

*Artefact from Stoke-by-Nayland.* Hearing in 1961 that a flint artefact of some kind had been found at the gravel workings at Thorington Street, Stoke-by-Nayland I paid a visit to the foreman who produced a magnificent specimen of something between a hand axe and a blade. This he said he had found in the washing and grading machine and had picked it out before it was in anyway damaged—and indeed its mint condition is remarkable. Further he indicated the approximate spot that was being worked at the time by drag-line: it appeared to have come from some 18 ft. below surface. The entire deposit consists of Pleistocene river gravel of a torrential or fluviglacial nature laid down in what was at the time the confluence of the rivers Stour and Box, and now forms a terrace some 30 ft. above normal river level. At about the same depth as the apparent position of this tool, though in another part of the pit, remains of mammoth have been found—teeth and a tusk, which latter I saw *in situ*. Thus on *prima facie* evidence it was taken as palaeolithic and tentatively ascribed to the Acheulian, for though atypical of that culture it seemed to bear comparison with some from Mt. Carmel.

The specimen was then referred to the British Museum where Mr. G. de G. Sieveking received it at first with considerable suspicion, especially on hearing that it had been found by a workman. Even so he apparently did not realize that it had not been discovered *in situ*: an important point. After keeping it for a while for comparisons he wrote referring to it as a 'magnificent Hand-Axe . . . within the possible range of variation in these Acheulian Lower Palaeolithic biface implements', but that it was of a very unusual form and should be published and preserved.

I then sent it to Dr. D. F. W. Baden-Powell of Oxford University, himself an exponent of flaking technique, who, considering a Bronze Age date more probable, wrote the following report and got the illustrations drawn by Mr. I. M. Allen of the Pitt-Rivers Museum. Most grateful acknowledgement is made to both these gentlemen.

It is not always easy to identify stone implements when they are isolated specimens which are not found in a definite stratigraphical position, and in discussing this particular example we have to rely principally on its conditions and typology. One naturally assumes that most of the stones which go through the washing plant of a gravel pit are from the main gravel, presumably a Pleistocene gravel in this case; but it is possible that this specific specimen slipped down from a position above the Pleistocene gravel to the place where the excavator was working, and therefore we

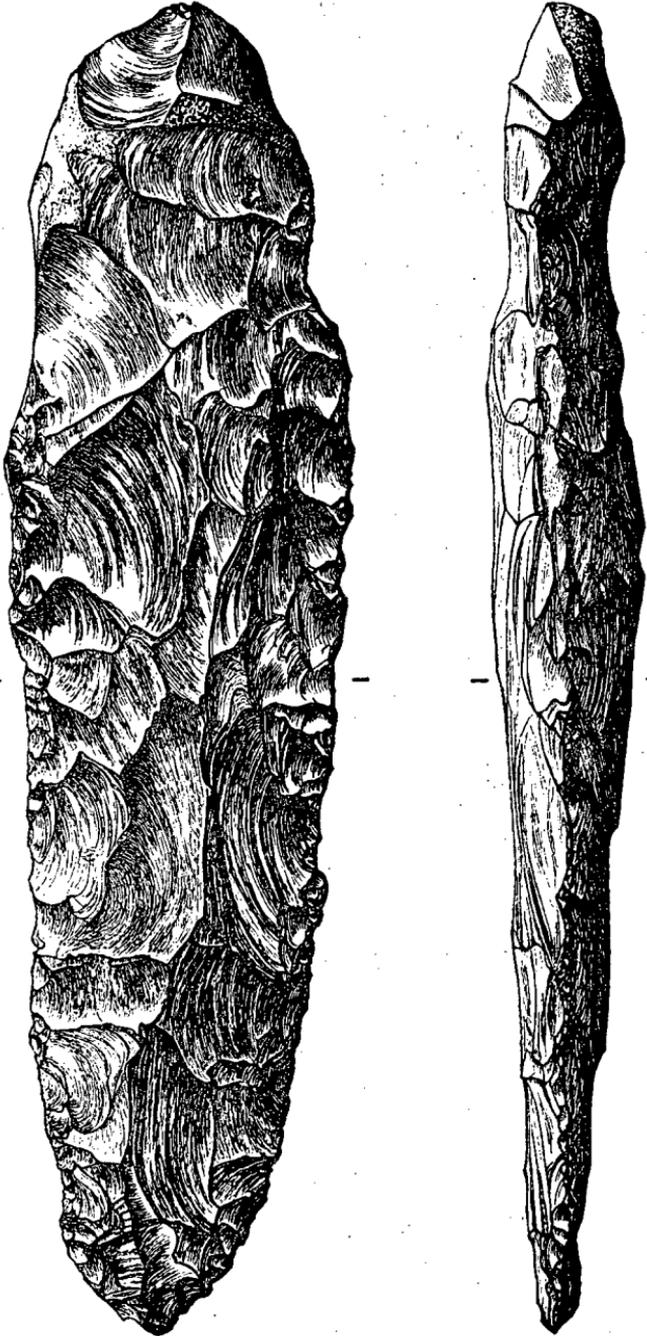


FIG. 28.—Artefact from Stoke-by-Nayland.

are not confined to a consideration of palaeolithic types when we discuss this artefact. It is necessary to emphasise this point because the typology does not seem to agree with any Lower or Middle Palaeoliths.

Although patination or staining are not absolute criteria of the age of flint specimens, the condition of this one is consistent with a very late (Holocene) age. It is made from dark brown flint, yellowish-green in part, with pale yellow cherty inclusions. The flaked surfaces are lustrous and show no patina or staining. This condition suggests a very late date, but does not by itself entirely rule out a palaeolithic age.

In general outline (Fig. 28) this artefact is very long and narrow, and remarkably thin in relation to its size. It is fairly well pointed at one end and blunt at the other, so that one can refer to the pointed and butt ends. It is beautifully flaked over both the flat faces, except for small areas of cortex at the butt end. It seems to have been made from a long flat nodule rather than from a large flake, as can be seen from the way in which the cortex wraps around the butt end. This is unexpected, as the whole shape would suggest that it had been made from a large flake or blade. The two sharp edges run almost the whole length of both sides of the specimen, one being slightly straighter than the other. When the edges are examined, these are seen only to zig-zag slightly and to be uninterrupted in direction except where the slight notches have been cut near the butt end, the widest part of the implement being just in front of the notches. These details are given here so that this artefact may be compared with the Bronze Age 'daggers' which are mentioned in the next paragraphs.

With these particulars in mind, it is possible to discuss a probable archaeological age for this specimen. At first sight it might be considered to be an extreme form of Acheulian hand-axe. It has been compared with a large number of Acheulian specimens, mainly in the Oxford collections, but it differs from any known Acheulian types in being:

- (a) so extremely thin for its size, and
- (b) much too long and narrow when compared with them.

It is also possible to think of it as an example of Solutrian work, but again it is much too long and narrow for the 'laurel leaf' forms, and three or four times too big for the

'willow-leaf' types. A Solutrian age cannot be ruled out, but if it belongs to that industry it is not typical of it.

On the other hand it is much nearer to some Neolithic or Bronze Age types, and its notches strongly confirm this hypothesis: it compares well in outline and size with some 'daggers and spearheads' described by Montelius (1908, p. 100) from Bronze Age burials, and with some 'blades' from the Fayum, Egypt, figured by R. A. Smith (Sturge Coll. Foreign, 1937, p. 92, fig. 914 and Plate XV, fig. 901). It also resembles examples from the Scandinavian megalithic structures (R. A. Smith, 1937, p. 68, fig. 820). It has been compared with Bronze Age material in the Pitt Rivers and Asmolean collections, and although it is not identical with any particular Bronze Age specimen, it is much more like these in every way than like the Acheulian or Solutrian material. I must take this opportunity to thank various officials in these two Oxford Museums for their help in this enquiry.

If the specimen is really Bronze Age (preferably Early Bronze Age), should it be described as a 'dagger' or called by some other name? These objects are variously designated 'daggers', 'lance-heads' and even 'sickles' by archaeologists. This one is obviously not a pick, axe or adze, because of the working edges along both its sides, and also because it is much too thin. Presumably it might have been used as a lance or spear-head, but it is very large and heavy for such a purpose. It might be considered as a sickle, and should be compared with the example figured by Grahame Clark (in S. H. Warren and others, 1936, Plate XLII, facing p. 197), but it has not got the curve when seen edge-on which is shown by the one illustrated by Grahame Clark. Possibly the specimen under discussion was not quite finished by its maker.

Many examples of 'daggers' have been illustrated by R. A. Smith which are very like this one, especially one from Stonehenge (Smith, 1920, p. 13, fig. 7), and others from Ham House and Hornsey (Smith, 1920, pp. 16-17) and near Mildenhall, Suffolk (Smith, 1931, p. 33, fig. 159). None is identical in every respect, and of course we do not know whether these objects were really used as daggers, or whether they were hafted or used in the hand; but those which are notched suggest that the blades were fixed to some sort of handle, and the name 'dagger' seems as appropriate as any other. This conclusion agrees with the full discussion of this subject by Grimes (1931), who believed

that the flint daggers were brought to this country at the same time as the rest of the Beaker industry.

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On re-reference to Mr. Sieveking, when he understood that the tool was not found *in situ* he agreed that it could be of early Bronze Age date though he considered the suggested parallels all much lighter and frailer implements and with rather different flaking pattern.

There remains the possibility that it might be a fake. From such knowledge as I have of the quarry foreman I would not entertain this supposition, but quite apart from personal grounds there are two considerations which make it most unlikely:

1. No man having obtained from some expert knapper a flint so exquisitely flaked would happily let it go for the very few shillings I gave (to give more may encourage nefarious dealings);
2. One wishing to deceive would not admit to finding it in the washer, but would maintain that he picked it himself from untouched gravel since conveniently removed by dragline.

This pit has now closed down. No other artefacts appear to have been found there. One must hope for fresh light from elsewhere.

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