

A Thames Pick from Mint Road, Wallington

Bruno Barber
Mark Birley

IN JUNE 1995 the Museum of London Archaeology Service carried out a field evaluation on the site of 25 Mint Road, Wallington in the London Borough of Sutton (TQ 28650 64555)¹.

The evaluation revealed a sequence of drift geological deposition starting with a periglacial solifluction deposit, known to overlie the Upper Chalk of the Cretaceous age². A layer of colluvium (hill-wash) up to 0.80m thick overlay these deposits and was excavated in spits. Finds in the colluvium were mixed, reflecting the formation processes involved, and included sherds of Bronze Age and Roman pottery together with an assemblage of shattered flint nodules and worked flint — blades, cores, flakes and debitage³. Most of this material lacks diagnostic features indicative of date, but one particularly fine tool, a Mesolithic Thames Pick (Fig. 1) was found within the colluvium at c 39.95m OD.

The pick is 179mm long; in width it tapers from 42mm at the blade end to 30mm at the butt; its maximum thickness is 32mm; and it weighs 303 grammes. It is fairly typical of its type, with the peculiarity that the blade end has been formed by the longitudinal removal of a series of narrow blades. It is formed from an opaque, chertlike

flint, which differs markedly from the rest of the material on the site.

This find contributes to a broadening of our understanding of the Mesolithic in the upper Wandle Valley. Some 500m further down the slope, at Wallington High School for Boys, a late Mesolithic assemblage was excavated in 1973⁴. Flintwork of similar age has come from several sites in Carshalton (Westcroft Road⁵, Orchard Hill⁶, Queen Mary's Hospital⁷) and from recent excavations at the former Wandle Valley Hospital further north⁸. At 542-6 Purley Way a comparable flint assemblage to that recovered from Mint Road, in similar deposits, included a geometric microlith⁹. All these sites are on, or at the base of, the slopes overlooking the River Wandle. In the case of Wandle Valley Hospital the later Mesolithic flint was recovered from a possible land surface bedded within colluvial deposits overlying a former channel of the river. The latter contained a soot-laden silt dated by radiocarbon to the 7th millennium BC.

The Museum of London Archaeology Service is grateful to Mr Derek Gostling of Kender Properties Ltd for funding the archaeological fieldwork and subsequent post excavation work.

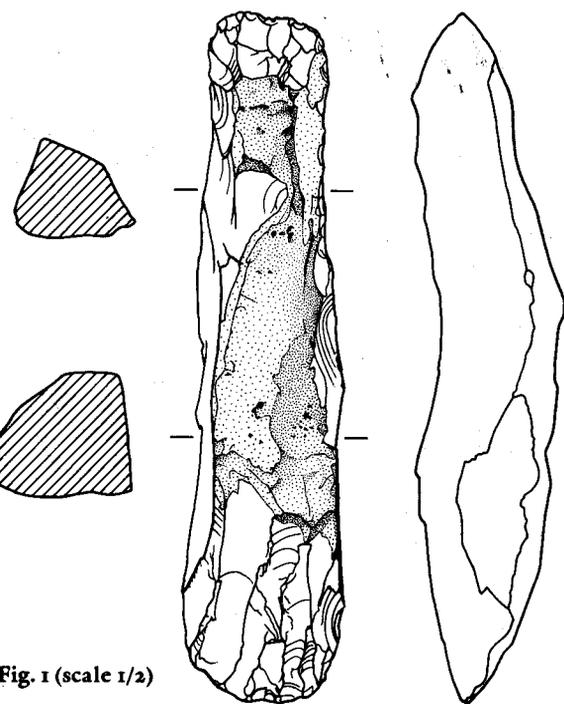


Fig. 1 (scale 1/2)

1. B. J. Barber 25 Mint Road, Wallington, London Borough of Sutton. *An archaeological evaluation* (MoLAS Report, 1995). The site archive is held by MoLAS under the site code MNT95, awaiting transfer to the Museum of London Archive.
2. Ordnance Survey, 1975, South London Drift Sheet 270, 1:50,000 *Geological Survey of Great Britain (England and Wales)*.
3. M. C. Birley MNT95 *Worked Flint Assessment, site archive* (1995). The flintwork here and on other sites in the area is generally indicative of the exploitation of the hillwash at the foot of the North Downs for flint eroding from the slopes over a considerable period of time.
4. A. Laws and M. Wooldridge 'Excavations at Wallington High School for Boys' in C. Orton (ed) *The Past — Our Future* Beddington, Carshalton and Wallington Archaeological Society Occasional Paper 4 (1980) 18-22.
5. J. Cotton and K. Hayes 'Finds from Westcroft Road, Carshalton, 1971 and 1978' *op cit* fn 4, 13-17.
6. D. Turner 'Excavations at Orchard Hill, Carshalton' *Surrey Archaeol Collect* 60 (1966).
7. A. W. G. Lowther 'Report on the excavations at the site of the Early Iron Age camp in the grounds of Queen Mary's Hospital, Carshalton' *Surrey Archaeol Collect* 49 (1946) 56-74.
8. M. C. Birley 'Excavations at the site of the former Wandle Valley Hospital, Middleton Road, Carshalton' *Surrey Archaeol Collect* forthcoming.
9. G. Potter 'A prehistoric site at 542-46 Purley Way, Croydon' *London Archaeol* 7, no. 12 (1995) 307-12.