

Surrey Historic Landscapes Project: field-walking on Bockett's Farm and in Norbury Park, Fetcham and Mickleham led by the late Steve Dyer

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Summary

As part of a landscape survey of the chalk downs west of the Mole Gap all available arable land was field-walked. The results are presented here and confirm the view that prehistoric activity in Surrey was concentrated on the greensand. A scatter of Romano-British (RB) pottery, augmented by the results of a metal detector rally organised by the late David Williams, and crop marks observed on aerial photographs, suggest the presence of either a farmstead or a religious site on the ridge of the North Downs.

Background

In the late 1980s Dave Field and this author discussed setting up a landscape survey in the county – recognising that Surrey had fallen behind much of the rest of the country in terms of landscape survey and wondering whether above ground archaeology over extensive areas had survived in the county. Eventually the Surrey Historic Landscapes Project developed as a joint initiative between Surrey County Council and the Surrey Archaeological Society under the leadership of the late Steve Dyer. The original brief was to study and record the landscape archaeology of the Mole Gap as a three-year project (1991-1994), but as work progressed it became clear that the density of features found, together with the difficulty of accessing them in what had been extensively wooded terrain after the storms of 1987 and 1991, meant limiting the area studied to the west side of the river. The east side was later investigated as the Mickleham Downs Project and designated an Area of Special Historic Landscape Value (ASHLV) under the leadership of the late Chris Currie (Currie 2000). A report on the survey of earthworks on the western side of the river has already been produced (Dyer 1996) and assessment of lynchets on both sides suggests that they were portions of a prehistoric, probably Bronze Age (BA), coaxial field system stretching across the valley (English 2013, chap 3).

The aim of this note is to record the results of field-walking undertaken by members of the Surrey Archaeological Society, Leatherhead and District Local History Society and Surrey Young Archaeologists Club, of ploughed land on the western side of the Mole, primarily on Bockett's Farm.

Geology, topography and present land use

The location of the area under study is shown in figure 1. The river Mole passes through the North Downs in a series of wide meanders leaving alternating series of areas of low-lying meadow and high river cliffs on either side. Only a narrow band of alluvium and terrace gravels exist on either side of the river. On the west side of the river the chalk downs achieve a height of 144m OD north of Westhumble before sloping steeply to the south and more gradually to the north. There is little exposure of Middle Chalk and areas of the Upper Chalk on the ridge of the downs carries superficial deposits of Clay-with-Flints. At the base of the dip-slope are narrow exposures of clay, silts, sand and gravels of the Lambeth Group.

Bockett's Farm occupies much of the northern portion of the dip-slope and is now a leisure farm. There are arable fields in the centre of the block but the southern Chapel Valley and the Mole Valley are primarily used as pasture. Much of the top of Fetcham Downs and the side of the Mole Valley are covered by woodland and scrub with extensive public access. A small area of private land on top of the downs surrounds Norbury Park House, an Italianate mansion of 1774.

Field-walking

The fields examined are shown in figure 2. Fields were walked in lines placed 10m apart with walkers returning half way between the lines. Participants had varying degrees of experience and although newcomers were paired with those who were skilled in the procedure differences in the efficiency of artefact recovery was inevitable. Collection strategy excluded post-medieval building material, 19th century and later pottery and all glass and plastic. Artefacts were sorted and the retained objects bagged, washed and marked using the Tithe Map / Award field name and the line number. When it was realised that there was a concentration of RB pottery in Bocketts Park Corner that area of the field was re-walked in a 5m grid.

WORKED FLINT

A total of 1395 pieces of worked flint were recovered from the 51.3ha of arable land field walked. The breakdown in forms found in each field is shown in Table 1 and the distribution of a limited number of forms in figure 3; the numbers of most types of artefact were too small for the distribution to be statistically meaningful.

A small number of the more interesting pieces are shown in figure 4 and fully described in the appendix. From Thorncroft Six Acres comes a combination tool created from a thick, keeled blade comprising an end scraper at the proximal end, two small scrapers on the ‘horns’ of a Y-shaped distal end, one of which incorporates a point usable as a borer or piercer, with effectively a notched scraper between the two ‘horns’ (fig 4.1). From the same field come part of a possible knife (fig 4.2), a fabricator (fig 4.3), an obliquely backed point (class 1a microlith, Jacobi 1978) (fig 4.4) and a short, round, steeply-flaked end scraper (fig 4.5). Bocketts Howes Field produced an end scraper with almost the entire edge of the flake ground smooth probably by using an abrasive stone (fig 4.6). Another end scraper, this time on a blade was found in Bocketts Further Longcut (fig 4.7) and from Bocketts Park Corner came a piercer with the point worked all the way round, thus a ‘rotating awl’ (Clark 1960) (fig 4.8).

In more general terms little can be said since the great majority of the worked flint cannot be assigned to a particular period. Blades, probably of Mesolithic or Early Neolithic date, are concentrated in two areas, Thorncroft Six Acres and the two portions of Bocketts Fetcham Field. Both are close to water sources, the first named is situated on a gravel terrace on the west bank of the Mole whilst Fetcham Field is on a gentle north-facing slope immediately south of a spring point at Bocketts Farm. Blade cores occur in small numbers but above average numbers were recovered from both these sites suggesting camps where flint nodules were processed.

Waste flakes were found in all the fields walked with higher concentrations clustering around the Bocketts Farm spring point. It is worth noting that no flake cores were located in any of the fields walked although these are perhaps most easily confused with plough-shattered nodules and may have been missed. Scrapers and utilised pieces, flakes with evidence of secondary working but not corresponding with any of the standard tool forms, have a very similar distribution with concentrations both beside the Mole in Thorncroft Six Acres and around the spring point at Bocketts.

Prehistoric pottery (identified by Mike Seager Thomas)

Only a very small assemblage of prehistoric pottery was recovered and the identification is shown in table 2. The great majority comes from Bocketts Park Corner and dates to the LBA

/ EIA – hardly surprising, firstly since the area was both line and grid walked and, secondly because the area is set within a co-axial field system most likely of BA date.

Romano-British pottery

During line walking Bockett's Park Corner it became clear that a concentration of RB pottery existed and the eastern portion of that field was re-walked in a 5m x 5m grid and all pottery collected. A total of just over 2kg pottery was recovered; the finds from the entire field are presented in table 3 and those from the grid-walking in figure 5. Some 70% was unsourced sand-tempered ware, a further 20% derived from the Alice Holt / Farnham industries and the remainder from farther afield. The date range encompasses the entire RB period. The grid walking produced a scatter of pottery over most of the area walked and it is clear that the scatter continued both to the east and to the west.

RB pottery recovered from other fields was limited to five sherds or less each from Bocketts Further Longcut, Bocketts Hawkes Hill, Bocketts Round Bush, Bocketts Well Field, NMF, TBB, Thorncroft Lower Freehold and Thorncroft Six Acres

Medieval pottery

A total of 177 sherds (884g) medieval pottery was recovered from Bocketts Park Corner with no concentration noted in the portion of the field that was grid-walked. The earliest fabrics dated to c.970-1100 (Q1 and GQ1) with a further presence during the 11th century evidenced by the occurrence small assemblages of fabrics SNC (pre-1000 – c.1100), IQ and S2 (both c.1050 – c.1250) but the majority of the pottery comprised fabrics Q2 (57.6% by sherd count) dated c.1150 – 1250 and OQ (24.9%) dated c.1250 – 1500). The field produced very little later pottery until fabric PMR, dated c.1580 – 1900. Details of the pottery from Bocketts Park Corner are given in table 3.

Medieval pottery from other fields was sparse by comparison amounting to now more than ten sherds from each field and the majority of that recovered was post-medieval (mainly PMR).

Discussion

Surface scatters of Mesolithic worked flint are found on most geologies throughout the county and the two concentrations noted close to water sources here are in no way unusual.

Any *in situ* remains are likely to be buried below alluvial deposits like the one located close by at Young Street (Carpenter 1952).

The disparity in evidence of prehistoric monuments between the North and South Downs has long been recognised (for example Field 1998) but the amount of worked flint recovered particularly from the greensand in Surrey points to the presence of a considerable population. Two clusters of barrows, both on the east side of the river, bracket the Mole Gap, with eight to the north on Leatherhead Downs (Poulton & O'Connell 1984) and two more to the south on Box Hill. A coaxial field system of probable Middle or Late Bronze Age (LBA) date, and evidenced by a combination of aerial photographs and above ground earthworks, stretches across the Mole from Fetcham to Leatherhead and Mickleham Downs (English 2013, 21-37, esp fig 3.8). One of the contour lynchets associated with this field system had been used for the deposition of a metalwork hoard dated to between *c* 1150-1000BC (Williams 2008) and pottery recovered during excavation of one of the lynchets on Mickleham Downs suggested use during the Middle – LBA and Early Iron Age (Currie 2000). Recent excavation of an area of downs to the east of the Mole located a number of ditches dated to the LBA and evidence that much of the land had been cleared and was in use for cereal production and as pasture (Hogg 2019). The small amounts of pottery found by field-walking would fit within this scenario. The work at Cherkley Court also located Middle / Late Iron Age features, a period not recognised west of the river.

However, despite the walked fields reported here being situated within this prehistoric field system the average density of worked flint, at 27 pieces / hectare, is substantially less than that on the greensand to the south where a density of 80 pieces / hectare was achieved (Winser *et al* 2018). Field-walking on chalk is complicated by the presence of large amounts of plough shattered natural whilst flint is easily visible on rain-washed greensand but this discrepancy is still likely to represent a genuine difference. Although Neolithic and BA settlement evidence is sparse throughout southern Surrey, a preference for the lighter greensand-based soils over the chalk, often with overlying superficial deposits has been recognised (for example Needham 1987) and this disparity confirms that impression.

The lack of any Roman building material associated with the pottery scatter located in Bocketts Park Corner suggests the presence of timber buildings rather than anything more substantial. A similar site was located on the Long Ride, Mickleham Downs (Currie 2000)

and it may well have been that the opportunities for trade occasioned by the proximity of Stane Street encouraged these developments. In 2003 the late David Williams oversaw a rally of metal detector users who recovered a small collection of material (Williams 2003) which included two early RB brooches and a possible third example, and up to nine 3rd and 4th century coins. The distribution of these finds and the pottery assemblage is shown in figure 5, together with a transcription of two features visible on aerial photographs. The circular mark, partially destroyed by construction of the A246, strongly suggests the presence of a round barrow whose above ground archaeology has been destroyed by ploughing. The second feature may represent the partial survival of a square or rectangular enclosure with an east-facing entrance and is close to the concentration of both ceramic and metal detector finds. Given the hilltop location, and the proximity of a possible barrow, a highly conjectural suggestion would be that this represents a site with religious connotations – certainly it is worthy of further investigation.

Bocketts Farm has been identified as a military holding in existence by the second quarter of the 12th century when it had been alienated from Thorncroft and formed a separate estate (Blair 1977). By c.1300 the farm and its land had become part of the demesne of the manor of Pachenesham Parva. The original site of the farm buildings is uncertain but the lack of medieval pottery from fields around the present site is surprising. The amount recovered from Park Corner Field, while greater than elsewhere, seems insufficient to suggest a settlement in that field. However, the presence of 11th century pottery indicates activity in the area predating the documentary evidence for Bocketts Farm; Thorncroft Manor is assessed in the Domesday Book as having been owned by the Saxon Cola who had been dispossessed, but whose family survived into the 14th century, possibly as tenants of part of their old estate.

A full catalogue of medieval pottery from all the fields walked is given in the appendix but it is notable that very little was recovered. It may be that Park Corner was in long term arable use and the pottery results from manuring, whilst the remaining fields were generally used for stock grazing.

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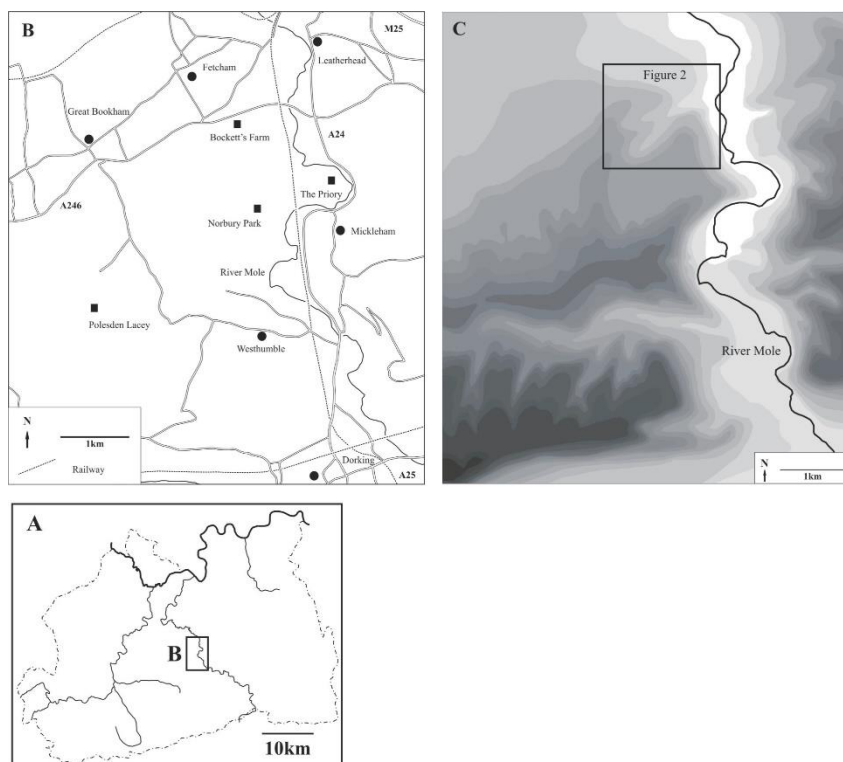


Figure 1 Location and topography of the area field walked. Contours are shown at 10m intervals with land below 40m OD remaining white

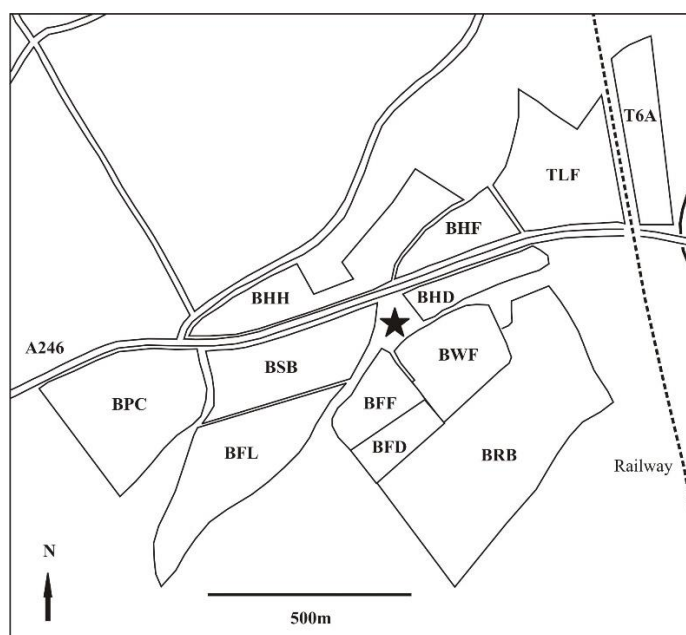


Figure 2 Fields by name – the black star indicates the location of Bockett's Farm

T6A	Thorncroft Six Acres	TLF	Thorncroft Lower Freehold
BSB	Bockett's Swayback	BFF	Bockett's Fetcham Field (part)
BHD	Bockett's Howes Field	BFD	Bockett's Fetcham Field (part)
BHH	Bockett's Hawkes Hill	BFL	Bockett's Further Longcut
BWF	Bockett's Well Field	BPC	Bockett's Park Corner Ten Acres
BHF	Bockett's High Field	BRB	Bockett's Round Bush, part of Eight Acres and Middle Field

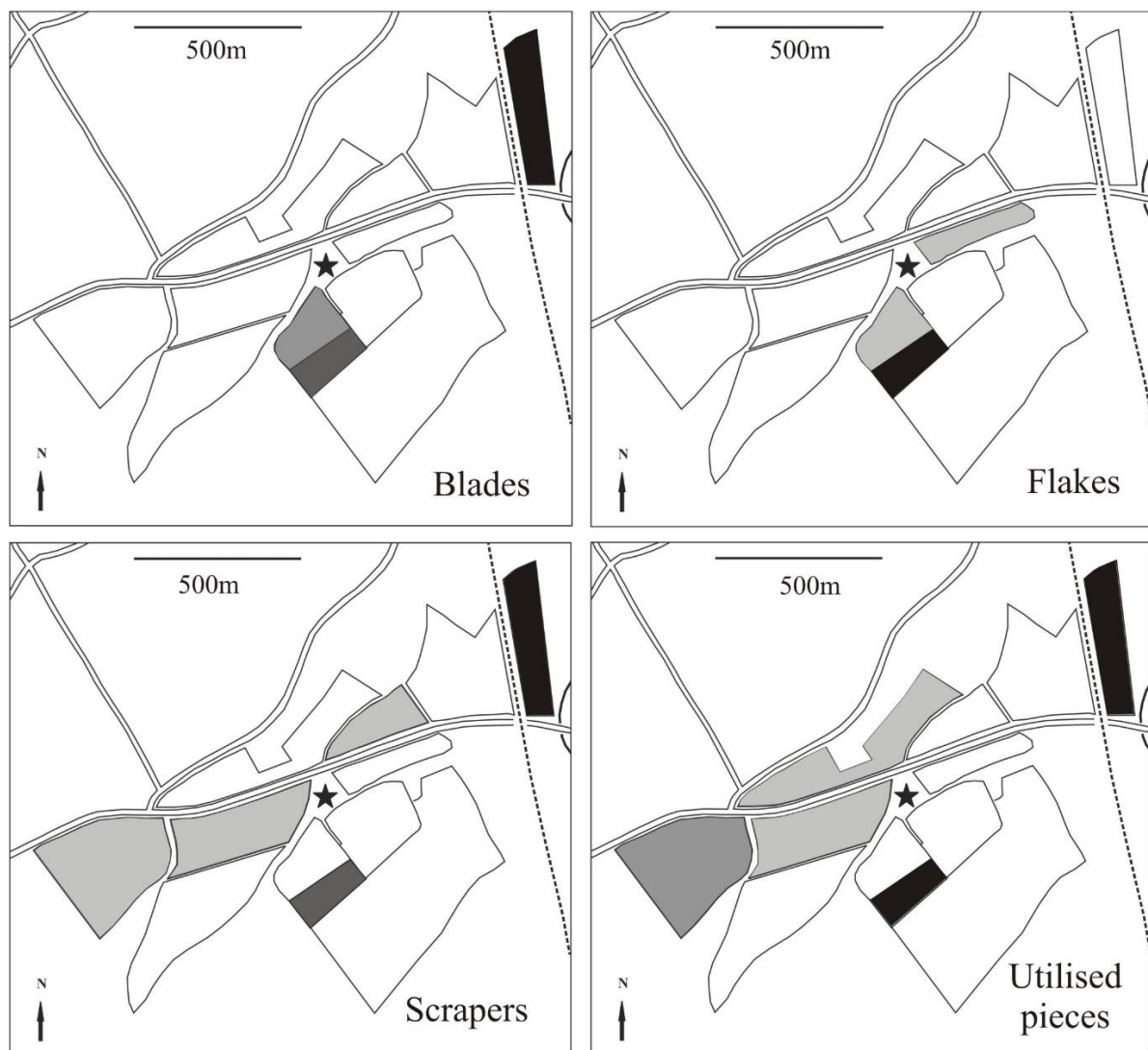


Figure 3 Distribution of a selection of flint tools and debitage

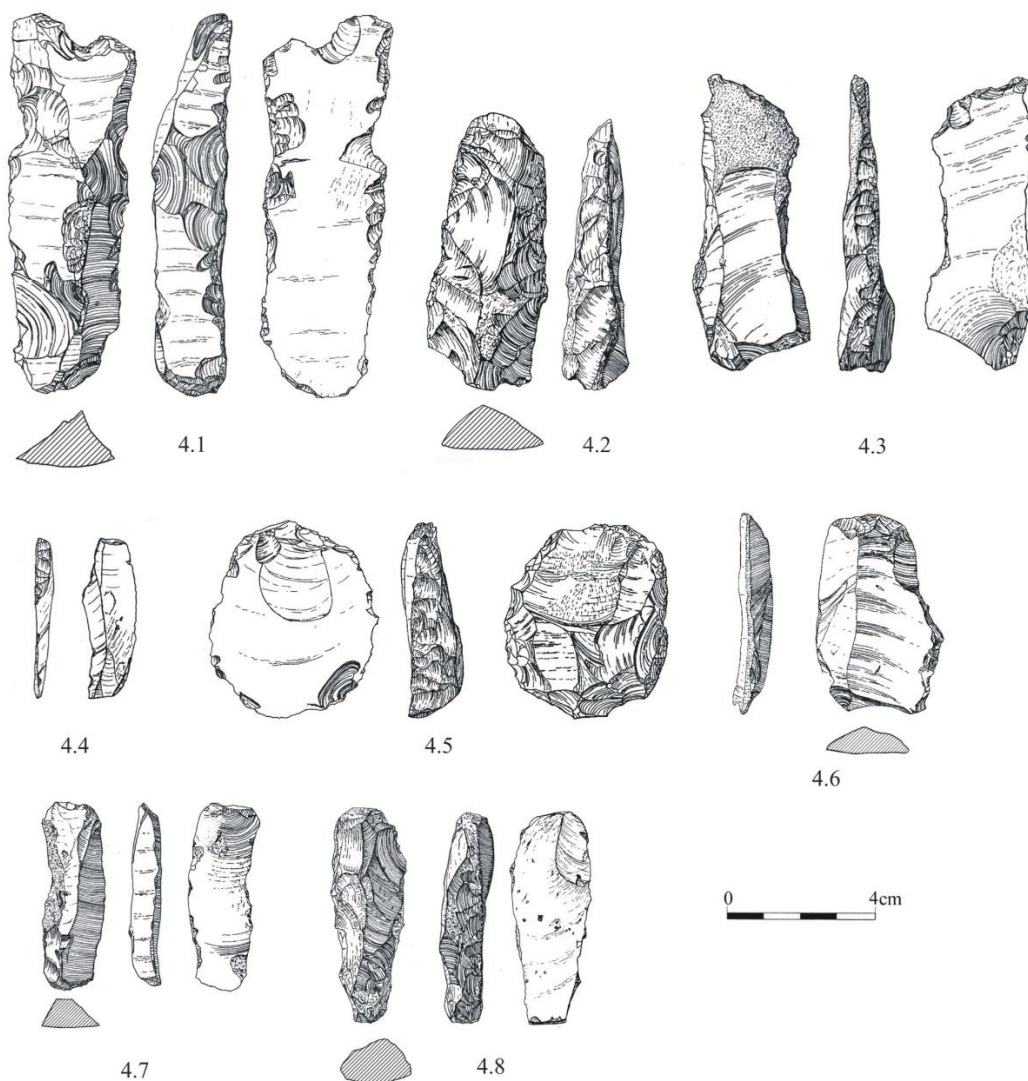


Figure 4 Selected flint implements; 4.1 – a combination tool comprising an end scraper at the proximal end, two small scrapers on the ‘horns’ of a Y-shaped distal end, one of which incorporates a point usable as a borer or piercer, with a notched scraper between the two ‘horns’ (Late Neolithic to LBA); 4.2 – a possible knife or axe tip (Neolithic or BA); 4.3 – a fabricator (probably Late Neolithic to BA); 4.4 – an obliquely backed point microlith (later Mesolithic); 4.5 – a round or horseshoe scraper; 4.6 – an end scraper with almost the entire edge of the flake ground smooth, probably using an abrasive stone (Mesolithic / Neolithic); 4.7 – an end scraper on a blade (Early Mesolithic or earlier); 4.8 – a rotating awl with a worked edge (Late Neolithic or BA). Fuller descriptions are to be found in the appendix

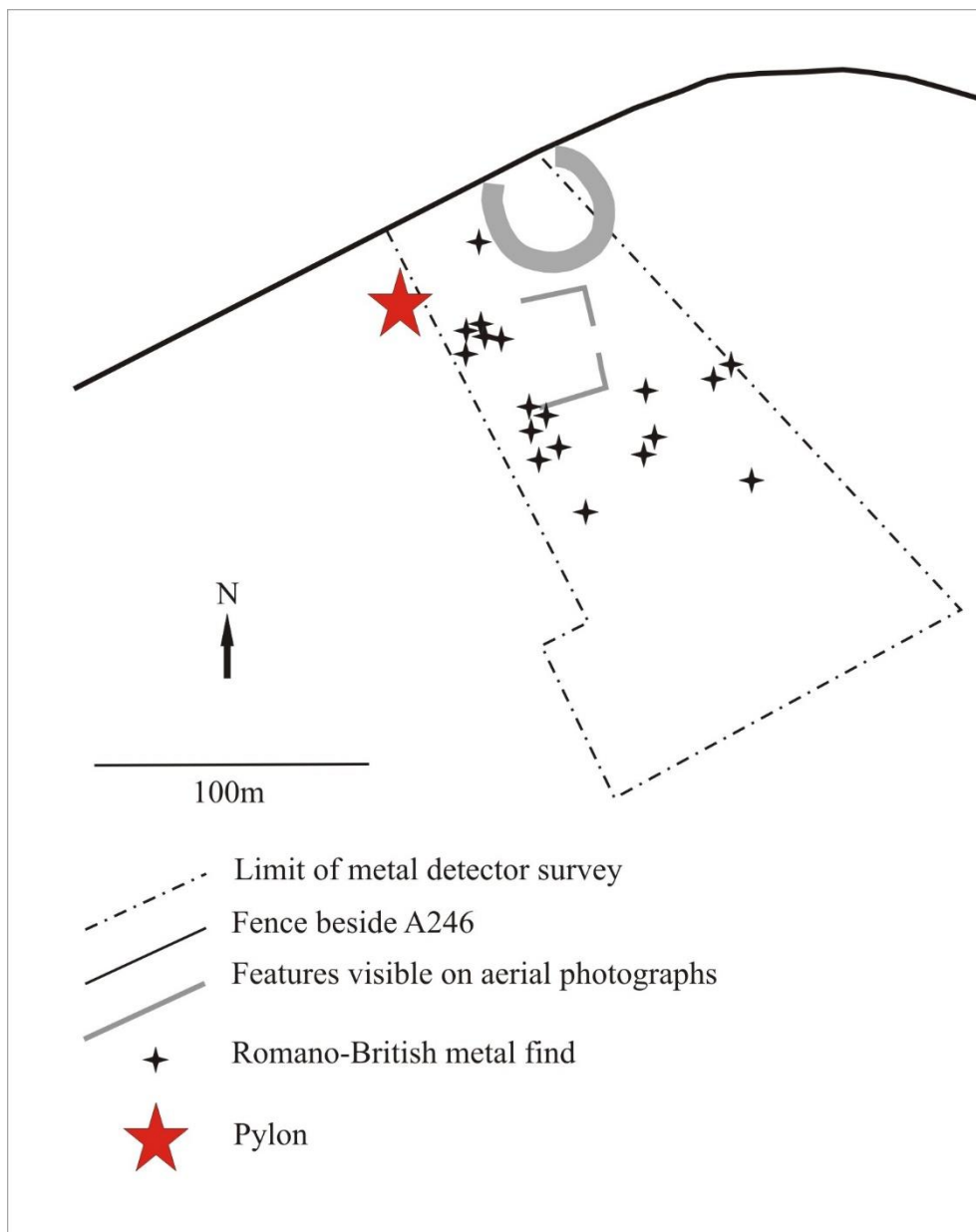


Figure 5a Results from a metal detecting rally and crop marks visible on aerial photographs at Bocketts Park Corner

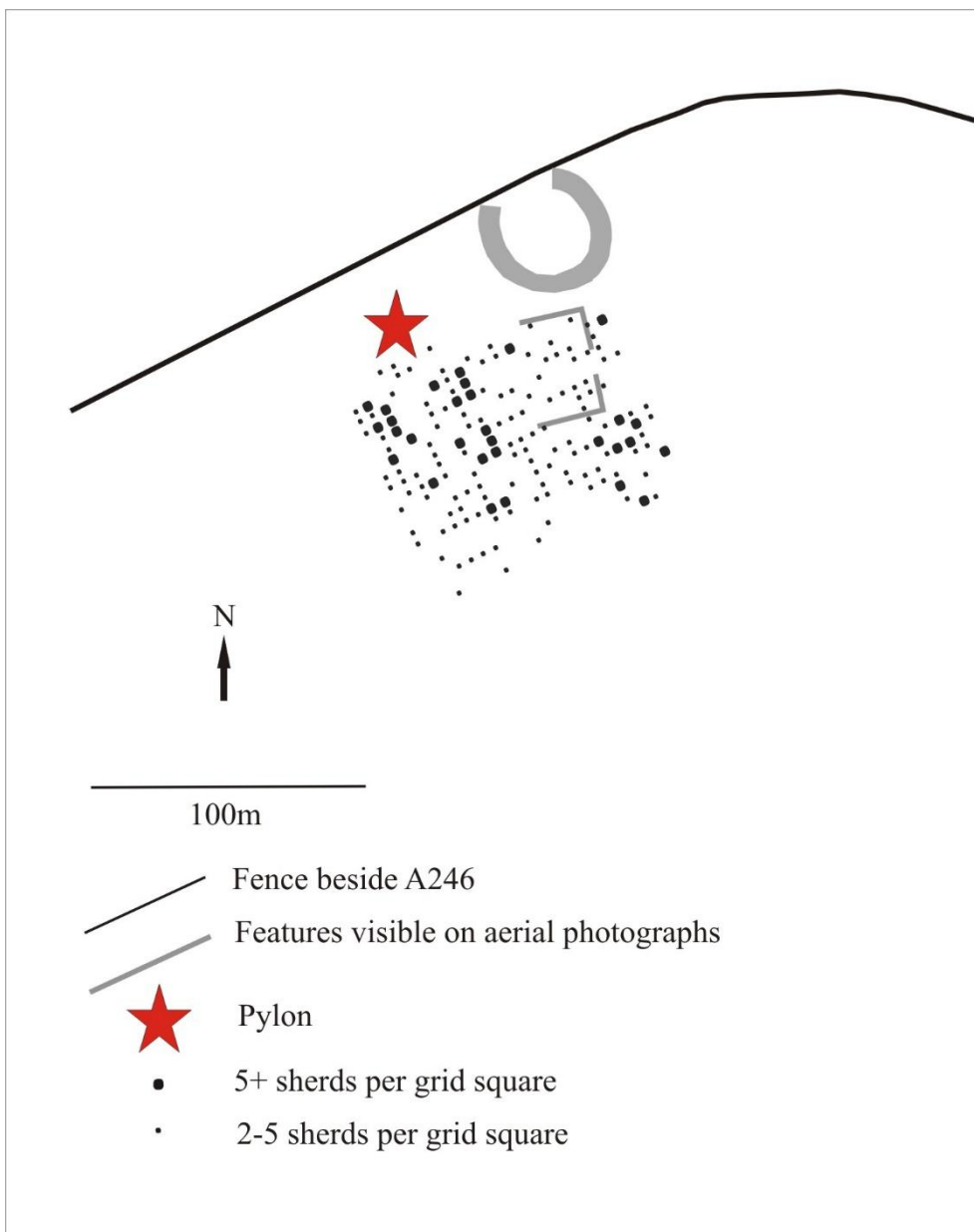


Figure 5b Distribution of RB pottery recovered during field-walking on a 5m grid at Bocketts Park Corner

Field	ha	Blades	Blade cores	Flakes	Flake cores	Scrapers	Core trimming / rejuvenating flakes / tablets	Awls / borers	Utilised pieces
BPC	6.89	7	0	93	0	6	2	4	15
BFL	3.25	4	2	53	0	1	0	1	1
BHH	6.25	4	0	87	0	1	0	0	8
BSB	3.96	1	0	84	0	4	0	0	4
BHF	2.48	0	0	59	0	2	0	0	1
TLF	4.73	4	0	93	0	1	0	1	0
T6A	2.40	31	1	158	0	10	2	0	7
BHD	1.68	1	0	55	0	1	0	0	0
BFF	2.09	4	2	53	0	1	0	1	1
BFD	1.57	5	0	383	0	3	1	0	7
BWF	3.50	2	0	61	0	1	0	0	2
BRB	12.50	4	0	53	0	1	1	1	0
Total	51.30	66	5	1232	0	32	6	8	46
Number / ha		1.29	0.10	24.02	0.00	0.62	0.12	0.16	0.90

Table 1 Worked flint recovered during field-walking

Field name	Fabric	No sherds	Period	Comments
Bocketts Park Corner	BPC	GQ	1	LIA / ERB
Bocketts Park Corner	BPC	F	1	LBA / EIA
Bocketts Park Corner	BPC	FQ	10	LBA / EIA
Bocketts Further Longcut	BFL	FQ	1	LBA / EIA
Bocketts Further Longcut	BFL	F	1	LBA / EIA
Bocketts Howes Field	BHF	FQ	1	LBA / EIA
Thorncroft Lower Freehold	TLF	G	1	LIA / ERB
Thorncroft Lower Freehold	TLF	FQ	3	LBA / EIA

Two are from the shoulder of a PDR-type shouldered jar, and another has incised lines

Table 2 Prehistoric pottery recovered from all fields. Fabric types: F – flint tempered; FQ – flint and quartz tempered; G – grog tempered; GQ – grog and quartz tempered

Fabric	Sherd count	Sherd weight (g)	Earliest date	Latest date
SAND	274	1457	43	400
PORD	23	122	350	400
AH	14	90	43	400
AHFA	14	85	250	400
OXRC	8	74	270	400
OXID	7	43	43	400
SAM	6	71	43	250
OXIDF	3	7	43	400
FINE	3	11	43	400
AHSU	3	23	60	160
MICA	3	15	43	400
VRW	2	25	43	160
NKGW	2	7	100	150
RWS	2	5	43	400
FLIN	2	7	43	400
COLCC	1	4	43	250
NVWW	1	9	150	400
VCWS	1	10	70	200
GROG	1	2	43	400
BB2	1	4	120	240
NFCC	1	3	250	400
Q1	1	2	970	1100
GQ1	1	9	970	1100
SNC	1	6	pre-1000	1150
S2	5	18	1080	1250
QFL	1	3	1080	1200
Q2	103	446	1150	1250
GQ2	1	3	1150	1250
FQ2	1	3	1150	1300
IQ	2	11	1150	1450
WW1B	3	17	1240	1400
WW1A	9	52	1240	1550
OQ	49	328	1250	1500
FOQ	1	4	1250	1500
RWW	4	16	1400	1550
PMRE	11	45	1480	1600
PMSR	1	12	1480	1650
BORD	5	29	1550	1700
RBOR	12	60	1580	1800
PMR	243	1627	1580	1900
BSGSW	2	17	1675	1800
STSL	1	1	1680	1800

Table 3 RB and medieval pottery recovered from Bocketts Park Corner. Fabric types are from the type series developed for the county

APPENDIX - SOME FLINT TOOLS by Christopher Taylor

Thorncroft Six Acres

- End scraper with double-ended notch (fig 4.1), 100 x 32 x 17mm

This piece has been made on a thick, keeled blade, the dorsal surface of which has been worked from both ends. The tertiary flakes removed from the sides and ends of the blade have been cut into the grey-white patina revealing a darker grey flint interior indicating that it was probably struck, left, and subsequently worked. No cortex remains.

It is a combination tool with the end scraper at the proximal end and two small scrapers at the distal end, on the Y-shape 'horns'. The longer of these incorporates a point, with a possible secondary use as a borer or piercer. The concave area within the 'Y' has been retouched to form a notched scraper thereby removing the incipient patination. This was probably used to pare down cylindrical objects made of fairly soft material, like a wooden arrow or spear shafts.

Two very similar surface finds from Sussex are illustrated by Curwen (1937, fig 36 nos 4 & 5, 147) and another from plough soil around a bell barrow at Avebury (Smith 1965, fig 4, no 4, 33). Butler reported two horned scrapers from a BA barrow at Cornish Farm, Sussex (2001a, 65) and fourteen from near Alfriston, Sussex (2001b, 221) which he dated to the later BA. Earlier, Clark (1927, 273) also reported hollow scrapers from Seaford. This piece cannot be dated more exactly than the late Neolithic to LBA.

- Tip of broken axe / knife (fig 4.2), 74 x 33 x 18mm

This has been bi-facially worked using a soft hammer and has a plano-convex profile. It has a uniform grey patination with a small area of cortex remaining. Probably at least half of the implement is missing so its function is not certain, but it was probably a type of knife. Its form and working dates it to the Neolithic or BA

- Fabricator (fig 4.3), 56 x 20 x 12mm

This piece has been formed from a flake of grey flint. It is unpatinated with a few blobs of reddish-brown staining and has the bulb of percussion and striking platform intact. The flake has been extensively worked to form a steep-sided tool with a domed or D-shape cross section. The ventral surface is unworked. The edge of the platform is heavily abraded probably by both pre-treatment of the core edge and subsequent wear. The angle where both sides meet the ventral surface is heavily abraded with numerous tiny spall removals similar to those found on the edge of scrapers. Smoothing is absent.

The term fabricator can embrace various forms depending on the writer. The D-cross section and steep working of this example is typical of pieces classified as fabricators. Fabricators tend not to feature in early Mesolithic assemblages. Where they are listed as such, for example, at Thatcham (Wymer 1962, 350), they take a different form, being on otherwise unworked blades and have points, possibly from microlith production. Froom (1976, Fig 81, 10-13) and Rankine (1960, fig 5-16, 250) illustrate examples similar to this one from Wawcott III and Oakhanger, both late Mesolithic sites. Similar examples are also recorded from the Neolithic sites at Staines (Robertson-Mackay 1987, fig 65, F154), Durrington Walls (Wainwright & Longworth 1971, fig 77, F82 & F83), Windmill Hill (Keiller 1965, fig 48, F145-7). They feature frequently among finds dated to the BA, for example at Amesbury G70 and 71 round barrows (Saville 1980, fig 2, 11 & fig 5,40), Bishop Waltham barrow (Ashbee 1960, fig 18) and the bell barrow at Deerleap Wood, Wotton (Crcoran 1963, fig 5.2). This form of fabricator is found from the late Mesolithic into the BA and cannot be closely dated although a late Neolithic to BA date is most likely.

- Microlith (fig 4.4), 22 x 7 x 2mm

This is an obliquely backed point with the left edge blunted, class 1a microlith, based on Jacobi's classification system (1978, fig 6) or A1a per that used by Clark (1922, 56). A small section of both ends is missing. As usual, the proximal end (top in fig 1.4) including the bulb, has been removed during manufacture. It is patinated light grey-blue.

Generally microliths of this type were larger in the early Mesolithic and became smaller towards the end of the period (Butler 2005, 96-98). However, within assemblages there is some range in sizes with smaller versions also found on early sites. As a surface find and without, therefore, any context in the form of other microlith types, for example the small geometrics of the late Mesolithics (Ellaby 1977, 9; Jones 2013, 33) this cannot be confidently attributed to a particular phase of the period. Given the trend to smaller examples, a later Mesolithic date is considered most probable.

- Scraper (fig 4.5), 52 x 42 x 17mm

A short, round, end scraper, Clark type A (1960, 217). It retains a small faceted striking platform and is unpatinated black flint with some grey inclusions. Almost the entire edge has been steeply flaked at c.80 degrees

This type of scraper is found in assemblages from the Mesolithic to the BA. Examples have been found at the late Mesolithic site at Wawcott III (Froom 1976, 140-141), on Neolithic sites at Winmill Hill (Keiller 1965, 94) and Hurst Fen (Clark 1960, 202218) and Bronze Age

sites at Crowlink (Butler 2001a, 67-69) and Shippea Hill (Clark 1933, fig 3). Scrapers tend to be the dominant tool type in late Neolithic / BA assemblages whilst blade end-scrapers, as distinct from this flake scraper, are more evident in the Mesolithic and are rare in the later Neolithic (Butler 2005, 166). These points and the fact that it is completely unabraded and unpatinated point to a later date.

Bocketts Howes Field

- End scraper with smoothed edge (fig 4.6), 48 x 30 x 11mm

An area about 1.8mm wide along almost the entire edge of this small flake has been smoothed. The bulb end (top, fig 2.1) has been removed, finely worked to form the scraper edge, and then smoothed. The flake is patinated a uniform white except for two small recent chips on the right side showing a black flint. These chips reveal a cross-section through the patination which is approximately half a millimetre thick. Also along the ground edge are small, very thin lengths, c.0.3mm wide, where the patination either has been ground through or just not taken in the first place so that the black flint is just visible.

As almost the whole edge is equally smooth, including the hollow at the distal end (base of fig 2.1), it seems unlikely that this is from use, the effect of which would have been concentrated at particular spots. Saville (1977, 4 & fig 2) illustrates several tools with wear from use which he terms 'worn-edge implements'. Saville's examples, from a Mesolithic context, have wear in a few spots but rarely all round the edge. This implement was probably smoothed all round before use, using some abrasive, stone surface and is similar to examples from the early Mesolithic site at Thatcham which Wymer terms 'Ground Edge blades' (Wymer 1962, 348 & 350, fig 12, 162). These have edges ground smooth pre-use, as distinguished from those which have a use formed lustre. Nine examples were found at Thatcham with pre-use smoothing which Wymer suggested were for scraping or burnishing bone. An almost identical flake, with its entire edge ground smooth, was found on the surface within the square enclosure at Windmill Hill (Keiller 1965, 105 & fig 48 no F151). Another example, from the Neolithic site at Hurst Fen, is a flake with edges ground smooth (Clark 1960 figs 15 & 223). Curwen (1939, 196-201) illustrated and described several examples of 'blunted axe-like implements', all with grinding on the cutting end, sometimes extending over the surfaces. One is a small (63 x 44mm), thin flake with a ground end. Unfortunately these are all surface finds and Curwen does not date them.

This piece is very difficult to date – implements like it seem to have been in use throughout the Mesolithic and Neolithic. Its patination suggests an early date within this time span.

Bocketts Further Longcut

- End scraper on blade (fig 4.7), 52 x 16 x 12mm

The only working on this blade is a small amount of retouch at the distal end to form the scraper. A section of cortex remains down one side. The whole piece is patinated a pure white with a waxy surface and a few patches of iron staining. There are some small abrasions and a chip on the ventral surface which have cut into the surface and then re-corticated leaving small, slightly gritty areas. Scrapers on blades are more common in the early Mesolithic than later periods. Taking this and the re-cortication into account the piece may date to the early Mesolithic or possibly before.

Bocketts Park Corner

- Point or piercer (fig 4.8), 76 x 28 x 11mm

This tool is formed on a thin flake which is unpatinated black flint with the point formed at the distal end. 'Piercer' (or sometimes 'point') is an umbrella term encompassing borers, drills and awls with retouched, pointed ends. This point has been worked 360 degrees round the working end and as such can be classified as a 'rotating awl' as defined by Clark (1960, 223). One edge has also been worked and utilised as a side scraper..

There is no general agreement on exactly what piercer and borer types were used for in prehistory but making holes in leather is the most probable (Butler 2001a, 68). Piercers with elaborate and extensive retouch are common in late Neolithic / BA assemblages. Generally assemblages dominated by piercers tend to date to the late Neolithic / BA whereas scrapers are more dominant in those from the earlier Neolithic (Saville 1977/8, 9, 20-21). Ten piercers, many of a style very similar to this one were recorded at the Southern Circle post holes and occupation earth at Durrington Walls (Wainwright & Longworth 1917, 174, 207). Very similar examples were also found at a funerary monument near Crowlink in Sussex and dated to the BA (Butler 2001a, 69). On balance it is likely that this piece dates to the later Neolithic or early BA.

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