

A PREHISTORIC AND ROMAN COASTAL SETTLEMENT AT BARNES CHINE, BRIGHSTONE, ISLE OF WIGHT

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with contributions by CLIVE BOND *and* MALCOM LYNE

A Romano-British settlement and other remains were recorded on the south-western slope of an eroding south-facing cliff edge at Barnes Chine, Brighstone, Isle of Wight (NGR SZ 436 808). The archaeological evidence consisted of a scatter of prehistoric flintwork and a Romano-British pit or gully, overlain by material reflecting Roman and later medieval hillwash from the adjacent slope.

INTRODUCTION

Barnes Chine in Brighstone is located at NGR SZ 4361 8085 on the edge of a cliff which is some 40 metres in height (Fig. 1). The Chine has now eroded into a small cleft along the cliff edge and within a few years this feature will be reduced to the current cliff edge profile. To the east is a small hill known as Barnes High, and the archaeological site is sandwiched between the sandstone ridge that forms Barnes High and the continually eroding lower Cretaceous strata of Wealden Shale and Gault formations that lie underneath. A group of red and green marl soils are visible in the cliff face that are known locally as the Wessex formation.

The archaeological layers and features were recorded within a small area of the cliff face during the summer of 1998 and examined in detail during 1998–2000. The main feature consisted of the northern lip-edge of a Roman gully or pit some 2 metres in width, stratified within layers of hillwash of prehistoric to medieval date.

Site History

The site at Barnes Chine was first recorded in 1856 when the Rev. Edmund Kell, Rector of Brighstone, recovered prehistoric flintwork and

Neolithic pottery; plus a large assemblage of Roman pottery and samian ware from the cliff edge (Basford & Tomalin 1999, 12–13). Kell suggested that the site was a production centre for Roman Vectis ware (Dunning 1931, 108). Investigations in 1928–30 by Mr G. Dunning recorded a substantial Bronze Age urn-cemetery on the summit of Barnes High, consisting of eleven urn burials found just under the topsoil, close to the edge of the cliff (Dunning 1931, 108–117).

Since 1930 the site has been visited by numerous local people who have collected moderate assemblages of prehistoric flintwork and Roman pottery (Basford 1980). The Roman material collected was limited to local Romano-British pottery, which included Vectis ware (Tomalin 1987), sherds of samian ware and New Forest grey wares. This assemblage was collected from the eroding cliff talus and no record of associated layers or features was kept. In 1980 Dr David Tomalin recovered a large portion of a rotary quern stone with associated Roman sherds from the slope of Barnes Chine (Tomalin 1987, 86–93). More recently a private collection of Roman material from the Chine was shown to the author, and a brief assessment of the collection showed it to consist of large quantities of local Roman pottery, tile and a few items of Roman metalwork. This assemblage was found in the field adjacent to the investigated area, and suggests a permanent settlement site of late Roman date.

THE EXCAVATED SECTION (Fig. 2)

Phase 1

The earliest feature was a light grey clean sandy soil (Context 8). The layer contained worked prehistoric

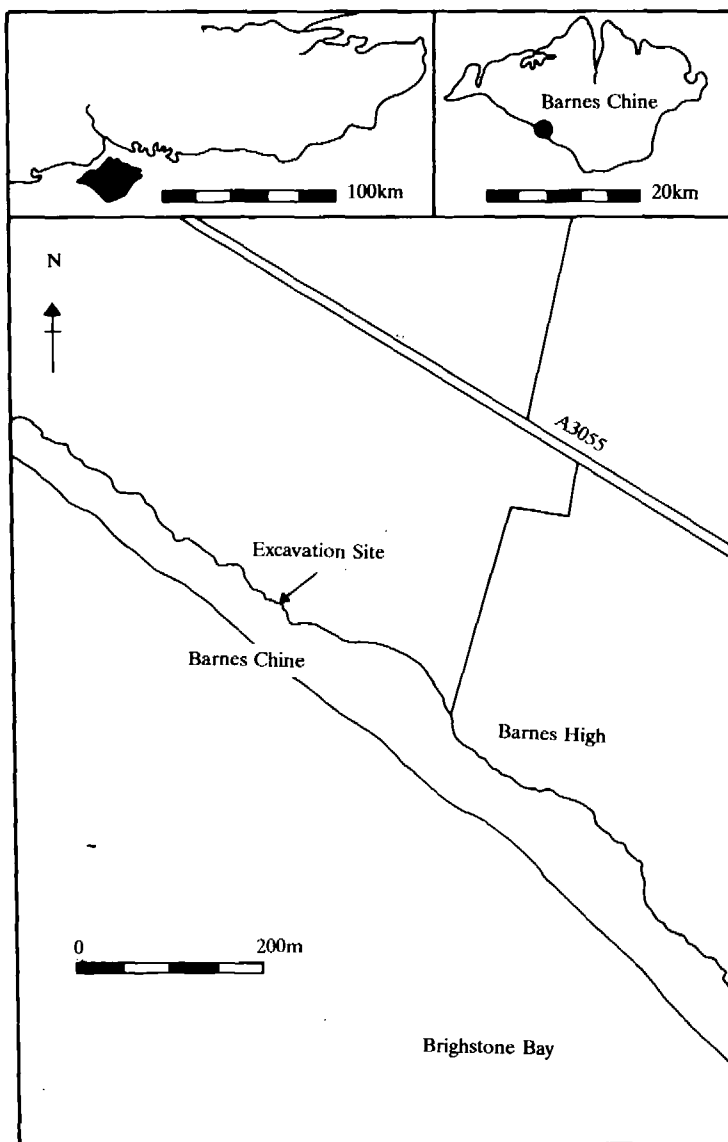


Fig. 1 Site location

Site Location

lithics, both within the section and extending eastwards along the cliff face. It appears to form part of a prehistoric hillwash deposit from Barnes High. To the east of the excavation a natural ferruginous sandstone deposit (Context 7) masked this layer and the subsequent phases of activity.

Phase 2

Above Phase 1 was a light grey/orange clean sandy layer (Context 6), which produced an Early Iron Age sherd and 1st Century AD pottery. A large fragmented ferruginous sandstone block was

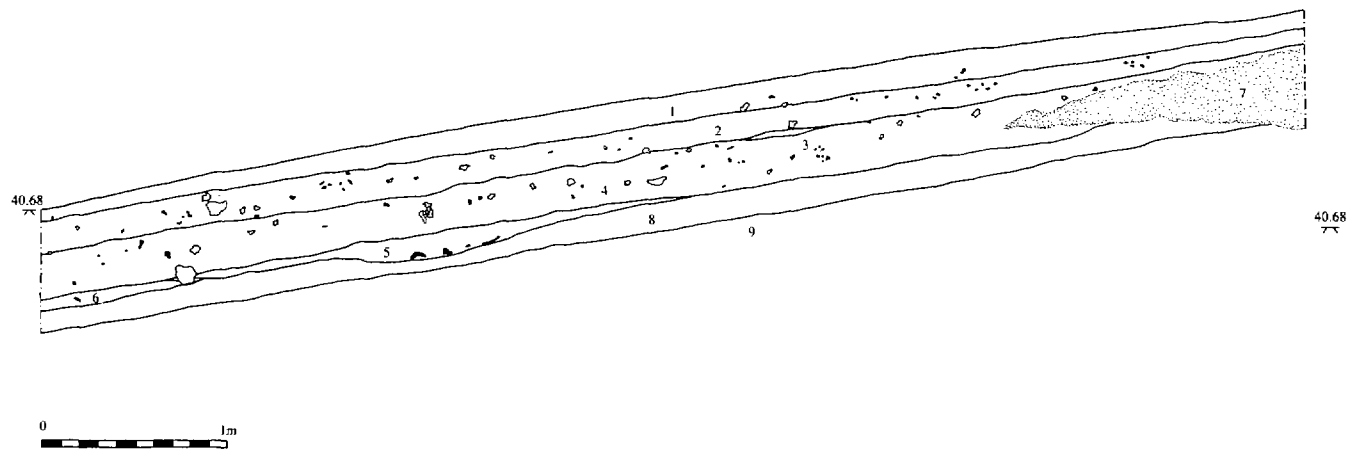


Fig. 2 South-facing cliff section recorded in 1998

Table 1 Flint Implements from Context 8

Lumps	3
Chips	27
Unused Flakes	26
Utilised Flakes	1
Retouched Flakes	0
Notched Flakes	1
Unused Blades	0
Utilised Blades	0
Retouched Blades	0
Notched Blades	0
Core Rejuvenation Flakes	6
Core Fragments	1
Cores	2
Borers	1
Scrapers	4
Retouched Pieces:	6
Unretouched Pieces:	63

embedded within the layer, and intruded into later contexts (5 and 4). Only a small portion of Context 6 was recorded, as westwards the cliff erosion had sealed lower levels.

Phase 3

Phase 3 at Barnes Chine was represented by a shallow pit or gully (Context 5). The fill of this feature consisted of a light grey sandy loamy clay with occasional charcoal fragments. The feature cut Context 6, and survived as a northern lip-edge of possible pit or gully some 45cm in depth and 2 metres in width. Artefacts from the fill of this feature were a fragmented grey ware jar and large pieces of tegula roof tile.

Phase 4

A major layer on the site was a yellowish-grey

sandy loam with frequent sandstone fragments and traces of chalk marl, containing patches of charcoal (Context 4). This thick layer contained large quantities of Roman pottery and tile fragments. The deposit was up to 50cm deep in places and would be too deep to be interpreted as Romano-British plough soil. It is likely that it represents Roman hillwash, caused by the cultivation of the slopes of Barnes High.

Phase 5

A late medieval plough soil layer (Context 2) sealed a small lens of undated dark sandy soil (Context 3) above the Roman layers. The medieval plough soil was a similar yellowish/grey sandy loam to Context 4, with occasional sandstone fragments interspersed within the deposit. The medieval pottery from the context was abraded and well rolled, suggesting intensive cultivation during the late medieval period. This layer was sealed with a coastal grassland topsoil (Context 1) that produced a few sherds of post-medieval pottery fragments.

THE FINDS

Lithics by Clive Bond

Lithics at Barnes Chine were recorded in only one context, Context 8, a prehistoric hillwash layer which appears to be a residual deposit. No horizontal recording of the feature took place. A total of 69 artefacts was recovered, 63 being of local flint and 5 of chalk down flint. The composition of this assemblage is shown in Table 1.

Waste Material

Different elements of the debitage – chips, core rejuvenation flakes, cores, flakes and blades – have been combined to evaluate what process in core reduction is evident on site. Here a pattern emerges showing that reduction of cores occurred on site. This is substantiated by the high value for primary and secondary flakes with cortex present;

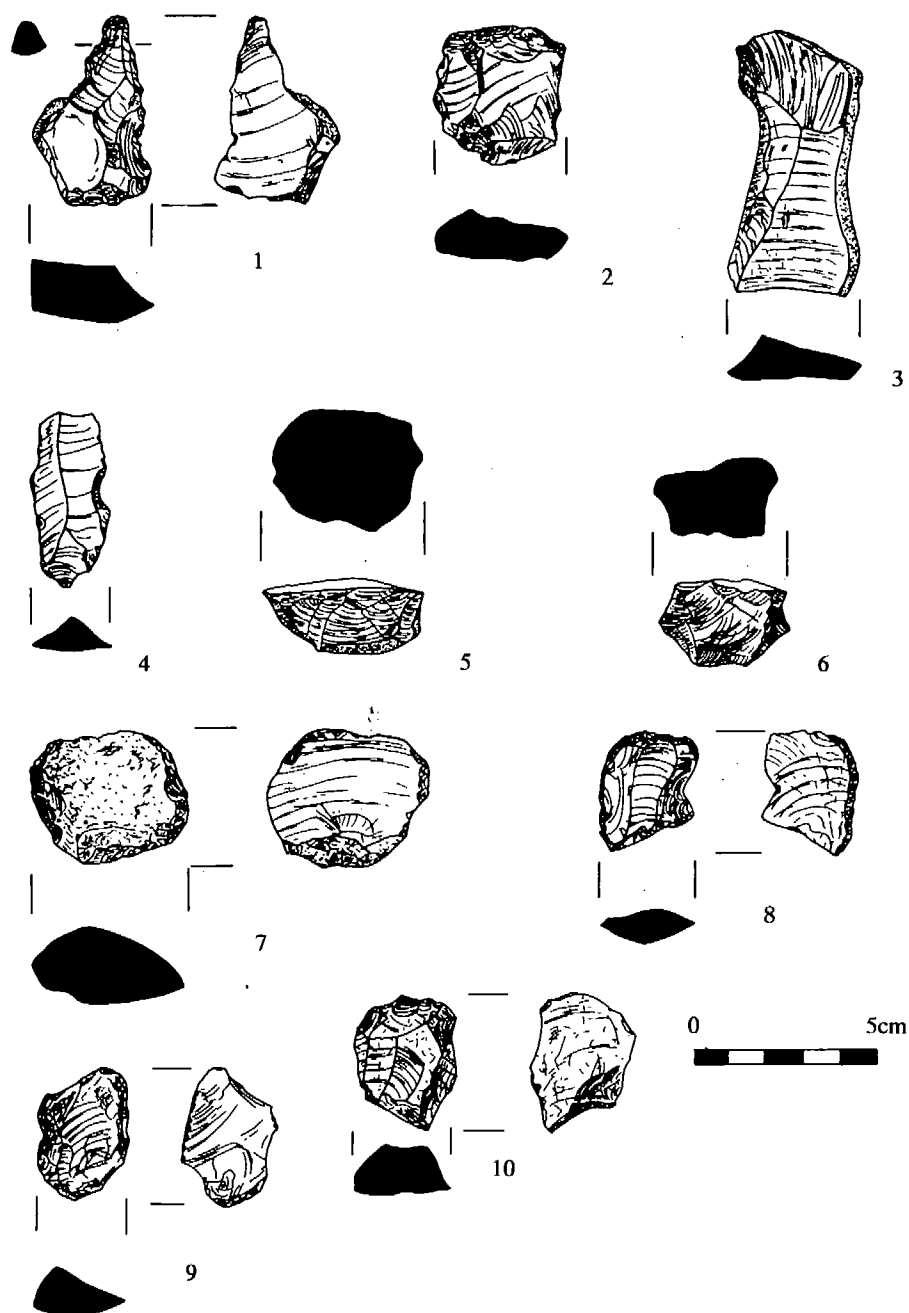


Fig. 3 Prehistoric flintwork

% of Cortex	No of Artifacts
0	22
0-50	24
50-100	21

Moreover, cores, a core fragment and core rejuvenation flakes of various dates, together with the frequencies of lumps and chips, indicate flint-knapping on site (Table 1; Fig. 3 nos. 2, 5, 6).

Unused, utilised and retouched flakes were measured ($n = 23$) and fall within the following ranges, L: 17-71 mm, B: 16-42 mm, giving a B:L ratio of 1:1-1:1.6. Variation in the size of the flakes from squat forms to the generally larger and broader flakes (Fig. 3 no. 3) suggest a later prehistoric date (Ford *et al.* 1984) and also correlate with the measurements taken from the Bronze Age assemblage at Arretton Down (Alexander *et al.* 1960, 287). The exception to this are two small broken flakes which appear to be Mesolithic.

The hammer technique evident in the assemblage is of equal importance. Both soft (diffused bulb/soft = 33) and hard (pronounced bulb/hard = 36) hammer, with only 5 pieces with faceted platforms, illustrate the ability of the knappers with such variable quality raw materials.

Implements

There are five true implements, a single borer and four scrapers; one end scraper, two burnt scrapers and one scraper on a flake (Table 1). There is also one utilised flake, one notched flake and a core rejuvenation flake with retouch.

Utilised/Notched Flakes: A flake of indeterminate date was produced from local pebble flint and utilised along one edge. The notched flake was made from an unspecified type of flint, notched and utilised on the edge mid section of the flake. The date may be Mesolithic/Neolithic (Fig. 3 no. 4).

Core Rejuvenation Flakes: Six core rejuvenation flakes include one with abrupt retouch on the distal edge which almost forms a half notch. This piece is attributed tentatively to the Neolithic as the flake removal scars are large. It was knapped from local flint, as was a larger example, perhaps of Neolithic/Bronze Age date. Both were removed

from the proximal end of the core to leave a large flaking surface. The other pieces (e.g. Fig. 3 no. 2) are similar to other flakes made from local flint with large flake removal scars. The combined weight of these pieces is 140.1 grams.

Core Fragment: A single core fragment in pale grey chalk downland flint is split across its axis. One platform is noted with five flake removal scars. The core is attributed to Clark's type Aii (Clark & Higgs 1960, 216) and its size broadly suggests a Mesolithic/Neolithic date. Weight: 22.0 grams.

Cores: Two small cores were found (Fig. 3 nos. 5, 6). Size and shape suggest that no. 5 may be intermediate Later Mesolithic/Earlier Neolithic. It has a single platform with flake removal scars all around, Clark's type Ai (Clark & Higgs 1960, 216). No. 6, with its battered surfaces and fine flake removals, is perhaps Mesolithic (Hughes & ApSimon 1978, 28). It is well wasted and has three platforms (Clark's type Biii or C; Clark & Higgs 1960, 216). Both cores are of local flint pebbles and have a combined weight of 58 grams.

Borer: This borer is a heavy-duty instrument made from local flint (Fig. 3 no. 1). It has a high angle of retouch on both sides of its point. Borers are uncommon on the Isle of Wight (Poole 1942b, 274), but other Neolithic examples are noted nearby from a site between Mottistone and Brighstone (Linford 1975, 495). The general robust nature of this piece implies it dates to the Neolithic/Bronze Age (see 'piercers' in Alexander *et al.* 1960, 291; Fasham & Ross 1978, 61).

Scraper on a Flake: This was made from a pebble flint with much of its cortex remaining (Fig. 3 no. 7). It has semi-abrupt angle, with short retouch on its distal edge. This edge would perhaps be used for light working of soft materials. Its simple shape and retouch may suggest a Neolithic date (Tomalin & Scaife 1980, 27).

End Scraper: This was produced from a local flint flake and has abrupt retouch on its distal end (Fig. 3 no. 8). A piece of cortex gives it a backing to support the thumb whilst working. The steep retouch suggests the working of hard materials. Its shape and production on a flake suggests a Neolithic or later in date (see concave scrapers in Dunning 1933, fig. 4; Tomalin & Scaife 1980, 27).

Burnt and Broken Scrapers: One is of local pebble flint with its entire cortex removed, with a crazed burnt

surface (Fig. 3 no. 9). It is broken centrally but displays semi-abrupt retouch along its remaining distal edge. It has a concave dorsal surface which fits the thumb well and was perhaps used for medium to light working. It is similar in form to the scrapers excavated nearby, indicating a Later Neolithic/Bronze Age date (Dunning 1931, fig. 2; 1933, fig. 4). The second scraper is recorticated and burnt (Fig. 3 no. 10). It has abrupt retouch, along its distal edge to the left broken edge. The steep retouch suggests the working of hard materials. Its convex dorsal surface, steep and coarse retouch suggests a Mesolithic date (Poole 1937, fig. 4 no. 34; cf. Rankine 1952, fig. 4).

Discussion

The quantity of debitage, i.e. flakes with cortex, cores and core rejuvenation flakes at Barnes Chine suggest knapping took place within the area excavated. It is difficult to estimate the frequency and specific timing of activity, but perhaps intermittent use occurred in the Mesolithic/ Neolithic with limited waste associated with the flakes and a scraper. More substantial activity appears to have occurred during the Neolithic/Bronze Age with debitage consisting of cores, core rejuvenation flakes, scrapers and a borer. This selection of equipment together with the total of 25 burnt implements and waste material indicate a settlement area with stones being heated or dragged into fires, perhaps associated with the area used for the burial of the eleven Late Bronze Age Deverel Rimbury urns excavated in 1928 (Dunning 1931). Recently two sherds of Beaker pottery have been recovered from the site (Tomalin pers. comm. 1999). This, taken with the previously noted Neolithic pottery sherds eroding out of the cliff, indicates the erosion of a former settlement (Basford 1980, 100).

Roman Pottery by Malcolm Lyne

Introduction

Barnes Chine produced 101 sherds (659 gm.) of Roman pottery. The assemblage indicates that occupation was probably continuous from the first to the end of the fourth century AD. The pottery was quantified by weight and number of sherds per fabric per assemblage. Fabrics were

identified with the aid of a $\times 8$ lens with built-in metric scale for determining the size of inclusions.

Fabrics

Handmade wares

- C1** Vectis ware (Tomalin 1987)
- C1B** Vectis ware variant with profuse up-to 0.50 mm. white, colourless and honey-coloured quartz filler.
- C1D** Vectis ware variant with profuse up-to 0.20 mm. colourless quartz filler and occasional coarse red ironstone inclusions.
- C2** Durotrigian black-burnished ware (Brown 1987, A4a and A4b).
- C3** BB1.
- C3A** Black soot-soaked fabric of variable coarseness with profuse sub-angular white quartz filler mixed with occasional coarse shale, chert and gypsum inclusions (Farrar 1973). This is the standard BB1 fabric as found on the production sites around Poole Harbour.
- C4A** Hampshire Grog-tempered ware (Lyne 1994). A late Roman group of handmade fabrics made somewhere in the north of the Isle of Wight and in mainland coastal areas opposite from *c.* AD 260 until the early fifth century, possibly as an adjunct to brine boiling activities.
- C4A** Variant fired black with profuse up-to 2.00 mm. crushed white grog.
- C4B** Variant fired black with profuse up-to 2.00 mm. crushed orange and white grog.
- C4C** Another variant fired black with moderate up-to 2.00 mm. irregular white and red grog and profuse up-to 0.20 mm. quartz filler.

Wheel-turned coarse-wares

- C5** New Forest grey wares (Fulford 2000)
- C7** Oxfordshire reduced grey wares (Young 2000)

Fine wares

- F1A** South Gaulish La Graufesenque samian ware
- F1B** Central Gaulish samian ware
- F3** Sandfree pale-orange fabric with sparse up-to 0.50 mm. red-brown ferrous inclusions, fired orange-red to buff-cream. A first to second-century flagon fabric.
- F4F** New Forest colour-coated wares (Fulford 2000)
- F4A** Reduced New Forest semi-stoneware with black to purple colour-coat (Fulford 2000, Fabric 1A)

and produced in the New Forest kilns during the period 260–400+.

F4B Oxidised cream version of the same fabric with red to brown colour-coat.

F5 Southern Spanish Dressel 20 amphora

Assemblage 1. The Iron Age occupation layer (Context 6)

This layer produced the earliest pottery from the site. There are only two pieces from the context, one of which is an abraded sherd of handmade patchy-black/brown/orange fabric with sparse up to 3.00 mm irregular calcined-flint inclusions. A few rounded up-to 1.00 mm soft red ferrous inclusions are also present. The fragment appears to be Early Iron Age and is almost certainly residual in the context. The second sherd is in a soapy grey-brown Upchurch ware fabric and is of probable late-first century date.

Assemblage 2. The pit or gully (Context 5)

This feature produced a number of joining sherds from a Oxfordshire reduced grey ware jar in wheel-turned orange-brown fabric with profuse up-to 0.20 mm brown and black ferrous inclusions and fired dark blue-grey with cheese-wiring whorls on its underside. A first to fourth century date is suggested by Young (2000).

Assemblage 3. The Roman plough soil (Context 4).

This context produced 98 sherds (561 gm.) of pottery; the largest group from the site (Table 2).

The pottery is very broken up and the assemblage is typical plough-soil material that spans the entire Roman period. Some of the sherds could be introduced field-marling material, but the sheer volume suggests the ploughing away of occupation layers on the site.

Illustrated Pottery (Fig. 4)

- 1 Straight-sided dish in Fabric C3A. Ext. rim diameter 200 mm. 1250.4.3.
- 2 Developed beaded-and-flanged bowl in black

Table 2 Roman Pottery from Context 4

<i>Fabric</i>	<i>No of Sherds</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Weight in gm</i>	<i>%</i>
C1B	1	1.0	52	9.8
C1D	3	2.3	54	7.4
C1	48	50.1	190	35.9
C2	1	1.0	14	2.6
C3A	1	1.0	12	2.3
C3B	12	12.6	66	12.4
C3C	1	1.0	20	3.8
C5	14	14.7	58	10.9
C7	8	8.3	14	2.6
F1A	1	1.0	1	0.2
F1B	1	1.0	22	4.1
F3	1	1.0	24	4.5
F4	3	3.1	6	1.1
F5	1	1.0	10	2.1
Medieval	2	2.1	18	3.4
Total	96		531	

Fabric C4A. Ext. rim diameter 180 mm. 1250.4.13.

- 3 Cavetto rim cooking pot of Tomalin Form 13 in Fabric C1B. 1250.4.8.
- 4 Everted rim jar of Fulford Type 30 in grey Fabric C5. 1250.4.5.
- 5 Rim from a handled bowl of Tomalin Form 27 in brown Fabric C1B. 1250.4.7.
- 6 Narrow-necked grey ware jar with everted rim of Young Type R15 in Fabric C7. Ext. rim diameter 60 mm. 1250.5.1.
- 7 Flagon in Fabric F3. Ext. rim diameter 120 mm. 1250.2.1.
- 8 New Forest indented beaker of Fulford Type 27 in Fabric F3. Ext. rim diameter 60 mm. 1250.4.30.

Tile and Brick

A small collection of Roman tile and brick consisted of ceramic roof tile (*tegulae* and *imbrices*), flue tile (*tubulus*) and floor tile. All the pieces came from

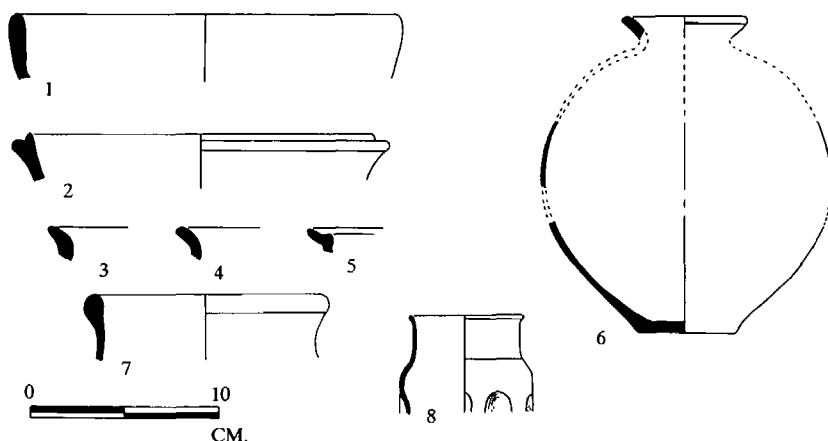


Fig. 4 Roman pottery

the late Roman Context 4, with the exception of one *tegula* from Context 5, and they suggest that a structure was possibly present or near the site. This is supported by a moderate scatter of Roman tile found in the adjacent ploughed field.

Twelve *tegula* fragments, several of which could be refitted, and a single *imbrex* were found scattered within Context 4. The pieces show little sign of the type of abrasion caused by continued agricultural activities. The fabric of the tiles looks similar to other tile fabric found on the Isle of Wight and was probably made locally.

A large abraded fragment of *tubulus* was reassembled from five fragments. They came from the side panel area with a width of 10.2 cm. Two scored impressions may be traces of a rough combing to adhere to other tiles or mortared walls. Traces of a central side vent were visible.

One fragment of hypocaust tile or brick was found in Context 4, deriving either from a *sesquipedalis* or a *bipedalis*, as the thickness (6.2 cm) puts it between the Vectensian tile sizes described in detail by Tomalin (1987, 100).

Fabric Types

Type 1: Sandy coarse fabric. Colour: Munsell 4/3 5YR reddish brown & 5/6 2.5 YR red. Abundant quartz sand with sub-angular/sub-rounded grains mainly less than 0.1–0.3 mm with moderate scatter of larger grains up to 0.6mm. Flint: small

angular inclusions of white flint mostly 0.1–0.2 mm across. Iron-oxides: abundant scatter of angular pellets of dark brown ferruginous iron stone, mostly 0.3–0.7 mm diameter. This fabric is found in the *tegulae*, *imbrex* and *tubulus*.

Type 2: Very sandy fabric. Colour: Munsell 5/8 2.5YR red. Very fine well sorted sand (0.1–0.2 mm). Inclusions: fine streaks of whitish cream clay with 5% small rounded tabular argillaceous clay pellets (0.1–0.3 mm across). This fabric is found in the floor tile.

Type 3: Sandy coarse fabric. Colour: Munsell 4/3 5YR reddish brown & 5/6 2.5YR red. Abundant quartz sand with sub-angular/sub-rounded grains mainly less than 0.1–0.3 mm with moderate scatter of larger grains up to 0.6 mm. Flint: small angular inclusions of white flint mostly 0.1–0.5 mm across. Inclusions: small rounded tabular argillaceous clay pellets (0.1–0.3 mm across). This fabric is limited to a single *tegula* in Context 5.

Medieval Pottery

Seven medieval pottery sherds were collected from Barnes Chine during 1990–1998.

Fabric Descriptions

Fabric 1: Organic-tempered ware; red and grey outer, grey inner surface; grey core; sandy clay

matrix, composed of abundant ill-sorted quartz. Inclusions consist of abundant evidence for organic tempering, ranging in size from fine to coarse with the appearance of chopped grass or straw; also sparse fragments of rounded flint. Date *c.* 1050–1250.

Fabric 2: Mixed grit coarse ware; red-brown surface, grey core, sandy clay matrix. Inclusions of medium and fine quartz, abundant ill-sorted flint, sparse coarse chalk, sparse red and black iron. Date *c.* 1250–1350.

Fabric 3: Sandy grey ware; grey surface and core; sandy clay matrix. Inclusions of abundant medium quartz, moderate medium iron. The exterior of this fabric is often splashed with dark green glaze. Date *c.* 1250 – 1350.

The single sherd in Fabric 1 is perhaps the most likely to have pre-Conquest origins, as organic-tempered sandy wares are typical of the late Saxon period in South Hampshire. The six other sherds consisted of five gritty coarse ware fragments in Fabric 2 and a single sherd from a glazed jug in Fabric 3. The Fabric 2 sherds were wheel-thrown and are local products that cannot be assigned to any known production site.

Post-medieval Pottery

Six post-medieval sherds were collected during 1990–1998.

Fabric Descriptions

Fabric 1: Pink Verwood-type ware; pink to buff-pink surface, pink or pale grey core; smooth clay matrix. Inclusions of abundant well-sorted medium quartz, moderate medium iron.

Fabric 2: Hampshire Red ware; red surface and core; fine sandy clay matrix. Inclusions of abundant fine-medium, well sorted quartz, moderate fine red iron.

This small group is comprised of local earthen wares. The red ware sherds are in a tradition seen throughout Hampshire from the 16th century. They were produced in the region around the South Downs, at centres such as Fareham, and the Hampshire and Surrey borders. The Verwood-type pottery is probably from the kilns at Ver-

wood, just north of the New Forest, which produced huge quantities of pottery throughout the late 17th to 19th centuries.

Clay Tobacco Pipe

A single stem fragment was found in Context 1. The thickness of the stem and its bored-hole suggest a late 17th century date.

DISCUSSION

The recent investigations at Barnes Chine have produced the first evidence from the site for a Mesolithic hunter gatherer/fisher band. The flint-work found on the site consisted of utilised flint flakes, scrapers and associated waste material consistent with the intermittent use of the site around 8,000–6,500 BC.

The excavated lithics suggest that these groups of nomadic hunters utilised downland flint for the production of their tools. This may imply that the site at Barnes was a coastal hunting zone that was used intermittently. The prehistoric hunters may have travelled from a camp site within the local hinterland, which was situated close to the abundant supply of downland flint.

The flint tools and waste material of Late Neolithic and Bronze Age date suggest that the excavated material represents flint knapping debris associated with a nearby settlement. This settlement activity was suggested by Dunning (1931, 113) who recovered numerous worked flints and pottery in association with burnt flint scatters. This was close to a Late Bronze Age urnfield (Dunning 1931, 108–117), which suggests a focus of prehistoric settlement in the environs of Barnes High. The isolated Early Iron Age pottery sherd (from Context 6) would indicate the continued but sporadic presence of prehistoric farmers utilising the fertile greensand soils, these activities probably going on well into the Roman period.

The stratified Roman material at Barnes Chine suggests the presence of a nearby settlement, including masonry structures using brick and tile. The evidence for this is reinforced by the collection of material found in the field

adjacent to the north of the site (Mick Green, pers. comm.).

As the erosion of the Barnes site continues, it is highly probable that more features, deposits and layers will emerge, and this archaeological data will warrant continued monitoring by archaeologists and local fieldworkers. This should be combined with further fieldwork in the hinterland of the site, which will help clarify the past land use of both the prehistoric and Roman environs of Barnes.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The programme of fieldwork would not have been possible without the co-operation of the farm owner Mr M Fisk. The author would also like to express gratitude to Mick Green, who kindly loaned an assemblage of Roman artefacts collected between 1990–1998 from the fields around Barnes High. Thanks are also due to Malcolm Lyne for reporting on the pottery, Paul Booth for his analysis of the grey ware jar and Clive Bond for his assessment on the prehistoric lithics. Special thanks are offered to David Tomalin for his help and encouragement regarding the first draft of this report

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