

TWO BURIAL GROUPS OF BELGIC AGE, HOTHFIELD  
COMMON, NEAR ASHFORD.

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*Map Ref. : O.S. 1 in. to the Mile, Military Edition 413642, Sheet 126.*

In the course of excavation of a drainage sump during the last week of August 1942, pottery was discovered by soldiers engaged in the digging. I arrived at the excavation within twenty minutes of the discovery, but by that time the urn A and the beaker B (see field sketch, Plate I, and photographs) had been removed in fragmentary condition from their original position. Questioning of the diggers, however, revealed the original position of the two vessels. Excavation was stopped, and the proposed drainage sump was begun again in a new position one yard east of the original pit.

Scientific investigation of the first digging was then begun, and it was found that in the course of excavation about two-thirds of the urn C had been dug away on the eastern side of the pit, leaving one-third of the vessel *in situ*. All four of the vessels discovered were much broken by the action of fern roots which were found growing through them; urn C was in a much more fragmentary condition than urn A, and despite careful hand excavation the remaining third of this urn was extracted in quite small pieces.

Examination of the remaining third of urn C *in situ* revealed the presence within of a quantity of calcined bone embedded in the sandy loam comprising the soil in which the vessels were buried.

Examination of the southern side of the pit revealed that a fourth vessel (beaker D) had been largely cut away in the course of excavation. The remaining portion of this beaker was in a very fragmentary condition.

Upon my return to the site on the following day I found that the soldiers engaged in the digging had put back the spoil into the original pit and left the site in a neat and soldier-like condition. This necessitated the re-excavation of the pit and the sifting of the whole of the spoil through a  $\frac{1}{2}$ -in. meshed sieve. This work was begun, and I examined each sieving, retrieving the fragments of the four vessels as they came to light. Among the easily recognizable fragments of the four vessels was one fragment apparently from another vessel, being of a baked clay of a reddish appearance, quite unlike the greyish-black earthenware of the other vessels. This fragment shows signs of the junction of a lip with the body of a vessel.

Comprehensive examination of the whole of the original digging being finished, it was decided to enlarge the pit all round in the hope of

discovering (i) the remainder of the red clay vessel, or (ii) the presence of other burial groups or other remains. Enlargement of the pit for a width of one foot all round failed to reveal the presence of anything else except a quantity of iron slag, which abounded at a depth of 18 in. in the stratum in which the vessels were buried.

A trial trench 2 ft. wide by 2 ft. deep and 9 ft. in length was then dug running south from the south-east corner of the pit, but with no result. The digging was then filled in and left (Plate I).

#### GENERAL REMARKS.

During the course of sifting many spherical pellets of slag of varying diameter were found scattered at all levels between 6 in. and 2 ft. below ground level.

At no point was the excavation of the pit carried to a greater depth than 2 ft., as at this depth a natural and undisturbed bed of yellow sand was encountered.

The new drainage sump dug by the side of the original pit and carried to a depth of 7 ft. revealed nothing save further deposits of slag at 18 in. depth. A trench 2 ft. deep and 18 in. wide running for an approximate distance of 60 yards across the site from east to west revealed nothing except scattered layers of the same material at 18 in. depth. Other drainage sumps and trenches dug in the near vicinity of the original pit revealed only more traces of the same. Isolated diggings of sumps and about two miles of trench for water pipes over an area of some acres on Hothfield Common have failed to reveal any further trace of the remotest archaeological interest.

My inference is that the four vessels represent an isolated burial group, and do not form part of a generally used burial ground.

#### RECONSTRUCTION OF VESSELS.

All fragments were cleaned with cold water and soft brush.

URN A. Almost completely reconstructed (joints secured with "Durofix").

Beaker B. Completely reconstructed save for small fragments of lip and base (joints secured with "Durofix").

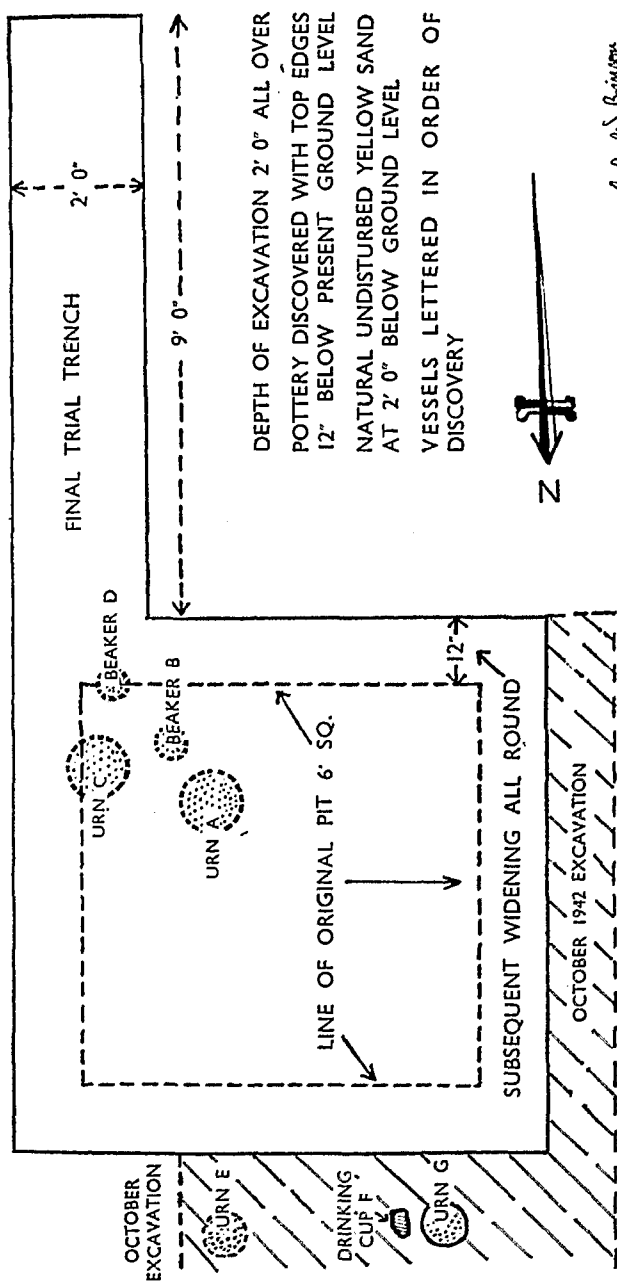
URN C. No attempt at reconstruction made.

BEAKER D. Whole of circular foot and part springing of sides reconstructed (joints secured with "Croid").

Not having the necessary laboratory facilities at my disposal I did not attempt reconstruction of the urn C which was in many fragments

FIELD SKETCH PLAN SHOWING LIMIT OF EXCAVATION

AUGUST 1942



DEPTH OF EXCAVATION 2' 0" ALL OVER  
 POTTERY DISCOVERED WITH TOP EDGES  
 12" BELOW PRESENT GROUND LEVEL  
 NATURAL UNDISTURBED YELLOW SAND  
 AT 2' 0" BELOW GROUND LEVEL  
 VESSELS LETTERED IN ORDER OF  
 DISCOVERY



*John G. Brinsford*

B. P. MOBILE  
 ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
 UNIT

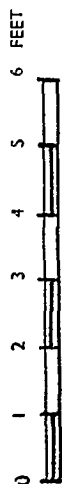


PLATE I.

and decided to cease work on beaker D so that a better reconstruction might be undertaken with use of proper equipment.

At this stage I decided to hand over the vessels together with the associated finds to R. J. Geering, Esq., Local Secretary of the Kent Archæological Society.

#### DESCRIPTION OF FINDS.

1. URN A. Almost completely reconstructed burial urn of greyish-black burnt wheel-turned pottery. Overall diameter outside of lip to outside of lip  $9\frac{1}{4}$  in. Height 8 in. Maximum girth 12 in. diameter. Plate II.
2. BEAKER B. Completely reconstructed beaker of greyish-brown burnt wheel-turned pottery. Overall diameter at lip, which is widest portion of vessel, 7 in. Diameter of base  $3\frac{3}{8}$  in. Height  $5\frac{5}{8}$  in. This beaker is of far greater delicacy in design and execution than the accompanying vessels, and is of the shape of an inverted bell decorated with four bands spaced at diminishing intervals from top to bottom, each band being separated from the next by a delicate cordon in low relief. Between the bottom band and the foot the line of the base is sharply retracted. The lip of the beaker projects at an approximate angle of  $45^\circ$  for a distance of  $\frac{1}{4}$  in. Plate III.
3. URN C. Fragments of a burial urn. This vessel is of the same greyish-black burnt wheel-turned pottery as urn A, but has a decorative band below the lip consisting of an undulating double line incised in the surface, further decorated by a single circular indentation at the apex and base of each undulation (see photograph). The size and proportion of this urn are much the same as urn A; the diameter at the lip is apparently about 9 in. Plate II.
4. BEAKER D. Partly reconstructed beaker of a coarser greyish-black pottery than urns A and C. Base 5 in. in diameter, with pronounced foot. The edges of the fragments of this vessel are much eroded. Despite the most careful search and sifting, no fragments of the lip of this vessel were found.
5. One fragment of coarse reddish burnt pottery with signs of lip springing from body of vessel.
6. A quantity of spherical pellets of slag of varying diameter.
7. A quantity of partly smelted iron slag typical of the general deposit at 18 in. depth, in which the vessels were discovered.
8. Flint flakes adjacent to the burial group.
9. Very fragmentary calcined bone from urns A and C.

PLATE II.

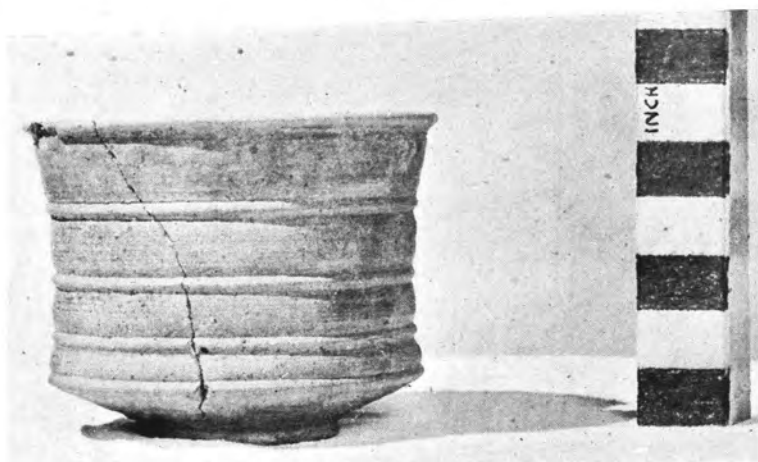


URN "A."



FRAGMENT OF LIP OF URN "C" SHOWING INCISED DECORATION.

PLATE III.



BEAKER "B."



URN "G."

## REPORT ON FURTHER EXCAVATION.

Further excavation on this same site, in a position between the original pit and the 60-yard trench already referred to, led to the discovery of three more vessels.

Soldiers engaged in drainage works turned up an urn E ; at the time of discovery over half of the vessel was broken and the fragments dispersed in the spoil. I was not advised of the discovery until the drainage work was completed. Upon the lower part of the vessel being handed to me I made arrangements for the spoil to be sifted in order to recover the remainder of the fragments of the vessel.

Examination of the newly-dug pit revealed the presence of the lower part of a small drinking vessel F protruding from the side. Upon the removal of this portion it was found to constitute about half of the whole vessel. Search by sifting was instituted for the recovery of the missing parts of this vessel which had been cut away by vertical shovel digging on the side of the pit. The remains of this vessel indicated that it had been buried lying on its side.

Further examination of the pit wall immediately adjacent to the drinking vessel led to the discovery of an urn G which was found to be quite intact and was removed by careful hand excavation. It was found to be three parts full of calcined bone and had been filled with sand from the stratum in which it was buried. There was no cover to this vessel, and nothing save bone fragments was discovered in it.

It was subsequently ascertained that a considerable quantity of the spoil from the digging had been carted away and used for filling ruts in earth roads. Examination of this resulted in many fragments of the two broken vessels being scattered over a wide area. Some pieces have been recovered from the ruts, but portions of the two vessels must be considered as irretrievably lost.

All three vessels were at the same depth as those mentioned in the first part of this report.

## DESCRIPTION OF VESSELS.

URN E. This vessel was made of a coarse pottery and is not so well finished as the accompanying specimens. The vessel when handed over to the Society's representative was only partly reconstructed and many of the fragments are missing. Height approximately estimated at 10 in. ; diameter at base 4 in. ; diameter from lip to lip  $6\frac{1}{2}$  in. An interesting and unusual feature is the presence of two holes  $\frac{1}{2}$  in. in diameter situated 2 in. apart, each  $\frac{3}{4}$  in. below the lip of the vessel. Doubtless a corresponding pair of holes would have existed in the lost portion of the lip on the opposite side of the vessel. This suggests that the vessel was not purposely made for

the interment, but was a vessel in normal domestic use before being used for its ultimate purpose.

**SMALL URN F.** This vessel is of delicate design and perfect technical execution. It is fashioned in the same type of pottery as beaker B and urn G and is wheel-turned. Height  $4\frac{3}{4}$  in.; diameter of base  $2\frac{1}{8}$  in.; diameter from lip to lip  $3\frac{1}{2}$  in. A full-sized half-section and elevational sketch is attached to this report. Plate IV.

**URN G.** This urn is in perfect condition and is of wheel-turned burnt pottery of the same type as beaker B. Height  $7\frac{1}{2}$  in.; diameter at base approximately  $3\frac{3}{8}$  in.; diameter at lip  $4\frac{1}{2}$  in.; maximum girth

### SECTION AND ELEVATION OF SMALL URN (F).

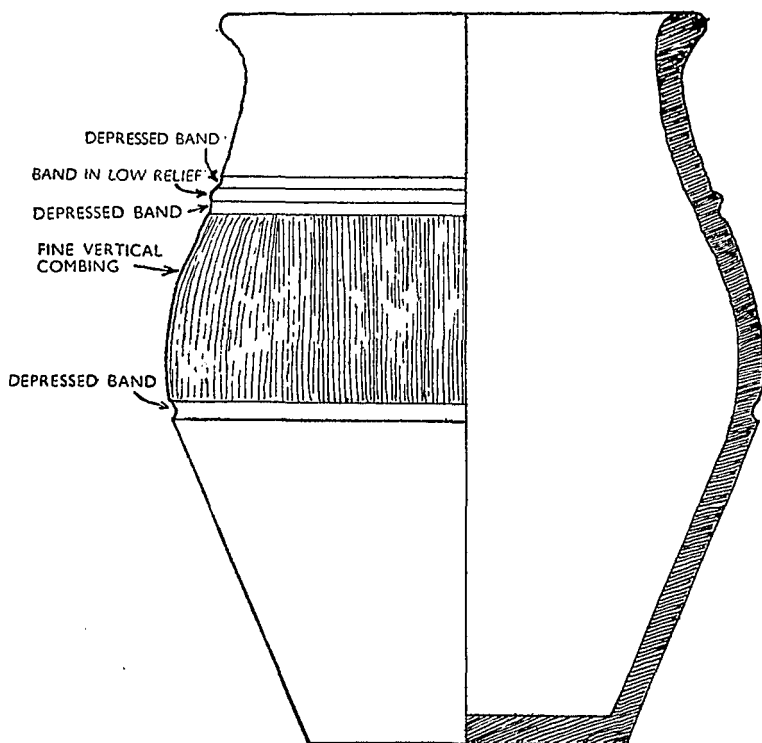


PLATE IV.

*John G. S. Brown*  
- L.T.R.E.

B. P. MOBILE  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
UNIT



(at height of 4 in.) is approximately 8 in. The lip is small and delicately moulded. The foot of the vessel is boldly moulded. On the shoulder between the lip and the maximum girth there is a decorative band of two horizontal incised lines. Plate III.

#### GENERAL REMARKS.

The fact that the second discovery of pottery lay within 10 feet of the first would seem to indicate that the first discovery represented an isolated burial group is now refuted. From the fact that nothing was found in many excavations on the site it would seem that the burial area is somewhat limited. There is, however, an area immediately adjacent to the south-west of the original diggings in which subsequent excavation may prove fruitful. This lies between the original diggings and the main road. (Mr. R. J. Geering has been shown this site.)

Further consideration of the types of vessel discovered would seem to confirm that both groups are Belgic. The execution of the vessels is typical of the high degree of technical skill which characterized the products of the potters of the Belgic tribes in occupation of this part of the country.