Notes on the South East Research Framework public seminar on the middle Bronze Age and Iron Age (20/10/07)

Chair: Tim Champion

Speakers: Barbara McNee, Peter Couldrey, Tim Champion, Sue Hamilton, Peter Clark

Notes: Jake Weekes

Introduction/Overview: The current state of later prehistory in the southeast

Tim Champion (TC)

TC opened the meeting by discussing the scope of the South East Research Framework middle Bronze Age and Iron Age survey in spatial and chronological terms. It is true that the nature of the landscape (ceremonial, settlement etc) changes at the beginning of period in question, so a dividing line here in terms of study makes sense in that way. On the other hand there is a real hiatus at the end of the Middle Iron Age, and in particular a case can be made for considering the late Iron Age along with the Roman period, rather than with the period under scrutiny.

One of the general questions to consider is the extent to which we are dealing with a 'region' in the period in question. Actually the region itself is quite diverse, with the Thames valley to the north, the Channel to south, the Weald in middle, and it is important to suspend current concepts of region in order to ask questions about the coherence of the study area in the past. Also, different parts of the region have been subjected to very different traditions of research. In the late 19th century, for example, Kent and Surrey were ahead of Sussex in research terms, because of London's expansion, minerals extraction etc. In the early part of the 20th century Sussex took over in terms of archaeological research up until World War II, and Kent and Surrey are only beginning to catch up in last few years.

In terms of resources, a huge and growing body of evidence is now available from developer funded archaeology, to which we may add finds associated with the Portable Antiquities Scheme, and also air photographic evidence.

TC argued that PPG16 is one of the most important documents in the history of British archaeology, and showed an example of Kent County Council archives of documents accessioned per year between 1988 and 2006, demonstrating a steady expansion of archaeologically available data. But these data are not spatially evenly distributed, being driven by the mechanism of modern development pressures rather than a research agenda. A map indicating the locations of these sources is equivalent to one of modern economic activity, and huge areas of the North Downs and the Weald are untouched; the picture is therefore skewed. This evidence is critically important but there is a need to understand its limitations. There has been little work on systematic analyses of aerial photographs in Kent and Surrey, although Sussex has been looked at a bit more. In the future, climate change may actually bring about

better conditions in terms of dry summers, but there may also be a change in agricultural activities in response, which could mean less cropmarks. Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) data are now appearing in significant numbers, and patterns are beginning to emerge. These patterns need to be identified and recognised and then we need to explain them. Kent for example is dominated by finds of late Iron Age coinage and Bronze Age hoards.

At this point, by way of example, Jake Weekes presented some new information on behalf of Andrew Richardson, the Finds Liaison Officer for Kent. A comparison of Early to Middle Bronze Age Hoards reported in South East England 2003-2007 (nine hoards) with Late Bronze Age Hoards reported in South East England in the same period (19 hoards) showed a remarkable increase in finds in Kent, and particularly east Kent in the later period. TC commented that PAS finds in this respect were adding to and reinforcing a pattern that had already been recognised, but that there was also very interesting information here which developed understanding, particularly in relation to the recent finds that were being made in a more westerly direction along the southern foot of the North Downs towards the Medway.

The next two papers of the morning, given by Barbara McNee and Peter Couldrey respectively, would focus attention on pottery as a vital source of information for understanding the Middle Bronze Age to Iron Age period in the region.

The middle to late Bronze Age potters of Kent

Barbara McNee (BM)

BM's paper dealt specifically with evidence of the middle and late Bronze Age potters of Kent. Well-preserved cremation cemeteries don't appear on current evidence to exist in Kent so there is a problem in terms of comparative material. The Channel Tunnel Rail Link excavations have however produced large amounts of pottery dating to the period. BM has been generating a comprehensive ceramic form and fabric type series for this material.

This type series will:

- Contribute towards a regional chronology for the middle to late Bronze Age Kent
- Be a user-friendly type series, which will hopefully be used by other pottery analysts and archaeologists
- Aim to highlight points of comparison and contrasts between sites, and allow patterns in the data to be recognised

The dataset now extends to 46 sites across Kent with thousands of pots represented. Most of the pottery examined has been recorded using the methodology as recommended by the Prehistoric Ceramics Research Group (PCRG 1997), and pots have been divided into bowls and jars, as these two are the main classes of vessel in Bronze Age Kent. Minor categories have also been considered, namely cups, lids,

jars/bowls and globulars. Whole profiles are quite rare in Kent, therefore rim sherds define the large proportion of the type series.

BM argued that this type of data has much to contribute to a better understanding of later prehistoric Kent. Most obviously, pottery informs our understanding of the chronology, but there are also other aspects that can be interpreted from this material, such as cultural and societal change.

Four ceramic phases have been identified for the middle to late Bronze Age Kent.

- Middle Bronze Age (1500–1300 BC)
- Middle to late Bronze Age transition (1300–1100 BC)
- Late Bronze Age plain phase (1100–800 BC)
- Late Bronze Age decorated phase or earliest Iron Age (800–600BC)

Some general points can be made about form and fabric. Kent middle Bronze Age pots are mostly in the same form (bucket urns), but there are some differences in the amounts of globulars. In terms of fabric, we are generally dealing with variant flint temper sizes (globulars tend to be finer, and perhaps a sieve was used in the production of this filler). BM pointed out that a considerable amount of skill is required to make such vessels, and joked that all her own heuristic efforts at experimentation in making vessels of the same type have ended in disaster!

Phase one (1500–1300 BC) (with examples from Sittingbourne, Iwade and Sandway Road) are characteristically of Deverel-Rimbury form in flint tempered fabrics. The second phase (1300–1100 BC) can be described as transitional, with new forms and fabrics (the latter used for both old and new forms). There is also a reintroduction of grog fabric (used more extensively in the Early Bronze Age). BM suggested that the pots may have been produced through seasonal potting by households (attested ethnographically). There also seems to be more pot available at this stage. This may tie in with increased population, although changes in fashion could be another explanation. Interestingly, globulars are rare, with the only six coming from quite closely grouped sites in Kent.

In the third phase (1100–800 BC) the Kent typology has general affinities with that of the wider region, with new forms in Kent fitting in with a wider distribution. There was an increase in burnishing (particularly with coarse fabrics), and some pots were covered in clay slurry for this purpose. There was some conservatism in fabrics, but generally an increase in changes in forms and fabrics. This might reflect changes in society at this time. Some pottery of the final phase (800–600BC) was more highly decorated, but the majority of pots were initially quite plain (indeed, some are hard to separate from earlier material). Certainly the tripartite bowl seems to emerge at this point. Cordons, fingerprint decoration on the rim and/or on the shoulder, and tooled decoration were gradually becoming more popular. This was also the case in Sussex and Surrey. At a very late stage the pottery became less decorative once more. Sandy fabric became more popular in this phase, alongside more variety of fabric generally.

Sandy fabrics make thinner walled vessels (and also more angular shoulders) easier to execute.

In summary these noticeable changes in the pottery assemblage can contribute to our understanding of chronology, but also to changes in society. We might be able to postulate wide ranging contacts between potters, for example, even though local material was generally used. There is the suggestion of the emergence of specialised production as we move into later period: also contacts with the continent. In terms of deposition, it is important to note that there are often mixed assemblages which include both middle and late Bronze Age pottery. This may indicate site disturbance; the condition of sherds might suggest 'rubbish' disposal in pits which were left open. This has implications for settlement continuity, but it is more probable that changes in form and fabric were more gradual, and that there was a co-existence of different styles. There is also the possibility of long term curation of objects to consider. Finally several sites point to deliberate acts of deposition marking the abandonment of late Bronze Age sites. The fill of a ditch at Kemsley provides one example, and the site at Willow Farm near Herne Bay, produced large numbers of sherds from one feature some of which seem to have been "re-fired". This may indicate that a structure burned down. We might therefore be dealing here with site abandonment in common with other sites in adjacent areas.

BM suggested a number of directions for future work, arguing a need to:

- Look into why so many sites appear to have been abandoned at the end of the late Bronze Age, and look for patterns within the landscape
- Look at sites in both a local and regional context in order to define their relationship to a wider first millennium BC cultural system
- Note that the transition between the middle Bronze Age and late Bronze Age is a recognisable pattern
- Refine the form type series and create a user-friendly fabric type series.

It is also important to think of presenting form and fabric work in a more stimulating way (using microscopic photography and sketches for example), and to always attempt to relate changes in the evidence to aspects of culture and society.

Iron Age pottery from Kent, *ca.* 600–100 BC

Peter Couldrey (PC)

PC identified four main ways forward in the study of pottery forms and fabrics in Iron Age Kent:

- Synthesis of current understanding
- Identifying strengths and weaknesses in current understanding

- Informing future development led work

- Defining agreed topics for future research in the context of regional, national and international priorities.

The emphasis of this paper would be on chronology, delineating the pottery groups that exist and noting where the problems lie in how these relate to the Iron Age society in Kent; in particular the development of what has been termed the Highstead-Dollands Moor group would be traced, with a view to moving beyond the 'group' as an analytical unit, and towards more fine-grained analyses of the duration of forms, fabrics and decorative techniques and styles.

Pottery forms and fabrics do generally change at around 600BC, but some forms and fabrics continue, to be joined by coarser fabrics and associated forms, with walls becoming much thicker, and also by new forms such as flaring bowls, which have continental precedents. East Kent wares are often found to have been rusticated with lumps of clay on the outside of the pot. Exact dating of the material is open to question but Highstead is a very important site in this regard. In the phase designated Period 3A at Highstead, both earlier and later forms were found together, and dated (on the basis of continental parallels) to the 6th century BC: there is some debate as to whether the date for these pots should be earlier or later. An important addition to the Highstead evidence is an assemblage representing a group of large jars with very thin walls (which should actually be thought of as 'works of art') recently recovered by the Canterbury Archaeological Trust from the developer funded site at Eddington Farm, near Herne Bay. Here stratigraphy showed seven sub-phases, the first six being equivalent to the British Museum's late Bronze Age phase. The seventh phase corresponds with an increase in the wall thickness of vessels around 500BC.

Highstead phase 3B (especially material from pit 114) represents material from about 500BC onwards, and includes a jar with heavily rusticated walls (and still some fine wares). This phase also included an important vessel (possibly a jar) which was painted in red and cream, with a geometric pattern incised, dated to the late 5th and possibly early 4th century, which compares with the early La Tène period in France. These vessels were found alongside coarser and rougher pots in the same contexts. There is also plenty of further evidence of different types of decoration with incisions as well as paint from other sites. At Whitfield, in pit 16, such material was associated with burnt grain radiocarbon dated to 390–165 BC. While at Sutton, north of Dover, a context containing similar material has been radiocarbon dated to 370–110BC.

The Highstead-Dollands Moor group clusters in East Kent, with the limits being in the lower Medway area. Some other examples have been reported elsewhere, but there is a need to be careful over terminology. Those identified in Essex, for example, did not have the same rustication techniques, which on the Kent pots seem to result from blowing of liquid slip onto the surface, as well as 'pebble dashing' effects.

The enclosure ditch feature at Whitfield contained, in its primary and main fills (as well as an early re-cut), a much later group, dated *ca*. 250–100 BC. There is nothing in this feature that compares with the ceramic assemblage in earlier pits on the site. Various typological changes, comparable with those from Sussex at around the same time, are evident. The Whitfield radiocarbon evidence is significant as it narrows

chronology a little, but there is currently no site that can show good relationship between early and middle Iron Age Groups (the latter predominantly jars with thickened and everted rims). The Bigberry water hole pit has evidence of a crossover to grog tempered wares, radiocarbon dated to the second half of the 2nd century BC, and a pit at Sutton contained a coin of the Morini (dated to the early decades of 1st century BC), so the material could be still extant in the late Iron Age.

In West Kent, at Darenth, there was not as much fine-grained pottery in the early Phase (Phase 1, originally dated to 900–500BC), but the forms and fabrics were also improving at this time. There is still uncertainty about the earliest dates for these pots, and we might now consider them to be later. Within the site at Darenth the 'early' and 'late' distributions of pottery were quite distinct, and were in fact published as differently dated plots. However, these could have been specialised areas and the material therefore contemporaneous. While the east Kent fabrics tended to be flint filled at this time, those of west Kent are characterised by the inclusion of flint and shell. Glauconitic Sandy Ware fabric seems to have been reserved for foot ring jars, a specialised fabric for this form in West Kent. The site at Farningham provided crossover between early and late material, but again absolute dating remains a problem.

In terms of chronology, we need to get more precision by using radiocarbon dating wherever possible, and thereby to understand the pottery typologies in a more finessed way, particularly in relation to duration of pottery forms, decoration and fabrics, rather than just groups. More dates and more precision will allow researchers to approach:

- The fact that pots from the same context are often not all of same age
- Dating of the use of pottery (via residues)
- Dating of its manufacture (via organic inclusions)
- Dating of its deposition.

It is also important to investigate specialisation of pottery as an industry; rustication might mean more people involved in manufacture, for example. Another specific example suggesting specialisation is a large jar from Sutton. This magnificent vessel was painted completely red on the outside and the vessel wall at its thinnest point was only 2mm thick: a highly skilled piece of craftsmanship. Such fine wares need closer examination and comparison, and we might also note associations of certain types with particular uses (e.g. briquetage), as well as specific fabrics. This will only be possible regionally through standardisation of terminology/coding systems (typologies, fabrics etc). Provision of on-line/electronic access to archive data/spreadsheets will also be of key importance, and will enable easier and more rapid assimilation of data across the region & beyond.

There are also specialist forms of deposition to consider, such as deposits of individual vessels or combinations of vessels, associations of vessels with other objects, termination deposits, etc. But this can only be done systematically via a change in sampling methods, with larger samples being derived from excavation of whole lengths of ditches rather than small sections, for example, and with detailed recording of the position of sherds and all objects within deposits. In order to begin to achieve the above, short term priorities would be to make sure that site reports which

had already been written are published as soon as possible, and to make data more easily available on-line, including an on-line index of reports and on-line access to grey literature reports.

Another important area to consider in the longer term was that of European contacts and correlations of material either side of the Channel/North Sea. The rustication techniques and polychrome painting of early Iron Age pots have demonstrable affinities with material from sites in northern France, for example, and it would appear that the early Iron Age rustication of pots in particular was originally influenced by continental styles, particularly in Germany, from about 1000BC. Development of more international studies to account for such correlations would require: a better understanding of independent chronologies, more closely defined forms, styles, and fabrics, concerted analyses of techniques of manufacture, use and deposition, further consideration as to whether ideas were borrowed and adapted rather than lifted and moved from one area to another as a package, and more consideration of the wider role of pottery in culture and society. Comparison with continental examples, however, can be hampered by the fact that such vessels are not always given much priority in foreign reports, as they have not traditionally been thought of as particularly important. International seminars to enable researchers and students to keep up-to-date with developments either side of the Channel, and the building of joint teams, or simply of coordinated research, would benefit all.

Discussion:

Wide-ranging discussion followed on perceived problems of absolute and relative dating of the period, with special emphasis on radiocarbon dates in association with pottery assemblages.

In particular, there is a need for new radiocarbon dates for the late Bronze to middle Iron Age period, and especially some that are not bimodal (bimodal dates can be equally calibrated to two separate calendar year dates, and are therefore not conclusive enough). There *are* radiocarbon dates for the middle and late Bronze Age, but these are not always associated with pot, as a lot of radiocarbon dates tend to have been taken from aceramic contexts on the basis that pottery evidence can be used to date the other deposits. There are currently about five or six radiocarbon dates for early material, but there is a marked hiatus around the earlier Iron Age. This is probably because of a lack of burnt food residues with the earliest Iron Age material. Another problem is that dating based on assemblages is largely artificial. There is frequently considerable diversity of pot forms and fabrics within the same deposits, and a need therefore to date individual forms rather than assemblages. There is at present no systematic project to produce a radiocarbon calibrated chronology for pottery in the South East.

One reason for gaps in chronology might be that, with coarse wares especially, material can be wrongly dated at first glance and therefore sent to the wrong specialist. There are also the problems of residuality to consider. Perhaps it would be better to focus on ‘context groups’ rather than general ‘groups’, as units of analysis. Curation of vessels over long periods has particular implications for analysis of relative chronology based on ceramic material (a Cornish example was cited where

conjoining sherds of the same vessel had been recovered from both the earliest and latest deposits of the same structure). There would seem to be evidence of deliberate attempts to influence the lifespan of certain types of object. This is more difficult to reconstruct with pottery than with flint and metalwork. Where a large proportion of an overall site assemblage comes from a particular deposit the idea of specialised deposition also needs to be considered. Such deposits seem to represent a single act of deposition, and yet often include a variety of differently typologically dated material: further evidence perhaps for certain objects being looked after and used for a long time (or for a need to rethink typologies?). Several examples of even longer term curation or re-use of found objects originally dating to the middle Bronze Age and early to middle Iron Age periods are also known from late Iron Age, Roman and even Anglo-Saxon contexts.

Beyond matters of chronology, there is a need to look at relative functionality of pottery, and distribution of different forms and fabrics around individual sites. This will require more fully excavated sites rather than the very small samples often produced by development pressures, for example. Moreover, next to nothing is known about kiln technology, because what is known is only that which can be inferred from the vessels themselves. A very broad correlation between fineness of wall and fineness of fabric of vessels can be discerned, which mainly arises out of practical considerations of the need for greater plasticity when making finer wares: but there are some interesting examples, such as certain pots where extremely fine flint temper ('like dust') has been used. In terms of pottery functions, the comparison of food remains residues for different forms would be useful, although how archaeologists recover the material is an important factor here, and there will be different types of residues on the surface and within the pot fabric respectively to take account of.

Dissemination of data was also discussed. There is a move towards trying to get reports out faster, although Highstead is not a good example; this excavation took place in 1987 and it has only just been published. If it had been necessary to wait for publication rather than PC's advance report on the pottery being made available, this would have set study back a long way. The same applies to the speed with which radiocarbon dates are being made available. Web publication certainly seems to be an important advance, which should be increasingly utilised. It was noted, for example, that evidence from the recent Channel Tunnel Rail Link sites (which is a good example of the benefits of on-line publication) might significantly change our understanding of the middle Iron Age in Kent especially.

The evolution of later prehistoric settlement in Kent and Surrey

Tim Champion (TC)

TC's paper traced the evolution of later prehistoric settlement in Kent and Surrey, with some emphasis on the Bronze Age in particular. TC first noted that different 'information zones' could be delineated in the counties as a result of uneven patterns of development led work, these being:

- High-density development in the Thames Valley, London, North Kent Coast and Thanet

- Medium-density development in the Medway Valley, on the Greensand and on the Chalk east of the Stour

- Low-density development on the Downs and in the Weald.

In Kent in particular, work has been highly skewed towards the east coast and Thanet, while in Surrey the vast majority of recent work has been in what is now greater London and especially a zone in the north-west, along the Thames, and large sites such as that at Heathrow.

Although there is much new information from development led work, therefore, it is patchy. Some research has been carried out on a national scale in terms of agricultural intensification and landscape organisation: in particular the work of David Yates, which is one of the few attempts to use the results of developer funded activity to produce a large scale survey. Further areas where Bronze Age field systems survived until more recently (such as on the North Downs), can be seen in aerial photographs, and there are also some areas which are not known in detail because data collection methods have meant that only small and apparently insignificant parts of undoubtedly broad field systems have been recorded, for example. At Ashford, two recent sites have come to light (some 500m apart, at Westhawk Farm and Brisley Farm), mainly because they underlie more visible later sequences. Only small fragments of systems are being seen.

It can be said that many ditches seem to have been filled in during the middle Bronze Age, and others seem to have been subject to re-organisation in the late Bronze Age; other systems actually begin in the late Bronze Age. Only a few structures are known (for example a middle Bronze Age house at East Valley Farm, near Dover, and another at Kemsley Fields, Sittingbourne), and it is generally hard to build a coherent pattern of the nature of human settlement in the landscape. Certainly an important question for future research is to find more houses and other structures dating to the period. Some areas have better overall coverage than others (for example at South Dumpton Down in Thanet), and a regional pattern of enclosures in East Kent in particular (comparable with Wessex) is starting to emerge. The rest of the evidence, including that for Surrey and Sussex, seems to show more unenclosed settlements distributed within the field systems.

Survival of early Bronze Age barrows in Kent is poor as compared with those in Surrey and Sussex. Huge destruction of these features in Kent has resulted from many being ploughed out, and not just in recent times. Some middle Bronze Age features are found to be cutting the early Bronze Age features. A long period of agricultural activity has had an impact, therefore. Many middle and late Bronze Age sites have also been severely truncated.

We begin to see enclosures more generally in late Bronze Age, including:

- Circular ‘ringworks’, as at Mill Hill, Deal

- Rectangular/square enclosures, as at Nore Hill, Chelsham

- Oval enclosures with interrupted ditches, as at Highstead and Ramsgate.

Settlement seems to be characterised by medium-density development in the Medway Valley, on the Greensand south of the North Downs scarp, and on the Chalk east of the Stour, with enclosed habitation areas of various shapes; in fact it would perhaps be better to begin to think more of a spectrum of site types. This is restricted to a late Bronze Age phenomenon: perhaps short-lived. The is also evidence of organised landscapes in wider excavations that include boundaries reinforced by ritual in some way, as at Shelford Quarry, near Canterbury, where field systems included special deposits and cremation material in aligned pits (cf. recent work at Ellington Farm, Ramsgate). Other themes in this area include deposition of metalwork (either singularly or in hoards) both within settlements and in other contexts (e.g. water), and midden deposits (cf. Wessex). In terms of late Bronze Age crop preferences, early use of spelt but equally a late survival of emmer (unlike cultural preferences in Wessex) is noticeable: how do we explain this?

There is no evidence of continuity of this landscape organisation into the early Iron Age, with all the evidence pointing to some form of major hiatus at this point. Some field systems were overlain by other forms of division, especially on the Chalk Downs, and some systems were plainly abandoned altogether. Even whole sub-regions seem to be little occupied in the early and especially middle Iron Age, with evidence for their use only beginning again in the late Iron Age/early Roman period. Again, there is little explanation for this phenomenon, which is in fact mirrored in Essex and London. What happened to the systems when they went out of use? Or perhaps this is evidence more of a change of use. Or were some of these areas indeed completely abandoned?

No certain divisions of the early Iron Age landscape are known, and there is only sparse evidence of settlement, as at North Foreland on Thanet, at White Horse Stone in the Medway area, and at occasional sites in Surrey (a roundhouse at Runford, Surrey, for example). The recent Channel Tunnel Rail Link excavations did find some further evidence in north Kent, however, so perhaps the historical lack of evidence results from looking in the wrong place, and a shift of settlement at this time has not been picked up.

In the Middle Iron Age we have the emergence of hillforts in the region, but evidence of other settlements is rare. There is also a complete contrast between hillforts in Kent and Surrey and those in Sussex in terms of function: this too awaits explanation. The Farningham Hill site in west Kent provides some of the best of the sporadic settlement evidence, being a completely excavated enclosure with a good ceramic sequence as well as stratified brooches to assist with chronology.

There is a further major hiatus between middle and late Iron Age sites, and settlement evidence becomes more common again in the late Iron Age, accompanied by a new phase of land division and enclosure. New buildings of this date include the roundhouse at Wey Valley Farm, Addlestone, Surrey, for example. Many sites show evidence of continuity into the Roman period (such as the Thurnham Roman Villa site in Kent). Indeed, most sites occupied in the early Roman period have their origins in the late Iron Age. New types of ‘urban’ settlement also begin to emerge in the late Iron Age, associated with the development of coinage and importing of Gallo-Belgic

pottery (as well as an archaeologically visible funerary tradition of cremation burial). There is still the need for more evidence, however, particularly in the rural sphere. Excavated examples are known, and the general template would seem to be rectangular enclosures. A larger number of such enclosures are known from aerial photographs, and we can perhaps now be more confident that these are associated with late Iron Age settlement. Further excavation is required in order to confirm this.

Discussion

The subject of chronology was returned to, and also the fact that advances in understanding rest on recognition of field systems, which can be hampered by development led focus on a particular site area and by the individuality of separate development led projects. It was noted that Yates' distributions of field systems had been able to focus on evidence of large-scale systems, which might be missed in small-scale excavations.

Further discussion of continuity of patterns in the landscape and scales of organisational change followed, with the Saltwood site in east Kent (part of Channel Tunnel Rail Link work) being put forward as an excellent example. The earliest known activity on this site, four Bronze Age barrows, were respected by late Iron Age and Roman field systems, and subsequently became the focus for important Anglo-Saxon pagan cemeteries. In fact, late Iron Age track ways can still be seen on the Ordnance Survey map of the area. Such sites emphasise the need to put visual data into GIS, in order to see the bigger pattern.

Sussex later prehistory: a research framework?

Sue Hamilton (SH)

Focussing on Sussex, SH initially pointed out that any Research Framework needed to be appropriate both for research led and development led archaeology (although it should be noted that the latter does incorporate research in its own way).

In the past, Sussex research has prioritised certain subjects and areas for a number of reasons. It would seem, for example, that research questions in Sussex have derived much from the work by the Curwens on the Sussex Downland. Interestingly, the agenda that has been derived from this work has tended to be influenced by Mrs Curwen's attitudes about not wanting to disturb the dead, and work has therefore tended to look more at settlement than burials. The Geology and topography of the counties have themselves been prohibitive of studies along north/south axes, and interfaces between the geological and topographic zones. But sites on the edges of the Downs, for example, seem deliberately positioned in order to have access to different resources. It should also be noted that the South Downs has been proposed as a national park, which raises issues concerning management of the landscape, all of which need to be factored into any research agenda. Moreover, coastal erosion should be highlighted, particularly in West Sussex, as more sites are being found on the coastal plain. Most recent development led archaeology has been on the Downs. Work on the A27 Brighton by-pass for example has shown considerable mid- to late Bronze

Age settlement longevity. Such transects also cut through colluvial deposits in valley bases, and have shown much potential for middle Bronze Age use of such areas.

Middle Bronze Age studies in Sussex suffer from a very localised focus of knowledge, both spatially (the Downland focus) and thematically. In the latter case there is often still too much dichotomy between settlement and funerary evidence. A more holistic approach is called for, studying the interplay between funerary and settlement spheres. In terms of the undoubted spatial focus of the current evidence (the central and eastern Downland areas in particular), we might wonder whether this represents a true picture of settlement patterning, or a bias in line with the focus of archaeological work in the county

There have been conspicuous examples of research archaeology with respect to settlement sites and houses on the Downs in particular. But the location of the sites in such elevated positions have significant stratigraphic implications in terms of very shallow deposits and features, making accurate identification of house floors and patterns of deposition particularly difficult. A lot more data are needed: data are currently often so limited as to make problematic the interface between what is found in excavation and the questions we would like to ask. This brings about a tendency to look at broader datasets in less detail. It would be helpful from this perspective also to isolate sites off the chalk where better preservation of evidence might be found.

The fact that the database is still predominately made up of evidence from the Downs also precludes investigation of broader landscapes. Even in the Downland areas themselves, more account should be taken of the fact that many settlements would have been inter-visual, and will have had more extensive field systems. Downland complexity itself needs to be taken account of. This relates back to the need to look for evidence in the Downland valleys as well as the higher ground.

The relationship of the middle Bronze Age to the late Bronze Age is a further area in need of clarification. In the late Bronze Age and early Iron Age there is much more widely dispersed evidence, particularly in relation to the coastal plain, but also on the edge of the Weald. Downland settlements seem to dwindle at this time. The question arises as to the location of settlements of people associated with the building of the first hillforts, also apparently at this time. It is possible, for example, that these people lived in lowland settlements and travelled to and made use of the hillforts either regularly or more sporadically.

A recently excavated site dating to this period further highlights the need to look beyond the Downs for evidence, and is particularly significant in relation to increased preservation (and therefore a more complex and nuanced dataset) afforded by waterlogged conditions. This is the developer funded site of Shinewater Park, on the Willingdon Levels near Eastbourne, East Sussex, which might justifiably be called the ‘Flag Fen’ of Sussex. Organic evidence preserved within waterlogged deposits from the site includes a wooden paddle (which relates back to the significance of riverine communications and a need for research to take account of north/south axes of movement), wooden corduroy trackways, building platforms, and a general richness of deposited material culture. The site provides but a glimpse into the longevity and complexity of late Bronze Age culture, and also raises the issue of cross Channel connections at this time, a significant aspect of the research framework as a whole.

Such evidence also highlights the significance of deliberate depositional practice, and in particular special deposits in watery contexts. Attitudes to 'rubbish', and its deposition in ditches or in intercutting pits are a related topic. Above all, the apparently new significance of the coastal plain, the Weald, and indeed the marshy parts of East Sussex requires further work if we are to understand it. On the higher ground, systematic analysis of cross-ridge dykes in relation to the re-organisation of land boundaries might produce significant results.

The early Iron Age in Sussex seems to be characterised by a marked decrease in settlement evidence and also a hiatus between the late Bronze Age and early Iron Age in terms of our understanding of the chronology. Contraction of settlement is especially noticeable on the coastal plain. A good deal more evidence and research is called for if these changes are to be understood.

The middle Iron Age sees the development of a series of large hillforts, but in general the only other sites are findspots. The paucity of evidence is such that the middle Iron Age cannot be clearly distinguished in the County. Questions at present revolve around the function of hillforts and their interrelationship with their hinterlands. It is quite possible that what is going on immediately outside the hillforts is highly significant, and so more environs studies are called for. A number of Banjo enclosures are also known from West Sussex, although exactly how these related to settlement is still unclear.

There are perhaps even greater problems with understanding the absence of evidence in East Sussex in particular. On the other hand, the discovery of an open middle Iron Age settlement on the edge of the Downlands at Norton, found during research excavation focussing on Medieval settlement, may indicate that the apparent lack of settlement for the middle Iron Age, in East Sussex and elsewhere, is a function of archaeological invisibility at present.

In the late Iron Age there is a recurrence of evidence for settlement on the coastal plain, although the nature causes and extent of this settlement, as well as its origin, remain unanswered questions. The apparently centralised settlement at Chichester Dykes has been the main focus of archaeological attention in the past, with continuity into the Roman period being a key consideration. It would be better, however, to look at a much wider area, considering sites as a part of a broader managed landscape, rather than dealing with individual sites in isolation. The latter approach seems to be somewhat synonymous with the mechanisms of the developer funded context. However, the report on the developer led Westhampnett excavations is a good example of what can be achieved in this area. A wider perspective was taken to this site, including interrelationships with other sites both north and south, on and off the Downs.

Finally, it might be that East and West Sussex are so different in the late Iron Age as to require different research agendas.

Discussion

TC pointed out that the idea of dividing West and East Sussex in terms of research objectives brings us back to questions raised at the beginning of the day about the homogeneity (or not) of the region, and how we might form a concerted approach. Is this just a question of where the work has been done, or are West and East Sussex really different at this time? A number of constraining factors might be responsible for gaps in knowledge about East Sussex, such as areas of outstanding natural beauty etc, which have precluded archaeological investigation. A continuation of the sort of activity seen in Kent is starting to appear in East Sussex, on Weald Clay, where sites are turning up through development led work. This highlights the importance of the South East Research Framework project as a way of defining the questions that this kind of developer funded work should be seeking to answer. In terms of late Bronze Age activity on the Sussex Coastal Plain and its apparent disappearance at the end of the period, a good way forward would be systematic dating of field systems through relatively small-scale strategic trenching, based on Curwen's maps of Sussex Downlands (an important resource), and input of resulting data into a GIS. Radiocarbon targeting of good stratigraphic sequences would help to see whether researchers are currently engaged in circular arguments based on inaccurate systems of relative chronology. TC pointed out however that another aspect to consider is the sheer rarity of stratified sequences. This might also be the root of the problem of an apparently "missing" middle Iron Age in the whole region. Is there little human activity in the region at this time, or is it that established pottery sequences are wrong? Perhaps variable assemblages found at sites have something to do with variant status, contacts, conservatism of older forms etc. It is possible that we still work on too large a scale in terms of identity, expecting identity to take place on a different scale than was actually the case. Such questions need to be tested further via a more fine-grained chronology developed through more systematic radiocarbon dating. The only way to tell how distinctive assemblages tally with people will be to first establish the contemporary use of different assemblage types on different sites.

Further discussion topics included, in Sussex particularly, the fact that rectangular and round houses seem to be intermittent. Traditional views of architectural traditions of the period, such as the idea of a general move from one building design to another, need to be revisited. At Shinewater Park, it has emerged that at least one of the putative 'causeway' features is almost identical in form to dwellings at the contemporary Meare Lake Village, in Somerset. The Shinewater platforms resemble rectangular structures, which may have served as (perhaps temporary) dwellings, located on edge of a palaeo-channel, and linked by trackways (including some of corduroy construction). There are, not surprisingly, suspicions that other sites might exist in this particular environment. Shinewater also has evidence of marine remains, contributing further to questions of inundations/floods etc, and climate decline generally in the period.

Finally, the somewhat vexed question as to the origins of hillforts was briefly raised, with arguments for and against these monuments being first built in the Bronze Age or the Iron Age respectively. This is largely a question of archaeological definition. How many 'hillforts' have pre-enclosure occupations for example? Should we only call a defended hill top settlement a 'hillfort' if it dates to the Iron Age? Such hermeneutic matters of definition and classification of evidence should be taken into

account by the research framework, and indeed represent continuing debates within archaeology generally.

At the great crossroads

Peter Clark (PC)

In the final presentation of the day, Peter Clark (PC) discussed the broader societal and cultural implications of one of the most important finds of recent years: the Dover Bronze Age Boat.

Initial focus of study on the boat following its chance discovery in 1992 focussed on construction methods: this was complex vessel with large oak timbers sewn together with yew withies. A type of catchment analysis had also been carried out on the resourcing of materials for the boat. Research had only subsequently focussed more on what the social implications of the boat might have been, on reconstructing the past society the boat represented, rather than just the artefact itself.

PC proceeded to explore evidence of a putative middle Bronze Age maritime culture he had dubbed "The People of La Manche", tracing evidence on either side of the Channel, from what seemed to be small family groups represented by small farmstead settlements scattered throughout the landscape (for example at East Valley Farm, Dover) to larger enclosures, such as those at Etaples, at the mouth of the river Conche in France. This site consisted of two very large enclosures, complete with a number of middle Bronze Age roundhouses. The excavator had in fact interpreted the site as a colony from Britain, noting the 'English style' of the dwellings.

Moving on to a consideration of evidence of large scale organisation in the landscape, PC considered the growing evidence of field systems mentioned earlier in the day by TC, in conjunction with large scale barrow cemeteries, both in east Kent (as at Monkton, Mount Pleasant, Castle Hill, Folkestone and North Foreland on the Isle of Thanet), and further afield in Sussex and Essex. The same evidence is to be found at sites on the near continent, for example at Conchil-le-Temple, Frethun, Fresnes-le-Montauban and Roeux in northern France, as well as in Flanders.

PC pointed out that Bronze Age barrows can now be shown to have had many phases, being continually remodelled over time, and argued that Ring ditch 3 at Monkton Mount Pleasant, in particular, could be seen as a possible 'henge' monument in its first phase, subsequently remodelled into a more traditional barrow monument. It was also surrounded by later barrows as the site continued to be a focus for ceremonial activity into the middle Bronze Age and beyond. Such longevity and increasing site complexity can be compared with multiple ring ditches in Northern France and Belgium, as can the later attraction of early medieval cemeteries. Some such sites might originally have comprised multiple ditches (a lack of overlapping making it impossible to tell if the ditches were contemporary or not), while other monuments can be shown stratigraphically to expand over time.

Both sides of the Channel can be shown to share other forms of material culture. Deverel-Rimbury style pottery, for example, can equally be seen in sites in northern

France, as at ‘Le Chateaux D’Eau’ at Roeux. The same could be said for middle and late Bronze Age metalwork. However, PC argued that distinctive typologies seem to be based on different nationalities of the researchers in question, and that, while French archaeologists often say such objects are from England, English archaeologists often give them a French provenance.

Another important facet of this material culture is contact along the coasts, as discovery of a complete Cornish pot, which had been placed in a ring ditch at Monkton, attests. It would seem therefore that either ‘Cornishmen’ came to Thanet, or that the pot was brought back from an extensive round trip. Whatever the case, perhaps it was the distance travelled that made deposition special.

PC argued that the Dover Boat discovery lies at the centre of what he calls the “Great Crossroads” made up of the Channel and Rhine and Thames,that was the focus of a maritime culture, whose material culture can be shown to stop as one travels further in-land on either side of the English Channel/North Sea. This culture flourished in the early- to mid- 2nd Millennium BC, and was the context for the recently recovered Ringlemere gold cup. PC suggested that the ‘henge’ monument at Ringlemere, which had subsequently been remodelled to act as a burial mound in the middle Bronze Age, has affinities with Ring Ditch 3 at Monkton as a mid- to late- Bronze Age context for ceremonial deposition. Moreover, it should be noted that Stuart Needham has also indicated a cross-Channel culture in relation to Ringlemere, and that such ideas tend to have more currency with colleagues across the Channel.

Barrow construction at Monkton stopped in the late Bronze Age, and the ceremonial area was apparently given over to farming. Interestingly, this situation is actually different from sites on the other side of the English Channel, where barrow cemeteries seem to continue into the Iron Age. We might wonder what implications this has for cultural contact at this time. The Dover Boat could have carried a crew of 16 as well as three tons of metal (which would be enough to make 6000 palstaves) and could survive 1m of swell, with an estimated journey time to Europe of four or five hours. There need not have been lots of Dover boats going over the Channel in order to maintain elite connections with Europe.

Further research is required to pursue the hypothesis of a maritime culture centred on the English Channel at this time. Where, for example is the English Etaples? Stuart Needham has postulated a multiplicity of perceptions of distance and relationships but also argues for a perception of larger community and long distance contact. Such interregional contexts and relationships might be reconstructed via thin sectioning of pottery, for example, in order to get a more detailed understanding of chronology and variability. Better dating evidence is required (which apparently exists on the Continent). Finally, there is an equal need to look to the west and north as well as eastwards.

Discussion:

TC argued that the most important things that travel in boats are people, and that other objects are just an expression of a particular type of human exchange. Further examples of maritime evidence, such as the Kimmeridge shale from Dorset found in the Dover boat, were mentioned, as well as the idea of ritualised voyaging. The

construction of the boat in itself had a social meaning. TC noted that open water was much more important at this time and that people would have been much more aware of water as a means of communication rather than division.

It was pointed out that late Iron Age sites are also to be found at many of the same sites either side of the Channel, and the need to develop cross-Channel comparison outside the chronological period was highlighted. In terms of early and middle Iron Age continuity, the question of the perceived decline in the number of settlements and its chronology need to be explored a lot more. Triangular loom weights of the early Iron Age are also found in a cross-Channel distribution, as are bone combs. Moreover, there was an ongoing need to import material for various uses. The Langdon Bay (Dover) metalwork hoard is an example. This has been identified on typological grounds as being from central France, but if the boat on which it was being carried had not sunk while attempting to enter the estuary of the Dour, then the finds would probably have been melted down to produce objects we would fit into a British typology.