

BOOK AND CONFERENCE REVIEWS

ANDERSON-WHYMARK, H. & POPE, M. 2016. *LATE QUATERNARY (UPPER PALAEOOLITHIC, MESOLITHIC AND LATER PREHISTORIC) HUMAN ACTIVITY IN THE DARENT VALLEY AT LULLINGSTONE COUNTY PARK, EYNSFORD, KENT.*

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This brief publication assembled by Hugo Anderson-Whymark and Matt Pope provides a succinct overview of the works undertaken at Lullingstone County Park, Eynsford, Kent, by Archaeology South-East and Surrey County Archaeological Unit. A series of prehistoric occupations were identified at the site, including *in situ* concentrations of material assigned to the terminal Upper Palaeolithic and Mesolithic, as well as limited numbers of artefacts from the Neolithic and Bronze Age. The works are of interest as they provide a significant contribution to the handful of high-resolution records of terminal Upper Palaeolithic long-blade manufacture and tool use, in close association with evidence of microlithic technology presumably associated with the early Mesolithic.

The volume is divided into six chapters. Chapters 1 and 2 are authored by Greg Priestly-Bell and Matt Pope. The first is introductory in nature and provides a brief overview of the archaeological fieldwork programme undertaken in advance of building work to extend a carpark at the Lullingstone County Park. The second is a more detailed stage-by-stage account of the excavation methodologies utilised during the archaeological investigations of the site. The level of detail provided on each stage varies quite significantly from only a couple of sentences in relation to the initial evaluation stage to more detailed description of the test pit sieving and watching brief. A more thorough description of the methodologies utilised in the initial stages would have been beneficial for understanding the nature of the collection and possible biases that might have occurred because of the different collection strategies employed. Some additional descriptive detail is given in subsequent sections and internal re-organisation of the chapter structure may have helped to better communicate the information that is given. An

outline of the observed lithic scatters is provided at the end of the chapter. An attractive series of plots illustrating the spatial distribution of the finds accompanied by photographs of the *in-situ* flint scatters is also provided.

Chapter 3 is related to the geological and palaeoenvironmental context of the site and outlines the excavation and post-excavation analyses undertaken by several authors. Martin Bates and Matt Pope begin the chapter with an overview of the sedimentary sequence as recorded during geoarchaeological test pitting. Useful lithographic data is summarised in tables from test pits GTP2 through GTP6. No information is given in relation to GTP1, which is the test pit identified in the volume as the focus of the Mesolithic scatter. Why the authors choose to omit this information is curious and its inclusion would have helped to provide a fuller picture of the sedimentary sequence. Furthermore, no lithographic description is given for EA1, which was the focus of lithic scatter assigned to the terminal Upper Palaeolithic.

The subsequent section provides an overview of the palaeoenvironmental evidence. It is subdivided into a report on the microfossils by John E. Whittaker and description of archaeobotanical remains from bulk soil samples by Dawn Mooney. The microfossil study is primarily focused on the analysis of freshwater ostracods. Even though the report highlights the preservation of other organic materials, such as plant debris, molluscs, slug plates, and insect, little more is made of this material. A more detailed description of the organic remains, beyond that restricted to the freshwater ostracods, would have been a useful addition and helped to provide a fuller picture of the palaeoenvironmental sequence. The accompanying series of tables list organic remains by broad category (e.g. molluscs,

earthworm granules, etc.) and only in the case of ostracods by species (e.g. *Candona neglecta*, *Ilyocypris bradyi*). No absolute counts are given, and tabulated data is restricted to the presence of each class. A description of the methodology is also lacking and may have helped to provide a better understanding of the procedures utilised during this work.

The archaeobotanical assessment of the bulk soil samples is incredibly brief and is primarily restricted to the quantification of material in tabulated form. The author also gives the results of associated radiocarbon dating efforts. A single age on charred hazelnut is given as a potential date for the Mesolithic flint scatter (SUERC-49677, 7313 ± 27 BP), but unfortunately no secure date is given for any of the contexts associated with terminal Upper Palaeolithic lithic assemblage. Information on the radiocarbon ages is suitably succinct, although it would have been useful to see the ages calibrated using the most recent IntCal13 curve (Reimer *et al.*, 2013).

A brief description of the results of soil micromorphometric analysis is also provided by Richard Mcphail. Most of the information is summarised in tables. A crude photograph of the soil monoliths is the only figure and an additional illustration showing the relative stratigraphic position of micromorphological samples would have been helpful.

Matt Pope brings together the information from the geoarchaeological and palaeoenvironmental records at the end of the chapter and highlights the broader significance of the sequence for understanding climate change potential during MIS 6 – MIS 5e and the opportunity for uncovering similar sediments in the area containing Palaeolithic archaeology. Unfortunately, there is a typographical error in the author's surname in the title of the section and this highlights some weaknesses in editing throughout the volume.

Chapter 4 concerns the nature of the lithic artefacts collected from during the excavations and the description of material is provided by Hugo-Anderson Whymark. The first section of the chapter provides an extremely brief overview of the subdivision of the material into three broad groups: A terminal Upper

Palaeolithic (TUP) long-blade assemblage recovered primarily as an *in-situ* scatter; a Mesolithic scatter preserved in the same head deposits; and, an extensive spread of residual Neolithic and Bronze Age flintwork. The focus of the chapter is on the terminal Upper Palaeolithic and Mesolithic assemblages. The subsequent description of the lithic artefacts is well conducted, and the author provides a clear account of the raw materials and reduction strategies utilised. An especially detailed description of the shaping and management of cores, alongside blank production, is provided for the lithic artefacts assigned to the terminal Upper Palaeolithic. It is supported by the extensive refitting of material, with five core refit groups identified. The analyses show that all stages of core reduction were undertaken at the site, although cores were also prepared elsewhere and imported after extensive working. In all cases, long blade manufacture appears to have been the primary objective of core reduction during the terminal Upper Palaeolithic. Description of the scatter categorised as Mesolithic is less detailed and systematic refitting of the collection was not undertaken. Nonetheless, the analysis shows clearly that the manufacture of smaller blanks and production of microlithic tools using the microburin technique was conducted at the site.

Even though the descriptive text is particularly insightful, the accompanying tabulated data is often confusing. A summary of lithic artefact counts from each stage of works is provided in four different tables. Each table is listed by context and artefact type and whilst this is valuable information it may have been presented in a more succinct fashion. As well as providing the aforementioned information, the author also uses a series of different symbols within each table to cross-reference the specific number of artefacts from each context attributed to each industry. Not only is this difficult to interpret but given that subsequent tables list the artefact types for each of the main industries it is arguably unnecessary. Furthermore, there appear to be some numerical inaccuracies in the artefact count data. For instance, the total number of artefacts given for the terminal Upper Palaeolithic assemblage differs between Table 4.5 and 4.9.

Both line drawings and photographs are given. Most of the images are good quality, although the tendency to provide photographs of core refits is somewhat frustrating, as it is often difficult to identify conjoins between artefacts. It would have been beneficial if paired line drawings and photographs were given for each of the refitted cores, as this would have helped to resolve this issue, which is done in the case of core 5. Another minor issue is the lack of consistency in the scaling of photographs, which makes it somewhat difficult to appreciate the relative size of cores.

A major limitation is the discursive elements of the chapter and accompanying arguments for classifying the scatters into separate terminal Upper Palaeolithic and Mesolithic assemblages. It appears that the assemblages are subdivided primarily on the occurrence of large blades in the former case and evidence of microlith manufacture and the use of the microburin technique in the latter case. Even though I do not necessarily dispute the identification of separate industries, a more extensive discussion on this subject would have been particularly helpful given the paucity of knowledge surrounding the transition between the terminal Upper Palaeolithic and early Mesolithic and ongoing debate about the nature of the lithic assemblages. Even though long blades may be most characteristic of the terminal Pleistocene assemblages (Barton 1989, 1998, 2009), both the sites of Launde, Leicestershire (Cooper 2006), and Three Ways Wharf, Uxbridge (Lewis & Rackham 2011), have provided notable quantities of microlithic armatures, and exploration of the idea that the distinct lithic scatters at the site were part of the same heterogeneous industries would have been useful, even if subsequently the alternative hypothesis that each scatter belonged to separate industry was adopted.

Chapter 5 and 6 are authored by Matt Pope and provide discussion of the nature of the lithic assemblages considering the inferred site formation processes and final concluding remarks. A brief mention is made at the start of the discussion about the presence of microlith technology in terminal Upper Palaeolithic long-blade assemblages, but the possible contemporaneity of the lithic scatters at the site is only briefly touched upon. The major focus

of the discussion is on the observed size differences in the two scatters assigned to the terminal Upper Palaeolithic and the Mesolithic. The author suggests that intentional selection of objects is the most probable explanation for size differences in artefacts between the scatters, with the possibility that the larger material was intentionally cached in a pit during the terminal Upper Palaeolithic. If this was the case, it would be the first documented evidence of caching behaviour documented in southern Britain, although such behaviour has been documented in the Vale of Pickering, North Yorkshire (Conneller and Schadla-Hall 2003). However, the author also highlights the possibility that the relatively large size of pieces in the terminal Upper Palaeolithic assemblage might be the result of natural post-depositional processes or simply biased archaeological recovery. Unfortunately, the weaknesses in describing the excavation methodologies and stratigraphy at the beginning of the volume make it difficult to independently evaluate the different competing scenarios offered and detract from the interpretative value of the final discussion, which is otherwise interesting and well-constructed.

Overall, this volume provides a useful account of the terminal Upper Palaeolithic and Mesolithic assemblages recovered from Lullingstone County Park. The study provides an important addition to the steadily growing body of data relating to the nature of human colonisation of Britain at the terminal Pleistocene/early Holocene transition. Barring relatively minor issues with the presentation of data, the refitting of lithic artefacts undertaken as part of the study provides a particularly useful insight into the methods of core reduction and blank manufacture utilised associated with terminal Upper Palaeolithic long-blade technology. However, weaknesses in outlining the excavation methodologies and describing the stratigraphy of the site make it difficult to judge competing hypotheses relating to the interpretation of the assemblages. Even though a more thorough treatment of these issues would have improved the study of assemblages from the Lullingstone County Park site, this volume assembled by Hugo Anderson-Whymark and Matt Pope provides a useful resource for scholars interested in the terminal

Pleistocene/early Holocene transition in Britain.

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