Strauss' 'exchanges of women' theory, has social anthropology come forward with a theory of cultural origins. What makes Knight's materialist model particularly significant is that it is unique in directly addressing the symbolic domain.

The comment of Robin Dunbar, reader in biological anthropology at UCL, seems an appropriate evaluation: 'Revolutions in science seldom appear ready made . . .but I suspect that the basis of a new synthesis between anthropology and biology may well lie within the pages of this book'.

Ian Watts

Collins, D. and Lorimer, D. (eds). *Excavation at the Mesolithic site on West Heath, Hampstead 1976-1981.* Oxford. British Archaeological Reports 217. 1989, (Printed 1991). 138pp. £13.00.

West Heath was first discovered in 1973 when a member of the Hendon and District Archaeological Society (HEDAS) collected a number of flint blades from a sandstone bluff near the Leg of Mutton pond on Hampstead Heath. Continued collection revealed a potentially important Mesolithic site which was undergoing erosion prompting excavation by HEDAS in 1976. This monograph presents the results of the first years of ongoing work at the site.

The work centres on two complementary sites - the 'main' site and the spring (spa) site. The 'main' site yielded a large assemblage of flint tools and debitage, some non-flint material and possible surface features of early Mesolithic date. The acid nature of the sandy soil here prevented the preservation of organic remains other than charcoal and, for this reason, the spa site was opened up in a waterlogged area 300 metres to the south-east with the aim of recovering palaeoenvironmental data. The spa site yielded important sequences of insects, pollen and macroscopic plant remains, albeit with virtually no artifactual material.

HEDAS have to be congratulated for undertaking methodical and controlled excavation, with three-dimensional recording of both finds and surface features. Post-excavation work was very much a team effort, but the report does not suffer from presentational problems often encountered with multiple authors.

Collins notes that the main purpose of the report is to 'record the salient features. . . of the flint artifacts'. In this sense the report succeeds; the assemblage is well described and illustrated with extensive use of distribution diagrams and tables. Lithic specialists may be disappointed with the short coverage of the flints, although one certainly grasps the salient features. References are often made to fuller data in the site archives and one hopes that such will eventually be published.

The assemblage resembles a 'classic' Maglemosian typology, e.g. obliquely blunted points outnumber geometrics by at least 10:1. Microliths dominate the entire assemblage, although enough scrapers, microburins, cores and waste flakes exist to justify calling the site functionally 'balanced' in Mellars' sense. Distributional diagrams indicate no convincing clustering of artifact types. Rejoined material indicated horizontal movement of 3-10 metres and some vertical sorting. This, and the lack of stratigraphy, leaves the

question of whether the site represents one or more occupational episodes open to question.

Features on the main site consisted of eight small pits containing charcoal flecks and a large quantity of burnt stone, the latter of which yielded six thermoluminescence dates with an average of 9625 ± 900 before present. It was decided that radiocarbon dating would not be reliable due to considerable root contamination of samples. Sadly, the TL dates are the only absolute dates for both sites. Some possible stake holes may indicate structures, although it must be said that the published data on these is insufficient to enable a fuller evaluation.

The insect fauna, pollen spectra and macroscopic plant remains recovered from the spa site enabled the reconstruction of a palaeoenvironmental sequence from the Atlantic zone to the medieval period. It is particularly encouraging that the coleoptera and pollen were in close agreement throughout the sequence.

The Atlantic period at the site is characterised by lime-dominated deciduous mixed forest indicated by pollen and forest beetles. It is interesting to note that the elm bark beetle *Scolytus scolytus* is present in the profile 20 cm below the elm decline horizon.

A clear landscape change occurs with the elm decline, with an opening up of the forest and rise in herbs, holly and some large herbivores. Some charred cereal grain is present at this depth also. Although the elm bark beetle cannot be ruled out, a model of early agriculturalists clearing the area can be accomodated. It is interesting to note that the site also yielded pre-elm decline cereal grains alongside indications of disturbance (fluctuating tree pollen, weeds and charcoal). Following the opening of the forest, there is evidence of some regeneration with some soil acidification probably dating from the Iron Age to Early Medieval period.

This important palaeoenvironmental sequence is presented both in lucid diagrams and discussed in the text. The report sticks mainly to objective presentation of the data, although there is a small amount of discussion as to the significance of the sequence.

The report as a whole is clear and concise. If lacking in great detail, it achieves its objectives by presenting the salient points of an important flint assemblage and environmental sequence. In doing this, it is a fine example of successful collaboration.

Many archaeologists are of the opinion that reports are not meant to be 'read' but 'consulted' in part. The bonus of this monograph is that it can be read both in its entirety and consulted as a fairly concise report. The site is of obvious importance and is a welcome contribution to the Mesolithic record and our understanding of early Holocene adaptations. It is encouraging to note that this picture will improve upon further publication of ongoing work at the site.

Paul Pettit