

**Assessment of the Bronze  
Age and Iron Age pottery  
from Meriden Quarry,  
Warwickshire**

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by  
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## **Assessment of the Bronze Age and Late Iron Age pottery from Meriden Quarry, Warwickshire by Annette Hancocks and Ann Woodward**

### *Introduction*

The pottery was rapidly scanned and quantified by count and weight (g) only. A total of 152 sherds of pottery were recovered from the evaluation and excavation. Of these 76% could be dated to the Bronze Age period (Table 1a) and 24% derived from the Late Iron Age (Table 1b). The pottery assemblage was recovered from thirty-two contexts and from two distinct areas of the site. The Bronze Age material derived from pits adjacent to the double post ring, whilst the Late Iron Age assemblage derived from the fills of the enclosure ditch and ring gullies. At least two contexts, 1081 and 1218, possibly contained residual Bronze Age sherds. No preservation bias was observed.

### *Factual summary*

A total of 115 sherds of Bronze Age pottery was recovered (1860g). The majority of the pottery of this period was grog-tempered. At least eight vessels were recognised, with five of these deriving from deposit 1162, a pit fill. Several of these vessels have internally bevelled rims, and a wide range and variety of decoration is present. This includes incised, opposed filled triangles and various motifs executed with a pointed tooth comb. At least two base angles were recognised amongst the Bronze Age material. Some of the sherds were very large (up to 322g) and some conjoins may be possible. The sherds are derived from a series of urns. In style these belong to a group of Early Bronze Age urns found in the Midlands and the Pennines. These are related to the Cordoned Urn tradition.

The range and variety of Late Iron Age pottery recovered was good, with both local and regionally-traded wares, such as briquetage, noted. A total of thirty-seven sherds of Late Iron Age date was recognised, weighing 424g. The majority of the fabrics observed were quartz tempered. There were six diagnostic rim forms, including those from globular and ovoid jars, along with several body sherds decorated with fine, incised scoring. Three fragments of briquetage were recognised and three decorated body sherds in the La Tène style. The majority of the Late Iron Age assemblage derived from the upper fills of the hexagonal enclosure, with the exception of three sherds of La Tène decorated pottery, which derived from the lower fill of this feature (WMS 4015 309.) These had previously thought to be of possible Saxon date.

The overall assemblage showed no signs of abrasion or weathering and was deemed to be in a good state of preservation.

### *Statement of potential*

The remains of the series of Early Bronze Age urns, especially the group from pit filling 1162, are of exceptional importance. Pottery of this date from the county, and from the West Midlands in general, occurs rarely. (For instance, only six examples of the otherwise commonly occurring Collared Urns are known from Warwickshire). The Meriden urns belong stylistically to a group of urns previously found in the Trent valley and the Peak District. Such urns are known primarily from funerary sites, in association with cremation burials, from barrows along the Derwent valley in Derbyshire. However, outliers in Staffordshire and in the lowland gravel zones are

also known. These include vessels from a flat cemetery at Eye Kettleby, Leicestershire (Woodward forthcoming), and individual urns from Willington in Derbyshire.

This class of urn is related typologically to the Cordoned Urn series of northern Britain on the one hand, and also to the Biconical Urn tradition of southern England on the other. The formal and decorative features represented at Meriden could be compared with those found on similar vessels from the Pennines, and also from the Biconical Urn related assemblage from Bromfield, Shropshire. The lowland gravel derived examples include two urns from different phases of excavation at Willington, Derbyshire – one of them contained in a pit located outside a post ring (Hughes, Woodward and Hancocks in prep.).

The modest volume of Late Iron Age pottery recovered has the potential to add to the existing corpus of pottery of this date from Warwickshire. The forms and fabrics represented could usefully be compared with those known within other Late Iron Age assemblages from the county, such as Park Farm, Barford, and Wasperton (Woodward in prep.), and also with a recently studied group from Whitemoor Haye in western Staffordshire (Woodward forthcoming). Detailed study would enhance the chronology and dating of the site and add greatly to the existing knowledge concerning patterns of trade and exchange, within the local and regional sphere. Of particular note, is the presence of three sherds of decorated La Tène style pottery, previously thought to be of possible Saxon origin, the presence of finely incised scored ware and the occurrence of briquetage. The latter is an indication that trade in salt was occurring from as far afield as Droitwich and Cheshire.

#### *Recommendations*

It is apparent that the whole assemblage would benefit greatly from detailed recording and analysis by form and fabric. It is recommended that all the pottery is recorded and analysed to levels stipulated by the Prehistoric Ceramics Research Group (PCRG 1997), using the standard BUFAU system, and a report prepared for publication. Aspects of the assemblage should be compared with the other regional assemblages referred to above; this would inform the topics of chronology, vessel function, structured deposition, production and exchange.

In particular the Bronze Age urns, and the nature of the urn deposits, could be compared with those from a range of funerary sites throughout the Midlands, and from non-funerary, apparently ritual, sites such as the pits located outside a post circle at Willington, Derbyshire (see above).

In the case of the Late Iron Age pottery, the occurrence of a number of querns within deposits of Late Iron Age date, may have implications for the levels of structured deposition occurring at Meriden. Combined with the regionally-traded pottery occurring on the site, information concerning the settlement status and site function may also be ascertained. For these reasons it is felt that the pottery assemblage and querns would benefit from a programme of thin-sectioning that would enable a greater understanding of the sources of trade and exchange occurring at the site. It is apparent that briquetage is reaching the site, but are the quernstones locally or regionally-traded? Thin-section analysis and reporting might be able to address these issues.

*Storage and curation*

Although stable, it is recommended that the prehistoric pottery should be packaged with a view to long-term storage.

*Appendices: Tables 1a and 1b*

Context	Feature	Description	Count	Weight (g)	Date range
Subsoil	208E/190N	1x grog tempered pot sherd	1	10g	Bronze Age
Subsoil	210E/195N T/1065	1x grog tempered pot sherd	1	8g	Bronze Age
1014	T/1065	1x grog tempered, thin walled body sherd	1	3g	Bronze Age
1045		1x grog tempered pot sherd	1	12g	Early/Middle Bronze Age
*1081	T/1065	1x grog tempered body sherd	1	133g	Late Iron Age with residual Bronze Age
1162	T/1065	Vessel 1: Internal rim bevel. Decoration comprises incised, opposed filled triangles (large design)	2	397g	Early Bronze Age
1162	T/1065	Vessel 2: Flat rim. Tooth comb decoration. Two parallel horizontal lines with verticals in between. A row of finger nail decoration below	1	51g	Early Bronze Age
1162	T/1065	Vessel 3: Internal rim bevel. Incised horizontal line below rim. Diagonal incised lines, probably chevron or diamond	1	19g	Early Bronze Age
1162	T/1065	Vessel 4: Internal rim bevel. Horizontal toothcomb rows. Part of one repair hole	2	11g	Early Bronze Age
1162	T/1065	Vessel 5: Flat rim, transverse incised lines on top of rim. Incised line below rim.	1	3g	Early Bronze Age
1162	T/1065	Plain body sherds	60	765g	Early Bronze Age
1164	T/1065	1x little rim with slightly inclined finger nail decoration immediately below rim	1	2g	Early Bronze Age
1164	T/1065	2x body sherds	2	12g	Early Bronze Age
1175	T/1065	1x base angle; 3x decorated body sherds with wide grooves and three body sherds.	7	82g	Early Bronze Age
1176	T/1065	16 x plain body sherds	16	142g	Early Bronze Age
1176	T/1065	1x decorated body sherd. Incised line	1	20g	Early Bronze Age
1176	T/1065	1x rim	1	27g	Early Bronze Age
1190	T/1065	1x plain, grog tempered body sherd	1	8g	Early Bronze Age
1197	T/1065	2x grog tempered body sherds	2	3g	
*1218	T/1065	1x urn fragment	1	14g	Late Iron Age with residual Bronze Age
1244	T/1065	1x grog tempered body sherd	1	3g	Bronze Age
1641	T/1065	8x plain body sherds; 1x internal rim with bevel and 1x base angle with band of finger impressions	10	135g	Bronze Age
<b>Total</b>			<b>115</b>	<b>1860g</b>	

Table AH/1a: Quantification of Bronze Age pottery from Meriden, Solihull by Annette Hancocks  
\* indicates presence of residual material

Context	Feature	Description	Count	Weight	Date range
205	T/1065	1x rim fragment	1	8g	Late Iron Age
303	T/1065	1x rim fragment	1	10g	Late Iron Age
309	T/1065	3x decorative body sherds	3	19g	La Tène
1001	Topsoil	1x possible burnt rim	1	1g	Late Iron Age
1034	T/1065	2x rim, 1x body sherd	4	73g	Iron Age
1076	T/1065	2x body sherds and 1x scored ware	3	42g	Late Iron Age
1079	T/1065	1x Droitwich briquetage	1	43g	Late Iron Age
*1081	T/1065	1x body sherd	1	5g	Late Iron Age with residual Bronze Age
1100	T/1065	1x quartz tempered body sherd	1	7g	Late Iron Age
1155	T/1065	1x body sherd	1	2g	Late Iron Age
*1218	T/1065	1x Cheshire Plain briquetage	1	24g	Late Iron Age with residual Bronze Age
1297	T/1065	4x plain body sherds	4	14g	Late Iron Age
1299	T/1065	1x rounded rim and 6x fine, incised scored ware. Quartz tempered	7	98g	Late Iron Age
1308	T/1065	2x plain body sherds	2	16g	Late Iron Age
1388	T/1065	1x plain body sherd	1	9g	Late Iron Age
1527	T/1065	1x Cheshire Plain briquetage	1	11g	Late Iron Age
1603	T/1065	1x plain body sherd	1	1g	Late Iron Age
1727	T/1065	1x plain body sherd	1	9g	Late Iron Age
1735	T/1065	1x plain body sherd	1	10g	Late Iron Age
2002		1x plain, quartz tempered body sherd	1	22g	Late Iron Age
<b>Total</b>			<b>37</b>	<b>424g</b>	

Table AH/1b: Quantification of Late Iron Age pottery from Meriden, Solihull by Annette Hancocks  
 \* indicates presence of residual material

### *Bibliography*

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