

ART. I.—*Prehistoric habitation sites at Seascale.* By J. CHERRY, B.Sc.

Read at Kendal, April 2nd, 1966.

THE West Cumberland coast south of St Bees Head consists mainly of low cliffs of boulder-clay interspersed with raised beaches, the latter covering considerable distances at Drigg, Eskmeals and Haverigg, where they are largely overlain by sand-dunes. Behind the coast the geological formation is a mixture of sand, gravels and boulder-clay, with kames and drumlins draining naturally into kettle holes, boggy hollows and small winding becks.

Although there is so far little evidence of prehistoric habitation at Haverigg, the sites at Drigg^{1 2} and Eskmeals³ have yielded artefacts with Mesolithic, Neolithic and Bronze-Age affinities. The debris from these sites shows them to be the remains of poverty industries, where the greatest possible use was made of the somewhat limited supply of small flint pebbles, which were to be found on the 25-ft. Raised Beach and the adjoining storm beach.

Despite the extensive use of the Drigg and Eskmeals sites they cover a comparatively small area, and although it is to be expected that the flint industry would be more active on the raised beaches where the supply of flint was greatest, other sites must have existed along the coastal strip. Many sites will have long been eroded away by the continually encroaching sea, but others must still remain undiscovered along the sides of the naturally drained ridges, within fairly easy reach of the storm beach which would supply a convenient, though small, supply of flint pebbles.

Almost all the farms on the coastal strip keep a field

or two in cultivation, so that a search of fields under the plough presents a convenient way of collecting evidence. The systematic search of ploughed fields and land erosion scars has often provided useful typological evidence for the distribution of prehistoric cultures. Much of the Mesolithic flint industry of the Pennines is to be found where the old soil and clay has been exposed by peat erosion. Mr E. J. W. Hildyard picked up flint and stone artefacts from the surface of ploughed fields in Upper Weardale,^{4 5} which tell of the occupation of that area by peoples who followed Mesolithic, Neolithic and Bronze-Age traditions. Useful information is still being obtained at Walney Island by this method.

The problem of where to begin such a survey was solved by the almost accidental discovery of flint scrapers in my own garden at Seascale in 1964. A request to friends in the village to keep an eye open when carrying out spring planting, produced several more flint tools and struck flakes. Although these discoveries were promising, the search of small areas of soil in scattered gardens presented many obvious difficulties. I decided, therefore, that a more profitable region would be the dry gravelly ridge which extends southwards from Seascale towards Drigg. This ridge lies about half a mile from the shore and has a natural drainage on its western side into a small beck, called Whitriggs beck.

Fortunately, a field immediately south of the village on Bailey Ground was under cultivation, and the farmer, Mr O. Mawson, kindly gave me permission to search, although a crop was already through the ground. Four flint scrapers and a small stone axe (Fig. 4, b) were found at the southern edge of the ploughed ground, and more flints were found in the north-west corner of the field.

Later in the year two more fields were ploughed and, aided by Mr K. M. Mawson, we made an exhaustive search of these. Quantities of flint flakes and a number

of flint tools were picked up, especially near the edge of a boggy hollow, close to the village itself. All the places where flint was found were on naturally drained sandy gravel, but the soil in the hollow was moist, black and peaty.

There seem to be at least three sites on Bailey Ground. The axe-head and its associated flints are quite separate from the main concentration of flint debris around the edge of the boggy hollow, and the material to the south of this is about forty yards away. The position of the sites is given in Fig 5.

Encouraged by success, we began to search all the ploughed fields on the western side of the hill above Whitriggs beck but found nothing more until we reached the fields of Burnt Moor farm, half a mile to the east-south-east. Here, in a hollow in a particularly sandy field, we picked up a small quantity of flint flakes, two steeply worked flint scrapers and a microlith.

The ridge is broken at Burnt Moor and the course of Whitriggs beck turns north-east along a shallow valley, past the house called Panope. On the far side of the valley, 250 yards south of the old farmhouse of Burnt-Moor, in a field belonging to Mr Shepherd of Moorside farm, we found flint flakes, a flint end-scraper and a small flint knife.

Further up the valley on the slope of a dry sandy field, 300 yards over the hill north of Drigg Cross, was another small site. Here, in a field belonging to Mr Farrish of Hallsenna, we found several flint scrapers and a flint knife, together with a struck flake of volcanic tuff. It was very much like the flakes which can be found at the Scaffell and Great Langdale axe factories, having a bulb of percussion and the same characteristic twist. In addition we picked up two large nodules of grey flint, one of which had been struck several times so that most of the cortex had been removed. This latter piece was identical in colour with two of the flint scrapers, and

had traces of a thin chalky cortex; I would not have thought that this was a beach pebble. It is interesting to note that, in 1855, a stone axe was picked up less than 100 yards to the north-east by Mr Poole of Hallsenna.⁶

Nothing much has been found on the higher ground to the south, although we have searched a number of fields. Above Moorside farm we found a few flint flakes and two flint scrapers, but these were well scattered.

Returning to our starting point, we began to search the fields bordering the Drigg-Seascale road, west of Whitriggs beck. In a field belonging to Whitriggs farm, about half a mile from Whitriggs bridge, we found flint flakes, flint scrapers and a flint knife. The spread of flint in this field was remarkably small, the whole occupying an area of only a few square yards. The flint lay near to the edge of a small hollow, which often floods during the winter.

Further down the road towards Drigg in a field belonging to Moorside, 300 yards south-west of Stony-How, we found flint scrapers, two flint blades and a heavily patinated fragment of a stone axe (Fig. 4, a). This field is not very dry, and the place where the axe fragment was lying often floods after heavy rain.

The fields on the seaward side of the road are rather flat and sandy, but since they are wetter than is to be expected I suspect that the boulder-clay is often not far beneath the surface; they yielded nothing but a few nondescript fragments of flint.

In 1938 Miss Fair reported the find of a flint knife⁷ east of Black How farm by Mr G. Richmond, while rescuing a horse from a bog. The knife is at present at Tullie House, Carlisle. The land now belongs to Mr C. Parker of Acrelands, who kindly gave me permission to search. The bog is extensive and fringed with trees; about 150 yards from where the flint knife was found in 1938, I picked up another, together with a small quantity of flint debris, in part of the field which was ploughed.

My son and I have also found flint flakes in molehills to the south and east of the bog, so that it seems likely that there is a larger settlement yet to be discovered here.

A fine example of a tanged and barbed flint arrowhead was picked up in 1950 by Mrs P. Lees near to the new Seascale Post-Office at Rose Bank; it is at present in the possession of Mr W. Fletcher. This arrowhead, with its barbs as long as the tang, is of Bronze-Age type, as were the cinerary urn from Herding Neb⁸ and the stone circle at Grey Crofts⁹ (which yielded material of an early Bronze-Age burial).

The evidence so far described has been positive, but a search of many fields from the Calder in the north to Holmrook in the south and as far inland as Gosforth, yielded nothing. Of over sixty fields searched, flint has been found in ten, and only at Bailey Ground has it been found in any quantity. The distribution and types of artefacts is given in the table at the end of this paper.

Most of the occupation of the area seems to have been between the 50-ft. and 75-ft. contours, within easy reach of Whitriggs beck, and the spread of flint within any field was usually quite small. There has been little sign of habitation on the upper slopes of the ridge, although it must be remembered that only a fraction of the area is under the plough, so that there may be material still to be discovered there. It was also noticeable that there was little or no flint to be found in the fields to the south of Seascale parish, which are directly inland from and within easy reach of the Drigg flint-chipping sites.

Fig. 1.

Nos. 9, 14, 62, 44 and 47 are from Bailey Ground, no. 27 is from Acrelands, no. 16 is from Burnt Moor, no. 41 is from Seascale village, and no. 67 is from Stony-How.

- 26, 27 and 62. Flint knives. Nos. 62 and 27 are made by a similar technique on long narrow blades, while no. 26 has been made from a flake, from which most of the cortex has been removed by pressure flaking. The Acrelands knife is a particularly fine specimen, made from dark grey flint. No knives of this type have been found at Drigg or Eskmeals.
- 41, 47 and 67. These flint knives exhibit much finer retouch, nos. 41 and 47 being worked obliquely across the axis of the blade.
- 9 and 44. Typical side-scrapers or knives of honey flint. The trimmed edge of no. 9 being particularly shallow, so that the flaking is not easy to detect. Several knives of this type were picked up at Eskmeals.
14. A broken scraper in dark coloured flint, this piece could be a broken awl.
16. Microlith in patinated white flint, blunted down its longer curved edge. The bulb of percussion has not been removed. This is the only microlith found so far in our field search.

Fig. 2.

Nos. 4, 5, 13 and 45 are from Bailey Ground, nos. 21, 24 and 69 are from Seascale, nos. 36 and 37 are from Whitriggs, nos. 35 and 39 are from Broom.

The scrapers illustrated show a variety of the forms which were picked up on the different sites. The retouch was generally fairly steep and many of them had a natural depression for the thumb, or had been worked so as to provide an artificial depression. The hollow is a refinement not usually present on the scrapers from the Drigg and Eskmeals sites. Nos. 13, 21, 39 and 45 are examples of the types with pronounced indentations.

35. A knife or scraper of grey flint, delicately blunted for about an inch of its curved edge. This has obviously been broken in use, for the retouch reappears again for a short distance, near to the cortex in the lower right-hand corner. It was evidently found convenient to rework the opposite face at the position of the break, to form a double-sided tool. This

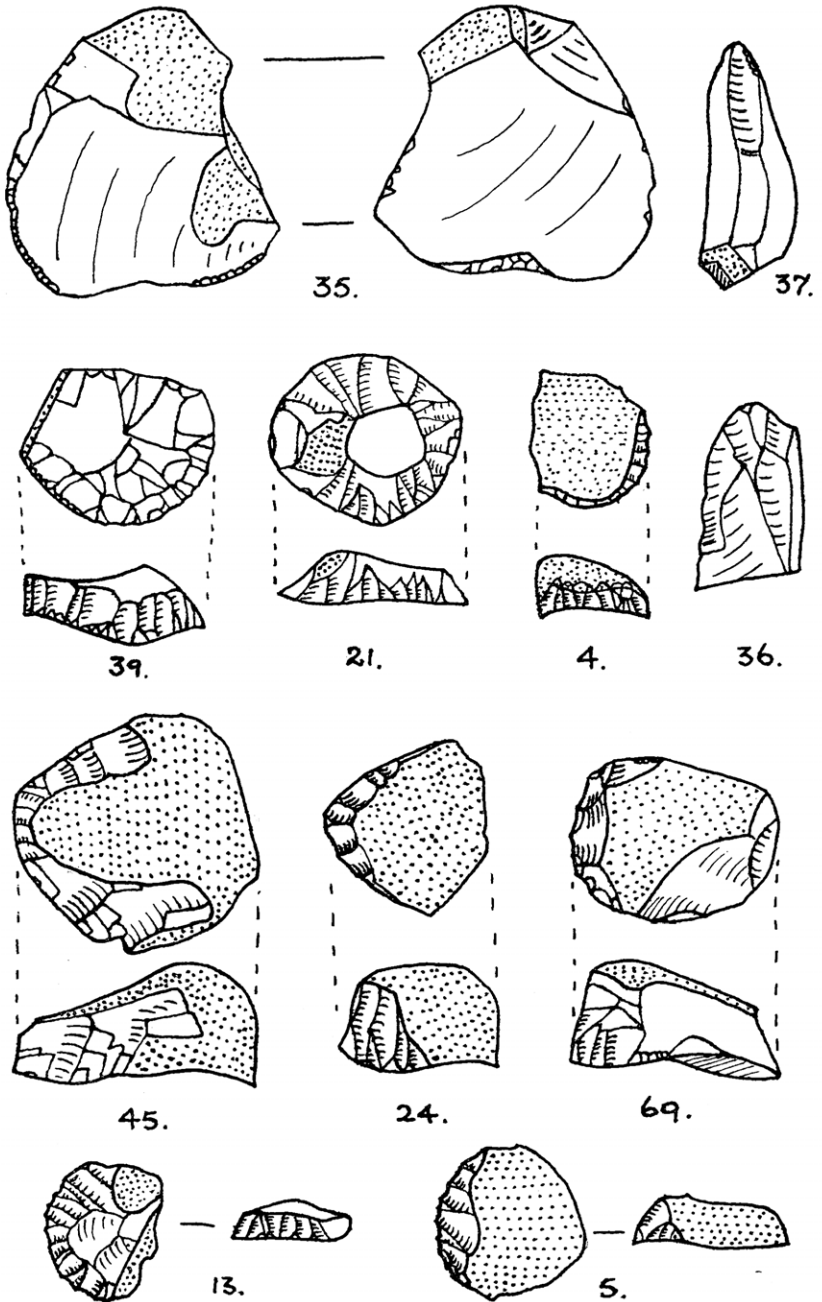


FIG. 2.—(Scale 1:1).

might mean that it was used as a knife rather than as a scraper. The cortex does not seem to be that of a normal beach pebble.

- 36 and 37. Flint blades from Stony-How. No. 36 has the gloss along one edge usually associated with the cutting of cereal stalks and could possibly be a fragment of a sickle blade.

Fig. 3.

All the flints illustrated are from Bailey Ground.

- 3, 49, 53 and 54. These are examples of what appeared to be single platform cores. However, a closer examination revealed that all of them have been struck from at least one other direction, although the original striking platform has been removed by reworking the core. It was noticeable that the cores had not been so completely worked out here, as was the case at Eskmeals. Some of the cores are illustrated, with small arrows indicating the direction from which they have been struck.
77. A broken knife of pink flint, it is triangular in section and several knives of this type have been found at Drigg, especially in association with leaf arrowheads. No knives of this type were found on the Bronze-Age sites at Eskmeals. This tool was picked up by K. M. Mawson close to the findspot of the Ronaldsway-type axe.
94. A utilized flake knife in grey flint with some creamy cortex still adhering. Some of the cortex has been removed for about half the length of the side opposite the utilized edge, giving a combination of utilized flake and prepared knife.
99. A core scraper made on an old core or a thick rejuvenation flake, the flake scars of the core run at right angles to the plane of retouch. This is clearly shown in the drawing.
114. Scraper in Black flint. It is unusual on these sites to find a scraper from which all the cortex has been removed. This is a particularly fine specimen with long narrow flaking scars around much of its circumference. Like no. 21 it is almost circular and has not got a very pronounced negative bulb.
117. Knife of creamy opaque flint, made from a blade struck from the edge of a core, with some cortex still adhering. Although not such a fine specimen as nos. 27 and 62, it nevertheless has the same characteristics.

10 PREHISTORIC HABITATION SITES AT SEASCALE

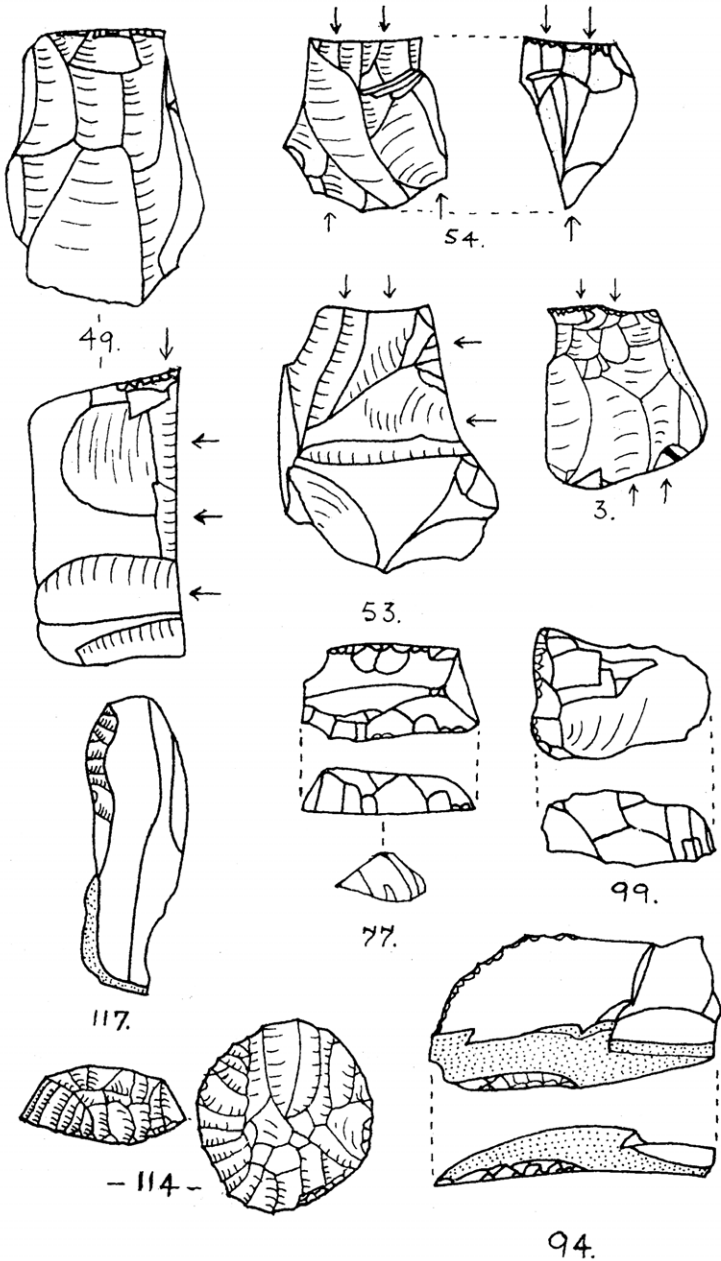


FIG. 3.—(Scale 1:1).

Fig. 4, a.

98. The axe fragment from Stony-How is very heavily patinated and appears to have been made from polished volcanic tuff. It is a pointed butt type with no faceting along its edges and, judging from the smooth condition and patination of the fraction, was broken in antiquity. The fragment is $5\frac{1}{4}$ in. long, 2 in. at its greatest width, tapering to about $\frac{3}{4}$ in.

Fig. 4, b.

The axe-head from Bailey Ground is the most interesting find from any of the sites. It has been made from a pebble of porphyritic rock and is a fine example of the type found by Mr J. R. Bruce and Mrs E. M. Megaw during the excavation of a Neolithic site at Ronaldsway, Isle of Man.¹⁰ It is 4.6 in. long and 2.6 in. wide at the blade, tapering to 0.8 in. at the butt.

The similarity between this axe and those from Ronaldsway is so marked that I feel I cannot do better than quote from Mr B. R. S. Megaw's report: "One of the most characteristic features of the stone industry was a special type of polished axe-head, of which seven examples were found, made from oblong pebbles of a coarse grained igneous rock. The butt-half of the axe was not only left unpolished but in several cases was evidently roughened intentionally and even reduced in thickness by pecking the surfaces which would be in contact with the haft. The polished (cutting-end) half of the axe-head, usually the thickest portion of the tool, is often clearly demarcated from the roughened butt-half, which sometimes has a slightly waisted appearance. The cutting edge and the "hafting line", which are parallel to each other, are oblique to the main axis of the tool thus making it asymmetrical. Another decided feature is that the butt is decidedly truncated, sometimes actually ground smooth, possibly to avoid splitting the haft, if one may assume a club-like haft the head of which would contain a socket deep enough to enclose the butt of the axe-head. The cross-section and profile of the axe-head are partly, indeed the profile in some examples might almost be called pear-shaped."

The Seascale axe-head is slightly smaller than the Ronaldsway specimen and the truncation of the butt is not so marked. The cutting edge of the blade is damaged, but a band about half an inch wide is still visible on the cutting edge where it has been reground and polished. The axe-head is illustrated in Fig. 4, b.

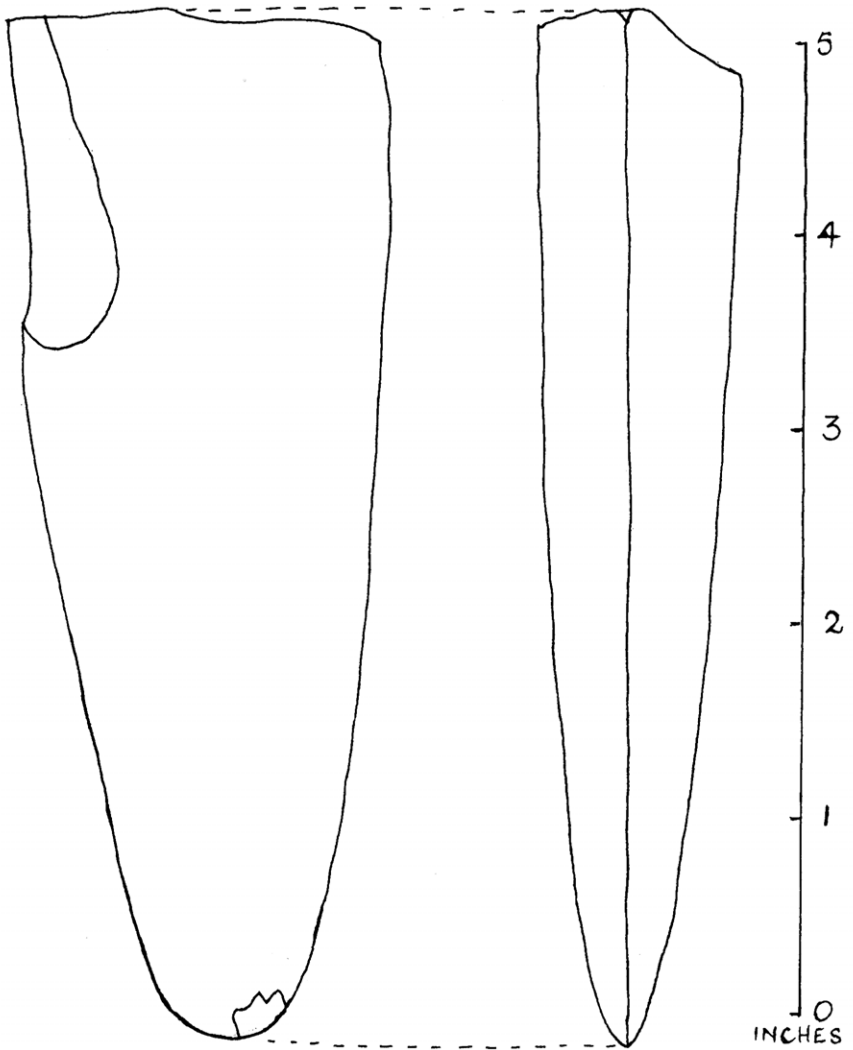


FIG. 4, a.—Axe fragment from Stony-How.

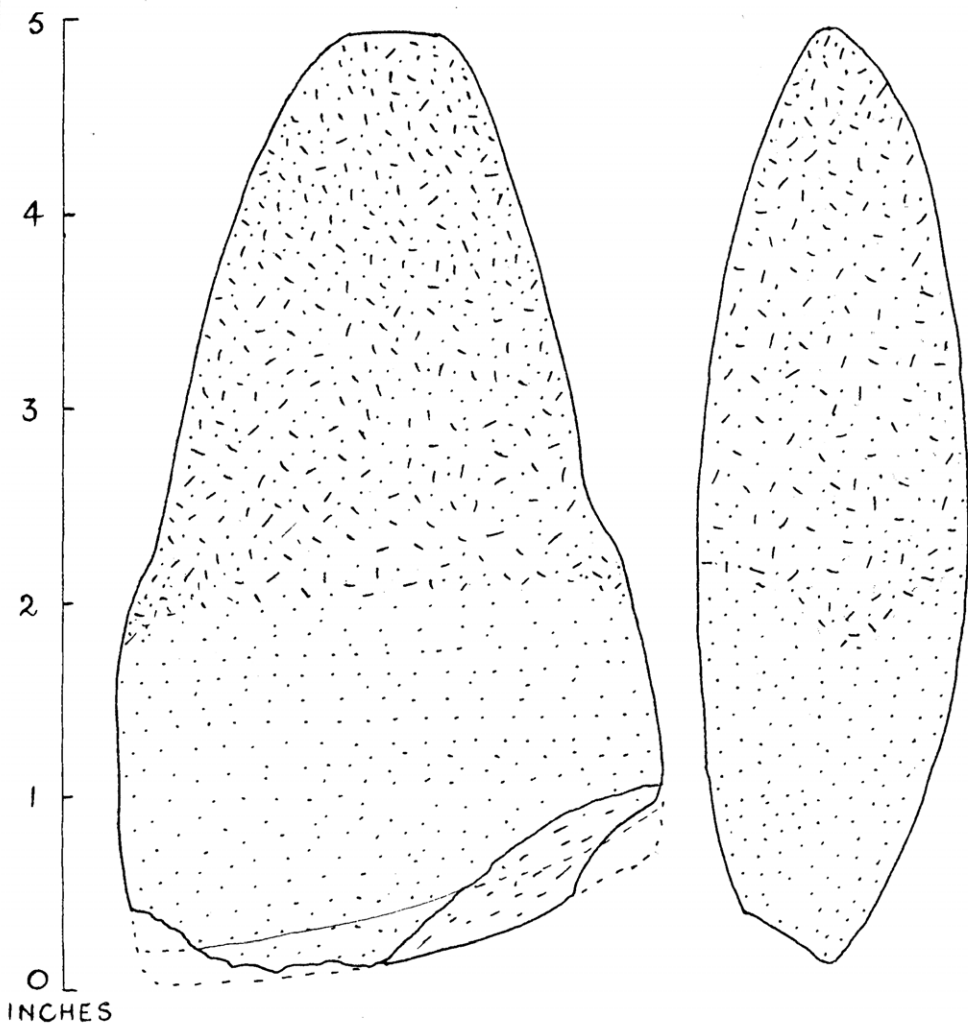


FIG. 4, b.—Axe-head from Bailey Ground (Ronaldsway Neolithic type).

As far as I have been able to ascertain, this is the only axe of its type that has been recorded in Cumberland, although its pebble-like form would obviously make it more difficult to identify, so that many more may be lying about unrecognized. Axes of the Ronaldsway type have been found at Whiston in Lancashire,¹¹ some have been described by Evans in "Ancient

Stone Implements'', and others have been discovered at Stony-kirk in Wigtownshire. Mr T. G. E. Powell tells me that one has turned up in the Wirral.

There is a fragment of a rough stone axe-head in the Dumfries museum which is labelled "Probably Ronaldsway" type. The fragment is faceted and in my view is not from a Ronaldsway type axe.

The flint scrapers which were found in association with the axe were steeply worked and bore a strong resemblance to those described by Mr Megaw from the Ronaldsway site. We have found nothing else which can be connected with this Isle of Man Neolithic culture. I think that pottery will have been destroyed by the action of the plough in this shallow stony soil.

Conclusions.

It has been suggested that flint artefacts could have been introduced by the use of sea-sand and seaweed as fertilizer.¹² Flint artefacts have been found in isolation at many places at varying distances from the coast, where seaweed manuring has never been practised. Flint debris from the storm beach would almost certainly be rolled and sand abraded and would have to be present in large quantities in order to account for the material in the coastal fields. In fact the material which I have picked up in the fields is neither rolled nor abraded, and the discovery of struck flints on the storm beach is rare indeed!

The evidence that we have gathered so far, shows that there were a number of small habitation sites to the south of Seascale, usually on dry, naturally drained land with a supply of water close at hand and within fairly easy reach of the beach. The place most favoured for settlement was in and around the village itself, where the evidence is of Neolithic and Bronze-Age habitation.

It was already known that implements from the factory sites of the Lake District reached the Isle of Man,¹³ but the finding of an axe of the Ronaldsway type emphasizes the cultural interchange of the Island with the west coast of Cumberland during the Neolithic period. There is yet much to be learnt about the prehistory of our county.

TABLE OF DISTRIBUTION OF ARTEFACTS

Site	<i>Flint Artefacts</i>						<i>Micro-liths</i>	<i>Stone Axes</i>	<i>Map Ref.</i>
	<i>Scrapers</i>	<i>Knives</i>	<i>Hollow Scrapers</i>	<i>Utilised Flakes</i>	<i>Cores</i>	<i>Blades</i>			
Bailey Ground	45	11	3	6	13	7	—	1	50103043 50093044 50093045
Burnt Moor	2	—	—	—	1	—	1	—	50083051
Moorside	3	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	50063054
Whitriggs	2	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	50043049
Stony-How	3	—	—	—	—	2	—	1	50033051
Acrelands	—	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	50153052
Seascale Village	6	1	1 T & B Arrow-head	—	—	—	—	—	50123042
Broom (Hallsenna)	3	1	—	—	1	—	—	1	50113059

NOTE:—Bailey Ground yielded 8 lb. of flint debris, the others yielded less than $\frac{1}{4}$ lb. each.

References.

- ¹ D. Nickson and J. H. Macdonald, "A preliminary report on a micro-lithic site at Drigg, Cumberland", CW2 lv 17.
- ² J. Cherry and W. Pennington, "Flint-chipping sites at Drigg", CW2 lxv.
- ³ J. Cherry, "Eskmeals sand-dunes occupation sites — phase I, flint working", CW2 lxiii 31.
- ⁴ Clare I. Fell and E. J. W. Hildyard, "Prehistoric Weardale — A New Survey", *Arch. Aeliana* (4th series) xxxi 98.
- ⁵ Clare I. Fell and E. J. W. Hildyard, "More flints from Weardale — A Postscript", *Arch. Aeliana* (4th series) xxxiv 131.
- ⁶ M. C. Fair, "A note on some West Cumberland stone axes", CW2 xxxv 259.
- ⁷ M. C. Fair, CW2 xxxviii 312.
- ⁸ C. A. Parker, "The Gosforth District", CW2 Extra Series, vol. xv, 29.
- ⁹ W. Fletcher, CW2 lvii 1.
- ¹⁰ J. R. Bruce, E. M. Megaw and B. R. S. Megaw, "A Neolithic site at Ronaldsway, Isle of Man", *Proc. Prehist. Soc.* xiii (1947) 139.
- ¹¹ *Trans. Hist. Soc. Lancs. and Ches.*, 1941.
- ¹² F. Barnes and J. L. Hobbs, CW2 li 2.
- ¹³ *Proc. Prehist. Soc.* xv (1949) 15 and 19, fig. 8; CW2 l 9.

Acknowledgements.

I would like to acknowledge the interest and co-operation of the farmers of Seascale and Drigg who so kindly allowed me to tramp around their land. The Ronaldsway axe was identified by Mr Megaw who also gave me useful information on the Ronaldsway Neolithic site. The artefacts have been examined by Miss Clare Fell who also gave us invaluable encouragement, and advice on the compilation of this report.

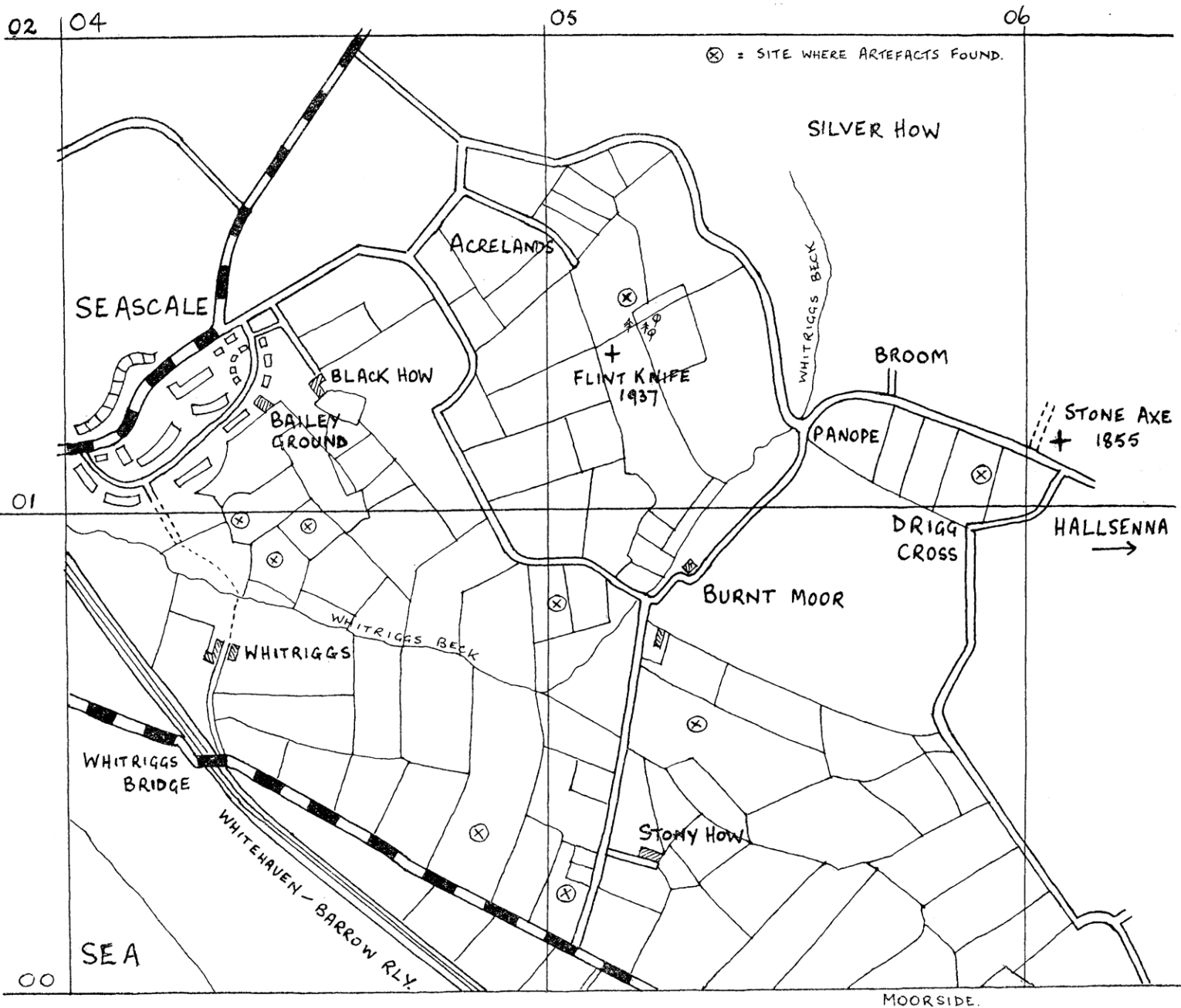


FIG. 5.—Map of sites.
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