

## Some Flint Implements from the Blackstone Rocks, Clevedon

The site of these finds lies between high- and low-water marks, half a mile south-west of Clevedon Old Church. Worked flints were first found here by Mr. Gray Usher, a former resident of Clevedon, on a ridge of shingle which runs out from the sea-wall to the Blackstone Rocks. A great part of this beach, according to the evidence of a number of residents, has been uncovered by erosion in the last twenty or thirty years. It was previously covered by a stretch of grass-grown alluvium, part of which still remains just outside the sea-wall.

Two years ago a number of implements from this site were inspected by Mr. K. P. Oakley, of the South Kensington Natural History Museum, who expressed the opinion that some of them were Upper Palæolithic. Other implements of this period have since been found, as well as some of more recent date. The whole collection was recently examined by the Abbé Breuil, who recognized three distinct groups: Upper Palæolithic, Mesolithic, and Early Bronze Age.

The most definitely Upper Palæolithic implement is No. 4, described by the Abbé Breuil as a Gravette blade, one end of which has been used as a burin of the *bec de flute* type. It is clumsier in appearance, and made on a much thicker flake, than most Gravette blades. If, as seems probable, it was made from a beach pebble, this difference may be due to the poor quality of the material. The same may be said of No. 1, which looks like a clumsy example of the "burin busqué," made on a thick flake of cretaceous chert; the Abbé Breuil, however, described it as a typical graver. Nos. 2 and 3 are angle-gravers, No. 2 being of chert, and No. 3 of flint. We have, then, three distinct types of graver and a Gravette blade, which should be sufficient to establish the Upper Palæolithic aspect of part of the industry, for although angle-gravers are sometimes found in early Mesolithic sites, the same cannot be said of the Gravette blade.

Other implements which may belong to the Cave Period are two points with faceted butt, one of flint (8) and one of black chert (18); a small, battered-back blade of black chert (5); a rough end-scraper (6); and a nodule of cretaceous chert (7) worked on both faces and having an undulating edge. All these, except Nos. 5 and 18, have the same deep white patination as the graters.

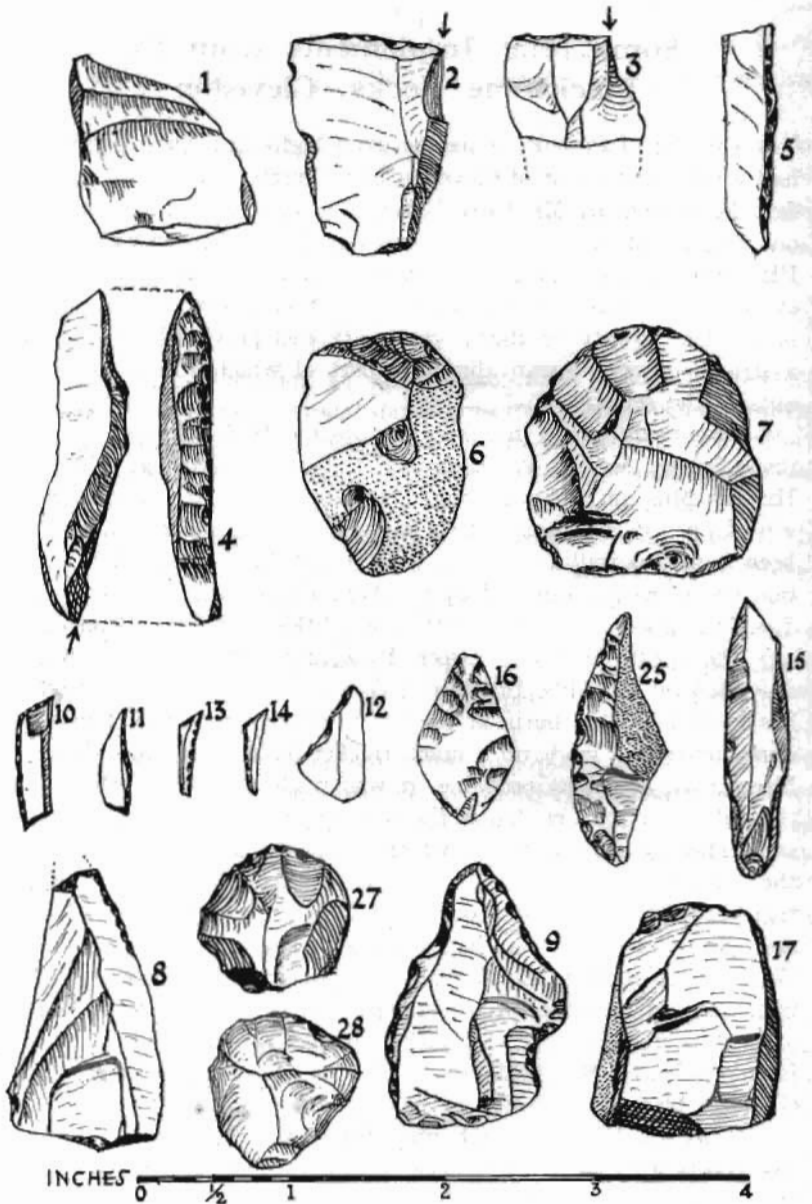


Fig. 25

The microliths are five in number and look rather out of place in an industry of which the general appearance is far from being microlithic. They are of the geometric type, which is thought to

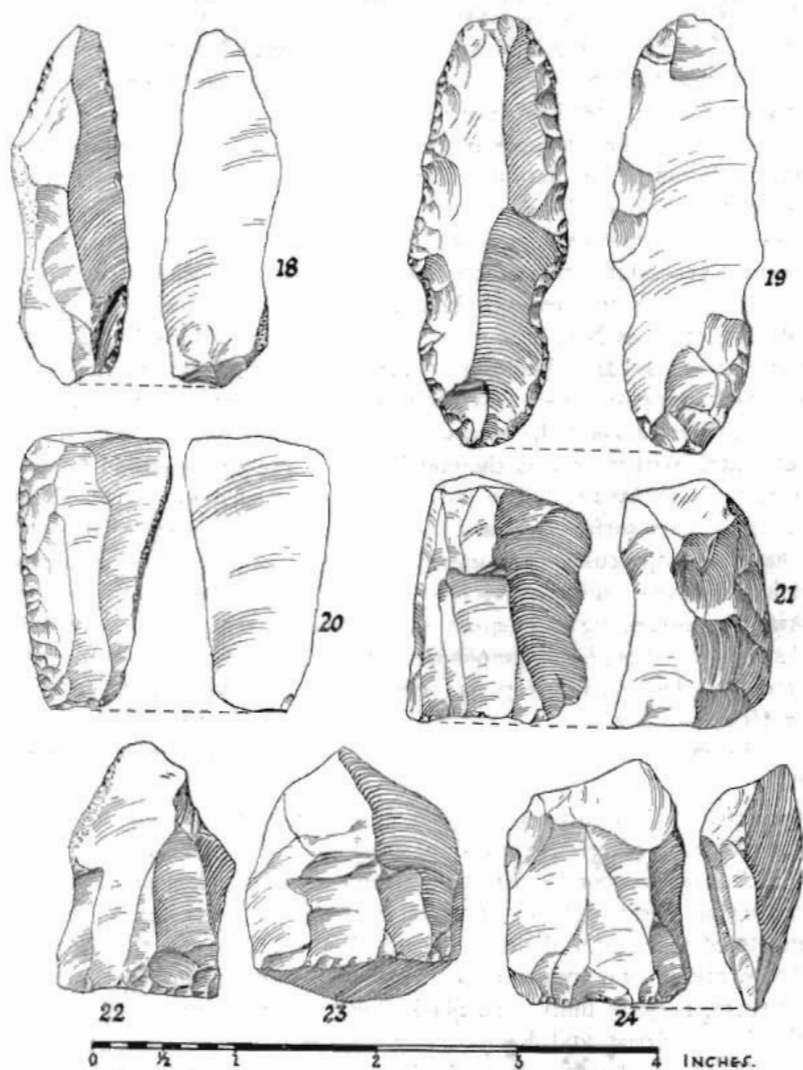


Fig. 26

be more recent in date than the non-geometric: see *The Mesolithic Age in Britain*, by Dr. Clark, and the *British Museum Stone Age Guide*. According to both these authorities, the rhomboid is more recent than the other geometric forms. No. 10, however, which is

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rhomboid, has the same white patination as the other microliths. It is blunted on three sides, and, although a rare type, has been found on the Mendips, at sites over 700 feet above sea-level. The small elongated triangle (13 and 14) is a fairly common type, and occurs in the Mesolithic Hearth of King Arthur's Cave. No. 11 is a crescent with blunted chord. No. 12 is either a triangular microlith or a fragment of a longer blade with a battered bevel.

The early Bronze Age seems to be represented by implements with little or no patination. These include a lozenge-shaped arrow-head (16), a small "knife" (15), and a side-scraper (25). There is also a broad flake (20), patinated white, which has been resharpened by pressure-flaking, which is quite unpatinated.

Something may be said about the implements which defy classification, such as Nos. 7 and 24, which are wedge-shaped and show signs of use at the sharp end. Perhaps the most interesting is a notched tool (19), which resembles certain Aurignacian implements; it has been suggested, however, that it may equally well be a fabricator, particularly as the end furthest from the notches has been worn smooth by use. The patination is uneven, being very slight on the ridged surface and a deep, creamy white on the bulbar face. The bulb of percussion has been removed, and indeed the pressure-flaking on the bulbar surface would be remarkable at any period. Another interesting implement is a "nosed" scraper (9) with two distinct notches; this implement is shaped largely by alternate retouch. Two small steep scrapers (27 and 28) are unusual in type and patinated white.

Besides the trimmed implements, the finds include untrimmed flakes, cores, and a large amount of waste material, indicating that the beach was used as a chipping-site; one or two flakes, however, are made of better quality flint, perhaps imported.

A large proportion of the implements and flakes are made of cretaceous chert, pebbles of which are found on the beach; implements of this material do not occur on the hilltops in this district. There are several implements of black, carboniferous chert, which, however, is quite unlike the black chert of certain implements from the Gower Coast and King Arthur's Cave.

It should be said that nowhere else along the coast between Portishead and Weston-super-Mare do pebbles of flint and chert occur in such quantities. It is not easy to explain their presence, but Mr. Usher thinks they come from the gravels which underlie the blue clay of the Clevedon "flats" at the village of Kenn, about a mile south of Clevedon. Mr. Usher says, "The gravels are mapped

as the Kenn gravels by the Survey and extend in an irregular patch from an unmapped line north-east of Kenn village to the coast by the Blackstone rocks." They contain numerous rolled flints.

Although the finds are distributed throughout the beach, they have always been most numerous at the furthest point from the sea-wall, where the shingle ridge meets a reef of carboniferous limestone. All the microliths come from here, and two of them (13 and 14) were actually dug from a small patch of red clay at this spot.

It is unlikely that a mere chipping-site would produce anything but waste material, such as cores and spalls. So many good implements, some with definite signs of use, have been found that one is tempted to assume that the beach was inhabited before the sea rose to its present level, and that possibly there was some sort of rock shelter at the place where the microliths and other material were found. This theory would agree with existing evidence that the sea did not reach its present level until well into Bronze Age times.<sup>1</sup>

Further digging might verify this, but the task of searching for microliths in clay soaked twice a day in sea water, is neither pleasant nor easy. Added to this is the fact that during prolonged spells of fine weather almost all the beach becomes coated with mud, so that no further finds are likely to be made until this has been stripped off and the underlying material disturbed by rough weather.

It may be added that a deeply patinated and much-rolled Mousterian implement was found on the shingle about a quarter of a mile away from the other finds.

I should like to thank Mr. K. P. Oakley, Mrs. D. P. Dobson, and others, who have helped in the identification of the flints.

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<sup>1</sup> *Vide The Archaeology of Somerset*, by D. P. Dobson.