

7.1 ASSESSMENT OF EARLIER PREHISTORIC CERAMICS

Nigel Macpherson-Grant

Summary

- 7.1.1 The excavation produced ten sherds of fairly abraded, flint-tempered prehistoric pottery. The sherds are small and most are residual in early medieval and later phases. One sherd may be from a later Neolithic Peterborough Ware bowl, a possibility marginally supported by the recovery of a residual Neolithic arrowhead, but it could equally well be later prehistoric. Another is probably of Late Bronze/Early Iron Age date; the remainder lack diagnostic characteristics and can only be placed within the broad time frame *c.* 1500-25 BC.
- 7.1.2 Although one pit contained a sherd of prehistoric pottery (Phase 1, Group 1, Fill 438) there is no guarantee that the sherd and feature are contemporary.

Introduction

- 7.1.3 A small number of prehistoric sherds were recovered during the excavation; none were retrieved from environmental or other samples. The presence of these sherds confirms a degree of later prehistoric activity, with the slight possibility of earlier occupation. The sherds probably arrived on-site either as a by-product of settlement fringe activity or as a component in farmyard manure. Though most of this material should be of later second or first millennium BC date, it is not possible to determine whether they stem from one single or several, chronologically separate, phases of pre-Roman land-use.

Methodology

- 7.1.4 The assemblage has been dated and quantified by context. It has also been reviewed for potentially publishable elements. The CAT fabric reference collection has been used to provide broad fabric identifications.

Quantification

- 7.1.5 A total of 10 sherds, weighing 37g, was recorded. Other than noting that all the sherds are flint-tempered and that there are minor fabric variations, the assemblage has not received detailed fabric analysis and quantification. No biases due to sampling or excavation strategies have been noted.

7.1.6 Table One

Prehistoric Ceramics

All dates are approximate, all are BC

<i>Context</i>	<i>Fabric</i>	<i>Group</i>	<i>Count</i>	<i>Wt (g)</i>	<i>Early Date</i>	<i>Late Date</i>
0	Flint-Tempered	-	1	7	1500	25
306	Flint-Tempered	-	2	3	1500	25
328	Flint-Tempered	-	1	9	1500	25
383	Flint-Tempered	-	1	7	3500	2500
438(Group 1)	Flint-Tempered	-	1	7	900	550
496	Flint-Tempered	-	1	3	1500	25
556	Flint-Tempered	-	1	1	1500	25
569	Flint-Tempered	-	1	7	1500	25
639	Flint-Tempered	-	1	2	1500	25

Provenance

7.1.7 Individual quantities and associated dating are indicated in Table One. There are no publishable elements/groups and their typological value is minimal. They do have a small degree of site- and topographic-based value in that, like the lithics, they probably indicate two or more broad phases of activity not represented in the feature record. There is no guarantee that the single sherd recorded from the only pit assigned to the earliest phase (context 438, sub-group 58, Group 1, Phase 1) is contemporary with that feature.

7.1.8 All the sherds are small and worn. Their condition may be the result of post-loss re-distribution, during later site phases, or during exposure derived from settlement or land-use activities significantly earlier than Phase 1.

Conservation

7.1.9 The degree of further analysis recommended below does not conflict with potential long-term storage since, following fabric analysis and the retention of any sherds for the regional Fabric Reference Collection, the remainder could be discarded.

Comparative material

7.1.10 The sherds lack diagnostic elements and their current type, size and condition are ubiquitous in later second-first millennium BC settlement sites or later prehistoric landscapes that have been agriculturally managed. At present over 500 (mostly minor) locations and assemblages could be quoted as potential parallels to the present group of material, but only because the sherds are lacking in diagnostic features.

Potential for further work

7.1.11 The assemblage is of some, but minor, value to landscape studies in that it suggests that there may have been a phase of prehistoric activity prior to Phase 1.

7.1.12 In order to provide long-term comparative data, a standard context-based fabric identification and quantification catalogue should be prepared for the site archive; no further work is recommended beyond this. Sherds not required for the regional Fabric Reference Collection could then be discarded.

7.2 ASSESSMENT OF LATE IRON AGE AND ROMAN CERAMICS

Malcolm Lyne

Summary

- 7.2.1 The site produced eleven sherds of abraded Late Iron Age to Roman pottery, all residual in late Anglo-Saxon and medieval contexts. The pottery has a maximum date range of c. 75 BC to c. AD 400 or later, although none of it need be earlier than the late first century in date. No diagnostic sherds are present.

Introduction

- 7.2.2 A small collection of abraded late Iron Age to Roman pottery was recovered from nine separate contexts; one sherd was unstratified (context 0). The material suggests that there was occupation of this date in the general area but it does not add materially to the Fieldwork Event Aims for this project.

Methodology

- 7.2.3 The sherds were examined with the aid of a hand lens. They have been assigned to fabric types, using the CAT Fabric Reference Collection.

Quantification

- 7.2.4 Eleven sherds (116g) were examined and are quantified in Table One. They include six sherds in late pre-Roman Iron Age fabrics (B2 and B2.1), three of Roman date and two (LR5 and LR10) which are late Roman.

7.2.5 Table One

Late Iron Age and Roman Ceramics

All dates are approximate, all are AD unless stated otherwise

<i>Context</i>	<i>Fabric</i>	<i>Form</i>	<i>Count</i>	<i>Wt(g)</i>	<i>Edate</i>	<i>Ldate</i>	<i>Comments</i>
0	B2	Closed	1	2	75BC	100+	Oxidised
344	R43	DR.31	1	2	150	200	Burnt
377	R14	Open form	1	6	120	270	Abraded
385	LR.10	Bowl base	1	34	240	400+	Burnt
388	B2	Jar	1	8	75BC	100+	Abraded
395	B2.1	Jar	1	2	75BC	100+	Oxidised
423	LR5	Store-jar	1	12	270	400+	Abraded
485	B2.1	Jar neck sherd	1	8	75BC	100+	Abraded
499	R43	Basal sherd	1	30	50	175	Worn
580	B2	Basal sherd	1	6	75BC	100+	Abraded
657	B2	Closed	1	6	75BC	100+	Abraded

Provenance

- 7.2.6 Each sherd was found in a separate context and all of them are residual (in deposits of Anglo-Saxon and early medieval date). The sherd from context 499 had been trimmed for re-use as a ceramic counter (see Appendix.7.5).

Conservation

- 7.2.7 The sherds are abraded and are relatively featureless, although they can be ascribed to fabric types. They do not have any particular conservation requirements and they can be stored as a bulk commodity. None of the material is suitable for illustration and it could be discarded at the end of the project.

Comparative material

- 7.2.8 Small scraps of pottery of this date are widespread throughout East Kent and it is not worthwhile to establish detailed comparisons with this assemblage.

Potential for further work

- 7.2.9 The state of the sherds suggests that they are derived from field marling; they contribute little to the aims of the CTRL project.
- 7.2.10 The material should be written up briefly in note form as part of the site report and requires no further study.

7.3 ASSESSMENT OF POST-ROMAN CERAMICS

John Cotter

Summary

- 7.3.1 In total, 272 post-Roman sherds (3.101kg) were recovered by hand excavation. The bulk of this material belongs to the early medieval period, although there are a few sherds of early Anglo-Saxon date and small quantities of material from the middle and late Anglo-Saxon, late medieval and post-medieval periods. The ceramics have been identified by fabric and consist largely of local shelly and shelly-sandy wares together with some Canterbury sandy wares.
- 7.3.2 The Mersham group is the first of its kind from this area and one of few groups of late Anglo-Saxon/early medieval date from the county. The shelly and shelly-sandy wares are predominantly of types previously established for the Ashford area and dated to the thirteenth century. However, the Mersham material is probably earlier than this and suggests that this tradition may have originated in the Anglo-Saxon period; indeed, some forms in these fabrics exhibit transitional Anglo-Saxon/early medieval characteristics. Thus, although the assemblage is relatively small, it is an important group in regional terms and it has the potential to advance our understanding of Wealden ceramic traditions before and after the Norman conquest.

Introduction

- 7.3.3 A modest assemblage of post-Roman sherds was recovered by hand excavation from 85 separate contexts. In addition, a small quantity of pottery came from the environmental samples. The latter material was briefly scanned but not recorded in any detail.
- 7.3.4 The study of this material was intended to assist a number of the Fieldwork Event Aims, as follows;
- Recovery of artefact assemblages (especially pottery) to elucidate the sequence of site development; to provide information on the status and economy of the site and data on trade and exchange;
 - Recovery of environmental and other economic indicators if these are found to be present on site;

Methodology

- 7.3.5 All of the material has been catalogued by fabric code, number of sherds and weight per context (Table One). Fabric codes are those of the CAT Fabric Reference Collection. Fabrics were identified by visual inspection and by microscopic examination (x20 magnification). All contexts containing pottery have been spot-dated. Brief notes and/or sketches of diagnostic items were made during the cataloguing process.

7.3.6 Table One

Post-Roman Ceramics, by phase and context

All dates are approximate, all are AD

<i>Con text</i>	<i>Sub- Grp</i>	<i>Grp</i>	<i>Phase</i>	<i>Fabric</i>	<i>Fabric</i>	<i>Grp</i>	<i>Count</i>	<i>Wgt</i>	<i>Early Date</i>	<i>Late Date</i>
0	0	0	0	EM1	Sandy	-	3	18	1050	1225
0	0	0	0	EM2	Shelly	-	1	22	1050	1225
0	0	0	0	EM3A	Shelly- Sandy	-	6	17	1075	1225
0	0	0	0	LM100	? English	-	1	5	1350	1550
0	0	0	0	LM2	Fine Earthenware	-	1	10	1475	1550
0	0	0	0	LM4	?Wealden Sandy	-	5	98	1450	1550
0	0	0	0	LS1	Sandy	-	1	14	850	1050
0	0	0	0	PM2.5	?Wealden Sandy	-	1	7	1550	1675
0	0	0	0	PM2.6	?Wealden Buff	-	1	32	1550	1675
365	0	0	0	PM25	London Stoneware	-	1	3	1675	1825
575	102	25	0	EM2	Shelly	-	1	2	1050	1225
575	102	25	0	M39	Potter's Corner Sandy	-	3	17	1175	1325
430	147	3	2	LS1	Sandy	-	2	27	850	1050
430	147	3	2	LS3	Shelly- Sandy	-	1	16	850	1050
573	101	4	2	LS3	Shelly- Sandy	-	1	6	850	1050
584	171	4	2	LS2	Shelly	-	1	4	850	1050
618	115	3	2	LS3	Shelly- Sandy	-	1	25	850	1050
626	160	2	2	LS3	Shelly- Sandy	-	2	18	850	1050
640	75	3	2	MLS2	Sandy	-	1	8	775	875
311	37	23	3	EM1	Sandy	-	7	54	1050	1225
311	37	23	3	EM2	Shelly	-	1	4	1050	1225
316	30	17	3	EM2	Shelly	-	3	20	1050	1225
318	23	11	3	EM1	Sandy	-	8	177	1050	1225
318	23	11	3	EM2	Shelly	-	29	262	1050	1225
325	38	11	3	EM2	Shelly	-	1	4	1050	1225
329	34	22	3	EM2	Shelly	-	1	2	1050	1225
331	39	10	3	EM1	Sandy	-	4	56	1050	1225
331	39	10	3	PM1	Red Earthenware	-	1	2	1550	1800
342	24	11	3	EM2	Shelly	-	1	10	1050	1225
347	25	6	3	EM2	Shelly	-	1	3	1050	1225
362	167	22	3	EM1	Sandy	-	4	32	1050	1225
366	27	11	3	EM2	Shelly	-	2	21	1050	1225
382	129	11	3	EM2	Shelly	-	1	2	1050	1225
383	131	6	3	EM1	Sandy	-	1	3	1050	1225

<i>Con text</i>	<i>Sub-Grp</i>	<i>Grp</i>	<i>Phase</i>	<i>Fabric</i>	<i>Fabric</i>	<i>Grp</i>	<i>Count</i>	<i>Wgt</i>	<i>Early Date</i>	<i>Late Date</i>
383	131	6	3	EM2	Shelly	-	1	3	1050	1225
383	131	6	3	LM4	? Wealden Buff Sandy	-	1	8	1450	1550
385	131	6	3	EM2	Shelly	-	1	6	1050	1225
388	29	20	3	EM1	Sandy	-	1	10	1050	1225
388	29	20	3	EM2	Shelly	-	2	10	1050	1225
388	20	20	3	PM1	Red Earthenware	-	2	56	1550	1800
391	129	11	3	EM2	Shelly	-	4	61	1050	1225
403	129	11	3	LS2	Shelly	-	6	175	850	1050
403	129	11	3	LS3	Shelly-Sandy	-	1	18	850	1050
416	130	6	3	EM2	Shelly	-	1	1	1050	1225
421	129	11	3	MLS2	Sandy	-	1	11	775	875
423	22	13	3	EM1	Sandy	-	2	26	1050	1225
424	65	14	3	LM32	Wealden Or.-Buff Sandy1	-	40	1475	1550	
424	65	14	3	LS19	Non-local Chalk-filled	-	1	10	850	1050
424	65	14	3	M10	?Wealden-type Sandy	-	1	5	1350	1550
432	146	12	3	EM1	Sandy	-	11	147	1050	1225
432	146	12	3	EM2	Shelly	-	1	12	1050	1225
440	164	11	3	EM2	Shelly	-	1	2	1050	1225
442	137	23	3	EM1	Sandy	-	1	4	1050	1225
442	137	23	3	EM2	Shelly	-	1	3	1050	1225
442	137	23	3	M40B	?Ashford/Wealden Sandy	-	1	5	1175	1400
471	178	12	3	EM1	Sandy	-	1	2	1050	1225
477	65	14	3	LS1	Sandy	-	1	4	850	1050
478	65	14	3	EM1	Sandy	-	1	10	1050	1225
485	149	6	3	EM4	West Kent Fine Sandy	-	1	17	1125	1250
487	157	6	3	EM1	Sandy	-	1	44	1050	1225
488	157	6	3	EM2	Shelly	-	1	30	1050	1225
492	57	14	3	EM1	Sandy	-	1	4	1050	1225
493	176	18	3	EM2	Shelly	-	1	30	1050	1225
498	151	6	3	EM2	Shelly	-	1	3	1050	1225
509	57	14	3	EM1	Sandy	-	1	4	1050	1225
509	57	14	3	EM3A	Shelly-Sandy	-	1	7	1075	1225
510	120	20	3	EM2	Shelly	-	1	2	1050	1225
510	120	20	3	PM1	Red Earthenware	-	2	4	1550	1800
511	128	11	3	EM1	Sandy	-	1	14	1050	1225
511	128	11	3	EM2	Shelly	-	1	6	1050	1225
514	119	10	3	LS2	Shelly	-	1	9	850	1050
515	180	6	3	EM2	Shelly	-	6	8	1050	1225

<i>Con text</i>	<i>Sub- Grp</i>	<i>Grp</i>	<i>Phase</i>	<i>Fabric</i>	<i>Fabric</i>	<i>Grp</i>	<i>Count</i>	<i>Wgt</i>	<i>Early Date</i>	<i>Late Date</i>
515	180	6	3	EM3A	Shelly- Sandy	-	1	16	1075	1225
519	65	14	3	LS1	Sandy	-	7	62	850	1050
525	152	11	3	EM2	Shelly	-	2	14	1050	1225
548	154	12	3	EM2	Shelly	-	6	13	1050	1225
551	156	19	3	EMS4	Organic Tempered	-	1	6	550	725
562	109	13	3	EM3A	Shelly- Sandy	-	1	44	1075	1225
568	104	13	3	EM1	Sandy	-	1	12	1050	1225
569	112	12	3	EM2	Shelly	-	1	3	1050	1225
572	60	6	3	EM2	Shelly	-	2	10	1050	1225
587	162	13	3	LM2	?C"bury- type earthenware	-	1	11	1475	1550
592	15	9	3	EM1	Sandy	-	4	135	1050	1225
595	68	8	3	LS2	Shelly	-	1	23	850	1050
596	69	8	3	EM1	Sandy	-	1	14	1050	1225
600	161	13	3	EM2	Shelly	-	2	33	1050	1225
601	16	7	3	MLS2	Canterbury- type Sandy	-	1	5	775	875
602	14	16	3	EM1	Sandy	-	2	7	1050	1225
603	15	9	3	LS2	Shelly	-	1	2	850	1050
609	161	12	3	LS2	Shelly	-	1	60	850	1050
619	70	8	3	LS1	Sandy	-	1	11	850	1050
620	68	8	3	EM1	Sandy	-	2	29	1050	1225
621	70	8	3	EM2	Shelly	-	1	1	1050	1225
621	70	8	3	MLS2	Canterbury- type Sandy	-	2	7	775	875
627	70	8	3	EM1	Sandy	-	5	39	1050	1225
628	71	10	3	EM2	Shelly	-	1	2	1050	1225
628	71	10	3	EM28	?Kentish White Sandy	-	1	22	1175	1225
629	73	10	3	EM2	Shelly	-	2	32	1050	1225
630	73	10	3	EM2	Shelly	-	2	11	1050	1225
632	70	8	3	EM1	Sandy	-	6	24	1050	1225
632	70	8	3	LS100	?English Miscellan- eous	-	1	2	850	1050
639	70	8	3	EM1	Sandy	-	4	24	1050	1225
639	70	8	3	M40B	?Ashford/ Wealden Sandy	-	1	6	1175	1400
649	65	14	3	LS1	Sandy	-	11	129	850	1050
659	65	14	3	EM2	Shelly	-	1	8	1050	1225
330	36	26	4	EM1	Sandy	-	1	18	1050	1225
330	36	26	4	EM2	Shelly	-	3	45	1050	1225

<i>Con text</i>	<i>Sub- Grp</i>	<i>Grp</i>	<i>Phase</i>	<i>Fabric</i>	<i>Fabric</i>	<i>Grp</i>	<i>Count</i>	<i>Wgt</i>	<i>Early Date</i>	<i>Late Date</i>
330	36	26	4	LM2	?C'bury- type earthenware	-	1	8	1475	1550
332	36	26	4	PM1	Red Earthenware	-	1	13	1550	1800
370	36	26	4	M40B	?Ashford/ Wealden Sandy	-	2	9	1175	1400
395	36	26	4	EM2	Shelly	-	1	4	1050	1225
395	36	26	4	LM2	?C'bury- type earthenware	-	1	36	1475	1550
456	62	26	4	EM100	?English Miscellan- eous	-	1	14	1050	1225
497	56	27	4	EM1	Sandy	-	1	3	1050	1225
497	56	27	4	EMS2	Shelly	-	1	2	450	700
497	56	27	4	LM32	Wealden Or.-Buff Sandy	-	1	10	1475	1550
508	56	27	4	EM1	Sandy	-	1	8	1050	1225
508	56	27	4	LM32	Wealden Or.-Buff Sandy	-	4	117	1475	1550
556	56	27	4	EM1	Sandy	-	1	2	1050	1225
556	56	27	4	LM2	?C'bury- type earthenware	-	1	3	1475	1550
556	56	27	4	M40B	?Ashford/ Wealden Sandy	-	1	11	1175	1400
556	56	27	4	MLS100	?English Miscellan- eous	-	1	2	650	850
392	28	28	5	PM2.5	?Wealden fine earthenware 1	-	2	155 0	1675	
397	90	29	5	LM2	?C'bury- type earthenware	-	1	9	1475	1550
398	4	31	5	M40C	?Ashford/W ealden Pasty	-	1	8	1250	1400
302	46	34	5	LPM12C	Pearlware	-	3	7	1780	1825
302	46	34	5	PM1	Red Earthenware	-	1	140	1550	1800

Quantification

7.3.7 The 272 sherds (3.101kg) of post-Roman pottery are presented by phase and context in Table One. 27 fabric codes have been used, indicating the variety of pottery types or wares present, although some of these come from the same general source area. No obvious collection bias was noted.

7.3.8 The quantity of sherds can be summarised by period as follows;

7.3.9 Table Two

Post-Roman Ceramics by Period

<i>Period</i>	<i>Fabrics</i>	<i>Count</i>	<i>Weight (g)</i>	<i>%</i>
Early Anglo-Saxon	EMS2, 4	2	8	0.8
Middle Anglo-Saxon	MLS2, 100	7	34	2.6
Late Anglo-Saxon	LS1, 2, 3, 19, 100	42	615	15.4
Early Medieval	EM1, 2, 3A, 28, 100	178	1762	65.2
High Medieval	M10, 39, 40B, 40C	10	61	3.7
Late Medieval	LM 2, 4, 32, 100	19	355	7.0
Post-Medieval	PM1, 2.5, 2.6, 25, LPM12C	14	266	5.2

Provenance

7.3.10 The majority of individual post-Roman contexts with pottery produced only around one to three sherds each. Most of the pre-1200 pottery comes from pit refuse. The highest number of sherds from a single context or sub-group is 37 (context 318, sub-group 23, Group 11, Phase 3), which contains some useful featured sherds. Other contexts producing modest assemblages of some note include the following;

7.3.11 Table Three

Contexts with Notable Ceramic Assemblages

<i>Context</i>	<i>Sub-Group</i>	<i>Group</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Count</i>	<i>Dating</i>
318	23	11	Pit Refuse	37	Early medieval
403	129	11	Animal Burial	7	Late Anglo-Saxon
432	145	12	Pit Refuse	12	Eleventh Century
649	65	14	Ditch fill	11	Late Anglo-Saxon*

*context 649 also includes some later pottery

Conservation

7.3.12 Generally the condition of the pottery is fair to poor. Many sherds are small and worn. There are no complete vessels or whole profiles although a few reasonably complete profiles can probably be reconstructed from the fragments.

7.3.13 The material does not have any special conservation or storage needs and it can all be treated as a bulk finds commodity. It may be necessary to reconstruct a small number of vessel profiles prior to illustration. It is recommended that all of the ceramics be retained. The quantity present is, in any case, not great but the material is of comparative value for future ceramic research in this area of Kent.

Comparative Material

- 7.3.14 Remarkably little post-Roman pottery has been published from the Ashford/Mersham area and, in general, known or published assemblages of late Anglo-Saxon or early medieval pottery from the rural Weald of Kent are scarce. The most relevant published assemblage is merely an interim report, now out of date, which deals with a probable kiln site, probably of the early thirteenth century, at Potter's Corner, Ashford (Grove and Warhurst 1952). It is clear from an examination, by the author, of this pottery in Maidstone Museum that both a sandy ware and a closely related shelly/sandy ware were produced at Potter's Corner, though the latter ware may represent a slightly earlier phase of production. This medieval shelly-sandy ware, probably made with fossil shell derived from the Hythe Beds, appears to be closely related to the late Anglo-Saxon/early medieval shelly wares at Mersham although the latter are clearly more primitive and cruder in manufacture. Nevertheless, some of the Mersham wares appear to represent an earlier stage of the same local tradition of shelly-sandy wares from which the Ashford wares eventually developed.
- 7.3.15 Pottery fabrics similar to both local shelly and sandy fabrics at Mersham are also known from the Anglo-Saxon and early medieval coastal settlement of *Sandtun*, near Hythe (Hodges 1981, 11; Macpherson-Grant and Blackmore, forthcoming). Early medieval flint-and-shell tempered fabrics are present but rare at Mersham. These are characteristic of the coastal areas of Sussex and south Kent. Very similar fabrics occur, for example, at the CTRL site north of Westenhanger Castle (ARC WSG98). Both late Anglo-Saxon and early medieval sandy Canterbury wares are well known from many sites in East Kent, although Mersham more or less marks the south-westerly limits of their distribution.

Potential for further work

- 7.3.16 The late Anglo-Saxon and early medieval pottery assemblage from Mersham provides a window into the ceramics of an area of rural Kent where virtually no ceramics research has been conducted previously. In terms of local and regional research priorities, as regards the Ashford/east Wealden area, the assemblage has the potential for demonstrating that the local ceramic tradition of shelly and shelly-sandy wares, previously dated no earlier than the thirteenth century, is in fact a tradition with Anglo-Saxon roots.
- 7.3.17 Late Anglo-Saxon and early medieval ceramics research in East Kent has, to date, been centred on urban sites, particularly at Canterbury and Dover (Blackmore 1988; McCarthy and Brooks 1988, 183-4; Macpherson-Grant 1990; *idem*, 1992; Cotter 1997; *idem*, forthcoming B;). One of the few comparable rural sites of early medieval date lies some distance away at Monkton in Thanet (Cotter, forthcoming A).
- 7.3.18 The occurrence of local, hand-made, basically Anglo-Saxon vessel forms sometimes side-by-side with technically more advanced early medieval Canterbury ceramics provides an interesting illustration of the late Anglo-Saxon/early medieval interface in ceramic technology. This may reflect more advanced urban products providing the catalyst for change in a more conservative rural tradition. In this respect the Mersham assemblage provides a useful contrast and corrective to the picture of urban ceramic development seen at both Canterbury and Dover.

- 7.3.19 With a significant shelly element (*c.* 40%) in the assemblage, Mersham has the potential to contribute to a long-term research programme, which is scientifically characterising the shelly ware industries of Kent. One aspect of this is the identification of the shell species used as tempering material in the pottery fabrics and determining whether these are of fossil or contemporary marine origin. Together with petrological information derived from microscopic or thin-section analysis, as well as more traditional ceramic information based on form and decoration, this provides a basis for sub-dividing the county's otherwise uniform mass of shelly wares into distinct localised industries or traditions. Analyses of this kind have recently been undertaken on shelly wares from Dover, Canterbury and *Sandtun* (Cotter, forthcoming B) and it would be useful to expand this programme to other parts of the county.
- 7.3.20 The earliest manifestation of the shelly and shelly-sandy wares has been assigned here, on the basis of comparison with urban assemblages, to the middle or late Anglo-Saxon period. As, at Mersham, they occur chiefly within contexts or groups that have also produced early medieval Canterbury wares, these early wares currently appear, therefore, to be largely residual. However, a limited programme of thermoluminescence analysis could provide independent dating and, thus, either confirm their residuality or point towards a later date-range for this tradition than that encountered in (perhaps more progressive) urban environments in East Kent, such as at Canterbury.
- 7.3.21 The post-Roman pottery assemblage also has the potential to address a number of the Fieldwork Event Aims, as detailed in the following paragraphs.
- 7.3.22 The assemblage elucidates the sequence of site development by providing dating information. Evidence provided by cross-joining sherds from different contexts can also shed light on this point, and can be used to establish the nature of the redistribution of discarded material across the site. With the benefit of the revised stratigraphic narrative, a more considered dating can then be offered for site features and for the groups and sub-groups. Although the ceramics are not in excellent condition, there is a high potential for establishing cross-joins. Similar work on the early medieval site at Monkton was very useful in linking structural evidence to the site sequence (Cotter, forthcoming A).
- 7.3.23 The quality of the pottery (*i.e.*, fine or coarse wares, high or low quality production) provides a degree of information on the status and economy of the site. The type of vessel forms present, as well as the fabrics in which they occur, can be quantified to some extent in terms of 'tablewares' or 'finewares' versus 'kitchenwares' or 'coarsewares' for the different chronological periods they represent. The ratio of different vessel forms present can sometimes shed light on site economy; a high number of bowls, for example, can indicate dairying practices. This quantification can be achieved by recording Estimated Vessel Equivalents (EVEs), usually by recording the surviving percentage of rims for each vessel form group and then comparing their totals. A count of diagnostic featured sherds complements this exercise. It would also be necessary to compare these results (either quantitatively or qualitatively) with other rural and urban sites and with lower and higher status sites to enable the Mersham assemblage to be seen in its broader socio-economic context.
- 7.3.24 The geographic sources of the pottery provide evidence for trade or exchange. In particular, there is the relationship with Canterbury, one of the possible destinations for iron products produced on the site. The quantities of pottery from known or inferred sources can be compared by grouping fabrics into source groups. This should enable supply trends and hence the relative importance of different trade links

to be established and compared. This can be achieved by tabulating the quantified data in terms of source groups.

7.3.25 Bibliography

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