Blue Bridge Lane & Fishergate House: Flint report

Peter Rowe

1.0 Introduction

This report summarises an assemblage of 86 lithic artefacts comprising 76 items from the 2000-2002 excavations at Blue Bridge and a further 10 items from the 2000-2001 excavations at Fishergate House, York.

The entire assemblage has been catalogued using Microsoft Excel. The following variables have been catalogued: - raw material type, raw material colour, percentage of cortex, cortex type, percentage patina, type of artefact (e.g. flake, blade, core), interpretation (e.g. scraper, arrowhead), period, length, breadth, width, method of knapping, whether burnt and whether damaged. The full catalogue is available with the site archive.

2.0 Raw material

The raw material from the two excavations shares similar characteristics and both sites are discussed together to avoid repetition. The material is almost entirely composed of knapped flint. There is a single piece of unworked blue agate (S.F. 4256) along with a natural pebble fragment of chert (S.F. 4247) both from Blue Bridge.

The flint is fairly homogenous in character and other than a few red-brown pieces consists of grey or light brown items often with a range of different shades within one piece. The flint becomes opaque on finer flakes and is of a good quality with few flaws or fossils.

Cortex is present on much of the primary knapping debris and natural pebbles. Where this is present it is worn from glacial or water action and is extremely thin in section.

The majority of the collection is consistent with the exploitation of small pebbles from glacial or coastal deposits for raw material. However there are a number of pieces from Blue Bridge that are evidently knapped from larger imported nodules (e.g. S.F's. 4251-3, & 4257).

3.0 Post-deposition factors

The material has little post-depositional damage. There is no evidence of thermal shattering from freezing or edge damage caused by movement in the soil.

A number of the pieces amongst the collection have extreme patina development. In these instances the original colour of the flint is completely masked by a white, cream or yellow patina. In one case an item from Blue Bridge has become uniformly patinated and has then been re-worked at a later point in prehistory (S.F. 302) with retouch scars breaking the surface patina. This phenomenon is also seen on one piece from Fishergate House (S.F. 997).

4.0 Blue Bridge, York 2000-2001

A summary of the material from Blue Bridge, York is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Blue Bridge Lane, York –assemblage composition

Type	Quantity	Percentage
Blades (or blade fragments)	3	4
Cores	1	1
Debitage	25	33
Irregular burnt pieces	2	3
Flakes	39	51
Natural pebbles	6	8
Total	76	100

The majority of the assemblage consists of small flakes or pieces of angular debitage. These vary in size from minute chips to struck pieces from large nodules (see 2.4 above).

There is a single core (S.F. 4276) based on a well-worked pebble of grey-brown flint. It has three striking platforms, two opposed and one at 90 degrees. The core has served to produce small blade and flake removals.

The basic tool types from the site are set out below in Table 2.

Table 2: Tool types from Blue Bridge Lane

Tool Type	Quantity	Small find no.
Retouched pieces	4	302, 4261, 4262, 4289
Scrapers	2	4275, 4291.
Utilised pieces	3	4248, 4264, 4292
Total	9	

In its most basic form, retouch has been used to modify the edge of a blade or flake (S.F's. 302, 4261 & 4262). There are a further three pieces with edge damage consistent with that occasioned by use (S.F's, 4248, 4264 & 4292).

A triangular point with bifacial working (S.F. 4289) was recovered from context 2209. This is based on a flake of high quality dark brown flint. This item is difficult to classify with any certainty but has morphological similarities to both later Neolithic arrowhead forms and more ubiquitous piercing tools. Regardless of function the invasive pressure flaked retouch suggests a date from the later Neolithic or early Bronze Age.

Two scrapers were recovered from the excavation. Small Find 4291 is an unstratified edge scraper, with notch, based on a large flake. This well-worn and deeply patinated item, with marked lack of symmetry, is potentially from the Mesolithic or early Neolithic period. The second scraper (S.F. 4275) is a robust thumbnail scraper consistent with a date from the early Bronze Age.

5.0 Fishergate House, York 2000-2001

This small assemblage of 10 items from Fishergate House is unusual given the high proportion of worked or utilised pieces. Discounting two natural pebble fragments the collection comprises 3 pieces of unworked debitage, 4 retouched pieces and one utilised flake (S.F. 1001).

Context 1317 produced two worked items of flint. One is a squat flake with battered edges (S.F. 992). The second is the proximal end of a narrow blade (S.F. 993). There is retouch along both edges of the blade and on

one side this has created a shallow notch. This method of notched blade working has strong parallels with microlith manufacture in the Mesolithic period and it is likely that the piece dates to this period.

A second retouched blade (S.F. 997) was recovered from context 1411. This is a robust example with a slight yellow patina to the surface. The retouch scars cut the patina suggesting re-working of previously knapped material by later generations.

The final retouched item is a small flake (S.F. 998) from context 1413. Here oblique retouch has been used to sharpen an edge.

6.0 Conclusion

This small collection demonstrates prehistoric activity on the margins of the Ouse from potentially as early as the Mesolithic period through to the early Bronze Age.

Raw materials were probably collected locally from glacial or waterborne deposits with some evidence for the importing of larger nodules (although it is possible that the nodular material from features 39 & 58 is from the historic periods, being so out of character with the rest of the assemblage). An expedient alternative to knapping from pebbles was to fashion new tools on previously discarded blanks left by earlier generations.

From this small sample it is difficult to draw any conclusions about the nature of prehistoric activity although it is certain that during prehistory lithic tools were manufactured, curated and disposed of in this locality.

Flint Catalogues

Appendix 1: Blue Bridge Lane catalogue

Appendix 2: York Fishergate House catalogue

URL: http://www.archaeologicalplanningconsultancy.co.uk/mono/001/art_lithic.html
HTML Markup: Guy Hopkinson • email: archaeoscope@mac.com. Updated December 22, 2004

Blue Bridge Lane & Fishergate House: Flint report - Appendix 1

Flint Catalogue abbreviations

Site Info.

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Raw Material

Material: F = Flint. C = Chert. A = Agate. Q = Quartz. T = Tuff. F. **Col.**: The colour of the raw material. / or ? = Unknown. BL = Black. BR = Brown. G = Grey. P = Pink. R = Red. CR = Cream. **Cort.:** The amount of cortex present on a piece expressed as a percentage (%). **C. Col.:** The colour of the cortex where present. BR = Brown. CR = Cream. R = reduced. C = Chalky. **Patina:** The colour of any patina followed by the percentage (%) of surface affected e.g W100. G = Grey. W = White. Y = Yellow

Technology

Type: The primary form of the item irrespective of further working. B = Blade. BD = Blade Distal. BM = Blade Mid. BP = Blade Proximal. D = Debitage (followed by size grading in 5 mm increments). F = Flake. IB = Irregular burnt piece (followed by size grading in 5 mm increments). NP = natural pebble (followed by size grading in 5 mm increments) F denotes fragment. **Interp.:** Interpretation of function of piece. RET = Retouched. USE = Utilised piece (may be followed by ? when unsure). Free text descriptions allowed e.g. SCRAPER, MICROLITH. ? = possible. **Work.:** To indicate type of working and where AE = All edges. E & E = End and edge – usually used for scrapers. BAT = Battered. LE = Left edge (when viewing dorsal surface). PF = Pressure flaked. RE = Right edge (when viewing dorsal surface). DE = Distal end. RET = Retouch May be followed by ? when unsure. **Period:** P = Palaeolithic. M = Mesolithic. ME = Early Mesolithic. ML = Late Mesolithic. MV = Very late Mesolithic. N = Neolithic. NE = Early Neolithic. NL = Late Neolithic. B = Bronze Age. BE = Early Bronze Age. BL = Late Bronze Age. **Length:** Dimensions given in millimetres (mm). **Breadth:** Dimensions given in millimetres (mm). **Width:** Dimensions given in millimetres (mm). **Bulb:** The knapping technique used to remove a flint. H = Hard Hammer. S = Soft Hammer. SH = Piece shattered from a strike elsewhere on the flint. ? = undetermined. REM = removed. **Burnt:** Indicate whether the piece is burnt on the following scale: - 0 = not burnt. 1 = lightly fired (some surface crazing, glossing or staining). 2 = medium exposure to heat (large cracks appear, pot lid fractures, surface becomes grey or white). 3 = heavily fired (surfaces completely patinated, significant pot lids and shattering). **Damage:** Record damage as A(ncient), M(odern) or T(hermal). Indicate which edge. **Notes:** Free text field

Appendix 1: Blue Bridge Lane catalogue

SITE INFO.					RAW MATERIAL					TECHNOLOGY									
Year	S.F.	Cont.	Feat.	Quant.	Material	F. Col.	Cort.	C. col.	Patina	Type	Interp.	Work.	Period	Length	Breadth	Width	Bulb	Burnt	Damage	Notes (Re-fits)
2000	302	1006	4	1	F	BR-G	0		BR90	F	RET	RET RE	Reuse	30	17	5	H	0	N	
2002	4247	1062	13	1	C	G	0		0	NPF<25							N?	0	N	
2002	4248	1062	13	1	F	G	15	CR ROLL	0	F	USE	END		24	31	10	H	0	N	
2001	4249	1147	46	1	F	G	0		0	BP				20	15	4	S	0	N	
2001	4250	1163	43	1	F	G	0		W90	F				18	24	2	N?	0	N	
2001	4251	1150	39	1	F	BR	5	CR ROLL	0	D<70							H	0	N	Piece from large nodule
2001	4252	1150	39	1	F	G	10	CR ROLL	0	D<105							H	0	N	Piece from large nodule
2001	4253	1150	39	1	F	G	10	CR ROLL	0	D<40							SH	0	N	Piece from large nodule
2001	4254	1150	39	1	F	G	0		0	F				15	12	2	S	0	N	
2002	4256	1288	310	1	A	B-G	50	W	0	D<20							N	0	N	
2001	4257	1367	58	1	F	G	20	CR ROLL	0	D<65							N	0	N	Piece from large nodule
2001	4258	1368	58	1	F	G	0		0	F				18	18	8	H	0	MOD RE	
2001	4259	1433		1	F	?	0		CR100	B				23	10	5	S	0	MOD RE	
2001	4261	1570	252	1	F	BR-CR	0		0	F	RET	LE		16	28	4	?	0	N	
2001	4262	1571	4262	1	F	?	0		CR100	F	NOTCH	END		26	18	6	H	0	N	
2002	4264	1649	284	1	F	BR-R	0		0	F	USE	LE RE		28	15	2	S	0	N	Very good quality flint
2002	4266	1765	208	1	F	BR	0	CR ROLL	0	D<20	USE?						SH	0	N	
2002	4267	1742	77	1	F	BR	0		0	NPF<30							N	0	N	

2002	4268	1742	77	1	F	G	0		0	D<20							?	0	N	
2002	4269	1770	208	1	F	?	0		G100	IB<20							?	3	T	
2002	4270	1846	381	1	F	G	5	CR ROLL	0	F				35	21	9	H	0	MOD RE	
2002	4272	1864	396	1	F	BR	0		CR80	F				17	20	4	S	0	N	
2001	4275	1836	381	1	F	G	10	CR ROLL	0	F	SCRAPER	THUMB	EBA	31	28	14	H	0	N	Robust thumbnail scraper
2002	4276	1902	401	1	F	G	5	CR INT	0	CORE 3				32	38	21	S	0	N	
2002	4277	1930		1	F	BR	0		0	F				20	21	8	H	0	N	
2002	4278	1944	437	1	F	?	0		W100	B				37	11	5	S	0	N	
2002	4279	2063	381	1	F	G	50	CR ROLL	0	NPF<25							N	0	N	
2002	4282	2176	546	1	F	BR	50	CR ROLL	0	D<20							N?	0	N	
2002	4284	2205		1	F	?	50	CR ROLL	CR100	NP<55							N	0	N	
2002	4285	2204		1	F	BR	40	CR CHALKY	0	PF				40	32	15	N?	0	N	
2002	4289	2209	555	1	F	BR	5	CR ROLL	0	F	BIFACIAL POINT		N-EBA	35	16	7	PF	0	N	
2002	4280	2017	474	1	F	?	0		CR100	F				24	28	8	H	0	N	
2002	4281	2177	545	1	F	G	0		0	D<20							?	0	N	
2002	4286	2205		1	F	G	20	CR ROLL	0	F				32	18	8	S	0	N	
2002	4287	2205		1	F	G	15	CR ROLL	0	D<25							SH	0	N	
2002	4288	2205		1	F	?	0		CR100	F				40	40	12	H	0	N	
2002	4290	US		1	F	?	0		CR100	F				45	18	5	S	0	N	
2002	4291	US		1	F	?	5	CR ROLL	BR100	F	SCRAPER	EDGE/ NOTCH	M?	55	41	12	H	0	N	
2002	4292	2107	351	1	F	R-BR	0		0	F	USE	RE		18	16	3	S	0	N	
2002	4301	1065	13	1	F	G	40	CR ROLL	0	D<15							SH	0	N	
2002	4305	1851	381	1	F	?	0		CR100	NPF<15							N	0	N	
2002	4309	2063	381	1	F	G	50	ROLL	0	F				17	13	5	H	0	N	
2002	4311	2096	273	1	F	BR	0		0	D<25							N?	0	N	
2002	4313	2129	520	1	F	BR	0		0	F				19	22	3	?	0	N	
2002	4314	2200	546	1	F	?	0		CR100	NPF<25							N	0	N	
2001	4316	1574	256	1	F	?	0		G100	F				36	17	7	?	3	T	
2002	4317	1065	13	1	F	R-BR	0		0	F				12	11	3	S	0	N	
2002	4317	1065	13	1	F	?	0		W100	F				16	11	2	?	0	N	
2002	4318	1147	13	1	F	BR	0		0	FD				11	15	3	?	0	N	
2002	4318	1147	13	1	F	?	0		W100	D<15							SH	0	N	
2001	4319	1341	164	1	F	BR	0		W50	F				12	16	3	N	0	N	
2001	4321	1436	215	1	F	G	0		0	D<15							SH	0	N	
2001	4322	1491	225	1	F	?	0		W100	D<20							?	0	N	
2002	4324	1515	218	1	F	BR	0		0	F				22	16	5	H	0	N	
2002	4324	1515	218	1	F	?	0		W100	IB<25							?	2	T	
2002	4325	1881	13	1	F	G	0		0	F				11	16	4	H	0	N	
2002	4326	2040		1	F	?	0		W100	D<20							S	0	N	
2002	4328	2128	520	1	F	BR	45	CR CHALKY	0	F				42	20	6	H	0	N	Poss. Burination attempt
2002	4504	1061	13	2	F	BR	0		0	D<10							SH	0	N	
2002	4505	1707	216	2	F	BR	0		0	D<5							SH	0	N	
2002	4505	1707	216	1	F	BR	0		0	F				6	5	1	S	0	N	
2002	4505	1707	216	1	F	BR	10	CR ROLL	0	D<10							SH	0	N	
2002	4506	1147	13	1	F	BR	0		0	F				5	4	1	S	0	N	
2002	4507	1449	353	1	F	BR	0		0	D<5							SH	0	N	
2002	4508	2063	381	1	F	BR	0		0	F				7	7	2	S	0	N	
2001	4509	1571	252	1	F	BR	0		0	F				4	7	1	S	0	N	
2002	4510	2041	458	1	F	BR	0		W30	F				12	5	1	S	0	N	
2002	4511	2054	381	1	F	BR	0		0	F				4	5	1	S	0	N	
2002	4512	1334	150	1	F	BR	0		0	D<5							SH	0	N	
2002	4513	2128	520	1	F	BR	0		0	F				11	6	1	S	0	N	
2002	4514	2195		1	F	BR	0		0	F				8	6	1	S	0	N	

2002	4515	1569	253	1	F	G	0		0	F				7	4	1	S	0	N	
2001	6121	1442	198	1	F	?	0		W100	D<20							SH	0	N	
2001	6121	1442	198	1	F	?	0		W100	D<15							N?	0	N	

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2000	991	1377	199	1	F	G	50	ROLL	0	NPF<55							N	0	N	
2000	992	1317	129	1	F	?	0		W100	F	RET	LE RE		34	25	12	H	0	N	Battered edges
2000	992	1317	129	1	F	G	0		0	BP	RET	LE RE	M	20	8	4	S	0	N	Retouch forming notch. Poss. Microlith manf.
2000	996	1352	64	1	F	G	0		0	NPF<35							N	0	N	
2000	997	1411	219	1	F	G	0		BR95	F	RET	LE RE		36	14	6	S	0	N	
2000	998	1413	220	1	F	BR-R	50	CR ROLL	0	D<25							SH	0	N	
2000	999	1413	220	1	F	BR	0		0	F	RET	LE RE		20	17	3	S	0	N	Scaled retouch
2000	1000	1422	224	1	F	BR	0		0	D<35							SH	0	N	
2000	1001	1482	258	1	F	?	0		CR100	F	USE	LE		19	13	4	S	0	N	
2001	1255	1550	292	1	F	G	0		Y40	D<30							H	0	N	Unidentified conceretion on surface.

URL: http://www.archaeologicalplanningconsultancy.co.uk/mono/001/art_lithic_app2.html
HTML Markup: Guy Hopkinson • email: archaeoscope@mac.com. Updated December 22, 2004