

ARCHAEOLOGICAL FINDS ON THE TISSINGTON TRAIL

By L. B. COOPER

WITH the growth in size of earth-moving equipment, and the desire to move many of the county's eyesores, there is bound to be an increase in the amount of soil moved from one locality to another. This creates the problem of identifying any archaeological finds from such a deposit, and necessitates finding the origin of any imported soil. Such a case has arisen on the Tissington Trail, the name given by the Peak Park Planning Board to its new grass-track which is designated for walking and pony trekking. This trail utilises the derelict section of the line which was formerly part of the London & North Western Railway, extending from Mapleton Lane bridge, near Ashbourne (SK 14176469), to Hartington Station (SK 16150612), a distance of 11½ miles.

The rails and sleepers have been removed, and the ballast covered with about 13,000 tons of soil to a depth of 4 in., and seeded down, making a path 15-18 ft. wide. The deposit on the southern section as far as Newton Grange was obtained from Grange Mill quarry (SK 244576), and numerous flint artifacts found at the quarry have been deposited in Sheffield City Museum by Mr. B. Bennett. The remainder of the track was covered with soil from the now disused Hartington Station quarry (SK 151613).

An examination of the full length of the trail in 1969 revealed numerous artifacts. On the southern section, 12 flint flakes, 7 of which have secondary retouch, were recovered. From the northern section, there were 19 waste flakes, 8 scrapers, 10 flakes with secondary retouch, and a complete polished stone axe. The axe, probably made from stone from the Graig Llwyd axe factory at Penmaenmawr, North Wales, measured 7½ in. x 2⅞ in. (fig. 1). In addition, 2 flint scrapers were found in a remaining soil heap at Hartington Station quarry.

A further complication might be mentioned. The ballast from the rail track is mainly green igneous rock, and investigation has shown that the London & North Western Railway used thousands of tons of Graig Llwyd rock on its tracks. It seems probable that the trail has the same ballast, and if one found isolated green stone chips one would almost automatically describe some of them as axe fragments.

The artifacts from Hartington Station quarry suggest the presence of

a Neolithic site, part of which may remain on the land adjacent to the quarry. The Grange Mill quarry finds may eventually prove to come from a similar site.

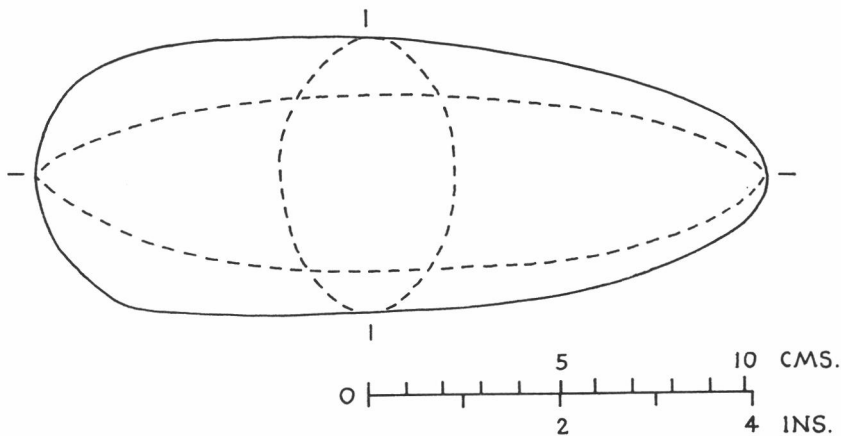


FIG. 1. Axehead from Tissington: outline and profiles.

The writer would like to thank the Peak Park Planning Board, and Mr. T. S. Burrell for permission to survey the trail and for information, and Mr. Ivor Davies of Penmaenmawr for information on the Penmaenmawr quarry. Details of the finds can be seen in a typescript deposited with the Peak Park Planning Board, along with the artifacts.