

The site was identified from the recovery of characteristic flintwork in a gravel quarry and the evidence indicates that it is likely to have been a temporary camp associated with the hunting of reindeer. The viewpoint looks approximately north across the tundra-like landscape of the floodplain associated with the Thames and Colne rivers. (Drawing by Giles Pattison © Surrey County Archaeological Unit)

Church Lammass, Staines c. 9000 BC

Flakes collected around Farnham by Henry Bury. Information and records can be lost over the years, such as the on-going study of axes and source respectively. Other times, the focus is on older collections, which are reassessed as trace element analysis, which showed correlations with a Salisbury Plain and East Anglian and Church Lammass – through Laser Ablation-Inductively Coupled Plasma-Mass Spectrometry (LA-ICP-MS) local flint sources was undertaken in 2010, assessing Palaeolithic flints from two Surrey sites – Wey Manor Farm Non-carbon material can also be analysed through advanced techniques, including lithics. A study to characterise Farnham – uncovered in a gravel pit in the 1980s – was dated to 36,600 years ago, +/- about 2000 years.

Palaeolithic flake from Farnham
(Drawing by Chris Taylor)



Mammoth tusk from Badsbot Lea found in 2005



The vast timespan of the 'Stone Age' – over half a million years – is often difficult to conceptualise, not least because it is represented by a wide diversity of artefacts and complexity of themes. The Palaeolithic (or 'Old Stone Age') is the era which begins with the earliest humans and ends with the retreat of the glaciers in the last Ice Age. Although much of our evidence is in the form of the flint tools left behind in the archaeological record, other sites from around Britain can give some insight into other aspects of material culture, including art.

As more and more scientific techniques are developed over the years, new advances are able to be applied towards research, allowing for more detailed results. One of the most significant methods which has developed in the last century is radiocarbon (or carbon-14) dating, which can provide age estimates for carbon-based materials derived from living organisms, based on residual radioactivity. Though this is given as a date range, rather than a specific age, the method can be very useful when applied to Palaeolithic material, whether charcoal from hearths or even mammoth tusks. One such tusk from Farnham – uncovered in a gravel pit in the 1980s – was dated to 36,600 years ago, +/- about 2000 years.

The Palaeolithic period c. 850,000 - 9000 BC

Where can I discover more?

Unlike much of later prehistory onwards – whether represented by the Bronze Age round barrows, Iron Age hillforts, Roman roads, Saxon barrows, medieval castles and churches, and numerous historical structures – there is almost nothing surviving in the landscape today to give a sense of what Palaeolithic Surrey may have been like. Artefacts such as flints which have been pushed to the surface through activity such as ploughing may occasionally be found upon the ground, but otherwise it is the rare excavated site



which contains evidence for the period.

Handaxe uncovered from field-walking in East Surrey
(© Surrey County Council)

Some learning sources on Palaeolithic 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 Farnham, Guildford, Bourne Hall and East Surrey. Other sites worth a visit include Butser Ancient Farm, where there are reconstructions of prehistoric 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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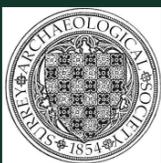
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Palaeolithic Surrey



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

9000 BC

UPPER
PALAEOLITHIC

35,000 BC

c.40,000BC Emergence of *Homo sapiens*, dated by evidence from Kent Caverns, Devon
c.10,000BC Portable art appears, including decorated horse jaw from Kendrick's Cave, Landudno and engraved figure on mammoth bone from Pin Hole Cave, Creswell Crags

MIDDLE PALAEOLITHIC

300,000 BC

c.250,000BC Best known Levalloisian site and tools from Baker's Hole, Kent

LOWER PALAEOLITHIC

850,000 BC

c.850,000BC Earliest evidence of humans in Britain discovered at Happisburgh, Norfolk, from which the oldest hand axe found in North West Europe also comes; the first humans in Britain at this time were likely *Homo antecessor*
c.700,000BC Previously assumed earliest stone tools in Britain uncovered in Pakefield, Suffolk
c.500,000BC 'Boxgrove Man' remains from West Sussex, an approximately 40-year old *Homo heidelbergensis*, are the oldest human remains in Britain; the site also has evidence for Europe's oldest bone tools, which came from a horse butchered at the site
c.420,000BC Sharpened wooden spears from Clacton, Essex are oldest known worked wooden artefacts
c.400,000BC Female skull from Swanscombe, Kent represents one of earliest fossils of *Homo neanderthalensis*



Palaeolithic Surrey

850,000-9000 BC

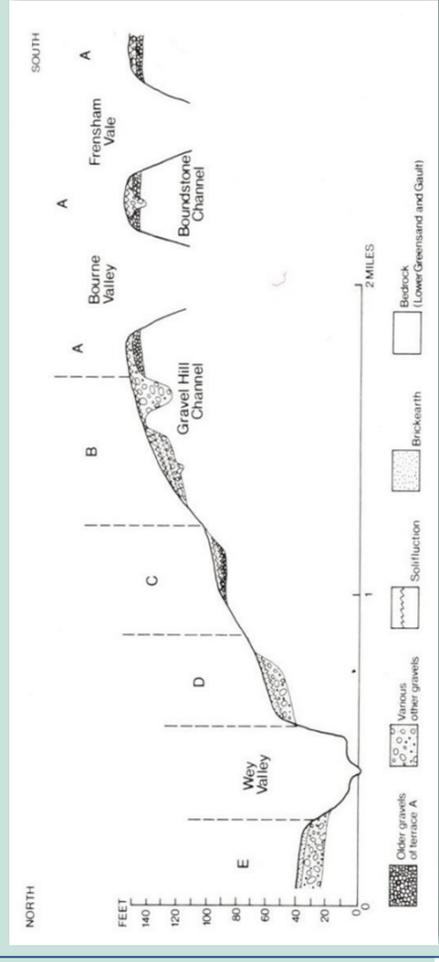
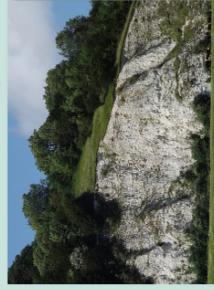


Geology and the landscape

Surrey – or rather the area which now comprises the modern county – is thought to have been inhabited for at least half a million years. Its landscape, however, evolved over millions of years prior to the earliest humans. During this vast period, an incredible amount of change occurred in the way in which people moved, lived, worked, established a sense of identity and adapted to their environment. Surrey's geology affected most aspects of society, including farming. As the overall poor quality of soil has made the area less suitable for agriculture than elsewhere in Britain, settlement has tended to cluster around more fertile areas, such as the Thames floodplain and the river gravel terraces. The geology itself is quite varied, and in the 30 miles that one travels from north to south in the county, at least eight different soil and rock types are crossed, which run east-west in geological bands. Although gravel and alluvium beds dominate around river crossings, chalk, clay and greensand are the overall principal strata, and they all vary in their suitability for agriculture and settlement.

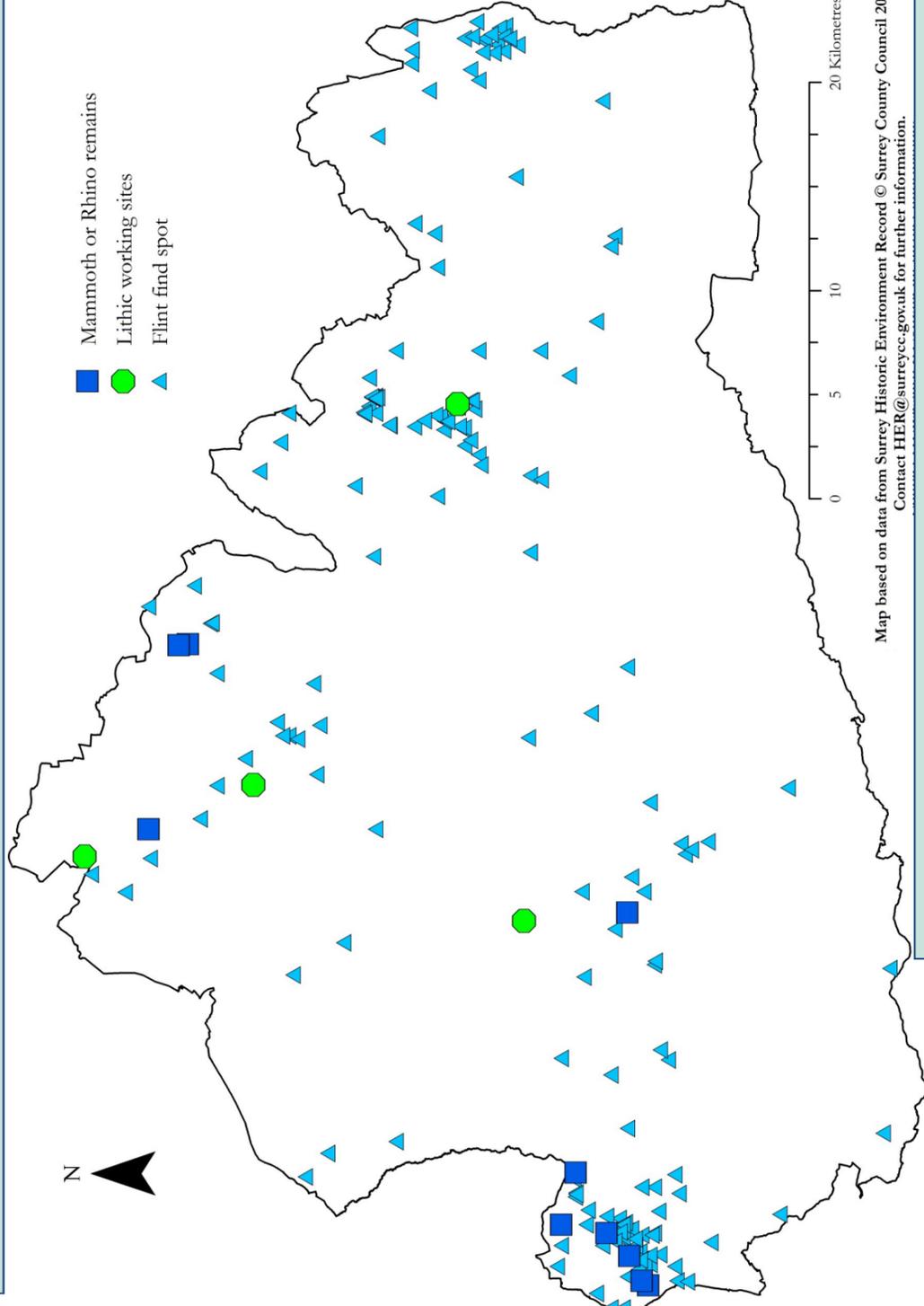
The low-lying poorly drained clay of the Weald was originally laid down about 130 million years ago, when the local climate was still warm and swampy. This was followed by the lighter sand and sandstone of the Lower and Upper Greensand, between which formed the clay, mudstone and siltstone of the Gault Clay. 65 million years ago, the chalk limestone which makes up the North Downs ridge (as at Betchworth, *left*) was then deposited, a feature whose steep escarpments and thin soil have made habitation challenging for millennia.

(Image: © Colin Smith, cc-by-sa/2.0, geograph.org.uk/p/3017282; Map: Surrey County Archaeological Unit)



Farnham gravel terraces

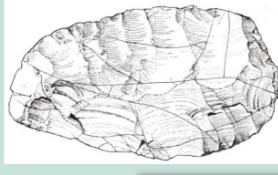
Although the number of known Palaeolithic sites in Surrey is limited in comparison to other counties, there are distinctive geographic clusters. One of the earliest known occurrences are the various flaked and hand-axes from the gravel spreads of Farnham's river terraces – the former floodplains of the River Wey – beginning with 'Terrace A' (*left*), whose sediments are the earliest in the sequence, dating over 400,000 years ago to the Anglian stage. A number of Acheulian hand-axes have been recovered from the Wolstonian Terrace B, and mammoth tusks, teeth and bone were common finds from the lowest gravels of Terrace D – deposited at the peak of the last Ice Age – most of which were revealed during quarrying, as at Coxbridge (*cover*) and Badshot Lea (*right*) sandpits. (Photos: David Graham, Farnham Herald; Drawing: John Wymer, after Derek Roc)



■ Mammoth or Rhino remains
● Lithic working sites
▲ Flint find spot

Early flint tools

Flint hand-axes – such as the Acheulian hand-axe from Farnham (*right*) – were the earliest tools used, with multiple functions, including for skinning and butchering animal carcasses. As more specific tasks were required and technology became more skilled, other tools such as knives or scrapers – like the example from Bourne Woods (*middle*) – were produced as well, along with long blades of similar size and shape (*see below*). (Images: Chris Taylor, Museum of Farnham; Drawing: W F Rankine)



Upper Palaeolithic occupation sites

Anatomically modern humans – *homo sapiens* – first made their appearance about 40,000 years ago, though Surrey evidence is rare before the Late Glacial period, when migrating groups would have tracked animal herds such as reindeer and horses. Their temporary camps leave little trace on the ground however, and are usually indicated by flint scatters. One such excavated site from this period was at Guildford fire station (*left*), at which over 2,500 flints – including 'long blades' – were recovered. Such 'long blade' sites tend to occur in river valley terraces, as at Church Lammas (*above*), dated to around 10,000 BC. At the slightly earlier Wey Manor Farm (*right*), the array of tools indicated a single episode of flint-knapping, with butchering, hide working and weapon re-tooling all taking place. (Images: Historic Environment Planning at Surrey County Council, Surrey County Archaeological Unit)



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 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.

