

# A LATE NEOLITHIC MACEHEAD FROM KINGSTON UPON THAMES

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Petrological examination of a Late Neolithic mace head from Kingston upon Thames<sup>1</sup> provides a useful addition to those listed by Roe.<sup>2</sup> It would be described by Curwen as an 'egg-shaped macehead'<sup>3</sup> while its more angular outline might allow it to fall into Roe's category 'Ovoid B'.<sup>4</sup>

The implement was found in 1965 during deep excavations for a multi-storey car-park in the town centre of Kingston. It was described by the developers<sup>5</sup> as being found about 15ft. from the back wall of Marks and Spencer Ltd.,<sup>6</sup> and about 16ft. deep in clay. This would place it firmly within the sediments of the ancient river channel discovered by archaeological investigations on adjacent sites.<sup>7</sup> Found close to the macehead was a pebble<sup>8</sup> and an ox bone.<sup>9</sup>

The implement is 90mm in length, 57mm wide, and 64mm thick, with a sub-circular section. It weighs 440 grms. The shafthole, placed slightly off centre, is generally circular, and is funnel-shaped with a minor chamfer at either end. Minimum diameter of the hole is 16mm, though upper and lower diameters are greater, at 28mm and 31mm respectively. The significance of the funnel-shaped hole is not clear. It may have accommodated a sleeve to aid hafting, or possibly allowed for a wedge to be driven into the shaft end to tighten the grip. Alternatively a tapered shaft may have been used to provide additional strength immediately below the head, the point most open to stress.

Excavations at Eden Walk in 1977, some 100 metres to the southwest produced sherds of Mortlake ware and other occupation material that may be attributed to the same period as the macehead. This was recovered from the channel at a similar depth to the macehead and was sealed by organic peat with a radiocarbon date of  $1610 \pm 90$  bc,<sup>10</sup> though it must be stressed that they are not necessarily stratigraphically related. Amongst flintwork from the same site an oblique tranchet derivative arrowhead would provide a more conservative association.

Within South-East England a cluster of macehead finds occur along the west London stretch of the Thames. Most of these are of the 'Thames Pestle' type,<sup>11</sup> including one from Kingston itself,<sup>12</sup> though a number of Ovoid maceheads of flint have been recovered.<sup>13</sup> Land finds are rare. Surrey provides the nearest parallels to the Kingston example, with stone Ovoid types from Weybridge<sup>14</sup> and Ash,<sup>15</sup> while others are recorded from Colne Engaine and Braintree Mill in Essex, and Friston in Sussex.<sup>16</sup> Both Piggott<sup>17</sup> and Roe<sup>18</sup> have emphasised the association of stone maceheads with Grooved Ware pottery. Roe lists seven examples of Ovoid macehead associations with Grooved Ware, and only two possible associations with Peterborough Wares. Artifacts attributable to the

Late Neolithic and Early Bronze Age periods in the London Basin perhaps need investigating in further detail. Implements such as 'Scamer' flint axes, and 'Duggleby' adzes have been linked with the Grooved Ware–Machead complex,<sup>19</sup> and numbers of these have been found in the area.<sup>20</sup>

Surprisingly, with the exception of a few possible sherds from the Thames and one from Putney,<sup>21</sup> no Grooved Ware has been found. Peterborough Wares however occur in greater quantities,<sup>22</sup> especially in riverine locations in west London.

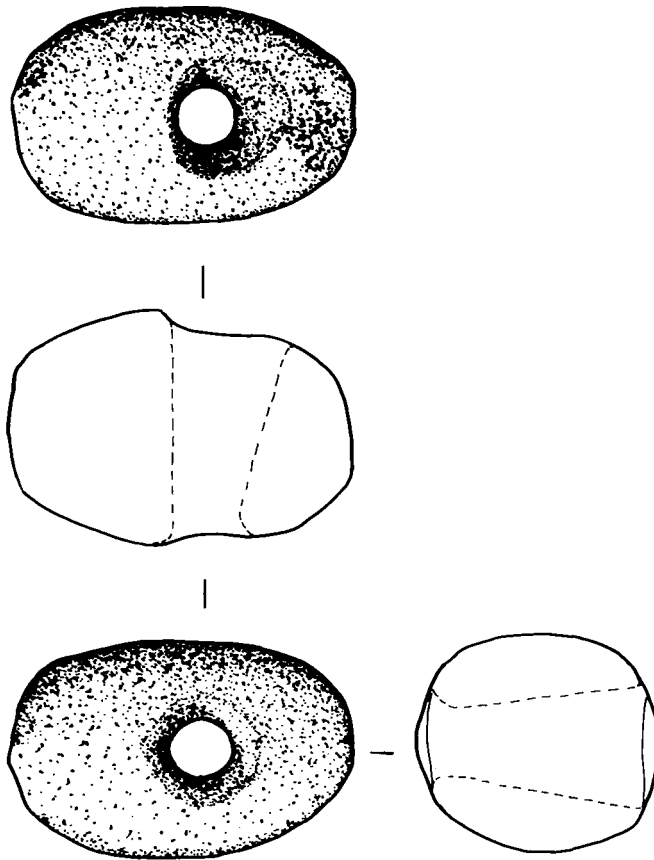


Fig. 1. Late Neolithic stone machead from Kingston upon Thames (1/2).

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Many thanks are due to Mrs. M. Hinton at Kingston Museum for allowing the machead to be sliced, recorded and published.

## APPENDIX: PETROLOGY

The fresh colour of the rock is blue-grey with prominent white feldspar phenocrysts and patches of dark minerals. In thin section the ground mass consists of short intergrown feldspar laths with some amphibole. It is difficult to determine the composition of the plagioclase feldspar since the whole rock is severely sericitised and altered. The feldspar phenocrysts are zoned, very turbid and subeuhedral and range from 3mm to 5mm in length. The patches of dark mineral were seen to be clots of small biotite crystals replacing hornblende. There is some sphene and magnetite present as minor constituent. The rock appears to be an andesite and the overall composition and texture suggest a source somewhere in the Breidden Hills of North Wales. An outcrop near Shrewsbury seems a likely source.

## NOTES

1. Kingston Museum Acc. No. 2035.
2. F. Roe 'Typology of stone implements with shaft-holes' in T. McK Clough and W. A. Cummins, eds., *Stone Axe Studies*, C. B. A. Res. Rep. No. 23 (London 1979).
3. C. Curwen 'An Egg-shaped Mace-head' *Antiq. j.* 21 (1941) 337-341.
4. F. Roe 'Stone maceheads and the latest neolithic cultures of the British Isles', in eds. J. M. Coles and D. D. A. Simpson *Studies in Ancient Europe* (Leicester 1968).
5. MacAlpine and Son.
6. NGR TQ 18066925.
7. J. Penn 'Evidence of Neolithic man in Kingston' *Kingston Geol. Soc. Rev.* 1, 1 (1968) 1-6.
8. Kingston Museum Acc. No. 2036.
9. Kingston Museum Acc. No. 2037 - right metatarsus of mature Bos - P. Nicolaysen, pers. comm.
10. HAR-2498. D. Hinton, pers. comm.
11. F. Roe *op. cit.* in note 4.
12. British Museum Acc. No. WG96.
13. F. Roe *op. cit.* in note 4.
14. Guildford Museum Acc. No S7666. Sliced ovoid macehead of Tuff.
15. *Surrey Archaeol. Collect.* 1946-7 (50) 137. Ovoid macehead of Bunter quartzite.
16. C. Curwen *op. cit.* in note 3, 341.
17. S. Piggott 'Neolithic Cultures of the British Isles' (London 1954) 331.
18. F. Roe *op. cit.* in note 4.
19. T. Manby *Grooved Ware Sites in the North of England* British Archaeol. Reports No. 9 (Oxford 1974).
20. Jean MacDonald, pers. comm.
21. S. E. Warren Excavation of a Neolithic Site at Sefton St., Putney *Trans. London Middlesex Archaeol. Soc.* 28 (1977) 9.
22. E.g., Gazetteer in S. Piggott 'The Neolithic Pottery of the British Isles' *Archaeol. J.* 88 (1931) 67-158.