

Second Report on the Excavation of the Mendip Barrows

BY R. F. READ.

ADDITIONAL NOTES ON FIRST REPORT.

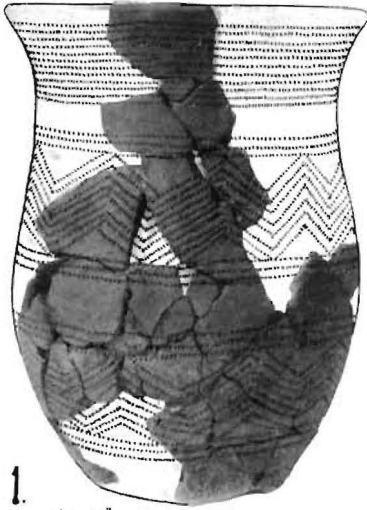
Since the publication of the last report¹ further investigations have rendered necessary the following additions and corrections.

Barrow No. 1. Blackdown. It is now quite certain that the beaker found in this barrow was associated with cremation, though not necessarily of the individual in whose honour it was deposited. Although no calcined human bone was found in the cist, the original ground level at the centre of the barrow was occupied by a hearth, 12 feet in diameter, containing fragments of charcoal and calcined human bones; the cist lay at the northern limit of the hearth, and its top was coincident with the hearth level. This hearth cannot belong to the secondary interment unless one of the following improbable conditions obtained, *viz.*, that no mound at all was raised over the cist, or that such a mound was removed, cremation performed, the mound replaced and secondary interment made above this.

The beaker (Plate X, No. 1) belongs to Phase I of Type B₁ (Abercromby), not Phase II, as previously stated. The ornament is more elaborate than that usually found on vessels of this type, and resembles that of Type A, Phase I. It appears to have been produced by a notched strip or cog-wheel and finished with a sharp point in some places. The greatest diameter of the body is placed low down; the lip is well curved outwards, and there is no trace of an angle. In all these respects it is an early beaker. It appears to resemble the Rhenish beakers, *e.g.*, Fig. 37* and Fig. 42*, Plates I and II, Vol. I, "Bronze Age Pottery" (Abercromby), from Andernach and Urmitz respectively.

The majority of the fragments of the cinerary urn (Fig. 1) found in the secondary interment were about 1 foot above the hearth previously mentioned; with them was a considerable deposit of burnt human bone. Though very incomplete it was evidently an urn of the overhanging rim type—probably fairly late in the series—for there is no definite angle at the junction of the neck with the body. For the ornamentation of pot-hooks we have found only one parallel, *viz.* the vessel from Hengistbury Head, which is a cinerary urn of Type I.

¹ *Proc.*, Vol. II, page 65 *et seq.*

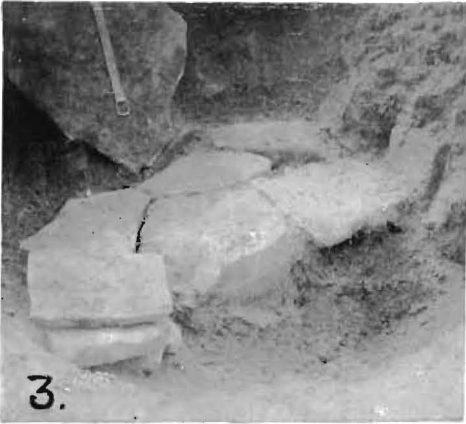


1.

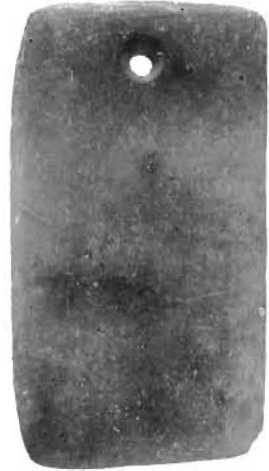
Height 8.3"



2.

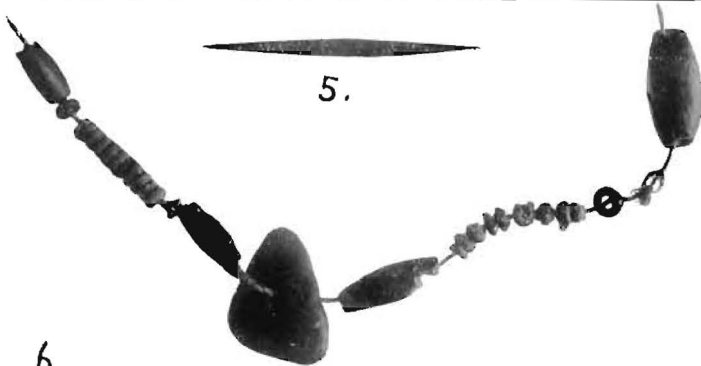


3.



4.

Length 7.25 cms.



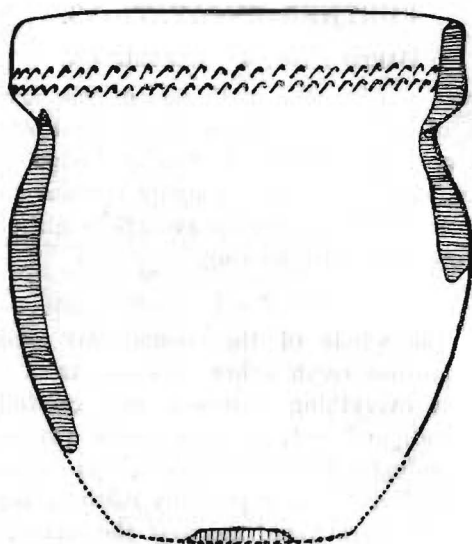
5.

6.

Cms. 0 1 2 3 4 5

PLATE X.





Cinerary Urn, Type I. { Height possibly about 10½"
 (Reconstruction) { Greatest Diameter 9"
 Secondary Interment, B.1. Blackdown.

FIG. 1.

Barrow No. 2. Blackdown. In this case, as in the last, the suggestion was made that the calcined human bone was a late introduction ; this was not so. Disturbance and robbing of the cist had probably occurred, because calcined bone was found in the joints of stones of the cist, and in all the angles and crevices, but not in the centre ; further, the small size of the cist—2 feet by 1 foot 8 inches—renders it probable that it was used for a cremated interment.

Barrow No. 3. Blackdown. A photograph of the urn from this barrow is now published (Plate XI, No. 1), and, as will be seen, it is probably referable to Type 5, the Cordon or Hooped Pattern, Bronze Age IV—V, and is remarkable as the only specimen of this type yet found in Area I (Abercromby's division). It is at least tripartite, the rim, upper segment, and remainder being made separately ; possibly the part below the hoop was in two, or even three, parts. Abercromby suggests that the absence of this type (the direct descendent of Type I) in his Area I, may be due to invasion occurring about Bronze Age IV, which affected only this area ; the presence then of an isolated example in the extreme N.W. is not surprising.

The close resemblance of the pigmy cup found with this urn (Bronze Age IV) to food vessel 13 *bis* (Abercromby), which is referred to Bronze Age I, is interesting.

FURTHER EXCAVATIONS.

BARROW No. 4. BLACKDOWN.

This barrow adjoins the path which cuts across the lower northern slopes of Rowberrow Warren; it is about 500 yards W.S.W. of B.M. 499.3 at S.W. corner of Mendip Lodge Wood, on the 6 inch O.S. map. It consists of a roughly circular cairn of stones, having a diameter of 37 feet, and an average height of 2 feet. It is of the simple bowl type with no ring.

EXCAVATION.

Practically the whole of the mound was removed and the apparently undisturbed earth below was dug to a depth of nine inches. Although everything removed was carefully sorted, no pottery was found, and only a very small quantity of calcined human bone, including a few human teeth, was encountered on the original ground surface. A few partially calcined bones and teeth of domestic animals were found amongst the stones. No cist was found. The mound is certainly a barrow, but it contained no associated implements. At the conclusion of excavation the mound was replaced in the usual manner.

BARROW No. 5. BLACKDOWN.

This is situated approximately 400 yards S.S.W. of the Bench Mark on cross roads near N.W. arm of Mendip Lodge Wood, and the S.E. corner of Rowberrow Warren. It is a roughly circular heap of stones, chiefly O.R.S., its diameter is 18 feet, and it is about 2 feet high. The centre of the cairn was depressed.

EXCAVATION.

An area 10 feet in diameter was dug, in the centre of the mound, to a depth of 2 feet 6 inches, all the material taken out being carefully sorted. One or two fragments of burnt bone, probably human, were found along with a little charcoal, and a fair amount of modern pottery. Stones were found below the original surface of the ground, and the modern pottery was found among these; fragments of slag or iron ore were also found. The barrow has probably been opened in fairly recent times, as the modern pottery tends to show.

MOUND A. BLACKDOWN.

This is situated about 350 yards S.E. of the ranger's cottage, and alongside the Blackdown grass path to Cheddar. It is 20 feet in diameter, 3 feet in height, and has a depression about 2 feet deep in the centre.

EXCAVATION.

A pit 2 feet deep and 15 feet in diameter was dug in the centre of the mound, which was found to contain few stones, and was chiefly composed of earth thrown up from a ditch around it. There was no sign of a cist, and the construction was entirely different from that of the Barrows 1—5.

Three flints and some rough pieces of chert were found. One flint was patinated white, had been burnt, and forms part of a typical round scraper or thumb flint. The other two flints are mere chips, and only slightly patinated. It seems very improbable that this mound was a barrow.

MOUNDS B, C AND D. BLACKDOWN.

There are three mounds, 350 yards S.E. of the Society's hut, one East and the other two West of the Goatchurch path, near its intersection with the Blackdown grass road to Cheddar. The central one was chosen, and N—S and E—W trenches were excavated to a depth of 3 feet. Nothing of interest was found, except one worked flint. The mound consisted chiefly of earth, stones being much fewer than in those hitherto dug. It appears to be an artificial mound at least, and it is probable that the other two will prove to be similar.

SMALL DISC BARROW, OR MOUND, ON PINEY SLEIGHT FARM.

This tumulus lies in a field on the S. side of the farm; it is not on the most prominent part of the ridge which traverses the field. It is circular, having a diameter of 24 feet, and is raised about 2 feet above the bottom of the surrounding ditch, near the periphery, but the centre is only one foot high. There is an "entrance" or gap in the raised ring, about 5 feet wide, on the S. side.

EXCAVATION.

The mound was dug to a depth of 3 feet. No cist or sign of a burial was found. The first 12 inches consisted of a reddish loam free from stones. In it were small fragments of pottery, a few flints and some slag. No charcoal or bone was found. Below were much-weathered limestone slabs lying on what was undoubtedly the weathered rock surface. No finds were made among these stones.

The pottery found is of five types: (a) coarse grey; (b) thin black, without granules; (c) thin black, with granules; (d) red wheel-made pottery, with an external green glaze (? salt-glazed); (e) pottery with brown and blackish brown sections, reddish on the surface; apparently it contains no white granules; some was decorated with a triple raised line or fourfold groove, and other fragments had a dotted line.

The types (b), (c) and (d) were found near the surface; types (a) and (e) appear to be typical Bronze Age pottery. Charcoal was found at all depths, but was very scanty. It is not possible to be certain that this artificial mound is a barrow, but it is highly probable.

MOUND NEAR BURRINGTON STATION.

This mound stands in the grounds of Lady Nutting's house, near Burrington Station. It is oval in shape, its dimensions being 80 feet by 36 feet, and stands 7 feet 6 inches high. After a trench had been dug it was discovered that the tumulus was merely the earth obtained in making a ditch on the N. side of the field in which it stood, and was about one hundred years old.

TYNING'S FARM BARROWS.

The sketch map (Fig. 2) shows the site of five barrows near Tynning's Farm. They are situated on a plateau at an altitude of 850 feet, on the south side of the crest of Blackdown, just south of the alleged line of the Roman road, as shown on the 6-inch O.S. map

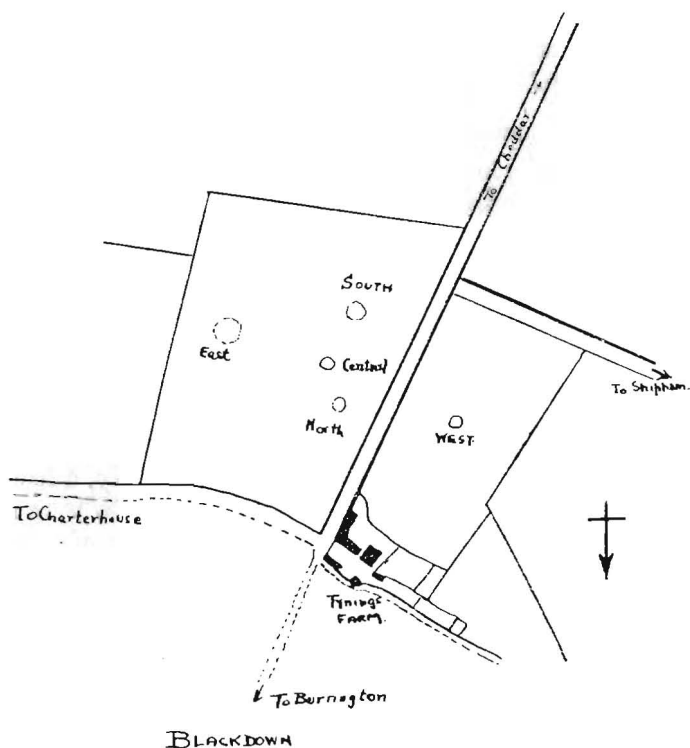


FIG. 2.

(Somerset Sheet XVIII, S.W.). They are situated on a low-lying part of the plateau.

NORTH BARROW.

This barrow (Fig. 3) consists of a regular mound 5 feet high and 44 feet in diameter. It is of the bowl type.

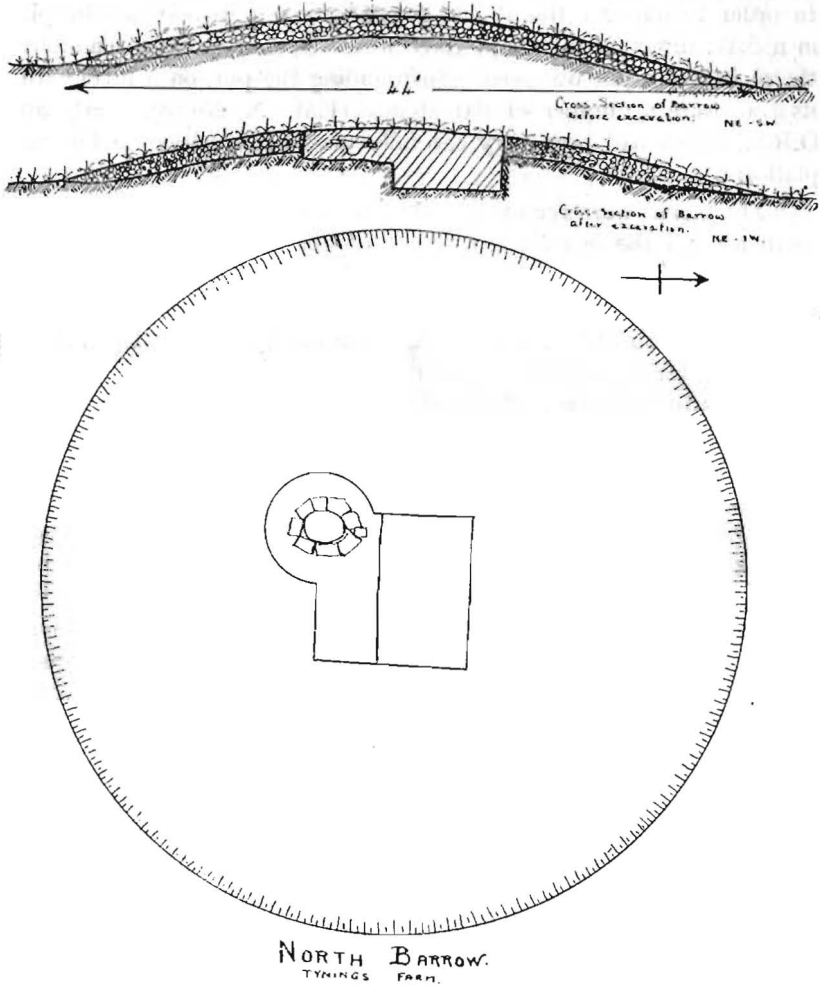


FIG. 3.

EXCAVATION.

The tumulus was opened in April, 1924, by digging a pit 6 feet square, practically in the centre. The northern half of the square was sunk to a depth of 5 feet, but the southern half

only 3 feet 6 inches. The layers encountered were: (1) 3 inches of turf and humus, (2) 1 foot of stones and very little humus, (3) yellowish loam. The second layer was of uniform depth throughout with the exception of the extreme S.W. corner of the excavation, here the layer of stone was about four or five inches deeper, and immediately below it the edge of a flat limestone slab was disclosed. In order to uncover this it was found necessary to extend the pit in a S.W. direction for about three feet. Upon removing the stone the mouth of a pot was seen. Surrounding the pot, on a level with its rim, were a number of flat stones (Plate X, No. 3), nearly all O.R.S., which had been very carefully placed in position to form a platform.

The stones were removed, and with great care the whole of the earth around the urn for a distance of about nine inches was excavated, so that the urn was left standing in its original position. It was then examined and found to be slightly crushed and several fragments were missing; these were found later, one three feet to the west, and the remainder inside the pot. Many small roots were growing into the sides, which were very friable. After drying *in situ*, by a slow fire, it was possible to remove the pot intact, with its contents. The immediately surrounding earth was in three layers which only extended three inches from the urn. The top two-inch layer was brown in colour, the next three inches were a mixture of charcoal and ochreous fragments, and the remaining portion differed very slightly from the undisturbed soil below; the latter was then examined to a depth of one foot, but was apparently undisturbed and yielded nothing. Fragments of coarse pottery, charcoal, flints and calcined human bone were found scattered in the stone layer and immediately below it.

POTTERY.

The cinerary urn (Plate XI, No. 2) is biconical and resembles some of the Rimbury Group, Type 4, Bronze Age IV—V (Abercromby). It is bipartite in structure, and its only decoration is a row of thumb marks at its angle. It is 10 inches in height. The paste is a light chocolate colour, of local clay, and without any admixture of stone fragments. Fragments of other vessels were present.

The urn contained a large number of fragments of calcined human bones, one of them copper-stained, and one or two flint fragments. The bones were from all parts of the body. The vertebræ showed osteo-arthritis lipping; the upper border of the great sciatic notch of the right os innominatum was acute angled, *i.e.* female; all the bones were slender. No associated implements or weapons were found.

There was about a handful of flint flakes and fragments, including a small flint knife from the stone layer, but none of these was typical. Some crinoids were found, some of which may have been used as beads.

The site of the barrow is a natural mound; in the course of its construction a small pit was dug, the urn placed in it, the earth, charcoal and ochreous fragments deposited around it, and the platform arranged round the mouth of the pot. It is probable that this platform was a few inches higher than the rim at first, the flat stone being supported thereon, but the weight of the latter and the stone layer above it caused the platform to sink, thus crushing the urn. The whole mound was finally covered with a layer of stones to a depth of about one foot. The urn was simple and the grave goods poor.

At the conclusion of the excavation the pit was filled in and the barrow re-turfed. The area around the pit will be dug and further results published in the next report.

SOUTH BARROW.

This barrow (Fig. 4) is of the simple bowl type without a ring. It has a diameter of 55 feet, and a height of 5 feet.

EXCAVATION.

A trench 8 feet long and 6 feet wide was dug, its N—S axis being 2 feet W. of the centre of the barrow. The barrow was composed mainly of earth, with the exception of four small mounds of stones at a depth of 2 feet. These lay roughly in a semi-circle. Below mound No. 1, and slightly to the N. of it, the complete skull of a horse was found. A foot beneath mound No. 2 was a dog's tooth and a flint knife, while No. 3 yielded a flint saw and No. 4 a flint scraper.

The layers were as follows:—

- (1) Just below the surface, a layer, 18 inches deep, of humus.
- (2) Sandy clay, 2 feet 6 inches.
- (3) A hearth, 3—6 inches thick.
- (4) Undisturbed yellowish clay.

The excavation was then extended eastwards in the form of a trench 2 feet wide. An arrow-head and a flint rounder were discovered here, among potsherds, at a depth of 2 feet and 4 feet 6 inches from Mound No. 3.

The pit was then widened on the S. side to 6 feet, and a collapsed and inverted urn was discovered 4 feet 6 inches S. of the centre of the barrow. It lay upon a very large water worn limestone slab. A few flat vertical stones had been placed round it. Upon the up-turned bottom of the pot was found a part of the base of another

not!
horse
(skull?)

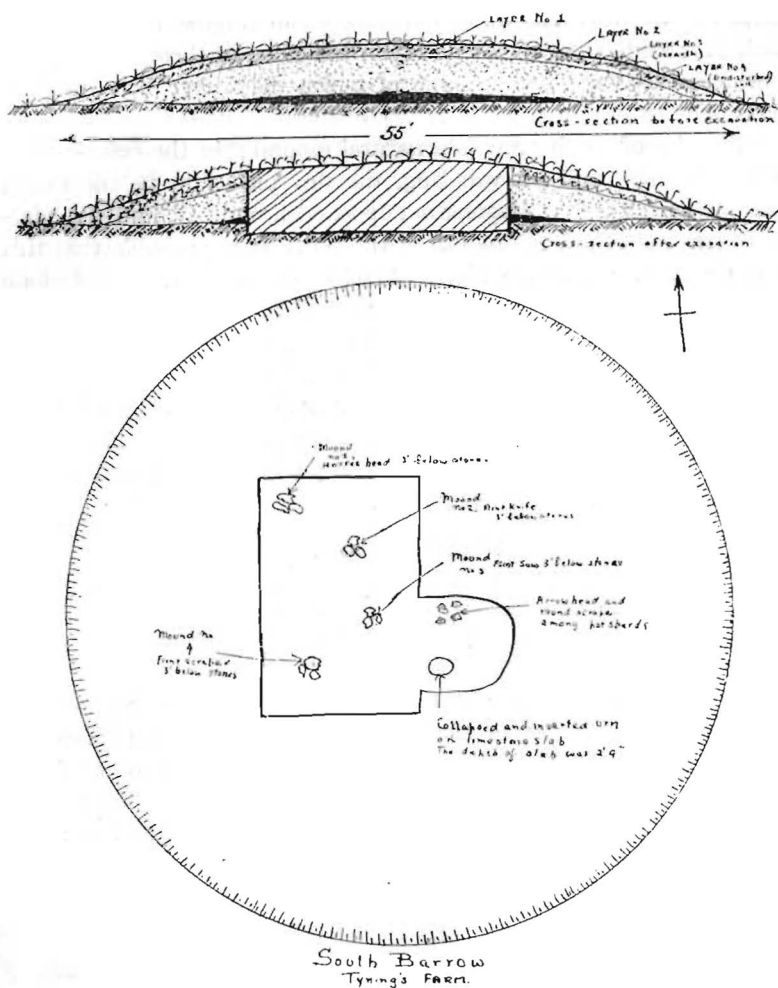


FIG. 4.

vessel. The limestone slab was 2 feet 9 inches below the surface. A certain amount of charcoal and ochreous mixture similar to that lying round the pot in the North Barrow was found in contact with the fragments of the urn.

The pot is biconical (Plate XI, No. 4) and the decoration, in addition to the cord pattern, displays the finger mark technique common in Type III, Southern Group I, Bronze Age III—V (Abercromby) and later. From the rim four imperforate lugs project (e.g. Deverell Group, as well as above). Its height is 16 inches. The



Height 19 $\frac{1}{4}$ in.

1.



Height 10 in.

2.



Height 12 $\frac{1}{4}$ in.

3.



Height 16 in.

4.



paste is similar to that of the cinerary urn of the North Barrow, but black inside. The pot is probably bipartite.

Its contents included the calcined bones of an adult, of indeterminate sex, showing good muscular development. A few crinoids, flint flakes and small fragments of pottery were also present.

The potsherds found belonged to a second vessel; some were 3 feet to the north of the urn, and at a depth of 2 feet, but others were found scattered in the hearth level, at a depth of 4 feet 3 inches. They were very much scattered, and did not appear to belong to another interment. The paste was jet black, with a reddish exterior, soft and uniform. The pattern consisted, as far as could be ascertained, of fine parallel oblique lines formed of double dots, possibly produced with a plaited thong. The portion of the base found belonged to yet another vessel, of which the paste was very hard and thinner than that of either of the other two.

The flint implements found were as follows (Fig. 5):—

A barbed and tanged arrow-head (No. 4). This is made of a fine honey-coloured flint, which had been patinated before the flint was worked. Its sides are convex, the surface flaking parallel, and it is a perfect specimen.

A triangular knife (No. 2). One angle is broken away, and the two shorter sides are retouched on both faces. It shows signs of extensive use.

A fragment of another knife or tranchet (No. 3).

A rectangular scraper (No. 1).

A saw or serrated knife (No. 5). The teeth are very fine and the retouching is directed from the lower face.

Besides the above there are three round scrapers of flint and one of chert; also another retouched blade and numerous unretouched blades and fragments of flint; the patination varied greatly; a few were fire crackled.

Several arrow-heads, scrapers and knives have been found during the past year in the adjoining eastern field, which is under the plough.

The remainder of this barrow is being dug at the time of writing.

WEST BARROW.

This bowl-type tumulus (Fig. 2) has a diameter of 21 feet, and a height of 2 feet 6 inches. A trench 6 feet long and 4 feet wide was dug through the centre from east to west. A large cist, 4 feet long, 2 feet 9 inches wide and 1 foot 3 inches deep was discovered. The walls were composed of irregular blocks of stone, the majority being O.R.S. The interspaces were filled with smaller stones. The floor was composed of flat stones roughly fitted together.

Within the cist were stones and earth and a few fragments of burnt bone, most of which were at the eastern end of the cist. The cremation appeared to have been carried out *in situ*, as some of the projecting smaller stones in the cist showed signs of having been burned, while at the western end of the cist this was not so evident.

Below the cist was a thin layer, about half an inch thick, consisting of black earth and burnt bone, resting on the original subsoil. Outside the cist, behind two of the smaller stones, a few fragments of burnt bone were found. No traces of pottery or bronze were observed, and the rest of the tumulus was barren.

CENTRAL BARROW.

Midway between the North and South barrows lies a burial mound; its diameter is 33 feet, and its height varies from 2 feet 3 inches to 3 feet. It appears to be of the bowl type. The top has several indentations which give it the appearance of having been previously opened. It consists of a layer, about 3 inches thick, of turf and humus, followed by 18 inches of small stones mixed with black humus, 12 inches of larger stones, and 6 inches of yellowish clay, then solid rock.

EXCAVATION.

The whole of the centre of this barrow was moved to a depth of 3 feet 3 inches, to the rock floor, a pit 12 feet in diameter being made. A couple of handfuls of burnt human bone, the sex and age of which were indeterminable, were found scattered throughout the third and fourth layers. Three or four fragments of pottery were also found. They were composed of a coarse grained paste of a dark brown colour inside, and light red outside. The flint finds included the following (Fig. 5):—

A triangular arrow-head (No. 7). It is very similar to that of Fig. 388, *Ancient Stone Implements*, (Evans), and it is also similar to a larger unfigured specimen in the Bristol Museum, taken by Mr. A. Selley from a barrow on Wellington Farm, Velvet Bottom, near Priddy. It is of a type unusual in this part of the country. The patination of both the local arrow heads is white.

A fragmentary lozenge shaped arrow-head (No. 6). This had been broken before patination had set in.

Two microlithic knives (Nos. 8 and 9), with retouched backs and bases. A number of unretouched broken blades.

For such a small tumulus the flint distribution is as dense as in the East Barrow (*q.v.*). All fragments are heavily patinated, and some

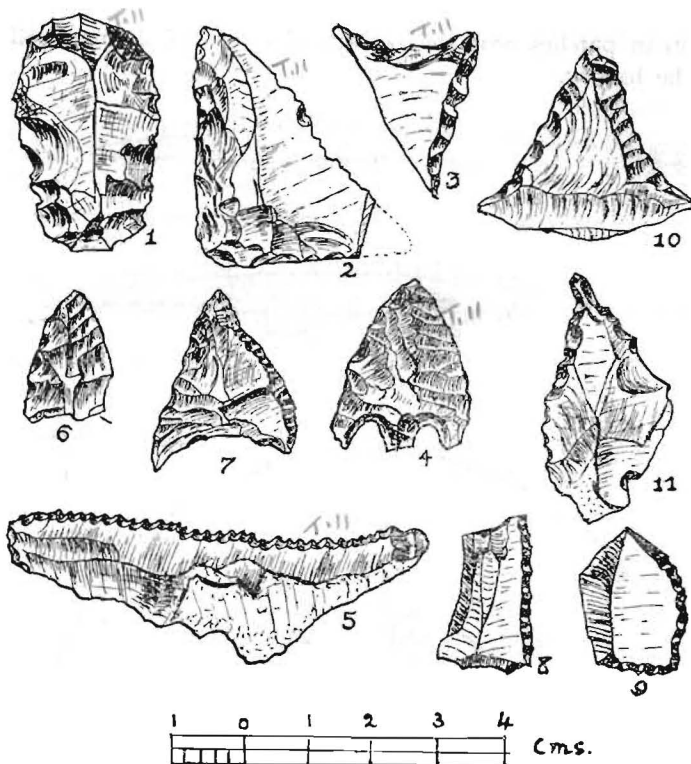


FIG. 5.

are fire crackled. The type and patination of the two arrow-heads, and of the other flints in the barrow seem to suggest that the barrow is of earlier date than either the North or the South barrows.

EAST BARROW.

This tumulus (Fig. 6)¹ is of the bowl type, and has a diameter of 74 feet, and a height of 2 feet 6 inches.

EXCAVATION.

During 1924 six expeditions were made to this barrow, and the whole of the mound, to a depth of 3 feet, has now been removed and replaced. The layers encountered were as follows:—

- (1) Turf and humus, 8 inches.
- (2) Loamy soil, 1 foot 9 inches, containing very few stones, all being O.R.S.
- (3) Apparently undisturbed soil in which were many more stones.

A grey material, possibly ash, interspersed with pieces of charcoal,

¹ The diagram of this barrow was drawn before the excavation was quite completed.

appears in patches near the bottom of layer No. 2, practically all over the barrow.

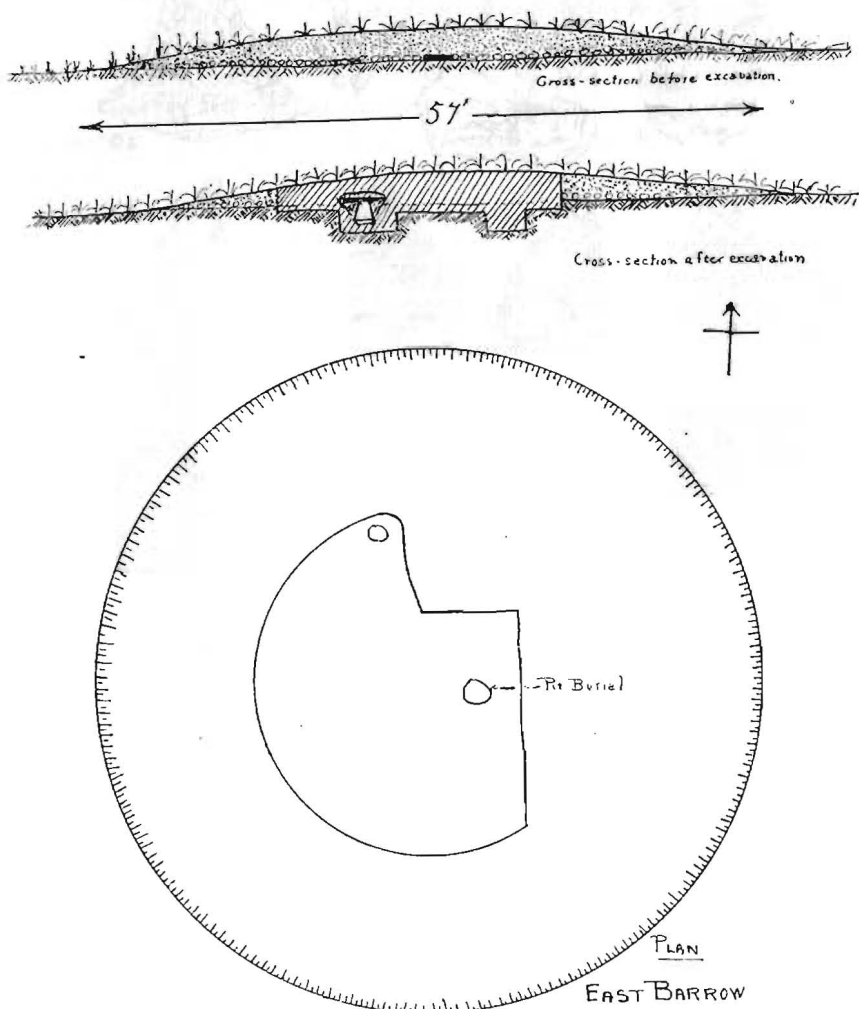


FIG. 6.

Approximately at the centre of the barrow a pit burial was found. The pit was 1 foot 6 inches in diameter, and was sunk 6 inches into the undisturbed subsoil. The top of the hole was surrounded with a circle of small stones, evidently placed there carefully, while the whole burial was covered with stones in which were flint fragments, including a thumb scraper. In the pit was a considerable quantity of calcined human bones of a muscular adult, sex indeterminate,

resting on the top of a layer of charcoal. Partially embedded in these bones were the following implements :—

An Amulet or Hone Stone (Plate X, No. 4). This is 3 inches long, $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches wide and about $\frac{1}{4}$ inch thick. The surface is polished, and the edges slightly bevelled. A hole, bored at one end, is countersunk on both sides. It is made of slate.

A Hone Stone made of a polished pebble, about 2 inches long.
No pottery was found in this part of the barrow.

About 8 feet N.W. of the above burial, at a depth of 2 feet 6 inches, a large flat stone was found lying horizontally. Nothing of importance was below this, but 5 feet from this stone, in the same direction, another stone was discovered. This was encrusted with a $\frac{3}{4}$ inch layer of material of a bituminous character. Beneath this stone was an inverted cinerary urn (Plate X, No. 2), complete with the exception of a small hole in the west side of it. The earth surrounding it was very dark in colour, and the encrusted layer, mentioned above, extended downwards, in the north and west, nearly to the bottom of the pot; this appears to be an attempt at sealing up the pot and its contents. The earth was removed from around the urn for a distance of 6 inches. Owing to the friable nature of the pottery it was found necessary to dry it by placing a fire round it. It was then possible to remove it in fairly large portions. The whole of the contents were carefully removed and washed, sifted and sorted. Where the inverted top of the urn was resting were found :—

Two barrel-shaped beads of jet.

Two thinner beads of jet, much weathered.

Two small disc beads and a triangular pendant, perforated in the centre, also made of jet.

A pale turquoise blue tube of vitreous paste, in the form of a linear series of fused beads (Plate X, No. 6).

Fragments of beads similar to the last, but of a dull green colour.

A fine bronze lozenge-shaped awl (Plate X, No. 5).

According to Dèchelette, in his classification of the Bronze Age for Western Europe, the association of vitreous paste beads, similar to those mentioned above, with lozenge-shaped awls, denotes the First Epoch of the Bronze Age, *ca* B.C. 2500—1900 B.C.

Charcoal was fairly abundant and the pot was nearly filled with calcined human bones; these belong to two individuals, (1) an adult female, probably less than twenty years of age, (2) a child, perhaps about three years of age, to judge from an astragalus, which is shrunken and deformed by fire, and a deciduous molar.

POTTERY.

The cinerary urn (Plate XI, No. 3) appears to belong to Type I, Phase I of the Bronze Age II. The angle is not quite sharp and the vessel is bipartite, therefore it does not belong to the very beginning of the series, but its early features are (a) the largest diameter is at the shoulder, (b) the technique of ornamentation belongs to an early period, (c) the convexity of the neck is due to distortion; it is evident that it was originally slightly concave.

FLINTS.

The following flint implements were found scattered throughout the barrow:—

A small tranchet (Fig. 5, No. 10) made of a thin flake of grey unpatinated flint. The sides are incurved and bear secondary chipping; the latter is directed upwards only on one side, and from both faces on the other. The base is unretouched, leaving a cutting edge; the faces also are unretouched; the apex is blunted. It is somewhat similar to a specimen from Yorkshire figured on page 291 of *Ancient Stone Implements* (Evans); Sir John Evans was uncertain whether to classify this, and similar implements, with knives or arrow-heads; while the implement is not ill adapted for the latter purpose, it has three cutting edges.

The tip of a leaf-shaped arrow-head, and the butt of a triangular arrow-head.

A borer (Fig. 5, No. 11), with secondary chipping.

A smaller borer, with a retouched hinge fracture on one side.

Two massive retouched knives.

Several blades.

Fragment of a fine knife.

Numerous cores and other flint fragments.

Most of these flints have a slight bluish patina—none were fire crackled.

CONCLUSION.

The Tynning's Farm barrows do not form a contemporary group. We have seen that the secondary interment in the East barrow is probably of Bronze Age I-II. The patinated flints from the Central barrow may, it is suggested, indicate a yet earlier date. The North and South barrows suggest Bronze Age IV-V, and the West barrow differed from the others in having a cist.

Our thanks are again due to our Hon. President, Sir George A. Wills for permission to dig the Blackdown barrows, to Major E. R. Leacroft for those on Rowberrow Warren, to A. J. R. Lobbett, Esq., for that on Piney Slight Farm, and to Mr. Small for those on Tynning's Farm.