B.R. HARLEY

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Cambridge Antiquarian Society,

OCTOBER 1922—MAY 1923

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A NEOLITHIC SITE NORTH-WEST OF CAMBRIDGE.

By Prof. J. E. MARR, Sc.D., F.R.S., and M. C. BURKITT, M.A., F.G.S.

(Read 20 November, 1922)

A ridge of high ground above the 50 foot contour-line extends on either side of the Huntingdon Road, from near the Shire Hall to a point about $\frac{1}{3}$ mile north-west of Girton College. The highest part of this ridge is found between the Observatory and Howe House, where an elevation of nearly 90 feet is reached. On this ridge a number of implements have been found on the surface during recent years, the majority of which were collected by Prof. R. H. Biffen, F.R.S., who has generously presented them to the Sedgwick Museum. Most of them came from the ground south-west of the Huntingdon Road now occupied by the University Farm. Relics of all ages from Lower Palaeolithic to recent times are found here, the former having been obviously derived from the gravels which here cap the ridge.

The implements to which special attention is here directed consist largely of black lustrous flints which, apart from the lustre, have undergone no change since they were manufactured.

From evidence obtained here and elsewhere, it seems clear that the lustreing of the flints prevented any further change, though how the lustre was itself produced requires explanation. Before describing in detail these black flints, a few words must be written about two other kinds of implement found in the tract.

The first of these are patinated, of a bluish or dove-grey colour, generally dappled with lighter specks or spots. It has been suggested elsewhere[1] that these implements may have come from a remarkable deposit of clay which flanks the gravel on either side of the ridge, in which case they are of Palaeolithic Age. They need not be further discussed here.

[1] Marr, J. E. "The Pleistocene Deposits around Cambridge," *Quart. Journ. Geol. Soc.*, Vol. LXXV, 1920, p. 221.

The other set consists of implements formed of honey-brown flint. These are uncommon, but among them are an arrow-head with tang, a 'thumb-nail' end-scraper, and a trimmed flake (a flat "slug") two inches long, of oval outline, flat on one face and delicately worked on the other, which closely resembles a flake from Castle Carrock, Cumberland, figured by Sir John Evans (*Ancient Stone Implements of Great Britain*, Fig. 239). The arrow-head has probably been made from an earlier flake of human workmanship of which the surfaces were white.

This set of implements is of late Neolithic or possibly even of early Bronze Age, and is markedly contrasted with the black flints not only by the state of preservation, but by the character of the work, though it is possible that some honey-yellow flints may be of the same age as the black ones, having been made from flint which was of different character to the black variety; on the other hand none of the implements of the presumed later period are black.

We may now consider in some detail the black flints, and to avoid confusion shall not consider such honey-yellow flints as may be of the same age.

From a fairly large collection we selected about thirty-seven specimens as shewing work designed to produce definite forms. Of these by far the most numerous are end-scrapers mostly with a steep end. No less than fifteen are of this character, one (unfortunately broken) having a fan-shaped retouch. In addition to the ordinary forms, there are two special ones: the first has two awl-like projections at the scraper-end, and the second is square-ended. Two hollow scrapers occur, one of much interest. The flake, two inches wide, is of irregular outline, but a hollow $\frac{7}{8}$ in. across and $\frac{1}{2}$ in. deep has been formed by delicate trimming recalling that of the well-known scrapers from the north of Ireland, of which a specimen is figured by Sir John Evans (*Ancient Stone Implements...*, Fig. 226 a). Our specimen exactly coincides in shape and outline of the hollowed part with the one figured. One from Sheep's Green, in the Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, has a similar hollow. It is of a greyish colour. A core scraper has been found, and two somewhat poor side-scrapers. In addition there are nuclei, two

having notches at the sides, probably to give a firm hold, a beak-shaped instrument, and a flake definitely trimmed for use.

In one place, $\frac{1}{10}$ mile from the Observatory, and just outside the enclosed ground around that building, a number of 'pygmy' flints have been found, about six of which have been obviously worked into a definite shape. As such 'pygmies' are rather rare in East Anglia we note their occurrence, though more should be found before anything definite can be said about them. Though the area of their apparent distribution is limited, they probably belong to the same series as the more widely distributed black flints, and most of them are black. They are quite different in technique from the palaeolithic pygmy flints found at Fen Ditton, and described in the succeeding paper.

Crazed flints, due to contact with fire (often spoken of as 'pot boilers'), are fairly frequent, and some at any rate may be of the age of the black flints.

Similar black flints have been found sparingly in other places in the neighbourhood, as in the Museum grounds on the Downing Site, near Elfleda House, $2\frac{1}{4}$ miles from Cambridge on the Newmarket Road, and at Fen Ditton. In the absence of any definite type of workmanship hitherto detected in these places, we do not regard the flints as being necessarily of the same age as those we have described.

It is clear that the industry of the Huntingdon Road tract was marked by a preponderance of scrapers of definite type, and it is markedly contrasted with that near Fen Ditton by the absence of gravers. The frequency of the implements is probably due to the favourable site, whence a view can be obtained all round, to guard against surprise attacks; where also the gravelly soil did not allow of a dense undergrowth, which would obstruct free movement. The abundance of such undergrowth in Neolithic times has been suggested by Mr W. G. Clarke as a reason for the extensive occurrence of neolithic implements only on tracts where such undergrowth was sparse, and their rarity where it was vigorous.

That the black flints are neolithic is clear, but with our present knowledge it is difficult to assign them to any definite part of the Neolithic period. This is due not only to the

paucity of types hitherto found, but to our imperfect knowledge of the sequence of implements of the Neolithic period in Britain, such as has been established elsewhere. Nevertheless, a few remarks may be added on this matter.

Anything in the nature of a general comparative study of our Cambridge surface stone industries with those found elsewhere is exceedingly difficult. To begin with, a large number of more or less similar specimens from localities outside our area would be necessary, as reproductions, unless superlatively good, are really not of much use. Again with the advent of the community life in Neolithic times (which was the direct result of a knowledge of agriculture and domestic animals) many local varieties of industry are developed. This is partly due to slightly different developments *in situ*, partly to admixtures with slightly different peoples. For example, East Anglia itself forms a more or less distinct region and has yielded tools which cannot be matched from the Neolithic of France. A good deal of work has been done, however, in various favoured areas of Essex, and we can make comparison of our Cambridge finds with these. The Essex work is largely due to researches carried out by H. Warren[1]. The following gives the Essex section:

1. Present surface due to land elevation.
2. Tidal silt or Scrobicularia clay, indicating a time when the land was just below sea level.
3. Peat, *i.e.* land was sinking.
4. Buried prehistoric surface with flint implements and pottery = Lyonesse surface.
5. Grey marsh clay or rainwash with flint implements and pottery.
6. Pleistocene brickearth of Palaeolithic Age.

It will be clear from the above that there are two layers of post palaeolithic date, containing flint tools and pottery, and that these two preceded a land submergence. The two layers

[1] *Essex Naturalist*, Part I, Vol. XVI, pp. 46, 265. *Proceedings of the Royal Anthr. Inst.*, Vol. XLII, p. 91. *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Soc. of East Anglia*, Vol. III, Part I, p. 94.

do not contain industries of quite the same date. In the lower the tools "appear to be made, for the most part, of weathered flint, such as might be found locally. The latter series, on the other hand, are usually made of unweathered flint of high quality, not infrequently translucent though occasionally almost opaque. The flint could hardly be found locally, either upon the surface or upon the shore of the sea." The pottery of the lower layer is poor and coarse, while in the upper layer fragments of "Beaker pottery" occur. It is, therefore, probably fairly safe to assign the industries of the lower layer to the true Neolithic and those of the upper layer to the dawn of the Bronze Age. Near Cambridge a "salad" has been made partly by denudation, partly by agricultural operations. The Palaeolithic implements can be fairly easily sorted off and as regards the rest, it would seem that as a rule the opaque, black tools belong to the earlier series, while the well made, often honey-brown tools belong to a later period—probably the later series of Essex. How far the difference in patina is really fundamental remains to be seen, but it certainly holds good, to a certain extent, locally and thus may prove a very useful factor. As regards the question whether the industries of the earlier series are to be assigned to an early or late Neolithic date, it is difficult to say. The general poorness of the industry would incline one to consider the early date as being the more likely. There are one or two small tools somewhat like a Campigny axe in the collection of H. Warren from Essex. The exact horizon of these is not certain. The earlier industry of the Cambridge district may have had a long duration and a part, at any rate, may well date from early Neolithic times.

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