

The Excavation of the West Kennet Long Barrow : 1955-6

by STUART PIGGOTT

The Chambered Long Barrow at West Kennet in Wiltshire, is one of the most famous megalithic tombs in the British Isles. It was first excavated by John Thurnam in 1860, and recently re-excavated, with remarkable and surprising results, by Professor Stuart Piggott and his staff and students of the Department of Prehistoric Archaeology in the University of Edinburgh. Here Professor Piggott summarizes the results of his excavations in 1955 and 1956: the full report, now in preparation, will be published as a monograph of the Research Committee of the Society of Antiquaries of London.

THE West Kennet Long Barrow, lying on a ridge of chalk downland some two miles south of Avebury in North Wiltshire, is one of the most famous monuments of its type.¹ If one excludes the Dorset 'bank-barrows', it is one of the longest, measuring some 330 ft. long on its east-west axis, 70 ft. wide at the eastern end, and 40 ft. at the western. Remains of the stone-built burial chambers and façade at the east end have been visible since it was first recorded by John Aubrey in the 1660's; William Stukeley made drawings in 1723 and 1724 which show the stones in the same order (or confusion) as in 1955, and in 1860 John Thurnam excavated beneath the westernmost of these, revealing a burial chamber with approach passage, only part of which he was able to dig owing to fallen stones he was not allowed to move. In the chamber Thurnam found a primary deposit of skeletons on the floor, beneath a filling which contained numerous sherds and flints, as well as animal bones, the pottery belonging almost wholly to Secondary Neolithic types of Peterborough and allied fabrics, with a certain amount of Beaker. His and W. C. Lukis's plans of the site showed a passage and terminal chamber, and left the 'very oporose congeries of huge stones' (Stukeley's phrase) otherwise uninterpreted.

The published plan presented an awkward puzzle to the typologists of chambered tombs, and the relationship of the surprisingly abundant pottery in the chamber filling to the interments was unresolved. The barrow had been one of the earliest Ancient Monuments to be scheduled by Pitt-Rivers, as the first Inspector under the Act of 1882, and after the last war the then Chief Inspector of Ancient Monuments, the late Mr Bryan O'Neil, discussed the site with the writer and invited him to re-excavate the barrow on behalf of the Inspectorate, with a view to elucidating, if possible, its archaeological peculiarities, and preparing the way for its conservation as a monument under guardianship for the benefit of the public. Excavations were accordingly carried out by the Department of Prehistoric Archaeology in the University of Edinburgh under the direction of the writer and Professor R. J. C. Atkinson in 1955 and 1956, with very interesting results.

Briefly, the main features were as follows. The structural aspects of these are graphically expressed in the accompanying isometric diagram (FIG. 1), and the typological problem was immediately resolved by the wholly unexpected and entirely gratifying discovery at a relative early stage of the excavation that Thurnam's excavations missed four intact burial chambers which, with the terminal chamber he did excavate, combine to make a plan for

¹ G. E. Daniel, *Prehistoric Chamber Tombs of England and Wales* (1950), 227, with refs.

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which many parallels exist among the Severn-Cotswold group of chambered tombs. The passage from which these chambers open leads into a shallow semi-circular forecourt, distinctively not of Severn-Cotswold type, however, which after the final funerals had been elaborately blocked with boulders and a 'false entrance', and closed by an enormous stone flanked by two somewhat smaller blocking stones, so set as to line up with a straight façade running across the east end of the barrow. The mound was found to have a core of sarsen boulders capped by chalk rubble derived from flanking quarry-ditches, but no trace of the peristalith suggested by Aubrey's sketch could be found. In the intact chambers the funeral ritual could be seen to have been that common to many chambered tombs, the bones of the earlier occupants being placed on one side to admit the later burials, but a wholly unexpected feature was the subsequent filling of all chambers and the passage right up to the roof with chalk rubble and occupational debris brought from elsewhere, and containing large quantities of pottery, bone and stone tools, beads and other objects. With the primary burials, and in direct association with the actual structure of the monument, was found pottery of Windmill Hill Neolithic type, and the sherds from the subsequent filling comprised a wide variety of Secondary Neolithic wares, including Peterborough and Rinyo-Clacton types, as well as various forms of Bell-Beaker pottery.

We may now consider the various features in greater detail. It had been the original intention to cut a section across the full width of the mound at some distance back from the terminal chamber, and to excavate in search of the flanking ditches whose existence was demonstrated by an electrical resistivity survey. The ditch on the north was in fact sectioned, and found to be nearly 10 ft. deep with an irregularly quarried base, and in its weathered condition, some 20 ft. wide at the top. It was separated from the mound by a berm nearly 40 ft. wide. A partial section only was made of the mound, since it was found that virtually the whole of the south side had been disturbed in recent times, consisting of craters some still visible on the surface and more filled up. This mutilation must be that referred to by Stukeley, who recorded that 'Dr Took has miserably defaced South Long Barrow by digging half the length of it': 'Dr Took' must be the Dr Toope of Marlborough who was in correspondence with John Aubrey in 1685, and whose depredations are referred to again below. At its maximum unmutated height the mound of the barrow rose 14 ft. above a thick chocolate-coloured old surface line, its core, up to 6 ft. in height, consisting of large sarsen boulders with air-spaces between, capped by chalk rubble derived from the flanking quarry-ditches for the remainder of its height. On the old ground surface was a scatter of small sherds of Windmill Hill ware, undecorated and with a few simple rims represented.

When excavation began in the area of the known chamber and passage at the eastern end of the mound, practically the only stones which could be assigned to a function were those standing or leaning in an approximately straight line as a façade to the barrow. Outside these lay an enormous recumbent stone which we now know to have been the central blocking-stone, fallen outwards, and westwards of the façade, piled on the eastern slope of the barrow, lay a meaningless jumble of blocks, two of which were in fact the undisturbed cap-stones of the two northern chambers, and a third the displaced cap of the south-east chamber. As the removal of obviously non-structural stones, and the excavation of the area proceeded, it became clear that considerable wreckage had taken place over what was finally discovered to be the blocked forecourt and the passage immediately westwards of it; the cap-stone of the south-east chamber, as we have seen, had in fact been dragged off southwards. As Stukeley's drawings show us that the site was already in this state by 1723 (the south-east cap-stone was certainly as we found it in 1955, and the other stones, less surely identifiable, seem also to be in the same state), the wrecking must have taken place

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before that date. The most likely suspect is Dr Toope, of whose activities Stukeley was told, and who certainly dug in what may have been a Saxon cemetery near The Sanctuary for human bones to make 'a noble medicine that relieved many of my distressed neighbours'. If he had hoped for further bones at West Kennet, the peculiar circumstances of the deliberate filling of the burial chambers in antiquity prevented him; the disturbance over the eastern chambers extends to a depth of 3 ft. only, leaving 5 ft. of undisturbed filling before the primary burials on the chamber floors could be reached.

The plan of the burial chambers on complete excavation showed a symmetrical composition, with a wide passage some 23 ft. long leading to a polygonal western or terminal chamber, and with two pairs of lateral chambers opening from it, three of these being approximately rectangular in plan, while one (the north-west) is polygonal. The proportions are massive: the terminal chamber is 9 ft. square and the others proportionately large. The construction is of blocks of local sarsen joined by panels of dry-stone walling, which is in some instances of sarsen boulders, but mainly of oolite of a type best represented by beds between Frome and Bradford-on-Avon, some twenty-five miles south-west from West Kennet.² The cap-stones are carried on two or more courses of sarsen corbels above the uprights at a height of 8 ft. above the floor in the two eastern chambers and in the terminal (western) chamber, and 6 ft. in the south-west and north-west chambers. These two chambers had their entrances blocked by small sarsens just over 3 ft. high set on the old surface and not in stone-holes as are all the structural uprights (PLATE XXV, *a*).

The passage opens on to a shallow semicircular forecourt 30 ft. across and about 7 ft. deep, which at its extremities joins to an approximately straight façade 20 ft. long on north and south, forecourt and façade being constructed of sarsen uprights joined by dry-stone walling in the same manner as the passage and chambers. The core of sarsen boulders already described as forming the spine of the mound continued round the chambers, and seems to have been held by revetment walls immediately behind the forecourt, this and the façade being backed by chalk rubble.

The central area of the façade at its junction with the passage had been badly wrecked by the probably 17th century digging already mentioned: no cap-stones of the passage at this point remained *in situ*. It could be established, however, that two massive upright stones had stood in the forecourt, more or less continuing the line of the sides of the passage, and on each side of these the forecourt was filled with a blocking of sarsen boulders. Whether these uprights had carried a lintel could not be decided owing to the destruction at this point. Immediately in front of the uprights three large stones had been set so as to continue the line of the façade as a chord of the forecourt arc. The central and southern of these stones has fallen outwards and lay flat, the northern was leaning outwards and had been partly destroyed. The central stone measured 13 by 10 ft. and when re-erected in its original stone-hole rested against the two uprights within the forecourt area. The whole of this construction must be interpreted as an exceptionally massive forecourt blocking set up at the final closing of the tomb.

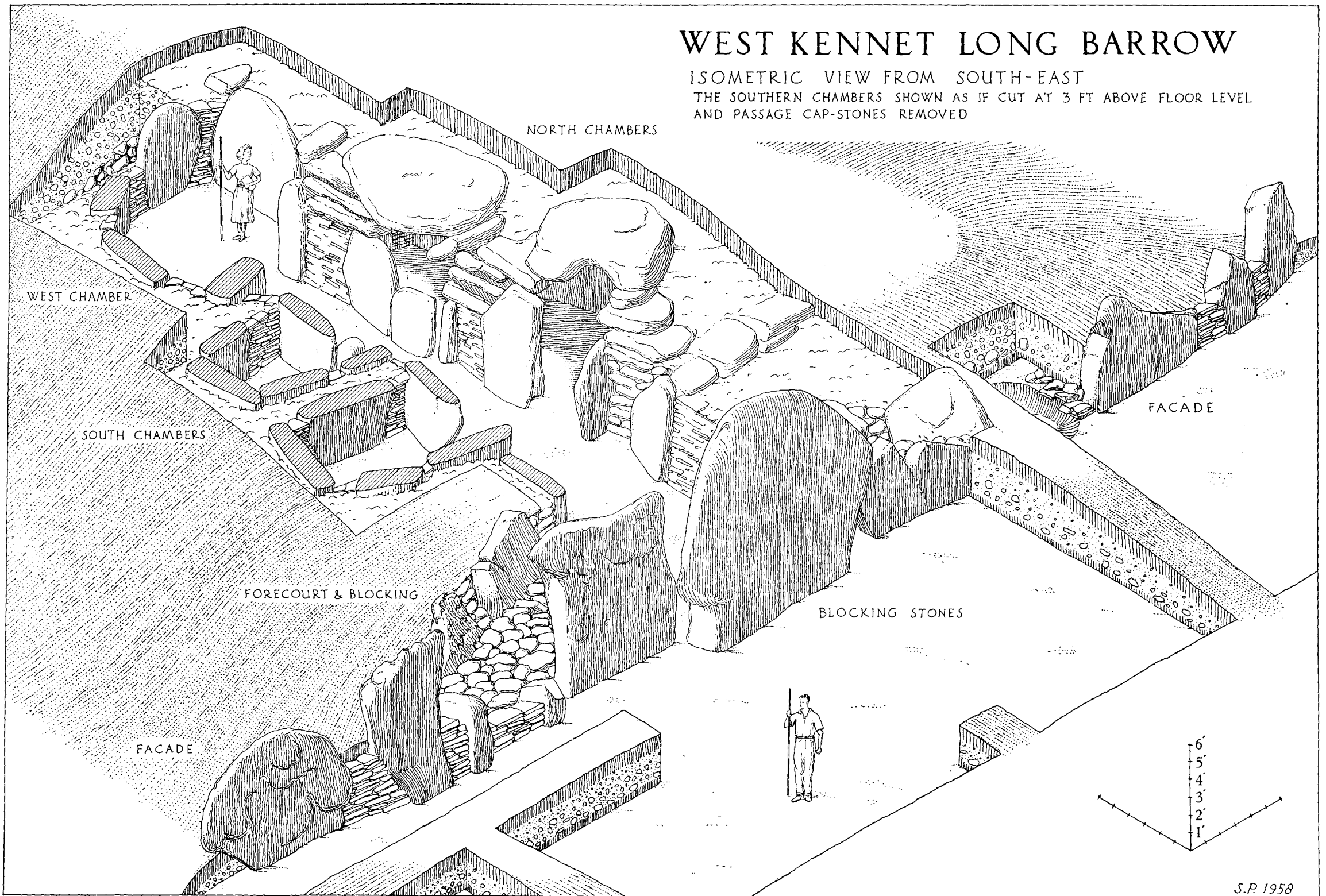
An incidental discovery of some interest was that on more than one of the chamber uprights, and on the southern of the three blocking-stones, were polished areas where stone or flint axe-blades had been ground or resharpened (PLATE XXV, *b*). The construction of such a megalithic tomb as West Kennet must have involved the use of considerable quantities of timber for levers, rollers and similar purposes, with a corresponding necessity for axes for felling and trimming.

² Report by Professor W. J. Arkell, Sidgwick Museum, Cambridge. Thurnam records a whetstone from the secondary filling made of Pennant Sandstone from the valley of the Bristol Avon.

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ISOMETRIC VIEW FROM SOUTH-EAST

THE SOUTHERN CHAMBERS SHOWN AS IF CUT AT 3 FT ABOVE FLOOR LEVEL
AND PASSAGE CAP-STONES REMOVED



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Sherds of Windmill Hill Neolithic pottery were found in the stone-hole of one of the façade uprights, and in that of one of the passage uprights as well. This, taken in conjunction with the sherds already noted as being present on the old surface beneath the mound, and those associated with the primary burials just to be described, enable us to assign the building and original use of the tomb to the earlier phases of the type-site itself, lying only a couple of miles away to the north. Sherds of Peterborough Ware from the forecourt blocking suggest that the work here, like the filling of the chambers, is to be associated with the use of this particular pottery style, though as we shall see this distinction may be cultural rather than rigidly chronological.

The floors of chambers and passage consisted of the same old ground surface as observed under the mound, and the burials had been laid direct on this. As usual in collective tomb burials there were, in addition to identifiably complete or partially complete skeletons, quantities of disordered bones. The remains were mainly concentrated at the rear of the chambers; in the north-east chamber a complete crouched burial of an elderly man occupied the western corner (PLATE XXV, *c*), with a leaf-shaped flint arrowhead in the region of his throat, and above him a mass of cremated bones representing two individuals, one male and one female. In the south-west chamber a row of three skulls had been laid against the rear wall, and a cache of vertebrae and long bones was similarly placed in the north-west chamber. Thurnam had found the remains of five individuals in the terminal chamber, and Professor Wells³ assesses the material from the four chambers excavated in 1955 as representing upwards of twenty adults, one youth, and at least a dozen children and infants—the latter were particularly abundant in the south-east chamber. All Thurnam's burials were male, and of the remainder of the adults nine were male and the rest female.

Professor Wells was able to demonstrate some very curious features in the circumstances of the West Kennet burials. In the first place there are not enough skulls to go round, and more lower mandibles than skulls. This (as he says) suggests that skulls were removed after the remains were reduced to skeletal form, in some instances leaving the lower jaw behind, and still more odd is the fact that there is a similar shortage of the larger limb-bones, which may also have been removed from the tomb after burial. He stresses that the circumstances preclude an explanation in terms of the transference of the bones from a temporary mortuary to the present tomb, and in this connection one may note that a skull and several femora were found in the upper part of the forecourt blocking, as if dropped while in the process of removal. One femur Professor Wells would assign to a skeleton in the south-east chamber, and this is confirmed by the presence in the same area of the blocking of a large sherd of a very distinctive Peterborough pot, other fragments of which were in fact found in the same chamber.

In terms of physical characteristics the West Kennet burials show features which are consonant with regarding them as members of a related group or groups—three or four parents with well-defined characters could, Professor Wells thinks, account for all the variations in skull-form present. He also feels that the West Kennet material may represent a mingling of two types, one robust and the other more gracile, and that the cranial characteristics would support Morant's contention of a North European strain in the British Neolithic population.

In the south-east chamber, against the west wall, were the crushed remains of what had been a complete bowl of Windmill Hill ware, with a slightly thickened rim decorated with oblique lines of 'imitation cord' pattern, and other sherds of unornamented pottery of undifferentiated Windmill Hill type were found on the floor of the north-east chamber.

³ The human remains have been reported on by Professor L. H. Wells, formerly of the University of Edinburgh and now of the University of Cape Town.

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It has already been mentioned that one of the skeletons in this chamber had a leaf-arrow-head associated with it. Otherwise, grave-goods in the normal sense were not present, but subsequent to the final deposition of burials (and after the presumed robbing of the tomb for skulls and long-bones) the chambers and passage were deliberately filled with irregular layers of chalk rubble, mainly clean but with many seams and patches (up to a foot or so in thickness) of rubble stained brown and black with charcoal dust and containing abundant potsherds, animal bones, flint flakes and occasional implements, bone points and other tools, and frequent beads made of bone, stone or perforated shell. A similar but less concentrated scatter occurred sporadically in the clean layers.

The sherds varied in size from small scraps to large fragments representing half a pot or more, and represented various forms of Peterborough Ware, Rinyo-Clacton Ware, and Bell-Beakers. No Windmill Hill ware was present, nor was there any sequential stratification among the various types of pottery, sherds of Beaker, for instance, occurring in the lowest layers (immediately above the primary burials) in the north-east chamber as well as at other levels. A striking find was the greater part of a fine Bell-Beaker carefully placed upside down in an angle of the north-west chamber at a high level.⁴ In sorting the pottery it has been found that no whole pot is represented, that fragments of the same vessel may be scattered between two or more chambers, and that many pots survive only as a group of sherds none of which join. In other words, the pots were not broken in the tomb as a part of funerary ritual, but were brought there as already scattered potsherds. Although burnt fragments of bone were relatively common, and other signs of burning and fire, no fire had been made within the tomb at any stage of the filling.

The filling had been carried up completely to the underside of the capstones, and one can only assume that the far chambers were filled first, those responsible for the process backing out in what would seem to us a rather undignified manner. The filling of the five chambers and the passage would amount to some 2,500 cu. ft. of material. The impression given by the mixture of dirty rubble and broken artifacts was that in part at least soil and rubbish had been scraped up from the floors of settlement-sites, or perhaps from temporary camping-places connected in some way with the funeral ritual. The forecourt and the area in front of the façade were completely stripped, and showed no signs of any such occupation or use, so that an origin at some distance from the barrow seems likely. Such filling has hardly been recognized as a distinctive feature in chambered tombs elsewhere, but something similar is known in the British Isles as well as in Scandinavia and North Europe.

The pottery from the filling comprises an overwhelming percentage of Peterborough Ware, comparable with that found by Thurnam in the west chamber but amplifying to a marked degree our knowledge of the sub-varieties of this ceramic in southern England. The Ebbsfleet and Mortlake variants are present, as well as many examples of what Dr Isobel Smith has called Fengate Ware,⁵ with small flat bases and overhanging rims foreshadowing the Cinerary Urns of which it is the progenitor. Rinyo-Clacton Ware is represented by a few finds only, and no vessel can be reconstructed, though they were clearly of the normal flat-based type. All the Beaker sherds found in 1955 are of the Bell-Beaker family (Abercromby's Type B₁) and include not only the fine vessel already mentioned, but sherds of Cord-Zoned Beakers (Childe's B₃).

The flint-work is uninformative, consisting mainly of waste flakes, with rounded or discoidal scrapers as the commonest tool-type, and one leaf-arrow in addition to that already mentioned as being found with one of the burials. In Thurnam's excavation a very

* Illustrated in J. F. S. Stone, *Wessex Before the Celts* (1958), pl. 14. Other illustrations of West Kennet are in pls. 6-8.

⁵ In an unpublished thesis.

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fine polished-edge knife of characteristic Secondary Neolithic type was found. A broken chalk mace-head with cylindrical drill-bored perforation has been reworked into a clumsy pendant, and the fairly numerous beads are of simple globular or barrel form in shale, chalk or bone, and are in some instances extremely small (e.g. bone beads of from 3 to 5 mm. in external diameter). Perforated shells include the little tusk-shaped *Dentalium*. Bone points or awls are relatively abundant; there are a number of perforated phalanges and a couple of 'scoops' or polishers.

All the foregoing finds occurred in the filling of the chambers and of the passage where this remained intact; for half its length this, and the western chamber, had been dug out by Thurnam and refilled in modern times. Except for one or two Peterborough sherds and a human skull and other bones already mentioned, the forecourt blocking contained no finds, nor was there any trace of ritual features or finds in the 20-ft. wide excavation made in front of the whole length of the entrance and façade.

The results of the new excavations at the West Kennet Long Barrow have (as so often is the case) cleared up certain difficulties but raised many new problems. The recovery of the plan of the burial chambers shows that far from dealing with an abnormality we have in fact the finest and largest example so far known of a tomb-type well known in the Severn-Cotswold group of chambered cairns, and hitherto best represented by Notgrove and Uley in a form most nearly comparable to West Kennet, and with other characteristic variations on the same basic plan in Stoney Littleton, Nympsfield or Parc le Breos Cwm: Wayland's Smithy, referred to again below, is another simplified version of the same 'transepted' plan. A remarkable feature at West Kennet is the comparatively great height of the passage and chambers—6 to 8 ft. Whether we call such tombs passage-graves or gallery-graves seems a semantic irrelevance, but the fact which is of importance is that comparable tomb-plans do occur in a restricted area of Western France around the mouth of the River Loire. Since G. E. Daniel first demonstrated the architectural relationships between the plans of his Retz Group and those of the Severn-Cotswold tombs,⁶ the position of the former as ancestral to the English series has been generally accepted. Before the new West Kennet excavations, the date of the Cotswold tombs could not be fixed more precisely than within the general span of the Windmill Hill culture in southern England, but we now know that a great transepted tomb of this group was being built two miles from the type-site of the culture, and at a stage early in the stratified sequence of the ditches of the causewayed camp there. The implications of this for the chronology of British chambered tombs is of course hardly less significant than for that of the West French sites.

Although the plan of the West Kennet burial chambers is recognizably a version of the Severn-Cotswold formula, the semi-circular forecourt opening on to a straight façade is without parallel in the southern British tombs, though a regular feature in the Clyde-Carlingford series of tombs such as East Bennan or Carn Ban in Arran.⁷ It is possible that Wayland's Smithy had a similar forecourt (still unexcavated) with fallen blocking stones, and Professor Atkinson's excavation of the Manton Long Barrow, four miles north-east of West Kennet, in 1955, revealed a plan which suggests an asymmetric degeneration of the same arrangement. Stukeley's drawings of the Devil's Den and of the destroyed chambered tomb on Temple Down again suggest the presence in the Avebury district of tombs with façades more comparable in plan to the Clyde-Carlingford series than to the Severn-Cotswold,⁸ and strengthen one's belief in some fairly close connection in architectural

⁶ G. E. Daniel, *Proc. Prehist. Soc.*, v (1939), 143.

⁷ S. Piggott, *Neo. Cultures Brit. Isles* (1954), fig. 25: contrast the Cotswold plans in fig. 20.

⁸ *Wilt. Arch. Mag.*, LII (1947), 57, where I suggested that such tombs might 'stand nearer to the main stream of ideas in tomb architecture than the rather specialized forms of the Cotswolds'. West Kennet now provides welcome confirmation of this view.

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traditions between these two groups, with the cusp-shaped forecourts of the Cotswolds as perhaps a later local development in that region.

The placing of the burial chambers at West Kennet at one end of an enormously long mound, part sarsen cairn and part rubble thrown up from flanking quarry-ditches, again emphasizes the complexities of tradition combined in our chambered long barrows and cairns. Here one has surely to look to the unchambered long barrows whose origins may well lie not in the west of Europe, but rather eastwards of the British Isles in the North European plain. The Windmill Hill culture, which not so long ago looked so deceptively homogeneous, may well turn out to be a complex affair with multiple origins in many European Neolithic traditions.

This complexity of coexisting traditions in material culture is again implied by the mixture of pottery in the chamber and passage infilling. The recent excavations at Windmill Hill* have shown that the apparent simplicity of the stratified sequence in the ditches there was illusory, and that sherds representing both the Abingdon and the Ebbsfleet pottery styles do in fact occur sporadically as a component of the pottery content in the lowest levels, though this is dominated by the plain wares named from the type-site. With this in mind, the presence of sherds of pottery of at least three Late Neolithic cultures—Peterborough Ware (with its variants), Rinyo-Clacton Ware and Bell-Beakers—in the filling of the chambers seems to represent cultural rather than chronological differentiation, for there is no evidence that any long interval elapsed between the last burials and bone-robbing, and the filling-up of the tomb. Indeed, the evidence of the forecourt blocking, while not conclusive, does suggest that this final act of closing a collective tomb built by users of Windmill Hill pottery was associated with people using Peterborough Ware: a state of affairs comparable with that observed at Notgrove and Nympsfield as well as in the Clyde-Carlingford tomb of Cairnholy I in Galloway.⁹

On the other hand, the fact that the only pottery associated with the original building of the tomb, and of its primary use, was of Windmill Hill types, and that none of this ware occurred among the secondary chamber filling, does mark some sort of a distinction between the makers of pottery in this tradition and those responsible for the mixture of Secondary Neolithic fabrics, exclusively in secondary contexts, on the same site. We must regard the West Kennet Long Barrow as a monument of the Windmill Hill culture, and one constructed and first used at a relatively early phase of the use of the causewayed camp at the type-site so short a distance away.

The phenomenon of the deliberate secondary filling of the chambers and passage seems hardly to have been recognized as a feature in the chambered tombs of the British Isles. On the other hand, it must be remembered that many of our better-known tombs have been, at the time of excavation, long roofless and ruined; both Nympsfield and Notgrove are examples of this state of affairs, and chamber filling could have existed. Nor can we be sure that the filling present in less ruined sites need always be the result of the later collapse of walling, etc., and, indeed, such sites as Pipton, where Dr Savory found that one chamber had in all probability been deliberately filled with clean earth, and another probably filled in a similar manner, shows a comparable situation, though in this case without the inclusion of artifacts.¹⁰ At Ty-isaf, too, Professor Grimes found the chambers full of stone debris, perhaps as a result of later ruin, perhaps not.¹¹ Similar circumstances

* (Of which a preliminary note appears on p. 268.)

⁹ E. M. Clifford, *Arch.*, LXXXVI (1937), 119; *ibid.*, *Proc. Prehist. Soc.*, IV (1938), 188; S. Piggott and T. G. E. Powell, *Proc. Soc. Ant. Soc.*, LXXXIII (1948-9), 103.

¹⁰ H. N. Savory, *Arch. Camb.*, 1956, 7.

¹¹ W. F. Grimes, *Proc. Prehist. Soc.*, V (1939), 119.

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may have obtained in some Clyde-Carlingford tombs (e.g. at Clontygora Large Cairn; Carn Ban, Arran),¹² and at Brackley, Kintyre, the deliberate filling up of the chamber as part of the final blocking (and after an Early Bronze Age burial with a jet space-plate necklace had been deposited) was noted.¹³ In fact, the deliberate total or partial filling of a collective burial chamber after the point of its final use may not be so unusual as at first appears. It was clearly not a universal practice, in the British Isles or elsewhere, as the unfilled chambers at Lanhill or other sites show, but, nevertheless, it does recur both here and on the Continent. Dr Lili Kaelas has pointed out to me that sporadic instances of such deliberate filling are known from South Scandinavian and North German chambered tombs, and others suspected from excavation reports which did not recognize the phenomenon for what it was.¹⁴ Similarly in the British Isles we must be prepared to accept deliberate filling where the evidence demands it, and not necessarily explain away the stone and earth contents of chambers as the result of accidental penetration of silt or of later ruin of walling or roof.

The large quantities of artifacts in the filling of the West Kennet chambers considerably augment our rather imperfect knowledge of the material culture other than pottery in the Secondary Neolithic groups. The pottery itself includes as we have seen a notable series of fragments of vessels of Fengate Ware which go far to provide links between this pottery style and that of our Cinerary Urns and Food Vessels, although at the same time others extend the range of eccentricity within the Secondary Neolithic pottery repertoire and show unparalleled forms.

The new excavations at West Kennet have then advanced our knowledge not only of this particular site, but also of many aspects of the British Neolithic cultures. In particular, the phenomenon of deliberate in-filling in collective chambered tombs needs investigation, both here and on the Continent, and the forecourt plan at West Kennet raises once more the question of the affinities which may exist between the architectural traditions of the Severn-Cotswold tombs and those of the Clyde-Carlingford group. And apart from these and other results of concern to the professional archaeologist, the work of conservation and judicious restoration which the Ancient Monuments Department of the Ministry of Works has carried out since the excavations has provided the general public with an opportunity of seeing one of the most magnificent and impressive of our collective chambered tombs. To see the monumental façade with its huge blocking stones at the entrance, and to walk into the great burial chambers, is an experience which brings home to one the architectural capabilities of those builders in massive stones who, before 2000 B.C., were already in North Wiltshire mastering the basic techniques which were to be used by their successors at Avebury and at Stonehenge.¹⁵

¹² O. Davies and T. G. F. Paterson, *Proc. Belfast Nat. Hist. and Phil. Soc.*, 2nd S., 1, pt. ii (1936-7), 20. T. H. Bryce, *Proc. Soc. Ant. Scot.*, xxxvii (1902-3), 36.

¹³ J. G. Scott, *Proc. Soc. Ant. Scot.*, lxxxix (1955-6), 22.

¹⁴ I am indebted to Dr Kaelas for allowing me to see the proofs of a paper to be published in *Offa* where this subject is discussed.

¹⁵ The finds from the 1955-6 excavations at West Kennet will be deposited in the Museum of the Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Society at Devizes; some restored pottery is at present on exhibition in the City Museum, Birmingham.

PLATE XXV



(a) Filling in N.W. chamber, seen from partly excavated passage.



(b) Axe sharpening marks on upright of S.W. chamber.



WEST KENNET LONG BARROW. (c) Articulated primary interment in angle of N.E. chamber.

[See pp. 237-8