instance, that Howel John East Field (F30) is a base camp (27 flakes, 2 cores, 1 microlith, 1 microburin, 1 scraper) when Quarry Hill (F49) is classified as an extraction camp (34 flakes, 2 cores, 1 scraper, 1 denticulate, 1 retouched flake, 1 microburin, 15 miscellaneous retouched).

Having classified many of the assemblages on a functional basis, the report concludes with a consideration of some of the main areas in which lithic scatters are concentrated. It is argued that there is evidence for the seasonal occupation of some areas and the probable exploitation patterns for particular groups of sites are examined. There is little evidence for cereal pollen at the elm decline and it seems that agriculture may have spread slowly into the upland area alongside some pastoral activity and continued hunting and gathering.

There is no adequate discussion of the Neolithic or Bronze Age, despite the title of the volume, though the present writer noted in passing the high incidence of leaf and barred-and-tangde arrowheads compared to transverse forms; the concordance of the distributions of the first two types and very different distribution of the latter.

This report inspires mixed feelings. The author's enthusiasm and thoughtful approach to the subject are obvious and there are some useful and thought-provoking discussions. The report clearly emphasises the need for careful background research when dealing with surface lithic collections and takes a well-rounded approach to the environmental context. The adoption of the Neolithic to Mesolithic model for the Later Mesolithic seems to have been a considered decision, the site catchment analysis is carefully handled and the author's data collection methods and analyses suggest that he could have produced some startling results. Sadly, in the end, it is the quality of the data which is at fault and leaves the report begging many questions - a problem which faces all postgraduate researchers and one for which the author cannot be blamed.

One final point - rather larger 'period' maps than those included, showing the location of sites with their catalogue numbers, would have been useful for those of us who do not 'know the exact location of the River Wear... and... its archaeology, particularly its prehistory'.

Julie Gardiner, March 1988


Since it is notoriously difficult to review this type of multi-author volume without being selective, or generalising, it seems only fair to begin with a list of the contents:

F. Healy, 'Prediction or prejudice? The relationship between field survey and excavation', pp. 9 - 17
R. Entwhistle and J. Richards, 'The geochemical and geophysical properties of lithic scatters', pp. 19 - 38
R. Bradley, 'A field method for investigating the spatial structure of lithic scatters', pp. 39 - 52
J. Gardiner, 'Tales of the unexpected: approaches to the assessment and interpretation of museums flint collections', pp. 59 - 65
S. Ford, 'Chronological and functional aspects of flint assemblages', pp. 67 - 85
M. Tingle, 'Inferential limits and surface scatters: the case of the Maddie Farm and Vale of the White Horse fieldwalking survey', pp. 87 - 99
S. Ford, 'Flint scatters and prehistoric settlement patterns in south Oxfordshire and east Berkshire', pp. 101 - 135
A. Myers, 'All shot to pieces? Inter-assemblage variability, lithic analysis, and mesolithic assemblage types: some preliminary observations', pp. 137 - 153
R. Bradley, 'Flint technology and the character of Neolithic settlement', pp. 181 - 185

Listing the contents also gives the potential reader a clear idea of what kind of a volume this is, once it is appreciated that by 'later prehistoric' in the title the editors mean Mesolithic to Bronze Age. The 'approaches' under consideration are largely those of fieldwalking, of course. It is argued that fieldwalking in a British winter, the going is mostly heavy. The only paper I can honestly say I read with positive enjoyment was Julie Gardiner's, the first part of which should have required no reading at all for those who, like any other interested professional, have come face-to-face with flints in museum basements. Lithic collections in museums have been ignored for too long by prehistorians, who have the lack of interest of those of us who do not know what is at fault towards this material by museum professionals. One problem Gardiner does not mention is that of the 'School Loan factor'; in many museums, lithic material which is not from the immediate vicinity or is judged for other reasons to be 'unimportant' has been dumped into the School Loan Collections, where it is liable to come adrift from its provenance and to become damaged or even lost. It is difficult to quantify such losses, but there are grounds for suspecting that this 'School Loans factor', particularly in the case of lithic items, is of alarming proportions.

I am sure it is not entirely coincidental to my enjoyment of Gardiner's paper that it is the only one in the volume to contain an artefact illustration! Next in terms of user-friendliness come the papers by Bradley and Healy, which are admirably brief and well-written. Further test-cases need to be examined, but it may be that Healy will be seen to have hit upon a phenomenon of absolutely fundamental importance for the understanding of surface collections. Her thesis is that lithic depositional contexts changed during the Neolithic period with a trend away from subsoil deposits and away from Late Mesolithic deposits incorporated in the fill of subsoil features. Later Neolithic debris more often being discarded on the contemporary land surface - hence the relative rarity of Earlier Neolithic compared with Later Neolithic flint in the ploughsoil. The suggestion in one of Bradley's papers, that sedentism is more of a Later Neolithic trait than an Earlier one, thus explaining the
similarities between Later Mesolithic and Earlier Neolithic flintworking, and the contrasts between the extent of Earlier Neolithic and Later Mesolithic flint scatter, raise immediate contradictions with Healy's paper. Alternative hypotheses, such as the possibility that both Later Mesolithic and Earlier Neolithic settlement strategies were more sedentary than Later Neolithic ones, are equally tenable.

Steve Ford has a quarter of the volume to himself. In his first paper he makes a brave attempt to isolate chronological and functional indicators/trends from assemblages from known Mesolithic, Neolithic, and Bronze Age sites/contexts, for use in the interpretation of surface collections. The attempt, including the relatively rare but under-exploited attributes of broken flake cores, though laudable, produces data which may be perhaps too 'coarse and ... ambiguous' (p. 81) to justify the amount of time necessary to analyse surface scatter along these lines, because of the unknown bias and residuality affecting each such scatter. Ford's second paper, considers the two fieldwalking projects for which his analytical techniques were developed, and contains much useful information for others involved in similar fieldwork. Be warned, however, that gremlins have attacked the captions to the figures in this paper: the first fig. 8.3 is the North Stoke survey, not East Berkshire; the second fig. 8.3 is really fig. 6.4; and, in fig. 8.9, (a) is (b) and vice versa.

Tingle's paper is also a valid contribution to the fieldwalking literature. His observations (p.89 and fig. 7.2) on the results of fieldwalking the same field in consecutive years offer comfort to those contemplating controlled surveys of fields already 'flected' by others. Tingle's comments about the potentially misleading use of information from museum collections (p. 95) should be seen as a footnote to Gardiner's paper.

Andrew Myers pursues a computerized clustering analysis approach to questions of Mesolithic assemblage variability raised by Mellars in a 1976 paper. Myers laments the failure of lithic analysts to follow up Mellars' study, interpreting this as lack of interest; whereas the reviewer would prefer to see this as the result of understandable caution. The problem with the Mellars study of 1976 was that the database was extremely suspect, with many of the assemblages used being of questionable integrity (of nothing more than the standards of assemblage analysis applied to them), and therefore the assemblages were unsuitable for direct comparison in such a simplistic way. Myers does not share this view, and is even content to to use Mellars' percentages in his own analysis. Experience dictates, however, that it is rash to grant credibility to figures based, for example, on the identification of burins by the whole host of different analysts. In fact, after analysing all of the numerical evidence together, Myers himself points to a major weakness of the data in that both Earlier and Later Mesolithic assemblages are treated as directly comparable, when technological change during the Mesolithic, especially insofar as the use of microliths is concerned, suggests they should be analysed separately.

Edmonds and Thomas fire themselves directly into the frontline of the style war with a summary of recent literature on the concept of style as applied to prehistoric archaeology, followed by a consideration of the 'social role of archery' in prehistoric Britain. Arrowheads from the Neolithic onwards are seen as specifically 'male' items. the egalitarian leaf arrowhead of the Earlier Neolithic is succeeded by the elitist transverse arrowheads of the Later Neolithic, while in the Bronze Age there are special "display" versions of barbed and tanged arrowheads, which contrast with the coarser, everyday examples. The problem comes in relating the first part of this paper to the second. Where do the authors see style operating in a synchronic manner rather than a diachronic one with regard to the flint arrowheads? Chiefly among the transverse arrowheads, it would appear, seizing on the nine varieties of Clark rather than the three of Green in order to emphasize the degree of variability. This straightforward raise is a major difficulty in the stylistic interpretation of prehistoric artefacts, which is the separation of likely contemporary concepts of stylistic contrast from present-day archaeological subdivisions by type. Do the different kinds of transverse arrowhead really indicate different stylistic expressions, or are there at least two functionally separate categories, represented by the typological distinction between chisel and oblique? How do we interpret the differences between transverse arrowheads on the British mainland and those in Ireland?

This volume demonstrates that lithic analysis is alive and certainly living in Reading, and all concerned must be grateful for the lead taken by Richard Bradley in assigning to lithic studies an importance which is all too rare in our universities. Whether this volume demonstrates lithic analysis to be entirely 'well is another matter. One can agree wholeheartedly with the editors that '... we still wonder whether the papers presented here do in sum actually advance these causes very far. A few steps backwards for sure, but, to change the metaphor, one had hoped for a bit more fruit from the theoretical tree.

In general, the editors have done well in terms of the presentation of this volume. Apart from the transpositions in the second Steve Ford paper noted above, the only other editorial problems seen by this reviewer were the misplaced headings to table 2 in Hyers' paper, the repetition of a line to the flint scatter, it would appear, seizing on the nine varieties of Clark rather than the three of Green in order to emphasize the degree of variability. This straightforward raise is a major difficulty in the stylistic interpretation of prehistoric artefacts, which is the separation of likely contemporary concepts of stylistic contrast from present-day archaeological subdivisions by type. Do the different kinds of transverse arrowhead really indicate different stylistic expressions, or are there at least two functionally separate categories, represented by the typological distinction between chisel and oblique? How do we interpret the differences between transverse arrowheads on the British mainland and those in Ireland?

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