Report 2380

Reference.....

LITTLE SOMBORNE The burnt flint

A number of features on the site produced large quantities of burnt flint. The flints were mostly "cores" of nodules which had then undergone further changes. Their surface was crazed and small blocky pieces had become detached.

The treatment most likely to give rise to this appearance is repeated heating in a fire, probably to red heat, followed by sudden cooling, e.g. by dropping into water. Slow cooling, e.g. in air or the ashes of a fire, tends to give rise to flaking rather than the blocky fracture noted here. The flints have a sooty surface which indicates that heating (and cooling) took place under reducing rather than oxidising conditions which argues against the hot stones being used to warm an oven. A possible use for these flints would be in cooking in a trough of water as described by Coles (1973) (after O'Kelly(1954)).

References

Coles,J. (1973) Archaeology by Experiment p.52-3

O'Kelly,M.J. (1954) Excavation and experiments in ancient Irish cooking-places J.Roy.Soc.Ant.Irel. 84 105-5

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20.10.77.

ANCIENT MONUMENTS LABORATORY

INTERIM REPORT Technology.

A.M. No.

This report is sent to keep excavators informed of the progress of work on their material and is not to be considered as necessarily representing the final conclusions on the work reported. Thus the Chief Laboratory Officer should be informed of any intention to publish information given in an A.M.L. Interim Report so that he may advise as to its suitability for publication.

On completion of an investigation, a formal report, correlating the information notified in any Interim Report will be prepared by the Laboratory. This report may include a revision of conclusions previously notified.

SITE Little Somborne

EXCAVATOR David Neal

Most of the slag appeared to be the product of iron smithing although, in a site of this period, small scale smelting cannot be ruled out. There were also pieces of hearth lining (clay vitrified on one side from contact with the fire) vitrified clay & fuel ash slag. These last two are indicative only of high temperatures & need not be associated with metallurgy.

Pit 855	773174	Hearth bottom (smithing?)
		Double hearth bottom (smithing?)
		Pieces of smithing slag & fuel ash slag.
		One piece of ? smelting slag
	773176	2 pieces of hearth lining
Ditch 107	773006	Iron working slag, probably smithing.
Quarry Hollow 969	773183	Vitrified Clay
Pit 1055	773193	Iron smithing slag.

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4/10/77