

= Coldrum Long Barrow =

The Coldrum Long Barrow , also known as the Coldrum Stones and the Adscombe Stones , is a chambered long barrow located near to the village of Trottiscliffe in the south @-@ eastern English county of Kent . Constructed circa 4000 BCE , during Britain 's Early Neolithic period , today it survives only in a ruined state .

Archaeologists have established that the monument was built by pastoralist communities shortly after the introduction of agriculture to Britain from continental Europe . Although representing part of an architectural tradition of long barrow building that was widespread across Neolithic Europe , the Coldrum Stones belong to a localised regional variant of barrows produced in the vicinity of the River Medway , now known as the Medway Megaliths . Of these , it is in the best surviving condition , and lies near to both Addington Long Barrow and Chestnuts Long Barrow on the western side of the river . Three further surviving long barrows , Kit 's Coty House , the Little Kit 's Coty House , and the Coffin Stone , are located on the Medway 's eastern side .

Built out of earth and around fifty local sarsen megaliths , the long barrow consisted of a sub @-@ rectangular earthen tumulus enclosed by kerb @-@ stones . Within the eastern end of the tumulus was a stone chamber , into which human remains were deposited on at least two separate occasions during the Early Neolithic . Osteoarchaeological analysis of these remains has shown them to be those of at least seventeen individuals , a mixture of men , women , children and adults . At least one of the bodies had been dismembered prior to burial , potentially reflecting a funerary tradition of excarnation and secondary burial . As with other barrows , Coldrum has been interpreted as a tomb to house the remains of the dead , perhaps as part of a belief system involving ancestor veneration , although archaeologists have suggested that it may also have had further religious , ritual , and cultural connotations and uses .

After the Early Neolithic , the long barrow fell into a state of ruined dilapidation , perhaps experiencing deliberate deposition in the late medieval period , either by Christian zealots or treasure hunters . Local folklore grew up around the site , associating it with the burial of a prince and the countless stones motif . The ruin attracted the interest of antiquarians in the 19th century , while archaeological excavation took place in the early 20th . After limited reconstruction , in 1926 ownership was transferred to heritage charity The National Trust . It is open without charge to visitors all year around .

= = Name and location = =

The Coldrum Stones are named after a nearby farm , Coldrum Lodge , which has since been demolished . The monument lies in a " rather isolated site " north @-@ east of the nearby village of Trottiscliffe , about 500 metres from a prehistoric track known as the Pilgrim 's Way . The tomb can be reached along a pathway known as Coldrum Lane , which is only accessible on foot . The nearest car park to Coldrum Lane can be found off of Pinesfield Lane in Trottiscliffe . Another nearby village is Addington , which is located one and a quarter miles away .

= = Context = =

= = = Early Neolithic Britain = = =

The Early Neolithic was a revolutionary period of British history . Beginning in the fifth millennium BCE , it saw a widespread change in lifestyle as the communities living in the British Isles adopted agriculture as their primary form of subsistence , abandoning the hunter @-@ gatherer lifestyle that had characterised the preceding Mesolithic period . Archaeologists have been unable to prove whether this adoption of farming was because of a new influx of migrants coming in from continental Europe or because the indigenous Mesolithic Britons came to adopt the agricultural practices of continental societies . Either way , it certainly emerged through contact with continental Europe ,

probably as a result of centuries of interaction between Mesolithic people living in south @-@ east Britain and Linear Pottery culture (LBK) communities in north @-@ eastern France . The region of modern Kent would have been a key area for the arrival of continental European settlers and visitors , because of its position on the estuary of the River Thames and its proximity to the continent .

Between 4500 and 3800 BCE , all of the British Isles came to abandon its former Mesolithic hunter @-@ gatherer lifestyle , to be replaced by the new agricultural subsistence of the Neolithic Age . Although a common material culture was shared throughout most of the British Isles in this period , there was great regional variation regarding the nature and distribution of settlement , architectural styles , and the use of natural resources . Throughout most of Britain , there is little evidence of cereal or permanent dwellings from this period , leading archaeologists to believe that the Early Neolithic economy on the island was largely pastoral , relying on herding cattle , with people living a nomadic or semi @-@ nomadic way of life . Although witnessing some land clearance , Britain was largely forested in this period , and it is unclear what level of deforestation the area of Kent had experienced in the Early Neolithic ; widespread forest clearance only took place on the chalklands of south @-@ east Britain in the Late Bronze Age . Environmental data from the area around the White Horse Stone supports the idea that the area was still largely forested in the Early Neolithic , covered by a woodland of oak , ash , hazel / alder and Maloideae .

= = = The tomb building tradition = = =

Across Western Europe , the Early Neolithic marked the first period in which humans built monumental structures in the landscape . These were tombs that held the physical remains of the dead , and though sometimes constructed out of timber , many were built using large stones , now known as " megaliths " . Individuals were rarely buried alone in the Early Neolithic , instead being interned in collective burials with other members of their community . The construction of these collective burial monumental tombs , both wooden and megalithic , began in continental Europe before being adopted in Britain in the first half of the fourth millennium BCE .

The Early Neolithic people of Britain placed far greater emphasis on the ritualised burial of the dead than their Mesolithic forebears had done . Many archaeologists have suggested that this is because Early Neolithic people adhered to an ancestor cult that venerated the spirits of the dead , believing that they could intercede with the forces of nature for the benefit of their living descendants . Archaeologist Robin Holgate stressed that rather than simply being tombs , the Medway Megaliths were " communal monuments fulfilling a social function for the communities who built and used them . " Thus , it has furthermore been suggested that Early Neolithic people entered into the tombs ? which doubled as temples or shrines ? to perform rituals that would honour the dead and ask for their assistance . For this reason , historian Ronald Hutton termed these monuments " tomb @-@ shrines " to reflect their dual purpose .

In Britain , these tombs were typically located on prominent hills and slopes overlooking the surrounding landscape , perhaps at the junction between different territories . Archaeologist Caroline Malone noted that the tombs would have served as one of a variety of markers in the landscape that conveyed information on " territory , political allegiance , ownership , and ancestors . " Many archaeologists have subscribed to the idea that these tomb @-@ shrines served as territorial markers between different tribal groups , although others have argued that such markers would be of little use to a nomadic herding society . Instead it has been suggested that they represent markers along herding pathways . Many archaeologists have suggested that the construction of such monuments reflects an attempt to stamp control and ownership over the land , thus representing a change in mindset brought about by Neolithisation . Others have suggested that these monuments were built on sites already deemed sacred by Mesolithic hunter @-@ gatherers .

Archaeologists have differentiated these Early Neolithic tombs into a variety of different architectural styles , each typically associated with a different region within the British Isles . Passage graves , characterised by their narrow passage made of large stones and one or multiple burial chambers covered in earth or stone , were predominantly located in northern Britain and southern and central Ireland . Alternately , across northern Ireland and central Britain long chambered mounds

predominated , while in the east and south @-@ east of Britain , earthen long barrows represented the dominant architectural trend . These earthen long barrows were typically constructed of timber because building stone was scarce in southern Britain ; archaeologist Aubrey Burl argued that these timber tombs might have been " even more eye @-@ catching " than their stone counterparts , perhaps consisting of " towering carved poles , flamboyantly painted " , but that evidence of such sculptures has not survived . The Medway Megaliths represent just one of these regional groups within the wider West European tradition of tomb building in this period .

= = = The Medway Megaliths = = =

Although now all in a ruinous state and not retaining their original appearance , at the time of construction the Medway Megaliths would have been some of the largest and most visually imposing Early Neolithic funerary monuments in Britain . Grouped along the River Medway as it cuts through the North Downs , they constitute the most south @-@ easterly group of megalithic monuments in the British Isles , and the only megalithic group in eastern England . Archaeologists Brian Philp and Mike Dutton deemed the Medway Megaliths to be " some of the most interesting and well known " archaeological sites in Kent , while archaeologist Paul Ashbee described them as " the most grandiose and impressive structures of their kind in southern England " .

They can be divided into two separate clusters : one to the west of the River Medway and the other on Blue Bell Hill to the east , with the distance between the two clusters measuring at between 8 and 10 km . The western group includes Coldrum Long Barrow , Addington Long Barrow , and the Chestnuts Long Barrow . The eastern group consists of Kit 's Coty House , Little Kit 's Coty House , the Coffin Stone , and several other stones which might have once been parts of chambered tombs . It is not known if they were all built at the same time , or whether they were constructed in succession , while similarly it is not known if they each served the same function or whether there was a hierarchy in their usage .

The Medway long barrows all conformed to the same general design plan , and are all aligned on an east to west axis . Each had a stone chamber at the eastern end of the mound , and they each probably had a stone facade flanking the entrance . The chambers were constructed from sarsen , a dense , hard , and durable stone that occurs naturally throughout Kent , having formed out of silicified sand from the Eocene . Early Neolithic builders would have selected blocks from the local area , and then transported them to the site of the monument to be erected .

Such common architectural features among these tomb @-@ shrines indicate a strong regional cohesion with no direct parallels elsewhere in the British Isles . For instance , they would have been taller than most other tomb @-@ shrines in Britain , with internal heights of up to 10 ft . Nevertheless , as with other regional groupings of Early Neolithic tomb @-@ shrines (such as the Cotswold @-@ Severn group) , there are also various idiosyncrasies in the different monuments , such as Coldrum 's rectilinear shape , the Chestnut long barrow 's facade , and the long , thin mounds at Addington and Kit 's Coty . This variation might have been caused by the tomb @-@ shrines being altered and adapted over the course of their use ; in this scenario , the monuments would represent composite structures .

It seems apparent that the people who built these monuments were influenced by pre @-@ existing tomb @-@ shrines that they were already aware of . Whether those people had grown up locally , or moved into the Medway area from elsewhere is not known . Based on a stylistic analysis of their architectural designs , Stuart Piggott thought that they had originated in the area around the Low Countries , while Glyn Daniel instead believed that the same evidence showed an influence from Scandinavia . John H. Evans instead suggested an origin in Germany , and Ronald F. Jessup thought that their origins could be seen in the Cotswold @-@ Severn megalithic group . Ashbee noted that their close clustering in the same area was reminiscent of the megalithic tomb @-@ shrine traditions of continental Northern Europe , and emphasised that the Medway Megaliths were a regional manifestation of a tradition widespread across Early Neolithic Europe . He nevertheless stressed that a precise place of origin was " impossible to indicate " with the available evidence .

= = Design and construction = =

The monument originally consisted of a sarsen stone chamber , covered by a low earthen mound , which was bounded by prostrate slabs . As such , the archaeologist Paul Ashbee asserted that the monument could be divided into three particular features : the chamber , the barrow , and the sarsen stone surround . It is located on the edge of a large lynchet scarp , although it is difficult to ascertain what views would have been possible from the monument at the time of construction , due to a lack of information on how densely forested the vicinity was . However , if the area was not highly wooded , then 360 ° views of the surrounding landscape would have been possible . The monument 's axis points toward both the North Downs and the Medway Valley , which is similar to the other Medway Megaliths . Archaeologist Sian Killick suggested that the Coldrum Long Barrow might have been built within view of a nearby settlement , and that this " may have been a key factor in the experience of ceremonies and rituals taking place at the tombs and may also have defined a link between the tomb builders and the landscape . "

It had been built using about 50 stones . The barrow is sub @-@ rectangular in plan , and about 20 meters (64 feet) in length . At its broader , eastern end , where the chamber is located , the monument measures 15 metres (50 feet) , while at the narrower , western end , it is 12 metres (40 feet) in breadth . As such , the barrow is a " truncated wedge @-@ shape " . The megalithic builders responsible for the Coldrum Stones positioned it on the top of a small ridge adjacent to the North Downs , and constructed it facing eastward , towards the River Medway .

The chamber of the monument measures 4 @.@ 5 metres (13 feet) in length , and 1 @.@ 7 metres (5 feet 6 inches) in width , although it was potentially much larger when originally constructed . The chamber 's internal height would have been at least 2 metres (6 feet 6 inches) . In its current state , the northern side of the chamber is made up of two slabs , one being 8 feet long , 7 feet , 6 inches deep , and 1 foot , 9 inches thick , and the other 5 feet long , 6 feet deep , and 2 feet thick . Conversely , the chamber 's southern side consists of a single slab , measuring 11 feet , 4 inches in length , 7 feet , 3 inches in depth , and 1 foot , 9 inches in depth at its thicker , eastern end . The western end of the chamber is closed off with a slab measuring about 14 feet , 6 inches wide , with a thickness of 1 foot and a depth of around 8 feet . A collapsed , broken slab lies at the opening eastern end of the chamber . It is also possible that a largely rectangular slab at the bottom of the slope had once been part of the eastern end of the chamber . Excavation has revealed that flint masonry was used to pack around the chamber and support its sarsens ; twentieth @-@ century renovation has seen this largely replaced with cement , allowing the stones to continue standing upright .

It is possible that there was a facade in front of the chamber , as is evident at other chambered tombs in Britain , such as West Kennet Long Barrow and Wayland 's Smithy . It is also possible that there was a portal stone atop the chamber , as was apparent at Kit 's Coty House and Lower Kit 's Coty House . Many of the larger slabs of stone that have fallen down the slope on the eastern end of the monument may have been parts of this facade or portal .

The earthen mound that once covered the tomb is now visible only as an undulation approximately 1 foot , 6 inches in height . In the nineteenth @-@ century , the mound was higher on the western end of the tomb , although this was removed by excavation to reveal the sarsens beneath during the 1920s . It is likely that in the Early Neolithic , the mound had a quarry ditch surrounding it , and it is inside this ditch that the kerb @-@ stones now sit .

The kerb @-@ stones around the tomb display some patterning ; those on the northern side are mostly rectilinear , while those on the southern side are smaller and largely irregular in shape . It is probable that there was an ancillary dry @-@ stone wall constructed using blocks of ironstone from the geological Folkestone beds , as is evident at Chestnuts Long Barrow . Given that such blocks of stone rarely occur naturally , it may have been quarried .

A concave line of abrasion and polishing can be found on both one of the central kerb @-@ stones on the western end of the monument and a kerb @-@ stone on the south @-@ east of the monument . These have been attributed to the sharpening of flint and other stone axe @-@ blades on these sarsens . It is possible that these tools were sharpened for use in cutting and carving the

timber levers and struts which would have been used in erecting the stones and constructing the tomb . Similar evidence for the sharpening of tools has been found at West Kennet Long Barrow , as well as later prehistoric monuments such as Stonehenge .

Coldrum Long Barrow is comparatively isolated from the other Medway Megaliths ; in this it is unique , given that the other surviving examples are clustered into two groups . However , it is possible that another chambered tomb was located nearby ; a razed , elongated earthen mound with an east @-@ west orientation is located in a hollow at the foot of the downs just under a quarter of a mile to the north of the Coldrum Stones . It may be that this represents the remnants of another such monument which has had its stones removed or buried . Several large sarsens to the south of the Coldrums might represent the remnants of a further such tomb , since destroyed .

= = Human remains = =

= = = Demographics = = =

Ashbee suggested that given its size and comparisons with other long barrows , such as Fussell 's Lodge , the Coldrum tomb could have housed the remains of over a hundred individuals . Excavations conducted in the early 20th century have led to the methodical discovery and removal of what was believed to be the remains of twenty @-@ two human individuals . These remains were examined by Sir Arthur Keith , the conservator of the museum at the Royal College of Surgeons . He published his results in 1913 , in a paper largely concerned with discerning racial characteristics of the bodies .

A subsequent re @-@ analysis of the bones was conducted in the early 21st century , and published in the Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society in 2013 : the project presented " osteological analysis , Bayesian modelling of radiocarbon dates , and carbon and nitrogen stable isotope analysis to inform on the demography , burial practices , diet and subsistence , and chronology of the Coldrum population " . Disputing earlier conclusions , it stated that the minimum number of individuals was seventeen . These were then further identified as probably belonging to nine adults (probably five males and four females) , two sub @-@ adults , four older children , and two younger children (one around five years old , the other between 24 and 30 months old) .

Keith had suggested that the crania he examined displayed similar features , which he attributed to the different individuals belonging to " one family - or several families united by common descent . " Similar observations had been made regarding the crania from other long barrows in Britain , although osteoarchaeologists Martin Smith and Megan Brickley noted that this was not necessarily representative of a family group . Instead , they stated that it would also be consistent with " a population that was still relatively small and scattered " , in which most individuals were interrelated .

Wysocki 's team noted that in all but one case , the fracture morphologies are consistent with dry @-@ bone breakage . Three of the skulls exhibited evidence that they had experienced violence ; a probable adult female had an unhealed injury on the left frontal , while an adult of indeterminate sex had an unhealed fracture on the left frontal , and a second adult female had a healed depressed fracture on the right frontal .

Isotope analysis of the remains revealed $\delta^{13}\text{C}$ values that were typical of those found at many other Southern British Neolithic sites , albeit with significantly higher values of $\delta^{15}\text{C}$, which grew over time . Although this data is difficult to interpret , it was identified as probably reflecting a terrestrial diet high in animal protein that over time was increasingly supplemented with freshwater river or estuarine foods . In the case of the older individuals whose remains were interned in the tomb , the tooth enamel was worn away and the dentine had become exposed on the chewing area of the crowns .

Radiocarbon dating of the remains suggested Early Neolithic activity began at the site during 3980 \pm 3800 calibrated BCE (95 % probability) or 3960 \pm 3880 cal BCE (68 % probability) , when the first human remains were buried at the site . It then suggested that after an interval of either 60 \pm

350 years (95 % probability) or 140 ? 290 years (68 % probability) , further depositions of human remains were made inside the tomb . This second phase probably began in 3730 ? 3540 cal BCE (95 % probability) or 3670 ? 3560 cal BCE (68 % probability) . The radiocarbon dating of the human remains does not provide a date for the construction of Coldrum Long Barrow itself ; it is possible that the individuals died either some time before or after the monument 's construction .

= = = Post @-@ mortem deposition = = =

Cut @-@ marks were identified on a number of the bones (two femora , two innominates , and one cranium) , with osteoarchaeological specialists suggesting that these had been created post @-@ mortem as the bodies were dismembered and the bones removed from their attached ligaments . However , they further suggested that the lack of such cut @-@ marks on certain bones was suggestive that the body had already undergone partial decomposition or the removal of soft tissues prior to the process of dismemberment . The precision of the cut @-@ marks suggests that this dismemberment was done carefully ; " they do not suggest frenzied hacking or mutilation . " None of the criteria that osteoarchaeologists deem diagnostic of cannibalism were found on the bones .

This cut @-@ marked human bone assemblage represented the largest yet identified from within a Neolithic long barrow in Southern Britain , although similar evidence for dismemberment has been found from a number of other Neolithic British sites , such as West Tramp , Eyford , Aldestrop , and Haddenham . There are two possibilities for how this material developed . The first is that the bodies of the dead were excarnated or exposed to the elements , followed by a secondary burial within the tomb . The second is that they were placed in the tomb , where the flesh decomposed , before the bodies were then rearranged within the tomb itself . These practices may have been accompanied by necrophagy , shamanism , or magical practices , direct evidence for which does not survive .

The inclusion of occupational debris over the bones was not unique to the site but common in chambered tombs from southern England . On the basis of an example discovered at Kit 's Coty House , Ashbee thought it apparent that the contents of the Coldrum 's chamber would have been compartmentalised by medial slabs , which served the same purpose as the side chambers of West Kennet and Wayland 's Smithy .

= = Damage and dilapidation = =

All of the surviving megalithic tombs from the Early Neolithic period have suffered from neglect and the ravages of agriculture . Although archaeologist Paul Ashbee noted that the Coldrum Stones represent " Kent 's least damaged megalithic long barrow " , it too has suffered considerable damage , having become dilapidated and fallen apart over the six millennia since its original construction . Most prominently , the eastern side has largely collapsed , with the stones that once helped to hold up the side of the barrow having fallen to the bottom of the slope . Conversely , it is possible that the sarsens at the bottom of the slope were not part of the original monument , but were stones found in nearby fields which were deposited there by farmers .

Excavation of Chestnuts Long Barrow revealed that it had been systematically destroyed in one event , and Ashbee suggested that the same may have happened to the Coldrum Stones . He believed that the kerb @-@ stones around the barrow were toppled , laid prostrate in the surrounding ditch , and then buried during the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century , by Christians seeking to obliterate non @-@ Christian monuments . Conversely , the archaeologist John Alexander ? who excavated Chestnuts ? suggested that the Medway tombs were destroyed by robbers seeking to locate treasure within them . As evidence , he pointed to the Close Roll of 1237 , which ordered the opening of barrows on the Isle of Wight in search for treasure , a practice which may have spread to Kent around the same time . Alexander believed that the destruction in Kent may have been brought about by a special commissioner , highlighting that the " expertness and thoroughness of the robbery " at Chestnuts would have necessitated resources beyond that which a local community could likely produce . Ashbee further suggested that in subsequent centuries , locals raided the damaged Coldrum tomb for loamy chalk and stone , which was then re @-@ used

as building material .

= = Folklore and folk tradition = =

In a 1946 paper published in the Folklore journal , John H. Evans recorded the existence of a local folk belief that a battle was fought at the site of the Coldrum Stones , and that a " Black Prince " was buried within its chamber . He suggested that the tales of battles taking place at this site and at other Medway Megaliths had not developed independently among the local population but had " percolated down from the theories of antiquaries " who believed that the Early Medieval Battle of Aylesford , which was recorded in the Anglo @-@ Saxon Chronicle , took place in the area .

Evans also recorded that there was a folk belief in the area that applied to all of the Medway megaliths and which had been widespread " up to the last generation " ; this was that it was impossible for any human being to successfully count the number of stones in the monuments . This " countless stones " motif is not unique to this particular site , and can be found at various other megalithic monuments in Britain . The earliest textual evidence for it is found in an early sixteenth @-@ century document , where it applies to the stone circle of Stonehenge in Wiltshire , although in an early seventeenth @-@ century document it was being applied to The Hurlers , a set of three stone circles in Cornwall . Later records reveal that it had gained widespread distribution in England , as well as a single occurrence each in Wales and Ireland . The folklorist S. P. Menefee suggested that it could be attributed to an animistic understanding that these megaliths had lives of their own .

In the early twenty @-@ first century , a tradition developed in which the Hartley Morris Men , a morris dancing side , travel to the site at dawn every May Day in order to " sing up the sun " . This consists of a number of dances performed within the stones on top of the barrow , followed by a song performed at the base of the monument .

= = Antiquarian and archaeological investigation = =

= = = Early antiquarian descriptions = = =

The earliest antiquarian accounts of Coldrum Long Barrow were never published . There are claims that at the start of the nineteenth century , the Reverend Mark Noble , Rector of Barming , prepared a plan of the site for Gentleman 's Magazine , although no copies have been produced to verify this . Between 1842 and 1844 , the Reverend Beale Post authored Druidical Remains at Coldrum , in which he described the monument , although it remained unpublished at the time . Associating the site with the druids of Britain 's Iron Age , Post 's suggestion was that the name " Coldrum " derived from the linguistically Celtic " Gael @-@ Dun " , and that the chiefs of some of the Belgic Gauls were interned there . He further reported that in both 1804 and 1825 , skulls had been found at the site . In 1844 , an antiquarian named Thomas Wright published a note on the Coldrum Stones and other Medway Megaliths in The Archaeological Journal . Wright had been alerted to their existence by a local vicar , the Reverend Lambert B. Larking , and proceeded to visit them with him . Describing the Coldrums , Wright mentioned " a smaller circle of stones " to the others in the area , with " a subterranean cromlech in the middle " . He further added that " it is a tradition of the peasantry that a continuous line of stones ran from Coldrum direct to the well @-@ known monument called Kit 's Cotty [sic] House " , attributing this belief to the variety of megaliths which were scattered throughout the landscape .

In 1857 , the antiquarian J. M. Kemble excavated at the site with the help of the Reverend Larking , providing a report of their findings to the Central Committee of the British Archaeological Association . Describing the monument as a stone circle , they asserted that they discovered Anglo @-@ Saxon pottery at the site , and noted that as well as being called the Coldrum Stones , the monument also had the name of the Adscombe Stones , which Kemble believed originated with the Old English word for funeral pile , ad . In August 1863 , the Archaeological Institute , who were then holding their week @-@ long meeting in Rochester , took a tour to visit the site , guided by the antiquary Charles

Roach Smith . That year , the monument was described in a copy of Gentleman 's Magazine by Yorkshire antiquary Charles Moore Jessop , who believed it to be a " Celtic " stone circle .

In 1869 , the antiquarian A. L. Lewis first visited the site , and was informed by locals that several years previously a skull had been uncovered from inside or near to the chamber , but that they believed it to be that of a gypsy . A later account elaborated on this , stating that two individuals excavated in the centre of the dolmen without permission , discovering a human skeleton , the skull of which was then re @-@ buried in the churchyard at Meopham . In an 1878 note published in The Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland , Lewis noted that while many tourists visited Kit 's Coty House , " very few goes to or ever hears of a yet more curious collection of stones at Colderham or Coldrum Lodge " . He believed that the monument consisted of both a " chamber " and an " oval " of stones , suggesting that they were " two distinct erections " . In 1880 , the archaeologist Flinders Petrie included the existence of the stones at " Coldreham " in his list of Kentish earthworks ; although noting that a previous commentator had described the stones as being in the shape of an oval , he instead described them as forming " a rectilinear enclosure " around the chamber . He then included a small , basic plan of the monument .

In August 1889 , two amateur archaeologists , George Payne and A. A. Arnold , came across the monument , which they noted was known among locals as the " Coldrum Stones " and " Druid Temple " ; according to Payne , " the huge stones were so overgrown with brambles and brushwood that they could not be discerned " . He returned the next year , noting that at this point , the brushwood had been cut away to reveal the megaliths . In his 1893 book Collectanea Cantiana , Payne noted that although it had first been described in print in 1844 , " since that time no one seems to have taken the trouble to properly record them or make a plan " , an unusual claim given that a copy of Petrie 's published plan existed in his library . For this reason , after gaining permission from the landowner , he convinced Major A. O. Green , Instructor in Survey at Brompton , to conduct a survey of the monument in August 1892 . He also wrote to the archaeologist Augustus Pitt @-@ Rivers , encouraging him to schedule the Coldrum Stones as a legally protected site under the Ancient Monuments Protection Act 1882 . Payne described the Coldrum Stones as " the finest monument of its class in the county , and one worthy of every care and attention . " Comparing it to other monuments of its type in Britain , he asserted that it was undoubtedly " of sepulchral origin , belonging to a period anterior to the Roman domination of Britain . " Payne also noted a folk tradition that there were stone avenues connecting Coldrum to the Addington Long Barrow , although added that he was unable to discover any evidence for the existence of this feature .

In 1904 , George Clinch published a note on the Medway Megaliths in the Royal Anthropological Institute 's journal , Man , in which he referred to the Coldrum Stones as " at once the most remarkable and the least known of the whole series . " Suggesting that its design indicates that it was built during " a late date in the neolithic age " , he compared the workmanship in producing the megaliths to that at the stone circle of Stonehenge in Wiltshire , although noted that they differed in that the Coldrum Stones clearly represented " a sepulchral pile " . Ultimately , he ended his note by urging for the site to be protected under the Ancient Monuments Protection Act 1900 . In that same issue , Lewis included an added note in which he rejected the idea that the monument had once been covered by an earthen tumulus because he could see " no evidence that anything of that kind ever existed " , and instead he interpreted the site as a stone circle , comparing it to the examples at Avebury , Arborlow , and Stanton Drew , suggesting that the central chamber was a shrine .

= = = Archaeological excavation = = =

The Coldrum Stones have been excavated on multiple occasions . On 16 April 1910 , the amateur archaeologist F. J. Bennett began excavation at the site , after previously having uncovered some Neolithic lithics from Addington Long Barrow . He soon discovered human bones " under only a few inches of chalky soil " . He returned to the site for further excavation in August 1910 , this time with his niece and her husband , both of whom were dentists with an interest in craniology ; on that day they discovered pieces of a human skull , which they were able to largely reconstruct . A few days later he returned to excavate on the north @-@ west corner of the dolmen with the architect E. W.

Filkins ; that day , they found a second skull , further bones , a flint tool , and pieces of pottery .

Later that month , George Payne and F. W. Reader met with Bennett to discuss his finds . With the aid of two other interested amateur archaeologists , Mr Boyd and Miss Harker , both from Malling , excavation resumed in early September . In 2009 , the archaeologists Martin Smith and Megan Brickley asserted that Bennett 's excavations had taken heed of the advice of Pitt Rivers that excavations should be recorded in full . They noted that Bennett had provided " clear plan and section drawings , photographs of the monument and careful attempts to consider site formation processes . " Suggesting that the monument was constructed on agricultural land , in his published report Bennett cited the ideas of anthropologist James Frazer in *The Golden Bough* to suggest that the Coldrum Stones " monument may at one time have been dedicated , though not necessarily initially so , to the worship of the corn god and of agriculture . " He proceeded to theorise that the human remains found at the site were the victims of human sacrifice killed in fertility rites . However , Evans later stated that " we have no means of knowing " whether human sacrifice had taken place at the site .

In September 1922 , Filkins once again began excavating at the site , this time with the aid of a resident of Gravesend , Charles Gilbert . Their project was financed through grants provided by the British Association and the Society of Antiquaries , with Filkins noting that at the time of its commencement , " a miniature jungle " had grown up around the site which had to be cleared . Excavation continued sporadically until at least 1926 . Human remains were discovered , and placed into the possession of Sir Arthur Keith of the Royal College of Surgeons . This excavation revealed all the existing sarsens surrounding the monument , a number of which had previously been buried beneath earth . The stones of the dolmen were shored up with concrete foundations where Filkins deemed it necessary . Although Filkins ' excavation was comprehensive , it did ignore stone holes , packing stones , and their relationship to the mound . In 1998 , Ashbee noted that while from " a present @-@ day perspective , it is possible to see shortcomings [...] in terms of the general standards of the early part of this century , there is much to commend . "

= = = Management by The National Trust = = =

In his 1924 publication dealing with Kent , the archaeologist O. G. S. Crawford , then working as the archaeological officer for the Ordnance Survey , listed the Coldrum Stones alongside the other Medway Megaliths . In 1926 , the Coldrum Stones were given to The National Trust , who dedicated it as a memorial to the Kentish historian Benjamin Harrison . A plaque was erected to mark this , which erroneously termed the monument a stone circle ; in 1953 , the archaeologist Leslie Grinsell expressed the view that " it is hoped that this error may be rectified in the near future " . Still owned by the Trust , the site is open to visitors all year round , free of charge . On their website , the Trust advises visitors to look for " stunning views from the top of the barrow " . John H. Evans characterised the site as " the most impressive " of the Medway Megaliths , while Grinsell described it as " the finest and most complete " of the group .