

ART. III.—*Some recent prehistoric finds of Lake District origin from the Yorkshire Pennines.* By J. DAVIES.

Read at Carlisle, April 1963.

THE purpose of this paper is to place on record some recent finds of prehistoric artefacts of Lake District origin from the Yorkshire Pennines which have previously either not been recorded or only in ephemeral publications. As only a few scattered finds are involved, no firm conclusions can be drawn, but it is hoped that as more such finds are reported they will help to throw some light on prehistoric trading routes, the most valuable evidence for which will be forthcoming with the completion of the petrological identification of stone implements, which has been in progress for some years.

The roughed-out stone axe (fig. 1, no. 1), now in my possession, was found by Mr K. Shepherd and myself in a narrow gully at about 1,620 ft. O.D. on Thorpe Fell on the Aire-Wharfe watershed (NGR: SE 008594). It is of fine-grained, greyish-green tuff, indistinguishable macroscopically from similar axes which occur in such profusion at the factory site in Great Langdale. It is of rather crude workmanship and abraded, coarsely flaked and asymmetrical, with an irregular, oblique cutting-edge. Though the butt-end has been broken off in antiquity, the profile suggests that it was originally thin-butted and it is of pointed oval section, both features being common among the factory products. Its present dimensions are 5.4 in. x 3.2 in. x 1.5 in., and it was probably about 1.5 in. longer when complete.

The surface bears no trace of grinding and it is, therefore, an unfinished axe and not a polished axe reflaked after fracture, such as occur quite commonly. The find-spot is about 50 miles SE. of Langdale and this is

the furthest distance from the factory for any roughout known so far, with the exception of one from Bullure, near Tayinloan on the Mull of Kintyre.¹ It is inconceivable that it should have been brought this distance to be deliberately abandoned and one can only conclude that

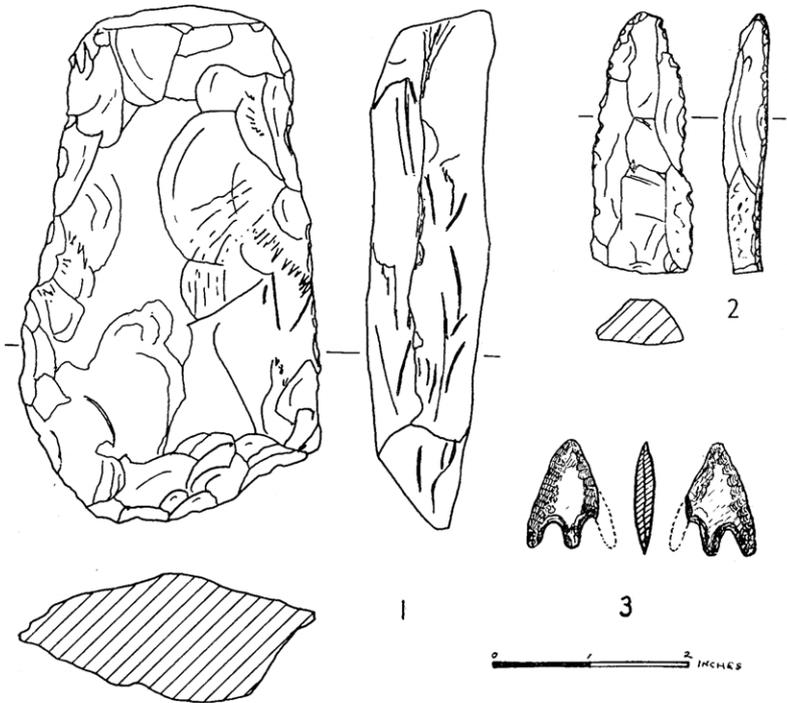


FIG. 1.

it had been accidentally dropped by some Neolithic traveller traversing a trade route to some as-yet-unknown finishing site. There are indications that this might have been quite near. Several polished and re-flaked axes have been found in the vicinity of Grassington, about three miles to the north; one — in the possession

¹ Information from Mr J. G. Scott, Kelvingrove Museum, Glasgow.

of Mr B. W. J. Kent of Beckwithshaw — is a magnificent specimen 10.6 in. long, of “Cumbrian” type, i.e. with a square cutting edge, oval section with faceted sides and a thin, square, expanded (“fishtail”) butt.

The butt-end of a similar axe — now in the Bradford Museum — was found in 1892 by the Rev. E. Jones at Skyrethorns, a mile or so west of Grassington. I have found a retrimming flake from a polished axe on Hawksworth Clowder, Littondale (NGR: SD 946691), about 6½ miles NW. of the find-spot of the Thorpe Fell roughout and several more have been found around Grassington.² All these appear to be of Langdale rock, though this can only be decided with certainty by petrological examination.

Miss Clare Fell (1951) suggests the Aire Gap as one of the possible routes for the distribution of Langdale axes and, no doubt, there will be ample support for this when the numerous polished axes in the Pig Yard Club Museum, Settle, have been sliced. The Cracoe Gap, the depression between Thorpe Fell and Threshfield Moor, makes a natural way from Airedale into Wharfedale, and the above finds make it very likely that this was indeed one of the routes followed. The Emsbay Gap, linking Skipton and Bolton Abbey, makes another natural route between the two waterways which might also have been used. The discovery of Mr H. Hollings, about 1957, of a polished axe with faceted sides which might be of Langdale rock, at Skibeden Quarries, near Emsbay (NGR: SE 015530) is suggestive. Both these depressions are very obvious topographical features from the surrounding moorlands.

The smaller implement (fig. 1, no. 2), also now in my possession, was found by Mr K. Shepherd in 1957, on a mole-heap at Lea Green, Grassington (NGR: SD 996656). It is a thick, tapering blade of plano-convex section, trimmed along both edges and showing signs of

² Dr Raistrick has about 40 in his possession and there are a further 15 in the Craven Museum, Skipton — all from the Grassington area.

utilisation at the tip, which is blunt. The main flake surface is plain but the opposite surface shows several flake scars, one running up centrally from the butt. This implement, which is rather unusual, might be described as a punch or fabricator. Even more unusual is the material, which is a dark, banded rock, traversed diagonally by a fine fault-line.

This was identified by Prof. H. C. Versey of Leeds University as a banded rhyolite from the Borrowdale Volcanic Series of the Lake District, which was confirmed by Dr G. H. Mitchell of the Geological Survey, who writes that, although it is not a typical Borrowdale, "I am inclined to think that it may well be from that area, being perhaps one of the very fine-grained rhyolitic tuffs with epidote streaks which occur in places." Unfortunately, the Petrological Department of the Geological Survey could not match it closely with any of their hand specimens but they too were of the opinion that it could well be a Borrowdale Volcanic rock.

As a unique specimen with no cultural or chronological associations, nothing further can be said about this remarkable implement but the attributed source of the material makes it of considerable interest.

The other artefacts to be considered consist of pieces of utilised graphite found on erosion patches on various Pennine moors where flints also occur. Details of these are as follows:

1. March 1956.
Blubberhouses Moor, Wharfedale (SE 128538).
Weight 3.364 gms. (0.12 oz.).
2. November 1957.
West Nab, Meltham Moor, Calderdale (SE 077088).
Weight 0.340 gms. (0.01 oz.).
3. September 1958.
Castleshaw Moor, near Denshaw (SD 998112).
Weight 8.663 gms. (0.31 oz.).
4. Before 1955.
Flake Moss, Meltham Moor, Calderdale (SE 075083).
Weight 14.374 gms. (0.51 oz.).

The first three were found by myself and the last by Mr E. V. Darby. All the pieces have one or more surfaces rubbed down and striated. The West Nab piece is extremely tiny and must have been used by very sensitive fingers.

The only natural occurrence of graphite in Britain, apart from some metamorphic rocks in the Scottish Highlands, is on the fell-side opposite Seathwaite in Borrowdale, Cumberland, which is undoubtedly the source of these Pennine fragments.

The presence of graphite in the Pennines is, of course, no new discovery; it has been known for quite a long time. Thus Sutcliffe (1897) records about 300 pieces, all found within one square yard, near Rough Hill, Rochdale, Lancs., and other occurrences round Halifax, Saddleworth and Huddersfield are mentioned by Law (1897), Wrigley (1911), Petch (1924), etc., but none of these writers seems to have given much consideration to the chief implication of these finds — evidence of prehistoric contact between the Lake District and the Pennines (though Mr Petch does say, briefly, that the graphite must have come from Cumberland).

Unfortunately, there is little dating evidence. With the exception of two pieces in the Huddersfield Museum, they have all come from erosion patches where the superficial vegetation and peat have weathered off and it is not uncommon to find flints of different periods lying together. Petch (*op. cit.*) assumes that the graphite is of Mesolithic age, in which he is followed uncritically by Clark (1932). There is however no evidence to justify this. The two critical pieces of graphite were found by F. Buckley in 1927 on Warcock Hill, Marsden, four inches above the base of the peat. It is, unfortunately, not possible to equate this level with a particular archaeological period but there is no doubt that the blanket bog peat in the Pennines began forming generally in post-Mesolithic times. It seems a reasonable assumption that

the distribution of graphite took place at about the same time and, no doubt, followed the same routes as that of the axes. It is suggestive that two stone axes which, from the illustration, appear to be of Lakeland affinity, were found (in 1887 and 1889) in the Castleshaw Valley. (Wrigley, *op. cit.*)

Mr J. P. Toomey (1960) reports that in an excavation at Oldfield Hill, on the east flank of Meltham Moor (NGR: SE 087101), a Neolithic leaf-shaped arrowhead was found "at the base of the ploughsoil (just a little higher than the occupation generally), associated with graphite." As the site is considered, however, to be an Iron Age native farmstead, some inexplicable disturbance appears to have taken place and this cannot be considered as conclusive evidence.

Haematite, both the hard and soft variety (known variously as "raddle", "reddle" or "ruddle") also occur quite commonly on Pennine moors and like the graphite, has usually been rubbed, suggesting use as a pigment. As this is a far more ubiquitous mineral than graphite, no unique source can be postulated for it, but it is quite likely that the hard variety at least might have been brought from Central Lakeland or from West Cumberland or the Furness district.

Finally, although outside the area under discussion, brief mention ought to be made of an extremely interesting implement found by Dr J. O. Myers in October 1957, in a ploughed field east of Ewefell Mire, near Newbiggin-on-Lune, Westmorland (NGR: NY 697066). This is a barbed-and-tanged arrowhead made of material identified by Prof. Versey as most probably Langdale rock (fig. 1, no. 3). This appears to have been made from a broken polished implement, probably an axe, as a polished area with fine abrasion scratches is still retained on one of the surfaces. The arrowhead is now in the possession of Dr Myers, but is destined for the Pig Yard Club Museum, Settle. A plaster cast will be exhibited in Bradford

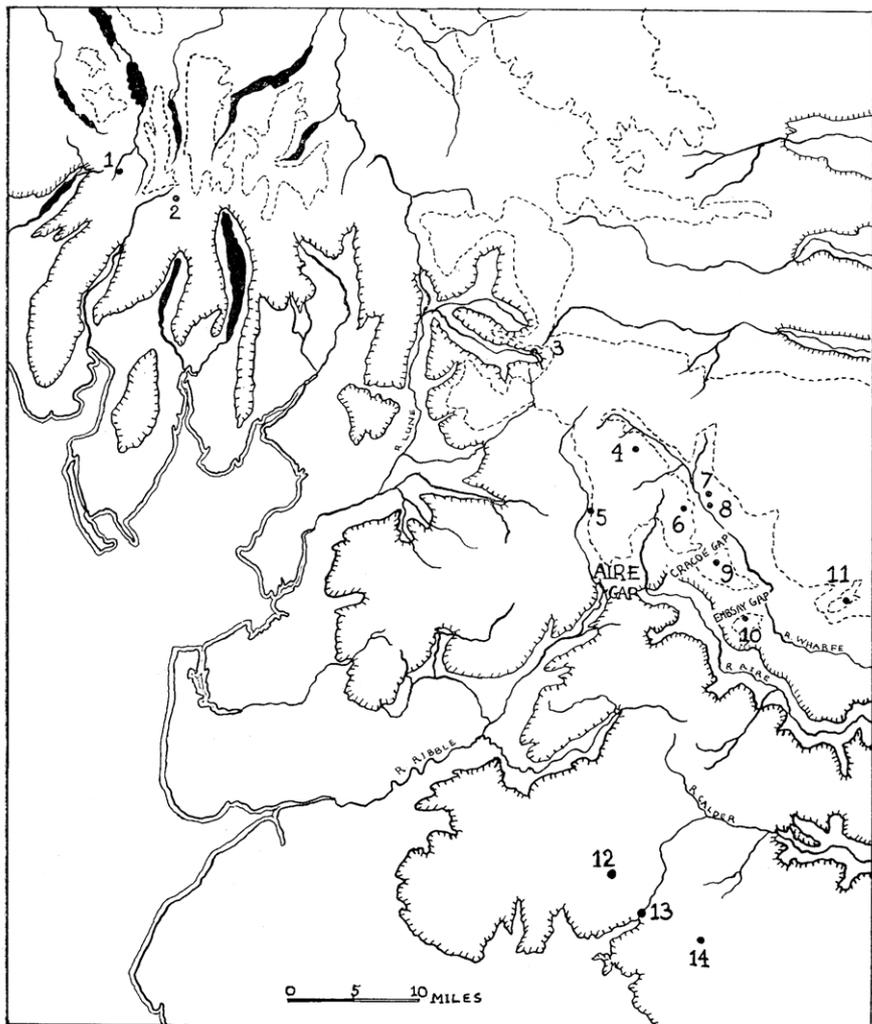


FIG. 2.—Map showing places mentioned. Key to the numbers:

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| 1. Seathwaite. | 8. Grassington. |
| 2. Langdale. | 9. Thorpe Fell. |
| 3. Newbiggin-on-Lune. | 10. Skibeden. |
| 4. Hawksworth Clowder. | 11. Blubberhouses Moor. |
| 5. Settle. | 12. Rough Hill. |
| 6. Skyrethorns. | 13. Castleshaw Moor. |
| 7. Lea Green. | 14. Meltham Moor. |

Museum. Tools, other than axes made from volcanic ash or tuff are rare in this area. The only other tanged and barbed arrowhead claimed to be of such stone is from Eskmeals sandhills published by Miss Fair in CW2 xxxvii 215 and upper plate, third from left. All other arrowheads so far recorded are of flint.

The places mentioned in this paper are shown on the map (fig. 2).

Acknowledgements.

Thanks are due to Mr C. H. Houlder for illustrating nos. 1 and 2 of fig. 1, to Miss S. Walker for drawing the map, to Mr T. G. Manby for information about Warcock Hill from the Huddersfield Museum, and to Miss Fell for helpful suggestions. Notes on the Thorpe Fell rough-out and the graphite finds have been published in the monthly (cyclostyled) bulletin of the Bradford Museum Archaeology Group.

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