

III.—THE MICROLITHIC INDUSTRIES OF NORTHUMBERLAND.

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The discovery of microliths—small flint tools of geometric form—on the coast of Northumberland has added a little to our information about the wanderings of the Tardenois folk in Britain. The relics of these people have been traced in many places abroad; and they are thought to have arrived in this country before the appearance of Neolithic man. Being fishermen or hunters their occupation of any locality was short and migratory. After the Tardenois people had passed into Britain, possibly by a land bridge from the continent, they do not seem to have been affected by the later developments of the Tardenois flint industry, which have been observed abroad. Thus the English Tardenois is in its earlier stages singularly like the earlier stages of the industry in Belgium; but so far no trace has been discovered here of the middle and late phases of the Belgian Tardenois. It is thought therefore that England was invaded in early Tardenois times by a continental people, who eventually became isolated and then proceeded to develop their flint industry on more or less independent and original lines, unaffected by foreign influence. It is difficult otherwise to account for the difference between the developed English Tardenois and its equivalent abroad. In the earlier stages of this industry a triangular or crescent shaped form of tool was gradually developed out of a pointed or truncated blade; later on the triangle developed into a trapeze. But in England the trapeze was not fully attained, although a considerable advance can be observed in the development of the triangle—an advance which has perhaps no very close parallel with anything found abroad.

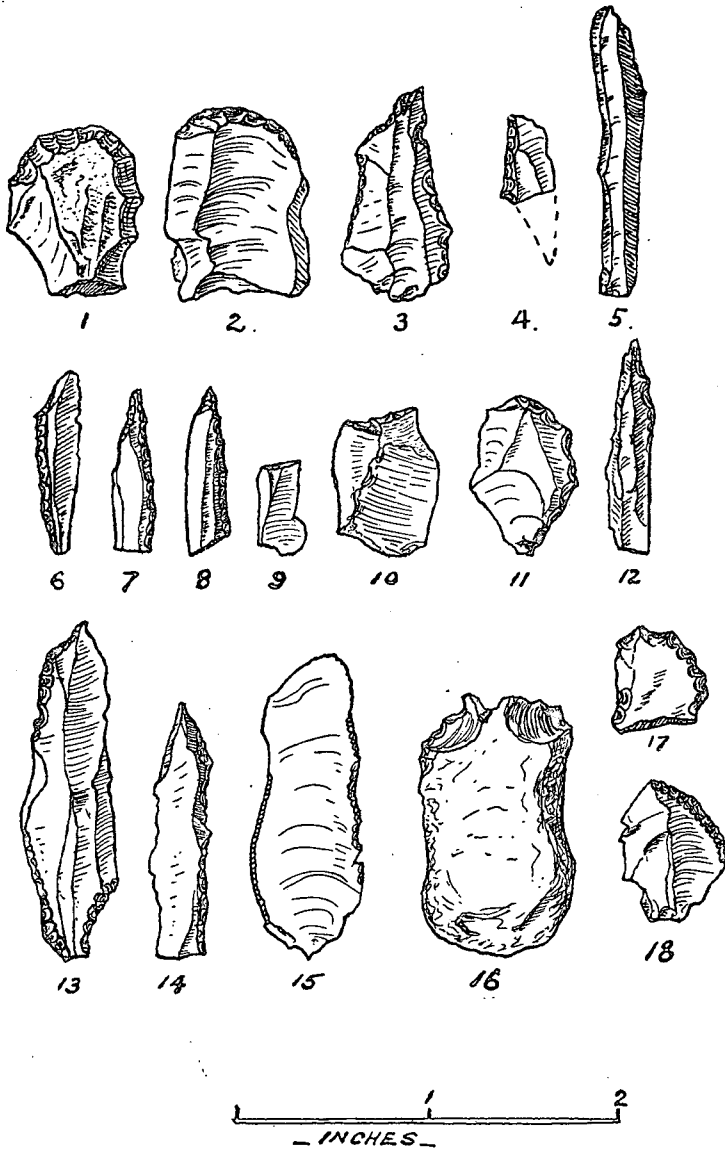
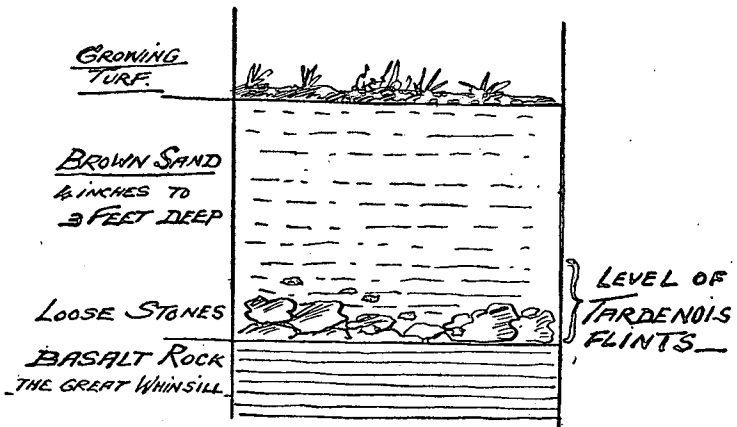


FIG. 1.—EXCAVATION AT SPINDLESTON (O.D. 150 FEET).
EARLY TARDENOIS.

Various phases of the Tardenois industry have been found in many places in England chiefly towards the East Coast and along the watershed of the southern Pennines. In Northumberland we get two distinct phases of the industry, both in the neighbourhood of Budle bay. The earlier of the two is represented by a group find (Fig. 1), excavated at Spindleston and by a few isolated specimens found on the surface of Budle crags. The later or more developed phase is represented by little groups of tools and chippings found in several places on the coast where the



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FIG. 2.

old land surface has been exposed (see Fig. 3). The earlier phase resembles very closely the early Tardenois of Belgium and of S.W. Yorkshire; the later phase may be a more local one, remarkable for its developed triangles, its tiny round scrapers and its scrapers used as wedges.

On the side of Spindleston crags facing the south corner of Budle bay a small workshop site was located owing to the operations of rabbits. At first a few long flakes were found exposed on the surface amongst the sand scratched out of rabbit holes. Mr. Pitt of Waren House, kindly granted permission to the writer, to excavate this

site. The section obtained by excavation is here shown (Fig. 2). The brown sand overlying the basalt rock is probably a mixture of the debris of the rock washed down from higher ground together with humus and blown sand. The flints were exposed at various depths, but mostly in close proximity to the solid rock. Only a small part of the ground excavated has been affected by the burrowing of rabbits. Altogether 362 pieces of flint were excavated from an area of about 40 square yards. Of these about 100 pieces are whitened or cracked by fire; and abundant traces of charcoal—the remains of the old hearth fires—were found. Cores, flakes and tools were scattered about in small patches, but never very densely. The flint is mostly of a hard type, grey or brown, rather typical of the early Tardenois in England. We can at least say that the occupation of this site was not prolonged, and that there was no shortage of workable flint.

List of tools found :—

- 16 Scrapers (Nos. 1, 2, 10 & 16-18).
- 3 Triangles all crude (Nos. 4, 6 & 14).
- 8 Pointed blades (Nos. 7, 8, 12 & 13).
- 3 Truncated blades (Nos. 3 & 9).
- 3 Blades with battered backs (No. 11).

No. 5 in the illustration is an example of an unworked blade, such as was used to make the characteristic points (*e.g.*, No. 7 or No. 12). No gravers or micro-gravers were found on this site, but the latter and even the true graver may be expected with this phase of the Tardenois. The whole group of tools corresponds closely with a much larger group excavated at Warcock Hill (north site) Marsden in S.W. Yorkshire.

Small clusters of flint tools and chippings of a later phase of the Tardenois industry were found along the Budle crags, on a small portion of Chester crags and again on an exposed pebbly floor on Ross links. The characteristic small triangles are never very common, and they are everywhere accompanied by a number of tiny rounded scrapers. The group find at Ross links included, out of a total of about 200 pieces of flint, 1 small triangle, and no

less than 35 scrapers, mostly small and rounded. A peculiarity of this coast industry is the heavy "scaling" of many of the scrapers. They appear to have had severe usage, possibly as wedges; it might be that they were used for opening shell fish or for splitting wood. Nothing whatever of this kind has been observed in S.W. Yorkshire, where the pygmy flints are abundant; so the inference is that this feature is due to some local use or need.

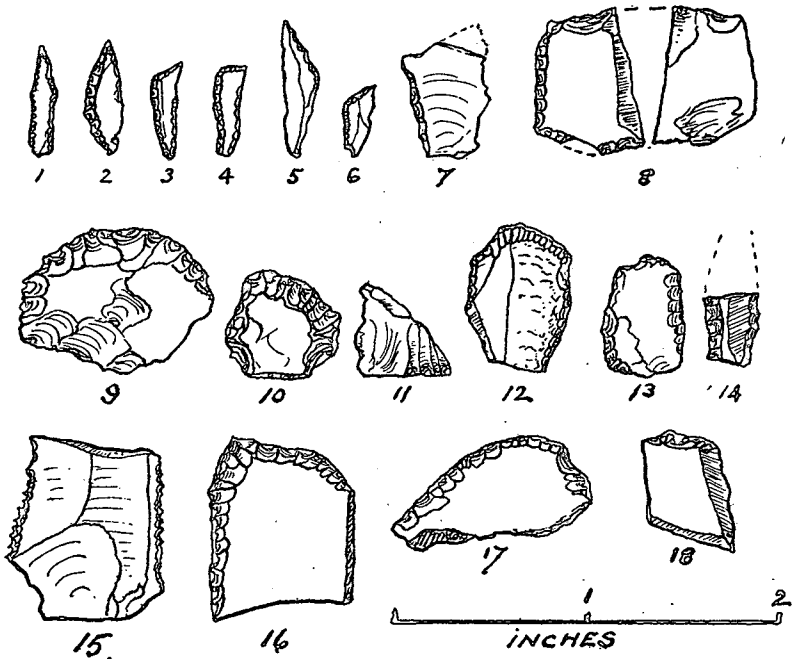


FIG. 3.—SURFACE FINDS ROUND BUDLE BAY. DEVELOPED TARDENOIS.

In Fig. 3 are shown the more common types of this phase of the Tardenois industry. Nos. 1, 3, 4 and 5, are geometric tools from Budle crags, No. 2 comes from Chester crags; and the rest are part of the group find on Ross links. The heavy scaling on the back of No. 8 should be noticed; and Nos. 9 and 13 are also scaled. No. 7 is a small knife and No. 15 has two serrated edges. The

types of triangle or crescent (Nos. 2 to 6) mark a great advance in workmanship over the crude forms in Fig. 1. No trace of the graver or micro-graver has been found with this group; and if the phase is a late one this is quite in keeping with foreign observations.

General Conclusion.—Northumberland was occupied in early Tardenois times and again apparently after a considerable interval. Owing to the fertility of the land and the absence of exposed surfaces it is impossible to judge the exact nature and extent of these occupations. A large area in the northern part of the county has now been examined for traces of the Tardenois folk, but save round Budle bay and near Craster the search has been a barren one. This does not mean that the Tardenois industry is not well represented in the county; it simply means that so far it has been difficult to find.

REFERENCES.

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