

POTS, FLINTS AND GRAIN RUBBERS: RITUAL IN PREHISTORIC SOUTHAMPTON

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ABSTRACT

Archaeological investigations in Southampton in the last 22 years have resulted in the discovery of six widely dispersed prehistoric pits containing deposits of pottery, sometimes accompanied by flints and grain rubbers. Two date from the Neolithic, one from the Middle Bronze Age, two from the Late Bronze Age, and one from the Early Iron Age but the features exhibit similarities in the nature of the deposits and the artifact assemblages. These suggest a long continuity of local tradition.

INTRODUCTION

The Southampton region lies to the south of the Wessex chalk downlands where prehistoric sites are common, but few prehistoric sites are known within the city. One type of site that can now be recognised is the pit with structured deposits, of which six examples are known (Fig. 1).

The first, dated to the late Bronze Age or early Iron Age, was found in 1984, in the Regents Park area of Shirley, and its unusual collection of pottery was duly published (Cottrell 1986). In 1998, the discovery of a Neolithic bowl in a pit near Hill Lane was a significant find, and the following year excavations in advance of the West Quay Shopping Centre found a Late Bronze Age pit containing a deposit of four pots. A few years later, in 2002, the construction of a block of flats in the Portswood area revealed another pit containing a Middle Bronze Age urn and other finds. Also in that year an excavation in Ascupart Street, in the St Mary's area, found a further pit containing Late Bronze Age pottery and roughly worked flints, and in 2003, only 250m to the south, at

Coleman Street, a Neolithic pit was discovered. This article presents the evidence in chronological order, and proposes a long-lived tradition of structured deposition.

NEOLITHIC

The pit at Coleman Street

The excavation (SOU 1267), lay towards the south end of Hamwic, the Middle Saxon town, at the junction of St Mary Street and Coleman Street. It was centred on SU 425117, and lay on the flood plain to the west of the River Itchen, some 400m from the river bank. A full report is deposited with the site archive (Cottrell 2003).

Feature 60 was a small pit, originally probably roughly circular in plan, with steep sides rounding to a near-flat base. The pit had been disturbed by later features, but what survived was some 530mm east to west, 780mm north to south, and some 600mm deep. Its original depth is unclear. The fill, context 61/179, was silty clay loam becoming darker at the bottom. The feature produced a substantial quantity of pottery, in four distinct fabrics, a sarsen saddle quern rubber, five chips of sarsen stone, six burnt flints and a quantity of worked flint. Many of the sherds were packed close together, apparently deposited in groups. Fragments of charcoal and a charred hazelnut shell were also recovered.

The finds by Matt Leivers

Flint

The flint consisted of 231 fragments. It is generally of poor quality, probably collected locally from the River Itchen or from the

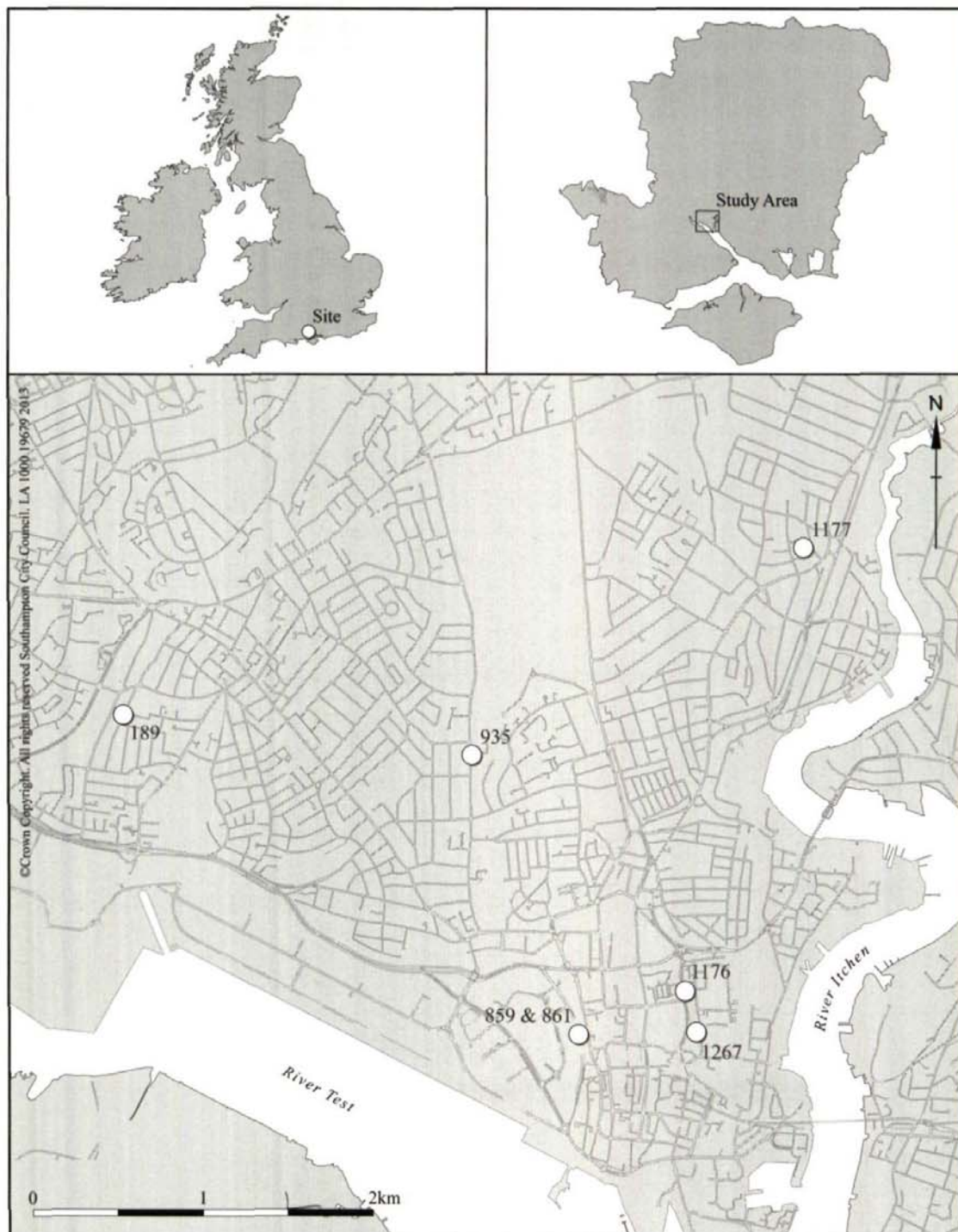


Fig 1 The centre of modern Southampton showing the location of the six pits. SOU 189 Regents Park; SOU 935 Hill Lane; SOU 859 & 861 West Quay Shopping Centre; SOU 1176 Ascupart Street; SOU 1177 Bowden Lane; SOU 1267 Coleman Street

gravels that underlie the brickearth in the area. Thermal flaws are present in most of the larger pieces, and one has crystalline quartz deposits in the centre. The assemblage can be divided into three broad groups:

1. flakes with formal characteristics (such as platforms, erailure scars, and bulbs) and indications of some level of skill and/or the intention to produce recognisable flakes or other artefacts
2. worked flint which had subsequently been burnt
3. pieces which demonstrated either a lack of skill or no intent to produce flakes or other artefacts, but rather a simple desire to reduce pebbles or nodules to smaller pieces.

In the first group, the pieces divide into broad, thin flakes on a brownish yellow flint which tends to translucency due to its thinness (nine pieces), and long, thin blades generally on the same flint, although thirteen pieces, including three broken blade segments, are darker. The remaining flakes tend to be short and thick, on a very dark grey, good quality flint. Two pieces appear to be formal tools. One (item 86) was a very rough triangular-sectioned knife, possibly unfinished, with lateral retouch or damage. The second (item 341) was a very small blade of almost microlithic appearance.

The burnt worked flint was generally comparable with the unburnt component of the assemblage. There were five large burnt nodules; and primary, secondary and tertiary working was present, along with less formal reductions. The pieces were generally small (under 20mm) with the exception of a single large secondary flake which is 54mm long.

In the third group, 24 fragments or nodules were present which may have served as objective pieces, although the term 'core' hardly applies, and the pieces have not been classified as such. The flint tends to be of poor quality, dark grey or greyish brown, with pale brown cortex. Some pieces grade to a reddish brown, which is probably an iron oxide patina. Two more formal cores (items 346 and 347) are of a similar flint and show a similar lack of technique. Both have multiple removals from

numerous directions. The rest of this group consists of approximately 100 pieces which can only loosely be referred to as flakes. Primary, secondary and tertiary working was apparent, although no tools or other artefacts can have resulted from the reduction process attested to.

It seems highly likely that most, if not all, of the flint objects were produced deliberately for inclusion in the pit. The freshness of the flakes and the quantity of pieces that are not formal debitage strongly suggests that the material was included in the fill of the pit very soon after its production, if not the actual knapping of flint into the feature as it was being backfilled. The obvious difference in the quality of the work evident in the assemblage may indicate the presence of at least two people, one of whom was a skilled flint knapper.

Utilised stone artefacts

A fragment of a sarsen saddle quern rubber (item 308), weighing 258g, was recovered. Five chips of sarsen were also found, from a second piece of sarsen. The breaking of these two pieces of sarsen is perhaps related to the pair of flint-knappers.

Pottery

A total of 379 sherds (2,642g) of pottery was recovered. The pottery was in generally poor condition, while individual sherds differed from good to poor.

Vessel 1

This pot, represented by 314 sherds, was in a flint-tempered fabric (PFR6). It had a neutral, broad, hemispherical, round-bottomed profile typical of a bowl (Fig. 2.1). It had a predominantly flat-topped or flattened, out-turned rim, although considerable variation in rim form was present in a single large sherd. The diameter of the vessel was approximately 260mm (some 75% of the rim survived), with walls between 4mm and 10mm thick. The vessel had been fired in an irregularly oxidising environment, resulting in variable colouring of the clay. From about a third of the way down, the wall has been burnished, giving a very smooth finish. No base sherds were identified.

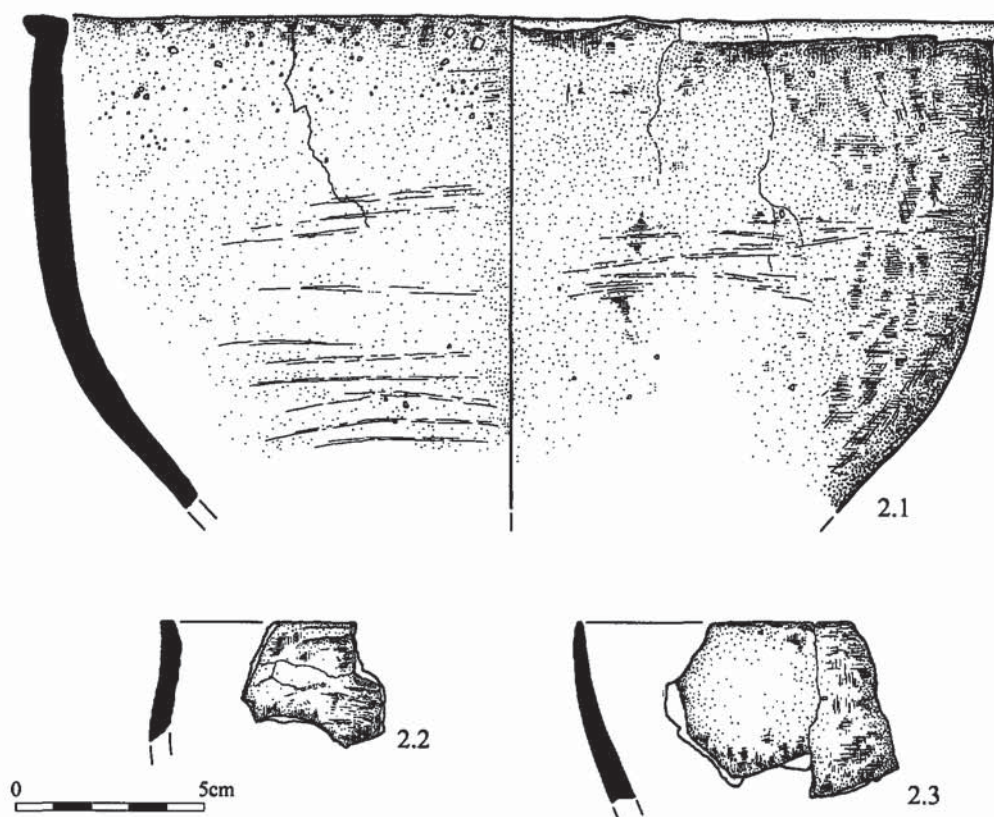


Fig 2 Neolithic pottery from the Coleman Street pit (SOU 1267). 2.1 Vessel 1; 2.2 vessel 2; 2.3 vessel 4

Fabric Group PRF6: a sandy matrix with common to abundant (>26%), poorly-sorted, sub-angular and angular, calcined flint; occasional naturally occurring rounded quartz grains. Rounded black patinated flint pebbles are also present (<3%).

Vessel 2

This vessel was represented by six sherds in a flint-tempered fabric (PRF8), including one simple everted rim (Fig. 2.2). The sherds were highly laminar and had oxidised red to yellowish red surfaces and dark grey to black interiors/cores but with some variable firing including near-full oxidation. The wall thickness ranged from 7mm to 8mm. The form and dimensions could not be reconstructed.

Fabric Group PRF8: a silty clay matrix with sparse (3–10%), poorly-sorted, sub-angular and angular, coarse calcined flint.

Vessel 3

This pot was represented by only three sherds, all flint-tempered (PRF13) and completely oxidised to a pale red throughout. The walls ranged from 4mm to 9mm thick. The form and dimensions could not be reconstructed.

Fabric Group PRF13: a very sandy clay matrix consisting of common to abundant (>26%), poorly-sorted, angular, calcined flint; sub-rounded to rounded quartz grains and iron minerals probably naturally occurring.

Vessel 4

This vessel was represented by 56 sherds from a neutral bowl with a convex profile sloping inwards towards the base. It was in a sandy fabric (PRQ3) and had a simple pointed rim (Fig. 2.3), although too little survived to estimate the diameter. The walls were between 2mm

and 8mm thick. The vessel had been fired in an irregularly-oxidising environment, resulting in variable colouring with patches of orange, grey and brown on the exterior and a varyingly oxidised or unoxidised core and interior. No base sherds were identified.

Fabric Group PRQ3: a sandy matrix containing 3–10% well-rounded flint and quartz grains.

Discussion

The reconstructable vessels and rim forms indicate that this is an assemblage of Early Neolithic bowls. Vessel 1 seems to have been placed rim uppermost in the pit in one piece or in a few very large pieces and its position strongly suggests that the lower section and base were never present. The remaining sherds of Vessels 2 to 4 appear to have been placed within Vessel 1 with the lithics, sarsen rubber and the hazelnut shell.

The lack of any human bone, or signs of a body stain, in the pit preclude its identification as a burial, but the nature of the assemblages does not suggest rubbish disposal. The inclusion of flints, apparently deliberately struck for the purpose, and the broken fragments of sarsen suggest the symbolic deposition of a carefully chosen, and restricted, group of artefacts associated with tool and food production.

The pit at Hill Lane

In 1998 the construction of a house at 145 Hill Lane, at SU 41251339, was observed (SOU 935). The site lay on fairly level ground, just south of Southampton Common, some 100m west of the stream known as the Rollesbrook. Eight features cut the natural plateau gravel, although only one included finds. This was feature 23, a pit some 1200mm in diameter and 600mm deep, with steeply sloping or near vertical sides. It was filled by a moderately stony sand, context 24. Some 500mm below the surface was a complete Neolithic bowl, half of which was removed by the machine and destroyed. The rest was recovered in small fragments.

The pottery by Dr Andrew Russel

Some 230g of pottery was recovered from context 24. It was of very poor quality, low fired

and crumbly and cannot be reconstructed. The extant sherds pottery comprised about half of a wide, bowl-shaped vessel, with a shoulder, concave neck and out-turned rim, the classic S-shaped profile of an Ebbsfleet bowl. The rim and neck had been decorated with shallow semi-circular impressions, perhaps from a bone or stick. This vessel belongs to the Ebbsfleet phase of the Peterborough Ware pottery tradition, current from 3400 BC. The only other find of Peterborough Ware known in Southampton is from the Montefiore Hall of Residence site in Swaythling (Crockett 1996).

Fabric Group PRF2: Low-fired fabric with a laminated hackly fracture, made from a fine clay to which has been added moderate, angular flint (10% to 15%, <10mm, most <3mm). The clay contained rare, naturally occurring, rounded polished quartz grains (<1%, <0.25mm). The rare voids and dark spots in the unoxidised parts are suggestive of fine organic matter.

MIDDLE BRONZE AGE

The pit at Bowden Lane, Portswood

The site (SOU 1177) lies some 200m west of the River Itchen at SU 432146 (Cottrell 2004a). The site was not on the flood plain of the river but on the valley side, where the land slopes down to the south-east towards the former course of a stream that fed into the Itchen. The 10 metre contour passes close to the north-west corner of the site. The site is situated in an area of scattered finds of prehistoric flint implements, and several archaeological investigations in the vicinity have produced worked flint. The natural London Clay was overlaid by layer 18, a slightly stony, silty clay loam, probably weathered from the natural clay, which included burnt flints and a utilised flint flake.

The pit (context 19) was found in a machined trench dug along an access road to the south of Bowden Lane. The machine exposed a circle of pot sherds, which proved to be a large pot, Vessel 1, positioned vertically within layer 18 and extending into the underlying clay. Part of the surviving top of the pot was removed

by the machine but most of these sherds were recovered. It is likely that earlier damage had been inflicted, probably by ploughing, as the rim of the vessel was missing. No discernible edge to the pit containing the pot was visible, so it may have been carefully dug to receive the vessel.

Two sherds of pottery had been placed in the base of the pit before the whole vessel was placed into the hole. They were in a similar fabric to the whole vessel, but are considered to have come from a separate pot (Vessel 2).

The fill of Vessel 1 was removed in the laboratory, and found to contained further sherds of the urn, six worked flints, three burnt flints and an abraded sarsen cobble that had been used as a rubber, probably on a saddle quern. The fill was sieved; no burnt bone was present but a single fragment of charred cereal, a few small sherds of the urn and a few burnt and worked flints were recovered.

To the north and south of the pit were features 27/35 and 31. Feature 27/35 crossed the trench 4.72m to the south of the pit. It was 220mm wide, 300mm deep and V-shaped in profile, with a flat bottom. The silty clay loam fills produced four sherds of flint-tempered pottery (Vessel 3) in the same fabric as the urn, one possibly worked flint and 11 burnt flints. Feature 31 crossed the trench 4.25m to the north of the pit. It was 1180mm wide and at least 300mm deep, with a flat bottom. The silty clay loam fills produced two burnt flints.

The finds by Matt Leivers

Worked flints

Two worked and utilised flints and one possible waste flake were recovered from the vicinity of the pot and eight flints were found in the fill of the urn. The first worked flint (item 1, layer 18) was a large, rough, secondary flake from an initial stage of core preparation. Damage on the right dorsal edge suggests subsequent use for chopping or scraping. The second worked flint (item 2, unstratified, close to the urn) was the distal end of a broken blade made on a tertiary flake, with possible retouch and definite use damage on both left and right dorsal edges.

Fill 28, of feature 27/35, produced a possible secondary flake.

The urn contained: one very irregular piece, possibly from a tertiary stage of production; one secondary flake; one tertiary flake with some cortex; a struck secondary chunk and two joining fragments; a large very rough core with cortex on one side and a secondary removal from it.

None of the worked flints from the urn are tools, and the working is so rough or has so little regard for producing usable pieces that tool production can hardly have been the intention. This assemblage looks like flint worked for its own sake, specifically for inclusion in the urn.

Burnt flint

The fill of the urn produced 34 fragments, two of which joined, with a total weight of 324g.

Stone rubber

A stone rubber or grinder (item 3) was recovered from the interior of the urn. It was made from an irregular, rounded, sarsen cobble featuring a natural root hole, with maximum dimensions 98mm × 86mm × 80mm (Fig. 3.1). The cobble could have been collected locally from the Plateau or Valley Gravels (Melville & Freshney 1982, 124). It is probable that the piece is a rubber from a small saddle quern, but the presence of three wear facets, of which only two seem likely to have been formed from grinding on a quern, suggests that the stone may have been used for other purposes as well. Further parallels can be found at Danebury, where objects 8.126 and 8.127 are similar forms (Laws *et al.* 1991, 395–7).

Pottery

A total of 118 sherds of handmade pottery, weighing 642g, comprising the substantially complete base and lower 220mm of wall of a substantial vessel of Middle Bronze Age date were recovered from feature 19, with a further four sherds weighing 4g from fill 34 in feature 27. Vessel 1 was the near complete urn, Vessel 2 consisted of two sherds, found beneath Vessel 1; Vessel 3, represented by only four sherds, was recovered from feature 27, the possible barrow ditch.

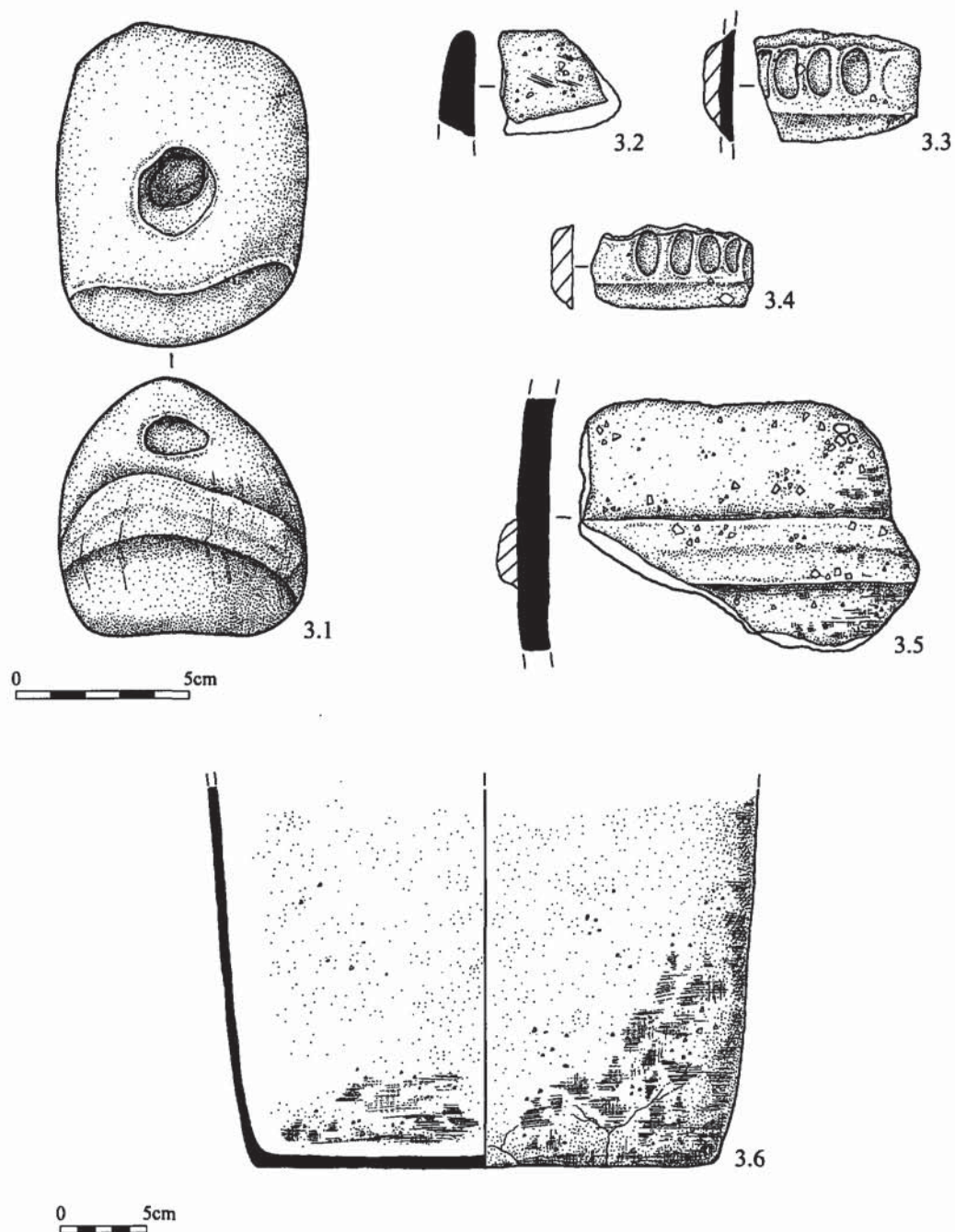


Fig 3 Middle Bronze Age finds from Bowden Lane (SOU 1177). 3.1 Sarsen rubber; 3.2 rim of vessel 1; 3.3 decorated cordon sherd from vessel 1; 3.4 detached decorated cordon sherd from vessel 1; 3.5 undecorated cordon sherd from vessel 1; 3.6 base of vessel 1

Vessel 1

This vessel comprised the complete base and body sherds (context 21) of a large Type 3A Bucket Urn in a flint-tempered fabric (PRF4). It had a simple upright rim (Fig. 3.2), whose diameter is unknown, but the maximum diameter of the surviving part of the vessel was 320mm. The urn was straight-sided with an applied horizontal cordon decorated with groups of finger-tip impressions (Figs 3.3 & 3.4) or with no impressions (Fig. 3.5). The wall thickness was between 10mm and 12mm. The better-preserved sherds have a smoother surface, perhaps indicative of the application of a clay slip. The base was flat and some 270mm across (Fig. 3.6).

Vessel 2

This vessel was represented by two joining sherds in a flint-tempered fabric (PRF4) recovered from beneath Vessel 1. The sherds are thinner (8mm maximum), and contain less calcined flint than Vessel 1. No form can be suggested.

Vessel 3

This pot was represented by four sherds in a flint-tempered fabric (PRF4) the largest of which is only 16mm long. Two of the sherds appear to be rims. They were recovered from feature (27) to the south of the urn.

Fabric Group PRF4: an irregularly oxidised, soft fabric, typically with black to dark greyish brown or yellowish brown cores and reddish brown or light reddish brown surfaces. There is a trend towards oxidation, but a very small number of sherds are completely unoxidised. Some sherds have completely oxidised exterior surfaces and completely unoxidised interior surfaces. The sherds are generally moderately thick, with irregular breaks. The matrix contains a moderate amount (20–30%) of medium to very coarse, sub-rounded to very angular, fairly well sorted calcined flint temper, together with some quartzite and iron minerals, probably naturally occurring in the clay.

Discussion

The fabric of these pots fits well within the Deverel-Rimbury tradition (Ellison 1981), dated c.1700–1100 BC, and the form places the vessel in the Middle Bronze Age. Parallels

within Southampton are rare, with the group of sherds from Bargate Street (SOU 142: Wachter 1975, 140–1) and the single sherd from West Quay (SOU 861, see below) being the only well-provenanced examples. Slightly further afield, similar pottery has been recovered from Nursling (Adam *et al.* 1997), Chandler's Ford (Entwistle 2001), Eastleigh (*ibid*) and Butts Lawn in the New Forest (Pasmore 2003).

The conditions of survival and recovery of the pottery prevent definition of its use at the time of deposition. Placed in the ground on its base, the upper half of the urn was almost entirely absent at the time of excavation. The presence of larger sherds bearing cordons both within the vessel and in machined spoil suggest that the pot was complete or substantially complete at the time of deposition, and that the missing portions were removed by later activity.

Conclusions

It is possible that features 27/35 and 31 represent an annular ditch surrounding the pot, and would suggest that Vessel 1 was at the centre of a small round barrow. No trace of a mound was present; if ever present it may have been removed by ploughing. The most obvious conclusion is that this vessel is a burial deposit, but the expected cremated human bone was not recovered. It can be argued that even if originally present it also could have been removed by ploughing or other later activities, although one would expect that some fragments would remain. On the other hand, the lack of human bone need not indicate a domestic context; at Zionshill Copse for instance, only three vessels out of eight contained bone (Entwistle 2001). Similarly, the presence of a single sherd of a vessel from a finer vessel beneath the urn could indicate either ceremonial or pragmatic disposal. The best indication of the purpose of the feature is perhaps the fact that it was impossible to define, its digging and immediate backfilling indicating that deposition of the urn and sherds was the sole purpose.

The possibility that the urn deposit and the associated features may be evidence of a small

barrow has been discussed above. The presence of the pot neither confirms nor disproves the suggestion. The two type sites for the Deverel-Rimbury pottery tradition are the Deverel Barrow and the Rimbury Flat Cemetery, so both forms of deposition were contemporaneous. The location on an east-facing hillside overlooking the river may be significant. A monument here, if not obscured by woodland, would be visible from across the river, and could have been placed to mark a boundary.

LATE BRONZE AGE

The pit at the West Quay Shopping Centre, Above Bar Street

Sites excavated in advance of the West Quay Shopping Centre (Russel & Leivers 2003) included SOU 859 and SOU 861, centred on SU 418117. The site lay at the top of a 10m high cliff overlooking the shore of the River Test just above its junction with Southampton Water. Apart from the pit group the site produced one sherd of Middle Bronze Age pottery and 14 sherds of Late Bronze Age pottery. This site probably marks the north end of a scatter of Bronze Age material that had previously been found to the south, including a flint scraper and sherds of pottery at Bargate Street (SOU 142: Wachter 1975, 140), pottery sherds from Maddison Street (SOU 29) (Smith 1984) and sherds, burnt flints and a scraper from Albion Place (SOU 132) (Maitland-Muller 1975, 132–4).

The pit, context 806, was a small roughly circular feature, 250mm in diameter and 150mm deep, cut into the natural brickearth. It is likely that the some of the upper part of the brickearth together with part of the pit's contents had been removed by more recent activity. The pit contained the bases of three Late Bronze Age pottery vessels, stacked above each other; fragmented into 353 sherds. Each vessel was of a different fabric; two were urn-like jars and the third was a bowl. No more than 50% of each vessel survived, and the upper parts were mostly missing. Fragments of a fourth jar were also present. Above the pots the feature had been

filled with brickearth, which was covered with a layer of soot and dark reddish brown, burnt clay. The extensive excavation of the rest of the site found only another 14 sherds of Late Bronze Age pottery, suggesting the pit was an isolated feature.

The pottery by Dr Elaine Morris

A total of 353 sherds (1,513g) of handmade, prehistoric pottery was recovered from pit 806, comprising parts of four vessels.

Vessel 1

The vessel at the base of the assemblage, context 809, was represented by nearly half of a 120mm diameter flat base and many body sherds in a very porous, vesicular or void-rich fabric (PRV1), with a suggestion of finger-wiping on the exterior (Fig 4.1). The fabric is distinctive, not only in the presence of the voids but also in the oxidised colour of the clay matrix, which is buff, rather than the orange-firing clays of the flint-tempered or sandy fabrics of the other vessels. This vessel is probably a jar but there were no rim or shoulder sherds to assist with identification, and it is only the coarseness of the fabric and the absence of burnishing that suggest this type of vessel. A very similar vesicular fabric was identified amongst the Late Bronze Age to Early Iron Age pottery from Ellingham Farm in the lower Avon Valley north of Ringwood (Morris 1996, 69).

Fabric group PRV1: a common (20%) amount of poorly-sorted vesicles or voids of various sizes and shapes (round, rectangular, linear and triangular) measuring $\leq 5\text{mm}$ across and a rare (1%) amount of subrounded to subangular, naturally-occurring flint detritus measuring $\leq 2\text{mm}$ across, with the presence of argillaceous matter which may be grog, clay pellets or mudstones that measure up to 15mm across with the majority $\leq 5\text{mm}$ and which are angular, subangular or subrounded in shape probably due to the softness of the firing of this fabric; the fabric has a soapy feel.

Petrological report: this fabric has a very blocky, marly or lumpy structure consisting of a 40% concentration of argillaceous matter which is distinctively angular in shape and has identical vesicles as the main character clay matrix with its own 15% concentration of linear and subrectangular voids,

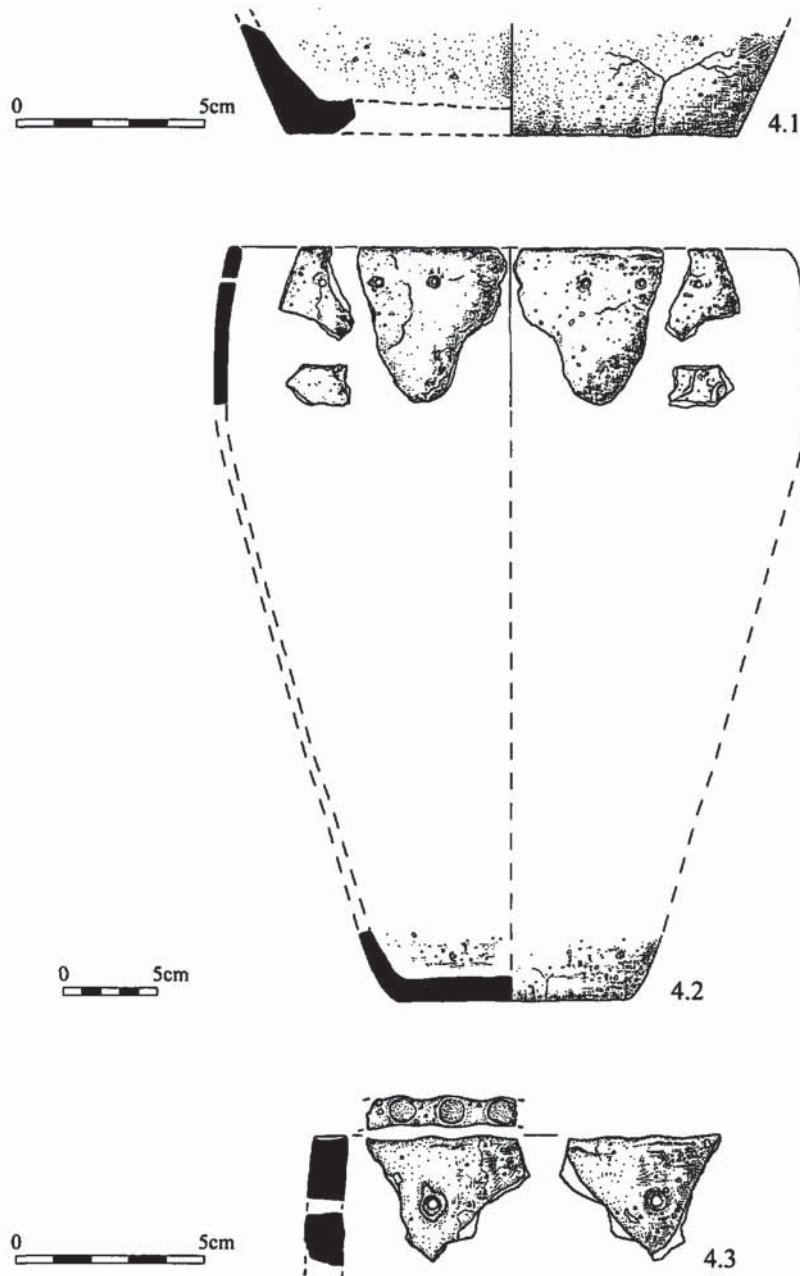


Fig 4 Late Bronze Age finds from the West Quay Shopping Centre pit (SOU 859). 4.1 vessel 1; 4.2 vessel 3; 4.3 vessel 4

and with rare (1%), extremely fine, subangular to subrounded quartz grains measuring ≤ 0.1 mm across and rare (<1%) angular flint fragments measuring

≤ 2 mm; there is every possibility that this argillaceous matter is grog temper due to its angularity and to the soapy feeling to the fabric.

Vessel 2

The middle vessel in the deposit, contexts 807 and 808, was a bowl in a fine glauconite-rich sandy fabric (PRQ1) characterised by the presence of an obtuse-angle shoulder sherd and a 115mm diameter base (not illustrated). The numerous body sherds were mainly a dark grey-black colour but showed some variable firing including full oxidation. There was burnishing on both surfaces and the vessel had a wall thickness ranging from 5mm to 8mm. No rim sherds were present. Fineware shouldered bowls are common in larger assemblages of Late Bronze Age pottery in southern England (Barrett 1980; Longley 1991; Hall 1992; Gingell & Morris 2000). The fabric is rich with limonite (transformed by firing to glauconite) as part of the sandy component of the clay matrix. This distinctive mineral is found in the Tertiary strata in the Hampshire Basin, but is more commonly found in the Upper Greensand and Gault (Cretaceous) clays within the UK, the closest examples of which are found 40 km west of Southampton in Dorset and Wiltshire, over 30 km east around Petersfield and south on the southern half of the Isle of Wight (Chatwin 1960).

Fabric group PRQ1: a softly-fired, very sandy clay matrix containing an abundant amount (40–50% concentration) of well-sorted, subangular to sub-rounded, medium-fine quartz grains measuring ≤0.4mm across; orange-firing clay.

Petrological report: an abundant amount (at least 50% concentration) of rounded to subrounded glauconite and subrounded to subangular quartz grains measuring up to 0.2mm across; there appear to be equal amounts of glauconite and quartz in this fabric.

Vessel 3

The topmost vessel in the deposit was a neckless, shoulderless, bucket-like vessel in a flint-tempered fabric (PRF7) (Fig. 4.2). It had a flat-topped or flattened rim and only a slightly convex or curved profile sloping inwards toward the base. This shape is best described as a tall, pseudo-hemispherical or half-oval, neutral to open form. The diameter of this vessel was difficult to ascertain as only 10% of the rim survived, but was probably between 300mm and 380mm. A complete flat

base, 120mm in diameter, was present. The profile of the base curves up the wall of the pot and had a basal angle of between 50 and 60 degrees. If this base does derive from the same vessel as the rim, then the vessel is likely to be have been c.500mm in height in order to join the narrow base.

The walls of the vessel were 7mm to 8mm thick. On the surviving part of the rim there were four perforations located horizontally 20mm below the rim and 30mm apart. The perforations, 3mm to 4mm in diameter, were made when the vessel was in a leather-hard stage of manufacture prior to firing and created by pushing a tool through the wall of the vessel from the exterior to the interior, leaving a bulge of excess clay on the interior surface around each perforation. A single body sherd, with what appears to be an applied strip along the flat wall profile that was then impressed with possible pinched decoration, was also present. This type of decoration is not dissimilar to more obvious examples from Plumpton Plain Site B (Hawkes 1935, fig. 5, e–f). The vessel had been fired for a short duration in an irregularly-oxidising condition, which resulted in variable colouring of the clay with patches of orange, grey and brown on the exterior, and an unoxidised core and interior to the vessel.

Vessel 4

A second vessel in fabric PRF7, similar in many aspects to Vessel 3, was also recovered from the upper part of the deposit. Less than 5% of the vessel rim was present and therefore a diameter cannot be estimated. Vessel 4 (Fig. 4.3) differed from vessel 3 in having finger-tip decoration along the top-edge of the rim, a pre-firing perforation some 5mm across, evidence for finger-wiping on the exterior of the vessel, and full oxidation on the exterior surface.

Vessels 3 and 4 are very distinctive in their simple form and presence of pre-firing perforations. Locally, they are similar in profile and perforations both to Middle Bronze Age bucket urns such as an example from Easton Lane (Ellison 1989, fig. 88, 53) and to Post-Deverel-Rimbury (PDR) Late Bronze Age tall, convex, urn-like jars such as examples from Twyford Down, Winchester (Seager

Smith & Woodward 2000, fig. 25, 18), Grange Road, Gosport (Timby 1995, fig. 12, 17) and Plumpton Plain Site B (Hawkes 1935, figs 5 and 8–10). The thinness of the walls of the two pots and their direct association with the fineware bowl (Vessel 2) made from a quartz sand fabric (PRQ1) strongly suggests that they are most likely to be PDR Late Bronze Age in date. They are also similar in form to PDR Late Bronze Age jars from sites to the north such as Aldermaston Wharf and Knights Farm subsite 3 (Bradley *et al.* 1980), Reading Business Park (Hall 1992, esp. fig. 41, type 7), and Pingewood (Bradley 1983–5) in Berkshire.

This does not, however, rule out the possibility that these vessels belong to a Middle Bronze Age to Late Bronze Age transitional period. Pottery of this period, which is likely to date from about the 12th to 10th centuries BC in central southern England, is now regularly recognised.

Both perforated vessels were made from the same fabric (PRF7), which has a slightly silty clay matrix with some iron oxides and deliberate flint temper. It is probable that these vessels were locally made with river gravels crushed and added as temper. However, the vessels could have been made east, west or south of Southampton in the flint-rich chalk areas of the South Downs, Dorset Downs and the Isle of Wight, or even north on Salisbury Plain. If so, then the vessels would have been transported to the site, used and deposited.

Fabric group PRF7: a fine sandy clay matrix with a 15% concentration of poorly-sorted, angular, calcined flint temper measuring ≤ 14 mm across but with the majority ≤ 6 mm; the naturally-occurring quartz grains in the matrix are subrounded to rounded in shape, measure ≤ 0.2 mm across and appear in a moderate to common density (15–20% concentration); orange-firing clay.

Petrological report: the clay matrix component of this fabric is characterised by a rare amount (1 to 2%) of rounded to subrounded quartz grains measuring up to 0.2mm across, a moderate amount (7 to 10%) of subrounded quartz grains measuring ≤ 0.1 mm across, a rare amount of muscovite mica flecks measuring ≤ 0.1 mm across, and a rare amount of rounded, iron oxide fragments measuring ≤ 0.2 mm across; all of these inclusions are likely to have been naturally-occurring within

the clay matrix prior to the addition of the flint temper

Discussion

Pit 806 is a deliberate deposit of Post-Deverel-Rimbury Late Bronze Age pottery. PDR Late Bronze Age pottery (c.1100–800 BC) also referred to as Late Bronze Age Plain Ware, is characterised by predominantly plain jars and bowls, which occur prior to the decorated phase of the Late Bronze Age ceramic series (c.800–600 BC). Visually there would have been a strong difference between the convex-profile, barrel-shaped jars in the coarse flint-tempered or vesicular fabrics with their mainly oxidised but variable firing colours and the fine, shiny, mainly dark-firing, shouldered bowl. This contrast is typical of the jar-bowl dichotomy of the PDR Late Bronze Age ceramic range.

The three main vessels were deposited in a shallow pit cut into the natural brickearth, resting one inside another, and covered with soot, burnt clay, a few burnt flints, and soil. It is possible that the vessels were deposited whole, but less than 50% of each vessel was present. There were no rim sherds from the bowl and only a small sherd from the shoulder area indicating that at least 95% of the shoulder area was missing. There were no rim sherds from the coarse, probably grog-tempered, vesicular jar. Although all three bases were stacked one upon the other, less than 50% of the lowest base was present. The deposit of burnt clay and soot above the top vessel also suggests a deliberate sealing layer rather than a plough-disturbed group of pots. It therefore seems unlikely that the vessels were deposited whole, and the fragments were selected for purposeful deposition rather than general rubbish discard. It is interesting that there are several different fabrics and forms represented amongst the three main vessels suggesting a careful selection of vessels for deposition. The range of pots includes those which may be locally made but also one, the middle pot, which could not have been made locally but had to be obtained through trade or travel which might suggest more value or a vessel of different value. The top and bottom vessels were coarsewares and the middle pot a fineware. The top vessel is also represent-

ative of a likely change in ceramic tradition and along with this tradition of change from urns to jars is accompanied by the possibilities of social change. These observations all suggest that this may be a feature of special social significance.

The strong probability that one of these vessels was not made locally is an exciting prospect for the study of trade and contacts amongst Late Bronze Age people in southern Britain (Morris 1994, 374). It is possible that the sandy PRQ1 bowl from pit 806 with its limonite/glaucanite fabric, originated from a location at some distance from West Quay. This is an aspect worth considering due to the location of West Quay on the coast and at the mouth of two rivers. Transportation of pots by boat as part of the daily-required baggage of a trader cannot be ruled out of Late Bronze Age life.

The pit at Ascupart Street

The St Mary's area to the northeast of the site of the medieval town of Southampton has long been known as the site of the middle Saxon town of Hamwic. Despite many excavations the only Bronze Age material recovered has been a scatter of undiagnostic flint (Andrews 1997, 15). Excavations at Ascupart St and Coleman St have now identified a focus of Neolithic and Bronze Age activity beneath the centre of the Saxon town.

The site, SOU 1176, was centred on SU 425120. A full discussion of the evidence is deposited with the site archive (Cottrell 2004b). The site lay on the level flood plain of the River Itchen some 500m to the west of the river. The natural was brickearth. It was overlaid by layer 45, a pale brown, silty clay loam, c200mm thick, a leached and disturbed horizon that contained burnt flints, 15 sherds of Early Bronze Age pottery and one sherd of Roman greyware. In the south-west part of the site, a Bronze Age pit (feature 140) cut layer 45 and was itself cut by a Middle Saxon pit. The Bronze Age pit was oval in plan and vertical-sided with a rounded bottom, and measured 540mm north-south, at least 640mm east-west and was some 500mm deep. Its fill, 141, was brown, silty clay loam containing charcoal and burnt flints. The finds assemblage from this

feature was dominated by prehistoric material. It included 10 worked flints and 73 sherds of Late Bronze Age pottery.

The finds by Matt Leivers

Worked flint

Ten fragments of worked flint were recovered from the Bronze Age pit. One, a heavily rolled broken piece, was possibly Palaeolithic. Two other fragments had been redeposited in an early modern brickearth quarry (feature 104) nearby. Two of the pieces, a tertiary flake from the Bronze Age pit, and a core fragment from the brickearth quarry, had been burnt, but not to the same degree. The remaining fragments, nine from the Bronze Age pit and one from quarry 104, comprised two blades and eight flakes. These may have come from no more than one or two nodules: the colour variation of flint and cortex was small, and there was no obvious difference in the manner of working to distinguish any pieces. They may have been the product of a single episode of knapping, and were probably made, used and discarded as a whole. A similar assemblage was recovered from a feature at SOU 1267 (see above).

Four flints showed evidence of utilisation. Item 160, from the brickearth quarry, was a core rejuvenation flake; edge damage above the platform suggesting possible utilisation. The Bronze Age pit produced item 165, a retouched blade with abrupt partial retouch on the distal third of the right lateral edge of the dorsal surface; item 166, a tertiary flake, utilised with very fine damage along the left lateral edge of the dorsal surface, and item 167, a primary flake with micro-denticulate retouch on the proximal end of the left lateral edge. As far as chronology is concerned, there are no particularly diagnostic tools. The size and quality of the pieces suggests a date between the Late Neolithic and the Late Bronze Age, and the association with the pottery in feature 140 would suggest the Late Bronze Age.

Burnt flint

Pit 140 contained 19 fragments of burnt flint; in addition the top of the natural brickearth produced a total of 158 fragments, and

another 99 fragments were recovered from later features. The burnt flints from pit 140 and the top of the brickearth, and much of those from the later features were probably prehistoric and may represent a scatter from burnt mounds, ovens or hearths. Burnt flint has commonly occurred in prehistoric contexts on sites elsewhere in Hamwic, such as at Six Dials (Andrews 1997).

Prehistoric pottery

Forty-six sherds of pottery weighing 390g were recovered from the pit. They came from two vessels.

Vessel 1

The vessel was most probably a large, Late Bronze Age, Post-Deverel-Rimbury high-shouldered jar with a simple upright rim in a flint-tempered fabric (PRF4). Forty sherds were found in the Bronze Age pit and 3 sherds were found redeposited in later features. Thirty-nine of the sherds were featureless body sherds, but two indicate a shoulder, whilst two rim sherds (which join) (Fig. 5.1) suggest a diameter of c. 340mm–380mm. A single, post-firing perforation was located some 18mm below the rim; it had an exterior diameter of 12mm, and an inner diameter of 5mm maximum.

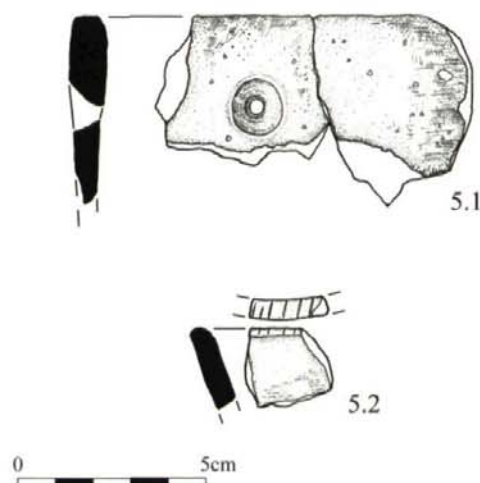


Fig 5 Finds from the Ascupart Street pit (SOU 1176). 5.1 vessel 1; 5.2 vessel 2

Fabric group PRF4: a soft, irregular, fabric containing a moderate (11–25%) amount of medium to very coarse (0.25mm to >3mm), sub-rounded to angular, poorly sorted flint temper. The fabric is irregularly oxidised with predominantly reddish brown outer surfaces and dark grey or black inner surfaces and cores, although variations are present, particularly on rim sherds.

Vessel 2

One rim sherd and 15 plain body sherds (two of which join) came from a single vessel in a sandy fabric. The fabric (PRQ2) was unoxidised, with grey exterior surfaces and dark grey inner surfaces and cores. No form is reconstructable, but the simple upright rim with fingernail impressions (Fig. 5.2) suggests a Late Bronze Age Post-Deverel-Rimbury jar. A possible parallel is provided by Vessel 2 from the West Quay excavations, which was of a very similar fabric (PRQ1).

Fabric group PRQ2: a soft, fine, fabric containing a sparse amount of fine (<0.25mm), sub-angular to angular, well-sorted, naturally-occurring quartz; sparse, very coarse (>3mm), rounded, well-sorted naturally-occurring flint fragments, and sub-rounded to rounded limonite/glaucanite.

Discussion

The two vessels in the pit appear to have been deliberately deposited in groups of sherds. They are typical Late Bronze Age PDR jar and bowl forms, and demonstrate the usual coarseware/fineware distinction. As at West Quay, SOU 859, the association of large coarseware jars with rim perforations in flint-tempered fabrics with a fineware bowl in quartz sand fabrics is notable. Again as at West Quay, the flint-tempered vessels were probably locally made, while the sandy vessel, which includes limonite/glaucanite may have been imported (see Morris above).

IRON AGE

The pit at Regents Park

In 1984 a pit containing early Iron Age artifacts was found in the Regent's Park area of Southampton. A full report has been published

(Cottrell 1986) but the principal facts will be covered here.

The site (SOU 189) was at SU 39201363, on level ground, on the plateau gravels at 16.5m OD, some 170m east of the Tanners Brook stream. The pit was 2.8m long, 1.2m wide and 560mm deep from the surface of the natural gravel. Although cut into the gravel the pit had been filled with deposits of loam. The pit seemed to have been filled in three episodes. The first consisted of some 300mm of sandy loam. This was levelled off and then six pots were placed in the pit. The smaller pots, consisting of two coarseware jars in an organic-tempered fabric (Vessels 1 and 10) and two fineware furrowed bowls tempered with crushed flint and chalk (Vessels 2 and 3) were deposited whole in the centre of the pit. Two larger urn-like vessels in a coarse organic-tempered fabric (Vessels 4 and 8) were deposited to the north of the whole pots; these large vessels had been broken up and deposited as groups of sherds laid flat, sealing a localised deposit of over 4000 grains of carbonised, sprouted barley (*Hordeum vulgare*). To the south of the whole pots was placed a rubber for a saddle quern in Lodsworth greensand from Sussex. The pit was then filled up with a silty loam. Scattered throughout the fill was evidence of burning, with lumps of fired clay, burnt bone fragments, charcoal and burnt flint.

DISCUSSION

At Coleman Street the Neolithic pit was roughly circular, some 780mm in diameter and 600mm deep. Most of the sherds came from the upper part of a large flint-tempered bowl, and there was a handful of sherds from three other vessels. All were Early Neolithic bowl forms and each vessel was in a distinct fabric. Also in the pit were a sarsen saddle quern rubber, five chips of sarsen stone, and a quantity of worked flint. The flint had probably been knapped into the pit as it was filled, by one skilled knapper using good quality flint and one unskilled knapper using poor quality flint. The only tools were a knife and a small blade. Some of the flints had been

burnt and there was charcoal present, suggesting fire played a part in the consignment of the finds.

The Hill Lane pit was destroyed by mechanical excavation so little can be said about the circumstances of the burial of the Neolithic bowl it contained. The pit may have formed part of a group of such features, but no other artifacts were recovered. Its location just south of a stream that bounded the poorer land of Southampton Common to the north may be significant.

At Bowden Lane, the presence of a large Middle Bronze Age Type 3A Bucket Urn placed upright in a pit and perhaps surrounded by a circular ditch, suggests a burial, but the lack of cremated human bone, the presence of a sarsen saddle quern rubber and struck flints in the urn, and the two sherds from a separate vessel placed beneath the urn point to a complex ritual that did not involve human burial. The eight flints in the urn were rough and irregular and included joining pieces; tool production was not the intention, rather it is argued that the flint was worked for its own sake, specifically for inclusion in the urn. The urn also included 34 fragments of burnt flint.

At the West Quay site the pit was a small roughly circular feature, 250mm in diameter at its base, but probably wider above. It contained portions of four Late Bronze Age pottery vessels, including three bases nested together. A variety of fabrics was present; grog, flint, and sand. Three were urn-like jars, two with perforated rims, and the fourth was a bowl. The bowl was the better finished vessel and may have travelled some distance to reach the site. Above the pots the feature had been filled with brickearth, which was covered with a layer of soot and dark reddish brown, burnt clay with burnt flints, suggesting fire played a part in the ritual of deposition.

At Ascupart Street the pit was some 540mm by 640mm by 500mm deep. It contained two vessels. Vessel 1 was most probably a large, Late Bronze Age, PDR high-shouldered, flint-tempered jar with a simple upright rim with perforations. Vessel 2 was a jar in a dark grey, sandy fabric. The pit also contained ten fragments of worked flint, which may have been the product of a single episode of knapping.

Table 1 presence/absence of artifact types

	Pottery	Stone rubber	Worked flint	Burnt flint	Plant remains	Smithing debris
<i>Neolithic</i>						
Coleman Street	X	X	X	X	X	
Hill Lane	X					
<i>Middle Bronze Age</i>						
Bowden Lane	X	X	X	X	X	
<i>Late Bronze Age</i>						
West Quay	X					
Ascupart Street	X		X	X		
<i>Iron Age</i>						
Regents Park	X	X		X	X	X

Three of the flints showed evidence of utilisation. Burnt flint was also present.

The Regents Park pit, dating to the early Iron Age, is the latest in the sequence, but as with the earlier examples it included groups of sherds from pottery vessels of different forms and different fabrics, together with a quern rubber. The rubber is in a glauconitic sandstone from Sussex, rather than a locally sourced stone, and the inclusion of smithy debris suggests new and contemporary dimensions were being added to the ritual.

Examples of complete or partial domestic pots buried upright in pits are known from a number of Middle and Late Bronze Age sites in Hampshire, including Westbury, West Meon, (Lewis & Walker 1977), Portsdown, (Nicholls 1987), and Ellingham Farm, Ringwood, (Butterworth 1996). Other examples from central southern England include Wrecclesham, Surrey (Lowther 1939, 180), Durrington Walls, Wiltshire, (Stone *et al.* 1954), and two Late Bronze Age sites in the Kennet Valley, Aldermaston Wharf and Knights Farm (Bradley *et al.* 1980).

Several small pits containing formerly complete or semi-complete PDR Late Bronze Age vessels have been found at Twyford Down noticeably in Area A, just south of an Early Bronze Age ring-ditch that contained

secondary deposition of Middle Bronze Age urns in the ditch and inner area (Seager Smith & Woodward 2000, 51–2, fig. 25). It is believed that the Late Bronze Age vessels were deliberately deposited, but not in association with human cremations, and that they had been placed in the pits in upright positions with the exception of the smallest jar. Some had slumped in situ, and subsequently all had been disturbed by ploughing. These vessels were very early in the Late Bronze Age sequence and the location of their deposition, 200 metres south of a major ceremonial focus for the dead during the Early and Middle Bronze Age periods, is likely to be significant, possibly representing another focus for social change, in that case the abandonment of cremation ritual. Therefore, there is every possibility that the special deposits in the Southampton pits could signify a similar adjustment within Bronze Age society during the second half of the second millennium BC.

The presence of stone rubbers in three of the pits can be paralleled at a number of other sites in central southern England. A Middle Bronze Age pit at Winnall, Winchester (Hawkes 1970) contained sherds of a globular urn in association with both the lower stone of a saddle quern and the rubber. Hawkes compared this to similar finds of buried querns, at Itford

Hill, Sussex (Burstow & Holleyman, 1957), and Farnham, Surrey (Lowther 1939, 169, 192). Hawkes suggested the possibility that the deliberate deposition of querns in pits, and possibly that of domestic pots, had some ritual significance. The occurrence of quern rubbers in association with complete or partial pots, together with flints apparently worked for the sole purpose of deposition, suggests a possible ritual significance to deposits that could otherwise be interpreted as domestic rubbish. The fact that the pots were often deposited in an incomplete state, and that some of the querns or rubbers were broken, may be related to the deliberate breaking or bending of bronze weapons in apparent ritual deposits, alterna-

tively it may have been a pragmatic choice of redundant goods used for a symbolic offering.

The deposition of pots, flints and rubbers, in some cases associated with fire, appears to be a long-lived practice in the Southampton area (Table 1). The Coleman Street pit is Early Neolithic, the Hill Lane pit could be as old as 3400 BC, the Bowden Lane find has been dated to c.1700–1100 BC, the West Quay and Ascupart Street material is all post-Deverel-Rimbury, 1100–800 BC, while the Regents Park pit was probably filled in during the 7th or early 6th century BC. The similarity of these deposits suggests continuity in ritual practice over at least two millennia, indicating a community deeply rooted in its local culture.

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