

◆ A collection of Mesolithic flintwork from the Horsham area

THE STANDING COLLECTION

by Chris Butler

The collection of prehistoric flintwork by Sylvia Standing around Southwater, near Horsham, has provided a fascinating insight into Mesolithic hunter-gatherer activity in the area. The presence of Horsham points on some of the sites alongside other types of microlith, tranchet adzes and other implements suggests they may be associated with a reduction in human group mobility.

INTRODUCTION

From 1963 through to 1980, Mrs Sylvia Standing collected prehistoric flintwork from fields around Southwater to the southwest of Horsham, from Nuthurst to the south of Horsham and from the northwest of Horsham around Rowhook and Warnham (Fig. 1). She recorded the exact location where many of the more important pieces had been found, and kept records and drawings of her finds in a number of notebooks whilst also marking the find spots on a map.

Mrs Standing collected the flints from a number of different areas, often surveying complete fields. When a concentration of flintwork was located, the site was then revisited several times.

The majority of the flintwork is Mesolithic in date, although there are numerous pieces of Neolithic and Bronze Age date in the collection as well. The collection has recently been deposited at Horsham Museum (Accession X2001-5313), and although a brief summary of some of the flints contained in it was included in the Mesolithic Gazetteer (Wymer 1977), this report is the result of a full analysis of the entire collection.

THE FLINT ASSEMBLAGE

The assemblage amounts to just over 3000 pieces of worked flint (Table 1). Each piece was inspected, with the aid of a magnifying glass where necessary, and recorded in the archive under its grid reference, where this was given on the flint. Unfortunately, just over one third of the pieces (mostly debitage) was not marked, and therefore could not be linked to any particular site; these included the 20 microliths and five microburins

on display in Horsham Museum. The raw material is predominantly a light mottled grey or grey-blue flint, with pieces of black flint also present in some numbers. Smaller quantities of light grey-white flint and mottled red-brown to grey flint are also present. All of this material would have been available locally from gravels and Head deposits, although it is possible that some may have originated from the Chalk Downs. It was noted that the grey-blue flint was favoured for the production of microliths, whilst some were manufactured on the light grey-white flint; other types were used only rarely.

Although there are numerous pieces of flintwork in the collection that date to the Neolithic period and Bronze Age, these are in the minority and can be separated due both to the differing flintworking technologies employed in those periods and to the identification of diagnostic artefact types (Butler 2005). The vast majority of the assemblage is Mesolithic in date.

MESOLITHIC DEBITAGE

The Mesolithic debitage includes a mixture of flake and blade/bladelet cores with prepared platforms, with the bladelet cores having one or two opposed prepared platforms. The cores are well worked-out and are normally cylindrical or pyramidal in shape. Crested blades and other core-rejuvenation flakes are present in some numbers, but core tablets are rare. The flakes are predominantly soft hammer-struck, but hard hammer-struck flakes are also present, a large proportion of them having evidence of platform preparation on the dorsal side. Blades and bladelets, and their fragments, are present in some numbers. They were mostly removed with a soft hammer or punch and also have evidence of platform preparation.

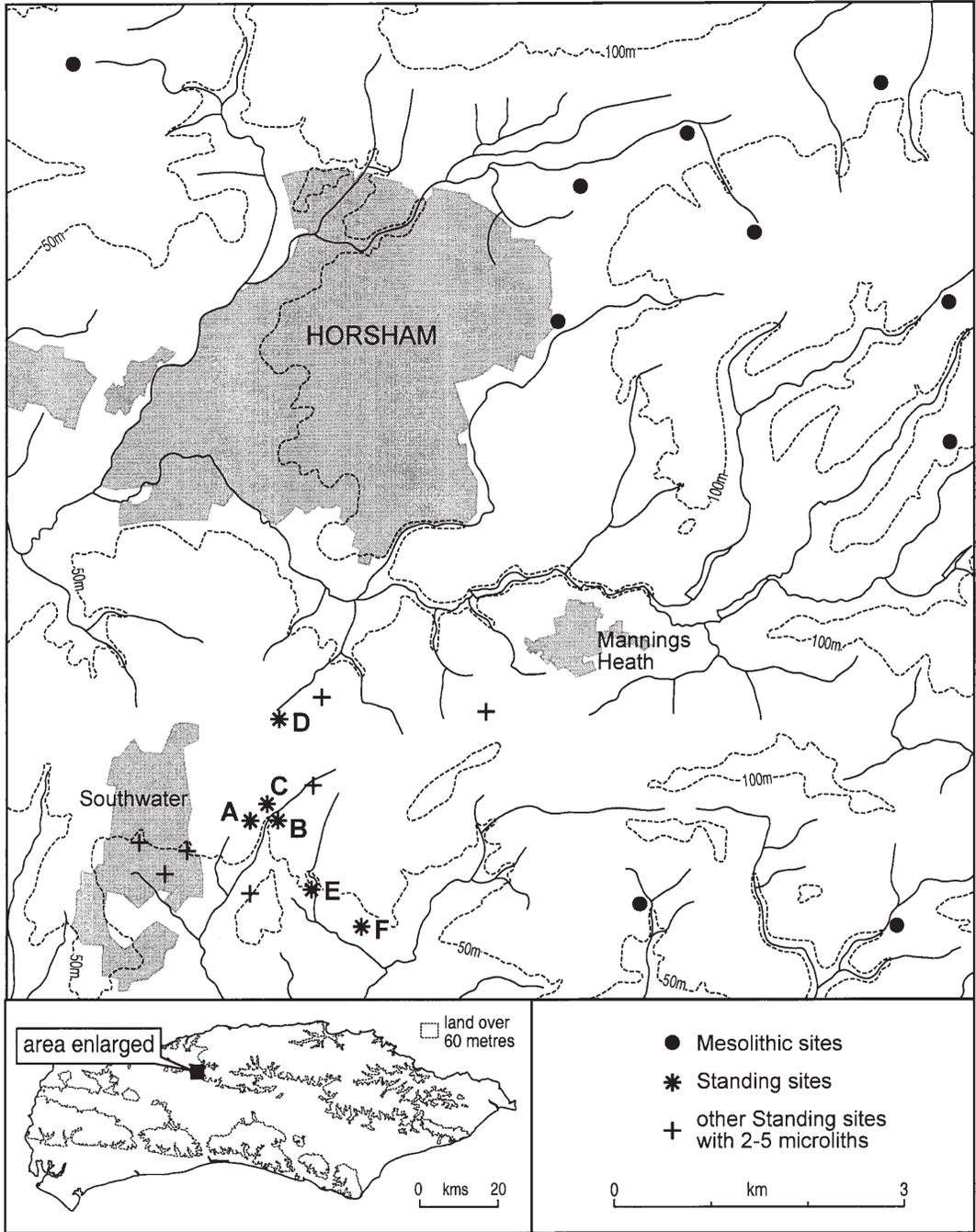


Fig. 1. Location map showing the sites from which Mrs Standing collected prehistoric flintwork.

Table 1 The Standing Collection.

Hard hammer-struck flakes	515
Soft hammer-struck flakes	541
Hard hammer-struck blades	10
Soft hammer-struck blades	77
Blade fragments	71
Soft hammer-struck bladelets	104
Bladelet fragments	183
Fragments	704
Chips	33
Shattered	42
Spalls	2
Axe-thinning flakes	2
Microburins	94
Core-rejuvenation flakes	16
Crested blades	17
Core tablet	1
Flanc de nucleus	1
Single platform flake cores	17
Two platform flake cores	18
Multi platform flake cores	18
Multi platform flake & blade cores	11
Single platform blade cores	7
Single platform bladelet cores	37
Two platform bladelet cores	15
Discoidal cores	6
Tested nodule	1
Core fragments	34
Scrapers	141
Miscellaneous retouched pieces	9
Piercers/awl/mèche de forêt	26
Notched flakes/blades	8
Cutting flake	1
Denticulated flake	1
Burins	5
Truncated blades	22
Microliths	181
Tanged points	3
Leaf-shaped arrowhead	1
Barbed-and-tanged arrowheads	3
Tranchet adzes	4
Tranchet adze-sharpening flakes	11
Adze/axe fragments	7
Polished axes	2
Picks	2
Fabricators	10
Hammerstones	7
Total	3021

IMPLEMENTS

The most common implement collected by Mrs Standing was the microlith with some 181 examples in the collection (considered further below). With 141 examples scrapers are the next largest category of implement. These are predominantly end-scrapers, and many are likely to be Neolithic or Bronze Age in date. Other flake implements include piercers and *mèche de forêt*, notched pieces, truncated pieces, fabricators and a few burins. A single example of a leaf-shaped arrowhead and three barbed-and-tanged arrowheads confirm the presence of later prehistoric activity. Amongst the core tools are four Mesolithic tranchet adzes, together with 11 tranchet adze-sharpening flakes, two picks, numerous fragments of adzes/axes/picks, and two Neolithic polished axe fragments.

MICROLITHS

The microliths were classified according to the typology developed by Jacobi (1978) for Wealden microliths (Table 2). The predominant type is the obliquely-truncated bladelet, which made up some 21% of the assemblage, while there are roughly equal proportions of straight-backed bladelets (9.3%), small scalene triangles (12.1%) and Horsham points (10%). A large proportion of the microliths (30%) were small broken fragments and could not be classified with any confidence, although many of them are likely to be obliquely-truncated bladelets.

As well as the microliths, there are 94 microburins in the collection. These are mostly proximal microburins, but there is also a small number of distal microburins and mesial bladelet segments with microburin-like breaks. When these are taken together with the bladelet cores, numerous bladelets and bladelet fragments, it is clear that the production of microliths was a major activity being undertaken at these sites. Many of the microliths have impact damage to their points and, together with the numerous broken examples, would suggest that these were being removed and discarded during the repair of hunting equipment.

THE MESOLITHIC SITES

Although the flintwork had been collected from many different locations, there were six major concentrations of Mesolithic flintwork that could be identified. These are now discussed in more detail below. Of the 20 microliths (including six

Table 2. The microliths at Sites A to F.

Microlith Type	Site A		Site B		Site C		Site D		Site E		Site F	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1a/1b	7	28	9	35	1		1	8	6	32	8	25
1b ^c									2	10	3	9
2a	1	4			1		1	8				
2b							1	8				
3a									3	16	1	3
3b	2	8										
3d	1	4	1	4			1	8				
5/5b			7	25	1						2	6
6											1	3
7a	2	8					1	8	1	5		
7b	3	12			1						4	12
9					1							
10a	1	4	4	16			2	17			2	6
10b			1	4								
12a/12c											1	3
Fragments	8	32	4	16	2		5	43	7	37	12	36
Total	25	100	26	100	7	<i>n/a</i>	12	100	19	100	34	100

Horsham Points) and five microburins, which have been mounted for display by Horsham Museum, a small number could tentatively be identified from the drawings in Mrs Standing's notebooks as coming from Site D. Dr Jacobi's card index was also consulted to see if other microliths could be traced to particular sites, but this was only successful for one site. All of the sites are located on Weald Clay, which has occasional outcrops of Horsham Stone.

Site A: Raylands House (TQ171268)

The site is located on the southeast-facing part of a steep slope (at approximately 65 m OD) to the east of Southwater. It is adjacent to a spring, and has a small stream (a tributary of the River Adur) located less than 100 m downslope. Some 305 pieces of flintwork were collected from this site; the majority of them could be dated to the Mesolithic period (Fig. 2).

The debitage includes soft and hard hammer-struck flakes together with soft hammer-struck blades and bladelets. There are also numerous bladelet and flake cores, some core-rejuvenation flakes, and single examples of a crested blade and a flanc de nucleus. There were 25 microliths, which included nine obliquely-truncated bladelets, one isosceles triangle, five scalene triangles, a lanceolate and one Horsham Point, as well as four microburins. The implements include 21 scrapers,

three piercers, three truncated blades and four fabricators, together with a small fire-fractured tranchet adze, two tranchet adze-sharpening flakes, a pick and three adze/pick fragments.

This site appears to have a broad range of implements, which includes both those associated with hunting (microliths) and those associated with a much broader range of tasks, including woodworking. The quantity and variety of debitage collected from here also suggests a broad range of tasks. The variety of flintwork types on this site would be consistent with that expected at a base camp (Butler 2005).

Site B: Raylands/New House Farm (TQ174268)

This site is located on the opposite side of the stream to Site A. It is situated on a plateau on the lower southwest-facing slope, and appears to be spread over a much larger area (200 × 100 m). There are also several springs close to this site. A total of 267 pieces of worked flint was recovered from this site, again mostly Mesolithic in date, which reflects a more restricted range of types with no tranchet adzes or picks (Fig. 3).

The debitage includes soft and hard hammer-struck flakes together with soft hammer-struck blades and bladelets. Some of the flakes are axe-thinning flakes. There are also bladelet and flake cores, but no core-rejuvenation pieces were

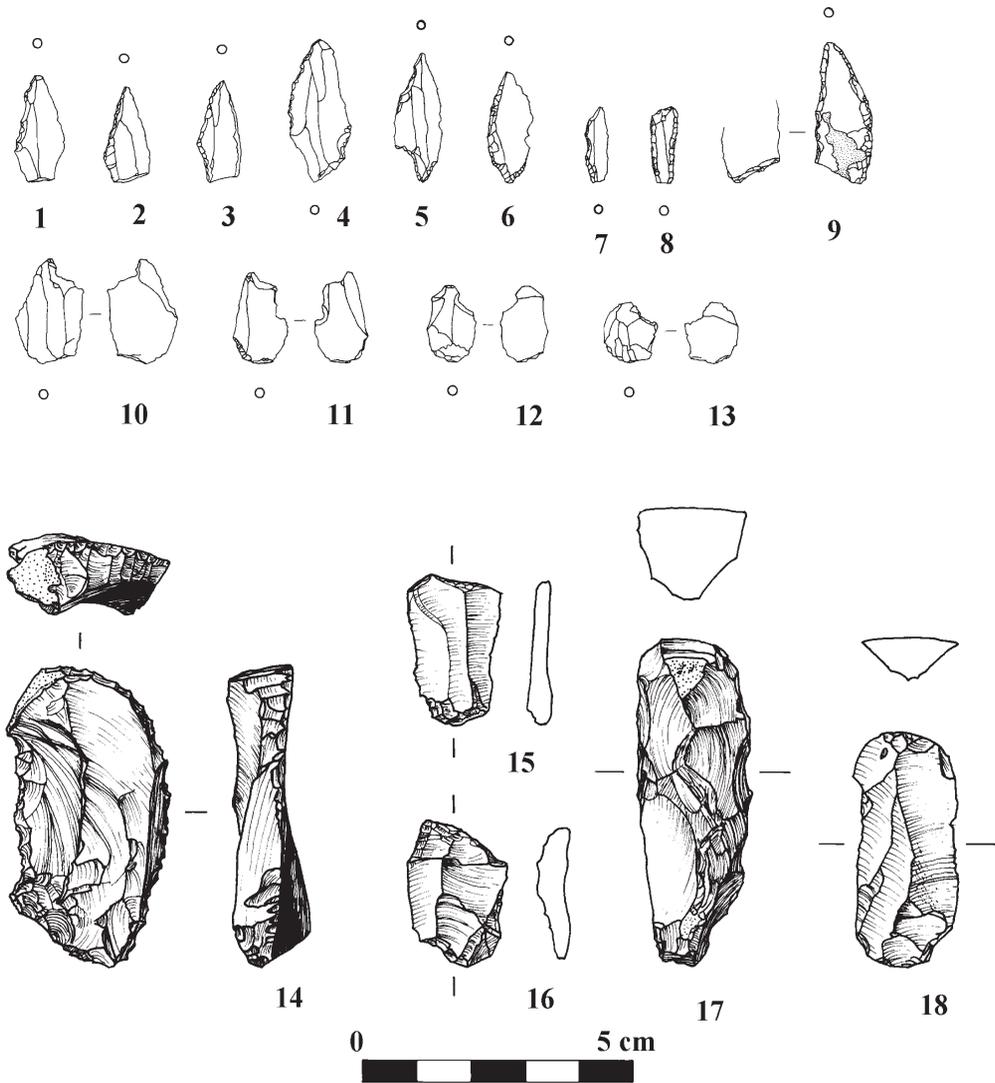


Fig. 2. Site A flintwork: 1-9: microliths; 10-13: microburins; 14: end-scraper; 15-16: truncated blades; 17-18: fabricators.

found. There are 26 microliths, which include ten obliquely-truncated bladelets, seven straight-backed bladelets, a lanceolate and four Horsham Points, as well as two tanged points and 19 microburins. Most of the microliths are broken, and it is possible that some of the broken straight-backed pieces could be the points of Horsham points. Two microliths are also fire-fractured.

The implements include 14 scrapers, one piercer, one burin, two truncated blades and a

cutting flake. Although there are no tranchet adzes, three tranchet adze-sharpening flakes were found.

This site appears to have a more restricted range of implements than Site A. Microliths predominate, and most of the remaining implements could be associated with the repair and maintenance of hunting equipment, or perhaps the initial processing of hunted or collected resources. A further small site 400 m south of Site B produced another five microliths, including a Horsham point.

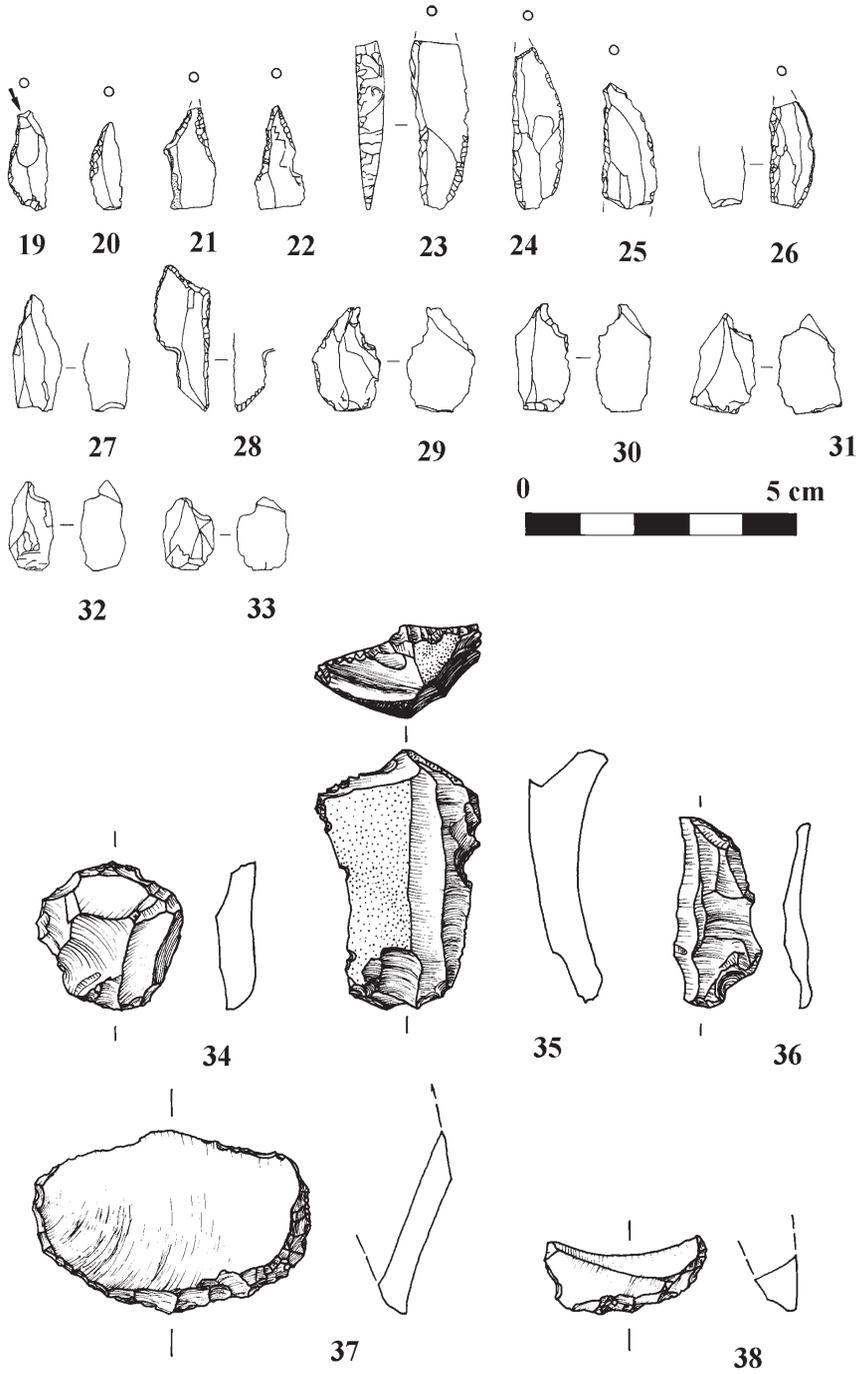


Fig. 3. Site B flintwork: 19-28: microliths; 29-33: microburins; 34-5: end-scrapers; 36: truncated blade; 37-8: tranchet adze-thinning flakes.

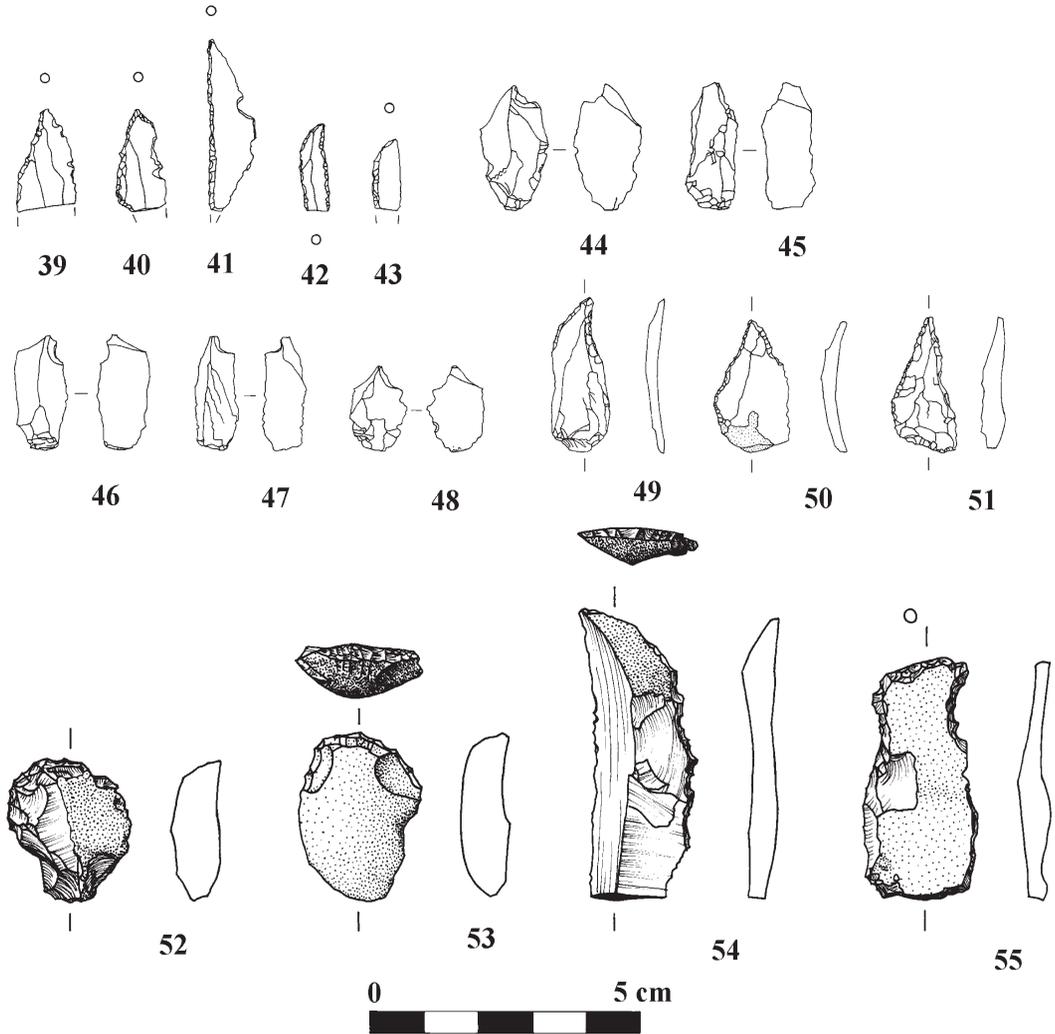


Fig. 4. Site C flintwork: 39–43: microliths; 44–8: microburins; 49–51: *mèche de forêt*; 52–3: end-scrapers; 54–5: truncated blades.

Site C: (TQ173270)

This site is a little to the north of Site A, on the same southeast-facing slope (also at approximately 65 m OD), and a little closer to the stream. Small amounts of flintwork were also found between Sites A and C. A total of 152 pieces was found here (Fig. 4), with a few isolated pieces collected a little further north.

The debitage is similar to that of the previous two sites, with flakes, blades and bladelets, flake and bladelet cores, together with a single crested blade.

There were seven microliths (including one

obliquely-blunted, one isosceles triangle, one straight-backed, one small scalene triangle, and one lunate), together with a single tanged point and 11 microburins. Jacobi's card index refers to two further straight-backed bladelets with additional retouch (one with inverse retouch) and a total of 29 microburins from this location. Other implements include four scrapers, five piercers and *mèche de forêt*, two truncated blades and a notched flake. There was also a single tranchet adze and an adze/axe fragment.

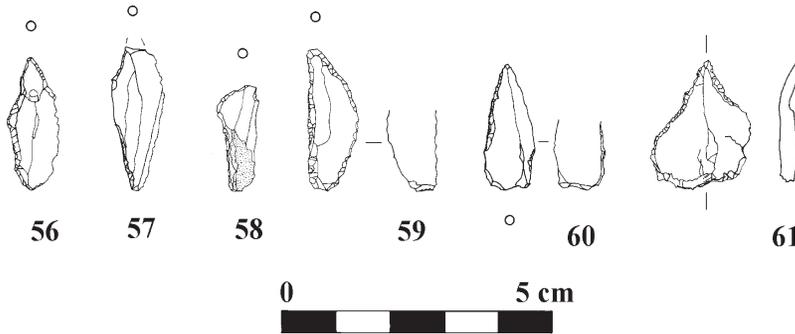


Fig. 5. Site D flintwork: 56–60: microliths; 61: *mèche de forêt*.

Site D: Hard's Farm (TQ174279)

This site is located about 1 km north of the first three sites, and is situated on a plateau on the upper west-facing slope of the same piece of higher ground. It overlooks a steep ghyll to its northwest, through which runs a stream, which is a tributary of the River Arun. A total of 163 pieces was found here (Fig. 5).

The debitage is similar to that found at the previous sites, with hard and soft hammer-struck flakes, blades and bladelets. There are more flake cores than bladelet cores in the collection; rejuvenation pieces include three crested blades and a core-rejuvenation flake.

There were 12 microliths (including one obliquely-blunted, one isosceles triangle, one bi-truncated trapezoidal bladelet, one small scalene triangle, one lanceolate, and two Horsham points), together with 10 microburins. Other implements include two scrapers, one piercer, one burin and a notched flake. There was also a single adze/axe fragment.

Mrs Standing's notebook for this site illustrates some 20 microliths and a similar number of microburins. It is likely that some of the pieces on display in Horsham Museum have come from this site, including two small scalene triangles.

This is a site similar to Site C and also contains a small range of implement types with microliths predominating. The microlith types are quite mixed, with two Horsham Points present here.

Site E: Gill House Farm (TQ177261)

This site is located in Nuthurst parish, and is just under 1 km to the southeast of Sites A to C. It is situated on a southeast-facing slope adjacent to a stream, which is a tributary to the River Adur. A total of 174 pieces was found here, not all of which are Mesolithic (Fig. 6).

There was little debitage recorded from this site, but the usual range of hard and soft hammer-struck flakes, blades and bladelet fragments (no complete bladelets) were collected. Two flake/blade cores and two bladelet cores, together with three crested blades, were also recovered.

There are 19 microliths (including six obliquely-blunted, two partially-backed bladelets, two bi-truncated rhombic bladelets and one small scalene triangle), together with three microburins. Other implements include 27 scrapers, two piercers, two notched blades, one truncated blade and a fabricator. There was also a single tranchet adze-sharpening flake.

This is a site similar to Sites C and D, and also contains a small range of implement types with microliths predominating. The microlith types are a mixed group, and while most of the remaining implements are Mesolithic, it is likely that a number of the scrapers are intrusive Neolithic or Bronze Age pieces.

Site F: (TQ182257–183257)

This site is also in Nuthurst parish and is located 750 m to the southeast of Site E. It is situated on a south- to southeast-facing slope adjacent to a stream that is a tributary to the River Adur. A total of 200 pieces were found here, not all of which are Mesolithic. (Fig. 7)

There was very little debitage recorded from this site, but the usual range of hard and soft hammer-struck flakes, blades and bladelets was collected. A single flake core, two discoidal cores and two core fragments were collected, together with a single crested blade.

A total of 34 microliths, together with 27 microburins, were found at Site F. The microliths

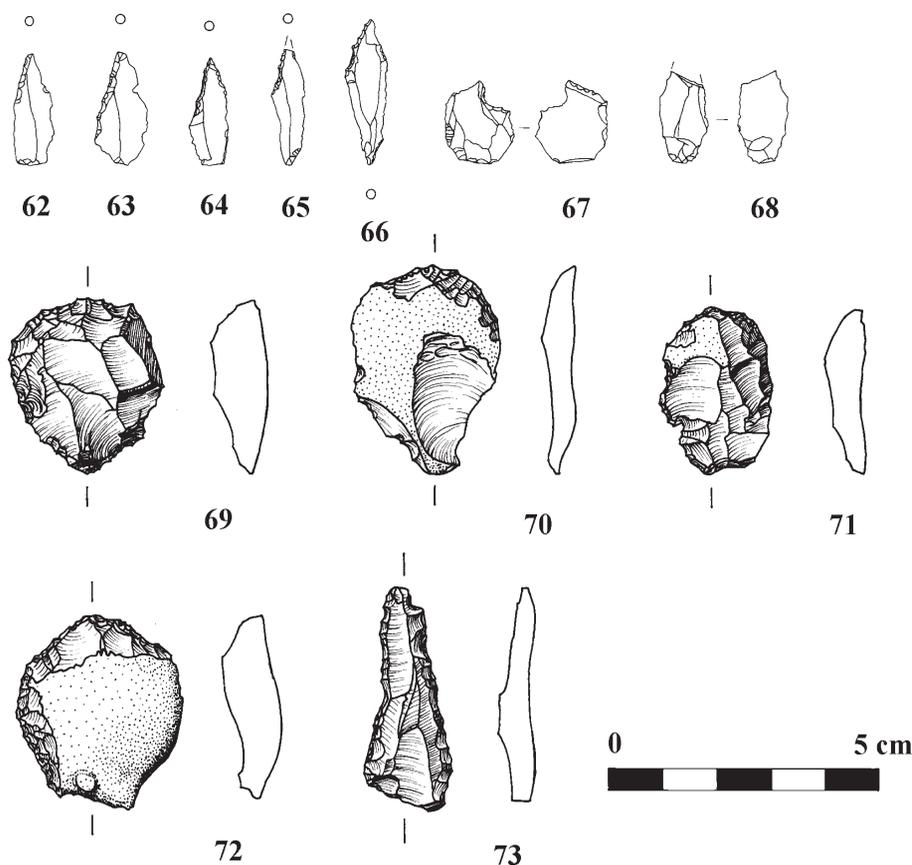


Fig. 6. Site E flintwork: 62-6: microliths; 67-8: microburins; 69-72: end-scrapers; 73: *mèche de forêt*.

included eight obliquely-blunted bladelets, three partially-backed bladelets, three straight-backed bladelets, one bi-truncated rhombic bladelet, four small scalene triangles, one rod, and two Horsham points. Other implements include 15 scrapers, three piercers/*mèche de forêt*, an awl and two truncated blades. There were also two tranchet adze-sharpening flakes and two adze/axe fragments.

This is also similar to the above sites with a small range of implement types. The large group of microliths is very mixed, and while most of the remaining implements are Mesolithic, it is likely that a number of the scrapers, together with the discoidal cores, are intrusive Neolithic or Bronze Age pieces. A Neolithic leaf-shaped arrowhead was also found nearby.

DISCUSSION

MESOLITHIC SITES IN THE HORSHAM AREA

The first recorded discovery of Mesolithic flintwork in the Horsham area dates to the later nineteenth century (Honeywood 1877). A number of individuals subsequently collected flintwork, including microliths, predominantly from the area of St Leonard's Forest on the Upper Tunbridge Wells Sand to the east of Horsham, and also at Warnham on the Wealden Clay to the north of Horsham (Holgate 1987; Fig. 1 and Appendix 1). These collections formed the basis of Clark's classification of microlithic forms and the identification of the Horsham Point as a distinctive piece (Clark 1934). Clark established that the hollow-based Horsham Points were predominantly associated with

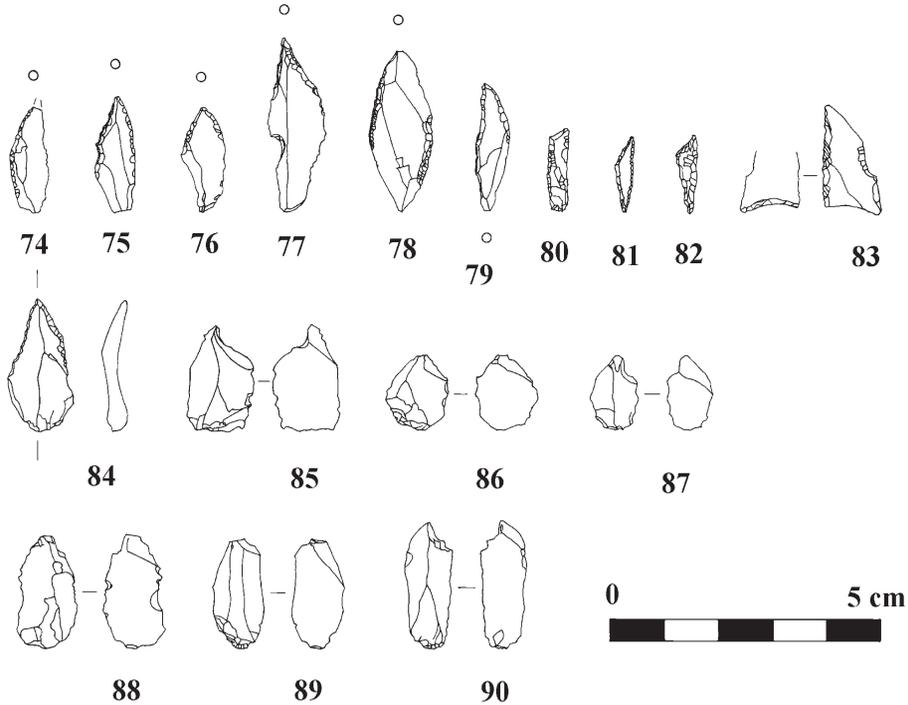


Fig. 7. Site F flintwork: 74–83: microliths; 84: mèche de forêt; 85–90: microburins.

obliquely truncated points and isosceles triangles, and concluded that they formed a distinctive and unique culture, whose origins have frequently been debated (Woodcock n.d.). Horsham Point sites have generally been dated to the middle part of the Mesolithic period, between about 7000 and 6000 BC.

Subsequent work pushed the geographical range of the Horsham Point 'culture' onto the Surrey Greensand (Rankine 1949) and elsewhere in the Weald, whilst today their accepted distribution is almost exclusively in the southeast of England, but with some outlier sites as far north as Lincolnshire, and west to Somerset and Devon.

Jacobi (1978) re-assessed the Horsham sites and concluded that the microlith assemblages are typified by the presence of obliquely-truncated bladelets (Class 1), geometric forms such as isosceles triangles (Class 2a) and, more rarely, rhomboids (Class 3a), together with the distinctive hollow-based Horsham Point (Class 10a). He noted that scalene triangles (Class 7) and other clearly later shapes were very rare or absent.

THE STANDING COLLECTION SITES

The results of the fieldwork carried out by Mrs Standing to the southwest of Horsham have made a valuable contribution to our knowledge and the known distribution of Mesolithic sites in this area. The assemblages are derived from unsystematic surface collection, which could mean there has been a bias in the types of material recognised and collected, although a good mix of implements and debitage was collected from each site. There could also be a certain amount of mixing of material from different periods, and from different dates within the Mesolithic period; the occurrence of Neolithic and Bronze Age flintwork in some of the assemblages confirms this. Therefore any conclusions that can be drawn directly from the assemblages at this time should be treated with caution.

The numbers of microliths collected from each of the sites are relatively small, and there are many small broken microlith fragments, which cannot be assigned with certainty to any particular class. Four of the six sites produced Horsham Points (Table 2), and only two produced Horsham Points in

anywhere near similar proportions to the sites in St Leonard's Forest, where the average proportion was 23%. Site B had 16% and Site D 17% respectively, although the overall number of microliths from Site D is small (excluding the microliths on display in Horsham Museum that may also originate from this site). Both of these sites also have high proportions of obliquely-truncated bladelets (Table 2), whilst Site D has a single isosceles triangle. Site B also has a high proportion of straight-backed bladelets (25%), a type largely absent from typical Horsham Point sites.

The other two sites with Horsham Points (Table 2) also have high proportions of obliquely-truncated bladelets, but also high numbers of small scalene triangles (Site A: 20% and Site F: 12%). The small scalene triangles are noted as being absent from Horsham Point sites (Jacobi 1978), and are generally associated with Later Mesolithic sites. This could suggest that these two sites are genuinely later in date, or had a different function. Site A, for example, has a broad range of Mesolithic implements including a tranchet adze and pick. Alternatively, the assemblages may be mixed, as a number of later prehistoric flint pieces was also collected from Site F.

Of the remaining two sites, Site C has only a small assemblage, with single examples of different microlith types. Site E has predominantly obliquely-truncated bladelets (32%), with some bi-truncated rhombic bladelets (16%) and partially-backed bladelets (10%).

In addition to these sites, small numbers of microliths have also been collected at other locations (Fig. 1), and these probably indicate that Mesolithic activity was widespread and not restricted to these six sites.

CONCLUSION

The proportion of Horsham Points found on the sites to the southwest of Horsham is much lower than at those sites to the northeast of the town, but at the same time there is a much greater variety of microlith types, including small scalene triangles, found on the former sites. However, one of the problems with the Mesolithic sites around Horsham is that, with the exception of the Halt site (Holgate 1987), they are all derived from surface collection, and are therefore likely to include both residual and intrusive material. It has been

noted from elsewhere that during the Mesolithic preferred locations are likely to have been revisited many times, and possibly over very long periods. This will have resulted in very mixed assemblages of material, especially microliths, accumulating at these sites, and it is therefore frequently difficult to assign dates to assemblages derived solely from surface collection.

At St Catherine's Hill, near Guildford in Surrey, a mixed microlith assemblage was recovered by surface collection. The conclusion reached was that the assemblage had affinities with the Horsham culture (Gabel 1976). Jacobi (1978, 20) suggested that St Catherine's Hill could represent 'an early stage in the local evolution of a Horsham technology, or the mixing of Horsham Points with an early assemblage that had once been stratified'. More recently, a similarly mixed assemblage has been excavated at Streat Lane, in East Sussex (Butler 2007). The microliths from this site also had affinities with Horsham-type assemblages, and Carbon-14 dates from the mid-eighth millennium BP, but this could equally have been a site that had been regularly re-used over a long period of time.

The presence on many of the Horsham sites of tranchet adzes, or tranchet adze-sharpening flakes, together with a wide range of other implement types in addition to the microliths, suggests that these sites were more than just short-stay hunting camps. Almost all of the sites around Horsham are found close to or alongside streams, or near to springs, irrespective of whether the sites are located on sandy or clay soils. Tranchet adzes were woodworking tools, whilst scrapers, burins, piercers and other tools suggest a wide range of tasks being carried out on these sites. Certainly this suggests more than just the manufacture and repair of hunting equipment, although it is clear from the many broken microliths that this was also taking place.

Horsham Point sites are one of three typological groupings of microliths identified by Reynier (1998) in his study of Early Mesolithic settlement. He concluded that these sites were generally located on low-lying valley sides and particular plateaux locales, and suggested that this represented a shift in settlement strategy from earlier Mesolithic groups, and may signify a reduction in human group mobility. This could be associated with the onset of more open mixed forest, which would have permitted relatively easy access for both humans and animals (Holgate 2003).

Unfortunately, until such time as carefully controlled excavations are carried out on an undisturbed Horsham Point site, it is unlikely that we will have a better understanding of their function, and of the composition of a true Horsham Point microlith assemblage.

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