

## A DISTINCTIVE 'CHOPPING-TOOL' ELEMENT ON THE '100ft TERRACE' AT ABBOTS LEIGH, AVON

by

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More than sixty years have passed since the attention of archaeologists was first drawn to the occurrence of palaeoliths on the '100ft terrace' of the lower reaches of the Bristol River Avon. (Davies & Fry 1929).

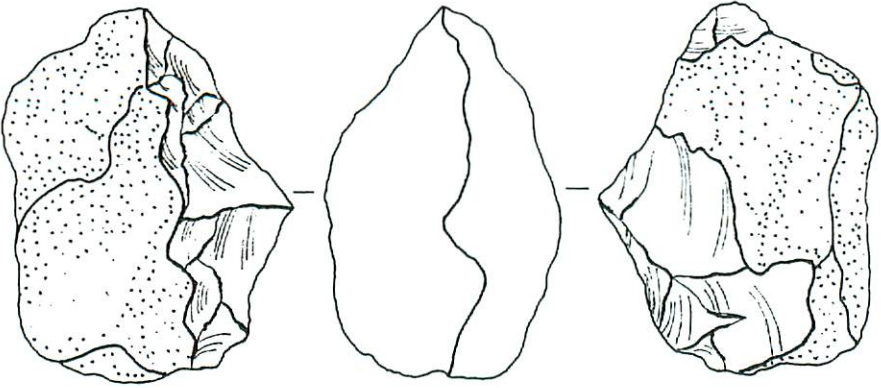
Since then several notes and papers concerning these lower palaeolithic artefacts have been published, the most valuable of which was Lacaille (1954).

It has been generally accepted that a middle Acheulian Industry which is not unlike that which occurs in the middle gravels at the Barnfield Pit, Swanscombe, Kent site, is present at Abbots Leigh, small roughly shaped pointed handaxes being the linking factor (Lacaille 1954 & Roe 1974).

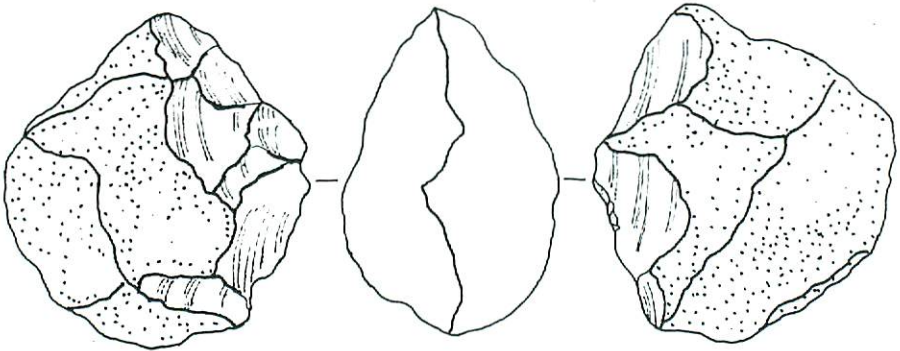
However, it appears that a mixture of industries may occur in the much disturbed terraces at Abbots Leigh, where artefacts are found to be in all conditions of wear and of a variety of types, many of which are not currently recognised as being attributable within a strictly British middle Acheulian context. The size, and the quality of the workmanship which is displayed in the vast majority of the stone tools found here was no doubt entirely governed by the size and the quality of the raw material which was available locally. An abundance of smallish, somewhat intractable chert pebbles and occasional cobbles occur on the '30m terrace', and it would appear that these presented a 'Hobson's Choice' situation for the tool-maker.

Whilst it is accepted that a rough chopping-tool might be recognised as being an occasional element belonging to any period of a stone tool-making economy, the occurrence here of a large number of these tools, of similar morphology and method of formation, seems to suggest a particular economy manufacturing chopping-tools to meet a specific requirement. A number of these locally found chopping-tools were amongst those artefacts which were recently recorded (Hack & Cornish 1991). Since writing that note more examples of these chopping-tools have been found on the Chapel Pill Farm site, which is centered on NGR.ST 543758, at 30m AOD. The two chopping-tools which illustrate this note are typical of those which have recently been found here, they are numerically the most abundant type of tool from amongst the various types which occur on the site.

Whilst no conclusive evidence can be presented at this time which might be reliably supportive of any estimate of the antiquity of these chopping-tools, they are rare in Britain and their occurrence in some numbers and concentration on this site would seem to justify the publication of this note. In excess of 150 chopping-tools have recently been found here. Chopping-tools like these are characteristic of an element of the assemblages described as 'Clactonian', such as those found in the lower gravels at Swanscombe, Kent (Chandler 1930), and at Clacton-on-Sea, Essex, (Warren 1951, Singer *et al.* 1973, and Wymer 1974). It should



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*Chopping-tools from Abbots Leigh, Avon.*

perhaps be noted that both Chandler and Warren gave greater emphasis to the occurrence of chopper-cores/chopping-tools than is generally given by later workers at Clactonian sites, who see the flaked tool element as being more characteristic of the industry. However, when these differences are considered in comparison with the material found at Abbots Leigh, the distinct favouring of core/pebble tools over flaked tools was probably due to the poor flaking properties of the raw material which is found locally.

It may be of interest to note that artefacts of early Acheulian/Abbevillian type were found at Portbury in 1931 (Fry 1956), and two chopping-tools were found farther up the river at Kelston in 1983 (Roberts 1983).

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