

A flint adze from Surbiton

A Mesolithic flint adze (fig 1) was found by Leslie Green whilst constructing a pond in his back garden at no 1 Endway, Surbiton in 1983 (TQ 19556 66565). The adze lay at a depth of some 2'6" (75cm) and 'within the first spit of natural clay below topsoil' (information from finder).

The area is mapped as river terrace gravel over London Clay on the Geological Survey 1:50,000 map sheet 270 (South London), though the findspot lies close to the junction between the gravels and the clay. The locality is elevated (+ 20m OD) and overlooks the valley of the Tolworth Stream (a tributary of the Hogsmill River), which flows SW-NE some 300m distant; the Hogsmill itself lies 1km or so to the east. The ground falls steadily away to the north and north-west, affording good views across the valley towards Berrylands and Surbiton.

Measuring 152mm in length and weighing 250gm, the adze is of attractively mottled and banded lustrous orange-grey-brown flint. Much cortex survives, particularly on one face and round the butt; the blade has been re-sharpened with a single transverse, tranchet, blow. There is a faint surface patination on the non-tranchet face which has given the high points a delicate blue-pink colour; one flake scar at the butt on the tranchet face however has a deep, creamy-white patina suggesting that the parent nodule had been worked on a previous occasion. Either way, the implement is a testament to the resourcefulness and skill of its maker, who, with a minimum of effort, managed to produce a serviceable and even elegant tool from an awkward elongated nodule of flint, presumably obtained from the local terrace gravels or the bed of the nearby Tolworth Stream.

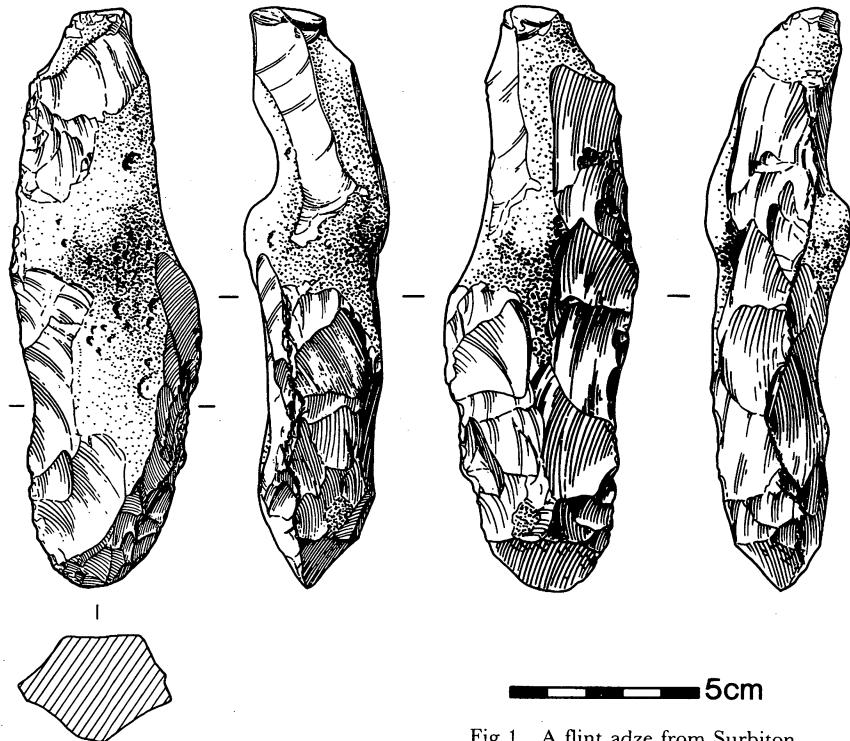


Fig 1 A flint adze from Surbiton

Though itself an isolated find, the adze is the latest in a series of characteristically Mesolithic artefacts to have been recovered from the area of the Hogsmill catchment. The finds from Ewell and from the Thames, at opposite ends of the main valley, are well known (eg Carpenter 1958, 155; Wymer 1977, 273-4; Field 1981, 12-15); less well known perhaps are the collections of cores and blades recovered – like the adze noted here – from positions close to the junction of the terrace gravels and London Clay at Old Malden (Carpenter 1958, 155; Wymer 1977, 191; Field 1981, 13).

The adze has been retained by the finder and is entered on the Greater London Sites & Monuments Record as number 032 022.

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JONATHAN COTTON