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A BRONZE SWORD FROM FOLKESTONE

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IN April or May, 1951, a fine bronze sword was dredged from the sea in the net of a Folkestone fishing smack in East Wear Bay, Folkestone, about 40 yds. from the shore, and off the site of the Roman villa.

The finder was Mr. H. Brice, but first recognition that the object might be of archaeological interest is due to Mr. G. F. Finn of Fairlight Road, Hythe, who chanced to be in the Fish-market at Folkestone when the catch was being handled. The sword remains for the time being in possession of the finder. My thanks are due to Dr. E. P. Stuart and to Mr. R. F. Jessup, F.S.A., for knowledge of the discovery, and to the Borough Librarian, Mr. R. Howarth, A.L.A., for allowing me to handle this interesting piece (Fig. 1.)

The sword is $24\frac{5}{8}$ in. long and is complete. It is in sound condition, but a little water-rolled. In general terms it is a characteristic weapon of the Late Bronze Age, and may be securely dated between c. 1000-700 B.C. More specifically it belongs to a small group of swords, not at present very well defined, but undoubtedly of native make, most of which have been recorded from Dorset. This example lies further to the east than any other yet noted, and is the sole representative of its kind from Kent.

The group, which we might tentatively name the Weymouth type, from its comparative frequency in that neighbourhood, appears to be contemporary with the better known Wilburton type. It is indeed probably to be regarded as a local, south-western, variant of the more widely distributed Wilburton swords, and their distribution patterns are largely complementary. It may, moreover, be noted that while the Wilburton type shows no significant resemblance to continental swords, the Weymouth type, a product of our Channel coasts, clearly has affinities with a type which at about this time seems to have developed in France, more particularly in those departments bordering on the Channel. The subject is too large to be developed here, but these few notes may serve by way of introduction.

One point of detail is of interest, and is, indeed, in the writer's experience, unique. Immediately below the outer rivet-hole on each side a small raised feature of semi-circular section (it is too ill-defined to rank properly as a beading or moulding) curves inwards past the slight ricasso and follows the line of the edge for a couple of inches, after which it tapers away. The course it follows is that commonly taken by the line or lines of engraved decoration often found on swords of slightly

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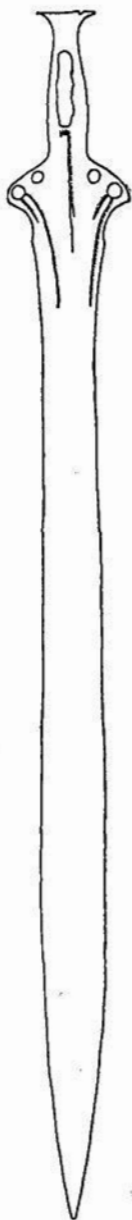


FIG. 1. Bronze Sword from Folkestone ($\frac{1}{4}$).

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earlier date. But there is no engraved decoration here. The change in taste from engraved line to thickened "moulding" seems rather to anticipate the very marked mouldings which accompany and accentuate the ricasso-notch in swords of the Carp's-tongue type in its initial form. More than this at the moment it is impossible to say, for in no other respect does the sword now under discussion share any of the characteristics of the Carp's-tongue type, which represents a later stage in the history of the bronze sword in western Europe.