

RECENT PREHISTORIC FINDS FROM THE THAMES FORESHORE AND BEYOND IN GREATER LONDON

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SUMMARY

This paper rounds up a selection of recent prehistoric finds reported to the Museum of London. All but five of the 43 finds were recovered from the modern foreshore of the River Thames (16 from the Middlesex bank and 22 from the Surrey bank), and the majority remain in private possession. In addition to the expected run of single flint, stone, antler, pottery and metal objects, several small hoards are described. These include caches of Middle and Late Bronze Age metalwork (Nos 22, 24, 26 from the modern foreshore and No. 27 from the London Clay overlooking the River Brent) and at least one, and possibly as many as three, hoards of Late Iron Age potin coins (Nos 35 and 36) from the modern foreshore. In terms of their rarity and significance, a substantial fragment of a handled pottery beaker from a point off Isleworth Eyot (No. 19) and part of a Middle Bronze Age gold composite ring from the modern foreshore at Wandsworth (No. 23) are worth particular note. Each of the pieces is described and their local/regional significance indicated.

INTRODUCTION

This is the second occasional paper rounding up prehistoric objects from Greater London reported to the Museum of London. Like that published previously (Cotton & Merriman 1991), a majority of the pieces noted here were found on the Thames foreshore. Unless otherwise stated they remain in private possession and are dealt with in chronological order. A concluding section attempts to pull together a number of points

regarding the recovery of objects from the Thames catchment and its intertidal zone in the London area.

PALAEOLITHIC (Fig 2)

1. Pointed flint biface found on the Surrey foreshore of the Thames at Barn Elms (TQ 233 774) by John Gibson during 1976 or 1977 (MoL 95.533/1).

The implement measures 130mm in length, 80mm in width at the butt and weighs 464.41g. It has a heavy butt which retains patches of worn cortex, and a reverse-S twist along one edge; the tip is missing. It is heavily rolled and ochreously stained; there are also traces of thermal cracking on the illustrated face.

2. Palaeolithic side scraper worked on a flake found close to low water on a 0.4m tide on the Surrey foreshore of the Thames at Vauxhall (c.TQ 2980 7782) by Jonathan Cotton in August 1993 (MoL 95.290/1).

The implement measures 96mm in length and 53mm in width, and is worked on a robust stone-struck flake with a plain butt. The piece is of mottled yellow-brown cortical flint; it is rolled and has a faint milky patina on the dorsal face.

3. Distal end of a Palaeolithic flake/blade found on the Middlesex foreshore of the Thames in front of Custom House Quay (c.TQ 333 806) by Mark Paros, and reported in 1996. The piece lay on a sandy deposit towards the rear of the foreshore close to the quay.

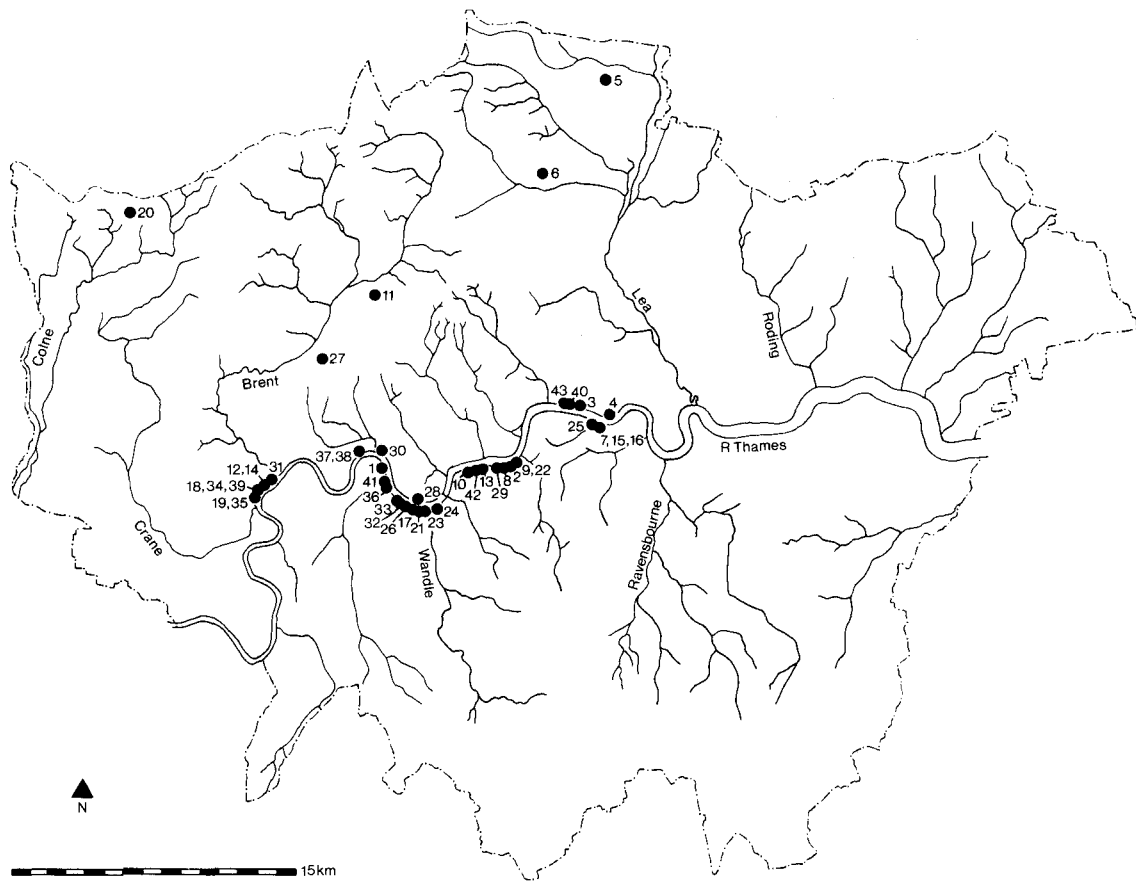


Fig 1. Location of finds mentioned in the text

The robust, double-ridged, parallel-sided flake/blade terminates in a hinge fracture, is 45mm in width, 8mm thick and has a surviving length of 54mm. It is heavily rolled and stained a dark chocolate brown; all high points and edges are worn and abraded. Although lacking its butt, the piece has Levalloisian traits.

4. Small, rectangular Palaeolithic flake found on the Middlesex foreshore of the Thames at Execution Dock, Wapping (c.TQ 3490 8005) by Anita Freeman ‘two or three months’ prior to May 1997. The dock lies immediately downstream of the Thames Police Station. The piece lay on the surface of the gravel shingle about half way down the foreshore on a normal low tide, and close to a metal pipe recently inserted in the foreshore. The finder suggests that it could have come from the upcast of the excavation to install the pipe.

The flake measures 64mm in length, 41mm in

width at its widest point, is some 13mm thick and weighs 42.18g. It is stained a lustrous dark olive-brown-black. It has been struck from a small, carefully-prepared core Levallois-fashion which has resulted in the production of a characteristically faceted butt.

Discussion

The biface and scraper (Nos 1 and 2) are both of lower Palaeolithic type and likely to have been eroded from one of the higher implementiferous gravel terraces by the Thames or one of its tributaries. They can be added to a number of other such pieces recovered from the foreshore of the modern Thames (eg Wymer 1991, Fig 3).

Although well-known from localities such as Yiewsley/West Drayton, Creffield Road, Acton and Baker’s Hole, Crayford, Levallois material is

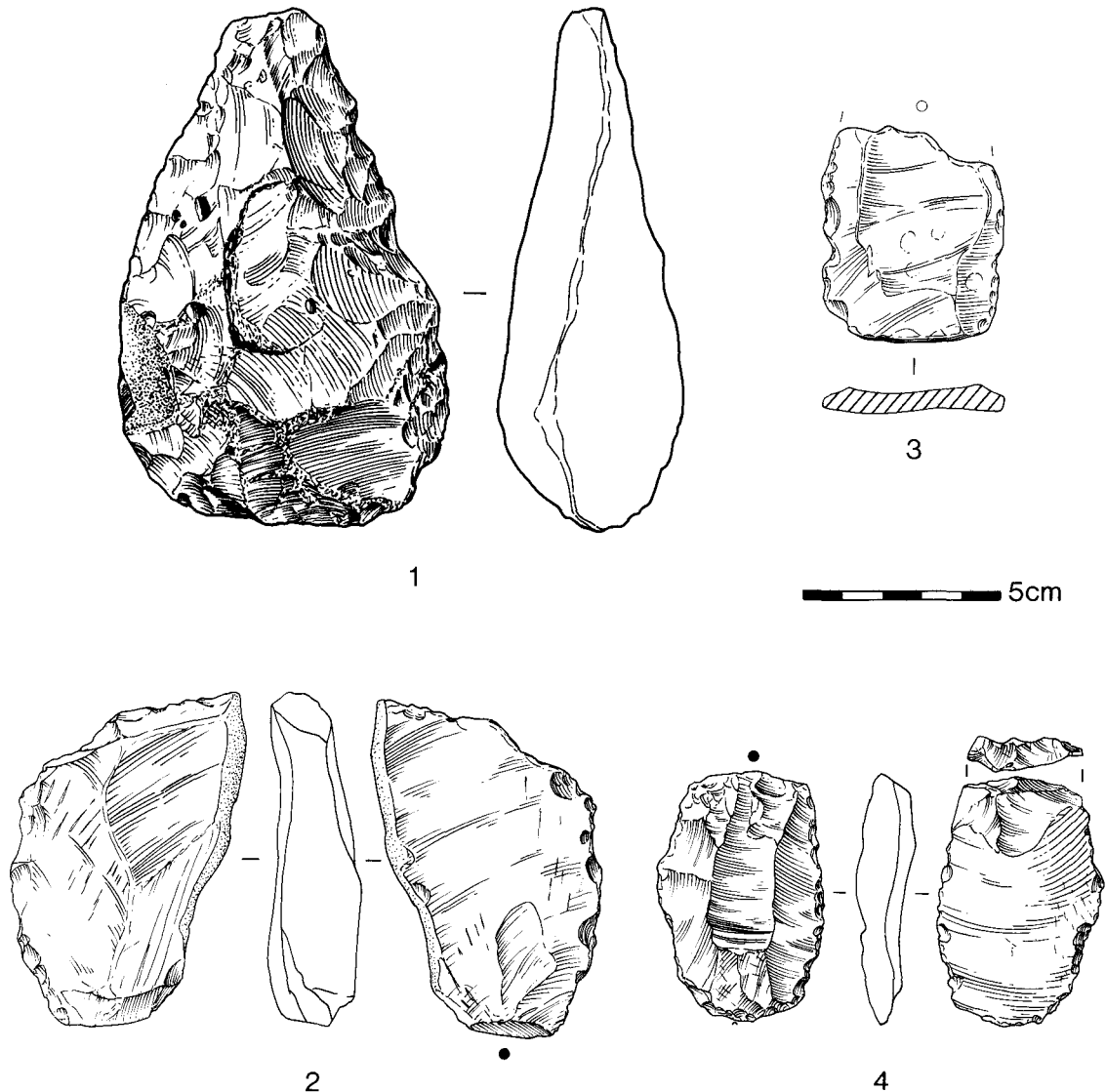


Fig 2. Palaeolithic flint artefacts Nos 1-4, scale 1:2

not often recorded from the modern Thames foreshore. The findspots of Nos 3 and 4 suggest that they could have become incorporated in Lower Floodplain (Shepperton Gravel) deposits which, downstream of Westminster, fill the late Pleistocene 'Buried Channel' of the Thames (eg Wymer 1991, 11-4; Bridgland 1994, 177, Fig 4.3; Gibbard 1994, 100-6). Other finds recovered from the 'Buried Channel' further downstream at Erith and Tilbury include four or five 'flat-butted cordate' or 'bout coupé' bifaces in somewhat similar states of preservation and staining to 3 and 4 above, and probably

attributable to the earlier part of the Devensian (Wymer 1985, 302).

MESOLITHIC (Fig 3)

5. Blade of a Mesolithic flint adze recovered 'with other flints' from an allotment in Goat Lane off Forty Hill, Enfield (TQ 3395 9814), and reported by Geoffrey Gillam of the Enfield Archaeological Society in June 1996. The findspot lies on an expanse of Third Terrace gravels on the west side of the Lea Valley.

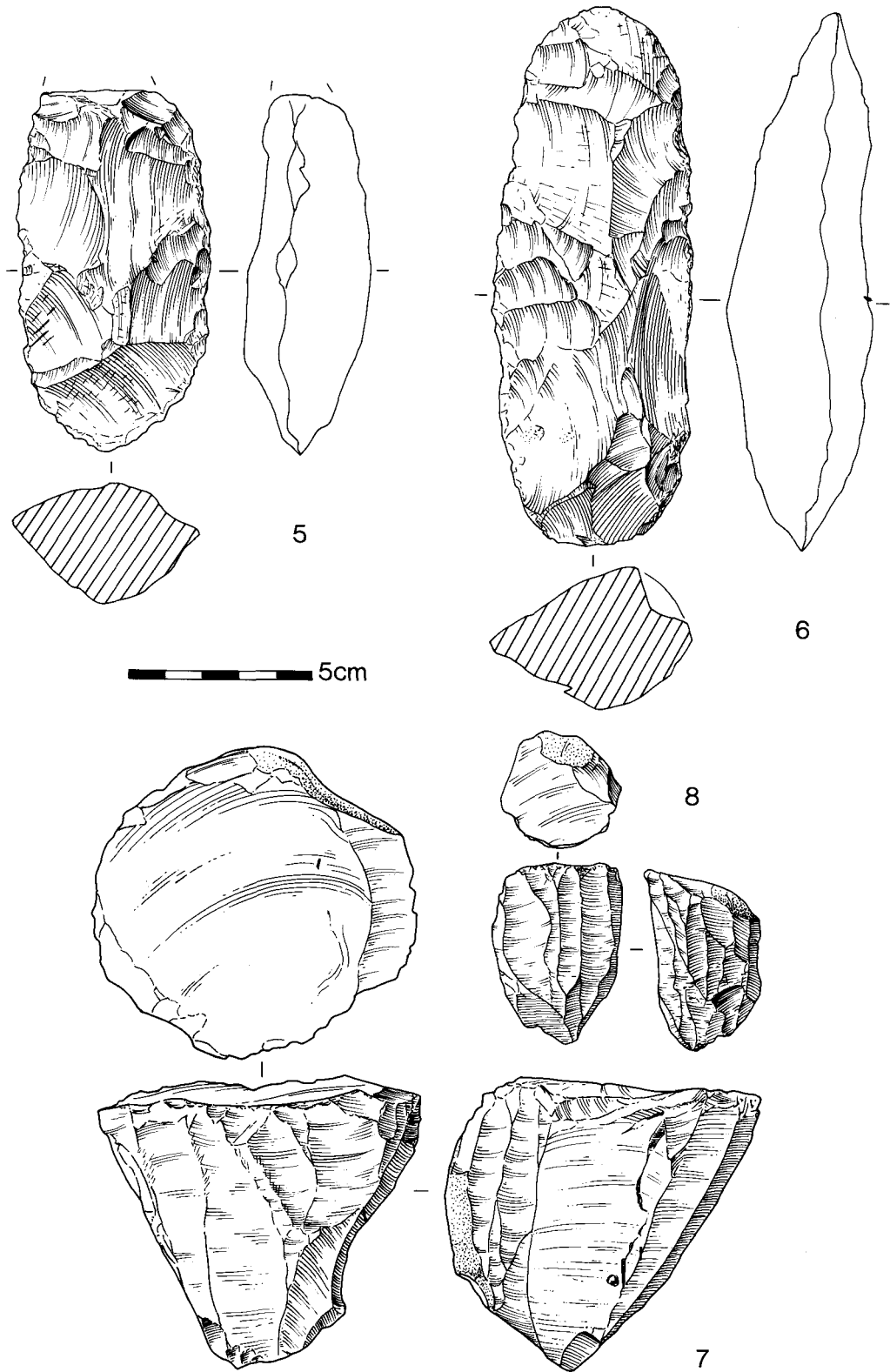


Fig 3. Mesolithic flint artefacts Nos 5-8, scale 1 : 2

The implement measures 97mm in length, 48mm in width, is 32mm thick and weighs 196.17g. It is of cherty, mottled grey-brown flint with iron staining on the high points of both faces. The piece also shows signs of wear and abrasion, particularly around the break, presumably the result of its having lain on or close to the surface. The cutting edge has been re-sharpened on one face with a tranchet blow.

6. Complete Mesolithic flint adze found in 1967 in a garden in Ulleswater Road, Southgate (TQ 3050 9313), and reported by Geoffrey Gillam in May 1997. The houses in Ulleswater and surrounding roads date from *c.*1909; prior to that time the area formed part of the parkland belonging to a private estate (Geoffrey Gillam, pers comm). The findspot overlooks Pymme's Brook, a tributary of the Lea.

The implement measures 147mm in length, 52mm in width, is 36mm thick and weighs 320.63g. It is of attractively banded grey-brown/pinkish-buff flint, and shows no sign of surface wear or abrasion. Both faces of the cutting edge have been resharpened with tranchet blows.

Discussion

Nos 5 and 6 can be added to a handful of other Mesolithic artefacts recorded from the Enfield, Edmonton and Southgate localities (*eg* Wymer 1977, 187; Gibson 1992). Excavations in the floor of the Lea valley at Enfield Lock to the east (Bedwin 1991) have located early Flandrian peats with high concentrations of charcoal, thought to indicate widespread clearance of the local pine-dominated tree cover by gatherer-hunter groups (Lewis *et al* 1992, 243–4). Adzes of the type published here could well have been used by these or later Mesolithic communities for tree-felling and related carpentry activities.

7. Large, single-platform pyramidal core found close to low water on the Surrey foreshore of the Thames in front of Chambers Wharf, Bermondsey (TQ 3438 7980) by Susanne Clokey and Julian Przybyla, and reported by Richard Hill in March 1995. The core was recovered from the surface of the foreshore at the downstream end of Chambers Wharf, in an area where seemingly *in situ* bedded horizons producing struck and burnt flint, pottery, animal, human and molluscan remains have been recorded by

Richard Hill and others (see also Nos 15, 16 and 25 below).

The core measures 80mm in overall length, is 81mm across its striking platform and weighs 554.9g. A patch of smooth cortex survives at one point and makes it clear that the core has utilised a thermally-fractured (and lightly peat-stained) cobble of river gravel, of cherty, originally mottled grey-black flint stained yellow-brown. There are at least eight flake beds remaining on the core, the largest of which measures 90mm in length. The striking platform appears to have been renewed with the removal of a large broad core tablet, suggesting that the core was originally capable of producing somewhat longer flakes/blades.

8. Single-platform pyramidal bladelet core found on the Surrey foreshore of the Thames at Vauxhall (*c.*TQ 2970 7780) by Jonathan Cotton in August 1993 (MoL 95.290/2). The core was picked up close to low water on a 0.4m tide, having apparently been eroded out of an extensive horizontal peaty horizon or 'platform'. (The findspot lay a few tens of metres upstream from that of No. 2 above.)

The core measures 53mm in length, 37mm in width and is 33mm thick. It is of good quality dark grey-black flint, with a small patch of rough white cortex adjacent to the striking platform.

MESOLITHIC/NEOLITHIC (Fig 4)

9. Worked red deer antler-base found on the Surrey foreshore of the Thames at Nine Elms, Vauxhall (TQ 3009 7796) by Jonathan Cotton in August 1993 (MoL 95.290/5). The piece was picked up close to low water between a series of pairs of substantial round-wood piles which run out into the deep water channel immediately upstream of the jetty belonging to the Nine Elms Cold Store. An antler tine and a flint blade were recovered a few metres downstream of the findspot; a pair of Middle Bronze Age spearheads from further up the same stretch of foreshore are discussed below (No. 22).

The antler-base measures 216mm in length along the beam, 64mm in diameter across the base, 43mm in diameter across the beam and weighs 695.2g. There are considerable signs of its having been worked with flint/stone tools: the beam has been severed between the bez and trez tines, the brow tine has been removed by careful

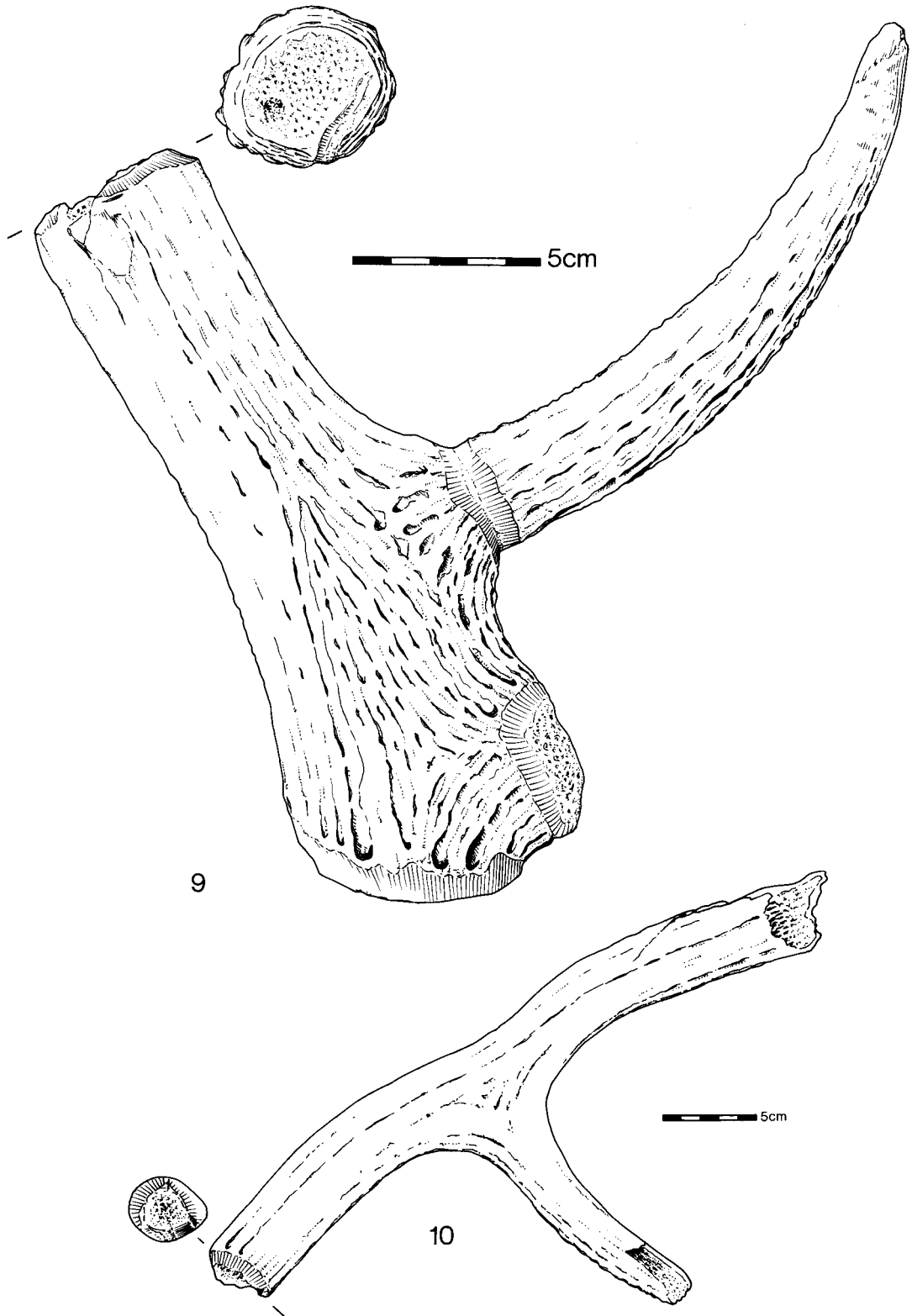


Fig 4. Antler waste, No. 9 scale 1:2, No. 10 scale 1:4

grooving and then snapping through the cancellous tissue, and the bez tine (175mm in length from base to tip) is in process of being removed by grooving, the latter presumably accomplished either by nibbling with a flint burin or sawing with a flint blade. The base of the antler (*ie* the part which joined the antler to the animal's skull) has also been modified using the same grooving technique, and this operation has effectively removed any evidence for determining whether the antler was shed naturally or cut from a dead animal (the use of shed antler is more common).

The piece is quite clearly in process of modification, and the original antler worker may have had any of several possibilities in mind: the creation of a heavy hammer suitable say for flint knapping, with the antler base as the working end; or perhaps the manufacture of a perforated 'base-mattock' (as Smith 1989, Types A & B) for use in wood-working, flenching or digging (*ibid*, 282). The problem with the first suggestion is that although modern flint-knappers use such tools, few actual examples with which to compare our piece survive in the archaeological record (Phil Harding, pers comm). However, the careful removal of the burr at the base of the antler suggests that this was the focus of attention. The manufacture of a base mattock would require the removal of the bez tine, the provision of an angled working edge (probably achieved by chopping away surplus antler with a stone axe), and the perforation of the implement for hafting (Smith 1989, 281), though in this instance the surviving length of the antler-beam is perhaps too short to produce an effective tool of this type (Clive Bonsall, pers comm). The reason for its discard part-worked remains equally unclear, although it is conceivable that it was deliberately immersed in the river to soften the tough outer surface of the antler for ease of working (*eg* Serjeantson *et al* 1991-2, 83), carried away in a flash flood and never recovered.

10. Worked red deer antler beam found on the Surrey foreshore of the Thames at Battersea (c.TQ 2765 7748) by Richard Hill in August 1996. The piece lay some 14m out from the river wall and 225m downstream of the Albert Bridge.

The antler beam is 400mm in length, 40mm in diameter and weighs 617.6g. The bez tine survives to a length of around 140mm although its tip is missing. The beam itself is badly shattered at its distal end, while there is a distinctive bevel at the proximal end providing

clear evidence of grooving with a flint burin or knife, as on No. 9 above.

It is possible that the intention here was the manufacture of a 'beam mattock', of which a number are known from the Thames (as Smith 1989, Types C and D). If so, a generally late Mesolithic date would be appropriate (Bonsall & Smith 1989).

Discussion

A number of finished antler tools including barbed points, antler-base and antler-beam mattocks, sleeves, picks, combs, pins, maceheads and cheek-pieces have been recovered from the Thames (*eg* Lawrence 1929; Lacaille 1961 & 1966; Smith 1989; Simpson 1996). However, few pieces of prehistoric antler waste have been identified locally hitherto. A group of grooved and chopped antlers of probable Neolithic date lay within a silted up river channel located at Eden Walk, Kingston during excavations carried out in the 1960s and late 1970s (Penn *et al* 1984, 216 & Fig 5; Serjeantson *et al* 1991-2, 83 & Fig 9, nos SF17 & SF18); a cut antler burr was recovered from a segment of the outer ditch of the earlier Neolithic causewayed enclosure at Yeoveney Lodge, Staines (Robertson-Mackay 1987, 122 & Fig 75); while an unfinished 'later Neolithic' antler macehead from the 'Thames foreshore' (MoL 84.405) has been noted by Simpson (1996, 303, No. 51). Antler working was also clearly taking place during the Late Bronze Age at Runnymede Bridge, primarily for the production of cheek-pieces (Longley 1980, 27-31; Foxon 1991, 148-9). Neither piece considered here can be closely dated, and both could belong equally well within either the Mesolithic or Neolithic periods.

NEOLITHIC (Figs 5, 6, 7)

11. Neolithic ground stone axe found during landscaping in the back garden of no 6 North Square, Hampstead Garden Suburb (c.TQ 254 885), and reported by the householder, Mrs C. Eilon, in January 1996. The axe had been discovered at a depth of approximately two feet during the removal of a Yew tree. North Square is situated on an eminence of London Clay which falls away northwards towards a minor

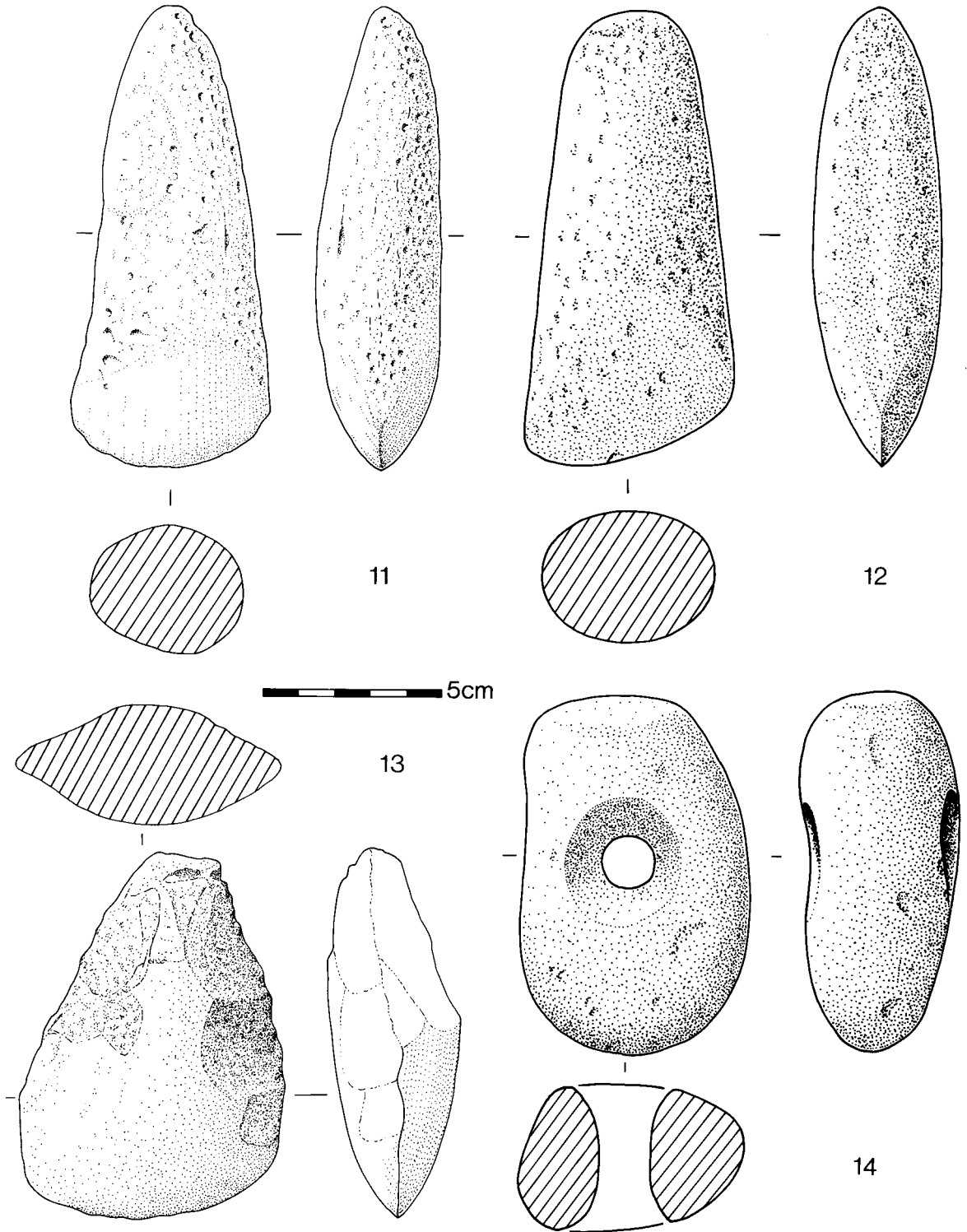


Fig 5. Neolithic stone artefacts Nos 11-14, scale 1:2

tributary of the Brent, the Mutton Brook, a kilometre or so distant.

The implement measures 130mm in length, 56mm in width at the cutting edge, is 35mm thick and weighs 330.65g. It is of nearly circular cross-section at the mid point and is made of a close-grained rock of grey-green hue, burnt pink across much of the illustrated face. It has not been sliced and the intensity of the heat to which the axe has been subjected renders macroscopic identification of the parent rock difficult (Sylvia Humphries, pers comm). The surface is pitted and cracked away from the cutting edge, although how much of this is due to fire action is unclear. The less damaged portions close to the cutting edge are heavily scratched and striated.

12. Neolithic ground stone axe found on the Middlesex foreshore of the Thames at Syon (TQ 175 764) by John Gibson sometime around 1976 or 1977 (MoL 95.533/2). The piece was discovered three quarters of the way down the foreshore and in (presumably) fortuitously close association with a Late Bronze Age scrap hoard (Needham & Burgess 1980, 445 & Fig 2; Needham 1987, 121, Fig 5.15, nos 2–18). It was considered to form part of the hoard by its finder. A quartzite pebble hammer (No. 14 below) was also picked up close by.

The axe measures 127mm in length, 58mm in width at the cutting edge, is 34mm thick and weighs 405.56g. It has a flattened circular cross section and a markedly asymmetric cutting edge, and is made of a coarse grained and much pitted green-black rock visually similar to products of Group I or Ia (Mount's Bay area of Penzance, Cornwall). However, the sourcing of rocks of 'Cornish' type has recently been critically reviewed by Berridge (1994), who has raised doubts about the whole concept of 'factory' sites in the Cornish peninsula.

13. Blade of a Neolithic ground stone axe found on the Surrey foreshore of the Thames at Battersea Park (c.TQ 2816 7760) by Richard Hill in early 1997. The findspot lies 16.3m out from the river wall and 70m downstream of the Festival Pier.

The axe fragment now measures 102mm in length, 71mm in width close to the cutting edge, is 34mm thick and weighs 279.23g. It retains a pointed lentoid cross-section and is made of greenish-grey, medium coarse-grained rock. Although it has not been sliced, it is visually similar to another axe from the Thames at

Hampton Court in the collections of the Museum of London (MoL 49.107/165), sourced as 'Mynydd Rhiw, North Wales' (Group VII). The axe has clearly been crudely re-worked at some stage subsequent to breakage to create a small but serviceable triangular tool, and would probably originally have been somewhere in the region of 180–220mm in length.

14. Neolithic perforated pebble hammer found on the Middlesex foreshore of the Thames at Syon (TQ 175 764) by John Gibson sometime around 1976 or 1977 (MoL 95.533/5). The piece was found three quarters of the way down the foreshore and close to a Neolithic axe (No. 12 above) and a Late Bronze Age scrap hoard (Needham & Burgess 1980, 445 & Fig 2).

The implement measures 100mm in length, 60mm in width, is 43mm thick and weighs 397.98g. It comprises a small oval quartzite pebble with an hour-glass perforation drilled slightly off-centre and towards the narrower end. Although there are one or two pock marks on the surface and at the edges, there is no trace of wear or abrasion at either end consonant with its use as a hammer (see Roe 1979, 36 & Fig 15).

Other 'pebble hammers' have been recovered from Syon Reach/Old England, and fall within a west London Thames cluster (Roe 1968; Field & Penn 1981, 15). The dating of these pieces is problematical, although the Mesolithic associations of many of their number are perhaps best known. However, others – as Roe has noted (1979, 36) – could belong within the Neolithic/Bronze Age or even later. The shape and size of our pebble, together with the off-centred positioning of its hour-glass perforation, is reminiscent of maceheads of Roe's 'ovoid' type, the latter often associated with late Neolithic Grooved Ware (eg Roe 1979, 30).

15. Naturally perforated flint nodule worked into a 'macehead' found on the Surrey foreshore of the Thames in front of the downstream end of Chambers Wharf, Bermondsey (c.TQ 3439 7980) by Richard Hill in 1989. Like the large pyramidal core (No. 7 above), the piece was recovered from the surface of the foreshore in an area where apparently *in situ* bedded deposits had been observed by the finder and others (see also No. 16 below).

The object measures 138mm × 132mm, is 49mm thick and weighs 780.1g. The flint is a mottled grey/black in colour with expanses of smooth grey-white cortex surviving around the

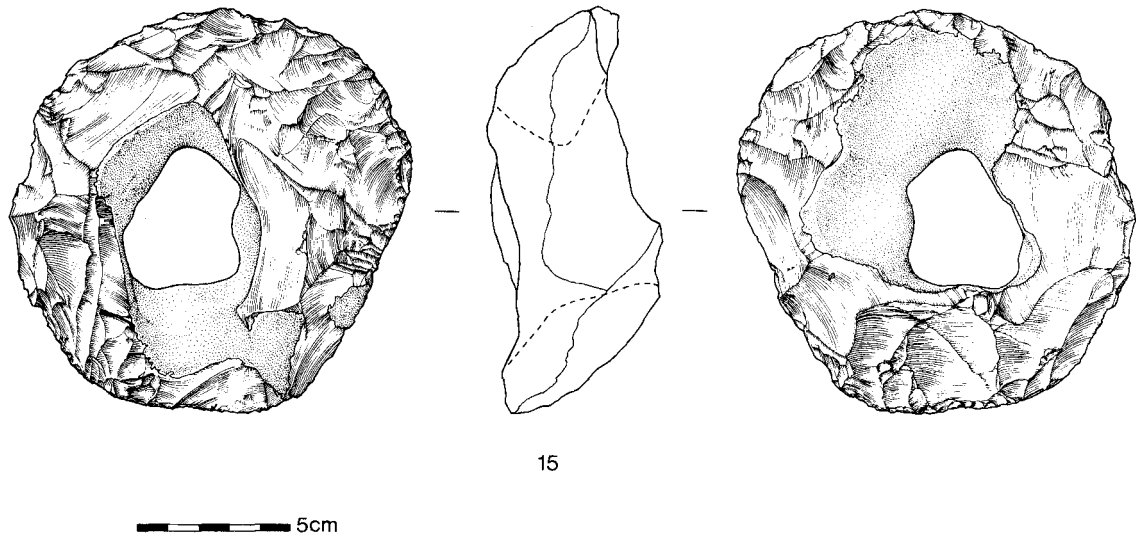


Fig 6. Neolithic/Bronze Age flint 'macehead' No. 15, scale 1:2

natural hole and at one point on the circumference. The flaking is bold and combines both hard and soft hammer technique. At several points the edge has been used as a striking platform for the removal of flakes/blades. The edge itself shows some signs of localised crushing and wear, although this may be a result of the time spent on the foreshore. (Traces of green algae on one face may be similarly explained.) No attempt appears to have been made to modify the central perforation, and no signs of wear are visible (*eg* from hafting).

Naturally holed stones worked into 'maceheads' are not particularly common. Examples from Foxholes Farm, Hertfordshire (Partridge 1989, 151 & Fig 89, No. 37) and West Kennet Avenue (Smith 1965, 242 & Fig 80, No. f205) are anyway both markedly smaller in size than that from Bermondsey, although in this respect a third piece from Mucking, Essex – now in the British Museum (P1990 12-4 1; Gill Varndell, *pers comm*) – is closely comparable (as is another somewhat larger stray piece from Paris currently in the Musée Carnavalet (Philippe Velay, *pers comm*). The Mucking and West Kennet examples exhibit edge bruising while, unlike our piece, all three of the parallels cited above appear to have a worn or 'lustrous' appearance at the perforation. The two smaller examples have been interpreted as possible amulets, and the signs of wear argued as the result of friction from a thong threaded through the hole; alternatively these could result from hafting friction.

Dating is inevitably something of an imperfect exercise given the universal appeal – and folklore (*eg* Dent 1965; Merrifield 1987, 161-2) – attached to naturally-holed stones; the Foxholes Farm piece for example was recovered from a deep 'shaft pit' (F50) dating to the Late Bronze Age (Partridge 1989, 110 & Fig 62), while that from West Kennet formed part of a scatter of struck flint and Peterborough Neolithic pottery recovered from an old land surface towards the southern end of the Avenue (Smith 1965, 210). The Paris piece is described as 'Neolithic', while that from Mucking has been tentatively assigned a Neolithic/Bronze Age date, which would on balance perhaps suit the Bermondsey piece too. Simpson (1996, 299) has drawn attention to a further group of 13 smaller flint 'maceheads' with natural perforations, some of which may be linked to the Maesmore group by virtue of the presence on several of decorative faceting, and for which a later Neolithic date might also be appropriate.

16. Rimsherd of decorated, heavily flint-tempered pottery found on the Surrey foreshore of the Thames in front of the downstream end of Chambers Wharf, Bermondsey (TQ 3436 7980) by Richard Hill in July 1995. It lay close to low water in an area which had previously yielded flintwork and a small series of dressed timber uprights 20-30cms in diameter (Richard Hill, *pers comm*). The naturally-holed 'macehead' (No. 15 above) and the large pyramidal core

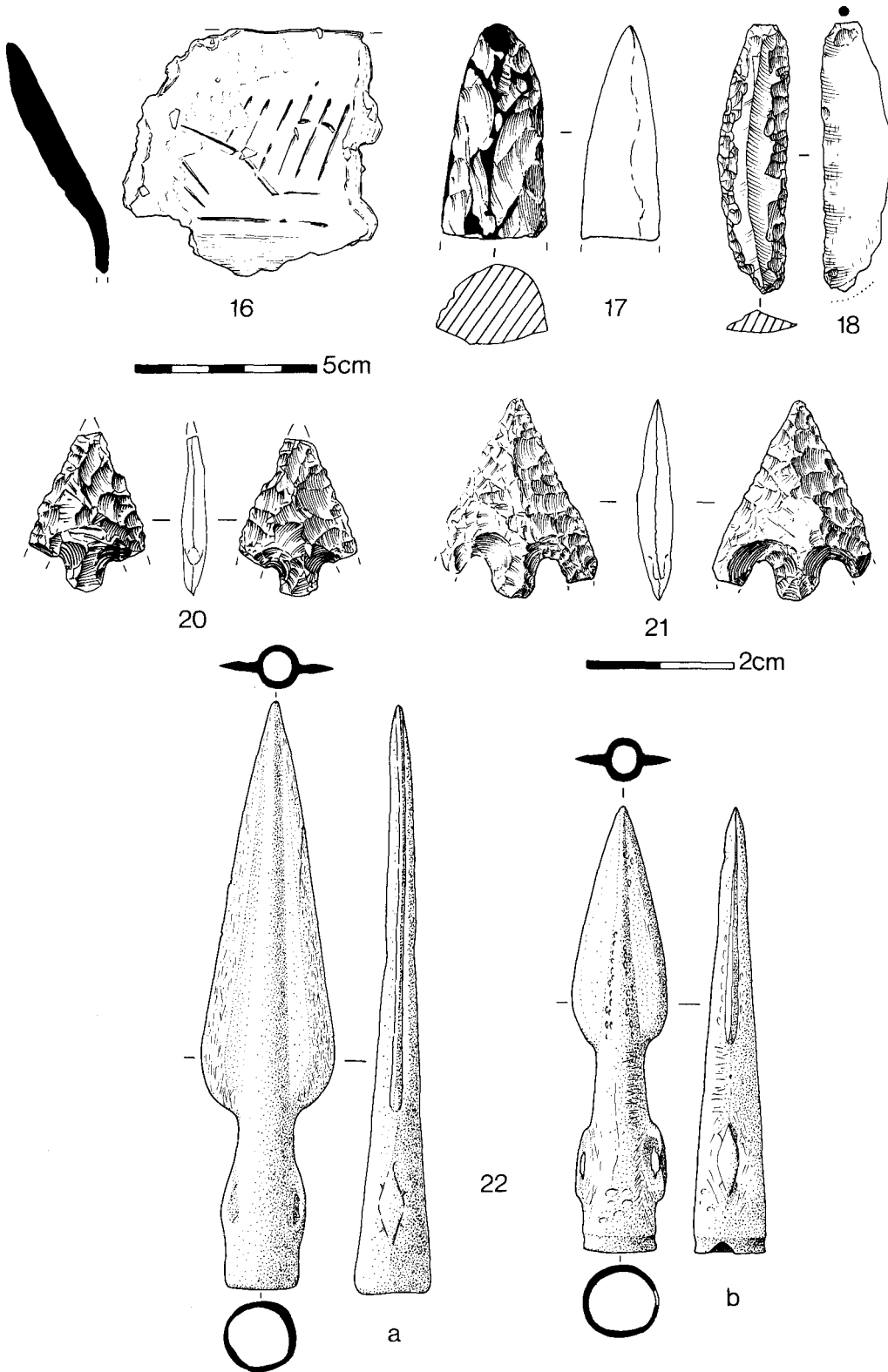


Fig 7. Neolithic, Nos 16-18, and Bronze Age, Nos 20-22 artefacts including MBA hoard No. 22 a and b. Nos 20-21, scale 1:1, the remainder, scale 1:2

(No. 7 above) were recovered from the same general area, as apparently was a sherd of Peterborough Neolithic pottery published previously (Cotton & Merriman 1991, 43).

The sherd measures 67mm by 65mm and weighs 51.68g. It comprises part of a large, flaring-mouthed but thin-walled open bowl with a simple, unexpanded rim, of fine sandy fabric with frequent angular crushed burnt flint inclusions, the latter up to 5mm in size. The sherd is fired light brown throughout. Little attention seems to have been paid to the finish of the exterior surface which, though somewhat abraded, appears to have been undecorated. (A thick layer of sandy 'tufa'-like deposit originally adhered to this surface, but has since been removed under laboratory conditions, and retained for future analysis.) The interior, by contrast, is better preserved and finished, and is decorated with a series of short oblique parallel strokes probably applied with a rounded point of wood or bone.

Its thin-walled open form is suggestive of Earlier Neolithic rather than Peterborough Neolithic affinities, though local parallels are hard to find. It is perhaps best accommodated within the 'southern decorated bowl tradition' (Whittle 1977, 85-97), though with closer affinities to the Sussex Whitehawk material rather than the heavy rims prevalent in the East Anglian Mildenhall style.

The thick 'tufa'-like layer adhering to the outer surface of the Chambers Wharf sherd has been noted on a number of objects from the Thames, and is often referred to as 'Thames race'. It comprises a calcareous deposit usually thought to have formed under slow moving water conditions such as would occur naturally in a mature braided river system. Here, the sherd presumably lay with its inner surface face-down, which effectively preserved the incised decoration.

17. Butt of a Neolithic part-ground flint chisel found on the Surrey foreshore of the Thames at Wandsworth (TQ 2480 7537) by Bob Wells, in February 1995. The object lay amongst 'gravel shingle' about three quarters of the way down the foreshore in front of Wandsworth Park.

The implement measures 59mm in length, 28mm in width, is 22mm thick and weighs 38.14g. It is of stained, cherty mottled grey flint and has a robust D-shaped cross-section. Its worn condition suggests that it had lain exposed on the foreshore for some while before discovery.

Such part-ground tools are usually regarded as Late Neolithic, though chisels of this type are not especially common locally. Lawrence for example notes only six specimens known to him (1929, 96). A complete example, 195mm in length, from the Thames at Wandsworth, is in the collections of the Museum of London (MoL A1478); a second, slightly smaller, comes from Barn Elms (MoL A23644).

18. Neolithic blade knife found on the Middlesex foreshore of the Thames at Syon (TQ 1730 7630) by John Gibson sometime around 1976 or 1977 (MoL 95.533/3). The piece was found while 'sieving for coins' below low water. A potin coin from the same findspot is dealt with below (No. 39); a second, halved, potin was recovered from this same locality by Richard Hill around 1980 (Richard Hill, pers comm).

The implement measures 75mm in length, 19mm in width, is 5mm thick and weighs 10.97g. It comprises a narrow robust blade of olive-green flint stained grey-black, subsequently reworked with shallow, invasive retouch along both lateral edges of the dorsal face to reveal the original flint colour. The distal tip is heavily worn through use. The original blade has a plain butt and has been detached from its parent core with a soft hammer.

A knife of this form was found with a beaker burial at Winterbourne Stoke G54 (Annable & Simpson 1964, No. 58), and with a food vessel at Weaverthorpe, Yorkshire (Kinnes & Longworth 1985, 46); similar knives were also associated with Grooved Ware at Mount Pleasant, Dorset (there termed 'blades with flat edge retouch' (Wainwright 1979, F10, F41-3, F57-60, F91, F104 & F141)). Such associations indicate a generally late Neolithic or Early Bronze Age date for the type.

BRONZE AGE (Figs 8, 9, 10, 11)

19. Substantial portion of an Early Bronze Age handled pottery beaker found off the downstream tip of Isleworth Eyot on the Middlesex foreshore of the Thames (TQ 1682 7596) in the Summer of 1976. Said to have had the consistency of 'wet blotting paper' on its discovery in shallow water at low tide, it was subsequently seen and photographed by John Gibson. The present whereabouts of the fragment are unknown, and the following description is based solely on the evidence provided by the photograph. Other



Fig 8. Early Bronze Age handled pottery beaker No. 19, scale 1 : 1

objects recovered from this same locality include a 'multiple find' of potin coins (No. 35 below) and a copper alloy lipped terret (Cotton 1978).

The beaker fragment itself is 175mm in overall length, and has separated into at least six,

possibly seven, conjoining sherds. The vessel form appears to be tripartite; the upper part of the (missing) handle seems to have been luted to the pot wall, while the lower end was attached by means of a rectangular hole cut when the pot

was green hard. The fabric appears to be sandy and somewhat vesicular. The decoration, probably incised with a flint blade or bone point rather than impressed with a comb, comprises four horizontal lines of floating lozenges infilled with lattice hatching. The two lines of lozenges on the upper part of the vessel wall are divided from the two on the lower by a distinct 'waist' emphasised by a band of cross hatching. Two horizontal bands of cross-hatching lend emphasis to the rim.

The vessel belongs to Clarke's Handled Southern Beaker Group (SH₄(B); Clarke 1970, 245–53), and to Lanting and Van der Waals' Step 7 (1972). In any current scheme the handled beaker appears to be a late phenomenon, perhaps as late as c.2000–1700 BC, though complicated panelled and floating decoration occurs from a much earlier date. Human bone associated with three Final Southern Beakers (Clarke's class S₄; Lanting & Van der Waals Step 7) has yielded calibrated calendar dates at 95% confidence which span the period 2195 to 1520 BC (Kinnes *et al* 1991). A number of handled vessels occur in East Anglian graves, with others recorded from South Wales and the Essex coast. Geographically, the closest examples are the single vessel from Lion Point, Clacton (Clarke 1970, fig 1072) and two others from Sible Hedingham (Clarke 1970, figs 1053–4). The Isleworth vessel is of particular interest because of the relative, and continuing, scarcity of beaker pottery in this part of the lower Thames valley. It is also one of the more elaborately decorated examples from the region. Boast (1995, 76) is careful not to equate decorative complexity with 'value', but he does note the recurrence of closed motifs such as lozenges on vessels chosen to accompany burials.

20. Barbed-and-tanged flint arrowhead found while digging in the back garden of 15 Blythwood Road, Pinner (TQ 117 906) by Barry Lanning early in 1997. The findspot lies on London Clay adjacent to an outcrop of the Reading Beds, and overlooks the Woodridings Brook, a minor tributary of the River Pinn.

The arrowhead, which is missing its tip and both barbs, measures 22mm in length, 16mm across the base of the barbs, is 3mm thick and weighs 0.98g. It is made of opaque light brown flint and has been dexterously shallow-flaked across both faces.

It can be added to a number of stray Bronze Age finds from the upper reaches of the Pinn; in

addition to a plano-convex knife mentioned in passing by Braun (1933, 102), two transitional palstaves and a barbed spearhead are also known from the locality (*eg* Cotton & Merriman 1991, 46).

21. Barbed-and-tanged flint arrowhead found on the Surrey foreshore of the Thames at Wandsworth (TQ 2501 7540) by Bob Wells, and reported in October 1992. The object was found on the surface of the foreshore during a heavy rainstorm, at a point close to the edge of a peat deposit visible at low water near Point Pleasant.

The arrowhead measures 28mm in length, 22mm in width across the barbs, is 4mm thick and weighs 2g. It is made of opaque, peat-stained grey-brown flint, and is somewhat plano-convex in long-section; part of the ventral face of the parent flake survives on one face. Both faces are otherwise neatly ripple-flaked although both barbs are now broken.

It belongs to Green's 'Sutton b' type (1980, 50–1), and can be added to a number of such arrowheads recovered locally from the Thames and beyond (*eg* No. 20 above). Barbed-and-tanged arrowheads appear to have had a wide currency, and were not the exclusive prerogative of beaker-using groups (*eg* Needham 1987, 101), most of the limited local evidence for which has been recovered from the river and its margins (*eg* No. 19 above). The stained condition of the piece, and its proximity to the edge of a peat platform, suggests that it may have been eroded out of the peat deposit itself, although this particular stretch of peat has provided several very early late glacial/early Flandrian dates (James Rackham, *pers comm*).

22. A pair of Middle Bronze Age copper alloy side-looped spearheads found on the Surrey foreshore of the Thames at Nine Elms, Vauxhall (TQ 3008 7795) by Jake Rylance, reported first to the British Museum in the Summer of 1994 and subsequently acquired by the Museum of London in November of the same year (MoL 94.215/1–2). The spearheads were found with the aid of a metal-detector at the same findspot on separate occasions a day or two apart; both lay at a depth of several inches below the surface of the modern foreshore amongst a number of substantial, paired round-wood piles, the latter under active erosion by the tides. It is fair to assume that the spearheads were deposited together, although the relationship between the metalwork and the wooden piles remains

uncertain. A site visit by Stuart Needham of the British Museum confirmed the finder's observation that peat-stained animal bones lay in the vicinity; at least one was noted to be 'firmly embedded' in an organic deposit. Other finds from the immediate locality of the piles included several pieces of struck flint and a partially-worked antler base (see No. 9 above).

a) The larger of the two spearheads measures 164mm in length, 36mm in width across the base of the leaf-shaped blade, which is 115mm in length, with a socket diameter of 20mm. It weighs 97.8g. The mid-rib is rounded and the blade-wings have bevelled edges with traces of extensive grinding; on one face of the blade there is a channelled groove or internal facet either side of the mid-rib. The side-loops are neatly modelled and protected by lozenge-shaped plates, although both loops are encrusted with iron concretions, amongst which were identified traces of mineral-replaced bast fibres of lime/linden (see below). The spearhead has a patchy oily green-brown surface patina and is in robust condition.

b) The smaller example measures 123mm in length, 26mm in width across the base of the leaf-shaped blade, which is 66mm in length, with a socket diameter of 20mm. It weighs 87.8g. The mid-rib is rounded and the blade-wings have slightly bevelled edges. The side-loops are neatly modelled and protected by lozenge-shaped plates, while the socket mouth is defined by a carefully-modelled hollow collar or inset bevel. There are traces of hammer facets close to the socket mouth and at the junction of the blade-wings with the mid-rib, and of grinding along the socket and adjacent to the side loops. The piece has a dark brown-purple surface patina and is in robust condition.

Discussion

Side-looped spearheads are usually attributed to the Taunton phase of the Middle Bronze Age (MBA 2: 14th-13th centuries BC), and their currency overlaps with that of other MBA spearhead types such as the larger basal-looped form. Both Vauxhall pieces fall within Rowlands's Group 1 (1976, 52), in having slender, leaf-shaped blades, rounded mid-ribs and angular loops with lozenge-shaped protective plates. Such spearheads concentrate in the lower Thames

valley. The two Vauxhall pieces clearly constitute a small hoard, and can be added to the few other Middle Bronze Age hoards known from the London area, most of which are composed of palstaves (*eg* Rowlands 1976, 236-7, but see also No. 24 below). Their relationship with the paired timber piles, though uncertain, is intriguing in view of the recurrent associations between metalwork finds and other late prehistoric timber structures noted elsewhere (*eg* Testwood Lakes, Southampton (Fitzpatrick *et al* 1996, 10; Andrew Fitzpatrick, pers comm), Flag Fen (Coombs 1992) and Fiskerton (Field 1986); for the local associations of metalwork with timber piles see Needham & Burgess 1980, 457). Fuller discussion of this potentially exciting possibility must await definitive dating of the Vauxhall timbers.

If the mineral-replaced bast fibres of willow/poplar caught in the loop of the larger piece do represent the remains of original organic bindings, this raises questions as to whether the spearheads were hafted when deposited and if so how such presumably buoyant objects came to rest at precisely the same spot (see Ehrenburg 1977, 17; Hooper & O'Connor 1976). It could be argued that they became entangled in flotsam around the pile structure, though, as noted above, the contemporaneity of spearheads and timbers cannot be demonstrated. Against this idea, however, no remains of any wooden hafts were found in the sockets of either spearhead despite the apparently favourable conditions for their survival (but see Caroline Cartwright's report below). This being so, it is perhaps more likely that the bast fibres represent the remains of string used to tie the two unhafted spearheads together for ease of transportation/deposition. Whether they represent a deliberately placed foundation deposit or a casual loss, however, remains unclear, as does their precise relationship with the timber piles.

Both spearheads were submitted to Caroline Cartwright of the Department of Scientific Research at the British Museum; she reports as follows:

Two bronze spearheads from Nine Elms foreshore, London were submitted for scientific examination of organic remains in the basal loop area of one of the specimens. Examination under a Wild M8 stereo microscope revealed a small area of mineral-replaced organics where the end of the basal loop joins the haft and another small area of organic remains on the loop itself. The second spearhead was also examined under

the stereo microscope but there were no identifiable organic remains.

The area of mineral-replaced organics in the end of the basal loop/haft region comprises fragments of wood which can be ascribed to *Salix/Populus* (willow/poplar) on the basis of a diffuse porous arrangement of vessels, simple perforation plates and uniseriate rays but chiefly on account of the highly diagnostic large ray-vessel pits present in the radial cross-field area which is visible on the spearhead surface – (BMRL 47023S).

The organic remains from the loop comprise fragments of bast fibres (phloem) from *Tilia* sp. (lime, linden) bark (BMRL 47024Q). Lime bast fibres have been used for cordage, coarse sewing and binding; many Neolithic and Bronze Age waterlogged sites from Switzerland and Germany contain a high proportion of lime bark debris from which the lime bast fibres have been extracted (Schweingruber 1990).

Unfortunately there is no conclusive way to demonstrate that the fragments of mineral-replaced *Salix/Populus* wood represent traces of the original hafting material. None of the organic remains from the Nine Elms foreshore spearheads has been submitted as part of the radiocarbon dating by accelerator mass spectrometry of Bronze Age metalwork but the use of wood and other organic remains associated with the hafting of Bronze Age metalwork will be synthesised and interpreted towards the conclusion of the programme; the Nine Elms organic remains will be discussed as part of this synthesis.

23. Fragment of a Middle Bronze Age gold composite ring found on the Surrey foreshore of the Thames at Wandsworth (TQ 253 753) by Bob Wells in February 1992. The object was located using a metal detector and lay at a depth of about three inches in gravel and mud over peat at a point about one metre above the dead low tide line near Point Pleasant. The find has been the subject of a Coroner's inquest.

The following report was prepared for the Coroner by Stuart Needham of the British Museum, to whom the find was referred:

Description

Length of fragment 15mm; width at cut end 8.7mm; width at terminals 7.1mm; maximum thickness of band 3.8mm; weight 6.13g.

The Wandsworth piece is about half of a penannular ring made up of two round- to oval-sectioned rods. The two rods appear to have been fashioned separately, then joined together with solder. They are coming adrift towards the broken end. The surviving terminals are roughly flattened, leaving small hammer facets and a slight depression in the centre of each.

The ring appears to have been cut through in antiquity, probably using a sharp bronze tool such as a chisel or knife against an anvil stone. This has resulted in an asymmetrically-tapered fracture. The surfaces of the rods are generally smooth and even, but are disfigured by a few scratches and indentations.

Analysis

The ring fragment has been analysed in the Department of Scientific Research, British Museum using X-ray fluorescence on an unabraded surface. This gives a semi-

quantitative result which nevertheless shows that it is substantially precious metal: mainly gold, some silver and a small percentage of copper.

Discussion

Despite its fragmentary nature, the Wandsworth ring can be confidently classified as a composite ring, a type well known in Middle Bronze Age contexts in Britain and parts of Europe (Taylor 1980, 53–9; Eogan 1994, 59). The proportions of the major elements in the metal compare well with other analysed goldwork of the Middle Bronze Age. Associations suggest a date range between about 1300 and 1000 BC.

In detail composite rings can be constructed in different ways; the fused variety, to which the Wandsworth example belongs, can comprise up to six parallel rings. Such rings seem to form part of a set of gold jewellery including plain penannular bracelets and more elaborate twisted torcs. In some associations composite rings have been found attached to one another (interlinked) or to the loop of a torc (notably in the Isle of Axholme find, Humberside). They may therefore have functioned as appendages to other ornaments, rather than being used individually.

Previous finds of composite rings in Britain and Ireland are not particularly numerous (about 13 findspots) and have a widely scattered distribution. The new Wandsworth find fills something of a gap between findspots in Sussex and East Anglia (Taylor 1980, 150 map 4). As an isolated find it is difficult to hazard a guess as to its original context of deposition. The evidence for being cut in antiquity could, however, suggest that this piece was destined for recycling by a goldsmith prior to its loss or disposal.

24. Middle Bronze Age notched hilted copper alloy rapier found in three pieces on the Surrey foreshore of the Thames 'about 300 yards up river from Wandsworth Bridge' (*ie c.* TQ 257 754) by Mr E. Penn in the summer of 1993. All three pieces were recovered with the aid of a metal detector at the same time and at low water; all were about 'three–four inches down in the mud'. The hilt and upper portion of the blade were found together, while the lower part of the blade was 'about 20 feet away'. The butt fragment refits with the middle section; although clearly from the same blade, the tip does not. The reported findspot lies off the Delta Business Park, downstream of the Wandle-Thames confluence.

Together, the butt and mid-section measure 120mm in length, and the tip a further 172mm in length, giving a minimum overall length of 292mm. The combined weight of the butt and mid-section is 38.38g; that of the tip 40.39g, giving an overall weight of 78.77g. All three fragments are worn and abraded; the butt is clearly incomplete but was probably originally provided with two rivet holes and two notches above the shoulder which may indicate the positions of other rivet emplacements.

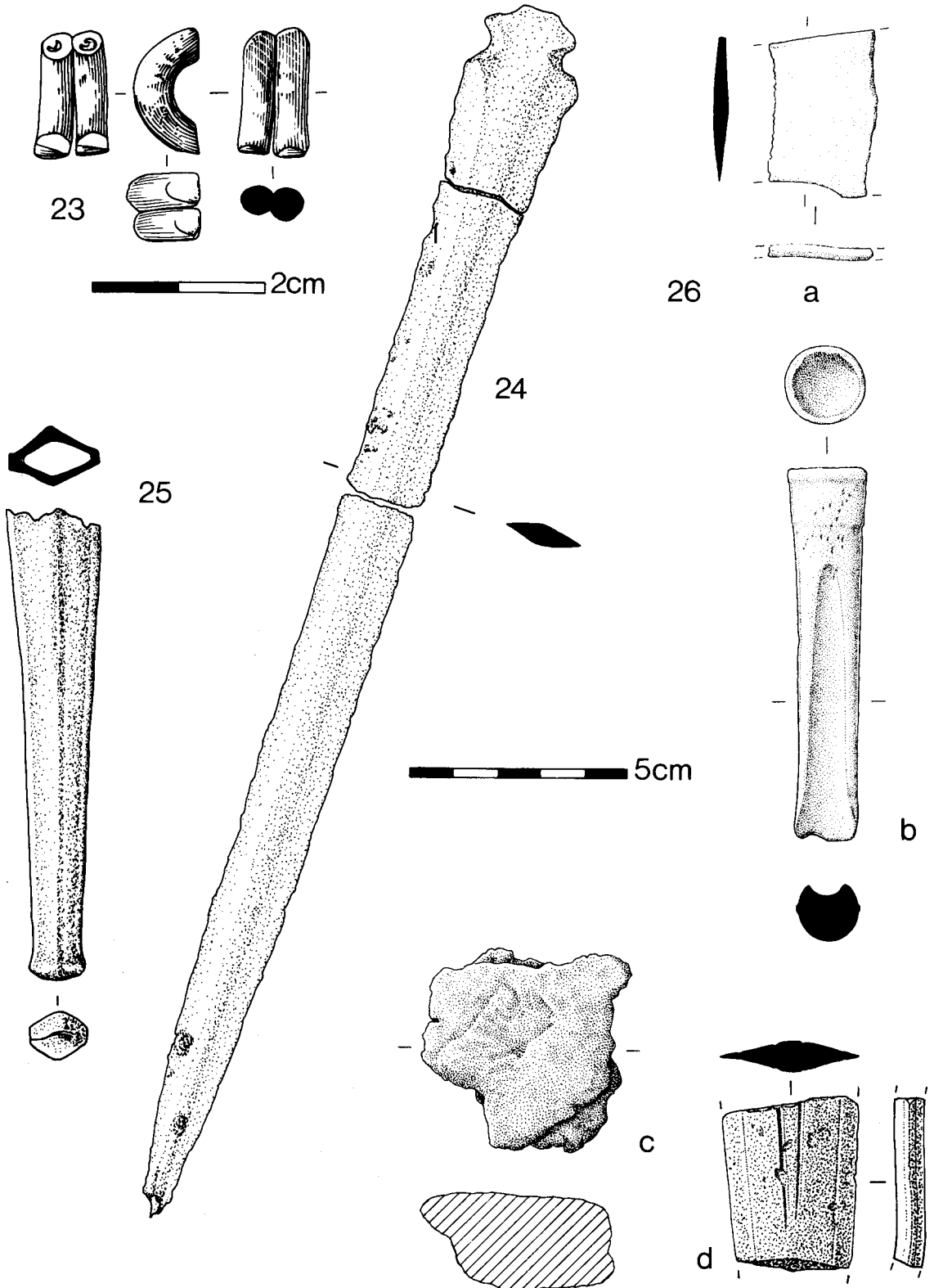


Fig 9. Bronze Age metal artefacts Nos 23-26 including LBA hoard 26a-d. No. 23 scale 1:1, the remainder 1:2

The narrow blade has a flattened mid-rib, and this, together with the short blade and butt form, suggests that the piece belongs to Burgess and Gerloff's Group IV: Type Appleby (1981, 74ff). Most Group IV rapiers can be attributed to the Penard phase (MBA 3: 12th-11th centuries BC; Burgess & Gerloff 1981, 106-9); upwards of thirty Type Appleby's have been recovered from the west London Thames downstream of Staines (eg Cotton & Merriman 1991, 46-8). The proximity of the three pieces of rapier (two conjoining) is noteworthy, and the find can, to all intents and purposes, be regarded as an atypical scrap hoard. The broken but otherwise reconstructable state of the rapier can be paralleled by later swords recovered both from the river and from hoards on dry land, as for example at Watford (Coombs 1979, 202-5).

25. Late Bronze Age tongue-shaped copper alloy chape fragment found on the Surrey foreshore of the Thames at Chambers Wharf, Bermondsey (TQ 3425 7984) by Richard Hill in 1993. The piece lay about half way down the foreshore in front of the western (upstream) end of the wharf and on an exposure of laminated clay eroding out of the foreshore.

The piece comprises the lower end of the chape and measures 108mm in length, 21mm in width at the mouth, 12mm in width at the slightly expanded tip and weighs 43.70g. The chape is clearly incomplete and somewhat abraded, and had probably lain exposed on the foreshore for some time prior to its discovery.

Long forms of tongue-shaped chapes belong within the Wilburton phase (LBA 1: 10th century BC) of the Late Bronze Age. This piece can be added to other Wilburton pieces already known from the City and adjacent reaches of the Thames (Needham & Burgess 1980, fig 7B). Its relationship with the laminated clay, the latter perhaps indicative of a transgression phase in the Thames alluviation sequence (Richard Hill, pers comm), is unclear, though likely to be fortuitous. Higher ground to the south, in the form of Horselydown and Jacob's Island, provides a plausible topographic setting for contemporary settlement activity; ardmarks of probable Bronze Age date have been discovered on several sites in the area of higher ground adjacent to St Saviour's Dock (eg Drummond-Murray *et al* 1994, 254; Heard 1996, 77-8).

26. Small Late Bronze Age hoard comprising three copper alloy objects (a fragment of knobbed

sickle, a socketed gouge and a lump of ingot) found on the Surrey foreshore of the Thames at Wandsworth (TQ 247 756) by Bob Wells and reported in September 1990. A fragment of copper alloy sword blade was subsequently found about three metres away from the original find by Ron Caddy and reported in August 1991. The first three pieces were found together with the aid of a metal detector at a depth of 'five or six inches'. They lay beneath a layer of shingle and about an inch into the top of a 'sandy peat' deposit; the fourth piece was also found with a metal detector and lay in a similar stratigraphic position. (A scrapped socketed axe of 'south-eastern' type was recovered from the surface in the same general area by Pat Loobey of the Wandsworth Historical Society (Pamela Greenwood, pers comm); it is unclear whether or not this forms part of the same hoard.)

a) The sickle fragment comprises a segment of the blade at the point where the angular butt meets the cutting edge. It measures 23mm in length, 37mm in width, is 3.5mm thick and weighs 14.95g. The blade is plano-convex in section with a central thickening and a straight, flattened but slightly bevelled back.

Although fragmentary the straightness of the back of the blade indicates that the Wandsworth piece belongs to a characteristic form of knobbed sickle termed the Minnis Bay type by O'Connor (1980, 178 & 533-4), after the discovery of two complete examples in the Minnis Bay, Kent hoard (Worsfold 1943). Such sickles concentrate in the lower Thames valley and appear to be an insular type; examples in north-eastern France and the middle Rhine are indicative of close cross-channel contacts (O'Connor 1980, 178). The type falls within the Ewart Park/Carp's Tongue phase of the Late Bronze Age (LBA2/3; 9th-8th centuries BC). Fragmentary examples occur locally in hoards from Petters Sports Field, Egham (Needham 1990, 17, 46 & fig 10, nos 84 & 86) and the churchyard of Great St Thomas Apostle, City (Anon 1933, 297 & e on accompanying figure).

b) The socketed gouge measures 87mm in length, and is 15mm wide across the blade. The external diameter of the circular socket mouth is 19mm, and the interior diameter is 15mm; it weighs 69.82g. The mouth of the slightly expanded socket has a low collar but the piece is otherwise plain. Casting flashes are visible down both sides. There are traces of ?hammer blows between the

mouth and the start of the gouge furrow; the semi-circular cutting edge has been damaged at one point.

Socketed gouges are a regular component of Late Bronze Age hoards, and most belong to the Ewart Park phase (LBA 2; 9th-8th centuries BC), although a slightly earlier Wilburton genesis (LBA 1: 10th century BC) is possible for examples with multiple mouth-mouldings (Needham 1990, 49). A number of single finds have been recovered from local stretches of the Thames; hoarded examples include those from Petters, Egham (Needham 1990, 48-9); Wandsworth (Garraway Rice 1923); Kensington (*Inventaria Archaeologia* 1960, GB52, 5); and Great St Thomas Apostle (Anon 1933).

c) The dimensions of the irregularly shaped copper ingot fragment are 47 × 45mm; it is 22mm thick and weighs 119.87g. Although both faces are flat it appears to be marginally plano-convex in section. Such ingot fragments are a common component of Late Bronze Age hoards.

d) Small segment of a sword blade measuring 40mm in length, and tapering from 32mm to 22mm in width; it is 6mm thick at the midrib and weighs 33.14g. The midrib is defined by twin grooves which peter away towards the tip; the bevel on both edges is also backed by a further groove. In long section the blade has been bent in two separate planes, presumably to create a small enough fragment to fit into a crucible for re-cycling.

On the face of it, the narrow, tapering blade, groove-defined midrib and groove-backed edge bevel are reminiscent of Carp's Tongue swords, fragments of which occur as scrap in hoards concentrated in the south-east (see O'Connor 1980, 188 and Needham 1990, 74 and fig 17d). Equally, however, it could form part of a less exotic, leaf-shaped sword blade. The small size and atypicality of the fragment makes definitive identification difficult, although it can, like the other pieces, probably be accommodated within the Ewart Park Carp's Tongue phase of the Late Bronze Age (LBA 2/3; 9th-8th centuries BC).

Discussion

It is clear from their close association that the first three pieces (sickle fragment, gouge and ingot fragment) comprise a small hoard, although it is by no means certain that they represent the

totality of the hoard as originally deposited. This is underlined by the sword fragment found three metres away which could be considered an outlier – not impossible in terms of its likely affinities and date, and the size, weight and condition of the piece itself. Either way the association of scrapped pieces and ingot fragment serve to confirm this as a small founders' hoard in Needham's terms (1990, 138-140 especially fig 42), and dated, like so many others, to the Ewart Park phase of the Late Bronze Age. Its deposition within the 'sandy peat' layer suggests that, at the time of its disposal, this portion of the modern foreshore was at least seasonally terrestrial. Sherds of LBA pottery and burnt flint have been recovered from around low water mark on this area of the foreshore by members of the Wandsworth Historical Society over many years (Pamela Greenwood, pers comm). Moreover, a second, larger, founder's hoard from Wandsworth, comprising eight socketed axes, a socketed gouge and eight fragments of copper ingot, was found buried in sand '150 yards south of the Thames' on the site of the Wandsworth, Wimbledon and Epsom District Gas Company (Garraway Rice 1923). Other small metal caches from the intertidal zone include a rare Wilburton scrap hoard from Syon (Needham & Burgess 1980, 445 & Fig 2; Needham 1987, 121, Fig 5.15, Nos 2-18), and a Ewart Park hoard, comprising a socketed axe and two pieces of copper ingot, found on the Surrey bank during repair works to the Grosvenor Road railway bridge at Battersea (Lawrence 1929, 92).

27. Small Late Bronze Age hoard comprising five copper alloy socketed axes found by Mr S. Czoborick in the vicinity of plots 28-29 on a building site in Disraeli Road, Park Royal (c.TQ 204 831), probably in February 1975 (MoL 74.405/1-5) and initially reported to D. Gareth Davies at Verulamium Museum. The axes were located with the aid of a metal detector and lay in an apparently undisturbed context along with what appear, from the finder's description, to have been fragments of copper ingot, the latter not retained by the finder. Site watching undertaken in advance of the subsequent development of an adjacent plot (at TQ 204 830) located several small features cut into the natural London Clay. None were definitely prehistoric and several contained medieval pottery (Richardson 1985, 47). The findspot lies just below the 30m contour on the south side of the

Brent valley; the River Brent itself is just over a kilometre distant to the north-west.

a) Unfortunately, the first axe, largest of the five, was stolen while out on loan in 1984. However, measurements taken from the drawing made shortly before the theft show that it was 84mm in length and had a surviving width of 43mm at the expanded blade (one of whose tips was missing), with a square-sectioned mouth.

b) Complete socketed axe 80mm in length, 40mm in width at the blade edge and weighing 147.37g. It has a square-sectioned mouth flanked by a low collar, with low casting flashes surviving down both sides and around the loop, from the underside of which projects a small spur. There is a single internal rib on either face. The exterior of one face has a lustrous, dark olive-green patina; much of the other is a metallic brown-black. One tip of the blade is damaged while the edge has been nicked in one place (and a metal sample taken from the area adjacent). The olive-green patina has been chipped in several places at the mouth and just below the collar, but this apart the axe is in a solid, stable condition.

c) Complete socketed axe 79mm in length, 35mm in width at the blade edge and weighing 138.51g. It has a square-sectioned mouth flanked by a low collar with the remains of casting flashes surviving down both sides. There is a single internal rib on either face. It has a patchy, cracked, olive-brown patina which has broken away at the blade edge, from whence a metal sample has been taken, and around the mouth and loop. Although in poor condition, it is solid and stable.

d) Complete socketed axe 68mm in length, 42mm in width at the expanded blade edge and weighing 99.06g. It has a square-sectioned mouth flanked by a low collar, and with the remains of low casting flashes surviving down both sides and around the loop. There is a single internal rib on either face. It is in similar condition to axe *b* and has a lustrous olive-green patina which has been chipped in several places. The expanded cutting edge is much damaged, and a metal sample has been taken from it. One face of the blade shows signs of cracking, which may be evidence of a faulty casting.

e) Complete socketed axe 54mm in length, 34mm in width at the blade edge and weighing 50.09g. Like the others it too has a square-sectioned mouth, although the collar visible on the others is virtually absent; casting flashes survive down

both faces and around the loop. It has a lustrous, mottled olive-green/reed green patina which has been chipped in several places around the socket mouth. The cutting edge has been chipped too and a metal sample removed.

Discussion

With their simple square-sectioned mouths flanked by low collars and plain undecorated blades, the five Park Royal pieces are typical of the sort of 'south-eastern' socketed axes well represented in local hoards (eg Petters Sports Field (Needham 1990, 28–31, his Class A)). It is unfortunate that the finder did not retain what sound like associated fragments of copper ingot deposited with the axes. It seems likely from this, and from the damaged condition of the axes themselves, that the find should be regarded as a small founder's hoard deposited in an area of London Clay not hitherto noted for Bronze Age activity. The Park Royal cache can be added to other hoards recorded from 'dry' locations in west London (eg Needham & Burgess 1980, 448, fig 4) though these, like those from Kensington, Southall, Hounslow, and the lost hoard from Starveall Farm, West Drayton, have usually been recovered from the terrace gravels.

The 'spur' projecting from the underside of axe *b* is a casting detail present on a number of implements. It would seem to indicate a realisation on the part of Bronze Age smiths that loops were prone to miscast if the passage of molten metal around the mould cavity was interrupted by a pocket of gas trapped in the void for the loop. To obviate this, a small 'overflow' chamber was added to the base of the loop to ensure that the mould at this point was fully taken up by the metal (see Needham (1993a, 44) for discussion of this point). The internal ribs on axes *b*, *c* and *d* (it is uncertain whether this feature was present on the lost axe *a*) have also been noted on a number of socketed axes. Their purpose was presumably to aid hafting.

28. Late Bronze Age tanged copper alloy awl from the Middlesex foreshore of the Thames in front of Hurlingham Park, Fulham (TQ 2480 7556) found by Bob Wells and reported in October 1992. The object lay amongst shingle at a point close to low water.

The awl measures 82mm in overall length and weighs 12.57g. The tapering point is faceted and 42mm in length; the tang is roughly square in

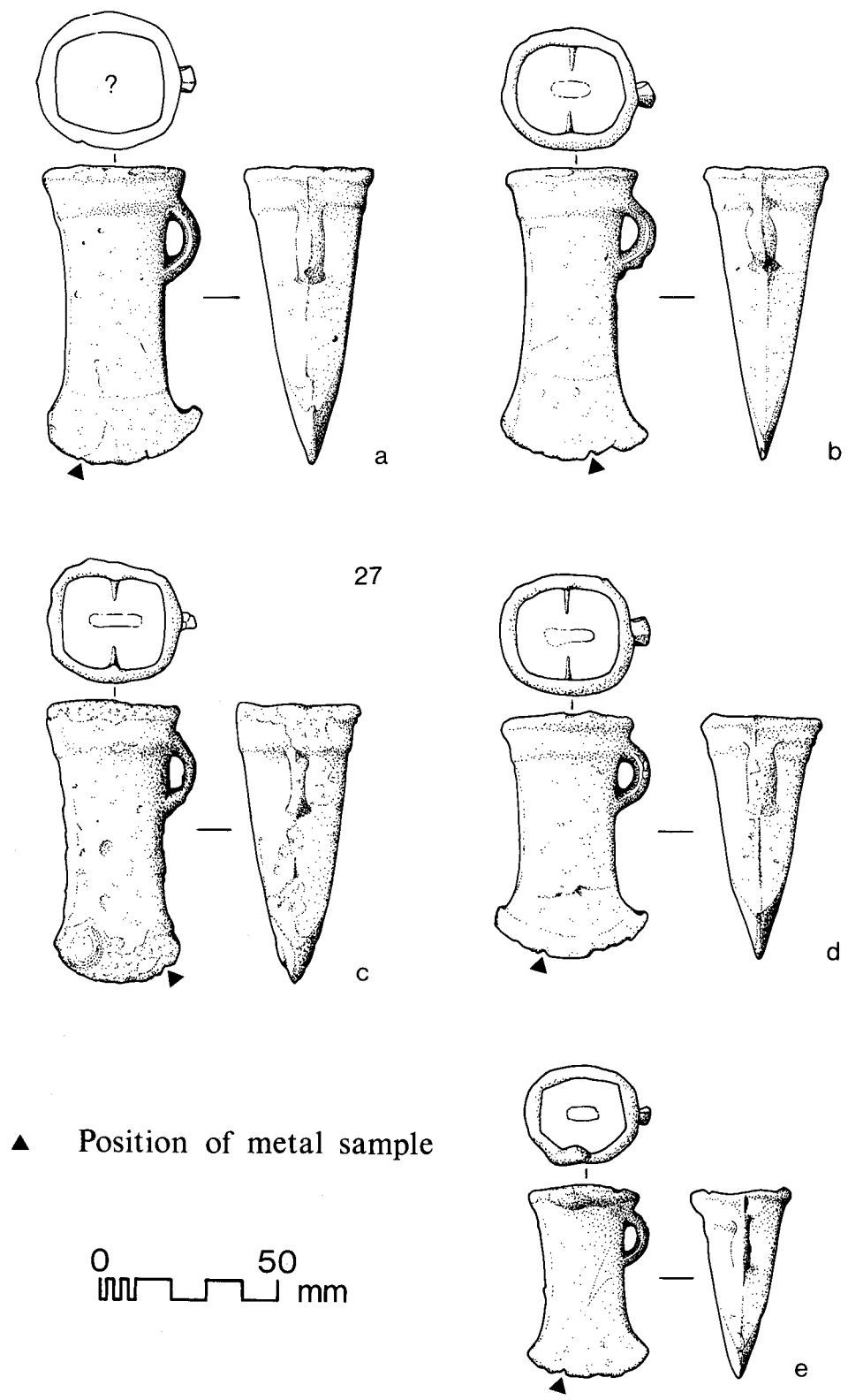


Fig 10. Late Bronze Age metal hoard No. 27 a-e, scale 1:2

section. The piece is in excellent condition, with no sign of surface corrosion; it has a dark bronze surface, with several areas of darker patination along the tang and close to the base of the point.

Awls of robust form are an increasingly common feature of Middle and Late Bronze Age settlement assemblages (eg Needham 1986, 141–3), and several can be cited from the London area, eg from the LBA sites at Runnymede Bridge and Beddington Sewage Works.

29. Rim sherd of flint-tempered pottery vessel recovered from a point three-quarters of the way down the Thames foreshore at Vauxhall (c.TQ 2950 7767) by Jonathan Cotton in August 1993 (MoL 95.290/6).

The sherd measures 65 × 83mm and is 7–8mm thick. It is of a grey-black, sandy fabric sparsely tempered with crushed burnt flint < 2mm across. It belongs to a weakly-shouldered jar with a short, flared rim, a form familiar during the Late Bronze Age-Early Iron Age. Its most notable feature comprises a line of inverted triangular impressions placed high on the shoulder, each impression measuring approximately 7mm in width at the base and 6–8mm high.

Although decoration at the shoulder is common on vessels of this type, it generally takes the form of finger-tipping or use of the finger-nail. The triangular motifs used here are less common, and reminiscent of continental *Kerbschnitt* ('cut out') decorated vessels (Nigel Brown, pers comm). While not common, there are a number of British parallels for the Vauxhall piece, of which the closest geographically comes from the Thames at Hammersmith (MoL C943). However, less care was taken with the decoration of this latter vessel, for the impressions are widely and irregularly spaced and less precisely executed, though the apex of the triangles point downwards. On other British pieces the situation is reversed: thus the examples from Scarborough (Smith 1928, pl 21, No. 11), Fengate (Hawkes & Fell 1943, Fig 3, C3) and Stonea (Jackson & Potter 1996, Fig 86.53) all have upward pointing triangular decoration.

IRON AGE (Figs 11, 12)

30. Incomplete copper alloy brooch of La Tène IB(?b) form purportedly found 'Thames, Hammersmith' by R. Irving sometime during the 1980s. The piece was originally offered for sale

to the Museum of London, but was not acquired. Its present whereabouts are unknown. However, two photographs and brief notes taken at the time by Peter Stott allows the following description to be placed on record. (The drawing published here on Fig 11 is likewise taken from the photograph.)

The brooch measures 53mm in length and has a solid, low, plain bow of apparently rounded cross-section and a four-coil 'spring' with external chord; the foot is missing, but is likely to have re-curved to meet the bow in a knobbed or snouted terminal. Whether the pin was truly sprung or merely hinged is not clear from the photographs, although the copper alloy terminal of what must be an axial-bar running through the coils of the 'spring' perhaps suggests the latter. Apart from its missing foot, the piece appears to be in a condition consistent with that of other river finds, and there seems no reason to doubt the veracity of its reported findspot.

The presence of an axial-bar is the main point of interest here, and is a feature matched on a number of other La Tène fibulae, including one of the five other early brooches known from this particular stretch of the river (eg Hull & Hawkes 1987, Nos 4282; 3084; 5359; 2925 & 2926). A number of these, and other small objects such as ring-headed pins (see No. 30 below), were found amongst a series of wooden piles (the so-called Hammersmith 'pile-dwellings') which extended upstream and downstream of Hammersmith Bridge on both sides of the river (eg Lawrence 1929, 85). The brooch discussed here can, like the majority of the others from this stretch, be dated to the 4th-3rd centuries BC.

31. Head of a cast, copper alloy ring-headed pin found with the aid of a metal detector on the Middlesex foreshore of the Thames at Syon (TQ 1780 7680) by John Gibson around 1976 or 1977 (MoL 95.533/6). The findspot lies a little way upstream from 'Old England', and close to where the same finder had previously recovered a small brooch of La Tène IBc form (Cotton 1979, 182, brooch B; now MoL 95.533/8).

The head of the pin measures 27mm in diameter and comprises a series of 11 moulded knobs or bosses; the overall length of the head and surviving shaft is 34mm, and weighs 21.93g. There is a now empty dished setting immediately below the head, on the angled shoulder of the shank, which perhaps held a coral stud. The shank of the pin is also missing, having broken

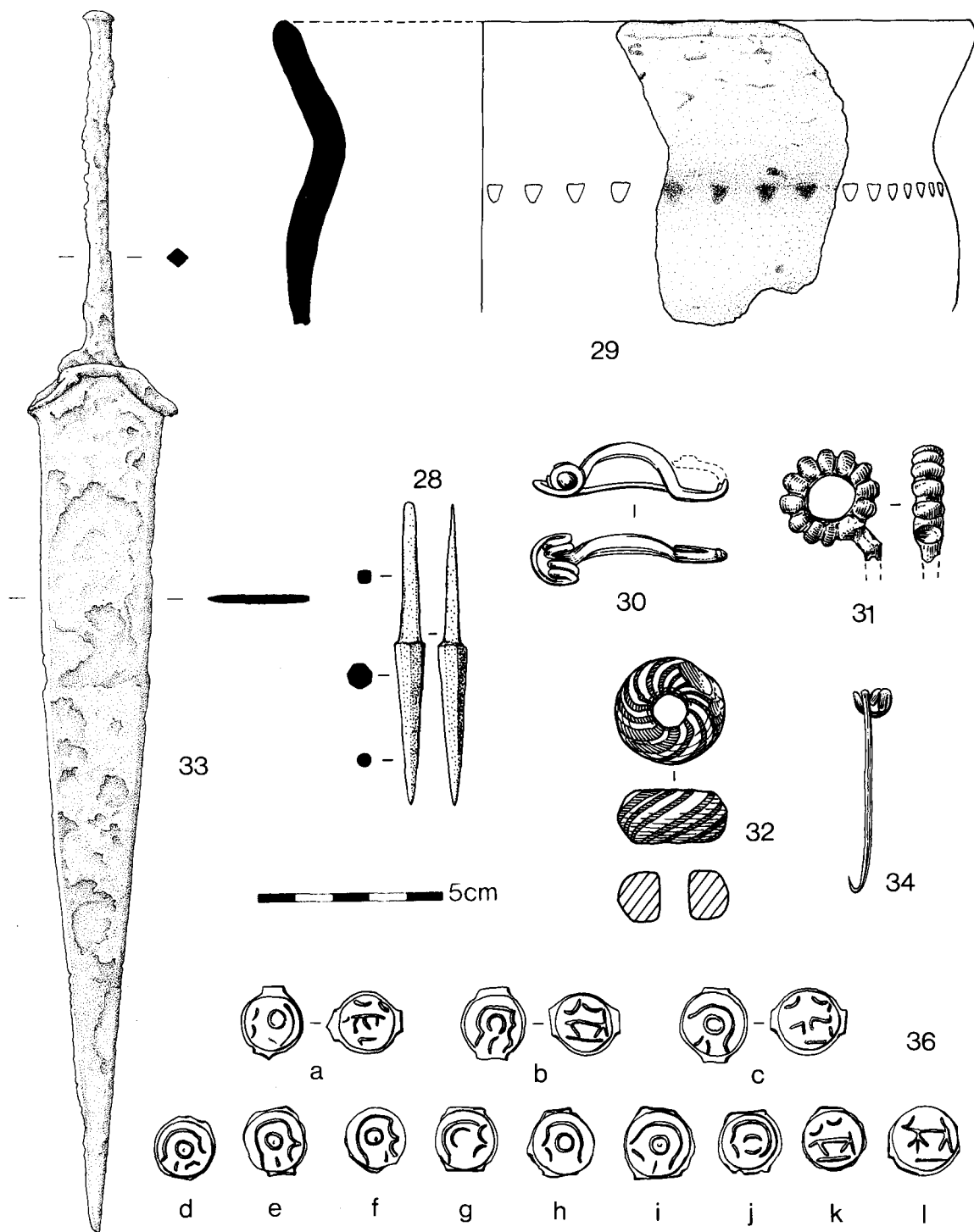


Fig 11. Late Bronze Age and Iron Age artefacts Nos 28-34, 36, scale 1:2

off just below the shoulder at the point where a lateral perforation – presumably to hold a further decorative stud – created a weakness. The length of the shank cannot be determined, although in view of the heavy multiple mouldings at the head it must have been of reasonable size to counterbalance the weight.

The ring-headed pin appears to have been a British form developing from the Swan's-neck type – the latter incorporating a shoulder at the top of the shank but not extending to create a closed, ring-shaped terminal. Copper alloy ring-headed pins are not all that common, and the Syon example is of particular interest in view of the heaviness of the mouldings at its head. In this it is reminiscent of the knobbed armlets from Mount Batten, Plymouth, thought to be of Hallstatt date (Cunliffe 1988, 61–2), and those from Cowlam, Arras and Raisthorpe, which are dated to the early La Tène period (Stead 1979, 72–6).

Locally, ring-headed pins have been recovered from the Thames at Hammersmith (*eg* Smith 1905, 345–6; Dunning 1934), and examples – including a particularly elaborate one featuring coral inlay – are in the British Museum and the Museum of London. Further afield, Fox illustrates a pin from Danes Graves, Yorkshire which has a coral bead or stud at the shoulder (1958, plate 9b); likewise another from Cold Kitchen Hill, Wiltshire (1958, fig 14). Such pins can be dated to the 4th–3rd centuries BC, though the knobs on our piece which are reminiscent of the Hallstatt-inspired armlets suggest that an even earlier date is not out of the question.

32. Glass bead found close to low water ('2m back from 0.0 OD') on the Surrey foreshore of the Thames at Wandsworth (TQ 2457 7556) by Bob Wells and reported to the Museum of London in October 1992.

The bead is of annular form with a diameter of 29mm, is 13mm thick and has a central perforation 8.5mm in diameter. It weighs 15.51g and has a blue ground with white 'whirls' emanating from the perforation. Its relatively large size, annular shape, colour and design identify it as an example of Guido's Class 7, Type a (1978, 57), often referred to as a 'Celtic Whirl' or 'whirl-decorated (ring) bead' (Henderson 1995, 156).

Type a is the most common of the three types of Class 7 beads, the latter defined by the colour of the ground – Type a being purple or blue. As

a class such beads are not particularly common in Britain, and occur more frequently in European oppida (Henderson 1995, 156). Of the 16 Type a beads listed by Guido, two have been found in Essex, one from Billericay (held in Chelmsford Museum, Acc No. B18.513) and the other, in private ownership, from Kelvedon. (Another has since been recovered from the so-called 'warrior' grave at Stanway, Colchester (Philip Crummy, pers comm).) However, their distribution in Britain is otherwise centred round the Iron Age trading route of the Bristol Channel, with a few examples from Ireland. This is the first example recorded from London.

'Celtic Whirls' are usually dated 150 BC–AD 50, though as Henderson (1987a, 162) makes clear, few have been recovered from stratified contexts. There are slightly earlier examples, such as that from Walesland Rath in Pembrokeshire, associated with a C14 date of 210–90 BC, while later finds include a fragment from Caerleon in a context dated AD 130–230. A further fragmentary piece has been recovered from Hengistbury Head (Henderson 1987a, 160, No. 127) and dated to the 2nd–1st century BC; the Stanway grave dates to the middle decades of the first century AD.

No evidence for the manufacture of such beads in the form of furnaces has been recovered either in this country or abroad, although a lump of raw purple glass was recovered during the recent excavations at Hengistbury Head (Henderson 1987a, 161 & 181–3; for the likely manufacturing technique for whirl-decorated beads see Henderson 1995, 156); others have come from continental sites such as Manching (*eg* Sievers 1991, 445–7). It is assumed that early examples found in Britain would have been imported. Local production of beads may have been underway by the last century or so BC, initially copying continental types, followed by the production of distinctive local versions (*eg* Henderson 1987b). As with other 'precious' or 'symbolic' items, beads may have been treasured across a number of generations. Often found singly, they could have functioned as hair ornaments, dress fasteners, parts of necklaces or even as talismans. Although limited, the evidence also suggests that they may have been worn by both sexes.

33. Iron dagger found on the Surrey foreshore of the Thames at Putney (TQ 244 757) by Bob Wells in the spring of 1990 (MoL 91.166). When found the dagger was heavily encrusted with

ferruginous concretion and bent into an S shape; only the tip of the blade and the knob of the hilt were visible. It lay on the surface close to low water some 'eight yards from the east [*ie* downstream] side of Putney Railway Bridge'. The finder noted that it might have been disturbed by the flotilla following the Oxford-Cambridge boat-race, which had taken place the previous day.

The dagger has since been straightened out during conservation and now has an overall length of 332mm, with a width at the hilt-guard of 42mm; it weighs 65.7g. The long slender blade is 230mm in length and of exaggeratedly pointed triangular shape; it has an unusually flattened cross-section 3mm thick with bevelled edges. The handle springs from an arched hilt-guard and comprises a square-sectioned tang some 95mm in length, the end of which has been flattened into a knob. No trace now survives of the organic hilt-plates.

Its campanulate hilt-guard marks it out as an Iron Age weapon, though in the absence of precise parallels a general La Tène III date is the best that can be offered at present (Ian Stead, pers comm). Jope notes a couple of late daggers from Camerton and Kingsdown Camp, Mells, both Somerset (1961, 340-1), though their blades, while triangular in shape, are shorter and have a marked mid-rib. None of the daggers from the lake villages are especially close in form either, although one of the two fragments from Meare Village East published by Coles appears from the illustration to have a flattened blade in cross-section (1987, 120 No. I 20). As such the Putney piece stands apart from the well known group of earlier Hallstatt D and La Tène I daggers in sheaths recorded from the west London reaches of the Thames (Jope 1961; Macdonald 1978), two of which come from Wandsworth just downstream (Jope 1961, nos 19 & 22). The bending of the blade is a feature noted on a number of iron weapons, as for example at Llyn Cerrig Bach in Anglesey, though it is a trait more commonly noticed on continental cult sites (*eg* Gournay-sur-Aronde (Brunaux 1988, 127)). Merrifield also draws attention to a cache of Late Iron Age/early Roman tools recovered from Lea gravels at Waltham Abbey, some of which had been destroyed by bending, perhaps to despatch them to the spirit world (1987, 29-30, pl 8).

34. Copper alloy pin and four coil spring of a La Tène III (probably 'Nauheim derivative') brooch

found on the Middlesex foreshore of the Thames at Syon (*c.*TQ 1725 7625) by Michael Spanswick in the late 1980s. The bow and catch-plate are missing, while the spring consists of four coils with an internal chord. The pin is complete although the tip has been bent back on itself, perhaps to facilitate use as a fish-hook. When straight, the pin would have measured some 62mm in length.

Brooches of this type span the period 100 BC-AD 50, and occur in both copper alloy and iron. The form is based on that of the Nauheim type, which is common on continental sites of the period though rare in Britain. A number of 'Nauheim derivatives' are known from the London area, both from the Thames and the City - the latter usually in association with post-Conquest material.

35. A 'multiple find' of potin coins (?a scattered hoard) was discovered off the downstream tip of Isleworth Eyot on the Middlesex foreshore of the Thames (centred TQ 1680 7600) by John Gibson and others in 1976-7. At least 25 coins were recovered with the aid of metal detectors from a spine of gravel running out from a brick retaining wall on the north-eastern side of the Eyot adjacent to the main channel. A majority of the coins appear to have come from various points beyond low water. Finds ceased when a barge ran aground and churned up the bank (information from finder). The brick retaining wall has since been extended across the tip of the Eyot; no further finds were reported during this work.

None of the coins are now available for study, although there is no doubting their identification as potins. A lipped terret (Cotton 1978) was amongst other objects recovered from this spot (see also No. 19 above).

36. A hoard (or hoards) of potin coins was found on the Surrey foreshore of the Thames between Putney and Barn Elms (TQ 235 763) by John Gibson and others with the aid of metal detectors during 1976-7. The findspot lay just upstream of the Beverley Brook at a point close to low water. A watching brief carried out by the Wandsworth Historical Society along the course of a pipe-trench being dug to the rear of the foreshore in this area revealed unstratified sherds of sand-tempered later Middle Iron Age pottery, part of a rotary quernstone and a biconical spindlewhorl in a glauconitic fabric, together with a pit containing sherds of pottery and part

of a possible copper alloy terret ring (Pamela Greenwood, pers comm).

An initial find of some 12 coins from a restricted area on the edge of a small gravel ridge by John Gibson was followed by a further nocturnal search by a person or persons unknown which reputedly recovered 'upwards of a hundred coins' from the same area (John Gibson, pers comm). The first find appeared to have been buried as a small cache; it is unclear whether the subsequent find was from this or a separate deposit close by. In any event none of the coins are now available for study, although three of the first group were seen and sketch-recorded by Pamela Greenwood of the Wandsworth Historical Society (two are Allen Class I, type B and one Allen Class I, type L4) (No. 36, a-c). However, a polaroid photograph of nine coins in the archives of the Wandsworth Historical Society is marked 'photo from Seaby's Nov 1976. Sold to them as coming from the foreshore near Putney Bridge but more probably from Barn Elms' (Fig 11, No. 36, d-l). Haselgrove (1987, 288) records '8+' coins of Class I type coming onto the market from 'a restricted area of the foreshore, close to Putney Bridge'.

In addition to the multiple finds recorded above, a number of single finds of potin coins (Fig 12) have also been reported. All were found with the aid of metal detectors.

37. Potin prototype from the Middlesex foreshore of the Thames at Hammersmith, just downstream of Chiswick Eyot (TQ 2214 7815), reported with No. 38 below by a Mr Smith in 1980. It has a thick, heavy flan 15mm in diameter and weighs 3.2g. Based on Gaulish copies of the 2nd century BC coinage of Massalia (modern Marseille) (John Kent, pers comm), the obverse shows a bust of Apollo to the left, and the reverse a 'butting bull' to the right.

38. A Class I potin, Allen type L (1971, 135) from the Middlesex foreshore of the Thames at Hammersmith, just downstream of Chiswick Eyot (TQ 2214 7815), was reported by a Mr Smith in 1980. It weighs 1.1g and was apparently found 'with one or two other Celtic coins', including No. 37 above.

39. An incomplete Class I potin, Allen type L (1971, 135) from the Middlesex foreshore of the Thames at Syon (TQ 1735 7634) was reported to the West London Archaeological Field Group around 1977. The Neolithic blade knife (No. 18

above) was found here 'while sieving for coins', while another, halved, potin was recovered from the same general locality around 1980 (Richard Hill, pers comm).

40. A Class I potin, Allen type F1 (1971, 134) was found in spoil dumped at Dagenham but taken from the Billingsgate Lorry Park on the Middlesex bank of the Thames in the City; it was recovered by Mr M. Butcher and reported in November 1984. The coin weighs 1.84g.

41. A Class II potin, Allen type M2 (1971, 135) from the Surrey foreshore of the Thames at Barn Elms (TQ 233 765) was found by John Gibson in 1976. It was recovered from a point close to low water and upstream of the multiple find No. 36 above.

42. An incomplete Class II potin, Allen type P1 (1971, 135) from the Surrey foreshore of the Thames at Battersea Park was reported by Mr R. Boneurty in 1980. The context in which it lay was 'apparently disturbed' with 'gravel and rubble obviously artificially deposited'.

43. A Class II potin, Allen type P1 (1971, 135) from the Middlesex foreshore of the Thames at London Bridge (TQ 328 807) was reported by Ron Hooper in November 1984. It was found 'deep within the foreshore'.

Discussion

The coins described above belong to a class of 'chill-cast high-tin bronze' coinage thought to originate in north Kent in the late 2nd or early 1st century BC and to have achieved its *floruit* in the decades either side of Caesar's British expeditions in the middle of the first century BC. The two classes, I and II, based on differences in size, weight and details of the design, were subdivided into 15 types (A-O) by Allen (1971). More recently Van Arsdell (1989, 76-79) has deduced five different stages spanning the period c.100-35 BC: prototype (Allen type A), experimental (Allen types B-D), innovative (Allen types E-G), optimisation (Allen types H-L) and adjustment (Allen types M-O), although the 'unilinear chronological validity' of either scheme remains doubtful (Haselgrove 1987, 248). The most recent discussion of the problem of the function, dating and classification of the potin coinage may be found in Hobbs (1966, 6.17) (John Kent, pers comm).



Fig 12. Iron Age potin coins, obverse and reverse of Nos 37-43, scale 2:1

Numbers of these coins (including several large hoards) have been recovered from the west London Thames and areas adjacent, although away from the river few have been found in meaningful contexts within the area. Five potins (one Class I, two Class II and two fragmentary pieces) were recovered from various Late Iron Age features at Lower Warbank, Keston (Philp

1991, 140-1), two Class II pieces came from the Farningham Hill enclosure (one each from the main south east enclosure ditch and Pit 10; Philp 1984, 35), while three Class Is were recovered during recent excavations at Uphall Camp, Ilford (one was stratified with late Middle Iron Age pottery) (Greenwood 1989, 100 & Fig 8; Pamela Greenwood, pers comm). Single examples have

been reported from Beddington Sewage Works (Class II, unstratified; Kent nd) and further out in Essex at Stifford Clays (Class I from Ditch 105) and Ardale School (Class II from Ditch 1317) (Wilkinson 1988, 69).

Of special interest amongst the coins listed here is the single thick, heavy piece from Chiswick (No. 37 above), which is likely to fall early within the series, say c.100 BC, and the one, possibly two, caches from the Putney/Barn Elms reach (No. 36 above), together with the 'multiple find' (?scattered hoard) from Isleworth Eyot (No. 35 above). The Chiswick coin represents a first or second generation British version of the first cast 'Massalia imitations' of Central Gaul (Haselgrove 1988, 102), best known in Britain from the hoards at Folkestone (Haselgrove 1987, 279) and West Thurrock (Van Arsdell 1989, 320–8). Although their distribution in Britain 'appears wider than that of the earliest British potin derived from them' (Haselgrove 1987, 248; Haselgrove 1988, Fig 1), few have been found in the London area hitherto.

It is particularly unfortunate that so little information regarding the composition of the hoard finds exists, beyond the few coins recorded by Pamela Greenwood from the first small Putney/Barn Elms cache, which appear to be of Class I type (Haselgrove 1987, 288). The reputed subsequent discovery of 'upwards of a hundred coins' from the same findspot is of particular interest in view of the handful of large so-called 'flight' hoards of Class I potins already known from the west London area, eg St James's Park ('sizeable'), Eel Pie Island, Brentford (266+) and Sunbury (359+), the latter apparently deposited with three pottery vessels (Allen 1971, 148; Tyers 1996, 139–40). Other more recent, if farther-flung, additions include the small caches from New Addington near Croydon (Fitzpatrick 1990) and from the Airport Catering Site at Stanstead (Priddy 1988, 269) both, curiously enough, composed of Class II potins.

CONCLUSION

There are a number of points to emerge from study of the objects published here. First, the expected emphasis on finds from the modern Thames foreshore; secondly the recovery of land finds from areas of seemingly difficult geology, such as the London Clay; and thirdly the presence of hoards of various types from both zones.

A glance at the range of objects dealt with reveals that a majority were recovered from the traditionally prolific reaches of the foreshore such as Syon, Putney and Wandsworth, though this is here taken to reflect the activities of individual searchers. Thus recent activity in less well-known localities such as Battersea, Vauxhall and Bermondsey has been equally successful (the first named writer of this report recovered the material from Vauxhall – Nos 2, 8, 9 & 29 above – on two short visits). Accelerating erosion of the foreshore in a number of localities is also offering an unrepeatable opportunity for careful recording of objects in context, as work by individuals (eg Hill 1996), local societies (eg Cowie & Eastmond 1997) and the Thames Archaeological Survey (Webber 1995) is currently demonstrating.

Closer scrutiny of the foreshore finds suggests that there is no longer any guarantee that the objects themselves were necessarily originally deposited in the *waters* of the Thames, as has been automatically assumed in the past. Indeed, a number of the finds may well have been lost on, and/or deliberately buried in, deposits which were at least seasonally terrestrial. Equally, landward excavations carried out behind the modern foreshore in riverside localities such as Isleworth (Chris Bell, pers comm) [see also paper: *An Archaeological Excavation on Land adjacent to Snowey Fielder Waye, Isleworth* in this volume], Chiswick (Dave Lakin, pers comm) [see also *Excavations at Corney Reach, Chiswick W4* in this volume] and north Southwark have identified prehistoric cut features sealed by later deposits, from which, given other circumstances, material could have been poached by the river. This has clear implications for the ways in which Thames finds as a whole are interpreted, and underlines the necessity of paying close and careful attention to the exact position and circumstance of each new discovery (eg Haughey 1996).

This point is nowhere more important than in the areas of the modern foreshore which have been subjected to alteration in the recent past. Lawrence, for example, drew attention to the dumping of dredged material from London Bridge further upstream at Hammersmith and Wandsworth (1929, 72), while at least one of the the gravel pits at Ham is known to have been backfilled with dredgings taken from the river at Chelsea (eg Anon 1961, 225). Similarly, recent documentary research has demonstrated that the downstream end of the Battersea reach has received prodigious quantities of dredged and

excavated material, barged in from Woolwich, the London Docks and the Royal Exchange, among other places, since at least the 1820s (Cotton 1996, 93), such that the circumstances of any finds recovered from the locality require especially rigorous scrutiny. The Class II potin coin (No. 42 above) from the Surrey foreshore in front of Battersea Park is a case in point, having been recovered from an 'apparently disturbed' context along with 'gravel and rubble obviously artificially deposited', so too the palstave published previously (Cotton & Needham 1991, 45-6).

The common denominator among the few pieces found away from the Thames appears to be the drainage pattern of the tributary streams. Thus the findspots of the two adzes from Enfield/Southgate lie close to eastward-flowing tributaries of the Lea; the barbed-and-tanged arrowhead from Pinner joins a small number of other Bronze Age finds recovered from a complex range of soils around the head of the Pinn; and the stone axe from Hampstead and the Late Bronze Age hoard from Park Royal both fall within the Brent catchment. Opportunities for archaeological fieldwork within such localities are often limited but, as the later prehistoric ditches found during recent MoLAS excavations on equally unpromising geology close to the headwaters of another small stream, the River Effra, at Upper Tulse Hill demonstrate (Penny Bruce, pers comm), they can be surprisingly informative.

The Late Bronze Age hoard from Park Royal is one of a number now known from Greater London (eg Needham & Burgess 1980, 448, Fig 4), although it is still somewhat unusual in that the findspot and circumstances of its discovery are tolerably well known (even if the possible ingot fragments which accompanied the axes are not!). Traditionally, Late Bronze Age hoards are divided into utilitarian/non-votive (*ie* axes and tools), and non-utilitarian/votive (*ie* weapons) (Bradley 1990, 10-14). By this yardstick both 'founder's composed' from Park Royal and Wandsworth, composed principally of utilitarian items, are non-votive. Yet such functionalist labelling surely underplays the amount of overlap between the supernatural and secular worlds likely to have existed in prehistory (eg Needham 1990, 137), for doubtless even apparently 'utilitarian' acts of deposition would have been accompanied by careful, non-utilitarian observances and hedged about by social taboos regarding unlawful recovery. Besides which we

still have little idea of the status and function that such collections of artefacts held in contemporary prehistoric society, or why their burial and non-retrieval should peak at this time. It might be noted that these hoards coincide with a diverse interest in elaborate structured deposition which is beginning to be recognised elsewhere at sites such as Runnymede Bridge, Flag Fen and Potterne (Needham 1993b, 60-6), suggesting that such hoards are simply the most visible manifestations of a much wider social phenomenon, and one hitherto more extensively documented for the ensuing Iron Age (eg Wait 1985; Hill 1995). Deposits of Bronze Age metalwork are therefore perhaps best interpreted on their particular merits, emphasising again the need to pay close attention to the circumstances surrounding individual discoveries. In this context it is particularly unfortunate that the relationship between the pair of Middle Bronze Age side-looped spearheads and the wooden piles at Nine Elms, Vauxhall remains so uncertain. It would be satisfying to report that they represent a special foundation or 'event-marking' deposit similar to that observed at Testwood Lakes, Southampton, where a complete rapier was recovered from silts pre-dating one of the Bronze Age timber 'jetties' (Fitzpatrick *et al* 1996, 10). It is possible that future fieldwork will help to clarify the situation at Vauxhall.

Finally, the recovery of the potin cache(s) from Barn Elms is worthy of note, especially when the potentially contemporary stratified deposits behind the modern foreshore (Pamela Greenwood, pers comm) are taken into account. Is it possible to suggest the presence here of a later Middle Iron Age/Late Iron Age site close to the Thames-Beverley Brook confluence? Such a settlement would appear to fit the pattern of Thames-side occupation which is beginning to emerge during the Middle-Late Iron Age, as stray features and pottery from a range of localities demonstrate. Taken together, this scattered evidence is clearly not yet sufficient to confirm or deny, let alone pinpoint, John Kent's postulated west London *oppidum* (1978, 57-8), though the tenor of his suggestion begins to look prescient.

Index

Barn Elms: 1, 36, 41
Battersea: 10, 13, 42

Bermondsey: 7, 15, 16, 25
 City: 3, 40, 43
 Enfield: 5
 Fulham: 28
 Hammersmith: 30, 37, 38
 Hampstead: 11
 Isleworth: 19, 35
 Park Royal: 27
 Pinner: 20
 Putney: 33, 36
 Southgate: 6
 Syon: 12, 14, 18, 31, 34, 39
 Vauxhall: 2, 8, 9, 22, 29
 Wandsworth: 17, 21, 23, 24, 26, 32
 Wapping: 4

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