

SOME RECENT PREHISTORIC FINDS FROM GREATER LONDON

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SUMMARY

This is an opportunity to publish a number of prehistoric finds reported to the Museum of London prior to May 1992, most of which have been retained in private possession. The 28 objects dealt with comprise: three Palaeolithic flint tools; a possibly late Upper Palaeolithic flint core; four Mesolithic flint axes/adzes; five Neolithic stone and flint axes; a sherd of Late Neolithic Mortlake Ware; a Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age flint dagger; 11 Bronze Age copper alloy artefacts including axes, a rapier, spearheads and two pins; and two Iron Age copper alloy objects comprising a late Hallstatt/early La Tene brooch and a figure-of-eight strap-union. The majority of these finds were recovered from the Thames foreshore or areas adjacent, although there are also several from the Colne and Lea valleys. With the exception of the Palaeolithic pieces from the gravels, artefacts reported from dry land are few but include a palstave from the London Clay hills at Eastcote. Each object is illustrated, described and its local/regional significance summarised. Concluding discussion briefly relates the finds to recent fieldwork in the London area.

INTRODUCTION

A number of prehistoric objects from Greater London have been brought in to the Museum of London for identification over the last 16 years. As most have been retained in private ownership the opportunity has been taken to place a selection of them on permanent record, using notes, drawings and/or photographs made at the time of their reporting. Others, including two small Late Bronze Age hoards, will be published separately in due course.

As might be expected the majority of the

objects have been reported from findspots in or close to the Thames or its major tributaries, though there are one or two exceptions (Fig 1). Their recovery is at least partly a reflection of the numbers and vigilance of the searchers now operating in the region, many of whom regularly employ increasingly sophisticated metal detectors. The objects considered here therefore include the usual run of flint and stone axes together with a range of metal tools, weapons and ornaments, and are dealt with in chronological order. Unless otherwise specified they remain in private possession.

PALAEOLITHIC

1. (Fig 2) Pointed Palaeolithic handaxe found during gravel extraction at Drinkwater Sabey's Holloway Lane Quarry by the pit manager, Dennis Williams, in 1981. The site lies to the north of Heathrow Airport between the villages of Sipson and Harmondsworth (TQ 067 780; *c.* +29m OD). The geology comprises Taplow Terrace Gravels of late Wolstonian age (Gibbard 1985, 46-7, 137), capped by deposits of brickearth probably laid down during the latter part of the Devensian (Gibbard *et al* 1987).

The implement's exact findspot cannot be determined, as it was recovered from a conveyor belt carrying gravel to the grading plant following removal of the overlying brickearths. However, the area then under extraction was confined to the south-eastern corner of the quarry, and centred at TQ 0680 7790. The implement must have lain deep within the terrace deposits (here some 6m thick), as the gravel was being dredged

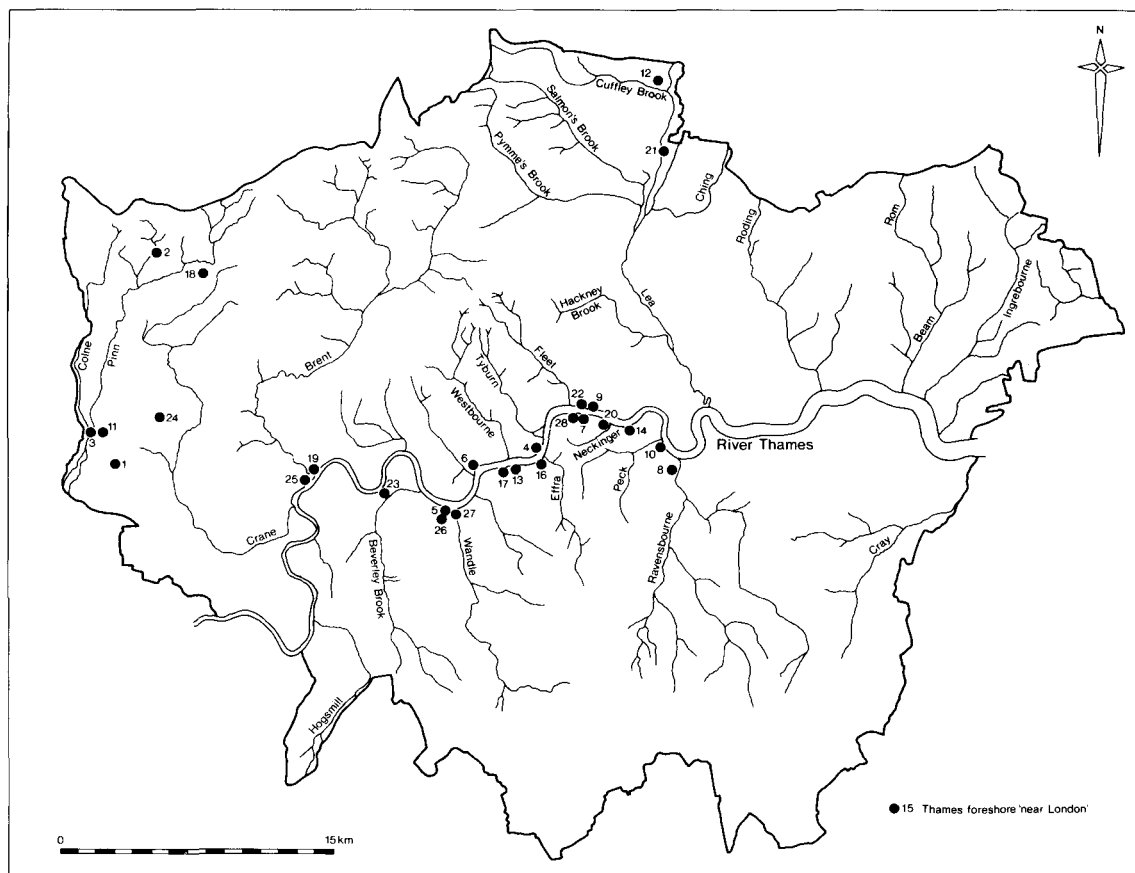


Fig 1. Location of finds mentioned in the text

from below water level by a large dragline at the time of the discovery (inf Dennis Williams).

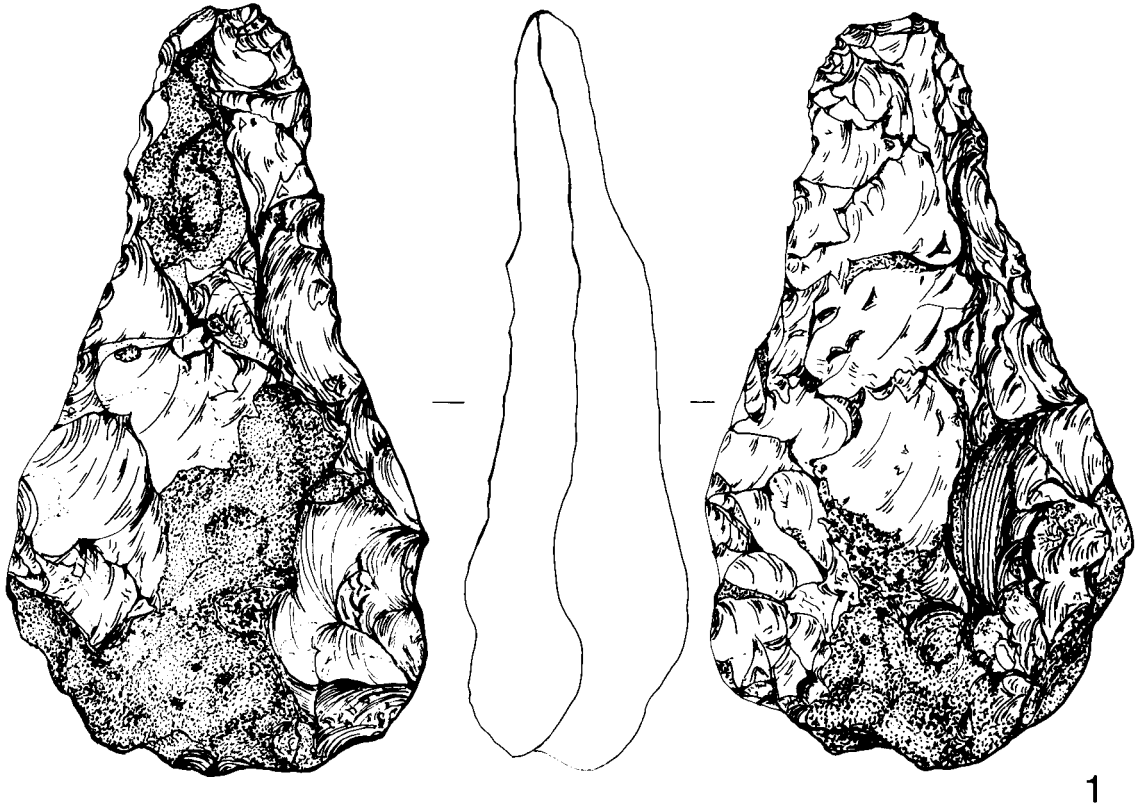
The handaxe measures 206mm in length and 110mm in width at the butt and is of mottled blue-grey flint stained yellow-brown, especially towards the tip. The working is robust and not helped by the nature of the flint itself, which contains a series of irregularities and fossiliferous inclusions; portions of cortex remain around the butt. The implement has a curved shape viewed in profile—this appears to have been dictated by the shape of the parent nodule on which it was made. It is considerably stained and heavily rolled, and the tip has been broken following acquisition of the ochreous patina.

The handaxe is of late middle Acheulean type and its worn condition makes it extremely unlikely that it lay in a primary context. Wymer (1988, 90) has suggested that the few such pieces recovered from the Taplow gravels have been

reworked from the higher (*c.* +34–39m OD), implement-rich gravels of the Lynch Hill Terrace to the north.

2. (Fig 2) Dennis Williams also reported the discovery of a second Palaeolithic-type implement, found at 'the north end of Ruislip Lido' by his son several years prior to 1983. Ruislip Lido is centred at TQ 089 894, and lies at an altitude of *c.* +50m OD. The geology comprises Reading Beds over London Clay, with small expanses of high level gravels to east and west.

The heavy triangular implement measures 132mm in length and 96mm in width at its widest point. It is made of mottled grey flint (as seen in a fresh break at the butt), stained yellow-brown with olive patches. Many of the high points are abraded, and there are patches of iron moulding. Cortex remains towards the tip and on the butt, showing that the implement—



0 5cm

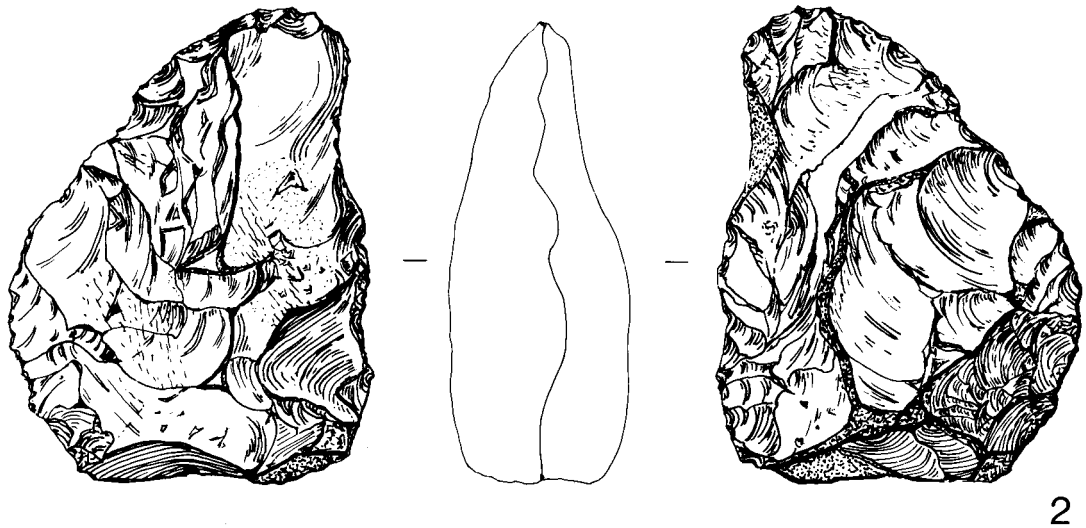


Fig 2. Palaeolithic flint artefacts nos 1 and 2, scale 1 : 2

although unusual in shape—is complete. The working is crude and much effort has been expended on the leading edge of the implement, suggesting that it should be interpreted as a chopper or scraper rather than a handaxe. It is somewhat rolled, though generally fresher than the Holloway Lane implement described above.

Seemingly of late middle Acheulian form, the presence of a Palaeolithic implement here is not easy to explain. It may be compared with a small number of other high level artefacts found in the Harefield area to the west (Wymer 1968, 255).

3. (Fig 3) Palaeolithic side scraper found by Mr R Rumble in his back garden at 57 Money Lane, West Drayton prior to 1980 (TQ 055 793). (See also no 11 below.) The findspot lies on the floor of the Colne valley (+25m OD) adjacent to the Fray's River—a tributary of the Colne artificially straightened in the post-medieval period (inf John Mills). The local geology comprises Colney Street Gravel over London Clay (Gibbard 1985, 81-4).

The implement measures 88mm in length and 66mm in width, and is of lustrous, yellow-brown-olive stained flint. Triangular in shape, it is worked as a scraper down both long edges. Its rolled condition and late middle Acheulian affinities suggest that it was incorporated in the Colney Street Gravel when the Colne drainage system cut through the adjacent implement-rich

Lynch Hill Gravels during the latter part of the Devensian.

?LATE UPPER PALAEOOLITHIC

4. (Fig 4) Large, opposed-platform flint core found by Mr M D Wood on the Middlesex foreshore of the Thames in front of the Tate Gallery during the spring of 1992 (TQ 302 785). The object was recovered from a point close to low water 'on a 1.3m tide'.

The core measures 124mm in length, 72mm in width, is 53mm thick and weighs 656.2gm. It is of a lustrous dark grey flint, with several lighter grey, cherty, patches. A large natural hole runs through the core, and marks the point where a fossiliferous inclusion has leached out; it presumably explains why the core was discarded. A number of the high points are rolled and abraded, particularly around both striking platforms, and mark the core's long sojourn in the river rather than any deliberate attempt at platform preparation. Areas of Thames 'race' adhere to many of the flake scars and both striking platforms.

The core is roughly D-shaped in cross-section, with a flat rear face briskly dressed with large flake removals, and a ridged or crested 'dorsal' face from which a series of long blades have

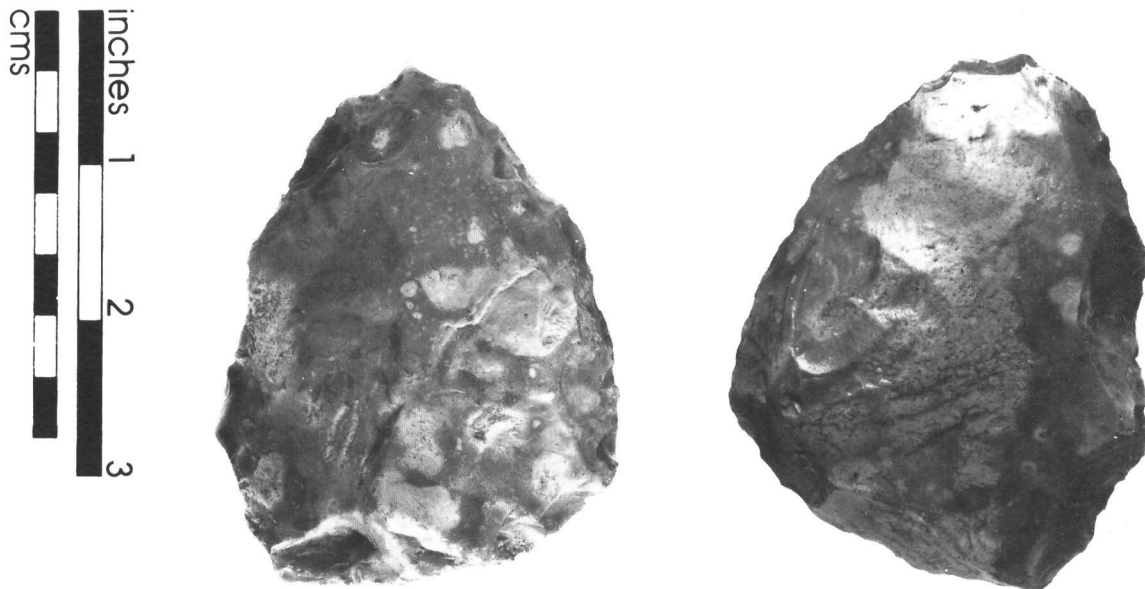


Fig 3. *Palaeolithic flint side scraper no 3 (two views)*

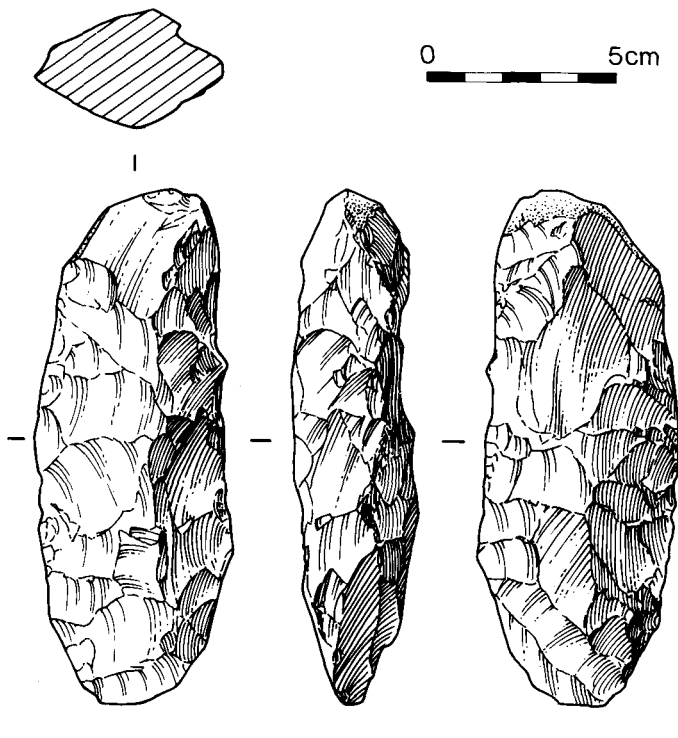
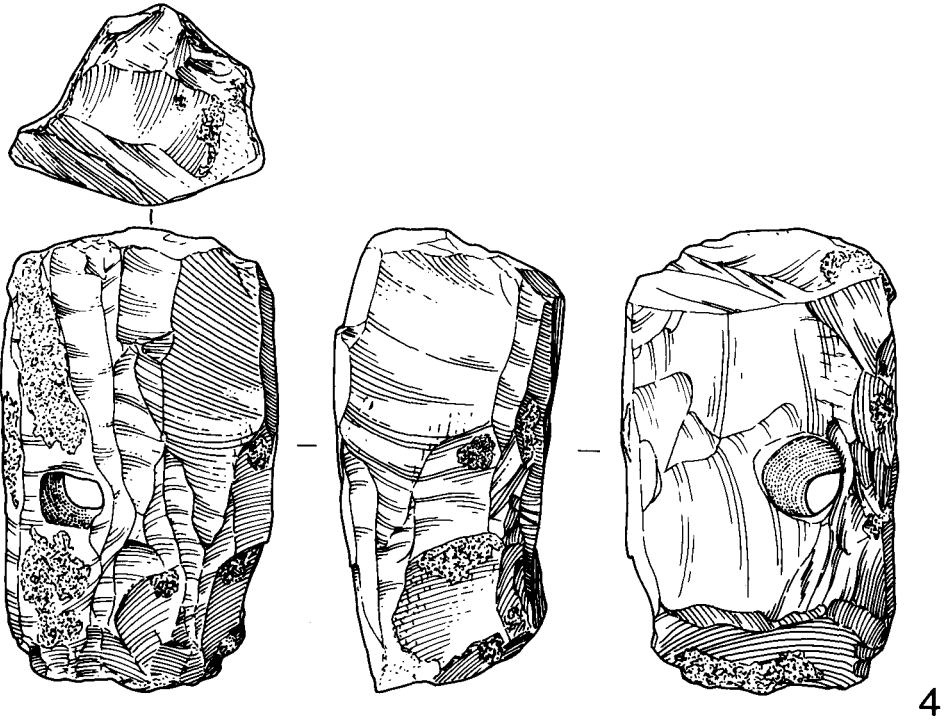


Fig 4. ?Upper Palaeolithic and Mesolithic flint artefacts, nos 4 and 5, scale 1:2

been detached. One striking platform has been carefully prepared with a series of flake removals, while the other appears to have been renewed with the removal of a single large flake. It is likely therefore that the core was originally somewhat larger, and capable of producing longer blades; the longest surviving flake scar measures 105mm in length and up to 30mm in width.

The overall length of the core, the opposed striking platforms, the careful preparation of one of them and the presence of a dorsal crest for the production of wide robust blades are characteristics suggestive of late Upper Palaeolithic core reduction. A few stray cores of this size and type are already known from the Thames (eg Teddington (MoL A13695); 'Brentford' (MoL 0.766); Barnes (MoL 0.767) and Wandsworth (MoL 36.217/25).

Recent excavation of an undisturbed late glacial/early Flandrian site adjacent to the river Colne at Uxbridge has produced similar cores (one over 170mm in length) in association with microliths and reindeer and horse bone, radiocarbon-dated to around 10,000 BP (Lewis 1991, scatter 'A'; Merriman 1990, 17). The flint industry has been linked with an emergent 'long-blade' technology defined on the products of sites in southern Britain and northern Europe (Barton 1989). Cores of the type noted here therefore may hint at the presence of further late glacial sites awaiting discovery in the floodplains of the Thames and its tributary streams.

MESOLITHIC

5. (Fig 4) Mesolithic axe or adze found by Mr R J Caddy at low water on the Surrey foreshore of the Thames in Wandsworth in September 1990 (TQ 2485 7540).

The implement measures 138mm in length, 50mm in width, 31mm thick, weighs 250.32gm and is of grey-blue flint stained yellow-brown. A patch of smooth, worn cortex survives at the butt. Both faces of the blade have been re-sharpened using the characteristic transverse or tranchet blow. The relatively small size and light nature of the implement suggests that it would originally have been hafted in an antler sleeve.

Wandsworth is a prolific stretch of the river for Mesolithic artefacts: Wymer lists 15 axes from the locality (1977, 200; see also Field 1989, 24),

together with bone and antler artefacts including axes, sleeves, points and a uniserial barbed antler spearhead (MoL A4907), one of two recorded from the river (Clark 1932, fig 2; Lacaille 1966, 14). The smaller components of the Mesolithic tool kit are, by their very nature, less well represented, though Wymer lists a few microliths from the river (1977, 200), while Greenwood notes others from dry land sites adjacent to the modern channel in Sefton Street and Felsham Road, Putney further upstream (1986, 7).

6. (Fig 5) Mesolithic adze found by Mr R Hill on the Middlesex foreshore of the Thames at the north end of Battersea Bridge in August 1985 (TQ 269 775).

The implement measures 126mm in length, 43mm in width and has a roughly triangular section up to 42mm thick. It is of dark grey flint with some inclusions; extensive patches of cortex survive, particularly around the butt and down one face. The cutting edge has been re-sharpened with a typical tranchet blow. There is recent abrasion along one side. As with No. 5 above, the small size of the implement suggests that it would have been hafted in an antler sleeve.

The Battersea reaches of the Thames have also produced their share of Mesolithic flint and bone artefacts. These include a number of flint axes (Wymer 1977, 199; see also Field 1989, 24), and a second uniserial barbed antler spearhead (MoL A19788) (Clark 1932, fig 2; Lacaille 1966, 14).

7. (Fig 6) Slender Mesolithic axe found by Mr R Hill on the Surrey foreshore of the Thames at St Mary Overie Dock, Southwark in 1985 (TQ 3264 8042).

The implement measures 235mm in length, 63mm in width and is 41mm thick. It is made of light grey flint which has a dull cherty appearance; cortex survives around the butt. The cutting edge has been re-sharpened on both faces with a tranchet blow.

Though under-represented in the archaeological record hitherto for reasons summarised by Merriman (1987, 319-22), recent intensive archaeological activity in the City and north Southwark has begun to supply a prehistory for the area. Data relevant to the Mesolithic, which can be added to the meagre entries listed in Wymer (1977, 185-6, 197), include the pollen assemblage recovered from a small marshy hollow at Peninsular House in the City (Milne 1985, 22-5), and increasing numbers of struck



Fig 5. Mesolithic flint adze no 6 (two views)

flints encountered on the sand and gravel 'islands' of north Southwark. Work at 15-23 Southwark Street, some 300m inland from St Mary Overie, for instance, has yielded diagnostic Mesolithic flintwork in the form of a pyramidal bladelet core, blades, an axe-sharpening flake and several narrow-blade microliths (Cowan, forthcoming).

8. (Fig 6) Broken Mesolithic axe or adze found

by Mr R Hill on the Pepys Estate (former Navy victualling yard) in Deptford in 1984 (TQ 375 774). The findspot lies on the west bank of the Ravensbourne River, which joins the modern Thames 600m or so to the north.

The implement measures 138mm in length, 53mm in width and has a maximum thickness of 41mm. It is of grey flint, apparently stained bluish-black, with some lighter blue patination

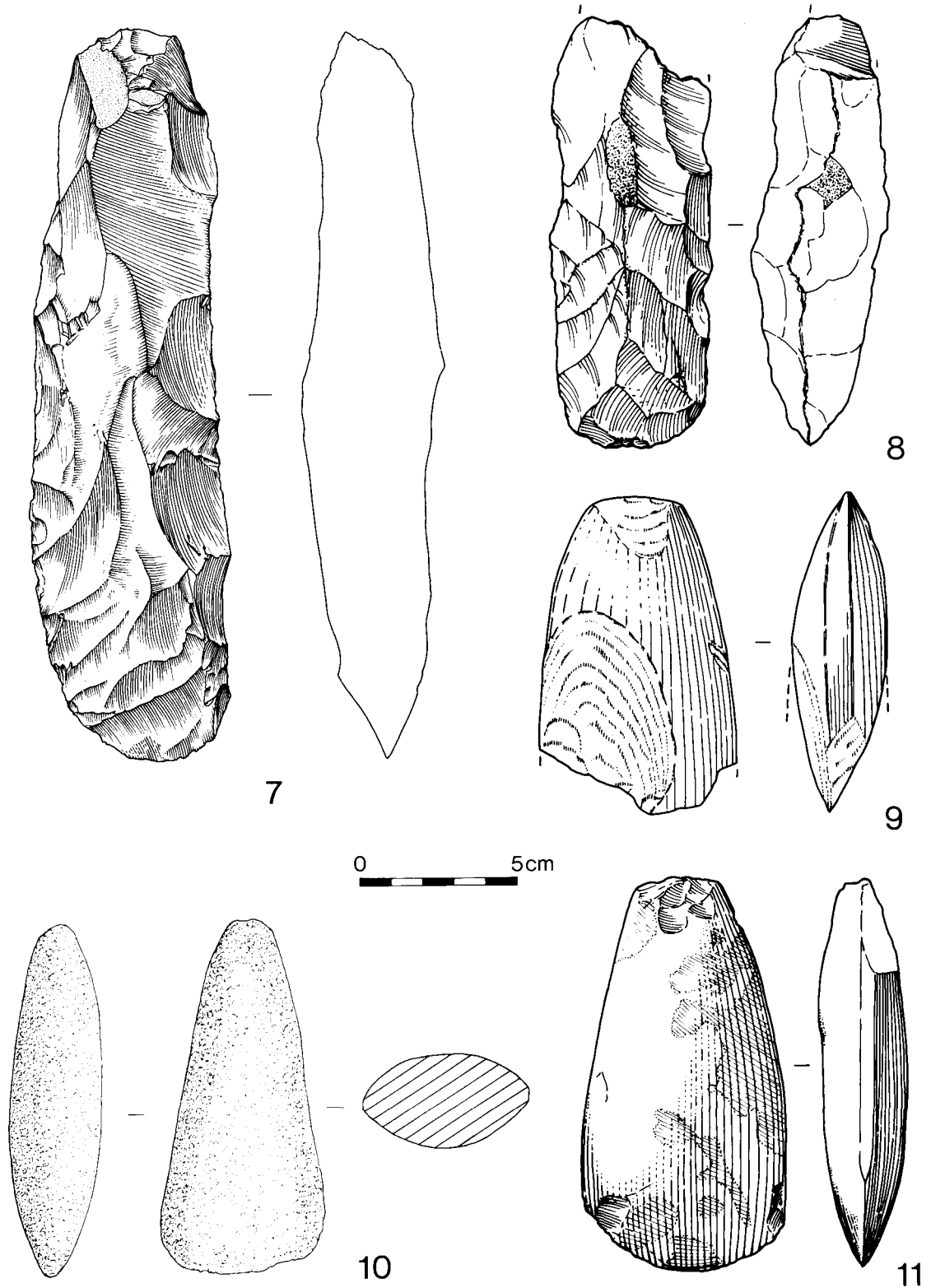


Fig 6. Mesolithic and Neolithic flint and stone artefacts nos 7-11, scale 1:2

and a patch of orange staining. Some cortex survives on one face and edge. The butt has been broken, probably anciently as the patination is continuous across the break. The cutting edge has been re-sharpened with a transverse blow, since when it has sustained minor damage.

The Deptford area is not noted for Mesolithic artefacts, though Wymer lists an axe dredged from the Thames at Greenwich Reach (1977, 187). Much of the area is masked by later Flandrian alluvial deposits and post-medieval riverside development, and it seems certain that prehistory is vastly under-represented in the archaeological record as a result. The present piece is therefore of some interest and importance. (See also No. 10 below.)

NEOLITHIC

9. (Fig 6) Butt of a Neolithic ground stone axe found by Mr B Farrow in November 1984 on a spoil tip at Dagenham, deriving from the Billingsgate Lorry Park site in the City of London (TQ 330 806).

The fragment is 102mm in length, 64mm in width, 30mm thick and weighs 244gm. The sides of the axe have a marked facet about 5mm wide. The stone has been identified as epidotized intermediate tuff (Group VI) (inf Valerie Jones), with a source in the Lake District. A number of such axes have been recorded from the London area previously, and are conveniently listed by Clough & Cummins (1988(b), table 16).

The axe fragment can be added to the tally of Neolithic material already recorded from the City (Merriman 1987, fig 1). Although impressive, the concentration of land finds of Neolithic axes in the area (VCH, 34), as Ralph Merrifield has pointed out (1987, 9-16), is as likely to reflect their susceptibility to collection as amulets and curios in later periods as attest genuine Neolithic activity. It is possible that our axe was incorporated either within Roman riverine deposits, or within material dumped behind one of the successive medieval waterfronts located during the 1983 watching brief (Schofield 1987, 55).

10. (Fig 6) Neolithic ground stone axe found by Mr R Hill on the Surrey foreshore of the Thames by Deptford Strand in 1989 (TQ 3684 7864). The findspot lies a little to the south of the point at which the Earl's Sluice joins the Thames (Barton 1962, 44).

The implement measures 114mm in length, 52mm in width, has a maximum thickness of 32mm and weighs 262.5gm. It has a thin butt and rounded sides; the cutting edge is somewhat battered.

The axe has been identified as a greenstone matching that from the Mount's Bay area of Penzance, Cornwall (Group I) (inf Alan Woolley). Such axes form the largest category of grouped implements from both the London area and the south-east of England (Clough & Cummins 1988(b), table 16; Woodcock *et al* 1988, table 14). So marked is the concentration of Group I axes in the lower Thames valley that study of their relative frequency distribution led Cummins to suggest a secondary point of dispersal from the Essex coast (1979, 9-12).

As noted above (No. 6), the Deptford area is not well represented in the prehistoric period, and little Neolithic material has been recovered from the locality hitherto. However, a ground axe is recorded from the Thames 'opposite Bellamy's Wharf', Rotherhithe (Adkins & Jackson 1978, no. 315) and a Late Neolithic discoidal flint knife was found during the construction of the 'new extension' to the Surrey Docks (*ie* Greenland Dock) at a point *c.* 10 ft 6 in below OD 'in gravel overlaid with peat varying up to six feet in thickness' (Anon 1937).

11. (Fig 6) Neolithic ground flint axe found by Mr R Rumble in his back garden at 57 Money Lane, West Drayton prior to 1980 (TQ 055 793). (See also No. 3 above.)

The implement measures 121mm in length, 60mm in width and is 28mm thick. It has a flattened oval section with a slight facet along the sides, and an asymmetrical cutting edge. It is of pearly grey flint, ground and polished all over; there is ancient damage at the butt and more recent damage at the cutting edge. A photograph of the axe appears in Cotton *et al* (1986, 34).

The proximity of the findspot to the Fray's River—an artificially straightened tributary of the Colne—suggests that the axe may have been deposited in an ancient river channel. A number of flint and stone axes have been recovered from the Colne valley and from the gravel terraces adjacent, including several from the West Drayton area (Cotton *et al* 1986, 35).

12. (Fig 7) Partially ground Neolithic flint axe found by Mr T Short in the back garden of 123 Park Road, Enfield Lock in 1987 (TQ 363 992). The findspot is situated on Flood Plain Gravel at

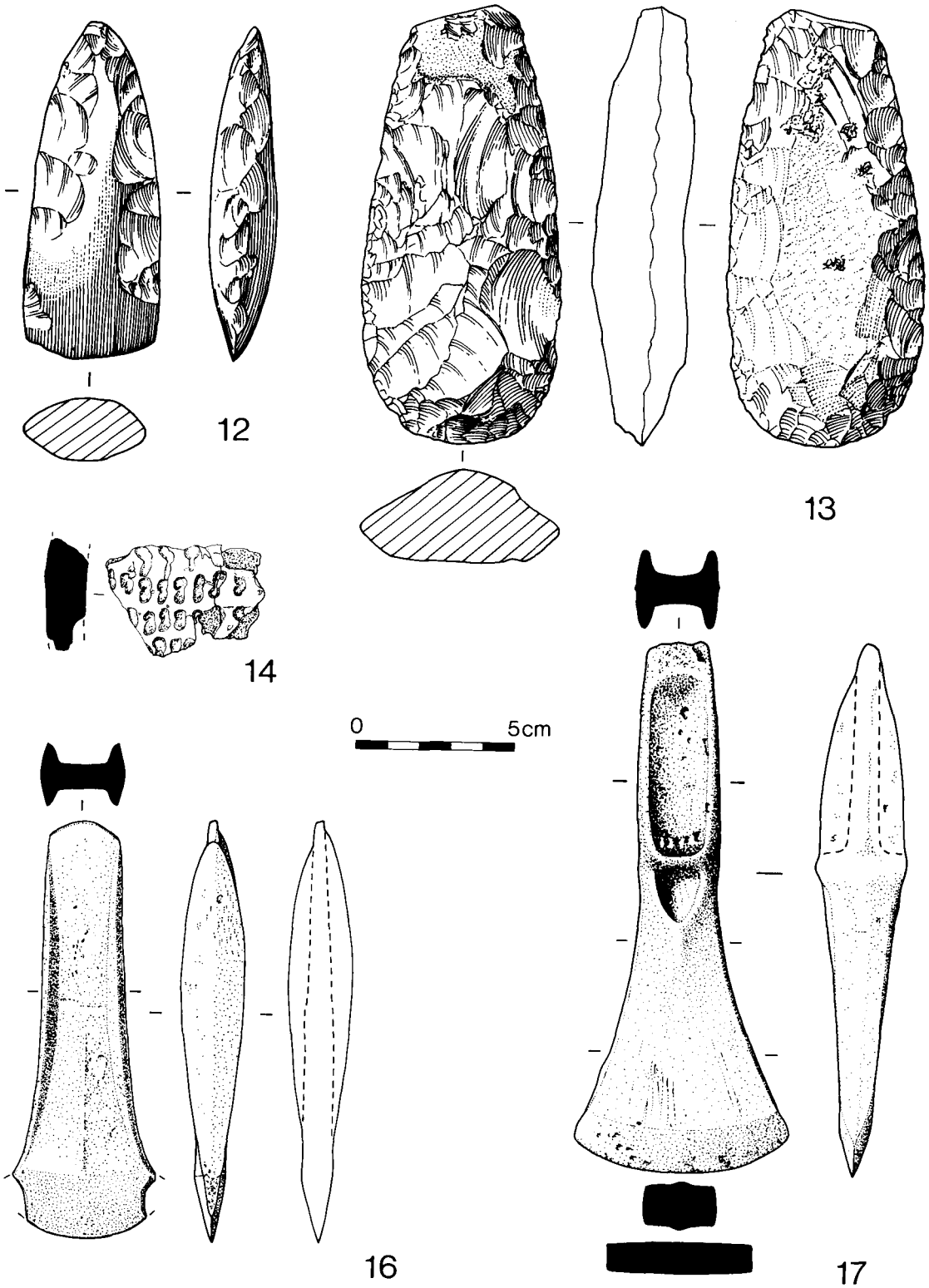


Fig 7. Neolithic flint artefacts, nos 12 and 13, Late Neolithic pottery, no 14, Early and Middle Bronze Age copper alloy artefacts, nos 16 and 17, scale 1:2

c. +20m OD a kilometre to the west of the River Lea; the Cuffley Brook, a tributary of the Lea, lies a similar distance to the south.

The implement measures 106mm in length, 41mm in width and is 21mm thick. It has a thin tapering butt and is ground and polished over the blade and midline. Its diminutive size suggests that it would probably have been hafted in an antler sleeve.

This latest find can be added to a trail of axes stretching up the Lea valley, the distribution pattern mirroring that in the Colne valley at the western edge of Greater London (see No. 11 above) (Grimes 1976). Single axes have been recorded in the vicinity, as for instance at Edmonton (inf Les Whitmore), and Ebbsfleet pottery from Waltham Abbey (Macdonald 1976, 23), though the most notable find is the hoard of three flint axes recovered from Temple Mills, Leyton in the latter part of the last century (Macdonald 1976, 25-6).

13. (Fig 7) Neolithic chipped flint axe found by Mr D Wood on the Surrey foreshore of the Thames, upstream of Chelsea Bridge in February 1990 (TQ 2837 7767). The axe was located at low tide and 'fairly low down on the foreshore' at the point where there is 'a kink in the footpath which runs parallel to the river through Battersea Park.'

The implement measures 140mm in length, 61mm in width, is 27mm thick and weighs 296.3gm. It is made of cherty amber-brown flint on what seems to be a large, thermally-fractured flake.

The 'dorsal' face is well worked and entirely typical in appearance, with neat radial flaking, a fine glossy surface and a patch of smooth cortex at the butt. The latter is complete as illustrated. Much of the 'ventral' face, by contrast, comprises a large patch of cherty material which does not readily lend itself to controllable reduction. Here, radial flaking has been carried out rather perfunctorily, so that expanses of the thermally fractured surface survive unmodified, particularly towards the butt. Thames 'race' also adheres to this face.

Though not a particularly prolific stretch of the Thames as far as Neolithic material is concerned, two flint axes are recorded from the river at 'Chelsea Bridge' and 'Chelsea' (Adkins & Jackson 1978, nos 225 and 326), while Lawrence notes another from Battersea Park itself (1929, 92). Other finds include two Late

Neolithic discoidal flint knives from Chelsea Reach in the collections of the British Museum and Museum of London (BM unreg; MoL 60.176/351), the latter was recovered from dredged material used to backfill Ham gravel pits.

14. (Fig 7) Sherd of Late Neolithic Mortlake Ware found by Mr R Hill on the Surrey foreshore of the Thames between Bermondsey and Rotherhithe in 1989 (TQ 348 798). The findspot lies close to the point at which the western Rotherhithe Mill Stream joins the Thames (Barton 1962, 46).

The sherd measures 52mm by 36mm, is 12mm thick and weighs 20.35gm. It has a leathery dark grey-brown laminated fabric which is liberally tempered with crushed burnt flint, the largest visible inclusion of which measures 9mm across. The exterior surface has been decorated with at least four horizontal rows of 'bird-bone' type impressions, while the interior surface appears to have been wiped.

Neolithic pottery has been recorded from the Thames foreshore before, but usually in localities further upstream, such as Mortlake and Hammersmith (Lawrence 1929, 82-4 & 86). However, excavations in north Southwark and in Lambeth further west have recovered a few sherds of Late Neolithic pottery and flintwork on or near to the higher sand and gravel 'islands' in these localities (Merriman 1987, 323 & fig 1). Recent work close to the present findspot, at Platform Wharf, Rotherhithe, has identified a further such 'island' (Norton 1988, 395), which may provide a topographic context for the sherd noted here.

BRONZE AGE

15. (Fig 8) A flint dagger of Beaker type found about 130 years ago was reported by Mrs D W Hill of Deal, Kent in July 1987. It had come into her step-father's possession having been given to his father, a school master, by the grateful parent of one of his pupils. The latter had apparently worked as a labourer 'near London digging on the shore of the river Thames' and had found the implement 'in the mud' (pers comm Mrs Hill).

The implement is 170mm in length, 60mm in width and has a maximum thickness of 11.5mm. It is made of dark grey flint. In form it tends to a lanceolate shape, with the widest part of the blade above the midpoint, and with an elongated squared-off butt. The workmanship is of high

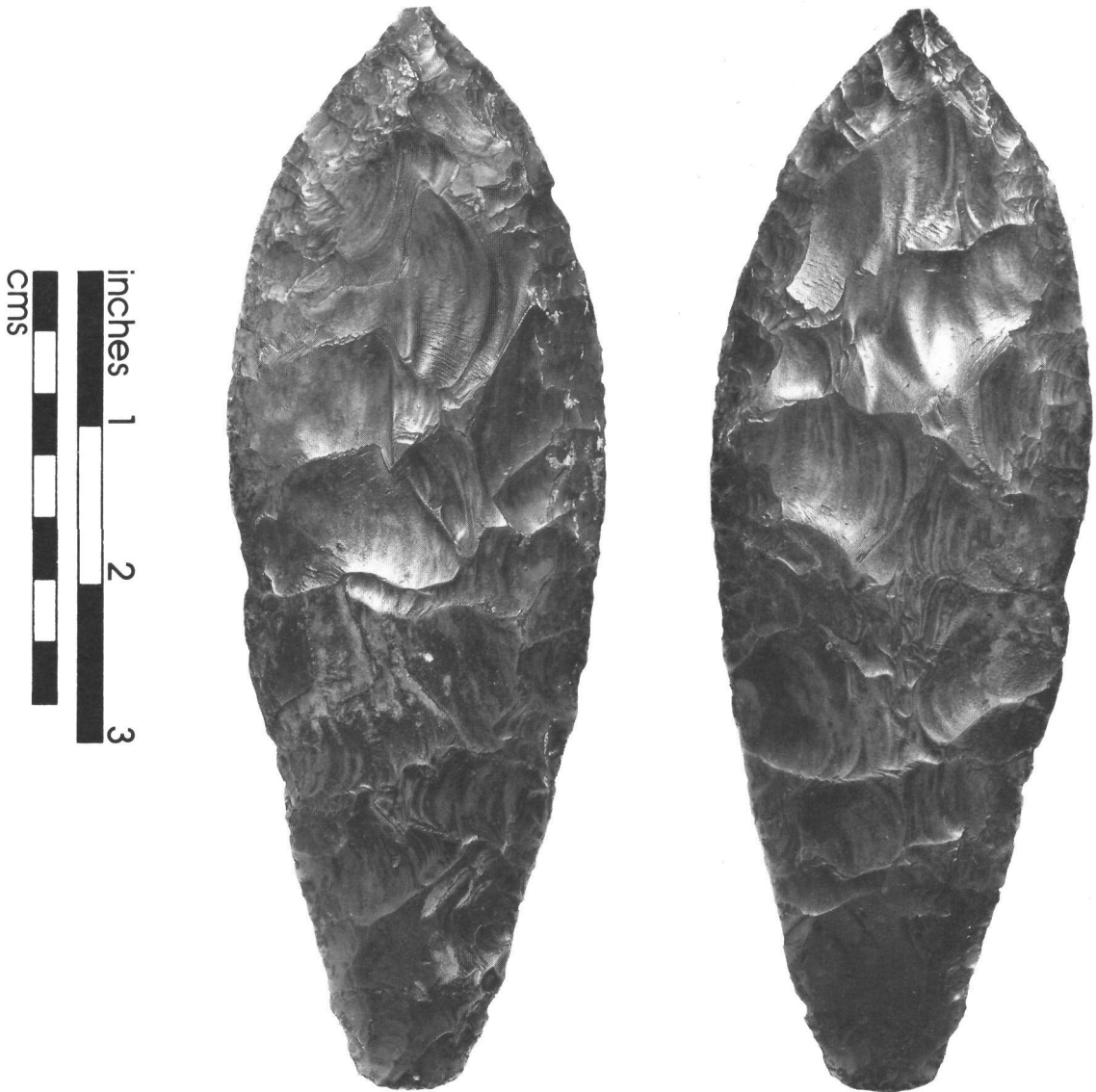


Fig 8. Flint dagger of Beaker type no 15 (two views)

quality with well controlled shallow flaking covering both faces. Serial flaking and fine edge trimming are confined to the blade above a slight indentation just below the midpoint on one edge—the latter perhaps marking the original position of the hilt (see Green *et al* 1982, 497).

Grimes noted long ago (1931, 340) that two distinct forms developed from the simple leaf-shaped form whose widest part lay at the midpoint: those with the widest part above the midpoint and a tapering butt which could be held in the hand without further elaboration;

and those with their widest part at the midpoint, rapidly tapering butts and notches to aid attachment of a separate handle. Our piece falls within the former class and may be compared with similar examples from the Thames at Sunbury, Kingston and Chelsea Bridge (Smith 1919, 17; Field 1983, fig 1 no. 2).

Twenty provenanced daggers from the lower reaches of the Thames are listed by Grimes, together with a further seven probably from the river near London and two from dry land (1931, 353). To these can be added others from the

river Wey below Weybridge (Weybridge Museum 1/1946, unpublished) and from the Thames at Kingston and Wandsworth (Field 1983).

The Beaker associations cited by earlier workers have not been challenged by more recent work, and comparison of the blade outlines with metal daggers of Butterwick type led Green to suggest that flint daggers could be located within later Beaker assemblages (Green *et al* 1982, 499). Away from the river, Beaker material is scarce in the London area (*eg* VCH, 37; summary in Barrett 1976, 34–5), and the group of Beaker sherds and struck flint from 15–23 Southwark Street, Southwark (Cowan, forthcoming), is the only Beaker assemblage of any size so far recorded from central London.

16. (Fig 7) Early Bronze Age copper alloy cast-flanged axe found by Mr D Wood on the Surrey foreshore of the Thames upstream of Vauxhall Bridge in 1984 (TQ 3005 7790). The findspot lies close to the point at which the River Effra joins the Thames (Barton 1962, 42–4). The axe was recovered from a level below the base of an eroding barge-bed constructed of dumped chalk, though the fresh, unpatinated condition of the piece makes it clear that it is a true river find and not imported with the chalk.

The axe measures 132mm in length, 45mm in width at the shoulder of the now-broken crescentic blade and weighs 285.28gm. It has a slender body with sides which converge slightly to an asymmetrically arched butt. The flanges, which are each some 20mm in width at their mid points, have been worked into two facets which meet in a central vertical spine but are otherwise undecorated. The crescentic cutting edge is, as noted above, broken at both ends, and would probably have been some 10–15mm wider when complete. There is a very slight transverse bevel between the flanges at a point some 56mm from the butt which appears to have been enhanced by several blows from a chisel. (It is conceivable that these are the result of trimming a frayed wooden haft.) The blade thickens noticeably below this and is marked by a faint vertical bevel running down the face of the axe to meet the chamfer of the cutting edge.

Broken blade apart the axe is in good condition and has an even, matt green-black patina below the transverse bevel and along the flanges, and a shiny golden yellow surface over much of the area between the flanges above the bevel. A number of small oval-shaped marks on both faces

above the transverse bevel appear to have been made with a pointed tracer or punch, but do not seem to have been decorative in intent; a series of short scratches are visible on both flanges towards the butt. There are also one or two localised areas of corrosion close to the butt on one face.

The axe belongs to the Arreton tradition of cast-flanged axes (Britton 1963, 284–91; Burgess & Cowen 1972), datable to the final phase of the Early Bronze Age, *c.* 16th–15th centuries BC. In addition to flanged axes, tanged spearheads and elaborate Camerton-Snowhill and Hammer-smith-type daggers comprise the other major components of the Arreton repertoire, which has a generally southern and eastern British distribution (Burgess & Cowen 1972, figs 6 & 7). Flanged axes in particular are well represented locally, coming mainly from the river (*eg* Needham 1987, fig 5.2), though one or two land finds extend this distribution.

While clearly a product of the Arreton tradition, the Vauxhall axe has several additional points of interest: these include its particularly slender form, which is reminiscent of some continental flanged axes (*inf* Stuart Needham); the unusual treatment of the flange-sides, which are more usually rounded or triple-faceted; and the vertical bevel on both faces of the blade. This latter feature is rare on axes of this early date and is present on three other examples, from Plymstock, Devon (Gerloff 1975, pl 51, no. 14), from Croft, Leicestershire (now lost), and on a third from Suffolk (Needham 1983; *inf* Stuart Needham). There is a considerable overlap in the various British and continental metalworking traditions current at the end of the Early Bronze Age, a state of affairs which the eclecticism of the present piece neatly reflects.

17. (Fig 7) Middle Bronze Age copper-alloy palstave found by Mr R J Caddy on the Surrey foreshore of the Thames at Battersea Park, 'directly in front of the pagoda' (TQ 279 775) in November 1990. The implement lay at a depth of 8 in (0.20m) in a layer of 'compacted chalk and gravel'. Its discovery was a considerable surprise to the finder, as the area had already been extensively searched on previous occasions.

The implement measures 169mm in length and weighs 441.8gm. It is in good condition with an even dark patina, though slight traces of green corrosion products are visible in one face of the septum. There are several small casting flaws on

the butt and septum of the illustrated face; traces of casting flashes survive, particularly on the flanges above the stop ridge.

The blade expands to a maximum width of 67mm, with a width at the stop ridge of 24mm. The flanges extend a short way below the stop to merge with a plastic shield design on either face. The shield expands into a short central rib, which is visible a little way down the face of the blade. There is also a hint of decoration enclosed within the shield, which extends into the base of the septum above the stop.

With a width at the stop/length proportion of 0.14 (Field & Needham 1985, 116), this axe falls into the narrow-bodied class of axes appropriate to the Acton Park 2 industries (MBA 1; Burgess 1976, 74 fig 4.9), characterised by the classic hoards from Acton Park, Ilsmoor and Burley amongst others (Rowlands 1976, 29). Acton Park 2 can perhaps be dated to the 14th century BC.

Shield pattern palstaves are relatively common finds across southern Britain, and are particularly numerous in East Anglia and Hampshire. The hoard of 12 palstaves from Burley for instance includes 11 of the type noted here (Rowlands Class I group 5a, 1976, 29 & pl 5, (57) 2-12). Locally, a number have been recovered from the Thames, and several from the gravel terraces adjacent.

18. (Fig 9) Middle Bronze Age looped copper alloy palstave found by Mrs M Wright in her back garden at 87 Deane Croft Road, Eastcote, Middlesex in 1977 (TQ 113 883). The axe was located at a depth of 2-3 feet (0.60-0.90m) below the surface, while preparing the ground for a vegetable plot. Deane Croft Road lies above the 50m contour and runs WSW-ESE along a ridge of London Clay which separates the River Pinn from the Yeading Brook.

The axe measures 118mm in length and 35mm in width at its cutting edge. There are traces of a median ridge on the short blade below the stop, and traces of a similar ridge on one face of the septum; the casting seams are visible down both sides. Its condition is typical of many land finds. It has a worn reed green patina and the cutting edge, butt, loop and flange crests are all much corroded (inf National Bronze Implements Index, British Museum).

With its narrow blade and low flanges, the Eastcote palstave belongs to Smith's narrow bladed 'Transitional' class (1959, 184), ultimately of northern French origin. The few true imports

appear to date to the Taunton phase of the Middle Bronze Age (MBA 2: 14th-13th centuries BC), though there are no features on the Eastcote piece linking it to the imported series. As such it is perhaps datable to the succeeding Penard phase (MBA 3: 12th-11th centuries BC). Transitional palstaves are widely distributed across southern Britain, with notable concentrations in East Anglia, along the south coast and in the Thames valley (Rowlands 1976, 36-8, map 9). They appear to have been superseded, in the south of the country at least, by developed 'Late' palstaves around 1000 BC (Smith 1959, 176-7; Needham 1980, 37).

Locally, a second transitional palstave has been recorded from the Reading Beds at Pinner, less than two kilometres to the north of the present piece (National Bronze Implements Index; inf Stuart Needham). Together the two axes point to a human presence on the less favourable soils overlooking the Pinn a century and more prior to the deposition of the Late Bronze Age barbed spearhead found recently in Park Wood, Ruislip, a little to the west (Cotton 1986).

19. (Fig 9) Middle Bronze Age notch hilted rapier donated to the Museum in 1982 by Mrs K M Pearce, whose late husband found it on the Middlesex foreshore of the Thames near Brentford Dock before the last war (c. TQ 180 773) (MoL 82.598).

The rapier measures 304mm in length, 45mm in width at the shoulder, and weighs 136.54gm. The butt, though damaged, appears to have a domed outline and is equipped with two rivet holes; two notches at the sides of the butt above the shoulder may indicate the positions of further rivet emplacements. The blade has a flat mid-rib section, and is slightly bent longitudinally. The piece has a matt dark brown-green patina which is scratched and encrusted in places.

With its short blade, flat mid-rib and rounded butt, the rapier belongs to Burgess and Gerloff's Group IV: Type Appleby (1981, 74ff). Type Appleby and its variants are well represented in the lower Thames valley, and may even have been developed there; over 30 complete examples have been recovered from the river between Staines and Battersea.

Though present in the Taunton period, most Group IV rapiers date to the succeeding Penard phase (MBA 3: 12th-11th centuries BC; Burgess & Gerloff 1981, 106-9); Rowlands suggests a late

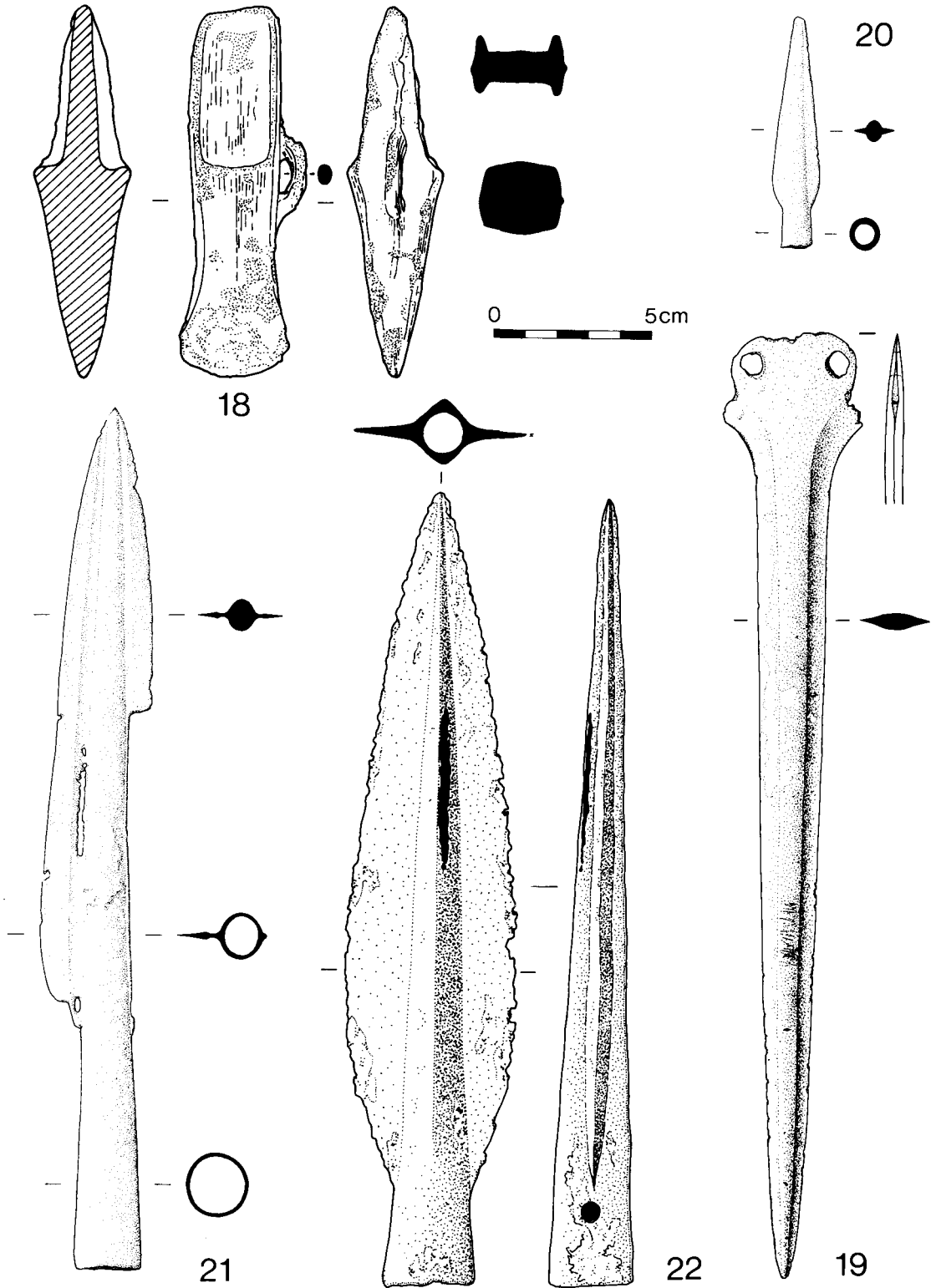


Fig 9. Middle and Late Bronze Age copper alloy artefacts nos 18-22, scale 1:2

11th or even a 10th century BC date for the development of the notch hilted type (1976, 74).

20. (Fig 9) Small, probably Middle Bronze Age socketed spearhead found by Mr A Pilson at Dockhead, St Saviour's Wharf, Jamaica Road, Bermondsey in March 1988 (TQ 339 798) (MoL 88.125). The findspot lies adjacent to the river Neckinger, which joins the Thames a few score metres to the north (Barton 1962, 45–6).

In its present state the spearhead measures 77.5mm in length, 16mm in width and weighs 19.79gm. It has a worn lozenge-section mid-rib, the latter cast slightly off-centre on one face. The tip is missing and the base of the socket gives the impression of having been ground down. It has a matt yellow-green surface patina, except at the socket/base of the blade where it is an oily purple-black colour.

Taken together, the small size of the present piece, the narrow, leaf-shaped blade, traces of grinding at the base of the socket and generally worn condition suggest that it can be identified as a small side-looped spearhead which has been re-worked after the loss of its socket end and loops (inf Stuart Needham). On the basis that the blades of such spearheads usually comprise over half the overall length, the present piece must originally have measured somewhere in the region of 110–125mm long.

Side-looped spearheads fall within Greenwell and Brewis Class IV (1909, 459) and can be dated to the Taunton phase (MBA 2: 14th–13th centuries BC) possibly starting earlier. (There is of course no way of knowing when our spearhead was re-used in its modified form.) With its slender leaf-shaped blade and lozenge section mid-rib, the Bermondsey piece belongs to Rowlands Group 2 side-looped spearheads (1976, 52), the main concentration of which is in north Wiltshire, Berkshire, Oxfordshire and the Thames valley (Rowlands 1976, 52, map 15; Ehrenberg 1977, 8). Even when complete, the present example is likely to have lain at the smaller end of the size range; Ehrenberg illustrates several diminutive examples, one of which, from Old Windsor (L 100mm, W 17mm) (1977, 52, no. 140), is also in the Museum of London's collections (MoL 49.107/878).

The spearhead appears to have lain on or adjacent to a further sand 'island' located in recent excavations at Phoenix Wharf, a few metres distant. Here the remains of an Early Bronze Age rectangular cooking pit and traces

of Later Bronze Age cross-ploughing were found, sealed by peats of possibly Tilbury IV date (c. 1500–1000 BC) (Girardon & Heathcote 1989, 78; Merriman 1990, 25; Bowsher 1991).

21. (Fig 9) Middle Bronze Age basal-looped copper alloy spearhead found by Mr F Tattershall during the construction of the William Girling Reservoir west of the River Lea, Enfield in 1937 (TQ 367 947) (MoL 87.2). The grid reference given here is an approximation only, as the spearhead was brought up by a dragline excavator (inf Mr F Tattershall).

The spearhead measures 276mm in length, and up to 29mm in width, though originally it would have been closer to 40mm. It weighs 161.19gm. It has a triangular shaped blade with a circular-section mid-rib and side channels (Rowlands 1976, 58 type C). The lower half of one side of the blade is now missing, and the other is considerably pitted with corrosion which has etched through the blade in the channel alongside the socket at one point. Only one of the two original loops survives, set within the base of the blade. The piece has a shiny golden-yellow patina with odd patches of corrosion. The bottom 25mm or so of the socket is a matt green-black colour.

Basal-looped spearheads comprise Greenwell and Brewis Class IIIa (1909, 459) and can be dated to the Taunton (MBA 2: 14th–13th centuries BC) and Penard phases (MBA 3: 12th–11th centuries BC). Their currency appears to overlap with that of the side-looped spearheads just discussed. The present piece belongs to Rowland's basal-looped Group 3 (1976, 58), having an essentially triangular blade. Group 3 spearheads have a south-eastern British distribution, and are concentrated in the lower Thames valley. One Group 3 piece, from the Thames at Hammersmith, appears to have been found complete with a wooden shaft about 5 ft (1.5m) long which was later discarded by the finder (Hooper & O'Connor 1976).

This new find can be added to the Middle Bronze Age metalwork already known from the Lea valley, much of which was recovered during reservoir construction in the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Hatley 1933, 10–12). At least three other basal-looped spearheads have been recorded from the Lea valley previously: from Edmonton Marsh, Rammey Marsh in Enfield and Walthamstow (Rowlands 1976, nos 1492, 1493 & 1541).

22. (Fig 9) Late Bronze Age pegged copper alloy spearhead found by Mr S Wheeler on the Middlesex foreshore of the Thames at Billingsgate in 1980 (TQ 332 806).

The spearhead measures *c.* 250mm in length and 40mm in width. It has a lanceolate blade with a lozenge section mid-rib and opposed peg-holes close to the base of the blade. Corrosion has etched through the mid-rib at one point towards the tip. Remnants of wood found in the socket have been identified as common ash *Fraxinus excelsior* L. (inf Vanessa Straker)—a species much favoured for spear shafts (eg Coles *et al* 1978, 10–12, 42).

Plain pegged spearheads (Greenwell & Brewis Class V, 1909, 460) are ubiquitous throughout the Late Bronze Age, and Ehrenberg follows Savory and Burgess in ascribing spearheads with lozenge section mid-ribs to the Wilburton phase (LBA 1: 10th century BC) (1977, 14). The Billingsgate piece may be added to the growing catalogue of Bronze Age metalwork recorded from the City (Merriman 1987, fig 2); this already contains several spearheads of Wilburton type (Needham & Burgess 1980, fig 7B).

23. (Fig 10) Short, stumpy Late Bronze Age copper alloy socketed spearhead found by Mr J R Wells in early 1992 on the Surrey foreshore of the Thames at Mortlake, 'just west (*ie* upstream) of Barnes Railway Bridge' (TQ 213 762). The object lay at a point roughly midway between the high and low water marks, 'among heavy gravel pebbles'.

The spearhead is 77mm in length, 27mm in width at its widest point and weighs 31.85gm. It is now badly pitted and incomplete, and the hole in the socket towards the base of the blade suggests that it may have been a faulty casting which caused the missing area of the socket to burst away. Enough of the blade survives to indicate that it was of lanceolate shape, though there is no sign of the pegholes by which it was probably originally attached to the wooden shaft.

In discussing the 22 short stumpy pegged spearheads from the Blackmoor (Hampshire) hoard, Colquhoun noted that the type seemed to have become popular from the end of the Wilburton phase (1979, 106); Ehrenberg too regarded them as characteristic of the Ewart Park phase (LBA 2: 9th–8th centuries BC) (1977, 15). Surprisingly few such spearheads have been recorded from local reaches of the Thames hitherto, though one in the Museum of London's

collection (MoL 49.107/851), is from the river at Teddington.

24. (Fig 10) Late Bronze Age copper alloy socketed axe found by Mr M J Hinchcliffe behind and south-east of St Mary's Convent in Botwell Lane, Hayes, Middlesex in July or August 1981 (TQ 0938 8072). The axe lay at a depth of 6 in (0.15m) beneath the surface of a field under pasture, subsequently built upon in late 1981. The geology comprised Taplow terrace gravels overlain by brickearth (Gibbard 1985, 46–7, 137; Gibbard *et al* 1987).

The implement measures 117mm in length, with a blade width of 56mm, and weighs 320gm. Both faces are decorated with three vertical ribs 50mm in length. The mouth-moulding is a single collar with a sloped top and concave underside which flows straight onto the body of the axe. Casting seams survive down both sides and there is a slight casting fault close to the top of the loop.

The condition of the axe is puzzling as its dark golden/black patina is more reminiscent of a river find than one recovered from the brick-earths. By way of explanation the finder has suggested that the axe could have been derived from a small ?gravel pit known as Shack's Lake, lying 100m distant, which was backfilled with imported material, possibly dredged from a local stretch of the Thames.

The axe itself belongs to the series of southern English ribbed axes referable to the Ewart Park phase (LBA 2: 9th–8th centuries BC). Schmidt and Burgess grouped such axes in the north of Britain into their Type Welby (1981, 221–3), though the many variants in the south have yet to receive detailed classification (inf Stuart Needham). Ribbed axes are well known in the lower Thames valley, and are represented in the hoards from Watford (Coombs 1979), Wandsworth (Garraway Rice 1923) and Petters, Egham where they comprise Needham's Class B (1990, 32–8).

25. (Fig 10) Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age copper alloy roll-headed pin found by Mr D Wood on the Middlesex foreshore of the Thames at Syon Reach (opposite the western end of Kew Gardens) in 1984 (TQ 1745 7640). The find lay towards the top of the foreshore close to the point at which the unprotected natural riverbank was being eroded at high water.

The pin is bent at its now broken tip, measures 52mm in length (nearer 60mm if straight) and weighs 2.5gm. It is formed of a wire strip of

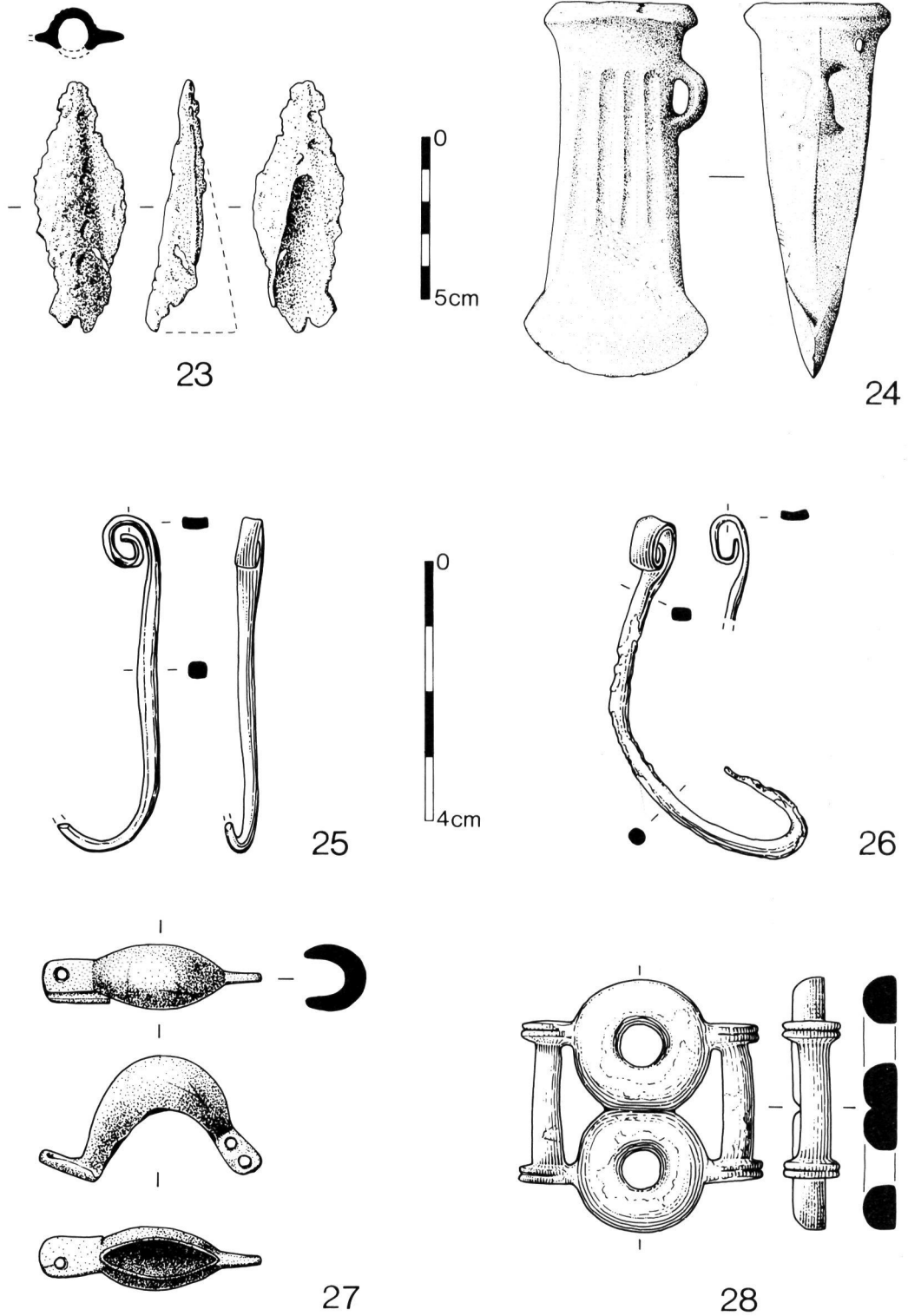


Fig 10. Late Bronze Age and Iron Age copper alloy artefacts, nos 23–26 scale 1:2, nos 27 and 28 scale 1:1

roughly square section which has been flattened and rolled over to create the head. In its present form, it is tempting to suggest that it may have been used as a fish-hook.

26. (Fig 10) A second Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age copper alloy roll-headed pin was found by Mr R J Caddy on the Surrey foreshore of the Thames at Wandsworth in May 1992 (TQ 2451 7557). It was found at low water and within a metre of a Romano-British copper alloy twisted wire bracelet.

The pin is badly bent and corroded and now measures 55mm in overall length (nearer 80mm if straight), and weighs 3.19gm. So bad is the corrosion that it is not clear whether the tip survives. The pin is formed of a length of circular-section wire which has been flattened and rolled over to create the head.

The continental ancestry and British findspots of roll-headed pins have been set out by O'Connor (1980, 200, list 179, map 63), who notes the longevity of the type and the dearth of closely dated examples. A number of the British pins have a loose connection with Late Bronze Age material (Ivinghoe Beacon and Heathery Burn Cave, for instance), though the recent recovery of a roll-headed pin from amongst occupation debris stratigraphically linked with the deposition of a Ewart Park hoard at Petters, Egham in Surrey, provides one reliably contexted and dated find (Needham 1990, 62-3).

Stray roll-headed pins have been recorded before from Wandsworth (one example; MoL A4913) and Syon (two examples; MoL A10578 & A11918). Both stretches have yielded much Late Bronze Age metalwork over the years which, in the latter area, includes material typical of domestic contexts such as tweezers and razors (Needham & Longley 1980, 426-7). The finder's observation that the Syon pin was eroded out of the modern river bank is worthy of further investigation; a Carp's Tongue scrap hoard was located in similar circumstances a few years previously (Needham & Burgess 1980, fig 2 & 445; Needham 1987, fig 5.15, nos 2-18). (Wandsworth too has recently produced a small, Late Bronze Age hoard apparently stratified within deposits eroding out of the foreshore, and this will form the subject of a separate note in due course.)

IRON AGE

27. (Fig 10) Incomplete Early Iron Age copper alloy bow brooch, found by Mr R J Caddy at

low water on the Surrey foreshore just downstream of the BP jetties at Wandsworth in August 1989 (TQ 2530 7538). The River Wandle discharges into the Thames a few score metres further downstream. Lumps of 'peat' were seen to be eroding out of the foreshore by the finder at about the same level as the brooch.

The brooch is 34mm in overall length, weighs 10.22gm and has a robust hollowed cast bow. At its foot, and adjacent to the short catch plate, the casting has been pierced vertically to secure a decorative knob or stud now lost. The head of the brooch terminates in a narrow, flattened and elongated finial 7mm in length which is pierced by two horizontal perforations, set one above the other at an angle of 45 degrees. These served to house the axial rods around which a bilateral double spring (or more probably mock spring-hinge) would have been wound and to which the pin was attached. This spring/pin assembly is unfortunately missing, though its likely form can be reconstructed by reference to a few other more complete pieces of similar type mentioned below.

The Wandsworth brooch belongs to a small but expanding series of innovative British cast brooches deriving ultimately from continental late Hallstatt/early La Tène models and datable to the first half of the fifth century BC. First recognised by Hodson (1971), a number of examples were discussed by Hull and Hawkes (contained within their Group L; 1987, 58-67, pl 21-22), since when further examples have come to light (Allen & Dalwood 1983, 16; Hattat 1987 & 1989; *inf* Valerie Rigby and Claire Mason).

No two brooches within the series are exactly alike, though each draws variously upon a restricted range of continental and insular features. The present piece shares its distinctively British humped hollowed bow with brooches from the Thames at Hammersmith (Hodson 1971) and Mortlake (Cotton 1979), and with others from Ditchling Beacon, Sussex (Hull & Hawkes 1987, 64-5; *inf* Fiona Marsden), Pirton, Hertfordshire (*inf* Valerie Rigby) and from the North Downs scarp above Aylesford, Kent (*inf* Claire Mason; see now Kelly 1991, 338). In addition, four of Hattat's equal-ended 'Upavon' type possess high hollowed bows (1989, 6-9), including the two eponymous Wiltshire examples (nos 1440 & 1441), and single brooches from 'Suffolk' (no. 1444) and Bledlow, Buckinghamshire (Hattat 1987, 12, no. 721).

The continental double spring (Hull & Hawkes 1987, 58) re-appears as a mock or dummy spring feature on several British brooches including the hollowed bow brooch from Ditchling Beacon mentioned already and on an excavated example from Holloway Lane, Harmondsworth (Cotton *et al* 1986, 53–4; Hull & Hawkes 1987, 64). Pairs of horizontal piercings indicate that the hollowed bow brooches from Hammersmith and Mortlake were, like this Wandsworth example, probably once similarly equipped.

The elongated finial of the Wandsworth brooch, an insular feature, matches those on the Harmondsworth, Hammersmith and Mortlake fibulae, while the now missing knob or stud adjacent to the short catch-plate is a Hallstatt feature which can be paralleled on the pieces from Hammersmith, Woodeaton and Great Chesterford (Hull & Hawkes 1987, 64, 66). In terms of shared characteristics, however, the present piece is perhaps closest to that from Hammersmith, though it lacks the latter's now missing balancing decorative knob at the head.

Such brooches can be compared with the well known series of Hallstatt D and La Tène I dagger scabbards recovered from the Thames (Jope 1961; 1982; Macdonald 1978) for both classes of object display local ingenuity in the adoption and innovative adaptation of a range of constructional and decorative features. Finally, in the present context it is appropriate to note that two of the La Tène I dagger scabbards were recovered from the river at Wandsworth (Jope 1961, 335–7, nos 19 & 22).

28. (Fig 10) Late Iron Age copper alloy strap-union found by Mr D Wood on the Surrey foreshore of the Thames in Southwark in 1971 (TQ 324 805) (MoL 92.143). The findspot lay half-way down the foreshore in front of The Anchor Public House.

The strap-union is of cast, figure-of-eight form and measures 38mm in overall length, 36mm in overall width and weighs 30.3gm. It is composed of two plain linked rings of solid, plano-convex section, one (19.5mm) slightly larger than the other (18.5mm), with central perforations 6.5mm in diameter. At each side strap-bars of circular section are attached to the rings by their simple terminal mouldings. The bars would have held straps up to 17mm in width and 2mm thick.

Strap-unions have been reviewed by Taylor and Brailsford (1985), following earlier work by Spratling (1972) and MacGregor (1976); the

figure-of-eight form is Taylor and Brailsford's Type I (1985, 247). Type I pieces have a distribution which stretches from Humberside to Wessex, and close parallels to the Southwark piece can be cited from Bigberry, Kent (Thompson 1983, 259) and East Anglia (Taylor & Brailsford 1985, nos 20 and 23). Taylor & Brailsford allow a generous second century BC to second century AD date-range for Type I strap-unions (1985, 267), though for the majority a tighter first century BC to mid first century AD bracket is permissible (see below).

Meaningful associations are few but informative. Of most interest perhaps is the presence of clay mould fragments at Gussage All Saints (Spratling 1979, 134; Foster 1980, 19), where variants of Type I strap-unions were clearly manufactured alongside other horse gear including three-link bits, terrets and lynch-pin terminals. The pit containing the metalworking debris belongs to the end of the phase 2 Gussage settlement and has provided two corrected radiocarbon dates of 390–10 BC (Q-1207) and 190 BC–AD 50 (Q-1206) (Wainwright & Switsur 1976); Spratling has suggested a first century BC date for the metalwork products on stylistic grounds (Wainwright & Spratling 1973, 123; Spratling 1979, 125).

Pairs of large Type I strap-unions have also been recovered from the cart burials at Garton Slack (Brewster 1971, 291) and Kirkburn on Humberside (Stead 1991, 47–51), in positions which indicated that they were suspended from the ends of the yokes and used to adjust the girth (Stead 1991, 49 & 51). Stead's attribution of the cart-burials to a La Tène I tradition (1991, 180–1) suggests that the strap-unions which accompany them must be placed at the head of the British sequence.

Further associations with horse gear are recorded from Ringstead in Norfolk (a single strap-union with two bridle bits and other items; Clarke 1951, 221–3) and Danebury, Hampshire (a single strap-union, a terret and two button-and-loop fasteners; Cunliffe 1984, 342 & 345). The Danebury finds were recovered from a floor surface placed late within the site's ceramic phase 7 (300–100/50 BC), for which a date of 100 BC was suggested (Jope in Cunliffe 1984, 345).

Such small pieces of Late Iron Age harness equipment are not particularly well represented in the lower Thames valley. However, two strap-unions have been recorded previously, however (one multi-lobed example from 'London' and a

possible second example with glass inlay from Horsenden Hill, Ealing (inf Ian Stead), together with several bridle-bits, terrets, and a crescent-headed lynch-pin (see MacGregor 1976, 51–76 for details; also Cotton 1978). These may be compared with the famous items of parade gear recovered from the Thames (eg Stead 1985a; 1985b). Recent excavations close to the findspot in north Southwark furnish a little complementary contextual evidence for late prehistoric and early Roman activity on the sand islands later occupied by Londinium's southern suburb (Beard & Cowan 1988, 376; Heard *et al* 1990, 609–10). However, neither this nor the strap-union considered here add much to the arguments in favour of a late pre-Roman precursor to Londinium (see Merriman 1987, 318 & 324).

CONCLUSION

The last 20 years have witnessed an unprecedented upsurge in archaeological effort, both in the City of London and beyond, which seems, following the promulgation of the Department of the Environment's Planning Policy Guidance note 16 in November 1990, unlikely to be repeated. Though the bulk of this work has yet to be synthesised and published, it is already clear that it will provide much contextual data to complement a century and more of endeavour on the part of antiquarians, dredgermen, mudlarks, fieldworkers and others (Merrifield 1990, 2–3). Far from being a footnote to such work, the finds published here underscore the advances (and the deficiencies) of these last two decades.

As far as prehistory is concerned, work in the City and north Southwark has begun to establish a firm topographic base from which to proceed, even though a number of important questions relating to the local river regime remain to be resolved. Thus, on the low-lying southern bank of the modern Thames it is now possible to link various of the finds recorded here (eg Nos 7, 14, 20 & 28) with areas of slightly higher sand and gravel (up to +1.8m OD; Heard *et al* 1990, 609) which were presumably above contemporary river levels in prehistory. Several of these 'islands' have also produced more direct evidence of early activity in the form of pits, ploughmarks and burials sealed beneath later deposits (Heard *et al* 1990, 610). It may be that the finds from Deptford (Nos 8 & 10) can be similarly explained,

though so far little fieldwork has been conducted in the locality; references to earlier discoveries (eg Anon 1937) underline the potential waiting to be tapped.

On the high ground of the north bank the situation is very different, for here prodigious amounts of brickearth and gravel have been displaced for Roman and later building programmes (Merriman 1987, 319). So much so that few undisturbed prehistoric contexts have yet been identified in the City or its immediate environs. Neither of the implements from the City noted above (nos 9 & 22) have unimpeachable contexts, although on the face of it the pegged spearhead from the foreshore at Billingsgate can be linked with countless others recovered from the river further upstream, which are generally now considered to have been deliberately deposited.

The number of prehistoric artefacts from these usually less productive stretches of the river downstream of Westminster is also of interest. In part this must be due to the numbers and vigilance of the searchers operating in the area (and their use of metal detectors), and in part to the accelerating erosion of the foreshore by high speed river traffic. However explained, it may indeed give a somewhat truer reflection of the actual situation, previously confused by, for instance, the dumping of material originally dredged from the Pool of London further upstream at Hammersmith and Wandsworth (see Lawrence 1929, 72). The possibility of misleading provenances becoming attached to objects in this way has long been recognised (see Marsh 1979 for the deliberate forging of such provenances), and seems to have occurred at least once amongst the objects published here (the socketed axe from 'Hayes', No. 24). In a second instance (the flanged axe from Vauxhall, No. 16), careful observation by the finder combined with the condition of the piece in question seems to obviate any initial doubts.

Many of the remaining objects dealt with have been reported from the traditionally prolific reaches of the Thames between Syon and Vauxhall (Nos 4–6, 13, 16–17, 19, 23, 25–7). While this is not the place to repeat the arguments relating to the deposition of artefacts in the Thames, it may be noted that the record is likely to be overly biased in favour of river material, as the stock of land finds will inevitably have been depleted over the millennia in an area as fertile, populous and developed as the lower

Thames valley, whereas river finds were largely irretrievable until dredging and collectors coincided in the last century (Needham & Burgess 1980, 446; Case 1991, 233). Moreover several of the objects, such as the pins and the brooch from Syon and Wandsworth (Nos 25–7), are types likely to be found on settlements. Their presence holds out at least the possibility of locating sites with good preservation of organics and environmental data—a possibility perhaps strengthened at Wandsworth by the observation of ‘peat’ eroding from the foreshore. Likewise the opposed-platform flint core from near the Tate (No. 4) which, following the recovery of other dated pieces from the Colne valley at Uxbridge, may with its fellows point to the whereabouts of other late glacial sites buried in the Thames floodplain.

The finds from the valleys of the rivers Lea and Colne (Nos 3, 11, 12 & 21) occur in areas still not sufficiently explored by archaeologists, despite a number of earlier casual discoveries in the Lea valley (*eg* Hatley 1933) and some recent encouraging results from the Colne valley (*eg* Lewis 1991). The palstave from the London Clay hills at Eastcote (No. 4) also lies on a geological stratum not often reached by fieldwork. It is presumably an indication that exploitation of woodland resources was under way in the locality as early as the end of the Middle Bronze Age.

The ‘Golden Age’ of Thames finds may have gone (Lawrence 1929, 71), but careful observation (and the use of sophisticated metal detectors) continues to bring to light numbers of prehistoric finds, even in areas seemingly exhaustively searched already. The few remaining expanses of river gravels in west Middlesex are a case in point—long known to have produced thousands of Palaeolithic flint tools in the days when the gravel was dug by hand, the odd piece still turns up, as the flint handaxe from the conveyor belt at Holloway Lane (No. 1) testifies. But how many others still pass unnoticed along the conveyors?

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