AN UNDISTURBED EARLY NEOLITHIC SITE NEAR SANDOWN, ISLE OF WIGHT.

BY HUBERT F. POOLE.

The majority of Neolithic Sites in the Isle of Wight, as elsewhere, have been discovered on cultivated land where flakes and implements turned up by the plough lie on the surface, sometimes in large numbers. There is always a difficulty in associating such disturbed matter with any one period or phase of culture, both earlier and later objects being usually also present.

The Site with which the present paper is concerned, however, presents little difficulty of that kind, the objects having been collected from the level at which they have remained since they were discarded by their makers. It is therefore possible to state that the bulk of the artifacts found associated here belong to one particular phase of the Neolithic Period.

The Site is (or rather was, as most of it has now disappeared into the sea) situated on the cliffs of Sandown Bay, at about one mile N.E. of Sandown. Its position may be recognised as a large semi-circular hollow facing the sea, bounded on the S.W. by the point in the cliff where the *Perna mulleti* Bed, marking the junction of the Wealden and Lower Greensand Strata, reaches the top of the cliff, and on the N.E. by the vertical ochreous sandstone cliffs of the Lower Greensand. Its position on the 6in. Ordnance Survey Map, Hampshire (Isle of Wight), Sheet xcvi, S.E. (Edition of 1909), may be found on the coast line directly under the D of the bold lettering of "YAVERLAND," and immediately east of the wording "Red Cliff." Inland the hollow at present extends to within 17 yards of the field railings.

Slips are constantly occurring, particularly during the winter, and the entire hollow has been formed by such slips during a number of years. The Site occupied the whole of the area now represented by the hollow, and undoubtedly extended further seaward, as the cliff face twenty years ago, when this investigation was started, produced flakes and wasters in abundance, much more so than to-day, when the landward edge of the Site appears to have been reached. It is also evident, from the comparatively rapid denudation of the coast taking place here, that the Site would have been at a considerably greater distance from the sea in Neolithic times.

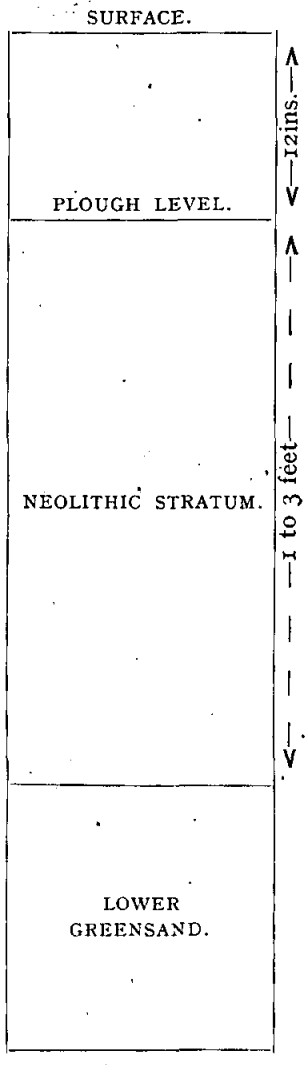
The hollow has been formed by the slipping of the sandy beds of the Lower Greensand over the lower clayey beds of the same formation, and the Wealden Clays on which they rest. Water easily percolates through the Greensand, and, so to speak, oils the way for constant new slips. These sandy beds give way in perpendicular slices of a few inches to a few feet wide at a time, and the Neolithic Stratum at the top is accordingly constantly producing fresh sections. These have been watched as they occurred, and the exposed matter extracted. During the

dryer months slips are not so frequent, but wind-erosion brings new objects to the surface for examination. The slipping movement is usually imperceptible, and the slices of strata remain in an upright position until gradual erosion and further settlement obliterate them.

Such has been the method of work, the accumulated matter resulting from twenty years' slips and exposures having been brought together in this paper. Nature has figuratively turned over page after page of the story of a primitive community, of which we are able to gather a few words here and there.

THE DEPOSIT.—The Neolithic Deposit appears in the face of the cliff, as illustrated by the diagram given on this page. The surface has been under cultivation at some time, certainly more than 100 years ago, and indications of this are found down to 12 inches from the surface. Throughout the stratum flints and occasional fragments of Pottery, mixed with small rounded fragments of chalk, are to be found. The few implements from this level have been disregarded, but the Pottery is dealt with by reason of its special interest. Occasional fragments of chalk, Pottery, etc., are found an inch or so below this stratum, having probably been taken down by the action of worms or mice. The Neolithic Stratum proper is from one to three feet in thickness, and appears to consist of blown sand derived from the Lower Greensand; it rests on undisturbed strata of the same formation. The enclosed flints, implements, and other matter are thinly scattered throughout, and only very occasionally form any sort of line of stratification.

The implements make up in interest what they lack in numbers.



On the ploughed field immediately inland of the hollow, many flakes and implements are to be found, but these are not apparently connected with the cliff-edge site. They are, on the whole, of larger and coarser make, and appear to lie nearer the surface.

CELTS.—The Celts are six in number. They fall into two classes, the larger "related to the Thames Pick," and the smaller "Narrow Celt or Chisel" connected by the only complete specimen, which is a "Transition from Thames Pick to Chisel." The words in inverted commas are those in Mr. Reginald A. Smith's descriptions.

Those "related to the Thames Pick" are two in number, both broken. Of the "Narrow Celt or Chisel" type there are three. The most complete, as well as most elaborately worked, is illustrated on Plate I, Fig. 2.

The "transitional" form merits description. It is of grey, dull-surfaced (bleached) flint, with slight ochreous staining here and there. Length $4\frac{3}{16}$ inches, extreme breadth $1\frac{1}{8}$ inches. The cutting-edge has been produced by the intersection of two facets. The body is roughly triangular in section, the apex lying well to the right when the cutting-edge is towards the observer (Plate I, Fig. 1).

There are also a few heavy, slightly trimmed flakes that would have been effective for use as Celts.

ARROW-HEADS.—The arrow-heads fall into a series of forms apparently developed from a pointed flake. The workmanship is of the simplest nature, being little more than the production of a suitable edge and point.

No. 1. (Plate II, Fig. 1.) This is a simple, thin-pointed flake without secondary chipping. It is given here as similar forms appear to mark the starting-point in the evolution of the arrow-heads on this Site. A good number of these pointed flakes have been found, and they would, no doubt, have been as effective in use as the more elaborately finished specimens. The edges appear to show signs of use. The slight hollow in the base is that left by the removal of the previous flake.

No. 2. (Plate II, Fig. 2.) An advance on No. 1, being a thin, roughly triangular flake of yellow-brown flint that has been trimmed at the edges on one face only. On the other face the bulb has been removed.

No. 3. (Plate II, Fig. 3.) A more elaborately worked but unfinished specimen in yellowish-grey flint. The left edge (as illustrated) is well worked on both faces. The right edge is the unworked edge of the flake, except at the point where secondary work has been started. The slightly hollow base is worked on both faces.

No. 4. (Plate II, Fig. 4.) Triangular arrow-head in greyish flint, worked on both faces. The base is slightly hollowed.

No. 5. (Plate II, Fig. 5.) Triangular arrow-head of greyish-brown flint, worked on both faces, and the base slightly hollowed by secondary chipping.

PLATE I.

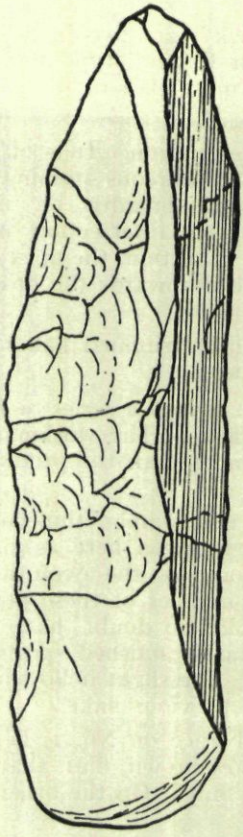


FIG. 1.

FIG. 2.

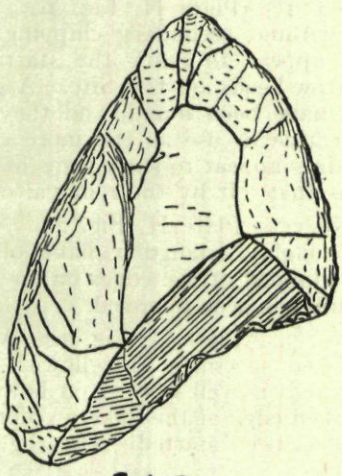


FIG. 3.

H.F.P.

NATURAL SIZE.

PLATE II.

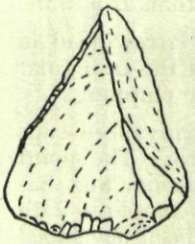


FIG. 1.

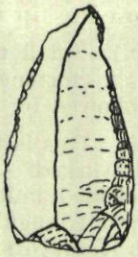


FIG. 2.

FIG. 3.

FIG. 4.

FIG. 5.

FIG. 6

FIG. 7.

FIG. 8

FIG. 9.

FIG. 10.

H.F.P

ALL NATURAL SIZE.

No. 6. (Plate II, Fig. 6.) Arrow-head in dark-grey lustrous flint, with a patch of reddish crust. The opposite face is practically unworked. It is more elongated than the other types, and the business-end is rounded, but its small size gives the impression that it was more likely to be used to tip an arrow than as a knife.

No. 7. (Plate II, Fig. 7.) Small triangular arrow-head in creamy lustrous flint. This is a shortened form of the triangular type. The base is slightly hollowed by secondary chipping.

No. 8. (Plate II, Fig. 8.) This is the most advanced type from the Site, having a well-worked single barb. The point opposite the barb is the thickened bulb-of-percussion, and has not been trimmed. Its general triangular form compares with the simpler types, from which it appears to have been developed by deeper working of the hollowed base.

PYGMY FLINTS.—The two specimens illustrated on Plate II, Figs. 9 and 10, have "battered backs." Fig. 9 would have made an excellent arrow-point. A few other small flakes with more or less secondary work have been found, as well as many splinters, probably connected with the Pygmy industry. The importance of "Pygmy" flints on this Site was not appreciated until recently, and no special search made, or probably more would have been found.

SCRAPERS.—Little is known of the development of the various forms of scrapers. All Neolithic Sites produce irregular forms that appear to be the result of adapting any handy flake of flint to the purpose. For this paper, the scrapers are roughly classified as follow:—

A.—About eighty scrapers fall into a class that may be described as roughly Horseshoe or Oyster-shell shaped: they are usually made from flakes, from which the bulb-of-percussion may or may not have been removed. The worked or scraping end is almost invariably that opposite the end showing the bulb. They are usually slightly longer than broad, and the scraping edge is rounded. The working is at various angles, what are known as steep-nosed scrapers being the least frequent. More detailed description is unnecessary, as similar forms have persisted from the close of the Older Palæolithic into and beyond the Bronze Age.

B.—Thumb-scrapers: two small scrapers, suitable for using between the finger and thumb, but otherwise agreeing more with Class A, are all that have been found.

C.—Another type, represented by about eighteen examples, is finger-shaped, being considerably longer than broad. These are made from long flakes, often the outer flake with the crust remaining. The flake is rounded at one end by secondary working to form the scraper.

D.—Side-scrapers, with the working along one long edge, which is either straight or slightly rounded, amount to twenty.

E.—Hollow-scrapers: some fifty of these have been found, but there is nothing of an elaborate nature. They are merely handy flakes, in the edge of which a small hollow has been roughly chipped.

KNIVES.—There are only two definite knives. One is a narrow flake, $2\frac{2}{5} \times \frac{7}{10}$ inches, coarsely worked on both edges, and also at its rounded end.

The other is somewhat unusual, being a large, thin flake, $4\frac{1}{2} \times 1\frac{3}{4}$ inches, one end of which is pointed and the other rounded. At the pointed end it has been nicely worked on both faces for $1\frac{3}{4}$ inches from the point. It is a knife on which considerable pressure could be brought to bear.

BORERS.—A few roughly pointed flints, some of triangular section, presumably for use as borers, have been found.

PECULIAR FORMS.—Single specimens of three peculiar forms have been found.

1.—The implement shown on Plate I, Fig. 3. "This *resembles* a 'point' of Le Moustier."

2.—An ovate, $3\frac{1}{4} \times 2\frac{1}{4}$ inches, in bleached grey lustrous flint. The method of production appears to be similar to the Levallois Flake, as it has been struck off from a previously worked nodule.

3.—This specimen has been produced in the same manner as No. 2. Mr. Reginald A. Smith describes it as "A handsome scraper, but hardly of the end-or side-scraper type." It is ovate, $1\frac{3}{5} \times 2\frac{3}{5}$ inches, of grey partially bleached flint. The back is thick, retaining a portion of the crust, and occupying about one-fourth of the circumference. A sharp edge extends round the remainder. It approximates in form to some late Drift implements (choppers).

HAMMER-STONES of varying sizes are fairly common. These are formed of natural pebbles of a size suitable to grasp in the hand, retaining the crust over most of the surface, and showing signs of much use on one or more heavily-battered faces. The majority have the appearance of having been taken direct from the chalk, but are slightly stained by the ochreous sand in which they are found. In several instances, however, a rolled beach pebble has been used. One stone, too large for convenient handling, but strongly battered, is probably an anvil. Another has the appearance of a handy chopping tool; the back consists of the rounded crust of the original pebble, and the opposite side has been brought to an edge by the removal of flakes on either side; the chopping edge shows signs of much use.

FLAKES AND WASTERS.—Flakes and wasters are the objects most frequently met with, being scattered throughout the deposit. The majority are purely waste material, but many of the finer flakes would apparently have made excellent knives, though they only occasionally show signs of slight retouching or usage. There are many varieties of patination and lustre. Cores are only moderately common.

POT-BOILERS.—Rough fragments of flint, whitened and cracked by fire, are of common occurrence down to the base of the deposit. It is noticeable that none of these fragments is an artifact. One steep-nosed scraper, whitened but not cracked, has probably been in accidental contact with fire.

BEACH-ROLLED STONES.—Waterworn pebbles, most probably collected from the beach, occasionally occur. The majority are flattened ovals, and are referable to the Wealden and Chalk.

IRON PYRITES.—A rounded nodule of Iron Pyrites, such as are found in the Chalk formation, $1\frac{3}{4}$ inches in diameter, occurred at three feet from the surface, associated with flakes. The angular surface, so prominent in a freshly excavated specimen, has been worn down, though still rough, and the nodule is scored and striated in many places, and one patch, about 1 inch $\times \frac{1}{2}$ inch, is smoothly polished. There can be little doubt that it was used with flint to produce fire. A few more of these nodules have been found, but the wear is smooth, like that of beach-rolled specimens, and they show no striations.

HELIX ASPERSA.—At one point a collection of shells of the Common Garden Snail (*Helix aspersa*) was found at a depth of from two to three feet from the surface, mixed with flakes, etc., and contained within a space of about one yard of the face of the exposure. With these was a solitary specimen of *Helix hortensis*. The shells were scattered in the deposit, and were only occasionally in contact with one another. Both of these species are used for food on the Continent.

POTTERY.—Fragments of Pottery occur very occasionally, the majority at the plough level. The fragments from this level are interesting, and have a certain bearing on those found below. They have been classed, without reference to levels, by Mr. Reginald A. Smith, of the British Museum.

PLOUGH LEVEL.

(A) Two fragments, one with a reddish-grey body and grey exterior, the other reddish throughout, the rim of a pot—" Possibly Mediæval."

(B) Two fragments of dark brown Pottery, one containing grains of sand in the body, the other apparently plain clay. Both were found just below the plough level,

FIG. 11.

NEOLITHIC POTTERY FROM AN EARLY NEOLITHIC SITE NEAR SANDOWN, I.W.

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but evidently belong to it.—" I think these are Early Iron Age (La Tène)."

(C) Three fragments of coarse reddish Pottery, one with the faces almost at a right angle.—" The angle is exceptional, but colour, thickness, and hardness point to the Hallstatt Period (Earliest Iron Age)."

NEOLITHIC LEVEL.—From the Neolithic Stratum come several small fragments of poorly-baked Pottery of a reddish-brown body, mixed with minute fragments of calcined flint. In some cases the inside is blackened (? by fire), and the outside is of a dull reddish tint. Some are blackened on both surfaces. One of these fragments, $1\frac{3}{5} \times 1\frac{1}{2}$ inches, is of special interest as being a portion of the rim of some vessel. The rim is thickened, but uneven and poorly produced, and has three thumb-nail impressions by way of ornament. Just below the rim are two further thumb-nail marks on the body, see Fig. 11. It was found at about two feet from the surface and immediately above the denuded Lower Greensand, this being the extreme depth of the Neolithic deposit at this point. " Probably Neolithic."

CONCLUSIONS.—The small number of implements, compared with the wasters and the area of the Site, and the broken or unfinished condition of the majority of the more elaborate ones found, suggest that the Site was a workshop, and any conclusions have to be based on matter discarded as unsuitable or accidentally lost.

The negative evidence is worth considering. In the first place there is the absence of anything polished or perforated. The Celts found are not of the more usual forms prepared by chipping for subsequent polishing. There are no leaf-shaped, lozenge-shaped, tanged or tanged and barbed arrow-heads. Double-ended and disc-shaped scrapers have not occurred, and the only thumb-scrapers are miniature examples of the end-scraper type.

The implements found are not of an elaborate nature. Two of the Celts have affinities with the Thames Pick, which has been variously attributed to the Late Palæolithic and Early Neolithic. Another is transitional (Plate I, Fig. 1), its cutting-edge is produced in much the same manner as the Danish Shell-mound Tranchet, which is Early Neolithic. The narrow Celts or Chisels, being connected by the previous specimen with the Picks, are probably early forms, but sufficient is not yet known to place them definitely. Enough has already been said regarding the arrow-heads to indicate their primitive nature. The scrapers are the simpler types, with a history extending from the Late Palæolithic to long past the Neolithic. The Pygmies are not sufficiently well represented to indicate their age. The

three specimens approximating in general form to Le Moustier types may have persisted from the earlier culture, but are more probably casual. The remaining implements are such as might be expected to occur casually during any phase of the Neolithic Culture. The Pottery must be placed to a suspense account. It will be seen that the evidence points to an *early* Neolithic date, and as such the associated forms are a valuable starting point. It is only from the examination of many such "sealed in" sites as the present, however, that the Neolithic series of types can be determined.

Thanks are due to Mr. Reginald A. Smith, B.A., F.S.A., for examining and reporting on some of the matter, and to those who have kindly allowed their finds to be examined.