Archaeological Watching Brief of Land at St Nicholas Court Farm, St Nicholas at Wade, Kent

Date: 31/03/2014
Updated 06/05/2014

NGR 625694 167011
Site Code: NICK-WB-14
(Planning Application F/TH/13/0587)

Report for
St Nicholas Court Farms Ltd

SWAT Archaeology, The Office, School Farm Oast, Graveney Road, Faversham, Kent
www.swatarchaeology.co.uk info@swatarchaeology.co.uk
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Plate 1. Area of Investigations (in red and blue)
1. SUMMARY

1.1 Swale & Thames Survey Company (SWAT) carried out an archaeological watching brief of land at St Nicholas Court Farm in Kent. A planning application (F/TH/13/0587) for planning permission for anaerobic digester and ancillary tanks was submitted to Thanet Council whereby the Council requested that an Archaeological Evaluation and Assessment be undertaken in order to determine the possible impact of the development on any archaeological remains. Subsequently KCC Heritage requested an archaeological watching brief. This additional work was carried out in accordance with the requirements set out within an Archaeological Specification (KCC 2014) and in discussion with the Archaeological Heritage Officer, Kent County Council.

1.2 The Archaeological Watching Brief was maintained throughout the programme of ground reduction and excavation (Plates 2-4). No archaeological features were revealed during the ground works, but some 26 worked flints were retrieved from the archaeological horizon (101) which are the subject of a specialist report (Appendix 2). The Archaeological Watching Brief has therefore been successful in fulfilling the primary aims and objectives of the Specification.

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 Swale & Thames Survey Company (SWAT) was commissioned by St Nicholas Court Farms Ltd to carry out an archaeological watching brief at the above site. The work was carried out in accordance with the requirements set out within an Archaeological Specification (KCC 2014) and in discussion with the Archaeological Heritage Officer, Kent County Council. The watching brief was carried out from 27th February to 12th March 2014 and included the area for a new granary store south of the access road (Fig. 1).

3. SITE DESCRIPTION AND TOPOGRAPHY

3.1 The proposed development site is located to the west of St Nicholas Court Farm and centered NGR 625694 167011. The site is on high ground overlooking the relict Wantsum Channel to the west and adjacent to a solar farm immediately to the east (SWAT Archaeology 2011). The proposed development area is open agricultural fields bounded to the north by the Thanet Way (A299), to the east by Potton Street, and to the south by the farm complex of St Nicholas Court Farm. According to the maps of the British Geological Survey, (1:50,000) the site has Bedrock Geology of Margate Chalk Member-Chalk with Superficial Deposits of Head 2, Clay and Silt (Brickearth). The site averages 17.00m-18.00mOD.

Geology found on site was about 0.55m deep with topsoil (100) up to 0.30m thick and composed of a dark brown grey still sandy silty clay with occasional chalk flecks (marling) and...
carbon flecks, rare peg tile fragments and frequent small to large sub rounded and sub angular flints. The layer (101) below the topsoil was up to 0.15m thick and consisted of a pale to mid brown friable sandy clay silt with rare chalk flecks and rare small to medium sub angular and sub rounded flint and rare worked flint. This deposit sealed the natural drift deposit of Head Brickearth (102) which was a mid orange brown friable sandy clay silt with areas of degraded chalk from the Chalk bedrock below erupting through the context. This context also contained occasional small to medium nodular flints, including possibly Bullhead flints.

4. PLANNING BACKGROUND

4.1 The Local Planning Authority placed the following condition on the planning consent:

AR5 No development shall take place until the applicant, or their agents or successors in title, has secured the implementation of
i archaeological field evaluation works in accordance with a specification and written timetable which has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority; and
ii following on from the evaluation, any safeguarding measures to ensure preservation in situ of important archaeological remains and/or further archaeological investigation and recording in accordance with a specification and timetable which has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority

Reason: To ensure appropriate assessment of the archaeological implications of any development proposals and the subsequent mitigation of adverse impacts through preservation in situ or by record.

5. ARCHAEOLOGICAL and HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The KCC HER archive shows that there are extensive cropmarks in the surrounding fields including several ring ditches (TR 26 NE 174, TR 26 NE 26 & 27). Archaeological work associated with the improvements to the A299 and the erection of agricultural buildings at the farm has revealed early Iron Age pottery, a Roman amphora (probably associated with a cremation burial), Roman pottery sherds, human skeletal remains and ditches and pits which may all suggest that a Romano-British settlement site existed in the vicinity. A WWII pillbox once stood in the field to the west, part of a line to the west of St Nicholas. Trenching associated with this line could be in the field.

HER entries include:
TR 26 NE 27
Crop marks of several ring ditches have been reported near St. Nicholas Court Farm. They are possibly the remains of Bronze Age barrows.
TR 26 NE 68
Three ring ditch crop mark features and a linear feature have also been identified near to St Nicholas at Wade.
TR 26 NE 112
Cropmark of a ring ditch with an internal feature.

TR 26 NE 162

A Mid Iron Age occupation site and an early Roman wall were found during work in advance of road development.

TR 26 NE 202

The remains of a Romano-British settlement were found at St Nicholas Court Farm. The possible site of a Roman villa. (TSMR Site 0304-1).

TR26 NE 240

A World War 11 pillbox formally located near Potten Street.

In September 2011 SWAT Archaeology conducted an Archaeological Watching Brief on the adjacent field to the east in advance of the construction of a ‘solar farm’. In Trench 1 a cremation group of Roman pots had been disturbed by the machine which had been fitted with a toothed ditching bucket. Although the KCC Specification specifies a toothless ditching bucket for the work on the inverter housing there is no such requirement for the cable trench runs. The cremation group had been so disturbed that one vessel and its contents (Cremation 2) were on the spoil heap and the other (Cremation 1) had about 70% of its pot truncated. The remains of the two pots were collected and excavation of the remainder of the surviving pot were photographed and drawn prior to removal. The handful of small pieces of burnt bone left for collection were not of a condition to allow meaningful work to be undertaken by a osteoarchaeologist.

The pottery was analysed by the pottery specialist and Cremation 1 is dated to between c.50-75 AD and Cremation 2 to between c.75-100 AD.

Subsequently 20 worked flints were retrieved from trench runs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 in a reasonably tight distribution pattern. The lithic specialist reports that:

“This assemblage comprised twenty pieces of worked flint, with most contexts producing only a single example. One round ‘thumbnail’ scraper of likely Beaker Period/Early Bronze Age date was recovered from Trench 1. [101], but patination suggests it is likely to be residual in that context. Most of the other flintwork was unpatinated, as expected in areas of brickearth geology, but showed damage from the processes of natural abrasion, ploughing and perhaps trampling”. This suggests that any finds not derived from modern ploughsoil contexts had seen a degree of exposure prior to incorporation within their context, or perhaps derived from former ploughsoil contexts. Thumbnail scraper aside, many of the other tools and flakes were simple, expedient or sometimes crude pieces which would not be out of place in broadly Bronze Age/Later Bronze Age (or later) assemblages. One small utilised flake from Trench 1 [102] and a knife from Trench 5 [501] could be of Mesolithic/Earlier Neolithic or Neolithic date, but a later date cannot be discounted” (SWAT Archaeology 2011).

6. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the archaeological watching brief, as set out within the Archaeological
Specification (2014) are to contribute to heritage knowledge of the area through the recording of the archaeological remains exposed as a result of excavations in connection with the groundworks.

7. METHODOLOGY
The objectives of the archaeological watching brief are to contribute to heritage knowledge of the area through the recording of any archaeological remains exposed as a result of excavations in connection with the ground works. Stripping of topsoil and subsoil prior to deep excavation (Plate 4) construction was watched (Plates 2 & 3) but no archaeological features were exposed. The area prior to excavation was scanned for finds by a SWAT Archaeology metal detectorist, during and after excavation. Excavation was carried out using a 20 ton mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless bucket for removing the overburden to the top of the first recognisable archaeological horizon, or natural, under the constant supervision of an experienced archaeologist. The area was subsequently inspected to identify any exposed features in plan and carefully selected cross-sections through the features would have been excavated to enable sufficient information about form, development date and stratigraphic relationships to be recorded without prejudice to more extensive investigations, should these prove to be necessary.

No archaeology was revealed in the stripping or ground reduction.

All archaeological work was carried out in accordance with the KCC Archaeological Specification (2013).

8. MONITORING
Curatorial advice was available during the course of the evaluation.

9. RESULTS
The archaeological watching brief failed to reveal any archaeological features.

10. FINDS
28 worked flints were retrieved and will be the subject of a specialist report.

11. DISCUSSION
A uniform stratigraphic sequence was identified throughout the site consisting of the natural drift geology of Head Brickearth with areas of degraded chalk erupting through from the solid Chalk geology below. The natural geology was sealed by a layer of what appears to be an early ploughsoil or subsoil and has been interpreted as the archaeological horizon in the earlier archaeological evaluation (SWAT Archaeology 2013).

No archaeological features were found cutting either this archaeological horizon of pale to mid grey brown and orange brown friable sandy clay silt or the natural Brickearth drift geology. A well distributed scattering of 28 ‘fresh’ struck flints was found within the archaeological
horizon which was devoid of cultural material later than the prehistoric periods. Taking into account the archaeological features found during the Watching Brief of the solar array in 2011 immediately east of the development site and cropmarks seen in the 2007 Google Earth image and listed in the HER, this area was undoubtedly a site of funereal importance from at least the Bronze Age. The lack of domestic and industrial activity in the form of cut archaeological features such as field systems suggests the area may have been used for ritual purposes and not subjected to the plough in antiquity. Then again, if one considers the truncation from modern ploughing of upstanding features such as the barrows on the dip slope surrounding St Nicholas Court Farm which survive now as just ring ditches, shallow ancient field boundaries may have been ploughed out through successive centuries of agricultural production.

Despite the lack of identifiable cut archaeological features, this watching brief has been successful in revealing a stratigraphic sequence throughout the site, and archaeological activity in the form of flint working has been found within a uniform archaeological deposit forming an archaeological horizon across the development site.

The archaeological watching brief has been successful in fulfilling the primary aims and objectives of the Specification. Limited archaeological activity was found during the watching brief which will inform the Archaeological Officer of the archaeological potential of site.

12. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

SWAT Archaeology would like to thank Jim Pace for commissioning this project. Thanks are also extended to Wendy Rogers, Archaeological Officer, Kent County Council for her advice and assistance.

Paul Wilkinson supervised the fieldwork, assisted in the field by Paul Hart. Illustrations were produced by Jonny Madden for Digitise This. The project was managed and the report written by Paul Wilkinson.

Dr Paul Wilkinson MifA
31/03/2014
Updated 06/05/2013
13. REFERENCES

Bibliography
Kent County Council (KCC), (2013) Specification for an Archaeological Evaluation at St Nicholas Court Farm, St Nicholas at Wade, Kent.

Kent County Council (KCC), (2014) Specification for an Archaeological Watching Brief at St Nicholas Court Farm, St Nicholas at Wade, Kent.

Wilkinson P. (Sept 2011) Archaeological Watching Brief of Land at St Nicholas Court Farm, St Nicholas at Wade, Thanet, Kent. Published document on www.swatarchaeology.co.uk (2011).

Wilkinson P. (2013) Archaeological Evaluation and Assessment of Land at St Nicholas Court Farm, St Nicholas at Wade, Thanet, Kent. Published document on www.swatarchaeology.co.uk (2013).


Maps
Ordnance Survey 4th Edition (1929-1952)

Websites
Kent Landscape Information System http://extranet7.kent.gov.uk/klis/home.htm
Plate 2. View of topsoil strip (looking north)

Plate 3. View of topsoil strip (looking west)
Plate 4. View of ground reduction

Key to Figure 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key to symbols</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>New concrete hardstanding</td>
<td>Emergency gas flare</td>
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<tr>
<td>Earth Mounding</td>
<td>Existing mature trees</td>
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<tr>
<td>Soft landscape area, native</td>
<td>Application area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Existing farm buildings</td>
<td>Proposed levels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Existing tall silos</td>
<td>Existing contours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security fence &amp; matching gates</td>
<td>Infiltration basin for clean runoff water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+16.50M</td>
<td>Retaining wall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.50M</td>
<td>Wildflower grassland</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Figure 1. Areas of the Archaeological Watching Brief are within the red line and the granary area (bottom centre, yellow tints).
**APPENDIX 1 – Kent County Council HER Summary Form**

| Site Name: | St Nicholas Court Farm St Nicholas at Wade, Kent |
| SWAT Site Code: | NICK/WB/14 |
| Site Address: | As above |
| Summary: | Swale & Thames Survey Company (SWAT) carried out an archaeological watching brief on land at St Nicholas Court Farm, Kent. A planning application (F/TH/13/0587) for the construction of anaerobic digester and ancillary tanks along with services at the above site was submitted to Thanet District Council (TDC) whereby Kent County Council Heritage and Conservation (KCCCHC), on behalf of Thanet District Council requested that an Archaeological Watching Brief be undertaken in order to determine the possible impact of the development on any archaeological remains. The work was carried out in accordance with the requirements set out within an Archaeological Specification (KCC 2014) and in discussion with the Archaeological Officer, Kent County Council. The Archaeological Watching Brief consisted of watching the ground reduction and excavation which encountered no archaeological features; but 26 worked lithics were retrieved in unstratified contexts. |

| District/Unitary: | Thanet |
| Period(s): | Prehistoric |
| Tentative: | |
| NGR (centre of site : 8 figures): | NGR 625694 167011 |
| Type of archaeological work (delete): | Evaluation |
| Date of Recording: | Feb-March 2014 |
| Unit undertaking recording: | Swale & Thames Survey Company (SWAT) |
| Geology: | Head Brick earth |
| Title and author of accompanying report: | Wilkinson P. An Archaeological Watching Brief at St Nicholas Court Farm, Kent |
| Summary of fieldwork results (begin with earliest period first, add NGRs where appropriate): | As above (cont. on attached sheet) |
| Location of archive/finds: | SWAT |
| Contact at Unit: | Paul Wilkinson |
| Date: | 31/03/2014 |
A brief comment on and catalogue of the worked lithics recovered during an Archaeological Watching Brief at:
St. Nicholas Court Farm, Thanet 2013

Site Code: SNCF WB 13

Analyst: Paul Hart
Completed 05.05.2014

Contents

1. Comment

Appendix – archive data
2. Quantification and initial spot-dating of the worked lithics assemblage
   2.1. Period Codes employed
   2.2 Key to Table 1
   2.3 Table 1: Quantification and initial spot-dating of the lithics assemblage

1. Comment

A total of 26 worked lithics weighing 188g were recovered during a Watching Brief conducted at St. Nicholas Court Farm, Thanet, in 2013 and these were presented for a brief review and initial spot-dating.

All were made from flint and all of the raw materials bar perhaps one were of types which could have been obtained from local sources within the immediate vicinity. The exception is a side and possibly utilised end scraper which might have been made from flint derived from a gravel source.

The flakes were generally small and either secondary or tertiary pieces. Only one waste flake (a primary) was present. The remainder showed use, though no retouched pieces were of specifically period-diagnostic form or particular note; the dates which have been suggested are based on general characteristic trends. All of the identified hammer types comprise examples of hard stone hammer-striking; there are no certain examples of soft hammer-striking. No blades are present and there are no instances of platform preparation. Thus there are no certain examples of ‘early’ (Mesolithic to Early Neolithic) flintwork and much of the collection could be relatively ‘late’, perhaps Beaker period and later (broadly ‘Bronze Age’); several phases could be represented however.

The flintwork was not recovered from features, but rather represents residual material retrieved from soil deposits or excavation surfaces; many pieces show some degree of chipping damage. There is an almost total absence of patina, suggesting that these pieces have not lain within chalk soil geology, though a couple show the early stages of a chalk soil patina. The lack of patination hinders the identification of residual material, the re-use of flintwork and whether the chipping damage present was certainly caused post-discard (though likely).
Appendix – archive data

2. Quantification and initial spot-dating of the worked lithics assemblage

2.1 Period Codes employed

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<td>968,000 - 250,000 BC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lower Palaeolithic I (Mode 1 flake tool industry)</td>
<td>LP I</td>
<td>968,000 - 320,000 BC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Palaeolithic I (M1 - Happisburgh-Pakefield)</td>
<td>LP I hp</td>
<td>968,000 - 700,000 BC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lower Palaeolithic II (Mode 2 Acheulian handaxe industry)</td>
<td>LP II</td>
<td>500,000 - 250,000 BC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lower Palaeolithic I (M1 - High Lodge)</td>
<td>LP I hl</td>
<td>500,000 - 472,000 BC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lower Palaeolithic II (M2 - Cromerian Interglacial plus)</td>
<td>LP II ci</td>
<td>500,000 - 450,000 BC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lower Palaeolithic I (M1 Clactonian - Hoxnian Interglacial)</td>
<td>LP I ch</td>
<td>425,000 - 412,000 BC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lower Palaeolithic II (M2 - Hoxnian Interglacial)</td>
<td>LP II h</td>
<td>412,000 - 362,000 BC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lower Palaeolithic I (M1 Clactonian - Purfleet Interglacial)</td>
<td>LP I cp</td>
<td>332,000 - 320,000 BC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lower Palaeolithic II (M2 - Purfleet + subsequent cold stage)</td>
<td>LP II p+</td>
<td>320,000 - 250,000 BC</td>
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<td>250,000 - 42/38,500 BC</td>
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<td>UP</td>
<td>43,000 - 9200 BC</td>
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<td>Earlier Upper Palaeolithic</td>
<td>EUP</td>
<td>43,000 - 30,500 BC</td>
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<td>Earlier Upper Palaeolithic I (leaf points; LRJ)</td>
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<td>C</td>
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<td>Beaker period</td>
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<td>Bronze Age</td>
<td>BA</td>
<td>2200 - 900 BC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Early Bronze Age</td>
<td>EBA</td>
<td>2200 - 1550 BC</td>
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<td>Middle Bronze Age (full range; ceramic MBA to 1350 BC)</td>
<td>MBA</td>
<td>1550 - 1150 BC</td>
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<td>LLBA</td>
<td>1550 - 600+ BC</td>
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<td>50 BC - 43/50 AD</td>
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</table>
2.2 Key to Table 1

**Type**
- Class of artefact, listed individually under its context in bold.
- Ordered as Waste, Retouched and Utilised, then by date, then by the strength of patina if appropriate to the site: strongest (residual?) to lightest/unpatinated (possibly contemporary when occurring in a patinating environment).

**Chip**
- Small struck flake with a maximum diameter less than 10mm.

**(RU)**
- Denotes tools which have re-used old, patinated struck flakes.

**Italics**
- Additional notes of interest in italics; including:

**(PP)**
- Denotes the presence of platform preparation.

**FS**
- Flake shape.

**S**
- Short or squat: width same as or greater than length.

**L**
- Long: length greater than width.

**N**
- Narrow: blade proportions but not a true blade.

**B**
- Blade: length twice or more width, with parallel sides and dorsal ridge/s.

**BL**
- Bladelet: blade less than 12mm wide.

**C**
- Cores: followed by the number of platforms, or ‘M’ for multiplatform, ‘D’ for discoidal, ‘K’ for keeled, or ‘F’ for fragment.

**FT**
- Flake type.

**P**
- Primary: complete/nearly complete cover of cortex on the dorsal surface.

**S**
- Secondary: lesser amount of cortex.

**T**
- Tertiary: no cortex.

**(T)**
- Near tertiary flake – a tiny amount of cortex remains to show material type.

**N**
- Natural: not a struck flake.

**RM**
- Raw material type.

**B**
- Buff cortex, rough, weathered, can be thick; from redeposited flint.

**SB**
- Smooth buff cortex; water-rolled?

**C**
- Chalky cortex from fresh, unweathered, chalk-extracted flint.

**G**
- Glaucnitic Bullhead Bed flint; from redeposited flint.

**O**
- Old, strongly patinated, naturally broken surface of flint.

**OW**
- As above, showing a thick white patina.

**R**
- River gravel flint.

**RB**
- Very thin, rough, (sometimes dirty-looking) buff cortex.

**S**
- Sea-rolled beach pebble/cobble flint.

**TB**
- Very thin, smooth, weathered grey-buff cortex.

**TG**
- Very thin, smooth, weathered, dark grey cortex.

**W**
- Water-rolled pebble cortex.

**1**
- Translucent yellowy-brown flint with no significant cherty inclusions.

**2**
- Translucent yellowy-brown flint with large, grey cherty inclusions.

**3**
- Graduating black to pale grey flint with occasional to medium small to medium-sized grey cherty inclusions.

**4**
- Graduating black to yellowy-brown flint with frequent fine grey cherty inclusions.

**5**
- Mottled black and grey flint with moderate to frequent small to large-sized grey cherty inclusions.

**6**
- Mottled grey flint with occasional to moderate small to medium-sized grey cherty inclusions.

**7**
- Mottled black, grey and yellowy-brown flint with no significant inclusions.

**8**
- Predominantly grey, graduating to translucent pale brown flint, with occasional to moderate medium to large grey cherty inclusions.

**9**
- Translucent black flint with moderate to frequent small to medium-sized grey cherty inclusions.

**10**
- Black flint with no significant cherty inclusions.
11 : Mottled black and grey flint with occasional to moderate small to medium-sized grey cherty inclusions.
12 : Mottled brown and dark reddish brown flint with occasional small white cherty inclusions; gravel flint source?
13 : Graduating black to translucent black flint with occasional to moderate small to large grey cherty inclusions.
14 : Mottled black, grey and yellowy-brown flint with occasional to moderate small grey cherty inclusions.
15 : Black flint with moderate to frequent small to large grey cherty inclusions.
16 : Black flint with occasional to moderate small to medium-sized grey cherty inclusions.
17 : Graduating black to coarse grey-black flint with occasional to moderate small to medium-sized grey cherty inclusions.

H : Hammer type (if possible).
H : Hard stone (eg. a cobble of rolled flint or quartzite).
SS : Soft stone (combined hard and soft characteristics; a cortexed flint nodule?).
S : Soft organic (antler, bone, wood).
W : Weight in grams (minimum 1g).

Patina : Patina present? If differential: described by ventral/dorsal surface; on cores described by platformflake scars.
N : None.
VE : Very Early (the first signs of a speckled discolouration; almost unpatinated).
E : Early (light dusting, but a more obvious speckled discolouration than VE).
M : Moderate (well established colours but coverage is patchy).
S : Strong (near or complete coverage of advanced patinas).
A : Advanced (at the later end of an Early or Moderate stage).
B : Blue.
G : Grey.
W : White (SW patinas are the most advanced form of patina).
TY : A translucent yellowy sheen.
( ) : Patina codes in brackets describe an earlier patina type truncated by re-use.

D : Potential/certain post-discord chipping/breakage damage present?
Y : Yes.
? : Denotes damage present but not certainly post-discord.
      : Either generally undamaged or with break surfaces that may be original.

Y : Yes.
? : Possibly, dependent upon context and associations.
1 etc. : Number assigned to an illustration or photograph provided with this report.

Period : Potential date range defined by Period Codes.
  NB. All dated pieces have been extracted from their original context bag and re-bagged separately.
  All pieces dated '?' have also been extracted, for review.
> : To.
< : No later than.
/ : Or.

Preference : Date preferred at this initial, brief review.
### 2.3 Table 1: Quantification and initial spot-dating of the lithics assemblage

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Context</th>
<th>Lithic type</th>
<th>FS</th>
<th>FT</th>
<th>RM</th>
<th>H</th>
<th>W</th>
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<th>D</th>
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