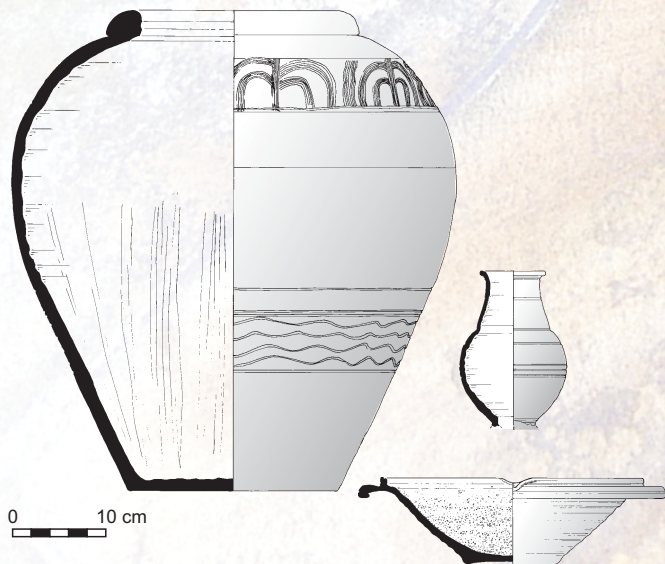


The focus of settlement must have shifted again after the Middle Iron Age, for there is a gap of some 400 years from around 100 BC when there is no evidence of people living at Groom's Farm. However, by AD 300 people certainly worked there. A pottery kiln was set up, one of many in the area forming part of the Alice Holt industry, a major centre of Late Roman pottery production in Britain. The kiln at Groom's Farm was a single-chambered twin-flue type, typical of the area, producing a range of jars, dishes and bowls. Local clay was used for the pots and the kiln was fired using charcoal from nearby oak and hazel coppiced woodland.



The demise of the industry came towards the end of the Roman period, around AD 400, and it is possible that four large storage jars buried close to the kiln may have been intended as a closing deposit, to mark the end of pottery making on the site. One pot contained two smaller pots and an iron axe and a bell had been placed in another.



Roman quern stone

The site at Groom's Farm saw little activity thereafter. Just a few sherds of Anglo-Saxon and medieval pottery show that it remained peripheral to rural settlement for the next 1500 years, probably agricultural land, until quarrying for sand in the 20th century revealed its rich earlier history.

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This site was archaeologically excavated and recorded by Wessex Archaeology on behalf of Grundon.

For more information about this project
<http://www.wessexarch.co.uk/projects/grooms-farm>

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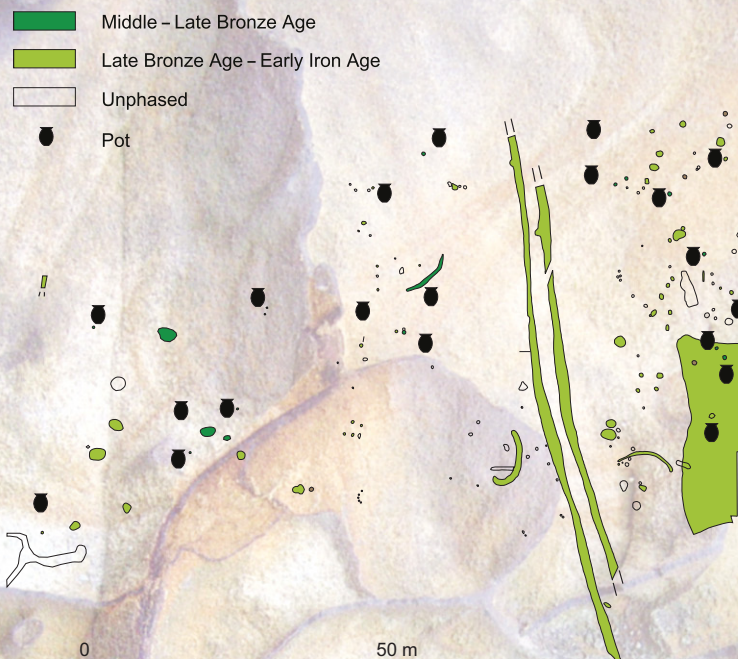
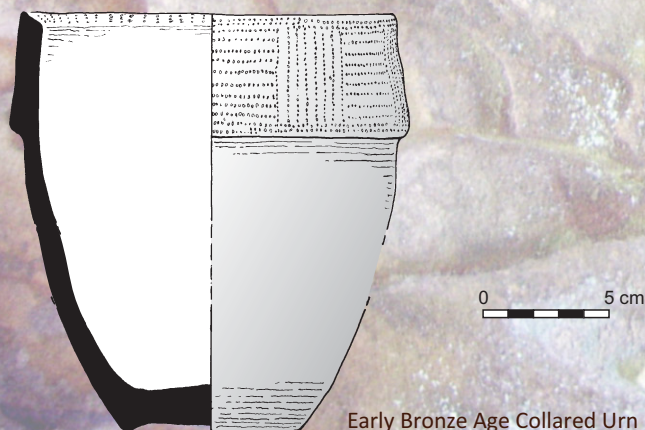
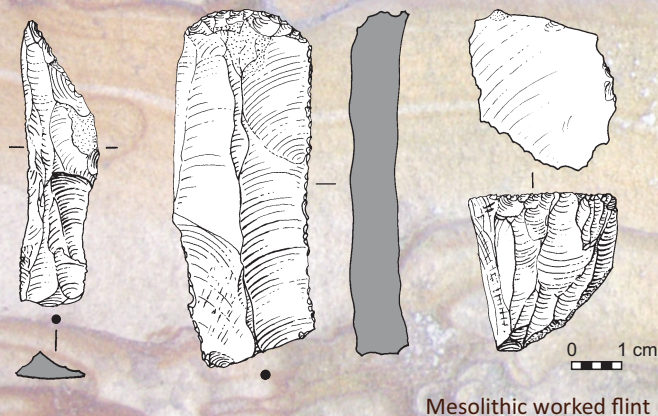
Archaeology at Groom's Farm Frithend



Sand quarrying undertaken by Grundon Sand and Gravel Ltd at Groom's Farm, Frithend in north Hampshire led to some significant archaeological discoveries. Between 1990 and 2010 Wessex Archaeology carried out a series of excavations in advance of quarrying which found that people have inhabited this area for at least 10,000 years.

A scatter of Mesolithic (8500–4000 BC) worked flint – most of it waste material but including several tools – were the earliest finds. It is probable that the site was visited, perhaps repeatedly, by groups of prehistoric hunter gatherers, attracted to the slight headland of higher ground close to the River Slea.

The first indication of more permanent settlement is in the Early Bronze Age (2400–700 BC), when a Collared Urn was buried in a small pit. Usually these pots were used as containers for the cremated bones of the dead, but this was not the case here. Instead, the Collared Urn contained burnt hazelnut and acorn shells, the remains of wild foodstuffs.



Middle Bronze Age – Early Iron Age features and pots

By the Middle-Late Bronze Age (1500–700 BC) Groom's Farm lay within a landscape that had been extensively cleared of trees for agriculture. Trackways and field systems marked out by ditches suggest a mixed economy, with animals (mainly cows and sheep) grazed on the higher, drier pasture and crops grown in the river valley. Several quern (grinding) stones used for cereal processing were found.

The settlement appears to have shifted over time and by the Early–Middle Iron Age (700–100 BC) there is evidence for a single, long-lived farmstead on the site. Shallow, circular drip gullies indicate roundhouses, built of wattle and daub with thatch roofs, and groups of post-holes may be the remains of granaries.

An unusual feature of the Groom's Farm site is the number of complete pots (almost 30) that had been buried here, perhaps over several centuries. One was associated with human remains but most pots were empty, though they may once have contained food or drink, cloth or leather, all materials which have not survived. Another pot was buried with two loomweights and parts of a quern, which can be seen to represent key elements of the economy of the settlement – weaving, crop processing and cooking. This may provide a clue to this unusual practice of burying pots – perhaps they were offerings for continued or renewed agricultural prosperity.

