

## UNCORRECTED ARCHIVE REPORT

## APPENDIX 4 - EARLY PREHISTORIC POTTERY by Alistair Barclay

**Introduction**

This report describes the Neolithic and early to middle Bronze Age pottery (72 sherds, 2966 g) recovered during the excavations (Table 1). The assemblage includes a small number of complete and fragmentary vessels from funerary contexts as well as a series of sherd groups recovered from pits. The condition of the pottery varied depending on context.

**Early-Middle Neolithic**

Thirteen sherds of early to middle Neolithic pottery were recovered from small pit deposits F512 (one rim sherd) and F518 (12 sherds). Diagnostic sherds include a simple rim from a plain bowl from F512 (Fig 13, No 1), and from F518 two inturned rims from either plain bowls or early Ebbsfleet ware vessels (Fig 13 no. 2; see Piggott 1962, fig 10.W2 and fig. 11.P5 and P9), and the upper part from a decorated bowl (Fig 13, No 3).

The decorated bowl (No. 3) is an unusual vessel and is not easy to parallel. Globular bowls of closed form occur in Ebbsfleet ware assemblages at Runnymede and West Kennet (Longworth and Varndell 1996; Piggott 1965, fig 11 P8) and more rarely in early Neolithic bowl assemblages (see Avery 1982 and note nos 10 and 19). The decoration on this vessel consists of finger-nail nicks on the back of the rim, which is a feature of both early Ebbsfleet and decorated bowl assemblages, a herringbone band of impressed thumb-nail, and possible zonal decoration involving cuneiform impressions. Such impressions occur on early Neolithic decorated bowls including examples at Abingdon (Avery 1982) and Whiteleaf (Smith 1954, fig. 5, no 1) and the zonal arrangement can be compared with other decorated bowls from Abingdon (Avery 1982, nos 2 and 68). This vessel has traits that can be found in both decorated bowl and Ebbsfleet ware assemblages. In terms of date and style the pottery from pit 518 has its closest parallels with the pottery from Whiteleaf and Runnymede Bridge (Smith 1954; Kinnes 1991; Longworth and Varndell 1996), both of which are likely to belong to the end of the early Neolithic (c.3500 cal BC).

**Discussion**

Taken together, the plain and decorated bowl pottery is likely to be broadly contemporary with the oval barrow and its primary burial (see main text). This pottery has few local parallels from the Upper Thames gravels, but does have some similarity with the pottery recovered from the Whiteleaf barrow on the Chiltern Ridge and assemblages containing bowl and early Ebbsfleet ware in the middle Thames valley, such as Runnymede Bridge.

### **Late Neolithic Grooved Ware**

Pit 287 contained four sherds of Grooved Ware as well as an intrusive ?Iron Age sherd. The four sherds derive from two separate vessels. Two sherds including a pointed internally bevelled rim are from a plain vessel of probable bowl form (Fig 13, No 4). The remaining two sherds are possibly also from a bowl. One sherd, a rim, is decorated with cord impressed lines and has an applied, perforated, lug (Fig 13, No 5).

Grooved Ware bowls have been recovered from a number of sites in the upper and middle Thames valley, including Radley and Yarnton: (Barclay 1999, illus 2.3) and from the Chiltern Ridge (Matthews 1976).

### **Late Neolithic/ Early Bronze Age Beaker and Other Sherds**

A few probable Beaker sherds were recovered from pit 906/A/1 and, more doubtfully, later prehistoric ploughsoil 158/A/1 (see Table 1) which are not further discussed.

A complete (fragmentary) Beaker was recovered from grave 618 (Fig 16).

#### ***Fabric***

The fabric has been made from a poorly sorted clay that contains a number of small highly polished pebbles of quartz and ironstone some of which exceed 5 mm in size. The clay also contains a greater number of highly polished and well-rounded quartz grits (up to 1.5 mm), finer quartz sand and possibly mica. Angular grog (almost certainly crushed pottery) has been added to the clay matrix. This material is generally well-sorted with fragments ranging in size from 1-3 mm, however, other larger fragments occur, some of which are in excess of 10 mm in length.

#### ***Form***

The vessel stands 190 mm tall and has a sinuous, almost biconical, profile with a clear angular carination at the shoulder (waist), which is just below midway up the vessel. The rim diameter is 133 mm, slightly less wide than the waist, while the base has a diameter of 73 mm. The rim has an out-turned and squared profile. The wall-thickness is 10 mm. The base, which is almost perfectly flat, has a slight lip and has been worn through use.

#### ***Decoration***

The decoration consists of very faint, almost invisible, impressed finger-nail, which forms an all-over pattern consisting of alternating vertical rows of either vertical or oblique impressions.

#### ***Discussion***

The Beaker vessel can be placed in Clarke's FN group (1970, \*\*) and is comparable to other finger-nail decorated vessels found at Summertown, Oxford (Clarke No 762) and

Brean Down, Somerset (Clarke No 779). A distinction can be made between the use of aplastic and plastic decoration, which also shows some correlation with vessel form. It has been argued that this distinction in form and decoration is also chronological with aplastic decoration considered earlier than plastic (Cleal 2003, 146-8; Clarke 1970).

Within the region vessels of this type are strongly associated with vessels belonging to Clarke's W/MR and European groups with sherds of both types been found together in pits at Drayton and Dean Bottom (Cleal 2003, 146; Cleal 1992). At Chilbolton, Hampshire a Beaker with both European and W/MR traits and an aplastic finger-nail decorated Beaker were recovered from a double inhumation grave within a barrow (Russel 1990, 161). Although the finger-nail decorated Beaker was secondary, the radiocarbon dates indicate that both burials were deposited within a short period of time (primary burial OxA-1072 3740±80 BP and secondary burial OxA-1073 3780±80 BP).

Beaker burials are not common within the immediate environs of the Dorchester-on-Thames monument complex, which partly reflects the type and scale of archaeological fieldwork. One significant find is the very fine Wessex/Middle Rhine Beaker recovered from the central grave within barrow XII (Whittle *et al.* 1992; Clarke 1970, 296 no 735) and other vessels and sherds have been recovered from Dorchester, from Drayton St Leonard, Clifton Hampden, Culham Fields and from Berinsfield (Clarke 1970, 493).

A contrast can be made between the Mount Farm Beaker and the vessel from Site XII, Dorchester. Secondary burials are sometimes associated with finger-nail impressed Beakers which, like the one from Mount Farm, are made from a relatively poor quality fabric. Examples include Linch Hill, Stanton Harcourt (Grimes 1960) and Chilbolton, Hants (Russel 1990). It would appear that vessels of this style were deliberately chosen for inclusion in secondary burials. Fine Beakers with complex decoration like the one from Site XII are nearly always found in primary burials. Sometimes burials contain two pots one fine, often the larger of the two, and the other less fine with either simple of finger-nail impressed decoration (eg Summertown and Yarnnton: Clarke 1970, 308 nos 761-2; Barclay and Edwards in prep). Pit deposits can also contain both types of vessel (eg Dean Bottom: Cleal 1992).

### **Vessels Associated With Round Barrow 101**

At least four vessels, a fragmentary Collared Urn and three miniature urns (146; 121/A/2; 123; and 178/A/1), were associated with probable or definite funerary deposits within the barrow.

#### ***Collared Urn***

Refitting rim fragments from a small Collared Urn (see Fig 21).

1. The vessel is made from an untempered micaceous clay. The vessel is extremely well-made with very fine impressed twisted cord decoration.

The vessel came from a disturbed context within the barrow and it is possible that the urn was originally placed with a primary cremation deposit. Within the Upper Thames region it has been noted that small urns tend to be placed within barrows, often as secondary deposits, while larger urns tend to get placed outside barrows in 'flat grave' cremation pits (Barclay 2002, 94-5). The Mount Farm urn would fit this pattern. Such variation could reflect slightly different funerary rituals. Certainly large urns would have been more visible and conspicuous if the urn was used in a funerary procession to transport the cremated remains, pyre debris and any offerings or grave goods. Small urns, such as the one from Mount Farm, are more likely to have been grave goods or a simply contained for cremated remains.

Other small urns are known from North Stoke and City Farm Hanborough (Case 1982; Case *et al.* 1964/5). The deep collar, possible straight neck and the decoration would indicate that this is a late or secondary style urn (Longworth 1984; Burgess 1986). The precise chronology of Collared Urns is still relatively poorly understood compared with other styles of ceramic. The Mount Farm urn is likely to be later than the Beaker burial secondarily inserted in the oval barrow to the south (see above), but earlier than the three miniature vessels of sub-biconical and biconical form from other deposits within the barrow.

#### *Miniature Sub-biconical and Biconical Urns*

Three near complete small vessels were found, two associated with small cremation deposits (121/A/2 and 123) and one with the inhumation of a child (see Fig 21).

2. 178/A/1: Ovoid pot 90 mm ht and 115 mm wide at rim; hooked rim and pedestal base, with two applied horseshoe bosses or 'handles'.; Incomplete with part of one side missing. Fabric moderate coarse sand with sparse angular quartzite (up to 2 mm) and rare angular flint up to 10 mm, fired reddish-brown with black core. The base is worn through use. There is a central thumb print in the middle of the underside of the base. Possibly slab built, but poorly made..
3. 123: Small shouldered vessel xx mm ht, xxx mm wide at rim with applied bosses. Fabric Flint and grog fired yellow-brown, black and brown. Coil built and fractured along planes of weakness.
4. 121/A/2: Slightly shouldered vessel, 90 mm ht, 100 mm wide at rim. Weakly shouldered and with faint vertical finger-wiped surface. Rim slightly damaged (old) and old breaks in wall. shrinkage cracks across base. Fabric appears to contain grog, hard fired, yellowish-brown to grey, possibly damaged by heat in pyre.

A number of Biconical and Sub-Biconical Urns are known from the Oxford region of the Upper Thames Valley (eg Barrow Hills, Radley, Iffley, Yarnton- Barclay and Halpin 1999; VCH 1939; Barclay and Edwards in prep). This type of pottery appeared towards the end of the early Bronze Age period (c.1700 cal BC) and is a direct precursor to the

Deverel-Rimbury style pottery. Certainly in the Oxford region relic traits, such as horse-handles, are sometimes found on Bucket Urns, while there is a general switch from grog-tempered fabrics to ones tempered with either shell, flint or quartzite. These trends can be detected at Mount Farm.

### *Deverel-Rimbury*

A total of 22 sherds (459g) of Deverel-Rimbury pottery were recovered from contexts 101, 143, 158, 164, 168 and 25, and a further 7 sherds (105g) are probably of this date, while 16 (84g) sherds, mostly from the same contexts could be of this or late Bronze Age date (see Table 1). Featured sherds include sherds from Globular and Bucket Urns, which includes two sherds with applied bosses (Fig 21, No 6; Fig 25 No and a rim from slashed decoration (Fig 25). This material was manufactured from a range of principally flint, shell and/or quartzite tempered fabrics. One heavy base sherd from a bucket urn in F101 had burnt cooking residues adhering to it.

A number of ring ditches in the Upper Thames valley have produced Deverel Rimbury material, most notably small urnfield groups at Shorncote (Barclay and Glass 1995) and Stanton Harcourt (Hamlin 1963) and the large urnfield at Standlake (Riley 1946/7). But unlike these sites, the Deverel Rimbury material from the area of the ring ditch at Mount Farm was not associated with cremations but with animal bone deposited in the upper fill of the ditch (F101) and an oval hollow (F164) filled with charcoal and burnt quartzite, with a few sherds from other deposits. Of these the most notable was F25 which was a human cremation, but it lay at some distance from the ring ditch and pottery consisted of a small number of sherds from different vessels, not an obvious funerary urn. In general therefore, this material should perhaps be viewed more in terms of a domestic rather than funerary assemblage, though this does not preclude some kind of residual special respect for the barrow as a burial place.

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**Table A4:1: Early Prehistoric pottery**

<i>Period</i>	<i>Context</i>	<i>Fabric</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>Wt (gm)</i>	<i>Comment</i>
Early to middle Neolithic	Pit 512/A/1	FA3	1	23	Rim
	Pit 518/A/1	F3	1	3	
	Pit 518/A/1	A1	2	8	
	Pit 518/A/1	F2	1	1	Rim
	Pit 518/A/1	FA3	2	20	Rim
	Pit 518/A/1	QA1	1	1	Rim
	Pit 518/A/1	FA3	3	23	Neck
	Pit 518/A/1	S3	1	8	
	Pit 518/A/1	AS?3	1	35	Rim
		<i>Sub total</i>		13	122
Late Neolithic	Pit 287/A/1	AG1	2	21	Rim
	Pit 287/A/1	G3	2	21	Rim
		<i>Sub total</i>	4	42	
Late Neo /early Bronze Age	158/A/1	GA2	1	9	
	Grave 618		1	854	Complete
	906/A/1	G3	2	6	
	906/A/1	NAT	1	10	Aplastic finger-nail decoration
	<i>Sub total</i>	5	870		
Early to middle Bronze Age	?Pit 146/A/1	NAT?	5	72	Collar
	158/B/1	G3?	1	31	Base
	158/A/1	GFA3	1	17	
	Crem. 121/A/2		1	508	Vessel
	Crem. 123		1	210	Vessel
	Grave 178/A/1		1	472	Horseshoe handles
	<i>Sub total</i>	10	1310		
Middle Bronze Age	101/B/1	F2	3	56	
	101/B/1	F3	3	68	
	101/E/1	F1	1	13	Rim- Globular Urn
	101/E/1	F2	1	20	Bucket Urn
	101/F/1	F2	3	46	
	101/G/1	F2	1	13	
	101/G/3	F3	3	49	
	143/A/1	F1	1	4	Rim
	158/A/1	F2	1	26	
	164/A/2	F1	1	14	?Globular Urn
	164/A/3	FA2?	1	13	
	164/A/3	Q3	1	54	
	168/A/3	F2	1	78	
	25/A/1	FG2	1	5	Base
		<i>Sub total</i>	22	459	
Probably middle Bronze Age	146/A/1	S3	1	24	
	158/A/1	S3	1	48	
	149/A/1	FA2	1	5	
	164/A/6	F1	1	2	Similar to middle Neolithic
	164/A/1	FA2	1	10	Rim
	164/A/1	FA2	1	9	Base
	164/A/1	QA3	1	8	
	25/A/1	S2	1	1	
	<i>Sub total</i>	8	107		
Mid-late Bronze Age	101/E/1	Q2	2	24	Rim, base

<i>Period</i>	<i>Context</i>	<i>Fabric</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>Wt (gm)</i>	<i>Comment</i>
	25/A/2	S2	1	3	
	25/A/2	S2	2	9	
	101/F/1	GQ2	2	19	
	101/D/1	?GOS	1	1	
	25/A/2	S2	1	13	Rim with slashed decoration
	<i>Sub total</i>		9	69	
Indeterminate prehistoric	194	A1	1	4	
	25/A/2	IND	5	10	
	25/A/2	IND	1	1	
	<i>Sub total</i>		7	15	
<b>Total</b>			<b>72</b>	<b>2966</b>	