

SURFACE FINDS OF NEOLITHIC-BRONZE AGE FROM THE
STOKE ST. MICHAEL TO FROME AREA, SOMERSET
by P. C. ENSOM

ABSTRACT

This addendum to Vrach's paper provides further evidence of surface finds of flint and chert implements from a neighbouring area.

INTRODUCTION

Geological field-work for an undergraduate mapping thesis (1975-76) in the area between Frome on the east and Stoke St. Michael, Somerset, on the west, incidentally located eight places where flint and (?Upper Greensand) chert, some of it worked, was found. This note lists these localities and briefly describes the material collected which has not been studied in detail. Localities where only one or two specimens were found have been listed for, as Vrach (1981) has already pointed out, strata containing either flint or chert are now absent from the eastern Mendip, suggesting that they have either been transported into the area or that the local residual deposits were utilized. During the geological mapping of the area no deposits of either flint or chert similar to the material described here were found.

MATERIAL

The numbers given in parenthesis following the National Grid References are the field references assigned to material during field-mapping, and are recorded in the field note-books housed in the Geology Dept., University of Leicester.

Sites

1. Ploughed field NNE of Chantry. ST 720.474 (No field ref.). A high concentration of flint and chert is present in the SE quarter of the field, especially noticeable on the plateau immediately north of the sharp drop to the east flowing stream along the field's southern boundary. A further small collection was made in the adjoining field to the east. Collections were made during 1975 and 1980. These have been supplemented by Vrach, who has carried out field walking at this location.

Flints (total collected) 778. Chert (presumed Upper Greensand) 121. The material collected includes cores and blades, many of which have been retouched to produce scrapers and in some cases notched producing spoke-shaves. A single barbed and tanged arrow head was found. This had been damaged during manufacture or while in use, since it has now only one barb and a strongly asymmetric shape.

2. Ploughed field east of West Down Quarry. ST 720.458 (Field ref. C.9). Thirty-seven flints were collected. Many show signs of having been struck and some retouched. A more elaborately worked scraper was also found.

3. (Field ref. C.9)

This collection became inadvertently separated from its parent collection, but I am reasonably sure that it was part of C.9. Support for this comes from the lack of blades in the C. collection, which are dominant in this group.

33 flints and one ? Upper Greensand chert. All fabricated. Amongst these is one fine end scraper with a beautifully worked concavo-convex edge. Blades are often retouched and some have been notched.

4. Track across field north of the road from Bulls Green to Dead Woman's Bottom. ST 716.464 (Field ref. C.7).

Two fragments of flint; one appears to be a broken blade worked at one end.

5. South facing slope west of Shearwood Wood. ST 701.465 (Field ref. AW.3).

Flint flake with cortex, struck from core and with one edge retouched.

6. Field surface SE of Collie Corner. ST 727.457 (Field ref. N.2).

Two flints: one is a blade and the other a rough flake which has been modified for use as a scraper.

7. Field surface, SW of and adjoining the previous site. ST 725.456 (Field ref. N.3).

Eleven flints and one ? Upper Greensand chert. Several of these show evidence of having been worked.

8. Field surface NW of Leigh-On-Mendip. ST 686.477 (Field ref. LD.31).

One flint fragment. Red terracotta tile fragments also present.

9. Field surface, west of Leigh-on-Mendip to Downhead road, close to new reservoir. ST 693.466 (Field ref. LD.32).

One flint fragment.

DISCUSSION

None of the sites mentioned above have produced flint or chert with a dimension greater than 8cm. Much of the worked flint retains cortex on one surface, a feature noted by Vbranch. Many of the flints have a well developed patina, and this has commonly been partly removed when blades have been retouched or reworked at a later date. The patina has not formed on these fresh surfaces. In common with the material described by Vbranch, the bulk of the material which has been worked can be assigned to a range from Neolithic to Bronze Age. The larger collections from West Down and Chantry (1 and 2 above) contain rare specimens which suggest Mesolithic origins. The sites described under 1 and 2 above are clearly the most significant in terms of the volume of material recovered. Both sites lie within the area designated for quarrying in Eastern Mendip. I support Vbranch in his call for greater surveillance and possible rescue excavation of sites such as these, where it is only a matter of time, before quarrying leads to the destruction of sites, which may provide valuable information on the level of prehistoric activity in the Mendips.

The collections have been deposited in the Frome Museum.

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REFERENCE

- VRANCH, R. D. 1981 Surface Finds of Neolithic-Bronze Age from Mells, Somerset, *Proc. Univ. Bristol Spelaeol. Soc.*, **16** (1).