



Sara

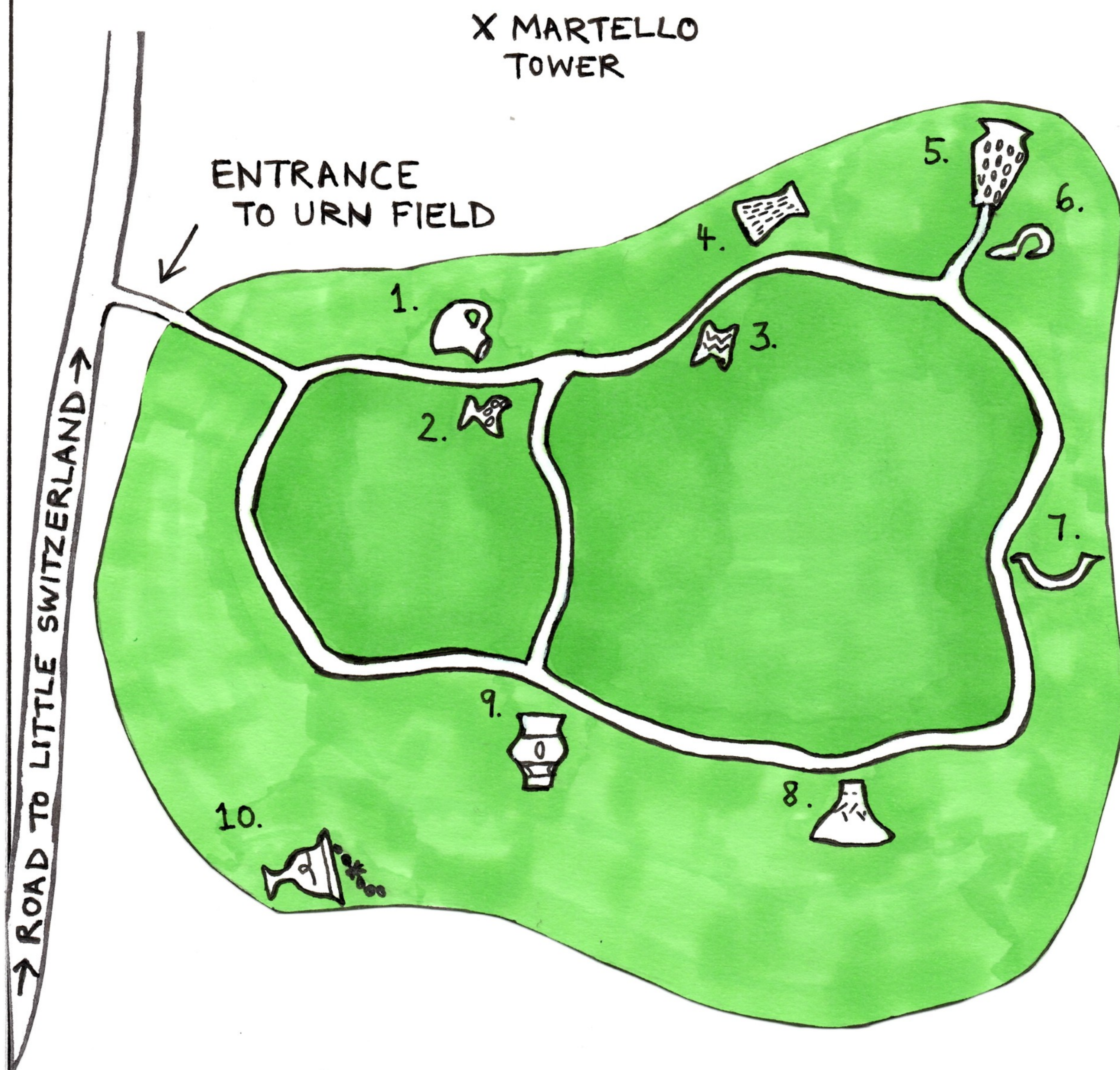
Trillo

Urn

Field

Plant References

PROPOSED MAP OF URN FIELD AT EAST CLIFF



KEY TO SCULPTURES

1. BLACKTHORN

2. MUGWORT

3. RAGWORT

4. GRASS

5. WILD CARROT

6. BLACKBERRY

7. CLEAVERS

8. PLANTAIN

9. ASH

10. ELDER

In addition to being inspired by the cremation urns found at Cheriton and East Cliff, each of the Urn Field sculptures has a relationship to one of the plants found on the East Cliff site.

1. Blackthorn

This is a jug-inspired sculpture which has been upturned so that it appears to have purple disc shapes, based on Iron Age decorative motifs, about to spill out of it at the lip of the vessel. The sculpture has been placed in front of the group of blackthorns and the disc decoration is the same colour as the ripening sloes on these trees. The sculpture could be read as a cornucopia, representing the abundance of edible plants on site, and the mugwort sculpture, close-by, could be a drinking cup/vessel to receive the blackthorn offering.

2. Mugwort

Mugwort is a cup-shaped piece which has nodules inspired by both iron age decorative motifs and the egg shaped flowerheads of the mugwort plant. Mugwort traditionally has many healing properties and is one of the nine herbs revered by the Anglo Saxons in their Nine Herbs Charm. Roman soldiers reputedly placed mugwort in their shoes to avert fatigue. The feet impression on the base of the sculptures references this, as well as animal pawprint and human foot impressions left inadvertently on the base of some locally found Roman tiles. The foot prints on Mugwort are those of the artist.

3. Ragwort

The Ragwort sculpture is inspired by the rim of a vessel and has a repeated, upturned “W”-shaped motif, copied from one adorning an Iron Age urn from Cheriton. Ragwort can be toxic to cattle and horses, but is invaluable for pollinators due to its nectar production. Hence the patterning serves as a warning or as an attraction according to the consumer, and the coloured pigment of the pattern is a tribute to the vivid yellow of the ragwort plant.

4. Grass

There are a variety of grass types on the East Cliff site, and this piece is a homage to the non-human excavators that live amongst these - particularly the rabbits. The sculpture has a hole at the base which could be read as a burrow entrance. The marks on the Grass sculpture are inspired by an Iron Age urn fragment which has lots of tiny, mysterious, incised marks, like a frenzied spell. For the artist, this was reminiscent of the scratched marks left on the earth by digging rodents, or their gnawed marks on plant stems.

5. Wild Carrot

The wild carrot plant has clusters of tiny white flowers with a central, solitary, ruby pink flower. Introduced by European settlers into North America, it was known as “Queen Anne’s Lace” because of these multiple delicate white flowers with the one ruby flower representing a drop of blood where Queen Anne pricked herself. The Wild Carrot sculpture has a raised surface of repeated textured relief elements, each having a finger sized aperture within it, and with a red-pink bead shape positioned in the central one of these. The sculpture is laid on its side at a point on the site where you could lie down next to it, as a reference to the plant’s use as a companion plant to crops.

6. Blackberry

There are an abundance of blackberry (bramble) plants growing at East Cliff, and a skirt of blackberries has grown up over the base and edge of the site. Blackberries throw out arching stems and the Blackberry sculpture, inspired by an Iron Age vessel handle, mimics a bramble hoop shape and has nodules inspired by the fruit. It is positioned adjacent to the cliff side of the site where brambles flourish.

7. Cleavers

The cleavers plant, also known as goosegrass, has stems and leaves which can attach themselves easily to clothing. The word cleave has two opposite meanings - to stick together or to split apart. The Cleavers sculpture is inspired by a vessel rim and is positioned close to the cliff: although it has a repaired crack (a cleave) inspired by the 1948 repairs to the Cheriton Urn vessels, it still holds together (cleaves), and is clinging to the section of East Cliff closest to the cliff edge. Likewise, the straw-rich cob decoration on the sculpture’s edge, inspired by the repeated “u” motifs on many of the Iron Age urns, hints at birds nests clinging to perilous terrain. The cob mix of this sculpture contains flint fragments, again referencing the geological composition of the cliffs and the cleaving of materials.

8. Plantain

The plantain plant is also one referenced in the Anglo Saxons Nine Herbs Charm, and has many healing properties. Both the Romans and Anglo-Saxons believed it cured headaches; the Anglo-Saxons reputedly tied plantain leaves to their head with red wool. The Plantain sculpture is inspired by the head and neck of an Iron Age vessel, and the abundance of straw cob at the top of the sculpture could represent the tumult of a headache, counterbalanced by the spontaneous “v” marks copied from a Cheriton urn. The Plantain sculpture also feels akin to a chimney or kiln, and faces Dungeness Power Station on the horizon.

9. Ash

The Ash sculpture is positioned in alignment with two healthy young ash trees growing on the East Cliff site. The sculpture is inspired by one of the Cheriton Iron Age urns which has rims and nodules as decoration. The front side of the sculpture, with three prominent grey nodules, faces Folkestone: these nodules are mixed with Gault clay taken from the base of Folkestone cliffs. In Norse mythology, the ash tree Yggdrasil, watered by three magical springs, formed the axis of the earth, the axis mundi. The sculpture feels shield-like, as though it were a symbol of protection of the site and the vulnerable ash tree saplings.

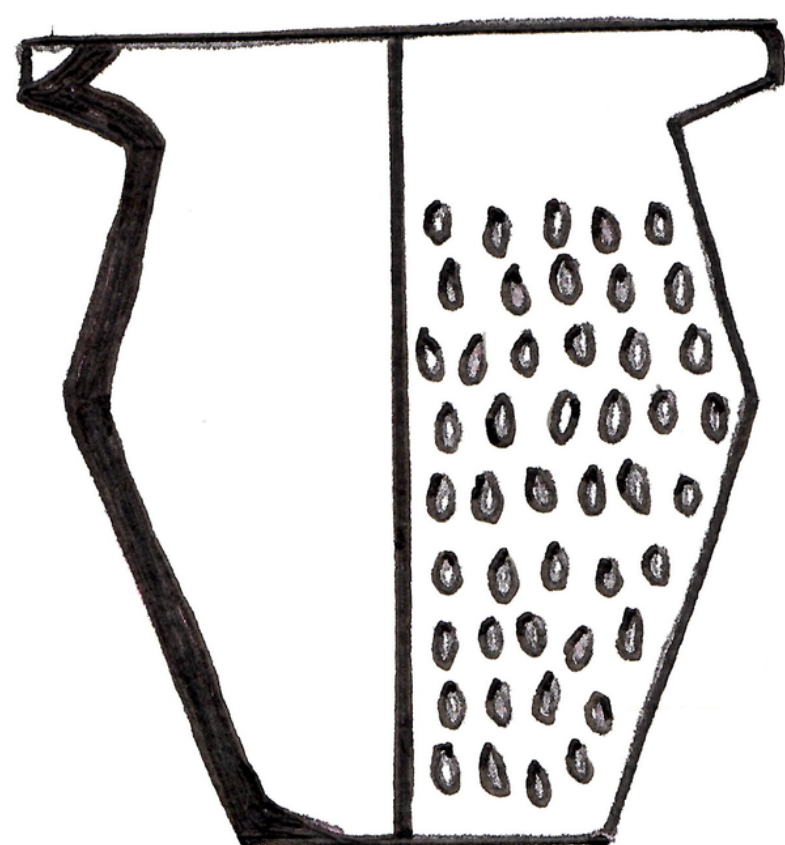
10. Elder

In folklore, the Elder tree has long been a source of opposing superstitious ideas - deemed unlucky in some cultures, but thought to ward off evil in other traditions. The Elder sculpture is positioned at the base of the site and hints at the fecundity of the East Cliff with a necklace of seed-inspired shapes, taken from alexanders, blackberries, and ivy berries. It has a snake-like motif copied from perhaps the most individual of all the Iron Age Cheriton urns: we can only speculate on whether this may have been a symbol, a signature, or an exuberant flourish by the Iron Age potter. It has the colour of elderberry juice and the bowl form hints at both the sound mirrors and the Siren sculpture, as well as having some acoustic quality itself.

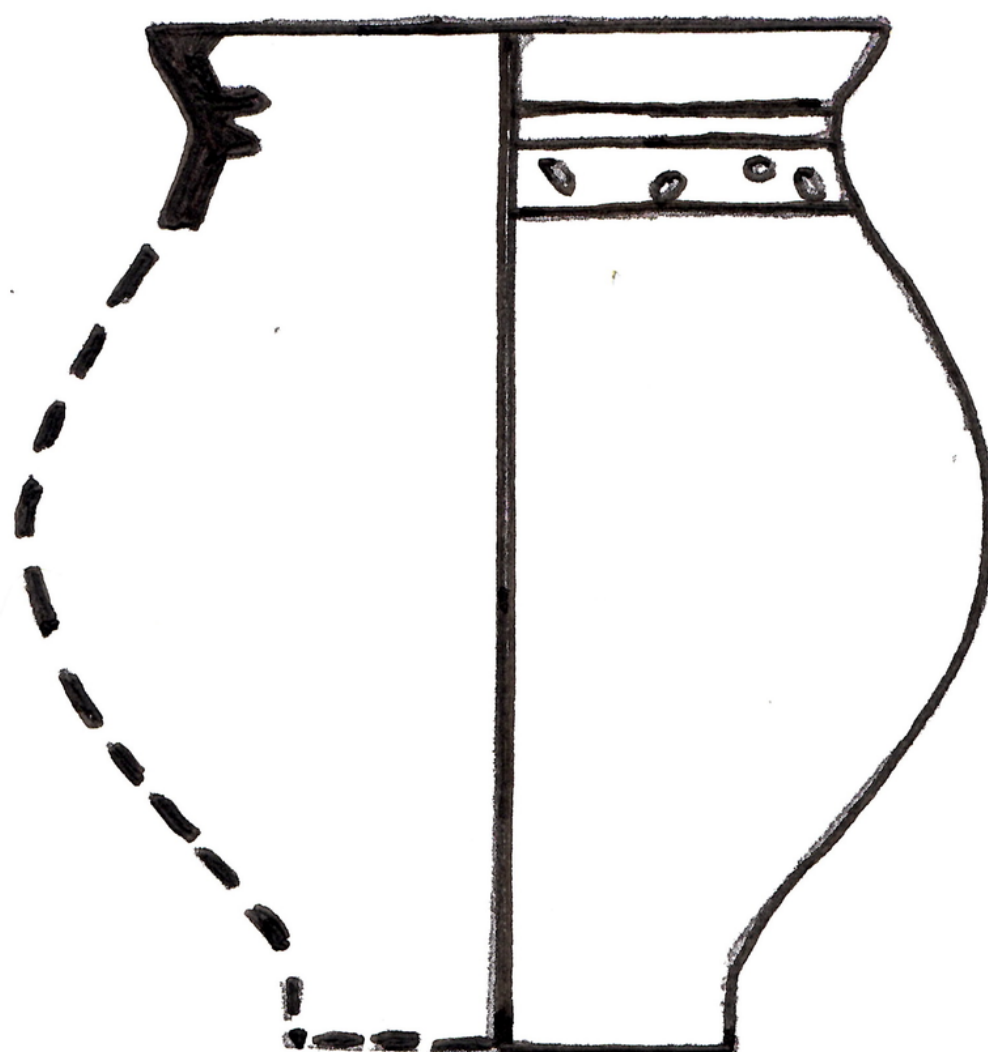


Urn Field: Elder by Sara Trillo, Folkestone Triennial 2025. Photo by Thierry Bal.

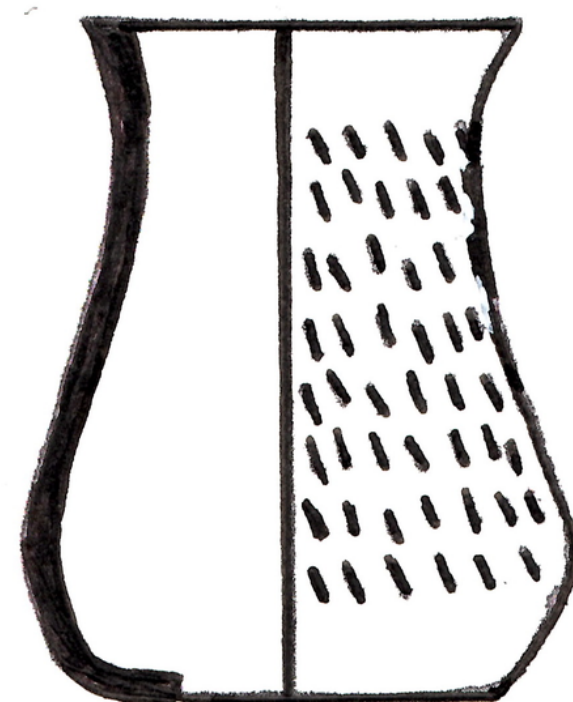
WILD CARROT



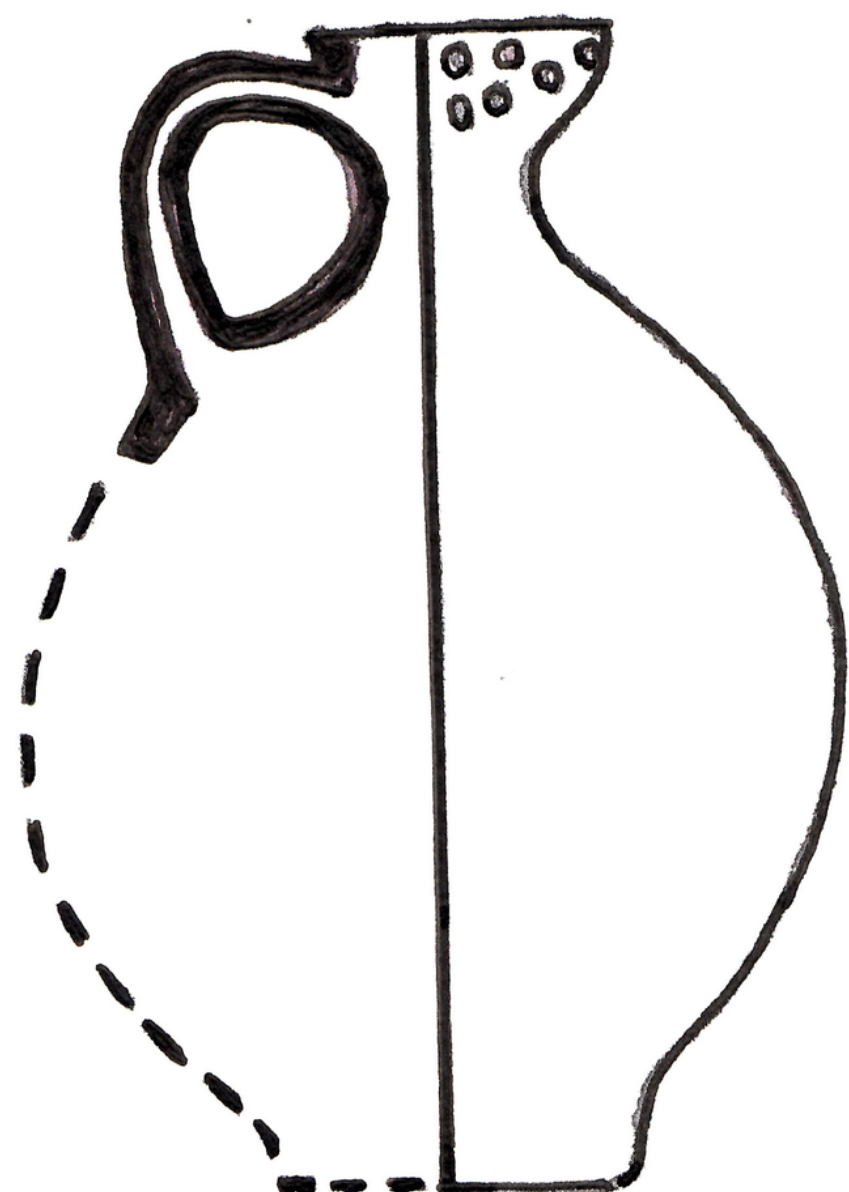
CLEAVERS



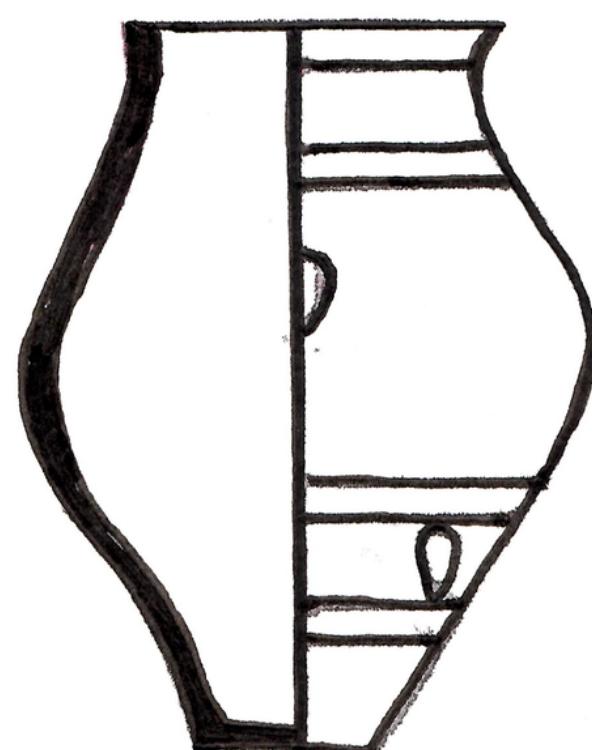
GRASS



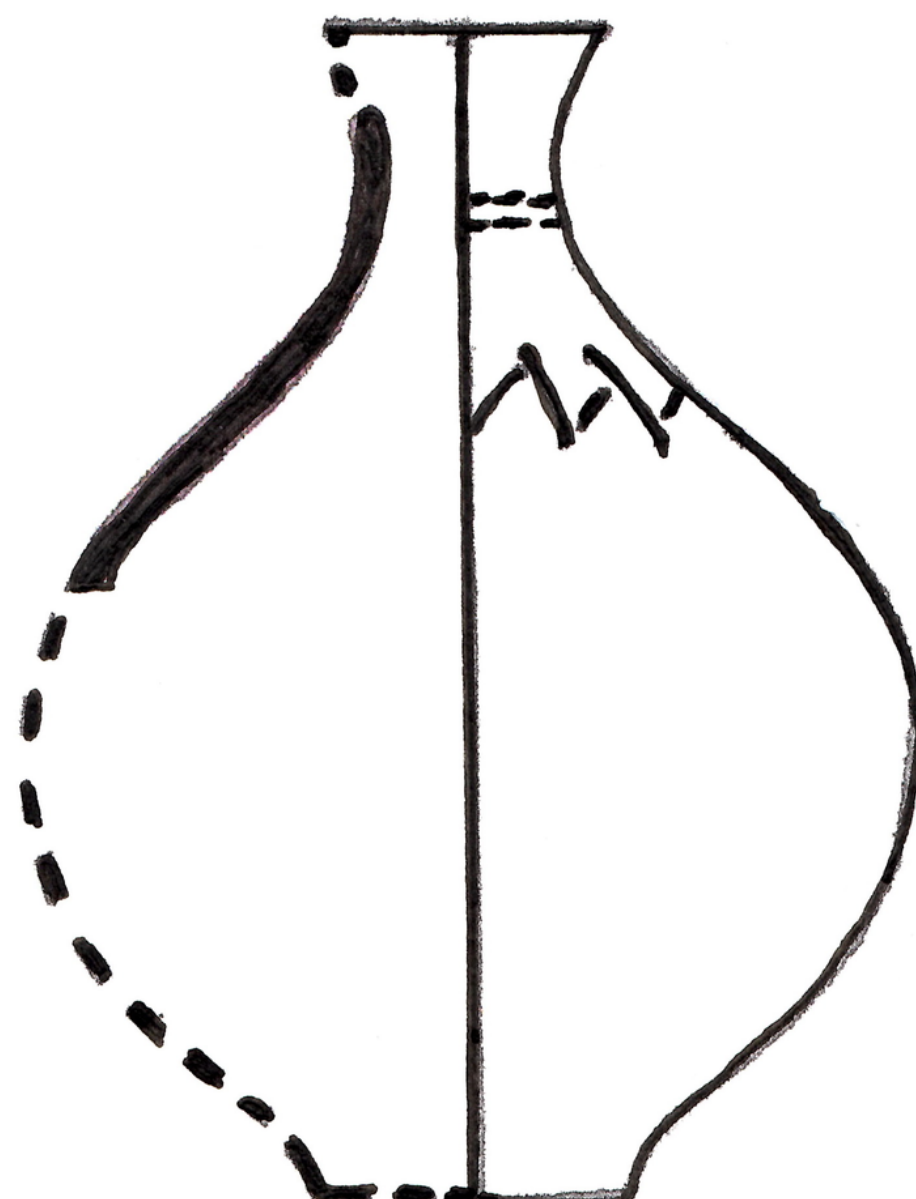
BLACKTHORN



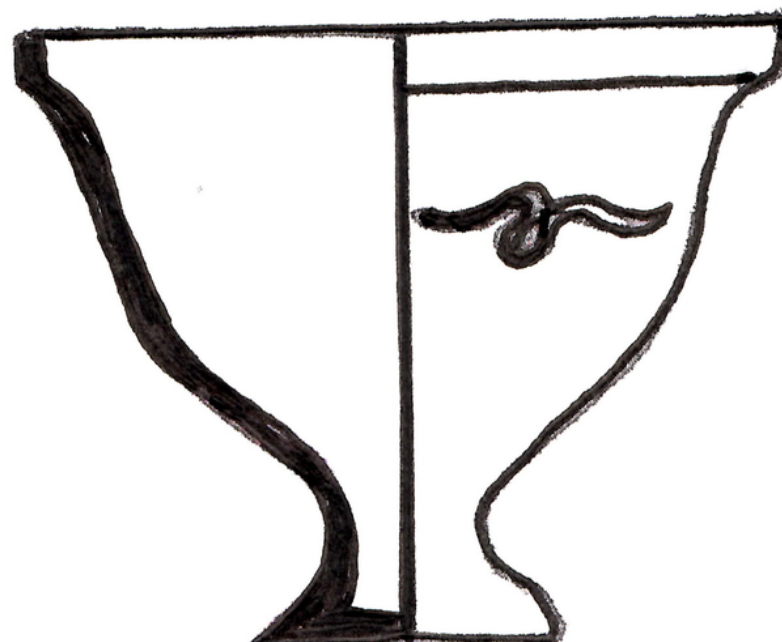
ASH



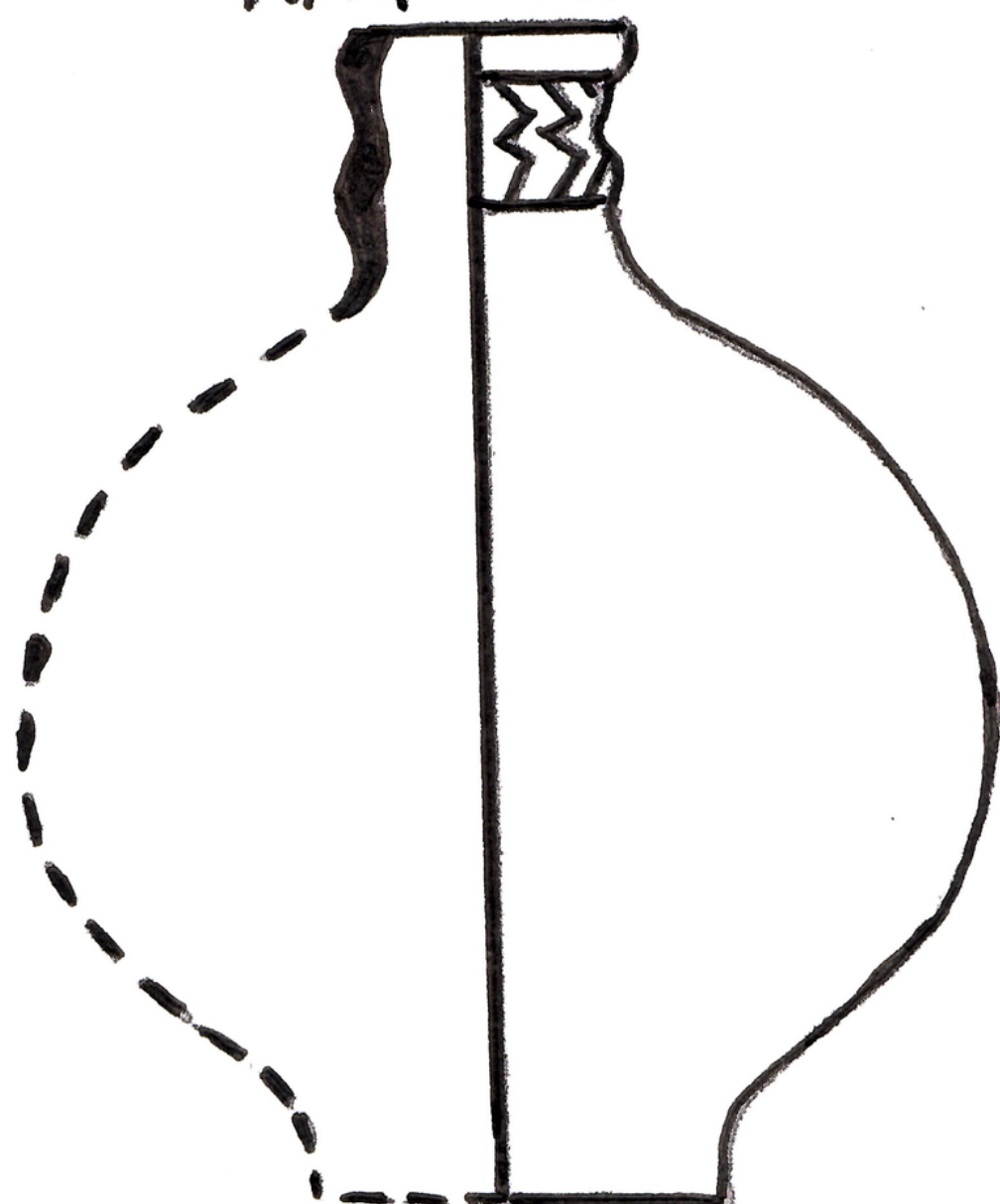
PLANTAIN



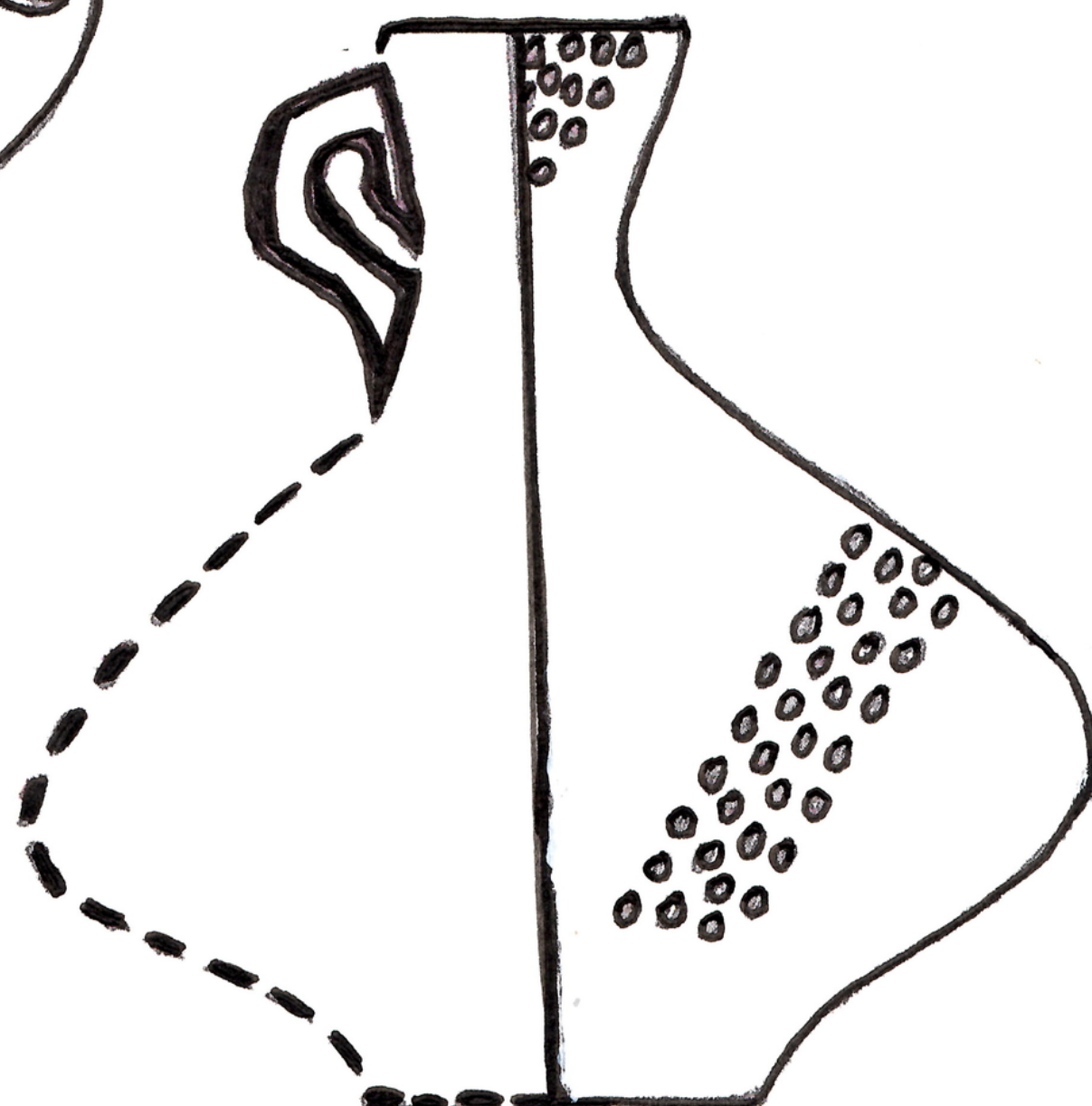
ELDER



RAGWORT



BLACKBERRY



MUGWORT



RECONSTRUCTED URNS WITH SHERDS FROM
URN FIELD, EAST CLIFF, FOLKESTONE