KNAPPING TECHNIQUES, MANUFACTURE AND REPLICACTION RECONSIDERED

Clive Jonathon Bond

INTRODUCTION

Surely, it remains true that the best way to understand lithics, their form, classification and function is to see, for example, a stone axe being manufactured in front of your very own eyes? Knapping is instrumental in clarifying and questioning our assumptions concerning the production of the quantity of tools and waste we seek to study. The many stone tools that lie on shelves in countless British Museums, untouched and still often viewed by visitors as simply ‘crude tools’ from distant times come alive if we can gain a better technical understanding of their manufacture and the humanity behind each artefact.

Prof. Nick Barton wrote of John Lord, a knapper from Norfolk:

“As one of the finest, if not the finest, living exponent of the art of flintknapping in Britain today, anything John Lord has to say about flint working is bound to be both interesting and informative.” (Barton 1992, 76, his emphasis).

I would add to this, John Lord has a profound insight into working stone and as lithic specialists, both professionals and amateurs, if we choose not to listen to his words we do so at our peril! An intuitive knowledge of working stone and the craftsmanship involved remains as compelling today, as it always has done. Over the past five years, I have demonstrated very basic skills to undergraduates studying archaeology. There remains for me and, often my students a very real magic to the sound of stone-on-stone contact, the puncture of a hammer and recoil of a flake. Would you like to witness this yourself?

A DAY SCHOOL

On Saturday, 22 May 2004 a Day School at The University of East Anglia, entitled ‘Making Stone Tools: an introduction with John Lord’, is intended to be organised. This Day School will be a joint event with The Centre for Continuing Education, the University of East Anglia and The Lithic Studies Society.

The aim of the event is for an introduction and discussion to be generated on the subject of lithic technology and replication studies. Practical sessions on knapping techniques are to be demonstrated. The well-known flint knapper John Lord is to attend. After a brief introduction, John will then commence working through the replication of various techniques and the making of tools that cover lithic industries from the British Palaeolithic, Mesolithic, Neolithic and Bronze Age.

The event is hoped to act as a meeting bringing together interested peoples so that any question on techniques of manufacture or function could be addressed by a master craftsman dealing in his chosen material (cf. Lord 1993, 1998). The objective here is to bridge the gap between the theoretical and the practical, by observing and discussing knapping as a group.

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At points during the day participants could also try their hand at knapping. Such moments may perhaps give participants some insight and basics skills into this unique and highly skilled craft as illustrated in John Lord’s well received textbook (Lord 1993).

**REPLICATION**

Many people within British lithic studies do not work stone themselves, save a committed group of Palaeolithic archaeologists (cf. Mitchell 1996, 65; Roberts *et al.*, 1997, 329, 343; Wenban-Smith 1989). Few examples in Britain have occurred of experimental knapping being used to understand later post-glacial lithic industries. The few exceptions to this rule being the knapping of flint beach pebbles, as part of the Southern Hebrides Mesolithic Project (1988-98) (Mithen *et al.*, 2000, 529-532) and the making of a flint axehead from scree and beach pebble flint by Phil Harding for the National Museums of Scotland, reported by Saville (1999, 99). Replication studies this side of the Atlantic remains relatively dormant compared to a continued interest in Europe and North America (Andrefsky 1998, 6-8; Whittaker 1994). It has been sometime since the journal *Lithics* have had a replication study published (the last being Mitchell 1996), save Lee’s recent study on the heat treatment of flint (2001). Indeed, at the ‘Lithic Studies in the Year 2000’ conference at Cardiff little, if any papers come to mind that touched on the reproduction of lithics in controlled conditions (Dunkin 2000). Therefore, it is perhaps prime time to set replication studies back on the agenda. What better way to gain an understanding of lithic manufacturer is there, than observe, experiment, and participation?

After the event it is hoped to publish details of discussions and debate. Expressions of interest would be gratefully received so we can plan the event.

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**Forthcoming Event: Making Stone Tools: an introduction with John Lord**

Provisional Event Details:

| **Day School:** | Making Stone Tools: an introduction with John Lord |
| **Date:** | Saturday, 22 May 2004 |
| **Time:** | 10.00am to 5.00pm |
| **Cost:** | £25 for the Day School  
£20 for the Day School  
(Reduction for members of the Lithic Studies Society) |
| **Venue:** | Elizabeth Fry Building  
University of East Anglia  
Norwich NR4 7TJ |
| **Contact:** | The Centre for Continuing Education, University of East Anglia |
| **Telephone:** | 01603 593266 |
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BIBLIOGRAPHY


