

# Struck flints from Ham Dip Pond, Richmond Park

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## Introduction

A small collection of struck flints was picked up by John Penn of Kingston Polytechnic (now University) in 1960 or 1961, following the dredging of Ham Dip Pond in Richmond Park. The collection was initially reported to Pat Nicolaysen of the Surrey Lithic Tool Research Group, and passed to the writer for the purposes of producing this account.

## Location, geology and date of the pond

Ham Dip Pond, sometimes known as The Glen Pond (Collenette 1937, 66), is situated roughly midway between Ham Gate and Ham Cross on the western edge of Richmond Park (TQ 1903 7174; fig 1). Unlike many of the other ponds dotted about the park, it is not a flooded former gravel pit, but was clearly formed by damming a small stream at the point where it cuts through an eroded bench of London Clay, before debouching across the Thames Floodplain Gravels west of Ham Gate.

Occupying a shallow valley which skirts the highest points within the park, this stream rises in the vicinity of Dann's Pond half a mile or so to the south-east of Ham Dip, and is fed by springs issuing from an expanse of High Level Terrace or 'Wimbledon Gravels' (Penn & Rolls 1981), which Gibbard (1979; 1985, 23) correlates with the Black Park Gravel of the late Anglian. For much of its upper course, the stream valley is flanked on its eastern side by a low linear bank which may relate to a boundary pre-dating the enclosure of the park by Charles I in the 1630s.<sup>1</sup> Other earthworks situated west and south-west of Ham Dip Pond have been similarly interpreted (Greeves 1990).

Although one of the more picturesque ponds in Richmond Park, Ham Dip Pond is of no great antiquity. It is not, for instance, marked on the 1851 Standidge *Plan of the Crown's Richmond Park and Sudbrook Park Estates in the County of Surrey* (Richmond Library LM 0178R), but first appears on a land-drainage survey of 1856 drawn by T A Dash (Greeves 1990, 9; copy in Bog Lodge, Richmond Park). It can therefore plausibly be identified as one of the nine new ponds created as watering places for deer between 1856 and 1861 by Josiah Parkes (Brown 1985, 118). It is shown on the OS 25 inch edition of 1863, and on subsequent editions.

The area around the pond had already produced 'broken blades and flakes together with scrapers' found in rabbit scrapes and on footpaths during the 1950s (Carpenter 1958, 156). The present collection was retrieved on a single occasion in 1960 or 1961 from amongst leaf-mould dredged from the pond and spread out on the adjacent banks (inf from finder).

## Previous work

Although the opportunity for large scale fieldwalking within the park is necessarily limited, other small groups of struck flint have been collected over the years by P J Croke, W Johnson, T H Knowles, A D Lacaille, W Lloyd, B M Stallard, W Wright and J J Wymer, amongst others (where known, findspots are marked on figure 1c). Finds include flakes and blades, and a few chipped and ground flint adzes/axes and arrowheads. Often sketchily recorded (eg Anon 1960; Croke and Stallard Collections in the Museum of Richmond and the Museum of London), findspots appear to concentrate round springs and patches of sands and gravels associated with the Black Park Gravel and the Beverley Brook (eg Johnson & Wright 1903, 128-9; Lacaille 1966, 35-6; Wymer 1968, 275; 1977, 195-6).

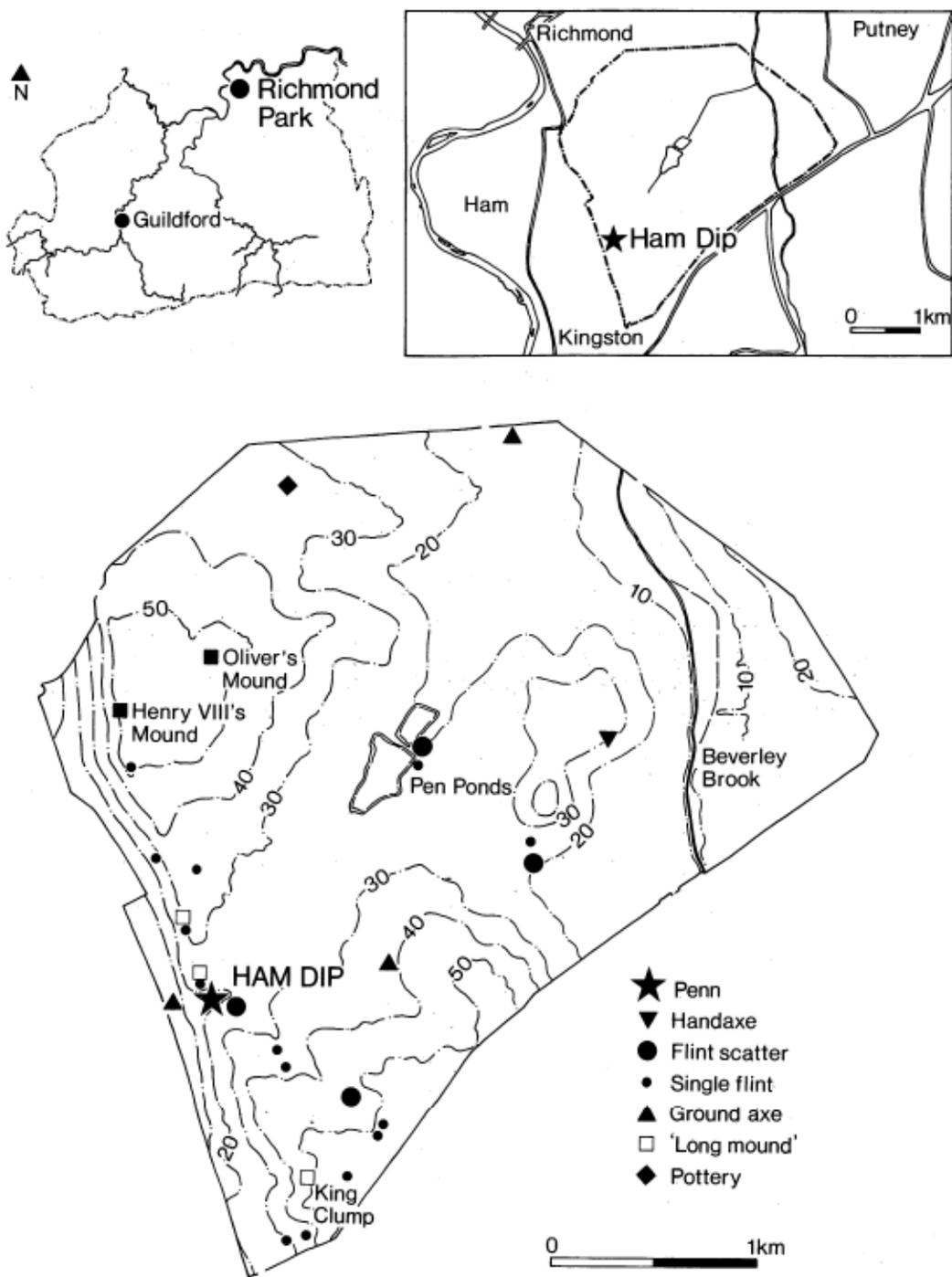


Fig 1 Location of Ham Dip Pond within Richmond Park; finds and site data taken from the Greater London Sites and Monuments Record and from Greeves 1990 and 1992, with additions. All contours are in metres.

Carpenter's recovery of flintwork from the London Clay around Ham Dip Pond (1958, 156) has already been noted; recent fieldwork in the same area has added a few further pieces (Greeves 1990).<sup>2</sup> Moreover, just beyond the western boundary of the park, major concentrations of lithics have been recovered from the Floodplain Gravels on Ham Fields (eg Field 1983); other, smaller, groups are recorded from Barnes and Wimbledon Commons (Carpenter 1958; Lacaille 1966; Cotton 1993). Stray finds of flint and stone axes have turned up in the same localities, on Kingston Hill (Penn *et al* 1984, 223) and from adjacent reaches of the Thames (eg Lawrence 1929; Adkins & Jackson 1978).

A number of undated earthwork features have also been recognised within the park as a result of recent intensive survey (Greeves 1992), some of which, like Henry VIII's Mound near Pembroke Lodge, and the now destroyed Oliver's Mound in Sidmouth Wood, may even be prehistoric in origin (Grinsell 1934, 34). Two such earthworks, identified as 'long mounds', lie on the break of slope just to the north of Ham Dip (Greeves 1992, 12-3); a further example, referred to as King Clump, is situated on the high ground close to Kingston Gate (see fig 1c). Others, such as the ridge-and-furrow near Kingston Gate (Field 1980) and in the north-eastern area of the park (Greeves 1991; 1992, 18-19), and the linear bank and other features close to Ham Dip Pond noted above, probably relate to medieval and later land tenure and usage pre-dating the enclosure of the park in the 1630s.<sup>3</sup>

### The flintwork

The collection considered here comprises just 34 pieces of struck flint. Worn gravel cobbles and pebbles make up the bulk of the raw material (exemplified by areas of worn and bleached cortex present on eight or nine of the pieces), which is of presumably local derivation. Fresh cortex on a single artefact – a crude plano-convex knife – suggests that it alone may have been knapped on 'chalk' flint. In terms of colour, greys and grey-blacks predominate, though there are several pieces of mottled orange/umber flint. With the exception of one rolled and patinated Palaeolithic flake, the collection is in fresh condition; two other pieces – a blade segment and a small flake – are lightly patinated.

The collection may be classified as follows:

Handaxe thinning flake	1	(fig 2, no 1)
Blades and blade fragments	13	(fig 2, nos 2 & 3)
Flakes	5	(fig 2, no 4)
Core trimming flake	1	
?Mis-hit axe/adze sharpening flake	1	(fig 2, no 5)
Picks	2	(fig 2, nos 6 & 7)
Scrapers	2	(fig 2, nos 8 & 9)
Awls/points	2	(fig 3, nos 10 & 11)
Plano-convex knife	1	(fig 3, no 12)
Notched flakes/blades	3	(fig 3, no 13)
Miscellaneously retouched pieces	3	(fig 3, no 14)
Total	34	

#### HANDAXE THINNING FLAKE

Snapped thinning flake of mottled grey/brown flint (fig 2, no 1), with glossy surface and abraded high points – the latter patinated a light milky-blue colour. The striking platform and part of the bulb of percussion have been removed.

Although the presence of a rolled flake from the London Clay at Ham Dip is difficult to account for, it can be added to the small number of Palaeolithic artefacts already known from the Park. Single

handaxes have been picked up from a spread of gravel east of White Lodge (Wymer 1968, 275) and from 'the area of Richmond Park' (MOL Stallard Collection, 61.212/15). Stray flakes are present in the Sturge (Wymer 1968, 275) and Stallard Collections; Johnson & Wright mention others (1903, 128-9; see also Anon 1960, 4).

#### BLADES AND BLADE FRAGMENTS

Thirteen blades and blade fragments are present in

the collection, comprising 5 complete blades, 4 segments, 2 distal ends and 2 proximal ends.

Most noteworthy is a robust blade of mottled orange/umber flint with marginal damage, which measures 126mm in length (fig 2, no 2). Although certainly long enough to fall within Barton's late Upper Palaeolithic 'long blade' category (1989, 264), the edge damage is not localised or pronounced enough for a true 'bruised' blade (*lame mâchurée*), and it could equally well be of early Mesolithic date. One of the four blade segments (fig 2, no 3), also of dark umber flint, appears to have been retouched following patination.

Blades and bladelets are present in many of the collections from the park summarized by Lacaille (1966, 35-6) and Wymer (1977, 195-6). Most are likely to represent Mesolithic knapping activity.

#### FLAKES

The five flakes include one lightly patinated piece and one broken leaf-shaped flake perhaps intended as a blank for an arrowhead (fig 2, no 4). The three others bear slight traces of utilisation.

Two of the flakes are broad and squat. While this may have chronological significance, it could also be a product of the poor quality of the raw material on which they have been knapped. A third is more blade-like in proportion, and has been struck from a seemingly previously worked nodule whose flake scars have bleached and patinated surfaces.

A number of similarly broad, squat flakes are present in the small Croke Collection in the Museum of Richmond (Acc No 0982). Also, T H Knowles had a leaf arrowhead from 'Sidbury Castle, Richmond Park' (MOL 73.195/27), while there is a fragment of another, together with a laurel leaf and a broken barbed and tanged arrowhead in the Stallard Collection (MOL 61.212/5, 61.212/34 & 61.212/38). A further leaf arrowhead, from the vicinity of Pen Ponds, is in the possession of Olive Halstead (David Field, pers comm).

#### CORE TRIMMING FLAKE

Core trimming flake of mottled orange/umber flint, with marked step-fracturing on its dorsal face. There is some retouch adjacent to the striking platform on the ventral face.

#### MIS-HIT AXE/ADZE SHARPENING FLAKE

Small flake of mottled grey/black/brown flint (fig 2, no 5). Though not a true transverse sharpening flake, with its long axis at right angles to the long axis of the parent axe or adze, this may represent a mis-hit which failed to detach cleanly.

Sharpening flakes are a characteristically Mesolithic means of renewing the cutting edges of axes and adzes. None have been recorded within the park hitherto, although both J G Marsden and A D Lacaille recovered examples from Ham Fields on Floodplain Gravels to the west (Field 1983, 179). The Croke Collection in the Museum of Richmond contains two relevant pieces from 'Richmond Park': a complete adze found in 1875

(Acc No 0978), and a fragmentary, reworked, tranchet example found in 1899 (Acc No 0982.1).

#### PICKS

Two slender but robust picks, fashioned on elongated gravel nodules of irregular lozengic cross-section. Both retain areas of cortex or thermal fracturing on or round their butts. The larger pointed example (fig 2, no 6), of mottled, cherty, light grey/black flint, measures 165mm in length and weighs 216g; the smaller chisel-ended example (fig 2, no 7), of mottled dark grey/black flint, measures 150mm in length and weighs 184.42g.

Although usually regarded as a Mesolithic tool type, picks seem to have continued in use into the Neolithic and beyond (Barrett *et al* 1981, 207). A number of similarly rudely-flaked core tools have been recovered from high level chalk sites (eg Field *et al* 1990), where they may have been used to grub flint nodules from the sub-soil. The two pieces published here seem too slender (and undamaged) to have performed this function, however.

#### SCRAPERS

Two scrapers, each of mottled light grey/dark grey flint. The first (fig 2, no 8) is a typical convex end/side scraper with steep marginal retouch; the second (fig 2, no 9) has more invasive retouch on the dorsal face, particularly at the proximal end, with marginal retouch at the distal end of the ventral face. Though the second scraper's leaf-shape is reminiscent of a laurel leaf point, the thickened asymmetric long section and marginal use-wear support its identification as a scraper. It is possible that the thinning of the proximal end was undertaken as an aid to mounting the piece in a haft.

Scrapers are particularly well represented in the Stallard Collection, comprising eleven of the 37 artefacts.

#### AWLS/POINTS

Two awls, the first (fig 3, no 10), of translucent smoke brown flint, is delicately worked on the proximal end of a narrow flake/blade, and has a shallow notch worked from its ventral face just below the awl-tip; the second (fig 3, no 11), of opaque grey/brown flint is more robust, and worked on the distal end of a thick triangular-shaped flake/blade segment.

Awls of both delicate and robust type are present in Mesolithic and Neolithic/Bronze Age flint assemblages. The Stallard Collection contains several; others have been recorded from Ham Fields (eg Field 1983, 174-5).

#### PLANO-CONVEX KNIFE

Large, crude plano-convex knife (fig 3, no 12) worked on a thermally fractured cortical flake of chalk-type flint. The dorsal face has been invasively retouched to form two robust long edges; the ventral face has been thinned by the removal of several flakes.

Usually regarded as a Later Neolithic/Bronze Age tool type, several plano-convex knives have been

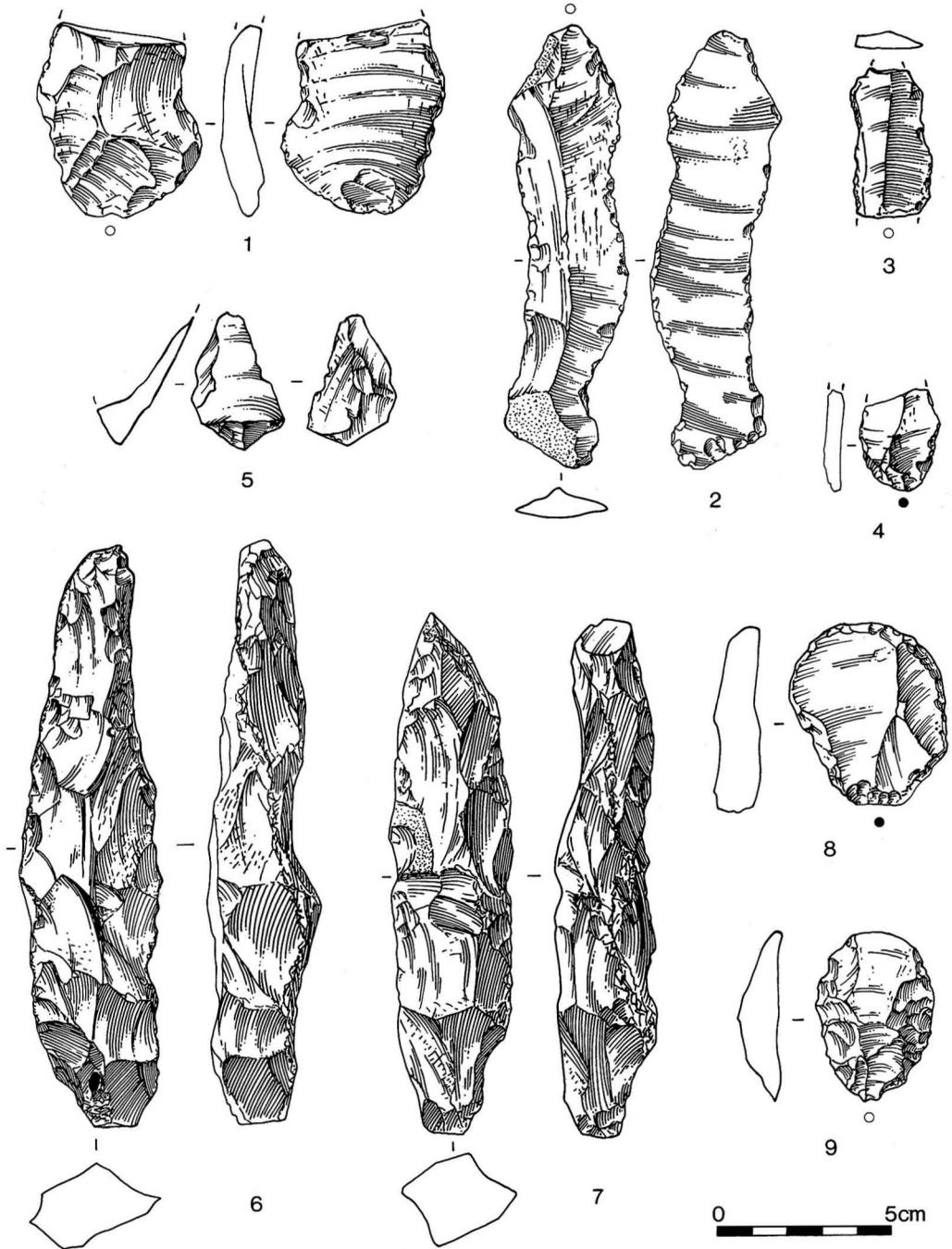


Fig 2 The Penn Collection of struck flint from Ham Dip Pond, Richmond Park, 1-9 (1:2)

recorded from Ham Fields (eg Field 1983, 175-6). The Stallard Collection also contains the pointed butt of a bi-facially worked flint dagger of Beaker type (MOL 61.212/28).

#### NOTCHED FLAKES/BLADES

All three notched pieces comprise robust narrow flakes/blades of cortical gravel flint, of mottled grey/black (fig 3, no 13), grey/brown and dark amber colour. In each case a single shallow notch has been worked on the leading edge at the distal end, such that the surviving cortex provides a comfortable pressure point.

Notched pieces form a minor but persistent component of earlier Neolithic assemblages; examples have been recorded from the Yeoveney Lodge, Staines causewayed enclosure (Robertson-Mackay 1987, 111-6).

#### MISCELLANEOUSLY RETOUCHEED PIECES

Two of the three pieces are similar, and comprise narrow flakes/blades of mottled grey flint with concave 'scraping' edges at their distal ends (eg fig 3, no 14). The third piece, a cortical flake of dark amber flint, has invasive retouch on one long edge and a shallow notch at its distal end.

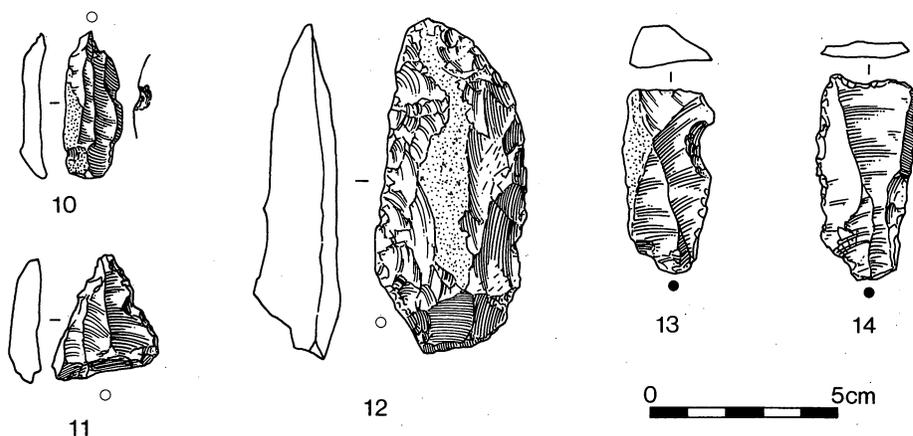


Fig 3 The Penn Collection of struck flint from Ham Dip Pond, Richmond Park, 10-14 (1:2)

### Discussion

The Penn Collection, though small, represents the first well-provenanced and reasonably substantial group of flintwork from Richmond Park to receive detailed publication. It can be added to the artefacts recovered from the same locality by L W Carpenter during the 1950s (1958, 156). The presence of such flintwork on an elevated area of London Clay subsoil overlooking Floodplain Gravels is of note, as is the apparent disparity in the raw material used at Ham Fields, which is mainly 'chalk' flint (Field 1983, 178) and Ham Dip, which is mainly local gravel cobbles.

The collection is clearly mixed, and includes elements of Palaeolithic and Mesolithic to Neolithic/Bronze Age type. In this respect, it is consistent with other local groups of flintwork recovered from the area of the park and beyond. The Mesolithic elements predominate, and diagnostic pieces include the various blades and bladelets, the ?mis-hit axe/adze sharpening flake and possibly the picks and awls. Mesolithic material is well known from the locality (eg Carpenter 1958; Lacaille 1966; Wymer 1977), having been recovered from a wide range of geological strata, and from the Thames. Although sensitive chronological markers like microliths are so far absent from Richmond Park itself, a number of narrow blade types (including a hollow based point and geometrics) recovered from Ham Fields to the west (Marsden 1932-4; Lacaille 1966, 27-8) suggest later Mesolithic activity close by.

The non-Mesolithic elements comprise the single Palaeolithic handaxe thinning flake, which can be added to a thin scatter of such material discussed above, and a few

Neolithic/Bronze Age pieces including the possible arrowhead blank, the notched blades/flakes and the plano-convex knife. This later material can be set alongside the various stray finds of ground flint axes and arrowheads recorded from Ham Gate (ground axe, Kingston Museum Acc No 1117); Isabella Plantation (ground axe, MOL 54.154); the area of Pen Ponds (leaf arrowhead found by Olive Halstead (David Field, pers comm)); and White Lodge (transverse arrowhead, Carpenter 1961, no 14). The large ground axe of orange flint from Isabella Plantation, in particular, found in November 1953 while clearing tree roots, is a superb piece comparable to many recovered from the Thames, and may represent something more than a casual forestry or foraging loss.

Finally, the recent intensive field survey of the park, conducted by Tom Greeves between February and May 1992, has located a wide range of earthwork features, a number of which have been identified as of prehistoric date (Greeves 1992, 11-16). Whatever the merits of these claims, the survey shows that Richmond Park is essentially a late medieval landscape fossilised since its enclosure in the 1630s. As the present small lithic collection, and indeed the Iron Age/Roman pottery recovered by Rendall (1983, 217-9), demonstrates, careful inspection of ground disturbances within the park provides the occasional opportunity to record traces of still earlier activity within this early 17th century landscape palimpsest.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks are due to John Penn, in whose possession the flints remain, for reporting his finds and for corroborating various details; to Pat Nicolaysen for bringing the collection to the writer's attention; to Simon Lace and Abigail Thomas of the Museum of Richmond, Paul Hill of Kingston Museum and Heritage Service and the staff of Richmond Local Studies Library, for affording access to material held in their respective collections.

### NOTES

- 1 Field observation by the writer during December 1994 identified a number of pieces of burnt flint and several struck flints in rabbit scrapes and tree roots on the western (left) bank of the stream.
- 2 Late Iron Age and Roman pottery has also been recovered from the area north of Bog Lodge in recent years (Rendall 1983, 217-9). Greeves (1992, 28-9) mentions the finding of a single sherd of ?LBA/EIA pottery from the same general area.
- 3 Recorded on the *Plan of the Proposed New Park at Richmond*, c1635, formerly in the Museum of London, now at the Public Record Office in Kew; conveniently shown in Cloake 1991, 18.

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