

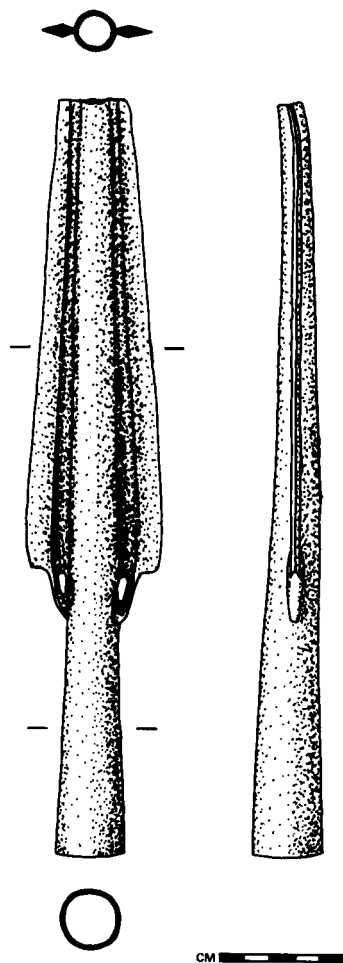
BASAL LOOPED SPEARHEAD FROM THE THAMES AT EEL PIE ISLAND

DAVID FIELD

A basal looped bronze spearhead was recently taken into Kingston Museum for identification. The owner¹ stated that it was found by his father in 1949, and that it was dredged from the clay bed of the Thames immediately upstream of Eel Pie Island (c. TQ 16357300).

The spearhead is 320mm in length, though the tip is missing, evidently an ancient break. Total length would probably have been about 400mm. The weight is 235 grammes. It is triangular bladed with a straight blade base and is channelled either side of the circular midrib. No rivet hole is present. The owner has suggested that the implement was not patinated when found and that its present coppery appearance may be due to frequent polishing with tomato ketchup. A number of small pits in the casting however retain a black patina while the interior of the shaft displays a patchy, green patina. The spearhead is of Rowlands Group 3.²

Leaf shaped basal looped spearheads are present during the Taunton-Barton Bendish phase (MBA 2) of the Bronze Age, while the triangular bladed examples are considered slightly later and attributed generally to the Penard (MBA 3). Recently both Rowlands³ and Ehrenburg⁴ have discussed dating and chronology so there is little point in re-covering that ground here. In addition Rowlands has considered distribution, and apart from groups in Lincolnshire and East Anglia noted the almost exclusive concentration of Group 3 types in the Lower Thames area. Forty-four examples come from this part of the Thames, all but three from the river itself. The present find adds one more to that number.



(1/3)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many thanks are due to Marion Hinton at Kingston Museum for bringing the find to the writer's attention, to Stuart Needham for most usefully commenting upon the draft and offering welcome encouragement, and to Mr. H. G. Hastings for kindly allowing the find to be recorded.

NOTES

1. Mr. H. G. Hastings of Kingston, who retains the find.
2. M. J. Rowlands 'The Organisation of Middle Bronze Age Metalworking'. *British Archaeological Reports* 31 (1976) 56-61.
3. *Ibid.*
4. M. Ehrenberg 'Bronze Age Spearheads from Berks, Bucks and Oxon'. *British Archaeological Reports* 34 (1977) 11-12.