In chapter 6, Gamble and Boisnier bring Lynford into focus, building up a nuanced picture of how Neanderthals may have been surviving within the changeable, seasonally aggressive, environments of MIS 3 Britain. I especially loved the introduction to this section, which succeeds in doing what academic archaeologists so rarely achieve — actually painting a picture of what this place might have been like as a living landscape to the Neanderthals moving through it. The environmental evidence is brought together into a detailed reconstruction of the local and regional resource-cape, with consideration given to how Neanderthals lived within such landscapes, building towards an exploration of the socioecology of Neanderthal life. On balance, the editors and contributors just pull back from coming down on the side of mammoth hunting, and it is a curious feature of academic reaction to the Lynford site that some have sought to argue it away (e.g. Smith 2012) — to suggest that, as it is not a totally pristine, in situ occurrence (or the oft-sought Palaeolithic Pompeii), then there is nothing we can say about Neanderthal activity there. Given the quality of the evidence from the site, and the comparatively impoverished nature of the rest of the British late Middle Palaeolithic record, one cannot help but despair at the excessive expectations of fellow researchers. Archaeology is hard, and Palaeolithic archaeology especially so; it requires a realistic, but positive, approach to difficult and often impoverished data sets. One sometimes feels that, unless an actual “smoking gun” was discovered still held to head of a mammoth by a mummified Neanderthal, then no-one will hold their hands up and accept that they were hunting such prey (whilst at the same time suggesting no plausible alternative to exactly how a large bodied, active hominin survived in north-west Europe for so long!).

All in all, this is a superb volume, and the culmination of an extraordinary amount of excellent and detailed work, for which the contributors and editors should be congratulated. The open access release, as a PDF, of this monograph is to be applauded, as it gives everyone — students, amateurs, professionals, and the cash-strapped Palaeolithic community — the opportunity to make up their own minds, rather than accepting secondhand the opinions of others — myself included!

Beccy Scott

REFERENCES


promise, providing an inventive and nuanced discussion of Long Blade and Early Mesolithic settlement at the site, and a model for the analysis and publication of sites of this date.

The Three Ways Wharf site occupies a low lying area on the floodplain of the River Colne. Together with other nearby sites known from developer funded archaeology, Denham and the Sanderson site, and sites encountered in earlier gravel extraction (Lacaille 1961), the significance of the Colne Valley for later Upper Palaeolithic and early Mesolithic lifeways is becoming clear. To this can be added evidence from sites from the Kennet Valley (Wymer 1962; Healey et al. 1992; Ellis et al. 2003; Froom 2005), the Lea Valley (Hazzledine Warren et al. 1934) and the recently excavated sites of Wey Manor Farm, Surrey and Church Lammas, Staines, which reveal both the importance of the Thames and its tributaries in the late Palaeolithic and Mesolithic and the increasing significance of alluvial archaeology for our understanding of these periods in the south of England. This is welcome news, as the Mesolithic of Southern England has (apart from the tireless efforts of Roy Froom) been somewhat neglected in recent decades. It is also heartening that the alluvial archaeology of the major river valleys is beginning to fulfil its potential. The true potential of this resource can be seen through the Upper Palaeolithic and Mesolithic sites of the river valleys of northern France, especially the Somme and the Seine (eg Leroi-Gourhan & Brezillon 1972; Fagnart 1997; Ducrocq 2001). There is still some way to go though, and though much of this work is unit led, there needs to be greater awareness of these contexts by development control and a more robust methodology developed for prospecting for sites of this date, which are still often found (and damaged) through machining. This volume will certainly go some way to understanding the contexts and highlighting the importance of this resource.

The Three Ways Wharf report is divided into seven chapters. The first introduces the site which is made up of several scatters of lithic and faunal material. The most important of these are scatter A, a Long Blade occupation and scatter C, which is made up of both Long Blade and early Mesolithic material. As is detailed in chapter 2, the Long Blade occupations took place on a clay-silt of fluvial origin which was damp, but subject to biological activity, which developed by the early Holocene into an alluvial gley soil. Vegetation was open throughout the occupation, though wooded areas were present in the vicinity by the early Holocene.

The following chapter discusses the lithic material, with a detailed technological and typological description of each area. Scatter C, the mixed scatter, is divided into scatter C east (which appears more Long Blade in nature) and scatter C west (more early Mesolithic) and this chapter describes some of the characteristics (size, faceting etc.) used to justify this separation. There is however obviously some admixture between these two area (perhaps more than the authors allow). Given this, it is unfortunate that the post-excavation funding did not permit more work on refitting (as the authors themselves lament), as this would allow greater chance of distinguishing early Mesolithic and Long Blade knapping sequences. The results obtained through the limited refitting permitted have been excellent; the refitting, for example, of a bitruncated microlith to a Long B sequence demonstrates contemporaneity of this unusual form with the Palaeolithic occupation and highlights the variability that can be glimpsed amongst Long Blade microlithic forms.

Faunal remains are discussed in chapter 4. Both the Long Blade scatters are characterised by reindeer remains. Scatter A revealed the presence of a single adult reindeer, along with a few horse remains. At scatter C east reindeer remains were more extensive with 3 animals probably represented. Scatter C west was dominated by red deer, with a MNI of 15; activity appears focused on the processing of these bones for marrow. Beaver, pine marten, swan, fox and wolf were also represented. Though the dates for horse and red deer matched the hypothesis that these animals are associated with the Long Blade and Mesolithic respectively, it should be remembered that fauna sampled is small in number and while there is no good evidence for horse or reindeer with Mesolithic industries, red deer is present on two Somme Valley Long Blade sites, Hangest and Belloy (Valentin 2008).
Book Reviews

Following a rigorous chapter on taphonomy, the book really takes off in chapter 6 which brings the different strands of evidence together, through spatial analysis to produce a nuanced understanding of the site. It is here that the talents of Lewis and Rackham come to the fore, in that both are skilled in interpreting activity patterning from the material remains of a very complex site. This is a subtle analysis with a variety of different models thoughtfully discussed. Again, more refitting would enhance the narrative, in particular in discerning Long Blade raw material transportation strategies, which can be very varied. There is also perhaps an over-focus on reindeer as diagnostic of Long Blade hunting strategies, which are only present on Three Ways Wharf and Church Lammas. Horse, in fact appears to have been a more important staple, having been recovered from Three Ways Wharf, Church Lammas, Launde, Seamer C and Seamer L, though reindeer may have been an important seasonal component.

Parts of this chapter which draw in the broader context and the following, final chapter, though still useful, are, as outlined earlier, a bit dated. More could be made of recent climatic work, while recent publications of Long Blade sites at Avington VI (Froom 2003), Launde (Cooper 2006) and Seamer C and K (Conneller & Schadla-Hall 2003; Conneller 2007) are mentioned briefly or not at all. A better synthesis of Long Blade/Belloisian/epi-Ahrensburgian material in northwest Europe is that of Cooper (2006). For the early Mesolithic site comparisons are made with Star Carr and some very astute points are made, particularly in speculation that Clark selectively collected fauna from the site, a factor which affects some of the classic analyses of the faunal remains (e.g. Legge and Rowley-Conwy 1988). That this speculation is, indeed, fact has been demonstrated during the recent excavations and through discussions with Clark’s excavators. This undoubtedly has led to the under-representation of marrow rich elements (for a discussion of how selective collection affects faunal representation see Marean & Kim 1998). Another site which is used as a comparator is Barry’s Island, N Yorks. In the interests of errors not being repeated in the literature (as this is not the first publication this site has been mentioned in) I would like to stress here that Barry’s Island is not an early Mesolithic site; rather it is a fluvial jumble of material spanning the Upper Palaeolithic to the late Mesolithic. The lithic material is heavily worn and mainly late Mesolithic in date. It should be noted that his error is not the fault of the authors of this book, rather the result of a rather premature pers. comm.

I have raised a few quibbles in the course of this review, mainly a result of circumstances beyond the authors’ control and which they themselves acknowledge; however these are relatively minor in the overall scheme of things. Overall this is an excellent volume which brings a highly complex site to life, and which will set a standard for future publications of Palaeolithic and Mesolithic sites to follow.

Chantal Conneller

REFERENCES


