

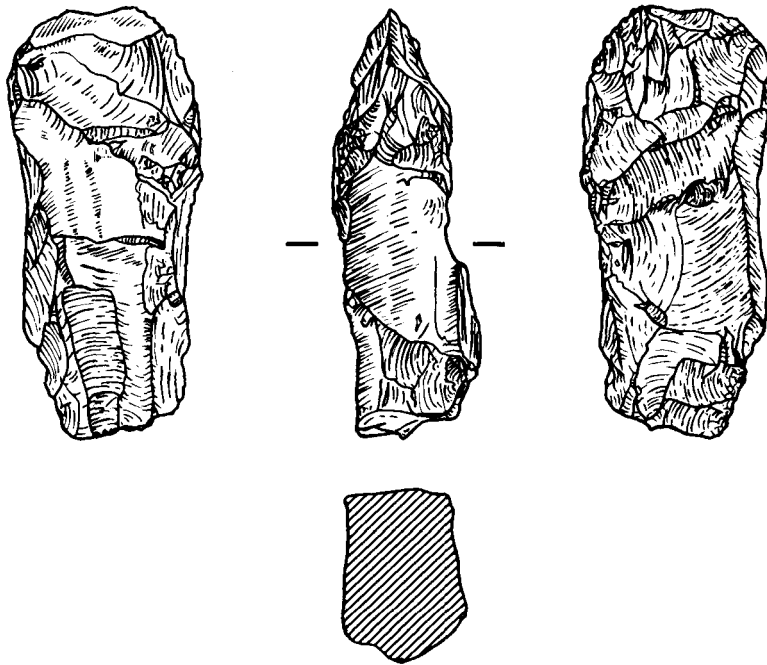
NOTES

This series of notes is used to provide a place to publish important individual objects or finds that would otherwise remain unpublished. *Editor.*

A MESOLITHIC TRANCHET AXE FROM THE THAMES AT FULHAM

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A tranchet axe of characteristic mesolithic type was found while examining the Middlesex foreshore of the River Thames at Fulham in June 1976.¹ The findspot lies on the north foreshore, at NGR TQ 25807558, 120m west of Wandsworth Bridge. This lies opposite a part of the river well known for finds of mesolithic material,² including the portions of Maglemosian bone or antler barbed points from Wandsworth and Battersea now in the Museum of London.³



The axe is 114mm long, with an average width of about 50mm and thickness of 30mm. It is of pale grey flint, stained olive green, and is fresh and unrolled, although slightly frost damaged on one face. No cortex is present. The axe is of sub-rectangular cross section, rather than the more usual rhomboidal, or triangular form, and has a sharply squared-off butt. The cutting edge has been formed by the classic tranchet blow, detaching a flake at a right angle to

the long axis across the full width of the axe. The axe is slightly wider at the blade than at the butt. A faint ridge halfway along the axe may be interpreted as a stop ridge for an antler sleeve, into which the axe could possibly have once been set.

This axe is but one more to add to the large number known from the Thames. Lawrence speaks of having had over a hundred from the river by 1929,⁴ although most of these are unpublished and poorly provenanced. This essentially riverine distribution of tranchet axes and picks is also noted in the Upper⁵ and Middle⁶ Thames Valley, and whilst occurring in other river valleys and on lowland sites they are rare on upland sites.⁷

The reason for this biased distribution may be functional variability in the toolkits of mesolithic peoples, the requirement for heavy axes used in forest clearance and boat building being mostly confined to the lowland sites occupied in winter.⁸

The axe is lodged with Gunnersbury Park Museum, Acton.

(I should like to thank Jacqueline A. Nowakowski for her excellent drawing, and Dr P. A. Mellars of Sheffield University and R. G. Lancaster of Gunnersbury Park Museum for discussing it with me).

NOTES

1. Found by the author during part of a systematic riverside survey of the borough by the Fulham and Hammersmith Historical Society, Archaeological Section. Other finds are currently being prepared for publication.
2. See, for example G. F. Lawrence "Antiquities from the Middle Thames" *Archaeol. J.* 86 (1929) 90, also A. D. Lacaille "Mesolithic facies in the Transpontine fringes" *Surrey Archaeol. Collect.* 63 (1966) 17.
3. E. Westerby *Ymer* (1931) 45. Also J. G. D. Clark *The Mesolithic Age in Britain* (Cambridge 1932) 18 and Fig. 2 Nos. 6, 7. These finds are in the Museum of London, accession numbers being A 19788 for the Battersea specimen, and A4907 for that from Wandsworth.
4. G. F. Lawrence *op.cit.* (in note 2) 74.
5. H. Case "Mesolithic finds in the Oxford area" *Oxoniensia* 17/18 (1952 and 1953) 2 Fig. 1.
6. R. F. Dennington and S. Morgan *The Middle Thames in Antiquity* (Slough 1966) 39.
7. P. A. Mellars "Settlement patterns and industrial variability in the British Mesolithic" in G. de G. Sieveking, I. H. Longworth and K. E. Wilson (eds) *Problems in Economic and Social Archaeology* (London 1976) tables 3 and 4.
8. J. G. D. Clark *Star Carr: A case study in Bioarchaeology* (Reading, Mass. 1972) 34.