

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

**Small Finds from Whitehill Road, Longfield and New
Barn, Kent
(Archaeological Zones 1 and 2)**

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Figure 1: Whitehill Road Small Finds, Amber beads

1 ZONE 1

1.1 Introduction

A total of 23 small finds were recovered from archaeological work in Zone 1:

Amber	21
Copper-alloy	2

The amber consists of 21 beads forming a necklace found in the neck and right shoulder area of an adult flexed burial, which was dug into the inner ditch backfill of an early Bronze Age barrow with double ring ditch at ARC WHR 99. A small lump of soil containing traces of copper alloy was also found in the fill of the inner barrow ditch, but these are both too small and too corroded to be identifiable. The remaining copper-alloy small find came from ARC 330 98 in Zone 1 and is a post-medieval (19th or 20th century) disc-shaped tag or label, probably associated with agricultural activity in the area.

1.2 Contextual narrative

1.2.1 Early Bronze Age barrow (ARC WHR 99)

The barrow mount was truncated and the only finds were recovered from the fills of the ditches. These largely comprised burnt and unburnt flint (see separate report) and a small quantity of copper alloy, small find SF 1. The latter consists of a very small fragment of soil containing traces of green copper alloy, recovered from context 15 (group 40131, sub-group 4), the fill of the inner barrow ditch; this fill underlies fill 36. It is impossible to identify the form or function of these pieces.

The most interesting finds from the site are the amber beads, found associated with the secondary crouched inhumation burial 41 (group 40135, sub-group 5), which cut through the backfilled inner ditch on the southern side of the barrow. A total of twenty-one beads were recovered consisting of seventeen virtually complete and four fragmentary (accessioned as small finds SF 2 and SF 3). The beads were found around the neck and right scapula area of the poorly preserved skeleton, buried in a flexed position with the head to the west. Comparison with other sites, elsewhere in Britain, indicates an Early Bronze Age date for the burial (see below).

1.2.2 Post-medieval (ARC 330 98)

A copper-alloy disc-shaped tag or label (SF 81) was recovered from Chainage 200+650 in ARC 330 98. One face is stamped ESA at the top and LONDON at the bottom and there is an

incomplete integral suspension loop at the top. This object dates to the 19th to 20th century and may have been associated with agricultural activity in the area.

1.3 Discussion of the amber beads

1.3.1 Introduction

The rather fragmentary and weathered nature of the beads argued against any form of destructive analysis to identify their source, but it is highly likely that they are made from what is termed ‘Baltic’ amber. In their 1991 study, Beck and Shennan analysed 123 prehistoric amber artefacts, of which 113 were Baltic amber, three probably Baltic and six too badly weathered or contaminated to identify (1991, 37). Baltic amber is found both in northern Europe, and along the eastern shore of England and Scotland, due to glaciation (ibid, 16-7). It is, however, impossible to identify the exact source of an artefact made of Baltic amber as that found in much of northern Europe is indistinguishable from the English and Scottish material. Given the quantity of amber that must have been in circulation in the prehistoric periods, it would seem that as well as utilising the naturally occurring material, much was also imported (ibid, 37) and that a thriving trade existed between Britain and mainland Europe.

1.3.2 Form and size

The typology used in the table below is Beck and Shennan (1991), which itself is based on that devised by Sprincz and Beck (1981) for Hungarian amber beads.

Table 1: Dimensions of the amber beads from context 40 ARC WHR 99:

Context	Bead	Diam (mm)	Th (mm)	Form and comments
40	SF 2.1	9-11	4-5.5	Beck and Shennan Group 1B/4
40	SF 2.2	10-11	6-7	Beck and Shennan Group 7B/4
40	SF 2.3	10-11	3.5-5	Beck and Shennan Group 1B/4
40	SF 2.4	10	3.5-4	Beck and Shennan Group 1B/4
40	SF 2.5	9-10	4.5-6	Beck and Shennan Group 1B/4
40	SF 2.6	8-8.5	4.5-5	Beck and Shennan Group 1B/4
40	SF 2.7	8.5-9	4.5-5	Beck and Shennan Group 7B/4
40	SF 2.8	8-9	4-4.5	Beck and Shennan Group 1B/4
40	SF 2.9	8.5-9	5-5.5	Beck and Shennan Group 7B/4
40	SF 2.10	8.5-9	5-5.5	Beck and Shennan Group 2?/4; rather worn and crumbly
40	SF 2.11	7.5-8	4-5	Beck and Shennan Group 1B/4
40	SF 2.12	9-9.5	4.5-5	Beck and Shennan Group 7B/4
40	SF 2.13	8-9.5	5	Beck and Shennan Group 7B/4
40	SF 2.14	25	5-11	Beck and Shennan Group 5
40	SF 3.1	10-11	4	Beck and Shennan Group 1B
40	SF 3.2	10	3.5-4.5	Beck and Shennan Group 1B/4
40	SF 3.3	9-9.5	4-5	Beck and Shennan Group 1B/4
40	SF 3.4	8	4.5	Beck and Shennan Group 7B/4; damaged
40	SF 3.5	7.5	6	Probably Beck and Shennan Group 7B/4; very crumbly & damaged
40	SF 3.6	8.5	4	Beck and Shennan Group 1B/4; approximately half remains
40	SF 3.7	-	-	Disintegrated.

The size of the beads varies, consisting of one larger bead and twenty smaller. The larger bead, number SF 3.14, has a diameter of 25 mm and a maximum thickness of 11 mm. Its hole is slightly off-centre and has a diameter of 2.5-4 mm at one end and 2.5 mm at the other. The remaining twenty beads are much smaller and fall into two approximate size ranges, ten with diameters of 7.5-9 mm and a thickness varying from 4 mm to 6 mm and nine with diameters of 9-11 mm and a thickness varying from 3.5 mm to 6 mm, except for one with a maximum thickness of 7 mm. All of the smaller beads have central circular holes with diameters on average of 2 mm.

The form of the beads also varies. The single large bead is circular with a lentoid cross-section conforming to Beck and Shennan's Group 5, a fairly uncommon form of bead in Britain but with most examples occurring in the early Bronze Age (Beck and Shennan 1991, 57). With one exception the remaining beads belong to Beck and Shennan's Groups 1B (flat, thin disc beads with rounded edges) or 7B (short cylinder beads with rounded edges), both of which also have a concentration in the early Bronze Age (*ibid*, 53 and 60). These two groups are very similar, only divided depending on the thickness of the bead. It should be noted that all the present beads have rounded edges, although whether this is an original feature or due to wear cannot now be identified. The exception amongst the smaller beads is number SF 3.10, which may belong to Beck and Shennan's group 2, annular beads, but as this is a rather worn bead this must remain uncertain. Virtually all of the beads could be classified also as Beck and Shennan's group 4, beads with a drop-shaped cross-section. Beck and Shennan suggest that the uneven thickness is a deliberate device to aid the way in which the beads hung and, therefore, how they appeared on the necklace (*ibid*, 57). The present beads all show signs of wear, with rounded edges and it is perhaps, therefore, more likely that the uneven thickness is the result of wear during use.

Amber bead necklaces of the early to middle Bronze Age show a wide variation in forms, both in terms of the use of different sized and shaped beads, but also in the use of beads of other materials along with amber (for example, Little Cressingham, Norfolk (Beck and Shennan 1991, fig 11.8), Shrewton, Wiltshire (*ibid*, fig 11.12, no. 1), Upton Lovell, Wiltshire (fig 11.15, no. 1), and Wilsford cum Lake, Wiltshire (*ibid*, figs 11.17 and 11.18)).

1.3.3 Dating

Although amber beads continued in use into the Roman and later periods they were never as popular as in the prehistoric period (Allason-Jones 1991, 271). Beck and Shennan's study of prehistoric amber artefacts in Britain (1991) demonstrates that although they occur in the Mesolithic and Neolithic periods and again in the middle and late Bronze Age and the Iron Age, it is the early Bronze Age that is the dominant period for the use of amber. Indeed, of a

total of approximately 200 occurrences of amber in prehistoric Britain about 130 date to the Bell Beaker and early Bronze Age phases (Shennan 1993, 59).

The problems with dating the necklace on stylistic grounds are highlighted by the occurrence of similar necklaces in the early/middle Bronze Age (for example, two from Easton Down, Hampshire (Beck and Shennan 1991, fig 11.4, nos 4 and 5)) and also in the late Bronze Age (an example from Balmashanner, Angus (ibid, fig 11.20, no.4)). However, since the form of the beads found on the present site are predominantly found on sites in the early Bronze Age and this period is also the point at which the use of amber artefacts peaks, it would seem probable that the necklace is early Bronze Age in date.

1.3.4 Discussion

The occurrence of this necklace in a secondary burial within a Bronze Age barrow is of importance in interpreting the ritual and ceremonial uses of this area of North Kent. Amber is one of a number of exotic materials that were used throughout the prehistoric period to produce beads and spacer plates, but also pendants and less commonly dagger pommels and even vessels (Beck and Shennan 1991, 62). In the Roman and post-Roman periods amber was one of a number of 'exotic' materials (for example, jet) which were thought to have various magical and medicinal powers, probably due to its electromagnetic properties. It is likely that amber also had a mystical or ritual significance in the Bronze Age, particularly given the frequency with which it is found in burials. Beads and necklaces of 'exotic' materials such as jet, amber and faience are traditionally associated with burials of the Wessex culture of the final early Bronze Age (Barclay & Wallis, 1999, 234), although they also occur elsewhere in Britain and on the continent (Coles & Harding 1979, 31 & 256; Shennan 1993, 60; du Gardin 1993, 67-75 and fig 1, nos 1-14). Bronze Age burials containing such exotic goods are known from Kent, particularly clustered in the east of the county (Drewitt et al 1988, 84-6), recent work, such as that along the line of the Channel Tunnel Rail Link and elsewhere is enhancing this picture. Work in advance of the dualling of the A253 between Monkton and Mount Pleasant, for example, has produced evidence of a landscape dating from the Neolithic to the Anglo-Saxon periods, including a number of Beaker graves, and three barrow cemeteries (Canterbury Archaeological Trust and the Trust for Thanet Archaeology, 1997, 305-10). One of the Beaker burials contained a necklace of 217 jet beads. In addition, at Ringlemere, near Sandwich, the discovery of the famous early Bronze Age gold cup has led to a series of excavations that have produced evidence of a hitherto unknown landscape of barrows and has also produced two amber artefacts, part of a pommel and a probable pendant fragment. The latter were found in disturbed contexts but it has been suggested that they may have been deposited with the cup c 1700-1500BC (Parfitt and Needham 2004). The White Hill Road

barrow and secondary inhumation with amber necklace adds further to this newly emerging picture.

While exotic finds have been recovered, there is little evidence of prehistoric amber finds from Kent and only a handful of occurrences from the neighbouring counties of Surrey and Sussex. A single amber bead was recovered with early Iron Age pottery from a pit at Hacklinge Holes, Worth (Parfitt 1984, 290) and amber beads have been found on later sites in Kent, such as the Jutish and Anglo-Saxon cemeteries at Sarre and Darenth Park (Perkins 1992, 147 and Batchelor 1991, 50). Amber beads came from a secondary urned cremation in the barrow on Mount Caburn, Ox-settle Bottom, near Lewes, Sussex (Curwen 1937, 168 and fig 45; Beck and Shennan 1991, 162) and the large barrow near Hove produced the famous amber cup (Curwen 1937, 162 and plate XIII; Beck and Shennan 1991, 159-60). A single bead was recovered from a late Bronze Age deposit at Queen Mary's Hospital, Carshalton in Surrey (Beck and Shennan 1991, 151). To the north, in Essex there are also few finds, although they include a necklace of eleven amber beads with shale beads and gold sheet plates from Rochford, found associated with an early/middle Bronze Age cremation (Beck and Shennan 1991, 168).

The dearth of amber finds in the south-eastern region in the early/middle Bronze Age when compared to the quantities found to the west in Wessex may well be due to cultural differences, with the amber indicative of a 'Wessex' influence in other areas. But it may also be due to other factors: as Beck and Shennan have pointed out (1991, 77-80) due to a lack of information of early Bronze Age burials in other areas of Britain it is difficult to make precise comparisons with the well-documented burials of Wessex. Furthermore, poor preservation, both of the amber and the types of archaeological sites that may have contained it, may also have played a part. The condition of the amber beads from the present site is quite poor and it is possible that in the past such poorly preserved material would not have been identified or perhaps even recovered. Agriculture and other processes have undoubtedly destroyed sites, such as barrows, most likely to contain amber artefacts. The discovery of the barrow at White Hill Road, with its secondary burial and accompanying amber necklace, highlights this problem: a single discovery may alter interpretations and assumptions about this area of Kent.

At White Hill Road it was not possible to identify the sex of the skeleton, although it has been noted that such necklaces are usually associated with female burials (Barclay and Wallis 1999, 234). A similar context is found at one of the barrows at Shrewton in Wiltshire (Barrow G5J, Netdown group, *ibid*, 169) where a necklace (rather different in form from the White Hill Road one), consisting of 40 very small disc-shaped beads with 4 lignite beads and a shell (*ibid*, fig 11.12, no. 1), formed part of a possible secondary inhumation of a middle-aged female in a barrow.

2 ZONE 2

2.1 Introduction

Thirteen small finds were recovered from archaeological work in Zone 2: one from ARC STP 99, eight from ARC SSR 99 and four from ARC 330 98:

Coins	2
Copper-alloy	3
Glass	2
Iron	5
Lead	1

Overall the finds are fairly small and scrappy. Two small fragments of glass, one each from ARC STP 99 and ARC SSR 99 have little further interest (the latter has been identified as modern). The metalwork is either, too corroded and fragmentary to identify, or is modern. The two objects of interest are the two coins both from ARC SSR 99, a ditch fill (group 40103, sub-group 116).

2.2 Contextual narrative

2.2.1 *Late Iron Age/Roman*

Two coins came from ARC SSR 99, both from a ditch that also produced Roman pottery dating to the mid- to late 1st century AD. Context 18 (group 40103, sub-group 116) produced SF 2, a copper-alloy Iron Age coin, identified by Dr Richard Hobbs (Dept. of Prehistory and Europe, The British Museum) as of a type usually attributed to Tasciovanus on stylistic grounds and probably dating to the late 1st century BC. The other coin came from context 13 (group 40103, sub-group 116) SF 1 and is a copper-alloy coin of Vespasian (AD 69-79), but possibly a cast copy/'light weight' forgery dating to the 2nd century AD (identification by Michael Hammerson).

2.2.2 *Post-medieval/modern*

ARC SSR 99 a number of intrusive later small finds from 35 and 42 (Group 40104, sub-group 114), the north half of an oven. These contexts also produced a small quantity of later 1st century AD pottery, dated to *c* AD70-100. These finds comprised a small fragment from a modern opaque white glass vessel with moulded ridges (identification by John Shepherd), a corroded unidentifiable fragment of iron and a modern copper-alloy eyelet. A small copper-alloy fitting with a screw thread came from modern feature 20.

ARC 330 98 produced three iron accessions from Chainage 204+540, all metal detected and unstratified. These comprise a hinge, part of a socketed tool or fitting and two fragments, one possibly a nail. A post-medieval/modern horseshoe (SF 74) was recovered from 342, a pit.

2.2.3 Undated features

At ARC SSR 99 a fragment of molten lead was retrieved by metal-detector from 19 (group 40102, sub-group 117), an undated ditch and a copper-alloy ferrule or tag came from 3 (group 40110, sub-group 113), an undated ditch.

ARC STP 99 produced (from an environmental sample) a small fragment of vessel(?) glass SF 1, from a possible pit 6 (group 40123, sub-group 4; undated). No other dating evidence is available for the context.

2.3 Discussion of the finds

The most interesting finds are the two coins mentioned above. Their full descriptions are as follows:

Iron Age

18 (group 40103, sub-group 116) SF 2 Copper alloy; Iron Age; identification by Dr Richard Hobbs, Dept. of Prehistory and Europe, The British Museum:

AE unit, obv. ?horse r. looking back; rev. Sphinx l., illeg. Wt.: 1.97g.

Ref: Hobbs R. 1996, cat. nos. 1760-61; Van Arsdell no. 1824

Comments: these coins are usually attributed to Tasciovanus on stylistic grounds. It probably dates to the late 1st century BC.

Roman

13 (group 40103, sub-group 116) SF 1 Copper alloy; Vespasian AD 69-79; possible cast copy/'light weight' forgery 2nd century?

3 CATALOGUE OF ILLUSTRATED FINDS (FIG. 1)

Each entry includes the small fin number (SF), the object description, the event code (ARC WHR99), the context number (Cxt). The number (I-) visible at the end of each catalogue entry refers to the unique record ID which can be found in the database.

SF 2. No. 1 to 14. Amber beads. ARC WHR99. Cxt 40. I-39.

SF 3. No. 1 to 7. Amber beads. ARC WHR99. Cxt 40. I-40.

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