

X.—MORE FLINTS FROM WEARDALE— A POSTSCRIPT.

By C. I. FELL and E. J. W. HILDYARD.

Between the publication of our last paper and my departure from Weardale in August, 1954, I found a considerable quantity of flints at three new sites and saw or heard of finds from other sources, and these are now described here, to complete the record. Miss Fell has again examined my finds and her report on the technical side is, as before, accompanied by an excellent drawing of those worth illustration.

The most prolific site was the small ($3\frac{1}{2}$ acre) field (No. 3124) adjoining Police Field (now laid down to grass) on the east. I was told locally that this used to be called "the Flinty field", and as it produced over 300 pieces the name can fairly be adopted, but in fact I imagine the word "flinty" in local parlance merely meant stony and had no reference to actual flints. It had not been ploughed for many years until 1953. Flinty field can scarcely be considered a separate site but rather an extension of the site in Police Field, from which it is merely divided by a modern dry wall, though it must be remembered that the eastern half of the $7\frac{1}{2}$ -acre field was re-seeded before it was examined for flints. The character of the finds, however, as will be seen, is very similar to Police Field and to those from the field on Eastgate House farm exactly opposite on the north side of the road. Bearing in mind other finds on the Pipe-line in the field behind Eastgate School it is clear that the piece of ground in the angle formed on the west by the Rookhope Burn and bounded by the Wear on the south

was a favourite camping ground in prehistoric times from the Tardenoisian onward.

The second site, which produced 113 pieces, was a rough pasture overlooking a steep descent on the east bank of the Westernhope Burn. The more level portion of this had, in 1953, been ploughed up for re-seeding by Mr. T. O. Wall, who noticed near the northern end a spread of medieval pottery and iron objects similar to that found at the episcopal hunting lodge at Cambokeels in the valley beneath. As the present north wall of this field (No. 2927) is part of the wall of the medieval Deerpark it is clear that the two sites are connected, and when Mr. Wall informed me I hastened to examine the site. As a routine matter I also searched the plough for flints, with the results recorded here. The barb and tang arrowhead was found by my son Robin, then nine years old.

The third site was also found for an unusual reason. I had recently sold to Mr. Race, of Thimbleby Hill, a narrow strip across the south end of Unthank Pasture, a 40-acre field of rough grazing, to give him direct access to the main road. On examining the upcast heaps along the side of his newly made farm road, only some 50 yards long, I found no less than 44 pieces, including burnt flint "indicating actual settlement". If this pasture is ever ploughed up it might, on this evidence, prove to be a rich prehistoric site. My only other finds were three more pieces on the Mary Knotts Quarry Dumps and a "blade" on the edge of the long disused reservoir marked as Sikehead Dam west of the Stanhope to Blanchland road.

In addition to my own flints the following must be mentioned. Mr. J. A. Newrick, of Ireshopeburn, found one flint and one chert fragment in the pasture in front of Dike House Barn (No. 2919). This is on the west side of the Westernhope Burn, about half a mile further down than the site already described. These were examined by Miss Fell. Mr. Newrick, well qualified, as an officer of the County A.E.C., to do so, also confirms my view, expressed in our

former paper, that flints in the Dale are only exposed by shallow, multiple furrow ploughing not exceeding 6 ins. in depth. Deeper ploughing reaches the subsoil and covers the flints.

He also mentioned the alleged existence of an old "Flint" Quarry west of the Grasshill Causeway road near the head of the Lang Tae burn, Map Ref. 35/8137. His suspicion that the mineral in question is chert rather than flint is probably correct.

Mr. Harvey Walton reported that Mr. J. C. Peart, of Gold Hill, picked up a "fairly large piece of flint on the Great Limestone outcrop at Slit Foot, near his farm", Map Ref. 45/836423, at a height of *c.* 1500 O.D. I have not seen this piece, but it is probably a core.

Neither have I seen the following, reported to me by Dr. D. Maling, who in 1953-4 made a geological study of the valley of the Wear. Three sites in the river terraces between Harperley and Witton-le-Wear:

Map Ref. 45/128334. North-east side of the river, on the higher river terrace, immediately north of Wadley Beck. Five fragments of whitish-grey flint were lying on the surface. This place would repay further examination.

Map Ref. 45/128330. A little further south in the field, on the east side of the railway (which consists in part of river gravel and had just been ploughed), one small flint chip.

Map Ref. 45/119340. On the west (right) bank of the Wear, in one of two fields between Shipley Beck and a small unnamed stream south of it, a single black flint, larger than the others, worked along one edge. The farmer at Low Shipley has seen other fragments of flint in this field.

All these sites are on the river terrace or river gravel below the 400 ft. contour. Their position in relation to the river seems analogous to Police Field and similar sites, but I have only seen these fields from the railway. Dr. Maling also calls my attention to a site at the confluence of the Acton Beck with Euden Beck, Map Ref. 45/035292, on the south side. I was aware that the gamekeeper at Bedburn

had been finding flints in this area for some years, but had not ascertained the exact place, as this is rather outside my purview.

Dr. Maling, also in September, 1953, took peat samples from the Greenfield Quarry Site, which he submitted to Dr. Blackburn and Mr. Pearson at King's College. The attempt to date the Greenfield site by this method was, however, not successful. Dr. Maling reported as follows:

“The section of the superficial deposits which I excavated at the quarry consisted of:

- 11-13 inches (peat grading into grey clay)
- ca $\frac{1}{8}$ inch reddish hard pan layer
- ca 24 inches yellow clay with stones.

GREAT LIMESTONE.

The flints which I found in situ were all in the layer of greyish clay about 1 inch above the reddish hard pan.

Dr. Blackburn took samples throughout the section, but only the top peat provided any satisfactory pollen and this suggests a very late date for the upper peat. The critical layer of grey clay only contains spores of polypodium, which are practically indestructible and useless for dating the deposit. Dr. Blackburn considers that the grey clay represents a former land surface which was exposed and weathered for a considerable length of time, so that aerobic bacteria destroyed all but the most resistant organic remains. In view of the tremendous number of flints which Mr. Harvey Walton has found there, which in itself suggests long occupancy of the site, one might have expected that the principal flint horizons were exposed at the surface for a long time.”

Finally I must mention a large core roughly 4 ins. square and $2\frac{1}{2}$ ins. thick found by Mr. F. Turnbull behind a fire back in Howl John during alterations to a fireplace. This is of characteristic grey-black flint with part of the cortex

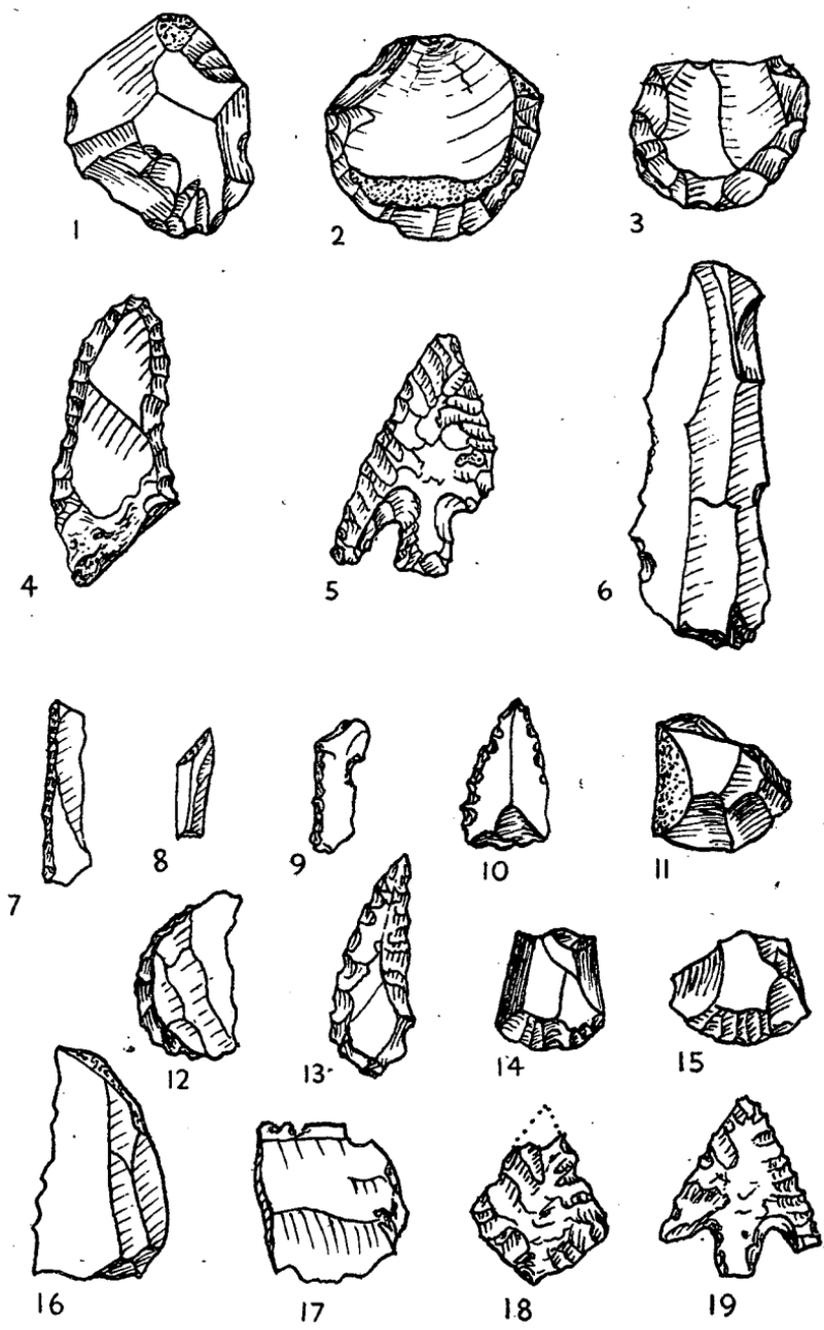


FIG. 1.

remaining, and must be a local find. If so, it is far the largest piece I have ever seen from Weardale.

ANALYSIS OF FINDS.

Before Mr. Hildyard left Weardale in 1954 he collected flints from a few additional sites not recorded in our previous paper. Flakes, cores and chips found at Unthank Pasture, Map Ref. 35/988377, at a height of *c.* 1100 feet o.d., and Dike Barn Pasture, Map Ref. 35/928372, *c.* 1100 feet o.d., are indeterminate in character and are not illustrated here, since no finished implements were found. However, the presence of a burin spall at the former site suggests an industry similar to that recorded from Greenfield, Cowshill, or from Police Field, Eastgate, while burnt flints indicates actual settlement there. A single well-trimmed blade was found at Sikehead Dam, *c.* 1450 feet o.d. (Map Ref. 35/957466), and two more flint chips were collected at Mary Knotts, site 15 on the distribution map of our previous paper.

Flints from two newly recorded sites are worth illustrating, first those from a newly ploughed field, Map Ref. 35/935366, at a height of 1250 feet o.d. up the Westernhope Burn—a burn flowing into the Wear about a mile and a half west from Eastgate from the fells on the southern side of the valley. About 100 fragments of flint and chert were collected. Finished implements include scrapers and a broken tanged and barbed arrowhead (fig. 1, 1-6). The arrowhead may have been broken in manufacture, for one side is a plain flake surface with very little pressure flaking. The barb of equal length with the tang is a form which has often been found associated with Beaker pottery. The industry does not betray a Mesolithic tradition, and it seems likely that the site was not occupied before Neolithic or Bronze Age times.

The second site—Flinty Field, Eastgate, *c.* 700 feet o.d. (Map Ref. 35/955385)—lies next to the east of Police Field, Eastgate, site 7 on the distribution map published with our

last paper, and has produced flints very similar to those found at Police Field and at Howl John, site 9. About 300 chips, flakes, cores and implements were collected, and some of these are illustrated in fig. 1, 7-19. The cores of flint and chert are small (no. 11) and not so characteristic of Mesolithic work as those illustrated from the two sites mentioned above. Microliths, already familiar from Police Field and Howl John, were found here (Nos. 7-10, 12-15) and are of the same late Tardenoisian tradition. No. 12 is a rough crescent, a form not previously recorded from Mr. Hildyard's Weardale sites. Here, as at Police Field, a small leaf-shaped arrowhead with broken tip (No. 18) and a tanged and barbed arrowhead of pink chert (No. 19) point to the occupation continuing into Neolithic or Bronze Age times, or to the Mesolithic techniques surviving into the later periods. The angular form of the leaf-shaped arrowhead (No. 18) seems characteristic of this district, since it occurs also at Police Field (*AA*, 4th series, XXXI, fig. 3, 18), and Bankfoot Quarry, Rookhope (*Ibid.*, fig. 5, 6).

These new finds support the conclusions of our previous paper, and show that the higher reaches of the Wear provided suitable ground for the economy of the people occupying this country from the close of Mesolithic times.