

**Channel Tunnel Rail Link
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Oxford Wessex Archaeology Joint Venture**

**The later prehistoric pottery from Mersham,
Mersham, Kent (MSH 98)**

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1 INTRODUCTION

A total of 10 sherds of later prehistoric pottery, weighing 41 g (Table 1), was recovered from the archaeological excavation at Mersham, Kent (ARC MSH 98). The material derived almost entirely from medieval and post-medieval features, with the exception of one sherd of Iron Age date from pit group 1 (context 438), tentatively assigned to Phase 1 (prehistoric and Romano-British occupation). The mean sherd weight was low, 4.1 g, and is indicative of the residual nature of the material. The assemblage consisted of undiagnostic body sherds which could be placed in one of three ceramic phases on the basis of fabric: the earlier part of the first millennium BC; the Iron Age or the late Iron Age.

The pottery was recorded using the methodology designed for the route-wide scheme, in accordance with the recommendations set out by the Prehistoric Ceramics Research Group (PCRG 1997).

Table 1: Quantification of later prehistoric pottery and summary of phase.

Context	Feature	Count	Weight (g)	Ceramic phase
0	U/S	2	7	Late Iron Age
306	1083	2	2	Late Bronze Age to early Iron Age
328	1033	1	9	Late Bronze Age to early Iron Age
383	1131	1	7	Late Bronze Age to early Iron Age
438	1058	1	7	Iron Age
556	1056	1	1	Late Bronze Age to early Iron Age
569	1112	1	6	Iron Age
639	1070	1	2	Late Iron Age

2 FABRICS

Three pottery fabrics were identified, containing inclusions of flint, grog and flint with quartz. They were classified using an alphanumeric system, designed to reflect the principal inclusions in the fabrics. The following letters have been used to denote inclusions: F (flint), G (grog) and Q (quartz).

The site lies on the Hythe Beds of the Lower Greensand, immediately adjacent to the Atherfield Clay. It is in close proximity to outcrops of Wealden Clay, the Folkestone Beds, Gault, and deposits of Fourth Terrace river gravels and alluvium (Ordnance Survey, Geological Survey of Great Britain, Sheets 305 and 306). The inclusions identified in the fabrics are all available in the local geology (defined as less than 7 km, cf Arnold 1985), suggesting local pottery production (Morris 1994a; 1994b).

F1. A fairly hard, sandy fabric containing moderate (10-15%) angular calcined crushed flint, ≤ 2 mm, with rare examples up to 5 mm. There are occasional pieces of sub-rounded detrital flint, ≤ 4 mm. The flint component is poorly sorted. The clay matrix is very fine and contains silt sized quartz grains (< 0.06 mm). Rounded iron oxides, ≤ 2 mm, can be seen in oxidised examples. The fabric could be dated no more closely than the earlier part of the first millennium BC. It was represented by 5 sherds, weighing 19 g.

FQ1. A hard, sandy fabric containing sparse (5%) angular flint fragments, ≤ 3 mm, moderately sorted; and sparse (3%) rounded to sub-rounded grains of quartz, mostly medium sized (>0.25 - <0.5 mm) with rare examples of coarse sand (>0.5 - <1 mm). The fabric could be dated no more closely than the Iron Age period. It was represented by 2 sherds, weighing 13 g.

G1. A fairly hard, soapy fabric containing very common to abundant (30-40%) sub-angular to sub-rounded grog, ≤ 2 mm, moderately sorted. Rare (2%) amounts of angular flint, ≤ 2 mm, are also present. The fabric was assigned to the late Iron Age phase. It was represented by 3 sherds, weighing 9 g.

3 FORM

The assemblage contained only undiagnostic body sherds. These were mostly plain, but a slight angle change was recorded on two sherds (contexts 0 and 383) indicating that they may derived from the shoulder area of the vessel.

4 DISCUSSION

The later prehistoric pottery from Mersham was undiagnostic in terms of both form and fabric. The material was abraded and residual in early medieval to post-medieval features. The single sherd of pottery (in fabric FQ1) recovered from possible Phase 1 pit 1058 (Group 1) is assigned to the Iron Age but cannot be dated more closely within this period. It is insufficient to date the feature with confidence. The Prehistoric Ceramics Research Group suggests that a minimum of 25-30 sherds must be present in order to date a phase of occupation (PCRG 1997, 21).

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