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**The early prehistoric pottery from Beechbrook  
Wood, Hothfield, Kent**

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

This assemblage was particularly remarkable for its Beaker vessels. A total of 173 sherds (2343 g) of early prehistoric pottery were recovered and a total of 18 vessels were identified. The assemblage was dominated by East Anglian, Barbed Wire and Southern style Beakers (67%). A further 29% was identified as earlier Neolithic, of which eight were refitted to form part of a large baggy or carinated bowl. The remaining 3% comprised sherds of indeterminate date and 26 sherds from the assemblage were residual. The most important groups of pottery were recovered from pits 1374 (14 Beaker vessels), 1716 (one complete Beaker vessel) and 1910 (two early Neolithic Plain Bowls). The condition of the pottery from pit 1374 was particularly remarkable.

*Table 1: Quantification and breakdown of the Neolithic and Bronze Age pottery by feature*

Feature	Context	Sherd count	Sherd weight (g)	Ware	Number vessels	of illustrated vessels	Comments
859	863	4	11	EN/MN	0	0	
864	865	2	2	EN/MN	0	0	
864	875	2	6	EN	0		
866	879	1	7	EN	0	0	
916	914	1	<1	EN	0	0	
930	932	1	<1	EN	0	0	
933	932	2	14	EN	0	0	
1374	1375	2	123	BKR	0		
1374	1376	4	1	IND	0		
1374	1377	99	1480	BKR	12	P2-9	
1374	1409	5	12	BKR	0		
1393	1394	1	12	EN	0	0	
1536	1537	1	8	EN/MN	0	0	
1682	1700	1	11	BKR	1	P10	
1682	1740	1	<1	EN	0	0	
1704	1703	1	2	EN	0	0	
1716	1725	1	220	BKR	1	P1	Complete
1719	1720	2	12	BKR	0	0	
1910	1909	31	317	PB	3	P12 & P13	Plain Bowl
2153	2154	2	<1	IND	0	0	
Surface Finds	1671	3	51	BKR	1	P11	
Surface Area	1671	4	54	IND	0		
Total		171	2343		18		

## 2 FABRICS

A total of 19 fabrics have been noted (Table 2). The earlier Neolithic fabrics are exclusively either purely flint-tempered, untempered or of sand and coarse flint. The Beaker fabrics exclusively consist of much fine sand, sand and fine rare flint or grog with various combinations of flint and sand. The sherds of finer grog-tempered fabrics may in fact be manufactured from argillaceous clay (Whitbread 1986)

The solid geology of the area consists of the Lower Greensand Folkestone Beds. The site is near the eastern boundary with the Lower Cretaceous Gault Clay. Overlying this is a

drift capping of clay-with-flints which may be part of the Lenham Beds. This included an extensive facies of yellow ferruginous sand and a mottled grey clay-with-flint. Patches of Head Brickearth of up to 1 m depth cover these deposits.

It is very likely that all the vessels from this assemblage were made locally.

*Table 2: Breakdown and description of fabrics*

<b>Fabric Name</b>	<b>Period</b>	<b>Fabric description</b>
A1	BKR	5% sand?
AF1	BKR	10-20% fine sand. 2% flint up to 2 mm.
AF2	EN	5% sand? 1% flint up to 2 mm.
AF3	EN	Hackly and laminated clay, sand 10% with possibly completed domains and 2% flint, 2-4 mm.
AFG1	BKR	Red and brown calcined flint, up to 2%. 10% fine sand. Grog > 1% up to 1 mm.
AG1	BKR	2-5% grog (?), up to 1 mm. Fine sand, not visible but 5-10% ?
D1	BKR	10-20% oxidised greensand, under 1 mm. Rare 1% flint, under 1 mm.
F1	PB	5% flint, up to 1 mm, may be fine sand visible in thin section but not by eye
F3	PB	Early Neolithic fabric - 5-10% flint up to 4 mm. No sand
FA1	BKR	5-10% flint up to 2 mm on internal face. In section 2% or less. Fine sand, 10%. 1% large voids.
FA2	EN	5% flint up to 2 mm. 10% sand
FA3	EN	20% calcined pink and white flint, up to 7-8 mm. Irregularly dispersed. Fine micaceous sand 5-10 %?
FAD2	EN/MN	% % flint from 0.5-5 mm. 1% rounded quartz sand and 5% fine greensand.
FAG3	BKR	5% finely broken but unevenly distributed flint, up to 6 mm. 5% rounded pellet-shaped inclusions, either grog or argillaceous rock fragments, 1-3 mm. Fine sand 5-10% ?
G1	BKR	5% grog, up to 2 mm. Some voids, leached material. Fine sand, not visible but 5-10% ?
GA3	BKR	10-15% grog, 1-4 mm, irregularly dispersed and sub-angular. Fine sand, 10%.
GAF3	BKR	10-15 % grog, 1-3 mm. 2% calcined flint, from >1-3 mm. Fine sand 10% .
GF2	BKR	2% calcined flint - up to 1 mm. 5-10% grog up to 4 mm (mostly 2 mm), rounded. Some body sherds have differential post depositional leaching on the internal face - 10% voids 1-7 mm, rounded and elongated/rectangular. Shell or grass.
GFA3	BKR	5-10% grog, 2-5 mm. 5% flint, 1-3 mm. Calcined flint. Fine sand 10%.
NAT	EN	Nothing observable, although fine sand might be observable in thin section. Soapy feel.

### 3 FORMS/TYPES

#### 3.1 Early Neolithic Plain Bowl. Baggy Profiled Bowls

The two early Neolithic Plain Bowl forms from pit 1909 included one large, open vessel with either a baggy shouldered or possibly carinated profile (P12) and one small rim sherd from a cup or bowl (P13). This vessel may also either have a baggy or a carinated profile. Both vessels had rolled rims although P12 is not evenly constructed.

### **3.2 Late Neolithic-early Bronze Age Beaker. East Anglian, Barbed Wire and Southern Styles**

With the exception of three vessels (P1, P10 and P11 from contexts 1700 and 1671), all Beaker forms are from pit 1374 and include East Anglian, Barbed Wire and Southern style Beakers. The four most identifiable forms were all versions of the East Anglian type (Clarke 1970). Vessels P3 and P5 are tall, wide bellied vessels with pedestal bases and thick, narrow, everted rims. The other two, P1 and P2, are small, short, rounded 'honey pot' type vessels. P7, a Barbed Wire style Beaker, appears to be a shorter, wider bellied example of this form. Other vessels with undeterminable profiles were decorated in a manner suggesting the East Anglian style; vessels P4, P8 and P9 were decorated with the same grooved line motifs. The motif on P10 (context 1700) has zoned decoration similar to that on the BW vessel (P7); this form of motif appears to be relatively common on East Anglian style vessels but also appears on Northern style vessels (Clarke 1970). Vessel P11 has a very sharp shoulder and straight sided walls, which also has parallels within the East Anglian type.

Vessel P6 is also a fragmented later style Southern style vessel (Clarke 1970; Lanting and van der Waals 1972), with a slack shoulder and straight walled profile. Three large, thick-walled sherds appear to be from later style vessels, such as Clarke's S1 type (Clarke 1970; Case 1977; Case 1993; Lanting and van der Waals 1972, 38-39). These are decorated with rusticated fingernail and grooved lines.

## **4 GENERAL DISCUSSION**

The most important features of this assemblage are the early Neolithic and the Beaker pits. This is an unusual assemblage in that there is no middle or late Neolithic pottery; most of the early prehistoric assemblages along the CTRL route represent the entire Neolithic.

The pottery from pit 1910, especially in association with the quern stone, indicates early Neolithic domestic use of the site. Most earlier Neolithic material (Clarke 1982, 26) has been found in eastern Kent. This finds an interesting parallel in the pit group from Wingham, in East Kent (Greenfield 1960), which contained both baggy profiled Plain Bowl, a saddle quern and a rubber. The residual early Neolithic pottery, recovered from the ring ditches, is also indirect evidence of such activity. Similar pottery was also recovered from the Chestnuts Megalithic tomb (Alexander 1961, 37, figure 11). Carinated Bowl has been found at Minnis Bay, Mill Road and Preston (Clarke 1982, 27, figure 9).

The Beaker pit is of regional, if not national, importance for the context of deposition and the association with pit 1716, cut into ring ditch 3012, the range of forms and the condition of the material.

With regard to Beakers, it is still true that all the early Bronze Age material from Kent comes from burials or stray finds (Champion 1982, 32). It is highly significant, then, that the largest Beaker deposit from any site along the CTRL route should be from a pit containing fruit (apple and pear) and hazelnut shell, a stone pestle, flints and burnt bone. None of the Beaker sherds are covered with residue but they are clearly associated with food and the preparation of food in this particular context.

The significance of the relationship between Beakers and context of deposition is not clear. There have been discussions concerning the extent to which production is tailored from the beginning, according to use (Boast 1995). It has been suggested that beakers were appropriated for burial and that it was either the association with the burial or the contents of the urn which were important (ibid). It has also been suggested that burial Beakers were made specifically for the grave and were designed to be aesthetically pleasing rather than functional (ibid), often being of poor quality. The argument follows that a burial Beaker is something removed from those used during everyday life. It is difficult, however, to assign meaning according to such criteria, as the genuine significance of burial/artefact associations and role of Beaker vessels is now lost. In this regard the association between the Beakers from pit 1374 and pit 1716 is particularly important. The complete vessel (P1) from pit 1716, has an almost exact parallel in P2 from pit 1374 yet there are certain differences which could be perceived as being significant. The latter is approximately one third complete, with a slightly different type of rim and base, and is in a different fabric. It cannot be argued that these vessels were not in 'functional' fabrics. The flint-tempered Beaker (P2) has much flint on the external and internal surface of the pot yet only 2% finely crushed flint is visible within the section. The sand-tempered Beaker (P1) is no less likely to have been functional (Edwards forthcoming) as the positive lipid residue results from Yarnton Beakers included an untempered Beaker. Furthermore, it is not clear that Beakers were used for cooking. Evidence from lipid residue analysis on the largest selection of early prehistoric pottery in Britain (Evershed et al 2002) shows direct evidence for the use of Peterborough Ware for cooking and serving food, (40% of samples produced results). There is strong evidence to suggest that the same was true for Grooved Ware (46%) but only very little (14%) for Beakers. The complete Beaker is marked out, however, by a firing blemish in the form of a spalling patch. Other such blemished vessels from the CTRL route have generally been sepulchral (see Synthetic discussion). It is unlikely, therefore, that the funerary Beaker (P1) was a physical abstraction of a domestic repertoire and much more likely that it was selected to accompany, in death, one who used such vessels during life. It is also possible that the Beakers from both features were the product of the same potter and of the same manufacturing process, during which no differentiation was employed.

Following Case's (1993, 263-4) discussion on East Anglia and the south east of England, all the motifs and decorative style from this pit are common. They can also be paralleled in Kent. The horizontal band motifs occur at Cottington Hill, Tovil, Great Mongeham, Folkestone and Igtham (Gibson 1992, 283; Clarke 1970, nos 350, 423, 336 and 38). Beakers from The Tovil, Folkestone, Wye, Sturry and Canterbury (Gibson 1992, 399-400; Clarke 1970, nos 382 and 338) are decorated with barbed wire. Fingernail decoration appears on the Barham vessel and crows feet on the Dover vessel (Clarke 1970, nos 380 and 435).

The significant details are in the early and later styles of these vessels; not only are these currently not considered to be contemporary, later styles are rare in Kent and the later forms in this pit are the more worn and abraded (therefore, possibly the older). The best parallels for the small, fat vessels come from Cottington Hill, Igtham, Canterbury and Preston (Gibson 1992, 283; Clarke 1970, numbers 38, 338 and 389). The vessel from Cottington Hill has been dated to 2045-1930 cal BC. The long, slimmer profile of P3 has parallels in vessels from Tovil, Great Mongeham and Erith (Clarke 1970, nos 350, 423 and 403). The later Southern style Beaker (P6) is possibly similar in form to vessels from Monkton (Macpherson-Grant 1994, 262-3), and Manston (Gibson 1991, 16), the latter of which has been radiocarbon dated to 2132-1922 cal BC. The larger, thicker sherds do not have parallels and are likely to come from large, rusticated Step 7 type (Lanting and van der Waals 1972) pot beakers. These have been recovered from other sites in the south east of England, such as Pyecombe in West Sussex (Case 1993, 262, figure 17).

Beaker chronologies such as those quoted above (Clarke 1970; Case 1977; Lanting and van der Waals 1972) tend to concentrate on burial Beakers; amongst those that do so (Case 1993), discussions do not embrace the problems which are specific to pit deposits. Pit 1374, for example, contains pottery, of middle and later styles, that was deposited together. The implications of this observation, in relation to Beaker chronology, depends on absolute dating.

Although the Beaker group was deposited at the same time, there is a clear difference in preservation within the pit. Some of the vessels are in better condition than is usual, with full profiles (P2 and P3) and many refitting sherds, while other vessels are represented by only one sherd. Three bases have remained intact (P2, P3 and P5) and many of the breaks appear to be fresh. It remains the case that the majority of the vessels are incomplete and that some sherds are worn enough to prevent refitting. It is difficult to identify this as evidence of time passing between breakage and deposition of the vessels as the sandy clay abrades very easily. It is important to note that the more worn sherds appear to be of the later style vessels and that the more complete and well preserved are of the earlier styles.

## 5 CATALOGUE OF ILLUSTRATED VESSELS

### *Figure 1*

P1. Context 1725. Complete Beaker vessel (220 g). Form: East Anglian style vessel, Fabric: A1. Firing: ext; YBR, core; BL, int; YBR. ST: ext; SM, BU and SL, int; SM, BU and SL. Th: 6 mm. Dec: ext; Neatly applied groove spiralling around the vessel from top to bottom. Rim Diam: 90-80 mm. Base Diam: 50 mm. Belly Diam: 100 mm. Vessel Height: 78 mm. Spalled patch. Simple base (rounded inside) with a slightly everted rim, otherwise a completely rounded vessel (although not spherical, uneven diameter).

P2. Context 1377. One sherd with a complete profile from rim to base (137 g). Form: East Anglian style vessel. Fabric: AF1. Firing: ext; RBR, core; BL-G, int; RBR. ST: ext; SM, SL, int; SM, SL. Th: 6 mm. Dec: ext; incised horizontal bands, some incomplete and uneven. Possible spiralling. Rim Diam: 86 mm. Base: 49 mm. Belly Diam: 100 mm. Vessel Height: 90 mm.

P3. Context 1377. Three illustrated sherds with almost complete profile from rim to base (398 g). Vessel consists of 54 sherds (639 g). Form: East Anglian or W/MR style vessel. Fabric: . Firing: ext; GBR, core; GBR, int; GBR. ST: ext; SM, SL, int; SM, SL. Th: 6 mm. Dec: ext; incised horizontal bands, some incomplete and uneven. Possible spiralling. Rim Diam: 190 mm. Base: 70-80 mm. Belly Diam: mm. Vessel Height: mm.

P4. Context 1377. Three sherds (27 g) of a Beaker vessel including rim, similar to P3. Form: Possibly East Anglian style vessel. Fabric: AF1. Firing: ext; YBR, core; YBR, int; YBR. ST: ext; SM, int; SM. Th: 5.5 mm. Dec: ext; incised horizontal bands, some incomplete and uneven. Possible spiralling.

P5. Context 1377. Three sherds (183 g) of a Beaker vessel including a foot ring type base with high pedestal. Fabric: FG1. Firing: ext; RBR, core; RBR, int; RBR. ST: ext; SM, int; SM. Th: 5 mm. Base Diam: 51 mm. Dec: ext; short horizontal lines of comb impression, applied in panels down the vessel as vessel turned. Like decoration on P2 & P3. Some fire clouds and three finger nail impressions on base. Comb teeth are 2 mm wide and the comb may be about 16 -18 teeth wide.

P6. Context 1377. One illustrated Beaker sherd from a total of 11 sherds (138 g). Fabric: GAF3. Firing: ext; RBR, external subsurface; G-RBR, internal subsurface; G-RBR, int; G-RBR. ST: ext; SM, INT; SM. Th: 8 mm. Dec: Vertically applied 'Crows feet' or Paired Fingernail impressions.

P7. Context 1377. Three illustrated Beaker sherds from a total of 8 belly sherds (111 g). Form: Possibly a late Southern Style Beaker. Fabric: . Firing: ext; YBR, Core; YBR-B, int; YBR-BR. ST: ext; SM, INT; SM. Th: 6 mm. Dec: Barbed Wire, a panel comprising of three horizontal bands above a set of diagonal lines, with four bands below. Below the panel, may be more bands leading to the base of the vessel.

P8. Context 1377. One illustrated Beaker sherd, from a total of 6 belly sherds (24 g). Fabric: FAG3. Firing: ext; YBR, Core; YBR, int; YBR. ST: ext; SM, INT; SM. Th: 6 mm. Dec: A panel of incised horizontal bands with finger nail impressions below, at the point where the sherd thickens.

P9. Context 1377. One sherd (21 g) of a Beaker vessel. Fabric: FAG3. Firing: ext; YBR, Core; YBR, int; YBR. ST: ext; SM, int; SM. Th: 6 mm. Dec: finger nail impressions and shallow, diagonal grooves which appear to have been created using plant fibres.



P10. Context 1700. One sherd from a Beaker vessel (11 g). Fabric: AF1. Firing: ext; RBR, core; G, int; G. ST: ext; SM, int; SM. Th: 7 mm. Dec: comb applied decoration, motif is a panel comprising horizontal bands and diagonal lines. Comb teeth faint but 1 mm wide.

P11. Context 1671. Three sherds of Beaker, including a shoulder sherd (51 g). Fabric: D1. Firing: ext; RBR, core; BL, int; BR-BL. ST: ext; SM, int; SM. Th: 6 mm. Dec: rows of finger nail impressions. Very well fired, hard sherds.

P12. Context 1909. One large rim and shoulder sherd (46 g) from an early Neolithic vessel. Plain or Carinated Bowl. Form: Either baggy profile or carinated bowl. Open vessel. Slightly rolled and everted rim with long flared neck. Fabric: FA3, Firing: ext; B-G, core G, int; G. ST: SM, int; SM. Th: 10 mm. Rim Diam: 230 mm. There is a fire cloud or unoxidised patch near the rim of the vessel.

P13. Context 1909. Small rim and shoulder sherd (7 g) from a total of four sherds, from an early Neolithic cup or bowl. Form: Neutral or open. Small rolled rim with flared neck - baggy or carinated vessel. Fabric: F1, Firing: ext; BR-G, core G, int; BR-G. ST: SM, int; SM. Th: 6 mm.

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