

REPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS.

REPORT

PRESENTED TO THE

Cambridge Antiquarian Society,

AT ITS THIRTY-EIGHTH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING,

MAY 27, 1878,

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1877—1878.

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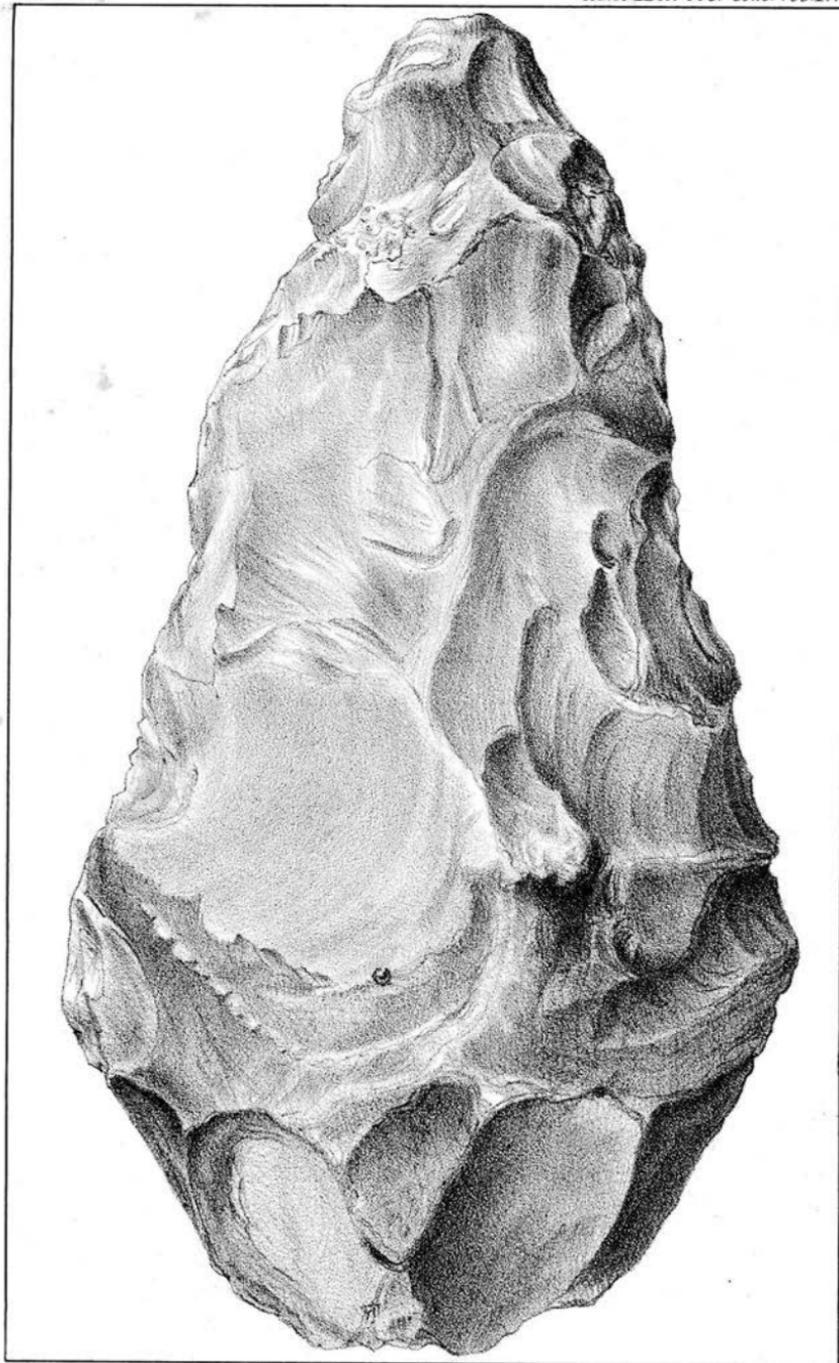
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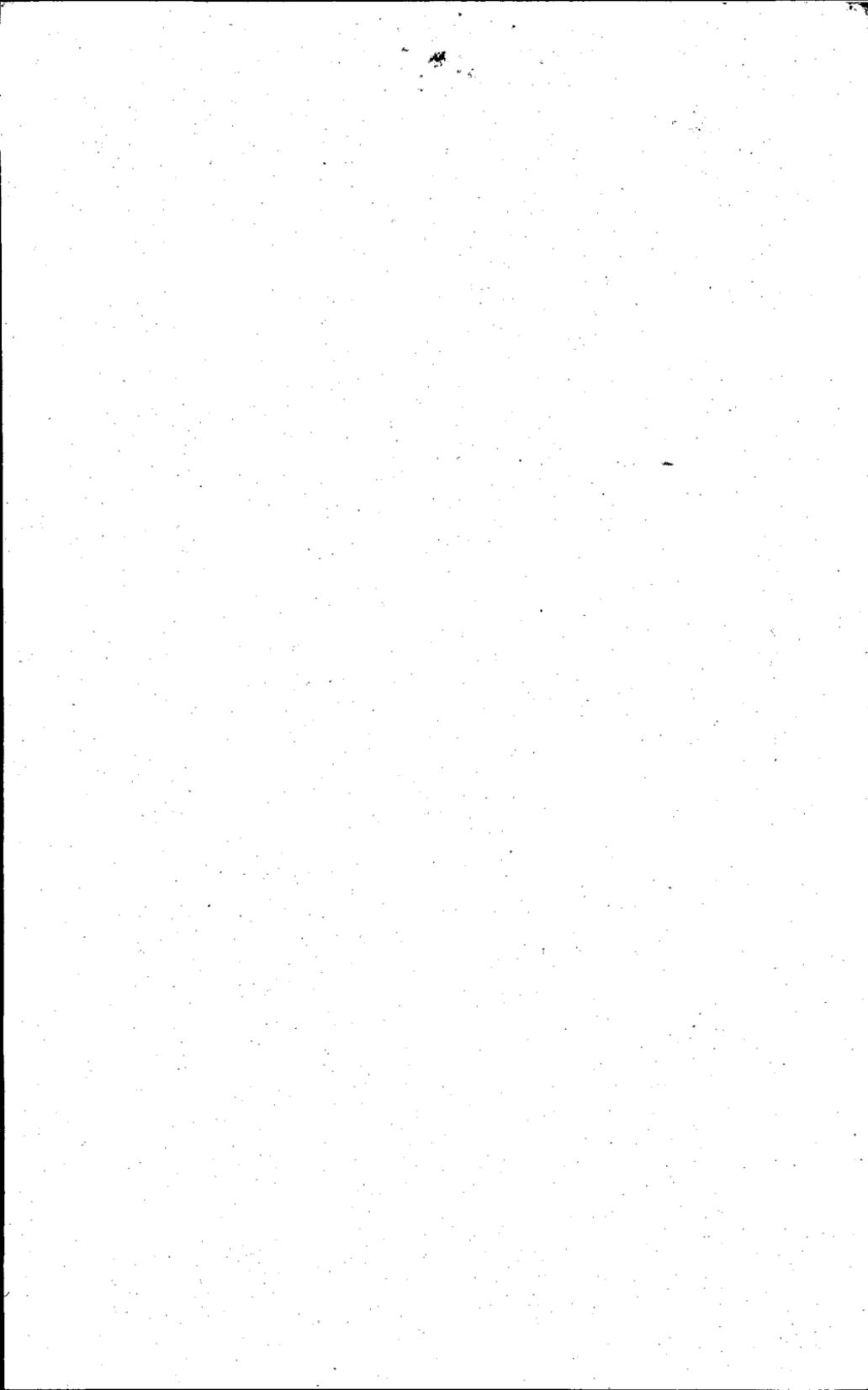
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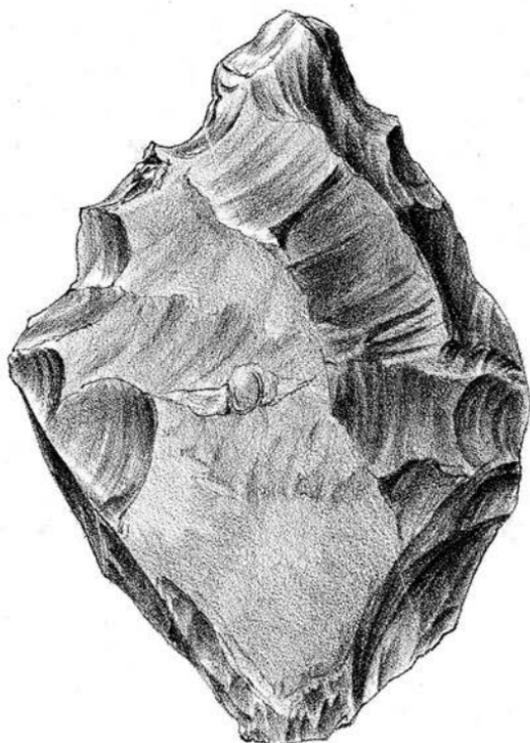


A.C.H. del. ad nat.

FLINT IMPLEMENT FROM THE BARNWELL RIVER GRAVEL.

(Natural Size.)



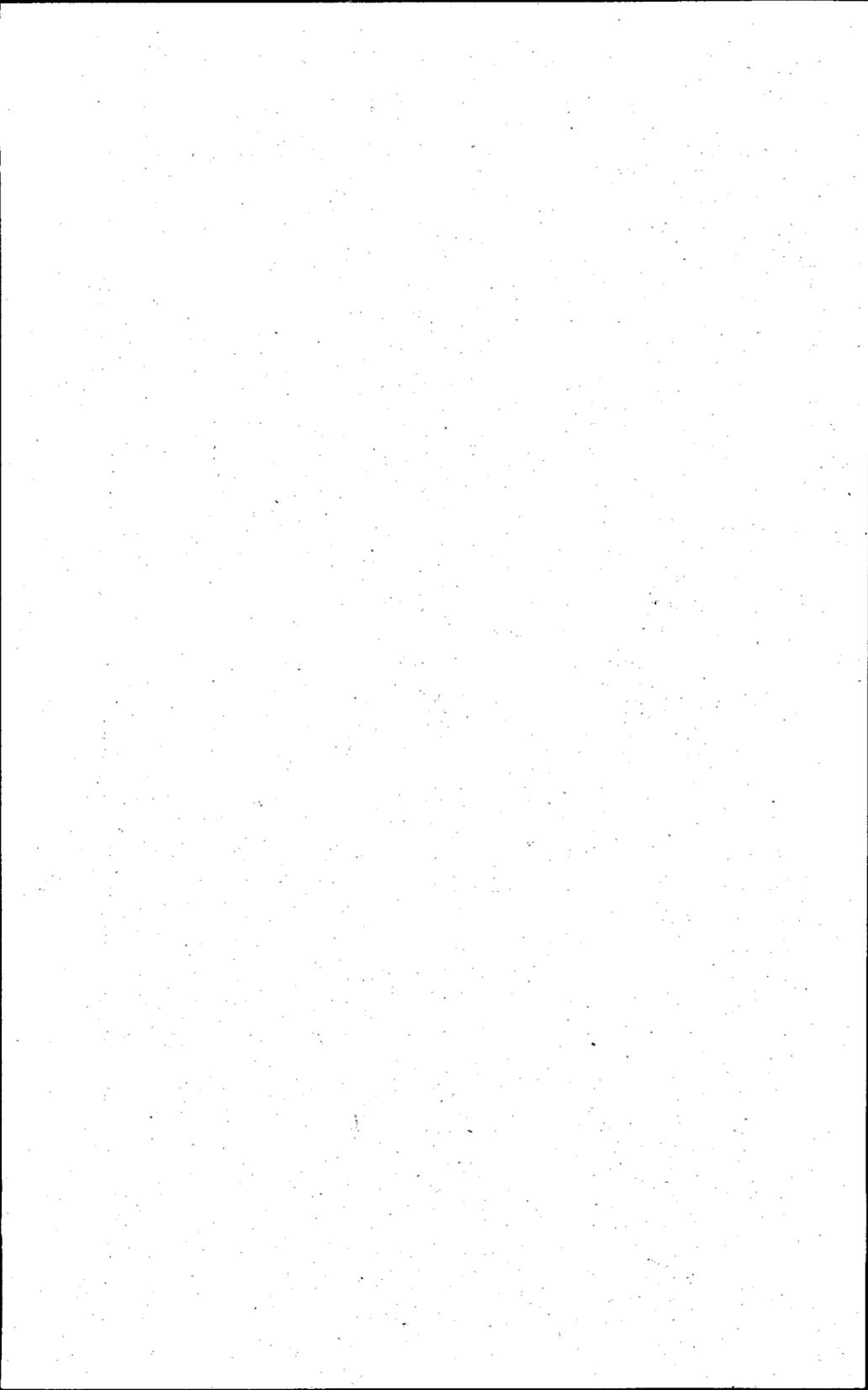


FROM THE OBSERVATORY HILL, CAMBRIDGE.
(Natural Size.)



A.C.H. del. ad nat.

FROM CHESTERTON GRAVEL PITS, CAMBRIDGE.
(Natural Size.)



XII. ON A FLINT IMPLEMENT FOUND AT BARNWELL,
CAMBS. Communicated by A. F. GRIFFITH, Esq.,
Christ's College.

[May 27, 1878.]

A FEW weeks ago a flint implement (herewith exhibited) was found in the gravel-pit at Barnwell by the workmen from whom I bought it. It is a very fine specimen of the "hache" type, its greatest length being $6\frac{3}{4}$ inches, its greatest breadth $3\frac{5}{8}$ inches, and thickness $2\frac{1}{8}$ inches. It corresponds closely with specimens in the Woodwardian Museum from Thetford in Suffolk and from Amiens.

The pit where it was found is in the well-known Barnwell river gravel, which contains a considerable number of bones of mammalia, including the Cave tiger (*Felis spelaca*), *Rhinoceros*, *Elephas primigenius* and *antiquus*, and *Hippopotamus*; and has in places a thin band of shells, amongst which *Unio littoralis*, and *Corbicula (Cyrena) fluminalis* are common. This band however is not found in the present pit, though it occurred in the old workings, 350 feet distant, on the other side of the Newmarket Road, in what was evidently the same gravel, but which is now closed.

The occurrence of a worked flint associated with these shells is, I believe, very unusual. At Menchecourt, in France, *Cyrena fluminalis* is found in the implement-bearing gravel, while I only know of a single instance of a worked flint found in England

associated with *Unio littoralis*. This was found in the brick-earth of Crayford, Kent, by the Rev. O. Fisher, in 1872¹.

This is perhaps the first time that evidence of man's existence has been brought to light in this gravel; the only other being of a doubtful nature, and consisting of a bone which appears to have been cut by man; it was described by Mr Seeley in his paper on the Fen Drifts in the Quarterly Journal of the Geological Society, and is now in the Woodwardian Museum.

A few palaeolithic worked flints have been found round Cambridge on gravel heaps. A specimen now in the Woodwardian Museum, was found by Prof. Hughes in gravel which came from the Observatory hill. Mr Fisher also has a small "hache" of somewhat the same type as that recently found at Barnwell, but only 3½ inches long and proportionately broad; this was found in gravel which came from the Chesterton pits.

With regard to the authenticity of the specimen, I may remark that when I got it it had been partially cleaned, but all the corners were full of the peculiar fine white gravel of the bed. I only gave one shilling for it, which goes to shew that the men found it on the spot, and did not buy it in the town, to sell it at a high profit in the pit.

A remarkable character of the weapon is that, while on one side and at the blunt end it is of the tawny yellow colour so common in palaeolithic flints from the gravel, on the other side it is much whitened, probably by the action of the infiltrated water.

The chief localities in the Ouse basin (of which Cambridge-shire forms a large part) in which palaeolithic implements have been found in any abundance are by the Ouse near Bedford and on the Little Ouse near Thetford. Mr Evans² gives a list of the genera of mammalia and mollusca whose

¹ Vide *Geological Magazine*, June, 1872.

² *Stone Implements*, p. 480.

remains have been found associated with the implements at Bedford, while Mr. Seeley¹ has given similar lists of those occurring in the Barnwell gravel. On comparing these we see that most of the genera occurring at Barnwell are represented in the Bedford deposits, the proportions being 13 out of 18 in the shells, and 6 out of 7 in the mammalia. A corresponding similarity exists between the implements, as may be seen from the figure which Mr. Evans² gives of an implement found at Biddenham near Bedford, which closely corresponds with the present specimen. These facts tend to prove that the two deposits are more or less contemporaneous. Probably the manufactories of the district were situated at Bedford and Thetford, where several hundred specimens have been obtained, while the single specimens that are occasionally found scattered about the fens and round Cambridge are such as have either been lost, or spoilt and then thrown away by their owners.

The antiquity of the deposit may be inferred by the presence of remains of the animals mentioned above, all of which became extinct in England before the historic period. At the surface in the pit where this implement was found there is a considerable thickness of soil in which many human skeletons have been found, most of the bodies having been interred in a sitting posture; these may therefore be referred to the Saxon period. Beneath this is found a layer of gravel from which I have obtained a very fine wolf's skull, a beaver's vertebra, with bones of a large swimming bird, probably goose, and other remains. Now the beaver has long been extinct in England, though it lingered on in Wales³ till the 12th century at least. Besides, the interments in the soil above could not have taken place till the additional four feet of surface-soil had been superimposed. Below this deposit we come upon nine or ten feet of a

¹ *Quarterly Journal of Geological Society*, Vol. xxii. p. 477.

² *Stone Implements*.

³ Owen's *British Fossil Mammals*, p. 199.

more ancient gravel, with remains of the large extinct mammals, and of two species of mollusca which are now extinct in England, one, the *Corbicula fluminalis*, not being found alive nearer than the Nile, while the *Unio littoralis* is still found in the rivers of France. The fact that two species of mollusca have become extinct since the time this gravel was deposited probably indicates a very great lapse of time, since these less specialised forms seem¹ to require a much longer space of time to disappear from any country by natural processes than the large mammalia, which from their higher organization adapt themselves less readily to new surroundings.

Among the many possible uses to which such implements as these may have been applied, one appears to have been overlooked. Many African tribes are in the habit of fixing some kind of spear-head into the heavy beam of a 'dead-fall' trap to make it more effective in killing the larger animals. Others, as related by Sir Samuel Baker², fix a spear-head into a very heavy short handle and drop it from a tree into the back of an animal passing underneath. Many of the river gravel implements would do well for either of these purposes.

In the plate prefixed will be found figures of the three Cambridge implements mentioned in this paper, for the drawings of which I am indebted to the kindness of Mr A. C. Haddon, of Christ's College.

¹ Lyell's *Student's Elements of Geology*, p. 139.

² 'Ismailia,' p. 272.