Channel Tunnel Rail Link

CTRL UK Limited

Oxford Wessex Archaeology Joint Venture

The worked flint from Snarkhurst Wood, Hollingbourne, Kent (ARC SNK99)

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1 INTRODUCTION

A total of 141 pieces of struck flint were recovered from the excavations and watching brief at South of Snarkhurst Wood and Musket Lane (Table 1). A further 15 fragments (318 g) of burnt unworked flint were retrieved from five contexts (Table 2). The material can be broadly dated to the Neolithic and Bronze Age. This is based on technological and typological aspects of the assemblage. There is a possible residual component, including an opposed platform blade core and a small blade element, which is likely to be Mesolithic. There are no surviving Prehistoric features, which indicates that the material is redeposited.

Table 1. Summary of worked flint by site.

	ARC 420 66+300-67+100 99			ARC 420 67+100-68+100 99	ARC SNK 99	Total
Flake	1	2	1		82	86
Blade					4	4
Blade-like flake					4	4
Irregular waste					2	2
Chip					2	2
Sieved Chips 4-2mm					6	6
Sieved Chips 10-4mm					9	9
Rejuvenation flake					1	1
Flake from ground implement					1	1
Multiplatform flake core		1			3	4
Single platform flake core					1	1
Opposed platform blade core					1	1
Tested nodule					1	1
End and side scraper					1	1
End scraper					2	2
Side scraper					1	1
Thumbnail scraper					1	1
Backed knife					1	1
Plano-convex knife					1	1
Piercer					1	1
Notch					1	1
Miscellaneous retouch					1	1
Retouched blade					1	1
Retouched flake					6	6
Serrated flake					1	1
Possible Thames pick fragment				1		1
Total	1	3	1	1	135	141

2 PROVENANCE

The worked flint was recovered from 25 contexts, including the fills of ditches, pits and gullies, topsoil and a cremation. Most contexts produced less than 20 pieces. The exception is 128, a finds reference number for artefacts found during the topsoil strip over Area B, which contained 65 pieces of flint.

3 RAW MATERIAL AND CONDITION

The predominant raw material in the assemblage is gravel flint, but there is also some use of chalk flint. Possible sources of both these materials can be found less than three miles away

from the site. Condition is good with a fair proportion of pieces recorded as fresh and few pieces recorded as damaged. Surprisingly, most of the fresh pieces came from the topsoil (context 128). Greater levels of damage would be more consistent with a redeposited assemblage. Surface alteration is minimal, with just a few pieces showing light cortication or iron staining. A total of 37% suffer breaks and 6% show signs of burning.

4 TECHNOLOGY AND DATING

Flakes constitute 92% of the debitage category, although there is a significant blade element as well. This suggests the predominance of Bronze Age material (Ford 1987:79, table 2). The blade element and a rejuvenation flake suggest the presence of Mesolithic or Neolithic material, with the flake from a ground implement being more closely dated to the Neolithic. There is a small proportion of chips and irregular waste which indicates the presence of knapping.

Of the seven cores, there are four multi-platform flake cores, one single platform flake core (Illustration AH-216), one opposed platform blade core and one tested nodule. Weight varies from the small blade core (40 g), to a fairly large multi-platform flake core (236 g). The opposed platform blade core, has platform edge abrasion and is likely to be Mesolithic. Platform edge abrasion is also evident on two of the multi-platform flake cores. This characteristic is usually associated with Mesolithic and Neolithic technologies.

The quantity of tools is fairly high and the range of types is broad, with most being recovered from the topsoil (context 128). Tools with a form diagnostic of function include two knives, five scrapers and a piercer. The backed knife is made on a fairly thick secondary flake with abrupt retouch to both the left and right hand sides (Illustration AH-110) and the plano-convex knife has invasive retouch entirely covering the dorsal surface (Illustration AH-106). The latter type is usually associated with the early Bronze Age. The end and side scraper is in fresh condition and has short retouch on the left and right sides and the distal end (Illustration AH-109). The two end scrapers have retouch to their distal ends, one with abrupt and the other minimal retouch. The side scraper has direct retouch on the left side and exhibits rounded use-wear. There is also a small thumbnail scraper which has direct retouch to two edges. This type of scraper is most commonly seen in early Bronze Age assemblages. The piercer has direct retouch on the distal left which creates the point. It has blade-like dorsal flake scars and is possibly Mesolithic. A rather unusual tool is a possible Thames pick fragment of Mesolithic date. It is roughly triangular in cross-section and has large flake removals from all surfaces. Alternatively, this could be a fabricator.

There are also ten retouched pieces whose form is undiagnostic. One piece with miscellaneous retouch has one large inverse removal at the proximal end. It is heavily corticated and has suffered later damage. The notched piece has a large flake removal from

the ventral surface. The retouched blade is in fresh condition and has direct retouch on its distal end. It also has platform edge abrasion suggesting a Mesolithic or early Neolithic date. There are also six retouched flakes which have direct or inverse retouch on one or more edges. Some show signs of utilisation. Lastly, the serrated blade has serrations along the left edge and a slight gloss on the ventral surface indicating use on silica-rich plant materials (Illustration AH-117).

5 DISCUSSION

The majority of the flint from south of Snarkhurst Wood can be dated to the Neolithic and Bronze Age. This is based on technological and typological aspects of the assemblage. There is also an earlier component, including an opposed platform blade core which is likely to be Mesolithic and a small blade element. The suggested date range indicates a long term human presence at the site.

Table 2. Summary of burnt unworked flint by context.

Event code	Context	Count	Weight (g)
ARC 420 66+300-67+100 99	7	3	31
ARC 420 66+300-67+100 99	10	6	43
ARC SNK 99	128	4	176
ARC SNK 99	233	1	28
ARC SNK 99	246	1	40
Total		15	318

6 CATALOGUE

Table 3. Catalogue of illustrated flint.

Fig.	Context	Category/description
AH-216	251	Single platform flake core. Slightly discoidal.
AH-110	128	Backed knife. Thick secondary flake with abrupt retouch to left hand side and semi-abrupt , slightly invasive retouch on the right hand side.
AH-106	128	Plano-convex knife. Retouch covering the dorsal surface, proximal break.
AH-109	128	End and side scraper. Fresh condition, cortical dorsal surface.
AH-117	128	Serrated flake. Large side-trimming blade, serrations to left edge, slight gloss on ventral surface at distal end.

7 BIBLIOGRAPHY

Ford, S, 1987 Chronological and functional aspects of flint assemblages, in *Lithic analysis and Later British Prehistory* (eds A. Brown and M. Edmonds), BAR Brit Ser **162**, 67-81, Oxford