

Carterton East (CACE18) pottery report

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INTRODUCTION

A total of 42 sherds weighing 135g were discovered during the archaeological work at the site. This includes the eight sherds recovered during the evaluation, with the remainder from the mitigation excavation.

Some 23 sherds weighing 104g could be dated to the early Bronze Age, with the remaining 19 sherds, weighing 31g, dating to the middle Bronze Age. The early Bronze Age material was in variable condition with some sherds in a fresh state, whereas others were highly abraded. The mean sherd weight (MSW) of the early Bronze Age pottery was 4.5g. All of the middle Bronze Age material was highly abraded, and had a MSW of just 1.6g. All of the pottery was found either in ring-ditch 20000, or the central cremation, 20001.

METHODOLOGY

The pottery was recorded following the guidelines of the Prehistoric Ceramics Research Group (PCRG 2010). Individual vessels were separated out from each context, weighed, with body, rim and base sherds counted. The major inclusion and up to two different minor inclusions in the fabric were noted, recording the grade (1-5; from very fine to very coarse), frequency (1-5; from rare to abundant), how well-sorted the inclusions are (1-4; from very well-sorted to poorly sorted), and the level of abrasion (1-3; from fresh to highly abraded). Each vessel was assigned a working fabric number, and this was rationalised into a final site fabric code. The code starts with a single letter indicating the major inclusion type, and subsequent letters indicating the minor inclusions. This is followed by a number, indicating different fabrics that share the same inclusions types. Each fabric is then described in further detail in **Table 1**. Rim types, decoration and any other additional features were noted. None of the sherds were large enough to obtain accurate extrapolated vessel diameters or Estimated Vessel Equivalents (EVE's), and an unsuccessful attempt was made at finding joins between contexts. The data was recorded onto an Excel spreadsheet. A summary of this is provided as **Table 2**.

	Sherds	Weight (g)	Description	Forms, features and decoration
<i>Early Bronze Age</i>				
GQ1	15	83	Moderate quantities of medium-sized pieces of well-sorted grog with rare amounts of quartz sand. Can have rare pieces of poorly-sorted limestone.	Collared Urn with twisted cord decoration on rim bevel and collar, and shoulder groove. Probable base of Collared Urn collar. Food Vessel/Biconical Urn?
GQ2	8	21	Moderate quantities of medium-sized pieces of well-sorted grog with moderate quantities of glauconitic sand. Can have rare pieces of poorly-sorted limestone.	One vessel
<i>TOT EBA</i>	23	104		
<i>Middle Bronze Age</i>				
SL1	19	31	Abundant platy fossil shell with rarer pieces of grey limestone and burnt flint.	
TOT	42	135		

Table 1: Pottery fabric description

Context	Feature	Context description	Date	Fabric	Abrasion	Sherds	Weight (g)	Comment
20002	20001	Cremation	EBA	GQ1	1	2	12	
20006	20005	Lower fill of ring-ditch	EBA	GQ2	2	8	21	
20031	20032	Lower fill of ring-ditch	EBA	GQ1	1	2	17	Rim of Collared Urn: twisted cord decoration on bevel and collar. Shoulder groove.
10111	10109	Middle fill of ring-ditch	MBA	SL1	3	2	4	
20043	20041	Middle fill of ring-ditch	EBA	GQ1	2	5	26	Rim, squared: possible Food Vessel or Biconical Urn. Not decorated
10112	10109	Upper fill of ring-ditch	MBA	SL1	3	6	11	
20008	20009	Upper fill of ring-ditch	MBA	SL1	3	10	10	
20024	20026	Upper fill of ring-ditch	MBA	SL1	3	1	6	
20030	20032	Upper fill of ring-ditch	EBA	GQ1	1	1	13	
20036	20033	Upper fill of ring-ditch	EBA	GQ1	2	5	15	Sherd probably from Collared Urn collar base where this meets body. Possible cordon instead of collar.

Table 2: Summary of the pottery by context

EARLY BRONZE AGE

The majority of the material comprised undecorated, featureless body sherds with only the fabric providing diagnostic information. Most could therefore only be assigned a general early Bronze Age date with no further information about form or typology. However, four sherds from three contexts had useful diagnostic features.

Diagnostic sherds

20031: from lower fill of ring-ditch 20000, cut 20032.

Rim from a Collared Urn (6g; GQ1). Twisted cord decoration on bevel (two parallel lines around outer and inner bevel). Twisted cord decoration on collar (one line around just under the rim top, and two further parallel lines 14mm apart flanking diagonal lines). Found with another sherd (11g; GQ1) almost certainly from the same vessel. This had a 9mm long groove on the shoulder.

20043: from middle fill of ring-ditch 20000, cut 20041.

Rim, squared, undecorated (9g; GQ1). Angle of rim uncertain, but probably from a Food Vessel, although possibly from a Biconical Urn. Found with four other (undecorated) sherds in the same fabric.

20036: from upper fill of ring-ditch 20000, cut 20033.

Body sherd, undecorated (5g; GQ1). From where the base of a probable collar (possible cordon) meets the lower body of vessel. Found with four other (undecorated) sherds in the same fabric.

Discussion

Two sherds were certainly from a Collared Urn, from context 20031. Although typological assignment is difficult due to the small size of the sherds, a few comments can be made. In Burgess' (1986, 345) scheme, the presence of a groove on the shoulder is an Early trait; however, no other Early traits were present despite enough of the vessel surviving as to expect others. Furthermore, the decorative pattern on the collar shares more with those that are within his Late group. This overall suggests that the vessel may typologically belong within the middle of the typological sequence. However, this assignment is very tentative.

The certain Collared Urn sherds were usefully stratified at the base of the ring-ditch, and can be assumed to be contemporary with the construction and initial use of the monument. The sherds were in a reasonably fresh condition, further suggesting broad contemporaneity with deposition. The majority of the early Bronze Age sherds were in the same grog-dominated fabric containing a small amount of sand and rare pieces of limestone. While this suggests that the group as a whole belongs to a fairly restricted chronological frame, it could not be demonstrated that any of the sherds between contexts belonged to the same vessel.

The rare pieces of limestone in fabric GQ1 could have derived from geological deposits that are very local to the site. One context, 20006, produced sherds in fabric GQ2. As a whole that fabric was very close to GQ1, suggesting that the potters had very similar approaches as to appropriate clay recipes; however, the inclusion of glauconitic sand indicates that the clay was not sourced in the immediate vicinity of the site. Instead, it is likely that the clay derived from Greensand deposits, the closest of which are *c* 16km to the south of the site (BGS 2018). Sherds in GQ2 were also found at the base of the ring-ditch. These were in a slightly abraded condition but could still have been contemporary with the construction and initial use of the monument.

The identification of a possible Food Vessel sherd is tentative, based on an undecorated rim of which the angle is not entirely certain. Another possibility is that the sherd belongs to a Biconical Urn, although this is thought less likely as the angle of the rim does not appear to be consistent with this form. Food Vessels are not common in the region, although they show considerable variety, and can be plain or minimally decorated (Case 1982, 109; Cleal 1999, 208, figs. 4.63-4).

MIDDLE BRONZE AGE

A group of 19 sherds weighing 31g were found in a coarse fabric containing abundant fossil shell. These were heavily abraded and derived mainly in the upper fill of ring-ditch 20000, although two sherds weighing just 4g were found in the middle fill. It is possible that these two sherds are intrusive into the deposit. It was noted in contexts 20008 and 20024 that the sherds were found in the top of the deposit. The middle Bronze Age sherds were retrieved from three adjacent slots in the western part of the ring-ditch. All of the sherds were in a very similar fabric, and they could have derived from the same vessel, although no refits were found. The clay could have been sourced from one of the many limestone deposits that are in the locality of the site.

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