

A BURIAL OF THE IRON AGE!
AND A SERIES OF EARLY IRON AGE
OCCUPATION SITES AT WADDON,
CROYDON, SURREY.¹

BY

PRESCOTT ROW.

THE old manor of Waddon is part of the parish of Croydon, and lies to the south-west of the parish church of that town. Here at the head of the Wandle River there are many evidences of a widespread population in prehistoric times, and the fields on the lower slopes of the North Downs, which steadily rise from Waddon Station towards Purley, are littered with flakes, and have yielded many implements.

The particular site to which I draw the attention of the Society and indicate as the Cedars Estate is easily reached by the bridle path running westward by Waddon Mill on the banks of the river, and the section under discussion is the north-east corner of the plot marked as Brandy Bottle Hill on the 6-inch Ordnance Survey. A hillock of Thanet sand here rises and extends eastward over the next field, the top of which is some 140 feet above sea-level, and makes a vantage spot with a good look-out over the wide stretches of the level plain running north from the present course of the Wandle River, in early times, no doubt, a stretch of marsh-land. It is still called Waddon Marsh.

In 1922 the estate and its big house came into the hands of the builders, roads were cut running north and south through the low hill of Thanet sand, and a large quantity

¹ A paper read before the London Meeting of the Prehistoric Society of East Anglia, October 13, 1925.

of sand on each side of the road was excavated and removed, leaving an escarpment both east and west.

Early in 1923 my friend Mrs. Richardson of Croydon drew my attention to the site. She had remarked the frequency of burnt flints in the exposed soil of the escarpment, and had noticed that they occurred more thickly at the junction of the top soil with the sand level, and with the help of her son had removed the earth from a section, finding a bronze, square-sided, pointed piercer, or awl, much pottery, and an unmistakable hearth resting on the sand.

She very kindly invited me to help her open up the site, and in May, 1923, I dug out an oblong section from the grass surface down to the sand some 14 feet away from Mrs. Richardson's excavation, and perhaps 12 feet from the edge of the escarpment. At this point I found, 23 inches from the surface, a well-chipped steep-ended flake implement, and close to it, 33 inches from the surface and resting on the sand, the fragments of a pot which Mr. Charles Tomlinson has been able partly to restore.

We were now fully alive to the interest of the area, and by the help of two friendly surveyors, Mr. H. Kent Atkins and Mr. R. E. Tapping, a measured survey was taken of the land on the eastward escarpment, divided into 5-foot squares, and we were thus able to locate accurately the position of the finds. Permission to dig was obtained from the landowners by the Croydon Natural History and Scientific Society, of which Mrs. Richardson is a member.

One of the earliest finds made by a helper, Miss Joan Mendham, was a skull buried some 12 inches in the sand, and 4 feet from the present surface. I was absent at the time, but was called before it was removed, and the fragments have been skilfully mounted by Mr. A. E. Smith of the Museum of the College of Surgeons. Professor Sir Arthur Keith pronounces it to be that of a boy of five years of age. He dates it as pre-Roman, perhaps 100 B.C. No other bones of the skeleton have, to my knowledge, been found, but as the site is somewhat public the story of buried treasure soon got afloat and a good deal of nibbling was done by children on the escarpment. For various reasons I did very little digging in 1924.

The deposit of rainwash which covers the old land surface yields an abundance of burnt flint and a fair number of clearly defined implements, also a large quantity of pottery in fragments, chiefly of unornamented and coarse varieties, with some unquestionable Roman pottery. The black grooved ware and the grey lattice pottery allowed, however, but one date, namely, late La Tène, somewhere in the region of 50 B.C. The type of flint implements was more troublesome to fix, for a rainwash, as the term implies, consists of the washings of the countryside, and may well contain worked flints of more than one period.

For the purpose of trying to establish a definite relationship between the flint implements and the pottery it became necessary to recommence excavations, in the hope that some stratified section in the form of an undisturbed occupation site or a working floor might be encountered and recorded.

On the 19th of September, 1925, in co-operation with Mr. J. P. T. Burchell, whose experience and energy I have found invaluable, we began cutting away an undisturbed part of the eastern escarpment at plot 62 on the plan.

The deposit and rainwash overlying the sand was here thicker than elsewhere, and at 4 feet from the present surface and sunk 8 inches below the level of the sand we were fortunate enough to reach an undisturbed circular hearth 4 feet across.

The hearth was composed of calcined flints, charcoal, sand burnt to a reddish tinge, and lumps of burnt clay. Intermingled were numerous pieces of pottery, flint implements, flakes, bones, and teeth.

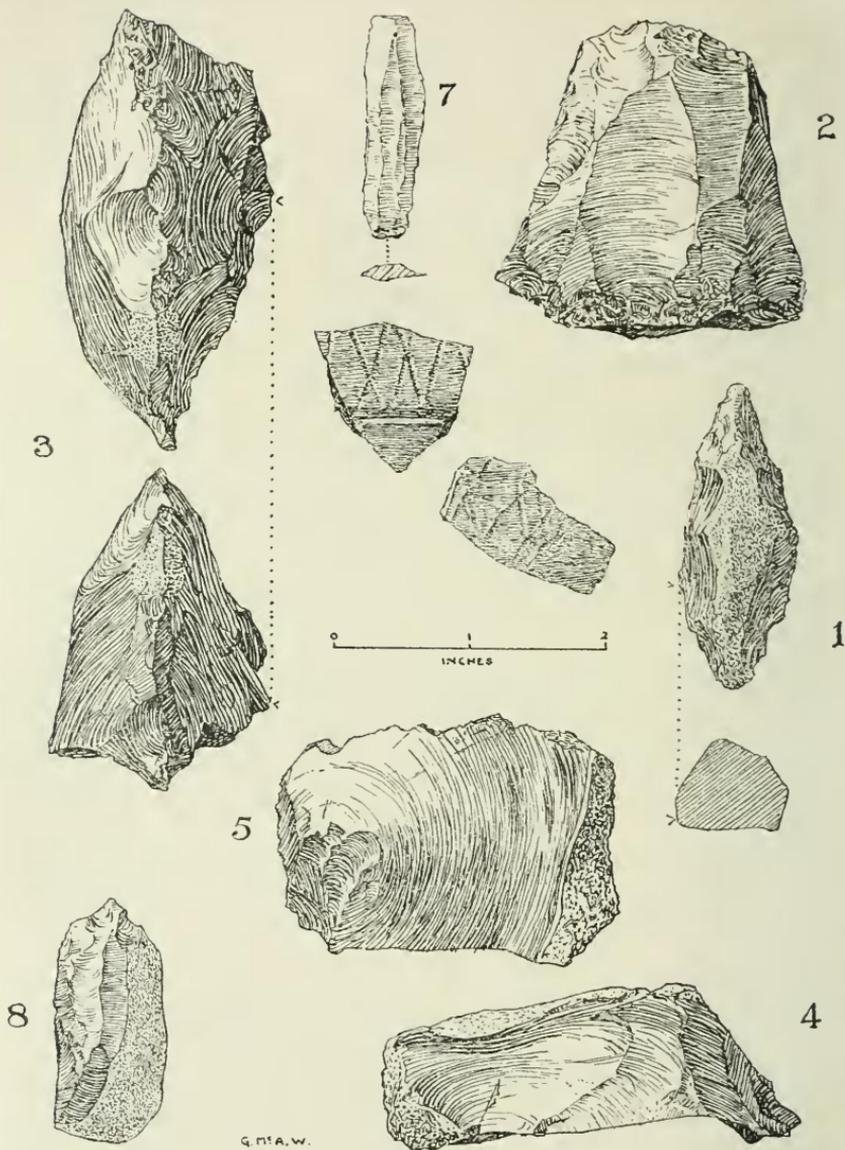
The pottery consists of three types:

(a) A coarse, well-baked pottery containing much crushed flint, the colours ranging from black to red.

(b) A fine and polished ware containing little or no crushed flint. It generally shows groove ornamentation, and is black in colour.

(c) A fine grey paste containing no crushed flint, and decorated with lattice ornamentation.

The flint implements and flakes from the hearth numbered some seventy-five in all, and consisted of:



WORKED FLINTS AND FRAGMENTS FROM LA TÈNE IRON AGE POTTERY.
From Waldon, Croydon.

1. A well-made fabricator, or more probably, perhaps, "strike a light" of grey chalk flint flaked and battered at the sides, the point of one end rounded and polished with use, $2\frac{1}{4}$ inches.

2. A tool or core of green-coated flint of blunt triangular shape. Flaked on two faces with edge much battered, $2\frac{1}{4}$ inches.

3. A sharp ridged implement of chalk flint pointed at both ends and flaked on the base and ridges, $3\frac{1}{2}$ by $2\frac{1}{4}$ inches.

4. An irregular ridged lump of chalk flint with steep fore-edge, $2\frac{3}{4}$ inches.

5. A green-coated flint flake with large bulb, chipped and flaked at the bulb end, $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches.

6. A triangular chalk flint lump with crust, $2\frac{1}{2}$ by 2 inches.

7. A neat flake of honey-coloured flint with delicate secondary working at side, $1\frac{9}{16}$ inches.

8. A, B, C, D, four other irregular flakes.

More than sixty other flakes, chips, and lumps from the hearth level, many of them and some of the implements showing traces of calcareous deposit.

The pottery and flint implements agree in character with those previously recovered from the rainwash and the surrounding hearth and occupied sites. The pottery with ornamentation is late La Tène in date, whilst the discovery of flint implements in the hearth and its immediate surroundings proves them, I submit, to be contemporary with the pottery.

I do not wish to claim that all the implements found in the rainwash at Waddon are Iron Age in date, far from it; but I suggest from the evidence of this particular area that the flints which shall be found *in situ* in hearths or occupation floor sites which are definitely associated with Iron Age pottery or metal work can be dated as of this period, and submit that the evidence before you throws a remarkable light on the abundant use of flint still continuing in this late period of pre-history.