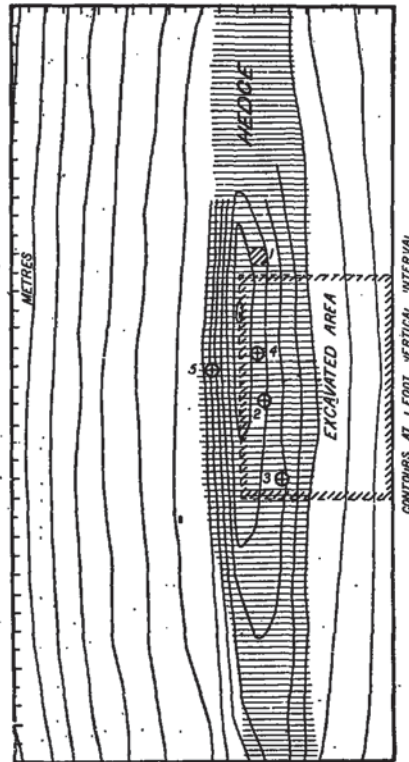


EXCAVATIONS AT RANCOMBE,
near Shorwell, Isle of Wight, August, 1920.

BY O. G. S. CRAWFORD.

A preliminary note on these excavations has already appeared in last year's issue (Vol. ix., part I., pp. 148, 149). I have not much to add to Mr. Morey's account.

RANCOMBE BARROW



- 1 BURIAL PIT containing inverted urn
 2 INVERTED URN
 3 FOOD VESSEL (the first found)
 4 " " —————>
 5 " " —————>

The site lay on the top of a narrow ridge or 'hog-back' formed of hard Upper Greensand Rock. Along the summit of



PLATE I.

RANCOMBE, 1920. CINERARY URN NO. 2 BEFORE AND AFTER MENDING.

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PLATE II.

RANCOMBE, 1920. FOOD-VESSELS 3, 5 AND 4 (FROM LEFT TO RIGHT).

this ridge runs a bank and hedge in an E.W. direction. All the objects were found in the bank of this hedge. The bank itself appears to be 'residual,' that is to say, it is a block of natural rock caused by the constant gradual ploughing away of the soil on either side. That this was so was proved by the character of the round pit or cist in which the large cinerary urn was found before excavations began. This pit, whose position is shown on the plan, was dug in the natural rock, as could be seen from an examination of its sides. It lay three metres W. of the highest part of the bank, which was probably also the top of the barrow; and it may, therefore, have been the primary interment. The other cinerary urn, found (fig. 2) inverted over burnt bones, lay eight metres south of the pit, and there were no signs of any pit or cist. The position of the other pots is shown on the plan. Remains of burning were found round each, but no bones; I therefore regard them all as food vessels. In addition there were found two other patches or nests of burnt material; the southernmost of these agrees closely with the measured position of the first pot found on the site (fig. 3), and I have little doubt that it was found here amongst the burnt matter. The discoveries may be summarized as follows:—

1. Pit containing burnt bones under a large inverted cinerary urn; the second pot found on the site and probably the primary interment.
2. Cinerary urn inverted over burnt bones; found during excavation (Plate I).
3. Pot, probably a food vessel, found 40 feet east of the large pit (No. 1); the first pot found on the site (Plate II; left).
4. Pot with overhanging rim, probably a food vessel, found during excavation (Plate II; right)
5. Pot, probably a food vessel, found during excavation; the only pot found on the S. side of the hedge (Plate II; middle).

It remains to give a detailed description of these pots.

1. Cinerary urn; height $18\frac{1}{2}$ inches; external diameter of mouth, 13 inches; maximum diameter (at edge of overhang) $16\frac{1}{4}$ inches; amount of overhang (measured vertically) $4\frac{1}{8}$ inches.

The overhanging portion is ornamented with five horizontal bands of cord-marks, between which are double crosses. The vessel is made of a gritty, brownish clay, but the grit does not show up. Part of the bottom (which, of course, was uppermost), is missing, and there are cracks in the sides; but otherwise the urn is in a very perfect state, and is a fine example of its kind.

2. Cinerary urn; height, 15 inches (probably more originally); external diameter of mouth $9\frac{3}{4}$ inches; amount of overhang, (measured vertically) $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches.

The overhanging portion is ornamented with eight horizontal rows, immediately below the lip, of a total width of about two

inches; below this the ornament consists of chevrons and diagonal lines. The ornament is of the "cord" type throughout, and was probably actually made by the application of a cord in this instance at any rate. The inner lip is sharply bevelled like No. 4 and is ornamented. The texture of the paste is very poor and rotten. When found, the urn was in a deplorable condition and large pieces flaked off, showing that a thin outer covering of clay had been smeared over it after the pot had been built up.

3. Food vessel; height, $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches (probably very little short of the original height); external diameter of mouth, $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches; diameter of base, $3\frac{1}{4}$ inches (Plate II; left).

Part of the base is still preserved, but not of the rim. The vessel is ornamented exclusively with "cord" ornament, but it is doubtful whether in this instance it was made by the application of a cord. The ornament consists of triangles with left-to-right hatchings parallel to the right side, arranged between two horizontal bands of "cord" ornaments; below is a row of horseshoes formed by pressing a loop of clay into the clay with the tip of the finger (which seems to have been a small one). The paste is brownish in colour and contains little grit.

4. Food vessel; height $4\frac{3}{4}$ inches; external diameter of mouth, $4\frac{1}{4}$ inches; diameter of base (restored), 3 inches; amount of overhang, 2 inches (Plate II; right).

The vessel is ornamented exclusively with "cord" ornament, which closely resembles that of No. 3. The inner lip is bevelled, and slopes inwards at a sharp angle; it is ornamented with a single row of chevrons and is three-eighths of an inch wide. The ornament upon the overhang consists of three horizontal rows of "cord" ornament, arranged in three double lines, between which are two rows of chevrons, the upper being three-eighths of an inch wide and the lower five-eighths of an inch. Immediately below the overhang are the remains of at least two rows of horseshoes, exactly like those on No. 3. The vessel is well made and the paste has been mixed well; it is of a yellowish-brown colour, and has patches of black, lichen-like staining, perhaps manganese.

5. Food vessel; height, $3\frac{5}{8}$ inches; external diameter of mouth, $3\frac{7}{8}$ inches; diameter of base, $2\frac{3}{4}$ inches (Plate II; middle)

Parts of both rim and base survive, so that the measurements can be relied upon. At 2 inches below the lip is a raised rib, evidently connected typologically with the "overhanging rim." The part above the rib is ornamented with punctured dots, a double row immediately above the rib encircling the pot; there are traces of similar rows arranged vertically. These dots were evidently made with a pointed instrument. The material of the pot is poor and very flaky; it is blackish-brown in colour and contains little or no flint grit.

All the above have been skilfully mended and restored by Mr. Young, of the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford. For the encouragement of future discoverers, a photograph was made of the fragments of cinerary urn No. 2 before they were pieced together; this is reproduced on Plate I for comparison with the same after restoration. As so often happens, the lower portion (which was uppermost) has been lost. I think the lower part, which is restored without any guiding fragments except the base itself, should have been made longer and narrower.

It is more than probable that all the pots are contemporary. A very similar barrow was rifled quite recently by a farmer near Narberth in Pembrokeshire. The pots found consisted of "two food vessels (cf. Abercromby, *Bronze Age Pottery*, i. Plate xxxiv., 109, Plate, L 347) two cinerary urns with overhanging rims and herring-bone and chevron patterns, and an incense cup (cf. *ib.ii.* Plate lxxxiii., 311, but more angular.)¹" Unfortunately, they are still in his possession and it has not, therefore, been possible to publish a proper account of them.

In the objects found, the Rancombe barrow proved far richer than any of those at Roundwood; but in the lessons to be learnt, Roundwood was far superior. There was little opportunity at Rancombe for making any nice discrimination of soils; the sandy formation of the Upper Greensand made this impossible. It was necessary to dig everywhere and trust to luck.

I must not conclude without expressing my thanks to the tenant, Mr. Downton, and to his wife, for their kindness during my encampment on their farm. To Mrs. Downton, also is due the credit for preserving the first pot found.

¹Bulletin of Celtic Studies I. i. (October, 1921), pp. 71-72. (Description by Dr. R. E. Mortimer Wheeler, M.C., F.S.A. See also "Western Mail," April 20th, 1921, where photographs of some of them appear.