

A NEOLITHIC PIT AND OTHER FINDS FROM WINGHAM,
EAST KENT

By ERNEST GREENFIELD

With Contributions from : A. M. ApSimon, G. C. Dunning, H. Godwin,
and others.

INTRODUCTION (See Fig. 1)

THE possibility of out-lying features of the Roman villa¹ at Wingham (Nat. Grid Ref. : 1 inch O.S. Map 173.TR 240/572) being discovered during the laying of pipelines, caused the Inspectorate of Ancient Monuments of the Ministry of Works to arrange for the observation of the trench passing close to the site. The work of bringing the main sewer to the village was carried out under two schemes, "A" and "B". Scheme "B" was the length of pipeline running through low-lying pasture and cultivated ground on the western edge of the village, over the chalk promontory on which the church stands, to the now disused East Kent Light Railway. Work on the scheme started on 20th April, 1955 and continued for six weeks ; during this period the trench between MHs 2 and 8 was completed ; it was then decided that the remaining section between MHs 8 and 11 would not be dug until some future date. The decision to watch the work was well rewarded by the discovery of a shallow pit containing Neolithic pottery and associated objects. Other objects of Roman, Medieval and later date were also found.

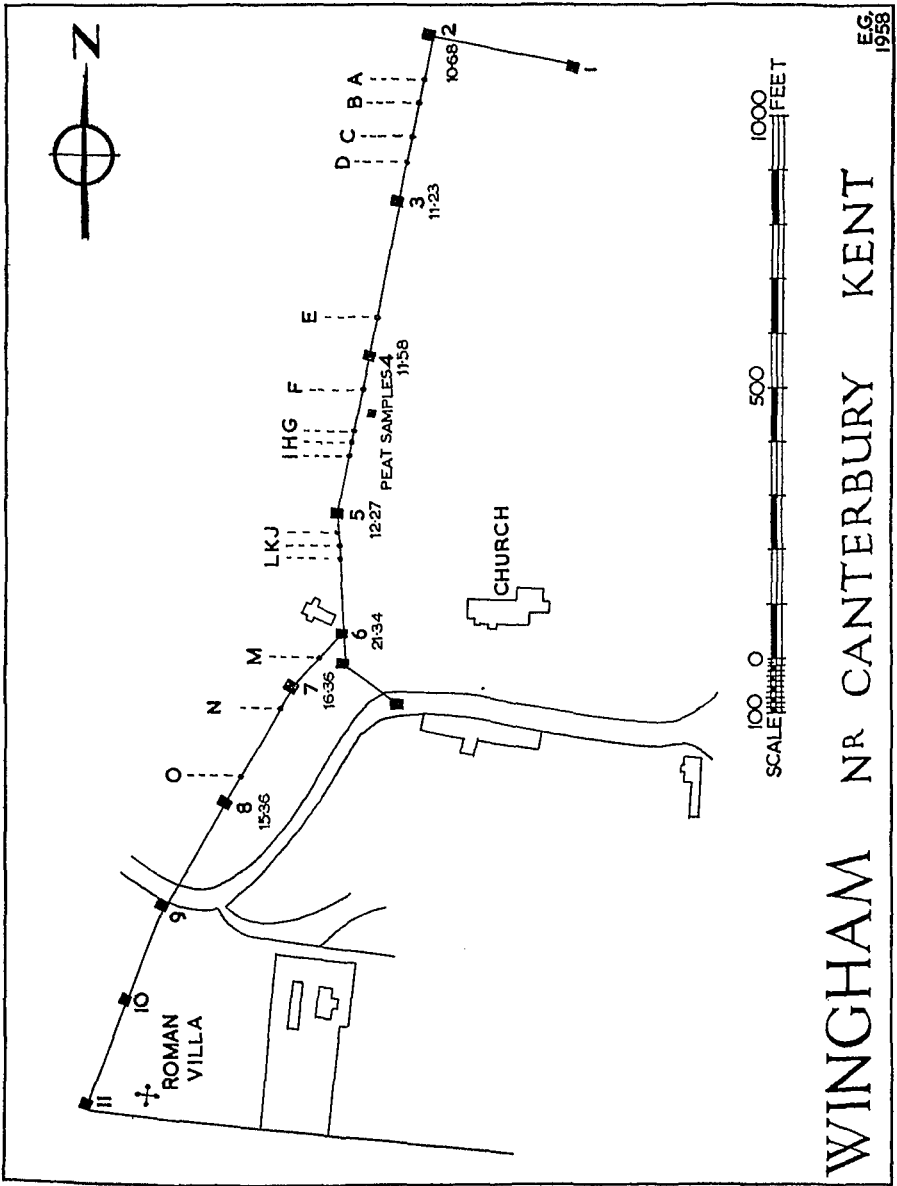
The site is on the east side of the Little Stour valley floor " where peaty silt overlies Upper Chalk with gravel intervening in places. The rising ground to the east of the valley is composed of Upper Chalk to approximately MH 6 with Brickearth and ' Hill-wash ' resting on Upper Chalk from there northwards ".²

The chalk surface contained many hollows ; these were in part filled with mixed broken chalk and flint and it was above this that peat had formed in varying depths. The main deposit of peat which reached a depth of 9 feet at MH 5, was first found some 25 feet south of MH 3 : it ended against the rising chalk surface 45 feet south of MH 5. In view of the opportunity offered by the exposed section Wye College were invited to undertake an analysis of the peat. Samples were

¹ " A Roman Villa at Wingham " by G. Dowker, F.G.S. Part 1. *Arch. Cant.*, XIV, pp. 134-9. Part 2. *Arch. Cant.*, XV, pp. 351-7.

² Information from Mr. J. G. Smart, Geological Survey and Museum.

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E.G.
1958

WINGHAM NR CANTERBURY KENT

Fig. 1.

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taken of the section exposed in a pumping hole, 96 feet from MH 4 and 9 feet 6 inches to the east of the trench. (See "Peat" below.)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Throughout the work the writer received much kindness and help from the owner of the site Mrs. B. L. Sage and Mr. C. Sage, and from the Resident Engineer Mr. L. W. Lister. Thanks are due to the Eastry Rural District Council for permission to reproduce part of their plan : to Dr. H. Godwin for his work and report on the peat : to Mr. A. M. ApSimon for his report on the Neolithic pottery, the antler comb, bone point and the flints ; to Mr. G. C. Dunning for his advice and help with the Medieval and later pottery ; to Mr. B. R. Hartley for his identification of the Samian sherd : to Mrs. E. M. Minter and Miss Elizabeth Meikle for drawing the Neolithic pottery : to Miss Meikle for drawing the antler comb, the bone point and the Roman knife plate : to Mr. P. Ewence for drawing the stone rubber and quern : to Mrs. E. M. Minter and Mr. L. G. Harris for drawing the Roman, Medieval and later pottery : to Mr. L. Biek for arranging the identification of the finds and for his advice : to Mr. Paul Ashbee for his research on other Neolithic sites in Kent and to Dr. S. G. Brade Birks, Dr. West, Dr. Neil and Mr. W. Lee for their help on the site during the examination of the peat.

NEOLITHIC

(See D on Plan, Fig. 1 and Section, Fig. 2)

Neolithic occupation was confirmed by the presence of a pit, roughly oval in shape measuring 5 ft. by 2 ft. and 10 in. in depth cut into the underlying chalky water-laid soil (Layer 5). It was sealed by a layer of fine sandy water-laid loam (Layer 3).

The workmen had cut through the pit whose major axis was orientated E-W at right-angles to the trench, and had thrown the contents of the pit on their spoil heap. This was closely examined and pottery fragments, flints, animal bones, an antler comb, a bone point or awl and part of a saddle quern and rubber were recovered. On the east side of the trench part of the filling remained in situ and this was examined. It consisted of blackish sandy silt containing charcoal flecks, a few scraps of burnt clay, pottery sherds and flints.

At MH 4 a layer of calcined flint gravel was encountered at a depth of 4 ft. 5 in. from the surface, at the base of the peat (see above) and sealed down beneath the same (assumed) layer (3) of ash-grey sandy loam that covered the Neolithic deposit ; it extended in the trench for 35 ft. on the north side of the manhole. A pumping hole dug 10 feet away on the east side showed it continuing in that

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direction and there was no doubt that it spread beyond the west side of the trench as well. The gravel, which was heavily calcined, was mixed with black sooty soil and its average depth was 7 inches, tailing off at both ends. Conditions did not allow this layer to be extensively examined ; a continual flow of water hampered the work.

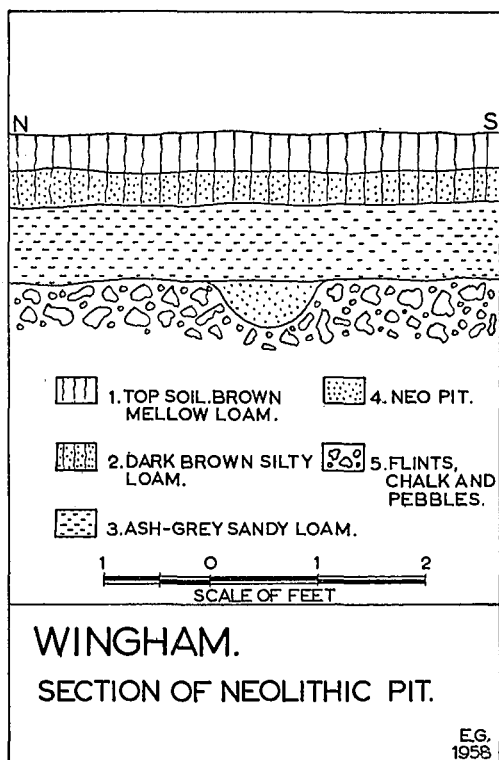


FIG. 2.

THE PEAT by Dr. H. Godwin

The peat bed encountered in the trench in the stretch including MH 4 and 5 was sampled at its deepest point and shown to comprise 230 cm. of organic detritus muds containing increasing amounts of mineral matter towards the bottom. Pollen analysis samples were secured throughout and subsequently analysed, and from these samples and larger bulk samples abundant fruits and seeds were also extracted and identified.

The situation and altitude of the site suggest that peat accumulation was initiated by the culmination of a rise in sea-level in Neolithic

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or post-Neolithic times : this caused formation of a calcareous fen or marsh which persisted up to and after Roman times. It was wettest in the early stages, but not apparently brackish save possibly very near the base.

As a means of dating, the pollen-diagrams are inadequate, and this must therefore rest upon archaeological evidence and possible radio-carbon assay.

The pollen-analyses show that throughout the time of peat deposition the neighbouring dry land had been largely clear of forest : the ratio of pollen of herbs to tree-pollen is high throughout and many genera of weeds and ruderal plants are recognizable, some of them dwarf species quite intolerant of any but very open habitats, such as the moonwort (*Botrychium lunaria*) and purging flax (*Linum catharticum*) and Parsley piert (*Aphanes arvensis*). Pollen of the ribwort plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*) is present at all levels, whilst that of cereals is more limited. Among the fruits and seeds (which are preponderantly of marsh and aquatic plants) there are a few weed species represented. There appears to be no indication of any change of agricultural practice through the time of formation of the deposit. It is interesting to note that pollen of beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) is present throughout, whilst that of lime (*Tilia cordata*) is only in the lower samples : this accords with the view that most of the peat is Sub-Atlantic in age.

More detailed consideration of the results must await publication elsewhere.

FINDS

The pottery, the antler comb, and the flints were submitted to Mr. A. M. ApSimon who reports as follows :

This is apparently the first substantial find of Western Neolithic pottery from Kent to be published, although Dr. Isobel Smith has recently suggested that the Grovehurst pot found with a flint sickle (Piggott, 1931) should be restored to this group (Childe and Smith, 1955, p. 228).

In the Wingham group seven distinct pots are represented by rim shards and there are a number of other shards, perhaps of other pots. It is clear none of the pots was complete when deposited. The prevalence of rim fragments is noticeable. The majority of "joining" fractures are fresh and probably recent, the other fractures are worn but not so much so as to suggest that the pottery had lain exposed to the weather before deposition.

The shapes are simple, all apparently being round bottomed bowls sloping in from rim to base, the rims either simple (Fig. 3:3), beaded (2), turned over (5, 6), out-turned (1), or flared (4, 7). There is no evidence of carination or shoulder, nor of lugs or handles of any sort.

Decoration is restricted to transverse fluting or rippling on the rim and the upper part of the inner surface (Fig. 3:4.6.7). Most of the pottery has a grey paste with much fine flint backing, most is very hard fired, the surfaces darker and varying from a matt surface with visible grits to a smooth burnished surface. This burnish varies from mere smoothing to a highly polished glossy finish.

This pottery does not appear to compare at all closely with any material known to me from Southern England. It is necessary for this to turn to the Neolithic pottery from Yorkshire barrows (Newbigin, 1937). Here can be found the "S" profile of 1 (Cf. Cowlam barrow 57, *Ibid.*, Fig. 2, but less rolled), the beaded rim of 2 (Kemp Howe, Fig. 2.4) and the turned over rims of 5 and 6 (Weaverthorpe barrow 42, Fig. 3.1 and Plate XVII, 1; Kemp Howe, Fig. 2.4 and Duggleby barrow 7, Plate XVII, 6—but this has a flatter topped rim).

The flared and fluted rims of 4 and 7 seem to have no exact parallel in Yorkshire, for both there and in Northern Ireland flared and fluted rims seem to belong to carinated and shouldered pots, apparently not present at Wingham. Turning to the south, the Neolithic pottery from Sussex is strikingly different. Highly burnished stonegritted wares are common in the later levels at Abingdon (Case 1956, p. 21-22) but there is no evidence to suggest a close relationship between this site and Wingham. The beaded rim of 2 can be paralleled at Maiden Castle (Wheeler, 1943, Fig. 26.6), but significant resemblances seem to end there, a shape as simple as 3 could perhaps be matched from almost any site.

The Wingham group seems then to be at present an isolated one. In view of the association with an antler comb it is instructive to observe that the pottery appears to belong neither to the Windmill Hill group (*s.s.*) nor to the Abingdon-Mildenhall group.

An antler comb has however been found in association with Neolithic pottery in Yorkshire.¹ It remains to be seen exactly what the likeness to the Yorkshire material implies.

In the face of diverse hypotheses concerning the dating, classification and derivation of British Early Neolithic cultures (Cf. Piggott, 1956, Case, 1956) it would seem to be rash to assert whether the Wingham pottery is earlier or later or whence it comes. I may however, be permitted to remark that the hard fabric and the high burnish of the best pieces (Mr. Case has remarked to me that he thinks these the finest of any British Neolithic pottery that he has seen) are very closely comparable with and indeed in every way reminiscent of specimens of early neolithic black burnished wares from the Mediterranean shown to me by Prof. J. D. Evans (Cf. Evans, 1958).

¹ "Neolithic Cultures of the British Isles." p. 118. Hanging Grimstone.

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SCHEDULE OF POTTERY (Fig. 3).

1. Round bottomed bowl with out-turned rim, thin (0.25 in.) ware with smooth grey-brown-black surfaces, contains fine flint grit.
2. Rim shard, thin black burnished ware.
3. Rim shards (fitting), upright rim with variable profile, ware contains a large amount of fine flint grit, which shows in patches on the outer surface, surfaces grey-brown smooth.
4. Rim shard, bowl with flared mouth, surfaces are brown-black, highly burnished, the ware contains fine flint grits. Fluting over the rim going well down inside the rim. The fluting is much more pronounced on this pot than on any of the others.
5. Rim and body shards of smooth burnished ware, with much medium to fine flint grit, surfaces grey-brown-black, inner surface darker and more highly burnished than the outer.
6. Rim and body shards, ware contains a great amount of flint gritting which shows on both faces. Surfaces are smooth, grey-brown-black and there is oblique fluting over the rim and well down inside.
7. Rim shard, flared as 4, medium to fine flint grit, shows through on the inner surface, surfaces are smooth, brown-black. Shallow fluting over the top of the rim.

THE ANTLER COMB (Fig. 3)

Made from part of a Red deer antler beam, original $9\frac{5}{8}$ in., diameter $2\frac{3}{8}$ in., length of teeth 2 in. Originally there were seven teeth but all are broken off close to the main stem. That the comb was complete before being broken by the workmen's tools is suggested by the fresh fractures when found. One tooth was recovered from the spoil heap and was found to fit one of the fractures. Deeply scored parallel striations of varying length occur from the base of the teeth, and are the result of cutting out the teeth with probably a sharp flint tool or flake. When found the comb was partly covered by a hard substance. This type has been found on a number of Western Neolithic sites in England (Piggott, 1954, p. 83) notably in causewayed camps but cannot be linked exclusively with any one variety of Western Neolithic pottery. The antler comb from Garton Slack barrow C.37 (Mortimer) found with a bowl of Piggott's "Grimston" ware (Newbigin, 1937, p. 208 and ref. there given) may be regarded as particularly significant since it is the Yorkshire neolithic pottery that has been compared to the Wingham material. Similar combs found in Belgium and Schleswig-Holstein have been discussed by Childe (1940, p. 41) and Piggott (1956, p. 99). They are generally considered to have been used for dressing hides.

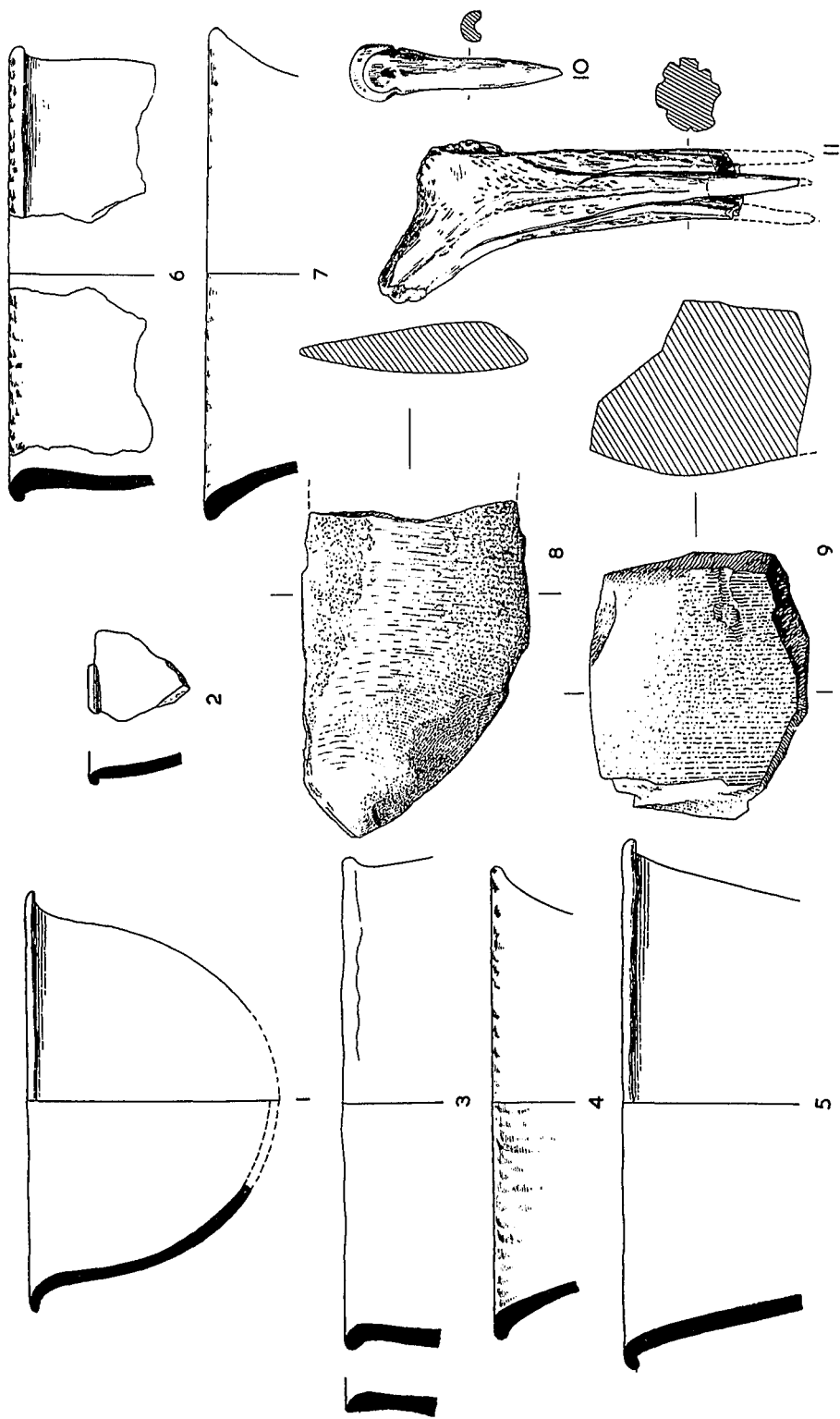


FIG. 3. Neolithic. Nos. 1 to 9 and 11, $\frac{1}{2}$; no. 10, $\frac{1}{3}$.

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THE FLINTS

The flint flakes found with the pottery and antler comb are apparently all derived from a single nodule and can be fitted together accordingly. None of them is retouched and none bear any signs of use. The flakes are fresh and un-patinated.

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THE BONE POINT OR AWL. (Fig. 3.10)

This was cut from half the terminal end of a metapodial of a sheep or goat. Length 3 inches.

THE SADDLE-QUERN AND RUBBER. (Fig. 3.8 and 9)

The quern consists of part of a thin slab of stone $7\frac{1}{4}$ in. in length and 5 in. in width, originally of semi-circular shape. The base, which is flat, is worn at the edges and high spots are polished, no doubt caused by movement of the quern when in use. The top is concave and the surface pocked and worn smooth in places. The rubber is a roughly squared lump of stone with one surface worn convex. This shows a small patch of polish on one side.

The quern and rubber were submitted to Dr. P. J. Adams (Geological Survey and Museum) who reports as follows: "Both specimens were probably taken from the Folkestone Beds (Lower Greensand). The

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rubber is a rather more gritty limestone than the quern which appears to be similar to material from the outcrops at Shorncliffe, about $1\frac{3}{4}$ miles west of Folkestone. ”

ANIMAL BONES.	Identified by Miss Judith E. King.	British Museum
	(Nat. Hist.).	
OX	Prox. end humerus.	
	Prox. end radius	
	Middle phalange	
	Metapodial	} from young animal
	Distal end tibia	
	Astragalus	
SHEEP or GOAT	Prox. end tibia	
	Incomplete humerus	
	Metacarpal—juv.	
	Astragalus	
	Ulna	
	Thoracic vertebra	
	Half terminal end of metapodial—worked.	(Bone point)
PIG	2 skull fragments	
	Ulna	
	Distal epiphysis of radius—juv.	
RED DEER	Part of antler beam, worked with parallel grooves.	
	(Comb)	

SAMPLE OF ORGANIC MATTER AND CONCRETION ON COMB

These were examined by Dr. R. H. Farmer of Forest Products Research Laboratory who comments : “ I think this is best described as petrified wood—it is not charcoal. It has been examined by our Wood Structure Section who report that it is probably alder (*Alnus glutinosa*).

The ash content of the specimen is 54.2 per cent. and the ash appears to consist mainly of calcium carbonate. Ordinary qualitative chemical analysis shows that, in addition to calcium, there is some aluminium present, together with traces of iron and magnesium. There is little or no siliceous material and no sulphate, but some phosphate is present.

Our Physics Section have determined the density by a mercury immersion method, and obtained the value 1.93. This fits in very well with the view that the pores of the wood are completely filled with mineral matter. Taking the densities of calcium carbonate and wood substance to be 2.7 and 1.5 respectively, I calculate that a mixture of 54 per cent. by weight of CaCO_3 and 46 per cent. of wood substance would have a density of 1.96. ”

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Dr. Farmer also examined the hard substance on the comb and says: "The calcareous concretion (taken from the antler comb) is very similar in composition to the mineral matter in the wood specimen, though we find no phosphate in it. Most of the material dissolves in HCl, leaving a black residue, presumably of carbonaceous matter."

SHELLS

A shell sample from the pit filling was submitted to Mr. A. G. Davis, F.G.S., British Museum (Nat. Hist.), who identified the specimen as "*Scrobicularia plana* (da Costa). This is an inhabitant of our estuaries and requires a muddy bed between tide marks. It occurs commonly in our estuarine clays as fossil or sub-fossil. Some of these clays are believed to be Late Pleistocene but most are Bronze Age and later".

NEOLITHIC SITES IN KENT

The following list of Neolithic sites in Kent has been kindly supplied by Mr. Paul Ashbee:

- (1) AYLESFORD. KITS COTY HOUSE. Minute sherds of red gritted ware from surface of the long barrow (possibly beaker). *Arch. Cant.*, XLVIII, p. 234.
- (2) DETLING. Shell gritted in Maidstone Museum. (Unpub.)
- (3) GROVEHURST. A typical Ebbsfleet pottery, Jessup. *Arch. Cant.*, 1931, pp. 42-8. *Arch. Cant.*, XIII, p. 122.
- (4) IGHTEAM. Pottery spoon. P.P.S., I, pp. 150-1.
- (5) ORPINGTON. Northern European sherds—possibly strays? *Arch. Cant.*, XLIX, p. 284.
- (6) TANKERTON. (SWALECLIFFE). Ebbsfleet sherd in Maidstone Museum. (Unpub.)
- (7) TROTTSCLIFFE. COLDRUM. A possibly Neolithic A sherd from the chamber. In Maidstone Museum. *Arch. J.*, LXXXVII, p. 138.
- (8) EAST MALLING. Rinyo Clacton Ware. Piggott. *Neo. Cultures.* p. 386.
- (9) SNODLAND. Sherds of Rinyo Clacton ware in Maidstone Museum.

ROMAN

Roman finds occurred between MHs 2 and 6, and some (F, G, H, I and L on Plan, Fig. 1) were found at varying depths in the peat. They represent a scatter of occupational material from the site already known or from others as yet undiscovered.

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- A. A small piece of an imbrex tile, 3 ft. 6 in. from the surface in blackish-brown sandy peaty soil containing tree branches, twigs and roots.
- E. Fragment of samian ware. Mr. B. R. Hartley has kindly examined this and identified it as Form 33, probably of Central Gaulish ware and of Antonine date. Fig. 4.3. Rim sherd of flanged bowl with rising flange and high bead, in well-fired hard red ware. Possibly fourth-century A.D. No parallel found. Wall sherd of coarse grey ware.

All were found 1 ft. 8 in. from surface, in brown peaty sandy soil containing some clay.

- G. Two wall sherds of grey ware of indeterminate date. From 4 ft. below surface at base of peat.
- H. Fig. 4.2. Three joining fragments of rim of flagon or bottle with stepped neck. Soft grey cored ware with brown soapy surfaces. Patchgrove type fabric. Closely paralleled at Richborough (RICH. III. 1932. Plate XXXII, No. 186) where it was found in a late first century context.

Wall sherd of grey ware of indeterminate date.

All from 3 ft. 6 in. below surface in medium brown peat.

- L. Fig. 4.1. Decorated bone facing plate from knife handle. Orna-mented with dots and circle pattern within panels of incised lines. Perforated at both ends through zones of incised lattice work. From 2 ft. 2 in. below surface in medium brown peat. See Lon. Mus. Cat. PL. XVII, 6-8, for other examples. Fragments of Roman roofing tiles and cattle teeth occurred at B, C, E, F and I.

MEDIEVAL

(See J, K, M and N on Plan, Fig. 1 and Fig. 4)

Pottery sherds were found at intervals in the trench between MHs 5 and 8, and were submitted to Mr. G. C. Dunning for identification. He states that they are all of Tyler Hill¹ ware.

Fig. 4

- J. No. 4. Rim sherd. Tall, everted, with flat top. Hard sandy grey ware with red-brown surfaces. U/S from spoil heap. Ref. : *Arch. Cant.*, LXVIII. Group III. Fig. 17, p. 131.
- N. No. 5 and 6. Two Rim sherds. 5. Tall, everted, with flat top. Hard sandy grey ware. 6. Tall, everted, with bevelled top. Hard sandy red faced grey ware. Ref. : *Arch. Cant.*, LXVIII. Group

¹ Distribution of wares : *Arch. Cant.*, LXIX, p. 148, Fig. 7. Site of Kiln : *Arch. Cant.*, LV, p. 57.

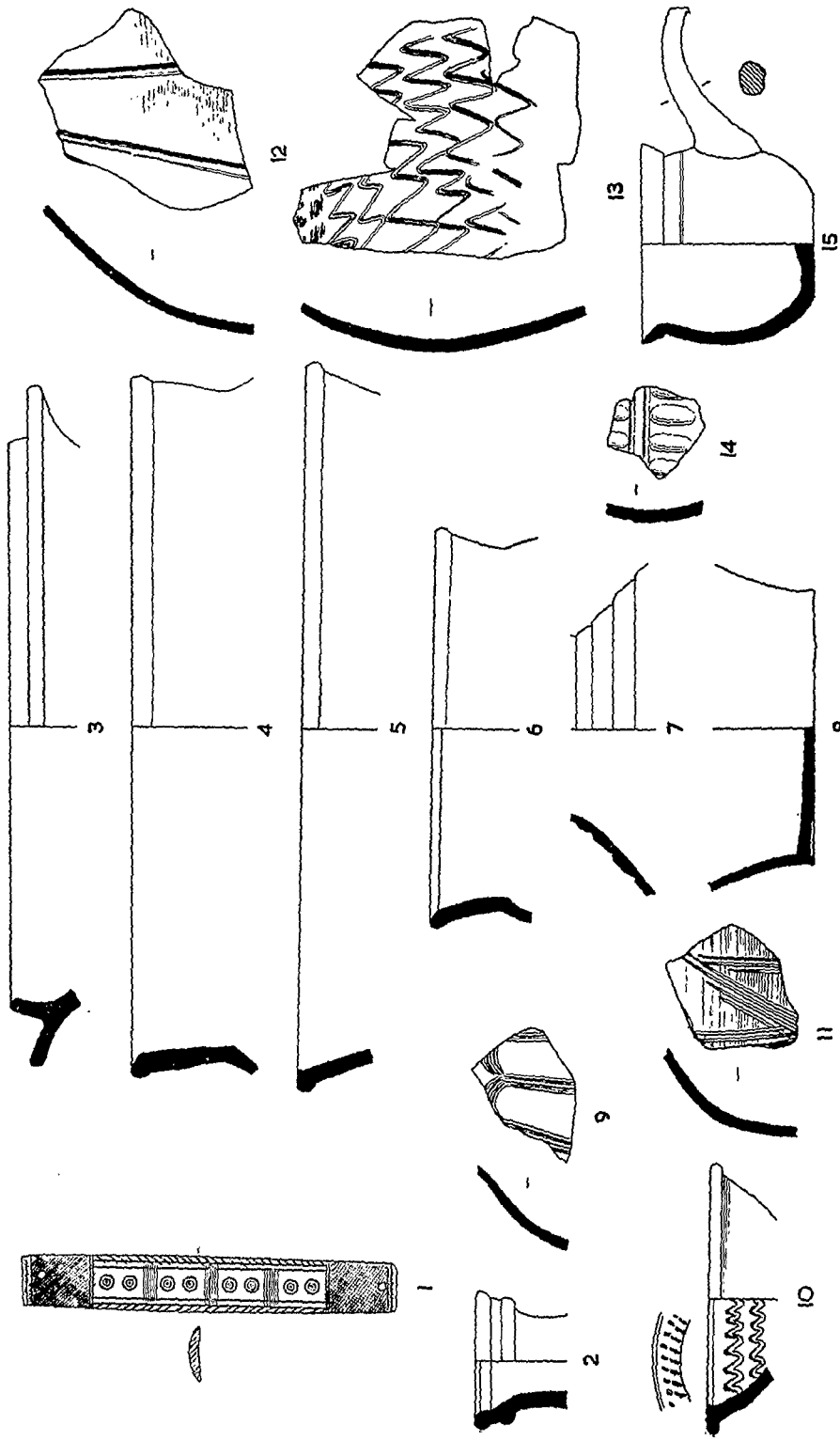


FIG. 4. Roman, Medieval and later. No. 1, $\frac{1}{2}$; Nos. 2 to 15, $\frac{1}{4}$.

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III. Fig. 17. 18 inches from surface in what appeared to be an occupation level of fine dark grey, charcoal flecked silt.

- M No. 7. Shoulder sherd of jug. Hard sandy red faced ware with grey core. Horizontal flattened bands on neck and shoulder.
- No. 8. Part of base of jug. Hard sandy red ware with grey core. Base flat. Ref. : *Arch. Cant.*, LXIX, 1955, p. 147. Fig. 6, No. 3.
- No. 9. Wall sherd. Hard sandy grey ware. Red faced on exterior with green-brown glaze over. Incised arcading under glaze.
- No. 10. Rim sherd of small dish. Hard grey ware with poor greenish glaze. Double row of stabbing on top of rim. Two lines of wavy scoring on exterior.
- No. 11. Wall sherd of jug. Hard sandy grey ware. Red faced on exterior under spots of green glaze. Horizontal rilling with vertical and diagonal bands of incised lines.
- No. 12. Large wall sherd of jug. Red faced with grey core. Patches of green-brown glaze on exterior over vertical ribs. Ref. : *Arch. Cant.*, LXVIII, Fig. 20, No. 44, p. 137.
- No. 13. Nine joining wall sherds of jug. Hard red faced ware with grey core. Patches of poor brown glaze on exterior over zone of scored wavy lines. Ref. : *Arch. Cant.*, LV, 1942, Fig. 3, No. 2.
- No. 14. Wall sherd. Hard sandy red ware. Two horizontal lines of thumb pressed impressions with two faintly scored lines between. Spots of brown glaze on exterior.
- K Not illus. Small wall sherd of indeterminate ware. Discarded on site.

LATER WARE.

- O No. 15. Two-thirds of small pipkin. Hard fine red ware. Solid handle. Interior brown glazed. Modern red and green paint drips on exterior which is burnt. Eighteenth-nineteenth centuries A.D. From spread of rubbish from nearby cottages, 13 inches from surface of top soil. The vessel has been restored by Mr. L. G. Harris.

The following information came to hand and was kindly made available after completion of the main report ;¹

“Q-106 90-100 cm. 2340 ± 130 BP (1959)

Coarse detritus mud of reed swamp from valley fen deposit 230 cm. deep, pollen-analysed throughout.

Q-110 175-185 cm. 3105 ± 110 BP (1959)

Fine detritus organic mud with fine sand.

¹ See note in *American Journal of Science*, Radiocarbon Supplement, 1960, Vol. 2, pp. 68-9.

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Comment:

Extrapolation of the chronology for the whole deposit (radio-carbon and pollen-analytic results) suggests that from 1600 B.C. to Roman times the Chalk here was open dis-forested country with arable land and pasture. Evidence of brackish water at the base of the deposit shows that the sea had reached its present height at or before 1600 B.C.—H. Godwin.”

The matter was further discussed with Dr. Godwin and Mr. Smart. The relation of this deposit to the Neolithic pit cannot be precisely assessed. The pit was on a rise of some 3-4 feet, not covered with organic mud. However, there appeared to be a continuous stratum of sandy loam underlying the mud and sealing the pit.

Such a stratum might have been produced by downwash, possibly from the surrounding brickearth slopes. No estimate of time is possible from the present evidence for this process; it could have occurred over a very short period.

One can only say that the pit must have become sealed at some time prior to the beginning of deposition of the organic mud—i.e. before 1600 B.C. There need thus also be no direct connection between the environment favouring this deposition and the activity associated with the pit.¹

Assuming uniform deposition, extrapolation suggests that the mud might have reached a level corresponding to —60 cm. at present by about A.D.1, and to —30 cm. by about A.D. 200.

L. BIEK,
Ancient Monuments Laboratory.

¹ But the presence of *Scrobicularia* suggests there was.