

THE DEAL-TYPE INHUMATIONS OF KENT: DEFINING AN IRON AGE MORTUARY GROUP IN LIGHT OF NEW DISCOVERIES

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This paper discusses a distinctive group of pre-Roman Iron Age (PRIA, c.800 BC-AD 43) burials from Kent. The first examples of these burials were identified during excavations undertaken by the Dover Archaeological Group (DAG) at Mill Hill, Deal starting in 1984 (Parfitt 1995). Since then, the number of known examples has more than tripled. These burials are significant for several reasons. Firstly, they contribute to the growing evidence for formalised burial practices in PRIA Britain, something for which there has been limited evidence for much of the previous two centuries. Secondly, the distinctive arrangement of these burials, with the bodies positioned supine and extended, contrasts with the more common British practice of positioning burials in crouched positions on their sides. Instead, such positioning finds its closest parallels in early La Tène (c.475-300 BC) burials from northern France. Indeed, artefactual evidence supports the idea that the rite was inspired by Continental contacts. These two characteristics therefore make this type of burial a distinctive and important group which warrant further study. This paper seeks to provide a preliminary archaeological definition of these burials in the light of the new evidence which has emerged as a result of fieldwork in the county over the last three decades. Following standard archaeological conventions, the burials discussed in this paper are named after the site where they were first identified; Mill Hill, Deal. There are several places named 'Mill Hill' in Britain. By contrast, Deal is synonymous with Kent, and thus helps to highlight to regionally specific nature of this group. As such, these inhumations are here referred to as Deal-type burials.

When the DAG began work at Mill Hill, Deal, the site was already known to have produced evidence for Iron Age occupation, including burials. Nevertheless, the results were surprising. In addition to five cremation burials of the long-identified Aylesford-Swarling group, a Late Pre-Roman Iron Age (LPRIA, c.100 BC-AD 43) cremation rite, 42 Iron Age inhumation burials were discovered, including a well-furnished warrior burial. The position of most of the inhumed individuals (26, or 62 per cent), lain on their backs, their legs extended out from the pelvis, was of particular interest, as such positions were rare in British burials. Although the importance of the site was immediately recognised, it did little to alter the

prevailing picture that PRIA Britain lacked formal burials. At the time only a small number of regionally and chronologically restricted groups were recognised. These were inhumations from East Yorkshire's 'Arras' culture (which may be as short lived as 300-100 cal BC; Jay *et al.* 2012, 181), South-Western England (*c.*300 BC-AD 100), and southern Dorset (Durotrigian burials: *c.*50/25 BC-AD 100) as well as the aforementioned Aylesford-Swarling cremation burials from South-Eastern England (*c.*150 BC-*c.*AD 43). When the Mill Hill site was published, the author remarked that they were virtually without parallel in southern England (Parfitt 1995, 157). The only other site which Parfitt could identify as potentially producing evidence for the same rite was Highstead, Sittingbourne, Kent. Here 20 inhumations and six cremations were reportedly found with LPRIA pottery (Kelly 1978, 267). Sadly, the site was not documented extensively, and the only written record of the cemetery was stolen. The remaining evidence which exists from Highstead are a series of photographs of the cremation burials, and a small number of vessels recovered from the cemetery. Parfitt also listed a series of other Iron Age inhumation burials, although all of these were examples of more common crouched inhumations lain on their side. Mill Hill, Deal, thus appeared to be a fascinating aberration.

Subsequent summaries of Kent's Iron Age mortuary data over the following decade suggested that this limited occurrence was little altered (Hamilton 2007, Appendix 1 and 2; Parfitt 2004, 16). Nevertheless, Champion (2007a, 123) noted the discovery of new cemeteries on the Isle of Thanet and proposed a Continental origin for the rite. Champion (*ibid.*) also offered an initial definition for the Deal-type burial (although he did not use this term), describing it as consisting of supine, extended inhumation, with limited grave goods (**Fig. 1**). However, in recent years rates of archaeological investigation in Kent have expanded on a massive scale, in large part due to the effects of Planning Policy Guideline 16. As a result,

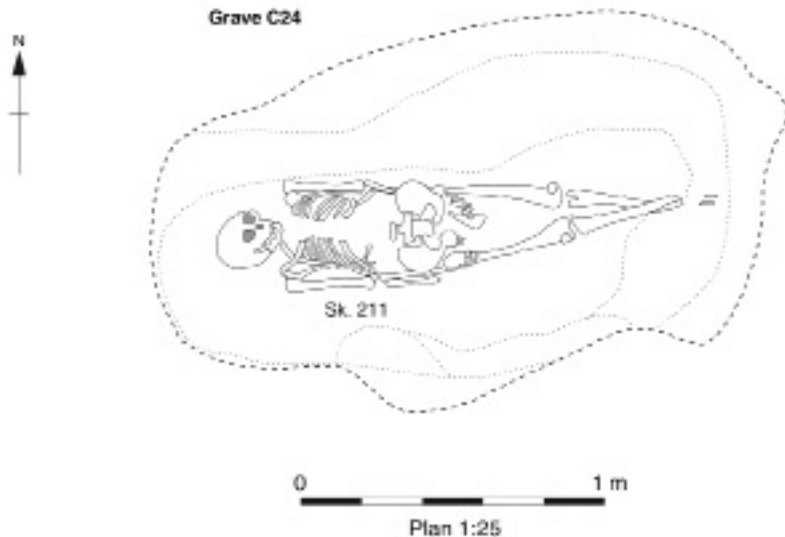


Fig. 1 Grave C24, Saltwood Tunnel, a typical Deal-type burial (reproduced from Riddler and Trevathan 2006, fig. 18, by kind permission of High Speed 1 Ltd).

TABLE 1. DEAL-TYPE BURIALS RECORDED IN THE DATABASE (TOGETHER WITH THREE ADDITIONAL DEAL-TYPE BURIAL SITES NOT YET PUBLISHED)

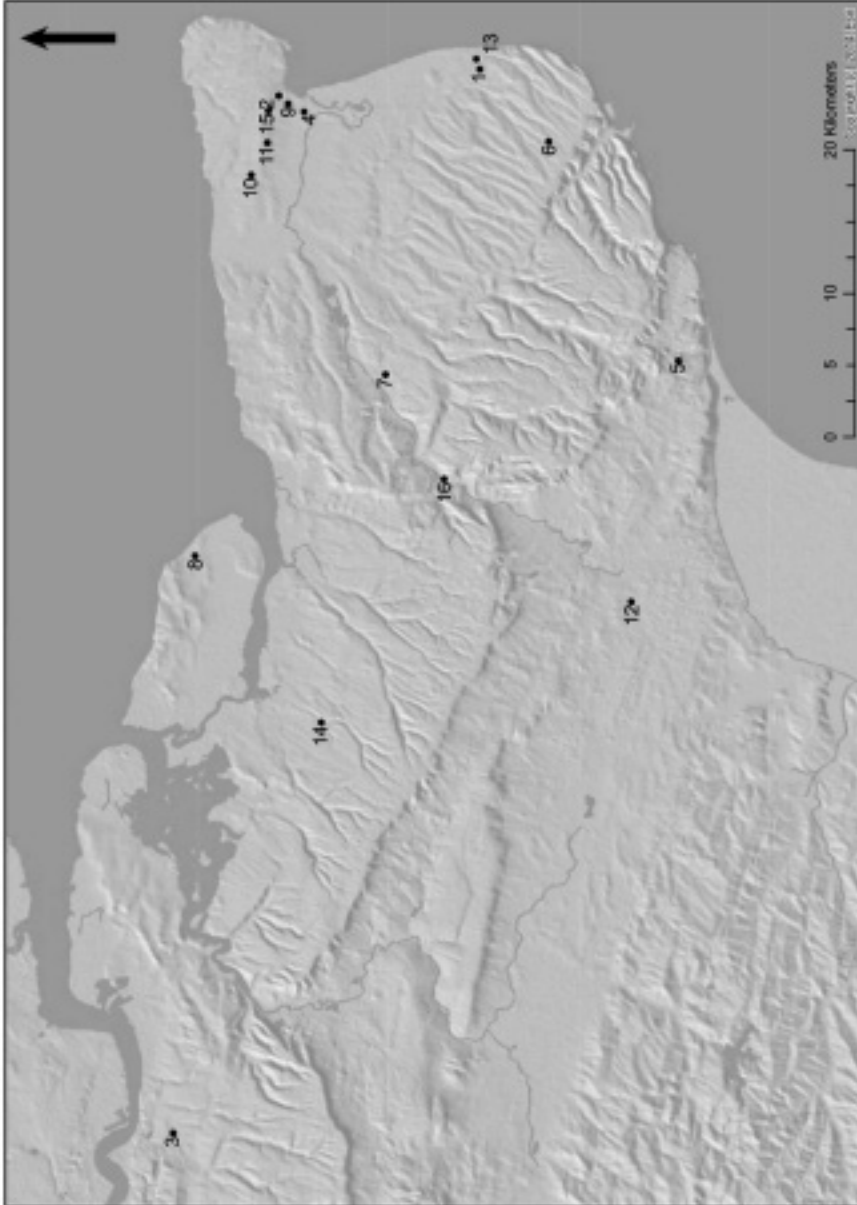
| Site | No. burials | Other Human Remains | Reference/Source |
|-----------------------------------|-------------|--|--|
| Mill Hill, Deal | 42 | | Parfitt 1995 |
| East Kent Access (Zone 12) | 13 | | Andrews <i>et al.</i> 2015 |
| A2 Activity Park | 5 | | Dawkes 2010 |
| Weatherlees WTW (Ebbsfleet) | 2 | | Egging Dinwiddy and Schuster 2009 |
| Saltwood Tunnel | 1 | | Riddler and Trevarthen 2006 |
| Church Whitfield | 1 | | Parfitt 1996 |
| Augustine House (Cby) | 1 | | Helm 2014 |
| Leysdown Road | 1 | | Margetts 2012 |
| Cottingham Hill | 1 | | Egging Dinwiddy and Schuster 2009 |
| <i>Total</i> | <i>67</i> | | |
| Plateau 8 Thanet Earth | 35 | 2 pit inhumations, 1 crouched, 1 cremation | Rady 2010; Weekes 2010 (<i>unpubl.</i>) |
| Tothill Street, Minster in Thanet | 11 | | Gollop and Mason 2006 (<i>unpubl.</i>); Bailey 2010 (<i>unpubl.</i>) |
| Brisley Farm, Kingsnorth | 2 | Roman era cremations | Johnson 2002 (<i>unpubl.</i>) |
| <i>Grand total</i> | <i>115</i> | | |

subsequent large-scale infrastructure developments which have been built in Kent, of which the Channel Tunnel Rail Link and High Speed rail connection 1 are the largest (Booth *et al.* 2011), have meant the quantity of data available for Iron Age Kent has increased immensely. Of the nine sites which form the database of this paper (**Table 1**), seven have been discovered since the turn of the century. Mill Hill, Deal, has ceased to be an aberration.

Selection Criteria and Dataset

Following Parfitt's (1995, 157) and Champion's (2007a, 123) lead, this paper has employed two criteria when selecting burials to be included in this study. In order to qualify as a potential example of a Deal-type burial, examples must originate from a site with supine, extended inhumation(s) which date to the PRIA. Burials which are not supine and extended have also been included, provided they originated from a site where supine, extended inhumations were present; this is in order to account for potential cultural variation within individual communities. This variation likewise conforms to the evidence initially observed at Mill Hill, Deal.

The dataset consists of 67 burials, derived from nine sites (**Map 1**). The majority lie in eastern Kent, with the main exception to this being the A2 Activity Park site,



Map 1 Sites in Kent with Deal-, or likely Deal-, type burials: (1) Mill Hill, Deal (2) Zone 12, East Kent Access II (3) A2 Activity Park (4) Weatherless Wastewater Treatment Works (5) Saltwood Tunnel (6) Church Whitfield (7) Augustine House (8) Leysdown Road (9) Cottington Hill (10) Thanet Earth, Plateau 8 (11) Tothill Street, Minster (12) Brisley Farm (13) Deal, Walmer (14) Highstead, Sittingbourne (15) Cemeteries 195118 and 126223, Zone 19, East Kent Access II (16) Julliberrie's Grave

Gravesend (Dawkes 2010), located to the north and west of the main concentration of sites. Of the burials in the dataset, the majority (42 or 63 per cent) are from Mill Hill, Deal itself. It should be noted that inhumations from this site do not represent the total number of inhumed burials interred at the site, as it was partially destroyed in the 19th century (Parfitt 1995, 155). Other sites are also known but were not included in the main database as the details required to analyse these burials are awaiting publication (bibliographic details are listed in Table 1). These include 35 Deal-type burials from Plateau 8, Thanet Earth (Rady 2010; Weekes 2010). Tothill Street, Minster, has also revealed the existence of 11 burials, of which 10 were supine, extended and one prone but belonging to the same cemetery (Bailey 2010, 69). Like Plateau 8, only summaries are available at present for these sites, and it is thus not possible to analyse them to the same extent as sites in the main dataset (Gollop and Mason 2006; Bailey 2010; Birchenough 2010). This brings the total number of Deal-type burials which conform to the above selection criteria to 115.

Further discoveries could potentially be added to this figure (**Table 2**). Some, such as the Highstead burials, lack enough details to permit further analysis. Others are published but cannot be dated with certainty to the PRIA. This may be due to the lack of associated grave goods, as is the case for an additional burial from Tothill Street which did not belong to the group noted above (Birchenough 2010). In the case of other burials from Kent this has only been resolved by radiocarbon dating (Fitzpatrick *et al.* 2015, 155). Where grave goods are present, they may lack sufficiently refined chronologies to ascribe a PRIA date. An example of this is cemetery 195118, East Kent Access II (EKA II), where the only grave good which could be used for dating was a penannular brooch (ON 4633) from Grave 278060 (Booth *et al.* 2015, 305). The brooch is a Fowler type A (Fowler 1960, 151, fig. 1), but dating cannot be any more precise than the first century AD (Anna Booth *pers. comm.* 25/04/19). As discussed in greater detail below, a post-Conquest date may not preclude some burials from being Deal-type inhumations rather than Romano-British burials. Indeed, there is evidence to suggest that early Roman period inhumations represent a continuation of the Deal rite. A potential example of this

TABLE 2. OTHER SITES IN KENT WITH PROBABLE DEAL-TYPE BURIALS

| Site | No. Burials | Other Human Remains | Source |
|-----------------------------------|-------------|----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Highstead, Sittingbourne | 20 | 6 LIA cremations | Kelly 1978 |
| EKA (Zone 12) cem. 195118 | 5 | 4 flexed inhumations | Andrews <i>et al.</i> 2015 |
| Cottingham Hill | 2 | None | Egging Dinwiddy and Schuster 2009 |
| EKA (Zone 12) cem. 126223 | 2 | 1 Roman inhumation | Andrews <i>et al.</i> 2015 |
| Tothill Street, Minster in Thanet | 1 | None | Birchenough 2010 |
| Saltwood Tunnel (sub-rect.) | 8 | 2 EIA-MIA cremations | Riddler and Trevarthen 2006 |
| Julliberrie's Grave | 3 | 1 LIA cremation | Jessup 1939 |
| <i>Total</i> | <i>41</i> | | |

are three supine, extended inhumation burials from Julliberrie's Grave. Found associated with an Aylesford-Swarling type grave, they were dated to shortly after AD 43 on the basis of associated ceramics (Jessup 1939, 226). Finally, there exists the problem of poor preservation, due in part to soil conditions in Kent, as is the case for most of the burials at Saltwood Tunnel (Riddler and Trevarthen 2006, 3).

If all possible examples of Deal-type burials listed in Table 3 are combined with those from Plateau 8, Thanet Earth, the cemetery from Tothill Steet, Minster, and those in the dataset, then the total maximum number reaches 156. An additional burial which could be added to this group is the adult female from Walmer, Deal, who was recovered with two 'divination spoons' (Woodruff 1904). The dataset also does not include the two warrior burials from Brisley Farm (Johnson 2002), although some have suggested it is a member of this group (Booth 2011, 314). If the Brisley Farm burials were included within this group, it would raise the total number of Deal-type burials to 158. The nature of the relationship between Deal and warrior burials is discussed below. A final pair of burials which could potentially be added to this group are the inhumations from Dumpton Gap, Broadstairs (Hurd 1909), although they were too poorly recorded to be able to do so. The Dumpton Gap burials also included a warrior burial.

Characterising the Deal rite

To attempt to determine what characteristics, other than the selection criteria noted above, can be used to define these burials as a cohesive cultural grouping, analyses of the following were conducted:

- Associated funerary architecture,
- Grave proportions, orientation,
- Demographic profiles of the deceased,
- Associated material culture.

In order to prevent patterns concerning orientation and demographic profiling being distorted by the dominance of the Mill Hill, Deal, sample, the results are presented in three groups; the entire dataset, Mill Hill, Deal, alone, and all remaining burials excluding this cemetery.

Associated Features and Funerary Architecture

There are no recurring patterns which would suggest that Deal-type burials were culturally linked to specific features or were expected to be associated with a particular form of funerary structure. Associations do occur, but they are varied and inconsistent. At Mill Hill, Deal, Grave 123 was surrounded by a ring ditch. It may also have been covered by a mound. Likewise, Graves 46, 114 and 127 also appear to have been covered by mounds (Parfitt 1995, 156). A ring ditch has also been recorded associated with burials at Plateau 8, Thanet Earth (Rady 2010, 8). A mound has likewise been suggested as an associated burial marker at Augustine House (Helm 2014, 15). Other associations are less clear. At Saltwood Tunnel, the poorly preserved, possible Deal-type, inhumation cemetery was positioned overlying and immediately east of a Bronze Age ring ditch. The cemetery was

associated with a small square or rectangular ditched feature, which the authors proposed to be a square barrow or mortuary enclosure. The relationship between the burials and the enclosure is, however, unclear. An undated possible posthole that cut the northern end of grave W1411 may also have supported a grave marker (Riddler and Trevarthen 2006, 16). At the Church Whitfield Eastry site, the sole burial discovered was located just outside the main contemporary enclosure (Parfitt 1996). At East Kent Access (EKA II) Zone 12, the small inhumation cemetery was positioned between hollow-way 1901163 (Fitzpatrick *et al.* 2015, 154). The burials were located close to a nearby settlement, but not within the settlement itself (*ibid.*, 187). No architecture was recorded within any graves. Indeed, all graves recorded had small proportions, and seemed to have been dug simply to contain the deceased and occasionally a small number of objects (the largest had a modest volume of 1.47m³). The lack of internal grave architecture and variation in terms of grave proportions may indicate a desire to have such burials conform to a cultural pattern.

Body Position and Orientation

Bodies were overwhelmingly positioned in supine, extended positions (n=44; 66 per cent) (**Fig. 2**). A similar pattern occurs at Plateau 8, Thanet Earth, where all burials were positioned extended, although some were located on their side (Rady 2010, 8). The prevalence of supine, extended inhumations supports the idea that this position was an important feature of this rite. The existence of other bodily positions also suggests that a degree of individual choice existed when burying an individual. Nevertheless, it does raise the question of whether the Deal rite represents a distinct cultural group based on burial position alone. In response to this, it is worth remembering that the use of varying burial positions is attested to among self-identifying groups in ethnographic literature. For example, in Evans Pritchard's (1956) study of the Nuer it was noted people who received different positions or orientation did so because of the specifics of their character when they were alive.

The pattern observed in the orientation of burials further supports the idea of personal choice playing a part in the way the burial was arranged (**Fig. 3**). Among the Mill Hill, Deal sample the largest number (n=15, 39 per cent) of burials with known orientation were orientated south-west. At Plateau 8 the pattern was even more pronounced, with all 28 burials in the main cemetery being orientated to the north (Rady 2010, 8). The same is also true of the group from Tothill Street, Minster (Bailey 2010, 69). In the remainder of the sample most burials (n=9, 36 per cent) were orientated north. However, in both the Mill Hill, Deal, and remainder of the sample, north and south-west orientations represented the second most prevalent orientation, respectively. The recurrence of these orientations, combined with the evidence from body positions, supports describing the Deal rite as a distinct mortuary group.

Deceased Population

A demographic profile classification system was constructed based on that used by Anderson (in Parfitt 1995) for the Mill Hill, Deal, cemetery, combined with that employed by Lucy Sibun (*pers. comm.* 11/03/2019). Determination of sex is based

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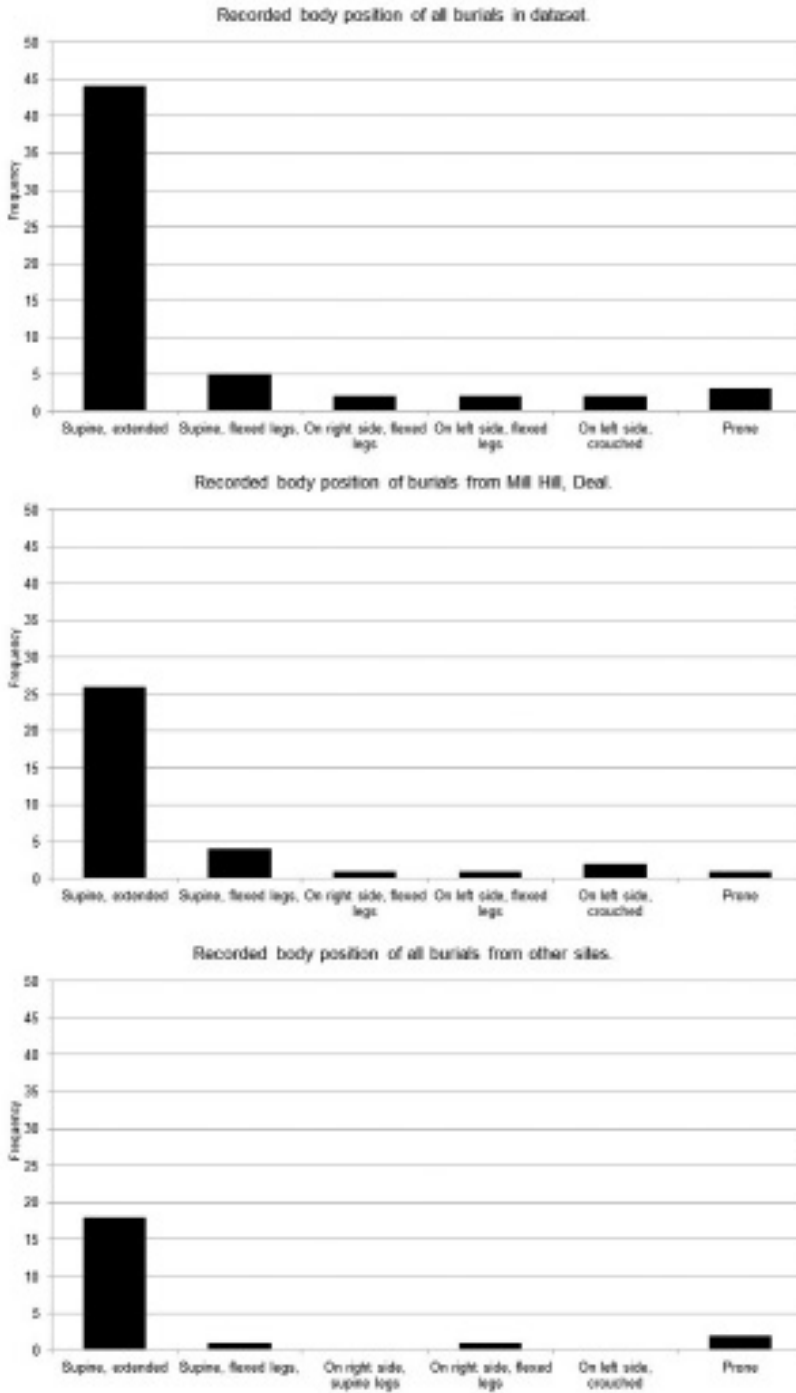


Fig. 2 Bodily position of all burials within the dataset. From top to bottom: entire dataset, Mill Hill, Deal and all sites aside from Mill Hill, Deal.

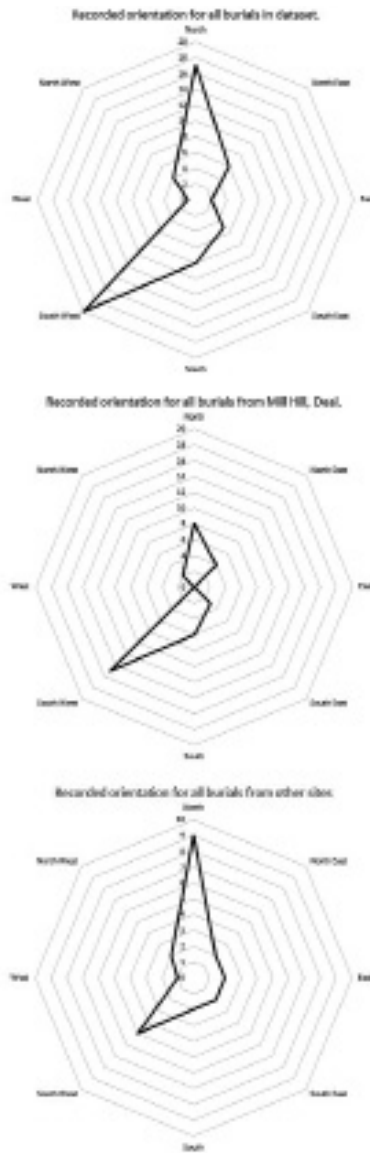


Fig. 3 Orientation of the burials of all ages observed within the dataset. From top to bottom: entire dataset, Mill Hill, Deal and all sites aside from Mill Hill, Deal.

on the information contained within the reports used to assemble the dataset. The age groups used are as follows: Infans I (0-12 months); Infans II (1-6 years); Infans III (7-12 years); Juvenile (13-20 years); Young Adult (21-30 years); Prime Adult (31-45 years); Mature Adult (45 years plus). The determination of sex was based on the information contained within the reports used to assemble the dataset, rather than on assessment of the osteological material by the author himself.

The Deal rite appears to have been provided to all ages and sexes (**Fig. 4**), and

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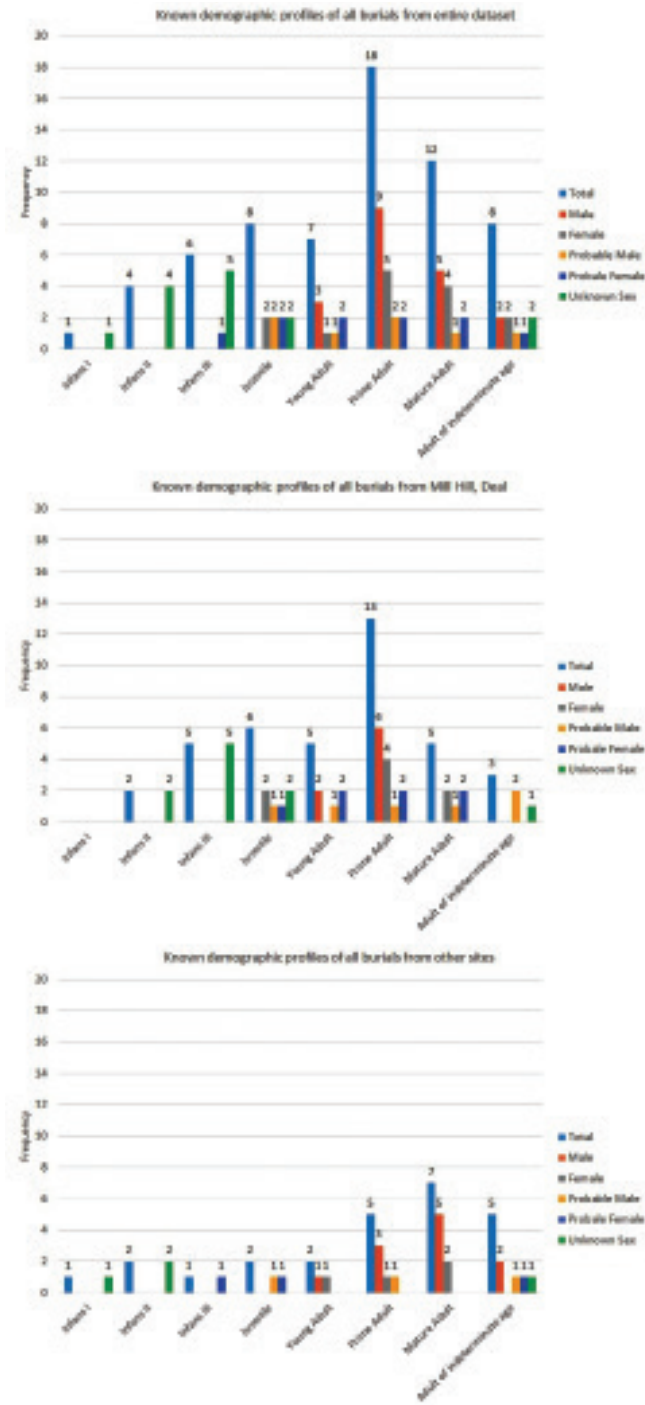


Fig. 4 Demographic profiles of burials within the dataset. From top to bottom: entire dataset, Mill Hill, Deal and all sites aside from Mill Hill, Deal.

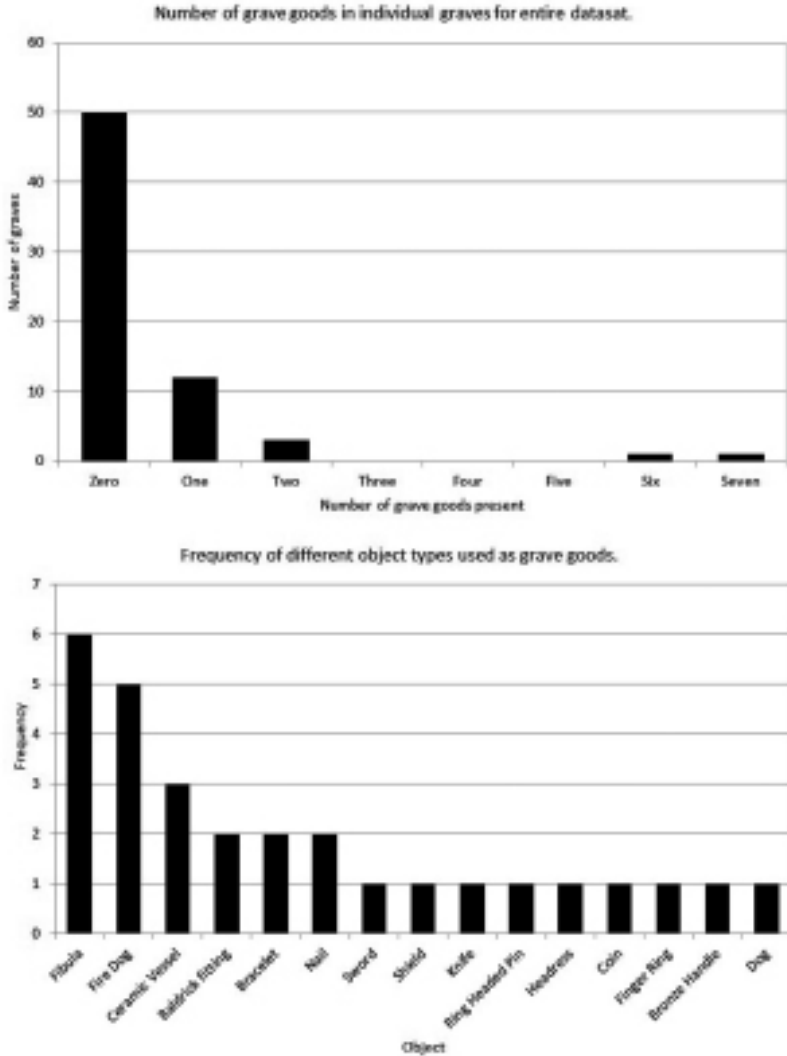


Fig. 5 Frequency of grave goods and types and quantities of grave goods recorded in the dataset.

the two cemeteries in the dataset, Mill Hill, Deal, and EKA II, can be considered to represent ‘typical’ agricultural populations (Fitzpatrick *et al.* 2015, 186). The predominance of certain groups within the sample, such as prime adults, should not be used to infer conclusions about the health of the population (Wood *et al.* 1992). Typically, among such populations a greater number of sub-adults should be expected (Chamberlain 2006, 90). Their absence from Deal-type burials can be best explained by the soil conditions of eastern Kent. The levels of preservation among adults were highly variable, ranging from *c.*99 per cent skeletal preservation to less than *c.*25 per cent. In such circumstances the bones of infants would be unlikely to

survive. The presence of sub-adults in the dataset, combined with empty graves as at Mill Hill, Deal, which were of child-sized proportions, does indicate that even the youngest members of the community were permitted access to this rite.

Grave Goods

The recent discoveries appear to confirm Champion's (2007a, 123) statement that grave goods rarely occur in Deal-type burials (**Fig. 5**). The number of items in the dataset which may be considered grave goods is limited (n=16). An additional ceramic vessel, provisionally dated from c.100 BC-AD 50, and sheep bones were found with the main Tothill Street, Minster group (Bailey 2010, 69). If the poorly-preserved Saltwood cemetery group does represent a Deal-type cemetery, then this would increase the number of ceramic vessels by two (**Fig. 6**). At Plateau 8 the only grave goods recovered were two LPRIA fibulae (Rady 2010, 8). Of the grave goods in the dataset, nails (n=2) and firedogs (n=5), all from a single grave (123 Mill Hill, Deal) could be argued to represent the remains of coffins, and thus not grave goods in a traditional sense (although see Cooper *et al.* 2019). The six objects within Grave 112, Mill Hill, Deal (the warrior burial), are remarkable for their quantity, unique nature and opulence. They have been much discussed elsewhere (Parfitt 1995, 58-94), and all that need be noted here is the contrast between Grave 112 and others in the dataset. Champion (2011, 235), in discussing the poorly-preserved Saltwood cemetery, has suggested that the provision of carinated bowls was a feature of the rite. The data do not support this. Rather, the impression given by the grave goods is like that noted above for associated features; a certain degree of individual choice. The objects chosen for inclusion in the grave were likely personal possessions of the deceased. Thus, the lap dog thrown into Grave 47, Mill Hill, Deal, could conceivably have been the pet of the woman in the grave.

Summary of Analysis

The patterns observed conform to those initially observed at Mill Hill, Deal, and provisionally defined by Champion (2007a, 123). The characteristics of the Deal rite are thus predominantly supine, extended inhumation, with bodies typically orientated to the north or south-west. Apart from Mill Hill Grave 112, grave goods are lacking. This may suggest that these communities sought to emphasise some sort of egalitarianism in death. A lack of associated monuments lends support to this. Nevertheless, the rite was not so strictly regulated as to prevent individual variation between graves. The presence of a limited number of monuments, and the varied nature of what few grave goods were included, indicates there was room for personal preference when deciding how to arrange the grave.

The Chronology of the Rite

The lack of dateable grave goods recovered from Deal-type burial has had the unexpected benefit that numerous radiocarbon dates have been obtained for these burials (**Table 3**). The radiocarbon dates obtained attest to a long-lived rite, likely originating in the fifth century BC. A fifth century BC origin is also supported by the carinated bowls from the potential Deal-type graves at Saltwood Tunnel (Champion

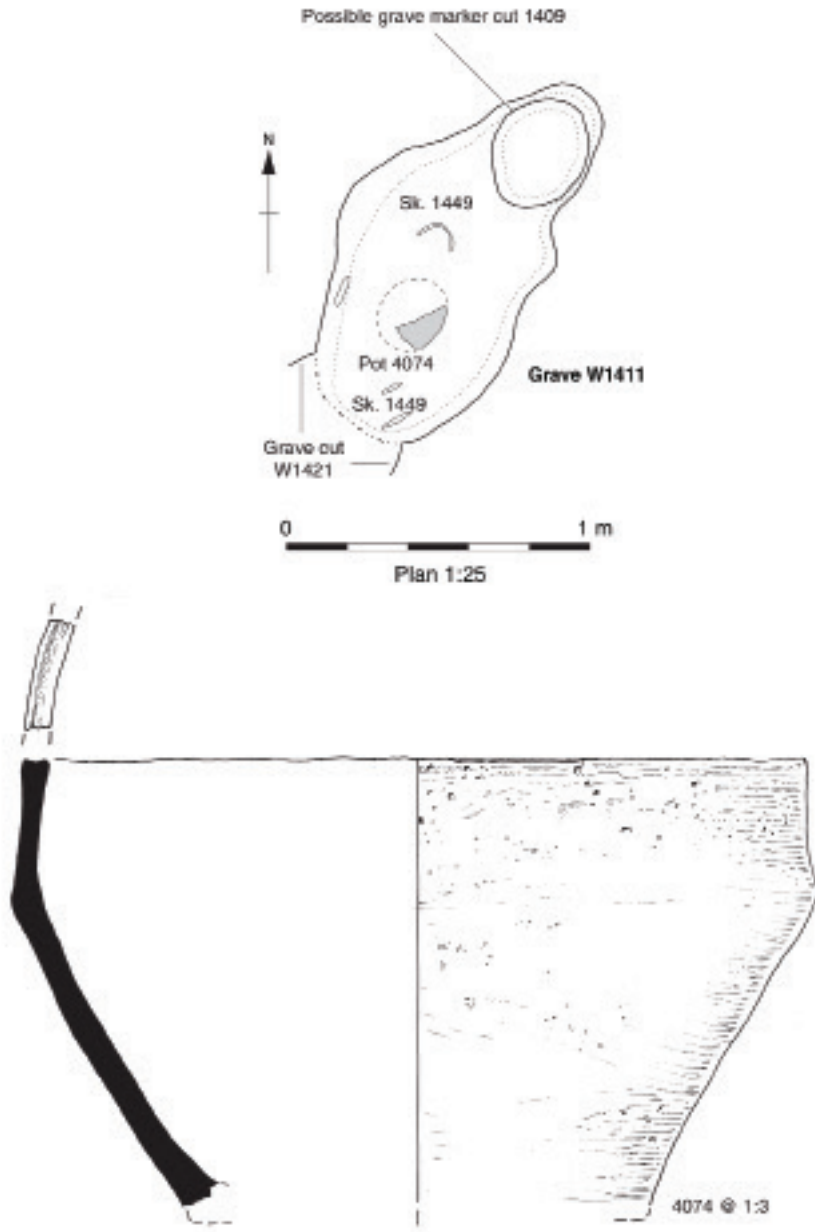


Fig. 6 Grave W1411, one of the two poorly preserved graves from Saltwood Tunnel with ceramic vessels (reproduced from Riddler and Trevarthen 2006, fig. 24, by kind permission of High Speed 1 Ltd).

TABLE 3. RECALIBRATED RADIOCARBON DATES FOR SAMPLED DEAL-TYPE BURIALS

(All dates have been calibrated using OxCal 4.3.2 (Bronk-Ramsey 2017) and are expressed at the 2 sigma level.)

| Site | Burial sampled | Recalibrated radiocarbon result and associated probability | Original Reference |
|--------------------------------|----------------|---|------------------------------|
| Zone 12, East Kent Access 2 | Grave 136033 | 2285±30 BP, SUERC-40287: 405-325 cal BC (at 65.5%); 295-229 (at 29%) | Fitzpatrick et al. 2015, 155 |
| Whitfield-Eastry bypass Area 2 | Grave 1 | 2230±60 BP, BETA 141266: 403-162 cal BC (at 94.7%); 130-120 cal BC (at 0.7%) | Parfitt 1996 |
| Zone 12, East Kent Access 2 | Grave 153028 | 2215±30 BP, SUERC-40288: 373-201 cal (at 95.4%) | Fitzpatrick et al. 2015, 155 |
| Saltwood Tunnel | C24 | 2185±35 BP, NZA-27734: 370-164 cal BC (at 95.4%) | Riddler et al. 2006, 16 |
| Mill Hill, Deal | Grave 31 | 2130±50 BP, BM-2868: 358-277 cal BC (at 19.4%); 259-42; BC (at 76%) | Parfitt 1995, 153, table 51 |
| Augustine House | Grave 1050 | 2064±26 BP, UBA-16765: 168-19 cal BC (at 92.2%); 12-1 cal BC (at 3.2%) | Helm 2014, 15 |
| Mill Hill, Deal | Grave 20 | 2030±65 BP, OxA-2967: 202 cal BC-88 cal AD (at 94.1%) 103 cal BC-122 cal AD (at 1.3%) | Parfitt 1995, 153, table 50 |
| Weatherlees WTW | Grave 3122 | 2016±30 BP, NZA-28976: 96 cal BC-61 cal AD (at 95.4%) | Barclay 2009, Appendix 2.5 |
| Mill Hill, Deal | Grave 15 | 1975±70 BP, OxA-2966: 169 cal BC-173 cal AD (at 94%); 193-211 cal AD (at 1.4%) | Parfitt 1995, 153, table 48 |
| Mill Hill, Deal | Grave 44 | 1950±70 BP, OxA-2968: 151-141 cal BC (at 0.7%); 112 cal BC-233 cal AD (94.7%) | Parfitt 1995, 153, table 49 |

2011, 235). The evidence from Mill Hill, Deal, and Weatherlees Wastewater Treatment Works (Ebbsfleet) demonstrate that the rite continued into the early Roman period. This supports Booth's (2011, 314) suggestion that first-century AD supine inhumations in Kent represent the continuation of Iron Age rites, rather than a Roman introduction. Elsewhere in Roman Britain it seems that inhumation only became widespread from the second century AD onward (*ibid.*, 315).

Determining the chronological phasing of the PRIA in Kent is problematic due to a variety of reasons recently reviewed by Champion (2007b; 2011) and Booth (2011). They can be summarised as:

- A paucity of associations between metalwork and ceramic assemblages,
- A lack of published large ceramic assemblages,
- Imprecise radiocarbon dates for the earlier part of the First Millennium BC, as a result of the Hallstatt plateau,
- An uneven chronological and geographical distribution of ceramics in the county.

Despite these difficulties, Champion proposes that the Earliest Pre-Roman Iron Age dates from 800 cal to 500 cal BC; the Early Pre-Roman Iron Age (EPRIA) can be dated with reasonable confidence to the period 550 cal BC to 300 cal BC. The Middle Pre-Roman Iron Age (MPRIA) likely dates from 300 cal BC to 100 cal BC, whilst the Late Pre-Roman Iron Age (LPRIA) probably began *c.* 100 BC (Champion 2011, 166). Fitzpatrick *et al.* (2015, 120) reviewed the ceramic evidence for the EKA II route and concluded a comparable range of dates. The fact that the Deal rite continued into the LPRIA is particularly noteworthy, as this period saw major disruption and alteration in the settlement record, the introduction of coinage and the adoption of cremation burials in Kent. Likewise, the continued existence of such burials as potentially late as the third century AD attests to either its compatibility with early Romano-British practices, its longstanding cultural importance for the communities of eastern Kent, or probably a mixture of both. Several first century AD supine, extended burials which have been considered examples of early Romano-British mortuary rites, may instead represent a continuation of PRIA rites (*per* Booth 2011, 314). It suggests that, despite the cultural and social changes attested to in the archaeological record over the centuries, the Deal rite continued to be considered by certain communities as the correct way to bury the dead.

The Deal Rite in the broader regional, British and near Continental contexts

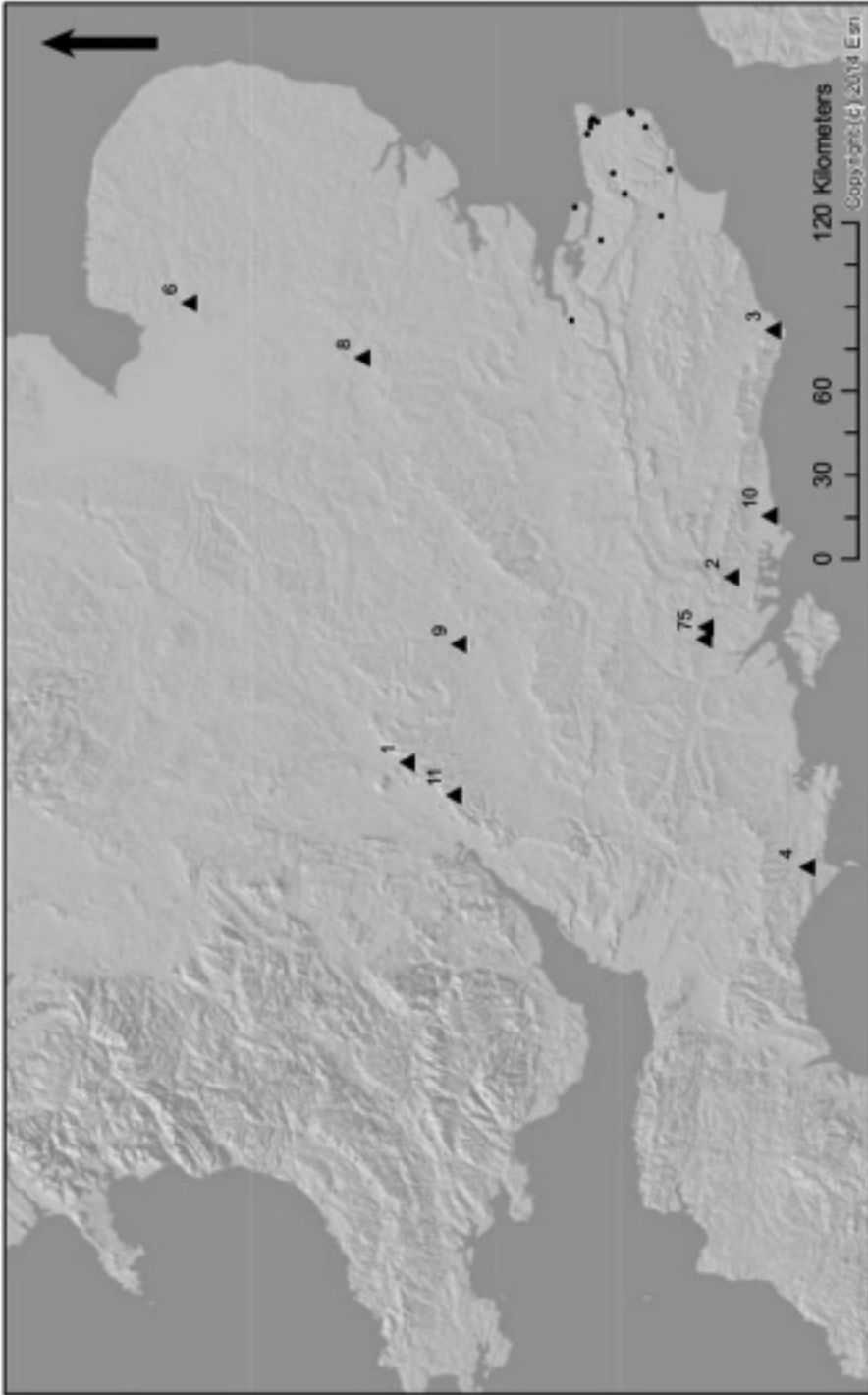
Deal-type inhumations thus appear to constitute a distinct, formalised burial rite, one which was seemingly long lived. Within eastern Kent as a *region*, it co-existed in the first centuries BC and AD with the Aylesford-Swarling cremation rite, as well as a variety of non-formalised inhumation rites and other practices involving human remains. Deal and Aylesford-Swarling type burials were not mutually exclusive, occurring at both Mill Hill, Deal and Highstead, Sittingbourne. It seems unlikely that either represents an ethnic marker based on this co-occurrence. It is possible that personal choice, or circumstances surrounding the death of an individual may have determined if they were inhumed or cremated, as was the

case in western Norway during the Migration Period, c.AD 400-550 (Kristoffersen and Oestigaard 2008, 134). However, at least by the first and second centuries BC, issues of status may have played a part. This is suggested by the fact the quantity of objects recovered from Aylesford-Swarling graves is, on average, much higher than those found in Deal-type graves (Lamb 2018, 259). Although no Aylesford-Swarling burials so far discovered in Kent are equal in terms of material wealth to the Welwyn sub-group from north of the Thames, there are several examples with what can be considered high status grave goods: Aylesford (Evans 1890), Boughton Aluph (Philp 2014), Westhawk Farm (Booth, Bingham and Lawrence 2008), A2 Pepperhill Site B (Allen *et al.* 2012). This may suggest that when the Aylesford-Swarling rite was introduced to Kent from northern France, it was adopted by the local elite, whilst the Deal rite remained in use by other members of the community.

In addition to Aylesford-Swarling type cremations, the Deal rite occurred alongside another distinct category of inhumation – warrior burials. Warrior burials merely denote the fact that these inhumations were provisioned with weapons. They are a well-studied example of burial, occurring across a large swathe of Britain (Hunter 2005; Inall 2016). At least three are known from Kent; Mill Hill Grave 112 and the two burials from Brisley Farm. A fourth may have existed at Dumpton Gap. The author has proposed elsewhere that warrior burials do not represent a distinct group, but instead a social class or idea which was in widespread use in Britain, and possibly parts of the Atlantic coast of France also (Lamb 2018, 449). Thus, the relative prevalence of warrior burials in Kent (compared to other parts of southern Britain) can be viewed as being partly a reflection of the existence of the Deal rite in the east of the county, as well as the strong maritime connections evident in other aspects of the archaeological record.

Within the broader *British* context, the Deal rite contributes to the growing evidence for formalised burial during the PRIA (Fitzpatrick 2010, 18-21; Champion 2011, 225). This includes the aforementioned regionally specific rites (Durotrigian, Arras, etc.), but also an increasing number of isolated burials and cemeteries which do not appear to belong to a specific group and, in the case of cemeteries, were likely in use for a few generations at most. Examples include Adanac Park, Hants. (Leivers and Gibson 2011), Suddern Farm, Hants. (Cunliffe and Poole 2000), Bristol East, Glouc. (Evans, Holbrook and McSloy 2004, 7) and Yarnton, Oxon. (Hey, Booth and Timby 2011). Among regionalised groups and isolated cemeteries, it is rare to find more than twenty individuals buried. In this respect, the limited numbers in which the Deal rite is found conforms with the pattern observed elsewhere in Britain.

However, it is the positioning of the deceased which makes the Deal rite stand out when compared to other regional formalised rites in PRIA Britain. As noted, the majority of PRIA British formal inhumations were positioned flexed on their side. For example, of 352 burials examined by Roth (2016, 67, fig. 6.3) little more than a fifth (80 or 22.7 per cent) were in supine, extended positions. (It should be noted that this figure includes non-formal supine, extended burials also.) **Map 2** displays those sites in southern Britain where supine, formal burials are known. Additional examples are also recorded to the north of this region, including several examples from East Yorkshire which date to the final phase of the cemeteries there



Map 2 Other sites in PR1A southern Britain with supine, extended inhumations and their location in relation to the Deal group:
(1) Hailes, Ireley Farm (2) Horndean, Snell's Corner (3) Eastbourne (4) Maiden Castle (5) Owslebury (6) Shouldham
(7) The Bourne (8) Hinxton Rings (9) Yarnton (10) North Bersted (11) Birdlip

(Stead 1991, 180). Of those in southern Britain, only in eastern Kent do supine, extended burials constitute the majority of burials at the sites they are recovered from. Elsewhere they occur as isolated, often unique burials, for example at The Bourne, Hampshire (Andrews, Harding and Egging Dinwiddy 2015), or North Bersted, Sussex (Taylor 2014), or as a minority among either crouched/flexed inhumations and/or cremations (Hinxtion Rings and Maiden Castle).

When contextualised against the evidence for Britain and the near Continent, specifically Normandy and the Hauts-de-France, the Deal rite displays a variety of contrasts and parallels. Although the near Continent continues to produce a greater quantity of formal burials, the data are not uniform. Areas such as the departments of Pas-de-Calais and Nord, as well as Belgium, are generally devoid of burials until *c.*250 bc (Leman-Delerive 2014, 125). In Picardy, early La Tène cemeteries, contain large numbers of burials (between 40 and 100+). Over the course of the later Continental PR1A (the La Tène period) cemeteries become progressively more numerous and smaller in size, with quantities comparable to those observed for the Deal cemeteries (Desenne *et al.* 2009, 30, table 1). A similar trend has also been observed for Lower Normandy (Chanson *et al.* 2010, 57, fig. 6). The smaller Deal-type cemeteries can thus be seen to be comparable in terms of population sizes to many sites on the near Continent as well as in Britain. The larger cemeteries at Plateau 8 and Mill Hill, Deal find parallels, in terms of size, to cemeteries from third-century BC Picardy, but also some larger British sites such as the aforementioned example of Suddern Farm (Hants.).

The evidence for funerary architecture is equally variable either side of the Channel. In southern Britain it is attested but not ubiquitous. Where enclosures, ring ditches, barrows and other funerary architecture occur, they are usually associated with LPR1A cremation burials, as at Blagden Copse, Hampshire (Hawkes and Dunning 1931, 303, fig. 30), Hinxtion Rings, Cambs. (Hill, Evans and Alexander 1999), or King Harry Lane, Herts. (Stead and Rigby 1989). Nevertheless, exceptions are known, such as the LPR1A inhumation cemetery from Adanac Park (Hants.). In Picardy, funerary enclosures and barrows are attested from La Tène A2 (*c.*425 bc) until the end of the Iron Age (Gransar and Malrain 2009, 147, fig. 7). Although barrows and ring ditches are associated with early La Tène inhumations in Picardy (for example at Bucy-le-Long ‘la Héronnière’) they are predominantly known from later cremation cemeteries, and even then they are not ubiquitous. Of a sample of 687 La Tène period graves examined by Gransair and Malrain (*ibid.*) 20.8 per cent (n=143) possessed an individual enclosure. A similar pattern occurs in Normandy during the later La Tène. In Nord and Pas-de-Calais it seems that individual enclosures around graves are restricted to cremation graves of the late La Tène period (e.g. Blancquaert and Desfossés 1998, 138, fig. 3), as is the case in South-East England.

Crouched and flexed formal inhumations do occur on the Continent, with examples known as far east as Hungary and Poland, dating to La Tène B (Horvath *et al.* 1987, 20; Bochnak and Golánová 2010, 158). Formal crouched/flexed inhumations are likewise known from northern France (**Map 3**). Flexed inhumations placed on their side are well attested among late early Iron Age/La Tène A (fifth-century bc) sites in Normandy, sometimes being the only position observed at cemeteries (Verney 1993, 98; Fromont *et al.* 2008, 13; Giraud and Cocollos 2009, 33; Chanson



Map 3 Sites in northern France with flexed and/or crouched inhumations: (1) Éterville 'Le Clos des Lilas' (Hallstatt D/La Tène A) (2) Chambly 'La Remise Ronde' (Hallstatt D/La Tène A) (3) Longueil-Sainte-Marie 'Près des Grisards' (4) Canchy 'Fond Carpentier' (5) Ifs 'Object 'Ifs Sud' (6) Fontenay-La-Marmion 'La Grande Pièce' (7) Mondeville 'L'Étoile' (La Tène B2-C2) (8) Boves 'La forêt de Boves' Zone 1 (La Tène B1-D1) (9) 'Urville-Naqueville' (La Tène D) (10) Tournedos-sur-Seine (La Tène)

et al. 2010, 69). Nevertheless, for the remainder of the La Tène period, extended, supine positions predominate (Chanson *et al.* 2010, 70). When crouched/flexed formal inhumations are found dating to the middle and late La Tène phases, they represent a minority of burials at the site, for example at Mondeville ‘L’Étoile’ (La Tène B2-C1) (Besnard-Vauterin 2009, 70). It is during the mid and late La Tène phases that cremation became increasingly prominent in Normandy, at the expense of inhumation (Chanson *et al.* 2010, 71-2). A notable exception is the La Tène D site of Urville-Naqueville where 64 (70 per cent) of burials were inhumations (Lefort and Rotier 2014, 21). Of these, eight were adult, and all were in crouched positions (*ibid.* 31-6).

In Picardy crouched burials are likewise present in La Tène A-B1 cemeteries, such as at Chambly (Pinard *et al.* 2000) and Longeuil-Sainte-Marie (Pinard 1997). However, in contrast to contemporary Normandy, they constitute a clear minority during this period. They are likewise uncommon for the remainder of the La Tène period (Pinard *et al.* 2010, 43). As in Normandy, cremation represents the majority rite in mid and late La Tène period Picardy (Pinard *et al.* 2009, figs 2 and 5). At the La Tène B1-D1 cemetery of Boves ‘La forêt de Boves’ Zone 1, Somme, inhumation was reserved for infants, although some of these were positioned in crouched and flexed positions (Buechez 2009, 117). In Nord Pas-de-Calais cremation appears to have been the most prevalent rite through the La Tène period, with inhumation burials constituting a distinct minority (Oudry-Braillon 2009, 61, table 1). Thus, whereas crouched burials represent the majority in Britain, they are a minority in northern France for much of the La Tène Iron Age. The Deal rite therefore finds its closest parallels, in terms of body positioning, to graves on the opposite side of the Channel.

As noted, with a few exceptions, grave goods are scarce in Deal-type graves. The provision of grave goods in Britain as a whole is also highly variable. Among the East Yorkshire cemeteries, for example, they vary greatly in terms of variety and quantity; the materially poorest graves were nevertheless provisioned with a single ceramic vessel (Giles 2012, 134). Something which does not occur among the Deal group. From a sample of 215 Durotrigian graves, the quantity of grave goods was typically higher than the Arras and Deal groups, with all ages receiving, on average, between two and three grave goods. Of these one was typically a ceramic vessel (Lamb 2018, 243, fig. 172). The general absence of ceramic vessels from Deal-type graves shows that these objects were not a required an essential component in the rite. It also raises questions about associated acts such as funeral meals, and what ceramic vessels meant to the communities who practice this rite. Parallels may be found elsewhere in southern Britain. For example, at the Bristol cemetery 24 inhumations were discovered in a cemetery dating from *c.*400 BC to the first century AD. The vast majority were adult burials, with the only grave good being a finger ring on an unsexed adult (Evans, Holbrook and McSloy 2004, 7, table 1). By contrast, in Picardy, early and mid-La Tène inhumation graves possess much higher quantities of items of personal adornment than are found in Deal-type graves (Desenne *et al.* 2009, 176, fig. 7). The same is likewise true of weaponry, ceramics and cosmetic items (*ibid.*, 177-9, figs 8, 10 and 11). The picture in Lower Normandy appears to be comparable to that in Picardy, and thus unlike that observed in eastern Kent (Chanson *et al.* 2010, 75, fig. 19).

Seeking Origins for the Deal Rite

The Deal rite displays a mix of insular and Continental characteristics. As a formalised rite originating in the 5th century BC, there are relatively few parallels attested in the rest of Britain. This clearly contrasts clearly with northern France, where formalised inhumation is much better attested in the period. Other supine, extended PR1A inhumations have been recorded elsewhere in Britain, but they do not occur in the quantity, or for a comparably long period of time, as occurs in Kent. Instead, the closest parallels to long lived cemeteries with supine, extended inhumations, such as at Mill Hill, Deal can be found in Early La Tène northern France. On the other hand, scant evidence for grave goods, conforming to the patterns observed elsewhere in Britain, is at odds with the evidence from early La Tène cemeteries from northern France. Thus, although the Deal rite displays many commonalities with Picardy and Normandy inhumations, it is not a direct parallel.

The various similarities between the Deal rite and burials from northern France raises the question of origins. The parallels, in terms of body position and the duration of the rite, has caused some to propose that the rite's origins can be traced to early La Tène northern France (Parfitt 1995, 157; Champion 2007b, 123; Rady 2010, 8). By contrast, Fitzpatrick *et al.* (2015, 192) suggests that the rite's origins are local, and does not represent a new and intrusive 'foreign' style of burial. They suggest that the formal rites observed at Cliffs End Farm, Thanet (McKinley *et al.* 2014), which date to the fifth century BC, indicate that a formalised tradition of inhumation existed in Kent when the first Deal burials were created. The Iron Age burials at Cliffs End Farm, however, were predominantly in crouched or flexed positions (Leivers and McKinley 2014, fig. 2.28). Only two burials were positioned supine, and mostly extended (Graves 3656 and 3651). This author is therefore disinclined to view the Cliffs End Farm as representing a precursor to the Deal rite. However, the presence of formalised burials at Cliffs End Farm does lend support to the idea communities in this part of Kent were receptive to acts of formalised burial (*per* Fitzpatrick *et al.* 2015).

The earliest Deal-type burials belong to Kent's EP1A, a time when there is good evidence for contact between this part of Britain and northern France. During this period ceramics in this part of Kent display strong similarities, in terms of form and surface treatment, with wares from northern France (Champion 2011, 165; Fitzpatrick *et al.* 2015, 193). Added to this is evidence in the form of a La Tène A fibulae from Kent, and early La Tène metalwork from the Thames (Champion 2011, 241; Fitzpatrick *et al.* 2015, 193). Such contacts, although more difficult to detect, continued into the MP1A, particularly in eastern Kent, where local ceramics display stylistic affinities with the Pas-de-Calais and Marne regions (Moody 2008, 131-4, figs 77-80). Additional MP1A evidence for contact occurs in the form of early Gallo-Belgic A and B *staters* from Kent, the earliest of which can be dated to the third century BC. Evidence for contact even occurs in the form of a fowl (an exotic bird during this period) from a possible shrine at EKA II Zone 13 (Fitzpatrick *et al.* 2015, 193). The archaeological evidence, in the form of imported metalwork, ceramic forms and surface treatments, and the prevalence of supine, extended inhumations in Early La Tène, supports the idea that the Deal rite has its origins in northern France.

The archaeological record thus evidences close links between Kent and northern France throughout the PRIA, with exchanges being especially evident in the fifth-fourth centuries BC, and first centuries BC and AD. None of the graves examined in this study contained definite Continental imports, but this does not preclude the possibility that some of the deceased were Continental migrants. Four burials from EKA II Zone 12 cemetery have previously been investigated for strontium and oxygen isotopic evidence for mobility. Oxygen isotopes indicated that one of the females (166004) and two of the males (153027 and 153054), were all living in different environments; environments with a climate which was colder than Thanet (Fitzpatrick *et al.* 2015, 191). Fitzpatrick (*ibid.*, 193) suggested that the origins of the people may have been in the Alps, whilst Millard and Powell (2015, 431) preferred Norway, southern Sweden or the Baltic as possible origins. Based on the evidence for British-central European contact, a central European, likely Alpine, origin seems more likely (Fitzpatrick 2015, 193). Although further isotopic and genetic analysis is beyond the scope of this paper, there is increasing evidence for long-distance mobility in the Channel area, including to Britain during both the EPRIA and LPRIA (McKinley *et al.* 2014, 144; Taylor 2014, 120; Fischer *et al.* 2018, 10; Fischer *et al.* 2019, 6). Based on these new studies and the aforementioned archaeological links between Kent and the near Continent, it would be unsurprising if further genetic or isotopic tests found evidence for migrants from northern France in Deal-type graves. It would be particularly insightful if the earliest graves in the group were found to contain migrants from northern France.

CONCLUSION

There is sufficient justification to classify the supine, extended burials of PRIA Kent as a distinct, regionalised burial group: the Deal rite. The recurring characteristics of these burials, including body position, orientation, and a lack of associated grave goods and funerary architecture, combined with their localised distribution supports this. Supine, extended inhumations occur elsewhere in southern Britain, but rarely do they represent the majority of burials as they do among the cemeteries from east Kent. Nor do they display geographical clustering observed in this part of the county. The exception to this are burials belonging to the final phase of the Arras culture in East Yorkshire. However, the appearance of such burial positions there appears to be an independent development, unrelated to those from Kent.

The strongest parallels for the distinctive body position of the Deal group are found on the near Continent. The chronology of this rite, combined with parallels between early La Tène wares in Kent and northern France, argue for the rite having been inspired, if not introduced directly, from north-eastern France, likely Picardy. These burials are not, however, entirely Continental in character. The presence of some flexed and crouched burials finds parallels with most other formal Iron Age inhumations from Britain. The same is true of the general lack of associated funerary architecture, which is rare outside of East Yorkshire. Likewise, the paucity of grave goods from these Kentish burials is echoed in the broader insular Iron Age funerary record. Although limited in quantity, the grave goods display much variety. This suggests that grave goods within these communities were included in graves as personal items, as opposed to markers of community identity or idealised

status. The exception to this is Grave 112, the warrior burial, from Mill Hill, Deal, which is argued to represent an insular, if not broader west Atlantic, idea which was adopted and interpreted by the community at Deal. This interpretation would suggest that the Brisley Farm, and potentially Dumpton Gap, warrior burials were also examples of the Deal rite.

The influences which existed in east Kent during this period, which included trade contacts and migrants from both Britain and the Continent, gave rise to a rite which shared much with communities elsewhere. A dedicated isotopic or genetic study of these burials will likely better clarify the relationship these people had with their contemporaries elsewhere in Britain and the Continent. Indeed, the presence of additional migrants in these cemeteries is to be expected. The picture sketched above is a preliminary one, and no doubt new discoveries will alter this picture, perhaps as much as the original excavations at Mill Hill, Deal, did over thirty years ago.

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