Promoting awareness of the archaeology
and history of North Devon

North Devon Archaeological Society (NDAS)

Fieldwalk at Little Weare Barton

April 2021

Derry Bryant

NDAS FIELDWALK AT LITTLE WEARE BARTON, WEARE GIFFARD, NORTH DEVON

From 9th to 11th April 2021, members of NDAS and "Friends of Berry Castle" walked part of a field at Little Weare Barton farm, close to Gammaton Moor, to look for lithic artefacts. The site was suggested by Keith Hughes, local resident and a "Friend of Berry Castle", as in the 1940s some flints were found by Mr W.Chamings, the farmer at that time. These artefacts are noted on HER MDV44259 and are housed in the Exeter Museum.

NDAS was looking for some outdoor activities during the lockdown of the Covid-19 pandemic and under "the rule of 6" organised a three-day walk with a rota of ten people, no more than six at a time.

Location and History:
Little Weare Barton is located on a South West hillslope, North of Weare Giffard. The field surveyed is above the farm, at SS48844 24061, known as "Big Field". The adjoining field to the West is "Quarry Field" in which are the remains of a small quarry and a double-ditched enclosure (HER MDV43948); it also contains a substantial spring. Located on a high ridge next to the road to Weare Giffard, Big Field slopes down to a wooded combe, with a stream running down eventually to the river Torridge. The site is high above the river with stunning views towards the sea to the West and to Exmoor in the East.

It was noted that the opposite hillside is shown as "Oldiscleave" on the OS map. This may be a derivation of "Odo's Cleave"- Litlewera was cited in Domesday as being held by Odo, son of Gamelin, which is perhaps also how Gammaton Moor got its name (HER MDV18925).

Fieldwalk Methodology
The field had been ploughed and harrowed. Over the course of three days, we attempted to set out 16 x 20m^2 grids, in three rows, roughly East-West, starting with the higher, flatter part of the field near the road, then moving down the hillslope. Grids B1 and C1 were not complete squares due to allowance for the diagonal hedgeline.

Each grid was divided into 2m wide strips. Each strip was walked twice North-South in opposite directions, walkers picking up lithic artefacts, bagging them according to grid and strip number (an intensive method which helps to find small items).

We met John Chamings, whose father found the original flints in the 1940s. On the last day we were joined by the current farming family, Richard and Jackie Chamings and their children Georgie and William. The family joined in, walking some strips and finding artefacts, including some Mesolithic bladelets. The collection of lithics will be kept by the family for the time being, as an educational tool for the children. At some in the future they may be donated to the museum.

Field conditions
The geology of the field was silty clay with a lot of sandstone – angular and sub-angular, interspersed with small pieces of quartz. There was some evidence of the field having been limed in the past; small pieces of coal and lime were noticed. The weather was fine and dry, with a cold Easterly wind.
The soil was dry.

Acknowledgments
Thanks go to all the walkers and to the Chamings family for their kindness and allowing us to walk their land. This report will be lodged with the Devon County Historic Environment Record.

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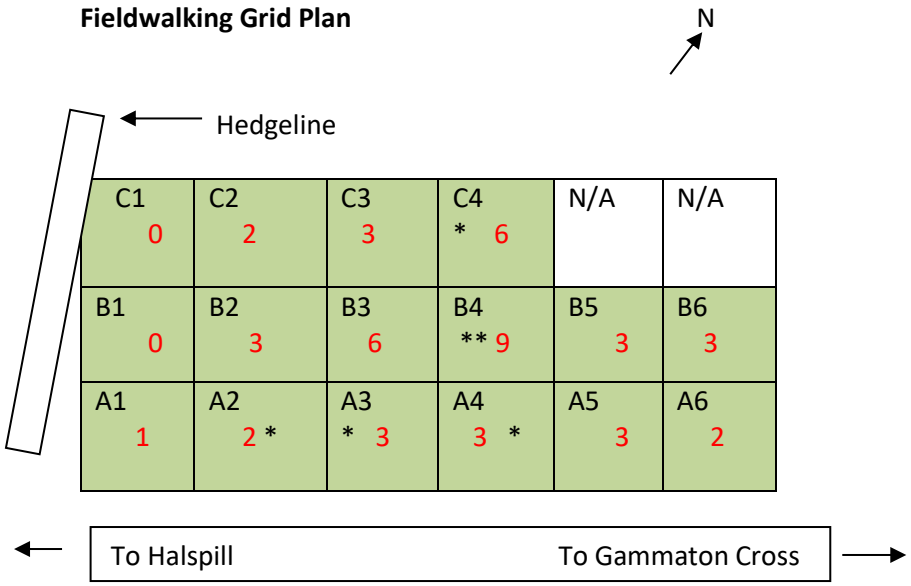
Enthusiastic volunteers walking strips on Big Field

Finding a bladelet!

Fieldwalking Grid Plan



Red = no. of lithics * = burned pieces = grids walked

Results:
A small collection of 57 pieces was retrieved, which appears to be Mesolithic: bladelets, small cores, notched pieces, flakes with retouch, and tools including scrapers and piercers. The presence of primary flakes along with cores, core fragments and chips would indicate that knapping took place on site.

A worked-out core and some core rejuvenation material (core tablets) indicate the paucity of raw material in the area. North Devon has little raw material flint apart from deposits in the Petrockstowe Basin and at Orleigh Court near Bideford; also from the beaches and rivers as mostly pebble material.

Evidence of combination tools; e.g. core re-used as a tool with retouch to form a scraping edge, two side scrapers also used as piercers.

Some pieces were burned and several had patination.

Material:
It was noted that pieces were either of pebble origin, possibly from the river nearby, or nodular. Colours included light grey, dark grey mottled, black; some colours (honey, reddish pink) were similar to those found at Burymoor Bridge, Merton indicating that the flint may be from the local area (Petrockstowe Basin) see Bryant D, NDAS Lithics Report on Burymoor Bridge, Huish, Merton 2018.

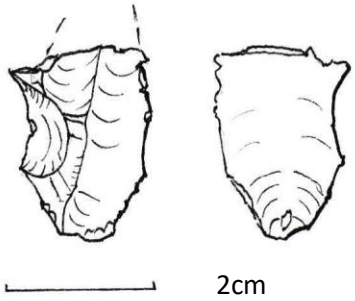
Several small quartz points were picked up, and a piece of shillet which may have been shaped/utilised.
Some small oval sandstone pebbles (< 2cm) were also found, dating unknown, which could possibly be slingstones, (noting the enclosure in the next field).

Cortex: 63% of the pieces had cortex, of which 21% showed nodular and 28% were of pebble origin. Some of the cortex was stained red or yellow with iron staining.

Finds Summary:

Summary of worked pieces recorded on spreadsheet	**Total 57**
Scrapers:	
End scrapers	3
Side scrapers	2
Side and end scrapers	3
Bladelets	6
Broken bladelets	6
Mesial segments	2
Piercers	1
Cores	4
Worked-out Cores	1
Bladelet cores	4
Core fragments	5
Core tablets	2
Flakes	2
Flakes with retouch	3
Notched flakes	1
Waste	2
Microdenticulates	2
Chips	3
Pebbles	5
Quartz	4
Shillet	1
Combination tools	3
Burned pieces	6
Patinated pieces	3
Notched pieces	4
Cortex present (not all identifiable)	36
Nodular cortex	12
Pebble cortex	16

Fieldwalk by NDAS April 2021 Illustration of sample lithics 1:1 Derry Bryant



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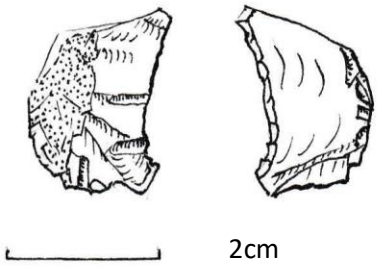

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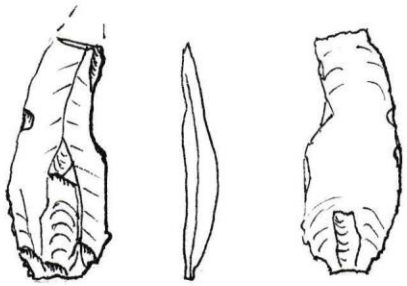

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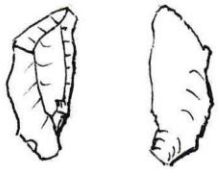

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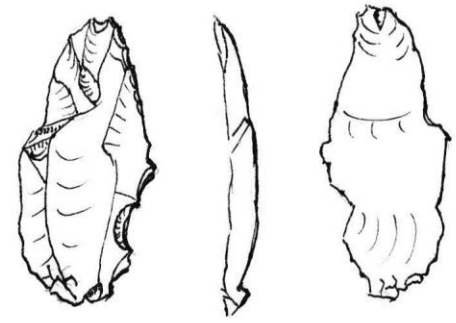

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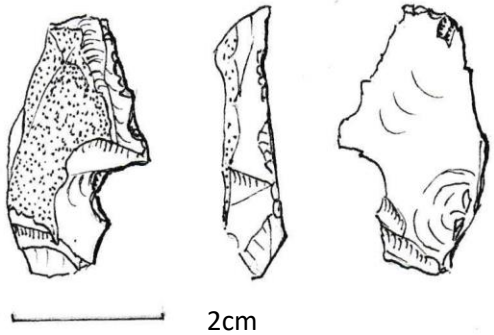

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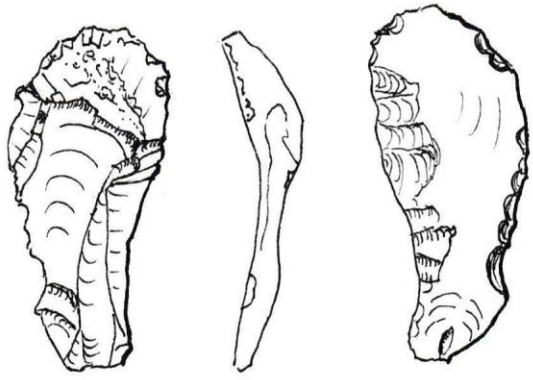

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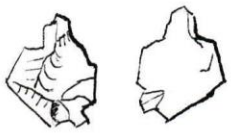

1cm

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Friends of Berry Castle, www.berrycastlehuntshaw.com
North Devon Archaeological Society www.ndas.org.uk