

Prehistoric – 450,000 BC - AD 43

There are some sites within the AONB that cannot be dated beyond saying that they are prehistoric. These sites are discussed here.

Two of the prehistoric sites are classified as settlements in the SMR, although the evidence for human habitation is scant. One settlement site was identified at East Head (Chi SMR 46; 476900 098500), on the basis of layers of fire cracked flint that were noted in the exposed sea cliff. The second such site (Chi SMR 166; 474800 103940) consisted of black earth with many pot boilers on the beach at Wickor Point on West Thorney.

A site consisting of a scatter of pot boilers was identified at Thornham Point (Chi SMR 179; 476600 104500), and there was a further site at Bosham with fire cracked flints (Chi SMR 2417; 480290 103990).

Two sites classified as flint working sites were also identified near Bosham. At the first of these (Chi SMR 257; 479700 102600), a number of high quality flints were discovered, including a half polished axe and an end scraper, that had apparently eroded from the cliff. This site may have dated to the Neolithic period. At the second site (Chi SMR 2481; 480000 104900) layers of fire cracked flint were observed in the exposed sea cliff, and worked flints appeared to have eroded from the cliff. Two further flint working sites were found at West Thorney, at Marker Point and Wickor Point (Chi SMR 165, 167; 474670 102310, 474800 103900 respectively).

At Gutner Common on North Hayling, a thin layer of black burnt material extending some 23m along a low sea cliff and containing burnt flint pot boilers sealed by alluvium was interpreted as representing prehistoric land clearance (Hants SMR 23,523.00; 473450 101570). Nearby, another site (Hants SMR 23,526.00; 473600 101700) also consisted of a 0.1m thick layer of black, burnt material that extended for 4.6m along a section created by a low sea cliff. This was also interpreted as representing land clearance. Nearby, burnt flints indicated the probable location of a hearth (Hants SMR 54,863.00; 473600 101800). Another hearth was recorded south of Duckard Point (Hants SMR 23,563.00; 472710 104230), resting on clay and sealed by alluvium. Burnt pot boilers were also observed at or near Gutner Common (Hants SMR 23,566.00, 23,524.00, 23,525.00; 473610 102380, 473450 101570, 473300 101700 respectively). It is tempting to attribute the hearths and burning to salt working, although there is not enough evidence to prove this conclusively.

There are also a number of stray finds attributed to the prehistoric period. Little interpretation can be put on such finds beyond saying that they indicate human presence in the prehistoric period in the AONB. A bronze tool (Chi SMR 4; 477800 098580) was found near West Wittering. Flint tools were also recovered at Fishbourne (Chi SMR 2430, 2441; 483800 104000, 482900 104400 respectively), Bosham (Chi SMR 2387, 2388, 2412; 480430 103800, 480480 103050, 481600 101300 respectively), West Thorney (Chi SMR 173, 192; 475780 102580, 477040 102470 respectively), Chidham (Chi SMR 199; 478900 103300) and West Wittering (Chi SMR 47; 477800 098600). An axe of black volcanic rock was found on the shore at Bosham (Chi SMR 2365; 480000 103000) and a Greek coin in the Fishbourne area (Chi SMR 2328; 484000 104000).

Unstratified pot boilers and other material have been recorded in sea banks on Hayling Island (Hants SMR 23,567.00, 23,570.00, 23,571.00; 473610 102380, 473610 102380, 473670 102510 respectively).

Research questions

There are no research questions for this general period beyond those already stated for the more specific prehistoric periods.