Hidden Heritage

A local archaeological & heritage guide to Farnham's buried past

Stone Age Farnham

450,000 - 2,500 BC

HERITAGE FUND

farnham town council

Farnham & District Museum Society

Surrey Archaeological Society

FARNHAM INSTITUTE CHARITY

For more information, images and pdfs of leaflets visit
www.farnham.gov.uk/hiddenheritage

farnhamofficial

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Find out more about Farnham's unique past

The Museum of Farnham is an accredited and award-winning museum situated within the Georgian Grade I-listed Willmer House. Within its local studies library and stores it holds the largest collection of archives I-listed Willmer House. Within its local studies library and stores it holds the largest collection of archives and stores from the work of local archaeologists in the Surrey Archaeological Society, who run fieldwork and heritage outreach projects in the Farnham area, including the community dig Finding Farnham.

www.surreyarchaeology.org.uk

Other links

Farnham & District Museum Society - www.farnhammuseumsociety.org.uk
The Farnham Society - farnhamsociety.org.uk
Surrey History Centre - www.surreycc.gov.uk/culture-and-leisure/history-centre
Surrey Heritage (Exploring Surrey's Past) - www.exploringsurreyspast.org.uk
Wreccleshham History project - wreccleshamhistory.wordpress.com
Hale History project - www.halehistoryproject.co.uk
Rural Life Centre - rural-life.org.uk
Buster Ancient Farm - www.busterancientfarm.co.uk
Guildford Museum - guildford.gov.uk/museum
Curtis & Aldershot Military Museum - www.hampshireculture.org.uk

Much of what we know about Farnham's early past comes from the work of local archaeologists in the Surrey Archaeological Society, who run fieldwork and heritage outreach projects in the Farnham area, including the community dig Finding Farnham.

www.farnhammatlings.com/museum

Want to learn about the Stone Age?

Knap your own tool...with soap!

Create cave art using natural materials (darken the room for special effect)

Build Stonehenge... from biscuits

Layout a timeline (to scale) of the prehistoric period up to the modern day

Activity ideas:

Local loans boxes are also available from the Museum, Surrey Archaeological Society and Surrey County Archaeological Unit

Suggested sources (a good internet search will result in more!)

Historic England's educational resources - historicengland.org.uk/services-skills/education (includes teaching activities and classroom resources, such as an immersive interactive timeline)

Canterbury Christ Church University Stone Age for KS2 - www.canterbury.ac.uk/arts-and-humanities/school-of-humanities/archaeology/stone-age-for-ks2.aspx

Ancient Craft Three Age Experience - www.ancientcraft.co.uk

Schools Prehistory and Archaeology - www.schoolsprehistory.co.uk

Young Archaeologists' Club - www.yac-uk.org

The Stone Age

Timeline

130,000,000 BC - *Baronyx* (the 'Surrey Dinosaur', so-named from a skeleton near Ockley) was the top predator in warm swampy southern England

800,000 BC - Humans (*Homo antecessor*) probably first arrive in Britain

700,000 BC - Earliest stone tools found in Suffolk

450,000 BC - Appearance of new species (*Homo heidelbergensis*) at Boxgrove, West Sussex

120,000 BC - Neanderthal people

30,000 BC - Cave art begins; *Homo sapiens* emerge

20,000 BC - Peak of the last Ice Age

10,000 BC - Earliest house in Britain at Star Carr, Yorks. and open air sites such as Hengistbury Head, Dorset

9000 BC - Temporary hunter camp in tundra landscapes as at Church Lammas, Staines

6500 BC - Britain separated from the continent

4500 BC - Farming and pottery introduced to Britain

4000-3300 BC - Construction of earliest earthworks such as early enclosures and burial chambers

3300-2900 BC - Cursus monuments, chamber tombs and stone circles begin

2900-2200 BC - Beginning of henges and flint mining; Stonehenge, Silbury Hill and Staines/Heathrow complex of ceremonial monuments at their peak

2700 BC - Tools and weapons made from cooper

2200 BC - Beginning of Bronze Age

Some further sources

Darvil, T. (2010) *Prehistoric Britain* (Routledge World Archaeology)

Hunt, R. (2002) *Hidden Depths: an archaeological exploration of Surrey's Past*

Oakley, K.P. et al. (1939) *A Survey of the Prehistory of the Farnham District*

Pollard, J. ed. (2008) *Prehistoric Britain* (Blackwell Studies in World Archaeology)

Timms, P. (1980) *Flint Implements of the Old Stone Age* (Shire Archaeology)

Historic England publications (many intro guides as online PDFs) - historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/

Lithics Assemblages: a guide to processing, analysis and interpretation Bajr Guide 49 (2017) - www.bajr.org/BAJRGuides/49_Lithics/49_Lithics_guide.pdf

Surrey Prehistoric Group - www.surreyarchaeology.org.uk/groups/prehistory (includes lithics reports and fact sheet)

Flint-knapping

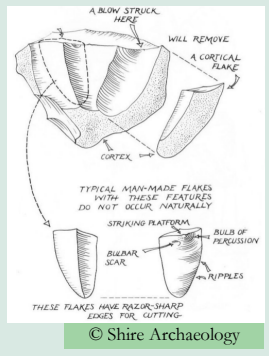
Farnham's history as a craft town can be argued to extend back as far as the Stone Age, as the technologically advanced art of flint-knapping is prominent in the area.

Flint-knapping is a complicated process which involves carefully controlled fracturing of stone – usually flint – by striking an impact point and sending energy waves/ripples throughout. By using different hammers, edge angles, strike power and speed, an experienced knapper can control how and where flakes detach from the core of the stone.

Proper angle for striking 'platform' edge to strike, and resulting flake © James Dilley

The aim is of course to produce lithics – tools made from raw stone material – which can be divided into three basic form types: debitage (the usually small waste flakes and chips produced from knapping), cores (what is shaped by gradual reduction through flakes, etc being knapped off), and of course tools (whether arrowheads, scrapers, burins, knives, axeheads or other various types).

The flint – silicon dioxide (SiO_2) – has a fine crystalline grain with a glassy character, making it ideal for knapping. Stones of different geological types are local to different regions in Britain, and it is possible to tell when certain lithic tools were made from stone which was imported (usually making it a clearly valuable and prized item).



© Shire Archaeology

Advances in lithic technology can reveal many things about how the brains of prehistoric people developed as the environment changed around them, resulting in different challenges which required different solutions. The evidence of this change can be seen in how tools evolved from – for instance – crude pebble choppers to intricate knives.

The Stone Age was a considerably broad period, divided into the Palaeo-('Old'), Meso-('Middle') and Neo-('New') eras.

The Old Stone Age (Palaeolithic) in Britain begins with the appearance of the first humans and ends with the retreat of the glaciers during the last Ice Age. During this vast period, both *Homo neanderthalensis* and *Homo sapiens* emerged and undertook hunting and scavenging for their subsistence. Our main evidence of this era are the stone tools left behind, as well as occasional cave art as in Creswell Crags, Derbyshire.

The Middle Stone Age (Mesolithic) is characterized by nomadic groups whose open tundra landscape shifted to covered woodland as a result of climatic warming and rising sea levels, which eventually led to the separation of Britain from the continent around 6,500 BC. The small groups of hunter-gatherers lived off what they could find or hunt seasonally, with their flint tools and waste flakes indications of their movement from site to site.

The Neolithic is regarded as the point when farming was introduced, although the earliest agricultural economy was a mix of pastoralism, horticulture, hunting and gathering. The need to look after crops and livestock meant that more permanent settlement was needed, and with fire and new tool types such as polished axes, larger areas of forest were cleared. The period also saw the introduction of pottery and large ceremonial monuments, such as the long barrow atnearby Badshot Lea.

Artwork by Victor Ambrus

200,000 BC		35000 BC		8300 BC	4300 BC	2000 BC
	Lower Palaeolithic	Middle Palaeolithic	Upper Palaeolithic			
	PALAEOLITHIC			MESOLITHIC		NEOLITHIC
				Hunter-gatherer communities	*Mobile farming communities*	

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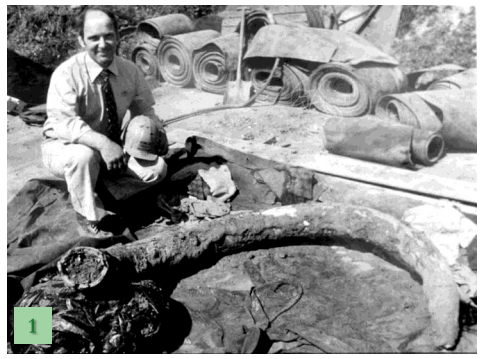
Ice Age mammals

Mammoth tusks, teeth and bones – and those of woolly rhino, wild horse and other now extinct species that bear witness to a cold climate – were quite common finds from the lower river gravels of the Farnham Terraces, with both mammoth tusks and molars recorded by W F Rankine in the early 20th century at basal gravel pits at Junction, Six Bells, Lower Snailslynch, Park Field, Weydon and Tanners.



1 W F Rankine with excavated tusk at Coxbridge sand-pit © Farnham Herald

A similar mammoth tusk from the Alton Road pit south-west of the town in the 1980s was radiocarbon-dated to around 39,000 years ago, at the peak of the last Ice Age.

2 Mammoth tusk from Badshot Lea sandpit discovered in early 2000s (Photo by D Graham)

WF Rankine (1879-1981)

William Francis Rankine was born in Dorking and moved to Farnham as a child, where he became headmaster of Badshot Lea School and engaged in most of the prehistoric archaeology of the region, alongside his wife Winifred – daughter of the jeweller/clock-maker Charles Borelli – who accompanied him on most digs.

Rankine's main passion was the Mesolithic/Neolithic, and he was extremely vocal in the need for a museum in Farnham, where his collection – one of the most important of its type – is now stored.

8 Rankine (in hat) with students at Mesolithic site in Oakhanger (© Museum of Farnham)

9 Collection of Mesolithic flints – axe, scrapers, blades and implements – from the Farnham terraces (Photo by D Graham)

Mesolithic pit-dwellings

With the warmer environment of the Mesolithic came new sources of food – wild birds, boar, deer and fish – resulting in a change to a migrating hunting and gathering lifestyle.

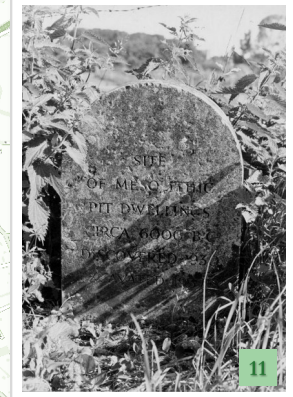
Smaller more developed tools were required for this hunting – including composite flints known as microliths – and axes, picks and blades of all sizes were produced, providing the main evidence we have for the period.

Evidence for where Mesolithic people were in the Farnham area – usually in temporary camps – is often in the form of flint scatters, including the large cores from which the flakes were knapped.

The range of flint sites for this period is broad, ranging from those in the valley on the Wey Lower Terrace ('E') – as at the West Street Cemetery Allotment, the Hart and locations along South Street – to river bluff sites such as Moor Park, Sheephatch and Monks' Walk.

The most extensive of the pit dwelling sites is at Bourne Mill Spring – former sewage works – where 18 pits were found, one of which contained 5,000 flints alone.

10 1937 Excavation of Mesolithic 'hut dwellings' at Bourne Mill Spring (Photo by C E Borelli)



11 Stone pillar marking the Bourne Mill site (Photo by C Shepheard)

Palaeoliths from the Farnham river terraces

The Farnham Terraces – which were heavily quarried in the late 19th and early 20th c. – are the relics of former floodplains of the River Wey.

3 Large flint axe around 400,000 years old from Farnham gravel pits © Guildford Museum

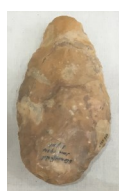
In addition to mammal remains, the terraces also produced some of the best examples of Palaeolithic hand-axes and flakes in Surrey, many of which were discovered by W F Rankine and formed a substantial collection now held at the Museum.

Hand axes were the earliest tools to be used by humans – with Farnham's examples amongst the earliest and best known – and would have had multiple functions, including for skinning and butchering the carcasses of Ice Age mammals.

Gradually the techniques for tool-making became more sophisticated, and – alongside tasks such as digging, chopping and sawing – flints with specific functions, such as knives or scrapers, were produced as well.

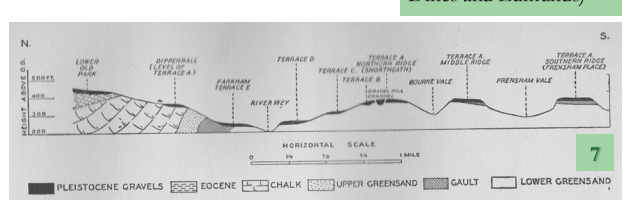
4 Palaeoliths from local terraces, including an Acheulian handaxe (*right*) from 'Paine's Pit', Wrecclesham © Museum of Farnham

5 Hand-axe from Stoneyfield pit along Terrace B and image of pit when excavated showing stratified gravel and sand © Museum of Farnham; Photo by H Bury



7 Section of the five Palaeolithic terraces of the District, the earliest and highest of which (A) stretches as far away as Alice Holt (*A Survey of the Prehistory of the Farnham District*, based on Dines and Edmunds)

6 Flint scraper or knife from Bourne Woods © Museum of Farnham



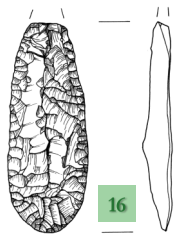
Neolithic flintwork

The Neolithic is marked by food production – both through agriculture and the domestication of animals – and flint types such as polished axes and leaf-shaped knives and arrow-heads are characteristic of the period.

12 Neolithic leaf arrowhead, from Yew Tree Cottage, Wrecclesham (Photo by D Graham)

13 Neolithic maul from Six Bells © Surrey Archaeological Society (SyAS)

14 Quartzite mace-head, Green Lane © SyAS, W F Rankine



16 Plano-convex knife of probable late Neolithic date found in 1935 from Burnt Hill, the Bourne (Drawing A Graham)

17 Neolithic polished axes and arrowhead (Photo by D Graham)

12

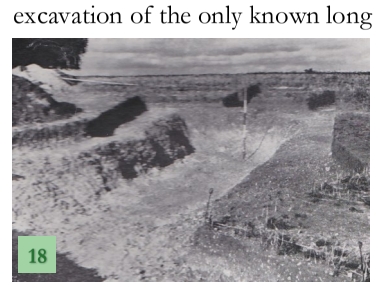
15 Assymetric transverse arrowhead (c 3500 BC) from Puttenham Common (Drawing by A Graham)

Badshot Lea Neolithic long barrow

During chalk-quarrying in the 1930s at Badshot Farm, W F Rankine observed the section of a ditch in the chalk-face and – on closer examination – leaf-shaped arrowheads, resulting in the excavation of the only known long barrow in Surrey.

At about 42 metres in length, the barrow would have originally been a chamber – probably for burial – covered by an earthen mound, though was most was already quarried away when it was first discovered.

Pottery also begins to appear at this time, and the Neolithic urns found at Badshot Lea are exceptional in their ornament.



18 East end of the southern barrow ditch and site during excavations (Photos by A Keiller)

19 West Kennet Long Barrow, Wiltshire

20 Rim fragments with ornament including bird-bone impressions and flint-incised criss-crossing (*top*), and large restored vessel in twisted cord impressions, finger-nail incisions and finger-pinching (*bottom*) © SyAS

21 Assortment of finds from barrow, including leaf arrowheads, polished axe, and bone and antler from domesticated species – such as ox and pig – and hunted game © SyAS

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