

**Channel Tunnel Rail Link  
London and Continental Railways  
Oxford Wessex Archaeology Joint Venture**

**The early prehistoric pottery from North of Saltwood  
Tunnel, Saltwood, Kent (ARC SLT 98, ARC SLT  
98C, ARC SLT 99, ARC SFB 99 and  
ARC SFB 01)  
by Emily Edwards**

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

A total of 137 early prehistoric sherds (2487 g) was recovered and analysed for the purposes of this report. A small amount of residual pottery included in the assessment has not been seen at the analysis stage and a further 68 sherds included in this report were recovered during fieldwork which was carried out after the completion of the assessment.

The Saltwood assemblage contained equal amounts of early Neolithic Plain Bowl and early Bronze Age vessels, the key elements being the early Neolithic vessels from the three pits (Group 46021) and the early Bronze Age pottery from the two barrows. The most important of this latter group was the complete but fragmented Food Vessel from the central burial of Barrow 10082 (grave 4619, context 4618).

At the stage of writing this report, it has not been possible to accurately establish the provenance of the sherds or the phasing of features. Generally, much material appears to be residual; exceptions are the early Neolithic pit group (Pits 136, 175 and 317), the Food Vessel (4618) from the central grave 4619 within barrow 10082, sherds from 3894 (pit 3896) overlying the ditch of this barrow, the Sub-Biconical Urn from the smaller barrow (10055) and Beaker from pit 4586.

It was noted that some fine, soapy grog tempered fabrics were Anglo-Saxon and there is a small chance that some sherds of this date remain undetected. The 15 pottery sherds from context 3719, which were identified in the assessment as middle Bronze Age are Anglo-Saxon and so are not discussed here.

*Table 1: Quantification of early prehistoric pottery by sub-group*

Abbreviations: Neo, Neolithic; EN, early Neolithic; PW, Peterborough Ware; Grooved Ware; GW/D, Durrington Wall style Grooved Ware; EBA, early Bronze Age; BKR, Beaker; FV, Food Vessel; AS, Anglo-Saxon.

Site Code	Sub-Group	Context	Sherd Count	Sherd Weight (g)	Ware
ARC SFB 99	Pit 175	3278	1	14	EN
ARC SFB 99	Pit 175	3278	2	33	EN
ARC SFB 99	Pit 175	3279	1	12	EN
ARC SFB 99	Pit 175	3298	2	7	EN
ARC SFB 99	Pit 175	3299	3	21	EN
ARC SFB 99	Pit 136	3372	2	14	EN
ARC SFB 99	Pit 136	3492	8	30	EN
ARC SFB 99	Pit 136	3492	1	6	EN
ARC SFB 99	Pit 136	3492	1	3	EN
ARC SFB 99	Pit 136	3492	1	5	EN
ARC SFB 99	Pit 136	3493	7	100	EN
ARC SFB 99	Pit 136	3493	1	6	EN
ARC SFB 99	Pit 136	3493	1	5	EN
ARC SFB 99	Pit 136	3493	3	11	EN
ARC SFB 99		3605	1	3	EBA
ARCSFB01	Pit 317	6064	14	48	EN

Site Code	Sub-Group	Context	Sherd Count	Sherd Weight (g)	Ware
ARCSFB01	Pit 317	6064	1	7	EN
SLT99	10082, Barrow Central Burial - 3703, Ring Ditch/Holloway,	3702	1	3	EN or AS
SLT 99	10082, Barrow Central Burial , 3703. Holloway associated with Central Barrow	3702	1	4	EN or PW
SLT 99	10082, Barrow Central Burial, 4619, grave BA (same as complete FV),	4618	5	1318	FV
SLT 99	3896, Oval pit dug into upper fill of barrow ditch 10082	3894	19	147	EBA
SLT98C	10055, round barrow subsoil	1102	2	8	PW
SLT98C	10055, round barrow subsoil	1103	12	323	Sub Biconical Urn
SLT98C	10055, round barrow subsoil	1037	7	117	Sub Biconical Urn
SLT98C	10055, round barrow subsoil	1038	1	15	PW?
SLT98C	1285, Anglo-Saxon grave	1284	1	9	GW/DW?
ARC SFB 99	Ditch 80	1297	1	5	EBA?
ARC SFB 99	Barrow 33	1377	2	5	BKR
ARC SFB 99	Ditch 62	1697	1	5	BKR?
ARC SFB 99	Barrow 33	1919	8	5	Neo
SLT 99	Ditch 10007	2139	2	3	EN or PW
SLT 99	Ditch 10007	2139	1	8	BKR
SLT99	Pit 2278	2282	1	4	BKR
ARC SFB 99	Pit 156	3294	3	3	EN or PW
ARC SFB 99	Pit 156	3294	1	4	EBA?
ARC SFB 99	Pit 135	3303	1	3	BKR or FV
ARC SFB 99	Ditch 183	3546	1	3	GW?
ARC SFB 99	Ditch 148	3544	1	4	BKR?
ARC SFB 99	Barrow 33	3588	2	9	EN or PW
SLT 99	3751, Anglo-Saxon grave	3750	1	4	EBA
SLT99	3779, Anglo-Saxon grave	3778	1	5	BKR
SLT99	3946, grave	3945	1	1	BKR
ARC SFB 99	Topsoil/ploughsoil	4000	1	4	EBA?
SLT99	4502 Anglo-Saxon grave	4501	2	9	BKR
SLT 99	4586 pit	4585	3	128	BKR
SLT 99	Barrow 10020	4639	2	2	EN or PW
ARC SFB 99	Grave 1392	1390	2	4	GW or EBA
			137	2487	

## 2 FABRICS

At Saltwood, the underlying solid geology comprises cretaceous Lower Greensand Folkestone beds, a distinct formation of lower cretaceous non-glaucinitic sandstone that outcrops from the base of the north downs chalk escarpment, and across which a significant proportion of the CTRL passes in Kent (British Geological Survey Sheet 305/6; Wood *et al.*). This is capped by a distinctive and very localised deposit of loessic drift material, consisting of brown, sandy clay containing weathered flints and calcareous concretions.

Generally the fabrics appear to have been manufactured from materials which may have been locally procured. The small, cordoned early Neolithic bowl from 3299 (pit 175) was manufactured from a soapy feeling calcareous fabric which has entirely leached. The remaining earlier Neolithic assemblage was manufactured from flint and sand fabrics whilst the early Bronze Age sherds were tempered with combinations of very fine rare flint, sand and grog. Only three Beaker sherds appeared to contain glauconitic sand. Sand was absent in the natural untempered sherds (and within the clay matrix of most sherds), which appeared to be soapy and free of inclusions, regardless of date. The exceptions to this appeared to be a small number of early Bronze Age sherds which contained rare inclusions of ferruginous pellets.

It is likely that the flint came from river gravel deposits although the loessic deposits may also have been utilised. The source for the leached fabric VA1 is not clear.

*Table 2: Neolithic and early Bronze Age pottery fabrics*

Abbreviations: EN, early Neolithic; PW, Peterborough Ware; GW, Grooved Ware; BKR, Beaker; FV, Food Vessel.

Fabric Name	Ware	Fabric Description
AF1	EN or PW	5% clear sand and 1% flint, 2 mm.
F1.a	EN	Flint sized from 1-2 mm, 10-15%.
F1.b	EN or PW	Flint up to 1 mm, 5 %
F2.a	EN	Flint sized 2-3 mm, well sorted, 30 %.
F2.b	EN or PW	1% flint up to 4 mm, soapy fabric
F2.c	EN/MN and EBA	Smoothed fabric containing flint sized from 1 mm to 5 mm, 10 %. Some micaceous sand present in clay, very fine and not visible.
F3	EN	Flint sized from 3 mm to 6 mm, 5 %. Some mica present, though not sandy feel.
NAT	PW or EBA	A fine, closed clay with much lamination and few natural inclusions.
FG2	GW	1% flint up to 4 mm, soapy fabric. 2% grog 2 mm
GPfe1	EBA	EBA? Fine clay with a soapy texture. 5% grog 1 mm, 1% ferruginous pellets
G3	FV	5% angular to subangular grog or argillaceous rock fragments, some are shaped and some achieve completion. Up to 4 or 5 mm
G1	BKR OR FV	Laminated, fine clay with a soapy texture. 5-10% grog, up to 4 mm, slightly more oxidised than matrix
DF1	BKR	5% glauconitic sand up to 1 mm. 1% flint, up to 1 mm.
GD1	BKR	Fine clay with a soapy texture, 5% grog 1 mm. 2% fine glauconitic sand
D1	BKR	5% glauconitic sand. 2% grog
GA3	BKR	5% grog up to 4 or 5 mm. 2% fine quartzitic sand
GFA3	BKR	5% grog up to 4 or 5 mm. Flint up to 3 or 4 mm, occasionally up to 5 mm. 2% fine sand
GF1	BKR	Closed clay with soapy texture. 5% grog up to 1 mm. 2% ill-sorted flint up to 2 mm.
VA1	EN	Void deep, plate like and angular, 10 % and very fine sand 2 %.

### 3 FORMS/TYPES

The early Neolithic forms included a small, neutral bowl with applied cordon (pit 175, P4), a plain carinated bowl (pit 136, P5), a decorated 'Whitehawk style' carinated bowl (pit 317, P7), and an open, globular bowl (pit 136, P6). The decoration on the carinated bowl from pit 317 included diagonal incisions on the area between the shoulder and the rim and the applied cordon on the small bowl was applied half way down the vessel at shoulder height.

There were three identifiable early Bronze Age vessel forms, a Beaker, a Food Vessel and a Biconical Urn.

There are only two published examples of Food Vessels in Kent, from Deal and Ashford (Champion 1982) and they are rare in the south of England. The Saltwood example (grave 4619, context 4618) has a T-shaped, diagonal rim. It is an open formed basic bipartite vase (Burgess 1980, 86-9, fig. 3.1), with an angle at the cordoned shoulder and a foot ring base and simple decoration restricted to the upper half of the vessel. Modern, reliable radiocarbon dates place Food Vessels in the period between 2220-1500 cal BC, which fits with the radiocarbon date obtained for this burial (2200-1940 cal BC, NZA 19641).

The Beaker from context 4585 (pit 4586) has a narrow closed neck with cordon, flared rim and impressed fingernail decoration. This shape is typical of the East Anglian (Tovil, Great Mongeham and Erith) and Finger Nail (Barham) decorated vessels from Kent. It is unusual because of the fingernail decoration, which appears again (with the exception of Barham) only within CTRL assemblages, and for the cordon below the rim. A fingernail rusticated Beaker vessel from Eyhorne Street (P8) has smoothed, plasticated cordons repeated down the length of the rim sherd. A vessel from Deal (Clarke 1970) also has a cordon below the rim. These are the only two known examples of cordoned vessels in Kent.

The sub-Biconical Urn (contexts 1037 and 1103 from barrow 10055) consisted of large, thick and straight-walled sherds with a simple, upright and rounded rim. These vessels characteristically have slack profiles (Calkin 1964, 40, figure 13) and usually occur with secondary burials in barrows.

### 4 PHASING

The early Neolithic and early to middle Neolithic pottery was recovered from a group of three discreet features (pits 136, 175 and 317) and from later features such as Anglo-Saxon graves or early Bronze Age ditches.

The Food Vessel (P1) was recovered from the central burial within barrow 10082 and the accompanying human bone was dated to (2200-1940 cal BC). The early Bronze Age sherds from 3894 come from pit 3896 that was placed centrally within the upper fills of the ditch to this barrow.

The Sub-Biconical Urn, the general date range for which is 2200 - 1500 cal BC, appears to be a later addition to a smaller barrow 10055 which did not contain a central burial. In addition, pit 4586 appears to be a Beaker pit containing three sherds. The remaining sherds appear, at the time of writing, to be residual and to have come from later ditches, pits and graves.

## 5 GENERAL DISCUSSION

This assemblage confirms the extent to which early prehistoric sites within Kent have previously been poorly represented, in that much of the pottery is of types which are rarely recovered from sites within the county. The main elements of this assemblage were the early Neolithic and early Bronze Age groups, the latter of which was recovered from the two barrows and included a Food Vessel (associated with a burial) and a sub-Biconical Urn (which may have been associated with a later interment).

The early Neolithic pits, containing plain and 'Whitehawk' style decorated ware, are evidence of domestic or ceremonial activity on a site which apparently was not associated with a monument; early Neolithic ceramic assemblages of this nature are rare in Kent, which confers a special significance to the site at Saltwood. It is a noteworthy fact that significant amounts of residual early Neolithic pottery (albeit small, worn sherds) were recovered from Anglo-Saxon graves. This provides evidence that the later cemetery reused both an early Bronze Age cemetery and potentially an earlier Neolithic occupation site of which the pits were only a small part.

The Beaker sherd from 4585 was also large enough to be diagnostic; although the form is of a type of Beaker typical of Kent, the fingernail decoration and cordon are, as yet, relatively uncommon for Kent (see above). The Food Vessel will now be one of three published examples in Kent.

## 6 CATALOGUE OF ILLUSTRATED VESSELS

### *Figure 1*

1. 4618, grave 4619. One Food Vessel in five fragments (1318 g), a basic bipartite vase (Burgess 1980, 88). Fabric: G3. Firing: exterior; red-brown, core: black, interior; red-brown. Decoration: rim bevel; short diagonal lines of impressed whipped cord, upper half of vessel above cordoned shoulder; horizontal bands of incised zigzags forming floating lozenges. Surface treatment: exterior; smoothed, interior; smoothed?. Thickness: 7.5 mm. Rim Diameter: 134 mm. Base diameter: 85 mm. Rim width: 19 mm. Height: 175 mm. Badly slumped vessel with cracks running from rim to base; these have suffered shrinkage from middle to base and will not refit.

2. Context 4585, pit 4586. One rim and shoulder sherd (99 g). Form: An FN style Beaker (Clarke 1970), with a narrow neck and wide belly. Cordoned below the rim. Fabric: GA3.

Firing: exterior; red-brown, interior; black, interior; red-brown. Decoration: Finger Nail rusticated. Surface Treatment: exterior; Smoothed, interior; Smoothed. Thickness: 11 mm. Rim Diameter; exterior; 300 mm, interior; 220 mm.

3. Contexts 1037 and 1103 from barrow 10055. One rim from a sub-Biconical Urn (20 sherds, 455 g). Form: A simple upright rim, body sherds suggest a weak outline with no sharp shoulder. Fabric: G1. Firing: exterior; black to yellow-brown, interior; black, interior; brown-black. Decoration: None. Surface Treatment: exterior; Smoothed, interior; Smoothed. Thickness: 17 mm.

4. Pit 175, Context 3299. Three refitting sherds (21 g) from the upper body of a small early Neolithic bowl (rim diameter 180 mm, 10 % remaining). Form: Simple square rim, rounded, neutral bowl with no shoulder and a horizontal cordon placed half way down the profile. Fabric: VA1. Firing: external; grey-brown, core; grey, internal; grey-brown. Voids indicate leached calcareous material. Surface Treatment: Smoothed both internally and externally. Thickness: 6 mm.

5. Pit 136, context 3493. Three refitting (11 g) sherds from an early Neolithic carinated bowl. Fabric: F3. Thickness: 5 mm. Firing: external; grey-brown, core; black, internal; grey-brown.

6. Pit 136, context 3494 and 3372. Eight sherds (114 g) representing both the refitting upper half of an open, uncarinated early Neolithic bowl and its' base. Form: slightly externally thickened, simple rim and rounded body. Fabric: F1.b Firing: exterior, brown-grey, core; grey, interior; brown-grey. (Rim Diameter: 132 mm. 30 % remaining.)

7. Pit 317, context 6064. One (7 g) shoulder sherd from a decorated, carinated early Neolithic bowl. Fabric: F2.b. Firing: exterior, brown-grey, core; grey, interior; brown-grey. Decoration: The decoration (incised lines) is situated above the shoulder, although three fingernail impressions are present just below the shoulder. These may not be part of a decorative scheme.

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