

BUTSER KNAPPING WEEKEND 2015

R. Banbury, Publicity Officer

For the seventh year in a row, the Society was invited to hold its annual weekend of flint knapping at Butser Ancient Farm, south of Petersfield, Hampshire. In contrast to last year's storm-curtailed event, the weather turned out to be perfect with sunshine throughout both days (1–2 August).

A mix of experienced and novice knappers assembled early on Saturday morning ready to practice their skills and learn new techniques. We were pleased to have Paul Saddleton and Antony Whitlock on hand to give everyone the benefit of their combined knowledge and to demonstrate their expertise with flint.

With several long-established quarries having closed in recent years, it has become increasingly difficult to secure quality raw materials. We decided this time to buy a larger amount than usual—two tonnes of prime Norfolk nodules. To ensure that there was enough, we restricted the number of participants to 20. However, there were fewer attendees than expected so we have a surplus for the next event.

To offer a broad range of activities, Paul brought other materials such as antlers, hafting resins, twine and heat-treated flint. However, these went largely unused as knappers preferred to focus on improving handaxe skills or working on their own individual projects.

Courtesy of Antony and others, we were able to show a range of replica tools, handaxes, cores and arrows. This attracted a good deal of attention from the general public and many stopped to watch the knapping, handle the items on display and to ask questions. Several people mentioned that they had come specifically because they had seen the event advertised by Butser.

Following a request from the team running the venue, Mike Trevarthen kindly agreed to produce various flint artefacts to go on display in Butser's visitor centre. More of the Society's membership leaflets were also requested as these are the most frequently taken by visitors!

After the first day's exertions and with the visitors gone, we were able to relax and enjoy the traditional barbecue and drinks together. The fire in the large roundhouse was lit for our benefit, and was welcomed as the night cooled under a clear sky. Most people camped outside, but one intrepid committee member had the roundhouse to herself.

A misty dawn heralded the Sunday morning sunrise and another day of knapping was underway.

The site provided a relaxing environment to work in. For those who wished to pursue their own interests, there was time and opportunity



Butser knapping weekend 2015.

to experiment with different techniques and materials. The schedule was kept deliberately flexible to allow everyone to pursue their own interests, whether they required expert assistance or preferred to perfect their skills on their own.

We were appreciative of Paul's and Antony's efforts—their guidance, patience and expert knowledge made it an enjoyable event for everyone.

One student produced a discoidal knife and worked to bifacially polish the cutting edge using an abrasive rubbing stone.



Melissa Metzger polishing a discoidal knife.



Antony Whitlock was able to reduce large nodules to substantial flakes for handaxe production.

We would like to thank the staff at Butser Ancient Farm who helped to set up our work area; they were friendly and accommodating throughout the weekend. We look forward to going back again.

The Butser staff also commented favourably on the positive feedback that they had received from visitors who had seen the knappers in action, and were also keen to have us back again next year.

To that end, we have agreed to return on the weekend of the 6–7 August 2016. Put it in your diaries now.