

Plate 9 Southern end of the Austin Friary (p.61), showing the main drain (left and containing water). In the centre are post holes of an earlier aisled building



Plate 10 Bottle seal from Bradgate Park (pp.60-1). Scale 1:1

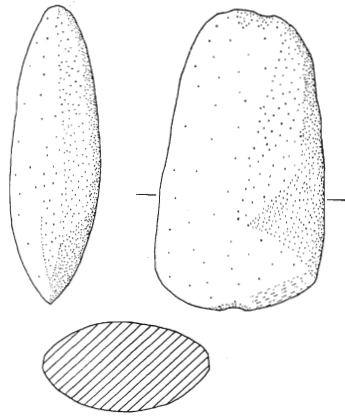


Plate 7 Stone axe from Sharnford, Leicestershire, Scale 1:2

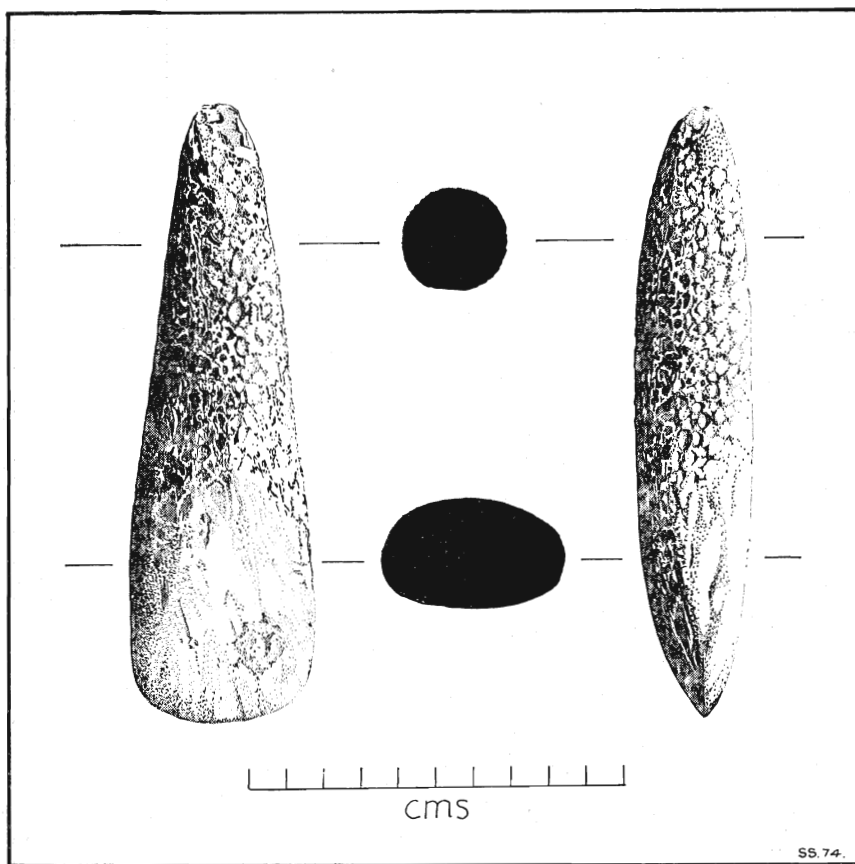


Plate 8 Neolithic stone axe (*Wigston Magna*), Scale 1:2 (p.64)

SS.74.

ARCHÆOLOGY IN LEICESTERSHIRE AND RUTLAND

1974

Edited by ALAN McWHIRR

I NOTES

II REPORTS OF FIELDWORK

I NOTES

A GROUP I CORNISH GREENSTONE AXE FROM SHARNFORD, LEICESTERSHIRE

The axe illustrated here (fig. 1) was found by Mr. B. Waite of 76 Barton Road, Nuneaton in the winter of 1971/72, whilst field-walking at Sharnford. The axe was lying on the surface of disturbed soil at SP/49059120, approximately on the line of the 300 feet above O.D. contour.

Description

The axe is complete, with only slight damage to the original profile. The surface is very eroded by weathering, and the only trace of polishing which remains is a small patch on one side of the cutting edge. In form, the axe tapers slightly from the convex cutting edge to the rounded butt, and is rather squat, being quite thick in proportion to the length and breadth. There are distinct side facets. The dimensions of the axe in centimetres are as follows: length 8.7, width at the cutting edge 4.7, and thickness 2.6. The weight is approximately 184 grammes.

Petrology

Macroscopically the composition of the axe is readily recognisable as greenstone. A thin section from the axe was prepared in the Geology Department at Birmingham University by Mr. Paul Buckland, and microscopic examination identified the rock as an uraltised gabbro of the type designated Group I by the Council for British Archæology's Sub-Committee for Implement Petrology. The prehistoric source of this rock is thought to have been in the Mount's Bay region near Penzance in Cornwall.¹

Discussion

The axe was found in exactly the same area as the flints recorded many years ago by Pickering², and recent fieldwork by Mr. Waite has produced evidence for both Mesolithic and Neolithic/Bronze Age activity here in the form of a substantial flint scatter.

In terms of axe shape, Professor F. W. Shotton of Birmingham University has informed me of a provisional tripartite subdivision of Group I axes which he has devised, based upon a study of examples found in the West Midlands. Type 1 has a pointed, conical butt, a rounded cutting edge, and a cross-section which approaches circularity at the centre of the axe³. Type 2 has a less curved cutting edge than type 1, but this meets the sides of the axe at a sharp angle, the butt is rounded, and the section ovoid⁴. The Sharnford axe is a good example of type 3, which is squatter, wider but thinner than the other types, with distinct side facets. The butt is rounded and the cutting edge similar to type 2, but without such sharp angles.

It may prove possible to extend such a classificatory scheme to greenstone axes in general, since it appears to cover the main range of shape types. For example, the Group XVI axes illustrated by Evens *et al*s can easily be divided into the above three types. No studies have appeared which attempt a metrical sorting of axe types along the lines of Malmer's work on Swedish stone axes⁶, or Roe's work on British

Palaeolithic hand-axes⁷, and until the data become available for this, intuitive typology of the kind outlined above remains valid.

It is not yet possible to say exactly what variations of axe shape mean in functional terms, although the shape differences do presumably have a functional, rather than a purely stylistic, significance. Whether or not other factors are involved, such as a chronological separation between the types, or multi-cultural exploitation of the outcrop, is not known, but it is surely of importance simply to note that these variant axe shapes have been produced from a single rock source. Thus the properties of Group I rock did allow for technical variation insofar as variant axe forms could be produced, though they may have acted as constraints in other ways, as in determining the length of the axe proportional to its width.

On the question of function, it has sometimes been suggested that certain stone axes were in fact used as hoes for agricultural purposes, rather than as axes proper, but positive evidence for the use of at least one Group I implement (of type 1) as a true axe is provided by the find of the hafted axe from Port Talbot, Glamorgan⁸. Since type 1 appears to be by far the most common form for Group I axes, axes of this shape may perhaps be presumed to have functioned as axes, unless other features, such as marked asymmetricality, suggest otherwise.

Group I axes are in general terms thought to relate to a third phase of stone axe production during the British Neolithic, and there is some evidence for a link between these axes and the Grooved Ware tradition at the end of the third millennium B.C.⁹, though, as only three Group I axes actually have firm archaeological associations (i.e. less than 2 per cent of the total identified), their chronological and cultural range cannot be regarded as fixed.

According to the number of unperforated stone axes which can at present be grouped, and following the published data available for analysis, Group I axes are the second most common axe type in this country after the Great Langdale, Westmoreland (Group VI) series. The details can be expressed as follows:

Area	Total of unperforated Axes sectioned	Total Axes grouped	Total Group I Axes
East Anglia ¹⁰	265	162	42
North-East Midlands ¹¹	363	278	16
South-West Region ¹²	709	328	89
Yorkshire ¹³	293	175	21
Totals	1630	943	168

Therefore, including those axes described as near to Group I, the Group I axes constitute 17.8 per cent of the total grouped axes, as against the Group VI axes which account for 43.5 per cent, and the next most prolific types which are Group VII, Graig Lwyd, Caernarvonshire at 9.4 per cent, and Group XVI, Cambourne area, Cornwall at 5.5 per cent, with its mainly local distribution. The distribution of Group I axes outside of the source area is remarkable when it is considered that only 30 (17.8 per cent) of the total 168 listed above were found in Devon and Cornwall combined. Published data on the stone axes from South-West Scotland¹⁴ suggests that no Cornish products reached this area, where the grouped material is overwhelmingly of Group VI derivation. The low percentage presence of the Group I axes from Yorkshire and the North-East Midlands suggests that these areas may be on the periphery of the distribution range of the Cornish axes¹⁵.

In the Midlands, the number of Group I axes identified so far is small, but the fact that four have been found in Shropshire, three in Worcestershire, and five in Warwickshire, including one from Withybrook only 5½ miles (9 kilometres) away from Sharnford¹⁶, clearly illustrates the inland penetration of this type. Both Keen and Radley¹⁷, and Clough and Green¹⁸, have drawn attention to concentrations of Cornish axes in coastal areas of Yorkshire and East Anglia respectively, and have suggested the possible existence of a coastal trade in axes from Cornwall. This may well be so, but in East Anglia more Group I axes come from the Cambridgeshire Fens area than from the coast¹⁹, and, coupled with the evidence from Central England, and with the relative absence of Group I axes in coastal Lincolnshire²⁰, some inland trade mechanisms for the distribution of Group I axes must be contemplated.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to Mr. B. Waite for bringing the axe to my attention, and for permitting it to be sectioned and published. Thanks are also due to Paul Buckland for carrying out the petrological identification, and to Professor F. W. Shotton for much advice on this note, and for allowing me to study his files on West Midland stone axe finds. The axe remains in the possession of Mr. Waite.

ALAN SAVILLE

NOTES

1. Evens, E. D., Grinsell, L. V., Piggott, S. and Wallis, F. S. "Fourth report of the Sub-Committee of the South-Western Group of Museums and Art Galleries on the petrological identification of stone axes", *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society*, 28 (1962), 211
2. Pickering, A. J., "Flint implements from the ploughlands of South-West Leicestershire", *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society of East Anglia*, 2 (1917-8), 559
3. e.g. Cummins, W. A. and Moore, C. N., "Petrological identification of stone implements from Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire and Rutland", *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society*, 39 (1973), 219-255, fig 3, 1, 53 and 397; Oswald, A. and Shotton, F. W. "Neolithic axes from South Staffordshire and Birmingham", *Transactions of the Birmingham Archaeological Society*, 73 (1955), 117-8, plate 12, 2; Shotton, F. W., "Notes on two stone axes from near Birmingham", *Transactions of the Birmingham Archaeological Society*, 68 (1949-50), 125-6, plate 19b; Stone, J. F. S. and Wallis, F. S. "Third report of the Sub-Committee of the South-Western Group of Museums and Art Galleries on the Petrological identification of stone axes", *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society*, 17 (1951), 99-158, fig 6, Dors. 93 and Corn 517
4. e.g. Cummins and Moore 1973, fig 3, 2 and 151; Stone and Wallis 1951, fig 6, Dors. 113 and Wilt. 291
5. Evens *et al*, 1962, fig. 3
6. Summarised in Clarke, D. L., *Analytical Archaeology*, London, 1968, 155-7
7. Roe, D. A., "British Lower and Middle Palaeolithic handaxe groups", *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society*, 34 (1968), 1-82
8. Savory, H. N., "A Neolithic stone axe and wooden handle from Port Talbot", *Antiquaries Journal*, 51 (1971), 296-7
9. Evens *et al* 1972, 253
10. Clough, T. H. McK., and Green, B., "The petrological identification of stone implements from East Anglia", *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society*, 38 (1972), 108-155
11. Cummins and Moore 1973
12. Evens *et al* 1972
13. Keen, L. and Radley, J. "Report on the petrological identification of stone axes from Yorkshire", *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society*, 37 (1971), 16-37
14. Williams, J. "Neolithic axes in Dumfries and Galloway", *Transactions of the Dumfriesshire and Galloway Natural History and Antiquarian Society*, 47 (1970), 111-122
15. cf. Cummins and Moore 1973, 223
16. Unpublished information on axes from Shropshire, Warwickshire and Worcestershire supplied by Professor F. W. Shotton
17. Keen and Radley 1971, 29
18. Clough and Green 1972, 115-6
19. Clough and Green 1972, fig 2
20. Cummins and Moore 1973, fig 2

ARCHÆOLOGY FIELDWORK GROUP: MOATS SECTION

Documentation

An investigation into the documentary sources is now virtually completed, with the exception of the material relating to Rutland. The Group would like to thank Mr. Chinnery and Mr. Falla who each kindly ran an evening class to facilitate the work on the material in the City and County Record Offices. The members who attended were: J. Baker, J. & J. Billings, E. Linford, R. Mitchell, D. Valentine and E. Whellans.

Field Surveying

The sites are now being investigated in the field, parish by parish. Existing plans are being checked; adjacent land is being walked to ensure that there are no ancillary earthworks not included in existing surveys, as many of these sites consisted of a complex of earthworks and not always just a single moat. A comprehensive survey is being made of all sites for which there is apparently no existing plan.

It is hoped that the gazetteer of sites within the new administrative district of Bosworth will be completed by early summer.

ANN DORNIER

AERIAL RECONNAISSANCES

In the course of specific programmes of aerial archæology in the midlands during the past 20 years, mainly concerned with the study and recording of "crop marks", parts of Leicestershire have had intermittent surveillance from the air.

The surface and immediate sub-soil geology of most of the county is not of a character that normally produces crop marks but the permutations of soil, crop, weather and incidence of rainfall at different crop growth stages are so many that anomalous growth occurs sometimes to indicate earlier land use. Except on the gravel terraces of the River Trent and River Soar on the west side of the county, concentrations of crop mark sites are unlikely and surveillance from the air simply finds an occasional crop mark feature that from its shape, or orientation can only be interpreted as earlier than identifiable features in the landscape of today. Considerations of air traffic control at Castle Donington inhibit regular study of the gravel terraces in that area, but should an exceptionally good recording year occur, the Air Traffic Controller would no doubt assist a properly organised recording programme.

Recent study from the air suggests that Leicestershire soils could provide additional archæological information from soil marks of ploughed-out field systems. Some of these are very complex and provide evidence that is not apparent on the surface of ridge and furrow field systems still standing. Ploughing is, of course, eroding much of the evidence still available from soil marks. Whilst a good case can be made out for a recording programme for this evidence before it is totally destroyed, there is not sufficient knowledge of earlier field systems to be able to interpret this type of evidence. The cost of such a programme in time, flying and photography is much greater even than one to record the standing ridge and furrow in strong relief contrast.

There are many features connected with ridge and furrow field systems that raise doubts about their origins. Linear banks up to a mile long seem in some cases to antedate the plough headlands of the fields on either side. Encroachment of headlands onto the banks or ridge and furrow across them sometimes prevents their use as access ways. It may, however, be a mistake to look for a single explanation for all such banks.

Whilst air photography can make a substantial addition to the record of the past development and use of Leicestershire soils, present interpretation techniques can make little use of the information.

JAMES PICKERING

A "CRESTED" GLASS BOTTLE SEAL FROM BRADGATE PARK,
LEICESTERSHIRE

"Crested" seals on glass bottles first made their appearance about the middle of the 17th century, at a time when the traditional "stoneware" wine bottle of Rhenish and English manufacture was on the decline and the preference for glass bottles

was on the upsurge. The tradition of "sealing" bottles, however, appears to carry through this transitional period (many of the stoneware bottles carried such seals).

A great number of glass seals have been found, from the "Gentleman's crested and private seals" to the common "Tavern seals", the latter usually bearing the licensee's initials and sign of the tavern¹.

The Bradgate Seal (Fig. 1)

About 30 years ago, outside the kitchen wall of the ruins in Bradgate Park, formerly the residence of the Grey family, a "crested" bottle seal was found (SK 534102). It remained in private hands until 1974, when it was presented to Leicestershire Museums, Acc. No. 2761974. The crest depicted on the seal is that of either Henry Lord Grey, 1st Earl of Stamford, who died 1673, or his successor Thomas Grey, Viscount Woodville and 2nd Earl of Stamford. The crest of the Grey family was at that time "On a wreath, a unicorn erect, ermine; armed crested and hooped, or; a full sun behind it whose rays are resplendent all round him"².

Dating

From the evidence above there can be no doubt that the seal belonged to the Grey family, but to attribute it to either Henry or Thomas Grey is not possible as both carried the same crest. The date range for this seal must therefore be circa 1650-1730, the latter being the abandonment date of Bradgate as a residence.

Ref: 1 Sheelah Ruggles—Brise, *Sealed bottles*
2 Nichols Vol. III, Part II, Page 675

T PEARCE

Acknowledgements

My thanks to Mrs. J. W. Lowe for presenting the seal, and to Mr. Peter Wright for the drawing.

II REPORTS OF FIELDWORK

LEICESTER

AUSTIN FRIARS. SK 58050441

Further excavations on the site of the Austin Friars have revealed a complex series of buildings. The earliest medieval structure on the site lies to the west on a different alignment from the succeeding buildings.

The wall at the north end of the site, which was at first thought to be the south wall of the church, now appears to be a boundary wall built in an earlier ditch defining the northern limit of the Friary buildings. No evidence of the church has been found at this end of the site.

The main drain, in the southern area of the site, is a complicated structure of several stone phases preceded by a ditch on a slightly different line. South of the drain lies a long narrow building on an east-west alignment with deep buttressed foundations. Two partition walls towards the west end appear to have been inserted later. The bases of the door jambs in these two walls and in the south wall of the building are still *in situ*. This building may have replaced an earlier aisled structure represented by two parallel rows of post-settings two of which are cut by the later foundations.

Several wooden bowls, two small pewter plates, the head of a pottery figurine and a large number of shoes and other pieces of leatherwork have been recovered from the drain. Fragments of window tracery have been found in tumble at the north and south ends of the site.

Evidence of Romano-British occupation, includes two intersecting ditches in the central area.

J E MELLOR

CHURCHGATE. SK 58630478

A section was dug across the presumed line of the rampart of the Roman town. Traces of Romano-British occupation in the form of post-holes, gullies and pits which penetrated the natural subsoil were found but the rampart itself had been totally destroyed by post-medieval activity.

J E MELLOR

DANNETT'S HALL. SK 575044

A trench was opened on the north side of King Richard's Road opposite the site of the Cherry Orchard Roman pavement (*VCH* 1 (1907), 196). It was hoped to find further evidence of the building with which the mosaic was associated. However, if the building had ever extended so far all trace of it has disappeared. The ground was thoroughly disturbed down to the natural sandstone which lay about 2-3 ft below the modern surface.

J E MELLOR

LEICESTERSHIRE

DUNTON BASSETT.

A perforated pebble macehead 12 cms long was found at Sambourne, Church Close. Acc No 468/1974.

R A RUTLAND

EVINGTON. SK 628028

A number of sherds of medieval pottery were found during the construction of a house next to the vicarage in Stoughton Lane. No structures were noted.

A D MCWHIRR

HUNGARTON.

A series of features in fields in the parish, identified from aerial photographs have been examined. They consist of rectangular banked enclosures varying from 25 feet by 45 feet to 30 feet by 60 feet superimposed on ridge and furrow and standing up to 1 foot high. They are of diverse orientation and are thought to be the remains of lambing pens constructed after the area had been laid down to grass and abandoned in the nineteenth century.

G A CHINNERY

MEDBOURNE. SP 798930

A small number of sherds of late Iron Age pottery, two with incised decoration, have been found in the village of Medbourne and surrounding fields, principally in areas adjacent to the Medbourne Brook. Similar pottery has been picked up in Stocking Field, Drayton (SP 834932).

E J LINFORD

SAPCOTE. SP 497932

Work on the site of a Roman villa (?) at Sapcote has been undertaken during the summer and autumn by a group under the supervision of S Smith and with the help of a grant from the Leicestershire Archæological Committee.

Fifty metres of the north face of the sunken road into the quarry has been cleared to record the section. The foundations of a Roman wall were found and traced for at least twenty-five metres.

S SMITH

SAPCOTE. SP 488934

Observations during the construction of a new access road to the rear of Knighton Engineering, revealed a small ditch five metres wide and one metre deep on an alignment with the features excavated by P Addyman (*TLAS* xxxvi (1960), 1). There were no finds.

S SMITH

THURLASTON. SP 488995

Fishponds, connected with the thirteenth century Capital Messuage termed "Basset House", have been identified in a spinney lying south of the present farmhouse at Basset House farm.

E J LINFORD

THURMASTON. SK 610104

A sherd of Beaker pottery was discovered by the Geology Section of Leicester Museums in October 1972 during fieldwork in the Soar Valley sand and gravel

pits. It was not associated with other archaeological material and its geological associations will be discussed elsewhere.

The sherd represents the rim and neck of a Beaker of Clarke's S2 type (D L Clarke, *Beaker Pottery of Great Britain and Ireland*, 1970, 210-224) to which he has assigned a date of c. 1600-1500 BC. Its decoration closely resembles that of the North Kilworth Beaker (Clarke number 426 and *fig. 854*) and consists of four horizontal grooves, below which are shallow triangles filled with stabs. Below these is a band of 10-11 shallow zig-zag grooves with the trace of another horizontal groove below that.

No discoveries of Beaker pottery have been reported in these *Transactions* for a century (*TLAS* III (1874), 111) and only nine examples are known from Leicestershire, of which two (Clarke Nos. 423 & 425) are strictly speaking unprovenanced. Little is known of the circumstances of discovery of most of these and this new find, made during organised fieldwork, is therefore particularly welcome.

R A RUTLAND

RUTLAND

EMPINGHAM. SK 936082

A number of features were disturbed by machinery in the vicinity of the new dam. Of primary importance was an Anglian inhumation cemetery containing more than 129 graves with a total of 147 burials. There was no pattern to the burials though in no instance did one grave disturb another. The cemetery was linear in nature being at least 120 metres long and, apart from one group of 6 burials, no more than 15 metres wide. Grave goods range in date throughout the sixth century and into the early seventh. The cemetery was bounded on one side by a trackway, probably of Roman date, which had cut down into the limestone over a considerable period of usage and had become a sunken feature. An Iron Age ditch was also examined.

M S GORIN

EXTON. SK 1771260

A Roman hearth with a scatter of pottery was found during the filling in of a railway cutting.

Acc No 1974.79
T H CLOUGH

NETHER HAMBLETON. SK 893067

Excavations by the Rutland Field Research Group for Archaeology and History have continued on the site of the deserted village at Nether Hambleton and more of the "long house" has been examined. Finds include a wall oven, a circular stone platform and a large glazed jug of Bourne Ware. A small grant was made towards this work by the Leicestershire Archaeological Committee.

A W ADAMS

RUTLAND FIELD RESEARCH GROUP FOR ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORY. DENDROCHRONOLOGY.

The Group have made extensive records of trees in the reservoir area and collected over 100 samples. It is intended to construct a graph of tree ring patterns for the area for future research. This work was aided by members of Oakham School.

HEDGEROW DATING.

Most of the hedgerows in the Hambleton area have been studied to determine the number of flowering shrubs in 30 yard lengths. Preliminary analysis has revealed that the hedgerows fall into three general age groups:-

- i. 2-300 years old
- ii. 5-600 years old
- iii. 800-1,000 years old

L G EMMERSON

NEOLITHIC STONE AXE FROM WIGSTON MAGNA.

The stone axe illustrated (*fig. i*) was found during ploughing by Mr J Pierce of Glebe Farm, Wigston Magna (SP 619964) and remains in his possession. I am indebted to him for allowing me to examine the axe and to record its existence.

The axe is 16.4 cm long, 5 cm wide at the cutting edge and it weighs 344 grammes. Except for a small chip on the cutting edge it is complete. It seems to have been made by a pulverising technique and then was subsequently polished on each side of the cutting edge, leaving a pecked area on the body and butt, presumably to prevent slipping when fixed into the haft. The butt is long and pointed and there has been an attempt to polish the tip. Bilaterally, the section of the body is asymmetrical with the flatter side showing a larger area of polishing.

Petrological examination by thin sectioning has not been possible, but visual examination shows that the axe is made from quartzite with a grain size of 0.5 mm and smaller, cemented with silica. My thanks are due to Dr Bob King of the Geology Department of the University of Leicester for his comments. He points out that although the material resembles Tracouse Grit of the Upper Brand Series in Bradgate he thinks it is an import to this area.

S SMITH