



Prehistoric burnt flints found in Middleton

# Prehistoric Flints Resource Pack

Key Stages 1, 2 and 3  
History

Researched and written by Megan Dennis

[www.heritage.norfolk.gov.uk](http://www.heritage.norfolk.gov.uk)



# Introduction

This Prehistoric Flints Resource Pack is designed to work within Key Stages 1, 2 and 3 of the National Curriculum history syllabus. It provides extension material for the archaeology led session provided by the Education Department at Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse. The session is based on objects in the First Farmers gallery. The pictures in this pack and information available online on the Norfolk Heritage Explorer website compliment and extend the topics covered in the museum session but can also be used as stand alone resources.

The Resource Pack provides details from the website, photographs and drawings from the paper archives held by Norfolk Landscape Archaeology designed to help children develop an awareness of archaeological objects and how they can be used to understand the past. The pack also includes possible teaching activities and ideas for cross curricular working.

The pack is part of a series of Resource Packs linked to the National Curriculum available from Norfolk Landscape Archaeology. Find details and download other packs on the Norfolk Heritage Explorer website:

[www.heritage.norfolk.gov.uk](http://www.heritage.norfolk.gov.uk)

## Contents

Background	3
Prehistoric Flints in the National Curriculum	4
Possible Teaching Activities	6
Cross Curricular Links	7
Using the Images with an Interactive Whiteboard	8
Finding Out More	9
Resources	10

## Background

Flint tools have been found in Norfolk dating to 700,000 years ago. Flint was the ubiquitous material for tool production throughout the prehistoric period. It can be shaped easily and forms very sharp edges. Flints could be collected from the surface but was also mined. Grimes Graves (NHER 5640), a series of Late Neolithic and Bronze Age flints mines, are an outstanding example of a prehistoric mine where flint was dug out with antler picks and hauled by hand over 20m up to the surface.

To create a flint tool a flint nodule or broken flint would be selected and prepared by striking off odd ends to make flat surfaces, or striking platforms. The knapper will then start to strike flakes off the edge of this core. When struck with a hammerstone, flint fractures in a specific way causing a number of features. These features (as shown in the diagram below) distinguish the tool as man made, rather than as natural.

Whilst the use of some flint tools is obvious from their shape and size, many are not, and it requires an expert to ascertain their exact use and age. You can, however, identify whether a flint has been worked or not by looking for the following features:

- Ripples (ripple marks on the flat surfaces radiating away from the point of percussion)
- Bulb of percussion (a small lump left in the flint immediately below the point it was struck)
- Secondary working or 'nibbling' (fine working on the edge of a tool to sharpen or resharpen it)
- Point of percussion (sometimes shows as a small area of damaged or crumbled flint where it was struck, above the bulb of percussion)
- Percussion platform (the flat 'edge' remaining where the flint was struck from the edge of a flat face of a core)
- Fissures (fractures produced by the shock of the knapping)
- Percussion scar (a scar of less cleanly cleaved flint below the point of percussion)
- Polishing (occasionally scrapers and similar tools will show signs of a high polish from much use, though the fully polished tools like stone axes are very rare finds, and would have had more to do with wealth and ceremony than 'working' tools)



Flints were also used as heating implements. Pot boilers are smallish burnt flints, usually whitened and crackled by intense heat. They are one of the most common finds made during field walking and have been found at over a thousand sites in Norfolk. These burnt flints may have been used for cooking food or heating water.

Text adapted from:

Brooker, P., 2006. Thetford Forest Archaeology—Lithics—Prehistoric Struck Flints. Available:

<http://spamandchips.net/archaeology/lithic.htm> Accessed 16 April 2007.

CyberScapes, 2002 to 2006. Knapped Flint and Prehistoric Flint Knapping. Available: <http://www.belchalwell.org.uk/artifacts-flint.asp> Accessed 16 April 2007.

# Prehistoric Flints in the National Curriculum

Although the National Curriculum does not prescribe history content any longer it does suggest that teachers use a variety of historical sources. It is often difficult for teachers to identify and use historical archives and local case studies. This is why this series of Resource Packs have been created.

This pack contains photographs and drawings of prehistoric flints from Norfolk. The pack and associated material has been created in consultation with local teachers, the Education Department of Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse and the QCA guidelines for Key Stage 1, 2 and 3 History. It will also be useful for teachers following other specifications and may be used in a variety of different ways. The packs give students a chance to interact with material evidence in a fresh and interesting way.

## **Prehistoric Flints in the QCA/Department for Education and Skills Schemes of Work**

### **History at key stages 1 and 2 (Year 3 and 4)**

Unit 6A: Why have people invaded and settled in Britain in the past? A Roman case study.  
Section 3 Who were the Celts and who were the Romans?

Tell the children that they are going to find out about the Celts, who lived in Britain before the Romans arrived. Give them information about and pictures of the Celts and the Romans (including the prehistoric flints pictures) . Ask the children to complete a three-column grid with the headings: 'How they did things', 'Celts', and 'Romans'. In the first column children can list aspects such as *dress, belief, language, towns, farms, art, technology*. They can use the other two columns to compare the two ways of life. Discuss the children's answers with them, drawing their attention to similarities and differences. How were flints used in the prehistoric and Roman periods?

Unit 18: What was it like to live here in the past?

Section 4: What do pictures and photographs tell us about past life in our area?

Give the children pictures showing finds from the area including the prehistoric flints (others can be found in the other Resource Packs and online on the Norfolk Heritage Explorer website). Challenge the children to ask each other questions about each picture. Help them to ask open-ended questions, such as *What does it tell us about the area and people in the past?* Lead a discussion to sort the pictures into a chronological sequence and then make a visual time line for the classroom.

**History at key stages 3 (Year 7)**

Unit 1: Introductory unit what's it all about?

Section 2: What are we going to find out about in history in years 7, 8 and 9?

Brainstorm *How do we know about the past?* Ask pupils to work in pairs and give each pair one source including the prehistoric flints showing finds from the area (other sources can be found in the other Resource Packs and online on the Norfolk Heritage Explorer website). Each source should be on the same size piece of paper or card. Ask pupils to use simple data-capture sheets to analyse the source under the headings *What type of source is it? What does it show/describe? What does it tell you? What further questions would you want to ask of the source?* Ask each pair to report back, describing the type of source and topic. Do not attempt to tell the whole story: spend two minutes on each. Ask pupils to locate 'their' sources on the class timeline.

## Possible Teaching Activities

- Try getting students to knock a few flakes of a hunk of flint (taking appropriate safety precautions), then get them to look at a photograph of a finished tool: do they still think it's a worthless lump of stone? Remember the experiment need only take 15-20 minutes; the remainder of the session can be spent discussing (if you think that was hard how long do think it would have taken to make this?)
- Place one picture of a tool in front of each student and ask them to write down what it is, how old it is and what it was used for. Then get each student to move one place to their right (taking their paper with them), and repeat the process.
- Examine the physical features of the object, its construction, its function and design. Compare it to a modern equivalent.
- Think about what the tools were used for the past. Pick your favourite tool and write a description of how it was used or draw a picture of it in use.
- Look at real examples of prehistoric tools from the pack. How many questions can you come up with that can reveal more information about the tool or the owner of the tool and their age, their gender and their status? Focus on the shape, the decoration, the type of worked flint and its function. Get the children to work in groups to come up with a list of questions about a particular tool – then give them to another group to try and answer.
- Challenge the children to design their own tool. Ask the children to explain their design, the shape, how it would be made, how the handle was attached– use the types of questions as above.
- Contact a local flint knapper to ask if they would come and do a demonstration.
- Talk about knapped flints— where have the children seen them before?—show them worked flints in buildings and talk about how flint is still an important resource.
- Make a flint collection – go for a walk on the beach, poke around in your garden, ask in your local museum. This activity has endless possibilities including identifying which flints have been worked, cleaning the flints, creating a storage and display system for them, dating them, analysing them, writing captions for them and interpreting them.
- Sorting flints. Give groups a tray each of worked and unworked flints – can they sort them, then sort by size, colour or type?
- Give everyone a picture of a tool – how much information can they get out of it? Write a card for the tool as if it were going in a museum display.



## Cross Curricular Links

### **ITC**

Ask children to use the Norfolk Heritage Explorer website to find out more about each of the finds shown in the picture. Have any similar objects been discovered close to their school or home? The website is designed for 12 year olds to use unaided but younger children may need assistance with this task.

### **Literacy**

Ask the children to think about how they might describe the flints shown in the picture. Ask them to write a short description of one of the objects.

Ask the children how they think the flints might have been used in the past. Ask them to write a description of how the flinty might have been used.

### **Art**

The pictures include several archaeological drawings. Ask the children to use these as inspiration and draw one of the flints shown in the photographs.

Ask the children how they think the flints might have been used in the past. Ask them to draw an illustration of how the tools might have been used.

Show the children half of one of the flints. Ask them, to imagine what the other half of the flint was like and to draw it.

## Using the Images with an Interactive Whiteboard

You can find high quality images from this pack on the Norfolk Heritage Explorer Teachers' Resources gallery:

<http://gallery.e2bn.org/gallery586.html>

Look at each of the pictures of flints in turn. Think about the sort of information you could get from them if you knew more about them. In groups think of 3 questions that you could ask about the flints that would explain more about their use. Write the questions on the board using the Notebook function. Different groups can then answer your questions. Suggested questions: Can it be held comfortably? Does this suggest how it might have been used? Would it be easier to use with a handle? How was it made? Does the tool have an edge? How has the edge been made? How could the handle be fixed? What task could have been performed with the tool? What skills were needed to make it?

Using the screenshade function hide half of the image. Ask the children what they think the other half of the flint looks like. Compare their answers to the image as you slowly reveal more of the picture. Do they change their minds about what the flint looks like as they are given more information?



## Finding Out More

### Websites

Brooker, P., 2006. Thetford Forest Archaeology—Lithics—Prehistoric Struck Flints. Available:

<http://spamandchips.net/archaeology/lithic.htm> Accessed 17 April 2007.

Museum of Antiquities, Newcastle, undated. Flints and Stones—Explore the Lives of the People of the Mesolithic. Available:

<http://museums.ncl.ac.uk/flint/menu.html>, Accessed 17 April 2007.

BBC, undated. BBC—History—British prehistory. Available:

[http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ancient/british\\_prehistory/](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ancient/british_prehistory/), Accessed 17 April 2007.

BBC, undated. BBC—Schools—History—british prehistory. Available:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/teachers/ks4/historyprehistory.shtml>, Accessed 17 April 2007.

British Museum, 2004. Department of Prehistory and Europe. Available:

<http://www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk/pe/pehome.html>, Accessed 17 April 2007.

Show Me, undated. Show Me—prehistory games, activities and resources for kids from UK museums and galleries. Available:

<http://www.show.me.uk/topicpage/Prehistory.html>, Accessed 17 April 2007.

### Books

Barber, M.; Field, D., and Topping, P., 1999. The Neolithic Flint Mines of England (London, English Heritage).

Bewley, R., 1994. Prehistoric Settlements (London, Batsford/English Heritage).

Darvill, T., 1995. Prehistoric Britain (London, Routledge).

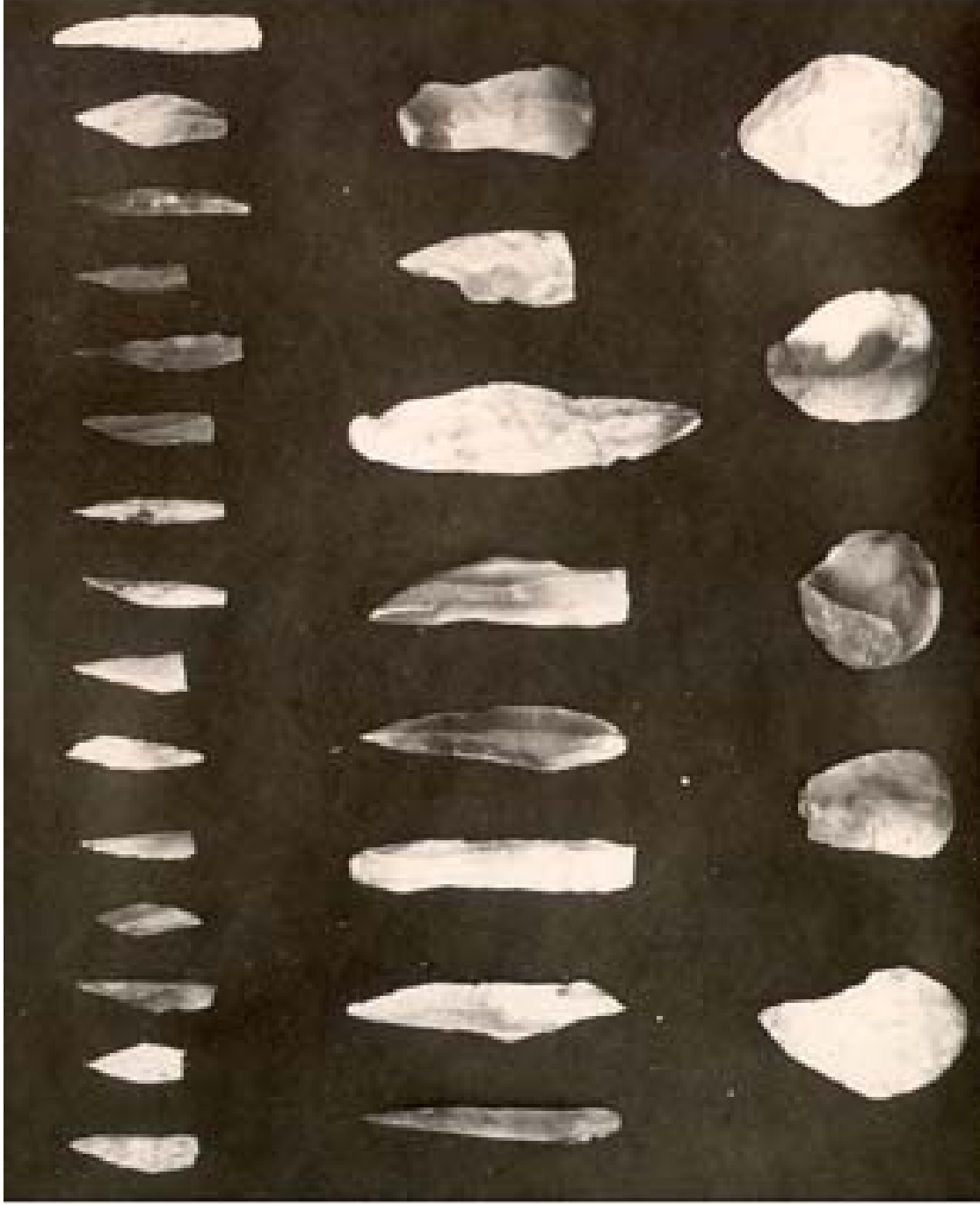
Dyer, J., 1993. Discovering Prehistoric England (Princes Risborough, Shire).

Holgate, R., 1991. Prehistoric Flint Mines (Princes Risborough, Shire).

Pryor, F., 2006. Prehistoric Farmers in Britain (Stroud, Tempus).

Timms, P., 1974 Flint Implements of the Old Stone Age (Princes Risborough, Shire).

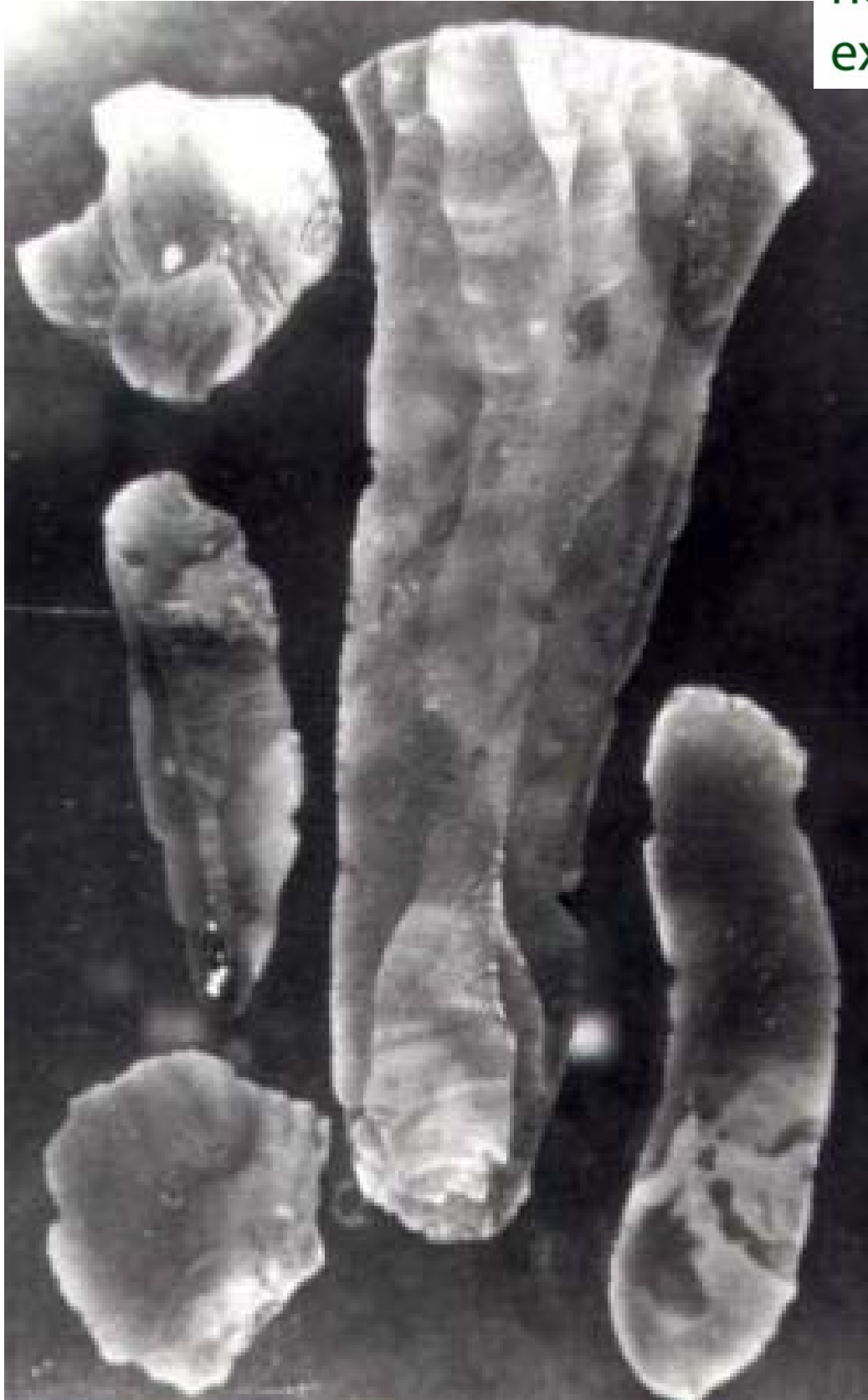
## Prehistoric Flints Resource Pack



Mesolithic flint tools from Kelling Heath, NHER 6246.  
What do you think the different shaped flints were used for?  
Available online at: <http://gallery.e2bn.org/gallery/586.html>  
Copyright Norfolk Museums & Archaeology Service.

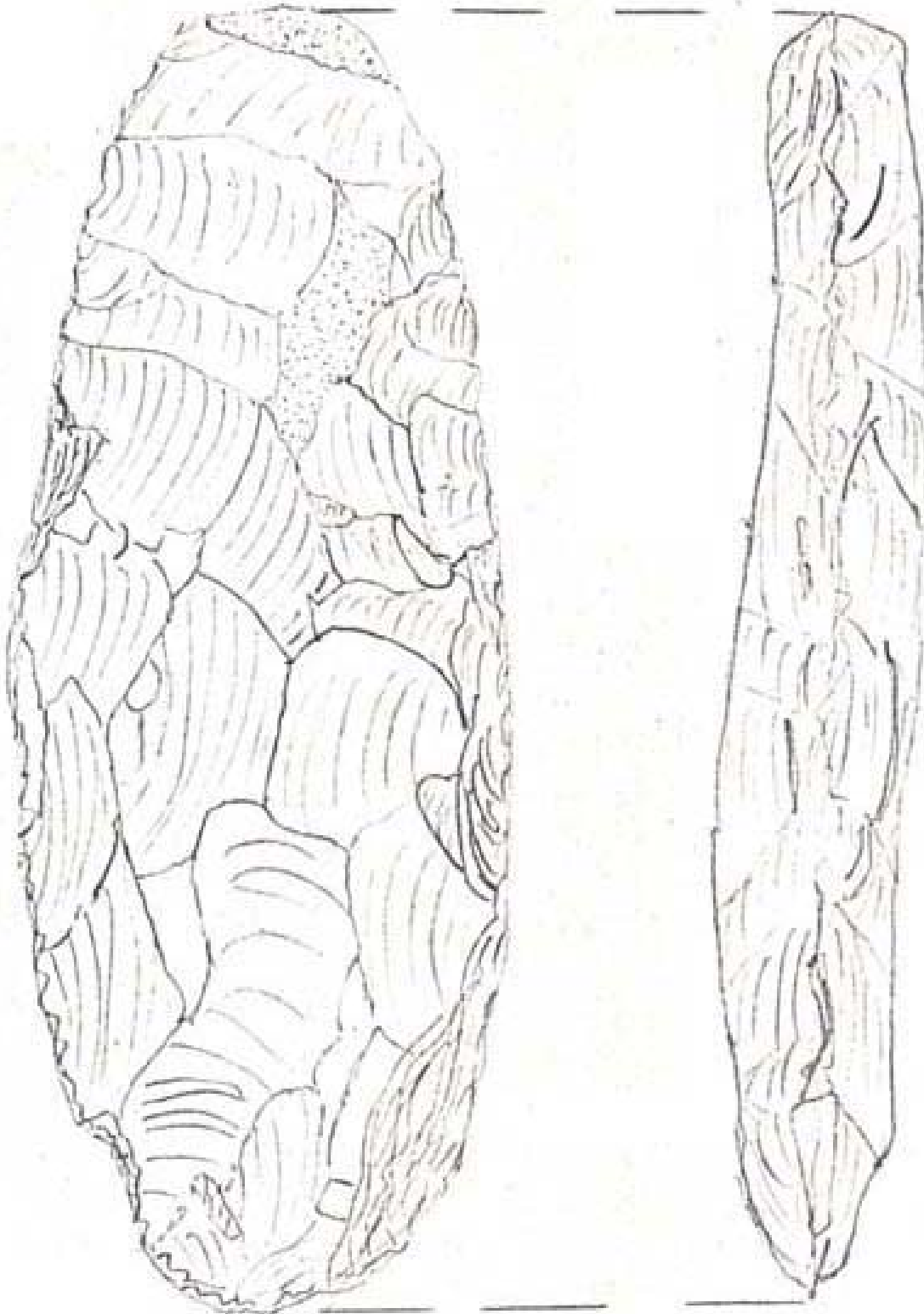


Three Neolithic flint axeheads found in Knapton, NHER 6875.  
How do you think a wooden handle was fixed to the axeheads?  
Available online at: <http://gallery.e2bn.org/gallery586.html>  
Copyright Norfolk Museums & Archaeology Service.



Mesolithic and Neolithic flint tools and working waste found in Beetley, NHER 16351.

Which flints do you think are tools and which are waste flakes that were formed when the tool was made?



Drawing of a Neolithic flint axehead found in Barwick, NHER 1978.

Is the axehead flaked or polished?

Available online at: <http://gallery.e2bn.org/gallery586.html>

Copyright Norfolk Museums & Archaeology Service.





Prehistoric burnt flints found in Middleton, NHER 23011.  
Can you see the fine crackles on the surface of the white flints? How did they get there?

Available online at: <http://gallery.e2bn.org/gallery586.html>  
Copyright Norfolk Museums & Archaeology Service.



# norfolk heritage explorer

---

**NORFOLK HISTORIC  
ENVIRONMENT  
RECORD**

Union House  
Gressenhall  
Dereham  
NR20 4DR

Phone 01362 869 389  
Fax 01362 860 951  
[heritage@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:heritage@norfolk.gov.uk)

Written in February 2007



 **Norfolk** County Council  
@ your service