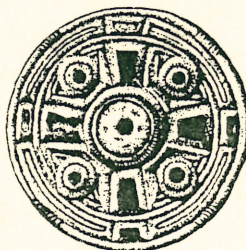


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Late Bronze Age and Roman Activity North of Chatteris Parish Church: An Archaeological Evaluation

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Cambridgeshire County Council

Report No. A153

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SUMMARY

An archaeological evaluation of approximately one hectare of land to the north of the church of St. Peter and St. Paul was undertaken by the Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeological Field Unit in November 1999. Four trenches were dug and revealed features containing prehistoric and Roman remains. Large sherds of at least seven late Bronze Age vessels were found. The pottery may be associated with a burial rite that occurred in a prominent position on Chatteris island. The nature of the group of pottery forms indicates rapid reburial (with the antler and a possible loom weight) with care following discovery. The site may have been adopted later by the church for the similar ritual reasons. The Roman pottery dates from the first century A.D. In spite of the location of the site close to the centre of medieval Chatteris no features that can positively be ascribed to the medieval period have been identified.

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**Late Bronze Age and Roman Activity North of Chatteris Parish Church:
An Archaeological Evaluation
(TL395 861)**

INTRODUCTION

In November 1999 the Archaeological Field Unit (AFU) of Cambridgeshire County Council undertook an evaluation to reveal archaeological remains at land to the north of the church of St. Peter and St. Paul, Chatteris (TL395 861) (Fig. 1). The work was carried out on behalf of Slaley Homes Ltd before development of the land for housing.

GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

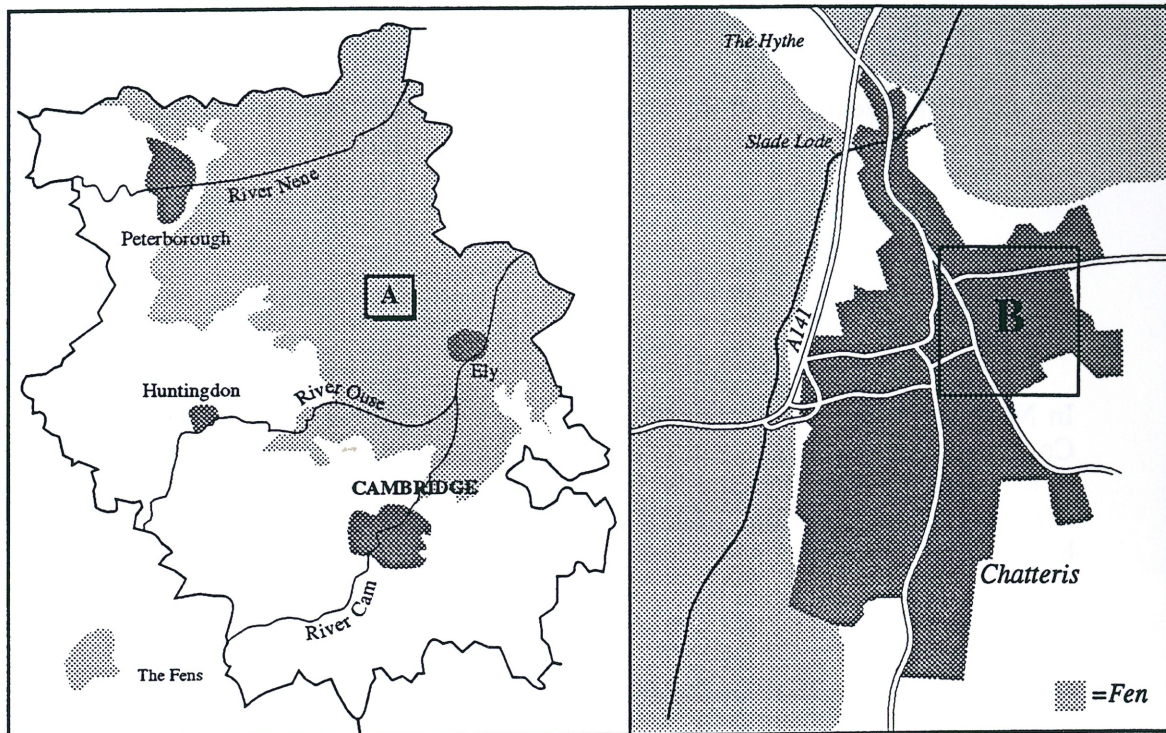
Chatteris is situated on an island of Ampthill clay with patches of March and terrace gravels. The island is surrounded with fen deposits, including peats sealed by marine clays laid down in the early Bronze Age. The site lies on a piece of land that slopes down (by over a metre) to the east, from a level of 9.3m by the church. The higher land, to the west comprises March gravels over clays (BGS 1995). Geological test-pit information from the site was not available to the author of this report but spoil from the area of the test-pits suggests decreasing amounts of gravel eastwards with mainly clays along the eastern edge of the site. Trenches support this evidence with sand and gravel in trench 1 and a more mixed gravel in trench 2 and sand and clay in trenches 3 and 4. The slope of the land has been accentuated by creating a platform on which the pig sheds and slaughter house were built.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The archaeological and historical background of Chatteris is discussed in a desktop survey (Roberts 1999) carried out before intrusive evaluation. The desktop report highlighted the presence of neolithic and Bronze Age activity in the vicinity but other than occasional stray finds no remains of early prehistoric date have been recorded from the town of Chatteris.

Similarly no Iron Age or Roman remains are recorded in the settlement of Chatteris but are well known from other parts of the island.

Documentary evidence and finds suggest occupation of this part of the island from the medieval period with a Benedictine nunnery dating from the early eleventh century and the church dedicated in 1352. The proximity of the church suggested a high potential for medieval remains to be found on the site.



TL
Figure 1 Site Location Plan

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METHODOLOGY AND CONSTRAINTS

A pig shed (with hard standing to the east), agricultural buildings and a slaughter house occupied the western part of the site. The whole of the area appears to have been under pasture at least since the end of the nineteenth century and probably for much longer. Four trenches were opened using a wheeled excavator with a 1.6m wide ditching bucket.

The total area opened by machine was approximately 205 sq.m. The trenches were planned, photographed and recorded using the standard techniques of the AFU. Modern intrusive features, such as boreholes, were recorded in plan but not excavated. In the following report numbers assigned to fills and deposits are given in plain text and cut numbers in bold text.

RESULTS

Trench 1

Trench 1 (51m long) was located close to the south-western corner of the site, with one part approximately parallel to the boundary with the church and the other extending northwards at right-angles (see Fig. 1).

This is one of the highest parts of the site and revealed sand and gravel under approximately 0.6m of topsoil and subsoil (slightly clay silts with small quantities of gravel). The depth of the over-burden increased towards the east.

At the western end of the trench the corner of a back-filled borehole was encountered. Close to this was the relatively recent burial (2) of a medium sized animal (probably dog, only the rear limb bones were present in the trench). Along the southern edge of the trench were three irregular shallow features (6, 8 and 12) which appear to be the remains of trees which were shown on the 1926 Ordnance Survey map. Four discrete features were noted along the northern half of the trench. Two were excavated – 4 was ovoid with a concave base with gently sloping sides. The fill (3) was a very dark greyish brown slightly clay silt with very occasional gravel. There were no finds from this feature. Feature 10 was approximately circular (diameter 0.4m) with a flat base and concave sides. The fill was dark grey brown slightly clay silt and contained no finds. Two similar features (14 and 16) with similar fills were also noted. In the southern section of the trench an area of burning was noted in the subsoil. This was approximately 5m wide and 0.4m from the base of the trench. The heat had discoloured the gravel in the base of the trench. Apart from the high ash content there were no finds from this deposit. To the east and in the section at approximately the same level was an area of brick rubble. This did not appear to form any part of a structure and many of the bricks were broken and abraded.

At the eastern end of the trench a shallow, flat bottomed feature (20), extending almost 1.5m from the southern section, was excavated. The fill (19) was a dark grey brown clay silt with rare pebbles and large gravel fragments. This contained fragments of at least five Bronze Age pottery vessels (including two with slashed rims, a sherd with finger impressions, and an almost complete base, see Appendix I)

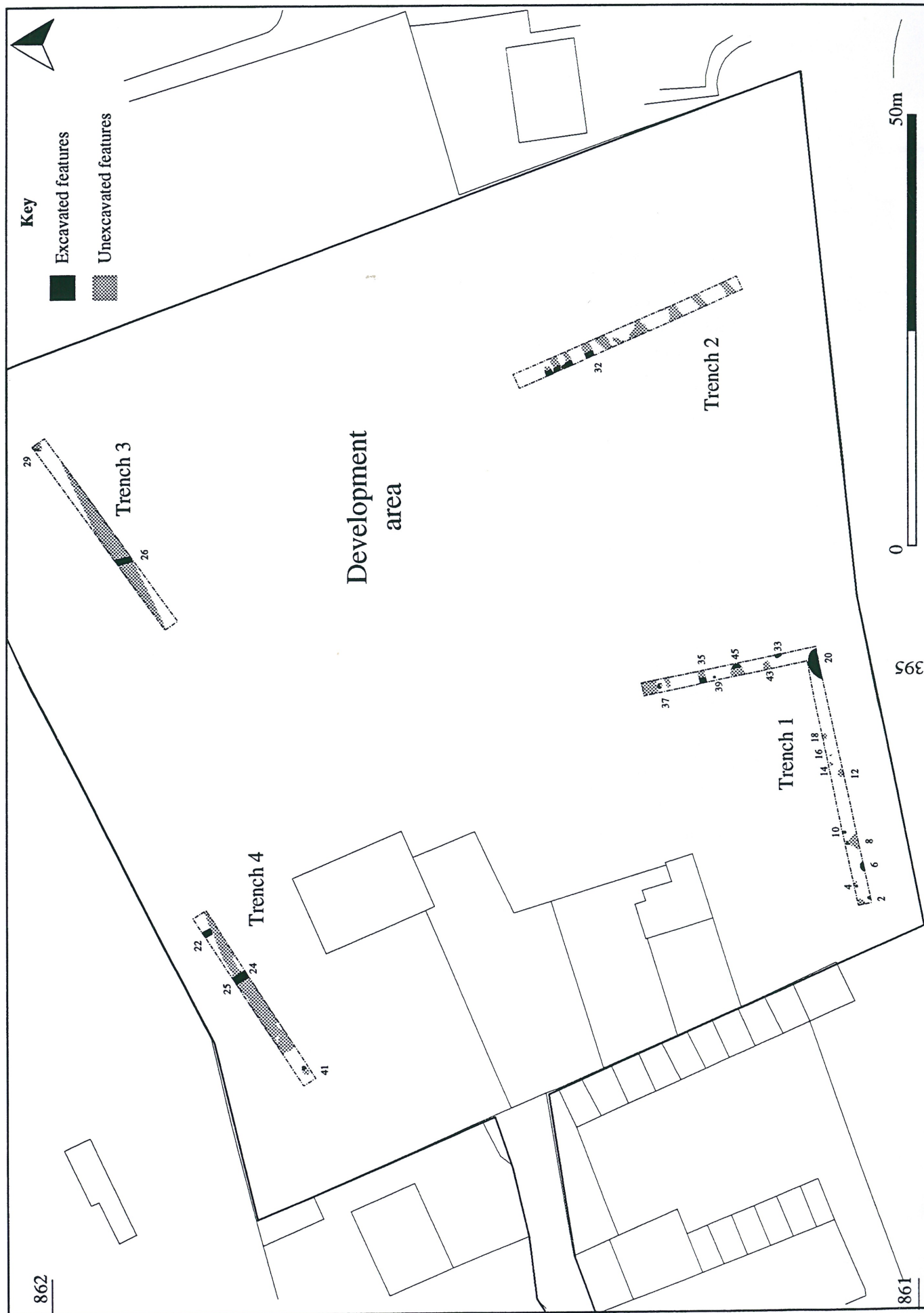


Figure 2 Plan of trenches showing archaeological features

and animal bone (including a burr and pedicle of antler). This feature was 0.18m deep with gently sloping, slightly concave sides.

In the north-south oriented part of trench 1 part of a posthole (33) was revealed, this was 0.5m wide and 0.35m deep with a flat base and steep, almost vertical sides. On the southern edge was a shallow scoop, possibly used to place a post. No finds were recovered from this feature.

Two irregular features (43 and 45) were noted extending across most of the width of the trench from the western section. One of these, 45, was excavated. It had a very irregular base and was shallow and irregular. To the north a small circular feature (39) was excavated. This had steep sides and a concave base and was 0.17m deep and 0.25m wide. The fill was dark grey clay silt and there were no finds.

Seven metres from the northern end of trench 1 was a linear feature (35) which extended east-west across the trench. It was 0.8m wide with shallow sloping concave sides and base and 0.2m deep. The single fill, 36, was a dark grey brown slightly sandy clay silt with small fragments of gravel towards the base. This feature contained two fragments of bone and four small fragments of pottery.

At the northern end of the trench was a sub-rectangular feature (37), 0.07m deep, 0.8m long and 0.6m wide. The single fill (38) was a dark grey brown clay silt with a small percentage of sand. A single abraded sherd of pottery was noted on the surface of this fill.

Trench 2

Trench 2 (28m long) was oriented north-south, in the south-eastern part of the site. The overburden comprised 0.25m of topsoil and 0.3m of sub-soil. The base of the trench contained coarse gravel with irregular patches of silty sandy gravel. Several features in this trench were investigated and most appeared to be shallow, irregular containing small quantities of sub-soil and no artefactual material. One linear feature (32) ran approximately east-west across the trench. The sides were concave and the base flat. The single fill (31) was a sandy clay silt with a moderate amount of gravel and contained two small fragments of abraded pottery and four fragments of bone.

Trench 3

Trench 3 (26.5m long) ran approximately east-west in the north-eastern part of the site. The overburden comprised 0.25m of topsoil and a very clay silty subsoil with very rare gravels, the trench was over 1m deep at its eastern end. Fragments of late Iron Age/Roman pottery were recovered from the machine spoil heap, including s. Running obliquely down the trench was a linear feature (26) which was steep sided, possibly V-shaped, cut into the natural gravels and was over 0.6m deep in the excavated section. This feature contained at least two fills, 27 and 28. The upper fill, 27, was a dark brown sandy clay silt with very occasional gravel. It contained fragments of animal and bird bone and unabraded fragments from several ceramic vessels, including both fine and coarse wares (including a copy of a *terra nigra* vessel) attributed to a Romano-British date. The lower fill, 28, was an olive grey silty clay with occasional gravel and a few larger stones. This fill contained no artefactual material.

At the eastern end of the trench was a pit, 29, which extended beyond the edge of the trench. It appeared to be circular and cut into clay and gravel in the base of the trench. The sides were shallow and the base irregular, it was 0.12m deep. The single fill, 30, was a very sticky dark grey brown silty clay and contained a small fragment of animal bone.

Trench 4

Trench 4 (23m long) ran approximately east-west in the north-western part of the site. Archaeological features were visible cut into the natural sand and gravel 1m below the present ground surface. Fragments of ceramic 'dog-dishes' (one with a metallic brown and one with a metallic grey finish) were found in the spoil heap, with other Romano-British pottery fragments, animal bone and a decorated bone knife handle (Fig. 3). The main feature in this trench was linear, running obliquely down the trench. This ditch, 24, had steep sides and a flat base and the excavated section was 0.4m deep. On the northern edge a shallow gully, 25, was cut through the sandy natural and into ditch 24. The fills were indistinguishable. The fill, 23, was a sandy clay silt with occasional gravel. The fill contained fragments of animal bone and pottery with various fabrics (grey wares and shelly ware) and has been dated to a Romano-British period following initial examination.

Ditch 24 was cut at the eastern end of the trench by a north-south oriented linear feature, 22. This was 0.2m deep with shallow sloping sides and a flat base. The fill, 21, was a dark brown clay sandy silt with occasional gravel and contained fragments of post-medieval building material and coarse pottery.

At the western end of the trench was a shallow pit, 41, which had very shallow sloping sides and a flat base. The fill was a slightly sandy clay silt with occasional gravel and no artefactual material.

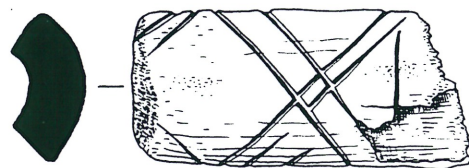


Figure 3 Decorated bone knife handle (scale 1:1)

DISCUSSION

Features on the site indicate two main phases of activity. In the southern part of the site one feature, 20, contained a large quantity of late Bronze Age pottery, including some large, unabraded fragments. The location of the site on fairly steeply sloping land on the edge of the island is similar to Bronze Age barrows around the edge of the more southerly parts of the island which slope down to the fen. The higher land in the churchyard (continuing under the north wall of the churchyard onto the site) may indicate the remains of a barrow which has been taken over for ritual during the

Christian period. No prehistoric remains were recovered from excavations in the southern part of the churchyard in the early 1990s (Macaulay, pers. comm.).

The other main phase of occupation of the site was during the late Iron Age/early Roman period (first century AD) and appears to have been restricted to the northern part of the site. The main feature dating to this phase is a large ditch which appears to continue through trenches 3 and 4 (contexts 24 and 26). The presence of relatively large, unabraded sherds from domestic vessels indicates settlement close to the development site.

It is reported by a neighbouring land owner that an underground stream runs through the gravels on the higher ground at the west of the site and this was confirmed by the borehole evidence which revealed water at a fairly high level. It is, therefore, possible that the irregular linear features and ditch in trench 2 may represent drainage features and water washing through the gravels.

CONCLUSIONS

Before this evaluation the potential for the presence of Bronze Age and Romano-British remains on the site was considered moderate to low, although occupation of the island during these periods was extensive and is well known. The single pit with antler, possible loom weight fragments and a large quantity of well preserved prehistoric pottery strongly suggests that more archaeological remains dating to this period (possibly even a barrow and burial) await investigation in the immediate proximity of Trench 1. The collection of pottery, combined with the antler and loom weight fragments suggests secondary deposition following re-use of the site, perhaps as part of a similar rite (Appendix I). A similar phenomenon (deliberate deposition of large Bronze Age sherds with an almost complete loom weight) was noted in Late Bronze Age contexts at Dimmocks' Cote, Wicken (Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeological Field Unit excavation archive report).

The Romano-British features in Trenches 3 and 4 also hint at adjacent activity, probably settlement, dating to the conquest period, within and beyond the northern part of the site. It is not surprising that the present town has been built over earlier remains but it was thought, following the desktop study, that the medieval town may have extended north of the church and east of the High Street on to the development site. No medieval features were identified during the evaluation and it would appear that the settlement at this time was restricted to the higher parts of the island, to the west, with pasture and ridge and furrow agriculture on the margins of the island.

The evaluation has demonstrated, however, good preservation of prehistoric and Romano-British remains on the site as well as demonstrating the absence of medieval settlement in this part of Chatteris. The absence of medieval occupation, and long term use of the land for pasture, has helped to preserve earlier remains.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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The brief for archaeological work was written by Andy Thomas, County Archaeology Office, who also visited the site and monitored the evaluation.

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APPENDIX I – The Bronze Age Pottery from High Street, Chatteris

by Morag Woudhuysen

General Background

Earlier fieldwork and publications saw Bronze Age pottery fitting into a simple sequential scheme of classification which went smoothly from beakers to urns. More recent fieldwork and the re-examination of earlier work has suggested a more complicated picture with a far stronger emphasis on local and regional developments. Radio-carbon dating has shown that some pottery traditions were contemporaneous, rather than sequential. Regional differences, which still remain only partially understood, have added to the complexity of the picture. Despite this, there are still some general principles which may be applied to Bronze Age pottery.

The Earlier Bronze Age pottery tended to be decorated with considerable care and by the use of some mechanical device. These may have been small combs or finely notched pieces of bone pressed into the wet clay to form lines of small impressions, twists, knots or plaits of cord pressed into the clay, or bird bones used to produce repetitive indentations. Such methods reflect the earlier Neolithic decorative traditions. In general, such decoration is found on the upper part of pots (apart from beakers which form a separate group).

Caution should be applied when using decoration as a factor to date pottery. Although there were broad preferences in decorative styles between the Early Bronze Age and the Late Bronze Age, it is possible to find overlaps between techniques and styles. Lawson (1984) fig 6.2, for example, suggests both comb decorated and fingertipped urns occurred contemporaneously in Early Bronze Age contexts in Norfolk.

Early Bronze Age pots tended to not only be decorated with considerable care but the fabric was often quite fine with carefully smoothed surfaces. By contrast, Later Bronze Age pottery tends to be thicker and to contain coarse fillers. Where later decoration occurs it tends towards being formed by scratched or burnished lines, or finger tipping. Profiles tend to be slacker. Judging by the overall fabric, the slight evidence of vessel shapes, the quality of finish and the slight decoration present the Chatteris sherds appear to be from the Later Bronze Age period.

Across southern and eastern England the Later Bronze Age pottery has broadly been recognised as Deverel-Rimbury-type pottery. The pottery from Chatteris fits into this group. More recent analysis of Later Bronze Age pottery by Ellison (1975) has suggested that in southern England ten shapes can be recognised between c1400-900BC and a further nine shapes between 900-700BC. The Chatteris material is not extensive enough to use a closer dating than that already suggested. The chronologies and typologies for southern England may not match those for the eastern regions but the general forms and dating suggested by Ellison reinforce the idea that the Chatteris material is Late Bronze Age in date and, broadly, can be matched by similar material elsewhere.

There are three forms of pot which occur in the Later Bronze Age and which are seen as relevant to an analysis of the Chatteris material:

1 Globular urns

The body of such pots is globular and the neck often upright and terminating in a simple rim. Surface treatment may include smoothing the outside of the pot and the production of a gentle shine. These pots tend to be better finished and made in less heavily gritted fabrics than the barrel and bucket urns. Decoration tends to be limited to zones around the neck and shoulder area and is formed by incised or tooled lines arranged, often, in simple geometric patterns

2 Barrel urns

These tend to be taller than the globular urns and stand c40-50 cms. The mouth may be the same diameter as the base, or slightly wider. Some slight impression of shaping may be added by a simple raised cordon or some finger tipping decoration, but barrel urns may be plain. They may have rounded rims or flat rims. A total lack of distinguishing features is often the characteristic of these pots.

3 Bucket urns

These share many of the characteristics of the barrel urn but have a slightly a more shaped profile where the upper part of the pot widens below the rim into a collared zone and the pot then decreases in size below this. This shape has a very long history and has been likened to the bi-conical pots which appear to be earlier, and may reflect metal *situla* shapes. Because the pot widens below the rim, sherds from this area of the pot can appear to have a slightly concave profile. Rims on such pots come in a variety of shapes: sub-round, somewhat flattened or inward sloping. It is my impression that inward sloping rims tend to be less sharply defined in later pots. Indeed, as a very broad generalisation, any shapes which survive from the Earlier Bronze Age tend to be more simple and less sharply executed in the Later Bronze Age.

Both barrel and bucket urns in the Deverel-Rimbury tradition were often made in thick and sometimes rather crude fabrics. The coarse tempering, which is present in the Chatteris sherds is characteristic of the Deverel-Rimbury tradition. The perceived crudeness of these pots (which is, perhaps, over emphasised when the pottery of the preceding Earlier Bronze Age is used for comparison) has led to suggestions that they were made as funerary vessels and, perhaps, fired on the cremation pyre. The Chatteris pots, although thick walled, appear to have been made carefully. They have flat bases and would have stood well, while the walls of the pots appear to have been carefully smoothed and wiped.

Common to both bucket and barrel urns is the use of finger-tipped decoration. Although this can be found in the Early Bronze Age on both rims and bodies (Coles and Harding, 1979) finger-tipped decoration is far more common in the Late Bronze Age. It may be applied to rims, to raised cordons or to applied bands of clay.

In practise, there is often little real difference between bucket and barrel urns. They are similar in size, while the collar of a bucket urn can be so vestigial as to resemble a barrel urn which has a cordon. All three types of pots, however, appear to be contemporary.

Although the primary use of Bronze Age pots cannot be verified, globular, bucket and barrel urns have all been found being used to hold cremations. For this purpose the

pots were inserted into the ground either upright and containing the ashes, or inverted over the ashes. Large, spread out cemeteries result from these burial rites. The location of the cemeteries may be related to earlier Bronze Age barrows, but in eastern England such cemeteries often have no earlier Bronze Age focus. This may be a false impression due to early antiquarians failing to look for barrows or failing to notice the much reduced remains of barrows. Many excavations in the 1800s took place when pots were uncovered and these, rather than the landscape in which they had been buried, became the focus of interest.

Discussion of the pottery

The Chatteris collection consists of rim, base and body sherds from different pots. Rim-sherds from at least seven pots were present and base sherds from four separate pots could be recognised. Body sherds were less distinctive but it was clear that sherds from several other pots which could not be linked to either the rims or bases were present.

Nearly all the sherds were coarse, contained noticeable tempers and were hand made. Both shell and fine flint fragments had been used as tempers for the clay. Some crystalline grit was also present. The shell and flint gritting was an essential addition to the raw clay and would have helped to lessen thermal shock, both when the pottery was initially fired and in any later heatings. This may suggest either that the pottery was initially intended to be used for cooking purposes and only subsequently became used for a cremation, or that the primary purpose was as a cremation vessel which, due to the temper, would be able to withstand the high temperatures of a cremation.

Rims

Rim 1

The largest rim sherd was c26 x 14 cms. and came from a pot c20 cm diam. The rim was irregular and probably formed by holding one hand inside the mouth of the pot and running a smooth surface (another finger?) along the rim. The result is a slightly rounded rim with an angular line on the inside caused by the clay being lightly pressed against the inner hand. The pot walls were c1 cm thick and the fabric contained flint gritting. Although the sherd was 14 cms deep, no shaping of the wall occurred. The slightly baggy, undifferentiated shape suggests this was a barrel urn. The sherd had been broken in antiquity.

Almost certainly the whole pot was made with one hand kept flat against the inner surface while the fingers of the other hand pushed and pressed the clay from the outside to raise the pot walls. This suggestion is supported by the faint finger moulding which can be felt on the inside of the pot and by comparison of the inner and outer faces. The outer face, which would have been pushed and pressed, has remained uneven; the inner surface which would have been held flat against a hand has a much finer surface. This has been caused by small amounts of fine clay particles being raised from the clay by hand movement and, effectively, creating a fine slip on the inner surface. The inner layer of water and fine clay particles may have been responsible for the inner surface of the pot drying out more slowly. At the initial firing of the pot this has resulted in the inner surface opening up with fine

cracks. These cracks have not weakened the pot, they are simply a result of differential water retention and evaporation from the two surfaces of the clay during firing.

Rims 2 and 3

These two rim fragments appear to be similar in shape and fabric to Rim 1, although less thick. The rim tops are smoothed and near flat. One of the sherds has a dark carbon-like deposit on it.

Rim 4

Approx. 4 x 8 cm. This rim sherd is less obviously tempered than many of the other sherds. The fabric is dark grey. The rim has been flattened and slopes slightly inwards. The upper surface has been decorated with diagonal nicks by drawing a fine edge across the unfired rim. Below the rim the neck curves in slightly before coming out to form a slight shoulder. The overall profile is slack, but the shape suggests this may have been a bucket urn.

The inner surface of the sherd is relatively smooth (as in Rim 1) but the outer surface has been roughly wiped down. The wipe marks appear to be fairly uniform, suggesting that a slightly rounded c1 cm wide tool was used – this may have been no more than a wooden spatula. The rim edge is finer than the rest of the body.

Rim 5

The fabric of this 4 x 5 cm sherd differs from all the others having a softer feel to it. The fabric is more smoothly finished on the brown surfaces. A few small chalk filler fragments are visible, but this sherd appears to have been tempered predominantly with grog. The rim has been carefully shaped and sloped down inwards with a faint bevel formed on the inner face. It has been decorated by two finger-nail impressions in the sloping face of the rim. At c1.5 cm below the rim, the wall had been pierced by a small hole sloping downwards into the pot. This had been done before the pot had been fired. Although the rim sherd has a limited depth of c5 cm it suggests that the pot may have widened very slightly before curving slightly downwards; this would suggest the rim may have been from a barrel urn or a smaller pot with slightly curved walls.

Rim 6

A noticeably fine sherd c2.5 x 3 cm and c0.5 cm thick. The rim has a square profile which has been formed by wiping the top flat and, as a consequence it is slightly inturned.

Rim 7

A light brown sherd c4 x 4.5 cm. The sherd is finely flint tempered and the rim square in profile. The sherd curves in immediately below the neck, and then outwards, suggesting this may have been a bucket urn.

Rim 8

This small fragment c2.5 x 2 cm is a finer and softer fabric than all the other sherds. The rim has a triangular profile and both faces appear to have been wiped and smoothly finished.

The rims form an interesting group of sherds due to their variety. The two inward-sloping decorated ones may be seen as having antecedents in Early Bronze Age forms of pottery.

Bases

Evidence for four bases was present.

Base 1

This was almost complete and consisted of five sherds which gave the diameter of c16 cm. The fabric was light brown on the inside and outside and contained some large chalk grits. The base was noticeably flat and the walls rose cleanly from it, at a near right-angle, and then widened out. A line of dark carbon-like material could be seen on the inside of the base around the angle where the wall and base of the pot met. This deposit was not present over the central area of the base.

Base 2

This was too small to suggest a diameter. It shared the characteristics of shape with Base 1, but had large flint grits.

Base 3

This sherd had large chalk grits in the fabric. The fabric was noticeably thicker than any of the other sherds and c1.2 cm thick. The fabric had been carefully smoothed on both the inside and outside, and a line of wiping on the inside, at the wall/base angle, remains visible. The diameter was probably c16 cms.

Of particular interest was a small patch of fine flint grits embedded in the small surviving area of the underside of this sherd. The sherd itself has not been tempered with flint, but with chalk. The presence of these fine grits may have been due to an accident of manufacture, and of no significance. Getting a flat bottom to a pot (and all these bases are noticeably flat) is technically quite complicated. Merely pressing out wet clay with fingertips can produce a flat surface. Because of the hidden but still present stresses in the wet clay, caused by fingertip pressure, a base formed in such a way is likely to curve or warp on firing. Rolling clay flat removes the problem of stress pockets, but the pressure of rolling tends to encourage the clay to stick thoroughly to the underlying smooth surface. This means that damage can occur when trying to remove the pot from the surface. In later periods this problem was solved by pulling a wire between the wet clay and the forming surface, thus cutting the pot free. This technique appears unknown in the Bronze Age. It is possible that this fine flint layer represents a dusting of the flat forming surface before the pot was made, in order for it to be removed more easily.

Base 4

This sherd retains no trace of side walls but its flatness suggests it should be seen as a base sherd.

All these sherds are noticeably flat which suggests they were formed on a smooth surface; their subsequent flatness retained through firing indicates the care and skill which has been applied to the manufacture of these pots.

Decorated sherd

Only one sherd in this collection was decorated. The sherd has a marked curvature, suggesting it came from along the angled shoulder line. The decoration consists of three shallow fingertip impressions and (possibly) a shallow band of clay. The sherd is too small to say whether the decoration was originally applied in any kind of pattern.

Other sherds

Of the other sherds one dark grey sherd with no visible tempering and well smoothed surfaces was noticeable. Several sherds appeared to show slight curves which suggested they might have come from the shoulder area of a bucket urn. A group of noticeably thin and well fired sherds could be identified as coming from one specific pot; two of these sherds had an ancient break but fitted exactly. Most sherds, however, had no distinguishing features.

Overall the pottery represents a significant number of vessels. Several sherds can be joined together.

Dating and parallels

The features discussed above all point to this pottery being in the Deverel-Rimbury tradition. Two published reports support this suggestion.

Piggott (1938) reported on a Middle Bronze Age and Deverel-Rimbury group in Hampshire. The primary Middle Bronze Age burial had been placed under a barrow and the cremation contained by an upright tri-conical urn/collared urn, with inward sloping rim. A later Deverel-Rimbury urnfield then occupied part of the earlier Bronze Age barrow. The pottery from this later period consisted of globular pots and variations of bucket and barrel urns, together with some smaller, totally plain, vertically sided flat bottomed pots c8-16 cm tall.

Chatteris has not produced sherds of any recognisably globular pots. One of the rims, however, was in a noticeably finer ware and there was one body sherd which was quite noticeably different from the rest. Conceivably these two different wares could have come from a globular pot, bearing in mind the finer and better finished fabric which appears to be a characteristic of these pots.

Some of the plain rim sherds from Chatteris appear to be from barrel urns, while the slack profiled sherds suggest bucket urns were present. Small, plain pots, as found by Piggott, have not been recognised, but it is conceivable that such pots may be present – represented by some of the rims and body sherds found – and unrecognised.

The Ardleigh excavation (Erith and Longworth, 1960) produced similar material. The urnfield deposition found here suggested that pots had been buried in groups. These might have reflected family or social grouping. The excavators did not identify any surface mounding which could be recognised as the remains of earlier barrows but suggested that the clustering of urns into groups might suggest the original location of barrows. They did not recover any Early Bronze Age material which might have been expected to have survived on the site if there were Early Bronze Age Bronze barrows and burials here originally.

The urns found at this site were either inverted or positioned upright. Eighty-eight bucket urns were found and thirteen globular ones. My impression is that globular urns are always in the minority on a site. The Ardleigh urns were all bucket urns and were fingertipped. This decoration ranged from all-over decoration to single applied or raised strips with lines of fingertip impressions. The globular pots were better made with some slipping and possible burnish. Although the writers saw this as a coastal Essex group, there are some similarities with the Chatteris sherds.

The excavators also wrote that this pottery suggested ‘a strong local conservatism in the potting industry of the region’. However, they did not find any additional material to give an independent date, and they failed to offer any speculation about the dating of this group. It can be presumed to be Late Bronze Age, but a tighter date would have been useful. Conservatism in East Anglia potting traditions is regularly mentioned in reports – but never defined chronologically.

Burgess (1974) gives some C14 dates for Deverel-Rimbury material, but these have all been obtained from sites in Wessex. His calibrated BC dates range from 2140-850BC. Care needs to be taken in using dates from one region for material from another. My own feeling is that the Chatteris material falls into a shorter time range than Burgess’s range and, most comfortably c1200-700BC.

The Deposition of the sherds

The nature of the group is unusual in that it consists of a variety of vessels all recovered from the same feature. This suggests these sherds are not in their primary position but, at some date, have been gathered together and reburied. The pit in which they were found had neither ash or calcinated bone in it (J. Roberts pers. comm.) which, if these pots are assumed to have had a cinerary function, supports the idea that these sherds had been removed from their original position.

Some sherds join and others have noticeably unabraded edges. Either once-larger sherds were placed in the pit and they have broken *in situ* under the weight of earth, or the sherds represent pots broken elsewhere and then fairly promptly reburied before the edges abraded. However the breaks were originally caused, the reburial of the sherds would suggest care and, perhaps, continuity of respect for the area.

Given these sherds have been reburied, they must be regarded as a secondary deposition and as a not necessarily contemporary group. Because Bronze Age pottery

of this sort is difficult to date I would be very cautious about offering any date distinction between these sherds; perhaps the inwards sloping rims might be seen as slightly earlier than the other ones.

Along with the pottery was found a substantial piece of antler. This had been placed in the pit on top of the pottery (J. Roberts pers. comm.). Grave goods are rare in Late Bronze Age urnfields but antlers have been found in association with earlier Bronze Age burials. Fox (1923) records a burial at Mildenhall where a food vessel and eighteen red deer antlers were recovered. The food vessel would suggest that this burial was of an earlier date than the Chatteris material, and my impression is that deer antlers are more commonly associated with earlier burials. This, in turn may be a reflection of the climatic and agricultural changes which occurred in the Middle Bronze Age. If antler is readily associated with burials of an earlier date, then this raises the question of whether the Chatteris pottery may have been gathered from a cemetery originally started at an earlier date. Given that the dating of the pottery is quite broad, this raises the question of whether some of the sherds might also be earlier than is apparent.

I do not think, on the pottery, that is possible to date this group more finely, but the deposition of the sherds and the placing of the antler above them does suggest that this was a carefully deposited group with ritual significance.

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APPENDIX II – CONTEXT LIST

Context	Category	Type	Description
1	fill	burial	dog bones in very loose fill
2	cut	burial	oval, modern
3	fill	posthole	very dark greyish brown clay silt
4	cut	posthole	shallow, ovoid
5	fill	root hole	irregular, natural
6	cut	root hole	irregular, natural
7	fill	root hole	irregular, natural
8	cut	root hole	irregular, natural
9	fill	post hole	dark grey brown slightly clay silt
10	cut	post hole	circular, flat base, concave sides
11	fill	root hole	irregular, natural
12	cut	root hole	irregular, natural
13	fill	post hole	dark grey brown slightly clay silt
14	cut	post hole	circular (unexcavated)
15	fill	post hole	dark grey brown slightly clay silt
16	cut	post hole	circular (unexcavated)
17	fill	pit	dark grey brown slightly clay silt
18	cut	pit	oval? (unexcavated), extending beyond section
19	fill	pit	dark grey brown clay silt
20	cut	pit	shallow, sub-circular, flat bottomed
21	fill	ditch	dark brown clay sandy silt
22	cut	ditch	linear, flat base, 0.2m deep, 0.8m wide
23	fill	ditch	sandy clay silt
24	cut	ditch	linear, >0.4m deep
25	cut	gully	curvilinear, 0.08m deep, 0.25m wide
26	cut	ditch	linear, steep sided, >0.6m deep
27	fill	ditch	dark brown sandy clay silt
28	fill	ditch	olive grey silty clay
29	cut	pit	?circular, shallow sides, irregular base, 0.12m deep
30	fill	pit	dark grey brown silty clay
31	fill	ditch	sandy clay silt, moderate gravel
32	cut	ditch	linear, concave sides, flat base
33	cut	post hole	circular, 0.5m wide, 0.35m deep
34	fill	post hole	mottled dark brown sandy clay silt
35	cut	ditch	linear, 0.75m wide, 0.2m deep
36	fill	ditch	dark grey brown clay sandy silt
37	cut	pit	shallow oval, 0.07m deep
38	fill	pit	dark grey brown clay sandy silt
39	cut	post hole	circular, 0.26m wide, 0.17m deep
40	fill	post hole	dark brown sandy clay silt
41	cut	pit	shallow, oval
42	fill	pit	dark grey brown sandy clay silt



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