

***The Joy of Flint.* Waddington, C. 2004. Museum of Antiquities, University of Newcastle. ISBN 07017 0165 X (paperback). £11.99 + £2.50 P & P. Available from the Museum of Antiquities, The Quadrangle, University of Newcastle NE1 7RU (0191 2227849).**

The front cover of 'The Joy of Flint' features a colourful photograph of a leather and sheepskin clad John Lord filmed flint-knapping during a BBC 'Meet the Ancestors' programme. I wonder if the title of the book jokingly refers to a similarly-entitled volume first published in the 1970s which also features a long-haired, bearded man, in that case accompanied by a hirsute woman? Admittedly they were not discovering the 'joy' of flint, but this book makes a firm case for flint being interesting, if not 'sexy' (although personally I hate that expression when it is applied to things that clearly are not). I digress, despite its flippant title, the book is well-written and beautifully-produced and in my opinion it will appeal to students, particularly incipient flint specialists, professionals and interested amateurs alike.

Although based on material from the collections held by the Museum of Antiquities of the University of Newcastle and the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, the scope of the book, which also provides a Gazetteer of the collections, is not restricted to the north-east. Instead it provides good, clear summaries of raw materials, flintworking techniques, identifiable flints by period and an easy-to-understand guide to methods of lithic interpretation, as well as a useful glossary and an extensive up-to-date bibliography and further reading section. My only criticisms are that the interpretation chapter might have been a little longer and more detailed and that the Gazetteer appears to be somewhat tagged on at the end. Nevertheless, the reader is directed to further reading if they want to pursue the various interpretative techniques listed and the Gazetteer will be useful to local researchers.

While the author modestly claims that his book is neither 'definitive nor in-depth' he has succeeded in providing a concise, accurate and accessible introduction to flint and stone tools from the Palaeolithic period to the present day. This book is the closest you can get to participating in an engaging flint practical as opposed to being bored into oblivion by a dry lecture about flint tool-making, the latter being exactly the kind of off-putting approach adopted in many universities and which has contributed to a low incidence of young researchers in the field. By contrast, the author's lavishly illustrated, no-nonsense, hands-on approach is far more valuable and informative to students at all levels, from school-age to undergraduate, postgraduate and lifelong learning. Hopefully this study will be useful to those who were not taught much about flint as undergraduates but find themselves having to deal with it during fieldwork and to commission specialists to assess and report on it. This book will be particularly useful in aiding on-site recognition of struck flint, as well as in introducing the reader to what a specialist can do, or, perhaps more importantly, what you can do if you become one yourself.

Lynne Bevan