

# RECENT WORK ON CROHAM HURST

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THE TRAINING course based on the archaeology of Croham Hurst arose out of the need for a trained body of fieldworkers in the Croydon area. Croham Hurst was selected as a suitable area for a detailed survey as geological and botanical surveys had already been undertaken by other sections of the Croydon Natural History and Scientific Society. The first year of the training course, which was attended only by members of the archaeological section of the C.N.H.S.S., consisted primarily of a detailed field survey with restricted trial trenching. The second training course took place between June 23rd and July 4th, 1969, and was attended by 27 people of whom 18 were absolute beginners to field archaeology.

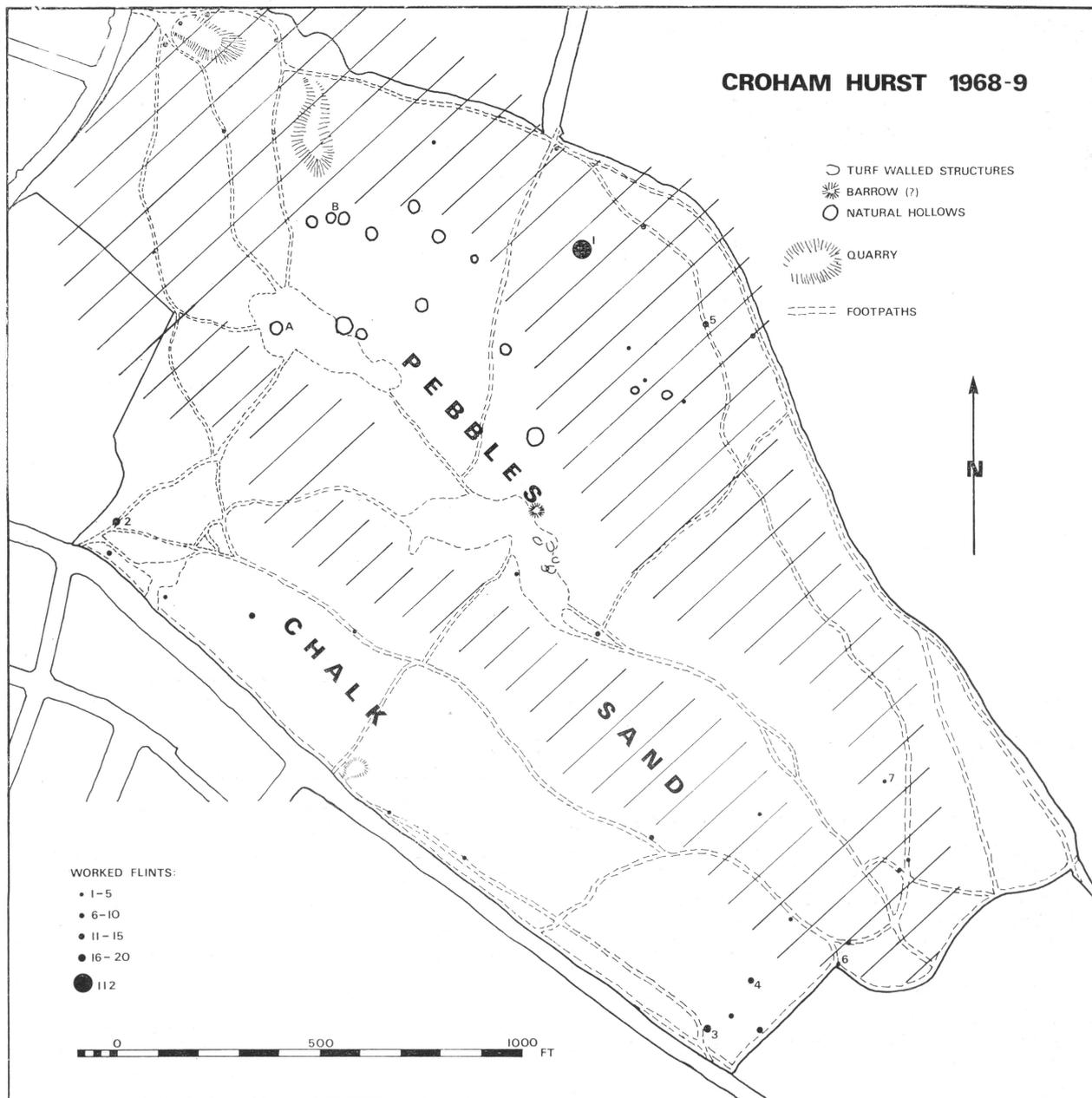
The majority of the people attending this latter course which was based on a turf-walled structure,

were either members of C.N.H.S.S. or University of London Extension course in archaeology centred in Croydon. There were also members of neighbouring societies and individuals from as far afield as Bromley, Esher, Streatham and Southwark indicating the pressing need for short training courses away from the complexities of city sites. The teaching, under my general direction, was undertaken by three archaeology graduates, Ann Ellison, Peter Sandiford and David Buckley, together with Lilian Thornhill, Secretary of the C.N.H.S.S. Archaeological Section.

Although both training courses were very short, the students were given a general introduction to most aspects of field archaeology and excavation techniques. All students learnt the fundamentals of



General view of Hut 3 during excavation (Photo: Peter Sandiford)



**Fig. 1. Plan of Croham Hurst showing flint-working sites in relation to solid geology.**  
 (Based upon the Ordnance Survey Map with the sanction of the Controller of H.M. Stationery Office, Crown Copyright reserved.)

surveying including how to make simple plans with a cross-head and tapes as well as the complexities of making contour plans with a dumpy level. Under the able scientific direction of Peter Sandiford the majority of the students mastered the use of both a Resistivity Meter and a Proton Magnetometer. As the bed-rock on Croham Hurst is not of the best type for

demonstrating the Proton Magnetometer, he took groups of students to the known Romano-British site at Atwood in Sanderstead and surveyed the area not excavated by R. Little in 1960. Excavation lay-out and method, recording of finds and drawing of plans and sections were demonstrated by the trench supervisors to small groups of students. In larger

groups the students were taught methods of archaeological photography, methods of processing finds and taking soil samples and the basis of interpretation of archaeological data. Despite all this teaching the archaeological results of our work were particularly interesting even if they remain somewhat problematical.

Croham Hurst is an outlayer of Lower Eocene sands and pebble beds resting on an eroded surface of Upper Chalk (Fig. 1.). Flints are particularly abundant in this Chalk. After a period of uplift and denudation the Chalk was covered with Thanet Sand. This buff loamy sand has at its base a layer of unrolled glauconite covered flints known as the Bull Head Bed. The Blackheath Pebble Beds, which overlie the Thanet Sand and cap the top of the Hurst, consists of well-rounded flints without any partly-formed pebbles, together with a predominantly quartz sand and chips of flint.

Croham Hurst has been well known as an area rich in surface finds of worked flints ever since George Clinch first examined the area in 1898. Part of our field survey therefore included surface collections of worked flints from all over the Hurst. Figure 1 shows the distribution of flint-working sites revealed by our survey. Thirty-six sites were revealed (including the area around the turf-walled structures); of these, 21 are situated on the Thanet Sand, 12 on the Chalk and only 3 on the Pebble Beds. This survey clearly shows that Croham Hurst was favoured by Prehistoric groups from the Mesolithic to the late Bronze Age and that the Thanet Sand outcrop was favoured most.

With all this flint material it has long been expected that Croham Hurst would reveal a settlement site. In 1899 George Clinch thought that he had discovered such a settlement in the form of 15 "pit-dwellings" on the Hurst. In that year Clinch excavated four of these pits and concluded that "although the results must be described as generally neutral (i.e. he found nothing!) the form of these depressions affords a strong presumption that they were the floors of huts in which Neolithic man dwelt." In 1968 two of the 15 known pits on Croham Hurst were sectioned but they showed no evidence of human excavation or habitation. (Pits A and B on Fig. 1.). It is possible that these pits may be the result of subsidence caused by localised differences in the Blackheath Pebble Beds. Pockets of sand or shells, as occur in the pebble beds at Abbey Wood, Kent, may have caused these local subsidences. Similar pits occur on other areas of Blackheath Pebble Beds such as Hayes Common and Worms Heath.

In 1968 two very slight sub-rectangular en-

losures were noted on the western edge of the southern clearing on the summit of the Hurst. Trial cuttings were dug through the banks of these structures in 1968, and showed that these banks were probably the remains of low turf walls. This area had been known as a surface flint collecting area since Clinch first collected a series of indeterminate flint flakes in 1898.

In 1969 three more structures were located and Hut 3 was totally stripped by hand down to the natural purple sands and pebbles of the Blackheath Pebble Beds. Every worked flint and fire-cracked flint was three-dimensionally recorded and plotted onto distribution plans. Hut 3 consisted of a sub-rectangular bank of pebbles and sandy soil which is probably the remains of a collapsed turf wall. An entrance gap was found in the eastern corner of the wall. Six post-holes were found within the structure, presumably indicating simple roof supports. No hearth was found within this structure but the distribution of 2,431 fire-cracked flints showed a high concentration in the entrance area. The western end of Hut 3 was found to overlie the south-eastern end of Hut 2. The sand and pebble bank of this structure together with a post-hole (No. 9 on Fig. 2) sealed beneath the Hut 3 bank and presumably associated with Hut 2, tends to indicate that Hut 2 was a similar structure to Hut 3. Also sealed beneath the bank of Hut 3, but within Hut 2, was a pit with a diameter of 2 feet and a depth of 8 inches. The bottom 3 inches of the pit was filled with charcoal. This pit may either have been a fire-pit or a small storage pit.

Apart from the structures nothing other than flint-work was found. No bones or other organic remains were found due to the acidic nature of the soil. The flintwork from the area excavated around Hut 3 appears to be the result of two or more industrial traditions. The flints from the different traditions were, however, all intermixed. The presence of burins, awls, micro-cores, micro-core rejuvenation flakes and parallel-sided blade-like flakes, together with a probable tranchet axe and a possible transverse arrowhead indicates at least a part of the assemblage is Mesolithic. The large number of rough flakes together with a mass of rough flint waste would, however, tend to indicate a later use of the area for flint knapping. The high percentage of flakes with secondary retouch would perhaps indicate continued use of the area in both the Neolithic and Bronze Ages. A bifacially worked flake with very shallow retouch is probably Neolithic. The large amount of very roughly worked flint waste tends to indicate a Bronze Age tradition. It is probable, therefore, that this assemblage is the result of periodic flint knapping in the area from the Meso-

CROHAM HURST  
HUT 3

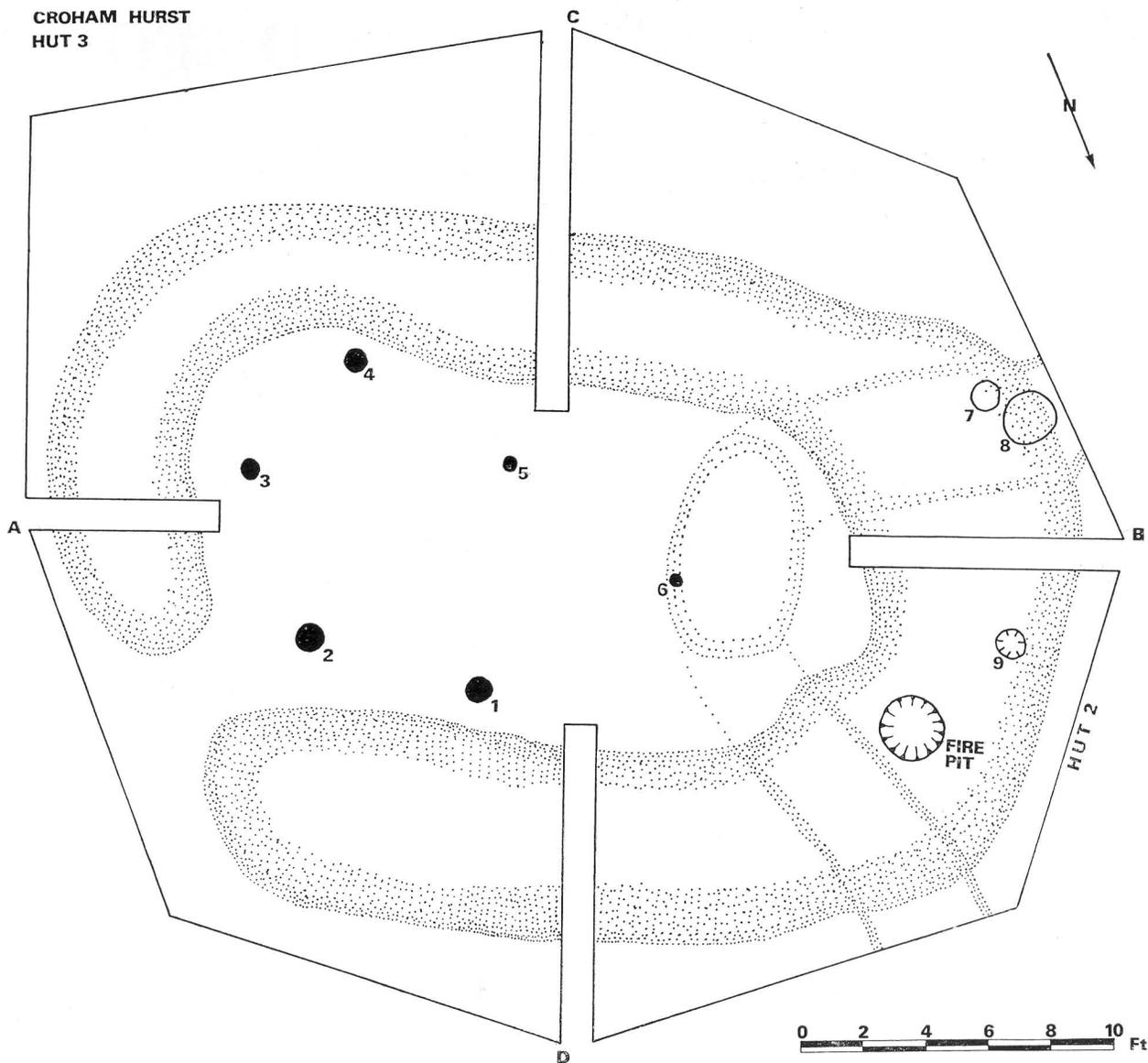


Fig. 2. Plan of Hut 3 in Croham Hurst settlement site. Stippled area indicates collapsed turf wall of Hut 3 overlying that of Hut 2. Post-Holes 1-6 are related to Hut 3, post-hole 9 is related to Hut 2 and post-holes 7 and 8 are earlier than either hut.

lithic period to the late Bronze Age.

An attempt was made to obtain a radiocarbon age determination for a sample of charcoal from the "fire-pit" found sealed beneath the sand and pebble bank of Hut 3 and probably related to Hut 2. A sample was submitted to Isotopes Inc., U.S.A., for analysis. The result received gave an age in years B.P. of  $1,145 \pm 95$ , that is A.D. 805. The absence of any Saxon material from any area of the Hurst seems to make this date improbable. This date may be the result of considerable contamination which would hardly be surprising considering that the

sample was only 1 foot 8 inches beneath the present ground level. An attempt was also made to obtain a relative date by pollen-analysis but insufficient pollen was found to construct a pollen diagram.

The flint assemblage found during the excavation of Hut 3 is only loosely associated with the hut site. The dating of the settlement site, will, therefore, probably always remain somewhat problematical. It may be related to any of the three flint industries or it may even be much more recent.

The full report on the fieldwork and excavations on Croham Hurst will be published in the *Surrey Archaeological Collections*, Vol. LXVII, 1971.