Latton Lands Prehistoric Pottery

Introduction

A total of 2373 sherds (16577 g) were recovered from the excavations at Latton Lands,. The assemblage was late prehistoric in character, with the majority of diagnostic vessels having been middle Iron Age Barrel Urns. A minimum of 88 vessels were noted and fragments of an early Bronze Age Aldbourne Cup, a whole early Bronze Age miniature accessory vessel and a Middle Bronze Age Deverel Rimbury Bucket Urn were particularly notable. Undiagnostic body sherds included three possible plain Neolithic examples. Earlier excavations at Latton recovered a predominantly middle Bronze Age assemblage with associated settlement (Timby 2004, 119-125). The condition of the assemblage is variable; the average weight was 7 g but several refitting sherds were noted. Most diagnostic forms came from secure, discreet features.

Methodology

The assemblage is quantified by weight and sherd number. Where possible refitting post-excavation breaks are excluded from the sherd count. The pottery is characterised by fabric, form, surface treatment, decoration and colour. The sherds were analysed using a binocular microscope (x 20) and were divided into fabric types and groups by principal inclusion type. Density is measured using a chart (derived from FitzPatrick 1984) which shows densities with difference particle sizes; a fabric containing 15-20 % fine shell will contain more shell than a fabric containing 20-30 % coarse shell.

Only the more diagnostic featured sherds are listed in the catalogues. Rim sherds were examined, classified and assigned, where possible, to vessel form. Details of surface treatment, firing, sooting, decoration were noted. The data was entered into an Access database, which forms part of the archive

Method of recovery and condition of the material

The pottery was all recovered from the hand excavation of features, with the exception of 71 sherds which were recovered from wet sieving. The overall mean

sherd weight for the assemblage is 6.9 g, which can be partially accounted for by the fragile quality of the shell fabrics of which the assemblage consists. A total of 47 vessels had reconstructable profiles, no whole profiles were present (with the exception of the early Bronze Age cup) and only one vessel was represented by more than 15 % of the rim.

Fabrics

Table 1.2 gives a breakdown of the fabrics identified within the assemblage whilst table 1.3 groups these. Table 1.4 gives a breakdown of fabric occurrence by date. The vast majority (56 %) of the assemblage was manufactured using clays containing fossil shell, whilst minor fabrics included onlitic, limestone, flint and sand.

The table below (table 1.4) shows that choices of fabrics during the Iron Age followed a certain distinctive pattern, common in the area, which may have been culturally determined rather than driven by function or convenience. All fabrics used in the manufacture of the later prehistoric pottery were associated with examples of diagnostic forms which enabled certain fabrics to be attributed to specific periods. Most of these examples were recovered from secure features, some of which were clearly stratified (e.g. pits 3126 and 3878). This pattern facilitated the more specific dating of otherwise undiagnostic plain, body sherds.

Throughout the latest Bronze Age-earliest Iron Age, fabric S1 comprised 81 % of the assemblage, the remainder consisting of S2 (15 %) and S3 (2 %). During the early Iron Age phase, recipes using either sand (51 %) or the less densely shell tempered S2 (41 %) were used in equal measure (2 % of sherds were manufactured from both). By the middle Iron Age, the proportions had changed again, so that 41 % of the sherds were manufactured from fabrics containing both sand and shell, whilst only 20 % of the S2 fabric were utilised. It is only amongst the diagnostic middle Iron Age sherds that the limestone (L1, L2), very coarse (S4, S5) and very fine, sparse shelly fabrics (S6) were noted, the former of which indicate non-local sources.

Local geology and Procurement of Resources

Latton Lands is situated on the First Terrace River Gravels, which contains clays derived from the surrounding geology. Beneath this, at various points within the site, can be found highly fossiliferous Jurassic Kellaways clay and sand, calcareous

sandstone and the Cornbrash limestone of the Great Oolite Group. The Forest Marble clays lie to the 2 km north west (BGS sheet 252; HMSO 1996; LOUGS 2000).

The proportions of each fabric within the assemblage reflects the variety of the local geology. At least four different sources of clay had been utilised: the shelly Jurassic clay, the clean Jurassic or gravel clay (to which the flint, grog and quartzite may have been added), the Palaeozoic fabric and the oolitic fabrics.

The Jurassic clays can be highly fossiliferous (which, at Latton, they have been observed to be) yet are often free from any visible inclusions. This may explain not only the fossil shell fabrics but the earlier fabrics containing no added temper.

It is not certain that the sand was naturally occurring within the potting clay utilised for the manufacture of these vessels. The Kellaways Clay is the most likely local source for a sandy clay; it is sandy and iron-rich, which matches the characteristics of the sandy clays noted amongst the early Iron Age assemblage.

The clays containing descreet ooliths may derive from the Forest Marble clays to the north west.

The nature of the terrace gravel clays at Latton are not known to the author at the time of writing, however, and there is a strong possibility that these were utilised as a potting clay. It is also possible that the gravels were a source of the flint used in the manufacture of some of the pottery although it is also likely that these vessels were brought into the area from the down land areas to the south.

Given Arnold's model of raw materials procurement for pottery production (Arnold 1985), it is likely that the majority of fabrics observed at Latton were procured from local sources. Groups 1, 3 and 4, 6-8 are likely to have been manufactured using locally procured materials. It is likely that the flint and Palaeozoic fabrics (groups 2 and 5) are indicative of vessels imported from the Wiltshire Downs and from the Malvern Hills or from east Herefordshire respectively (Peacock 1968; Morris 1983).

Comparanda

The flint fabrics were difficult to characterise and date, as the sherds were small and worn. Flint is as ubiquitous in more southerly areas of Wiltshire as the shell fabrics are at Latton; flint tempered Globular Urn was noted within the assemblage recovered from the earlier excavations at Latton (Timby 2004c, 123) and coarser flint fabrics are typical of Bucket Urn, Post Deverel Rimbury and earlier Neolithic pottery.

The use of grog, sand and untempered clay is typical of the early Bronze Age. The middle Bronze Age fabric was associated with one vessel decorated with a finger tipped cordon. The fabric used was consistent with fabrics described by Timby (Timby 2004c, 121).

The coarse shelly ware is ubiquitous in this region (Timby 2004b, 94). The Palaeozoic fabric appears in some quantity across the region from the end of the middle Iron Age (Timby 2004b, 107); it equates with Peacock's fabric B1 (Peacock 1968; Morris 1983) and, for these vessels, a source in the Malvern area or east Herefordshire is likely.

Forms

Vessel forms were classified according to general types (PCRG 1997, 34) for which a table below provides basic descriptions and quantifications (Table 7). The table demonstrates presence of the usual range of early and middle forms, carinated jars and bowls being earlier and globular, ovoid and straight being later. A total of 47 vessels were assigned a form type; only 26 of these had measurable rims and of those, all (with the exception of one) were represented by under 15 % of the rim diameter.

Table 1.5: Table showing frequency of forms by period. (Codes: Neo, Neolithic; EBA, early Bronze Age; MBA, middle Bronze Age, LBA, late Bronze Age; LBAEIA, latest Bronze Age-earliest Iron Age; EIA, early Iron Age.)

Vessel Form	Form Description	LBAEIA	LBAEIA?	EIA	EIA OR MIA	MIA	MIA?	Grand Total
А	Jar misc					1		100001
Ai	Ovoid (or Barrel for mia)					14	1	15
Aii	Carinated (short necked, tripartite)	5		3	1	1		10
Aiii	Slack Shouldered (long necked, tripartite)			2				2
Aiv	Long necked carinated (tripartite)			1		1		2
Av	Globular					5		5
aviii	straight walled vessel					4		4
В	Bowl misc			1				1
Bii	globular and short necked bowl					1		1
Biv	Flared rimmed round bodied bowl			4				4
Bv	Biconical bowl		1	1				2
Grand Total		5	1	12	1	27	1	47

The Assemblage by phase

Early Bronze Age

Form

The early Bronze Age phase comprises four sherds (13 g) which were recovered from the terminal ends of an enclosure ditch (2381 and 2553) and a pit (2259). These sherds included two refitting sherds of a sand tempered Aldbourne Cup (2382, terminal 2381), one small, grog tempered, plain body sherd (2366, pit 2259) and one miniature cup (2546, terminal 2553, SF 236), possibly of conical shape, 50 mm high and 35m in diameter and with no decoration. It is also possible that one small, simple rim (2382) and a tiny plain body sherd (2, 5 g), which were manufactured from a fine, sandy fabric, were also early Bronze Age; these have been considered to be a later, intrusive sherd.

Surface Treatment and Decoration

The Aldbourne cup sherds are black, smoothed, and manufactured from a closed, inclusion free fabric. They were decorated on one side with incised triangles and on the other with incised chevrons (P2); both internal and external patterns are filled with deep holes which in places almost pierce the sherds. This is a pattern typical of cups of this style but which is also very similar to designs on decorated wares of the earliest Iron Age (see P4), especially given the black colour and the tiny possible traces of white infill noticed in some of the holes. The key characteristics are three fold. Firstly, the fabric is completely clean and closed, which is typical of early Bronze Age and Neolithic fabrics rather than of later pottery. Secondly, the holes are unusually deep for any other type of vessel, and finally, the internal and external decorative patterns are of equal extent and complexity of design. The miniature cup was plain and smoothed.

Nature of the evidence

This was a very small collection of broken sherds, the only vessel which was represented by more than one small sherd was the miniature cup. These were found in the two terminal ends of an enclosure ditch and must be considered parts of special deposits.

Comparanda

Aldbourne Cups are a rare type of accessory cup typically found in Wiltshire and are almost exclusively found accompanying early Bronze Age cremation burials, particularly disc barrows (Ford 1991, 180). The function of the enclosure is not clear but no human bone was found in association with any of the sherds.

The site from which Aldbourne Cups get their name is the Aldbourne Barrow, one of four excavated by Cannon William Greenwell at the end of the nineteenth century, at Sugar Hill, Aldbourne, near Hungerford in Berkshire. where a cup was recovered from a cremation within a bowl barrow and is at the British Museum. Other examples, none of which were associated with other ceramic vessels, include those from the primary cremation from a twin disc barrow at Wimbourne St Giles, Dorset (Annable and Simpson, 1964, 433); a bowl barrow at Durrington, Wiltshire (Annable and Simpson, 1964, 473); a bowl barrow at Winterbourne Stoke, Wiltshire (Annable and Simpson, 1964, 474).

Fragments from two Aldbourne cups were recovered from a pit at Charnham Lane in Berkshire (Ford 1991, 179, figure 1; Ford 2002, 78). These are unusual in having associated radiocarbon dates (BM 2737 3360+40 BP [1750-1525 Cal BC]). This pit also contained a large shoulder fragment of an early Bronze Age Urn and was part of a 6 m diameter circle comprising seven pits (later replaced by postholes). Although the Charnham cup was not associated with human bone, the circle of pits was strongly reminiscent of the circles of stakes or posts commonly found beneath round barrows. The decoration on these sherds is very similar to the cup from Latton Lands.

Open, straight walled miniature vessels of a similar tiny size were recovered from at bowl barrow at Winterbourne Stoke, Dorset (Annable and Simpson, 1964, 451 and 454) and from the primary cremation within a bowl barrow at Avebury, Wiltshire (Annable and Simpson, 1964, 454).

Middle Bronze Age (1500-1150 cal BC)

Form

The middle Bronze Age phase (7, 58 g) comprised a thick walled body sherd decorated with a finger tipped cordon, a squared rim and a few small broken sherds. These were recovered from the secondary fill (3602) of ditch 3599 and were manufactured from a coarse shell tempered fabric (S2).

Decoration

The finger tipped cordon (P3) is a feature characteristic of middle Bronze Age Bucket Urns and was common on vessels from earlier excavations at Latton Lands (Timby 2004, figure 16 and 17).

Nature of the evidence.

The diagnostic sherds were relatively well preserved although little of the vessel was represented. Other smaller sherds, which were also recovered from this fill, were thought to be manufactured from a later prehistoric fabric.

Comparanda

Middle Bronze Age pottery is scarce in the region. The earlier excavations at Latton identified a middle Bronze Age settlement, from which were recovered a middle Bronze Age assemblage of 963 sherds, including cordoned Buckets Urns and coarse shell fabrics (Timby 2004c, 119-122). Recently, excavations at Shorncote and Roughground Farm recovered Deverel Rimbury assemblages from funerary and non-funerary sites. Some possible middle Bronze Age sherds were recovered from features associated with segmented ditches at St Augustine's Farm South and St Augustine's Lane (Barclay 1999, 319).

Late Bronze Age (1150 - 950 CAL BC)

The late Bronze Age phase was represented by seven sherds of equal size and condition, which were recovered from sole or primary fills of pits (1586, 1649) and the upper fill of ditch 2976. These were relatively thick walled (c. 10 mm) and manufactured from fabrics containing variable quantities of fine to coarse flint and sand. Other than fabric, only one other diagnostic characteristic (a gritted base) was noted; these are a feature characteristic of late Bronze Age plain ware pottery.

Earliest Iron Age (800-500 CAL BC)

Form

A total of 283 (1734 g) sherds (a minimum of seven vessels) of earliest Iron Age pottery were recovered from 16 contexts within ditches, ditch termini, postholes and pits. The majority of forms (five) were carinated jars (P5 and P6) although there is also one biconical bowl (P4). The fine S1 fabric was used to manufacture all of the

identified carinated jars whilst a fine A1 fabric was used to manufacture the biconical bowl.

The apparently isolated pit 2566 contained refitting fragments of a carinated jar, almost the whole profile being represented. The refitting neck and shoulder sherds of P5 were recovered from the central pit (1737) of a roundhouse. The Biconical bowl was recovered from a group of pits situated near to roundhouse 2842.

Decoration, Surface Treatment and Fabric

Fabrics used to manufacture the pottery from this period were predominantly S1 and S2, surface treatment was restricted to smoothing and little preference for smoothing vessels of either fabric type was noted. Decoration was minimal but included finger tipping on rims and shoulders of carinated jars and incised and hanging triangles with white infill on a Biconical Bowl. A total of six body sherds had residue adhering to either the inside or external wall.

Nature of Assemblage

The general condition of the assemblage was reasonable, the average weight being 7 g. A total of four rims, from two vessels, were identified; one of these was large enough to allow measurement of estimated vessel equivalents. Despite the paucity of rims, 53 % of the sherds were attributable to forms as many were neck and shoulder sherds; 56 % comprised diagnostic sherds.

Comparanda

These forms and types of decoration are a feature of the early All Cannnings Cross style (Brown 2004, 172; Gingell and Morris 2000, 165), the Biconical Bowl being similar to Morris' type 1 and the jars to Morris' type 51 (although one is very fragmentary, with no rim).

It is becoming increasingly apparent that All Cannings Cross is often associated with special deposits and it could be said that the ceramic deposits from Latton add to this body of evidence, in that a large refitting part of a carinated jar was recovered from a pit within a roundhouse. Nearby at Horcot Pit, where settlement also radically changed after the early Iron Age, pits containing earliest Iron Age pottery were also placed inside and opposite the doorways of roundhouses.

Similar sites include Dunston Park (Morris 1995, 77-89) in the Thames Valley, Knight's Farm in the Kennet valley (Bradley et al 1980), Uffington White Horse (Brown 2003, 174) in Oxfordshire, Potterne (Gingell and Morris 2000, 136-178) and Longbridge Deverill in Wiltshire (Chadwick Hawkes 1994), where over fired pottery was found within a roundhouse.

Early Iron Age (600-300 CAL BC)

Forms

A total of 169 (1404 g) early Iron Age sherds (a minimum of 24 vessels) were recovered from 21 contexts or 18 features, including pits, postholes, waterholes and ditches. Fabrics used to manufacture this pottery were more numerous than in previous phases, although there were still two dominant fabrics (sand fabrics and S2). A total of 24 vessel forms were identified, of which 11 were attributable to form. Jar forms (6 vessels) included carinated and slack shouldered (P7, P11, P12, P14, P15, P16), with simple, T shaped and externally flared rims; bowl forms (6 vessels) either had flared rims or were biconical and closed in form (P8, P9, P13, P10). Some shell tempered sherds (five refit) from pit 1970 are thought to represent two lids (not illustrated); these were both very thin walled with almost flat circumferences and raised centres.

Surface Treatment, Decoration and Usewear

With the minor exception of one small red coated, plain body sherd, the surface treatment was restricted to smoothing. The tiny fragments of a very small flared bowl (posthole 2814) may also have been red coated, as the worn surfaces show remnants of a red finish. Decoration was not present. The external rim, neck or upper body of three carinated jar (Aii) forms were observed to have residue adhering to them.

Nature of assemblage

The general condition of the early Iron age material was variable; although the average weight was 8.3 g, may of the heavier rim sherds belonged to large vessels and no vessel was represented by more than 10 % of the rim. The quantity of material recovered from features was low, with only nine contexts containing more than 20 sherds.

A total of 22 rims, from 22 vessels, were recovered, including simple rounded, simple squared and externally expanded forms, of which only 10 were large enough to allow measurement of estimated vessel equivalents.

A high percentage of the assemblage was attributable to form (41 %); 72 % of the assemblage comprised diagnostic sherds.

One of the largest groups from this phase was recovered from pit 3878. The lower fills of this pit contained (P15 and P16) early Iron Age slack shouldered and carinated jars and the biconical bowl. Fabrics from this context were predominantly S2. The upper fills of this pit contained middle Iron Age pottery (P17 and P18).

Comparanda

Early Iron Age pottery in the Thames Valley and Cotswold region is characterised by carinated jars with upright necks and flared rim bowls, expanded and T shaped rims, pie crust decoration on the rims and finger tipping on rims and shoulders. Parallels can be found within assemblages from excavations at Gravelly Guy (Duncan et al 2004), Wittenham Clumps (Edwards forthcoming; Hingley 1979; Rhodes 1948; Savory 1937), Allen's Pit (Bradford 1942), Mount Farm (Myres 1937), Wigbald's Farm (Savory 1937), Ashville (DeRoche 1978) and Appleford (De Roche and Lambrick 1980, 45-59).

Middle Iron Age

Form and Fabric

A total of 763 (6711) sherds of middle Iron Age pottery were recovered from 32 contexts within pits, postholes and water holes. A total of 43 vessels were identified (P17-29), 27 of which (63 %) were attributable to forms; the majority of vessels were ovoid vessels (15 vessels), whilst five were globular, 4 were straight walled and a single incidence of a long necked, carinated jar was noted. Only two bowls were noted (P27).

Fabric usage during this period greatly diversified. It is generally accepted that calcareous fabrics give way to finer sandier and mixed fabrics from the early to the middle Iron Age (Duncan *et al.*, 2005). Recent work has shown this to be a very broad trend that is dependent on a number of factors such as local geology, geographical location of the site and the date range of the pottery (E. Edwards and A. Barclay pers.

comm.). The pattern was not entirely clear at Latton. During this period, the shell fabrics give way, to a large extent, to the sand and shell fabric (group 6). Group 6 accounts for 3.5 % of the early Iron Age diagnostic sherds and 41 % of the middle Iron Age diagnostic group. The use of the fine sandy fabric, however, drops from 51% of the early Iron Age groups to 8.5 % of the middle Iron Age groups. The middle Iron Age at Latton also sees the ascendancy of limestone fabrics, which are not usually exclusively linked to this period, and of very small amounts of other generally more coarse shelly fabrics (group 4-6).

The presence of earliest Iron Age vessels (LBAEIA) and possible late Bronze Age sherds (one gritted base and plain body sherds) obfuscated identification of both the straight walled jars (surface find 2727, postholes 3848, 3745, and pit 3126) and the ovoid jars (pits 1163, 3126, 2338, 2918, 3407, 3878, enclosure ditch 3955 and roundhouse 2916). The ovoid jars were almost all recovered from discrete middle Iron Age features or undisturbed contexts within clearly stratified features (context 3874 within pit 3878). The straight walled jars were, however, largely recovered from contexts such as postholes in which redeposition could have been a concern. Those from features 3745 and 3126 were not associated with any other diagnostic material. The dating of this form rests partly on parallels with other local sites and partly on pit 3126. Pit 3126 was a recut of pit 3192, which contained both a middle Iron Age globular jar and limestone fabrics. The example from pit 3126 was associated with ovoid jars and with middle Iron Age limestone fabrics.

Decoration, Surface Treatment and Usewear

Surface treatment was restricted to smoothing and no decoration was noted. Charred residues were noted on 38 sherds (eight vessels), most of this was located on the external faces of the rims, necks and shoulders and may indicate boiling over contents during cooking. Each of the middle Iron Age jar forms is represented by at least one example with residue adhering to the surface, thus suggesting that the forms may not have been strictly functionally specific.

Nature of the Assemblage

The condition of the middle Iron Age pottery was generally good; the average weight was 8.7 g. The quantity of material recovered from features was low, however, with

only eight contexts containing more than 20 sherds. A total of 44 rims were recovered, including pointed, simple squared, simple rounded and internally bevelled forms (P19, P26), of which 22 were large enough to allow measurement of % of rim remaining. No vessel was represented by more than 18 % of the rim and no complete profiles were noted. A low percentage of the assemblage was attributable to form (12%); 12% of the assemblage comprised diagnostic sherds.

Comparanda

Middle Iron Age pottery in the Upper Thames Valley is characterised by ovoid, slack shouldered and globular jars and globular bowls. This assemblage consists of calcareous wares which appear to be ubiquitous on sites of this date throughout the Cotswolds and the Upper Thames Valley (Timby 2004b, 107). Similar assemblages were recovered locally from Totterdown Lane (Timby 2004a), Thornhill Farm (Timby 2004b), Claydon Pike (Miles *et al.*, forthcoming), Ashton Keynes (G. Jones pers. com.), Horcot Pit (Edwards forthcoming), Watkins Farm (Allen 1990), Gravelly Guy (Duncan *et al.* forthcoming) and Farmoor (Lambrick 1979).

Discussion

The prehistoric pottery from Latton Lands represents activity dating from the early Bronze Age through to the middle Iron Age. The increase in numbers of sherds covered in charred residue by the middle Iron Age may indicate a change in methods of eating and food preparation. These residues were usually on the internal face of the base sherds or on the internal and/or external face of the rim, neck and shoulder sherds. Unfortunately the total assemblage was far too fragmentary for this element to be further researched; it can be suggested that the increase in residue represents an increase in the use of pottery to cook foods containing starch, sugar and carbohydrate.

The early Bronze Age vessels from the terminals of the enclosure ditch are important as both types of cup are rare. The significance is heightened by the fact that these are not associated with a barrow, which has been an almost exclusive association. The closest early Bronze Age assemblage came from Roughground Farm (Hingley 1993, 21) The middle Bronze Age Bucket Urn is broadly contemporary with the settlement noted during earlier excavations at Latton (Stansbie and Laws 2004). Earliest Iron Age pottery of the All Cannings Cross tradition is not commonly found outside of hillforts in the Upper Thames Valley and only one comparative site exists within the immediate locality, at Horcot Pit in Gloucestershire (Edwards forthcoming); regionally, non-defended settlement sites include Knight's Farm and Dunston's Park in the Kennet Valley (Bradley *at al.* 1980; Morris 1995), Roughground Farm in Gloucestershire and Yarnton-Cassington (Bell and Stansbie forthcoming) in Oxfordshire. Hillforts include those along the Ridgeway such as White Horse Hill and Liddington (Brown 2004, 174).

Early Iron Age assemblages are not common in the immediate locality although the Latton assemblage does have many wider parallels within the Upper Thames Valley. The closest parallel is that from Roughground Farm (Hingley 1993, 40-44)

The middle Iron Age pottery fits into a wider landscape of communities within the immediate area; pottery of this type can be found within a region extending from the Upper Thames Valley, across the Cotswolds and into the Severn Valley (Timby 2004b, 107). The fossiliferous shelly wares appear to be an ever present feature of these assemblages and the Palaeozoic limestone is common from the middle Iron Age through to the 1st century AD.

The range and date of the pottery at Latton indicates a continuity which is important, especially when placed in the regional context of shifting settlements. Latton is between two areas of shifting occupation. Firstly, to the west, there are larger and later assemblages from Ashton Keynes (Jones pers. com.), under 5 km to the south west, and (7 km to the West) Somerford Keynes (Miles forthcoming). Roughly within about seven km to the north east, there are important later Iron Age and Roman assemblages at Thornhill Farm (Timby 2004b), Welford Bowmoor, Kempsford (Miles forthcoming) and an early to late prehistoric assemblage at Horcot Pit (Edwards forthcoming). The Roughground Farm (18 km to the north west) assemblage partly constituted early Bronze Age, late Neolithic, late Bronze Age and early Iron Age pottery. The Latton assemblage provides a link in the Cotswold Water Park sequence, between earlier and later prehistoric settlement, paralleled only by Horcot Pit.

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