

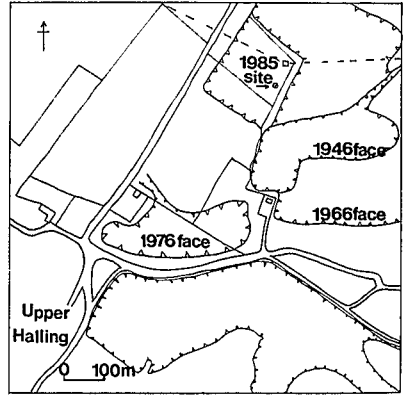
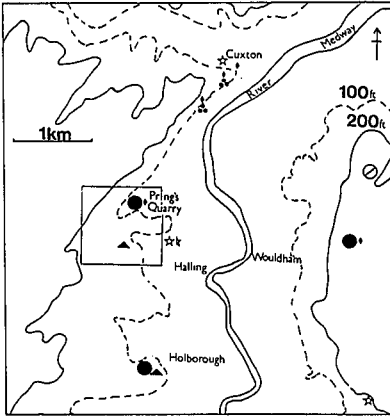
EXCAVATION AT PRING'S QUARRY, UPPER HALLING

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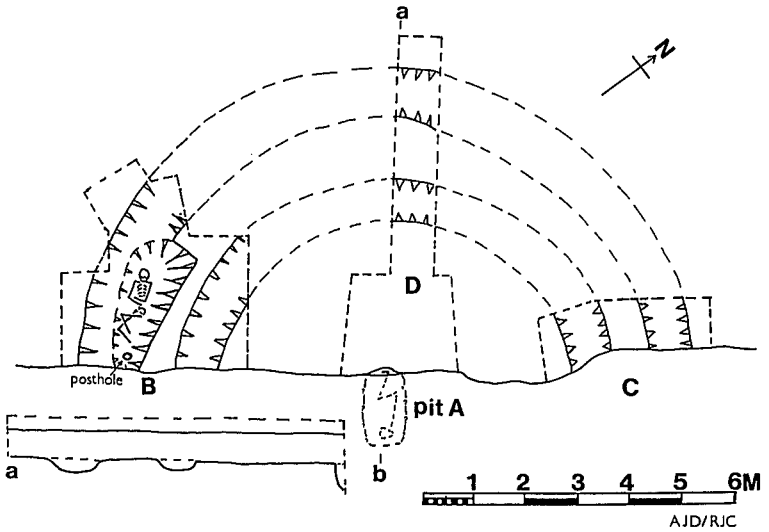
In February 1985 fieldwork by the writer and the Hon. General Secretary identified a site at Pring's Quarry (N.G.R. TQ 69686480) where topsoil stripping in advance of chalk extraction had revealed a series of pits in the quarry face. With the permission of the owners, Messrs. Rugby Portland Cement Company, the Maidstone Area Archaeological Group was able to carry out a limited rescue excavation under the direction of the writer. The following members gave valuable assistance in very adverse weather conditions: Ms. S. Gretton, Mrs. J. Homewood, Mr. A. J. Daniels, Mr. A.C. Harrison, Mr. R.E. Wallbridge and Mr. R.C. Weekes. The interest and co-operation of Messrs. J. L. Ward and W.R.O. Dixon of the Rugby Portland Cement Company and of the contractors, Messrs. Blackwell of East Colne, who rearranged their work schedule to assist us, are most gratefully acknowledged. Special thanks are accorded to Sarah Gretton for the report on the bones and molluscs and to Mr A.J. Daniels who carried out the survey of the site.

The site is located at a height of 25 m. O.D. on the upper slope of a strip of cultivated land between the alluvium of the Medway valley and the poor soils of the North Downs (Figs. 1 and 2). As the quarry face moved north-west, it revealed a 2 m. thick layer of compacted fine chalk wash under the plough soil. The absence of any flint or soil inclusions in this chalky layer, which overlay a thin dark soil layer above a chalky loam solifluxion deposit, led Dr. Bridgland to suggest that the chalkwash was a fluvial deposit, eroded from the nearby Downs under cold conditions. A similar buried soil was previously observed by Dr M.P. Kerney in the quarry face 200 m. to the east, which he assigned to the Allerød Interstadial and the chalky hillwash to the subsequent Younger Dryas Cold Period.¹

¹ M.P. Kerney, 'A Middle Weichselian Deposit at Halling, Kent', *Proc. Geol. Assoc.*, 82 (1971), 1-11.



- KEY
- Ring Ditch
 - Probable Barrow
 - Burial
 - ☆ Neo. axe
 - ▲ Neo/EBA sherds
 - ◆ " " flints



Figs. 1-3. Pring's Quarry, Upper Halling: Location and Plan (*Crown Copyright reserved*).

EXCAVATION AT UPPER HALLING

Pit A was cut into this chalky wash and was the first feature investigated. It was 0.40 m. deep and contained the foot bone of an adult inhumation (Appendix). Although the remainder of the skeleton had been destroyed, the body was apparently oriented north-west-south-east with the head to the east-south-east. Further trenches (B and C) demonstrated that this central inhumation was surrounded by two ring ditches, 8 m. and 11 m. in diameter (Fig. 3). These ditches were shallow with flat or gently rounded bottoms, cutting c. 0.30 m. into the chalk wash and being 0.70 m. – 0.80 m. wide. The ditch was filled with a fine, dark-brown soil differing from the topsoil in that it contained patches of carbonaceous material but few flints. The absence of any chalk debris in the ditches argues against the presence of any bank close to the ditch. The central area (D) provided no evidence of a central mound or any features around pit A.

Trench B was expanded to investigate an intact inhumation cut into the side of the outer ditch. The body was north-west-south-east buried in a supine position, with its arms across its chest and its knees gathered up. Sarah Gretton has identified the skeleton as a 19-year-old female (Appendix). Apart from a single unworked flake, there were no other objects deposited with the body. After placing a small pile of flint nodules over her pelvis, the burial had apparently been marked with a post at her feet. The presence of the outer ditch fill over the burial pit indicated that the body was buried before the ditch was silted up.

The excavation yielded several flint tools but only two came from stratified contexts. These were a horseshoe scraper (Fig. 4,1) and a worked fragment with a denticulated edge (Fig. 4,2) both from the outer ditch fill. The scraper would be equally appropriate in either Late Neolithic or Bronze Age contexts. The unstratified flints from the topsoil are mainly scrapers with one borer (Fig. 4,5), a pattern which is typically Bronze Age. The steeply retouched scraper (Fig. 4,4) is indicative of specific Deverel Rimbury connections.²

Investigations of Late Neolithic/Bronze Age flint collections from adjacent sites at Cuxton and Upper Halling³ has revealed that two of these scatters of flint work were also reported to be associated with 'interments' (Fig. 1) If these burials were roughly contemporary with those at Pring's Quarry, then they provide further evidence of prehistoric occupation in the Medway valley, to supplement that of the well known megalithic monuments further up the valley.

² F. Healy in F. F. Peterson, *Knighthon Heath Cemetery*, BAR 98, Oxford 1981, 165.

³ J.G. Wilson Collection, Herne Bay Museum, Co. Archive No. H1117 and 1135.

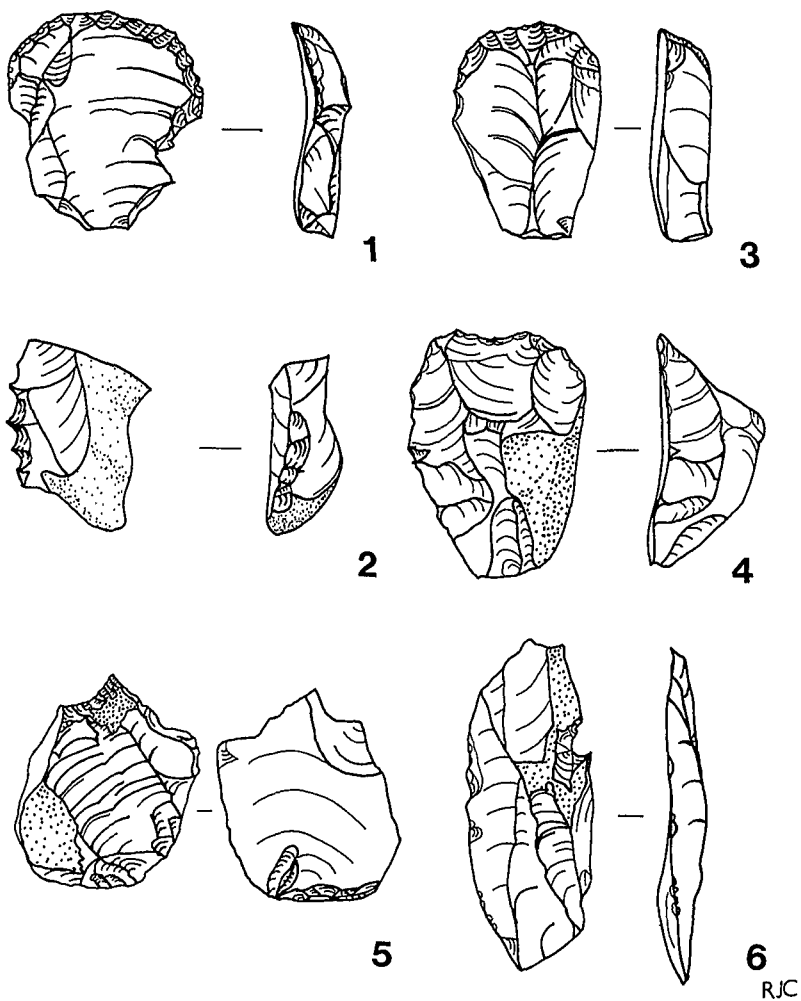


Fig. 4. Pring's Quarry, Upper Halling: Flints (Scale: 1/2).

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APPENDIX

Bone and Mollusca

S. Gretton

Pit A. The bones remaining in the central grave consisted of left-foot bones and the distal end of the left tibia from an adult skeleton. Some long bone fragments and a few right foot bones were also recovered from debris which had fallen from the pit.

Outer Ditch. The inhumation was in a very corroded and friable condition, with many bones having completely disintegrated. The sciatic notch showed the skeleton to be female. The majority of the long bone epiphyses were fused but the skull sutures were not. The third molar teeth were unerupted and the second molars showed little signs of wear indicating that she had reached an age of around 19. Long bone measurements gave an estimated height of 1.58 m. (5 ft. 3 in.). There was no indication of the cause of death.

Mollusca

As there was no significant difference in the snail species found in the various features, they will be considered as a single sample. There were 46 specimens of *Helix nemoralis* (Linné) and 5 (?) specimens of *Helix hortensis* (Müller), and a single specimen of *Trichia hispida* (Linné). These snails exploit a wide range of habitats, ranging from woodland and scrub to grassland. A more specific indicator is *Pomatias elegans* (7 examples) which favours friable, highly calcareous soils and was presumably attracted to the loose ditch silts. A single specimen of *Hellicella itala* (Linné) was identified and this is typical of dry exposed calcareous grassland.

Generalisations about the site environment are not possible as the sample was so small and only a small proportion of the ditch fill was retained for sieving.