

Second Report on King's Weston Hill, Bristol.

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Since the first report was published (see p. 76) further excavations have been carried out on the various mounds described as tumuli with the object of proving or disproving them to be barrows.

The mound described under the heading of tumulus No. 5 has been excavated. It proved to be an accumulation of loamy soil over a fragment of an old boundary wall. This therefore is definitely proved not to have been a burial mound, and so can be struck off the list.

T.1.

BARROW No. 1, KING'S WESTON HILL.

Lat. 51°, 29', 53", N. Lon. 2°, 38', 42", W.

The excavations proving this to be a barrow have already been described (p. 78). Since then the pottery sherds have been submitted to the British Museum and pronounced to be transitional from Bronze to Iron Age. The sherds are dark in colour, of gritty paste and hard. A closer examination of the human tooth found proves it to be a deciduous incisor from a child aged about six years.

T.2.

BARROW No. 2, KING'S WESTON HILL.

Lat. 51°, 29', 53", N. Lon. 2°, 38', 42", W.

This tumulus is a low circular mound with a flat top, the diameter on excavation being found to be 40 feet not 50 as stated in the previous report, when the measurements were taken in the summer, a period when the edges of all the tumuli on the hill are very difficult to distinguish, owing to the rough tufted grass.

The stratification of the tumulus was as follows:—

1. Turf 4-ins.
2. Stones with a fair quantity of earth 12-ins.
3. A hearth 2-ins.
4. Bed rock.

The greater part of the finds came from the hearth which was proved to be roughly circular with a diameter of ten feet. Excavations were continued beyond its area for 2-ft. all round, but no finds were obtained. The smaller portion of the finds came from layer 2

in the area vertically above the hearth. The finds include pottery, a few fragments of flint, an iron article, charcoal, burnt human bone, burnt and unburnt animal bones.

POTTERY.

1. Two minute sherds of Samian ware from just under the turf.
2. A number of sherds of a vessel of Hallstatt type, including a portion of lip and shoulder shewing finger tip decoration. The surfaces are smooth with rather a soapy feel being red externally and dark internally. The paste is fairly fine and the vessel was hand-made. Found near the centre of the hearth. (Fig. 1).

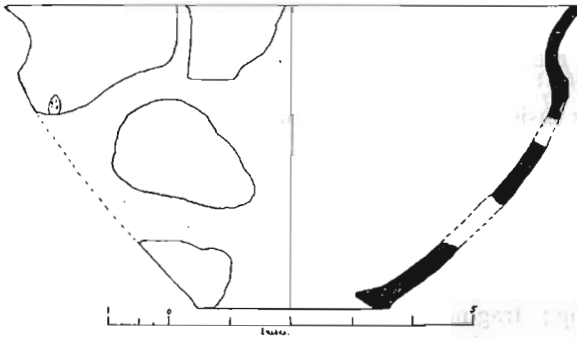


FIG. 1.

3. A number of sherds representing at least five more vessels, including parts of a large vessel with a red exterior and a black interior. The surfaces of this one, more especially the external one, have a pocked appearance due apparently to surface grit having weathered out, leaving the sherds with rather a soapy feel, and with white oblong granules shewing on the surface. The remaining sherds shew all gradations between that described above and the coarse gritty pottery of T.1 and T.3.

IRON.

The only article of this material consists of a cheek piece of a bridle; it is a curved circular rod of iron slightly flattened at the centre, where it is pierced by two small rectangular holes. The terminals are in the form of small knobs. (Fig. 2.)

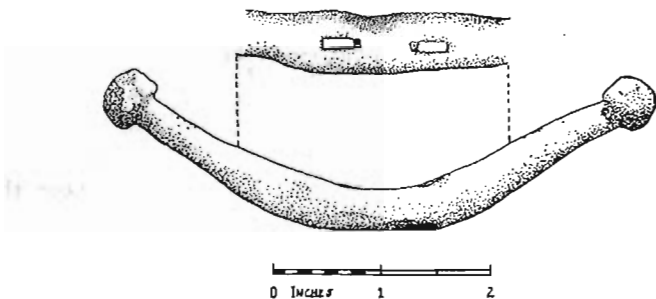


FIG. 2.

OTHER ARTEFACTS.

These comprise a flake knife and pygmy end scraper of flint, both patinated white; a portion of a polished stone implement made from an igneous rock, probably local; and a bone fragment with a notch cut in it.

HUMAN BONE.

This consists of a small handful well burnt.

ANIMAL BONES.

Some of these are burnt, but the majority of them are not so; the following animals are represented:—

1. Horse; an incomplete meta-tarsal and teeth.
2. Pig; fragments of limb bones and teeth.
3. Ox; teeth.
4. Sheep; portions of limb bones and teeth.

T.3.

BARROW No. 3. KING'S WESTON HILL.

Lat. 51°, 29', 46", N. Long. 2°, 39', 9", W.

A low flat topped circular mound with a diameter of 21 feet. It merges so gradually with the slight rise in the ground on which it stands that its correct diameter could not be determined until excavated. Digging was commenced near the southern border, where there was a slight depression which it was thought might be due to the top of the cist falling in, and carried on over the whole of the mound until it tailed out to a height of less than 6-ins. Nothing was found in the depression mentioned above save a few bits of burnt human bone, but scattered throughout the S.E. sector of the mound were sherds of a cinerary urn, only three sherds being found outside this area.

STRATIFICATION.

1. Turf, 3-ins. 2. Earth and stones, 11-ins. 3. Bed rock.

The larger stones were disposed in a rough ring near the edge of the mound as if to form a containing wall.

POTTERY.

A number of sherds all belonging to a single cinerary urn were found scattered throughout layer 2. The paste is dark, hard, and very gritty, and the urn had been made in at least two parts, the base having been made separately. The shape of the lip and the shoulder rather suggest a Bronze Age date for the urn, but the hardness and grittiness of the paste are rather against this, and it is important to note that sherds of exactly the same quality have been recovered from T.1 and T.2.

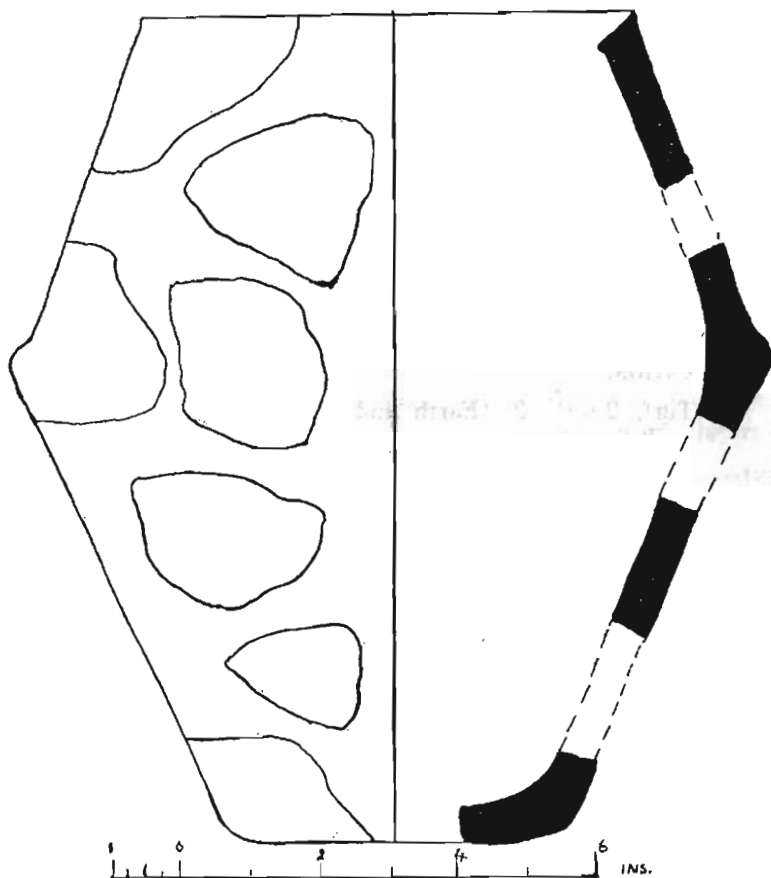


FIG. 3.

A reconstruction shews the vessel to be biconical in form, with the shoulder placed about two thirds of the height, which is 12-ins., from the base. From the base to the shoulder the walls slope fairly steeply outwards, but from the shoulder to the lip the reverse is the case. An exact duplicate of the vessel cannot be found from other sites, but the nearest to it in form comes from All Cannings Cross.¹

Fig. 3 is a reconstruction drawing of the urn.

OTHER FINDS.

These comprise a few fragments of burnt human bone, an unburnt humerus of pig, charcoal and a flint flake knife, 4.2 cms. long, patinated white.

The depression to the south contained only burnt bone, and no pottery, and possibly represents a disturbance of the mound.

T.4.

BARROW No. 4. KING'S WESTON HILL.

Lat. 51°, 29', 54", N. Lon. 2°, 38', 43", W.

A small flat topped circular mound proved by excavation to be only 10 feet in diameter, and 10 inches high. North to south, and east to west trenches were dug 3 feet wide, and enlarged at their junction.

STRATIFICATION.

1. Turf, 2-ins.
2. Earth and stones, 8-ins.
3. Bed rock.

FINDS.

1. Just north of the centre and at the bottom of layer 2 was a portion of a Roman mortarium.
2. Nearly at the centre in layer 2 a rounded stone of quartzite which might have been used as hammer stone.
3. A single fragment of burnt human bone.
4. A molar tooth of horse.

The last two were a short distance west of the centre.

At the conclusion of the excavation of each tumulus the excavation was filled in and the turf replaced.

¹ *All Cannings Cross*, B. H. & M. E. Cunnington, Plate 41, No. 4.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS.

From the account given above it is seen that the mounds described as tumuli 1—4 King's Weston Hill in the first report have all been proved to be barrows, the burial in each case being by cremation.

The broken and scanty remains recovered from all the barrows seem to indicate disturbance subsequent to their erection. As a clue to the date of this disturbance a Roman bead was found in T.1, two fragments of Samian ware in T.2, and a portion of a Roman mortarium in T.4. Thus it may be fairly safely assumed that the disturbance of all of them took place in the Roman period, and that T.1 was subsequently disturbed in Saxon times, for a portion of a bronze of that period was found in it.

The pottery is of importance, ranging as it does round the earliest part of the Iron Age, and it establishes one more site from which pottery of the Hallstatt type has been obtained. It is very unfortunate that no other dateable objects came to light, but it is known from other sites that pottery of this type is associated with fibulae of La Tène 1 type, and so it may be concluded that these barrows were made round about 400 B.C., T.3 being the earliest of the series to judge from the shape of the urn found.

In E. and S.E. England in the earliest part of the Iron Age, burials in barrows are by inhumation, and it is not until later that this custom gives place to cremation. Further the connections of this part of England are with N.E. France and Belgium, an area where, in the period under discussion, inhumation was the general rule. In N.W. France however, cremated burials were the rule, marking a very big distinction between the areas.

In this western portion of England it is known that during the full La Tène period, that is from about 350 B.C. onwards, the connections with the continent were with Armorica and the north and west of France generally. The finding of cremated burials of the earlier part of the Iron Age in the west of England seems to indicate that this connection was even then as well established as the connections in the east.

Finally, barrows of the Iron Age are generally known to be smaller than the preceding Bronze Age ones, and these on King's Weston Hill are no exception to the rule.