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COLDRUM MONUMENT AND EXPLORATION 1910.

[WITH PLATE II.]

BY F. J. BENNETT, F.G.S., F.R.A.I.

I WILL as briefly as I can describe the monument, as the exploration and human remains are perhaps more important.

Situation.—Coldrum, though perhaps a unique stone structure, is really very little known and its isolated situation may account for this. It is an hour's easy walk by footpath from West Malling and $1\frac{1}{4}$ miles north of Addington.

Literature.—The only full account, I believe, is that by Mr. G. Payne, F.S.A., in his well-known and valuable work *Collectanea Cantiana*, 1893, p. 139; I also refer to this in the chapter on Megaliths in my *History of Ightham*. I will give this, condensed in part.

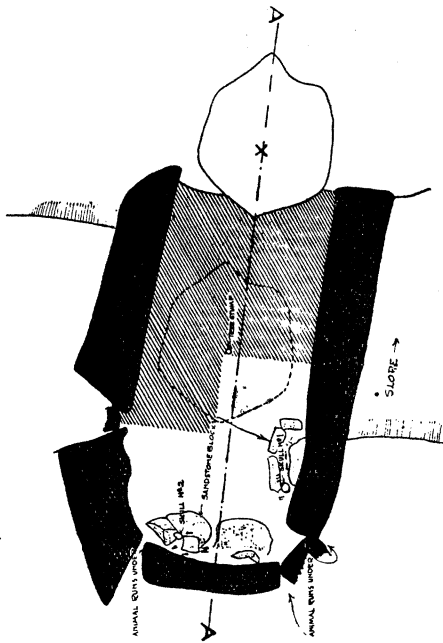
At 700 paces from the Pilgrims' Way we (Mr. Payne and Mr. A. A. Arnold, F.S.A., August, 1889) came on the fine but little-known cromlech called by the local people "Coldrum Stones and Druid Temple." Attention was drawn to these extensive remains about the year 1845, in *Archæological Journal*, Vol. i, p. 263, but since that time no one seems to have taken the trouble to properly record them or make a plan.

This cromlech, so overgrown then but visited later, Mr. Payne wrote to General Pitt-Rivers to get scheduled under the Ancient Monuments Act. Mr. Payne then got Major A. O. Green, Instructor in Survey, Brompton, to make a proper survey, completed August 20th, 1892, a sketch (inset) was also made then by Major Green's son. Mr. Payne calls Coldrum "the finest monument of its class in the county." "The dolmen is erected on rising ground which formerly sloped towards the byeway to the east of it; this slope has been excavated for the purpose of obtaining chalk, during which operations the stones, numbering fifteen on that side, were dislodged from their original position. To the west of the dolmen are seventeen stones, which now lie embedded in the soil, but which, doubtless, once stood erect. The structure comprises altogether forty-one stones, the majority weighing several tons apiece. The dolmen consists of one stone on the north and one on the south side and two on the west, whilst that on the east side has been dislodged. In the centre, on the floor, are two others, which formed the capstones, or it may be that they are the two halves of one capstone which served as a covering to the tomb." Coldrum may be regarded as a typical cromlech, *i.e.*, a dolmen surrounded with stones. The enclosure in question comes out upon the plan in a rectangular form, the dolmen occupying a position towards north-east of it; the space within has a slight elevation in the centre. "Some years ago two quasi-archæologists amused themselves by digging in the centre of the dolmen, when they found a human skeleton, the skull of which was buried in Meopham churchyard."

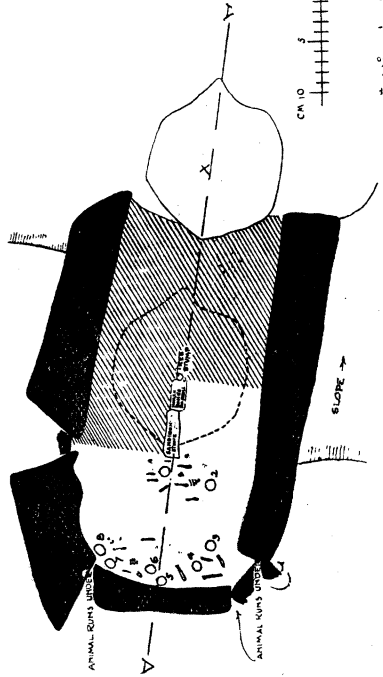
PLAN D.

PLAN SHOWING POSITIONS OF SKULLS FOUND AT COLDRUM WITHIN DOLMEN

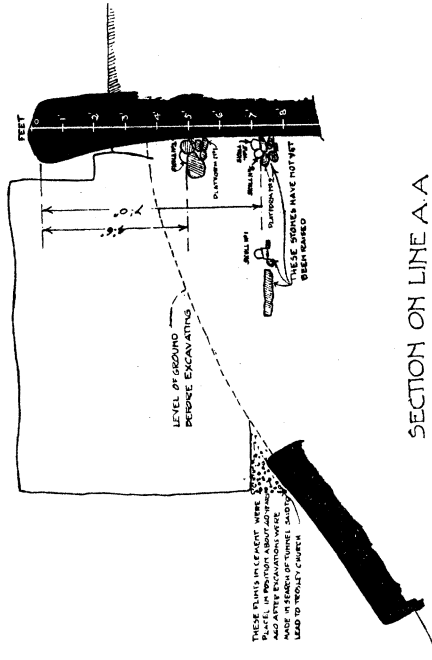
SCALE 1/2" TO A FOOT



PLAN OF DOLMEN AT GROUND LEVEL SHOWING FIRST DISCOVERY

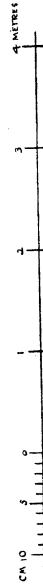


PLAN OF DOLMEN AT LOWER LEVEL SHOWING SECOND DISCOVERY

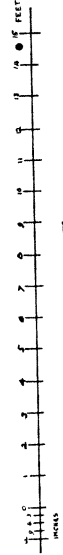


SECTION ON LINE A-A

NOTE
 PORTION HATCHED ON PLAN IS UNEXPLORED
 DOTTED LINES ON PLAN DENOTE APPROXIMATELY
 ORIGINAL POSITION OF STONE X
 NUMERALS REFER TO ORDER IN WHICH SKULLS AS INDICATED
 WERE DISCOVERED



SCALE OF METRES



SCALE OF FEET

MENS. F. J. BENNETT. REG. STRA.
 DEL. BY ENKELINS
 AUGUST-SEPTEMBER 1910

Plans.—The published plans are :—

Archeologia Cantiana, Vol. xiii, p. 16. Professor Petrie. 1878.

Our Mr. A. L. Lewis's plan. 1878.

Collectanea Cantiana. Major Green, and sketch by Son. 1892.

Further plans, etc., and model on a larger scale. E. W. Filkins. (Plans C and D.)
Reasons for making these are given later on. 1910.

These will be used in the following description.

Name.—Origin of this I leave to others.

Description.—Coldrum consists of a dolmen on the edge of a 17-foot slope facing east with a broken square of 50 feet by 50 feet (all plans here agree) to west behind it. See Plan C.

The most marked break in this square is that to the south; this break, I suggest, may have formed a south entrance along a possible VIA SACRA (Map G), connecting with the Addington megaliths; several stones, as the Map G shows, remain of this suggested avenue.

To return to the dolmen. This now consists of four stones (Plan D) and once apparently of six (*vide* Payne, etc.), having had two medial ones; one of these slipped and is now at the entrance. See Plan D, x.

Internal dimensions are, east to west, 12 feet 3 inches; north to south, 5 feet 8 inches; on the slope and at the base are several stones (17); I will refer to these later on.

Dolmen stones—dimensions.—Those of the *two* on the north side are 8 feet by 1 foot 9 inches by 7 feet 5 inches, and 4 feet 6 inches by 2 feet; west side, 4 feet 6 inches by 1 foot; south side, 11 feet 3 inches by 1 foot 9 inches by 7 feet 3 inches; east side, slipped stone, 5 feet 2 inches by 4 feet 3 inches. As the bases of the west and one of the north and the slipped stones have not been disclosed we cannot give their full measurements.

The stones of broken square.—The stones composing the north, west, and south sides of the broken square lie horizontally, partly covered by growth, thus suggesting they were never vertical. The low mound in the centre is, as I have learnt, largely due to the carting of field refuse into the enclosure formed by these stones.

This completes my brief description of the monument; some additions will be made later on.

Sarsen Stone Survey, etc.—I will now refer to the position of Coldrum in the two divisions into which, as I consider, the West Kent megaliths fall; they are the result of the Sarsen Stone Survey, etc., which I have made during my residence in Malling, when I retired from the Geological Survey in 1889.

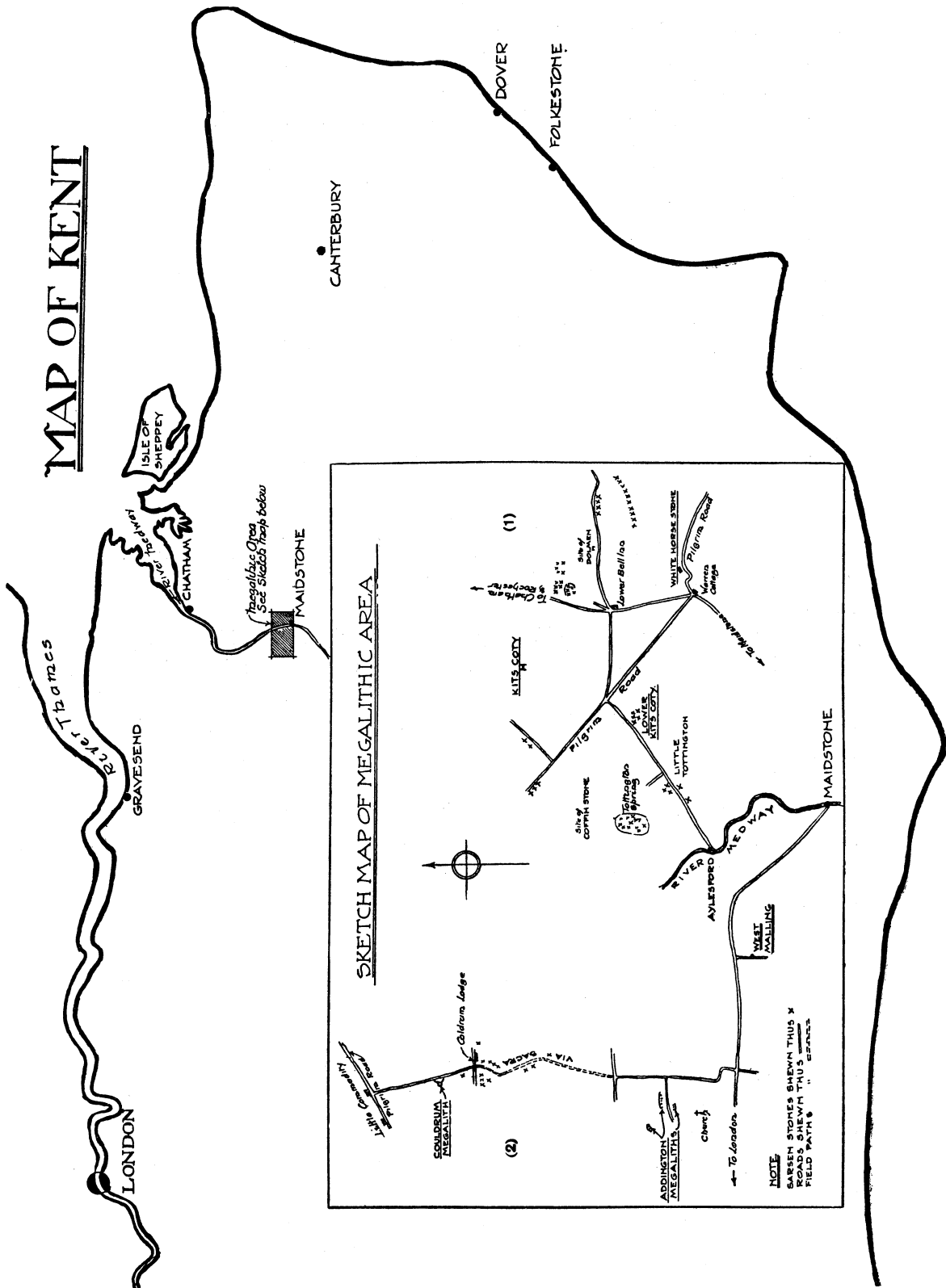
Field names.—What we also very much want is a list of the field names in this Sarsen stone area.

Two divisions of West Kent megaliths, etc.—These fall into two divisions. (See Map G)—

1. Kit's Coty group. (Round Lower Kit's Coty.)
2. Coldrum, north and south alignment.

MAP G.

MAP OF KENT



Exploration, 1910.—My finds of Neolithic flakes, etc., under the Addington megalith, led me to try what I might find within the Coldrum dolmen. My first attempt was made on April 16th, 1910, and no sooner had I put my fork in near the west wall than I at once turned up, and under only a few inches of chalky soil, some human bones. This find I kept to myself and determined to do no more without someone present to keep and record further finds, in an area apparently so full of human remains.

The opportunity arose on August 16th of same year, when I had a visit from my niece, Mrs. Lindsay, L.D.S., of Edinburgh, with her husband Mr. Lindsay, L.D.S., both, of course, dental experts, and also much interested in craniology. I then took them to Coldrum and we started to dig close to the south wall of the dolmen, and soon, under, say, 6 inches of soil and slabs of stone, we found Skull 1, Platform 1 (see Plan D), with teeth and bones; this was all we found that day. This skull was most carefully put together (it was found in many pieces) by Mr. Lindsay and returned to Dr. Keith.

I then informed Mr. Rust, Mr. Nevill's steward, of this most important find, and had his assurance that Mr. Nevill would not object to my proceeding further.

My thanks and also yours, I am sure, are due to his courtesy.

As Mr. and Mrs. Lindsay had to return to Edinburgh the next day, I wrote to Mr. Filkins, and on the 18th we met at Coldrum, and started work at the north-west corner of the dolmen, and he soon found bones and also the flint saw, the only implement of the kind found; and the only other finds were small portions of rude pottery (see these).

We carefully sifted the removed earth and soon finally came on a stone pavement, and on brushing away the soil found Skull 2, Platform 1 (see Plan D), lying between two blocks of (local) iron sandstone of the Folkestone Beds.

Two photographs were taken of this (see these) before the skull was disturbed.

On the 19th some further work was done and what seemed a trench was disclosed, 2 feet long along the north and south sides of the dolmen, and stopped at the east and west by pieces of stone, this may, however, have been a burrow.

The work was then stopped as I wished to have further expert opinion, and to inform such as to what had been found. By invitation Mr. G. Payne, of Rochester, and Mr. F. W. Reader met me and Mr. Filkins at Coldrum, August 20th, and Mr. Reader came back with me to Malling and inspected the remains at my house.

Nothing more was done. On September 2nd Dr. Keith visited me at Malling; saw the finds and considered them most important.

Nothing definite as to any immediate resumption of the work having come of the above meeting at Coldrum on August 20th—and on discussing the matter with my friend Mr. Boyd, of Malling, an experienced traveller who had met Dr. Keith, and who with his friend Miss Harker, of Malling, are both much interested in archæology, and fearing also, as the spot was so isolated, some unauthorized

persons might intervene, as indeed had already happened—it was thought best that I should, with their kind assistance, continue the work.

Assisted by them, work was resumed on the 3rd and 5th and completed on September 7th as far as our explored portion of the second platform, etc., was concerned.

To Miss Harker is due the finding in my presence of most of the remaining skulls; she most carefully and deftly worked round them, and the many pieces into which they fell were duly numbered with the accompanying bones, and removed to my house, and I afterwards restored the skulls as well as I could—no easy task, they were found in so many pieces.

Miss Harker and Mr. Boyd took photos of some of the skulls in position; circumstances prevented this being done with all of them.

Mr. Boyd also helped me to take measurements of their location and Mr. Filkins afterwards from these made the plans.

I here wish to thank all those who so kindly came to my assistance in this most important exploration.

General remarks.—As the plans show, the whole excavation took place in a very small area, 27 square feet on first platform, and less on second platform, and to the west of the once dividing stone, and there still remains much the same area to be explored, besides a possible third platform.

Most of the unexplored area is to the east of the once dividing stone, and when this slipped it may have pushed in front of it any burials to the east of it; some of these, however, may have been removed when the cave I have referred to was dug, and to these causes may perhaps be referred any human remains found on the slope at Coldrum previous to my exploration; we found some finger bones, etc., on the slope when Mr. Filkins and I had the earth cleared from the stones there on making the plans and model. A piece of a jaw was given me some three years ago, so found, and is now at Maidstone Museum.

Mr. Payne also alludes to a find of human remains in his *Collectanea Cantiana*, p. 139, made presumably when the cave was dug, and of which the skull, by order of the Vicar of Meopham, was buried in that churchyard, causing the Rector of Trosly to complain that he had robbed him of his oldest parishioner!

Age of Coldrum.—The flint saw and the portions of rude pottery may well be both Neolithic.

Another discovery of mine tending that way and of much interest, and unique as far as I know in England, is a highly polished groove in one of the stones (see Plan C).

Such grooves, as I afterwards learnt, are rather numerous in France and termed “polissoirs,” and are always connected with the stones of the megaliths there.

The one in question seemed to me just such a groove in which Neolithic polished celts may have been ground, and close to this a polished flat surface where further or perhaps preliminary polishings took place. This surmise of mine is confirmed by the French evidence.

Calcareous deposit on the platform stones.—As stated we found two stone platforms and there still may be a third.

Now a most important age-factor is that the stones of both platforms are all coated with a deposit of carbonate of lime, and the red colour of these iron sandstones is thus quite disguised. This deposit alone is eloquent of time, and as this occurs on all the stones examined of the first platform, there must have been a considerable interval of time between the interments of the two platforms corresponding to the time necessary to form that deposit, and if there should be a third platform under similar conditions, this adds still more to the age as thus indicated by deposit.

The fact that the area exposed to any rainfall west of the medial stone was, say, at most 20 square feet only, when that was in its place, and that much of this fall may have been deflected by the walls of the dolmen, points to a considerable period of time for the deposition of this deposit on the stones and which was dissolved out of the chalk soil that covered them. Of this chalk soil, too, we found only a foot or so on the first platform and not much more on the second platform.

No cover.—This deposit also proves that there could have been no cover on the dolmen during its deposition nor have I seen any stone on the slope, not accounted for, that could have formed such a cover, to say nothing of what might have made the placing of this on the dolmen, situated on so sharp a slope, an almost impossible task.

Arrangement (?) of the Remains.—The only evidence of any definite arrangement would seem to be indicated by the position of the skulls, and most of these would seem to have been placed on their faces, near to and almost touching the west wall of the dolmen, and also as regards No. 1 and No. 2 skulls of the second platform these may have been placed against the wall of the once dividing stone. In the middle space were found the bones, disposed at all angles, and all those on the second platform were in a very moist condition. They also proved most difficult to extract as the soil was very compact and even hard in places, and being so near to the colour of the soil this made it difficult both to distinguish and to extract them. The burrowing also of animals, rabbits, etc., had caused disturbances of the remains in those places.

Whose remains were these ?—In considering this question we at once take leave of fact for theory and speculation.

I also have come to the conclusion that the dolmen and parapet wall stood and stand on a prehistoric cultivation terrace, a key, but not perhaps *the* key to the purport of the Coldrum monument.

My suggestion, then, is that this cultivation terrace—they abounded in this area, and many still remain—connects Coldrum with agriculture, and thus I consider with its attendant customs, often religious ones.

Briefly, then, this monument may at one time have been dedicated, though not necessarily initially so, to the worship of the corn god and of agriculture. Dr. Fraser, as we know, has most abundantly shown in his monumental work, *The Worship*

of the *Golden Bough*, that this cult was a world-wide one, and not quite extinct even yet.

Some young man was selected, one of a family perhaps set apart, and had a very merry time during his year of god-ship, at the end of this, he was sacrificed at the dolmen, being led up the ascent, and his body was dismembered and the limbs and blood scattered over the fields to ensure fertility. His wife or wives may have been killed, too, and any child born during that year also, and their bones gathered together and buried within the dolmen.

As Dr. Keith will tell you, the remains of those on the upper platform mostly belong to young persons, two only being old ones, and one bone that of a newly born child, and all possibly belonged to one family.

As I have stated there must have been great intervals of time between the different platform interments, sufficient perhaps to have caused differences in the purport of the burials, and if there be any remains on the third platform these might add more to our knowledge, so that the story of Coldrum appears far from complete till further exploration takes place.

I may say I have replaced all the soil turned out, and have also filled up the excavated floor with Kentish rag, leaving it all indeed more compact, etc., than before.

Visit of Kent Archæological Society, 1909.—A result of my Sarsen Stone Survey was the visit paid to White Horse Stone, Kit's Coty, and Coldrum in 1909 under my guidance.

Maidstone Megalith Meeting.—Another result of the survey, and of the above visit, was the important conference at Maidstone on the Kent megaliths, March 10th, 1910, opened by me. My views again differed very much from most of those then expressed.

How my plans, photos, and model came to be made.—I had been asked to prepare a large plan of Coldrum for the above meeting but the notice was too short and I wanted all that time to verify my Sarsen Stone Survey for the meeting. After that meeting I determined not only to make a large plan but also a model on the same scale.

These were most ably done under my superintendence by my architect friend, Mr. E. W. Filkins, of Gravesend; all the positions of the stones being fixed by theodolite, and modelled on the spot. This model, plans, photos, and 25-inch map I afterwards presented to the Maidstone Museum, where by application the latter may be seen, the former being always on view.

Opposing views as to Coldrum.—I have stated that my views as to Coldrum differed from those expressed at the meetings mentioned, I will now state them.

1. I hold that the dolmen does *not* stand in the centre of any circle, oval, or rectangle, and put in plans as proof, and the other published ones support this, 6-inch maps for instance; that on the contrary, rather, it formed part of a broken square with a parapet wall to the north and south of the dolmen, that this parapet formed the eastern boundary of the structure and that this never extended any further to the east.

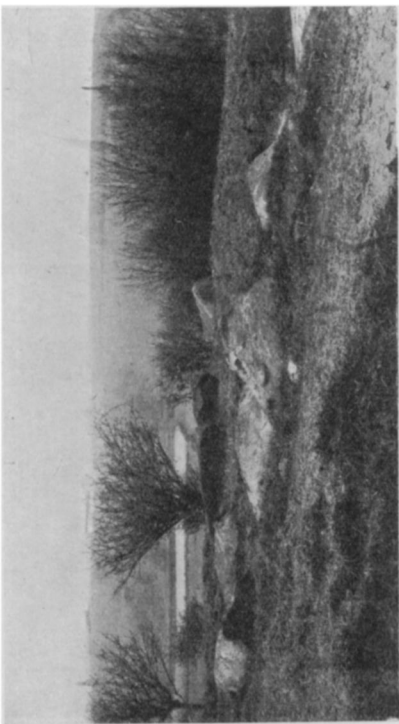


FIG. 1.—STONES AT WEST OF DOLMEN.



FIG. 2.—VIEW OF DOLMEN FROM WEST.



FIG. 3.—REMAINS OF CHAMBERED STRUCTURE TO THE SOUTH OF THAT IN FIG. 4.



FIG. 4.—EAST VIEW OF DOLMEN.

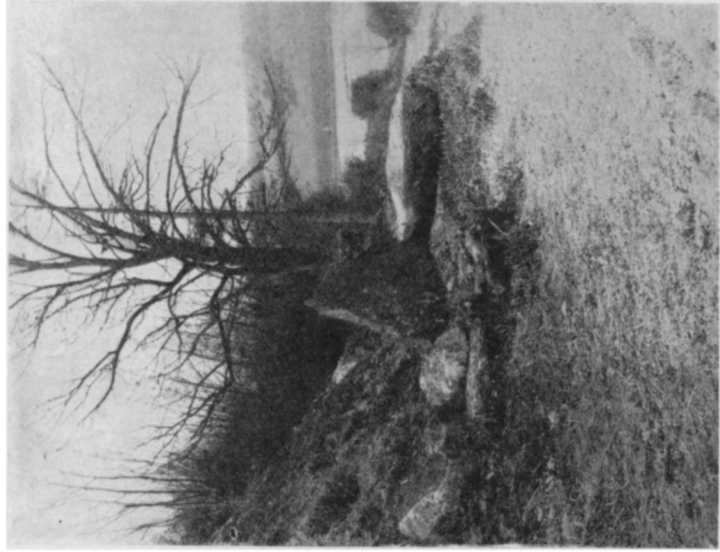


FIG. 5.—VERTICAL STONE WITH OTHERS IN CONTACT, A SEPARATE CHAMBERED STRUCTURE.

COLDRUM MONUMENT AND EXPLORATION, 1910.

I would ask, if the dolmen had formed the centre of any circle, oval or rectangle, how came the so-called *fallen* stones to lie as they now do, *so far within* the supposed eastern half of any alleged circle, oval, or rectangle ?

Some of these (see Plan C) parapet stones are still in place (see plan), the rest have merely *slipped*.

2. It is stated and published, and I quoted this, I admit, in my *History of Ightham*, in my chapter on the megaliths, not having gone into the matter so fully then, that fifteen of these stones fell through digging for chalk at Coldrum.

Now no such digging either did or would have taken place, as chalk could quite as well have been obtained either to the north or south of the monument; the risk also would have been too great, indeed, quite prohibitive, and the fall of one stone would have been quite enough. I have made most careful inquiry and not one stone has been known to have so fallen, though the medial stones, as we see, did slip some forty years ago say, but quite without being noticed or recorded.

My inquiries have led to my finding out how this idea of chalk digging arose.

About forty years ago, and when this property belonged to a Mr. Whitaker, and when the area within the dolmen was divided into two chambers by the medial stones, some unauthorized persons, simply to test the tradition of an underground passage, an evergreen idea, between the dolmen and Trosly church, half a mile south-west of Coldrum, dug a cave, which my informant saw, at the entrance to the dolmen (see Plan D), now indicated by flint concrete. This falling in of the cave, too, has been the cause of most serious disturbances within the dolmen. The Vicar of Trosly here intervened and stopped this, fearing the stones might fall.

This caused the slipping of the medial stones, but apparently quite unnoticed.

3. As to the seven stones to the north and at the foot of the slope, one of which is vertical, this, I consider, is in its original position and the one near it also perhaps. These seven stones, I hold, are not slipped parapet stones, but formed a separate chambered structure. There would seem to have been a similar one to the south, of which only two stones seem left. This also is a new reading of Coldrum. If then there were two separate chambered structures to the north and south at the foot of the slope with the dolmen above as apex, these would form a triangle seen from east as Mr. Filkins suggests. This further suggests to me the pyramid idea. On Plan C I have suggested a restoration of the parapet stones, and this still leaves these seven stones at least unaccounted for.

4. That what I have termed a cultivation terrace is such, and no earthwork, as has been stated, I believe. There is no ditch, and all the soil on the slope has accumulated. I could say more as to this and as to the origin of the terraces but have not the time now.

The standing, then, of the dolmen with the parapet wall on this terrace and with the stepped ascent to same gives to the structure a commanding and acropolis-like aspect, and a key to the purport of the monument, a unique one perhaps, and certainly a most interesting and important one; I now give place to Dr. Keith.