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REPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS.

REPORT

PRESENTED TO

The Cambridge Antiquarian Society,

AT ITS TWENTY-SECOND GENERAL MEETING,

MAY 12, 1862.

ALSO

Communications

MADE TO THE SOCIETY.

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M.DCCC.LXII.

XVII. On a Flint Hammer, found near Burwell. By Charles C. Babington, M.A.

[Read *Feb.* 24, 1862.]

It is desirable to place on record in some more permanent form than a newspaper paragraph the discovery of a "flint hammer of the drift" in Cambridgeshire. The specimen in question was brought to me amongst other stone implements obtained by a collector who visits, in pursuit of fossils, the workings now going on in search after the so-called "Coprolites". He tells me that the hammer in question was found by the workmen in the mill used for cleaning the coprolites, where it had been well washed with them. Neither he nor the workmen had any idea of its peculiar interest until I pointed it out to him.

We must endeavour to find out the mode by which the hammer found its way amongst the coprolites, for no person will for a moment suppose that it is of the same age as them.

The workings where it was found are close to the foot of the chalk stratum near Burwell. The base of the chalk is not unfrequently partially covered with drift gravel where it adjoins the fen land; and there is such a patch at Burwell. As it is from this gravel that the primeval hammers are elsewhere obtained, we have no difficulty in believing the present example to have been so derived, and to have fallen amongst the "coprolites" either during the present work or at some former disturbance of the land.

We are told, and it is nearly certain, that these gravels were deposited at the edge of the water at a time when it stood much higher relatively to the land, and was usually or always frozen over in the winter; that the gravel itself was piled up on or near the shore by the action of the ice, as is now the case in the arctic regions; and it has even been suggested, with much appearance of probability, that these hammers were chiefly used in breaking through the ice to allow of their possessors obtaining food by fishing when the waters were otherwise closed. Of course this is purely theoretical; but it does seem to me that Mr Prestwich is justified by the facts in advancing it as explanatory of this obscure subject.

The hammer in question is very similar to those found at Hoxne and at Amiens, as represented in the *Philosophical Transactions* for 1860, plate 14, fig. 6 and 8.

This specimen has nearly retained its original colour from having probably lain in peat soil, for all that were so situated are found to be little changed in that respect; if it had been deposited in clay or ochreous beds, it would have undergone change.

We have every reason to believe that the great level of the Fens was raised above the influence of the tide before the Roman occupation of Britain, but it is not improbable that at an earlier period the whole district may have been an estuary, and that the floating ice may have been drifted against the hills that now border the Fens, and may have there deposited the drift gravel, as was apparently the case in the parts of France where the primeval hammers are found.