the air. Ashes and charcoal were found in them. Many of the bones were large, but not gigantic, and, for the part, perfectly sound. In June 1865, the smaller tumulus was opened, by order of the late Lord Holland, who had then purchased the lands. The appearances were much like the former, with this exception only, that no urns were found." *Old Guide Book*, 1794. *Guide to the Isle of Thanet*, 1883-4, 245.

(20) **TILMANSTONE**

A barrow 30 feet in diameter was surrounded by a ditch. An inhumation burial was found near the centre, and unspecified bones of animals and birds were recovered. Presumably from this mound, but exactly where is not stated, came the slotted "incense" cup. *Kent Times and Chronicle*, 18th March, 1911; Whitley MSS, K.A.S. Library; Jessup, *Arch. Kent*, 122.

(21) **WESTBERE**

A barrow on Skinner Hill contained an overhanging-rim urn, presumably with a cremation. *Journ. Brit. Arch. Assoc.*, XXII, 241.