

Latton Lands 2001-2004

The flint Kate Cramp

Introduction

A total of 68 struck flints and two pieces (9 g) of burnt unworked flint were recovered during four phases of excavation at Latton Lands, Wiltshire (Table 1). Most of the material came from sites examined between 2001 and 2002 (52 pieces). The remaining 16 pieces were recovered from phases of work undertaken in 2003 and 2004. The flints were thinly scattered, with very few contexts producing more than a single piece and none exceeding eight pieces (Table 2).

The assemblage spans the Mesolithic to Bronze Age period, although no demonstrably Neolithic material was recovered. The small collection of flintwork from an oval enclosure in the south-west of the site (Group 2255) probably dates to the late Neolithic or early Bronze Age period and, as such, may relate to widespread evidence for contemporary settlement and burial activity in the area. Other diagnostic pieces include a single microlith (Fig. 1.1) which, along with a truncated blade, may represent activity in the Mesolithic period. An illustrated selection of flints is shown in Figure 1, and the accompanying catalogue can be found in Table 4.

Table 1: The flint assemblage from Latton Lands 2001-2004 (LALA 01-04).

Category:	LALA 01	LALA 02	LALA 03	LALA 04	Total:
Flake	5	18	3	5	31
Blade		3		1	4
Bladelet		2			2
Bladelike flake	2	3	1	1	7
Rejuvenation flake core face/edge	1				1
Irregular waste	1				1
Chip		3			3
Multi-platform flake core	1	1			2
Unclassifiable/fragmentary core		1			1
Retouched flake	1	4	1		6
End-and-side scraper		2	1	2	5
Backed knife		1			1
Microlith		1			1
Truncated blade	1				1
Serrated flake				1	1
Denticulate		1			1
Total:	12	40	6	10	68
Number (%) of burnt struck flints:	1 (8.3)	8 (20)	2 (33.3)	1 (10)	12 (17.7)
Number (%) of broken struck flints:	3 (25)	25 (62.5)	2 (33.3)	3 (30)	33 (48.5)
Number (%) of retouched flints:	2 (16.7)	9 (22.5)	2 (33.3)	3 (30)	16 (23.5)
No. of burnt unworked flints:	2				2
Weight (g) of burnt unworked flints:	9				9

Table 2: Quantification of the struck flint assemblage by feature.

Site:	Group:	Cut:	Deposit:	Total:
LALA 01	811	810	811	1
	1035	1038	1037	1
	1126	1127	1126	1
	1221	1223	1221	1
	1247	1245	1247	3
	1826	1825	1826	1
	1849	1848	1849	2
	1883	1885	1883	1
	2050	2053	2050	1
LALA 02	2253	2253	2253	3
	2254	2254	2254	1
	2255	2258	2262	2
			2368	2369
			2371	1
		2380	2378	1
		2509	2504	5
		2511	2494	1
			2498	1
		2553	2546	8
	2550		1	
	2256	2256	2256	2
	2257	2257	2257	2
	2353	2320	2319	1
	2444	2510	2444	1
	2570	2572	2570	1
	2591	2591	2591	1
	2592	2592	2592	1
	2593	2593	2593	1
	2596	2596	2596	1
	2597	2597	2597	1
	2600	2600	2600	1
2603	2603	2603	1	
2604	2604	2604	1	
LALA 03	2849	2849	2849	2
	2920	2918	2920	1
	2921	2918	2921	1
	2956	2958	2956	1
	3128	3126	3128	1
LALA 04	3493	3494	3493	1
	3671	3670	3671	1
	3695	3690	3695	1
	3711	3713	3711	1
	3724	3724	3724	1
	3873	3878	3873	1
	3874	3878	3874	1
	3885	3886	3885	2
	4007	3563	3564	1
Total:				68

Methodology

All the struck flints within the assemblage were individually examined and catalogued according to broad debitage, core or tool type. Dating was attempted where possible. Cores and core fragments were classified according to the type of removal and number of platforms, and were individually weighed. Burnt flint was described and quantified by piece and by weight. Additional information, such as the degree of calcination, was also recorded. The data was entered directly onto an MS Access database, a print-out of which will be deposited with the archive.

Condition

In general, the flintwork has survived in a very fresh condition and many pieces still possess sharp edges. A small number of pieces, mainly from topsoil and subsoil layers, are rolled and damaged. Residual material from later contexts also tends to be in poor condition. Cortication ranges from a light incipient speckling to an opaque white discoloration; very few pieces are uncorticated.

Raw material

Both chalk and gravel flint sources appear to have been used for the manufacture of the tools and debitage in the assemblage. The size of the flake cores, weighing as little as 16 g, may reflect the small size of the parent nodules or perhaps that that raw material was being treated economically. In general, thermal fractures and other defects are rare and suggest that the flint was of a reasonable knapping quality. No non-flint raw materials were recorded.

The assemblage

What follows is a two-part presentation of the flint assemblage, which first considers the material from the oval enclosure (Group 2255) before turning to a discussion of the flintwork from elsewhere on site.

Group 2255

A small but potentially significant collection of flintwork was recovered from six interventions through an enclosure formed by two U-shaped ditches in the south-west of the site. The assemblage consists of 21 flints in fresh condition (Table 4); most pieces are moderately or heavily corticated. The assemblage is dominated by unretouched flakes (ten pieces), although blade material is relatively well represented by a combined total of four pieces. Most of the flakes have been carefully struck, often following brief attempts at platform preparation. A small flake core (16 g) was recovered from deposit 2369.

The retouched component includes four tools: one retouched flake, one end-and-side scraper (Fig. 1.2), one backed knife (1.3) and a denticulated flake. The quality of the retouch suggests a late Neolithic/early Bronze Age date for the scraper and the knife, although the latter has been manufactured on a re-used blank of unknown origin. The denticulated tool consists of a broad secondary flake with a series of closely-spaced notches on one of the longer edges. It is possible that some of these pieces, and in particular the backed knife, were deliberately selected for deposition in the enclosure ditch.

Table 3: The struck flint assemblage from Group 2255.

Category:	Total:
Flake	10
Blade	2
Bladelet	1
Bladelike flake	1
Chip	2
Multi-platform flake core	1
Retouched flake	1
End-and-side scraper	1
Backed knife	1
Denticulate	1
Total:	21
Number (%) of burnt struck flints:	4 (19.1)
Number (%) of broken struck flints:	12 (57.1)
Number (%) of retouched flints:	4 (19.1)

Other features

For the most part, the remaining assemblage formed a thin, residual spread across the site. The collection is largely composed of unretouched flakes with a slightly lower representation of blades, bladelets and bladelike flakes. A second multi-platform flake core was recovered from ditch 1245, while an unclassifiable core fragment came from context 2592.

The tool inventory is dominated by retouched flakes, although scrapers are relatively well represented and may indicate that certain specialised activities were being performed in the area. The majority of scrapers have been steeply retouched on thick, robust flakes. These crudely fashioned pieces are likely to have been used for heavy duty-tasks, such as wood-working or hide-scraping, and probably date broadly to the Bronze Age. Some of the more finely worked pieces may represent Neolithic or early Bronze Age pieces.

Evidence of Mesolithic activity is provided by a single microlith from context 2591 (Fig. 1.1). The microlith compares most closely with Jacobi's class 4 or class 5 (Jacobi 1978, 16, fig. 6) but, in isolation, cannot be closely dated within the Mesolithic period. It is possible that the truncated blade from ditch 1038 (context 1037) also belongs to a Mesolithic industry.

Other pieces of note include one serrated flake (context 3724), which displays some silica gloss on one edge indicating its use on silica-rich plant materials, perhaps for the production of fibres for textiles (Juel-Jenson 1994, 62).

Discussion

The flint assemblage from Latton Lands demonstrates a long period of human activity in the area, stretching as far back as the Mesolithic period and possibly beyond. Although no closely datable Neolithic types were identified, there is positive evidence for occupation in the late Neolithic or early Bronze Age period from the oval enclosure (Group 2255), which produced an assemblage of 21 struck flints. The significance of the assemblage from Group 2255 lies in its context and composition rather than in its size, which is admittedly rather small. This collection of flintwork includes a finely made scraper (Fig. 1.2) and a backed knife on a re-used blank (Fig.

1.3). Along with a complete pygmy pot and cow skull from the northwestern ditch (see ***, this volume), these ‘special’ artefacts may have been deliberately selected for deposition in the enclosure.

Table 4: Catalogue of flint illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure no.	Site:	Feature:	Context:	Small find no.	Category:	Description:
1.1	LALA 02	Object ref. 2591	2591	247	Microlith	Minimally retouched. Long, narrow bladelet with light edge retouch to right-hand side. Somewhere between Jacobi's class 4 & class 5 (Jacobi 1978, 16, Fig. 6). Mesolithic.
1.2	LALA 02	Ditch 2258	2262	218	End-and-side scraper	Abrupt retouch on distal edge; light, semi-abrupt retouch on left-hand edge. Probably Beaker.
1.3	LALA 02	Ditch 2553	2546	245	Backed knife	Triangular point retouched on re-used flake. Neat, scalar retouch. Probable knife. Beaker?

References

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