Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit

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Freeman's Farm, Felton, Avon

Results of the Phase 2 fieldwalking
and geophysical assessments

by
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1 Introduction and summary

1.1 Following on from the Phase 1 survey (Ellis 1992), a fieldwalking programme has been undertaken followed by geophysical survey of selected areas.

1.2 Further work confirms the preliminary impression of a rich archaeological resource, and suggests that it represents the results of Mesolithic, Neolithic, and Bronze Age activity, with a strong possibility of Neolithic settlement sites.

2 Fieldwalking methods

2.1 The fieldwalking programme involved 25 person days and was undertaken between 30th March and 6th April.

2.2 The areas covered were fields 2, 3, 4, 8, and 9, together with most of fields 1, 5, and 6, except for their northern ends which lay outside the threatened areas (for field numbers see Ellis 1992). Field 7 had been recently ploughed and was not examined. Fields 10-12 are under pasture.

2.3 Prehistoric pottery and flint, Romano-British pottery, and medieval pottery were collected. Flint does not occur naturally here and all flint

has been imported by human agency. Post-medieval pottery and tile was noted as a general artefact background but was not collected.

2.4 Despite some crop growth, flint and pottery were easily visible on the surface of the ploughsoil in most of the fields investigated, an exception being Field 4 where collection was impeded by turnip growth. This explains the paucity of finds here, although a number of arrowheads, including leaf-shaped forms, have been collected from this field by the farmer (Ellis 1992, 3).

2.5 Fields were walked in transects approximately 4 metres wide, in the direction of the line of the drilled crops. Each find, or group of finds, was bagged and left at the place of collection, its position marked with a garden cane. After the completion of each field, each find-spot was plotted with an EDM, and the finds were then collected and numbered.

3 Fieldwalking results: prehistoric

3.1 The survey plot (see attached figure) shows the distribution of flint tool and waste types, and prehistoric pottery within the survey area.

3.2 Two sherds of Iron Age pottery are also included on the figure. The example from Field 5 is flint-tempered, and the sherd from Field 1 is quartz-tempered with a double incised line.

3.3 The flint assemblage comprises 545 struck flakes and artefacts (Tables 1 and 2). The raw material is a high-quality flint, presumably from Wessex (the Marlborough Downs are the nearest source), predominantly light to dark grey in colour with some examples exhibiting partial to total white patination. Few primary flakes occur in the assemblage and cortex has been entirely removed from most of the cores. The majority of the flint has been broken in the ploughsoil. Few of the flakes, and none of the blades and microliths, have retained their original lengths, and some items, whilst retaining traces of retouch, have lost their

diagnostic elements - three of the seven arrowheads are fragmentary. More durable classes of artefacts, cores and scrapers have survived intact.

3.4 Lithic scatters are notoriously difficult to date (Bradley et al 1984, 112). Although chronologically diagnostic artefacts are rare in the assemblage, it appears to be broadly Neolithic in date, although some elements imply activity during earlier and subsequent periods.

3.5 The presence of five convincing microliths and four cores, used for the production of small blades, suggests some Mesolithic activity in the area.

3.6 Earlier Neolithic flint types (Gardiner 1984, 21), are restricted to the presence of four leaf-shaped arrowheads, two of which have been abandoned during the manufacturing process.

3.7 In addition there were three barbed and tanged arrowheads, two of which were fragmentary. This type is typically Bronze Age in date although some degree of chronological overlap with the Neolithic is possible.

3.8 Cores and scrapers are well-represented, but these tools are not datable in unstratified assemblages and stylistic differences may relate to function, with several distinct types being used concurrently for different purposes. The real value of the scrapers lies not in their limited use for dating purposes but as settlement indicators. Together with awls and burins, scrapers are the only retouched implements to be expected in settlement areas with any degree of frequency (Schofield 1987, 280). The distribution of scrapers in the survey area attests to widespread settlement during the Neolithic, and possibly Bronze Age, especially in Fields 3, 5, 8 and 9. The high incidence of burnt flakes, tertiary flakes, and cores in the south of Field 5, continuing south into Fields 8 and 9 indicates that flint-working, possibly involving the heat-treatment of flint, was carried out on the site. The systematic removal of cortex would have taken place at the quarry site where nodules were reduced in weight before being removed to the home range for tool

production. This would explain the paucity of primary flakes in relation to the higher incidence of secondary and tertiary flakes.

3.9 The assemblage of artefacts and flakes collected from Freemans Farm attests to intensive and successive episodes of prehistoric activity principally during the Neolithic period, but with some evidence for earlier and subsequent land usage.

Table 1 Occurrence of flakes, flake types, and cores in the assemblage

	flake/burnt flake	retouched flake	core/burnt core
primary	15/0		
secondary	109/7	4	
tertiary	251/54	18	
totals:	375/62	22	31/2

Table 2 Occurrence of flint tools in the assemblage

scraper/burnt scraper	arrowhead	blade	microlith
33/2	7	7	5

4 Fieldwalking results: Roman and medieval

4.1 Roman and medieval pottery finds are quantified by field in Table 3. A lack of feature sherds and a high incidence of abrasion, common in ploughsoil assemblages, precluded chronological identification in most cases.

4.2 The distribution of identifiable ceramics is sparse and random, occurring only in Fields 1, 2, 3, 5 and 9, and could be attributed to manuring. Field 6, where a Roman pottery spread was previously identified (Ellis 1992, 6.6), yielded no ceramic finds on this occasion.

4.3 The Roman pottery assemblage mainly comprised local greywares which probably originate from the kiln at nearby Congresbury, some Black Burnished Ware (BB1), a few sherds of Severn Valley ware and a heavily abraded fragment of an Oxford colourcoat.

4.4 Medieval pottery comprised green-glazed sandy coarsewares from the kilns at Ham Green and Bristol and some examples of quartz-gritted coarsewares with green glaze produced in Devon during the late medieval to early post-medieval periods.

Table 3 Occurrence of Roman and medieval pottery (no of sherds)

	Roman pottery	medieval pottery
Field 1	7	19
2	4	25
3	7	16
5	10	10
9	4	0

5 Results of geophysical survey

5.1 Survey was undertaken on 15th April. The following is based on the preliminary plots, the full report will follow in due course.

5.2 The areas chosen for survey were based on the air photograph evidence (Ellis 1992) and on the fieldwalking results (see separate figure). Area 1 in Field 4 was based mainly on the air photographic evidence combined with that of former flint finds. Areas 2 and 3 in Fields 8 and 5 were chosen because of the coincidence of flint finds and the air photographic mark. Area 4 in Field 9 was determined by artefact distributions. The air photographic marks to the west of the area appeared on the ground to be recent.

5.3 Unfortunately survey could not be undertaken in Area 1 due to the proximity of agricultural machinery.

5.4 Area 2 shows some elements of the air photographic mark to the south, but has strong anomalies indicating ditches and pits to the north.

5.5 Area 3 shows a circular feature to the south - perhaps that shown on the air photograph, two sides of a linear ditch-like feature to the east and strong anomalies indicating pits to the north.

5.6 Area 4 again shows linear features and clusters of pit-like anomalies to the west.

5.7 The initial impression given by the plots is of dense archaeological features, probably ditched enclosures and pits or occupation areas.

6 Conclusions

6.1 Trial trenching is now needed to confirm the geophysical and fieldwalking evidence.

6.2 The possibility of an Iron Age/Romano-British settlement raised in the first phase report seems to have receded, although one may lie under pasture to the west of the area.

References

Bradley, R, and Gardiner, J (eds), 1984 Neolithic studies: a review of some current research, BAR British Series, 133

Ellis, P, 1992 Freemans Farm, Felton, Avon: phase 1 archaeological evaluation, BUFAU report no 203

Schofield, A J, 1987 Putting lithics to the test: non-site analysis and the Neolithic settlement of southern England, Oxford Journal of Archaeology, 6(3), 269-286

FREEMANS FARM FELTON Field walking survey

Location of flint and prehistoric pottery collected April 1992

1
Not surveyed
2
3
4
Not surveyed
5
Not surveyed
6
Not surveyed
7
Not surveyed
8
9
10
Pasture

Key to symbols

- ▲ SCRAPER
- △ KNIFE — BLADE
- ◆ MICROLITH
- ■ CORE
- ○ TERTIARY FLAKE
- ◐ SECONDARY FLAKE
- ● PRIMARY FLAKE
- × ARROWHEAD
- ○ BURNT FLINT
- □ RETOUCH
- P PREHISTORIC POTTERY
- CROP MARKS

0 250 500m