



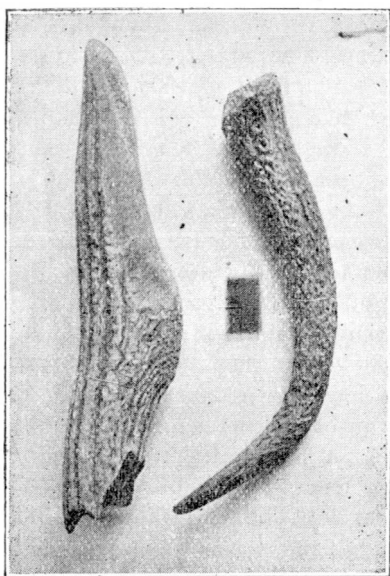
On the Discovery of two Prehistoric Horn Implements at Lymm, Cheshire

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UNFORTUNATELY the study of early man finds comparatively few admirers in the field of Archæology; but those who extend their researches into prehistoric times, and care to dip a little into the past history of the earth, will be well rewarded with the glimpses of the border-land connected with, or immediately succeeding, the last geological traces in the earth's history. There it is we get the first traces, in unwritten tablets, of primeval man, by his remains and his handicrafts, which have been preserved to us through long ages, in river gravels, and the submerged forests; in caves, and in the tumuli erected to his memory.

We have already seen something of the rude stone implements used by the Neolithic tribes of North Wales, and now we have two other examples of the tools they manufactured and employed, and which, to my mind, are infinitely more interesting from their almost unique character, and from the resemblance they bear to others discovered in the North of Scotland. These examples are early Neolithic, and were found in a submerged forest bed at Lymm, while excavating for the Manchester Ship Canal. They are the property of Mrs. C. Griffiths, of Helsby, Cheshire, to whom we are greatly indebted for

the loan of them, and also for permission to make plaster casts from them. Mrs. Griffiths writes: "The antlers (implements) were found in the Canal Cutting, opposite Lymm, about 25 feet below the surface of the ground." Both are made from the antler of a red deer. Fig. 1



Figs. 1 and 2.

The length of label indicates one inch.

measures $11\frac{3}{10}$ inches, and its greatest girth is $6\frac{8}{10}$ inches, and weighs $15\frac{1}{2}$ oz. It is made from the beam of a massive antler, and still bears, very clearly, the marks of the comparatively blunt tool which fashioned it. The cutting end is widely rounded, and somewhat chisel-shaped, and has been formed by cutting the antler obliquely for a distance of 6 inches. The opposite end is imperfect, but there are evident traces of a hole $\frac{8}{10}$ ths of an inch in diameter, which was made completely through the beam. Fig. 2 is a prong or "bez" cut from the beam of an antler. But the implement used to sever it must have been of a very different character to that employed in making the former implement. In this example the tool-marks are much narrower, and remind one of the teeth-marks of certain small rodents. The pointed end of the tool has been slightly flattened on two opposite sides; and the tool-marks resemble those on the larger example. It measures 12 inches along its outer curve,

and weighs $7\frac{1}{2}$ oz. Sir William Turner's account¹ of the Scotch examples is so full of interest, that I venture to give *in extenso* what he says of them :—

“In 1819 the bones of a great Fin-whale, estimated about 72 feet long, were exposed in the carse land adjoining the gate leading into the grounds of Airthrey Castle, near Bridge of Allan, about 25 feet above the level of high water of spring tides. Two pieces of stag's horn, through one of which a hole about an inch in diameter had been bored, were found close to the skeleton. In 1824, on the Estate of Blair Drummond, in the District of Menteith, a whale's skeleton was exposed, and along with it a fragment of a stag's horn, which was said to have a hole in it, and to have been like that found along with the Airthrey Whale. Mr. Home Drummond also states that a small piece of wood was present in the hole, which fitted it, but on drying shrunk considerably. Unfortunately, these specimens have been lost, and no drawings or more detailed descriptions were ever apparently published; though in some geological and archæological works they have been stated, without any authority, to have been lances or harpoons. Twenty years ago the skeleton of another whale was exposed at Micklewood, Gargunnoch, a few miles to the west of Stirling, and resting upon the front of its skull was a portion of the beam of the antler of a red deer, fashioned into an implement eleven inches long, and six-and-a-half inches in greatest girth; a hole had been bored through the beam, in which was a piece of wood one inch and three-quarters long, apparently the remains of a handle. The implement was truncated at one end, and shaped so that it could have been used as a hammer, whilst the opposite end was smooth and bevelled to a chisel, or axe-shaped edge formed by the hard external part of the antler. There can be no doubt that this implement resembled those found alongside of the Airthrey and Blair Drummond Whales earlier in the century; and it effectually disposes of the statement that they were lances or harpoons. Dug-out canoes have indeed been found imbedded in the carse clays at a similar level, so that the people of that day had discovered a means of chasing the whale in the water;

¹ *Nature*, January 6th, 1898, pp. 235-236.

one can, however, scarcely conceive it possible to manufacture a horn implement sufficient to penetrate the tough skin and blubber of one of these huge animals, and to hold it in its efforts to escape. It is much more probable that the whale had been stranded at the ebb of the tide in the shallow water near the shore, and that the people had descended from the neighbouring heights, and had used their horn implements, with their chisel-like edges, to fleece the carcass of its load of flesh and blubber, and had carried the spoil to their respective habitations. There can be little doubt that these implements rank, along with the dug-out canoes, as the oldest relics made with human hands, which have up to this time been found in Scotland, and they belong to the earliest period of occupation by Neolithic man."

Thus it will be clearly seen how closely our example (fig. 1) resembles those described by Sir William Turner. And when we consider that dug-out canoes have also occurred in Cheshire in the similar deposits, it is only reasonable to infer they may have been contemporary with the Scotch examples.

