

## **Assessment of Iron Age and Roman Pottery**

*by Malcolm Lyne*

### *Introduction*

Small quantities of late Iron Age and early Roman pottery were recovered by limited watching brief excavation and must therefore be considered a sample of what was present on the site.

### *Methodology*

All of the pottery assemblages were subjected to general sherd count, weighing and spot-dating. None of them were considered suitable for more detailed quantification.

Fabrics were classified with the aid of a x8 lens with built-in metric scale for determining the sizes, nature, form and frequency of inclusions. Finer fabrics were further examined using a x30 magnification pocket microscope with built-in artificial illumination source.

Fabrics were classified using the Canterbury Archaeological Trust's codings (Macpherson-Grant *et al.* 1995) where applicable.

### *Quantification*

The site yielded 379 sherds (11.014 kg) of late Iron Age and Roman pottery from three contexts (Table 1). Most of the sherds (317, 10.464 kg) are from a bead-rim grog-tempered storage jar with vertical body combing of Thompson type C6-1 (1982). This and the small number of assemblages makes the material unsuitable for any kind of tabulation by phase.

### *Provenance*

#### Phase 1, c 150 BC - AD 1

Two of the pottery assemblages appear to belong to the earlier part of the Late Iron Age. That from ditch 827 is of little dating value but includes a body sherd in a handmade fabric with profuse finely-crushed calcined flint filler of middle Iron Age character. The other sherd is in the glauconitic B9.1 fabric. The assemblage from pit 829 is of considerably greater significance: the 59 sherds include 27 from two slack-profiled saucepan pot type vessels in calcined-flint tempered fabric, 13 from two similarly slack-profiled pots in glauconitic B9.1 fabric and 11 sherds in fabric B2.1 with siltstone grog filler.

#### Phase 2, c AD 1 - 100

The storage jar referred to above came from the middle fill of ditch 807 and most of it, if not all, is present. Unfortunately the type has a wide date range and indicates that the ditch could either belong to the period immediately preceding the Roman conquest or be as late as AD 100.

### *Conservation*

No further conservation is required. It is recommended that all of the material should be retained.

### *Comparative material*

The assemblage from pit 829 is a particularly important one in that it appears to belong to the transitional period between the middle Iron Age and the late Iron Age. No comparative material has been located from the area but such is the significance of the pottery that a

thorough search is recommended, not only through more obscure publications but through unpublished pottery assemblages in local museum stores.

The large bead-rim storage jar from context 809 is paralleled on a number of sites in east Kent such as the Marlowe Car Park in Canterbury (Pollard 1995, fig 274-94) and features in Thompson's corpus as one of the form C6-1 variants (1982).

#### *Potential for further work*

The potential for the Iron Age pottery from pit 829 to contribute to the landscape aspect of the CTRL project is minimal but the material is important in that it contributes to our understanding of ceramic development in this part of Kent during the transition from the middle to the late Iron Age. The presence of rim sherds from saucepan pots is particularly interesting in that vessels of this type are rare in Kent and largely replaced by globular jars and similar forms. Saucepan pots are common in middle Iron Age Sussex and their presence here could be indicative of cultural links with that area rather than the rest of Kent. The assemblage from pit 829 should therefore be written up in detail with discussion. Seven vessels would merit illustration.

The large storage jar, despite the fact that nearly all of it is present, contributes little to the aims of the CTRL project except in the field of pottery trade and that in other commodities. This vessel would have been very large and heavy when complete and this author's researches in the area suggests that most vessels of this type came from one source in the Whitstable area. It is unlikely that trade in large bulky vessels like this was economically viable unless they were marketed as packaging for some more valuable product.

A similar vessel form but in shell-tempered ware from kilns on Higham marshes was sent all over Kent, Surrey and the London area during the early Roman period and can be shown to have contained produce by the presence of resin sealant adhering to the rim. A small jar of similar type was found still sealed at Valkenburg in Holland and contained the breast bones of 30 larks. This storage jar should be subjected to analysis for residues in an endeavour to find out what it originally contained and published with a drawing. A distribution plot of find-spots of this kind of vessel in Kent and elsewhere may contribute significantly to our understanding of trading-patterns in the area during the Late Iron Age and Early Roman periods.

#### *Bibliography*

Macpherson-Grant, N., Savage, A., Cotter, J., Davey, M., Riddler, I., 1995 *Canterbury ceramics 2, The processing and study of excavated pottery*

Pollard, R. J., 1995 'The pottery: the Belgic and early Roman periods', in Elder, J., (Ed.), *Excavations in the Marlowe Car Park and surrounding areas, The Archaeology of Canterbury 5*, 585-624

Thompson, I., 1982 *Grog-tempered 'Belgic' pottery of south-eastern England*, BAR Brit Ser 108, Oxford

*Table 1: Summary of late Iron Age - early Roman pottery*

Context	Count	Weight (g)	Period	Comments
828	2	29	100 BC - AD 1	B9.1, M-LIA flint temper
830	59	502	100 BC - AD 1	B9.1, B2.1, M-LIA
809	317	10,464	AD 40 - 70	B2, storage jar
801	1	19		B1

## Assessment of Medieval Pottery

*by Paul Blinkhorn*

### *Introduction*

The pottery assemblage comprised 362 sherds with a total weight of 4870 g. The minimum number of vessels, was 2.27.

The bulk of the assemblage comprised a large group of early medieval pottery from two related contexts, and almost certainly represents a primary dump of domestic pottery. Otherwise, the context-specific groups were small, and activity at the site seems to have largely been contained to a short period within the later 12th – mid 13th centuries.

### *Methodology*

The pottery was counted and weighed. The minimum number of vessels (MNV) was calculated by measurement of rimsherd length. Fabrics were identified visually, and the pottery was recorded using the codes and chronologies of the Canterbury Archaeological Trust Fabric series for the county of Kent (Cotter forthcoming a and b), with the following types noted:

- EM3A, E Kent shelly-sandy ware, 1075/1100-1200/25. 1 sherd, 2 g, MNV = 0.
- EM.M5, Ashford Potters Corner shell-filled sandy ware, 1125/50-1225/50. 360 sherds, 4865 g, MNV = 2.27.
- M40B. Ashford/Wealden sandy ware, ?1200/25 - 1400. 1 sherd, 3 g, MNV = 0.

### *Quantification and Provenance*

The pottery occurrence by number and weight of sherds per context by fabric type is shown in table 2.

The restricted range of ware types from this site indicates that activity was confined to a short span within the early medieval period. Most of the pottery comprised a large group of cross-fitting material from contexts 820 and 821, the upper and primary fills of pit 819 respectively, with all the vessels in fabric EM.M5. Such pottery has a general date range of the mid-12th – mid 13th century, but the fact that the contexts which produced this ware did not produce any other pottery types indicates that they date to the early 13th century at the latest. In addition, the range of vessel types and their typological traits indicate that the context 820/821 assemblage probably dates to the later 12th – early 13th century (see below). All the other contexts, in pits 816 and 822, have a similarly restricted range of vessel types, although most were very small, and comprised only a few sherds. Only the topsoil, 801, produced 13th century pottery and did not have any EM.M5 wares present. Thus it would appear that the medieval activity at the site falls within the mid 12th – 13th century.

### Pottery from contexts 820 and 821

As noted above, the majority of the pottery from this site comprised a large assemblage from two contexts, with cross-fits noted between both. The group comprised mainly six jars, a bowl and a possible pitcher with rouletted decoration. Small fragments of at least two other jars were also noted, and the group appears to be a dump of domestic pottery from a nearby settlement. All the rims are simple forms, with five thumb-impressed. Two simple tubular spouts were also noted. Thumbed rims and rouletting are quite unusual for pottery of this tradition, and this, combined with the presence of tubular spouts suggest that the assemblage

probably dates to the later 12th – early 13th century (J Cotter pers. comm.). All the vessels were sooted to a greater or lesser degree, including the bowl.

#### *Conservation*

As evidence for the date of the pits in which they were found, and as a relatively rare assemblage of pottery of this date from this area, all of the medieval pottery should be retained.

#### *Comparative material*

Pottery of this date is poorly known in this area, and there is thus little material with which this assemblage could be usefully compared. Comparison with assemblages from other excavations along the CTRL will be of value.

#### *Potential for further work*

Although the pottery can contribute little to the CTRL research aims, or to the interpretation of the site beyond its chronology, it is of some significance in terms of the relatively poorly known chronology of pottery in Kent in this period. This relatively small assemblage should, therefore, be published in detail.

#### *Acknowledgements*

Grateful thanks go to John Cotter and Nigel McPherson-Grant of the Canterbury Archaeological Trust for their kind help in identifying and dating this material.

#### *Bibliography*

Cotter, J, forthcoming a, The pottery, in K Parfitt, B Corke and J Cotter *Excavations at Townall Street, Dover, 1996*, Canterbury Archaeological Trust

Cotter, J, forthcoming b, The post-Roman pottery, in A Hicks and M Hicks (eds) *Excavations at St. Gregory's Priory, Canterbury*, Canterbury Archaeological Trust

*Table 2: Summary of medieval pottery*

<b>Context</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Weight (g)</b>	<b>Period</b>	<b>Comments</b>
801	2	5	13thC?	fabrics EM3A and M40B
817	2	4	M12th - M13thC?	fabric EM.M5
818	2	13	M12th - M13thC?	fabric EM.M5
820	325	4412	M12th - M13thC	fabric EM.M5
821	30	434	M12th - M13thC	fabric EM.M5
824	1	2	M12th - M13thC?	fabric EM.M5