BOOK REVIEW


N. Barton

As one of the finest, if not the finest, living exponents 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. It is a great pleasure therefore to report that this booklet - billed modestly as an instruction manual - amply manages to fulfill that expectation. It conveys clearly and succinctly many of the key aspects of flint technology at a beginners level, and is well-illustrated by a very impressive selection of drawings and colour photographs.

One of the pleasures of reading this book is in the simple clarity of the text, which is not only highly informative but is presented with the infectious enthusiasm of one who is well used to teaching and demonstrating the practical skills of flintknapping to audiences all over the country. The book starts with the basic premise that the best way to understand flint technology and knapping (from the Dutch meaning to flake, snap or break) is to experience it yourself directly. Thus the reader is introduced in quick succession to the nature of flint, the knapper's toolkit, hammer types, selection of raw material and methods of working it. Jargon words are generally avoided or used sparingly and where they are used they are generally accompanied by an explanation. For example, some readers (myself included) may not have been familiar with the origins of the term 'quartering'. Lord explains this as a word used by gunflint knappers for describing the initial splitting of a flint nodule. The deceptively simple method is also illustrated and will doubtless save on many needlessly shattered hammerstones, not to mention jarred wrists.

The booklet is full of good advice for the novice flintknapper. This ranges from such obvious aspects of employing gloves and goggles, to the more serious underlying dangers of inhaling silica dust. The latter is explained in the form of the amusing jacket cover which purports to show the headstone of John Lord together with a special health warning about the hazards of knapping in confined spaces. However, judging by the dedication in the front of the book (to his wife Val, "who has destroyed more vacuum cleaners than any other woman that I know"), it is clear that he has not always heeded his own advice in these matters.

The illustrations deserve special mention. They include excellent colour photographs detailing the different knapping tools and methods used. Many of the line drawings are also in colour and apart from their information content, add greatly to the overall attractiveness of the presentation.

This lavishly illustrated and beautifully written booklet appears at the low price of £4.95 and is exceedingly good value for money (ed's note - see special price for LSS members below). The author, who promises a series of such booklets on the subject deserves to be hugely congratulated (or should I say 'lorded') on the results of Volume 1. If this an indication of the quality to expect, I, for one, can not wait to see the contents of Volume 2.

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HALF-PRICE SPECIAL OFFER

John Lord has offered to supply copies of his recent book on lithic technology (reviewed above) to members of the Lithic Studies Society at the special rate of £2.50 per copy. This represents a considerable discount on the normal retail price of £4.95. Please order directly from John mentioning the LSS and enclosing an additional 50p to cover postage and packing.

An additional discount of 10% will be allowed on orders in excess of 50 copies.