

Mesolithic pick found at Westmeston, East Sussex

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Ron Packham, a local resident, showed the author a large flint implement that he had found in the 1950s. It was picked up on his father's market garden at Westmeston (TQ 344148) whilst he was clearing flints ahead of rotovating for soft fruit and vegetable planting. Hayleigh Farm road formed the northern boundary of the seven-acre site, where there were three glasshouses on the sandy soil. The land rises gradually to the southern boundary near Hop Garden Shaw, where Ron recalls that a large scatter of flints caused constant damage to the plough. It was in this area that he found the large worked flint with an 'intriguing shape' that he kept, and always intended to 'ask someone about it'.

The author noted that the large orangey-brown flint had been hand-struck to form an implement that fitted the hand comfortably (Fig. 1), and offered to show the find to staff at Barbican House Museum for an accurate identification. The piece has been recorded on the Portable Antiquities Scheme database (Cf. S USS-EBEBA4; SUR-2A4C65; SUSS-902627). With help from Chris Butler, the piece was identified as a complete pick dating from the Mesolithic period (c. 8300–8500 BC), even though the deep ochre-brown patination of the flint, with small greyish-white inclusions, is more commonly found on Upper Palaeolithic implements in Sussex (Butler 2005).

The pick was described as having been knapped to resemble a tranche adze and is larger than is common in Sussex, but could be classified as a Hassocks Adze. (The dimensions are 211mm in length, 53mm long and 37mm wide, and weighing 738g.) It is asymmetrical, with a blunted edge for hafting or handling, with some abrasion approximately two-thirds up from the point suggesting it had been hafted. The thick grey/white cortex is retained and extends along a third of the dorsal surface. The cutting edge tapers to a pointed surface, and most of the removals are large and broad on the dorsal, ventral and mesial surfaces.

Acknowledgements

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REFERENCE

Butler, C. 2005. *Prehistoric Flintwork*, Stroud Tempus, 106, fig. 42. No 1, and 104.

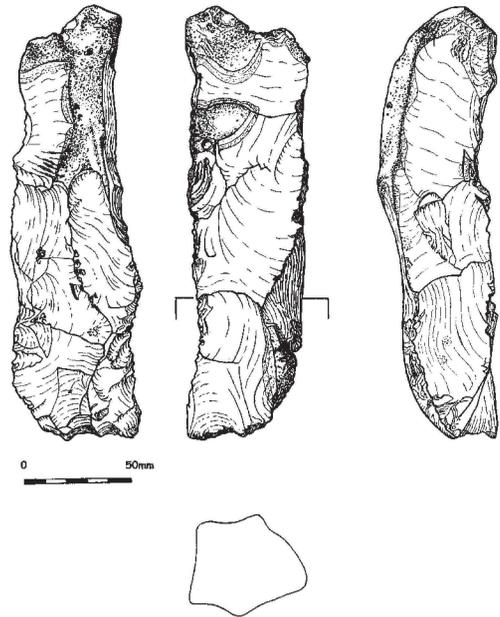


Fig. 1. The flint.

Excavation of a site at Elsted, West Sussex

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In 1974 a field survey identified a concentration of pottery sherds in a field centred on SU 813 191 to the southwest of the village of Elsted, West Sussex (Bell and Tatton-Brown 1975, 58–66). This scatter of pottery was investigated in 1975 by the Sussex Archaeological Field Unit (Redknap and Millett, 1980, 197–229), who excavated an area of 520 square metres to the east of the brow of the hill (Fig. 1). The excavation uncovered a small 'cobbled' area which was thought to be the courtyard of a Romano-British farmstead, whilst a geophysical survey (Redknap and Millett 1980, 202, fig. 5) and infra-red photography identified the possibility of an associated stone bath house to the north (Redknap and Millett 1980, 205).

In June 2011 an earth resistance and fluxgate gradiometer geophysical survey was undertaken, centred on the 1975 excavation, covering an area of 270m by 180m, in order to re-assess the possible existence of this building. The survey identified several anomalies that might indicate hidden archaeological features situated near to and aligned with the courtyard that could be the farmstead and bath house.

In June and July 2012 the Elsted Archaeology and History Society (EH&AS) undertook an excavation of this potential Romano-British farmstead and bath house. This is a brief report on the results and findings of both the geophysical survey and the excavation.