

The site was identified from the recovery of characteristic flintwork in a sand quarry which indicated that it was visited repeatedly over several millennia, but most regularly during the Late Mesolithic. It lies on slightly elevated ground at the watershed of major rivers and migrating deer herds are likely to have been an important factor in its usage. The viewpoint looks north across the open grassland or heath of the Lower Greensand to the wooded North Downs. (Drawing by Giles Patison © Surrey County Archaeological Unit)

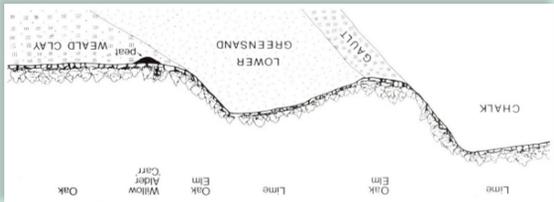
North Park Farm, Blechingley c. 4500 BC

Although not found in context, flints identified through fieldwalking and surface collection can indicate areas of activity and supplement the better stratified evidence uncovered in excavations. When found *in situ* in features such as pits, flint assemblages can even be dated if charcoal or botanical remains such as charred hazelnuts are radiocarbon-dated, and occasionally use-wear analysis is carried out on the lithics, closely examining the edges and working surfaces to determine their original function.

Trencher axe recovered from fieldwalking © Surrey County Council



As scientific techniques develop over the years, new advances are able to be applied towards the study of the Mesolithic, even when not directly archaeological sciences. One such example is the role that geomorphology (or landform studies) and pedology (soil science) can play in informing prehistoric environments. In the case of the Late Mesolithic, southern England is known from pollen data to have been mixed deciduous woodland where tree types varied with different soils.



forest of the Later Mesolithic (R I Macphail and R G Scayle) Distribution diagram of tree types in the mixed deciduous woodland where tree types varied with different soils.

The Mesolithic period c. 9300 - 4300 BC

Where can I discover more?

As a hunter-gatherer society who would have lived in temporary dwellings, the Mesolithic differs from later periods by having no substantial monuments and little surviving today to give an insight into what the landscape may have looked like at the time. In Surrey however, a small museum – under private ownership and available by appointment for group visits or on the occasional open day – was erected in Abinger over the site where Mesolithic dwellings were excavated in 1950 by L.S.B. Leakey.



Abinger Pit Dwelling Museum

Some learning sources on Mesolithic Surrey

- Bird, J and D G Bird (1987) *The Archaeology of Surrey to 1540*
- Cotton, J et al (2004) *Aspects of Archaeology and History in Surrey*
- Hunt, R (2002) *Hidden Depths: an Archaeological Exploration of Surrey's Past*

Other suggested resources

- Canterbury Christ Church University's **Stone Age teaching resource for Key Stage 2** (canterbury.ac.uk/arts-and-humanities/school-of-humanities/docs/Stone-Age-for-Key-Stage-2-Teaching-resource.pdf)
- Schools Prehistory & Archaeology** (schoolsprehistory.co.uk)
- Ancient Craft Three Age Experience** (ancientcraft.co.uk)
- Portable Antiquities Scheme** (finds.org.uk)
- Exploring Surrey's Past** (exploringsurreypast.org.uk)

In addition to the Society's own handling collections and teaching resources, local loans boxes are available from many of the county's museums, as well as Surrey History Centre.

Local prehistoric exhibits can be viewed at museums including Chertsey, Guildford, Bourne Hall and East Surrey. Other sites worth a visit include Butser Ancient Farm, where there are reconstructions of Mesolithic dwellings on display.



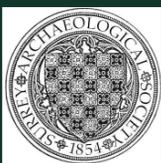
“Promoting the study of archaeology and antiquities... and any other matters or things relating to the pre-history and history of the County.”

- *Articles of Association*
Surrey Archaeological Society

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Mesolithic Surrey



Explore your local heritage and discover more about the origins of Surrey's earliest settlements

4800BC Possible experimentation with cereal cultivation suggested from Cothill Fen, Oxfordshire

5000BC Earliest copper objects begin to be made in Europe

5500BC Doggerland finally disappears, having gradually flooded as a result of sea level rise

6500BC Britain separated from the Continent and finally becomes an island

7800BC Coastal site at Howick, Northumberland, which included evidence for a tepee-like house and seafood-based diet

8000BC Farming developed in the Near East (though would not reach Britain until the Neolithic period)

8400-8200BC Largest Mesolithic cemetery in Britain at Avebury's Hole cave in Somerset

9000BC Earliest post-glacial settlement in England established at the lakeside settlement at Star Carr, Yorkshire



Mesolithic Surrey

9300-4300 BC

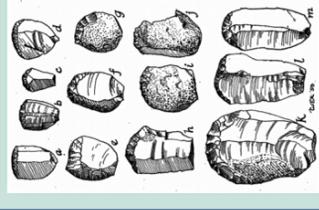
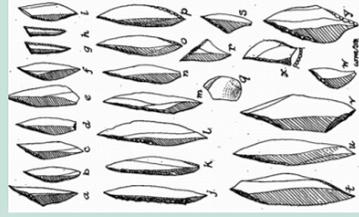
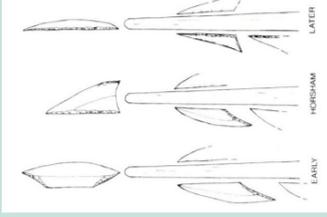


Lithic scatters

As the small groups of hunters and gatherers in the Mesolithic were largely nomadic, their flint tools and waste flakes – knapped from local stone – are usually the main indications of their movement and temporary occupation of sites. This evidence was often in the form of flint scatters, including the larger cores from which the flakes were knapped (see core and

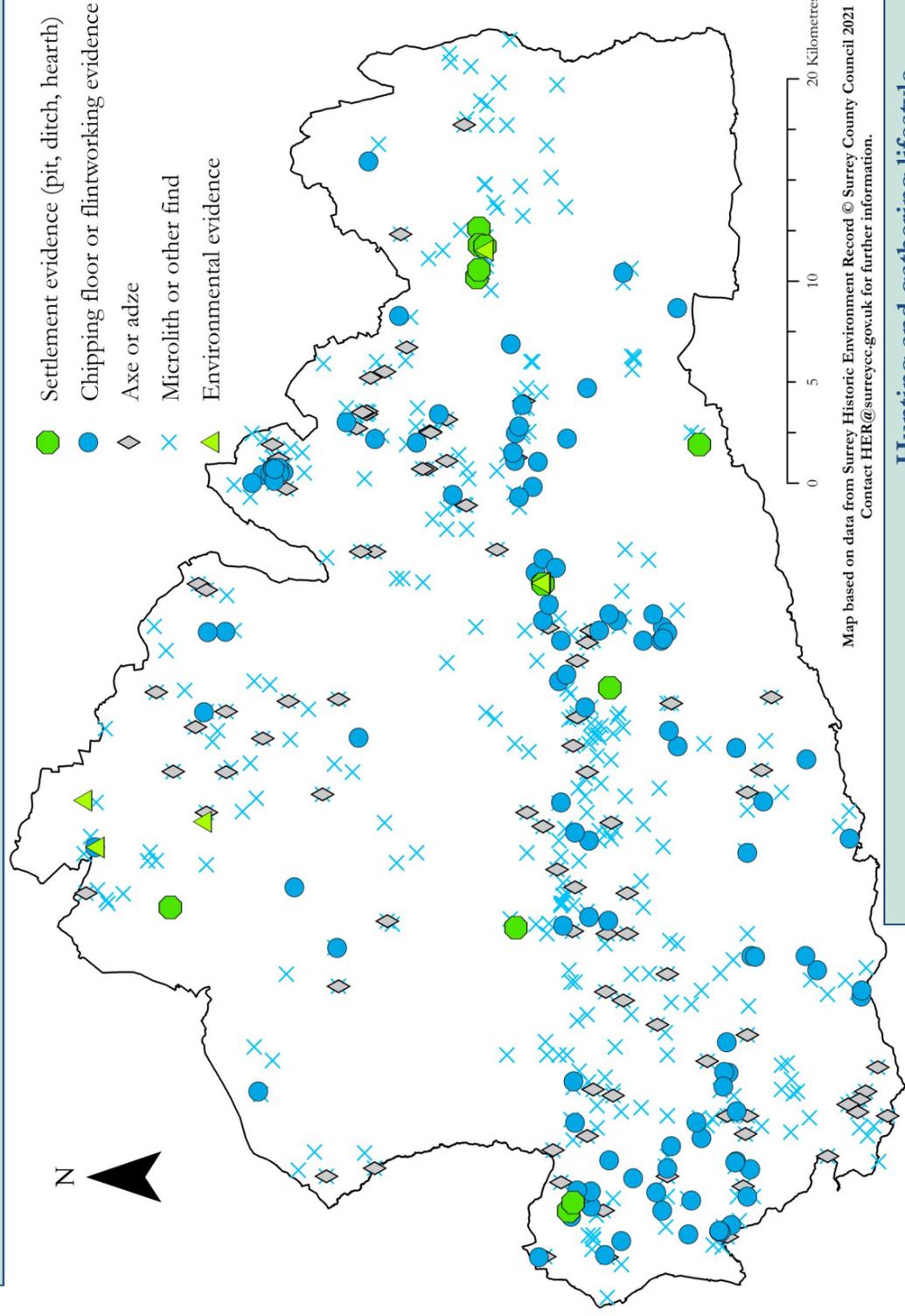
flake blades from modern-day knapping, *centre left*). Smaller, more developed tools were required for hunting, including small blades known as microliths (*centre right*), scrapers (*bottom left*), tranche axes and core adzes (such as the one from Leatherhead, *right*, as well as range of flints from the Farnham terraces, *bottom right*). By the Later Mesolithic, around 6700 BC, new styles of tools appeared which may have been brought over from the continent. The asymmetric 'Horsham point' – dating to around 7000 BC – was replaced by straight-backed bladelets or rods in the later period (see the reconstruction of hunting projectile heads and later microlith from Orchard Hill, Carshalton, *right*).

(Photos: Surrey Archaeological Society, Chris Taylor, Ancient-Craft/James Dilley, David Graham; Drawings: Roger Ellaby, W F Rankine)



Mesolithic dwellings

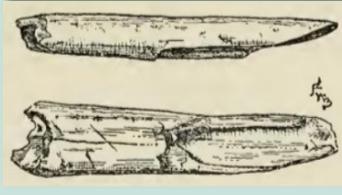
Flint scatters, indicating flint-working, are the most common indication for the temporary occupation sites of the period. Occasionally though, pits and hearths are also excavated which contain valuable environmental information. At North Park Farm, Bletchingley (*right and cover*), evidence of fire and cooking activities demonstrated that the hollow was repeatedly used over a long period, with the number of struck flints totalling over 75,000. The material recovered from the hearths at Bermondsey (*far right*) – combined with use-wear analysis on the flint tools – also provided insight into the site activities, and an early excavation at Bourne Mill, Farnham (*left*) uncovered at least 18 pits, though they may have been for quarrying, rather than dwellings. (Images: C E Borelli, Surrey County Archaeological Unit, London Archaeological Archive & Research Centre)



- Settlement evidence (pit, ditch, hearth)
- Chipping floor or flintworking evidence
- ◇ Axe or adze
- × Microlith or other find
- ▲ Environmental evidence

Transition to the Neolithic

The Mesolithic period is regularly defined by characteristics of a migrating society, including lack of any monumental architecture and changes from a microlithic technology. The overall lifestyle was clearly variable however, with sites ranging from small bases for overnight occupation to favoured locations used repeatedly as camps over the years. This hunting and gathering lifestyle almost certainly continued into the Neolithic, even after the development of farming.



Although the evidence in Surrey is limited, it is possible that the early domestication of animals took place in the Late Mesolithic, though examples such as the possible sheep metacarpal from Farnham (*above*) are only speculative. Whether or not this shift in subsistence was the direct result of continental newcomers, or was taken up by the indigenous population through trade and contact, it impacted heavily on the archaeological record, including the changing flint technology and disappearance of microliths. (Image: W F Rankine)

Metal Detecting

If undertaken responsibly, detecting can make important contributions to archaeological knowledge. Detectorists are reminded that it is illegal to trespass – remember all land has an owner! – and to record and to record finds with their local Finds Liaison Officer and the Portable Antiquities Scheme. For more on the Code of Practice, please see www.finds.org.uk.



Portable Antiquities Scheme
www.finds.org.uk

Hunting and gathering lifestyle

By the Mesolithic, the landscape had shifted from open tundra vegetation to covered woodland – a mixture of oak, lime, hazel and elm – as a result of climatic warming. With the warmer environment came new sources of food – wild birds, boar, deer and fish – which resulted in the change to a migrating hunting and gathering lifestyle. The small groups of hunter-gatherers lived off what they could find or hunt from season to season, whether nuts, berries, fruit, wild cattle, deer, pig, fish and fowl. Charred plant remains such as hazelnuts (as in the example from West Kent, *left*) are often the most common evidence of this subsistence economy – even being able to date associated flints, as at Kettlebury – and roe deer bones have been recovered both from hearths at Bermondsey and pits at Charlwood. Although flint tools are by far the main evidence of hunting equipment, occasional implements fashioned from bone and antler have been found, such as the antler spearheads from Wandsworth and Battersea (*right*). (Images: © Historic England, ELWJphotography; Drawing: David Williams)

