

Fieldwalk On Falmer Hill, Near Brighton - Second Season

by the Brighton and Hove Archaeological Society

This report as well as describing the recent fieldwalks also includes descriptions of previous discoveries in the area.

Grid ref.: TQ 355 075 area

Date walked: 6&7/10/84 and 14/10/84 (grid walk - see below)

Method:

'Leap-frog' method with lines either 60 or 120 m. apart and sections 30 m. long. Material picked up 1m. on either side of the line (see Fig.1).

During the field-walk on the west field two areas of high flint concentration and assumed to be flint-knapping sites were discovered. The distribution of finds over one of these sites was plotted using a grid method (see Fig.2). 1 m² squares were spaced 5m. apart and all artefacts within the squares were collected. A 1:25 sample of the site was obtained.

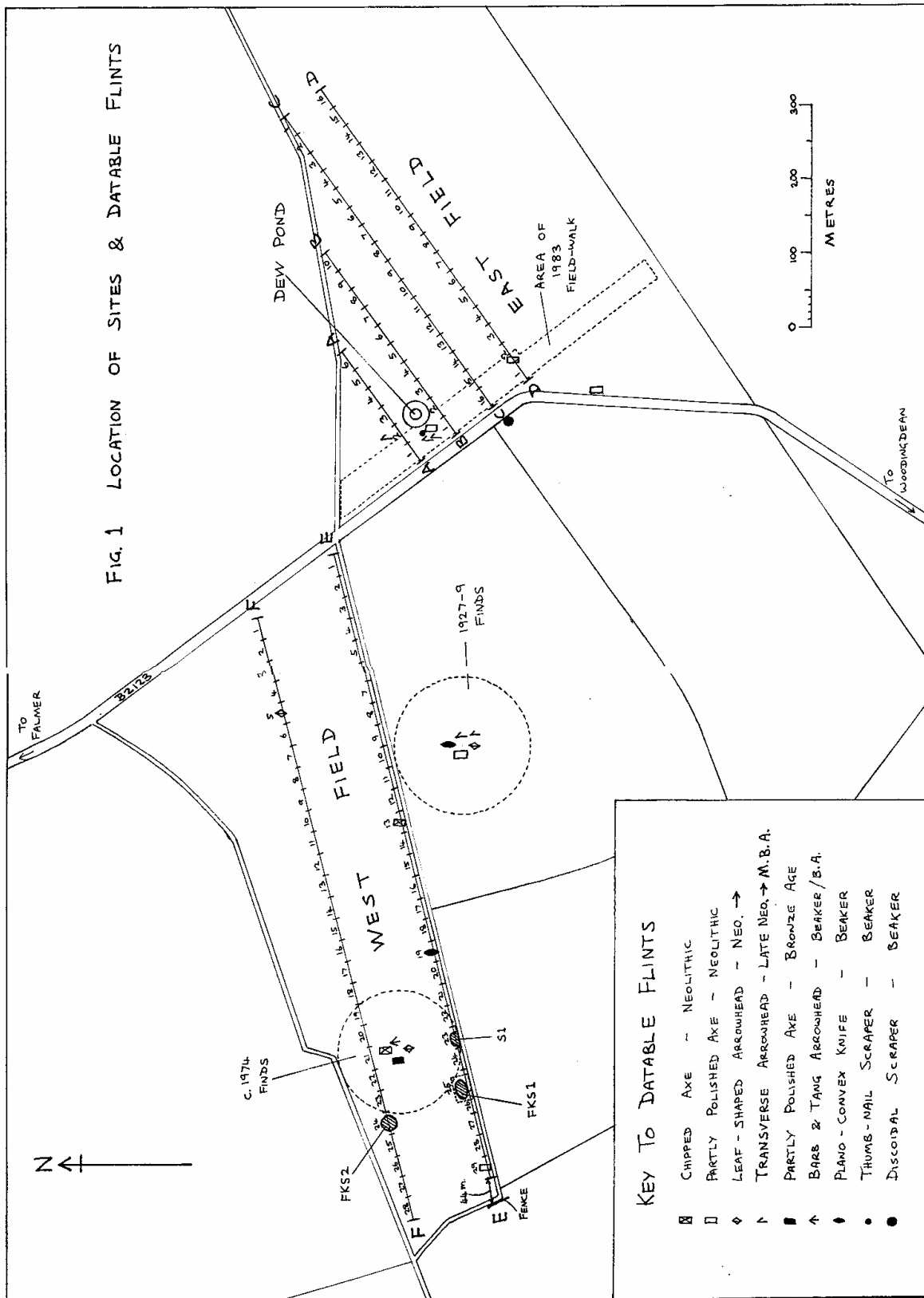
Situation & geology:

Unlike the usual Downland hills in the Brighton area Palmer Hill lies in a W - E direction. It is joined to Newmarket Hill by a NW - SE facing saddle (near the present dewpond). The bedrock is Upper Chalk.

Area covered:

107 sections, 30m. long and 2ni. wide give an actual. collecting area of 6,420 m². Lines 60 and 120 m. apart yield respectively 1:30 and 1:60 samples of the fields.

Farmer & farm: Mr.E.S.Huxham, Court Farm, Palmer (TQ 356 088)



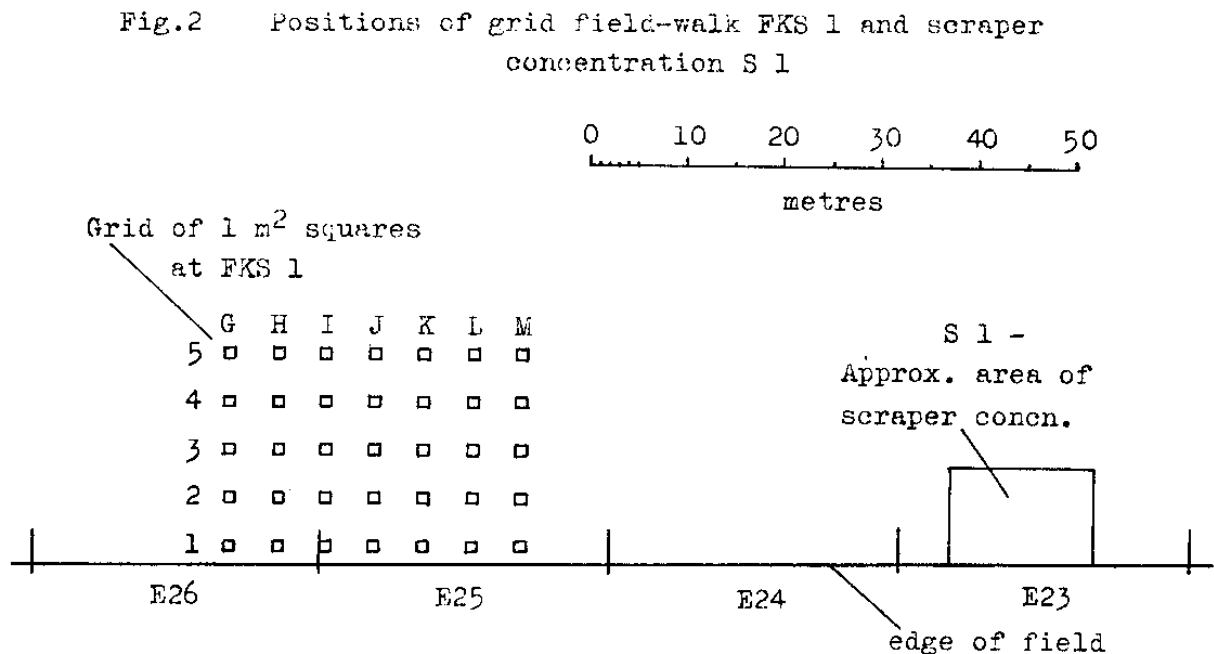
Distribution And Description Of Finds

Finds consisted almost exclusively of worked and fire-cracked flints. Areas containing relatively high numbers of worked flints and presumed to be flint-knapping sites (FKS 1 & 2) were found near sections E25 and F24 (All section numbers refer to the 1984 field-walk) on the west field. (see Fig.1). Their positions are suspiciously close together but since the ground between them contained only small numbers of flakes there is little possibility of both being part of one continuous site. In order to plot the area and shape of FKS 1 a grid type field-walk was carried out (see Method, p.1).

The distribution of finds from both types of field-walk are shown in Figs. 3 - 6. For extra clarity the areas of the lines or squares has been expanded in these diagrams. An attempt has been made to adjust the distributions to compensate for the variation in experience of the volunteers.

Fig.3 indicates that considerably more struck flakes were found on the west field (av. 24.5/section) than on the east (av. 6.3/section). Both this year's and last year's results indicate that the highest numbers of flakes on the east field. are around the dewpond. Numbers of flints on the west field. appear to be highest at either end of the field but clearly the finds from just two lines is not a large enough sample to prove this.

Cores and fire-cracked flints tend to be under represented on field-walks and consequently it is difficult to find meaningful results from their distributions. They both appeared to be rather randomly scattered over the whole area. The four hammerstones found (B2, E17, E26 and. P3) are generally in areas containing relatively high numbers of worked flints. 254 fire—cracked flints were found. (esp.F10).



As with the struck flakes Fig.4 shows that the quantity of implements are in general greatest on the west field. However, it seems that although relatively few flakes were found in the dewpond area, the number of end and side scrapers (including the 1983 finds) are comparable with those on the west field.

Possibly of significance is the greater number of relatively small scrapers (length and breadth < 40mm) in line E (5) than line F (1). Scrapers are largely confined to the eastern side of the west field, but section E23 contained an unusually high number (5) of a distinct type.

A later investigation of the section produced a further ten examples confined to an area of approximately 10 x 15m (designated scraper site 1 - S 1 -see Fig.2 above). The scrapers are all relatively small (av. length 36.4mm, av. breadth 28.6mm), more than half are on wholly cortical flakes (1ary - 8, 2ary - 6, 3ary — 1) and all except one have right—hand leaning retouch (see the typical example — Fig.7 no.9).

All scrapers are made of unpatiriated dark grey flint, and the 15 specimens appear to form a definite group. No other comparable scrapers have to my knowledge been found in the Palmer Hill area. Other finds from S 1 (also called E23(II)) were a notched piece, two spurred implements and a waisted Axe (Fig.7 no.4) though there is no way of knowing if these implements are contemporary with the scrapers.

Fig.3 Distribution of struck flakes

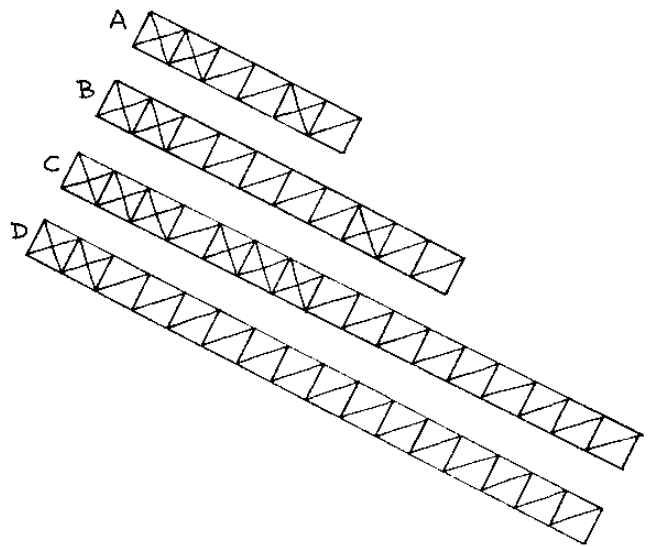
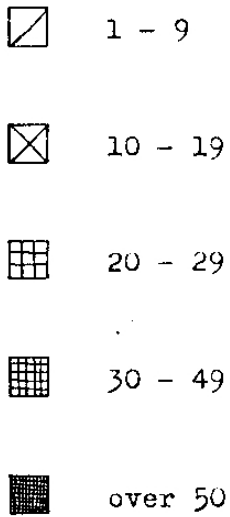
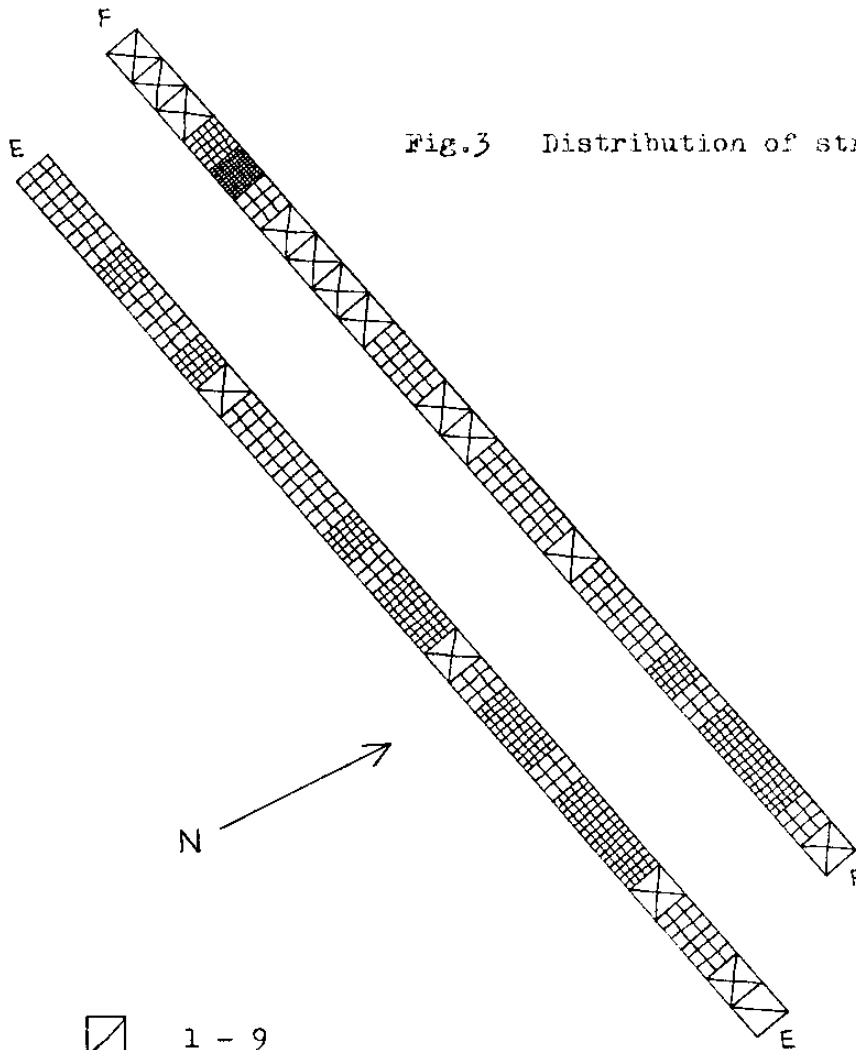
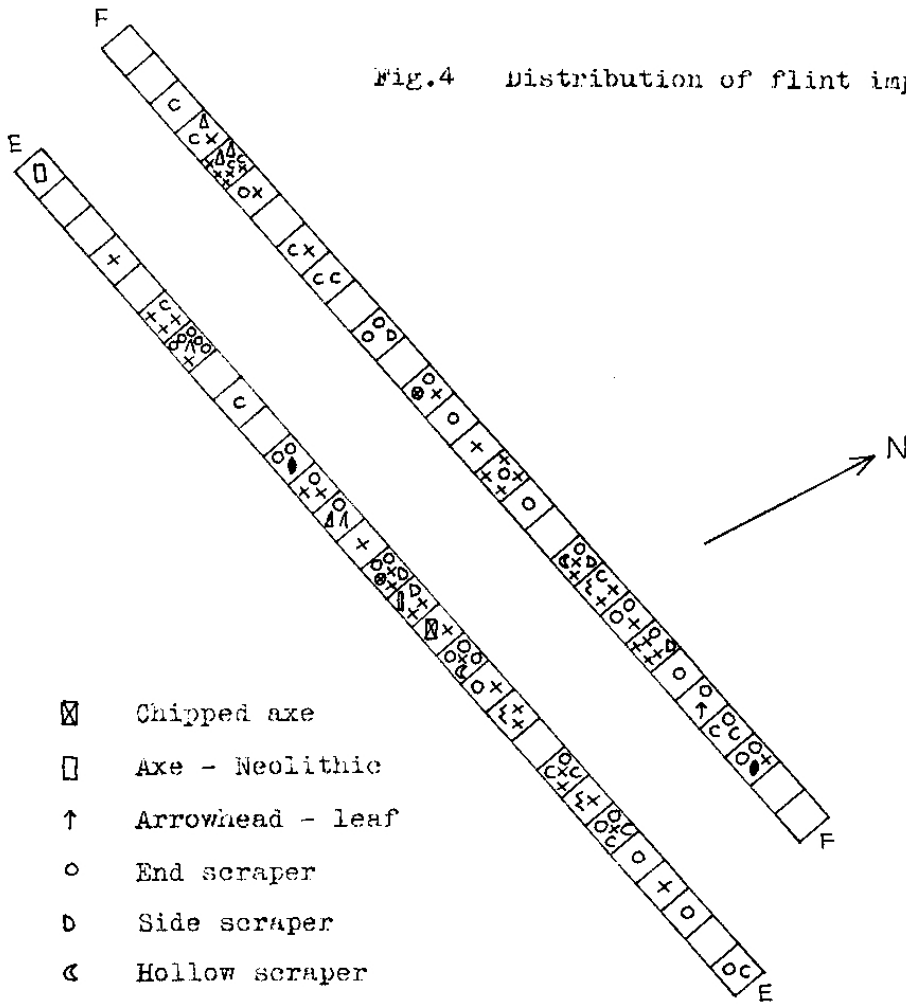
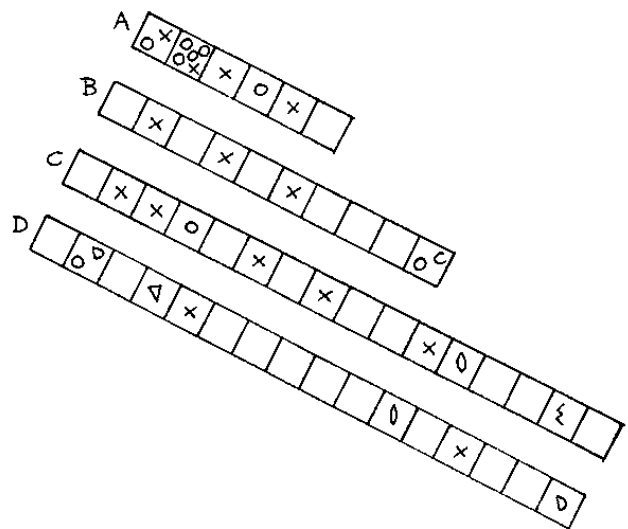


Fig.4 Distribution of flint implements



- ◻ Chipped axe
- ◻ Axe - Neolithic
- ↑ Arrowhead - leaf
- End scraper
- ◊ Side scraper
- ◐ Hollow scraper
- c Notched piece
- ▮ Pick
- Δ Awl/borer
- ∇ Drill bit
- Λ Spurred implement
- ξ Serrated blade
- ⊙ 'Nosed piece'
- ◊ Knife
- ◐ Plano-convex knife
- x Misc. retouch



Notched pieces appear to have a fairly localised distribution to the east and west of the west field, and despite the lack of finds on the east field this year the 1983 field—walk showed that many notched pieces and hollow scrapers are to be found in the dew pond area. One interesting 'notched piece' found in section E8 is a small blade thin for most of its length but with a thick retouched 'handle' at one end the point of the blade has some retouch but the main feature is three regularly spaced, very small (approx. 2mm) notches (The middle notch, however, may be a result of modern damage).

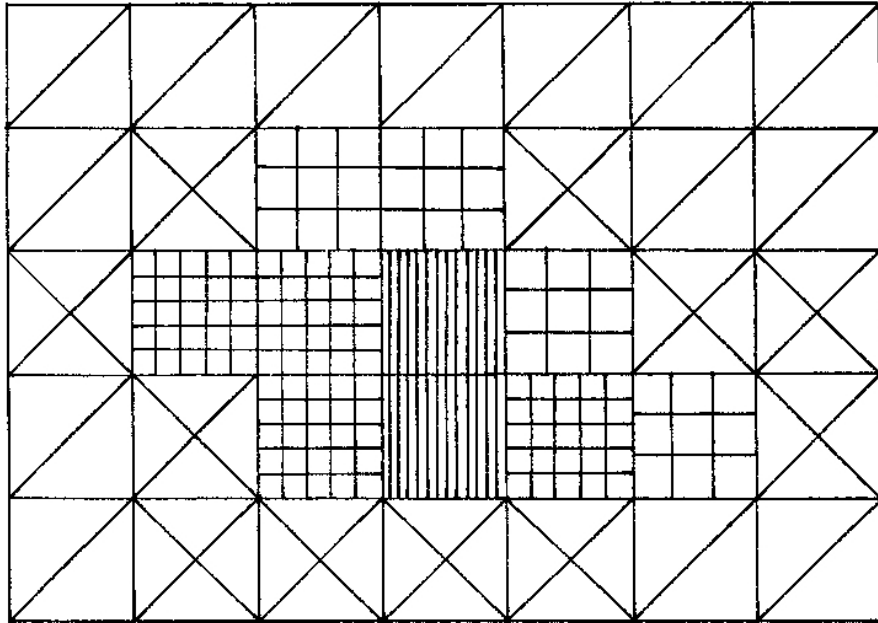
Other, possibly significant, observations are three awis/borers in sections F24&25, three serrated blades in sections E7, E10 and P9, a number of knives (including a blunt—backed knife) from the area to the east and southeast of the dew pond and three transverse arrowheads found near to the dew pond. More work in the area will be needed to prove the validity of any of these apparent groupings.

Figs.5 & 6 show that both struck flakes and implements at PKS 1 are concentrated in an area of approx. 30m by 20m. The difference between the 'background count' of 5 flakes/m² and the central area containing 70 flakes/m² makes it feasible that the area represents a flint-knapping site. As would perhaps be expected on one of these sites a good number of tiny flakes were found. Cores were not concentrated in any particular area and two hammerstones were found. The horned hollow scraper (Fig.7 no.12) found during the grid fieldwalk is, by its position and patina, probably unlikely to be contemporary with the flint knapping site. The piece is patinated a light grey colour whereas most of the flakes at the site are unpatinated. These implements are particularly common in the Seaford area¹ but occasional specimens have been found in the Brighton/Lewes area².

1 J.G.D.Clark, 'Some hollow-scrapers from Seaford.', S.A.C., Vol 68 (1927) pp 273-6

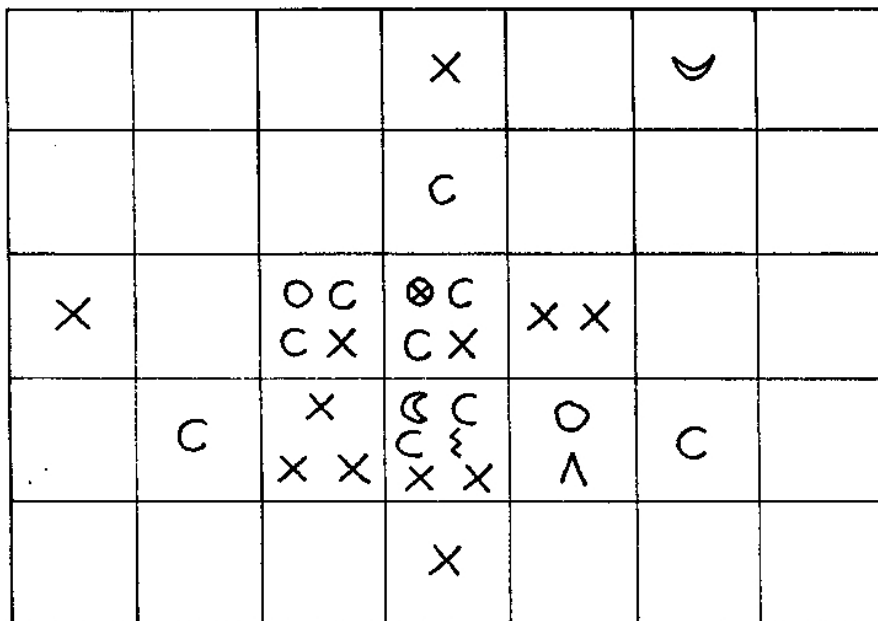
2 e.g. see flint illustrations - J.T.M.Biggar, 'A field survey of Houndean-Ashcombe and other downland fields west of Lewes, 1972-5', S.A.C. 116 (1977/8) pp 143 - 153

Fig.5 Distribution of struck flakes at FKS 1



1 - 9
 10 - 19
 20 - 29
 30 - 49
 over 50

Fig.6 Distribution of flint implements at FKS 1



○ End scraper ◁ Hollow scraper ∪ Horned hollow s.
 C Notched piece ⋈ Serrated blade ∧ Spurred implement
 ⊗ Late Neo. flake? X Miscellaneous retouch

A second possible flint-knapping site (FKS 2) is situated on a slight rise in section P24. Notched pieces appear to be the commonest implement type on both sites.

The flint implements illustrated in Fig.7 came from various sources, Nos.3 and 5 were found by C. & J. Skeggs in c. 1974 (Brighton Museum code Fh74). Nos, 7, 10 and 13 were found during the 1983 field—walk (Fh83- computer codes are no.7 - 222409, no.10 - 222401, no.13 - 222408), no.8 was a personal find (.Fh83) and the rest were found on either of this year's field—walks (Fh84).

The illustrated flints are as follows

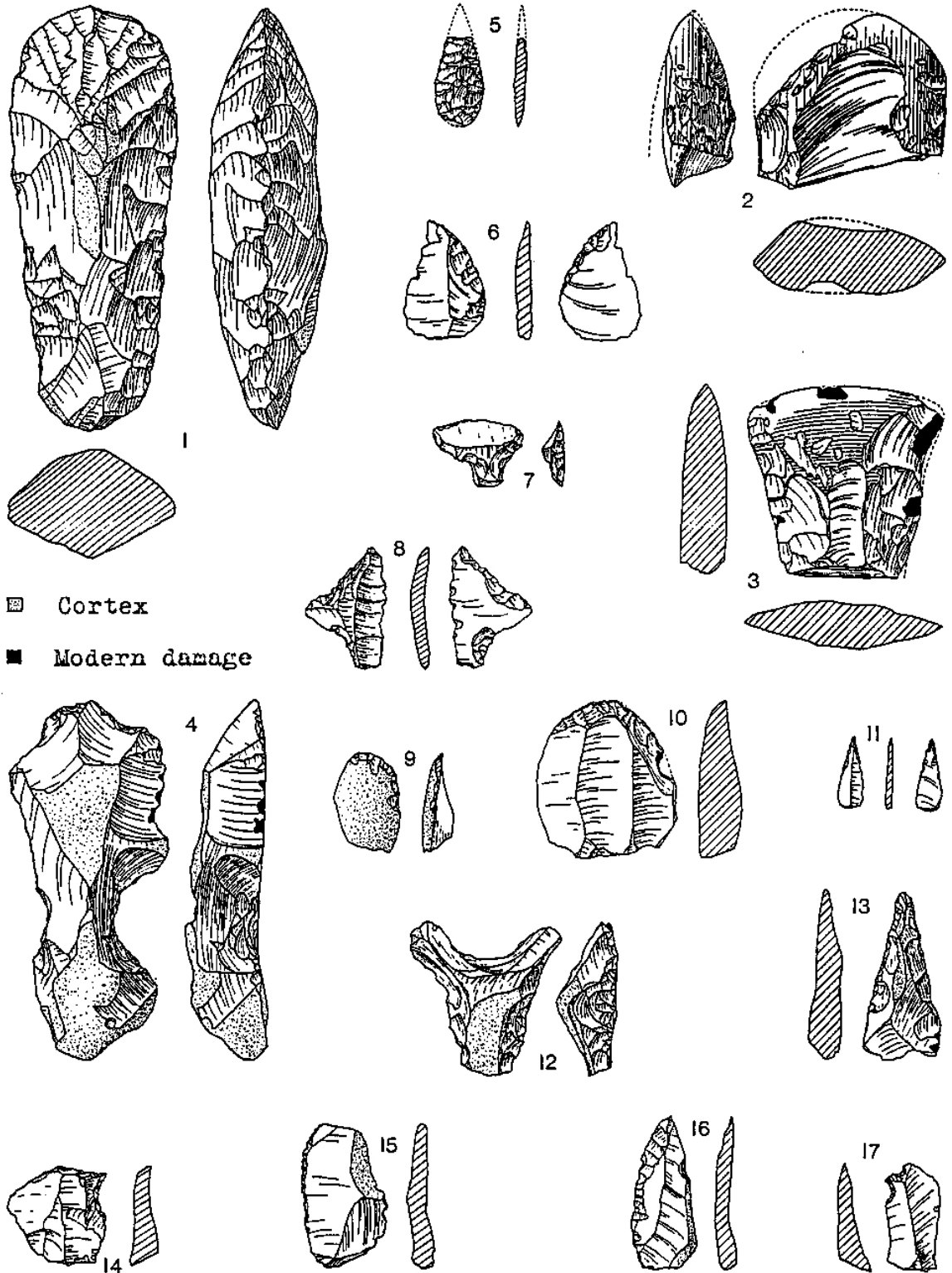
- (1) Complete chipped axe
- (2) Fragment of partly polished axe
- (3) Fragment of partly polished. axe with splayed edge
- (4) Waisted axe
- (5) Leaf-shaped arrowhead
- (6) Leaf- shaped arrowhead (possibly unfinished.)
- (7) Possibly Clark type D transverse arrowhead¹
- (8) Clark type E transverse arrowhead
- (9) & (10) End scrapers
- (11) Microlith—like drill bit
- (12) Horned hollow scraper
- (13) Borer
- (14) Awl/borer
- (15) Serrated blade
- (16) Plano-convex knife
- (17) Spurred implement

1 J.G.D.Clark, "Derivative forms of the petit tranchet in Britain", Arch J, Vol 91 (1935), 32-58

Fig.7

Flint implements

Scale $\frac{1}{2}$



'Guesstimates' of the areas investigated by C.Skeggs and by L.V.Grinsell in 1927—9 are shown in Fig.I. Unfortunately the Grinsell finds, originally placed in Hove Museum, have now been lost. They included a damaged polished celt, a transverse arrowhead, two or three other arrowheads including both leaf and single barb, a knife with ripple flaking and innumerable scrapers.

The finds from all sources have been summarised in Table 1.

Few datable pieces have been found in the area. Partly polished axes of both Neolithic (Fig.7 no.2) and Bronze Age (Fig.7 no.3) date are present. Transverse arrowheads, in general, were produced over a long period ranging from the Mesolithic to the Bronze Age, but the pieces found on Palmer Hill probably have a more limited date range from the late Neolithic to mid. Bronze Age. It is now known that even the leaf—shaped arrowhead. Is not limited to the Neolithic period. The microlith-like drill bit (Fig.7 no II) may possibly be of Mesolithic date but could also have been made later.

Flints of possible late Neolithic date are the waisted axe (fig.7 no.4) and some ill-defined large flakes, heavily retouched and often having a short, thick 'nose' ('nosed pieces!)- Two small (av. 36x28mm), very similar, oval flints steeply retouched all round (but not scraper—like) and covered on both sides with short scratched lines were found. 1m, apart near the dewpond. Both are patinated. Their use is not known,

Beaker types are represented by a thumb-nail scraper, discoidal scrapers and piano-convex knives (e.g. Fig.7 no.16), Both of the latter types are made using the pressure-flaking technique.

In general, Neolithic serrated blades have fine serrations, whereas Bronze age blades have larger serrations, each serration often formed by two or more retouches.¹ The illustrated example (Fig.7 no.15) appears to be a Bronze Age type.

The very few (6) pieces of pottery found. (all except one are personal finds) are possibly of Beaker/Bronze Age date. A barbed and tanged arrowhead found by J.Skeggs is of probable Beaker form.

There are, at present, no indications of groupings of flints of different periods.

A Bronze Age bowl barrow (TQ 3558 0750) and a possible Saxon grave mound cluster (group centred on TQ 355 076) were situated in the east of the west field. - all trace of their presence has now been destroyed by ploughing.

1 E.W.Holden & R.J.Bradley, 'A late Neolithic site at Rackham, S..a.C.113 (1975) pp 89 - 99

2 EG see Stuart Piggott, "The Neolithic Cultures of the British Isles", 1954 Fig 44, Nos 6&9, p. 280

Table 1 Summary of flint finds from Falmer Hill

	1927 finds	1984 field-walks Fh84						
		Fh74	Fh83	PERSONAL FINDS +E23(I)	A - D	E	F	FKS 1
No. of sections			77		48	64	61	
Struck flake		284	677		303	786	609	574
Core		5	13		21	30	26	19
Hammerstone			1	2	1	2	1	2
Chipped axe		1				1		
Polished axe - Neo.	1		1	2		1		
Leaf arrowhead	1	1					1	
Drill bit					1			
End scraper		13	20	14	10	21	16	1
Side scraper		5	11		1	1	3	
Core scraper		1				1		
Hollow scraper		3	31			1	1	2
Notched piece		3	17	1	1	8	10	9
Knife		2	3	2	2			
Pick			1			1		
Fabricator				1				
Awl/borer			3	1		1	3	
Spurred implement				2		2		1
Transverse Arrowhead	2		1	2				
Waisted axe			1	1				
'Nosed piece'		2				1	1	1?
Barb & tang arrow		1						
Thumb-nail scraper			1					
Discoidal scraper		1		2				
Plano-convex knife	1					1	1	
Polished axe - B.A.		1						
Serrated blade		5			1?	2	1	1?
Misc. retouch		25	37		14	22	24	12

Discussion

The quantity of worked flints and the large range of tool types found make it highly likely that Palmer Hill was the site of settlement(s) in Neolithic/Bronze Age times.

If this is true it is perhaps strange that so little pottery has been found especially since the causewayed camp at Whitehawk, Brighton, a mere two miles to the SW, is rich in pottery. Possibly the pottery, once present, has now disintegrated.

Since early man apparently favoured. South-facing hill slopes for their settlements the attraction of Palmer Hill's W - E ridge is clear. It will be particularly interesting therefore to investigate the field to the south of the west field. including the area where Grinsell made his finds (see Fig.1).

Acknowledgments

I am once more indebted to Mr.E.S.Huxham for allowing the fieldwalks to take place and to Dr.A.Woodcock for his help with the flint identifications. My gratitude, as always, goes to all the members of BHAS and SAS that helped with the survey and in particular to Mr.R.Lloyd for helping with the grid fieldwalk.

Bob Saville

25/11/84