

NOTES ON SOME EAST SUFFOLK NEOLITHS.

BY WILLIAM A. DUTT.

The pre-historic archæology of North-West Suffolk has been exhaustively dealt with by distinguished authorities, and, although a district that has produced such immense numbers of Palæolithic implements, and which possesses such interesting works of Neolithic man as Grimes Graves, must be considered one of fascinating possibilities, the present-day searcher there for pre-historic relics may well despair of making any discovery that will call for more than a repetition of what are now familiar deductions and assertions. Indeed, it is just possible that, so far as Suffolk is concerned, so much has been heard about the prolific productiveness of its North-West division that a little too much attention has been devoted to that neighbourhood, and, in consequence, what may be termed the "pre-historic possibilities" of other parts of the county have been somewhat ignored. That this might be the case occurred to me some time ago, when, after a fortnight spent in searching for Neolithic implements on the warrens of North-West Suffolk, I turned to the very few records in my possession of the discovery of Stone Age implements in East Suffolk, and more particularly in the Hundred of Lothingland.

These records are few and generally disappointing. On turning to the standard work on stone implements, "The Ancient Stone Implements of Great Britain," by Sir John Evans, I find only one record from the Hundred of Lothingland. It is that of a Neolithic flint knife which was found a good many years ago on Corton Beach, and which is described in the *Archæological Journal*



Fig. 5.



Fig. 3.

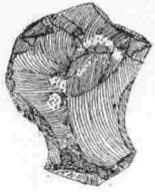


Fig. 7.



Fig. 6.

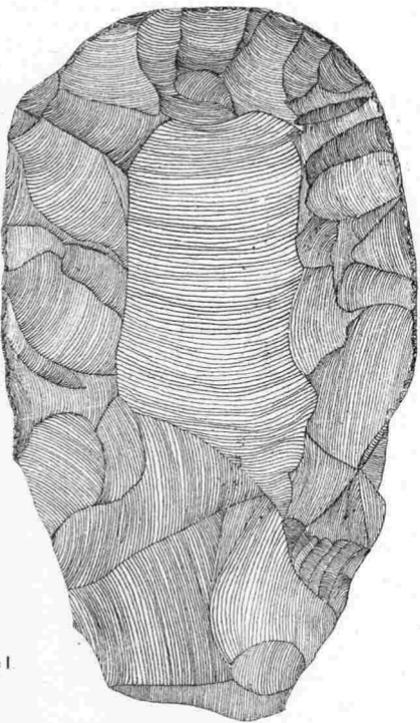


Fig. 1.

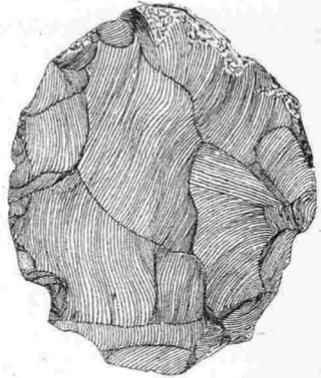


Fig. 8.

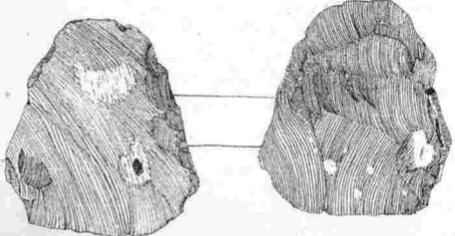


Fig. 4.

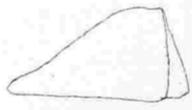


Fig. 2.

EAST SUFFOLK NEOLITHS.

(Vol. xxii., p. 75), and in the *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries* (2nd series, Vol. iii., p. 19). In Suckling's "History of Suffolk" reference is made to the discovery of celts at Lound so long ago as 1776, and at Bramfield in 1842; but in neither instance is it stated whether the celts were of stone or bronze. On making inquiries in the neighbourhood of Lowestoft, I could hear of only three recent "finds" having been made. In the possession of Mr. Grimmer, of Oulton Broad, I found a good polished axe of the common type, figured No. 43 in "Ancient Stone Implements." Mr. F. Morse, of Lowestoft, has a few chipped, partly polished, and wholly polished axes which were unearthed at Lound and Belton during excavations in connection with Lowestoft Waterworks. These implements, with a portion of a rubber, were found lying on or in a bed of sand, overlain by several feet of peaty soil containing buried trunks of oaks. The finest implement I could hear of, however, was a large Neolithic axe (Fig. 1), found by Mr. J. Bruce Payne, late of St. Aubyn's, Kirkley, by the side of a railway line on the south side of Lake Lothing. This axe, which I believe to be by far the finest flint implement East Suffolk has as yet produced, is beautifully flaked and chipped, and partly polished. It is $7\frac{1}{4}$ inches in length, $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches in breadth, 10 inches in girth, and weighs $42\frac{1}{2}$ ounces. It is of elongated horse-shoe shape, has a sharp, though somewhat abraded cutting edge, and seems equally adapted for use as an axe or an adze. At first I was inclined to believe that it might have been brought to Kirkley with railway ballast, but Mr. Bruce Payne tells me that he found it partially embedded in apparently undisturbed soil, and Sir John Evans, to whom I submitted it, thinks it probably belongs to the locality where it was discovered. It is, he adds, of "rather peculiar form."

The above notes are practically all I was able to obtain as regards the finding of Neolithic implements in the neighbourhood of Lowestoft. They were enough to suggest that it was worth while to keep a look-out for

Neoliths, but not enough to make one feel confident of being well rewarded for careful searching.

My own flint-hunting rambles around Lowestoft were commenced within a week of my return from North-West Suffolk, where I had tried, with some success, to train my eyes to distinguish Neolithic implements as they lay strewn about the warrens, and to detect the slighter traces of Neolithic flint-working. Before entering into any details of my discoveries it may be as well, perhaps, to state what conclusions I have been led to draw from those discoveries.

In the first place I may say that there is plenty of evidence of the Hundred of Lothingland, and, indeed, of the whole coast between Gorleston and Kessingland, having been inhabited by a Later Stone Age race. From the abundant traces remaining of them it seems that these pre-historic people were either exceedingly numerous or—what is more probable—in occupation of the district for a very long time. Their chief settlement, so far as the Hundred of Lothingland is concerned, seems to have been situated along the north shore of what is now known as Lake Lothing, but which, in Neolithic times, may have been a part of the estuary of a river, which entered the sea by way of Kirkley Ham. The most important part of this settlement was probably situated on the slopes of the uplands on which Lowestoft parish church now stands. On the north side, and near the west end of Lake Lothing, I have found a large number of flint implements, and the fact that flint flakes and chips are very numerous indicates that the manufacture of such implements was carried on there. In the parish of Flixton, about three miles north-west of Lowestoft, there are similar traces of a settlement near Flixton Decoy, on the slope of a hill bordering the marshes. Five miles further north-west there was probably a settlement near the shores of what is now known as Fritton Lake, for, not only have several axes been found in that neighbourhood, but traces of Neolithic flint-working are detectable near the Fritton end of the

Lake. Between Fritton Lake and Belton, Neolithic relics are easily found, especially near the tumulus called the Bell Hill, and on Fritton Common. Along the coast, between Gorleston and Kessingland, there is hardly a field where traces of Neolithic work are not to be seen. In the neighbourhood of the Empire Hotel, on Kirkley Cliff, I met with several well-worked implements which had been dug up when the hotel's foundations were laid, and which had been spread with excavated soil on the slope of the cliff.*

Taking England as a whole, there appears to be conclusive evidence that at the time of the advent of the Neolithic race or races the land surface of the country was of about the same extent as it is now. East Anglia, however, at that time presented a somewhat different aspect to what it at present wears, for into the heart of it, as far as Norwich in one direction, Harleston in another, and Aylsham and North Walsham in others, extended arms of a great estuary which covered what are now the marshes of Broadland. As there is good reason for believing that as recently as the time of the Roman Occupation, and perhaps of the Norman Conquest, this estuarine condition obtained, we are, I think, justified in assuming that during the period of Neolithic man's occupation of East Suffolk the Hundred of Lothingland was practically an island, bounded on the east by the North Sea, on the north and west by the waters of the great estuary, and on the south by the estuary and, possibly, a small river. Such an island, protected in a measure by its comparative isolation from the mainland, would be admirably adapted for a Neolithic colony. That parts of it were cultivated by the Later Stone Age settlers is probable, for I have, on more than one occasion, come across large flint implements which can hardly have been used for any other purpose than ploughing; but fishing and fowling must have been the chief pursuits of these early inhabitants of East Suffolk, and of fish and fowl

* I have found Neolithic implements in the following East Suffolk parishes:—Lowestoft, Kirkley, Pakefield, Kessingland, Gisleham, Carlton, Oulton, Flixton, Gunton, Corton, Hopton, Gorleston, Fritton, Somerleyton, and Belton.

there must have been an abundance around the Hundred of Lothingland.

As regards the ancient stone implements I have found in East Suffolk, I think I may safely say that, with two exceptions, they may all be safely assigned to the Surface or Neolithic Period. Up to the present I have met with only two Palæolithic implements, and these, I have every reason to believe, were brought into the district with railway ballast from Mid-Norfolk. A great many of the implements I have found are shaped out of naturally rounded flint pebbles or portions of such pebbles.

Axes, Adzes, and Choppers. I have already referred to the fine axe found by Mr. Bruce Payne, and also to those which were discovered in the parishes of Lound and Belton during the excavations conducted in connection with the Lowestoft Waterworks. The latter are interesting on account of their workmanship; but they represent types which are not uncommon in England, though they appear to be by no means numerous in East Suffolk. In the Hundred of Lothingland, axes or adzes of a rather unusual type are not infrequently met with. These are generally small, the larger ones seldom exceeding three inches in length. In shape they are often not unlike some of the axes of the Bronze Age, for they are narrow at the butt-end and often expand into a semi-circular or fan-shaped blade. I notice that Sir John Evans figures implements of a similar kind (Figs. 38 and 38A, "Ancient Stone Implements of Great Britain.") from Undley Common in Lakenheath, and East Dean, Sussex, and he suggests that when in use they were fixed in a socket, probably of stag's horn, the socket being in turn fixed in a wooden handle. Three or four small adzes in my possession may easily have been so used; but one, which I found just outside Lowestoft, has a prominent knob left on the butt-end, and is, it seems to me, better adapted for use in a handle made of a withy of willow or osier. Blacksmiths frequently use handles of this kind to hold their hard chisels. Indeed, I am inclined to think that, although

their butts shew no abrasion, some of these small axes and adzes may have been used after the fashion of hard chisels, hammer blows being struck on the bone handles into which they were socketed. Dr. C. B. Plowright has described and figured* an axe from Massingham, in West Norfolk, which closely resembles some I have found in East Suffolk.

To a certain type of implement which is fairly common in East Suffolk, but which I have not met with elsewhere, I apply the name of chopper, on account of its superficial resemblance to a familiar kind of chopper or hatchet in general use for splitting firewood. I have found over a score of these implements (of which Fig. 2 is a fair example) at Lowestoft, Kirkley, Flixton, and elsewhere. Generally speaking, they are uniform in shape, though of varying size, ranging from $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches to $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches in length, and $\frac{3}{4}$ inch to $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches in breadth. One or two of them have been fashioned by skilful flaking and chipping on both sides; but most of them are shaped out of naturally rounded pebbles, the naturally smoothed portion, in the case of the larger implements, being left where it would rest against the palm of the hand while the implement was in use. It is not unlikely, I think, that some of the larger of these choppers were used for breaking or splitting bones; but they seem to be equally adapted for flaking and chipping tools.

Scrapers. In East Suffolk, as is the case almost everywhere where Neoliths occur in large numbers, scrapers of various kinds are more numerous than any other kind of implement. I have found as many as a hundred in a month, and more than one spot is known to me where, after heavy rains have washed the surface of the ground, I can generally pick up a dozen or more. The majority of them are of rough workmanship, and probably were never intended to serve more than a temporary purpose; but some I have preserved in my collection are perfectly shaped and their secondary chipping is equal to

*Trans. of the Norfolk and Norwich Naturalists' Society, Vol. v., p. 253, Fig. 4.

the best I have seen in East Anglia. The fields around Lowestoft have produced several excellently worked oval and horseshoe-shaped scrapers; but half-a-dozen of the finest I have met with were found lying within a space of about four square yards at Fritton. Among these was a well-chipped, almost circular implement only $\frac{7}{8}$ inch in diameter. A similarly shaped but much larger scraper ($2\frac{1}{4}$ inches in diameter) was met with at Pakefield. The so-called duck-bill type is not uncommon in East Suffolk. An interesting "find" at Lowestoft was a semi-circular scraper, which had been made into almost perfect shape, and probably lost after five secondary chips had been taken off its edge. Some of the horseshoe-shaped and straight scrapers are notched each side, just above the butt or handle end. This would make them easy to secure, by binding, to bone or wood handles.

Hollow Scrapers. My largest implement of this kind is from Fritton. It is about 3 inches in length, $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches in breadth, nearly an inch in thickness, and has a worked "hollow" $1\frac{3}{4}$ inches across and $\frac{5}{8}$ inch in depth,—large enough to admit a broom handle. Hollow scrapers so large as this, or approaching it in size, are rare. Scrapers with hollows $\frac{3}{4}$ inch or $\frac{7}{8}$ inch across, however, are not uncommon; but the commonest kind are those with a hollow $\frac{3}{8}$ or $\frac{1}{4}$ inch across. These, which are made out of variously shaped flakes and fragments of flint, seem well adapted for the smoothing of arrow-shafts; but the apparent absence of arrow-heads from East Suffolk makes it doubtful if they ever served this purpose. More probably they were used for shaping and sharpening implements of bone and wood.

An interesting series of hollow scrapers in my collection have very small but, generally, finely chipped hollows. These are probably implements which were used to round and point bone needles. I have found these small-hollowed scrapers—which are usually made of rather thin flakes, or portions of such flakes—at Lowestoft, Fritton, Kirkley, and elsewhere. One or two of them

have more than one hollow, and a few appear to have been used also as straight and side scrapers. On others a minute but acute point is left, such as would very well serve the purpose of boring the eye of a bone needle. At any rate, the point must have been left intentionally on the edge of the scraper, for there is usually secondary chipping around the projection, which is sometimes made the sharper by the detachment of a tiny chip quite at the point.

Knives. A large number of the Neolithic flakes met with are more or less abraded at the edges and have undoubtedly been used not only as scrapers but as cutting-tools; but some of the knives are well-worked implements. In shape these often resemble one or another type of scraper; but they can be distinguished from scrapers by the sharpness of their edges. The chipping of some of these implements is very fine. Some of the circular, or almost circular knives, are not more than $1\frac{1}{4}$ inches in diameter, and when in use they must have been held between the thumb and first finger. This remark applies also to some small oval and horse-shoe-shaped knives. I have not met with one chipped to a cutting edge all round, and usually not more than a third of the edge shews secondary chipping. I have one beautiful little cutting implement only $\frac{3}{4}$ inch in diameter.

The most interesting knife in my collection is from Fritton (Fig. 3). It is fashioned out of a three-inches long fragment of flint in such a way as to leave a two-inches long handle which fits the under part of the first finger when held there by the second finger and thumb. Unfortunately about a quarter of an inch of the blade has been broken off.

Fig. 4 represents an implement which is undoubtedly a knife and possibly a scraper as well.

Borers, Awls, and Drills. Roughly shaped borers of various sizes are almost as numerous as scrapers at some of the spots which appear to be the sites of Neolithic settlements. Many of them show little or no secondary

chipping; but the abraded appearance of the sharp edges of the flint near the point, as well as the shape of the implement, usually indicates plainly the purpose for which it was used. I have something like fifty of these implements in my possession, but with one or two exceptions they differ little or not at all from the ordinary types common in many parts of Britain. The exceptions are an unusually large and weighty implement from the Church Fields, Lowestoft, and an unusually small and well worked one from Lake Lothing. The implement represented by Fig. 5 I think should be included among the borers. Its point is very acute and admirably adapted for making the eyes of bone needles. Some of the smaller borers are adapted for use as awls, and may have been used as such in the making of skin garments.

Fabricators. Fig. 6 represents a type of implement not uncommon in East Suffolk, and which may have been used for chipping and flaking. A less common type is seen in Fig. 7. Implements which may be described as intermediate between the former type and the figured chopper (Fig. 5) are also met with.

Large Discoidal Implement. At Santon Downham and elsewhere in north-west Suffolk, large discoidal implements to which it is difficult to assign a use are found. I came upon a similar implement (Fig. 8) at Fritton. It is worked by secondary chipping to a fairly sharp edge almost all round, and has a hollow worked in one part of the edge. This implement was probably made out of half a rather large pebble, the side shewn in the figure being that on which the surface of the pebble was flaked off. The other side is unworked, excepting that the bulb of percussion is partly knocked off. Implements of this kind may have been used as scrapers or bone-breakers.

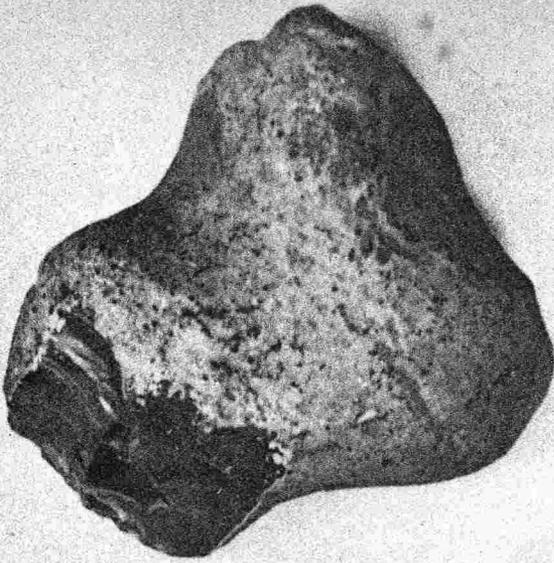


Fig. I

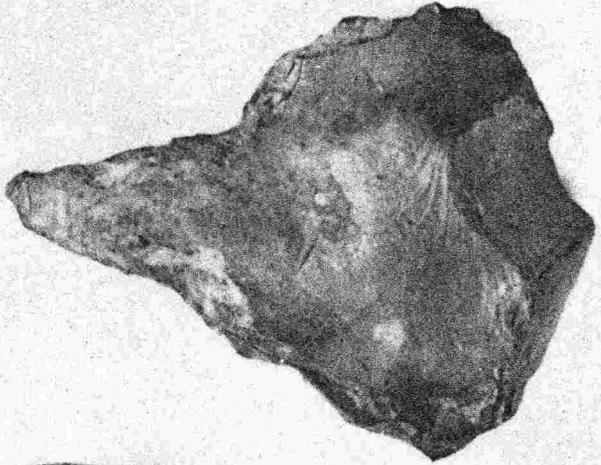


Fig. II

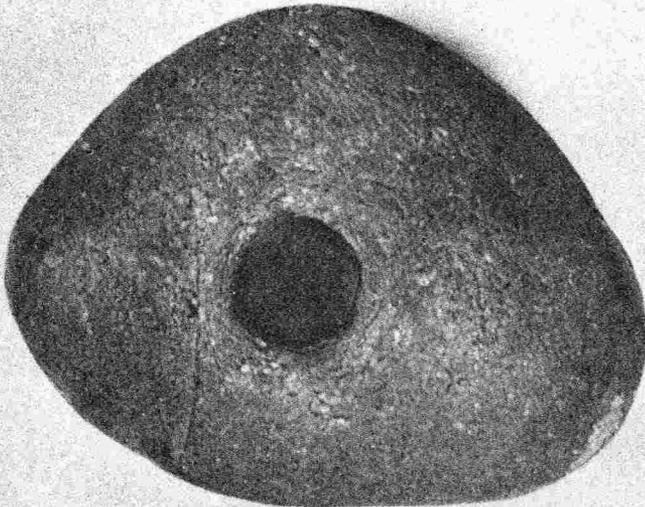


Fig. III

Scale $\frac{1}{4}$