

## Worked flint assemblage

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### Introduction

The struck assemblage has a total weight of 2.69 km and comprises 168 pieces, in addition to which there are 282 pieces of natural flint. A notable feature of this assemblage is what appears to be prehistoric utilization of many pieces of natural flint: *i.e.* pieces that have not been intentionally struck. This trait is further complicated due to the later re-deposition of many of the artefacts.

### Assemblage State

A surprisingly large proportion (*c.* 88.1%) of the pieces are intact and in a moderate state, despite the fact that the assemblage is residual re-deposited and battered. The material from the most recent features (Periods 8 and 9) is, as one might expect, the most damaged. The incidence and degree of patination varies greatly, though comparatively few pieces possess a heavy patina. The trait has been recorded but no meaningful pattern can be discerned.

### Raw Material

Raw material usage, and non-usage, is one of the most interesting aspects of the assemblage. The presence of a large natural assemblage helps to demonstrate a degree of selective raw material procurement in the struck assemblage. Almost 85% of the struck flint utilizes material from a till-derived source, yet this material constitutes only 40% of the natural. Flint derived from local fluvial gravel sources (possibly till or stream) constitute 5% of the remaining struck material, despite being 16% of the natural. Flint characteristically found in the upper chalk of the Yorkshire and Lincolnshire Wolds constitutes a surprisingly large proportion (16%) of the natural assemblage. To a great extent the proportions in which the different raw material sources have been utilized is directly related to the material's intrinsic quality versus its local abundance, better quality flint being more frequently used. The chert is of poor knapping quality and has been obtained from gravel deposits.

Beach flint was probably obtained from the Humber foreshore, but such pieces, though of fine quality, are usually too small or have been subjected to excessive depositional trauma which normally mitigates against their use.

### Lithic Reduction Sequence and Technology

There is an unusually large proportion of tertiary débitage (chunks, flakes and blades) for an assemblage of this nature, which furthermore contains a relatively high proportion of chunks from tertiary stages of lithic reduction. The knapping can be described as poor and has been achieved by the crude application of hard hammer techniques, often involving the use of flint against flint.

All intact chunks, flakes and blades (number = 100)

Primary (wholly cortical dorsal) 2%

Secondary (partially cortical) 55%

Tertiary (Totally un-corticated) 43%

### Assemblage Traits

#### *Use-Wear*

Even allowing for the disparity in assemblage sizes from various phases, there is an obvious increase in the proportion of flints exhibiting traces of prehistoric utilization in the material from Saxon and earlier periods. Subsequently, the degree of utilization declined and remained fairly constant throughout the later periods, with the exception of the unstratified material. Battering is a consistent feature of the whole assemblage and in many instances natural (unstruck) flint appears to have been used as a hammer stone in the process of manufacturing implements. However the picture is further complicated by incidental battering that has occurred to pieces since deposition.

#### *Utilization* (Table 52)

Edge-utilized pieces have been classified separately from those exhibiting wear through use. Utilization resembles intentional edge retouch but has been caused by extensive or repetitive use in the same way or direction. The division between use-wear and utilization is to some extent artificial and both can be considered

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together.

Pre-Saxo-Norman phases contained most of the cores and nearly 52% of the edge-retouched and edge-utilized chunks, flakes and blades; whereas post-Saxo-Norman phases contained only 20.5% of such pieces. The remaining 27.5% were from unstratified contexts. Unusually, many of the chunks and crude flakes show traces of edge-use and utilization.

### **Assemblage Composition**

The artefacts are discussed below and the incidence and composition of the assemblage is given in Table 52.

The struck assemblage is characterized by a marked paucity of blades and blade flakes, and a large proportion of chunks and irregular flakes. Retouched implements, though few, are slightly more numerous (over 17%) than might be expected from an assemblage of this nature and exceed the proportion of retouched implements from local prehistoric sites such as the Neolithic site at Normanby Park (Riley 1973, 53). Here, retouched implements constituted only 3.5% of the assemblage.

#### *Cores and Hammer Stones*

All the cores are of crude flake varieties of single platformed, double platformed and unclassifiable types, and all but one have been manufactured using till flint. There is no evidence of core rejuvenation (trimming) except for the presence of an edge-retouched core rejuvenation flake (F1676, Period 1). The basic physical size and appearance of the cores is consistent with material from regional later Neolithic and Early Bronze Age assemblages. In at least two examples (F315, Period 7; F5373, Period 4) core-like pieces of natural flint have received heavy battering that is consistent with their use as prehistoric hammer stones.

#### *Blades and Bladelets*

Most of the blades are small, squat fine examples with dorsal flaking. Seven of the eight pieces are of dimensions allowing their classification as bladelets. Pieces such as these are frequently encountered in regional flint assemblages associated with later Neolithic Grooved Ware pottery of the Woodlands sub-style. Unfortunately, such

pieces are also common in local assemblages of the later Mesolithic, of which there are many in the vicinity, (May 1976, 33, fig. 17); the remaining lithic material would appear to be consistent with the former date.

#### *Edge-Retouched Flakes and Blades*

The edge-retouched flakes and blades have been manufactured on some of the better knapped flake and blade supports. In five of the six examples it is the right-hand edge that has been retouched.

#### *Fabricator (F7271)*

A chunky, irregular example with battering on its right-hand side has been manufactured on an olive grey till flint. The precise function of such implements is a matter of debate, though this example has probably been used as a knapping implement. Local stratified examples are a rare occurrence but, where present, pieces similar to the Barton example tend to be found in surface assemblages in which later Neolithic, Bronze Age or Beaker material is pre-eminent, e.g. Anwick Fen (Lincs.) (Chowne and Healy 1983, 44, fig. 73).

#### *Burin (F3987)*

Perhaps the most significant component of the flint assemblage is the presence of a dihedral burin. The implement was manufactured on a fine blade of light brown, gravely till flint and possesses two small marginal areas of edge retouch. Examples such as this are frequently found in later Mesolithic assemblages and are rare in later contexts. Such pieces are thought to have functioned as engraving tools for working on bone, wood, antler and leather.

#### *Notches*

Two notched pieces are present in the assemblage. They are common in almost all prehistoric flint assemblages but cruder examples such as the Barton examples tend to have later Neolithic and Early Bronze Age affinities and occur sporadically, though usually and more frequently, near settlement sites.

#### *Piercer (F3902)*

The Barton piercer has been formed by bilateral flaking at the proximal end of a small blade flake of dark olive grey till flint,

which shows traces of blade trimming. Piercers are typically associated with leather working; but despite traces of edge-use the point of the implement does not appear to have been used. This example is typical of Neolithic and Early Bronze Age pieces.

#### *Scrapers*

The scrapers have received a comparatively moderate to heavy degree of use and, with the exception of a small semi-ovate button or 'thumbnail' example of Beaker aspect (F3902), the Barton examples do not possess any period-diagnostic traits. One slight trait is a tendency towards asymmetry. Despite this the overall form of the scrapers is slightly more consistent with local later Neolithic and Early Bronze Age pieces, particularly with the Beaker associated specimens from Risby Warren. The Barton examples are however slightly larger than the published specimens from that site (Riley 1978, 10), and slightly smaller than Neolithic specimens from Normanby Park (Riley 1973).

#### *Gun Flint (F1621, intrusive)*

The gun flint possesses a cortical heel; it has been manufactured of fine fawn/brown coloured flint and is consistent with local seventeenth- to nineteenth-century types manufactured for use in pocket pistols, prior to the emergence of Brandon (Suff.) as the town pre-eminent in manufacturing gun flints. Edge damage suggests that the piece has been used to fire a gun on at least two occasions.

### **Distribution and Chronology**

Although the flint is undoubtedly all residual, there is still a slight degree of spatial differentiation apparent in the lithic distribution with different flints being associated with different features. There is a minor degree of inverted stratigraphy with characteristically earlier flint work coming from the latest features.

The early ditches and postholes appear to have a slight proclivity towards flint of a Neolithic nature. The pre-Saxon features contain flint of any date, but with a slight preference for Bronze Age pieces, particularly within the fill of graves. Middle Saxon features yielded a slightly increased proportion of later Neolithic pieces, and

Saxo-Norman phases exhibited a slight increase in the proportion of characteristically Early Bronze Age pieces. Period traits are absent from the assemblage material obtained from twelfth-century contexts. Flint from thirteenth- to nineteenth-century contexts seems to be an admixture of all periods.

Flint from all prehistoric and some later periods (*e.g.* the gun flint) is certainly present, but later Neolithic and Early Bronze Age material dominates. Though not distinct there is probably a light background scattering of later Mesolithic flint work, the burin (F3987) is one possible example. This is not unusual since the area is known to be rich in Mesolithic material (*cf.* May 1976, 32–4). It is possible that at some period, spatially discreet Neolithic and Bronze Age sites existed.

### **Conclusions**

The concentration of retouched and utilized flint in pre Saxo-Norman contexts may have resulted from cutting Anglo-Saxon features, such as graves, into previously sealed prehistoric contexts. The graves will have cut through both Neolithic and Bronze Age levels. As a general rule unstratified Bronze Age flint is more numerous than Neolithic.

The retouched component of the assemblage is of a domestic nature, the presence of notched pieces, a piercer, burin and fabricator might suggest that there was once a small settlement in the near vicinity. The relative proportion of these, the retouched and utilized pieces exceeds what might have been expected. On a post-prehistoric site this would normally be attributed to differential recovery during excavation, however the fact that all natural was retained lends support to the above hypothesis. The Neolithic and Bronze Age occupation areas may have been spatially discreet but later activity has removed all traces.

The archaeological potential of this assemblage is very limited, but suggests the possibility that prehistoric material may survive intact if any isolated islands of undisturbed stratigraphy that might come to light in the future.

Table 52. The struck flint assemblage.

Waste and unretouched (débitage, cores and blades)	Total number Number	Percentage of Assemblage	Number Broken	Weight (gm)
Chunks	32	19.0	NA	763.3
Flakes	77	46.0	16	891.2
Blades and bladelets	8	4.7	1	15.0
Cores	7	4.2	1	355.4
<b>Utilized pieces</b>				
Utilized natural	1	0.6	NA	16.0
Utilized chunks	6	3.6	NA	115.3
Utilized flakes	1	0.6	NA	21.8
Edge-utilized flakes	5	3.0	2	27.1
Edge-utilized blades	1	0.6	NA	6.1
<b>Retouched and implements</b>				
Hammer stones	2	1.2	NA	62.4
Fabricators	1	0.6	NA	45.2
Miscellaneous retouched chunks	4	2.4	NA	55.0
Miscellaneous retouched flakes	5	3.0	NA	59.7
Edge-retouched flakes	4	2.4	NA	37.2
Edge-retouched blades	2*	1.2	NA	71.5
Notched pieces	2	1.2	NA	21.3
Piercers	1	0.6	NA	2.2
Burins	1	0.6	NA	3.2
Scrapers	7	4.0	NA	117.5
Gun flint	1	0.6	NA	3.6
Totals (11.9% breakage)	168	100	20	2,690

Natural flint = 282 pieces (weight 3.026 kg) \* = ChertNon-flint and fossils = 9 items