

The Late Glacial in North-West Europe: Human Adaptation and Environmental Change at the End of the Pleistocene. Edited by N. Barton, A.J. Roberts and D.A. Roe. Council for British Archaeology Research Report No. 77. 1991. 279pp. Price £32.00.

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The volume under review is the product of a conference held at Oxford in September 1989 on the Late Glacial in north-west Europe. The conference was successful in attracting a large overseas contingent and this is fully reflected in the proceedings as only 7 of the 24 papers are from contributors based in Great Britain.

At the outset the editors are to be congratulated on producing a volume of high quality in such a relatively short time. All too often nowadays either a considerable period elapses before conference proceedings appear or quality suffers in order to achieve speedy publication. It might be feared that the price of £32 may not allow as full a dissemination of this work as would be hoped, but it is a fact of modern life that most reports or proceedings of any size are in excess of £30 and it is something of a relief if prices do not extend beyond £40. The price does not however seem to have deterred buyers as over half the print run has been sold.

As there is not space to discuss each paper, I will only touch on those that have caught my attention, particularly in relation to lithics, with apologies to authors not referred to. The first paper to mention is that by Becker and Kromer dealing with their work on dendrochronology and radiocarbon calibration, notably the recognition of plateaus of radiocarbon dates due to fluctuation in atmospheric radiocarbon. Radiocarbon dates around 10,000 BP and 9550 BP in fact encompass periods of about 250 and 500 years respectively. This is critical for the lithic specialist as establishing a chronology of technological change for the Late Glacial and Early Postglacial is largely reliant on radiocarbon dates due to the scarcity of stratified sequences.

The subject of dating brings me neatly onto the paper by Housley on the work of the Radiocarbon Accelerator Unit in Oxford. Nowadays no conference of this sort seems complete without a contribution on the subject of AMS dates, and it is useful to have a list of all dates from NW Europe covering the Upper Palaeolithic and Mesolithic. Housley also touches on the problem of 'compressions' or plateaus, in the radiocarbon record as well as dealing with the general strategy and philosophy of the Oxford lab. Of particular note is his suggestion that the compression factor could account for the concentration of dates around 12,400 BP. Results of further work, extending tree-ring chronologies to cover this period will be eagerly awaited.

The impact of AMS dates on studies of the Late Glacial is amply demonstrated in two papers by Currant and Lister on faunal topics. It is the dating of specimens by Oxford that provides the cores of these papers; from Gough's Cave and Chelm's Combe in the case of Currant's article, and mammoths for Lister's. The recognition that mammoths returned to Britain after the period of the Last Glacial Maximum with evidence from five sites including Gough's is of particular note. It is also worth emphasising that the Lister's work on mammoths from the Devensian has produced "no evidence that mammoth was being hunted".

It is clear that it is impossible to divorce Late Glacial studies in Britain from work going on elsewhere in Northern and Western Europe, and the contributions dealing with continental studies are very useful. Of specific interest in term of lithic technology is the presentation of the evidence from the site of Schweskau, Lower Saxony, Germany, in a paper by Breest and Veil. The discussion of the relationship of the Schweskau assemblage with various technological groupings, the Magdalenian, the Hamburgian and the Creswellian, is of broader significance, as is the consideration of the *en éperon* technique of blade production. This highly distinctive butt feature is likely to prove an important chronological type fossil, and it has already been recognised in this country at the site of Three Holes Cave in the Torbryan Valley (Barton 1990). Increased familiarity with the features associated with this technique among archaeologists in this country may allow a wider recognition of Later Upper Palaeolithic sites, particularly from field-walking collections (advances in this area may already have been made, Jacobi pers. comm.).

It is instructive to note that the majority of the European sites discussed are in river valley locations (i.e. Schweskau, Belloy-sur-Somme, Bedburg-Königshoven), and in the Ahrensburg Tunnel (including the famous sites of Stellmoor and Meiendorf). The potential of such areas for studies of the Late Glacial has long been recognised on the continent but the same cannot be said for this country. Later Upper Palaeolithic archaeology in Britain is still dominated by cave sites, as is well demonstrated by the databases available to David and Jacobi in their respective papers on the Late Glacial in Wales and the 'Creswellian'. Even though, as Jacobi points out, "a decreasing proportion of Late Glacial findspots ... are to be associated with caves ... few of these [open air sites] ... have been followed up by surface survey or excavation". It is also depressing to note that the number of known sites is only increasing very slowly and most of the new ones consist of the findspots of single lithic artefacts. David can only lament the fact that the database available to him is little different to that used by Mortimer Wheeler in 1925. It is clear that new strategies will have to be developed to tackle this problem particularly in regard to river valleys. A starting point could be to seek out similar valley formations to that containing the classic sites of Meiendorf and Stellmoor. Tunnel or funnel-like valley formations seem likely to offer a high potential for finding

buried Late Glacial sites, particularly if they are in regions of known sites such as South Devon or Northern Somerset/Avon.

Bearing in mind the above comments it is very pleasing to note the interim report by Lewis on the work carried out at Three Ways Wharf, Uxbridge. Earlier research had indicated the presence of early Flandrian sites in the Colne Valley, and an appropriate strategy was employed to investigate the area. The scatters of lithic and faunal material that were eventually uncovered make it potentially one of the key sites in Britain for understanding the changes taking place during the transition from the late Devensian to the early Flandrian. Having stated that, it is not surprising to find Uxbridge discussed by Barton in his paper on exactly this subject. Barton's contribution undoubtedly represents a major advance in establishing the changing nature of lithic assemblages around 10,000BP. It should be remembered, however, that Barton is forced to extrapolate from the evidence of only 12 sites. This lack of sites is even more striking if the two radiocarbon compressions discussed by Becker and Kromer are taken into account.

The paper by Jacobi is, for the lithic specialist, one of the two key papers presented in the volume (the other being Barton's). Jacobi considers the term 'Creswellian', first proposed by Garrod in 1926, with special reference to the sites at Creswell Crags and Cheddar Gorge. Jacobi's conclusion is that use of the term 'Creswellian' as synonym for the British Later Upper Palaeolithic is no longer valid. There are certainly a group of sites that can be linked by the presence of 'trapezoidal side-blades' ('Cheddar points'), but these now seem likely to be one aspect of a typological and technological diversity current at the time. Jacobi therefore maintains that the term 'Creswellian' should be used to describe a specific industry. There certainly seems to be a strong case for describing assemblages purely in terms of their typological and technological features in order to understand the overlapping distributions in time and space of the various traits.

The last paper to mention is that by Speth concerning the implications of nutritional constraints on Late Glacial hunter-gatherers. As he says "most studies of prehistoric foraging adaptations assume that protein, especially the protein from animals, was the single most important nutrient and that foraging strategies were primarily directed towards maximising the acquisition of meat". This however may not in fact be the case, as diets containing an excess of protein can have serious detrimental effects. A prolonged diet involving a protein intake that represents more than 50% of the daily caloric intake can cause liver and kidney impairments as well as other problems. The human body appears to be severely limited in the rate at which it can effectively metabolise protein. Near recent or modern hunter-gatherers have tended to overcome this problem by selectively seeking out fatty meat and marrow (see Speth for references). Similar

strategies to deal with this nutritional constraint would have been employed by hunter-gatherers of the Late Glacial in Europe, and Speth discusses what these might have been. This has important implications when attempting to reconstruct subsistence patterns as well as directly interpreting traces found on archaeological sites.

In this review I have unashamedly touched on those papers that have caught my attention, or which I think are of the greatest importance to lithic studies. Another reviewer would have almost certainly highlighted a different selection of papers given the broad range of topics covered in the volume. It is quite clear that these conference proceedings represent a major contribution to Late Glacial studies not only in Britain but in the whole of Northern Europe. Given the relative dearth of books dealing with this period it is almost certainly going to become one of those classic works that are so eagerly sought after by students in second-hand bookshops long after it is out of print.

References

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- Garrod, D.A.E. 1926. *The Upper Palaeolithic Age in Britain* (Oxford, Clarendon Press).
- Wheeler, R.E.M. 1925. *Prehistoric and Roman Wales* (Oxford).

NOT JUST A BOOK ABOUT NOMADS

Nomads in Archaeology by Roger Cribb. Cambridge New Studies in Archaeology. 1991. 253pp £35.00

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A historical perspective

Occasionally (and, sadly, all too infrequently) a book or research paper comes along which challenges us to review the way we analyse and interpret data, whether artefacts, artefact collections, artefact distributions or the cultural context within which any of the above occur. This, of