

BURY CLIFF, AN EARLY PREHISTORIC SETTLEMENT SITE, NEAR ELTON, DERBYSHIRE

By G. A. MAKEPEACE

INTRODUCTION

Over many years this site has gradually yielded a large number of prehistoric artefacts and a few sherds of prehistoric pottery. It became obvious as the material gradually accumulated that here was perhaps a substantial prehistoric settlement site and so a survey of the physical attributes and the plotting of all finds was undertaken. All the artefacts came from either mole hills or erosion features.

THE SITE

The site lies to the north of the village of Elton (SK 21656165) and south of Harthill Moor (Fig. 1) at *c.* 290m OD. This is north of what was called Bury Cliff Wood (also known as Anthony Hill). It overlooks the lower end of Gratton Dale, lying on a gently sloping natural gritstone shelf before dropping down to the Rowlow Brook. The site has been incorporated into later enclosures and a trackway cuts through to what may have been the former wood. To the south-east is a defunct quarry now used for trial biking.

There are a number of extant earthworks and boulder (slab-on-edge) walls (Fig. 2) of unknown date, which may be part of the prehistoric settlement. They are certainly earlier than the enclosures. No other material has been recorded from this site to suggest later activity. The earthworks seem to form a series of terraces and small enclosures on what may have been natural outcrops, a feature found on other gritstone sites. An area to the south has produced many flint and chert artefacts and today is in danger due to trial biking. The whole site may cover an area of *c.* 2–3 acres.

THE ARTEFACTS

Though some prehistoric coarse pottery has been found, many sherds appear to be abraded except for one small rim sherd with a diagonal line impression (Fig. 3.10). This appears to be similar in appearance to a rim sherd found at Roystone Grange (Thomas 1991, 39, fig. 3.2). The number and variety of scrapers suggests that this site had a domestic role. It is difficult to be precise about dates but it would appear to fall within the Neolithic/Early Bronze Age. The ratio of worked flint to chert is approximately 75:25, although much of the flint appears to be of poor quality. The chert is dark grey to black and is similar to that from the Ashford area near Bakewell. Some of the flint has been burnt. The area to the south-east has produced a large amount of unworked chert, but whether this is a natural deposit or has been brought to the site for working is not known.

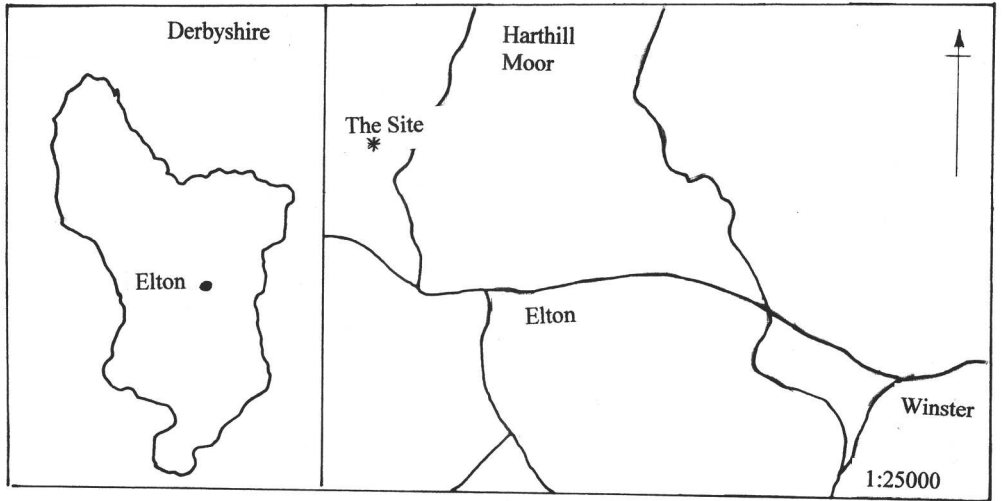


Fig. 1: Bury Cliff location.

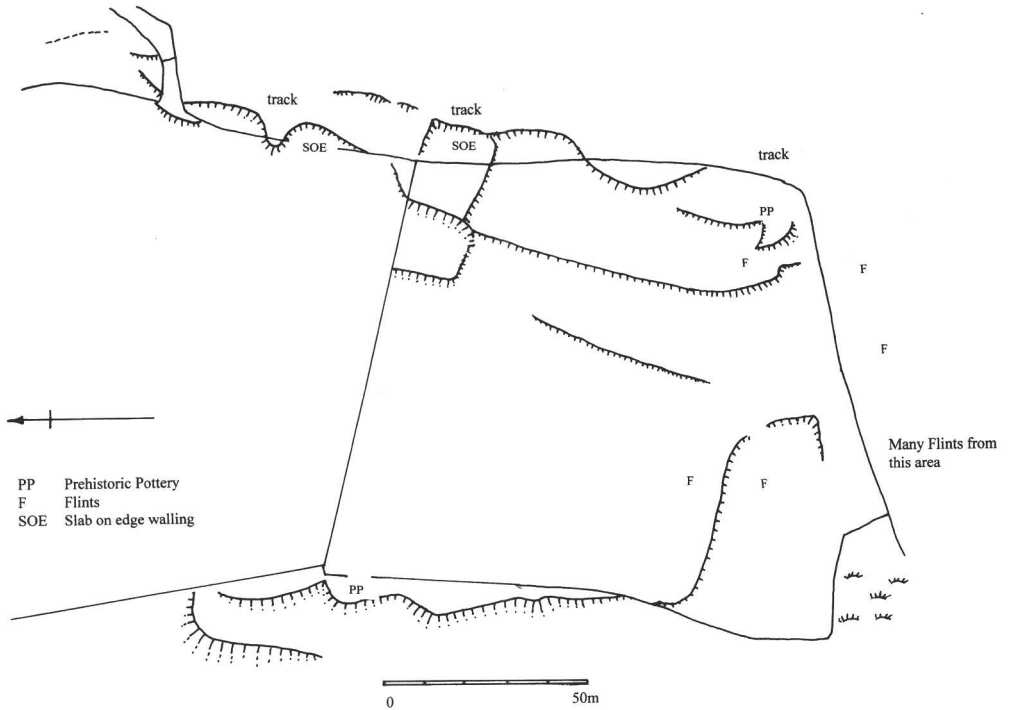


Fig. 2: Bury Cliff site plan.

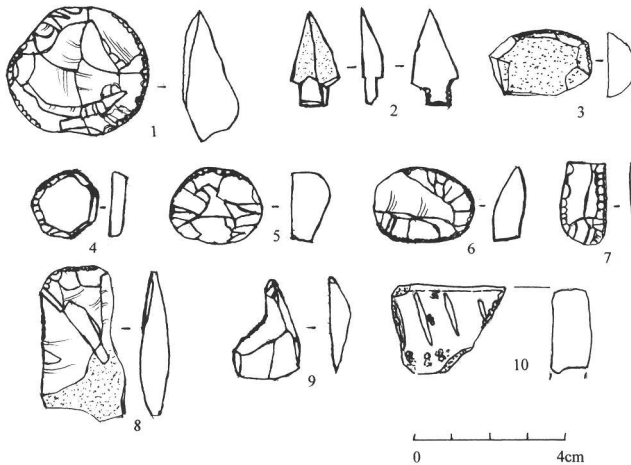


Fig. 3: Bury Cliff artefacts.

Descriptions (Fig. 3)

| | | |
|----|--------------------|---|
| 1 | Discoidal Scraper | flint, semi-translucent, retouch around dorsal side with some retouch on ventral edge |
| 2 | Arrowhead or Point | flint, grey, tanged, cortex on dorsal side, some retouch on ventral edges |
| 3 | Thumb Scraper | flint, grey, slightly mottled, steep retouch |
| 4 | Thumb Scraper | flint, grey, steep retouch along edges |
| 5 | Thumb Scraper | flint, dark grey/brown, steep retouch |
| 6 | Thumb Scraper | flint, brown, cortex on dorsal side, fine retouch |
| 7 | Blade | flint, dark grey/brown, semi-translucent, fine retouch on dorsal side and edges, broken, rounded base |
| 8 | End Scraper | flint, brown, semi-translucent, cortex, retouch on nose and left dorsal edge |
| 9 | Awl or Burin | chert, grey/black, retouch along hollow curve and on nose |
| 10 | Pottery Sherd | rim sherd, rounded with flattened top, coarse fabric, diagonal incised decoration, brown exterior, black interior, slightly abraded |

CONCLUSION

This site lies on the southern edge of the gritstone outcrop of Harthill Moor and overlooks the limestone landscape. In the area of Harthill Moor there are many prehistoric sites and monuments including artefacts recorded from this area alone (Bateman 1848; Hart 1981; Makepeace 1999) to mention just a few. Bury Cliff lies in an ideal position to exploit the resources of both gritstone and limestone areas alike. A similar site to that at Bury Cliff was located many years ago to the north of Sanctuary Wood

(SK 224628-226631). This site consists of linear and curvilinear stone banks, a possible round house and denuded barrow. and has produced a number of flints, a scraper and sherds which appear to be from cinerary urns or similar vessels (Makepeace 1963, 1; Makepeace 1999, 12). It is possible that these and other related sites help to put the Nine Stone circle into a period context.

REFERENCES

- Bateman, T. (1848) *Vestiges of the Antiquities of Derbyshire*. London.
- Hart, C.R. (1981) *The North Derbyshire Archaeological Survey to AD 1500*. Chesterfield. North Derbyshire Archaeological Trust.
- Makepeace, G.A. (1963) Harthill Moor. *East Midland Archaeological Bulletin* 6:1.
- Makepeace, G.A. (1999) Cratcliff Rocks — A Forgotten Hillfort on Harthill Moor, near Bakewell, Derbyshire. *DAJ* 119: 12–18.
- Thomas, J. (1991) Prehistoric Pottery from Royston Grange. In R. Hodges and K. Smith (eds) *Recent Developments in the Archaeology of the Peak District*: 37–43. Sheffield. Sheffield Archaeological Monographs 2. University of Sheffield.