

## Neolithic – 4,000-2,000 BC

In the later Mesolithic and earlier Neolithic period, the deeply incised river valleys are likely to have silted up with fine grained sediments, leaving shallower valley profiles with largely freshwater rivers. These rivers may have been tidal, although there would not yet have been a definite shore-line environment. Waterlogged seed and other environmental evidence allow a picture to be built up of the environment and landscape that existed locally to the AONB (Allen & Gardiner 2000). Open grassland and alder carr may have existed in the valleys and along the rivers with predominantly lime open woodland on the drier land above.

The majority of Neolithic evidence in the AONB (Fig 6) relates to concentrations of Neolithic flints – tools in addition to waste flints. Types of flints recovered include: blades, knives, axes, awls, borers, cores, waste flakes, hammerstones, and fire cracked flints, although the majority are scrapers.

The coastline in Chichester Harbour from West Wittering to the west side of Thorney Island near Emsworth was systematically fieldwalked in 1982 to identify evidence of saltmarsh utilisation (Cartwright 1984) and most of the Neolithic evidence derives from this work. Indeed many of the sites are numbered according to Cartwright's scheme (CH/1 etc). The location of Cartwright's sites and the Chichester SMR reference for each is presented in a table at the end of this section.

Sites CH/1-CH/10 were located at the tidal margins of the headlands and foreshore at West Wittering. Waste material, tools and fire-cracked flints were scattered along the coastline. In some cases the evidence suggested the remains of occupation sites, with 'mounds' of flints at site CH/4 and pits at site CH/6. Other flint tools have also been recovered around West Wittering (Chi SMR 12, 42, 48, 49; 477800 098600, 477820 098700, 477000 098000, 478400 100300 respectively).

Further along the coast, firecracked flints, waste flakes and scrapers were recovered from sites CH/11-CH/13 around the west of Itchenor. Other flint tools are also known from here (Chi SMR 2389; 480100 100500). The assemblages from sites CH/17-CH/21, on the Apuldrum coastline were characterised by waste flakes, retouched flakes and blades, scrapers, a small blade core and fire-cracked flints. Other flint tools were also recovered in this area (Chi SMR 2343, 2435; 483840 103500, 483000 103000). Site CH/30 contained layers of fire-cracked flints, like site CH/4, 'possibly representing the remnants of an occupation/industrial site.' Sites CH/27, CH/29, CH/32-34 also yielded flint tools. Sites CH/35 and CH/36, west of Bosham Hoe, yielded a small amount of waste material and a fair amount of fire-cracked flints while sites CH/37-CH/43 in the Bosham area characterised prehistoric occupation, with retouched flint tools and waste recovered. Other flint tools, including a partly polished axe, are also known in this area (Chi SMR 2364, 2370, 2461, 2490; 480000 103000, 483610 104240, 480520 103880, 484000 104000 respectively).

Some *in situ* flints were visible in the low cliffs among the saltings around the Cutmill and Chidham creeks; at site CH/45 layers of fire-cracked flints and other flint material were recorded. Flints were also recovered from sites CH/44, CH/46 and CH/47 and from sites CH/48-CH/51 around Cobnor and west of Cobnor Point. A polished flint axe was also recovered in the area of Cobnor House (Chi SMR 256; 479050 102500).

An excavation on the coast at Chidham (site CH/55; Bedwin 1980) found a total of 630 worked pieces of flint, 133 of which could be used as scrapers (Chi SMR 206; 477930 103830). A Neolithic date for the assemblage was suggested by three uncompleted leaf-shaped arrowheads. This specialised assemblage may have been used to prepare wooden arrowshafts, spearshafts and possibly osiers for plaited fish traps. The dominance of scrapers in the assemblage suggests the use of salt marsh and freshwater marsh, although does not support the notion of permanent settlement. Sites CH/52-CH/54 and CH/56-CH/59 yielded similar material, suggesting an interrelation between these sites. A second flint working site was also identified at Chidham (Chi SMR 252; 477900 103780).

Flintwork including waste, retouched and notched flakes, scrapers, a possible axe roughout and an awl blank was recovered from sites CH/60-CH/61. Concentrations of fire-cracked flint here suggested hearth areas on the foreshore to Cartwright.

Waste flakes, retouched and notched flakes, scrapers, cores, blades, a hammerstone, an awl, a borer and much fire-cracked flint were recovered from sites CH/62-CH/70. As at site CH/55, much of the flint did not fall into easily classifiable categories. A flint knife has also been recovered from this area (Chi SMR 93; 476400 105400) and a flint working site was recorded between sites CH/63 and CH/64 (Chi SMR 246; 476570 104960). Some waste and retouched flint was recovered around the coast of West Thorney to Emsworth, including from site CH/71, with a cluster of fire-cracked material from site CH/72. A flint axe has also been recovered inland on Thorney Island (Chi SMR 176; 475610 103220).

Another coastline walkover survey in 1996 (Jones 1996) sought to replicate Cartwright's work. However, the findings of this survey called into question some of the conclusions made in 1984. Jones found that fire cracked flint was ubiquitous – some of it was the result of modern beach fires; other fire-cracked flint may have resulted from stubble burning in the medieval period. He therefore concluded that fire cracked flint does not always represent prehistoric activity; only when concentrations of fire-cracked flint is found closely associated with other flint artefacts can any claim be made to prehistoric origins. He also concluded that Cartwright's distribution of sites may be misleading. Many of the blanks on her map might have more to do with the vegetation cover and survey access than to lack of prehistoric activity, he argued.

However, some conclusions can be drawn from the flints recovered from the AONB. The predominance of scrapers in the Neolithic evidence would seem to suggest that these tools were made from locally available material on the spot for immediate use and discard. This may explain why many of the flints do not fall easily into recognisable categories. It is an essentially non-domestic assemblage, possibly representing seasonal, short-term grazing and associated activities. Other artefacts – such as large core tools and arrowheads – may have been brought in to the area.

The Neolithic finds are almost all in the east of the AONB (ie east of Thorney Island), reflecting the areas that were fieldwalked by Cartwright. There is only one record for Hampshire (Hants SMR 23,382; 472870 105290) which relates to scrapers and flakes found during grave digging in the cemetery of St Thomas's church. This distribution is likely to reflect where fieldwalking has taken place and the availability of the foreshore, rather than reflecting where such material might be found. Indeed from Longmere Point around the coast of West Thorney to Emsworth 'much of the coastal margin has been covered by modern debris or concrete slabs and overall access to the foreshore was severely limited' (Cartwright 1984).

The situation in the AONB may be similar to that of neighbouring Langstone Harbour (Allen and Gardiner 2000). The area may well have been used for short-term occasional hunting visits and the exploitation of flint resources. These activities would have contributed an important part of the Neolithic economy and life style even though the area itself was not settled or occupied. The AONB was peripheral but not marginal to the occupied areas, providing specific and important resources for local communities. Meanwhile, settled occupation was largely concentrated on the adjacent chalklands.

The coastal plain was until recently thought to be largely devoid of monuments and settlement evidence in the late Neolithic and early Bronze Age. However, recent excavations, for example at Westhampnett, have found the presence of more typical domestic or funerary activities in this period. This indicates clearances within the woodland and more permanent activities and settlement forms.

### *Research questions*

A substantial gap in knowledge about the Neolithic period is of the environmental conditions. Systematic coring of the AONB would help to build up a picture of the environment during this period. Work of this nature has been carried out in the neighbouring Langstone Harbour (Allen & Gardiner 2000).

Research questions should also concentrate on increasing understanding of how the AONB was used in the Neolithic and its relationship to inland sites, particularly settlement sites.

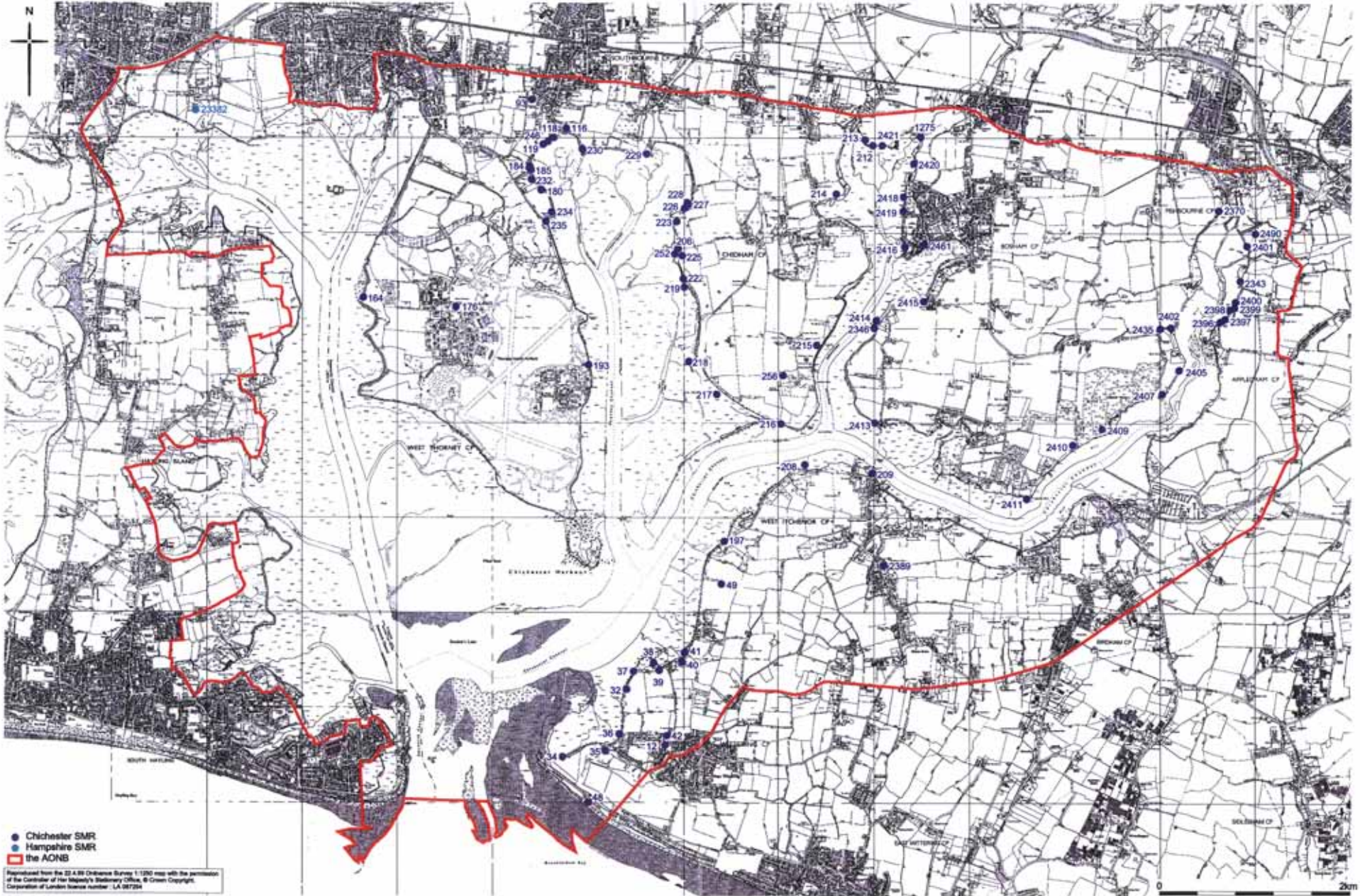


Fig 6 Neolithic period map

<b>Cartwright number</b>	<b>site</b>	<b>Chi SMR</b>	<b>Easting</b>	<b>Northing</b>
CH/1		34	476730	98480
CH/2		35	47180	98540
CH/3		36	477320	98720
CH/4		29	477360	98980
CH/5		32	477400	99190
CH/6		37	477470	99380
CH/7		38	477680	99470
CH/8		39	477740	99390
CH/9		40	477980	99480
CH/10		41	478010	99580
CH/11		197	478430	100750
CH/12		208	479280	101560
CH/13		209	479980	101470
CH/17		2396	483630	103070
CH/18		2397	483680	103100
CH/19		2398	483720	103200
CH/20		2399	483780	103220
CH/21		2400	483790	103280
CH/24		2401	483910	103870
CH/27		2402	483110	103010
CH/29		2405	483200	102560
CH/30		2407	483020	102310
CH/32		2409	482390	101940
CH/33		2410	482080	101770
CH/34		2411	481600	101200
CH/35		2413	480010	102000
CH/36		2414	480020	103080
CH/37		2415	480520	103280
CH/38		2416	480320	103850
CH/40		2418	480300	104230
CH/41		2419	480300	104380
CH/42		2420	480410	104730
CH/43		1275	480480	105010
CH/44		2421	480080	104920
CH/45		212	479980	104920
CH/46		213	479900	104980
CH/47		214	479600	104410
CH/48		215	479400	102820
CH/49		216	479030	101990
CH/50		217	478350	102300
CH/51		218	478050	102650
CH/52		219	478000	103430
CH/53		222	477990	103520
CH/54		223	477920	104120
CH/55		206	477930	103830
CH/56		225	477980	103760
CH/57		226	478000	104260

CH/58	227	478030	104300
CH/59	228	478030	104320
CH/60	229	477600	104830
CH/61	230	476930	104880
CH/62	116	476760	105100
CH/63	118	476630	105000
CH/64	119	476520	104930
CH/65	184	476380	104700
CH/66	185	476390	104670
CH/67	232	476400	104560
CH/68	180	476500	104450
CH/69	234	476610	104220
CH/70	235	476550	104120
CH/71	193	477000	102610
CH/72	164	474640	103320

*Table 1: Cartwright's Neolithic sites and corresponding Chi SMR reference and location*