

Stories in stone

The story of flint



△ Flint tools were made by our ancestors living in the Chilterns from half a million years ago, using the most abundant and superb rock for making their tools:



Clockwise from the left – a large axe, a range of scrapers, microliths for spears, a hammerstone for making tools, and a blade for cutting.

(Cadmore End, Mesolithic – 10,000 years old).

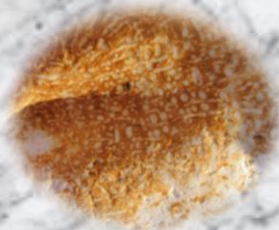
These tools can be made with such a sharp edge that they would not leave a scar if used for operations.

△ Flint formed naturally in the Chalk – and nowhere else. It formed between 80 and 65 million years ago, and has never been made at any other time in our geological history.



△ Above and left – flint formed in layers on or within the chalky sediment, preferentially flowing into burrows or surrounding fossils. How could it do this? Because it formed as a jelly!

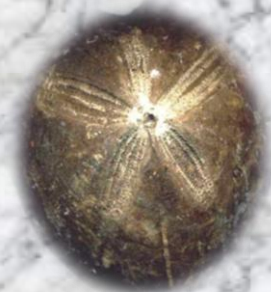
△ It formed under extreme conditions of global warming which resulted in more than a 300 metre rise in sea level. This disrupted ocean currents and caused oxygen to be cut off from the ocean floor from time to time. Lack of oxygen kills animals and this why many of the nodular flints seen above at Whiteleaf contain fossils.



← Sponge fossil

Heart urchin →

Both fossils are about 80 million years old.



△ Flint fossils can be found wearing out in footpaths or even in tree throws in woods throughout the Chilterns. Next time you are out walking – keep your eyes peeled!