Ohel has also used the evidence from the coastal site at St. Adresse near Le Havre to support his hand-axe preparatory areas theory. The so-called Clactonian from this site is, from my own observations and visit to the site, of dubious age and bears little resemblance to the Acheulian. It is not to be confused with artifacts from the Acheulian site of the Station Romain nearby, although Ohel considers the two are contemporary. A geological assessment of the St. Adresse site is required before such contemporaneity can be claimed.

Select References


ARTICLES

IRON AGE FLINTWORKING - FACT OR FICTION? by Alan Saville

The opinion current among British lithicists, and the view to which the present writer is inclined to subscribe, is that the regular production and use of flint artifacts for everyday domestic activities declined and ceased altogether within the later Bronze Age. In southern England this means during the first half, and probably during the first quarter, of the first millennium BC. This major technological and industrial change would appear to correlate with the increased availability and durability of bronze, and its use to manufacture a wide range of domestic tools. With the introduction of iron technology flintworking was rendered obsolete, except in certain specialised situations, such as scale object manufacture, and in instances of ad-hoc usage. One of the latest radiocarbon determinations for a fully-fledged flint assemblage is that associated with the Middle Bronze Age settlement at Grimes Graves, Norfolk (BE-1097; 1134±44bc; Mercer 1981, 36), an assemblage which is probably already anachronistic in scale and scope, but stimulated by the unusually prolific availability of raw material.

This picture has now been challenged by A.J. Smith (1981) in her publication of the flints recovered during recent and past excavations at the Iron Age site of Moase West in Somerset. Smith claims (1981, 65) that her analysis "... establishes the definite manufacture and use of flint tools at the site, during the main period of occupation" (i.e. third century BC), and that "... it seems clear that a south-western flint knapping tradition of Iron Age date can be distinguished" (1981, P1.66). A critical reading of Smith's study would suggest that these claims are perhaps premature, since the evidence is by no means clear-cut.

Objections to Smith's claims may be summarised under the following headings:

Quantification and stratification. The 1979 excavations at Moase West produced a total of 124 flints. Smith (1981, 65) regards this as a "considerable number", which hardly seems appropriate when it is realised that the same excavations produced 50kg of Iron Age pottery (over 5,000 potsherds). The Iron Age pottery is concentrated stratigraphically in
the 'Black earth' deposits, in direct contrast to the flints of which the majority derive from the alluvially deposited 'soil'. The 1,469 flints recovered at Meare West by Bulleid and Gray during their excavation of a much more extensive area suggests that the general flint density is correspondingly as low as that recorded in 1979. The majority of flints from the earlier excavations were unstratified, but again flint was more common in the alluvial clay than in the Iron Age levels proper. If the Iron Age inhabitants of Meare were involved in regular flint production then far greater totals of waste debris should be apparent, and a closer stratigraphic correspondence between flint and pottery occurrence would be expected.

**Typology and condition.** The tool component of the Meare West flint assemblage appears to be dominated by somewhat undiagnostic scrapers, but does include two complete axeheads and six fragments from polished flint axeheads, as well as five leaf-shaped arrowheads. Artefacts of the latter two types Smith is happy to accept as Neolithic in date (1981, pl.61), as indeed she accepts a Mesolithic attribution for the "microliths", and a Bronze Age attribution for the barbed-and-tanged arrowhead. On the other hand Smith regards the petit-tranchet and triangular arrowheads and apparently all the knives and scrapers, as being of Iron Age date. This conclusion is based upon a lack of "patination", though in some cases it is suggested that "patinated" pieces represent earlier tools which were collected and reused in the Iron Age (Smith 1981, pl.59). "Patination" is a notoriously unreliable variable, dependent as it can be on microenvironmental conditions of deposition, and its occurrence at Meare West would need to be studied in detail in relation to the stratigraphy before it could be shown to have relevant chronological implications. Otherwise there is nothing about the typology of the implements present which would hinder an earlier prehistoric attribution, and in the case of the petit-tranchet arrowheads a recent exhaustive review of contextual associations has indicated a complete lack of evidence for survival of any transverse arrowheads beyond the fifteenth century (Green 1990, 111).

**Comparanda.** To support her arguments Smith refers to supposed Iron Age flint assemblages from Glastonbury and Ham Hill in Somerset, Maiden Castle in Dorset, and Carn Brea in Cornwall. Two of these sites, Ham Hill and Maiden Castle, have extensive traces of Neolithic settlement which would explain the presence of the flint assemblages more economically, and which anyway render these sites unsuitable for comparative purposes. Glastonbury Lake Village is a far larger site than Meare West, but has only 520 recorded flint artefacts, a total completely inappropriate for the hypothesis of active Iron Age flint production on site, and the same is true of Carn Brea. In fact this point was specifically made in the Carn Brea flint report (Saville 1978, 393), which also noted that the only diagnostic pieces were clearly of pre-Iron Age type. It may be concluded that none of the assemblages cited by Smith provides any definite evidence for Iron Age flintworking or flintwork.

Smith also fails to discuss in detail the problem of residuality, which must always loom so large in any consideration of the presence of flintwork on later prehistoric sites. The Meare assemblage does include items which are unquestionably out-of-context and residual on an Iron Age site, such as the leaf-shaped arrowheads, and there is no convincing explanation offered to contradict the suspicion that all the Meare flintwork is equally residual. Smith's suggestion that Iron Age people collected flint from sites of earlier periods could alternatively be explained by the ubiquity of earlier prehistoric presence in the Levels, which has led to a 'meared' overall distribution, or by the possibility of imported peat (Cone et al. 1979, 9) brought to Meare with artefacts incorporated.

In summary, therefore, the present writer would regard the presence of a small flint assemblage at Meare West as no more remarkable than those flint assemblages recorded from the excavation of many Romano-British and Medieval sites when full artefact recovery is practised, and no more indicative of post-Bronze Age flint production. There is no prima facie reason why Iron Age people should not have exploited the properties of flint which were so well known to their prehistoric predecessors, but this has yet to be archaeologically demonstrated in southern England, where the occurrence of residual flint in small quantities on Iron Age sites is the norm (Saville, 1979a, 145-6; 1981, 110-121). The problems posed by residuality will not make such a demonstration easy but the numerous large-scale excavations of Iron Age settlements now in progress - as at Crickley Hill in Gloucestershire and Danebury in Hampshire - will perhaps cast more light on the issue. Certainly all excavators of Iron Age sites are encouraged (cf. Saville 1979b, 2) to pay particular attention to the presence of lithic material so that further, quantifiable data may be accumulated.
Acknowledgement

I am grateful to Professor John Coles for his helpful comments on the initial draft of this note. Professor Coles himself supports the concept of Iron Age flintworking as described by Smith, so it should be stressed that the views offered here are the sole responsibility of the present writer.

References


**Readable Drawings - The Order of Flake Removals**

by Hazel Martingill

One of the main objectives of an illustrator of lithic artefacts is to produce 'readable' drawings. That is, a drawing which describes how the artefact was knapped rather than just its superficial appearance. Obviously the first thing to get right (Martingill 1980) is the exact overall size and depth of the artefact, together with its character - for example a hand axe should have a more rugged character than a delicate long thin blade. When the outline of the artefact has been established the sequence of flake removals and retouch can be considered. In order to reproduce this on a drawing the illustrator must be able to recognize that some flake scars are no longer complete but have been truncated or invaded by other scars as shown in Fig. 1.

![FIG. 1: COMPLETE AND TRUNCATED FLAKE SCARS](image-url)

1a Complete flake scar
1b Bulbar end removed, leaving an area of shallow ripples
1c Distal end broken, leaving the tightly rippled area of the negative bulb
1d Longitudinally truncated flake scar