

The Sixth International Flint Symposium, Spain, October 1991.

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The imposing hall of the Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Cientificas in Madrid provided the main location for the first Spanish hosting of the Flint Symposium. Over 100 delegates, both archaeologists and geologists, gathered to present and/or listen to a bewildering variety of talks. The task of selecting which talks to attend (and of understanding what was being said) was greatly eased by the very impressive 'Abstracts' volume all delegates received at the start of the Symposium. This publication (Bustillo and Ramos Millan 1991) sets a new standard which will be very hard to emulated.

The 'Abstracts' volume was just part of a hefty delegate's pack, thoughtfully presented to us in shoulder-bags bearing the Symposium logo. Not so thoughtful for those who like to travel light was the inclusion in the pack of a large, carefully gift-wrapped chunk of polished flint, complete with stand and labelled 'VI Flint Symposium', but this piece of kitsch now has a cherished place in my study!

As usual, the geological and archaeological sessions were mainly held in parallel, and I attended some 48 archaeological talks spread over the four days, arranged in sessions on flint exploitation, flint mining, flint supply and lithic economics, source determination, flint technology, and use-wear. It is impossible to review all these in detail, and most will be available in print in due course in the Symposium Proceedings to be edited by Antonio Ramos Millan; suffice it to say that while the quality of content and presentation varied enormously, one could not help but be impressed at the range and depth of lithic studies going on throughout Europe and beyond.

This symposium marked an interesting comeback for researches on mining sites, which were of course the catalyst for the initial concept of the Flint Symposium. Mines and quarries from Italy, France, Australia, Egypt, Spain, Holland, Scotland, England, and Poland were featured. Polish archaeologists were strongly represented at the Symposium, and a whole morning session was debated to the extensively excavated, 36-hectare Krzemionki mining site south of Warsaw. There was also a very good poster-session on Krzemionki which served to emphasise the importance of this key site. There was, however, little that was entirely new to be reported about Krzemionki, so one felt the proceedings were a little unbalanced when, for example, the stunning recent work at Jablines in France was rushed through in barely half an hour. Nevertheless, it was the session on mining which saw the most animated and entertaining discussion, following on from spirited disagreement between two Polish archaeologists over the social

organisation of flint mining. Perhaps inevitably in these confusing post-Communist times, one side was adamant that the mining at Krzemionki must have been controlled by a 'Big Man'!

The geographical spread of the talks was probably the widest yet at a Flint Symposium, with discussion of lithic materials from the USA, Argentina, Syria, Germany, Hungary, Switzerland, Belgium, Portugal, and Greece, in addition to those countries listed in the previous paragraph. The respective delegate representation at the Symposium was curious, however, with only one German archaeologist and only five from Britain. Relatively high prices and the timing at the beginning of the academic year may have deterred the British, but a similarly poor showing from France may have more to do with the official Symposium languages being English and Spanish!

A novel feature of this Symposium was a sprinkling of invited papers by distinguished key speakers. Only one of these was given in plenary session - the opening talk by Raymond Siever from Harvard on 'Chert and oceanic silica through geologic time'. Most archaeologists, myself included, found this survey way over our heads and were too readily distracted by the speaker's temperamental microphone and by the first of many annoying aural intrusions from the chain-saw being used to lop trees outside the conference hall! The invited archaeological papers were a magisterial survey by Jacek Lech (Poland) on 'Prehistoric flint mining and flint supply in European archaeology', which took us right back to the earliest work at Cissbury; Katalin Takacs-Biro (Hungary) on the 'Raw material economy of the Late Neolithic' in her country; and Isabel McBryde (Australia) on 'Stone quarries, production and exchange in Aboriginal Australia'. McBryde also showed on video the excellent film 'The spear in the stone', made by Kim McKenzie for the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies. This is a truly enlightening film which deserves wider screening to the general public as well as to archaeologists.

As a general comment, I felt that too many of the Symposium talks failed by making absolutely no concessions to their audience. For example, it seemed completely pointless for several speakers to simply read, without any further embellishment, a text printed in the 'Abstracts' volume, while those speakers who read a text very fast in their own language, without using any visual aids at all, were not helping an international audience appreciate their work. Perhaps the speakers who did this were aware in advance of how disaster-prone the slide projection would be; some speakers had their presentations inexcusably ruined by projector difficulties which the organisers should have been able to avoid.

The session on use-wear studies did little or nothing to improve the status of this lithic Cinderella. An initial disappointment was the absence of Roger Grace, billed to give a talk entitled 'From Newton to Chaos in lithic use wear', to which many were looking forward, but the session itself was marred by the inability of the two chairpersons to keep to programme or to time, leading to the kind of chaos which Grace might well have anticipated.

The social side of the Symposium was complicated by the delegates being split between numerous hotels and hostels in different parts of Madrid, but the reception at the Town Hall on the first evening and the Farewell Dinner on the last were a great success. However, it was a very big disappointment on the evening visit to the National Archaeological Museum in Madrid to discover no member of staff on hand to welcome us or introduce us to the Museum and its collections - and what magnificent collections! This inexplicable own goal on the part of the Museum left everyone somewhat bemused as we drifted anticlimatically around the displays.

The general consensus, as I picked it up, seemed to be that this was not one of the best Flint Symposia, though it had its moments and the quality of work presented in both the lectures and the poster sessions cannot be gainsaid. Even so, for many the highlight was the fantastic bookstall laid on by Portico Librerias of Zaragoza. There was a special Symposium book catalogue, and the conference hall lobby had tables spread with a wonderful feast of publications on lithics from around the world, including British publications now unobtainable new over here. The fact that the booksellers took plastic meant many delegates had a lean following month!

The Symposium was preceded by a geological excursion in northern Spain, and succeeded by an archaeological one to the south east, terminating in Almeria. Again the handbook for the archaeological field excursion was splendid (Ramos Millan *et al.* 1991), and the trip itself was a visual treat, culminating in a visit to the remarkable Fort 1 at Los Millares in the process of excavation. Nevertheless, the trip was not without its problems, and perhaps future Symposia organisers should consider a return to the format last used at the Brighton Symposium in 1983, whereby site visits are an integral part of the main proceedings in which all delegates participate. Such visits give the chance for both geologists and archaeologists to appreciate and discuss the same sites and locations, more easily fostering the inter-disciplinary dialogue which is surely one of the main aims of the Flint Symposia?

For 1995 the International Committee have selected Poland as the first-choice host country. The hope was unanimously expressed that our colleagues in Poland will be able to succeed in their plans for that will undoubtedly be a major event.

References

Bustillo, M.A. and Ramos Millan, A (eds). 1991. *VI International Flint Symposium: Abstracts*. Madrid (ISBN 84-00-07180-8).

Ramos Millan, A., Martinez Fernandez, G., Rios Jimenez, G. and Afonso Marrero, J.A. 1991. *Flint production and exchange in the Iberian Southeast, III millennium BC (VI International Flint Symposium Post-Symposium Field Trip)*. Granada (ISBN 84-338-1437-0).

BOOK REVIEWS

Hengistbury Head, Dorset. Volume 2: The Late Upper Palaeolithic and Early Mesolithic Sites by R.N.E. Barton, with contributions from D.E. Barton, C.E. Bergman, S.N. Collcutt, J. Cook, J. Huxtable, I. Levi-Sala, R.I. MacPhail, E.J. Rhodes, J.L. Ruiz, C. Salter, R. Sanderson, R.G. Scaife, B.A. Tocher and R. Unger-Hamilton. Oxford University Committee for Archaeology Monograph No. 34. 1992. 299pp. Price £38.00.

Roger Jacobi

This volume presents the results of the 1980-84 excavations at the Late Upper Palaeolithic (Mace) and Early Mesolithic (Powell) sites, 650 metres apart on the southern margin of Hengistbury Head, Dorset. The former had already been sampled by Angela Mace in 1957 and by John Campbell in 1968-9, while the latter was only discovered by Ronald Powell in 1977. In addition, excavation of 96m² of the Upper Palaeolithic sites was supplemented by trial pitting of a 660m² area - the Eastern Depression - to its north.

Let it be said that at a time when archaeology appears to be heading for publication hyperdrive - strangulation by paper guaranteeing academic survival - yet another monograph, this time with 15 contributors, would normally occasion only dread. In this case, think again.

Firstly, I congratulate Nick Barton on his decision to produce what is, in effect, a single text divided into chapters not by individual contributors but by the sense of the contents. Secondly, I congratulate him on achieving what is, by and large, not an easy road. As an outsider to this research, and only sometimes an observer, I appreciated being gently led through the history of past work, project design, excavation and post-excavation methodology and then step by step to the results and discussion of results. The effect of this integrated text is very much that of a well-prepared lecture, and we all know how rare that is.

Before passing on to the 'meat', it is worth further commenting to a Society, many of whose members are hopefully still interested in lithic artefacts rather than the theory of lithics, that this is one of what are still relatively few examples of a report where there has been a clear understanding between technologist and artist. The fine drawings (by Rupert Cook, Hazel Martingell, Jeffrey Wallis and Christine Wilson) are thankfully traditional, and so legible. Can I also recommend the decision to use photographs to illustrate the majority of the re-fitting in preference to line-drawings which are both expensive and, because of their complexity,