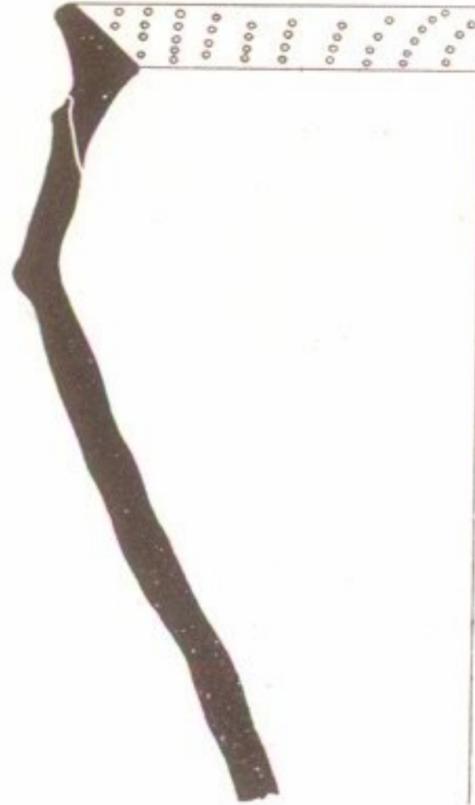
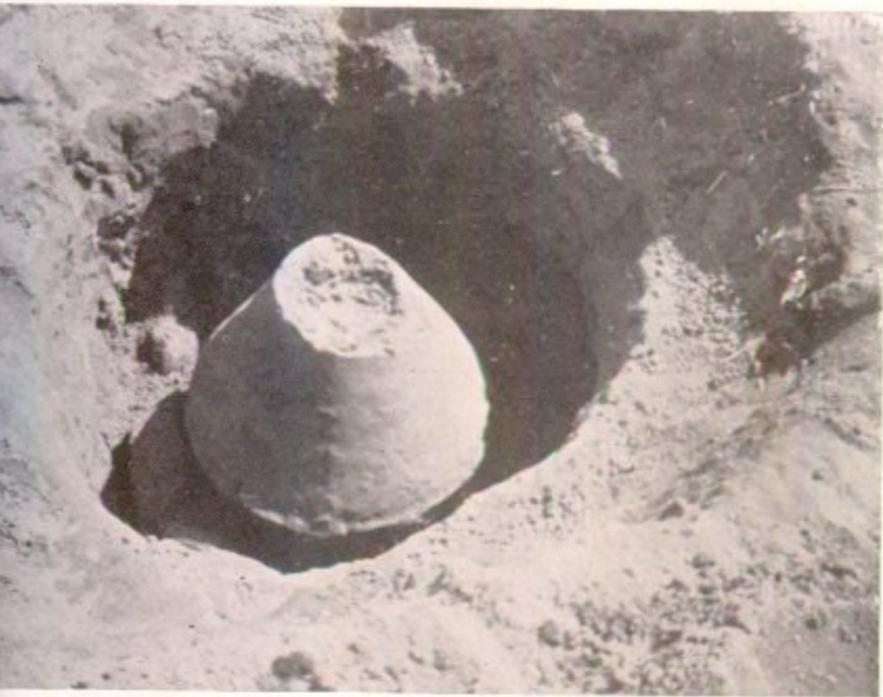


8. FLINT CORE AXE FOUND ON FAIR ISLE, SHETLAND.

The purpose of this note is to put on record the discovery of what seems to be a Mesolithic flint core axe on Fair Isle, Shetland. The discovery was made in June 1945 while the writer, accompanied by Sub-Lieutenant Appleby, R.N., then in charge of the naval station on the island, was searching for skua chicks.



1. Encrusted Urn from Scotlandwell. ($\frac{1}{2}$.)



2. Scotlandwell: Urn *in situ*.



3. Scotlandwell: Paving on which the Urn rested.

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The flint was embedded with other pebbles in a patch of bare ground from which the peat had been eroded. The site was the summit of a knoll on the edge of the plateau where the Great Skua nests, and about 800 yards west-north-west of the naval huts at North Haven. I estimated the height above sea-level as about 300 feet. It is a matter of regret that I did not think of preserving any of the peaty soil in which the flint was embedded on the chance that it might have contained the pollen that would have helped to locate the object in terms of the North European climatic sequence. When this was pointed out to me by Professor Childe, an effort was made to get in touch with Sub-Lieutenant Appleby to procure some of the soil, but he was no longer on the island, and no other opportunity has arisen of revisiting the island.

The object is a flint core axe measuring 12 cm. by 4.5 cm. The ends of the flint are not notably sharp but it has been given sharp edges. The edges are

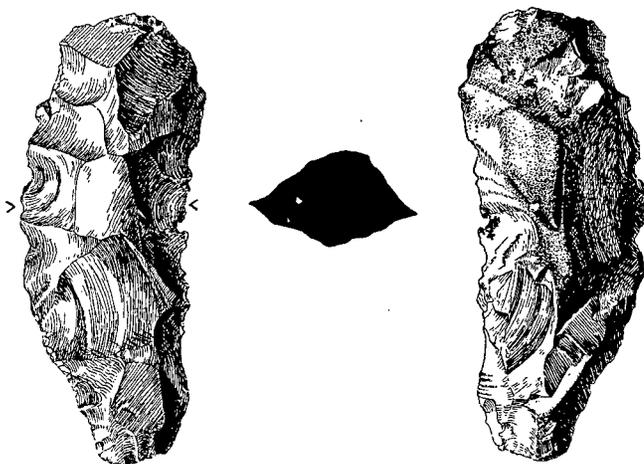


Fig. 1. Flint core axe from Fair Isle ($\frac{1}{2}$).

formed by the intersection of flake scars, produced on both sides by blows transverse to the main line of the axe. Ripple marks indicating the direction of the blow are visible on both faces.

The implement has been manufactured from a very ugly piece of flint with a natural hole spoiling one edge. There is a lot of cortex on one side which passes into a layer of greyish-white patination. The fresh flint surfaces are grey. When observed the only part of the object visible was the rough cortex, and when picked up the contrast between the weathered surface and the freshness of the under surface was very striking. This led to the speculation as to whether the rough cortex could be a secondary deposit formed after the manufacture of the implement. Consideration shows that this cannot be the case and that it is the original outer cortex of the flint. What seems to determine the matter is that a face has been struck obliquely through the cortex at a very small angle into the layer of patination.

It is not the type of piece of flint likely to be used by people who had plenty of flint available, and for that reason one feels that it is unlikely to have been of

either Danish or Irish manufacture but may have been manufactured on the island where it was found. Flints must be exceedingly rare on Fair Isle. I cannot find a previous record, and an extensive search carried on for the two remaining days of my visit was quite unproductive. At the same time it is not impossible that occasional flints carried from chalk outcrops under the North Sea may occasionally turn up on Fair Isle. Flints are sometimes found at Rousay in the Orkneys, and within the past few weeks (March 1946) there has come into my possession a piece of highly silicified chalk with flint inclusions which was picked up on Bressay, about fifty miles north of Fair Isle. Flint tools are not uncommon in the Orkneys.

The technique of manufacture of the implement is that appropriate to the core axes characteristic of the Forest Culture throughout Northern Europe. Clarke in *The Mesolithic Settlement of Northern Europe* figures very similar implements from Broxbourne, England, and Sandarna, Sweden. Comparable implements are also found among the Late Larnian flints of Northern Ireland, but none have hitherto been found in Scotland.

Such implements in Denmark occur in the Maglemose Culture, which began in the Boreal climatic phase and continued in use through the kitchen-midden culture of the Atlantic phase even into Sub-Boreal times. Lacking the pollen evidence it is impossible to do much more than hazard a guess as to the place of this Fair Isle axe. Movius in *The Irish Stone Age* contributes the most recent discussion of the position of Stone Age Cultures in Britain, and concludes (p. 193): "The Forest Culture of the North European Plain arrived in Scotland in Early Atlantic times, during the period of the Litorina transgression, and similar influences were diffused ultimately into the Late Larnian Culture of Ireland." It is perhaps then permissible to suggest that in the Atlantic Period, which witnessed the spread of the Forest Culture to the outlying parts of Scandinavia and to the mainland of Scotland, some elements of this culture arrived in the islands to the north of Scotland.

In conclusion I would like to express my thanks to Professor Childe for his helpful comments.

GEORGE A. CUMMING.