

Stone Age Stanton

When was the Stone Age?

The 'Stone Age' is divided into three periods, roughly as follows:

Palaeolithic period (or 'Old Stone Age') 2,500,000 to 11,000 years ago;

Mesolithic period (or 'Middle Stone Age') 11,000 to 6,000 years ago;

Neolithic period (or 'New Stone Age') 6,000 to 2,100 years ago.

Artefacts have been recorded from our parish dating to all of the above periods; they are described below.

Flint Core



Palaeolithic flint core

By far the oldest artefact found in Stanton was a worked flint core found in 2006 after a ditch had been cleaned and deepened, in the field edge west of the stream below Hill Farm (now called Highborne Lodge).

It's a long core of opaque white, cream and yellow flint. Whilst quite abraded it still clearly shows the evidence of several flakes having been struck off. The Regional Finds Liaison Officer for the East Midlands reported that it belongs to the Palaeolithic period [1]. The core might date anywhere between 220,000 and 70,000 BC, long before the last ice age began, and so, theoretically,

Flint - a form of silica formed in chalk deposits. In certain areas of the country it occurs as large nodules or tablets and was mined from prehistory onwards.

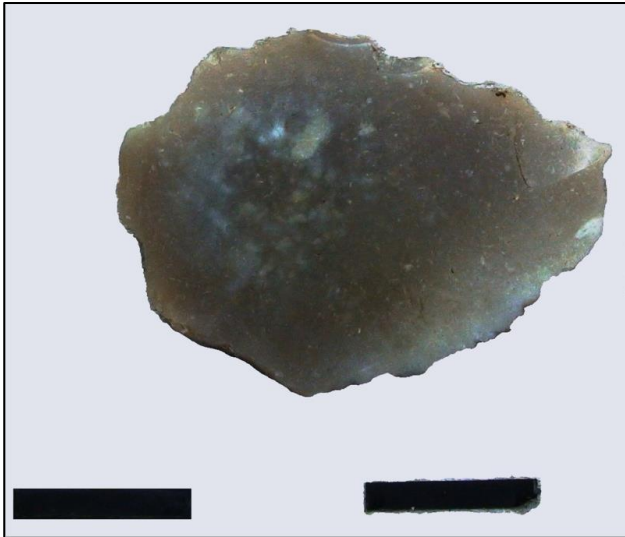
Flakes - although flint is a very hard material it is extremely prone to fracture. If a pebble of flint is struck with a hammer (usually another stone or piece of antler) it will split, often forming a flake.. The normal process is for a flat surface to be located or manufactured on the pebble and for blows to be struck around its edge to remove flakes. These usually have razor sharp edges and need no further modification to make useful cutting implements.

Core - a nodule or pebble of flint from which flakes have been removed. Cores will normally have at least one flat platform. As well as a platform, the faces of the core should have a number of flake scars running away from it.

Flakes struck from cores have a number of defining features. On the back of the flake will be a swelling known as the bulb of percussion. This may have one or more small bulbar scars. Below the bulb are a series of ripples that radiate down through the flake. Fissures may also be visible running down the length of the flake. The front of the flake may be covered in cortex or have ridges and scars left from previous flakes.

it should have been found underneath 70 feet of boulder clay that covers the area. The fact that it came from the bottom of a ditch only 1 metre below the surface would suggest that it had been picked up by the ice elsewhere during the following ice age and was left behind in the clay as the ice retreated.

Flint Flake



Re-touched chert flake: the bars are 1cm

Mesolithic examples of man's activities are almost as uncommon as artefacts from the preceding Palaeolithic period. In 2009 a single flake of chert (a mineral very similar to flint) was found in a field on the east side of the Melton Road.

The flake has a distinct striking platform and a bulb of percussion with traces of the original cortex remaining on the dorsal

surface. There is evidence of retouching along the edges. The Regional Finds Liaison Officer has assigned the flake to a period between the Mesolithic and Neolithic periods (between c8300 and 2100 BC) [2].

Flint Implements

There is a sandpit in the field opposite the Manor Barns on Browns Lane that supplied sand for the golf course. It also contained flints transported by the ice from the chalk formations of Lincolnshire. In 1938 Mrs K. M. Bird of the Old Rectory discovered flint flakes and evidence of tool manufacture in the soil in her garden, soil and in the soil of a newly-excavated grave in the churchyard nearby.

Subsequent excavations in the garden of the Old Rectory revealed the blackened floor of a hut, together with 200 pieces of worked flint and chert including scrapers, arrow heads, burins, borers, a bone marrow extractor and various retouched flint pebbles, cores and nodules; a selection of the finds are illustrated by Philips [3]. It's highly unlikely that this was an isolated hut, but excavations could not be pursued due to the outbreak of the Second World War. The hut has tentatively been dated to the Neolithic period and could be 4,000 years old.

Flint Axe (1)



Stanton Lane polished flint axe head

In 1948 Miss Patricia Wallis, whose parents ran Stanwold Kennels on Stanton Lane, picked up a Neolithic flint axehead from the soil in the kennel runs, shortly after some

land-drainage pipes had been laid. The axe head is 18cm long, 6cm wide and 3cm thick (7" x 2 ½ " x 1 ¼"). The flint had been finely ground and polished. In use it would have been bound into a wooden shaft. This find looks as good as when it was first made and is certainly of best museum quality.

Flint Axe (2)



Butt end of the Langdale type VI stone axe

In June 2006 the construction of a wide access road to Stanton Farm uncovered surface scatter of flint knapping debris in the form of a couple of hundred flint flakes of all sorts and sizes, together with the butt end of a (second) polished stone axe.

The axe is made from a dense green-grey volcanic stone worked to a narrow rounded point and polished smooth without a cutting edge. It has been recently broken some 60mm from the end, possibly by the bulldozer creating the new road. It has been dated by the Regional Finds Liaison Officer at Derby Museum as made between 3500 and 2100 BC in the Neolithic period.

The axe has been assigned to group VI, an igneous greenstone from the Great Langdale axe factories in Cumbria. The type VI axe is the most common type north of a line connecting the Thames and the Severn, forming 40% of the 903 known axes, which gives some indication of the scale of trade between the north of England and Nottinghamshire.

Flint Axe (3)



Third axe found along Melton Road

A third, complete, axe was found when pipes were being laid across the back garden of a house on the Melton Road. It is a knapped and partly polished flint axe measuring 97mm x 47mm x 21 mm. After some period of use the blade was reworked to sharpen the edge but it was not re-polished. It has been dated by the Regional Finds Liaison Officer

at Derby Museum as made between 3500 and 2100 BC in the Neolithic period [4].

Early Post-glacial Period

As arctic conditions finally retreated from Britain about 10,000 years ago, the warming process was slow and led to the gradual colonization of the land by a succession of tree species: first birch then mixed pine and oak. The early post-glacial period is often marked by sporadic surface finds of flint tools: microliths, graters and small scrapers. The makers favoured relatively treeless regions on sandy soils for their temporary hunting camps.

The shift from hunter/gatherer to the pursuit of agriculture led to a more sedentary lifestyle and freed dedicated teams of people to mine flint or stone and to manufacture various stone or flint tools. This cooperative effort led to the design of very sharp flint axes more adapted for tree felling and the introduction of blunter stone 'axes' which may have been more suited for tilling the soil. Scientific study of stone axes (petrology where thin slices of the stone are examined microscopically) has identified twenty-five sites across England, Wales and Scotland where Neolithic stone axe factories were producing quantities of these tools.

Archaeological Assessments

For the last few years an archaeological assessment on possible archaeology has been compulsory for any building work or soil disturbance. The assessment may be called for as either a statutory requirement or as part of the planning process.

The simplest assessment involves a "paper chase" where the proposed building work is checked against a national list to see whether there are any nearby scheduled ancient monuments, listed sites or buildings, or proximity to a village centre. If the proposed work does not fall within these categories then it can often proceed without any further investigation.

For sites that fall into the above categories, on-site field work must be carried out which can involve a full and costly archaeological dig to record the findings.

References

1. Portable Antiquities Scheme ref. [DENO-04FB64](#)
2. Portable Antiquities Scheme ref. [DENO-411476](#)
3. Philips P. 1972 "The flint artefacts found at Stanton on the Wolds, Nottinghamshire." Transactions of the Thoroton Soc. vol lxxvi, p8-12
4. Portable Antiquities Scheme ref. [DENO-CB1BF6](#)