

## **Access Cambridge Archaeology**

### **Meldreth (MEL13) Flint Report**

#### Quantification

Of the 345 pieces of flint submitted for analysis 246(71%) were natural, unmodified pieces and are not discussed further in this report. The total 88 of worked flints recovered from the investigations together with 140.8g of unworked burnt flint (11 pieces). The assemblage is quantified by test pit and context in Table 1 on the following page. The flint was recovered from 22 test pits with numbers of worked pieces varying from 1 to 21 in individual test pits.

**Table 1: Quantification of the flint assemblage**

TP	Context	chip	irregular waste	primary flake	secondary flake	tertiary flake	blade	retouched flake	total worked	unworked burnt flint no.	unworked burnt flint weight (g)
1	1				1				1		
1	2				1				1		
2	1					1			1		
3	4	2							2		
3	5				1	1			2		
4	8				1				1		
5	5				1				1		
8	5					1			1		
11	2	1							1		
12	1				1				1		
12	2								0	1	1.9
15	2					1			1		
15	4				1				1		
16	2				1				1		
16	4				1				1		
16	5	1		1					2	1	1
17	1	2							2		
18	2				1				1		
20	1				1				1		
20	3				5	1			6	1	8
20	4					2			2		
20	5	1		1	2	4			8		
20	6				3	1			4		
21	1				1				1		
21	3	2			1	2			5		
21	4	1							1		
23	1				1				1		
23	2			1					1		
23	3				1				1		
23	4				1				1		
23	5				1	1			2		
23	6				1				1		
23	7				2				2		
23	8					1			1		
24	1				1				1		
24	2				1			1	2		
24	4				1				1		
24	5				1				1		
25	2			1	2				3	1	14.5
25	3		1						1		
25	3				1				1		
25	4		1		1				2	1	35.7
27	1								0	1	2.4
27	2		2						2		
27	3				1				1	1	63.9
28	1				1				1		
28	2				1				1		
28	3				1				1		
28	9					1			1		
29	2				1				1		
29	4				2				2		
29	6						1		1	2	9.2
29	7								0	1	3.3
29	8				2	1			3		
31	6								0	1	0.9
32	1				1				1		
32	5		1		1				2		
		<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>140.8</b>

### **Condition**

The condition of the assemblage is varied but is generally poor with a high percentage of broken pieces and with frequent edge damage and abrasion which in some instances will have been severe enough to have obscured traces of light retouch and utilisation. 31 pieces display surface alteration in the form of cortication ('patination'), varying from a light blue speckling to heavy white colour. This cortication probably has a degree of chronological significance, with earlier pieces displaying corticated surfaces and it is notable that among the uncorticated pieces are several which may have been accidentally (plough?) struck in relatively recent times.

### **Raw Materials**

The assemblage is made up entirely of fine grained flint. There is considerable variety in the character of surviving cortical surfaces, most, however, point towards secondary sources of flint from superficial geological deposits such as fluvial/glacial gravels or glacial till. There are a few pieces which have a thick cortex more suggestive of a source from primary chalk deposits. Flint bearing chalk (the upper chalk) outcrops some 6 or 7 kilometres to the south of the modern village whilst river terrace gravels associated with the Cam/Rhee river system can be found a few kilometres to the north east (BGS 1974).

### **Composition and dating**

The worked flint assemblage is made up almost exclusively of unretouched flakes. Unusually there are no cores and only a single retouched piece is present. The technological traits of the flakes vary considerably. Particularly notable is the poor quality of flaking associated with much of the uncorticated material. Many of these pieces are irregular and squat in morphology cortical striking platforms and hinged terminations are also common. It is likely that some of this material relates to later prehistoric (post Early Bronze Age) activity and represents the expedient use of flint resources by communities for whom metal tools had assumed a greater utility than their flint counterparts (Ford et al 1984). More carefully worked material is more common amongst the corticated flintwork and includes relatively systematically produced pieces with trimmed striking platforms and some with evidence for soft hammer percussion. This material is likely to be somewhat earlier in date although blade based forms of Mesolithic or earlier Neolithic date is very rare in the assemblage suggesting a Neolithic or Early Bronze Age date is probably more likely for the bulk of this material. This material includes a flake possibly struck from a late Neolithic levallois-like core (Ballin 2011). A notable concentration of these more systematically worked flints were recovered from test pit 20, which contained 21 struck flints in total and which may indicate the presence of a relatively dense lithic scatter.

The only definitely retouched piece in the assemblage is a secondary flake with bold, somewhat crude dorsal retouch from test pit 24. A late prehistoric (Later Bronze Age to Iron Age) date is most likely for this piece, which probably functioned as a cutting tool.

Only small quantities of burnt flint were recovered from the site. These need represent no more than pieces inadvertently caught up in hearths etc and may relate as much to later, historic, activity than to prehistory.

### **Summary**

Characterisation of the assemblage from Meldreth is hampered by a lack of technologically and typologically diagnostic pieces but appears to reflect prehistoric activity from the Neolithic well into later prehistory. The relatively large assemblage from test pit 20 indicates some potential for substantial lithic scatters to be located in the area.

## References

Ballin, T. B. 2011. The Levallois-like approach of Late Neolithic Britain: a discussion based on finds from the Stoneyhill Project, Aberdeenshire. In Saville, A. *Flint and Stone in the Neolithic Period*. Oxford: Oxbow Books

BGS. 1974. *Biggleswade. Drift Edition: 1:50,000 Geological Map., Sheet 204*. British Geological Society

Ford, S., R. Bradley, J. Hawkes and P. Fisher, 1984. Flint-working in the metal age. *Oxford Journal of Archaeology* 3, 158-73