

EOLITHIC MAN IN WEST SURREY.

BY

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THE term Eolithic, as applied to the earliest type of pre-historic man yet known, has been adopted as defining (and correctly so) a very primitive period of his existence, and is derived from the Greek words *Eos*, signifying the dawn, and *lithos*, for stone.

In Palæolithic times we speak of man from a geological point of view, but much more so in the Eolithic period. From the time when Mr. B. Harrison's discoveries at Ightham in Kent of rude, roughly chipped and highly ochreous flints were first made until the present time disputes have arisen as to the authenticity of these early specimens of the works of Man, who formed tools of so primitive a nature that many learned pre-historic archaeologists hold that man as man had little or nothing to do with them or their fabrication, that in fact they were but natural forms not quite understood, and that in time it will be seen that their contentions were correct.

Undoubtedly Palæolithic implements, specimens of the Art of Man in the shaping of stones for use as implements, have had an influence in helping this prejudice which exists against an earlier type, not only because they are so much finer in their work, but also because they are more numerous, better known and better understood. It should be borne in mind that although the discoveries at Ightham of numbers of Eolithic tools at high elevations of from six to seven hundred feet above the sea level are fairly numerous,

yet compared with the finds of Palaeolithic implements Eolithic finds are few and far between.

Again, it is only when we arrive at a period in geological time at which human beings had apparently no right to be in evidence, that doubt arises, a doubt which is accentuated by the oft-repeated assertion that the shaped stones—or rather flints showing secondary work—which occur in certain geological deposits known as river drift are merely nature forms.

Now flint is always associated in its original state with the chalk deposits, having been in its origin a sponge or something of that nature: why, then, it is said, should not these “worked” flints be the work of primitive seas, with their erosions, batterings and poundings, in eras long before the coming or being of Eolithic man, or if not of the sea, of some torrential river? besides, nature really does some wonderful things in splitting by frost, rubbing, bruising, staining. And so nature does, it must be admitted: but does she “shape” or chip stones for a definite purpose or a definite use? If, however, it be admitted that nature does so much to shape stones, how is it that all drift beds, where exactly the same geological conditions occur as happened in beds in which man’s handiwork have been found, do not contain, not a few, but thousands of stones which simulate the work of man? In short, if nature is so prodigal and does so much, why is it that “worked” flints are so rare compared with the unworked? They surely ought to be not only in one but in every collection of drift beds, however and whenever deposited.

Again, take a headlong torrent of to-day. The same forces are at work as in the past: but are “chipped” flints definitely shaped into useful forms found in any torrent beds? no; rounded stones, much as we find now on our sea beaches, are the only result of torrential action. Besides, would it not be natural that such should be the case? If, for an experiment, a flint could be taken and fixed down in some definite part of a torrent where other stones would impinge against it, would

it become shaped or chipped to form a shape? No; it would be fractured, bruised, pounded, and probably in time obliterated altogether, but not fashioned into a shape. If this argument be accepted of what might happen to-day, why should torrents of the past have acted differently?

It is exceedingly difficult to picture to ourselves what the state of our country was in the days of the Tertiaries—rivers of vast volume running at higher levels, valleys unscooped out, mountains then that are but little hills now, in fact, the whole aspect of the country vastly different. England, then connected with the Continent, had little or nothing of its present outlines.

It is even possible that men of the Eolithic epoch were totally different to those of the Palæolithic period; in fact, judging from their implements, of which few if any forms survive in the succeeding period, they were. When Eolithic man however was in existence, a good deal of denudation must have taken place; and it must be borne in mind that he did not mine or dig out the "black" flints from the chalk as his successors did—the Neolithic, who came after the Palæolithic, people.

We must also recollect that Eoliths were probably chipped at some distance from the beds of drift in which they are now found, possibly on the slopes of hills and plateaux long ago denuded. Apparently, the majority of flints operated upon by Eolithic man had already been in the drift; nature evidently at the Eolithic stage had already done its work (or partially so), letting loose from the chalk matrix millions of flints which were scattered over wide areas much as we see them now.

One can imagine a tremendous pouring of rain during the Tertiary epoch, a grinding out of water-ways, accompanied by a rush of débris, a mingling of all sorts and conditions of rocks and stones; yet there must still be a doubt as to the forces at work being sufficient to produce what might resemble man's handiwork. Given a strong, swift torrent of the drift period, surely sand would amongst other things act as a buffer between the

stones, and débris of other kinds would also interpose: besides, were the torrential floods never at rest or passive, did they perpetually pass backwards and forwards?

Again floods causing drift, as we now see it deposited, can hardly be compared with the power and action of the sea upon its beaches: if these Eoliths be nature forms, we ought to find on all our sea fronts an accumulation of works by nature simulative of man's tools; but do we? Unless upheaval has taken place in geological times, the present deposition of valley gravels must be taken as giving a clue to what was in existence in the neighbourhood in the past.

Gravels deposited at high levels, which were certainly caused by river or fluvatile action, indicate (1) that great changes have taken place in the levels of the country; (2) very often that the old rivers were of greater volume and power than those of their present representatives. Levels as at present existing, therefore, not only are an indication of age, but also give a clue to the past. It must not, however, be concluded that the discovery of Eoliths in low-level gravels deprives them of age; for, as already mentioned, great erosions have taken place, and deposits in low levels may have been derived from higher levels.

Levels, however, do indicate geological age to some extent; and although the high contour lines, as we now know them, may not indicate the greatest original age, yet we must take them as representing what we know, allowing for denudation and other factors as altering the face of the country from Eolithic times down to the present.

During the Tertiaries the surface of the country was settling down, earth movements were more severe than now, and although probably in the South of England there were but few great convulsions, yet there were great and vast changes going on. In tracing the present river systems and comparing them with the past we must take into consideration the geology of the district under notice. For instance, a fault or upheaval of a hard stratum had an important bearing on a flowing river,

causing it to take other channels and cut its way through softer materials and so assisting to alter the configuration of the district through which it flowed. The origin of drift beds laid down by river action can only be determined by their constituents—even then the place of origin is somewhat vague, the starting point of any given deposit being practically undefinable.

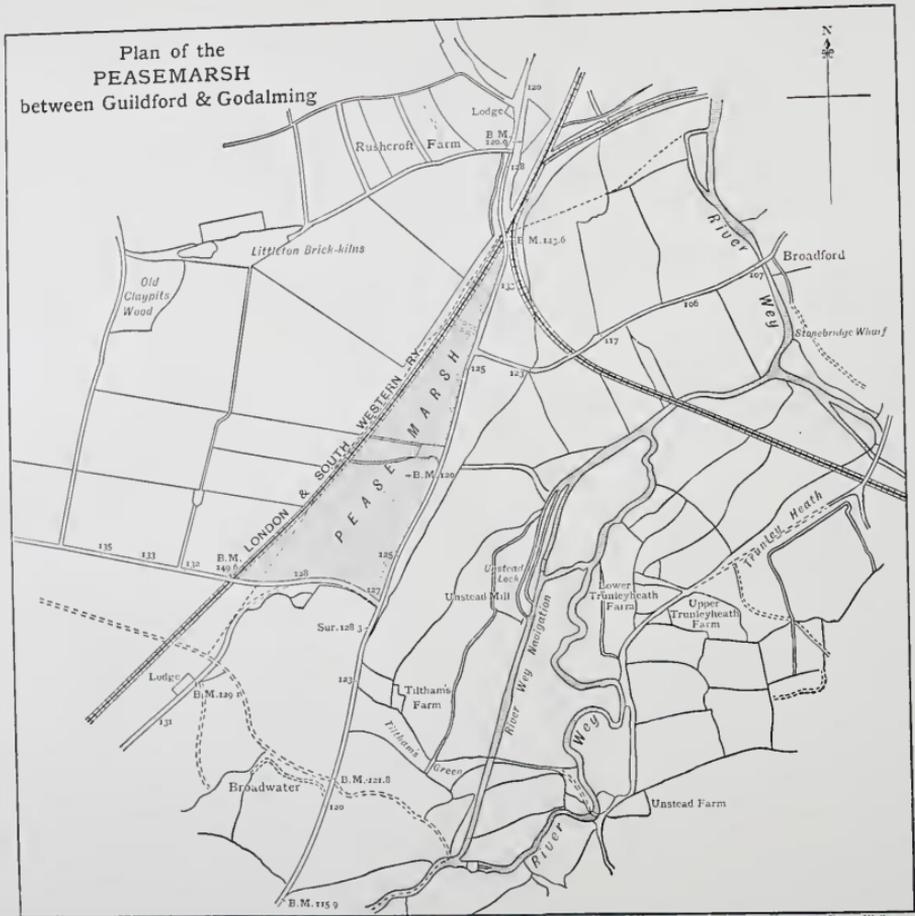
The River Wey rises in the main stream at or near Alton, Hants.; thence it receives numerous small tributaries until finally it reaches Farnham, at the end of the chalk ridge known as the Hog's Back. At Farnham the old river met with an obstruction in geological times—apparently what is known as a fault. This stayed its course to the east, and finding a softer stratum in the valley, practically the direction from which it came, it cut its way by Elstead, Peperharow and Godalming, passing the Peasemars, until finally it came through the Hog's Back at Guildford, and eventually joined the Thames at Weybridge.

The immense deposit of drift gravels at Farnham, the product of the old River Wey, or some other river, such as a magnified Blackwater, has produced hundreds of flint implements of the Palaeolithic Period (see *Surrey Archaeological Collections*, Vol. XI, p. 244) beautifully worked, and of types differentiating from Eoliths in more than one feature.

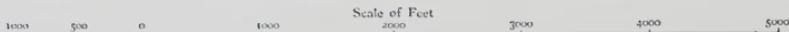
So far Eoliths have not been found in the Wrecclesham Bourne (or Farnham) drift beds, and do not occur except in one or two isolated examples in the district around. The late Sir John Evans, F.R.S., in his work on stone implements, chronicles the discovery of a Palaeolithic implement at the Peasemars (one of the earliest found in this country), which is situated midway between Guildford and Godalming.

At the time of this discovery the gravel was being dug for the roads in that particular district; but those excavations, some distance from the pits now open, have long ceased to be made. Quite recently, however, the drift deposits of the Peasemars have been opened up in the corner nearest to the River Wey, and careful investiga-

Plan of the
PEASEMARSH
between Guildford & Godalming



Emery Walker sc.



PLAN OF THE PEASEMARSH BETWEEN GUILDFORD AND GODALMING.

Plan of the
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PLAN OF THE PEASEMARSH BETWEEN G

tions of these openings have resulted in the finding of a number of implements of recognised Eolithic type. The first visit to these pits in company with Mr. J. Russell Larkby (whose researches at Well Hill, Kent, led to the discovery of intermediate Eoliths in that district) led to little or no result; but a series of visits have at last borne fruit and the acquisition of numbers of worked stones has resulted. The men of the dawn, it should be noted, chose flat-sided stones which they worked or chipped only on one side with a downward stroke, as a rule on one edge only, differing in that particular from the men of the Palaeolithic period, who worked both sides and all edges, holding the flints in their hands when fabricating their implements.

The beds in which the Peasemarsch Eolithic implements occur are situated at the low level of O. D. 124, and are evidently derived from much older beds; but so far no Palaeoliths have been found, neither implements nor flakes, in the pits now open. The Peasemarsch itself in early geological times was evidently a "basin" or "pond" of some extent, many small streams doubtless, as well as the River Wey, draining into its area in Eolithic times.

The Hog's Back played an important part in ponding back the River Wey and other streams, for when covered by ice it would be a formidable barrier to the passage of that stream. The Tillingbourne and other smaller rivers would doubtless be a factor in the deposition of the Peasemarsch drift beds, bringing down the Tertiaries off the Hog's Back and other hills, debris which would eventually be deposited as drift.

Spurs of Bargate crop out at Holloway Hill, Godalming, above Artington and at other spots, all within a short distance of the district, and these features have an important bearing on the geology of the Peasemarsch.

It will be seen, in examining the Plate of implements found at the Peasemarsch, that there is a definite intention in the formation of the shapes of the flints, many of which compare in a remarkable manner with those found by Dr. Blackmoor near Salisbury. One of

the most interesting tools is No. 3, which is a skin softener or scraper. Nos. 2 and 4 are what are known as "Humpback Scrapers," and show undoubted intentional chipping and shaping. Nos. 10, 11 and 12 are boring tools, 13, 14 and 16 are "hollow" scrapers. No. 7 is a most interesting tool, being the possible forerunner of the adze (it is badly shown in the Plate).

It may be mentioned in conclusion that a selection of these Eolithic implements can be seen in the museum of the Surrey Archæological Society and Guildford Corporation at the Castle Arch.