

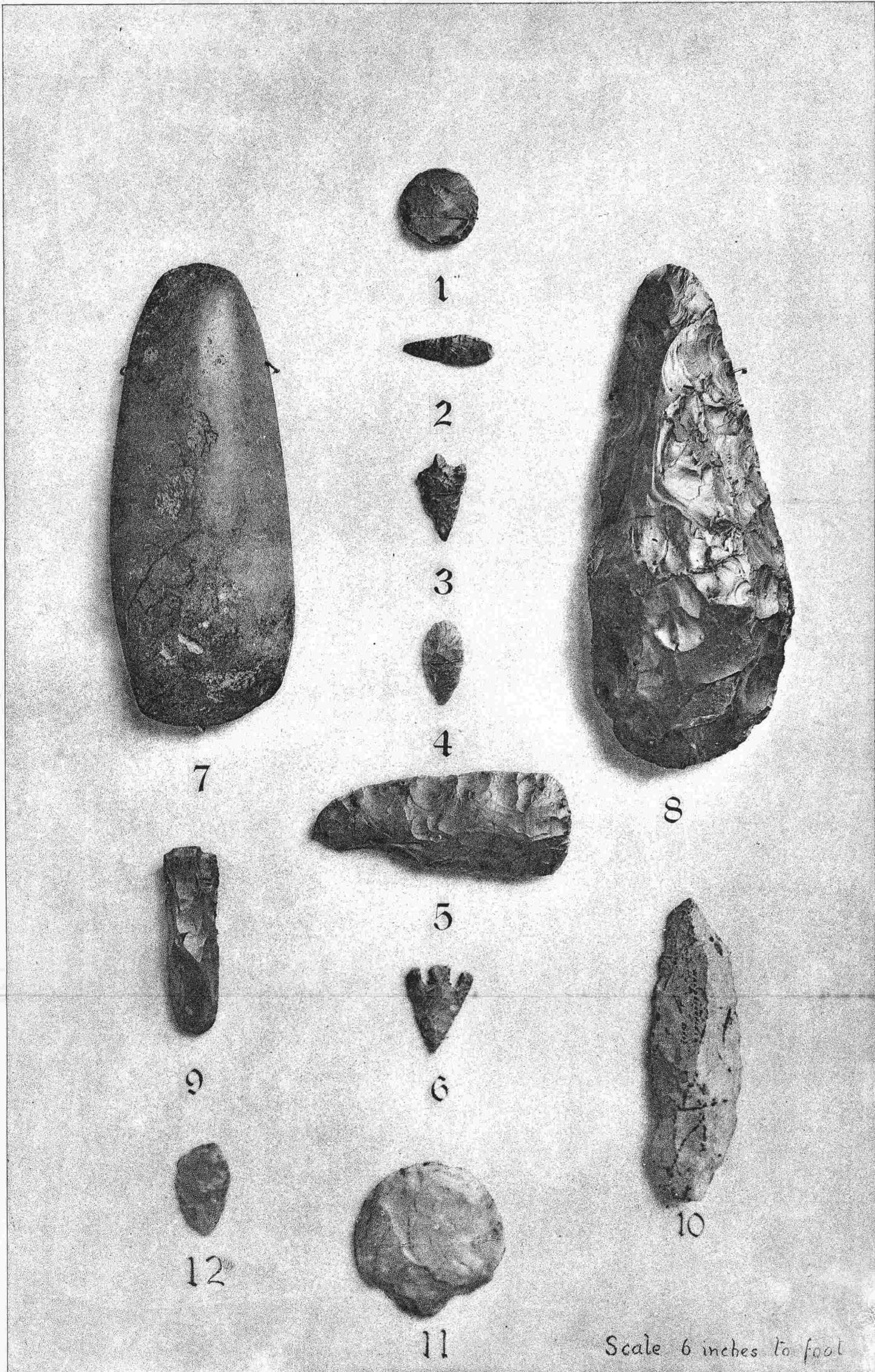
NEOLITHIC SUFFOLK.

EDWARD R. H. HANCOX.

Over the whole of Suffolk, but more particularly in the North-west and South-east of the County, have been found those well known weapons and implements characteristic of the Neolithic stage of civilization. Examples of these beautiful objects, turned up in the process of agriculture, or found lying on the surface of our sandy heaths, may be seen in almost every museum and private collection. The district which has yielded more than any other in England, is that around Icklingham and Brandon, where, near the latter town, are situated the pre-historic workings known as Grimes Graves.

Since the exploration of these ancient mines by Canon Greenwell, F.R.S.,—who probably found them in the same condition as did the Saxon, who, investing them with dread origin, gave to them their name—much attention has been given to this interesting branch of archæology, and many now experience a keen pleasure in acquiring specimens of these antiquities, and gathering from the collection the scanty information it affords of the habits and life of those who used such weapons. The training of the eye to discriminate between the true implement and the accidental flake is soon accomplished, and the delight experienced in a “find” will fully compensate for the perhaps unkind remarks of the village gossips, who may come upon an enthusiast overhauling a heap of stones by the roadside or wandering, apparently aimlessly, over a freshly cultivated field, which proceeding I have known to be considered connected in some mysterious way with the full moon.

* The commonest form of Neolithic implement, that



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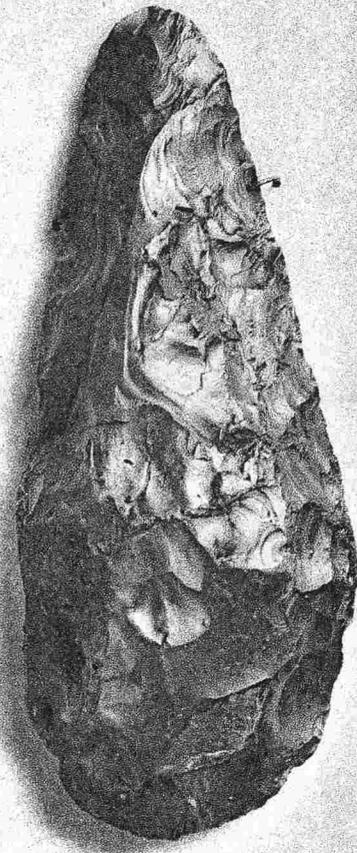
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8



5



9



6



10



12



11

Scale 6 inches to foot

known as the "scraper," occurs in some districts in such abundance as to suggest the probability of their being in use long after the introduction of metal. The specimen chosen for illustration (Fig 1) is of usual type, but more symmetrical; it shows, as do most of them, the bulb of percussion, and is very neatly chipped into horseshoe form, and bevelled in such a manner as to give a very sharp cutting edge. The original of Fig 1 was found by the shepherd on a farm at Martlesham, and given to me with an assortment of over 150 more, all of which he had picked up in course of his work; many were recognisable as Neolithic, while others might have been used in much later times in conjunction with iron to produce fire. On this same farm, which is situated on the edge of an extensive tract of heathland, over which are scattered numerous tumuli, have been found many specimens of Neolithic implements, including the three varieties of arrow-head (Figs. 2, 3, and 4), the small celt (Fig. 5), and others, which speedily passed into private collections. My friend, the shepherd, soon after it had been pointed out to him that these antiquities had a commercial value, found a beautiful celt, which had acquired, in course of many ages, a "creamy" appearance, but to satisfy an admiring companion that the object really was one of "them old flint hatchets," he broke it in two, so as to prove its age by the darker colour of the stone within!

At once the best known, and most delicately shaped of these primitive weapons, are the arrow heads; four varieties are figured; the last (Fig. 6), an almost perfect example, and very similar in shape to the one from Icklingham, figured in Part I. of Vol. XI., was found by a very small youngster in the garden of a cottage on Brightwell Heath, near Woodbridge; it is of grey mottled flint, and its point is just as capable of penetrating the skin as when fashioned, say, two thousand years ago. Fig. 2 is a rarer form. Sir J. Evans, in his "Ancient Stone Implements of Great Britain," mentions a similar variety having been found near Icklingham. Figs. 3

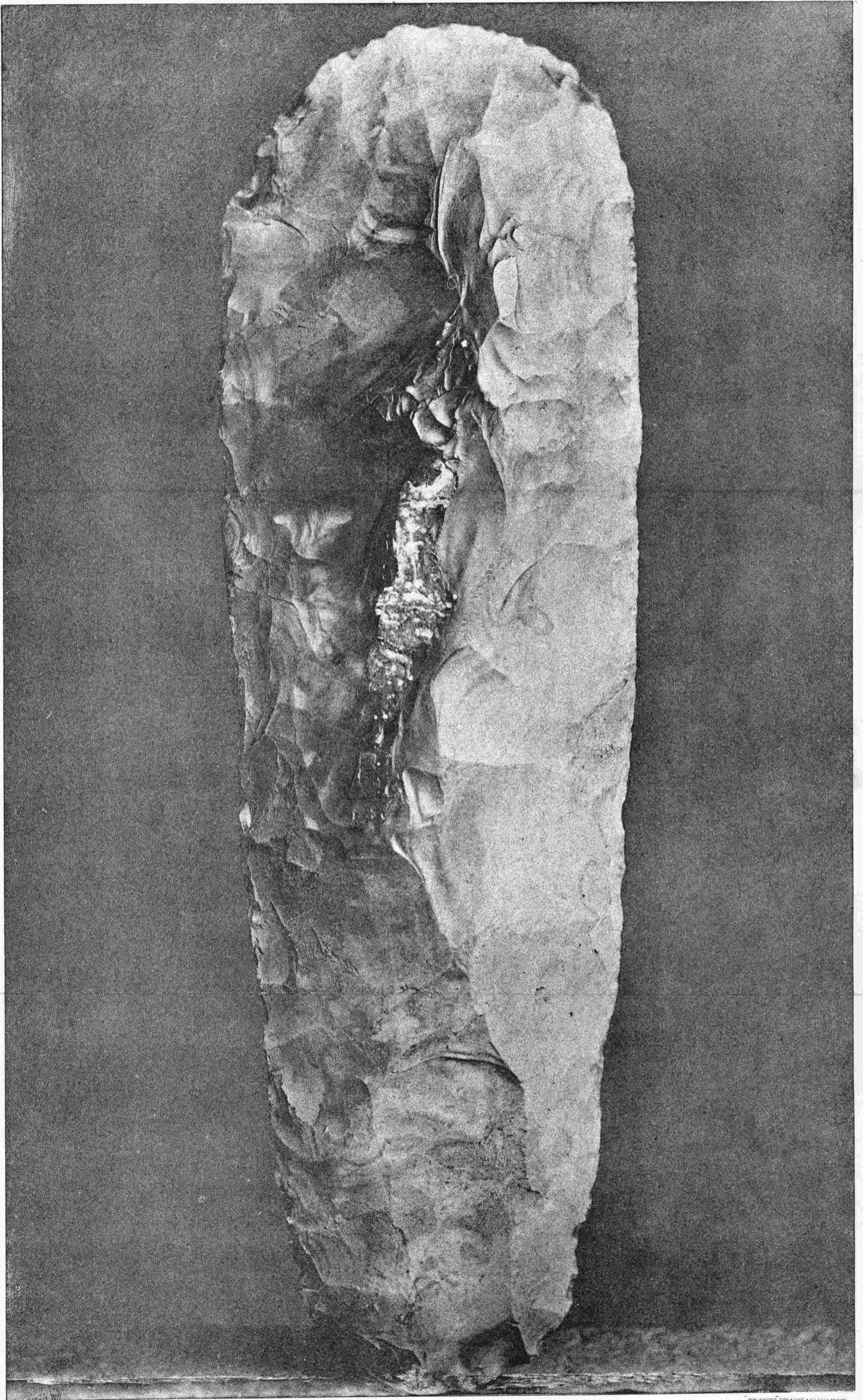
and 4 are both very delicately worked on one face, the greater portion of the other being the untouched surface of the flake.

It would be interesting to know whether any of the peasantry of Suffolk share with those of many other counties, the belief in the magic powers of the beautiful little arrow-head. These objects are regarded by many, even in these practical days, as possessed of great virtues; they are looked upon as weapons shot by the fairies in their efforts to injure man and beast, and wonderful precautions are taken to preserve cattle from such attacks; they are worn as charms against all kinds of evil, and are firmly believed by some to have been showered from Heaven, a belief possibly arising from the fact of their being often found after a storm in places where before they were not seen, the rain in the meantime having washed away the mould that hid them from view.

The polished and unpolished celt are represented by Figs. 7 and 8, but not having a good Suffolk specimen of the former, I have used one from Elmstead Market in Essex, as a type of those found in this county. Fig. 8 approaches so nearly a Palæolithic form that I figure it in contrast to the more usual Neolithic type as represented by Fig. 5; it is of a semi-transparent ochreous flint, boldly chipped into shape and very sharp at its business end.

Polished celts deservedly occupy a favoured place in collections of Pre-historic implements, they are often objects of much beauty, the stone, or rock, being occasionally chosen by the Neolithic manufacturer for its attractive marking or colour, evidencing artistic perception in man at that early period.

Undoubtedly the finest Suffolk specimen of an unpolished Neolithic celt (Plate 1), was found when demolishing an old wall at Lindsey, near Hadleigh, in 1899. It is of flint, stained by contact with lime in the mortar in which it had been embedded for about two hundred years. Its length is no less than $11\frac{1}{2}$ inches; greatest width and



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SUFFOLK NEOLITHIC FLINT, IN THE POSSESSION OF JOHN S. CORDER.
EXACT SIZE.

thickness $3\frac{5}{8}$ inches and two inches respectively, and weighs $3\frac{1}{4}$ lbs. It is now in the possession of Mr. John Shewell Corder, who has kindly allowed it to be reproduced in illustration of this paper.

In many districts, the celt, in common with the arrow-head, is endowed with supernatural powers, its celestial origin being firmly believed in. "Thunderbolts," some call them, having the remarkable property of preserving the house in which one is kept, from being struck by lightning.

Many other quaint beliefs in the extraordinary virtues of these early weapons might be mentioned. superstitions which have survived from the time of the discovery of copper and tin, and the art of alloying them to form the harder metal bronze.

Figures 9 and 10 show two chisels, typical of those found in this county; the former, of dark flint and ground at the chisel end, is from North Stow; the latter, which is of weathered flint and unground, is from Waldringfield. A beautiful implement of grey flint from North Stow is shown in Fig. 11; it is carefully worked on both faces, one of which is flatter than the other, forming a chisel edge which is slightly ground; similiar implements are described by Sir John Evans as knives. A very fine specimen of a knife, or dagger, was recently unearched during excavations at works now in progress near Portman Walk, Ipswich; it was, however, a little damaged by the workman's pick. The implement, which is beautifully flaked, is $7\frac{3}{8}$ in. in length, $2\frac{1}{8}$ in. wide at centre of blade, tapering to a point at each end, and is nowhere of greater thickness than $\frac{1}{4}$ in. Fig. 12 is that of a small spear, or arrow-head from Nacton.

In the standard work on this subject—that of Sir John Evans—there are over 150 references to Neolithic implements found in the County of Suffolk; these include examples of all known English types, the greater number coming from the North West of the County; and it is not surprising in a district where flint, the texture of which

allows of its being readily flaked, abounds, that evidences of the occupation of Neolithic man should be met with in such numbers. The Neolithic workman, however, found that stone taken from the surface, or even a little below it, was not always suitable to his purpose, for Canon Greenwell, in his examination of one of the 150 pits of Grimes Graves, discovered that it had been sunk to a depth of 39 feet before the best kind of flint had been reached, and at this level various horizontal galleries had been excavated by means of picks formed from antlers of the red deer, many of which, together with numerous finished and partly finished implements, were found upon the floor just as left by the Neolithic miner.

The immense amount of care and patient labour bestowed by man of the later stone age upon the production of objects so liable to be lost or broken, seem to justify the conclusion that some other use was intended for them than merely that which suggested their shapes. It is known that the treasured weapons found a place in the tomb by the side of their departed owner to accompany him on his mysterious journey to the other world, and it may be that implements destined for such a purpose were fashioned with more than ordinary care during the lifetime of the individual. It is not improbable that the more highly finished of the smaller implements, the ability to produce which, was not general, but confined to districts, such as that around Brandon, from which centre they were bartered away for other necessities of life, gradually came to be recognised as standard mediums of exchange, thus forming the earliest prototypes of a metal currency.