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## **Surface Flints from Long Newnton, Gloucestershire**

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SURFACE FLINTS FROM  
LONG NEWNTON, GLOUCESTERSHIRE

by Commander H. S. GRACIE, R.N.

OF recent years the collection and study of surface flints has fallen somewhat into disrepute as a scientific activity. The cause may be in part the habits of early collectors, many of whom preserved only the more spectacular pieces, often without a note of their provenance, leaving the rest in the fields. A more important factor is the lack of stratigraphy, without which there can be no certain chronology. The Gloucestershire hills with their shallow soil, generally only a few inches deep, do not lean themselves readily to the formation of layers and few, if any, have been found undisturbed. But this is no reason for the neglect of our Cotswold industries; the lack of data merely makes their study more difficult. We may not be able to establish a relative chronology, but at least it should be possible to glean some knowledge of the movement and distribution of population in prehistoric times. Comparison of this paper with the writer's earlier report on Leonard Stanley,<sup>1</sup> for instance, shows that the same succession did not occur at Long Newnton as at the former place. When the results of similar methods of search are available from a number of sites statistical comparison should give us much valuable information.

This site, in the parish of Long Newnton,<sup>2</sup> lies at a height of 400 feet O.D., on the slight ridge that runs ssw from Rodmarton and is  $2\frac{1}{2}$  miles from the long barrow

<sup>1</sup> *Trans. B.G.A.S.* 1939, LX, p. 180.

<sup>2</sup> O.S. 6", Glos. LXVI, NW.

there. The main collection comes from three fields, 54 acres in extent, known as the Bowldridge Grounds, lying to the east and southeast of Adey's Firs covert and behind the farm buildings called Bowldridge. A few flints found in the immediate neighbourhood are included. Several small streams rise close by, but at present they are merely dry ditches except in wet weather. No doubt they provided a good water supply in the damper Neolithic period. The soil is fairly light and sandy, being only a foot or so deep and lying on the Great Oolite.

Most well-known flint sites in Gloucestershire have been searched again and again by collectors who, as mentioned above, removed only the more spectacular implements. Here, however, it is probable that few have been removed. It is a lonely spot and far from main roads. Thus the absence of certain forms may be more significant than it would be elsewhere. No ancient remains from the district seem to have been described, though Mr A. D. Passmore has in his collection a bronze flanged axe in perfect condition, which was a casual find from somewhere in the parish. This may have been found two or three miles from the site under discussion, where the Bronze Age is not well represented. Three polished flint axes, two of which may be seen in Devizes Museum, were found near by in the parish of Crudwell.<sup>3</sup> Besides flint little has been found on the surface, apart from haematite and fragments of Roman pottery.

The collection consists of 5400 pieces of flint of which about 280 may be regarded as artifacts, whole or broken, excluding cores and utilized flakes. A selection of fragments was shown to Dr K. P. Oakley who suggested that most of them were soil-flint, not water-rolled, from the surface of the chalk hills, the nearest of which lie some 12 miles to the southeast near Purton in Wiltshire. A few particularly poor pieces, frost-pitted, were probably

<sup>3</sup> Catalogue of Devizes Museum, part II, 2nd edition, p. 8, plate III, fig. 3.

picked up and brought with the rest but found to be useless. A nodule of Upper Greensand chert, also probably from Wiltshire, perhaps Warminster, had been discarded after the removal of one flake had disclosed its nature. Some better quality flint, including that from which the ground axes were made, may have come from as far as Sussex where it is known to have been mined. The patina in general is white though it is found in all stages of blue and grey. There are instances, such as FIG. 5 (8), of re-chipping where a new tool with unpatinated secondary work has been made from a thickly patinated white flake. Segregation of implements of different periods has not been attempted in the figures.

#### MICROLITHS (FIG. 1)

The microliths, of which there are 23 in the collection, show a tendency towards the geometric. Triangles or trapezoids (1-5) and crescents (6-9) are represented.

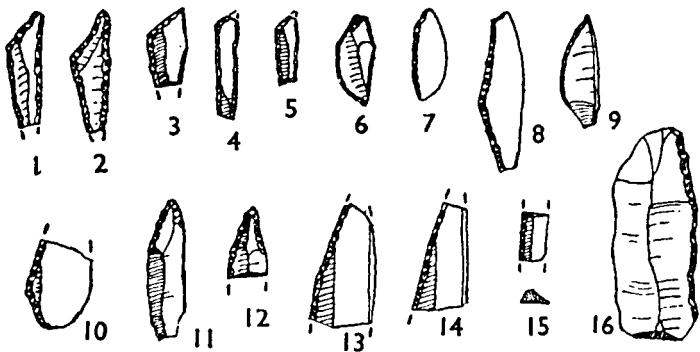


FIG. 1. Microliths

All the flints (FIGS. 1-10) are shown †

Most of the others are damaged, but would appear to have consisted of blades blunted down one side or truncated and points blunted down part of both sides (11). Middle Tardenoisean influence is indicated. Both early and late forms are absent as is also the micro-burin,

though the writer has a doubtful specimen from a site two miles to the westward. Micro-burins cannot be expected to be very numerous as they are by-products of the manufacture of microliths from long flakes. This method of manufacture may have been known, but most microlithic forms must have been made directly from short flakes, as the cores are all extremely small. The microliths have been found on all parts of the site, not concentrated in patches as in many districts. This may be due to the shallow nature of the soil, lying on rock, and thus discouraging the digging of deep and permanent pit-dwellings. Nos. 1-3, 6 and 7 have already been published by Dr. J. G. D. Clark<sup>4</sup> but have been redrawn in order to make the picture more comprehensive.

#### FABRICATORS AND PRISMATIC SHAPES (FIG. 2)

Seven rod-shaped flints were probably fabricators. One required very little shaping and is much bruised at the end (1). Two are roughly triangular in section (2, 3) having two plain flake surfaces and the third roughly trimmed. The sections of the remainder are round or polygonal. A few other fragments may represent broken fabricators and two of these are smoothed at the end as though they had been used for rubbing or polishing.

No. 4 and a smaller companion are trimmed into triangular section; 5 and 6 are thick flakes with parallel faces and steep sides, while another of the type is rectangular like a very small tile. Similar specimens, though smaller, occur at Leonard Stanley.<sup>5</sup> No. 7 is triangular and shows some secondary trimming at the bulbar end. No. 8, long and delicate, is blunted on one side near the point. No. 9 and one other are crudely blunted along

<sup>4</sup> *Proc. Prehist. Soc. of East Anglia*, 1934, VII, 421.

<sup>5</sup> *loc. cit.*, figs. 59, 60.

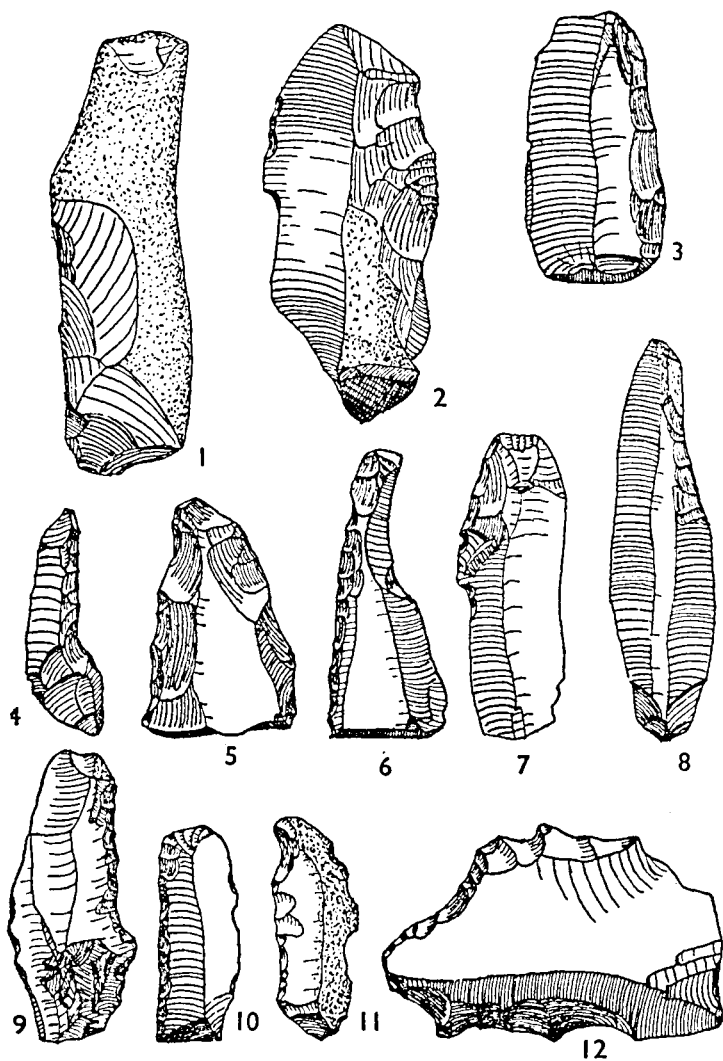


FIG. 2. Fabricators and prismatic shapes

most of one side. Five small triangular prisms (nos. 10 and 11) show a little trimming all along one edge, and two the original crust on one face. No. 12 is a very thick flake trimmed to a rough tang at one end.

#### SCRAPERS (FIGS. 3 and 4)

There are 132 scrapers, of which 30 are broken and have not been classified. Most of them are small, but a few heavy implements have been found. No. 1 has a steep cliff nearly an inch high; there are three of the type. No. 2 is one of four, massive and crudely made, while no. 3 represents four heavy end-scrapers. Several of these larger implements show resolved secondary working and may be of Late Bronze or Iron Age date. Of the lighter tools 22 are concave on the upper face (4, 5), 18 convex or ridged (6-9), 5 flat (10, 11) and 11 show a considerable amount of crust on the convex upper face (12-14). No. 14 is one of the very few unpatinated implements. In FIG. 4 are shown three small and very thin specimens (15-17), the secondary chipping on which is Mesolithic in character. There are three more of these. Seven end-scrapers are represented (18-21). No. 23 is matched by a similar type from Leonard Stanley.<sup>6</sup> No. 24 is remarkable in that the bulb of percussion is on the upper face. Nos. 25 and 26 are angular. No. 27 is the only true hollow scraper, though several flakes show notches and may have been used for the same purpose. Nos. 22 and 28 are side-scrapers, but the former has a scraper edge all round and the latter a slightly hollow scraping edge at one end. In the great majority the working edge is angled at from 70° to 90°, though in a few cases, notably 11 and 23, both pressure flaked, it is less than 30°. Careful workmanship is not a general characteristic of the scrapers though some (e.g. 1, 5, 11, 14 and 23) are beautifully made. Second quality flint is the usual, but not invariable, material.

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.* fig. 37.

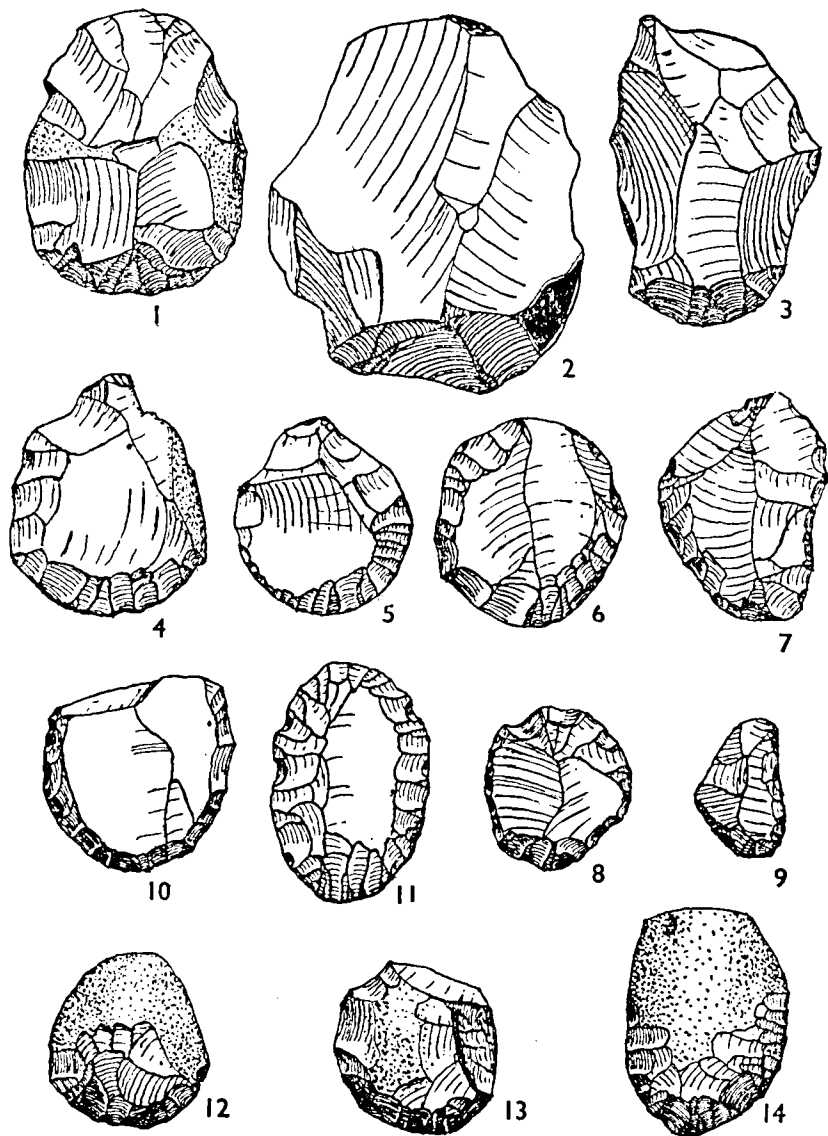


FIG. 3. Scrapers

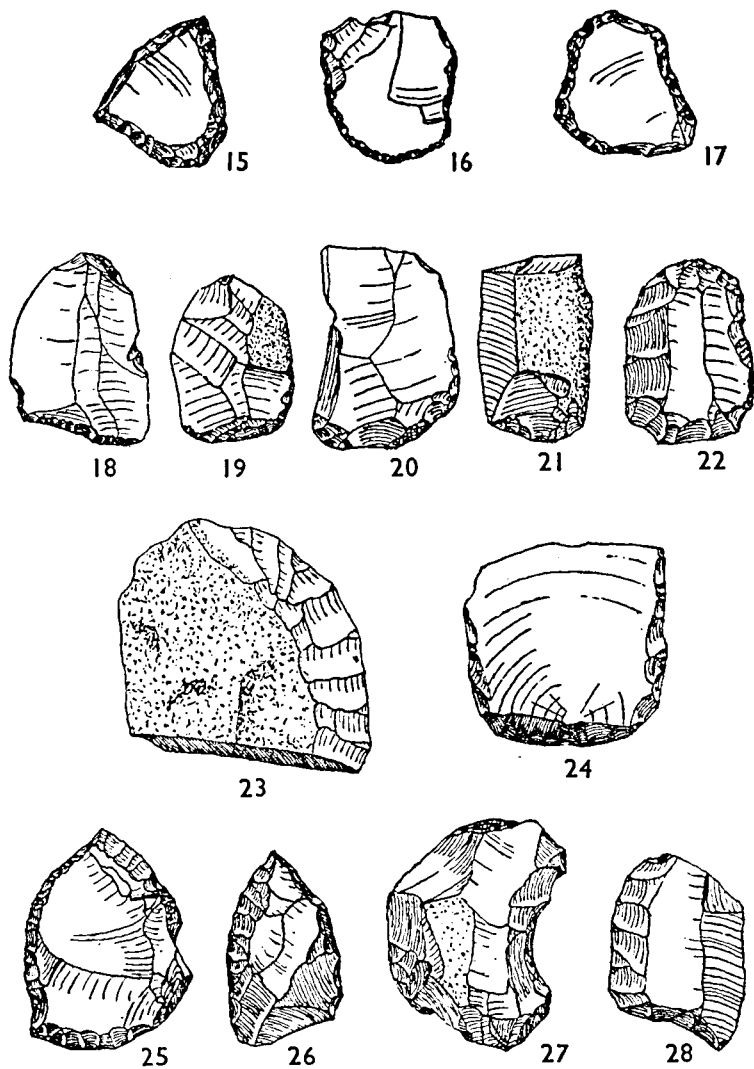


FIG. 4. Scrapers

## ARROWHEADS (FIG. 5)

No. 1 is irregularly shaped with rather steep secondary chipping. On the under side there is a little trimming on the right near the base while half the left hand side near the point shows blunting in Mesolithic style. No. 2 is the most nearly complete of three leaf-shaped arrowheads. No. 3 is a lozenge and would be more symmetrical but for a little damage on the lower right hand side. No. 4

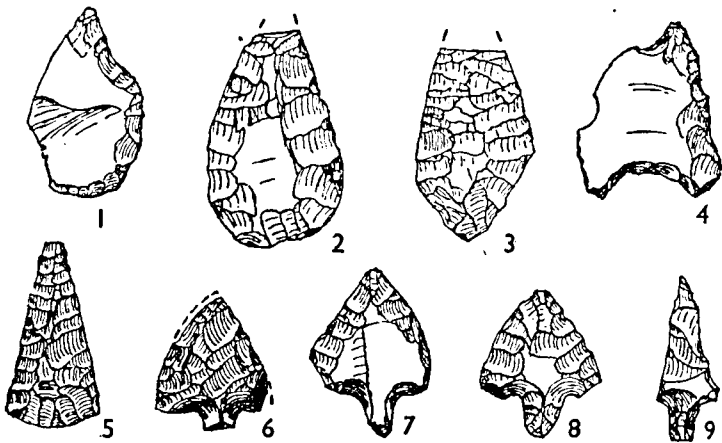


FIG. 5. Arrowheads

has slight damage on the left side, but is otherwise perfect. It would appear to be a large barb for insertion in a slot in a harpoon or arrow rather than a hollow-based point. Nos. 6-8 are small, rather crude, tanged arrowheads, no. 7 being flatter than the others. They are a late type and may even belong to the Iron Age. Mr G. C. Dunning showed me an unpublished specimen he had excavated from an Iron Age B site at Salmonsbury near Bourton on the water. It was very similar to no. 7 in size, shape and workmanship, even to the point being slightly bent back following the original curve of the flake surface. There was, in his opinion, conclusive evidence to show

that it was made in the first century B.C. Nos. 5 and 9 are unusual types both very well made, particularly the former. The latter has been made from an old flake. There are three other broken specimens whose original form cannot be determined as only the pointed ends have turned up. One of these may have been of birch-leaf shape, while another was made from a fragment of a polished tool. The collection is small, by no means spectacular, and lacks certain important types. The early transverse arrow-head and beautiful winged varieties of the Bronze Age are missing.

#### MISCELLANEOUS POINTS, AND BORERS (FIG. 6)

The triangular points found at Leonard Stanley<sup>7</sup> are represented here by a single specimen (1). There are 3 long knives or lance points (2 and 3) of which one is blunted down most of both sides while the other two, which have been broken, are only blunted near the point. A beautiful little point (4) is too thick for an arrowhead and too small for a borer unless it were used only for delicate work. No. 5 again is small and thick and curves to a point; evidently another tool made for a special purpose. There is a series of points (6-10) which would appear to be arrowheads. They are all rather crude and thick. No. 6 may have been used for boring and 10 is asymmetrical. All have plain under-surfaces. Mr. Dunning has a point, also from his Salmonsbury excavation, very similar to 10 and ascribed to the early first-century A.D. There are two borers with obliquely set points (11 and 12) and two more normal ones (15, 16). Nos. 13, 14 are of a curious type. Both are undamaged and are trimmed to sharp points in Mesolithic style. They are too wide for use as barbs, unless in some very large weapon, and no attempt has been made to sharpen the leading edge. Indeed, in 14 the original crust extends right to the point.

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.* figs. 21-23.

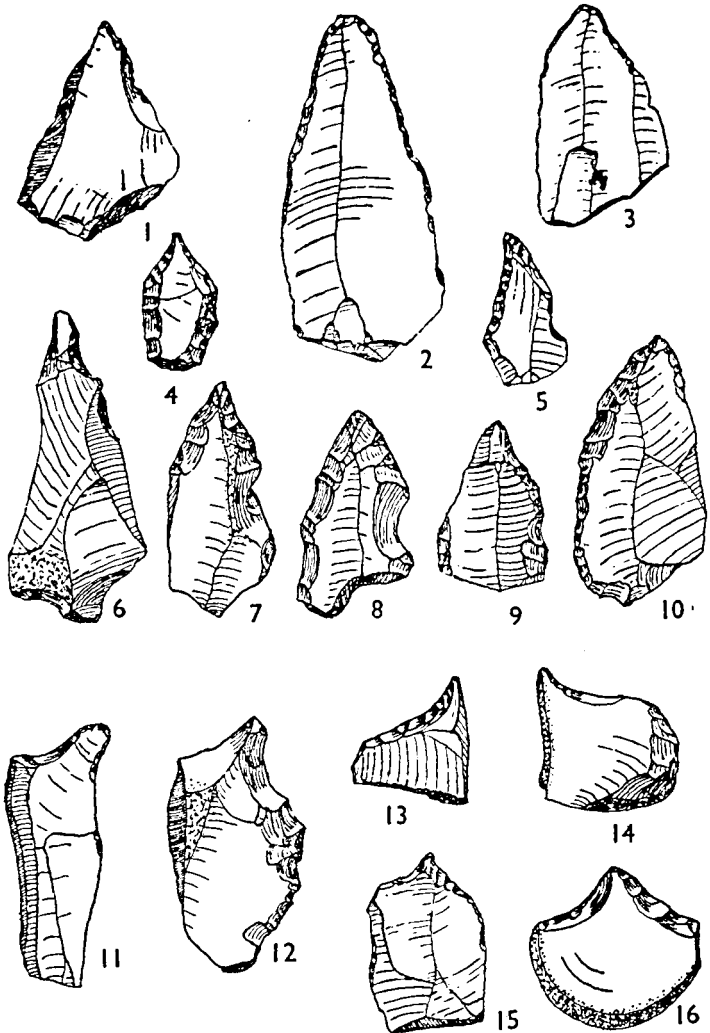


FIG. 6. Miscellaneous points, and borers

## GROUND AND POLISHED FLINT (FIG. 7)

It was once thought that axes of polished flint were rare on the Cotswolds.<sup>8</sup> The idea is rapidly being dispelled and this site has yielded no less than 19 fragments. No doubt most axes were used until they were damaged beyond the possibility of re-sharpening, when they would

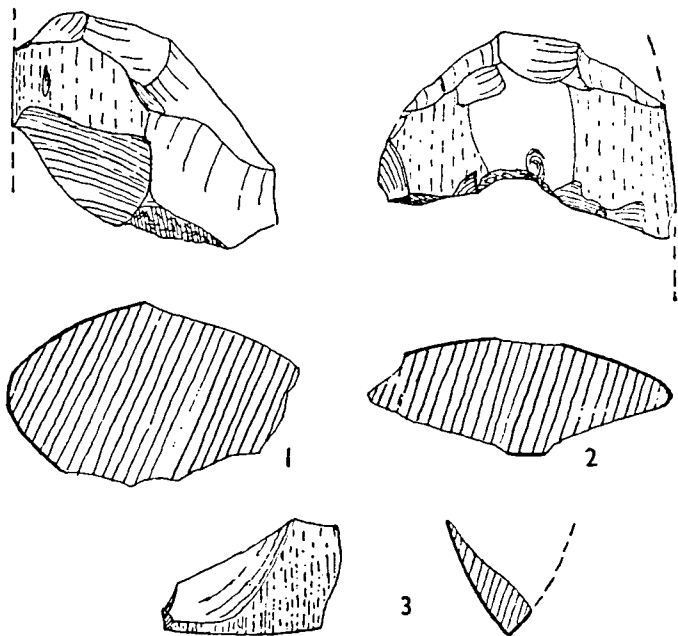


FIG. 7. Fragments of ground and polished axes

be broken up and made into other tools. Admittedly there is only one tool in this collection, an arrowhead, showing the remains of a ground surface, but some are made of the first quality flint, which is the invariable material of the polished axes. Three specimens are illustrated. No. 1 is from near the thickest part of the

<sup>8</sup> Greenwell, *British Barrows*, 443-4. Crawford, *Long Barrows of the Cotswolds*, 9.

implement. No. 2, being slightly tapered, evidently comes from near the butt end and 3 shows a portion of the cutting edge. Another fragment is from a cutting-edge, while others show more pronounced flattening of the sides than does no. 1. No stone axes of material other than flint have been recognized.

#### UTILIZED FLAKES AND BLADES (FIG. 8)

There are many hundreds of flakes and blades, of which some 200 show signs of use. A common type is a large flake with one sharp edge, the other side being thick and blunt, frequently showing the original crust (1 and 2). These in all probability were hafted, several together, to form sickles. There is no trace of corn-gloss, but this could hardly be expected on surface flints. The remainder of those illustrated, all with the bulbar end downwards, are typical. Most of them are very thin and must have presented usefully sharp edges when new.

#### DISCS AND MISCELLANEOUS TOOLS (FIG. 9)

Twenty discs with sharp edges and lenticular section (1-3) may have been used as sling stones or for throwing. In two of the larger ones the sharp edge is broken by a flat facet. No. 1 is of this type and when gripped with first finger on the flat facet it seems to be the perfect missile. No. 2 is the smallest of the twenty. No. 3 is more or less square in plan, but all the others are circular.

No. 4 is the only graver in the collection and even this one shows no signs of use. It has a curious but carefully made notch at the back. No. 5 is carefully trimmed to a point, but does not seem to have been used as a lance tip. It may have been hafted and used as a knife. No. 6 is circular in section and has a battered end. Other specimens have the same characteristics; they suggest very light hammer heads. No. 7 has a little pressure flaking near the end, but is broken. It recalls Leonard

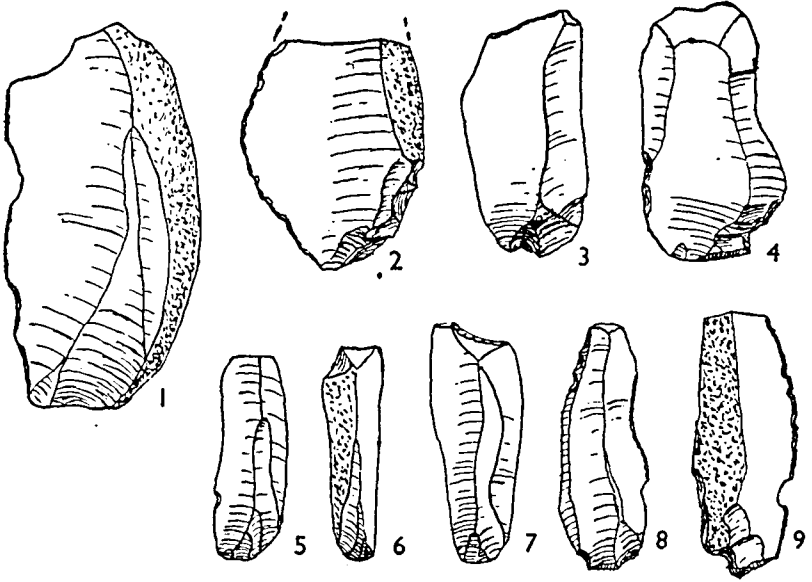


FIG. 8. Utilized flakes and blades

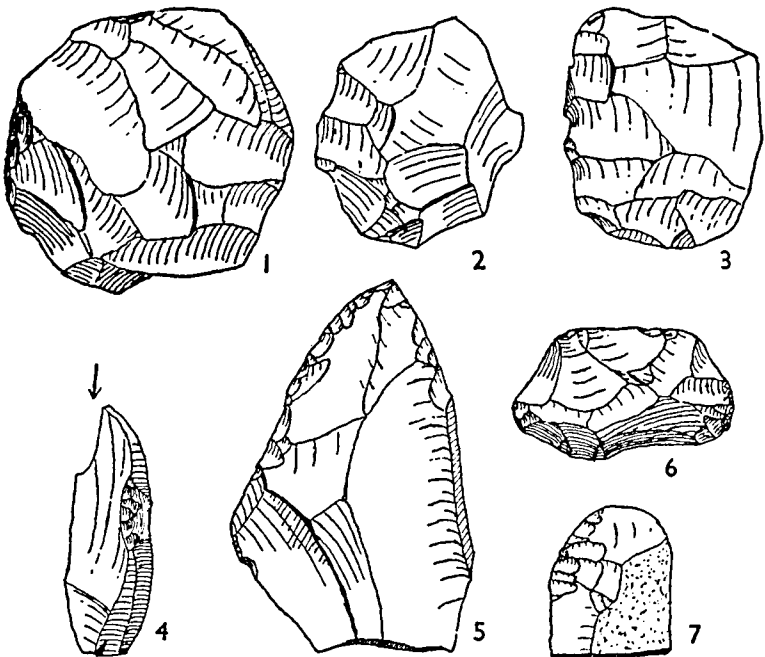


FIG. 9. Discs and miscellaneous tools

Stanley, FIG. 61.<sup>9</sup> Miscellaneous items not illustrated include a pot-boiler and a flint nodule used as a hammer-stone.

#### CORES AND CORE TRIMMINGS (FIG. 10)

Of the 70 cores about half have had flakes struck off from all directions (2). The others have been struck either from one end or from prepared platforms at both ends (1). All are very small, no. 2 being the largest.

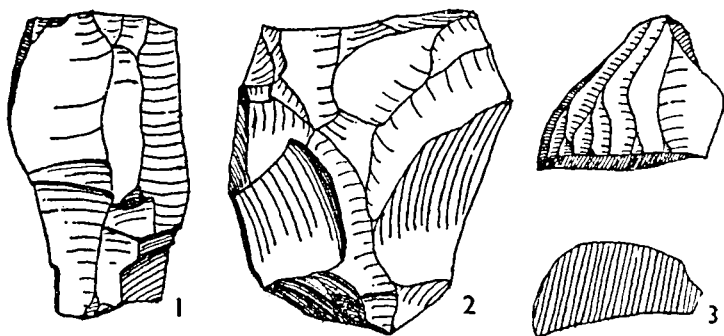


FIG. 10. Cores and core trimmings

There are also a few core trimmings (3). A few cores may have been used as scrapers, but this does not appear to have been a common practice, possibly because they were normally whittled away to such small dimensions.

As early forms are infrequent it seems that occupation began some time after the commencement of the Mesolithic period. How long it continued is not certain, but it must have dwindled during the Bronze Age or specimens of winged arrowheads, 'slugs' and the like would have been found. The tanged arrowheads can as easily belong to the Early Iron Age or later times as to any other period. Similar ones have even been found on Roman

<sup>9</sup> loc. cit.

sites, e.g. Witcombe.<sup>10</sup> There is some evidence of occupation in the Iron Age and in Roman times and the Fosse Way passes close by. The absence of late Mesolithic forms probably indicates that Neolithic people arrived in the district earlier than they did in some other parts of the country. Lack of water in the drier climate may account for the shifting of the population in the Bronze Age. The deserted area need not have been a large one and is probably confined to the driest part of the watershed between the rivers Thames and Avon. Distribution-maps show the Cotswolds as a sparsely populated district at this time, and objects usually assigned to the Bronze Age are certainly less common than those of the Mesolithic and Neolithic periods. Nevertheless I am inclined to subscribe to Sir Cyril Fox's suggestion that the barrenness may be 'due in some measure to the imperfection of the archaeological record'.<sup>11</sup> The water difficulty has today been overcome by a good well, but even so a circle a mile in radius centred on the site embraces only two cottages.

The large numbers of tiny flakes and waste chips show that flint from the neighbouring chalk hills was imported in the rough and worked locally. This would coincide with the evidence obtained from the Rodmarton Long Cairn where this point was demonstrated by the fact that large pieces of Old Red Sandstone, which probably came from Tortworth, were found in the chambers. The axes, however, whose material came from farther afield, may have arrived in a partly finished state. At the Penmaenmawr axe factory, rough-outs were found ready for distribution, their finishing being done locally, each area no doubt having views of its own as to details. Such views are common even today in this age of ready made

<sup>10</sup> Unpublished : information from Mrs E. M. Clifford.

<sup>11</sup> *Personality of Britain*, 3rd edition, p. 66.

tools.<sup>12</sup> The small quantity of better class flint among the waste flakes could easily arise from the breaking up of old axes to make smaller tools.

There seems to have been a shortage of flint, not only at Long Newnton but all over Gloucestershire. The cores, scrapers, arrowheads and other implements are very small; a feature that is common to the Cotswolds in general. Other tools besides axes were remade into smaller ones, often at a much later date, as in several specimens the patina on the secondary work is thinner than on the main flake surfaces. Bone seems to have been used to a great extent for the manufacture of tools; they have been found in recent times in the Notgrove, Nympsfield and Rodmarton Long Cairns, and, in the reports of last century's excavations of similar monuments references to bone tools were by no means uncommon. It is possible that examples could be found on the surface today but their age could hardly be determined with certainty. Was this economy due primarily to scarcity of available flint or to its expense? The area of the chalk hills cultivated by Neolithic man cannot have been great so the surplus of soil-flint available for export may have been limited. The cost of transport is difficult to assess as the journey to the nearest chalk hills and back, though only 25 miles, leads across a belt of clay, which probably supported a dense and dangerous forest. Transport, however, must have added considerably to the value of flint imported from such distant parts of Sussex, already expensive by reason of its mining costs. It seems therefore that the community, though prosperous enough to build a magnificent array of barrows and to trade axes from a great distance, could not afford to import mined flint for general purposes even from the Wiltshire mines. They had to be content with soil-flint and share the short supply with a large district. At the

<sup>12</sup> R. U. Sayce, *Man*, xxxvi, 63.

same time it must be borne in mind that a survival of Mesolithic ideas may account for the small size of many types.

I have to thank Mr H. G. Witchell, for his kindness in allowing me to make the collection on his land ; Mrs E. M. Clifford, F.S.A. (SCOT.), for examining the flints and for her advice and help at every stage of the writing of this paper ; and Mr A. D. Passmore F.R.A.I., Mr G. C. Dunning, F.S.A., and Dr K. P. OAKLEY, F.G.S., for their assistance in various ways.