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# AN ANGLO-SAXON CEMETERY AT ORPINGTON

## FIRST INTERIM REPORT

By P. J. TESTER, F.S.A.

SINCE July 1965 excavations have been taking place at Fordcroft, close to the boundary between Orpington and St. Mary Cray, on a small area of land adjoining Poverest Road near its junction with the main route from Sidcup to Sevenoaks (A224). This work has been sponsored by Orpington Museum under authority of the London Borough of Bromley to whom the site belongs. Evidence of Roman occupation has been discovered and also a considerable number of burials forming part of a previously unknown Anglo-Saxon cemetery. This is of particular interest as, hitherto, no well-authenticated archæological evidence of early Anglo-Saxon occupation along the course of the River Cray has been recorded, though the neighbouring valley of the Darent has produced notable remains of that age. Excavation will be continued until the site is thoroughly investigated, and the present report describes the results obtained up to the autumn of 1966. All the finds are retained at Orpington Museum.

### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Permission for the excavation was given by the site-owners, the London Borough of Bromley, who also provided a mechanical excavator to remove surface rubble. Mrs. M. Bowen, B.A., Curator of Orpington Museum, has been responsible for much of the organization, as well as participating in the digging and dealing with the finds. Mr. A. C. Hart has made the photographic record and also the drawings of the grave-goods (Figs. 4-11). He and Mrs. Hart have given most valuable assistance in the excavation from its commencement. Mr. H. R. Robinson, F.S.A., has cleaned the sword and some of the other iron objects, and Mr. B. D. Glynn, B.D.S., L.D.S., provided a dental report which has been valuable in determining individual ages of some of the skeletons. Anatomical information was supplied by Dr. C. Carter, B.M., M.R.C.P., Dr. D. B. Harden reported on the glass, and Dr. J. N. L. Myres supplied notes on the pottery. Animal bones from Grave 38 were identified by the British Museum (Natural History).

Those who gave consistent help with the digging in the first two seasons include: Mesdames B. N. Banks, E. D. Hart, A. E. Highland,

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D. J. Rylands, R. M. Tester, E. Whitehorn; Misses G. Hoggarth, A. Robinson, M. E. and A. F. Tester; Messrs. A. H. A. Banks, R. G. and S. W. Banks, D. C. Lyne, R. M. Lyne, P. Rylands, J. Taylor, R. H. C. Taylor and K. P. Whitehorn.

Mr. B. D. Stoyel, the former K.A.S. Local Secretary for Orpington, assisted in initiating the excavation and gave active help until his departure from the district at the end of the first season.

To these and all others who have assisted in various ways with the investigation the writer expresses his grateful appreciation.

### THE SITE

This consists of a plot of land, about an eighth of an acre in extent, lying between Poverest Road and Bellefield Road, and made vacant by the demolition of a terrace of Victorian brick cottages. Two sides of the quadrilateral area (north-east and south-west) are formed by the roads, and the other two by remaining houses and their rear premises (O.S. 1 : 2500 Plan TQ 4667, National Grid Reference 46786758). When inspected in June, 1965, the site presented a dreary and unpromising appearance, overgrown with weeds and littered with rubbish. However, it was known that about twenty years previously when a service trench was dug opposite this point in Bellefield Road, a considerable quantity of Roman pottery was found by the workmen, as recorded by the late Mr. A. Eldridge in *Arch. Cant.*, ix, 101. At that time it was thought that these finds related to a Roman building which might have stood in the immediate vicinity, and it was in order to test this theory that trial digging was commenced in July, 1965. From the commencement large quantities of Roman material came to light but no foundations of a building. As work progressed, part of an Anglo-Saxon cremation pot was found, and near it several inhumation burials of the same age. It thus became apparent that we had had the good fortune to light by chance upon an Anglo-Saxon cemetery and from that time the search for further burials became the main object of the investigation.

The present suburban setting of the site is the product of the last hundred years. Previously it had been agricultural land lying between the villages of Orpington and St. Mary Cray, the River Cray, flowing from its source half a mile to the south, passing within 200 yards of the site of our discoveries. The subsoil here is mainly brick-earth, a sandy clay (probably re-deposited Tertiary material) resting on Flood Plain gravel covering the floor of the valley. A spot height in Poverest Road marked on the O.S. map gives the level as 156 ft. above O.D. The medieval churches of Orpington and St. Mary Cray are three-quarters of a mile south and half a mile north respectively. Just over half a mile to the west lay the farmstead of Poverest, a name which can be traced

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back as far as the early fourteenth century.<sup>1</sup> Otherwise the site is not in close proximity to any long-established settlement. The use of the name Fordcroft in association with this locality is of some antiquity and occurs in the will of John Manning of St. Mary Cray who died in 1583.<sup>2</sup>

### EVIDENCE OF ROMANO-BRITISH OCCUPATION

Excavation revealed in the south part of the site a continuous thin layer of flint rubble about 2 ft. from the modern surface. On this and in the overlying soil was a scatter of Roman material consisting of broken roof-tiles, pottery, coins and other small objects. This evidence of R.-B. occupation continued beyond the flint area into all parts of the site so far investigated. Details will be published separately in due course and at this stage it will suffice to state that the flint spread is tentatively identified as the metalling of a yard possibly related to a Roman dwelling not so far located and probably lying outside the area available for excavation. No mortar occurred on the flints which suggests that they do not in themselves represent debris from a destroyed building. Pottery and coins indicate continuous occupation from the late first to the fourth centuries. Several Roman pits have been examined. A large one on the north side towards Poverest Road contained considerable quantities of second-century pottery including samian ware. The course of a ditch, found to contain several complete Roman vessels, is also shown on the accompanying site-plan.

### ANGLO-SAXON BURIALS

In the first two seasons' work 16 cremations and 29 inhumation burials have been examined. Cremated remains in pottery vessels were interspersed among the inhumation graves without any evidence to suggest that the two rites were practised otherwise than contemporaneously. The cremation pots had evidently been set in shallow holes and had in many instances suffered damage from later ploughing and similar disturbance. It is now difficult to determine the original surface-level before the Victorian cottages were built, and the site has a general build-up of about a foot of debris resulting from their demolition. Original depths of graves are therefore difficult to establish and where stated in this report were measured from the present surface which may well be higher than formerly.

Most of the graves were dug so that the head of the corpse pointed roughly westward. Others were placed with the head to the approximate south, and graves of both orientations were intermingled and sometimes intersected. Some had been dug through the Roman flint

<sup>1</sup> J. K. Wallenberg, *The Place-Names of Kent* (1934), 29.

<sup>2</sup> *Foordcroft*. Prerogative Court of Canterbury. 26 Rowe, 1583.



spread, or metalling, and the soil in which the burials had been made varied from dirty gravel to clean sand or clay. In many cases the dark soil of the grave-filling was distinguishable from the lighter subsoil and the outline of the grave could be observed. Most were roughly rectangular with rounded corners, but there were several of less regular form. Many of the skeletons were very decayed and the anatomical evidence obtainable from them is scanty, though teeth and long-bones, where sufficiently preserved, have supplied information regarding age and height. Men's graves, identified as such by associated weapons, showed much less skeletal decay than those of women and children.

Most of the burials so far examined have lain within the actual area of the demolished cottages in Poverest Road and it is remarkable that so little damage was done to them by the building and demolition. Some elderly folk who still live locally once inhabited these dwellings and the revelation that they had for years unknowingly lived with crowded skeletons a slight depth below their floors has provoked lively and amusing comments when they have visited the recent excavations.

#### NOTES ON THE SITE-PLAN (Fig. 1)

The accompanying plan shows the relative positions of Burials 1 to 58 examined during the first three seasons' work. When the rest of the site has been excavated, an enlarged plan, including the area to the south, will be published as part of a later report. Several features of the provisional plan call for comment.

The Roman ditch and large pit were not visible on the surface but were traced by excavation. Abundant Roman pottery came from their filling and also from a small pit (marked P) just south of Burials 10 and 11. Some of the Anglo-Saxon graves were dug into the filling of both the ditch and the larger pit. Two other small pits are marked, one north of Grave 5 and the other south of 42. The former was a foot in diameter and  $3\frac{1}{2}$  ft. deep, the contents being dark soil with flint nodules, part of a Roman *imbrex*, and also an ox jaw. The other small pit was similar in size but contained no dating evidence.

Over the foot of Grave 43 the filling was sealed by part of a hearth of burnt clay. It extended under the building which forms the east side of the site and its further investigation is therefore impossible. A few sherds of medieval pottery were in association, including a flanged rim of c. 1300. No other indications of medieval occupation were found elsewhere on the site, so the association of these sherds with the hearth is significant.

It is to be observed that although digging was extended right up to the south side of Poverest Road there was found to be a broad strip immediately adjoining and parallel to it which contained no graves.

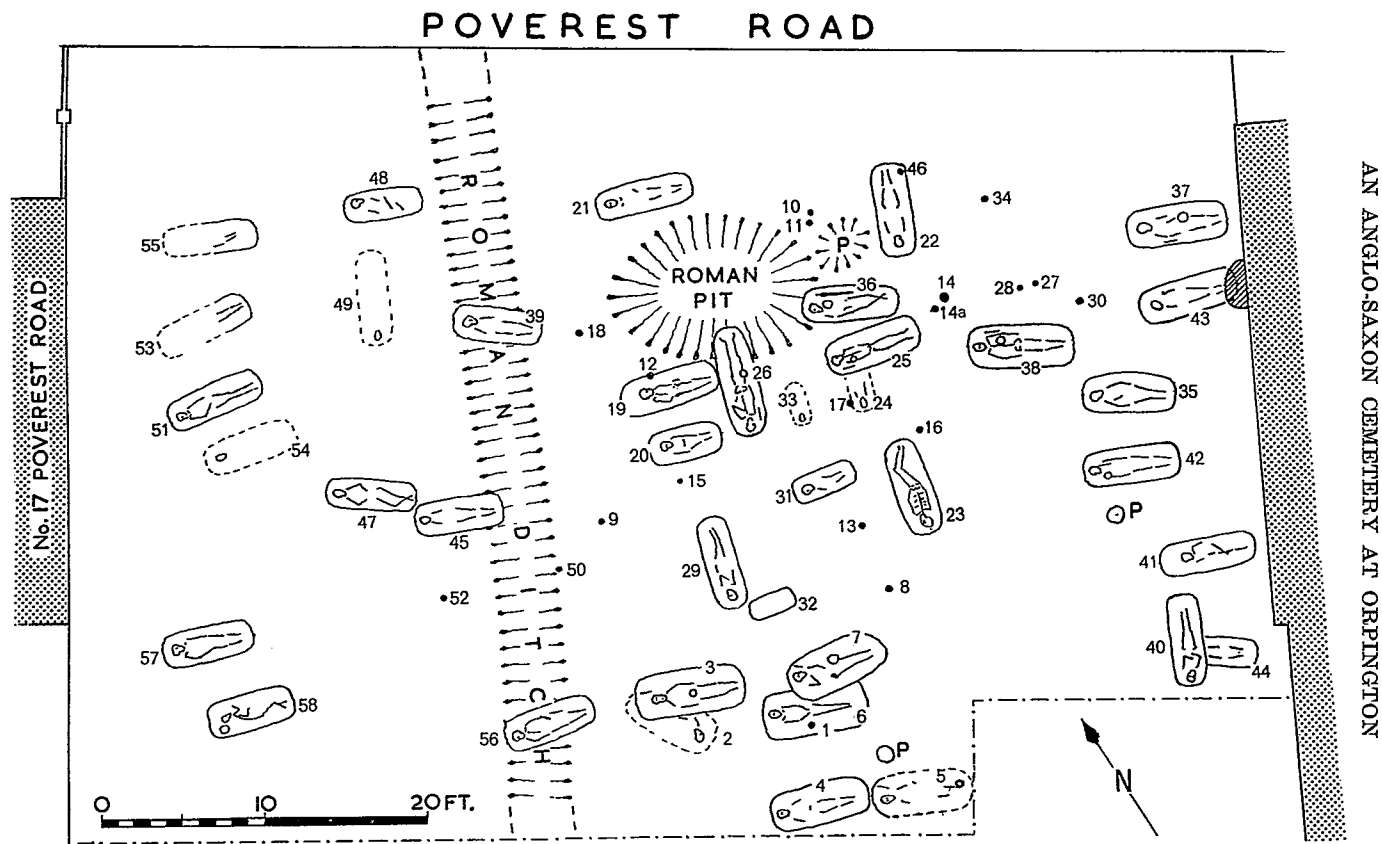


FIG. 1. Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Orpington. Provisional Site-plan.

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This seems to show that the northward extent of the cemetery has been reached. Probably more graves lie under No. 17 Poverest Road, and they certainly do under the buildings to the east, as a spearhead and skull were found by the owner when he made an inspection-pit in his garage floor. Roman material has been found in trial digging in the area immediately south of that covered by the present site-plan and it is anticipated that more Anglo-Saxon burials will come to light there also.

### DESCRIPTION OF THE BURIALS AND ASSOCIATED OBJECTS

In the following notes the burials are numbered to accord with the site-plan (Fig. 1). Unless otherwise stated the skeletons were lying on their backs looking upwards or with the head turned to right or left, the arms to the sides. *Right* and *left* are used from the skeleton's position and not the observer's. Thus 'Spear by the right side of the skull' means on the observer's left when looking down into the grave from its foot. Some of the objects described are not figured owing to their severely corroded or incomplete condition.

1. Cremation burial. Part of the base of pot of typical Anglo-Saxon hand-made fabric, apparently inserted in upper filling of Grave 6. Inside, attached to the bottom, was a small quantity of burnt bones surrounding an unidentifiable iron object, possibly a small toilet utensil or knife.

2. Incomplete skeleton of woman, age about 30. Head to south-east, leg bones destroyed by Grave 3.

(a) *Iron knife*, close to right humerus, point towards head of grave (Fig. 4).

(b) *Glass armlet* (Fig. 4). One fragment *in situ* beneath right humerus indicating that it was worn just above the elbow. Other joining fragments were found scattered in the lower grave filling, the damage being due no doubt to ploughing over the shallow grave. Dark olive-green glass with large patches and streaks of amber colour and a few small patches of bluish-green. External diameter about 3 in. The interior wall is flat and unpolished, showing the characteristic roughened surface left by casting in a mould or modelling on a core; the exterior wall is smoother, though the surface is dulled. On the exterior, just inside each rounded edge, or rim, there are continuous single bands of rouletting, consisting of a broken line of dashes, each about  $\frac{1}{10}$  in. long. Between these rouletted lines the surface is divided vertically by pairs of parallel lines composed of dashes  $\frac{1}{8}$  in. apart. Each line has 6 or 7 dashes, perhaps made with comb-like implements with pointed teeth. Between each pair of lines is a four-petalled 'flower' which may have been made with a single-leaf stamp impressed four

times for each 'flower', or with a four-leaf stamp, perhaps the former, since the 'flowers' seem not to be exactly uniform in shape. The complete armlet would have contained 10 of these flowers.

Dr. D. B. Harden has commented: 'I would suppose that the bangle was drawn out in a flattish band from a gob of warm glass on to a hot cylindrical core, probably of iron. The ornaments would presumably be impressed or rouletted while the glass remained warm and *in situ* on the hot core. When the core cooled and contracted the glass could be removed easily and itself finished by very gradual cooling in an annealing chamber.'

Other examples of these rare glass armlets have come from Chessell Down (Isle of Wight), Malling Hill (near Lewes), Milton Regis and Chatham Lines (Kent). Miss Vera I. Evison states that they are not later than early- to middle-fifth century and probably originated in the Meuse valley.<sup>3</sup>

3. Skeleton of man, age 30 or over. Height approximately 5 ft. 8 in. Depth of grave from modern surface 3 ft. 9 in.

(a) *Spearhead*, on left side of skull (Fig. 10).

(b) *Shield-boss*, on pelvis. *Hand-grip* in form of thin iron strip with traces of wood adhering, similar to Fig. 11, 36b. Boss secured to wood of shield by five bronze disc-headed rivets with traces of tin or silver coating. Button of boss of same form and material as rivet-heads (Fig. 11).

(c) *Four iron studs*, disposed in line passing through boss. The inner pair were under the boss; the others 1½ ft. apart. These were obviously associated with the shield though their precise function in regard to its construction is uncertain.

(d) *Iron knife*, on left side of waist, point towards head. Length 6.2 in.

(e) *Iron buckle*, at centre of body above pelvis (Fig. 4).

4. Skeleton of woman, very poorly preserved. Height about 5 ft. Grave 3 ft. deep in dirty gravel.

(a) *Bronze disc-brooch*, worn on right side of chest (Fig. 4). Decoration of concentric inscribed circles and punched triangles which contain traces of tin or silver. Remains of iron pin. A close parallel from Bifrons is figured in *Arch. Cant.*, x, 302; now in Maidstone Museum and there dated c. A.D. 500.

(b) *Bronze disc-brooch*, found a few inches below the chin. Decorated with concentric inscribed circles and faint traces of punched ornament round perimeter; iron pin (Fig. 4).

(c) *Small bronze buckle* with iron tongue. Lying near outside of right femur (Fig. 4).

<sup>3</sup> V. I. Evison, *Fifth-Century Invasions South of the Thames* (1965), 21-2 and Map 7.

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(d) *Iron knife*, very corroded, lying across centre of body on waist-line, point to right. Length 4.5 in.

5. Skeleton of man, age 20 or over. Grave 2 ft. 6 in. deep and disturbed by modern drainage trench across middle.

(a) *Spearhead*, on left side of skull (Fig. 10).

(b) *Shield-boss*, on lower part of left leg. Very corroded but obviously of the same general shape as others from the site illustrated in Fig. 11. Diameter about 6 in.; iron grip of similar form to Fig. 11, 36b.

(c) *Knife*, on left side of waist. Length 6.2 in.

6. Skeleton of woman, age 25-30. Height about 5 ft. 3 in. Well preserved bones. Depth of grave 3 ft. 4 in. Lying with hands together over pelvis. No grave goods.

7. Skeleton of man, age about 40. Height approximately 5 ft. 6 in. Depth of grave 3 ft. Right arm bent at elbow with hand towards left shoulder as though to grasp shaft of spear.

(a) *Spearhead*, on left side of skull, tip disintegrated (Fig. 10).

(b) *Shield-boss*, covering top of left femur. Secured to shield by five silver-headed rivets. Thickness of shield, as indicated by rivet shanks, about 0.3 in. Iron grip with turned-up sides (cf. Fig. 11, 38b and 42b), attached by two bronze disc-headed rivets and with traces of wood adhering (Fig. 11).

(c) *Knife*, on left side of waist, point towards foot of grave. Length 5 in.

8. Cremation burial. Damaged black urn, rather gritty ware, containing burnt bones. Stamped decoration of common character. Dr. J. N. L. Myres suggests a sixth-century date (Fig. 2).

9. Cremation burial. Complete pot, brown to black surface, black internally (Fig. 2). Contents of burnt bones and

(a) *two fragments of worked bone* with inscribed parallel lines, possibly remains of a comb (Fig. 4).

10. Cremation burial. Base of much-damaged black pot containing burnt bones.

11. Cremation burial. Base of much-damaged pot of reddish ware, containing burnt bones.

12. Cremation burial. Urn of grey-brown ware with evidence of chaff-tempering.<sup>4</sup> Contained burnt bones (Fig. 2).

13. Cremation burial. Bowl of poor chaff-tempered ware, clumsily shaped. Outside varies from orange-brown to black; inside black. Contained burnt bones (Fig. 2).

14. Cremation burial. Cooking-pot of poor chaff-tempered ware. Black on upper part but burnt to brownish shades below. Three vertical

<sup>4</sup> The term 'chaff-tempering' is here used to denote the presence on the surface of the pottery of marks indicating burnt-out fragments of chopped grass or straw mixed with the clay.

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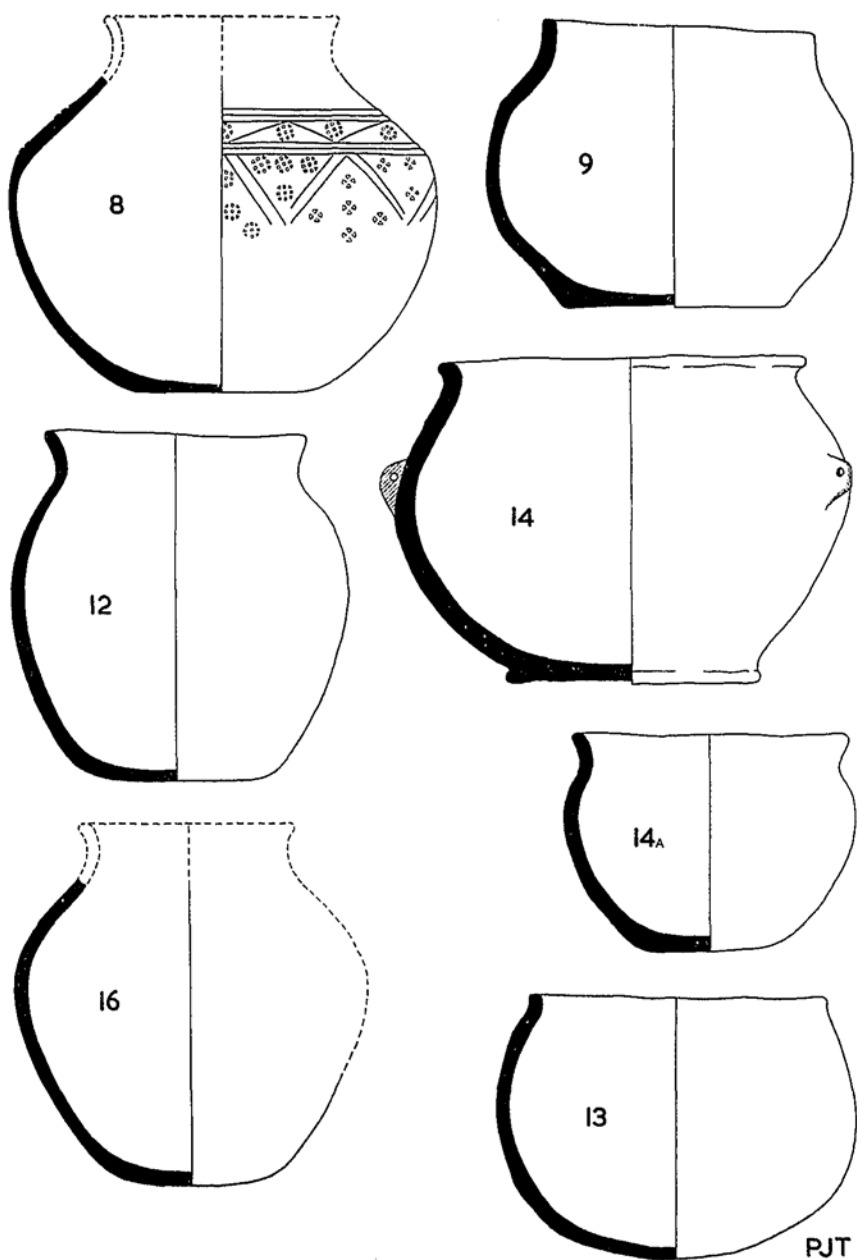


FIG. 2. Pottery from the Orpington Anglo-Saxon Cemetery ( $\frac{1}{4}$ ).

pierced lugs for suspension. Unusual flat base. Black scum inside represents traces of food cooked in pot. Used as cinerary urn and contained burnt bones (Fig. 2).

(a) Corroded *iron ring* with thin iron strip attachments. Found among the burnt bones inside the pot (Fig. 4).

14A. *Small pot* found 14 in. from 14 and apparently not a separate burial as it contained no burnt bones. Poor fabric with much burnt-out chaff showing on surface. Dull orange-brown to black outside; black internally (Fig. 2).

15. Cremation burial. A few sherds of a shattered pot enclosing a quantity of burnt bones.

16. Cremation burial. Damaged pot of hard, dark-grey to brown ware. Unwashed clay with small pebbles and some chaff. Contained small quantity of burnt bones (Fig. 2).

17. Cremation burial. Complete vessel of hard grey ware with brownish patches. Some traces of chaff-tempering. Contained burnt bones (Fig. 3).

18. Cremation burial. Base of black pot with contents of burnt bones.

19. Skeleton of woman, age about 20. Approximate height 5 ft. 4 in. Right hand on pelvis. Depth of grave 3 ft. 3 in.

(a) *Bronze buckle*, on right hip, tongue pointing right. Closely associated were *three bronze dome-headed studs*, evidently the means by which the belt was attached to the buckle (Fig. 4).

(b), (c), (d) and (e) These objects were corroded together and lay close outside the upper part of the left femur as though buried in a bag suspended from the waist.

(b) *Iron knife* (Fig. 5).

(c) *Two iron rings* (Fig. 4).

(d) *Loop of bronze wire* (Fig. 4).

(e) *Small bronze finger ring* (Fig. 4).

20. Skeleton of child, sex undetermined, age 7-8 years. Height about 3 ft. 8 in. Depth of grave 3 ft.

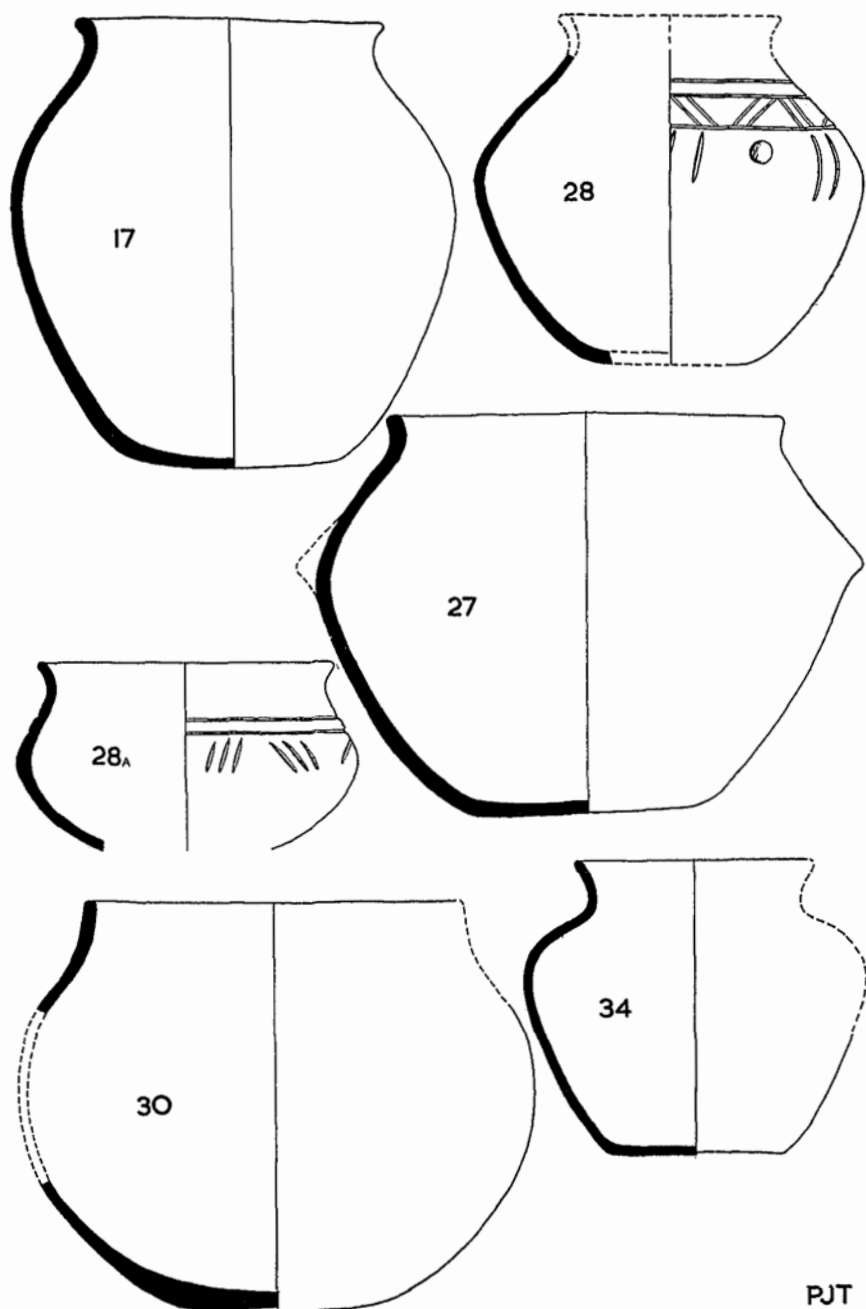
(a) *Iron buckle* with long tapering attachment-plate, on waist-line at centre of body, tongue pointing left. Bronze washer on rivet which secured belt to plate (Fig. 5).

(b) *Knife*, partly covered by buckle, point towards right (Fig. 5).

21. Skeleton of woman, age about 35, bones very decomposed. Height over 5 ft. By the left knee was a *sestertius* of Antoninus Pius, but it is uncertain whether this was deliberately placed in the grave or chanced to be in the back-fill.

(a) *A pair of bronze bird-brooches*, possibly intended to represent eagles, lying below chin, 3 in. apart, the heads inclining slightly outwards with beaks pointing in outward direction in each case. Each has

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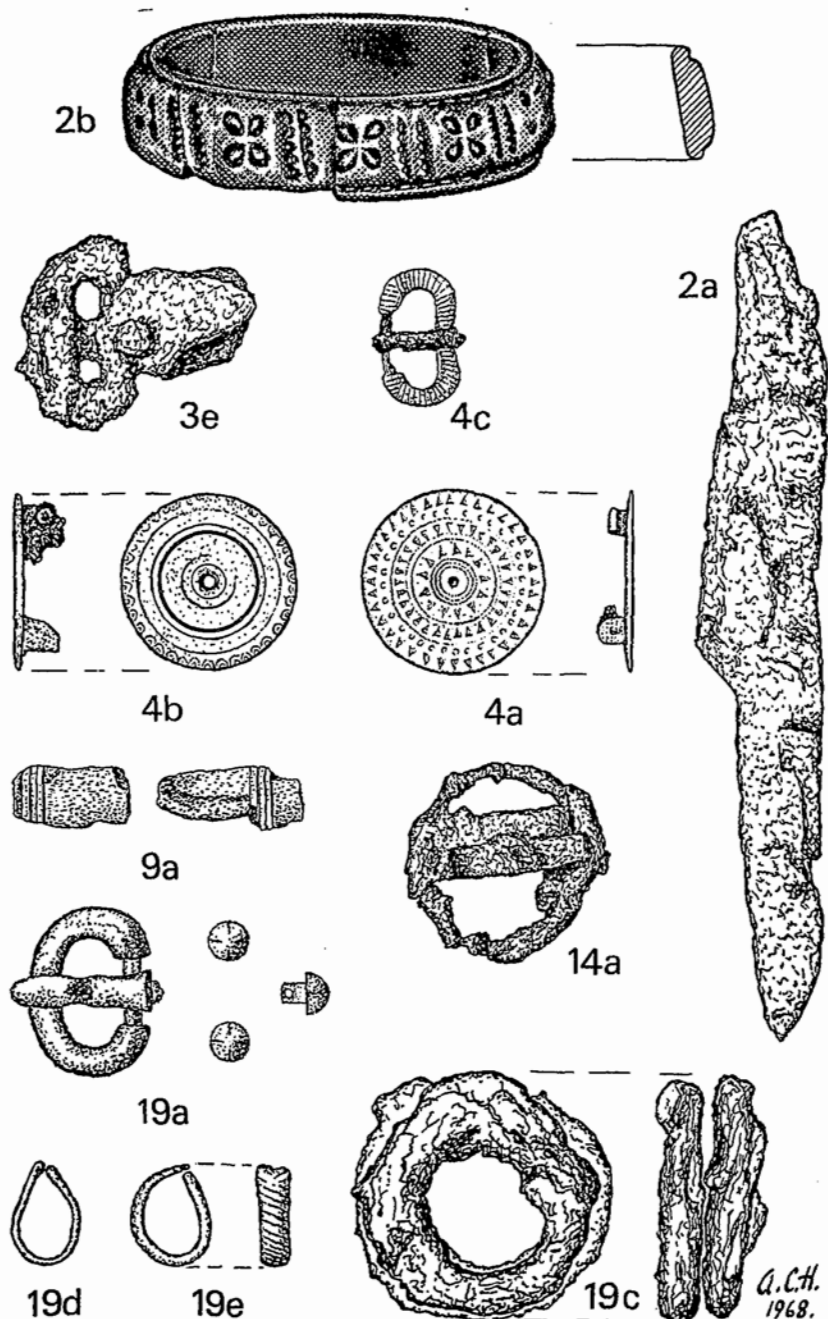


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FIG. 3. Pottery from the Orpington Anglo-Saxon Cemetery ( $\frac{1}{4}$ ).



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A.C.H.  
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FIG. 4. Objects from Graves 2, 3, 4, 19; and Cremation Burials 9 and 14 (3).

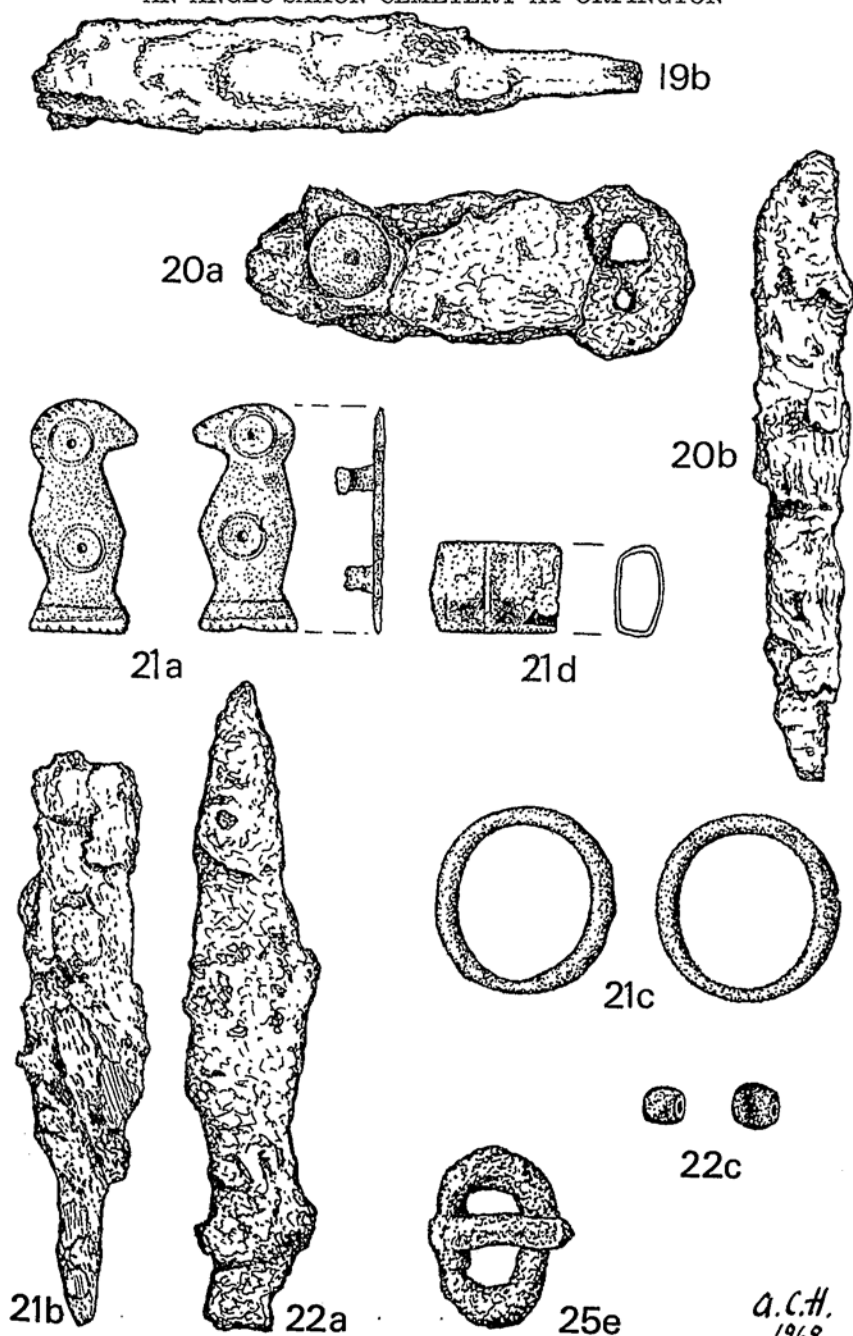


FIG. 5. Objects from Graves 19, 20, 21, 22 and 25 (§).

A.C.H.  
1968.

a large ring-and-dot ornament repeated once on the head and once on the body, and two horizontal lines across the base of the tail, with vestigial tail feathers below this. Traces of iron pins, and tin or silver remaining in ring-and-dot decoration (Fig. 5).

(b), (c) and (d) were all lying in contact by left hip as though buried in bag or purse (cf. Grave 19).

(b) *Knife*, point towards left (Fig. 5).

(c) *Two bronze rings*, lying in contact (Fig. 5).

(d) *Tinned or silvered bronze tube*. From its position in the group it cannot have formed the ferrule of the knife handle, as its form might suggest (Fig. 5).

22. Skeleton of woman, age 40 or over. Height about 5 ft. 3 in. Depth of grave 2 ft. 6 in.

(a) *Knife*, point of blade towards head of grave, on left side of waist (Fig. 5).

(b) *Iron object*, very close to (a). Too corroded for certain identification but may have been large pair of tweezers. Length 5 in.

(c) *Two amber beads* under chin (Fig. 5).

23. Well-preserved skeleton of man, age about 50. Height 5 ft. 10 in. or over. Lying with knees slightly drawn up to the left, as though grave had been dug too short. No grave goods.

24. Skull of child, sex undetermined, age about 4 years. Slight traces of arm bones but rest destroyed by Grave 25. No grave goods.

25. (Plate I.) Skeleton of man, age 35-40. Height about 5 ft. 4 in.

(a) *Spearhead*, close to right shoulder (Fig. 10).

(b) *Shield-boss*, on right side of chest. Grip in form of thin bronze strip with expanded ends; fragment of wood adhering to underside (Fig. 11).

(c) *Four iron plates*, evidently mounted on shield, shown *in situ* in accompanying photograph. Each plate had a central shank by which it was fastened to the shield.

(d) *Knife*, on left side of waist. Length 4.5 in.

(e) *Iron buckle*, at waist-level near centre of body, tongue pointing to right (Fig. 5).

(f) Small iron point, possibly a strap-end, on left side of body at waist-level pointing left. This can be seen *in situ* in Plate I.

26. (Plate II.) Skeleton of man, age about 30. Height approximately 6 ft. Left arm bent at elbow with hand towards top of chest. The upper filling of the grave consisted of a compact layer of large flint nodules, evidently placed for protection or to mark the grave on the surface.

(a) *Spearhead*, by right shoulder (Fig. 10).

(b) *Shield-boss*, resting at centre of right femur. Iron grip with turned-up sides (cf. Fig. 11, 38b). Part of its extension can be seen across bones of right hand in the photograph (Plate II and Fig. 11).



*A. C. Hart*

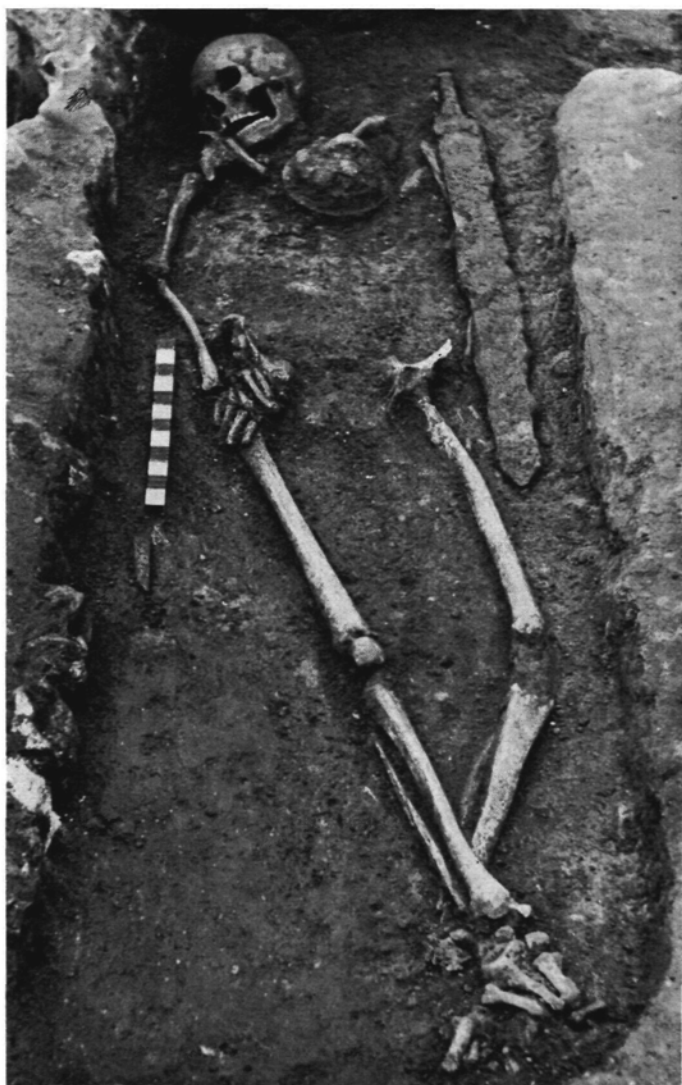
Grave 25.

PLATE II



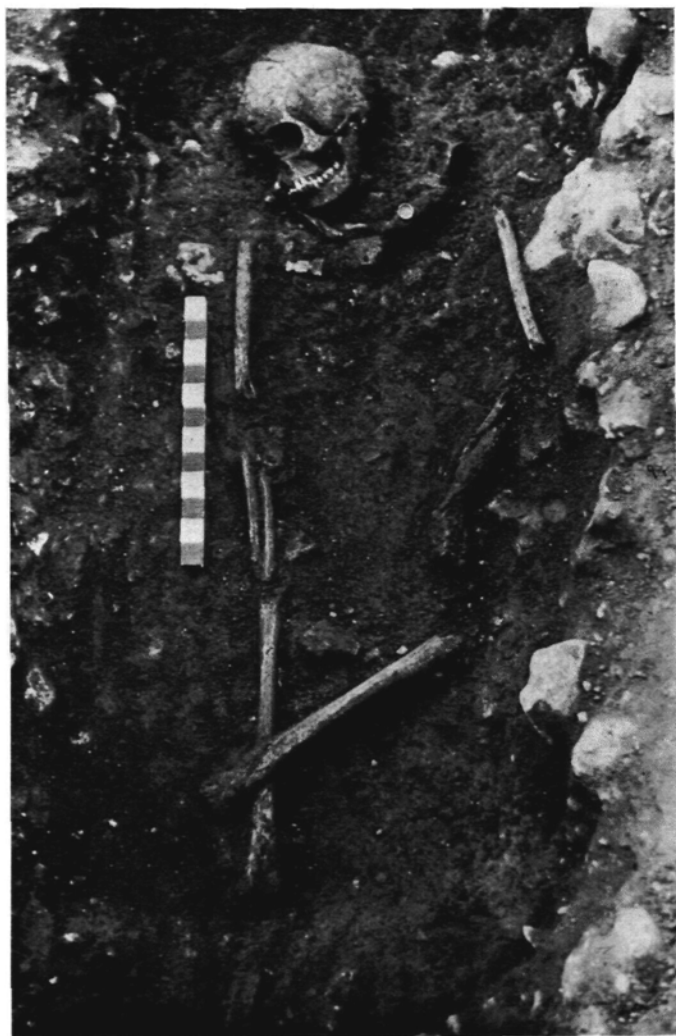
*A. C. Hart*

Grave 26.



*A. C. Hart*

Grave 36.



*A. C. Hart*

Grave 41.

(c) *Three bronze disc-headed rivets*, evidently attached to shield. Two can be seen together by right hand in the photograph; the other close to inside of left femur (Plate II and Fig. 6).

(d) *Two thin rectangular bronze plates* with clenched pins. One occurred close against outside of left femur (just half-way up from knee in photograph); the other inside right knee. If these were mounted near the edge of the shield they indicate its diameter as not less than 2 ft. 2 in., and the pins of the mounts show the thickness of the shield to have been about 0.3 in. (Plate II and Fig. 6).

(e) *Knife*, point towards upper part of grave, lying on left side of waist (Fig. 6).

27. Cremation burial. Pot with three unpierced bosses on shoulder. Brownish exterior, black inside. Contained burnt bones (Fig. 3).

28. Cremation burial. Incomplete pot of grey ware with reddish patches on exterior. Much coarse grit visible particularly inside near the base. Decoration of incised grooves round neck with chevron ornament. Round the shoulder there are pairs of vertical incisions separating circular dimples. Contained burnt bones. Dr. Myres refers this vessel to the middle of the fifth century (Fig. 3).

28A. Probably a cremation burial represented by disturbed and incomplete pot without any cremated bones in association when found. Occurred in the same general area as 28 and dated by Dr. Myres to 'the Hengist and Horsa horizon in Kent'. Hard grey ware with incised grooves round neck and groups of triple slashes on shoulder (Fig. 3).

29. Skeleton of woman, age 25-30. Height about 5 ft. Bones poorly preserved. Arms crossed on chest with fingers of right hand under left wrist. Shallow grave.

(a), (b), (c) and (d) in compact group by left hip, as in Graves 19 and 21 described above.

(a) *Knife*.

(b) *Two iron rings*, corroded on to (a). Similar to those in Grave 19.

(c) *Pair of bronze tweezers* (Fig. 6).

(d) *Ring*, formed of spiral bronze strip (Fig. 6).

(e) *Bronze strap-end* with iron rivet, under right knee (Fig. 6).

(f) *Iron buckle* with bronze attachment-plate, at waist-level near centre of body, tongue pointing left (Fig. 6).

30. Cremation burial. Incomplete pot of brown ware with some coarse grit. Contained burnt bones (Fig. 3).

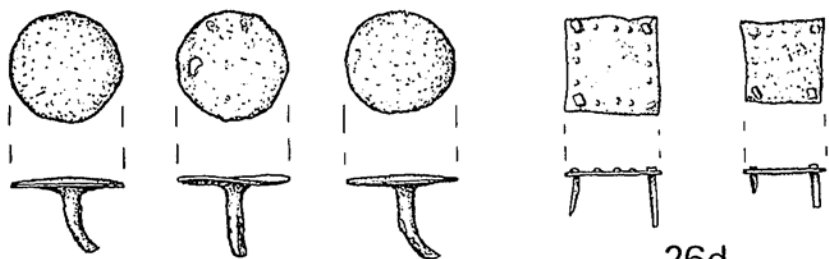
31. Skeleton of child, bones very badly decayed, height about 3½ ft. No grave goods.

32. Skeleton of child, sex undetermined. Height less than 3 ft. Bones very decayed and fragmentary.

(a) *Fourteen beads* on chest and neck. Fig. 6, left to right: (i) cylindrical, white ceramic body with blue spiral band; (ii), (v) and



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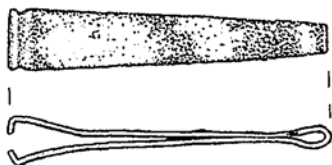


26c

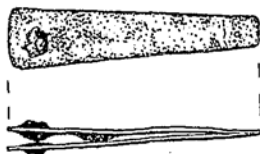
26d



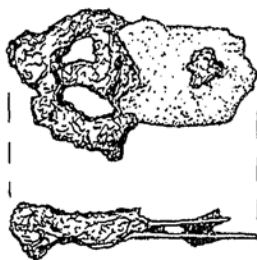
26e



29c



29e



29f



29d



32a



32b

*a.c.H.*  
1968.

FIG. 6. Objects from Graves 26, 29 and 32 (3).

(vii) same material as (i), blue lines on white body; (iii), (viii) and (xiii) plain pinkish-brown paste; (iv) plain green paste; (ix) dark-blue glass; (x) yellow paste with green lines; (xi) lemon-yellow paste; (xii) very corroded grey substance; (xiv) amber.

(b) *Two pierced Roman coins*, evidently worn as ornaments. One, of Allectus, occurred at the centre of body; the other, of Constantine the Great, 6 in. from it towards foot. From their positions it is doubtful if these coins were threaded on the same strand as the beads and they may have been attached to the front of the child's clothing (Fig. 6).

(i) Æ. Allectus (A.D. 293-296). Rad. bust to rt. IMP C ALLEC(TVS) AVG. Rev. A galley. VIRTVS AVG. Mint-mark QC (Colchester).

(ii) Æ. Constantine the Great. Helmeted bust rt. CONSTAN(TINVS AVG). Rev. Altar (probably inscribed VOTIS XX) BEATA TRANQVILLITAS. Probably minted at Trèves, c. A.D. 317.

33. Skull of infant, age  $1\frac{1}{2}$  to 2 years. Head to south but outline of grave and traces of other bones not readily apparent. No grave goods.

34. Cremation burial. Pot of grey ware, with much evidence of burnt-out chaff-tempering. Dr. Myres considers it 'fairly early' and likens it to others associated with objects of c. A.D. 500. Contents of burnt bones (Fig. 3).

35. Skeleton of woman, age about 35. Height approximately 5 ft. 6 in. Depth of grave 2 ft. 6 in.

(a) *Spindle-whorl*, made from the base of a brownish, wheel-turned Roman pot. Lying just inside top of right femur (Fig. 7).

(b) *Buckle*, with iron loop and bronze attachment-plate, at centre of body on waist-line, tongue to right (Fig. 7).

(c) *Iron implement* with ring for suspension, lying on right side of chest (Fig. 7). It resembles a simple type of Roman key. Cf. two from Sarre figured in *Arch. Cant.*, v, 312.

(d) *Knife*, lying across (c), point towards right shoulder (Fig. 7).

(e) *Knife*, found in filling slightly above floor of grave on left side of skull (Fig. 7).

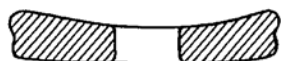
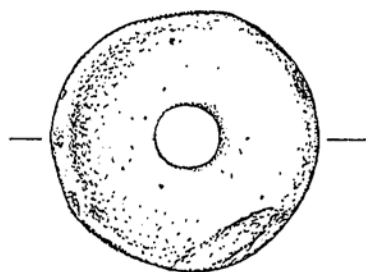
36. (Plate III.) Skeleton of man, age 25-30. Height about 5 ft. 8 in. Legs crossed at ankles.

(a) *Iron sword*, 2 ft.  $10\frac{1}{2}$  in. long, lying on left arm, point level with middle of thigh (Fig. 10).

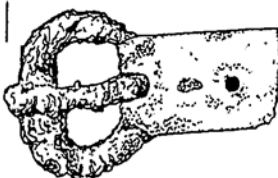
(b) *Shield-boss*, placed high on chest. Flat, iron grip with considerable remains of textile attached, evidently remains of the warrior's clothing<sup>5</sup> (Fig. 11).

<sup>5</sup> It is hoped to include in a later report fuller details of this and other fragments of textiles adhering to grave-goods. These will be submitted for expert examination in due course.

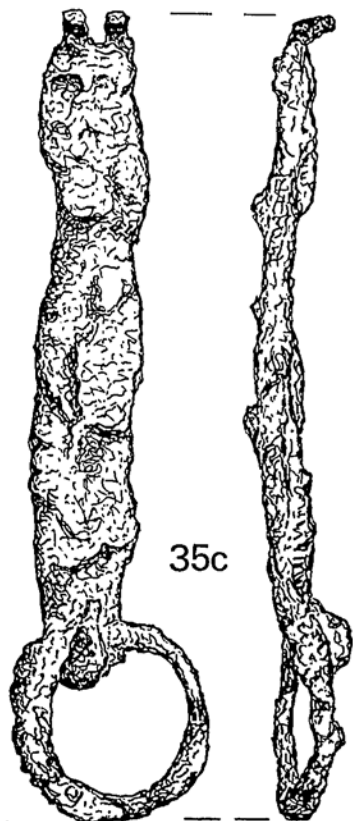
AN ANGLO-SAXON CEMETERY AT ORPINGTON



35a



35b



35c



35d



35e

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FIG. 7. Objects from Grave 35 (†).

(c) *Small bronze buckle* with iron tongue, found under boss (Fig. 8).  
 (d) *Knife*, lying with tip of blade just under chin and pointing right (Fig. 8).

37. Skeleton of man, age 35-40. Height about 5 ft. 11 in.

(a) *Spearhead*, by right elbow, the unusual position implying a shaft not more than 3½ ft. long. Remains of wood in socket (Fig. 10).

(b) *Shield-boss*, covering top of left femur (Fig. 11).

(c) *Knife*, point towards skull, lying at waist-level on left side of body. Length 6.2 in.

38. Skeleton of man, age 20-30. Height about 6 ft. Depth of grave 2 ft. 10 in. On the knees were laid animal bones identified as the fragmentary atlas and pelvis of a horse.

(a) *Spearhead*, by left shoulder; no trace of wood in socket, in contrast to every other spearhead from this cemetery in which clear remains of the shaft are visible (Fig. 10).

(b) *Shield-boss*, on left side of chest. Iron grip with turned-up sides (Fig. 11).

(c) *Knife*, covered by boss (Fig. 8).

39. Skeleton of woman, poorly preserved, age undetermined. Height about 4 ft. 9 in. Depth of grave 1 ft. 10 in., dug across line of filled Roman ditch.

(a) *Pair of identical bronze saucer-brooches* (only one illustrated). One on right shoulder, the other under chin. Central motif resembling swastika or four running legs, of Roman derivation; iron pin (Fig. 8). Other examples of this type of saucer-brooch have come from Broadway Hill (Worcester),<sup>6</sup> Broughton Poggs (Oxford),<sup>7</sup> and Horton Kirby (Kent).<sup>8</sup>

(b) *D-shaped bronze buckle* of Roman type, on pelvis, iron tongue to right (Fig. 8).

(c) *Bronze key*, at waist on left side. Very Roman in appearance (Fig. 8).

(d) *Small corroded iron object* in contact with (c) and possibly also a key. Traces of textile adhering (Fig. 8).

40. Skeleton of adult, probably female. Height about 5 ft. Head slightly raised on flints. Right hand on pelvis; left forearm across waist.

(a) *Knife*, lying on left forearm near elbow.

41. (Plate IV.) Skeleton of girl, age about 13. Height approximately 4 ft. 6 in. Left femur displaced and lying across right.

(a) *Bronze-gilt button-brooch*, on left clavicle, decorated with crudely executed human face (Fig. 8). Cf. two examples from grave at Chatham Lines.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>6</sup> *Antiquaries Journal*, xxxviii (1958), 72-3.

<sup>7</sup> E. T. Leeds, *Early Anglo-Saxon Art and Archaeology* (1936), 13.

<sup>8</sup> A. Meaney, *Early Anglo-Saxon Burial Sites* (1964), 134.

<sup>9</sup> E. T. Leeds, *The Archaeology of the Anglo-Saxon Settlements* (1913), 107.

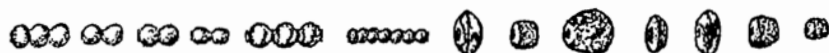
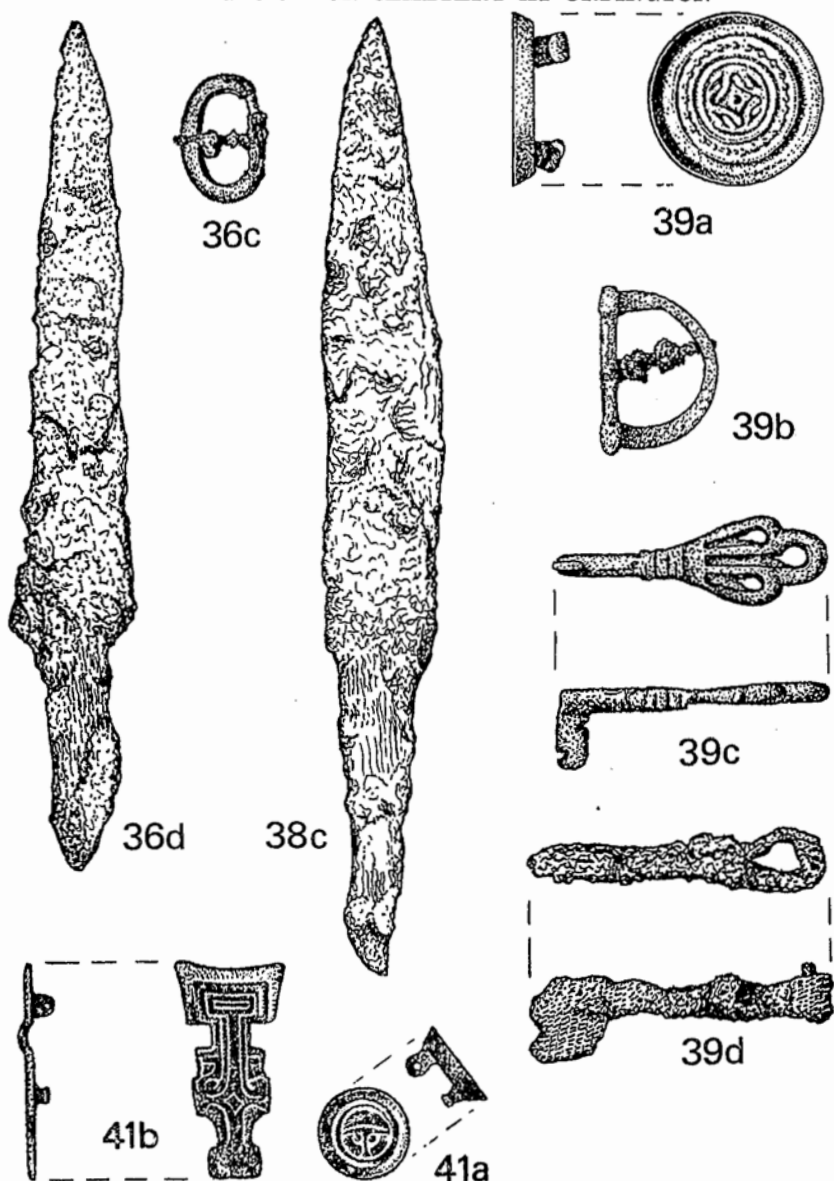


FIG. 8. Objects from Graves 36, 38, 39 and 41 (3).

A.C.H. 1968

(b) *Bronze square-headed brooch*, on right shoulder (Fig. 8). Two similar brooches came from the same grave at Chatham Lines referred to above, and their association with mask-brooches there and at Orpington is significant. E. T. Leeds dated the Chatham grave to the second half of the fifth century.<sup>10</sup>

(c) *Thirteen beads*, on upper part of body. Fig. 8, left to right: (i)-(v), segmented, grey-green glass; (vi) segmented, dark-blue glass; (vii) and (xi), white body with blue lines, like those from Grave 32; (x), green paste; (viii), (ix), (xii) and (xiii), amber.

(d) *Knife*, at left side of waist (Fig. 9).

(e) *Iron buckle*, on pelvis (Fig. 9).

42. Skeleton of man, age about 30. Height approximately 5 ft. 9 in.

(a) *Spearhead*, on left side of skull with socket on chest (Fig. 10).

(b) *Shield-boss*, on right shoulder, tilted as though shield had been placed on edge at side of grave. (Cf. Lyminge, Grave 31, in *Arch. Cant.*, lxxix, 22.) Three iron studs in association (Fig. 11).

(c) *Bronze ring*, at waist, slightly right of centre. With it were six small rectangular bronze plates originally joined in pairs by rivets. It is thought the ring may have served as a buckle, the belt being attached by means of the riveted plates. The other end of the belt could have been passed through the ring and knotted (Fig. 9).

43. Skeleton, poorly preserved, probably female. Dental evidence suggests an old person. Height about 4 ft. 6 in. or over. Right arm bent at elbow with forearm across lower part of chest. No grave goods.

44. Leg bones only of skeleton lying at right-angles to Grave 40. All upper part of skeleton destroyed by Grave 40 but two saucer-brooches survived in position where shoulders of body in 44 would have been.

(a) *Pair of identical bronze-gilt saucer-brooches* (only one illustrated) decorated with design of running scrolls (Fig. 9). A close parallel came from Northfleet (now in Maidstone Museum) and has been dated c. A.D. 500.<sup>11</sup> Some other published examples came from Oxfordshire,<sup>12</sup> Worcestershire,<sup>13</sup> Norfolk and Westerwanna in Hanover.<sup>14</sup>

45. Skeleton of adult, poorly preserved, probably female. Height about 5 ft.

(a) *Iron buckle*, at waist (Fig. 9).

(b) *Small knife*, on left side at waist-level (Fig. 9).

(c) *Iron purse-mount*, lying with knife (Fig. 9). Impression of dried stalks or similar vegetable matter in the rusted surface.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> A. Meaney, *op. cit.*, 131.

<sup>12</sup> British Museum, *Guide to Anglo-Saxon Antiquities* (1923), 35.

<sup>13</sup> *Antiquaries Journal*, xxxviii (1958), 76. Reference is there made to other similar brooches from Mitcham (Surrey), Bournemouth (Oxford) and Frilford (Berks.).

<sup>14</sup> E. T. Leeds (1936), *op. cit.*, plate XI.

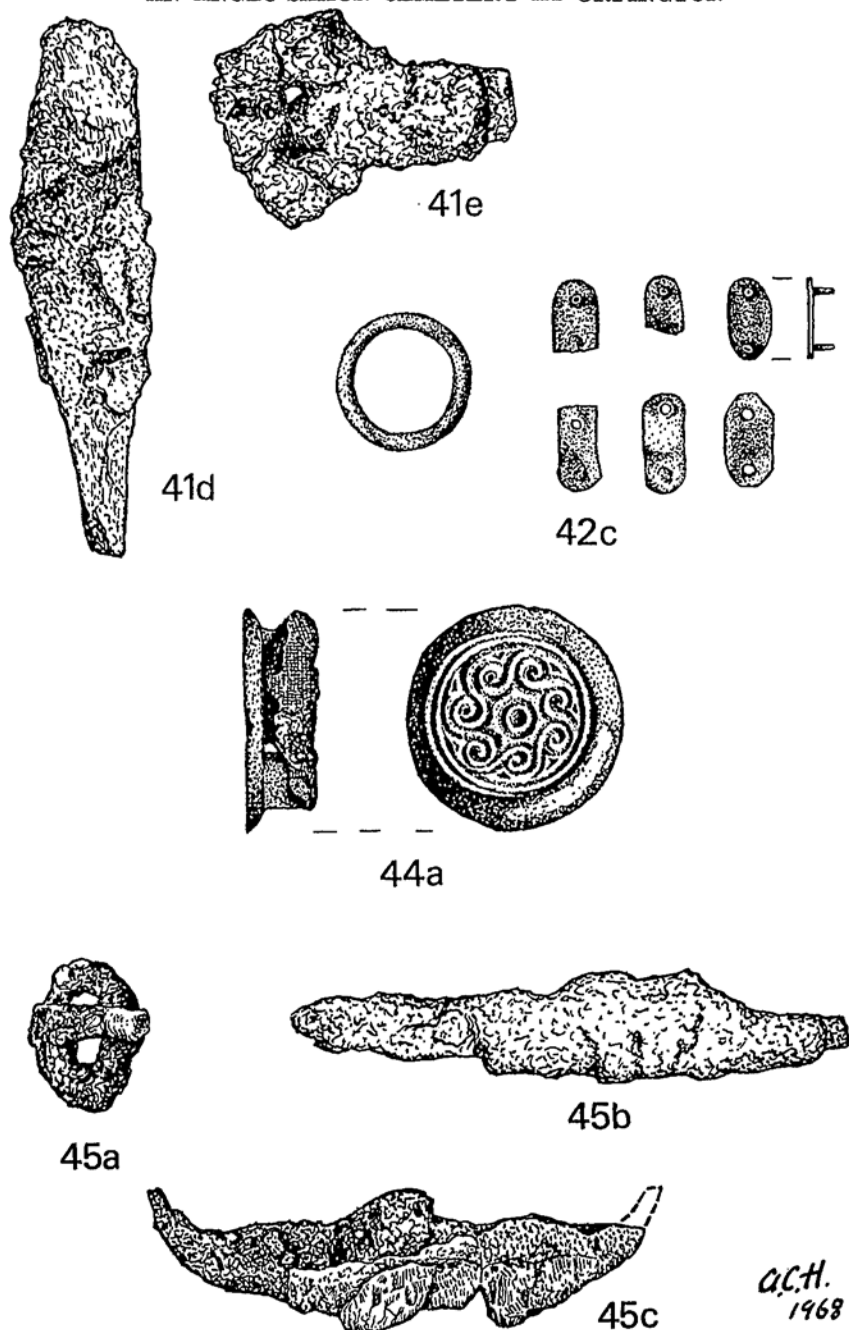
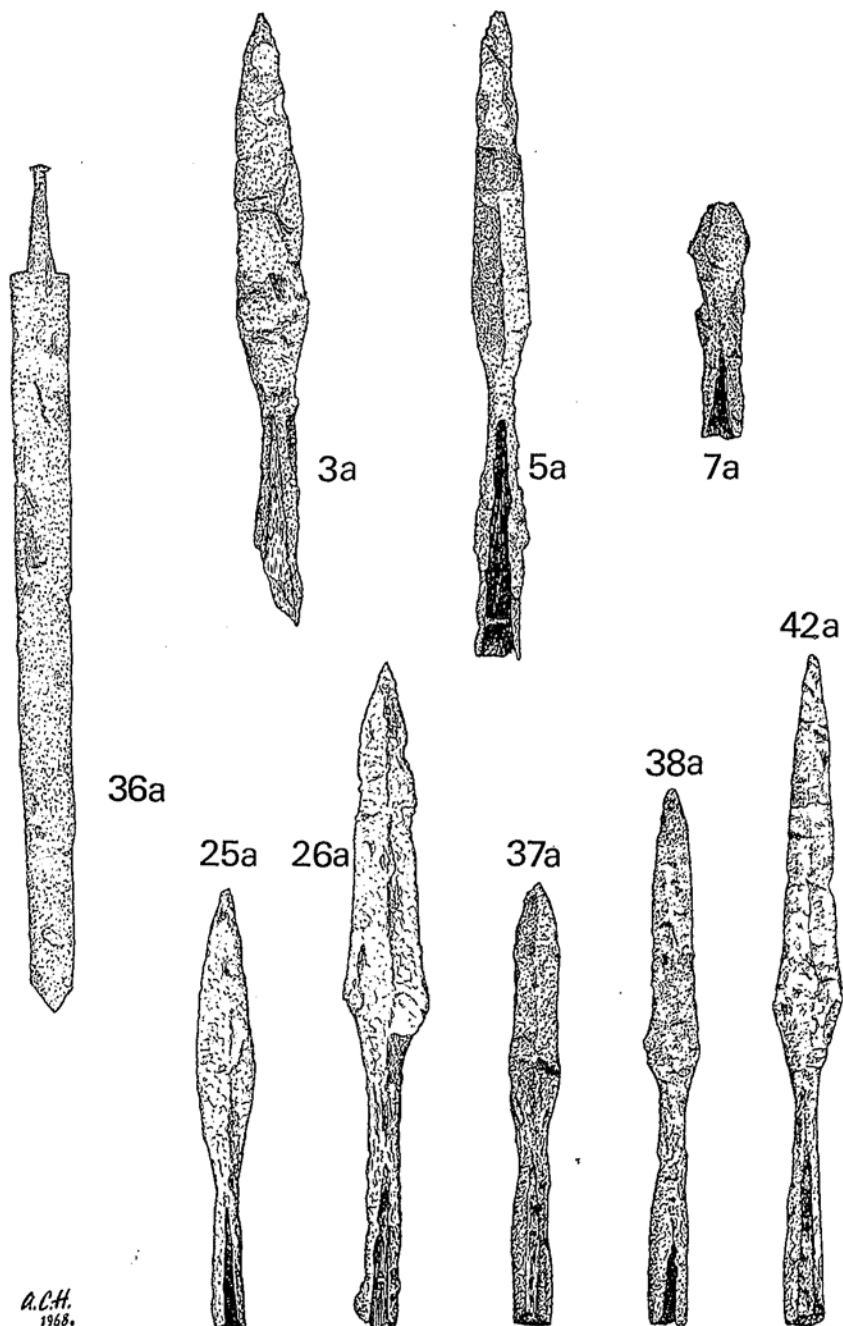


FIG. 9. Objects from Graves 41, 42, 44 and 45 (3).



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FIG. 10. Sword from Grave 36 ( $\frac{1}{2}$ ).  
Spearheads from Graves 3, 5, 7, 25, 26, 37, 38 and 42 ( $\frac{1}{2}$ ).





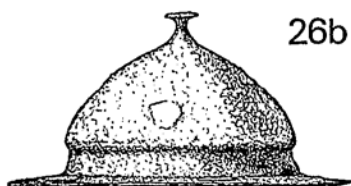
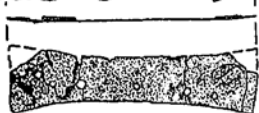
3b



7b



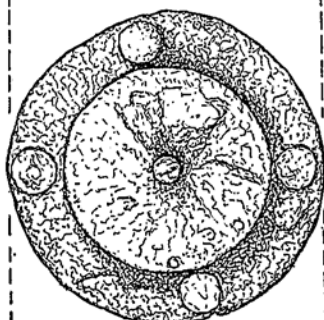
25b



26b



38b



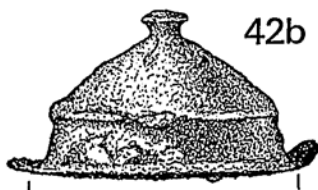
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36b



37b



42b



FIG. 11. Iron Shield-bosses from Graves 3, 7, 25, 26, 36, 37, 38 and 42 ( $\frac{1}{2}$ ).

## DISCUSSION

Until the site has been fully explored it would be unwise to attempt a detailed assessment of its significance. Certain obvious facts may, however, be noted which help to put the discovery into its proper archaeological setting.

Geographically and culturally the Orpington site may be regarded as an addition to a small group of Kentish Anglo-Saxon cemeteries lying on or near the south side of the Thames. E. T. Leeds pointed out in 1913 that the cemeteries at Cliffe, Higham, Northfleet and Horton Kirby form a distinct class from those in Kent east of the Medway.<sup>15</sup> Northfleet and Horton Kirby II (Riseley) were both mixed cemeteries<sup>16</sup> in which cremations and inhumations were intermingled, as at Orpington. In East Kent inhumation is overwhelmingly predominant (though cremations occurred at Hollingbourne and Westbere)<sup>17</sup> and cremation is completely absent from most of the extensive cemeteries in this region. Mixed cemeteries occur, however, in Surrey at Beddington, Ewell and Guildown,<sup>18</sup> and Orpington provides a link between these and the previously known Kentish examples. Beddington is the nearest of the Surrey group and lies 10½ miles west of Orpington, while Horton Kirby is only 6½ miles to the east.

Some of the Orpington burials are clearly early, with fifth-century articles like the glass armlet and the pottery vessels 28 and 28A. Nothing so far recovered suggests a continuation beyond the sixth century and the use of the cemetery may be put provisionally at c. A.D. 450 to 550. Future discoveries may, of course, lead to a modification of this view.

In 457 Hengist defeated the Britons at *Crecganford*, usually identified as Crayford where Watling Street crosses the River Cray, 6 miles downstream from Orpington. South of Crayford, on the east ridge of the Cray valley, there remains an extensive linear earthwork referred to in a charter of 814 as *fæstendic*—‘the strong dyke’. It has been suggested that this dyke may have been made to consolidate the victory of Crayford and that the invaders halted on the line of the Cray for some time in their north-west advance towards London.<sup>19</sup> The apparent absence of pagan Anglo-Saxon remains in the Cray valley, in contrast to the cemeteries along the Darent stream slightly to the east, seemed to support such an interpretation. The recent Orpington discovery, however, lessens the force of this argument, for the cemetery lies on the west or London side of the Cray and is clearly

<sup>15</sup> E. T. Leeds (1913), *op. cit.*, 100, 115.

<sup>16</sup> A. Meaney, *op. cit.*, 130, 133.

<sup>17</sup> *Idem*, 124, 140.

<sup>18</sup> *Idem*, 237, 240 and 241.

<sup>19</sup> *Arch. Cant.*, liv (1941), 21, and *Antiquaries Journal*, xiv (1934), 254.

indicative of an established settlement there at an early date, perhaps in the generation of Hengist, or very soon after.

Distribution of the North Kent cemeteries suggests strongly that the settlers came by way of the Thames Estuary and penetrated the country inland from its south shore by following tributaries such as the Darent and Cray. Certainly the cemetery-finds from this area have much in common with those of the Thames Valley further upstream; in particular the saucer-brooches from Northfleet, Horton Kirby and Orpington bear close resemblance to others from sites much farther westwards. According to Dr. G. J. Copley they 'point back to the region of North Germany between the Elbe and the Weser where their prototypes have been found', and he adds: 'There can be little doubt that the banks of the Thames, from the mouth almost to the source, were colonised in the fifth and sixth centuries by a people exhibiting the same culture and having the same Continental homeland.'<sup>20</sup>

<sup>20</sup> *The Archaeological News Letter*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (1954), 25.