

RECENT SURFACE FINDS FROM A BARROW ON WETTON LOW, WETTON, STAFFS.

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In Memoriam L. B. COOPER

Both editors and authors are confident that they are committing no impropriety in publishing in this journal a report on a site just outside Derbyshire. This paper was written after the death of Len Cooper, to honour the memory of a scholar and friend who engaged himself in archaeological research throughout the Peak. His love of Derbyshire, his companionship and his constant eye for the past are sorely missed.

INTRODUCTION

Wetton Low is a prominent rounded hill in the limestone country of the Peak, lying half a mile (0.8 kilometre) south of the village of Wetton (SK 1122 5473) (Fig. 1). On its summit is a large burial mound, the north-eastern side of which is surmounted by an Ordnance Survey triangulation pillar (322.51 metres O.D.). On a casual visit on 12th April 1984, Charles Exley, Alan Miller and the late Len Cooper observed several pieces of white patinated flint showing through the eroded surface of the short cropped grass covering the mound, adjacent to the south face of the triangulation pillar. Examination of these flints showed them to be not just waste flints, but artefacts with considerable secondary working. Construction of the triangulation pillar took place in July 1947, and maintenance work has been carried out on it on a number of occasions since its erection, the most recent being in July 1983 (details kindly supplied by Mrs S. White, Information Branch, Ordnance Survey). Evidently, the flints have been exposed as a result of the construction and repair of the pillar, combined with the movement of cattle around it. A surface collection of flints from any Peak barrow is a rare occurrence, and demands a close study of the barrow and its setting.

THE SITE

There are signs of at least one rectangular trench having been cut into the mound, beginning at its western margin, taking in its centre and terminating near the foot of the triangulation pillar. It is reminiscent of the work of early barrow diggers. The strong possibility of antiquarian diggings led to the investigation of publications of Thomas Bateman and, eventually, to the frontispiece of *Barrow-digging by a Barrow-knight*. It was this illustration, described by the author of the work as "a faithful delineation of the scene on 28th of May, 1845" (Isaacson, 1845; see the reproduction in *DAJ* 93, 1973: 102-3, Pl. II), that enabled the definite identification of the mound as Taylor's Low(e), Wetton, the excavation of which Bateman described as follows (1848: 66):

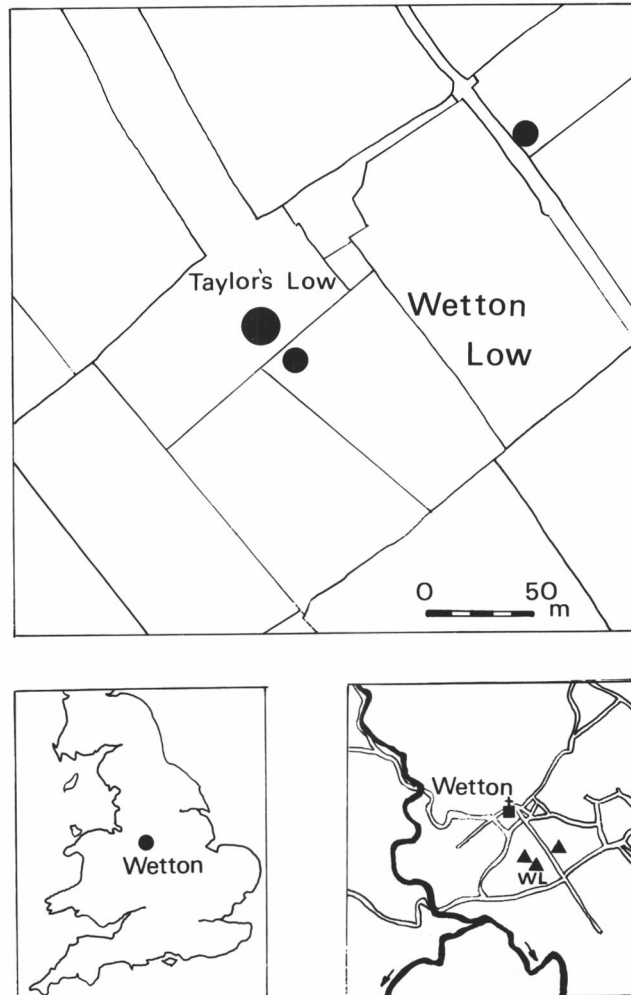


Fig. 1. Wetton Low: location.

The first tumulus opened this year in Staffordshire ... about two feet from the surface of the barrow was a cist, formed of thin, flat limestones, containing the skeleton of a young person, probably a female, the knees, as is frequently the case in the more ancient barrows, being contracted. About eighteen inches from the surface, on the north side of the tumulus, was another skeleton; deeper down a small octagonal cist, containing a simple deposit of burnt human bones, was erected over a human skeleton, which lay in a large square cist, cut in the rock, thus presenting the anomalous appearance of a cist within a cist. There was nothing found with any of these interments; a few flint instruments and a small piece of an urn only occurring promiscuously. The most remarkable circumstance attending this barrow was, that although each skeleton was quite undisturbed, yet all the heads which lay towards the interior of the mound had been destroyed, by the central part of the tumulus having been some years ago removed, in order to form a limekiln.

A new survey by Clive Hart in the vicinity of Taylor's Low has led to the discovery of a small barrow, 9.5 metres in diameter and c. 35.0 cms at its maximum height, approximately 20 metres

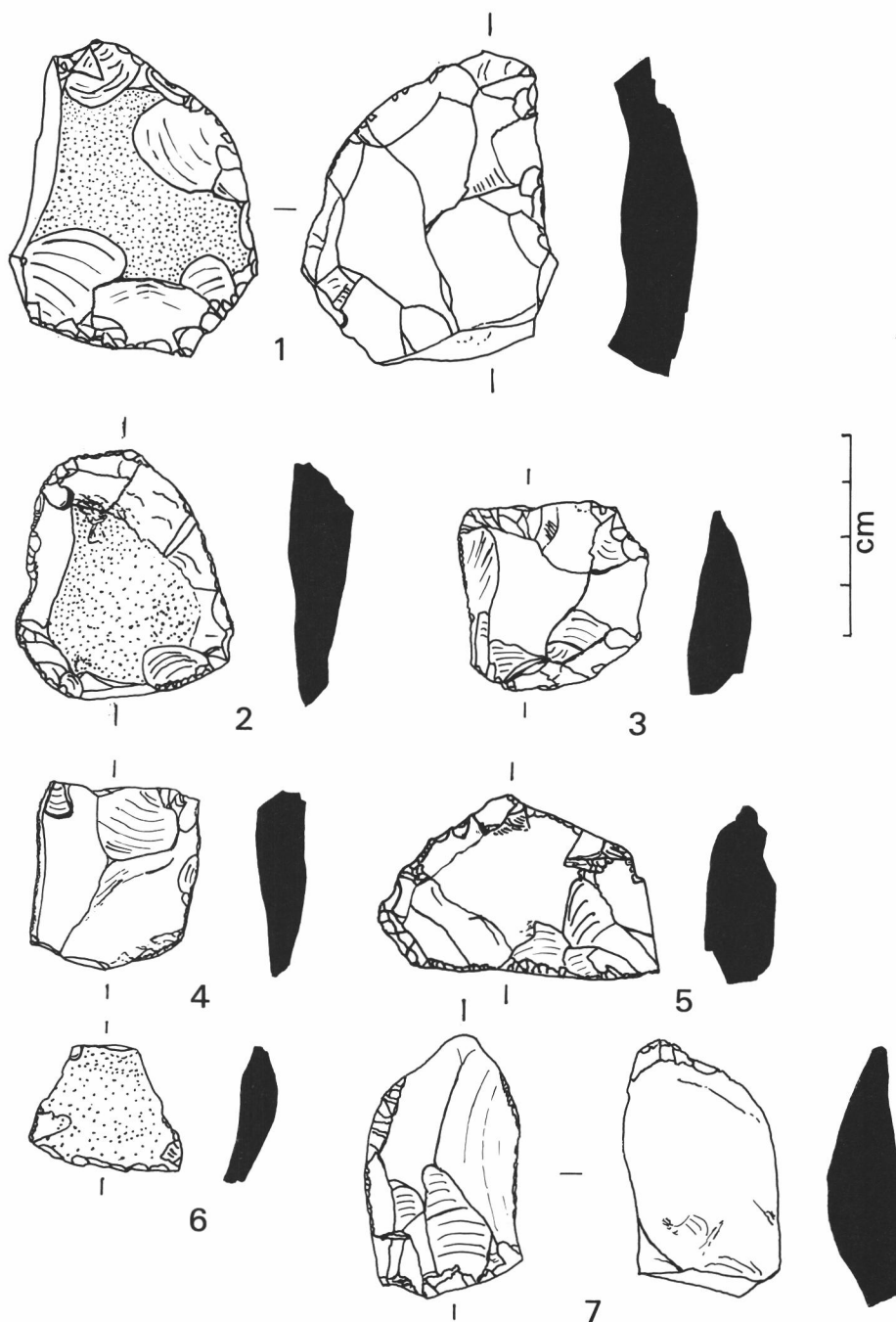


Fig. 2. Wetton Low: finds (I). 1: thick flake knife with some secondary working; 2: end-side scraper; 3: end-side scraper; 4: end-side scraper; 5: broken end-side scraper with some secondary working on breakage edge; 6: waste with cortex and (?)utilized edge; 7: side scraper with utilized opposing edge and point.

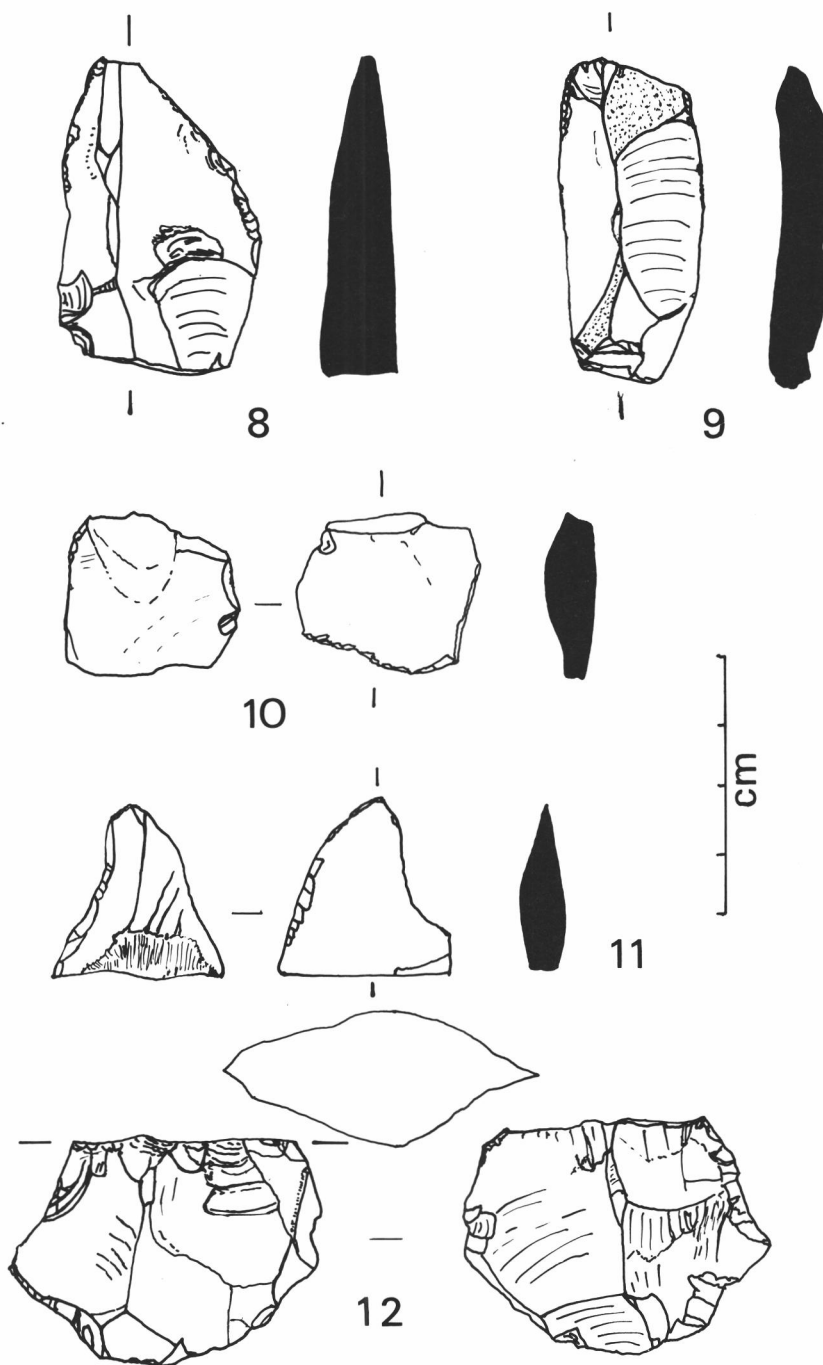


Fig. 3 Wetton Low: finds (II). 8: side scraper with utilized opposing edge and point (comparable with Fig. 2.7); 9: end scraper on blade; 10: waste with secondary working along one edge; 11: broken, hollow-side scraper; 12: keeled core, Clark D type, with one major platform.

to the south-east, and a second small barrow, truncated by the road and field wall, 160 metres to the north-east (Fig. 1).

THE FINDS

Twelve flints were recovered from the eroded surface immediately at the base of the triangulation pillar (Figs 2 and 3). These flints were most likely brought to the surface when the pillar was seated in the mound. The standard minimum depth for the footings of such pillars (including the lower centre mark and lower block) is 1.10 metres. Allowing for disturbances, the mound may be calculated to be a little over 1.6 metres high. The cache of flints may well, therefore, have come from the old land surface, or even from an interment below the mound.

The number assigned to each worked flint follows Len Cooper's original arbitrary ink numbering of the finds. All the flints are in a fairly fresh, unrolled condition, although they are all white patinated. Flints nos. 7-9 have a secondary surface cortex, heavily iron-stained. Three different forms of flint-chert are distinguishable on the basis of colour, quality and type of cortex. The flinty-cherts are comparable with the chalk flints of the East Riding of Yorkshire.

The flints are notable for their relatively large size and thickness, and exhibit rough use prior to deposition. All appear to have been worked by flaking, and the initial use of hard hammers may be recognised by the striking platforms, prominent hinge fractures and feathered fractures. All the blades and flakes have been struck from cores, and exhibit modification by retouch with, in eleven cases, signs of use. The cache comprises a core (Fig. 3.12). This is small and exhausted, and belongs to Clark's Form D: keeled cores produced by flaking in two directions (Clark *et al*, 1960: 216f.).

The original notes and finds are deposited in Sheffield City Museums (Accession no. 1986-599).

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