A chipped stone assemblage from Wigtwizzle, South Yorkshire

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1. Summary

Thirty five chipped stone artefacts were examined by myself in February of 2020. The assemblage was recovered during ground works undertaken at Wigtwizzle nursery during the late 1960s by Terry Howard. The assemblage is characterised by debitage, including cores, indicative of secondary working at the site during the Neolithic or Early Bronze age. Tools present are indicative of domestic associated activities relating to the Mesolithic, Neolithic and Bronze age. The assemblage, though small, adds to increasing evidence for significant levels of interaction with the landscape of Ewden Valley during prehistory.

2. Location, geology, topography and current use

The tiny hamlet of Wigtwizzle is located in Ewden Valley, South Yorkshire, at NGR 424885, 395680 (centred), approximately 12 kilometres from the centre of Sheffield (Figure 1; Figure 2). The settlement lies along the north facing slope, on a narrow ridge orientated north east – south west between two streams occupying narrow but deeply incised gullies (Figure 1-4). When free of tree cover, the location affords good views along Ewden Valley (cover photo). The valley is one of several to the north and west of Sheffield that have an east-west orientation, and are divided by ridges of high ground between. These rise to approximately 300 metres above ordnance datum to the south, and 350 metres above ordnance datum to the north, at the point in the valley where Wigtwizzle is located (Figure 3). Wigtwizzle itself is at approximately 200m above ordnance datum. The orientation and character of the valley are defined by the cutting of Ewden Beck. Ewden Beck rises on the high ground of the Millstone Grit geological formations to the west and flows through siltstones and mudstones in the valley bottom. The valley bottom is flanked to the north and south by Millstone Grit deposits at the highest points and Coal Measures Sandstones deposits on the lower slopes (BGS 2019). The reservoirs that now dominate the valley are in use principally for water supply, but are also managed as access land for the public by Yorkshire Water (Yorkshirewater.com 2019).

The land within which Wigtwizzle is located consists of conifer plantations owned by the local authorities (Natural England 2014). This includes the Nursery, from which the present assemblage was collected.

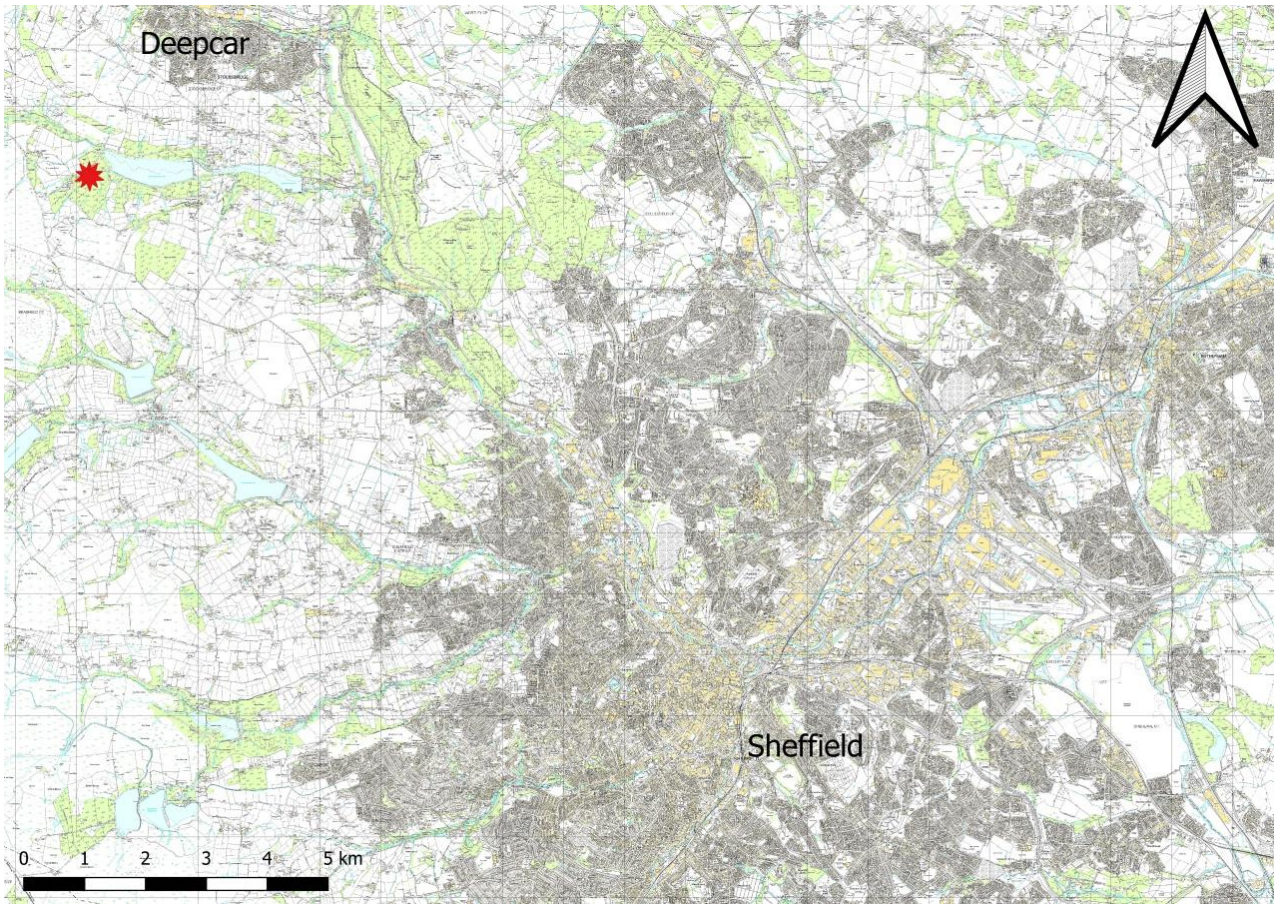

Figure 1: The location of Wigtwizzle, South Yorkshire (red). ©Crown Copyright/database right 2020, an Ordnance Survey/EDINA supplied service.

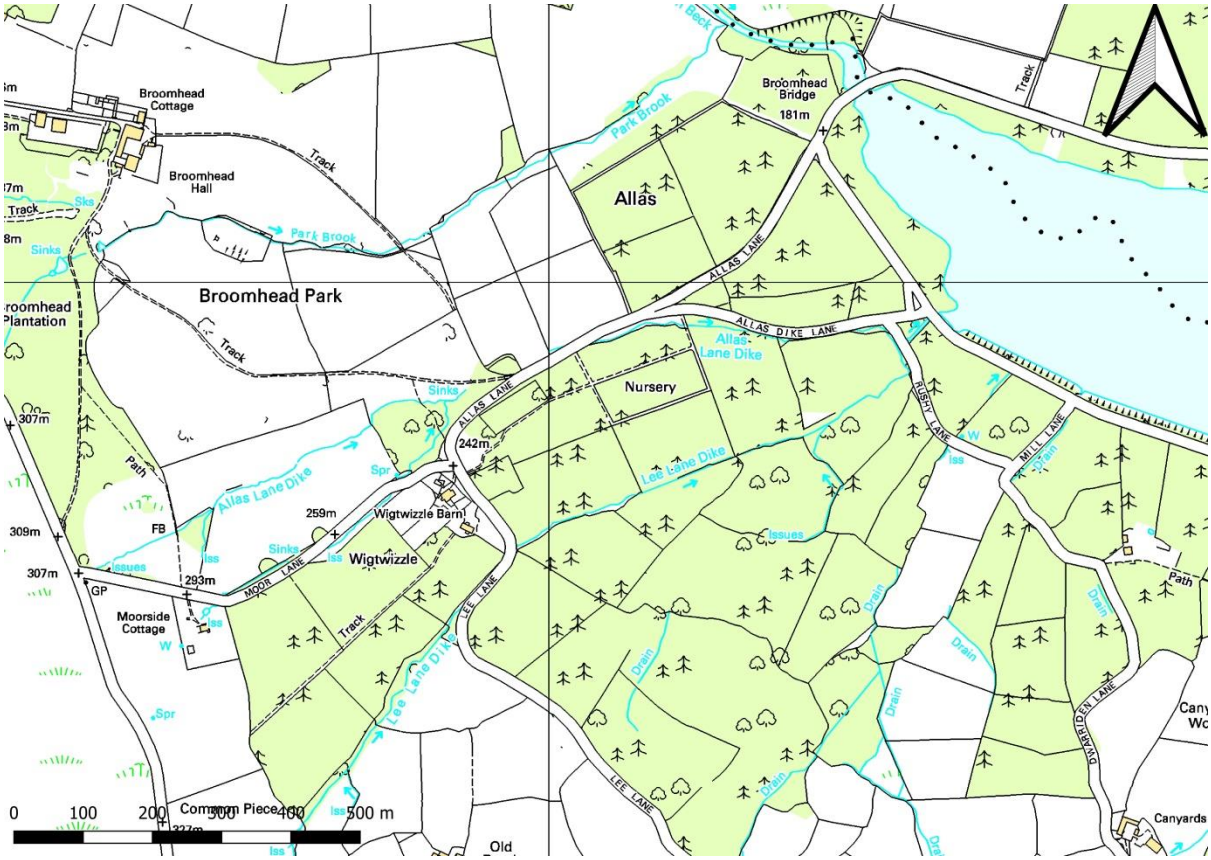

Figure 2: Wigtwizzle and Broomhead Park. ©Crown Copyright/database right 2020, an Ordnance Survey/EDINA supplied service.

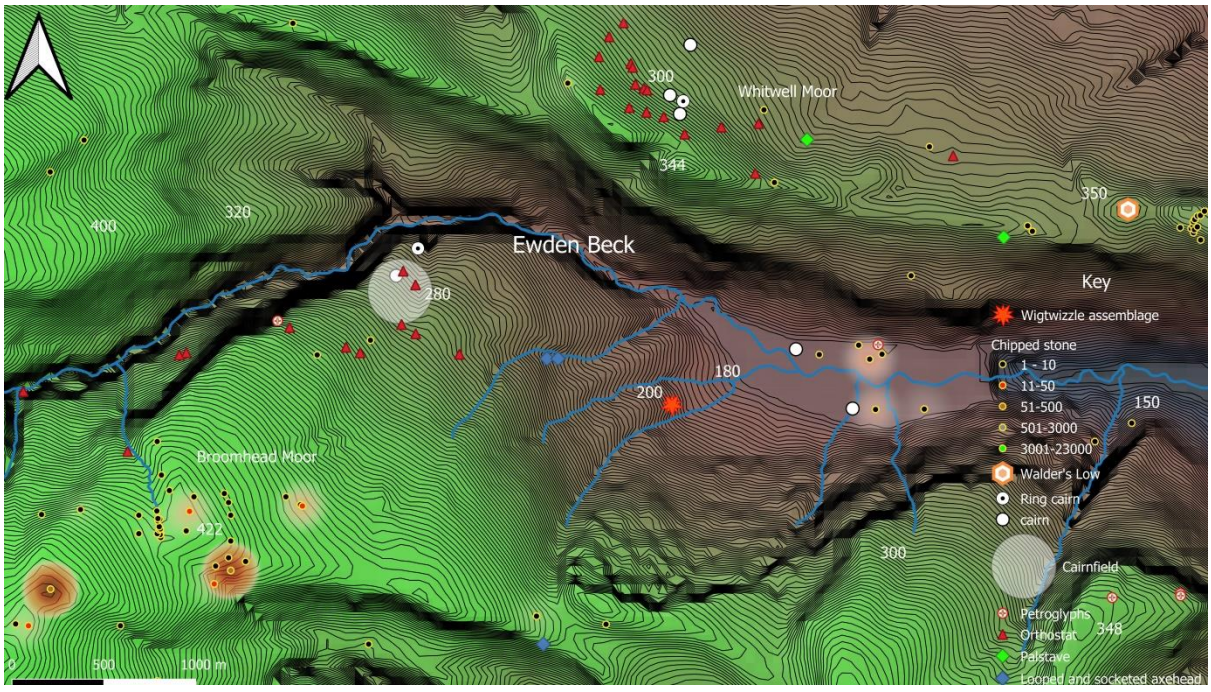

Figure 3: Upper Ewden Valley, South Yorkshire. Elevation is indicated by Green (high), Beige (middle) and Blue (low) with figures indicating metres A.O.D. Localised chipped stone concentrations are represented by diffuse red roundels. © Crown Copyright/database right 2020, an Ordnance Survey/EDINA Supplied Service.

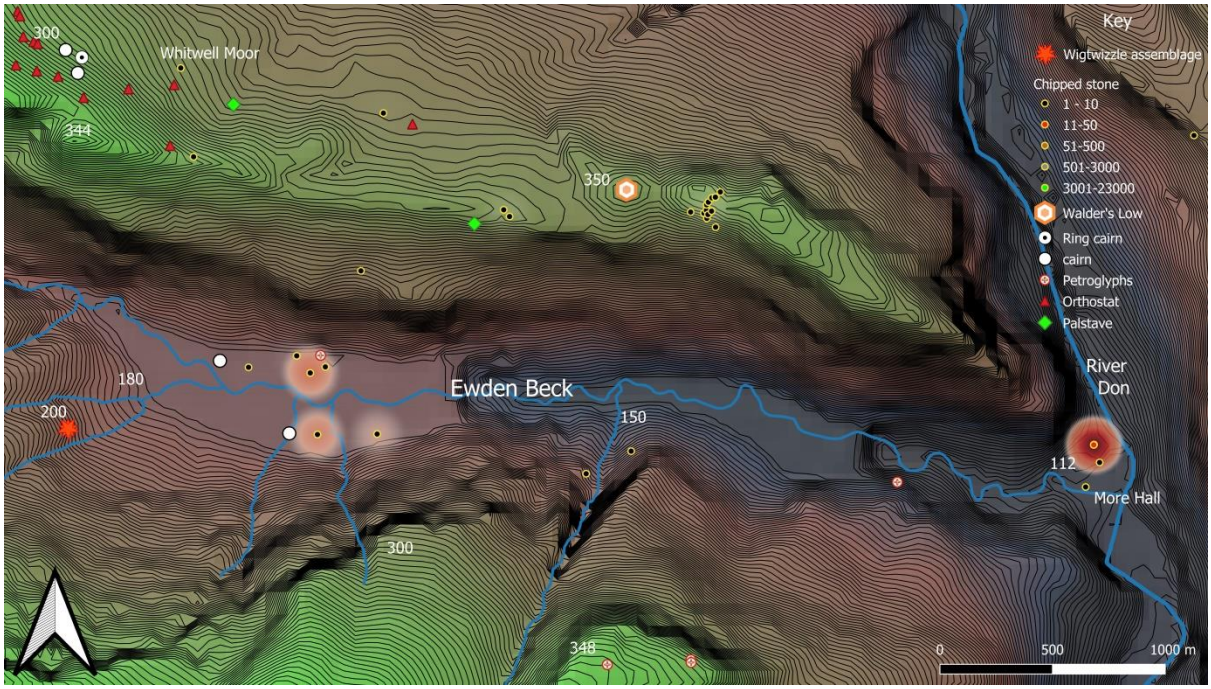

Figure 4: Lower Ewden Valley, South Yorkshire. Elevation is indicated by Green (high), Beige (middle) and Blue (low) with figures indicating metres A.O.D. Localised chipped stone concentrations are represented by diffuse red roundels. © Crown Copyright/database right 2020, an Ordnance Survey/EDINA Supplied Service.

3. Historical and archaeological background

The earliest information available for the settlement indicates that it existed by no later than 1547, when it was known as Wightwisseles (Douglas n.d.). Though very small, the settlement appears on maps of Yorkshire and the west riding of Yokshire from 1645, on the map of W. and J. Blaeu, where it is called Wightwesell, and thereafter regularly on subsequent maps (Picture Sheffield). An inscription at the entrance of the former Wigtwizzle Hall was dated to 1610, although elements of its structure appeared to be indicative of an earlier, Tudor period, date for its foundation (Douglas n.d.).

The hall, a small building given its status, was inhabited by local farming families until as late as the 1930s. It was demolished in 1936 (Todnor 2005).

Wigtwizzle lies to the immediate south-east of the Broomhead estate and the site of the former Broomhead Hall and park (Figure 2). The Broomhead estate, still home to the Rimington-Wilson family, was owned by the antiquary John Wilson in the late eighteenth century (Holland 2013 (1837): 128). Wilson excavated barrows in the vicinity of a still extant cairnfield and ring cairn or embanked stone circle during the eighteenth century, removing pottery and burnt human remains (Hunter 1875 (1819): 461), and a polished stone axe head

(Kenworthy 1928: 34). This cairnfield, and the later linear ditched feature of Broomhead Dyke which overlies it, are scheduled monuments (List Entry Numbers 1018039 and 1018590 respectively).

In 1820 a looped and socketed copper alloy axe head was recovered as a stray find on the cricket ground of Broomhead Hall itself (Kenworthy 1928: 34), very close to the site of the cairnfield and embanked stone circle (Figure 3). An almost identical artefact was recovered by a metal detectorist from the near vicinity recently, and recorded by the Portable Antiquities Scheme (SWYOR-553554).

The scheduled area was surveyed by John Barnatt during the 1970s (Barnatt 1990: 42). Barnatt interpreted the ring cairn as an embanked stone circle, but cast doubt on the antiquity of the cairnfield, suggesting instead that they might be spoil heaps from modest quarrying activities. In my own survey of the site in 2010, I recorded an extensive distribution of small mounds to either side of the Dyke, amongst which were distributed several small orthostats (Cockrell 2017: 164; Figure 3). I found no evidence to question the original designation.

Around the banks of Broomhead reservoir, immediately below Wigtwizzle, surveying undertaken during droughts in recent years recorded numerous features largely relating to the Early Modern and Modern periods, but also including probable eroded cairns, a “cup-marked” stone, and scatters of chipped stone (Cockrell 2019; Figure 3; Figure 4). More recently, another “cup-marked” stone, first noted during the 1960s, has been recorded (SMR: MSY 13354; Cockrell *et al* in press; Figure 3). The recording of other petroglyphs in the vicinity is the subject of ongoing research.

To the immediate north of the valley at Whitwell Moor, walkover surveying recorded numerous archaeological features relating to quarrying activities of recent historical date, and probable clay extraction. Many more are of probable prehistoric date, including cairns, earthworks and numerous orthostats that appear to define the edge of a localised wetland (Cockrell 2016; Figure 3; Figure 4). Two of the features are recorded as “unenclosed settlement” (SMR MSY6214; MSY6215). Only one of these was relocated during the survey, which when investigated in a more detailed survey proved to be a probable ring cairn (Cockrell 2018). Chipped stone, polished stone axe heads and palstaves have also been recorded as stray finds from the locale (Cockrell 2016).

Other archaeological activities in the area have included the Heritage Lottery funded Bolsterstone Castle Project (Merrony 2008), recording late Medieval and early post Medieval structures, Bolsterstone Blacksmith’s Workshop and Forge excavations (Cockrell 2009; 2010), and fieldwalking at Bank Farm (Cockrell 2019) producing small assemblages of Early Modern pottery and prehistoric chipped stone artefacts. Bank Farm is close to the probable prehistoric barrow of Walders Low (SMR 00541/1).

4. Aims and objectives

The aim of the present study is to add to the existing record an assemblage of chipped stone donated to me by Mr Terry Howard. Objectives include recording the assemblage and placing it in its regional historic and environmental context.

5. Methodology

The assemblage was recovered informally by Terry Howard during the course of tree plantation management during the late 1960s at the "nursery" adjacent to the site of the former Wigtwizzle Hall (T. Howard pers.comm.). The site was being disced prior to the planting of tree saplings in rows, and the artefactual material was exposed and recovered as the activity progressed.

The assemblage was examined during February 2020 and recorded in terms of its attributes and the data tabulated (appendix). Measurements were only recorded for complete pieces, in accordance with the system devised by Saville (1980).

6. The chipped stone

Summary

A total of 35 chipped stone artefacts were recovered from Wigtwizzle nursery and examined in March 2020 (Figure 5). The data is summarised in tables 1 and 2. Some of the more distinctive implements were given small finds numbers and described in more detail below (Figure 6). The assemblage includes 13 tools, with the remainder comprising debitage (including four cores). Of these, five were Mesolithic implements, five Late Mesolithic, one Early Neolithic and one Neolithic. One implement has been counted twice in table 2 because it was a microburin reused as a scraper.

Figure 5: The Wigtwizzle assemblage. Bottom row, left to right, SF 1-8. Source: author.

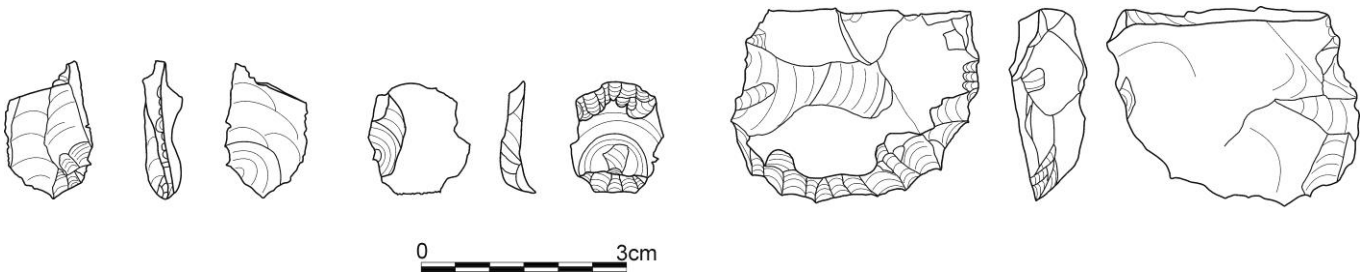

Figure 6: a selection of the small finds numbered artefacts. Left to right, SF 1, SF 4, SF 2. Source: author.

1. A mid grey brown tertiary bladelet, translucent, with a dorsal ridge along the centre of its long axis, truncated by an angled break at the distal end indicative of microlith removal. This is only 8mm above the proximal end, indicating that it is a microburin. The proximal end has been edge trimmed on the dorsal side above the platform to one side of the dorsal ridge. The platform, along with the bulbar scar on the ventral side, are offset somewhat from the long axis of the bladelet, giving the impression (when measured in accordance with Saville's methodology) that the blade is slightly wider than it is in relation to the long axis of the implement. The dimensions, as

conventionally derived, are 17mm long by 15mm wide and 4.5mm thick. It is almost certainly a microburin of the Late Mesolithic, edge trimmed for re-use as an end scraper.

2. A large flat broken tertiary flake of light grey white flint of probable Wolds derivation. The flake has semi-abrupt retouch at the surviving end and is likely to be an end scraper of the Early Neolithic.
3. A blade-like secondary flake of dark grey brown till flint measuring 24mm long by 19mm wide and 3mm thick. Edge trimming is noticeable on both sides at the proximal end of the implement. Typologically indistinct scrapers of this kind, crafted on small flakes with cortex remaining, are common in Mesolithic assemblages (Butler 2005). However, the poor quality of retouch ("edge trimming"), is not consistent with Mesolithic reduction strategies.
4. A small tertiary spall of mid grey brown till flint with abrupt retouch at the proximal end on the ventral side and invasive retouch at the distal end of the ventral side. The small size, intricate retouch and use of a spall as a scraper is consistent with Late Mesolithic practices, although the profile of the abruptly retouched thicker end recalls Bronze Age scraper profiles, but in miniature.
5. A secondary flake of mid grey brown till flint 32mm long by 21mm wide and 6mm thick. Most of the bulb of percussion is missing. Narrow removal scars on the distal side are present, as well as edge trimming along all non-cortical edges on the distal side. Opportunistic reuse of flakes with cortex remaining in this way are consistent with Mesolithic practices, but the attribution is not certain.
6. A tertiary flake of light grey brown till flint of probable river gravels derivation with abruptly retouched sides forming points, one of which is broken. A double ended piercer, of the Mesolithic to judge from its modest size and careful secondary working, but the attribution is not certain.
7. A tertiary blade-like flake of patinated light white brown flint, mottled with white inclusions, of probable Wolds derivation. Narrow bladelet removal scars are present on the dorsal side. Edge trimming is present on alternate sides of the implement, perhaps hinting that the implement was to be used as a drill bit-like piercer, although the tip is missing. It is shouldered at the proximal end, with one shoulder retouched abruptly on the dorsal side, probably to facilitate handling. The material, removal scars, and reduction strategies are most consistent with a Mesolithic date.
8. A tertiary blade of translucent light grey brown till flint of probable river gravels derivation measuring 29mm long by 22mm wide and 5mm thick. Damage to the edge of the striking platform at the proximal end is indicative of the flake being a rejuvenation removal. The dorsal side has a large concave blade removal scar and the distal end of the implement has been abruptly retouched with a slight concave edge to form a hollow scraper. The scar on the dorsal side (suitable for gripping with a thumb) and the flat profile of the implement are indicative of Neolithic reduction strategies.

7. Discussion

Although not recovered during the course of systematic field walking, the character of the assemblage is broadly consistent with others recorded in the region and locally (Cockrell 2017; 2019; in press), except in one respect. It has been noted elsewhere (Cockrell 2017) that the distinctive black chert sourced from Derbyshire, and especially associated with Monsal Dale (Henson 1988; Cootes 2012: 80), seems largely to have been utilised as a raw material for tool crafting during the Mesolithic. Its use catastrophically declined thereafter (Cockrell 2017: 107-108). This is not reflected in the present assemblage (Table 1). However, due to the small size of the Wigtwizzle assemblage, this difference should be treated with caution as it does not have good statistical significance.

Consideration of the character of the implement types (Table 2) shows that the vast majority are those that indicate the crafting and use of domestic related tools.

	Nodular (Wolds)	River Gravel Till	Black Chert
Mesolithic	1	4	
Late Mesolithic		5	
Mesolithic-Neolithic		1	
Neolithic		1	
Early Neolithic	1		
Neolithic-Bronze Age		1	1
Indeterminate	9	9	2
Total	11	21	3

Table 1: distribution of materials

	scraper	piercer	microburin	bladelet end	core	flake	chunk
Mesolithic	2	1		1		1	
Late Mesolithic	3	1	1				1
Mesolithic-Neolithic						1	
Neolithic	1						
Early Neolithic	1						
Neolithic-Bronze Age					2		
Indeterminate	3	1			2	10	4
Total	10	3	1	1	4	12	5

Table 2: distribution of implements (one implement is both a bladelet end and scraper, and is counted twice).

Placed within its localised geographical and topographical context (Figure 3; Figure 4), the assemblage is poised between the site of the embanked stone circle and cairnfield at the beginning of the gorge-like upper reaches of Ewden Beck, and the concentration of chipped stone largely relating to the Neolithic and Early Bronze Age recovered by the confluence of the Ewden and the River Don (Jeffrey Radley, unpublished archive at Museums Sheffield). Between these sites, it is becoming increasingly evident that a variety of activities were being undertaken along the valley relating to the Mesolithic, Neolithic and Bronze Age.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Stocksbridge Heritage Centre for their help and advice concerning Wigtwizzle, as well as their usual boundless enthusiasm for all things to do with local history and archaeology. The staff at Sheffield Local Studies Library are also thanked for their customary friendly help and advice. As ever, Terry Howard is warmly thanked for his detailed and informative insights. Ruth Morgan kindly read and commented on an earlier draft of this report, for which I am very grateful. However, the content, including any errors, are the sole responsibility of myself. This report was completed with the generous support of the Bridge Community shop, Stocksbridge.

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Appendix: Catalogue

Key: “mat.”= material; “Prov.”= provenance; “RS”= core reduction sequence.

eas.	north.	L	W	T	No.	Mat.	Colour	Prov.	Class	Type	Specific	RS	Period	Comments
425200	395800	17	15	4.5	1	flint	mid grey brown	till	tool	scraper	microburin	ter	L.mes	Retouched as scraper.
425200	395800					chert	black	monsal	debitage	core	flake	ter	mes_BA	Cube like. E.Neo?
425200	395800					chert	light white grey		debitage	core	blade	ter	mes_BA	One narrow removal scar.
425200	395800					chert	dark black grey	monsal	debitage	chunk		ter	mes_BA	Blade removal scars.hinge term.
425200	395800				2	flint	light grey white	wolds	tool	scraper	end	ter	E.Neo	Large flat flake. Broken.
425200	395800					flint	light grey white	wolds	tool	scraper		sec	mes_BA	Narrow removal scars. Edge trimming.
425200	395800					chunk	mid grey brown	till	debitage	chunk		prim	mes_BA	Narrow removal scars.
425200	395800					flint	mid brown grey	wolds	debitage	flake		ter	mes_BA	light grey inclusions.
425200	395800	24	19	3	3	flint	dark brown grey	till	tool	flake		sec	mes_BA	edge trimmed on both sides at proximal end.
425200	395800				4	flint	dark brown grey	till	tool	scraper	double ended	ter	L.mes	retouch at both ends on ventral side.
425200	395800	32	21	6	5	flint	mid grey brown	till	tool	scraper	side and end	sec	mes	abrupt retouch, and use wear on distal side.
425200	395800					flint	light grey brown	till	debitage	core		ter	Neo_BA	
425200	395800					chert	black	monsal	debitage	core		ter	Neo_BA	
425200	395800					flint	light white brown	wolds	debitage	chunk		prim	mes_BA	Blade removal scars.hinge term.
425200	395800				6	flint	light grey brown	till	tool	piercer	double ended	ter	mes_BA	Retouched to 2 points (1 broken).
425200	395800					flint	light white brown	wolds	debitage	flake		ter	mes_BA	Patinated, worn and edge damaged.
425200	395800	43	21	6	7	flint	light white brown	wolds	tool	piercer		ter	mes	Mottled white. Patinated. Broken. Retouched
425200	395800					flint	mid grey brown	till	debitage	chunk		sec	L.mes	Narrow bladelet removal scars.
425200	395800					flint	light grey brown	till	debitage	flake		ter	mes_BA	
425200	395800	25	30	5.5		flint	light white grey	wolds	debitage	flake		prim	mes_BA	Heavily patinated.
425200	395800					flint	dark black grey	till	debitage	flake		ter	mes_BA	Mottled white.
425200	395800					flint	mid black grey	till	debitage	flake		ter	mes_BA	Mottled white.
425200	395800	20	23	5		flint	mid grey brown	till	tool	flake		ter	mes_BA	Edge trimmed end and use wear on side.
425200	395800					flint	light brown grey	till	debitage	bladelet end		ter	mes	Very narrow removal scar on ventral side.
425200	395800	29	22	5	8	flint	light grey brown	till	tool	scraper	hollow	ter	Neo	Abrupt concave retouch at distal end.
425200	395800	28	18	5.5		flint	mid grey brown	till	debitage	flake	rejuvenation	ter	mes_Neo	Edge damage to platform. Narrow scars.
425200	395800					flint	mid white grey	wolds	tool	scraper		sec	mes_BA	retouch on ventral side.
425200	395800					chert	mid white grey		debitage	chunk		ter	mes_BA	
425200	395800					flint	mid white grey	wolds	debitage	flake		sec	mes_BA	Worn. Patinated. Edge trimming or damage.
425200	395800					flint	dark brown grey	wolds	debitage	flake		sec	mes_BA	
425200	395800					flint	light yellow brown	till	tool	piercer		ter	L.mes	Narrow removal scars on dorsal side. Edge trimming.
425200	395800					flint	dark black grey	till	tool	scraper		ter	mes_BA	edge trimming at one end of dorsal side.
425200	395800					flint	light brown grey	till	tool	scraper	hollow	ter	L.mes	fine abrupt concave retouch on one side.
425200	395800	18	14	3		flint	light brown grey	till	tool	scraper	side and end	ter	mes	Narrow removal scars on dorsal side. Edge trimming.
425200	395800					flint	light yellow brown	till	debitage	flake		sec	mes	retouch to point on 2 sides. Broken.

Table 3: catalogue