The flint

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Introduction (table 1)

Excavations at Tamworth, Staffordshire produced a very small assemblage of just two struck flints and three pieces of burnt unworked flint weighing 2g. The assemblage from Tamworth comprised two flakes, one each from ditch fills 2054 and 2408. The flake from context 54 had been struck from a large nodule of high quality flint and was very large at 106mm by 86mm by 10mm with a small patch of thick chalk cortex on its lower right edge. It displayed an area of utilisation along its distal left edge and the left and right lateral margins also displayed signs of probable use. The flake displayed parallel negative scars suggesting that blade production was an important consideration for the knappers. Context 2408 yielded an undiagnostic mesial segment of an inner flake in quite poor condition.

Table 1: The flint assemblage from Tamworth, Staffordshire

CATEGORY TYPE	
Flake	2
Blade index	0% (0/2)
Total	2

No. burnt (%)	0/2 (0%)
No. broken (%)	1/2 (50.0%)
No. retouched (%)	0/2 (0%)

Methodology

The artefacts were catalogued according to OA South's standard system of broad artefact/debitage type (Anderson-Whymark 2013; Bradley 1999), general condition noted and dating was attempted where possible. The assemblage was catalogued directly onto an Open Office spreadsheet. During the assessment additional information on condition (rolled, abraded, fresh and degree of cortication), and state of the artefact (burnt, broken, or visibly utilised) was also recorded. Retouched pieces were classified according to standard morphological descriptions (e.g. Bamford 1985, 72-77; Healy 1988, 48-9; Bradley 1999). Technological attribute analysis was initially undertaken and included the recording of butt and termination type (Inizan *et al.* 1999), flake type (Harding 1990), hammer mode (Onhuma and Bergman 1982), and the presence of platform edge abrasion.

The assemblage

The flint assemblage from Tamworth is of note solely for the presence of a very large flake that could potentially be Pleistocene in date although its full date range could easily span the Upper Palaeolithic through to the Neolithic period or beyond. It is easily one of the largest flakes that this analyst has seen and similar flakes have been restricted to sites of upper Palaeolithic or Mesolithic date. It is not inconceivable that it may have been struck from a core producing large tool blanks and is clearly from a nodule of very high quality flint, something that is lacking in the local area. This raises the possibility that it is not prehistoric and may have been lost by a contemporary flint knapper or perhaps even may have related to a gunflint industry where large blade-like pieces were sought for the production of regular gunflint blanks, presumably fashioned from high quality flint nodules.

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