7. The Flint

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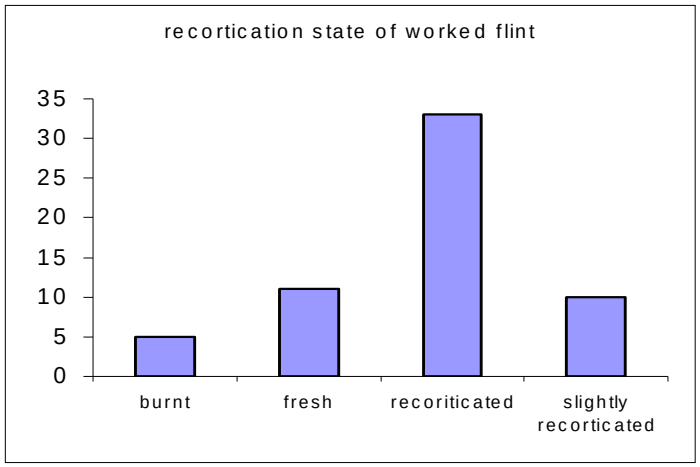
7.1 Introduction

Sixty pieces of flint were submitted for analysis. Forty three (72%) come from the 1996 excavations at Segsbury and 17 (28%) come from the 1997 season. Of these 11 (18%) exhibit natural fracturing, resulting from thermal damage in 10 cases. Two of these pieces are shattered from cores. As a result only 49 pieces have been subjected to detailed technological and morphological analysis.

7.2 Raw Material and Condition

All of the raw material is chalk flint but there is no indication as to whether this is mined or surface collected material. However, the quality of the pieces may suggest that it is not from mined contexts. Over 50% of the material (33 pieces including the thermally damaged examples) exhibits total recortication. Only 10 pieces (16%) are in a fresh condition and 11 (18%) show partial recortication (Fig. 7.1). Some possible implications of this are discussed below.

Figure 7.1 Condition of flint material



7.3 Typology

The range of artefacts can be broken down as shown in Table 7.1.

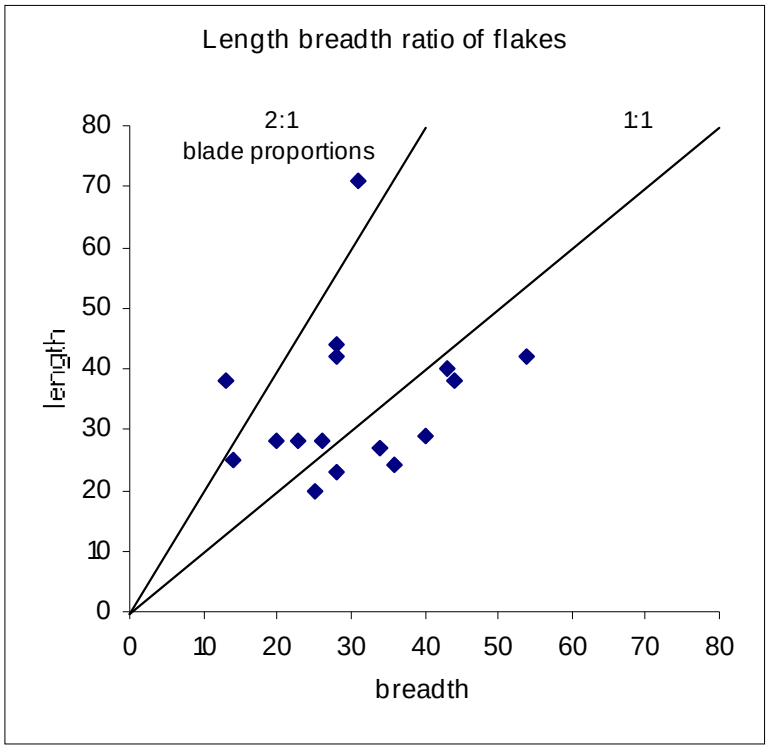
Table 7.1 Typological break down of flint material

No.	Description
15	Flake
5	broken flake
2	misc retouched flake
1	bashed flake
2	Bladelett
21	Chip/chunk
1	core frag
1	retouched core frag
2	thermal core frag
8	thermal flake
1	Utilised
1	Natural

7.4 Technology and Morphology

Complete flakes are generally short and squat with only two exhibiting blade proportions, but these are not fine examples and do not characterise any earlier forms such as those from the Mesolithic (Fig. 7.2). With the exception of these pieces, the remaining flakes are all less than 50mm in length and the majority (50%) are wider than they are long (Fig. 7.2). Ten (66%) of the complete flakes have pronounced bulbs of percussion suggesting the use of hard hammer technology.

Figure 7.2 Length/breadth ratio of complete flint flakes



All levels of core reduction are represented in terms of cortex present on the flakes, with 7 (12%) primary pieces, 31 (52%) secondary and 21 (35%) tertiary. Complete cores however, are absent from the assemblage, and cores are only represented by one core fragment (F1).

As Table 7.1 indicates, no chronologically diagnostic implements were recovered as only three (5%) pieces exhibit small patches of retouch (F50, F59, F1). There seems to have been no observable method applied in the choice of pieces for retouching as the three artefacts include two very rough flakes and one core fragment. The only clearly utilised flake (F33) was found in a hornwork ditch. The piece is fresh and has been utilised on an unmodified edge. The other possibly utilised flake (F24) was also fresh and found in the fill of pit 1334 (fill 1545).

7.5 Discussion

State of re-cortication is not generally seen as an indicator of the relative ages of flint artefacts. Condition and context of deposition may play an important role in the re-cortication process. When the assemblage was analysed in terms of context of deposition this latter point is further highlighted. Table 7.2 shows that material which lay either near the surface or in the upper layers of features was fully recorticated. Those pieces near the bottom of features, however, were either fresh or only slightly re-corticated.

Material deposited in pits and which was potentially covered very quickly further re-enforces the argument. This is much fresher than that recovered from ditches on the site where it

would have been exposed for longer to the elements. The ploughing and erosion in the area would have exposed flint in the upper fills and thus exacerbated the re-cortication process.

The lack of any diagnostic artefact types makes dating the assemblage very difficult. Since nearly all of the material comes from Iron Age contexts where the majority of the assemblage is associated with Early Iron Age pottery (Table 7.2), it seems reasonable to propose that the flint is contemporary with the ceramics. Furthermore, there are no other artefacts from the site that date to earlier than the later Bronze Age/Early Iron Age, making it difficult to argue that the lithic material is residual from much earlier phases of human activity at Segsbury. In addition, the iron artefacts from the site are limited to only 13 pieces and only six are dated to the Iron Age (the others being modern and from topsoil layers) at a time when metals are viewed traditionally to have fully replaced flint tools. In support of an Iron Age date, a fresh flake was found in a lower layer of pit [1019] (fill 1724), where above this a child's inhumation was deposited associated with ceramics dating to the Early Iron Age**,** including haematite wares.

Table 7.2 Context versus re-cortication state, showing relative dated periods by associated pottery

Context (associated dated pottery)	R	SR	F	B	Type
pit fill 1412 (lowest) EIA			1	1	1 x flake, 1 x bladelett
pit fill 1724 (lower) EIA			1		1 x flake
pit fill 5012 (lower)		1			1 x broken flake
pit fill 1545 (lowest) LBA	1		1		2 x flake
pit fill 4112 (2nd) EIA			1		1 x flake
pit fill 1539 (upper) IA		1			1 x bladelett
pit fill 1006 (only)	1		1		1 x chip/chunk, 1 x flake
pit fill 1475 (upper) EIA				1	1 x chip/chunk
pit fill 1517 (upper) EIA	1				1 x flake
pit fill 1266 (top) EIA	5				1 x core frag, 1 x thermal flake, 3 x chip/chunk
pit fill 1176 (top)	6			1	2 x thermal flake, 1 x flake, 1 x retouched flake, 1 x thermal core frag, 2 x chip/chunk
pit fill 1697 (top) EIA					1 x flake, 1 x thermal flake, 1 x chip/chunk
Total	14	2	5	3	
ditch fill 3008 (top) EIA			2		1 x flake, 1 x chip/chunk
Ringditch fill 1004 (upper) EIA/MIA	7	2	1		1 x misc retouched flake, 1 x broken flake, 1 x bashed flake, 2 x flake, 1 x thermal flake, 4 x chip/chunk
Hornwork ditch fill 6003 IA/R			1		1 x utilised flake
gully fill 1536 (only) IA	3	1			3 x chip/chunk, 1 x broken flake, 1 x thermal flake
Total	10	3	4	0	
Posthole fill 1490 IA	2	1			1 x thermal flake, 1 x chip/chunk, 1 x broken flake
Posthole fill 1428	3	2			1 x thermal core frag, 2 x chip/chunk, 1 x flake, 1 x broken flake
Natural feature 1705				1	1 x thermal flake
Total	5	3	0	1	
Rampart layer 7351	1				1 x chip/chunk
Layer over rampart 7302			2		2 x chip/chunk
Natural layer 4002	1	1			2 x flake
Topsoil 1000	1				1 x retouched core frag

R = recorticated, SR = slightly recorticated, F = fresh, B = burnt

Despite the limited number of flint artefacts present and the lack of retouched pieces, the general technological and morphological characteristics of these pieces represent recent observed trends in Iron Age flint assemblages (cf. Humphrey 2003; Humphrey & Young 1999). Recent studies have observed that diagnostic tools are limited to scrapers, cutting flakes and awls/borers, which is countered by an increase in miscellaneous retouched pieces and utilised unmodified flakes. In addition, it is observed that assemblage numbers are very low, using a simple core/flake technology employing hard hammer technology, which shows a lack of either skill or concern in knapping technique. The latter is evidenced by: obtuse striking angles; a high instance of step or hinge terminations; thick, wide striking platforms; irregular dorsal flake scar patterns on flakes; short, squat flakes – L/B ratio 1:1; a high instance of chips and chunks; irregular core morphology; the presence of incipient cones of percussion on core striking platforms; a predominance of secondary and inner flakes. (Humphrey & Young 1999; Young & Humphrey 1999).

The technological and morphological aspects of the Segsbury flakes fit the general pattern observed in the studies mentioned above and can be paralleled at other Iron Age flint assemblages such as Buddon Wood and Wanlip, Leicestershire, London Road and Fison Way, Thetford and phase 4 and 5 from the barrow site at Micheldever Wood, Hampshire (cf. Humphrey 1998; Cooper & Humphrey 1998; Gardiner 1993; Healy 1991; Fasham & Ross 1978 respectively).

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