

A Catalogue of the Archaeological Finds
from the garden of 'The Steppes'
Springhead, Ashwell, Hertfordshire.



A Catalogue of the Archaeological Finds
from the garden of 'The Steppes',
Springhead, Ashwell, Hertfordshire.

by

David Went and Christine Colley

with contributions by

Faith Pewtress, Adam Garwood and Tony Offord

North Hertfordshire District Council Museums
Field Archaeology Section

December 1990

Contents

	Contents
Page i	List of figures
i	Note on the cover illustration
1	1; Introduction
3	2: The Worked Flints
14	3: Pottery
15	3.1: Romano-British Pottery
16	3.2: Anglo-Saxon Pottery
17	3.3: Saxo-Norman Pottery
20	3.4: Medieval Pottery
22	3.5: Post Medieval Pottery
24	4: Tile
25	5: Non-Ceramic Finds
27	6: The Clay Tobacco Pipes
33	7: Bibliography

List of Figures

Page 3	1: 'The Ideal Flake'
7	2: Flint Scraper and Pot Lid-Type Scraper (Arbury Banks)
8	3: Flint Blades
9	4: Flint Blades and a Gun Flint
10	5: Flint Cores
11	6: Flint Cores
16	7: An Anglo-Saxon Bowl with Thumb-impressed decoration
17	8: St.Neot's Type Pottery - Rim Forms
18	9: St.Neot's Type Pottery - Base Forms
19	10: A Decorated Tile Fragment
30	11: Manufacturing Periods of the Ashwell Clay Pipes
31	12: A Selection of Decorated Pipe Bowls from Ashwell

The cover illustration shows two figures taken from the fourteenth century Luttrell Psalter (British Library MS), fighting with earthenware jugs. Perhaps not all of the pottery fragments recovered from Ashwell were the result of accidental breakage !

1. INTRODUCTION

The following report catalogues a large quantity of archaeological material which was presented to the Field Archaeology Section for identification and analysis by Mr. J. Crabtree of 'The Steppes', Springhead, Ashwell, Hertfordshire.

All of the finds, with the exception of a flint scraper from Arbury Banks (an Iron Age defended settlement just to the south-west of Ashwell), were found over a period of about twenty years by Mr. Crabtree while working in the garden of his house. The little street known as 'Springhead' in Ashwell lies on the east side of the springs forming the source of the River Rhee, one of the streams which flow north to form the River Cam. 'The Steppes' is a modern house very close to these springs, on the east side of 'Springhead', but lying several metres above the springs. The finds came from the garden at the back (east) of the house. The garden is in two parts; one close to the house while the larger part is about 50m further to the east, connected by a pathway.

The land is clearly in a favourable position, lying as it does very close to the springs but on drier, higher ground. It was obviously favoured by settlers from early times as is attested by the remarkable range of finds of several periods. One always expects peoples of all periods to be attracted to settle close to springs; in this case it is pleasing to have some proof.

The finds present a significant picture of consistently renewed settlement spanning several millennia, from the late Neolithic/early Bronze Age (c.2,500-2,000 B.C.) to modern times. Settlement in this part of North Hertfordshire has a long history, encouraged to a large extent by the presence of the Icknield Belt, a major routeway from at least as early as 4,000 B.C. Ashwell Street, on the southern edge of the village, marks the approximate northern line of this ancient route. This, together with the springs and the surrounding light, easily worked soils, helps to explain the consistent settlement pattern implied by the finds in this collection.

We would like to express our gratitude to Mr. Crabtree for not only diligently collecting all these artefacts (and, here we catalogue only a selection of the more interesting and informative material), but also for bringing them to our attention. As a result the finds provide a valuable contribution to our knowledge of the archaeology of the Ashwell area.

G.R. BURLEIGH,

KEEPER OF FIELD ARCHAEOLOGY,
LETCHWORTH MUSEUM.



The indirect percussion method of flaking flint.

2. ASHWELL FLINTS

The Ashwell flints total 258 and can be divided into seven categories: cores; core rejuvenation flakes; blades; irregular flakes; scrapers; waste flakes and a solitary gun flint.

The dimensions listed in the following tables refer to the greatest width, thickness, and length.

A small selection of flints have been illustrated at life-size.

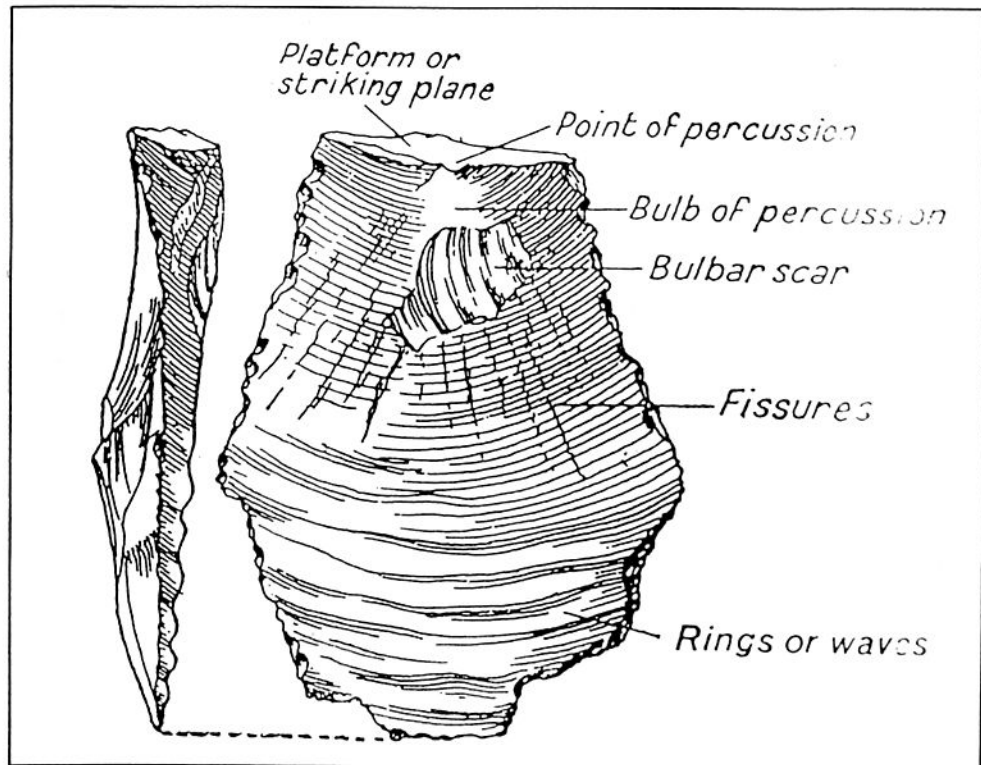


figure 1. The ideal flake, in which all the conchoidal features are clearly visible.

(British Museum Publications Limited)

CORES (21)

WIDTH	THICKNESS	LENGTH (mm)
30	11	31
30	19	45
37	33	42
30	28	34
33	24	30
25	10	50
30	20	42
31	17	41
35	21	47
30	23	35
33	16	43
24	12	33
31	21	41
22	18	41
33	23	47
19	14	26
28	15	38
34	17	47
20	19	59
19	8	30
27	26	58

AVERAGES (mm)

28.5	19	40
------	----	----

IRREGULAR FLAKES (8)

WIDTH	THICKNESS	LENGTH (mm)
24	8	46
20	5	29
14	5	30
16	5	30
20	5	30
21	10	30
15	7	21
11	8	29

AVERAGES (mm)

17.5	6.5	30.5
------	-----	------

BLADES (46)

WIDTH	THICKNESS	LENGTH (mm)
21	10	32
13	5	37
15	5	45
17	5	43
15	7	36
9	6	38
11	4	33
16	4	34
16	4	46
18	7	47
19	4	30
18	7	34
20	10	46
11	3	11
13	6	41
13	5	32
13	6	26
15	5	30
17	4	27
21	5	26
20	3	25
15	5	32
16	4	31
15	7	34
10	7	26
17	5	35
19	6	31
20	5	22
14	6	24
11	3	25
17	5	22
17	3	22
12	6	22
13	6	23
15	5	34
14	5	22
21	9	33
11	2	13
11	3	18
17	3	14
24	5	18
15	5	45
15	10	54
20	5	30
7	3	24
14	3	13
AVERAGES (mm)		
15.5	5.5	30

SCRAPERS (4)

WIDTH	THICKNESS	LENGTH (mm)
10	44	62
11	30	42
15	30	43
10	34	50
AVERAGES (mm)		
46	34.5	49

GUN FLINT (?)

WIDTH	THICKNESS	LENGTH (mm)
17	9	43

CORE REJUVENATION FLAKES (13)

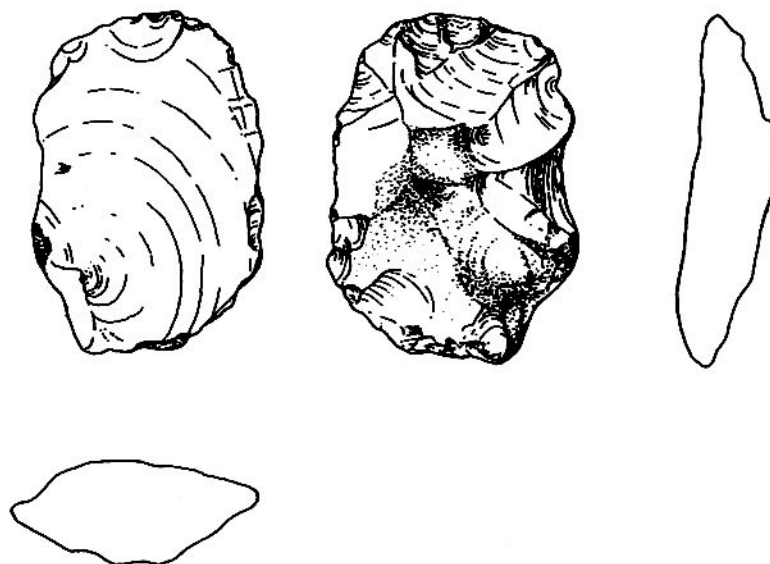
WASTE FLAKES (165)

TOTAL NUMBER OF FLINTS 258

ASHWELL FLINTS ILLUSTRATIONS

(SCALE 1:1)

SCRAPERS



"POT-LID" SCRAPER

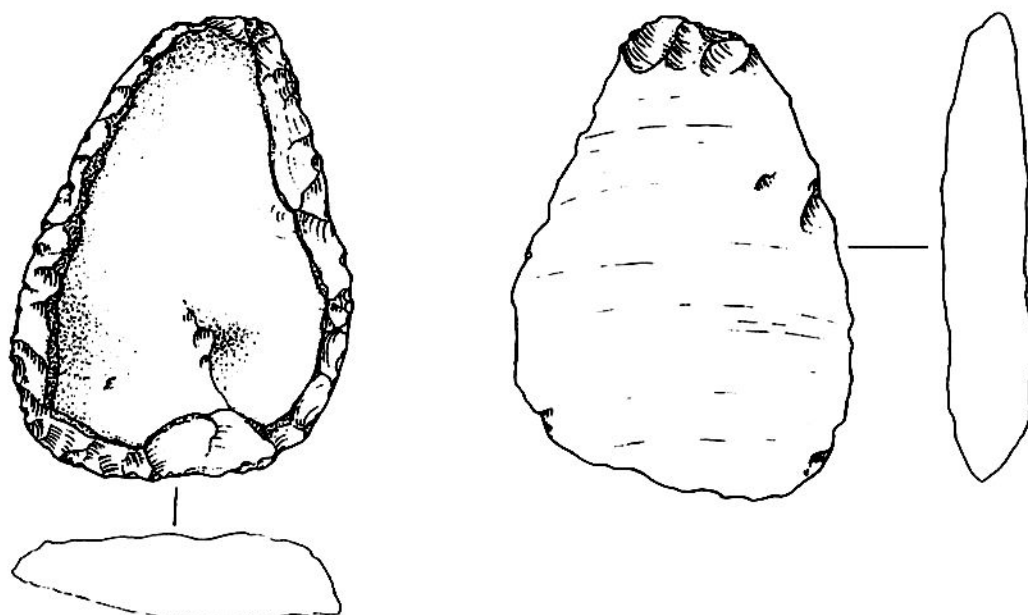


figure 2

BLADES

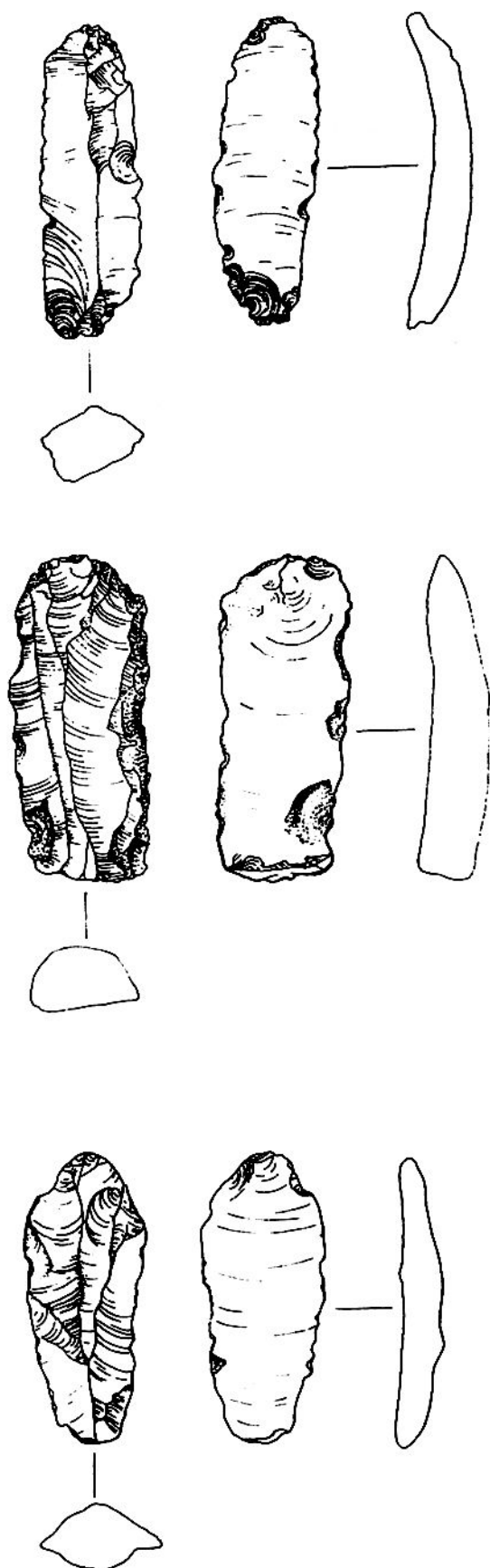
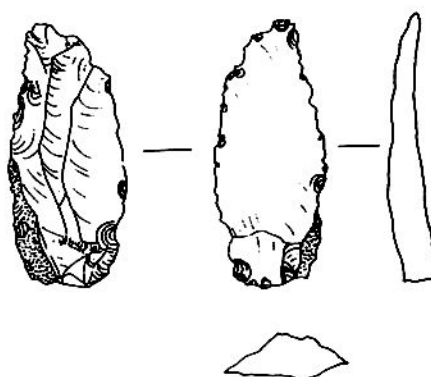
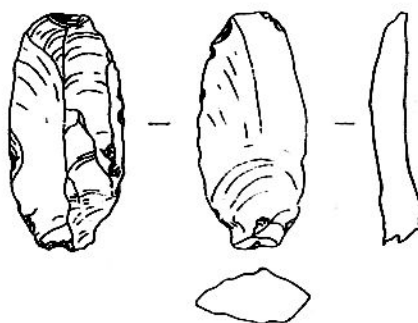


figure 3

BLADES (CONT)



GUN FLINT (?)

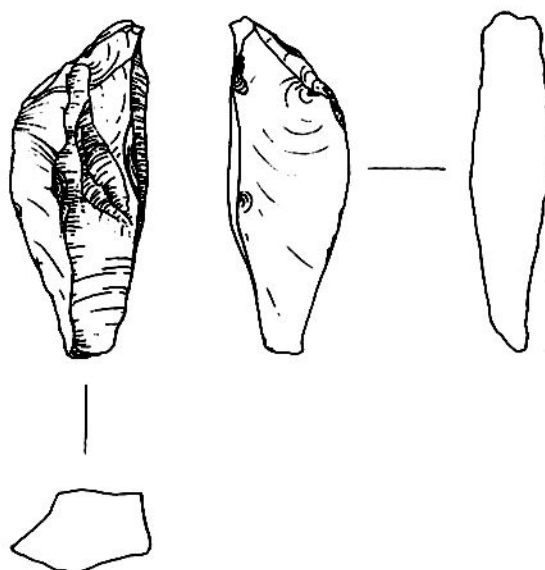


figure 4

CORES

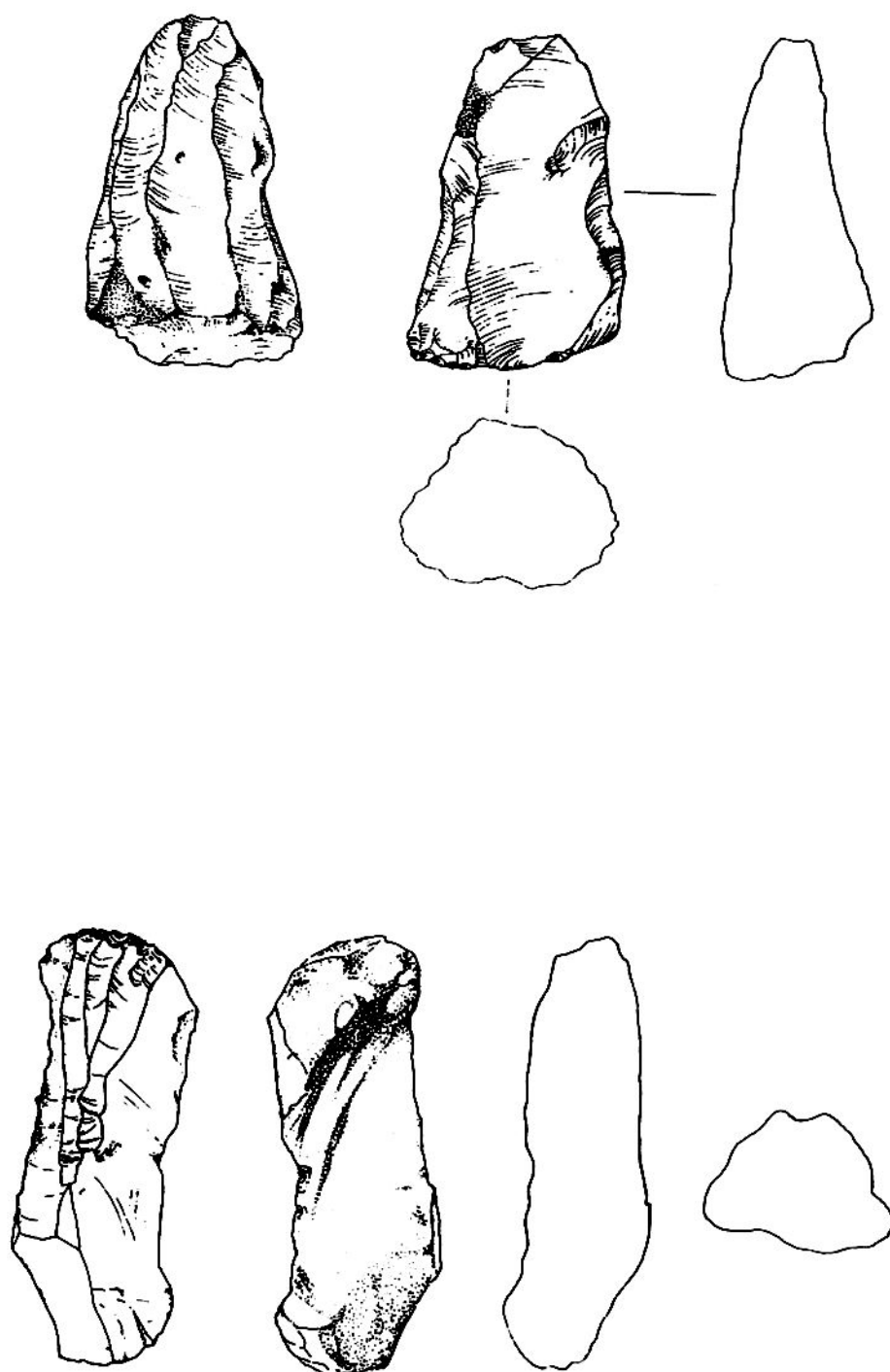


figure 5

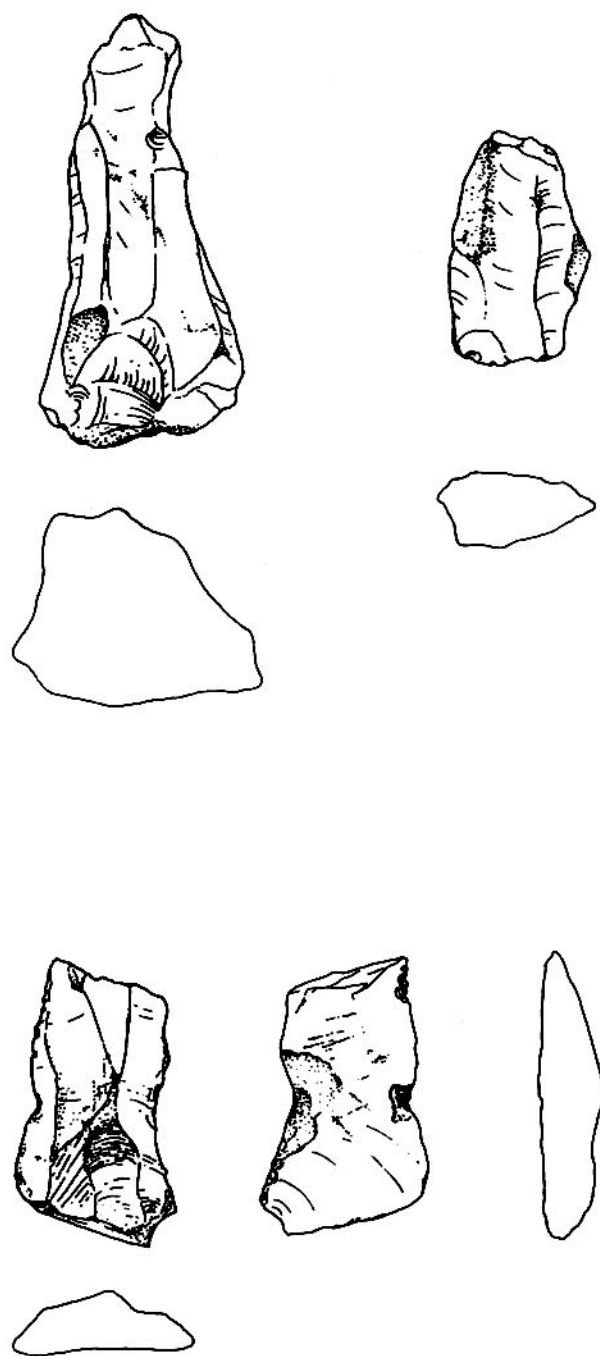


figure 6

Conclusions.

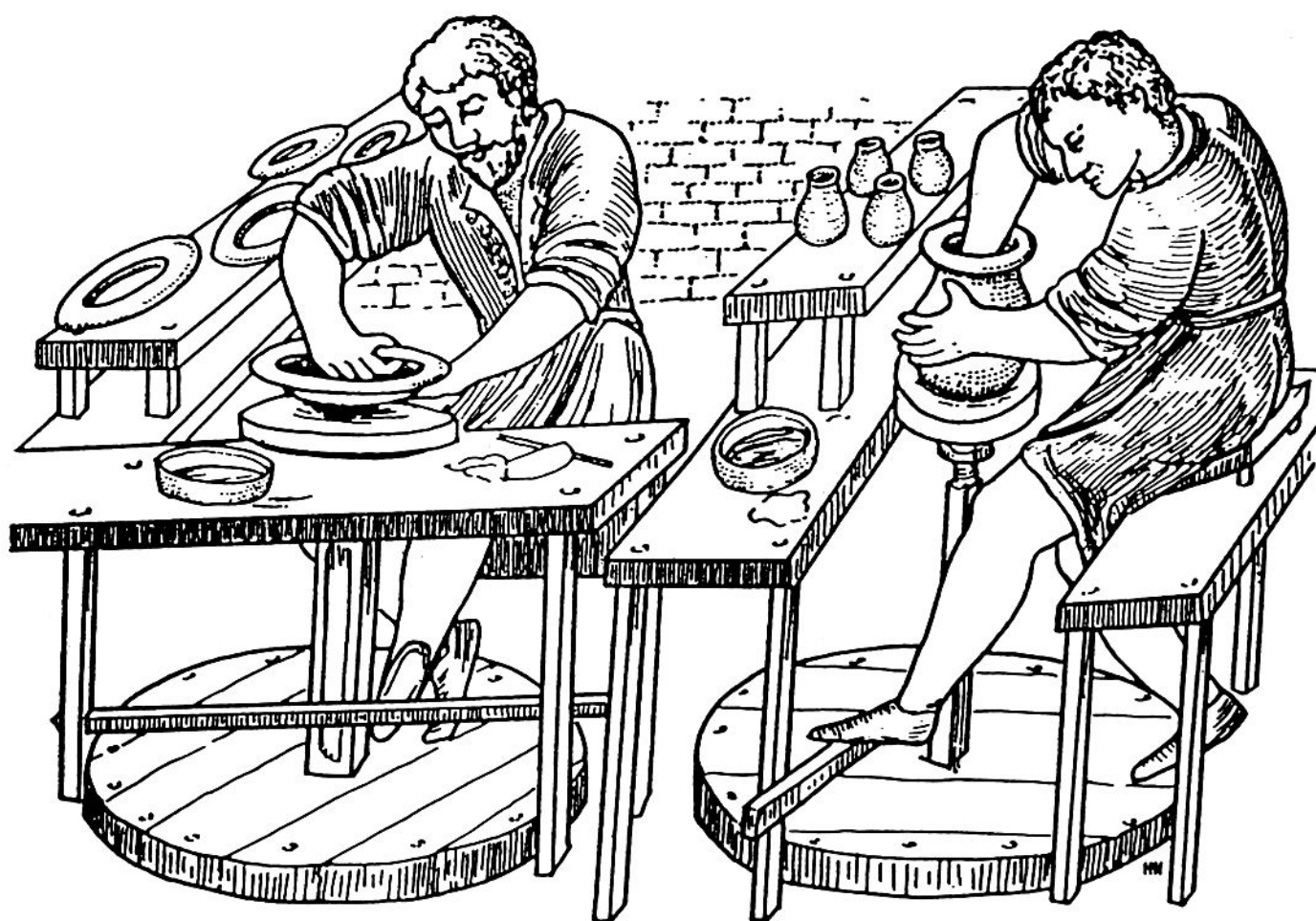
The lithics gathered from Ashwell do not include many diagnostic examples, indeed the majority of the material is in the form of rough - struck blades or working flakes, which could belong to either the middle to late Neolithic period (c.3,500 - 2,500 BC), or the early Bronze Age (c.2,500 - 1,600 BC).

The 'Pot lid scraper' from Arbury Banks is typical of early Bronze Age flint work. The overall flake was created naturally by frost shattering (indicated by its dull surfaces.), after which the edges were trimmed in characteristic early Bronze Age style by regular pressure-flaking.

A wide variety of Bronze Age sites are known across North Hertfordshire. The Icknield Way, which passes to the south of Ashwell, dates from the Neolithic period and continues in use throughout pre-history into historical times, always acting as an encouragement to settlement along its route. The barrow cemetery on Therfield Heath originated in the Neolithic period, and reached its zenith in the middle Bronze Age. Round barrows of Bronze Age date are also known to the north of Baldock, near the Norton Road, where a possible cursus earthwork runs across the fields. In addition, a ? Bronze Age structure and boundary line, both composed of post holes, were discovered to the south of the Royston Road, Baldock, during the excavation of a Romano-British cemetery. The discovery of Neolithic and Bronze Age activity is a fairly frequent occurrence on Romano-British sites excavated in North Hertfordshire, reflecting a shared preference for good agricultural land between these two very different farming communities.

This evidence of struck flints from Ashwell probably points to the location of a late Neolithic or early Bronze Age settlement, in which the manufacture of flint tools would have been an every day occurrence. The scale of the settlement or its precise function cannot be assessed from such limited evidence, however a sequence of mixed arable and pastural farmsteads might be expected in the vicinity of a spring, as at Ashwell.

The 'Gun Flint' was recognised as such by Keith Matthews, now of the Grosvenor Museum, Chester. Although the flint was not completely formed as many gun flints are - in a wedge-ended, rectangular block, the overall shape implied such a use. Perhaps it was a roughly formed replacement, made due to the high cost or limited availability of the proper item. The comparatively recent date of manufacture (18th or 19th century) is attested to by the lack of surface patination, which invariably covers prehistoric struck flints recovered from the local calcareous soil.



Potters using kick wheels, circa 1550.

3. The Pottery

The pottery fragments recovered from the Springhead area of Ashwell reflect a considerable time span, and indicate periods of local occupation dating from the late pre-Roman Iron Age (50BC - AD50) to the twentieth century.

The total absence of Bronze Age pottery is slightly curious given the quantity of worked flint of that period found in the vicinity (see Section 2). It is of course possible that there was little settlement in the area during that period, although perhaps this poorly fired, less resilient material was generally less able to withstand the chemical and physical weathering processes in the soil, thereby distorting the picture available to us through the distribution of finds.

The dense population of the North Hertfordshire area during the Romano-British period (mid first century to mid fifth century AD) was perhaps greater than at any time prior to the later medieval centuries. This is indicated by the large number of settlement sites known throughout the district, and the frequency with which residual pottery is found. Doubtless many more settlements existed than the number of which we are currently aware, and some perhaps will never be found due to the succession of overlying villages and towns, or extreme deterioration caused by intensive agriculture. The area around the source of the River Cam in Ashwell might be expected to have supported several surrounding Romano-British (and earlier) farmsteads. Some are already known, near Arbury Banks, by Ashwell End, and scattered across the fields to the north of the main settlement at Baldock. The Icknield Way crosses the landscape just to the south of Ashwell, no doubt creating a strong impetus for development which, together with the light fertile soil and the convenient water source, enabled the area to flourish, with consistently renewed farming communities.

The Anglo-Saxon material reflects either continued settlement, or re-occupation of the area in the sub-Roman period. Early sixth and seventh century pottery is not commonly found in North Hertfordshire, perhaps indicating the tenacity of the indigenous population after the withdrawal of provincial Roman government. The seventh century hand-made, Anglo-Saxon vessel fragments in this collection are particularly important therefore, supplying further information concerning the spread of early and middle Saxon settlement in the district.

Later Anglo-Saxon and Saxo-Norman pottery appears to emanate largely from main production centres such as St. Neots and Thetford, which served virtually the whole of the region. In the Domesday Book, Ashwell is described as a Borough with fourteen Burgesses. The collection of pottery forms of this period illustrates some of the typical vessels in use at this time.

The later medieval vessels are also the products of centralized manufacture, distributed over Hertfordshire at a time when it was comprised of some of the richest manorial lands in England.

The English Renaissance, Reformation and Elizabethan periods were not very well represented in the pottery collection, however the common pottery forms of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were apparent. The overwhelming preponderance of nineteenth century, salt glazed earthenware is merely a consequence of the proliferation of these tough, utilitarian vessels in the agricultural and rural communities of the period.

3.1. Romano-British Pottery.

(North Herts Museums Pottery Fabric Series)

Fabric 4 Shelley wares.

Sandy-textured matrix heavily tempered with shell. In use from the first century AD to the fourth century. Used for basic cooking pots, storage jars, dishes and bowls.

23 sherds (111g), 6 rim sherds. 14 vessels represented.

Fabric 11 Fine sand-tempered grey wares.

Even textured, fine sand tempered micaceous ware. Usually self-coloured grey or blue-grey. The most common Romano-British ware, used for wheel-thrown vessels, but not cooking pots. Manufactured locally, probably in the Much Hadham area. In use from the late first to the fourth century AD.

6 sherds (30g), 1 base sherd. 6 vessels represented.

Fabric 12 Coarse sand-tempered grey and red wares.

Coarser version of Fabric 11, used for cooking pots. In use from the late first to the fourth century AD.

4 sherds (23g), 1 rim sherd. 3 vessels represented.

Fabric 16 Coarse sand-tempered wares.

Matrix heavily tempered with coarse sand. Some examples slip-covered to mask the gritty surfaces. Colour varies from white to dirty brown to red. Wheel-thrown, used for flagons, mortaria, bowls and jars. Late first century to late second or early third century AD.

3 sherds (45g), 1 reeded rim sherd - mortaria. 3 vessels represented.

Fabric 20 Cream sandy wares.

Sand-tempered ware, finer than Fabric 16, but similar. Used for wheel-thrown vessels, mainly flagons - also necked jars and carinated bowls. Probably manufactured in the Verulamian Region, also possibly in the Nene Valley and Oxfordshire potteries. Early to mid second century AD.

3 sherds (24g). 3 vessels represented.

Fabric 22

Fine-grained, iron-rich, smooth matrix. Tempered with mixed white calcareous and black sand grits. Oxidized to pink or pale orange. Used for flagons. Second century AD.

1 sherd (10g).

Fabric CC3 Nene Valley colour-coated wares.

Fabric varies from cream to orange or grey, slip varies from orange to dark brown. The commonest colour-coated fabric in the third to fourth centuries at Baldock. Manufactured in the lower Nene Valley potteries. Late second to fourth century AD.

1 sherd (10g). Decorated with incised lines.

Imported Roman Pottery Roman red-gloss pottery : Samian ware.

One undecorated body sherd (10g) from a moderately large vessel (form unknown). Very hard, well fired pinkish-red fabric; possibly Central Gaulish - late first or second century AD.

One thin, undecorated body sherd (2g), very eroded (form unknown). Buff/orange fabric with a few small grits. Possibly East Gaulish - late second century AD.

One eroded, undecorated body sherd (1g). Red-orange fabric. East Gaulish - late second century AD.

3.2. Anglo-Saxon Pottery.

Highly micaceous, hand-made, globular vessels. Grog-tempered with flint and quartz inclusions. Outer surfaces burnished, interior surfaces smoke blacked. Possibly early seventh century AD.

Seventeen sherds in total (382g), three rim sherds and one base sherd. Several sherds displayed voids left by calcareous or vegetable matter. One sherd had an oxidized interior surface. Three vessels were represented.

One vessel was partially reconstructed - representing 12% of the rim and part of the adjoining body. The lowest body sherd showed thumb-impressed decoration (see figure below).

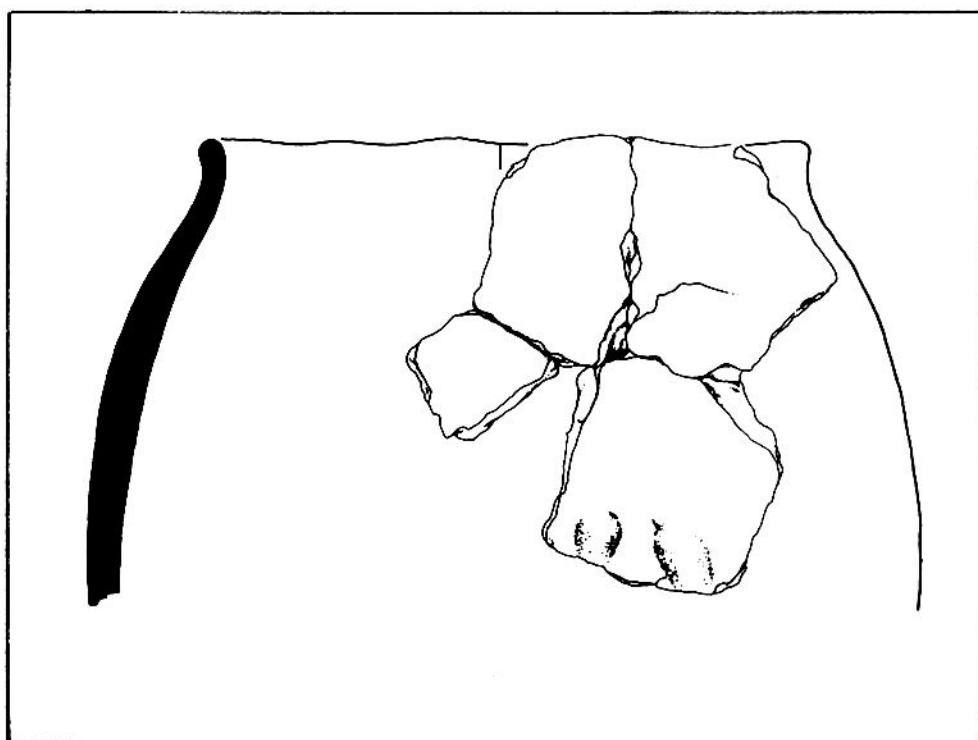


Figure 7 : Reconstruction drawing of an Early Anglo-Saxon, thumb-impressed vessel. Scale 1:2

3.3. Saxo-Norman Pottery.

St.Neots-type ware.

This was a widespread pottery type used in the region - relying on numerous similar clay sources and potteries for its ubiquity, rather than extensive trade. The fabric contains a considerable amount of fossil shell from the Lias clay sources, sometimes with quartz fragments as additional tempering. The core of the fabric is always grey-black, with surface colours varying from buff-grey to orange. Forms are either hand-made or wheel-thrown, and are mainly cooking pots, bowls and dishes, although spouted vessels, storage jars and lamps are known.

St.Neots-type wares may be very similar in appearance to Romano-British shelly-wares (Fabric 4) due to shared clay sources and manufacturing techniques. However there are distinctions, although both are low-fired, the later wares tend to be harder. The Saxo-Norman wares also display a separate tradition of rim design, decoration and form, with a higher proportion of hand-made vessels.

The date range for St.Neots-type ware is from around 900 AD to the twelfth century, with a floruit between 1000 and 1150 AD.

The source of the Ashwell pottery is not known, however the fragments may be equated with fabric and form descriptions listed in *The Bedford Archaeological Journal*, volume 13. In that report four sub-divisions of the basis fabric were noted :

- a/ Grey core, orange oxidized surfaces. 15-20% fossil shell
- b/ Dark grey core, smooth buff-coloured surfaces. 15% shell.
- c/ Grey core, sooty orange-brown surfaces. 20-25% shell.
- d/ Grey core with grey-brown or grey surfaces. 15-20% shell.

Rims

Seventeen rim sherds were present in the collection, no two from the same vessel. This is perhaps the safest estimate of the total number of vessels represented by the assemblage.

Twelve of the rims were either plain or incomplete. Of these: three sherds were type a, five were type b, two were type c, and two were type d.

The remaining five rim sherds are illustrated below.

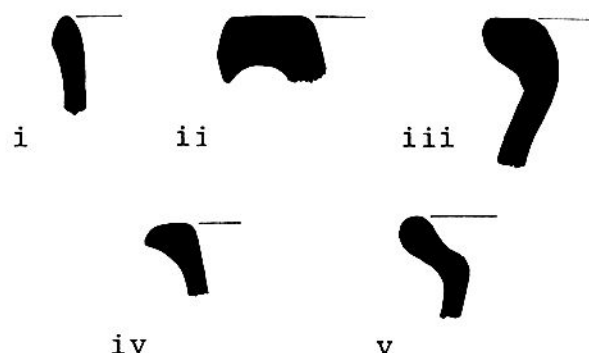


Figure 8 : St.Neots-type pottery - rim forms.
Scale 1:2

- i. Hand-made, narrow necked rim, possibly a narrow-necked jar. Plain, turned out form with no Bedford parallel. Fabric a.
- ii. Hand-made, thick walled rim, part of a cooking vessel. Similar to Bedford rim type 12. Fabric a.
- iii. Wheel-turned cooking pot or jar. No Bedford parallel form. Sooting on the external surface. Fabric b.
- iv. Asymmetric, hand-made, thin walled rim. Similar to Bedford rim type 4. Cooking vessel, fabric a.
- v. Hand-made rim of a globular jar. No direct parallel with a Bedford form. Fabric d.

Base sherds

Two base sherds were recognised (both illustrated below). Both appeared to be 'sagging bases', sheared to produce a flatter profile. In each case the sherds represent medium sized cooking vessels, both made from fabric b, together weighing 10 grams.



Figure: 9. St. Neots-type pottery - base forms. 1:2

Body sherds

Thirty seven undecorated body sherds were examined. Of these ten sherds were fabric a (40g), thirteen sherds were fabric b (40g), five sherds were fabric c (30g) and five sherds were fabric d (20g). Three body sherds remained which did not fit into any of the previous fabric categories. Two of these pieces contained more than the usual amount of mineral inclusions, with grey cores and the outer surfaces reduced. The inner surfaces were gritty, possibly with a self-slip. The colours were similar to fabric b, and the combined weight was 5g.

The remaining sherd (5g) was also similar to fabric b, but with a higher percentage of fine inclusions, mainly quartz sand, giving a gritty texture to both surfaces.

Tile

Two decorated tile fragments appear to be made of St. Neots-type, shelly ware fabric. However, tile of similar composition was produced in the district during the Romano-British period, and there is some ambiguity concerning the date of these artefacts.

The tile pieces were quite large by comparison to the pottery sherds, the latter averaging about twenty millimetres square and six millimetres thick.

One sherd was roughly triangular (70x70x50mm), approximately sixteen millimetres thick and made of a similar material to fabric b. The 'under' surface was very eroded, the upper surface however was inscribed with parallel lines arranged in two groups which diverged by approximately twenty-five degrees (see figure 10). The second fragment was roughly trapezoidal (83x52mm), seventeen millimetres thick, and similar to fabric a. This fragment was also inscribed with parallel lines, in this case diverging by approximately eighty degrees.

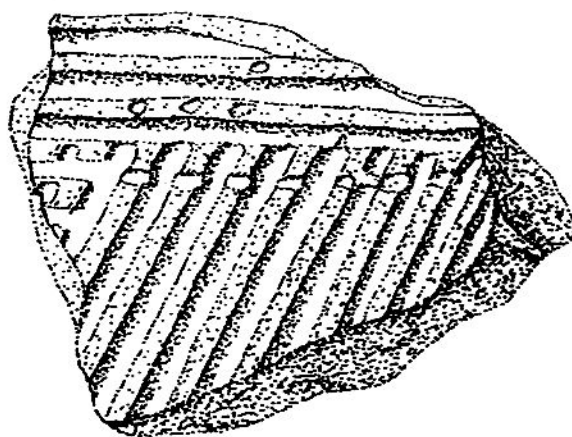


Figure 10 . St.Neots-type ware - tile fragment. 1:1

Thetford-type ware/Ipswich-type ware

This is predominantly a hard, sandy grey fabric, wheel-thrown apart from some large storage vessels, and well fired. The fabric is usually reduced to a mid-grey hue, although some surfaces display slight reddish or buff oxidation. The earliest forms are mostly cooking pots, lamps, pitchers and bowls, usually with sagging bases. Later forms (eleventh century onwards) include a wider range of these basic shapes, often with flat bases. Decoration includes rouletted patterns and applied, thumb-impressed strips.

Both wares were manufactured at their respective towns from the late ninth to the early twelfth century.

No. of sherds	135
Base sherds	6
Rim sherds	9
Decorated sherds	1
Total weight	835ggrams

Stamford Wares

Stamford wares were produced at several sites in the town. They comprise of eight, closely related fabrics (A-H), and vary from 'very fine' to 'sandy', with very small quartz grains. The colours range from white/buff to pink/orange or grey.

Glazed pottery examples are known to have been made from the ninth century, and became increasingly common thereafter. The glaze ranges from yellow to pale sage green. Some early pots from the castle site kiln were painted red with an iron-rich slip.

The usual forms are cooking bowls, jars, and spouted pitchers, normally thin-walled with templated rims.

These wares were produced from the tenth to the mid-thirteenth century.

Un-glazed sherds

No. of sherds	125
Rim sherds	7
Base sherds	7
Decorated sherds	2
Total weight	575g

Glazed sherds

No. of sherds	44
Rim sherds	2
Base sherds	3
Decorated sherds	0
Total weight	250g

The decorated sherds displayed a combed pattern. The glazed wares in this assemblage could not be placed earlier than the first half of the twelfth century.

3.4. Later Medieval Pottery

The pottery from Ashwell was compared against examples sited in the Bedfordshire Archaeological Journal 13 (1979): Excavations in Bedford 1967-77. These examples reflect fabrics and forms that would have been fairly uniform throughout Bedfordshire, and would have been exported to, or copied by, manufacturers in the surrounding counties.

Fabric C1

This fabric contains well-mixed, white quartz inclusions, with occasional fragments of grog (crushed pottery), flint and other minerals. The core is always grey, whilst the surfaces may vary within a dull, brown-grey colour range, sometimes with sooty patches. The surfaces are sandy to the touch. The vessels are wheel-made, occasionally knife-trimming can be discerned under the rim.

Date : Eleventh to thirteenth century.

Weight 8g

Sherd No. 1

Rim sherds 1

Fabric C4

Inclusions of large quartz grains and flint in moderate quantities. The temper is clearly visible on the surfaces, giving the pottery a rough, pimply texture. Wheel-made and hard fired, usually quite thick. The ware is invariably reduced with dark grey-buff surfaces and a grey core, sometimes with brownish margins.

Date : Twelfth to fourteenth century.

Weight 50g

Sherd No. 5

Fabric C22

This fabric is full of large inclusions, mostly quartzite, but with an abundance of other minerals, giving the pottery a pimply surface. A grey core is usual, surface colours vary from grey-brown to orange-brown. Wheel-thrown and evenly fired.

Date : Eleventh to thirteenth century.

Weight 25g

Sherd No. 3

Fabric C23

Coarse pottery containing large grains of quartz and quartzite in its tempering. The core is light grey, with pink margins noted in one example. Surfaces are rough and pimply, yellow-brown-buff in colour. Wheel-made, decorated by stabbing and slashing. Both red slip and yellow-green glaze occur.

Date : Thirteenth to fourteenth century.

Weight 25g

Sherd No. 4

Rim sherds 1

Fabric C27

Inclusions composed chiefly of small grains of quartz and quartzite mixed quite smoothly with the clay. The core is norm-

ally fired grey to orange. The surfaces are grey, often patchy with red/orange-buff areas occurring. The fabric is sandy to touch and used for wheel-thrown vessels.

Date : Twelfth to fourteenth century.

Weight 75g

Sherd No. 15

Rim sherds 2

Fabric C36

Uneven, rough mixture of inclusions. Mainly small quartz and quartzite grains, with occasional pieces of grog and flint (some very large). The cores are dark grey, sometimes with dark brown margins. The surfaces are dark grey to black, and have a sandy feel.

Date : Eleventh to thirteenth century.

Weight 40g

Sherd No. 1 (strap handle sherd)

Fabric C40

Abundant large red quartzite grains included in a fabric which displays numerous voids. Brown-grey core with pinkish margins, and a pimply, dark grey surface. Wheel-finished.

Date : Twelfth century.

Weight 50g

Sherd No. 2

Rim sherds 1

Fabric D1

Tempering includes many small, black mineral grains and moderate quantities of calcite grits. Voids are noticeable where calcareous material has burnt out during firing. The fabric is grey throughout.

Date : Fourteenth century.

Weight 90g

Sherd No. 9

Fabric D2

The tempering is a mixture of quartz, other minerals, and calcareous material. The cores are generally a reddish-brown, sometimes appearing 'laminated': grey, brick red, grey. The surfaces are sandy and rough to the touch, usually grey to black in colour.

Date : Eleventh to twelfth century.

Weight 150g

Sherd No. 7

Hertfordshire Grey Ware

A very smooth, fine sand-tempered, light grey fabric. Wheel thrown vessels. Occasionally one surface is coloured reddish-brown.

Date : Twelfth to fourteenth or early fifteenth century.

Weight 70g

Sherd No. 20

Rim sherds 2

Unidentified Glazed Wares

Probably medieval fabric. Grey, fine sand-tempered matrix with an orange core. Green-speckled, patchy toffee coloured glaze (external surface). Source unknown. Wheel-thrown.

Date : Probably fifteenth century.

Weight 250g

Sherd No. 20

Rim sherds 2

Unidentified Coarseware

Oxidised grey ware pottery. Grey core, fine to sandy fabric sometimes with numerous quartz grit inclusions. Wheel-thrown; source unknown.

Date : Probably fifteenth or sixteenth century.

Weight 450g

Sherd No. 61

3.5. Post Medieval Pottery

Earthenwares

Un-glazed earthenwares. Eighteenth to nineteenth century.

The fabrics were divided into three basic types, a buff/orange coarse, sandy ware, a hard red/orange sandy variety and a buff/orange smooth fabric with a grey core. The forms appear to be mostly large urns and bowls, with the occasional flower pot.

No. of sherds	type	weight
10	base	145g
15	rim	200g
76	undecorated body sherds	515g
1	decorated body sherd	10g
1	strap handle	50g
<u>103</u>	<u>total</u>	<u>920g</u>

Glazed earthenwares (red/brown). Eighteenth to early twentieth century.

The fabric/glaze combinations were arranged into six categories.

- Red sandy fabric/dark brown, toffee-like glaze.
- Red sandy fabric/bright orange glaze.
- Buff/red smooth sandy fabric/pale yellowish/greenish-brown glaze.
- Orange sandy fabric/dark green/brown mottled glaze.
- Red/orange fabric/medium brown glaze.
- Buff/orange fabric/medium brown, thick glaze.

The glazes were all transparent, usually salt or lead based, and normally applied to the interior of the vessels. Decoration other than single incised lines was rare. The common forms were various sized bowls and jars, with occasional dishes or platters. Some of the finer sherds appeared to be the remains of small, globular tankards. Two of the larger vessels had double-lipped rims.

No. of sherds	type	weight
20	base	780g
77	rim	1900g
1290	body sherds	13035g
4	handles	100g
<u>1391</u>	<u>total</u>	<u>15,815g</u>

Variegated glazed earthenware. Eighteenth to nineteenth century.

Buff-orange fabric, thin walled, cream coloured glaze on the interior surfaces; brown, glossy glaze on the exterior.
Four body sherds (75g).

Green glazed earthenware. Seventeenth to eighteenth century.

Two sherds of a 16mm thick, pale orange fabric with interior and exterior glaze. Pale 'khaki' glaze with darker green vertical and horizontal brush strokes. One base sherd and one body sherd (110g). Probably seventeenth century.

Creamy buff/grey fabric, exterior coated with yellowish-green glaze (two fragments with darker green mottles). The forms appear generally well made, largely thin walled bowls or jugs dateable to the late seventeenth century, or perhaps more likely the eighteenth century. Three rim sherds, seventy-one body sherds, one base sherd (945g).

Yellow glazed earthenware. Seventeenth century.

A pinkish-buff fabric with no obvious coarse inclusions. Thin walled, with a patchy yellow, lead based glaze on the exterior surfaces. Two body sherds (40g).

Cistercian/tyg-type earthenware. Seventeenth to eighteenth century.

These fragments may actually be neither of these two generic pottery types, however the descriptions compare well with examples seen elsewhere. The fabrics are grey, buff-coloured or red, with dark brown or purple/black glaze on both surfaces.

Two rim sherds, one base sherd and twenty-nine body sherds (495g), representing a minimum of eleven vessels.

Glazed slipware (earthenware). Eighteenth to nineteenth century.

Fragments of two vessels were present in the sample.

- 1) Three body sherds of a fine buff fabric coated with an orange/brown glaze. One sherd with a yellow trailed slip pattern beneath the glaze. Very small fragments (5g).
- 2) Three body sherds of a similar fabric to the above. White/yellow slip beneath a brown glaze (5g).

Stoneware

Brown-glazed stoneware. Nineteenth century.

This material is fired to a higher temperature than the earthenware (1,200 degrees centigrade) so that the clay particles melt and coalesce.

Four fabric/glaze combinations were represented.

- a) Pale buff-coloured fabric - speckled brown glaze over a yellow background (exterior only). Two body sherds (5g).

- b) Smooth, pale buff-coloured fabric - light brown glaze over a dark brown linear slip pattern. Both surfaces glazed. One body sherd (5g). Probably manufactured in Staffordshire.
- c) Pale creamy buff-coloured fabric, light yellow glaze. One bead-rim sherd (5g).
- d) Pale yellowish-cream fabric, dark brown glaze. Two rims, one plain body sherd and four body sherds decorated with horizontal grooves. One knob handle, perhaps originally part of a teapot lid. (Total weight : 50g)

China

Brown glazed china. Nineteenth or early twentieth century.

One rim sherd from a small bowl or cup. A very glossy, dark brown glaze covering a pattern of embossed squares. (3g).

4. Tile

Two fragments of tile were included in the assemblage of pottery sherds from Ashwell.

- 1) A fragment of roof tile (80x70x10mm). Pinkish-red fabric with numerous voids. Patches of mortar with flint grits were still adhering to the underside. An impressed radiate (spoked wheel) design surrounded the single peg hole.
- 2) Large fragment of very fine, pinkish/buff tile. Raised wall sections within the segment contained areas of perforated, honeycomb-like structure, perhaps indicating its use as a flue or ventilation tile.

In both cases a precise date is impossible due to the continued use of favoured clay sources and similar technology over several centuries. The earliest date for fragment 1) is perhaps the sixteenth century, although it may well have been manufactured later. The second fragment possibly dates from last century, although an eighteenth or indeed an early twentieth century provenance cannot be ruled out.

5. Non-ceramic finds

In addition to the worked flints discovered in the vicinity of Springhead, Ashwell, several other non-ceramic objects were collected by Mr. Crabtree. These are described below.

Whetstones.

Two whetstones were collected. Both were well worn indicating prolonged use, however the age of these items cannot be securely stated. Both stones are comparable to examples excavated in Romano-British contexts in Baldock (Stead and Rigby 1986), yet the possibility remains that such stones may have been used in a rural community up to and beyond the introduction of uniform, commercially produced forms in the recent past.

- a) Green-grey 'soapy' stone (oolithic limestone?). One end rounded, the other a jagged break (170x25x14mm). Predominantly worn on the two longest and widest surfaces making them concave. Deep incisions on three sides may be the result of re-pointing a blade.
- b) Pinkish-grey micaceous stone (igneous rock). In the shape of an elongated parallelogram (90x40x15mm). Well worn on the broad surfaces with incisions on two sides.

Iron ingots.

Two broken blocks of partially refined iron were included in the material from Ashwell. Both appeared to be the ends of shallow bricks or bars, probably cast in open ceramic moulds, indeed perhaps both produced in the same mould. These ingots are composed of the intermediate product of iron manufacture, a partially refined (approximately 80% pure) iron which could later be broken up and re-worked into a more pure state prior to casting or forging. The ingots may have been produced locally or transported in this form to be used by local iron masters or blacksmiths. Ingots of this type are known to have been used from the early eighteenth century onwards, although a more probable date for the Ashwell finds may be the later eighteenth or nineteenth century.

- a) The end of a square cornered block, broken with an uneven edge which reveals the impurities in the material. (75x60x34mm, 750g)
- b) The end of a square cornered block, tapering slightly towards the point at which the ingot is broken. Very similar dimensions to the other ingot (with the exception of depth) may indicate that both bars were cast in the same open mould. (73x60x29mm, 600g)

Copper alloy wire.

A length of brass wire (approximately 95mm long, 2.5mm diameter). Perhaps originally bent to form three sides of a hexagon, although now in a broken condition. The remaining end is curved into a 'U' shape, indicating its probable use as a handle, perhaps for a can or lantern or similar purpose. The composition of the alloy suggests a date of manufacture in the nineteenth or twentieth century.



Detail from a drawing of an
unknown man smoking a clay pipe.
Mary Beale, 1632-97.

6. Clay Tobacco Pipes.

A great quantity of clay tobacco pipe fragments were presented for evaluation. The majority of these were plain, broken stems, dating from the nineteenth or early twentieth centuries. Some of the stems were stamped with either the maker's name, or the place of manufacture. Similarly, the plain bowls were all of forms common in the last century, although some of the decorated examples could be given more detailed dates and provenances. There is one pipe-bowl of the first half of the seventeenth century.

Stem terminals	75
Broken, plain stems	1,775
Plain bowls	225
Decorated bowls and stamped stems	770
Total weight	2,845 grams

6.1 Catalogue of diagnostic fragments.

Maker	Place of Manufacture	Date	No. of Frag's	Description
.....
G.Kiff	St.Albans	1886-1917	1	Stem- stamped with the name and the place of manufacture.
T.Cleever	Cambridge	1836-50	5	Stems- stamped with name and place.
	Surrey		1	Bowl- decorated with the head of a buffalo, and the letters RAOB. (Royal and Ancient Order of Buffaloes)
	Surrey		3	Bowls- decorated to resemble acorn cups.
Webster Adams	Ipswich	1810-53	9	Bowls- decorated with vine leaves and disjointed vertical ribs.
J.Cleever	Loughborough Leicestershire	1828-46	1	Stem- stamped with name.
O'Brian	Dublin	1860-90	1	Bowl- stamped with an oval mark " O'Brian, Mayo St. Dublin".
	Dorking	late 19th century	1	Bowl- with laurel leaf design on the front spine.
Webb		1851	1	Stem - stamped "Exhibition" to commemorate the Great Exhibition of 1851.

Maker	Place of Manufacture	Date	No. of Frag's	Description
.....				
			2	Bowls - with vertical, fluted deco- ration forming arches around the rim.
			5	Bowls - with pronounced seams.
			3	Bowls - with hooped design.
	late 19th century		1	Bowl - decorated with 'rustic' nod- ules and undulating vertical lines.
			2	Bowls - plain, with unidentifiable stamps.
			1	Bowl - with a simple, ribbed pattern around the rim.
			1	Bowl - large and plain, with a small foot.
			2	Bowls - large and plain, with a med- ium sized foot.
			2	Bowls - large and plain, with a large foot.
Bedford(?)			1	Bowl - small and plain, with a large flat foot. Ribbed pattern around the rim.
			1	Bowl - large and plain.
			2	Bowls - small, with circular decorat- ion on both sides.
			6	Bowls - with plain bodies, and ribbed decoration around the rim.
			1	Bowl - decorated with scales.
			1	Bowl - with a flattened seam, flanked by circular indentations.
			4	Bowls - small and plain, with small feet.
			3	Bowls - small and plain, with medium sized feet.
			1	Bowl - small and plain, with no foot
Cambridge			1	Stem - stamped with "Cambridge"
			8	Bowls - decorated with a fluted, ovulo design.
			1	Bowl - with widely spaced, fluted design.

Maker	Place of Manufacture	Date	No. of Frag's	Description
		1600-1650	1	Sloping, barrel-shaped bowl with narrow rouletted decoration around the rim.
	London		1	Bowl - plain, with the legend "London" stamped on the side.
Michael -?-rrison			1	Stem - with partially illegible stamp.
	Leigh		2	Bowls - formed in the shape of negro heads. One with pierced ears which may have possessed ear rings.
	Dutch (?)		1	Stem - twisted with square-point rouletting.
Smith			1	Stem - stamped with "Smith's new pip..." on one side, and "345 Caledonian" on the other.
			1	Stem - with "Albert" stamped on both sides.
			1	Bowl - decorated with the figure of a bird between two crossed branches.
			1	Bowl - in the form of a bearded Arab.
			3	Bowls - with vine leaf scrolling on the front seam- and crossed key decorations on either side.
			5	Bowls - with crossed keys, and no other decoration.
			2	Bowls - decorated with the 'fleur de lis' of the Prince of Wales, and the motto "Ich Dien" (I serve). The front seams are decorated with a branching tree, under which a soldier stands firing a rifle.
			1	Bowl fragment - displaying the arms of the Prince of Wales.
	late 19th century		2	Bowl - with 'rustic' nodular decoration.
			1	Bowl - with fluted decoration and dots around the rim.
			22	Stems - with various forms of laurel leaf decoration.
			1	Bowl foot - in the form of a lady's lower leg and slippered foot.

Maker	Place of Manufacture	Date	No. of Frag's	Description
.....
			3	Bowl fragments. Plain and angular.
			5	Stem fragments. Unidentified forms of decoration.
			6	Bowl fragments. Unidentified forms of decoration.
			1	Small red clay figurine in the shape of a squirrel - used for packing tobacco into the pipe bowl.
			1	Wooden cigarette holder with a metal sleeve

6.2 Conclusions.

Adrian Oswald in the British Archaeological Report No.14 (1975), states that -

"the middle and latter parts of the 19th century produced a great variety of shapes (of pipes), so that a general typology is of little use."

This statement was born out by the evaluation of the clay tobacco pipes from Ashwell. Although the general mass of stems and bowls could be assigned to the mid to late 19th century, there were few examples which were capable of more precise dating.

1810	1820	1830	1840	1850	1860	1870	1880	1890	1900
									(1) <u>G.Kiff. St.Albans</u>
									(1) <u>O'Brian. Dublin</u>
									(9) <u>Webster Adams. Ipswich</u>
									(1) <u>Webb.</u>
									(5) <u>T.Cleever. Cambs</u>
									(1) <u>J.Cleever. Loughborough</u>

Figure 11 : Dateable pipes, the date range for each manufacturer, the number of pipes in brackets.

With the exception of a single, plain bowl of the first half of the seventeenth century, the general date range for the Ashwell pipes appears to be from about 1810 to 1917. The period of maximum deposition was probably between 1840 and 1850, perhaps reflecting activity around the Cross Keys public house, which formerly occupied the area from which these pipe fragments were collected.

After the 1840's the popularity of the clay pipe declined in favour of the more durable briar. In the second half of the nineteenth

century, the number of manufacturers in England fell in response to the dwindling demand. A few foreign manufacturers exported to the remaining market in England, the Dublin pipe may be indicative of this process.

Some of the decorated pipe bowls were of particular interest. The bowls decorated with the figure of a soldier and the emblem of the Prince of Wales, may imply the presence of members of a military regiment in Ashwell towards the end of the 19th century. Likewise, the bowl decorated with the motif of the Royal and Ancient Order of Buffaloes, might suggest that a member or branch of this philanthropic society resided in Ashwell at this time.

Eight of the pipe bowls were adorned with crossed keys. This symbol of St. Peter may have been applied to products sold exclusively by the Cross Keys public house.

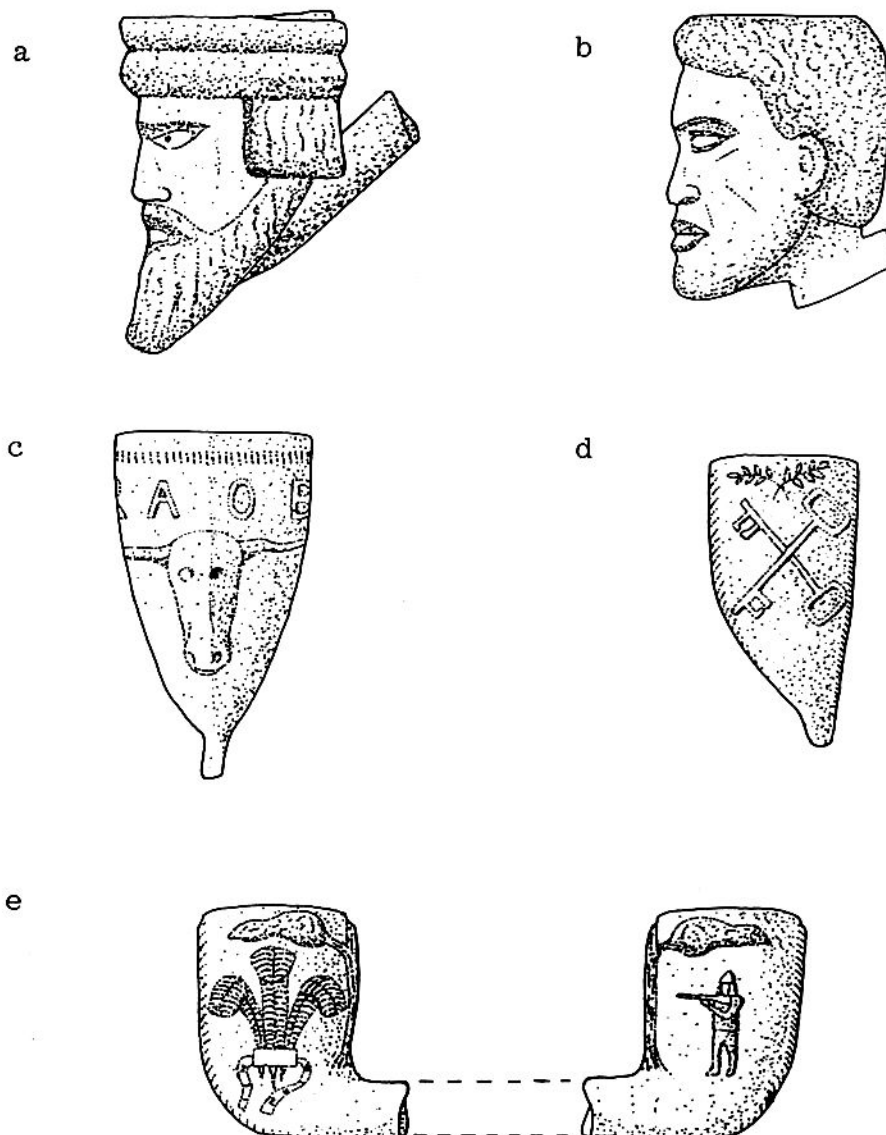


Figure 12 . A selection of decorated pipe bowls.

- a. Arab-head.
- b. Negro-head.
- c. Royal and Ancient Order of Buffaloes.
- d. Crossed keys, perhaps sold in the public house.
- e. The 'fleur-de-lis' of the Prince of Wales, and the figure of a soldier. Perhaps supplied to a military regiment such as the Welsh Guards ?

Bibliography.

- Ashworth, H. 1990 North Hertfordshire Museums Pottery Series. NHDC Field Archaeology Section Report.
- Baker, E. and
Hassell, J. 1979 Excavations in Bedford 1967-77, The Pottery. Beds Arch J. 13 : 147-240
- Davey, P. 1981 The Archaeology of the Clay Tobacco Pipe. (VI. The London Region). BAR 97.
- Hodges, H. 1964 Artifacts. An Introduction to Early Materials and Technology. London.
- McCarthy, M.R. and
Brooks, C.M. 1988 Medieval Pottery in Britain AD 900-1600. Leicester University Press.
- Oswald, A. 1960 The Archaeology and Economic History of English Clay Tobacco Pipes. J. of the Arch Ass vol XXIII.
- Oswald, A. 1975 Clay Pipes for the Archaeologist. BAR 14.
- Rackham, B. 1972 Medieval English Pottery. London.
- Stead, I.M.
and Rigby, V. 1986 Baldock: The excavation of a Roman and pre-Roman settlement 1968-72. London.
- Timms, P. 1974 Flint Impliments of the Old Stone Age. Shire Archaeology.
- Watson, W. 1975 Flint Impliments. British Museums Publications.