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SÉANCES DE LA SOCIÉTÉ PRÉHISTORIQUE FRANÇAISE

MESOLITHIC PALETHNOGRAPHY

RESEARCH ON OPEN-AIR SITES BETWEEN LOIRE AND NECKAR

PROCEEDINGS FROM THE INTERNATIONAL ROUND-TABLE MEETING IN PARIS (NOVEMBER 26–27, 2010)

as part of sessions organised by the Société préhistorique française

Published under the direction of

Boris Valentin, Bénédicte Souffi, Thierry Ducrocq,
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Mesolithic Palethnography
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The 'Beuronian with crescents' in Northern France: the beginnings of a palethnological approach

Thierry Ducrocq

Abstract: The establishment of a Mesolithic chrono-cultural framework reveals several successive traditions in Northern France. The most well-documented of which is the 'Beuronian with crescents' dated to around 8,000 calBC. The main sites actually seem to represent the juxtaposition of contemporaneous concentrations. The time spent at these sites seems brief and principally concerns hunting activities focused on wild boar.

FROM THE DISCOVERY OF THE MESOLITHIC IN NORTHERN FRANCE TO THE BASIS FOR A PALETHNOLOGICAL APPROACH

The small Tardenois region, which has lent its name to the Tardenoisian, has made Northern France a key area for Mesolithic research since its beginning (Rozoy, 1994a). Furthermore, information collected from north of the Loire formed the main body of J.-G. Rozoy's (1978) monumental synthesis within which can also be found the first palethnological approach to the French Mesolithic. This reconstruction of Mesolithic lifeways is principally based on discoveries from Northern European peat deposits (bows, arrows, abundant fauna, etc.). In fact, the majority of sites known from the Paris Basin are located on sandy outcrops presenting adverse conditions for the preservation of organic material. In order to fill this gap, research turned towards the peat valleys of Northern France, particularly those in the Somme (Ducrocq, 1989). The complexity of these sites quickly became apparent as the discovery of levels containing preserved fauna multiplied. As a result, comprehensive geological studies (Antoine, 1997) connected with detailed taphonomic approaches (given the frequency of palimpsests) have become instrumental (Ducrocq, 2010). The accumulation of absolute dates from sites apparently not suffering from problems connected to successive occupations traces (palimpsests) clearly demonstrates that distinct types of microlithic assemblages occupy different chronological positions (fig. 1). The initial absolute dating results also exposed the weaknesses of the chrono-typological framework employed up until this point. The primary objective became placing the Mesolithic of Northern France within a morpho-stratigraphic, environmental and cultural framework (Ducrocq, 2001). The perception of continuity between different stages of the Mesolithic was replaced by the recognition of a succession of stable typological stages separated by more complex episodes, but without any genuine transitional sites. Evidence from Southern and Western France for a single rupture between a First and Second Mesolithic (Marchand, 2008) is not easily transferred to Northern France, especially for the first two millennia given probable population displacements induced by the expansion of the North Sea. However, this would not be of relevance here if the sites had not demonstrated stark contrasts in lifeways between the different phases. For instance, several Early Maglemosian sites still contain numerous endscrapers and burins, while these tool types are almost always absent from the youngest 'Beuronian with crescents' occupations. Fishing presents a second example as it is only attested to from the beginning of the Boreal chronozone on fairly complex sites such as Noyen-sur-Seine (Mordant, 1989) or la Chaussée-Tirancourt. An inaccurate consideration of finer

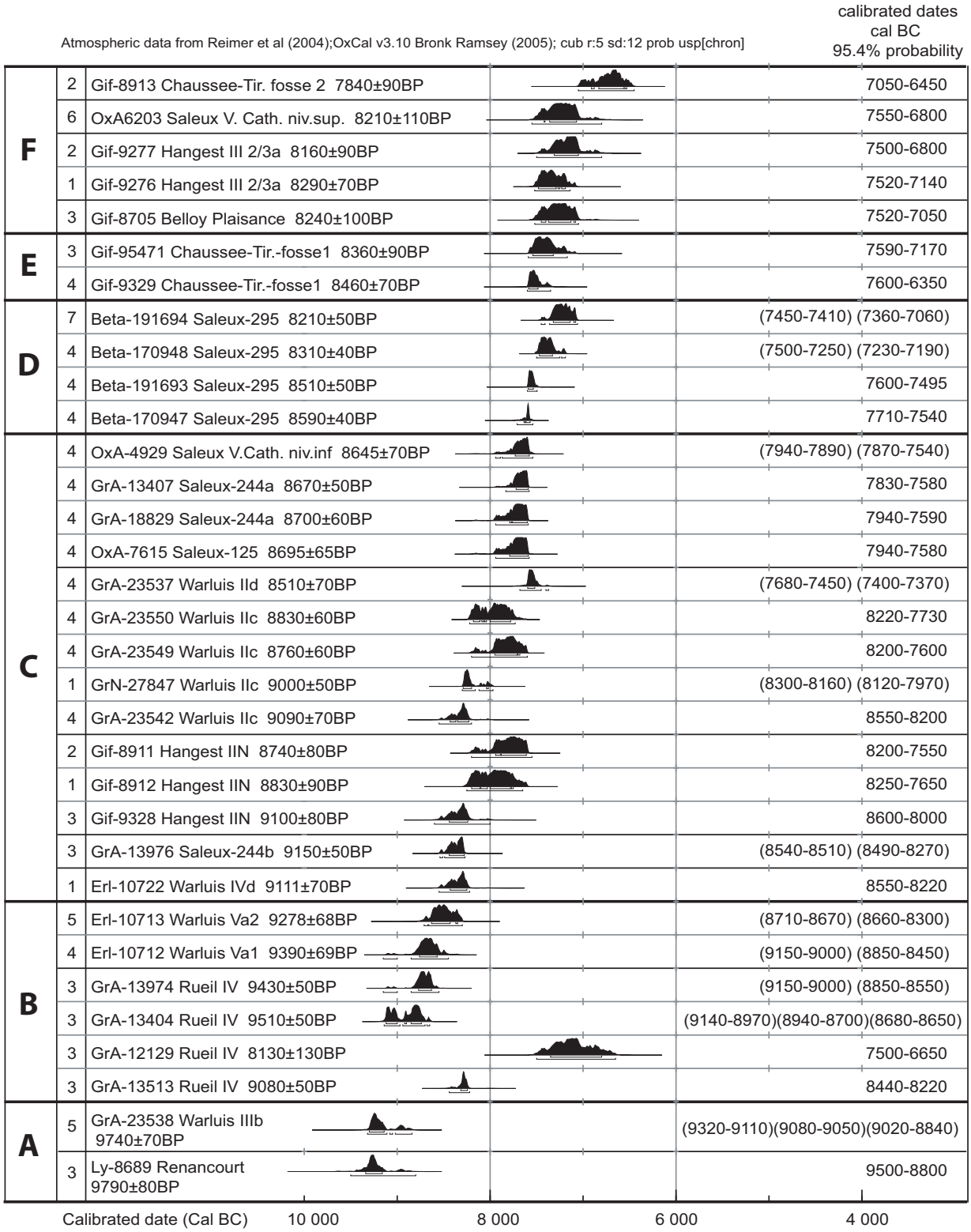


Fig. 1 – Principal absolute dates for the Early and Middle Mesolithic in the peat valleys of Picardy. A: Initial Mesolithic; B: Early Maglemosian; C: 'Beuronian with crescents'; D: 'Beuronian with scalene triangles'; E: 'Beuronian with backed bladelets'?; F: RMS A. 1: Dates on burnt hazelnuts; 2: charcoal; 3: unidentified bone; 4: *Sus scrofa*; 5: *Cervus elaphus*; 6: *Bos primigenius*; 7: *Castor fiber*.

chronological aspects could lead to a highly seductive, but ultimately incorrect analysis involving a fictitious ranking of sites and their relationships between each other (base camps, hunting camps, fishing spots, etc.).

Only the period around 8800 BP in Northern France is sufficiently well-documented from a number of different well-preserved sites to provide the basis for a robust palethnological approach. The study presented here has the simple objective of rapidly outlining the initial results concerning this Mesolithic culture.

'THE BEURONIAN WITH CRESCENTS': CHRONOLOGY, IDENTIFICATION, DISTRIBUTION, GEOGRAPHY AND TERMINOLOGY

This tradition was first recognised from surface collections in the Ercheu region (Ducrocq, 2001), followed by the recovery of artefacts from a sound sedimentary context occasioned by monitoring work on floodplains (digging reservoirs or stripping gravels) which, taken together, led to an understanding of the chronology and environmental context of the 'Beuronian with crescents' (Ailly-sur-Noye, Crouy-Saint-Pierre, Hangest-sur-Somme). New excavations were carried out on floodplains such as at Saleux (Fagnart et al., 2008), Warluis (Ducrocq et al., 2008), Conty and Amiens-Étouvie, as well as on sandy outcrops (Lihus, Attilly, Sermoise) or along plateaus as at Blangy-Tronville. Rescue diagnostics have also led to further discoveries.

In the Somme Basin, all of the lithic industries dated to between 9100 and 8700 BP contain numerous crescents associated with points with retouched bases (transverse or oblique) (figs. 2 and 3). Even if we exclude dates produced on charcoal ('old-wood' effect) and animal bone (problems with collagen preservation) and retain only those produced on carbonised hazelnuts, the results remains the same. Taking into account issues tied to calibration and the radiocarbon plateau at 8800 BP, these industries broadly date to between 8500 and 7500 calBC, in other words, several centuries on either side of 8000 calBC. Palynological analysis from several sites in the Somme (Munaut and Defgnée, 1989; Ducrocq, 2001) place them to the beginning of palynozone 7 identified by Van Zeist and Van der Spoel-Walvius (1980) which corresponds to a relatively low forested landscape dominated by hazelnut trees.

All of these sites were initially subsumed in the 'Hangest group' defined from the site of Hangest-sur-Somme 'Gravière II Nord' which was the best documented at the time (Ducrocq, 1991 and 1992; Ketterer, 1997). It then seemed appropriate to find a new term for designating this material culture given difficulties in accepting a 'culture' in the ethnological sense. The Beuronian, in a strict sense, was first defined in Southern Germany by W. Taute (1973) to describe assemblages containing both points with retouched bases and triangles. S. K. Kozłowski's (1983) broader definition of the Beuronian (Beuron-Coincy culture; fig. 4A) included assemblages that were not only very similar typologically (Gob, 1985), but were spread over a much larger territory. In my sense of the term, this more broadly defined Beuronian is comparable to a techno-complex containing points with retouched bases (fig. 4B). Distribution patterns of Western European groups who essentially employed this type of microlith during the first half of the Boreal clearly shows a separation of the Beuronian from the major Sauveterrian groups to the south and the northern Maglemose-Duvensee industries. However, the Beuronian techno-complex itself includes microlith assemblages that differ significantly according to their chronological or geographic position.

Thus the 'Beuronian with crescents' lasted for less time than the Beuronian complex in general and is characterised by the replacement of triangles by crescents. It is not restricted to the Somme, but is spread across the entire Paris Basin up to the Cher Valley in the south and all of Belgium (fig. 5). Its existence in Eastern France and Southern Great Britain, although probable, has not been clearly documented given the lack of uniform microlith assemblages genuinely comparable with those from the Somme. The possibility of different traditions coexisting in the same territory applies only to areas at the edges of this large territory, especially in Belgium (Crombé, 2002). This immense techno-complex includes smaller entities distinguishable, for example, by the use of Wommerson quartzite limited to Belgium (Noens et al., 2009), the replacement of points with transverse bases by those with oblique bases at the end of the period (towards 8700 BP) in the Somme Basin (Fagnart et al., 2008) or the use of Montmorencian prismatic tools in the Île-de-France and Centre regions (Griselin et al., this volume).

This three-tier hierarchical classification (Beuronian in a broad sense, 'Beuronian with crescents', smaller geographic or chronological entities) could provide evidence of a social territory (Beuronian with crescents) and annual territories for the lower level entities as has occasionally been proposed for the end of the Nordic Palaeolithic (Clark, 1975). This taxonomy composed of three territorial levels is reminiscent of ideas proposed by R. Newell and his team (1990) based on the study of decorative ornaments taken to reflect language families, tribes or bands, in other words, local groups. While this remains hypothetical, it is nonetheless worth noting that the lowest level entities occupy areas comparable with the cultures J.-G. Rozoy (1991) equated with tribal dialects incorporating bands of around 15 individuals (Rozoy, 1998). In this classification, the 'Beuronian with crescents' from the Somme Basin would represent the beginning of the middle stage of Rozoy's 'Somme Group' (1994b). The problem with this designation is that is presupposes a connection between the different regional and chronological phases beginning from the earliest stage. This is far from evident as major palaeogeographic changes could produce multiple population migrations.

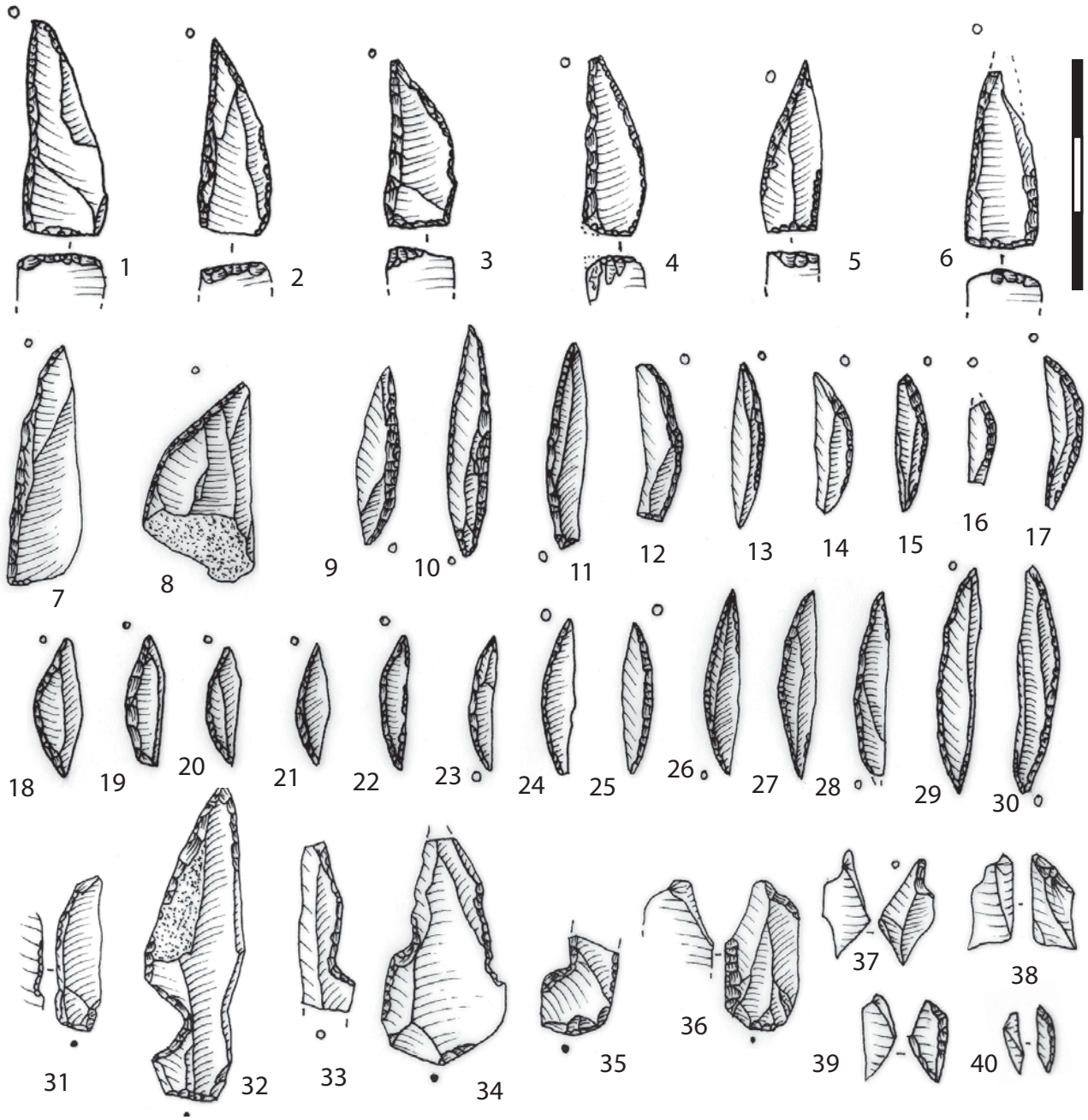


Fig. 2 – Warluis I (Oise). Microliths typical of the 'Beuronian with crescents'. 1-6: points with retouched bases; 7-8: points with un-retouched bases; 9-30: crescents; 31-35; incomplete pieces; 36-40: microburins (drawings T. Ducrocq).

WHAT IS THE NATURE OF 'BEURONIAN WITH CRESCENTS' SITES?

Apart from the site of Conty which represents a brief stopover by a lone hunter (Ducrocq, 2001), 'Beuronian with crescents' sites take the form of artefact concentrations several dozen square metres in size. The juxtaposition of several of these concentrations could be interpreted as resulting from multiple visits to the same place (Ducrocq, op. cit.). This reasoning is based on frequent palimpsests evident in Mesolithic contexts that are often responsible for the size of the largest sites (Crombé et al., 2006 and this volume).

Features are also rare: there are no traces of tents, cabins or simple shelters. Basic combustion zones are represented simply by dispersed burnt remains. Debitage clusters have been documented at the sites of Crouy 'Étang' and Hangest 'Gravière II nord' (Ducrocq, 2001).

A recent study of lithic raw materials from three sites (Ailly-sur-Noye, Crouy 'Étang' and Hangest 'Gravière II nord'; Fabre et al., 2007) documented the exploitation of all flint types available within a one kilometre radius. In each assemblage, some blocks were imported from

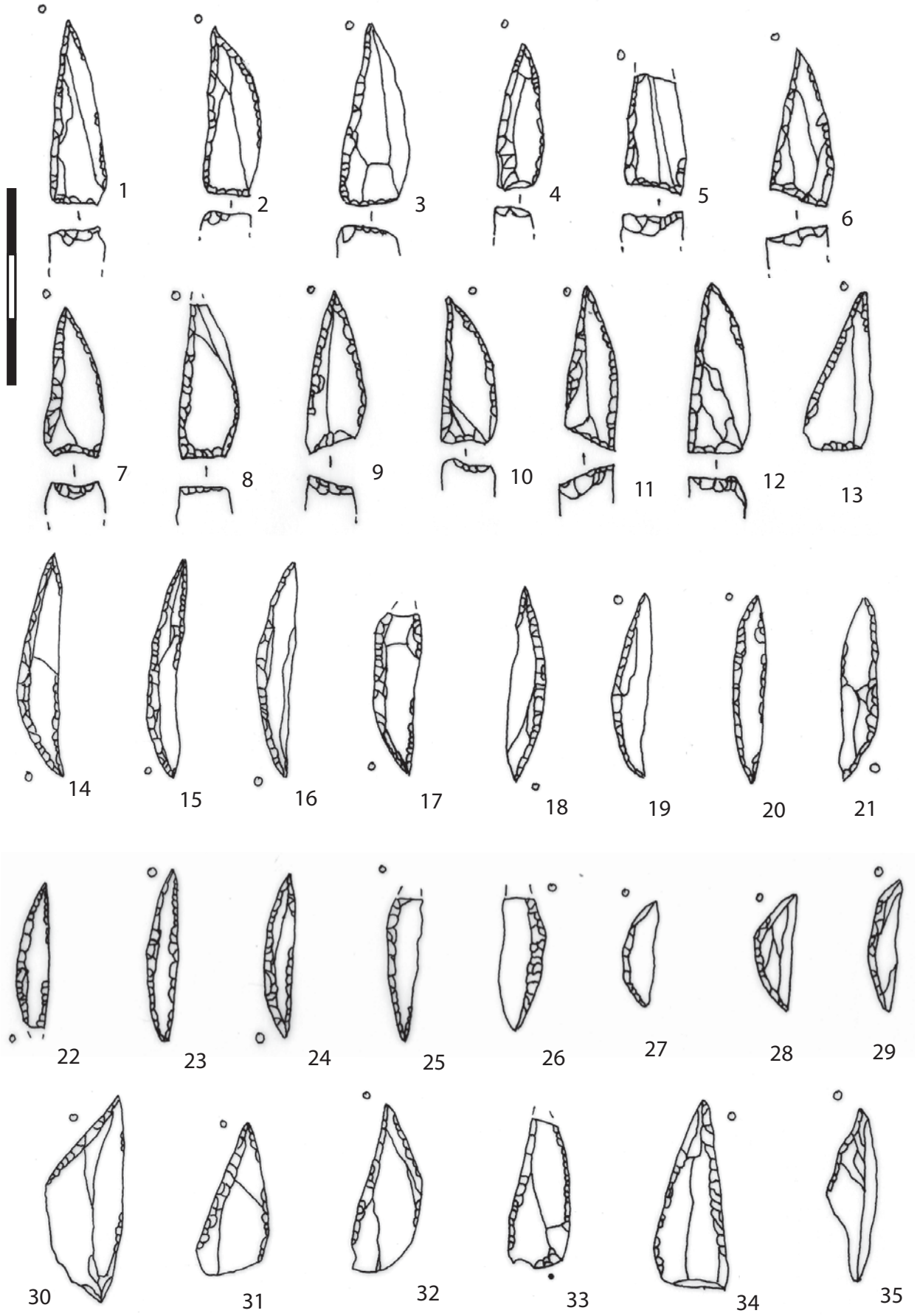


Fig. 3 – Warluis IIc (Oise). Microliths typical of the ‘Beuronian with crescents’. 1-13: points with retouched bases; 14-29: crescents; 30-35: points with un-retouched bases (drawings T. Ducrocq).

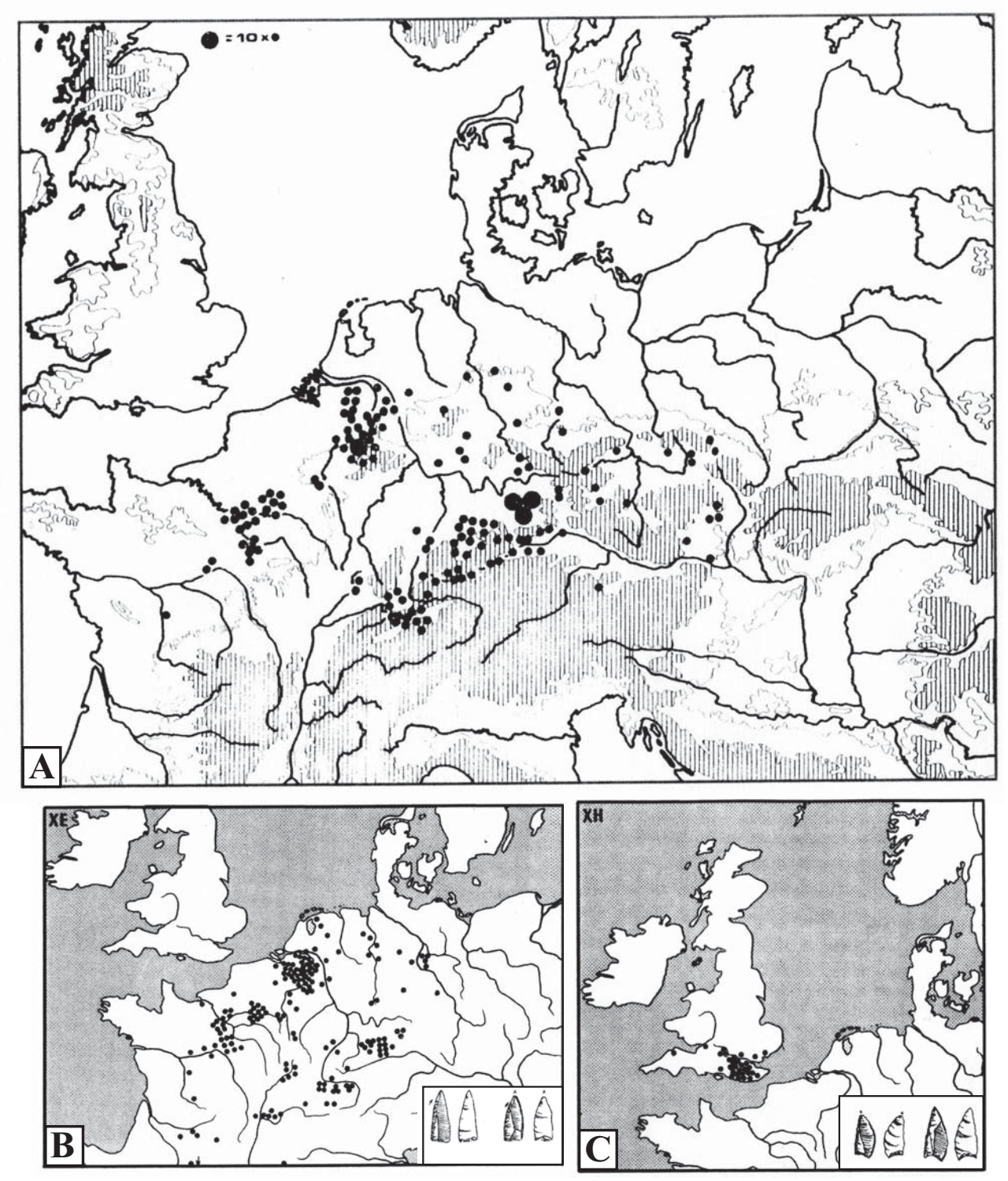


Fig. 4 – Maps after Kozłowski (2009, p. 139, 140 and 316). A: Geographic range of the Beuronian; B: Distribution of points with transverse bifacially retouched bases; C: Points with obliquely retouched bases (Horsham points). Numerous points in Northern France should be added to map C. The Horsham and Honey Hill groups from Britain could be integrated within the Beuronian (Reynier, 2005).

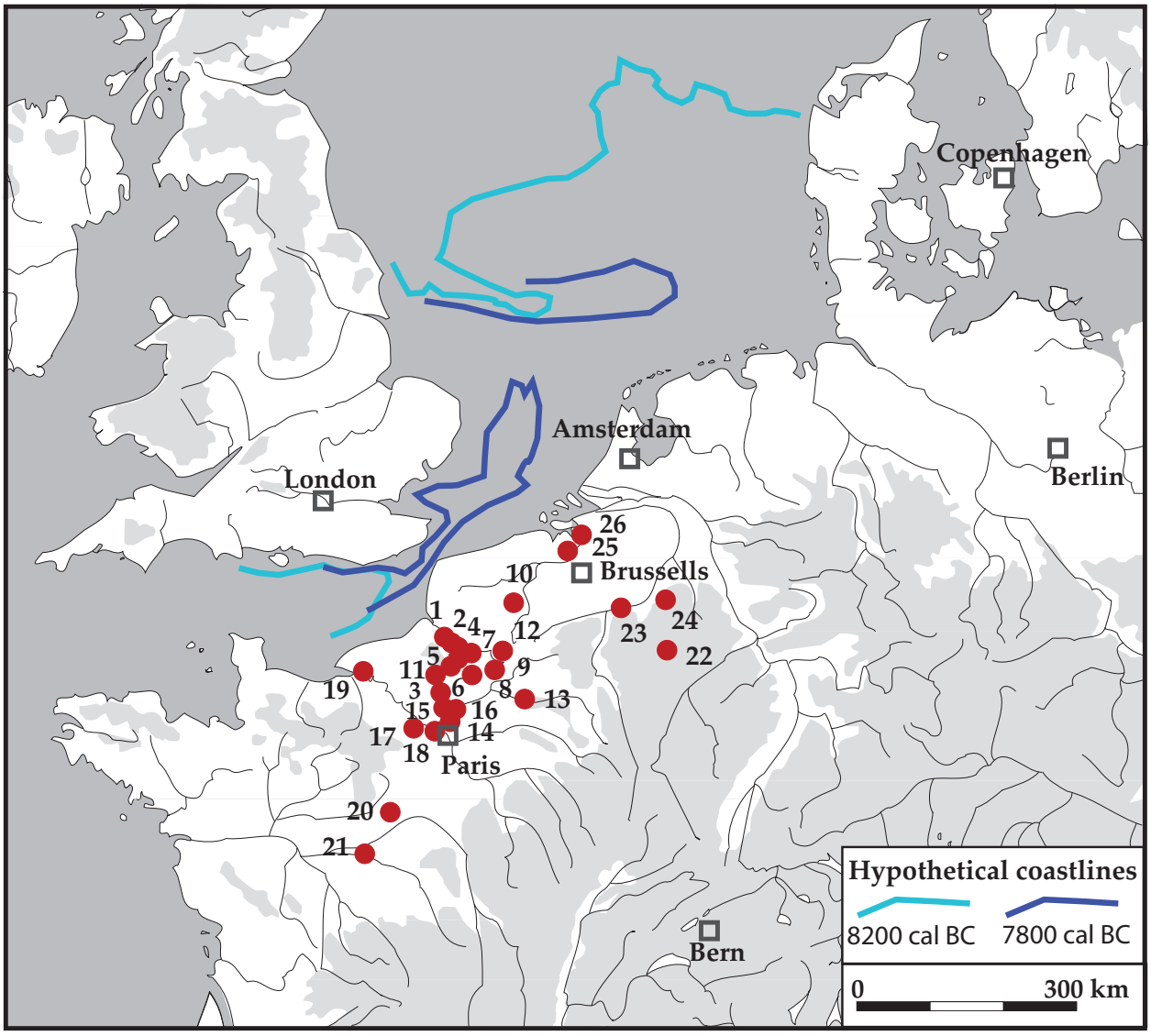


Fig. 5 – Principal sites attributed to the ‘Beuronian with crescents’ (towards 8800 BP). 1: Gravière II Nord at Hangest-sur-Somme; 2: L’Étang at Crouy-Saint-Pierre; 3: Warluis I, II, IV; 4: Étouvie-Chemin de la Marine and Rue Saint Maurice II at Amiens; 5: La Vierge Catherine and Les Baquets at Saleux; 6: Le Marais at Conty; 7: La Petite Tête at Blangy-Tronville; 8: Le Marais de Berny at Ailly-sur-Noye; 9: L’Abbaye-aux-Bois at Ognolles and La Haute Borne at Beaulieu-les-Fontaines; 10: Le Bois du Marais at Masny (Félix, 1968); 11: Lihus II; 12: Le Bois de la Bocquillière – MESO II at Attilly; 13: Sermoise; 14: Piscop M1 (Rozoy, 1978); 15: Hédouville (Daniel, 1934); 16: Les Prés-Saint-Laurent at Beaumont-sur-Oise (Souffi, 2001); 17: Le Dentu at Boinvillers and Haussepied at Orvilliers (Griselin, 2008); 18: Chaville I (Rozoy, 1978); 19: Saint-Wandrille-Rançon (Souffi, 2008); 20: Lorges I (Rozoy, 1978); 21: Le Chêne des Fouteaux at Saint-Romain-sur-Cher 1, 3 and 4 (Kildéa, 2008); 22: Galgebierg at Diekirch (Spier and Geiben, 1987); 23: Seilles 2 and 3 (Destexhe, 1979); 24: L’Ourlaine (Gob, 1981); 25: Verrebroeck 4 and 23 (Perdaen et al., 2008); 26: Doel Deurganckdok 3 (Noens et al., 2006). Changes in the coastline deduced from the work of Jelgersma (1979), Coles (1998), Sommé (1999) and Sommé et al. (1994).

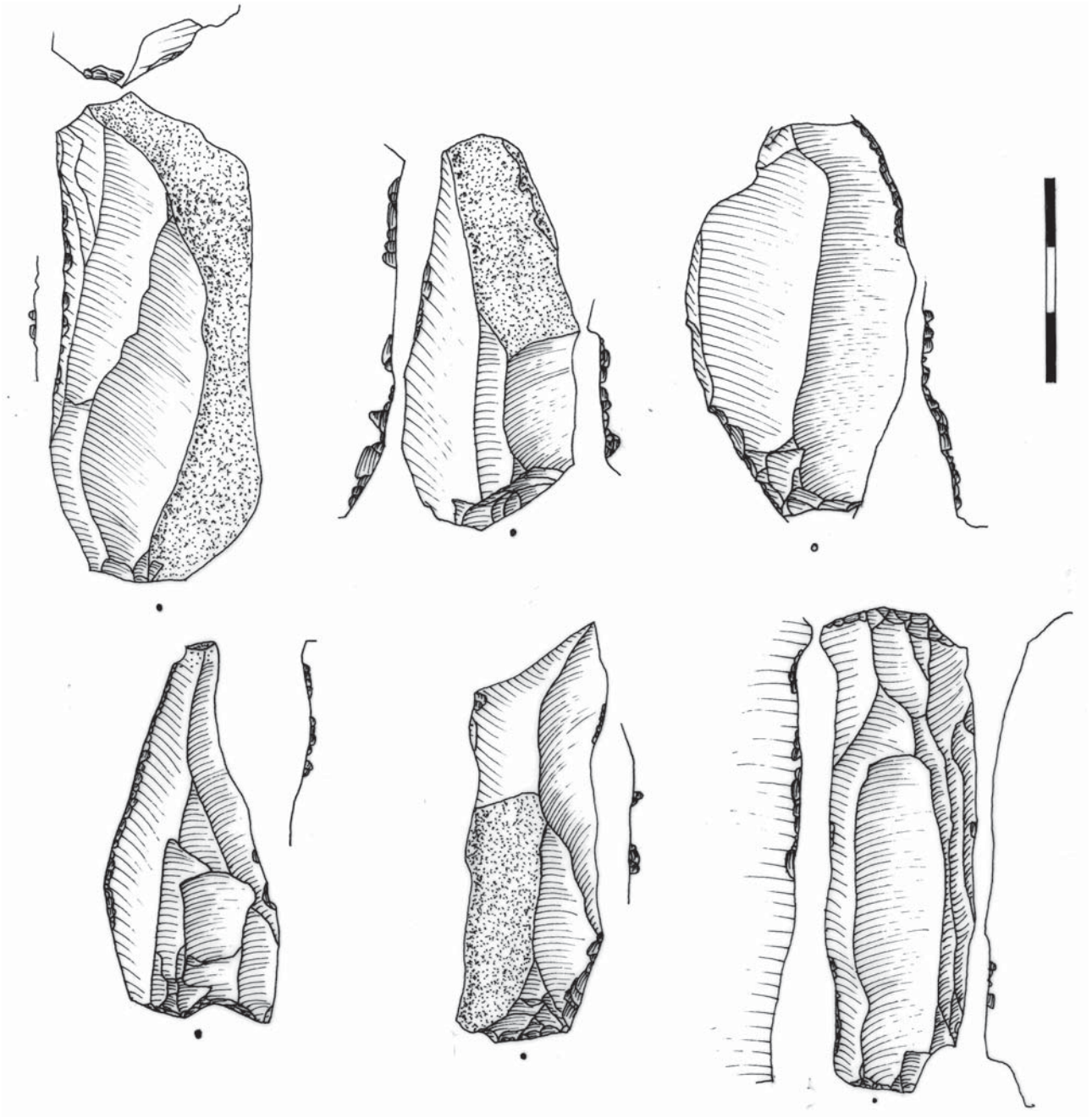


Fig. 6 – Gravière II Nord at Hangest (Somme). Artefacts with retouch produced by use (drawings T. Ducrocq).

slightly more distant sources up to 9 km from the sites or around a 2 hour walk. At other sites such as Warluis I, Mesolithic groups installed themselves directly on a source of raw material. The entirety of the *chaîne opératoire* is present from opening the block to the production of microliths. Debitage, although in the Coincy style (Ketterer, 1997), demonstrates particular nuances probably connected to the abundance, quality and morphology of the raw material. While endscrapers and burins are rare, numerous artefacts carry irregular retouch resulting from use (fig. 6). A still unpublished analysis of these pieces from Warluis I by N. Cayol (INRAP) revealed various, but moderate uses sometimes connected with the working of plant materials. Numerous microburins and unfinished pieces indicate that microliths were manufactured on-site. Several points with retouched bases bear complex breaks probably connected to their use as projectile elements and several crescents still carry traces of glue (fig. 7). This combination demonstrates that the maintenance of hunting weapons played an important role on these sites.

All of these features of the lithic industry are common on sites found on floodplains or sandy outcrops (Ducrocq, 2001). The fact that activities do not differ according to topographic position excludes considering these sites as fulfilling complementary functions.

Fig. 7 – Gravière II Nord at Hangest (Somme). Broken crescents still carrying small traces of glue near the retouch (photos S. Lancelot).

At first glance, the occupation of valley floors could be motivated by fishing practices, however no supporting evidence exists — no fish remains were recovered from Warluis, Saleux, Hangest, nor any of the sites with well-preserved fauna. The faunal spectrum is restricted to several mammals and is largely dominated by wild boar, such as at Warluis I where it is the only species present. Wild boar is often represented on sites by several, generally young, individuals (four at Warluis I). Compared to ternary age structures of natural populations, this pattern suggests non-selective hunting (Bridault, 1997). The form in which game was introduced to sites remains relatively unknown given the lack of detailed studies, limited excavations and the probable disappearance of anatomical parts in hearths or due to taphonomic processes. However, at least a portion of the animal seems to have been consumed on-site: numerous bones present traces of butchery, as well as human-induced fractures, while others are charred or carbonised. Determining the season of occupation is also difficult based solely on wild boar remains as multiple births can be spaced across the year. A. Bridault has proposed an occupation between March and August or October and January for Warluis I.

Burnt hazelnut shells are absent from certain sites such as Saleux. On other sites hazelnut shells represent rare elements susceptible to being accidentally burnt in the vicinity of combustion zones. Although their number sometimes reaches several dozen, this dietary resource appears of secondary importance.

Overall, preliminary faunal data combined with evidence for microlith production makes it possible to interpret these sites as short-term camps essentially dedicated to the hunting of large prey, especially wild boar. Patterns of raw material provisioning indicate the exploitation of an approximately 10 km area. The combination of relatively diverse activities, the on-site consumption of resources, the presence of combustion zones and all stages of the *chaîne opératoire* for microlith manufacture argue in favour of stopovers lasting several days. However, the absence of elaborate features and time invested in certain other activities (rarity of endscrapers, burins, bone tools) suggest relatively short stays. This perception of small, extremely mobile human groups moving between sites with identical functions, essentially based around the acquisition of meat resources, is very close to that of J.-G. Rozoy or the ideas formulated by S. Philibert (2004) for the Sauveterrian.

SINGLE CONCENTRATIONS OR LARGE CAMPSITES?

Large campsites elsewhere

A settlement model composed of single, non-ranked concentrations was based on the absence of more extensive or complex sites (see above). However, several studies of sites in neighbouring areas or regions have led to very different hypotheses. For example, the slightly older Beuronian from level R4 at Ruffey-sur-Seille (Séara et al., 2002) where conjoins between concentrations spread over 600 m² provide evidence of a clear contemporaneity between apparently non-complementary units and outlines an extensive campsite. The absence of certain anatomical parts of prey suggests a site mainly dedicated to hunting, probably involving the transport of portions of prey elsewhere (Séara, 2000). Faced with such discoveries (see also Kind, this volume), how can we not re-examine data concerning the 'Beuronian with crescents' from Northern France in an attempt to identify large campsites or long-term occupation sites?

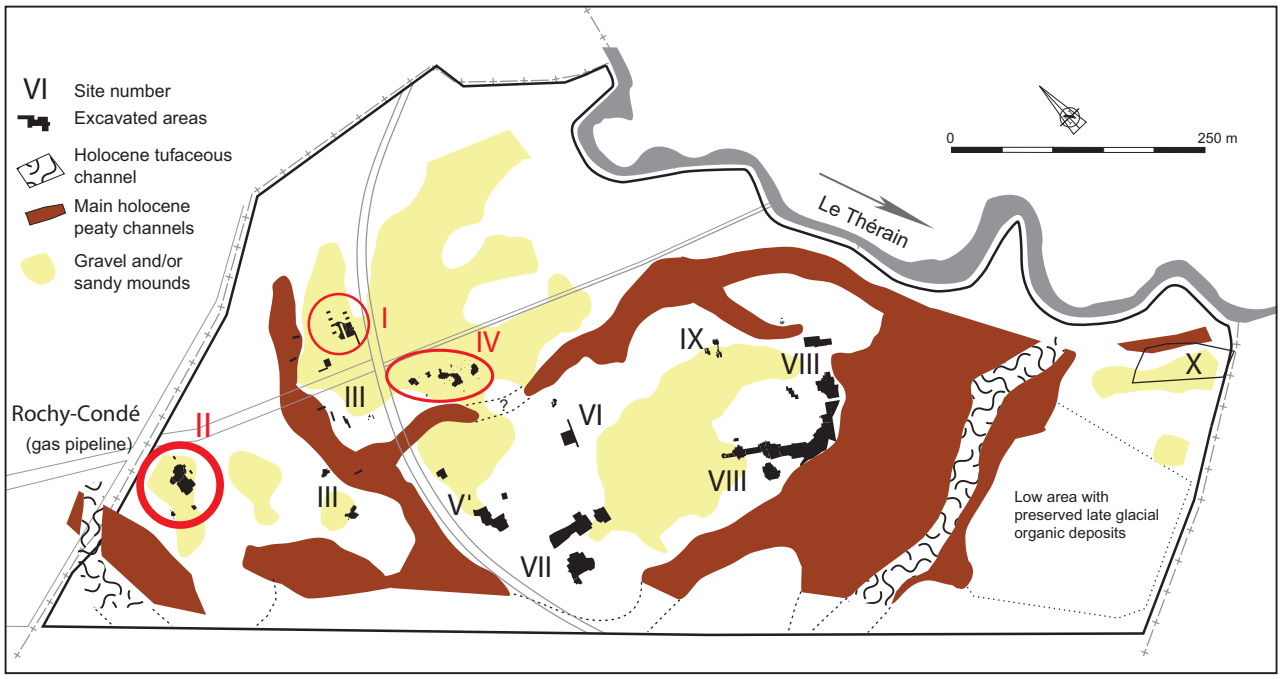


Fig. 8 – Warluis (Oise). Location of the sites and the main paleochannels across the entirety of the surface investigated (S. Coutard).

Warluis II: a large campsite

Extensive sites with multiple contemporaneous concentrations can be excavated over large areas with little or no taphonomic problems. The site of Warluis (fig. 8) has recently provided such an opportunity in the form of several Early and Middle Mesolithic loci, certain of which produced 'Beuronian with crescents' assemblages. Although different problems impeded the excavation and analysis (Ducrocq et al., 2008), one of the priorities was to excavate the Mesolithic occupations over a large area, followed by attempting refits between concentrations. This was carried out for site II which produced a typical 'Beuronian with crescents' assemblage (figs. 9, 10 and 11): crescents and points with retouched bases, numerous pieces with irregular retouch produced by use and a debitage method identical to Hangest 'Gravière II nord' (Ketterer, 1997) with all of the debitage stages once again present.

While wild boar remains (several individuals) predominate, fish is absent and hazelnut shells are present. No features were evident, however zones with heated elements or more concentrated lithic waste were noted. The 225 m² manual excavation, spread over four sectors, was complemented by a larger investigation carried out with the help of the mechanical digger. The main excavation sector (IIc; figs. 12 and 13) uncovered at least two concentrations separated by several metres, each portraying the same artefact diversity suggesting the existence of two 'activity units' (*sensu* Séara, 2000). Sector IId, separated from IIc by more than 10 m, produced a similar concentration. The more distant sectors IIa and IIb represent zones with more diffuse remains. Furthermore, a concentration detected by a trench, as well as the presence of an erosion zone and an overly restricted excavation area leaves open the possibility that other units exist. The series of ^{14}C dates, although coherent with the chrono-cultural attribution, did not allow a precise understanding of the chronological relationship between the different sectors. (fig. 1). Refits (fig. 14) and conjoins highlight the existence of two entities in sector IIc linked by numerous short-distance connections (fig. 15). The relationship between the two zones is especially well-documented by refit 9 composed of an isolated core and debitage products

Fig. 9 – Warluis II (Oise). View of sectors IIc and IId after the removal of the topsoil. The black and white areas correspond, respectively, to silts and peats covering the Mesolithic level (photo T. Ducrocq).

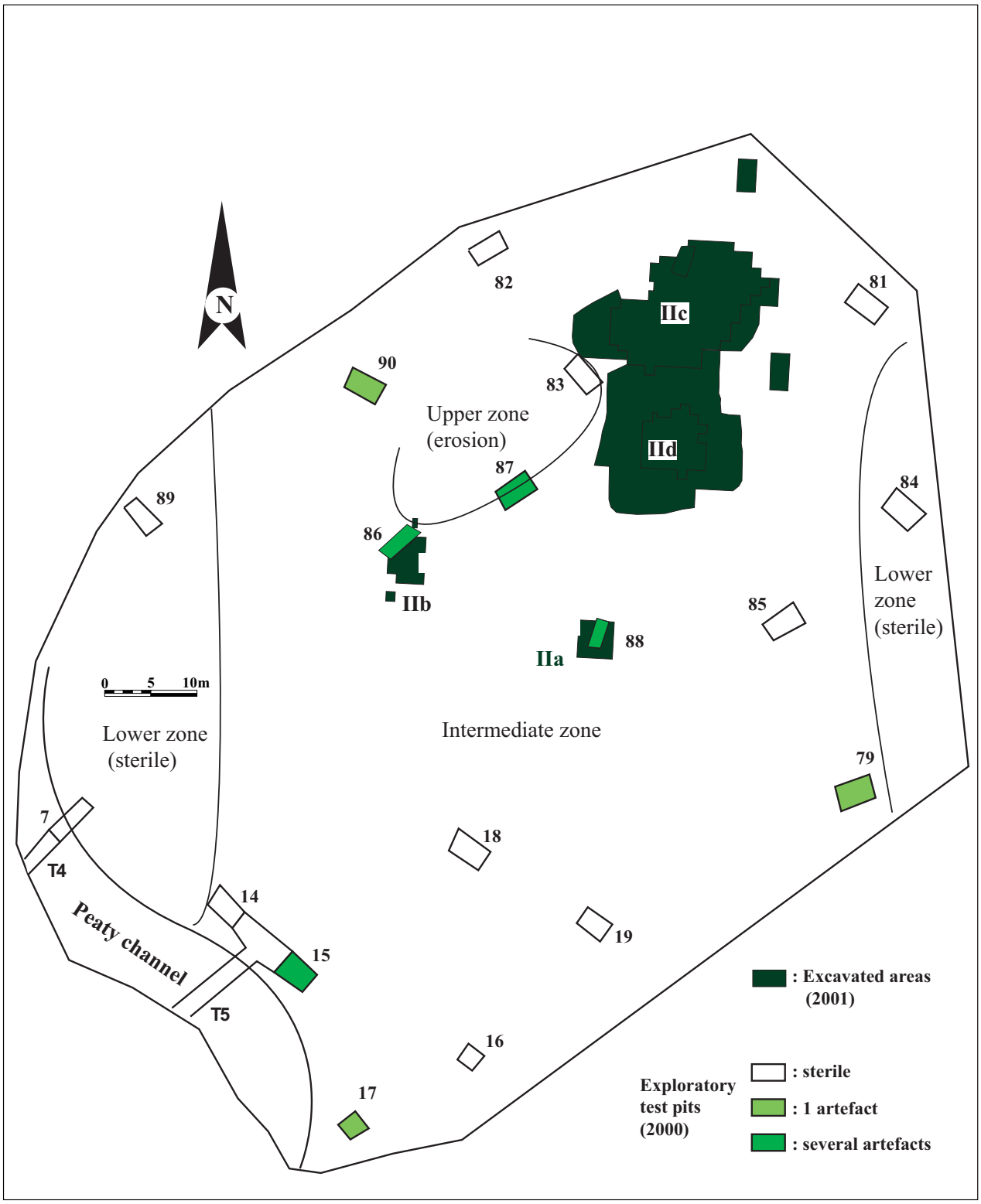


Fig. 10 – Warluis II (Oise). Overall plan of the site (T. Ducrocq).

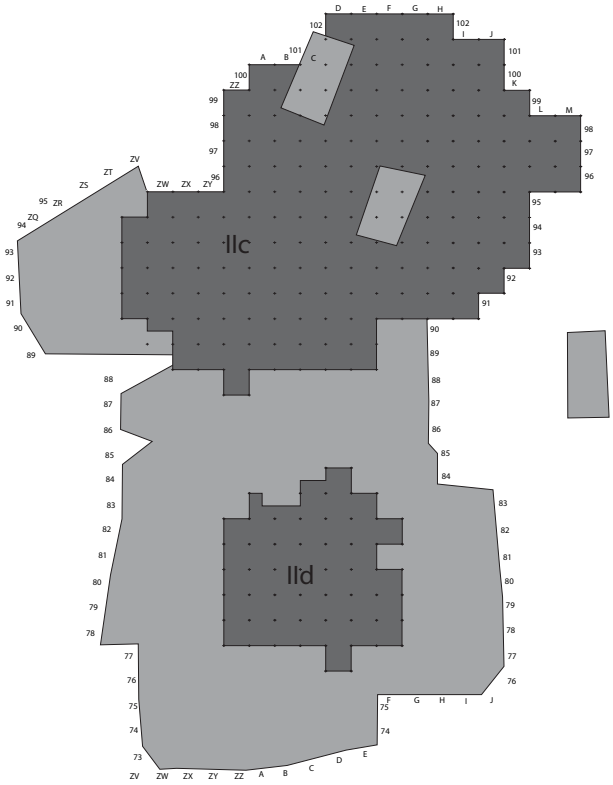


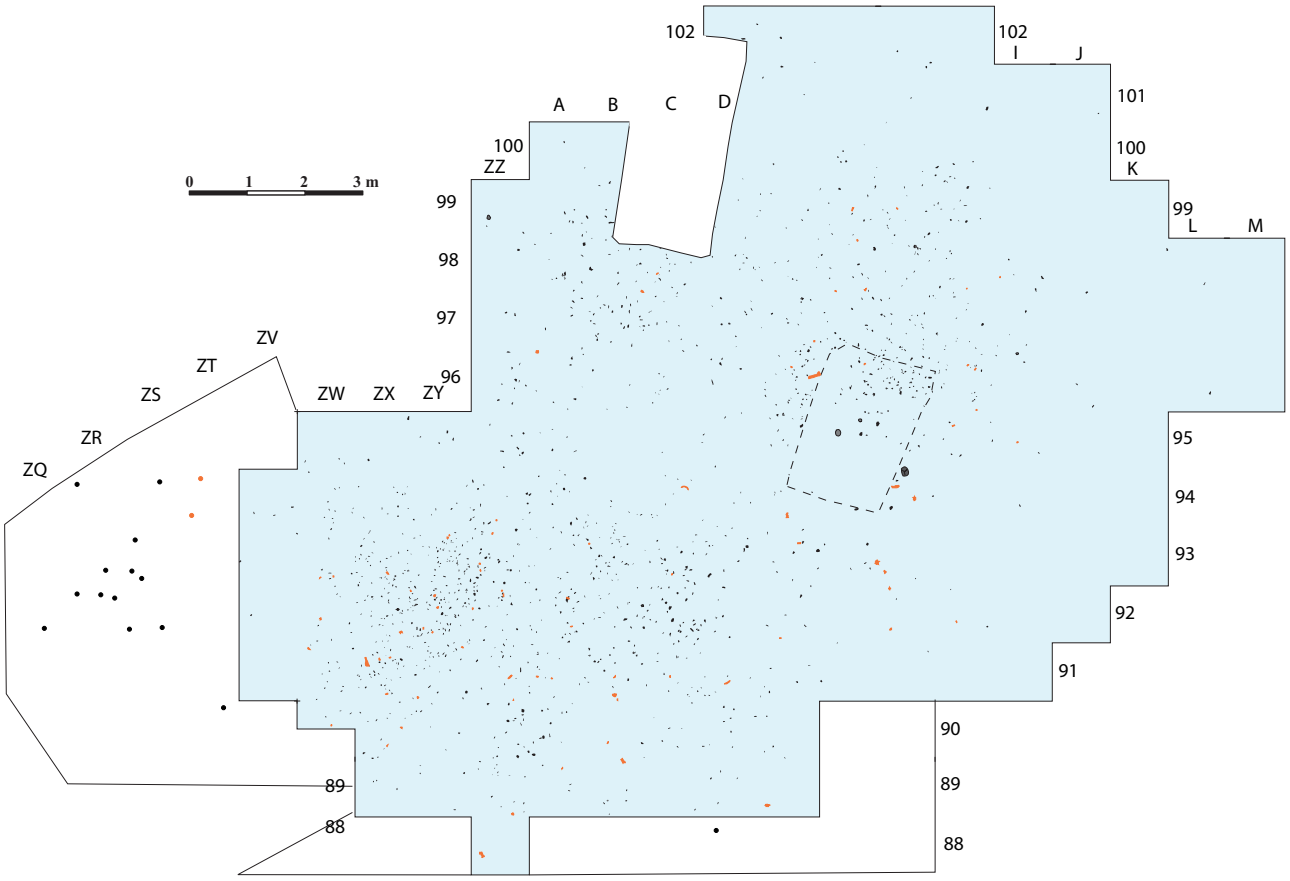
Fig. 11 – Warluis II (Oise). Detail of sectors IIc and IId including the 1 m² grid. The shaded area represents the extension of the manual excavations, lighter areas indicate the zone excavated with the mechanical digger.

dispersed across all the concentrations. Conjoins between units IIc and IId are often over a distance greater than 15 m (fig. 16) and demonstrate a clear contemporaneity between these concentrations: a core tablet found in IIc was detached in IId, while in the opposite sense, a flake from a refit sequence in IId was discarded in IIc. Cores found in IIc and IId conjoin, respectively, with flakes from IId and IIc

Another argument supporting the contemporaneity of the concentrations is the presence of an artefact type normally rare in such a context: around 10 absolutely identical perforated fossil shells (*Ampullina (Crommium) sp.*, determination P. Lozouet; fig. 17) recovered from the two units of IIc and sector IIb.

Finally, if we consider all the concentrations as contemporaneous what emerges is an campsite spread over more than 3,000 m². If we restrict it simply to sectors IIc and IId, the surface is still larger than 1,000 m². The two other main 'Beuronian with crescents' sites at Warluis are found 200 m (I) and 250 m (IV) on the other side of the paleochannel (fig. 8). Site IV also yielded a perforated shell of the same type, however nothing suggests a chronological connection with site II.

Fig. 12 – Warluis II (Oise). Sector IIc. Total artefact distribution with bone artefacts in orange. The points represent elements recovered during mechanical excavations (T. Ducrocq).



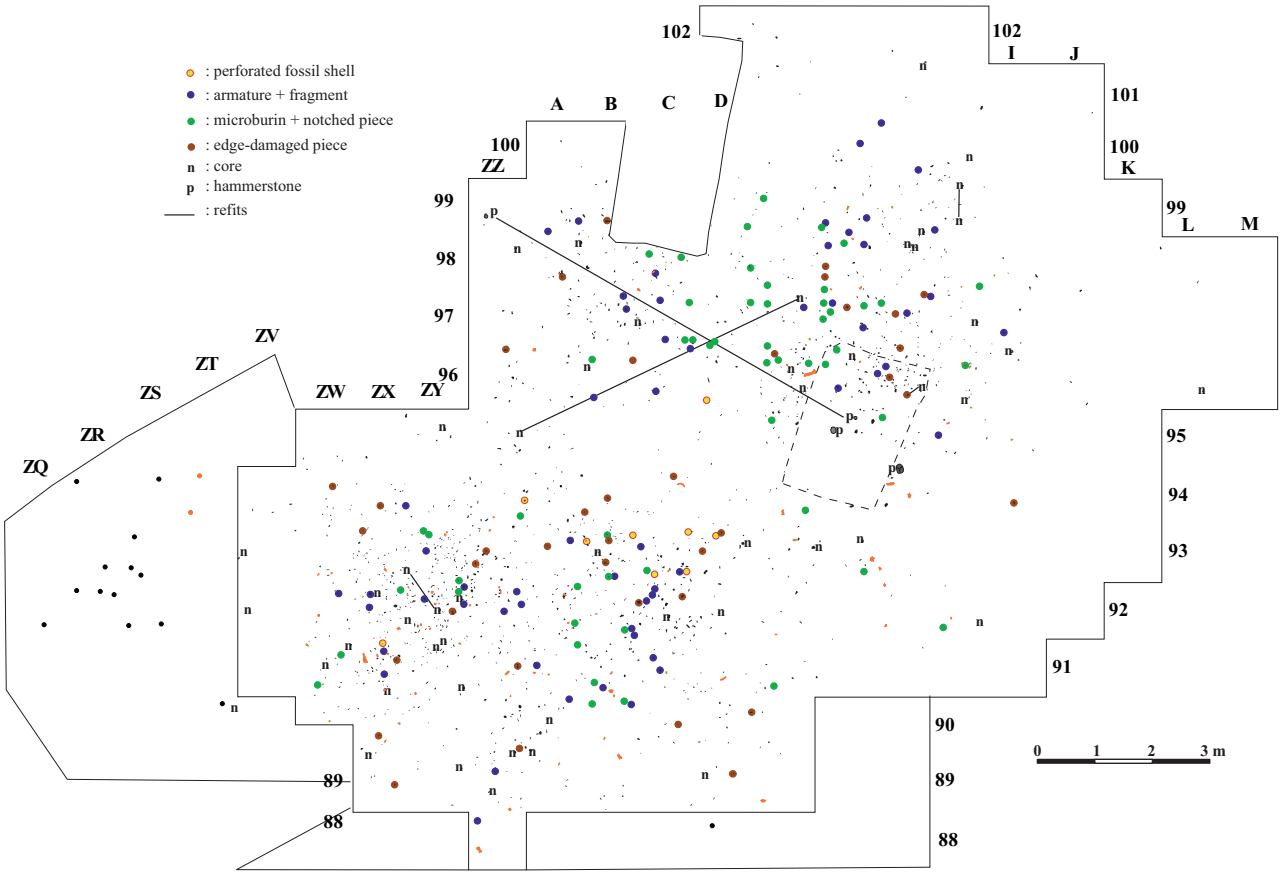


Fig. 13 – Warluis II (Oise). Sector IIc. Selective distribution of particular types of remains (T. Ducrocq).

DO SITES WITH A SINGLE ISOLATED CONCENTRATION EXIST?

Earlier documented sites in gravels, ponds, on sandy outcrops or at the base of hillsides do not provide insights into this question given the limited surface areas investigated or the erosion of adjacent large areas. The absolute dates from Saleux (Fagnart et al., 2008) allow three distinct cultural units to be distinguished (Beuronian with crescents, Beuronian with triangles, RMS). However, there are several ‘Beuronian with crescents’ concentrations dispersed in a 250 m corridor along the bank of a paleochannel. Conjoins have not yet been tested between more distant concentrations. On the other hand, in the ‘La Vierge Catherine’ sector, the lower level contains four small adjacent units connected by conjoins. The different ‘Beuronian with crescents’ concentrations at Saleux could provide evidence of multiple stays in the same location and/or a single occupation represented by several posts spread along a watercourse.

Fig. 14 – Warluis II (Oise). Sector IIc. Refit no. 10 connecting several cores to the same block. This management of large-sized raw materials is virtually indistinguishable from that observed at Hangest ‘Gravière II nord’ (Ketterer, 1997).

Recent diagnostics on floodplains have uncovered new ‘Beuronian with crescents’ sites. The investigation of large flat surfaces has led to the discovery of at least two concentrations near Amiens ‘rue Saint-Maurice II’ (Ducrocq, 2010), at Balagny-sur-Thérain (test pits by T. Ducrocq) and several unpublished sites near the confluence of the Oise and Aisne (work by M. Digan, T. Ducrocq, F. Joseph, C. Paris, K. Raynaud). Despite single isolated concentrations remaining impossible to demonstrate, several different units grouped together within a relatively large encampment seems in fact to be the rule. This type of camp implies a significant number of individuals capable of employing multiple hunting tactics such as battue or beating (Rozoy, 1978, p. 1405), effective for slaughtering a sounder of wild boar.

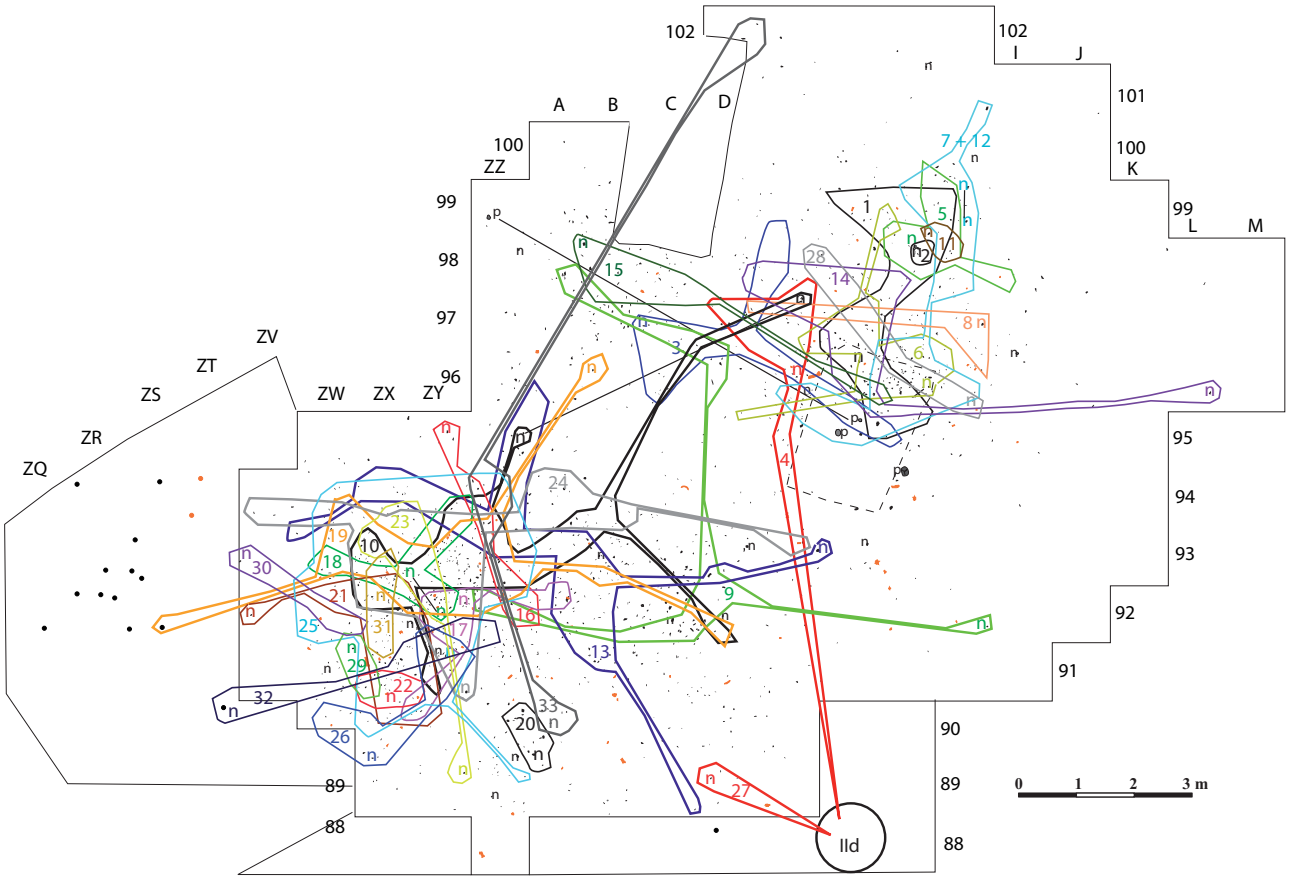


Fig. 15 – Warluis II (Oise). Sector IIc. Spaces covered by elements of the various refits (T. Ducrocq).

DIFFERENT TYPES OF SITES?

While these encampments certainly suggest residential sites occupied briefly by several families, can we be absolutely certain that they don't instead represent simple short meetings of hunters? Furthermore, how to explain the absence of endscrapers, burins and bone tools without evoking the existence of complementary specialised sites? Do locations occupied for longer intervals with features and more elaborate activities also exist? The answer to these questions can only come from new discoveries.

Unfortunately, these long-term occupation sites are likely to be found in locations that were particularly attractive throughout the Mesolithic, thus making palimpsests especially difficult to interpret.

The re-evaluation of the site of La Chaussée-Tirancourt 'Le Petit Marais', occupied throughout the Mesolithic, gives a possible indication of such a site. Located on a large silt terrace exposed to the south and directly on the banks of a small river, the attractiveness of this location is reinforced by its proximity to the confluence of the Somme and an outcrop rich in high-quality chalk flint. Peat infilling progressively pushed the dry ground up the hillside thus limiting any palimpsest effects hindering a detailed palethnological approach. The main sector produced essentially final Beuronian and 'Mesolithic with mistletoe points' occupations, however it seems that a lower level, excavated over a small surface, could correspond to the 'Beuronian with crescents'. If this attribution proves correct, this level contains a secondary burial, a combustion feature (a hearth-pit covered with heated stones and connected to small paving of heated stones), as well as numerous assorted domestic tools. It is therefore a good, although still hypothetical, candidate for a more long-term occupation that included a broader range of activities.

CONCLUSION

Clearly it is still premature to model the economic strategies of 'Beuronian with crescents' societies based on comparisons with contemporary or historic hunter-gatherer populations. This lack of data gives way to numerous contradictory hypotheses that can only be verified by new discoveries.

The main excavated sites present juxtapositions of several contemporaneous activity units that exclude the possibility of a single nuclear family. Stopovers seem

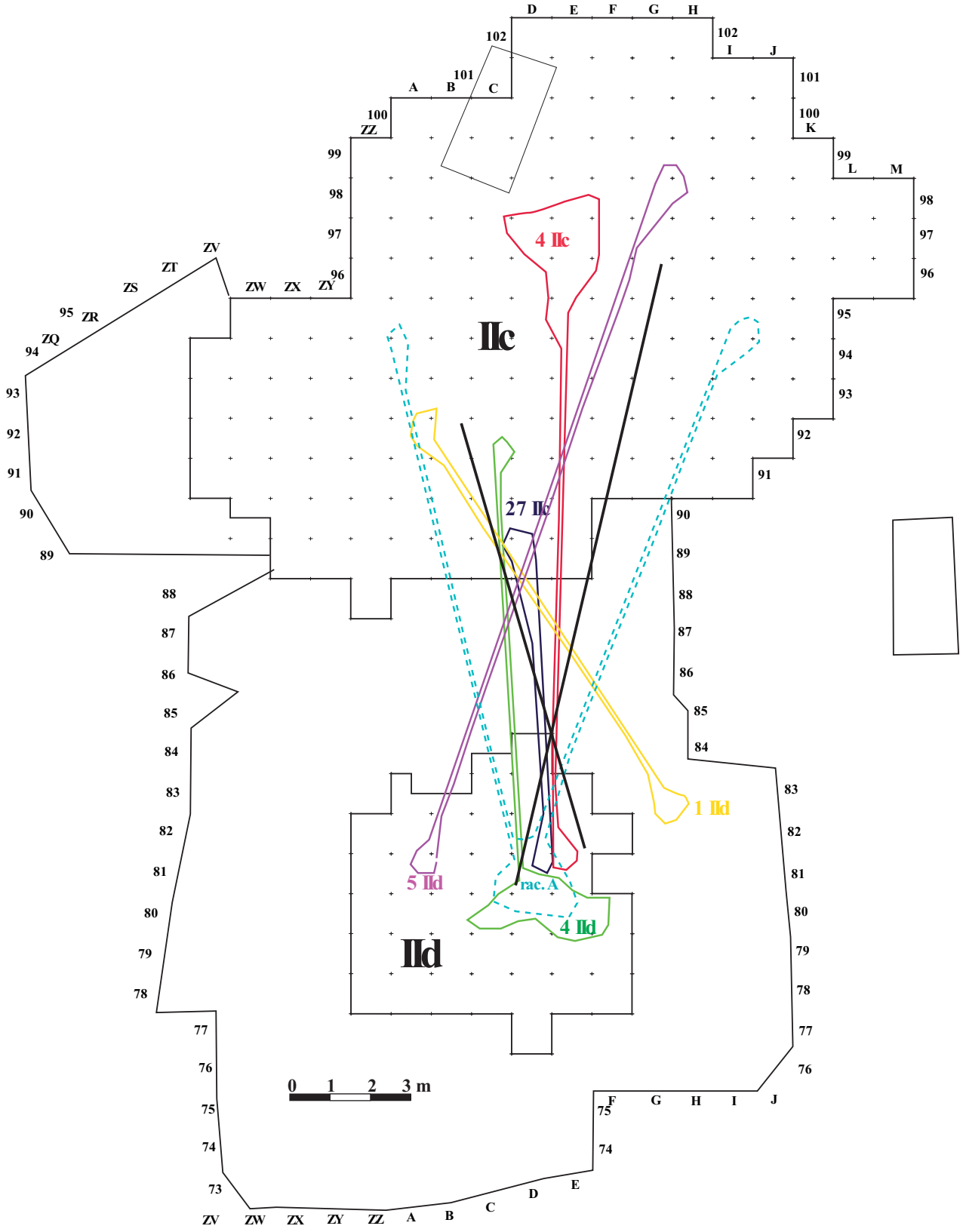


Fig. 16 – Warluis II (Oise). Sectors IIc and IId. Conjoins between the two sectors (T. Ducrocq).

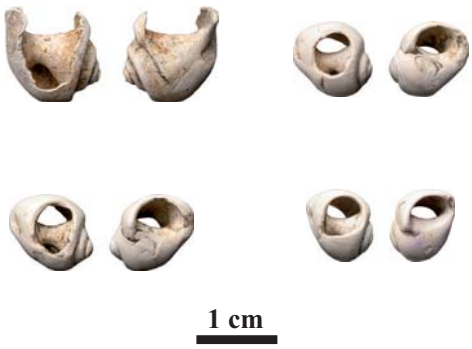


Fig. 17 – Warluis II (Oise). Perforated fossil shells of *Ampullina (Crommium) sp.* The first, top left, comes from sector IIb and the others from Sector IIc. The absence of Tertiary fossils occurring naturally in all the geological levels of the Warluis floodplain confirms their introduction by humans (photos S. Lancelot).

brief and essentially concerned hunting activities concentrated on wild boar. Seasonality studies and an investigation of which anatomical elements were exported from or introduced to the site would be instructive. A functional approach to the lithic industries is also indispensable in order to define activity zones and the relations between them.

New excavations must be both extensive and not limited to the area of just one or two artefact concentrations. Palimpsests can be studied if amongst the artefacts are objects that are rare elsewhere and could therefore possibly correspond, in some part, to specific functional occupations.

Finally, a chrono-cultural approach must continue to be pursued in order to reduce this type of variability in robust palethnological approaches.

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MESOLITHIC PALETHNOGRAPHY

RESEARCH ON OPEN-AIR SITES BETWEEN LOIRE AND NECKAR

Proceedings from the international round-table meeting in Paris (November 26–27, 2010)

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'Mesolithic Palethnography…': part of this volume's title represents a sort of methodological and theoretical mission statement designed to convey the idea that research concerning the last hunter-collectors is today in desperate need of this type of insight. Since the beginning of the 1990s, a spectacular crop of occasionally vast open-air sites has emerged, one of the notable contributions of preventive archaeology. Several long-term excavations have also added to this exponentially increasing body of information that has now come to include a growing number of well-preserved sites that have allowed us to address palethnographic questions. This volume represents a first step towards revitalising Mesolithic research. Here we have focused on occupations from the 8th millennium cal BC, currently the best documented periods, and limited the scope to Northern France and certain neighbouring regions. The first part contains several preludes to monographs highlighting potential future studies as well as various patterns in the structuring of space and the location of camps. These, as well as other complementary discoveries, provide material for the second part of the volume dedicated to new data concerning the functional dynamics of Mesolithic camps.

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