

WINCHESTER

A CITY IN THE MAKING

Archaeological excavations between 2002 – 2007
on the sites of Northgate House, Staple Gardens and the former Winchester Library, Jewry St

Section 9

Struck Flint

by Hugo Lamdin-Whymark

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Introduction

In total, 362 struck flints were recovered, including 129 chips measuring below 10 mm², retrieved from sieved residues. Flint was recovered from 157 contexts across the excavated areas. Most was clearly redeposited from Roman and later contexts. Seventeen flints were found in four Phase 1 contexts, but even these may also be residual. Extensive edge damage on numerous flints further highlights reworking from primary depositional contexts. The broad technological attributes of the assemblage and typologically distinct artefacts are considered to provide dating evidence and an indication of overall assemblage composition (Table 1).

Table 1: The worked flint assemblage by category type

CATEGORY TYPE	Northgate House	Discovery Centre	Grand Total
Flake	96	104	200
Blade	3	1	4
Bladelet	1	4	5
Blade-like	2	1	3
Irregular waste	8	4	12
Sieved chips 10-4 mm	19	110	129
Tested nodule/bashed lump		2	2
Multiplatform flake core	1		1
Scraper on a non-flake blank		1	1
Other scraper	1		1
Awl		1	1
Spurred piece		1	1
Denticulate		1	1
Retouched flake	1		1
Grand total	132	230	362

The flint assemblage

The assemblage is entirely of local origin. Most cortical pieces exhibit either a thick white cortex from sources in the chalkland landscape, or a thin and abraded cortex typical of flint from the local river gravels. The assemblage is dominated by unspecialised flakes of irregular forms, frequently of relatively broad dimensions. Nine blades and bladelets represent only 4% of the flake debitage. Several of these, along with a small number of flakes, exhibit dorsal blade scars and platform edge

abrasion characteristic of earlier prehistoric blade-orientated industries, and a broad Mesolithic to early Neolithic date is proposed for these flints.

In contrast, the unspecialised flakes appear to have been struck from irregular and unprepared cores, predominately using a hard hammer percussor, such as a hammerstone, without preparation of the platform edge. This reduction strategy is typical of middle to late Bronze Age industries, although comparable flintwork is known in the Iron Age (Ford *et al.* 1984; Humphrey 2003). It is possible that some of the flakes and the majority of the chips represent accidental products of pit digging and construction. Five flakes fresh flakes from Roman robber trench CC1627 may result from the trimming of flint nodules for building. Cores are under-represented in the assemblage, with only two tested nodules and a multi-platform flake core present. The latter weighs 62 g and exhibits irregular flake removals without preparation of the platform edge. It produced flakes typical of those present in the assemblage.

Six retouched artefacts included two irregular scrapers, two piercing tools, a denticulate and a flake with slight edge retouch, typical of middle to late Bronze Age assemblages, although none is intrinsically diagnostic.

Discussion

The small number of Mesolithic or early Neolithic flints indicates an early presence in the landscape typical of the chalklands of southern England. Most of the assemblage probably dates from the middle to late Bronze Age, reflecting a period of activity in the local landscape, but the artefacts form a relatively low density spread. Due to the limited number of diagnostic flint artefacts and the lack of contextual associations it was not possible to precisely characterise the nature of this activity. The Roman and later activity may have augmented the prehistoric assemblage with additional flakes and chips, some from construction in flint, the majority representing accidental debitage created whilst cutting pits and foundations.

References

Ford, S., Bradley, R., Hawkes, J. and Fisher, P., 1984 Flint-working in the metal age, *Oxford Journal of Archaeology* 3(2): 157-173.

Humphrey, J., 2003 The use of flint in the British Iron Age. In J. Humphrey. Ed. *Researching the Iron Age: selected papers from the proceedings of the Iron Age Research Students Seminars 1999 - 2000*, Leicester: Leicester Archaeology Monograph **11**.

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