

## A BRONZE CAULDRON AND OTHER ANTIQUITIES FROM NORTH-EAST SUFFOLK.

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One of the most attractive scenic features of the district of Lothingland in north-east Suffolk is the shallow valley, now well-wooded, of a stream rising one mile from the present coastline at Hopton and flowing westward for five miles to join the River Waveney near St. Olave's Priory, Herringfleet. Owing to the subsidence of the land this small valley has silted up and the broad sheets of water now visible are due to modern damming and interference with the natural drainage. The reaches of the valley are termed successively Hopton Run, Millwater or Lound Run and Fritton Decoy, and form the boundary of the parishes of Hopton, Lound, Belton, Ashby, Fritton and Herringfleet (Fig. 1).<sup>\*</sup> In the middle sector of the valley, Lound Run, the peaty infilling has been removed to form a series of reservoirs for the water supply of Lowestoft. It was during the construction of these reservoirs between 1897 and 1909 and subsequent work in 1936-7 that the remains of a bronze cauldron, probably of the Early Iron Age and numerous flint and stone tools of the Neolithic or Bronze Ages were uncovered, but no adequate record of their exact positions was kept and it is now impossible to make full use of these important discoveries in elucidating the natural changes to which the area has been subject in late prehistoric and historic times. During the removal of the last of the peat from the extreme western end of Lound Run in 1936, the writer was able to examine the sections revealed in this portion of the valley though it must be borne in mind that the deposits are naturally deeper at this point than higher up. In June 1936 near site 4 (Fig. 1) the centre of the valley showed 6 feet of the bottom of a peat bed, of which the upper layers had already been removed but which was probably not more than 10 feet thick at any point, overlying 1 foot of yellow sand and clay with another layer of peat, also 1 foot thick, beneath, and below this glacial sand or gravel. The peat beds thinned out on the flanks of the valley.

Published accounts of discoveries in this valley are few and tantalisingly vague. "Several pieces of antique armour, with various coins"<sup>†</sup> were found near the millwater in the early 19th century while about 1835 a Lound landowner examined the upper (Lound) end of Fritton Decoy "in search of treasures supposed to have been hidden there by smugglers, for which he had an iron cylinder constructed to

<sup>\*</sup>O.S. Suffolk 6 inch sheets 4 N.W. and N.E.

<sup>†</sup>J. H. Druery, *Historical and Topographical Notices of Great Yarmouth in Norfolk and its environs including the parishes and hamlets of the Half-Hundred of Lothingland in Suffolk*, 1826, 161; W. A. Dutt in *Eastern Evening News*, September 27, 1938.

pump out the water. All he found, however, was a hard platform, composed of chalk or marl surrounded by stakes or woodwork of some description".\* It has been suggested that this platform was used for steeping hemp but a general similarity to the lake dwellings subsequently discovered in the meres of Breckland must be noted† and it is to be hoped that it may be possible to re-examine this site and determine its precise significance.

The bronze cauldron (Fig. 2) was found in February 1898‡ while removing peat from the channel near the waterworks on its western bank (site 1). It was lying in mud at a depth of 5-6 feet under a black peat composed of roots of reeds and rushes, moss and ferns. Alders were growing above to form a car. A firm bottom of clean white sand appeared at 6-7 feet from the surface so that this point was probably outside the area covered by the lower peat bed.||

Only the lower portion survives of this circular cauldron of thin bronze and round the upper lip of this wall-sided section is a row of rivet-holes for the attachment of an upper tier now lost, though a small fragment of it still adheres one inch below the lip. The maximum diameter of this "depressed spheroid" is now  $13\frac{3}{8}$  inches and its height now  $6\frac{3}{8}$  inches, and the metal is 1 mm. thick. The missing upper tier was affixed to the lower portion by twenty square-sectioned iron rivets of which five fragmentary specimens still remain in position. The hard wear, and perhaps prolonged use, to which this cauldron has been exposed is amply attested by the condition of its surface-blackened and corroded, dented and broken and patched to lengthen its life. The hole in its base, was, however, caused by the tools of the workman who discovered it. The first patch,  $4\frac{3}{4}$  by  $3\frac{3}{4}$  inches, has the same internal patina as the rest of the vessel to which it is fixed by sixteen bronze rivets. The second patch,  $7\frac{3}{4}$  by  $3\frac{1}{4}$  inches, likewise with bevelled corners, is less patinated but is an ancient repair perhaps effected shortly before the vessel was discarded. It overlaps the edge of the former repair and its rivetting is likewise of bronze. No great span of time need necessarily have elapsed between the fabrication of the cauldron with its iron rivetting and its renovation with bronze rivets.

Bronze cauldrons were introduced to Britain in the Late Bronze Age and their subsequent development is an exclusively British feature.§

\*Proc. Suffolk Inst. Arch. vi, 1888, p. xvii (excursion of July 6, 1885); East Anglian, new series, II, 111; Victoria County History, Suffolk, I, 1911, 276.

†W. G. and R. R. Clarke, In Breckland Wilds, 1937, 40, 77-78; V. C. H. Suff. 1, 269-70.

‡Site marked on 6 inch O.S. 4 N.W. 1928 edition with inaccurate date "1909" (information of Mr. A. Osborne, Manager of Lowestoft Water and Gas Co.) but this date is that of the completion of the engineering undertaking.

||From letters by Mr. and Mrs. Morse to British Museum, 1898 (filed in department of British and Medieval Antiquities). Mr. Morse was then chairman of the company. Accession No. 1898-5-16-1, from the directors of the company (see F. D. Longe, Lowestoft in Olden Times, 1905, 9).

§Archæologia, LXXX, 1930, 3 (E. T. Leeds). Distribution map in Antiquaries Journal, XIX, 1939, Pl. LXXVIII.

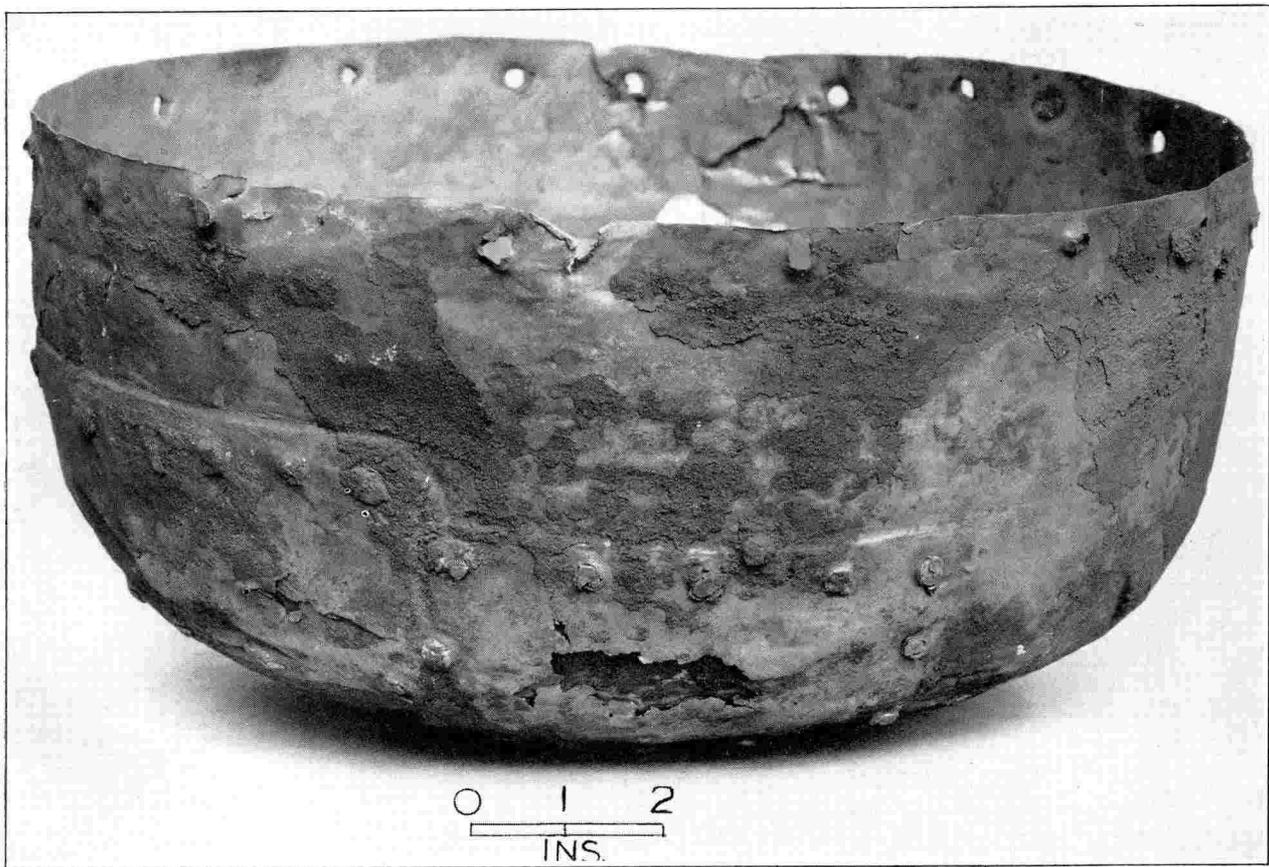


FIG. 2. BRONZE CAULDRON FROM LOUND RUN (British Museum).

Although the original form of the Lound cauldron cannot be ascertained, its shape and the use of iron rivetting suggests the Iron Age, and probably the latter portion of that period, rather than the Late Bronze Age, as the time of its production.\* It is unfortunate that the stratigraphical position of this object cannot be fixed in relation to the group of antiquities now to be described.

Over the whole area converted into reservoirs but especially in that sector north of Bunker's Hill, stone implements were recovered from the surface of the sand under about 6-7 feet of peat, though whether the sand was the thin stratum separating the two peat beds or the underlying glacial deposits is unknown. These implements, though some may have been lost since their discovery, are significant as forming the most extensive series of axes from any East Anglian site except Grime's Graves (Figs. 3, 4). At least eighteen flint and two stone axes, numerous flint flakes and cores and two quartzite rubbing stones are known and may be studied in two groups†. The series illustrated in Fig. 3 is in Ipswich Museum (1933. 205) and Norwich Museum (No. 10-loan from K. Luck, 1932) and comprises loose discoveries from various parts of the excavations. Five of the axes of grey or black flint are chipped and polished, two are chipped only and there is a fragment (not illustrated) of the cutting edge of a third chipped specimen. The ground stone axe (No. 11) cannot be identified without slicing but it may be described as a grey-green igneous rock. The most interesting of the series is No. 12 (British Museum, 1933, 10-9, 1) a finely polished greenstone axe of thin bodied pointed-butted type (6.9 inches long and .6 inch maximum depth) with pointed oval cross section. The stone is a dull light green, strongly veined from the butt end with dark green, and stained ochreous in patches, and can loosely be termed jadeite. Its cutting edge indicates considerable wear and the axe itself is of course an import to the district, probably from Brittany.†

The flake and core (Ipswich Museum, 1933, 206-10) (Fig. 3, Nos. 3, 4) are illustrated as typical of the miscellaneous flint implements from the site, preserved in the British, Ipswich and Norwich Museums. The British Museum has a crust-edged disc of flint, patinated greenish-fawn, (1.4 inches long) and a piece of iron pyrites (1 inch long) found together and presumed to be a strike-a-light set (B.M., 1933, 10-9, 2 and 3). Ipswich Museum also contains from the site a spherical flint hammer for knapping and a granular quartzite rubbing stone and a fragment of fine-grained sandstone for the same purpose. The significance of the "flint heads" found at site 3 in 1909, according to the Ordnance

\*For bronze bowls see Bulleid and Gray, *The Glastonbury Lake Village*, I, 1911, 182 and for distribution of cauldrons, *Proceedings of Prehist. Soc.* III. 1937, 164-5 (Mattinson and Palmer).

†See C. Daryll Forde, *On the Use of Greenstone (Jadeite, Callais, etc.) in the Megalithic Culture of Brittany*, *Jour. Royal Anthropological Inst.* LX, 1930, 211-234 and for distribution, Chitty and Fox in *Proc. Prehist. Soc. East Anglia*, VII, 1933, Fig. 6b which shows concentrations of finds round Southampton and in the chalk belt of East Anglia.

Survey, is not clear as it is uncertain if these are the flint flakes now in Norwich Museum or axe-heads.

The flint axes and quartzite polishing stone (13 by  $7\frac{1}{4}$  inches) with one concave surface (Fig. 4) now on loan in Norwich Museum (124.932) from the Lowestoft Water and Gas Co., are perhaps the most important antiquities recorded from the valley as they seem to be associated. They were found at site 2 in Belton parish in a tributary to the main valley and were lying on sand beneath the peat like the other implements from adjacent sites. The Ordnance Survey gives the date 1909 but they seem to have been found between 1902-4.\* Axes 3, 5, 6, 7, 8 were almost certainly associated with the polishing stone and 9 may also belong. The patinated surfaces of 1 and 2 and the black unpatinated flint of 4, suggest that they may be intruders but they have been kept together as a group for many years and may well be a hoard. The polished axes have a pointed oval cross section, but the chipped examples approach a lozenge form and 6 may be a "rough-out." This factor and the presence of the rubbing stone and of polished (five) and unpolished (four) axes in mint condition in the series suggests that the chipped axes were lost while in process of being ground into shape. All save 2 and 4 have slightly convex sides and all except 4 are of mottled greyish Lincolnshire flint from the local drift and not mined material from Breckland.

This hoard, for such it must be considered despite the lack of information about its discovery and the possibility that one or two of its component implements are intrusive, is a welcome addition to the nine hoards already published† of which four come from the neighbouring county of Norfolk and of these Burgh St. Margaret is only nine, and Whitlingham sixteen, miles distant from the scene of the present discovery.‡ Like the Lound Run hoard the Burgh and Whitlingham hoards contain both polished and unpolished axes.

Little of archaeological importance was found in the operations of 1936-7. In 1936 the present writer picked up potboilers on the surface of the sand beneath the upper peat on the north side of the valley close to site 4, where in 1937 the carpal bone of an ox was recovered from the peat at a depth of ten feet, apparently from the surface of the underlying sand. The bone, since added to the collection in Norwich Museum, is now  $7\frac{3}{4}$  inches long and 2 inches wide above the joint at the distal end. It is transversely perforated and cut diagonally and there is the beginning of another perforation. The use of this worked bone is not clear but is probably of the Early Iron Age.

\*W. A. Dutt in Proc. Suffolk Inst. Arch. XI, 1903, 327-30; The Norfolk Broads, 1905, 321-3; The Waveney Valley in the Stone Age, 1905, 30-2, 38; F. D. Longe, Lowestoft in Olden Times, 1905, 9 with plate showing 2 polished and 3 chipped axes, 3 flint flakes and grinding stone; V. C. H. Suffolk, I, 1911, 260.

†R. A. Smith in Archæologia, LXXXI, 1921, 113-124 and R. L. S. Bruce-Mitford in Antiquaries Journal, XVIII, 1938, 279-284.

‡The other two Norfolk sites are Egmere and Wells-next-the-Sea.

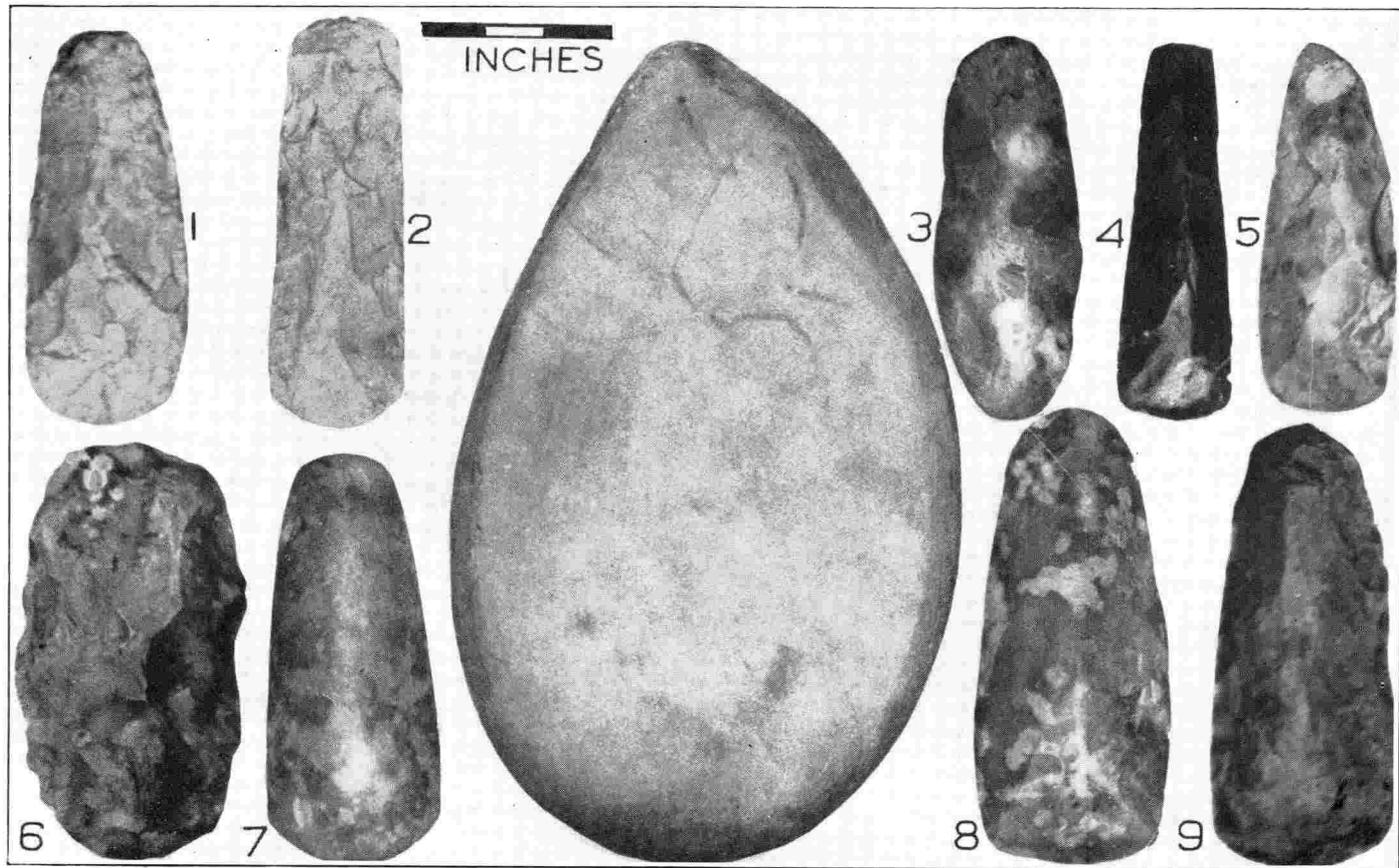


FIG. 4. HOARD OF FLINT AXES AND GRINDING STONE FROM LOUND RUN, BELTON PARISH (Norwich Museum Loan).

## CONCLUSIONS.

Archaeologically Lothingland is little known. Among pre-Christian antiquities Burgh Castle has usurped pride of place but the geographical position of this well watered area of sandy heathlands adjacent to the coast, argues potential attractions for prehistoric invaders. The discoveries outlined above emphasise the need, first indicated by the publication of the Late Bronze Age hoard of scrap metal from Somerleyton,\* for a more intensive examination of its prehistory. The heathland and wooded slopes flanking the River Waveney should be productive and the barrows south-west of Belton have already suffered, but settlement in all periods cannot have been divorced from the valley already described and it is along its slopes that search is most likely to be rewarded, especially if the alluvial deposits of Fritton Decoy should at any time become available for investigation. The importance of the routes crossing this valley by the ford near Fritton House, and immediately west of the waterworks, should need no emphasis, for the present road system focuses on these vital points as its predecessor doubtless did, especially when subsidence rendered transit over the valley increasingly difficult. The possibility of examining a lake dwelling with the consequent opportunity of salvaging the normally perishable equipment of a primitive community should act as a spur to the continued investigation of this small valley.

The evidence published here suggests the presence of scattered groups of Neolithic and Early Bronze Age herdsmen on both banks of this small river especially in its upper reaches† who knapped their flint tools and ground their axes there. Later in the Iron Age a lake dwelling may have been established in Fritton Decoy and the bronze cauldron and the worked ox bone may be stray finds from this or some similar structure. Continued occupation perhaps in the Roman age may be indicated by the bronze stewpan from Herringfleet stamped with its maker's name.‡

I am indebted to Mr. T. D. Kendrick and Mr. C. F. C. Hawkes of the British Museum for facilities to examine and publish the cauldron; to Mr. G. Maynard for photographs of the implements at Ipswich Museum; to Miss G. V. Barnard for permission to examine and publish the hoard at Norwich Museum with the assent of the Lowestoft Water and Gas Co.; to Dr. Muir Evans for information on the worked bone and to Dr. J. C. and Mr. Joseph Hawksley, sons of the former Waterworks engineer during the period of the discoveries and donors of the implements to the Ipswich and the British Museums, for much help in unravelling the sequence of events on the site.

\*Antiquaries Journal, VIII, 1928, 236.

†Two polished axes from the shore of Fritton Lake are on loan to Norwich Museum from Mr. K. Luck, 1932, and a fragment of another was given by Mr. J. Gunn in 1868. (Catalogue of Antiquities, 1909, p.8).

‡V. C. H. Suffolk, I, 1911, 308; Norwich Museum, Catalogue of Antiquities, 1909, p. 48.