

AN EARLY PREHISTORIC SITE AT ALDWARK, NEAR BRASSINGTON, DERBYSHIRE

By G. A. MAKEPEACE

and

PAULINE BESWICK

THE SITE

The site, now destroyed, lay to the south-east of Aldwark, close to the lane leading from Aldwark to Grange Mill at around SK 236573 (Fig. 1). It was located on gently sloping ground on deep, well-drained, loamy soils overlying the limestone.

During expansion of quarrying by Longcliffe Quarries above Grange Mill, clearance of topsoil brought to light a variety of features and artefacts ranging from the Neolithic through to the medieval period. The site was visited intermittently between 1995 and 1996 during this surface clearance. The area was stripped gradually to expose the natural limestone and the overburden dumped around the edges. It was amongst the clearance and dumped soil that artefacts were discovered.

THE FINDS

Flint and stone artefacts and, perhaps most importantly, Neolithic pottery were found. The pottery was recovered either from the spoil heaps or what appeared to be a truncated pit or ditch. A fairly large amount of charcoal was also recovered from this feature (and immediately double-sealed to await the opportunity to have it dated and is still in GM's possession) which may give a more precise date for the Neolithic activities on this site in due course. Due to the area having been ploughed for many years there were no physical surface features to identify it as a prehistoric site but it may have been similar to other known sites in Derbyshire i.e. Lismore Fields, Wormhill, Mount Pleasant and Aleck Low (Garton 1987, 250–253, 1991, 11–14; Hart 1981, 42–7; Garton and Beswick 1983, 7–40; Hart 1985, 51–69).

Other finds included Romano-British Derbyshire Wares and some medieval sandy wares.

The flint and stone

Diagnostic flint material consists of a plano-convex knife, a variety of scrapers and a diamond or kite-shaped arrowhead together with a quartzite fabricator and flint debitage (Fig. 2).

Illustrated pieces:

- | | | |
|---|--------------------|--|
| 1 | Plano-convex knife | Flint, brown-grey, mottled, retouch on dorsal side and finer retouch on ventral edges.
60 × 35 × 5mm. |
|---|--------------------|--|

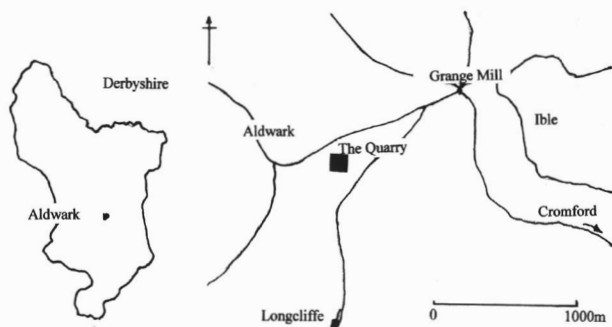


Fig. 1: Aldwark Quarry location.

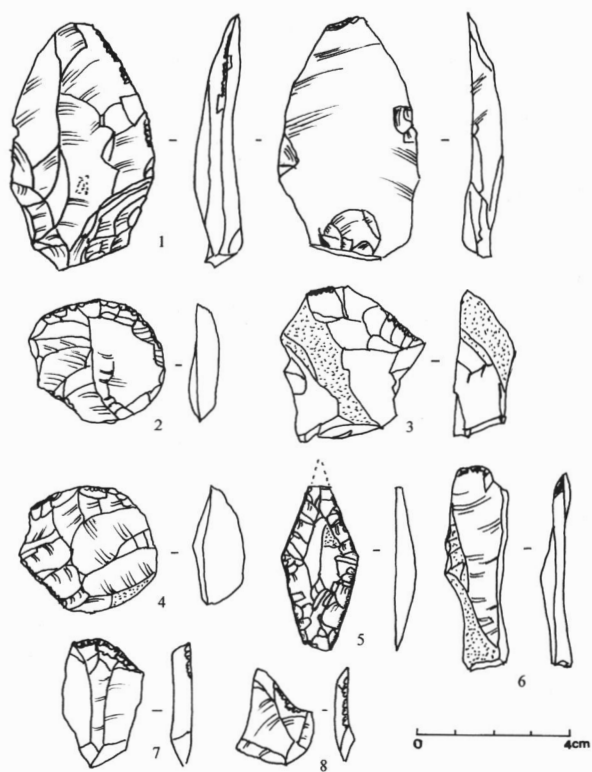


Fig. 2: Aldwark Quarry flint finds.

- | | | |
|---|-------------------|---|
| 2 | Discoidal scraper | Flint, black-brown, mottled, fine retouch. |
| 3 | End scraper | Flint, grey-brown, core flake, retouch on distal edge. |
| 4 | Discoidal scraper | Flint, dark grey-brown, fine retouch around edges. |
| 5 | Arrowhead | Flint, grey-brown, kite or diamond shape, bifacial retouch, tip broken.
44 × 29 × 5mm. |

6	End scraper	Flint flake, light brown, cortex present, retouch on end.
7	End scraper	Flint, dark grey, retouch on end.
8	Notched scraper	Flint flake, grey-brown, retouch on curved concave edge.

Not illustrated:

Fabricator	Fine-grained brown quartzite Triassic pebble, smooth, elongated with percussion marks at both ends. 700 × 320 × 230mm.
Debitage	Includes cores, core flakes, broken blades and chips mainly of flint, with one chert flake and one burnt flint.

The kite-shaped arrowhead certainly has a northern distribution from Derbyshire to the Scottish borders (Green 1980, 74–5), whilst other similar arrowheads can be seen in the Bateman Collection (Howarth 1899) and from Mount Pleasant, Kenslow (Garton and Beswick 1983, 27–31). Unfortunately the Aldwark arrowhead (Fig. 2.5) was found out of context, but would not be out of place in the Neolithic and could be contemporary with the Neolithic pottery.

The Neolithic pottery

By Pauline Beswick

Description

Fourteen sherds (weighing 250g) of Middle Neolithic Peterborough Ware. Three vessels are represented, two in the Mortlake substyle and one body sherd possibly in the Ebbsfleet substyle.

Fig. 3 Mortlake Ware bowl

Six sherds (two joining), weighing 124g, from a small bowl around 15cm high and of indeterminable diameter. The heavily moulded rim is decorated with four parallel horizontal rows of deeply incised channels (2mm wide by 1mm deep), below which is a narrow concave neck with finger impressions on the interior from reduction of the thickness. All-over horizontal rows of vertical fingernail/fingertip impressions cover the body except for the basal area. The average body thickness is 15mm and the condition is good (unabraded). Fabric: moderate large angular quartz and chert inclusions up to 10mm in size, in an iron-rich clay. Buff reddish outer surface with black core and interior surface.

Fig. 4.1 Decorated body sherd

Body sherd weighing 36g, badly abraded surface bears the remains of irregular horizontal and possibly diagonal rows of small oval impressions possibly done with a birdbone. Body thickness 12mm and all surfaces weathered. Fabric: moderate angular and sub-angular rock inclusions, including quartz, sandstones and igneous derived rocks up to 5mm in size. Light red outer surface, brown interior and black core.



Fig. 3: Aldwark Quarry: Neolithic Mortlake Ware bowl.
Scale 1:2.

Fig. 4.2 Decorated sherd

Body sherd weighing 40g, abraded surface decorated with deeply impressed horizontal bands of cord maggot impressions. Average body thickness 13mm and traces of burnt residue on interior. Fabric: as for Mortlake Ware bowl Fig. 3. Brick red outer surface, dark brown interior surface and black core.

Six fragmentary sherds (50g) are too damaged to assign to any particular vessel, but all are in fabrics similar to the two described above under Fig. 3 and Fig 4.1.

Forms and decoration

The heavy rim and sharp neck profile of the bowl (Fig. 3) and the use of abundant fingernail/fingertip decoration are typical of the Peterborough Mortlake substyle in England and Wales (e.g. Piggott 1954, Pl. XI, 1,4 and 5; W. Kennet, Wiltshire, Piggott 1962; Sarn-y-bryn-caled I, Powys, Gibson 1994, 171–2). Decoration in horizontal bands is also typical of this style. However, the channelled lines on the rim of this example are unusual and reminiscent of Grooved Ware decoration, although short angled incisions do occur on Peterborough Wares. Local examples of similar bowls from the Peak District include bowls from a rock shelter at Calling Low Dale (Gilks 1971, fig. 1) and from Rains Cave (Ward 1893, pl. IX, fig. 2) and further afield Woodhouse End near Macclesfield (Manby 1977, sherds fig. 14 FB and fig. 17 BX) and Whitemoor Haye Quarry, Staffordshire (Coates 2002, fig. 33.3).

Cord maggot decoration, as used on sherd Fig. 4.2, is also typical of Peterborough Ware and was used abundantly in the Mortlake substyle. Similarly the use of angular quartz and chert inclusions, some very large, is also typical of the Mortlake and of the Fengate substyles in the Midlands and Wales (e.g. Mount Pleasant, Kenslow,



Fig. 4: Aldwark Quarry: Neolithic decorated sherds. Scale 1:2.

Derbyshire, Garton and Beswick 1983, 21–3; Whitemoor Haye Quarry, Staffordshire, Coates 2002, 44; Wales, Gibson 1995, 29). In the south of England flint appears to be the preferred material (Cleal 1995, 188–9). Gibson (*ibid.*) suggested that the use of white quartz, given its association also with ritual sites, may have had a special significance at the period.

The possibility of angled as well as horizontal birdbone impressions on sherd Fig. 4.1 could imply a geometric design, as for instance on the bowl from Melbourne, Derbyshire, which Longworth described as possibly in the Ebbsfleet substyle of Peterborough Ware (1976, 67). The slightly thinner body and smaller more varied inclusions (*cf.* Manby 1988, 69) plus the possible use of birdbone also suggest the Ebbsfleet substyle. However, lack of evidence for the rim form makes it impossible to be certain.

Discussion

Peterborough Ware is the dominant Neolithic pottery tradition in the Peak District. Evidence for the relative frequency of sherds in artefact scatter sites and records of finds from at least ten cave sites in both domestic and funerary contexts have been summarised previously (Garton and Beswick 1983, 19–20). Unfortunately one of the two largest collections in the north Midlands from Middle Hill, Wormhill, near Buxton has not been published in full (Hart 1981, 46–7), although the second from Woodhouse End, Gawthorpe, near Macclesfield is available (Manby 1977). The former area revealed occupation evidence and the latter material was found incorporated in a barrow mound, as were the Peterborough ware sherds from Wigber Low (Manby 1983, 53–7). Mortlake bowls are the dominant substyle in the region but both the Ebbsfleet and the Fengate substyles are present (e.g. Mount Pleasant, Garton and Beswick 1983, 19–20; Aleck Low, Hart 1985, 67). As yet there is insufficient evidence to suggest the development of a regional equivalent of the Mortlake bowl, as has been suggested for instance for the Rudston style in Yorkshire (Manby 1988, 9) and the Meldon Bridge or Ford styles further North (e.g. Gibson 2002, fig. 38).

Recent re-evaluation of radio carbon dates for Peterborough Ware in Wales (Gibson 1995), southern England (Gibson and Kinnes 1997) and Yorkshire (Manby, Moorhouse and Ottoway 2004, 114–5) suggest a date range of 3500 to around 2700 or 2500 BC and that all three substyles had developed fully by 3000 BC. As yet, however, there is no demonstrable chronological progression through Ebbsfleet, Mortlake to

Fengate, as was suggested originally by Smith (Smith 1974, 112). New ceramic traditions represented by Grooved Ware appear in southern England from around 3000 to 2800 BC (Garwood 1997) and possibly earlier in Yorkshire (Manby *et al.* 2004, 55, 115) and overlap the use of Peterborough Ware but the two have only occasionally been found in firm association (Thomas 1999, 109). The possible Grooved Ware influence on the rim decoration of the Mortlake bowl (Fig. 3) is, therefore, of interest.

CONCLUSION

Over the years a number of local quarries have enlarged their activities and because they were working to old legal permissions for quarrying no formal archaeological evaluations or watching briefs were implemented before or during removal of the overburden. Thus a great deal of archaeological information is likely to have been lost. GM has been able to recover other archaeological material, more by luck and by being in the right place at the right time, at Ivonbrook SK 235587, Grange Mill SK 237568 and Ballidon SK 200560, as well as at Aldwark, and much of it is prehistoric (Makepeace forthcoming).

The amount of Neolithic and Early Bronze Age material found in this limestone area (e.g. Hart 1981, 34–47; Makepeace 2000, 87–100; 2001, 173–5; forthcoming) infers that early prehistoric settlement activity was widespread.

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