Notes

Two Late Glacial finds from north-west Leicestershire

Lynden Cooper and Roger Jacobi

This short note describes two recently discovered Late Glacial flint points from neighbouring parishes in north-west Leicestershire. A Late Upper Palaeolithic backed blade was found by the then Trent & Peak Archaeological Trust at Rookery Lane, Lockington-Hemington during field walking in advance of the Derby Southern Bypass (Challis 1995). Assessment of the flint assemblage from survey and excavation by ULAS at Willows Farm, Castle Donington has also revealed a convex backed blade of Final Upper Palaeolithic date (SF 181.XA14.1997; TLAHS 73, pp.87-91).

The backed blade (SF AFE) from Lockington-Hemington (NGR SK 4662 2832) is a probable ‘Cheddar point’, in that it has a trapezoidal outline formed by two oblique truncations linked by backing along the shorter joining edge. The upper truncation is slightly convex and the modification is direct bar the tip, which has been retouched ‘on anvil’. The backing is slightly concave, with direct retouch changing to rather rough inverse modification lower down. There are traces of a second oblique truncation at the lower (proximal) end to give a trapezoidal outline. A burin-like removal on the leading edge originates from this second truncation and can be compared to an example excavated at Robin Hood Cave, Creswell Crags in 1969 by John Campbell (1977 fig. 152, 10). There is some utilisation damage on the leading edge with large scalar (accidental, superfluous) removal on the ventral face. The blank was a blade from an opposed platform core and is undulating in longitudinal profile. The piece is unpatinated and is of a slightly smoky brown, translucent flint. Garton (in Challis 1995) speculates that two blade fragments (SF AEZ and AET) found in close proximity to the backed blade may be contemporary. Both have narrow, rubbed puntiform butts and one (AET) was also faceted.

Although termed points, suggesting use as weapon heads, they may have had a variety of functions serving as knives, gravers or piercers. It has been suggested that the Cheddar point is a marker of the British Creswellian (Jacobi 1991 and 1997) thereby placing it in the Bølling chronozone of the Late Glacial Interstadial c. 13-12,000 radiocarbon years BP. This period sees the re-colonisation of Britain following the Last Glacial Maximum when conditions were too severe for human survival in Britain and much of northern Europe. The Creswellian is, of course, well represented in the East Midlands by finds from Creswell Crags (Robin Hood Cave, Church Hole Cave and Pin Hole Cave). Recent field walking in Nottinghamshire is also beginning to locate open sites such as the scatter near Farndon situated on the higher gravel terrace of the Trent (Garton 1993, Knight and Howard 1994) and the find spots of Cheddar points from Lound and East Stoke (Jacobi et al. forthcoming).

The piece from Castle Donington (NGR SK 4437 2892) is a distal fragment of a Federmesser or Azilian point, in that it is a blade with convex backing. The backed edge has steep abrupt retouch while the leading edge has been slightly remodified at a later date, evident from fresh scars cutting through the patinated surface. This reworking appears deliberate and an attempt to produce a small plano-convex knife. The ancient loss of the proximal end precludes the identification of the piece as a possible ‘penknife point’ (Clark 1932, p.xxii; Garrod 1926, p.140). The raw material is a light grey-brown translucent flint.

Although there is a paucity of dating for Federmesser in a British context, there is

some opinion that such finds belong to the Final Upper Palaeolithic (Jacobi 1997), probably dating to the Allerød chronozone of the Late Glacial Interstadial c. 12-11,000 radiocarbon years BP. There is some evidence of their use as projectile points, evident from impact damage, and the smaller examples were likely to have been used as arrowheads. Penknife points have been recorded at Mother Grundy's Parlour, Pin Hole and Robin Hood, Creswell Crags, Derbs. and more recently at Cotgrave, Notts. (Garton et al., forthcoming) and Potlock, Derbyshire (D. Garton, pers. comm.).

Although the Leicestershire points are only two isolated find spots they represent the first identification of a Late and Final Upper Palaeolithic presence in the county (as opposed to the Terminal Upper Palaeolithic or ‘epi–Ahrensburgian’ (Gob 1991; Johansen and Stapert 2000), represented by the Launde site – TLAHS 71). pp.91-3). It is of some interest that the Leicestershire and Nottinghamshire sites are both situated upon the higher gravels of the Trent flood plain. We can now begin to see a Late Glacial human presence across the landscape of the East Midlands, and not just restricted to the limestone caves of Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire.

**Glossary**

Allerød chronozone – a pollen zone based on Danish pollen cores that showed a more wooded environment in the second half of the Late Glacial Interstadial (Mangerud et al., 1974).

Azilian – culture-historical term for a French Late Upper Palaeolithic industry. Azilian
points are synonymous with Federmesser, their usage mainly politically and geographically determined.

Bølling chronozone - a pollen zone based on Danish pollen cores which showed a rapid transition from extreme cold climate to warmer, arid conditions during the first half of the Late Glacial Interstadial (Mangerud et al., 1974).

Federmesser - a culture-historical term for a North-west European Late Upper Palaeolithic industry which Schwabedissen (1954) termed Federmesser-Gruppen. Federmesser (German for ‘penknife’) described the distinctive shape of the backed blades. Its present use refers mainly to medium-sized convex backed blades or bladelets and includes British ‘penknife points’ (Clark 1932).

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A ‘new’ cruck-framed building at Littlethorpe, Leicestershire

Fragments of a previously unrecorded cruck-framed building survive at 31–33 Station Road, Littlethorpe. Nothing of this early structure is visible externally and the properties appear, ostensibly, to be a pair of brick-built cottages of late 18th or early 19th-century date (illus. 2). Embedded within the brickwork of the north wall of number 31, however, is a reasonably complete cruck truss. Illustration 3 shows the internal elevation of this wall; the terms left and right used in the following description of the truss relate to the orientation of this drawing.

The cruck truss consists of an unmatched pair of blades linked by a tiebeam and collar. The upper section of the right hand blade is obscured by the later brick chimney, although the top of the left hand blade is just visible within the roof space. Joint evidence on this timber indicates that the apex was of saddle form, although the saddle itself has been removed. The lower section of the left hand blade is also missing, cut off just below the tiebeam. The lower part of the right hand blade may or may not survive, but is not visible. The tiebeam is largely hidden, but seems to be in situ. A short section is seen within an arched recess beneath the staircase, adjacent to the rear wall. Peering up the flue of the ground floor fireplace, a further section is discernible. Pairs of peg holes in both blades, approximately midway between tiebeam and collar,
3. Internal elevation of the north wall of number 31 Station Road, Littlethorpe
probably mark the attachment point of spurs, now removed. The outer ends of these short, horizontally set timbers would originally have been fixed to vertical posts, forming part of the side wall framing. Two peg holes seen in the underside of the left hand blade, above the collar, may mark the point at which a purlin was attached. A similar arrangement may be seen at Church Cottage, Cadeby, where the purlins are carried directly on the cruck blades, presumably pegged into position. Alternatively these peg holes might represent the upper attachment point of a packing piece - a subsidiary member on which the purlin may be carried, as at 3 North Street, Rothley (Webster 1954, p.44), for example.

Joists supporting the gypsum plaster first floor of number 31 are carried over the back of an axial beam, the north end of which rests on the tiebeam. The axial beam is a sizeable timber, some 10m long, which passes through the party wall separating numbers 31 and 33 and is lodged in the south wall of the latter, also supporting the first floor joists of this property. A brief inspection of number 33 revealed little additional evidence of early fabric, although it is possible that further timbers survive, concealed beneath later rendering and wall coverings. The party wall dividing numbers 31 and 33 appears to coincide with the position of an earlier cruck truss, although nothing of this frame seems to survive.

The ground plan of each cottage corresponds with one bay of build of the earlier cruck-framed structure, indicating a building of at least two bays. Further bays may originally have existed, but there is evidence neither to confirm nor disprove this.

A very similar saddle cruck truss can be seen in the gable end of a house at 30 Coventry Road, in the neighbouring village of Narborough. Another cruck truss was discovered in Narborough when Bell View Cottages, on the north side of Leicester Road, were demolished in the early 1970s (Smith 1972/3, p.63). At Cosby, 1 mile to the south of Littlethorpe, part of Church Farm barn is of saddle cruck construction. The erstwhile village store in The Nook at Cosby is also cruck-built, as was a, now demolished, house in Brookside, in the same village (David Smith, pers. comm.).

The absence of diagnostic details precludes any conclusive comment on the age of the Littlethorpe cruck. In broad terms, a date somewhere in the second half of the 15th or the 16th century seems most likely. If the first floor structure is an original feature, rather than a later insertion, then a preference for the latter century might be tentatively suggested. The fact that the blades are an unmatched couple may also indicate a later, rather than earlier, date. Dated crucks in the vicinity include Church Farm barn, Main Street, Cosby and Church Cottage, Cadeby, both mentioned above. Dendrochronological analysis indicates that the trees from which Church Farm barn is built were felled some time between 1566 and 1601, with a likely felling date around 1581 (Vernacular Architecture 1991, p.45). Church Cottage at Cadeby, 8 miles west of Littlethorpe, is rather earlier, with a precise felling date of 1472-3 (ibid., p.45).

The cruck-built structure at Littlethorpe may have survived relatively intact until c.1800, when major rebuilding work seems to have been undertaken. The side walls were reconstructed in brick and a new roof added. This was laid to a shallower pitch than the original, improving first floor accommodation. The property was subdivided into two, tiny cottages, each measuring barely c.4.5m (15 feet) square, internally. Notwithstanding the modest size of the dwellings, however, it is clear that some deference to the architectural aesthetic of the age was observed in their construction. The two front doors are located together in the centre of the street-facing elevation. On either side, ground and first floor windows are arranged symmetrically. Above the doors a blind window 'balances' the façade. All of the openings, and the blind window,
have cambered arch heads. A subtle chequered effect has been achieved using two
different types of brick, laid in (occasionally irregular) Flemish bond. For the headers a
buff coloured brick has been used, which contrasts with the darker, red-brown colour
of the stretchers. A number of other houses in Littlethorpe and Narborough have
similar chequered brickwork façades. Inside number 31, tall round-headed recesses are
located either side of the fireplace, echoing the arrangement found in many grander
houses of the period.

Two later brick-built ranges to the rear of number 31, and now part of that property,
formerly served as separate dwellings. The process of accretion is reflected in the
apparently incongruous numbering of 31 and the adjacent house to the north, number
25 Station Road (the white painted building in illus. 2).

That the illustrated truss has survived relatively intact, despite at least one major
reconstruction and any number of more minor alterations, may be due to its location
on a party boundary line. Boundary disputes are not an exclusively modern
phenomenon and it appears that in the past, as now, conflicts were avoided by limiting
the extent of alterations to party wall structures. This point is perfectly illustrated in the
recent rebuilding of 5-7 Regent Street, Hinckley. Part of an early 17th century timber-
framed structure, discovered in the course of demolition (Finn 2000, pp.243-7), was
retained in the party wall between numbers 7 and 9 Regent Street not for its intrinsic
interest (the rest of the timber frame was removed once it had been recorded), but to
avoid the disruption to businesses operating from the adjacent property that its removal
would have caused. In conclusion, it seems likely that many such fragments of earlier
fabric remain to be discovered in party walls across the county.

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particular the Cosby examples.

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The Hall of the St. George’s Guild, Leicester: a history

For a county town, Leicester is not rich in medieval deeds and it is rare to be able to
trace back properties in modern deeds before the last quarter of the eighteenth century.
A recent archaeological assessment on 10-12 Guildhall Lane, ahead of its conversion
into a restaurant, brought to light the private collection of deeds associated with the
property (Finn 1999). These documents allow us to locate the St. George’s Hall,
which formerly housed the St. George’s guild, and trace much of its subsequent tenurial history. The guild is first documented in 1499 when the town’s governing elite, known as the forty-eight, were ordered to contribute to its expenses suggesting that it was poorly endowed (RBL, ii, 355; Kelly 1865, 37-50 and North 1866, 236-45). St. George was a popular national figure in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and many English towns had guilds named after him. At least some of these guilds, as at Leicester and Norwich, were responsible for organising processions featuring George and the dragon (Hutton 1996, 26-7; Riches 2000, 126-39). Leicester’s version of the St. George procession was known as the ‘riding of the George’ and took place (at least after 1523) on a day chosen between St. George’s day and Whitsun. This practice may have been falling into decay by the early sixteenth-century as a borough ordinance was passed to enforce it in 1523 ‘according to old custom’ and fines were imposed in several years subsequently for non-compliance (RBL, iii, 24, 32 and 42).

The hall of the St. George’s guild lay in Town Hall Lane on the east side of St. Martin’s church mirroring the position of the Corpus Christi guildhouse, on the west side of the church. St. Martin’s was the borough’s richest church by the late thirteenth century and replaced the poorer church of St. Nicholas as the focus of urban ceremony in the later Middle Ages. The Corpus Christi guild was founded to organise masses intended to speed its membership, drawn from the town’s elite, through purgatory. However, by the end of the fifteenth-century the guild’s hall had become the de facto town-hall (Courtney 1998, 135-6). The guild of St. George’s had its own chapel within the church of St. Martin’s, which according to Nichols (1815, 1ii, 591) lay at the west end of the great south aisle, built around 1300. The chapel of Our Lady, utilised by the Corpus Christi guild, lay in the superior position at the east end of the same aisle. This
association reflects the frequent linkage between the two figures in late medieval mythology and iconography with St. George portrayed as the Virgin’s champion (Riches 2000, 68-100).

The linked symbolism and spatial layout of their buildings indicate that the Corpus Christi and St. George’s guilds were closely linked with each other and St. Martin’s church. This is also a reflection of the symbolic linkage between urban government and the late-medieval church. The St. George’s guild was clearly the junior of the two guilds. However, it is unclear to what extent this was reflected in membership or function. It is possible that the St. George’s guild gave an opportunity for the more junior members of the senior guild to experience office holding. Despite its quasi-religious symbolism, it is also possible that the guild functioned as a more secular arm of the elite than the Corpus Christi guild. Certainly, Riches (2000, 138) has interpreted the riding of the George in Leicester as an expression of civic power rather than popular rejoicing, noting that the populace were ordered to attend.

The borough appears to have acquired St. George’s Hall by 1541-2 when it was rented out for 4s (RBL, iii, 49). In 1547 the horse ridden by the George, and the ‘flirth and vente’ (?plinth) on which it stood within its chapel, were sold by St. Martin’s church. In 1550-1 the vault over the St. George’s altar was also sold (North 1884, 25 and 48). It thus seems likely that the guild had ceased to exist before the dissolution of the chantries in 1548. It is certainly not listed in the chantry certificates which record the properties confiscated at this time (Hamilton Thompson 1910). In 1552-3, the accounts of St. Martin’s record the ‘dressing’ or cleaning of the St. George’s ‘harness’ or armour (North 1884, 67). This may indicate that at least some of the fittings were returned to the chapel during the Catholic reign of Queen Mary. However, there is no firm evidence that the procession itself had been restored as claimed by Hutton (1996, 89). St. George’s chapel is last mentioned in 1593-4 when it was partitioned (North 1884, 137).

Another messuage and garden, called The Maidenhead, is listed alongside St. George’s Hall in the 1591-2 chamberlain’s account and subsequent rentals (LLRRO BR III/2/60 and RBL, iii, 310). It was rented for 13/4d and was also said to lie on the east side of St. Martin’s churchyard. This led Billson (1920, 208) to locate it on the north-east corner of St. Martin’s lane on the west side of St. George’s Hall. However, a deed of 1653, when the borough granted the Maidenhead to William Alsop, a baker, locates it on St. Martin’s Churchgate, that is the road running past the south side of the churchyard. The same deed notes that existence of a common way (St. Martin’s East) and barn on its west side (LLRRO BR II/8a/1059). In 1597 a room-by-room inventory was made upon the death of the tenant of The Maidenhead, William Hobbye, a wheelwright. The inventory indicates that Hobbye was using the premises for brewing, probably for sale on the premises, as well as a wheelwright’s shop (RBL, iii, 332-5). It is uncertain if it continued as a beer house after Hobbye’s death. It was rented to his widow before being leased to Roger Hunfield, the town clerk in 1614 (LLRRO BR II/8a/870). The St. Martin’s churchwarden’s accounts for 1590-1 mention repairs on the churchyard gate said to be next to Hobbye’s, that is The Maidenhead, thus clearly locating it by the northern end of St. Martin’s East (North 1884, 134).

The house or barn, known as St. George’s Hall, appears in the chamberlain’s accounts for 1591-2 and the surviving town rentals from 1594-5 onwards, rented for 6s/8d per annum (LLRRO BR III/2/60; BR III/3/various; BR II/8a/588 and RBL, iii,
The use of the term ‘barn’ in these documents may imply that it was a single storied ground-floor hall like the surviving Corpus Christi hall. Seventeenth-century references to a house, barn and garden may imply that a second structure stood alongside the hall, perhaps a solar block as in the former thirteenth-century guild hall in Blue Boar Lane by St. Nicholas’ church (LLRRO BR III/3/49; Billson 1920, 52). St. George’s Hall was described as being ‘ruinous and in decay’ in a duchy of Lancaster survey in 1587 but so was most of the other housing stock in the borough (RBL, iii, 240). A deed of 1594 conveying the property to John Flampson, haberdasher, mentions two adjoining gardens (LLRRO BR II/8a/585). It was subsequently rented to Robert Stokes and James Ludlam, brewer. The messuage known as St. George’s Hall with a barn and garden was sold to Ludlam in 1671 (LLRRO BR II/8a/1158). At the same time, Ludlam also acquired from the borough a ground, formerly a messuage, on the east side of the churchyard which produced a rent of 2s per annum (LLRRO BR II/8a/1156). This ground was described in previous rentals as a garden formerly attached to the Bate’s house, i.e. The Maidenhead (e.g. LLRRO BR III/3/57).

The subsequent history of St. George’s Hall is recorded in a series of deeds and abstracts for 10-12 Guildhall Lane in the hands of the current owner. The earliest deed dates to 1770 but abstracts carry the tenural history back to its purchase from the borough 1671. In 1685, after the death of James Ludlam, the property, comprising two messuages and two cottages, was bought from his heir, Thomas Ludlam, brewer, for £250 by Elizabeth Benskyn. There seems to have been a subsequent legal dispute over ownership leaving the properties in shared ownership between Thomas Ludlam and Elizabeth Benskyn. One messuage is represented by 10-12 Guildhall Lane and the other by 7 St. Martin’s East on its south side. Probate inventories survive for both James Ludlam and Thomas Ludlam for the years 1685 and 1687, respectively (LLRRO PR/I/87/29 and PR/I/90/138). Both inventories have room-by-room descriptions of the same dwelling, presumably either on the site of 10-12 Guildhall Lane or, less likely, 7 St. Martin’s East. In 1685, the dwelling contained a hall, a parlour, a little parlour, a chamber over the parlour, a little chamber, a corn chamber (containing wheat), a little closet (with books), and a gallery (containing old iron) as well as a cellar and brewhouse. Both the parlours contained beds in both inventories which also list barrels and horses. The 1687 inventory clearly describes the same house though by this date the corn chamber also contained a bed. Additionally, two yards and a wash house are mentioned in 1687.

Both messuages were acquired in 1706 by the Nedham family from Elizabeth Berskyn (paid £100) and the Richard Ludlam (paid £150). It is possible that 7 St. Martin’s East was the ground, formerly rented for 2s, acquired in 1671. The Nedhams seem to have rented both messuages out to five sets of tenants. In 1770 they sold 10-12 Guildhall Lane to William Watts, and the deeds for 7 St. Martin’s East were henceforth held separately. 10-12 Guildhall Lane appears to have been converted into the inn known as the Queen’s Head (presumably commemorating the earlier ‘Maidenhead’ pub) shortly after its purchase in 1770. A brewhouse was attached to the property, and Watts held two cellars or vaults which ran partially under 7 St. Martin’s East. Watts also had to make arrangements for shared access and joint maintenance of a well and water pump between his yard and that of 7 St. Martin’s East, then in the occupation of Caleb Lowdlam. 10-12 Guildhall Lane subsequently changes hands several times but continued in uses as a public house. In the early 1890s it was renamed the Opera Hotel. The deeds show that the two cellars running under
the boundary were lost to the property upon a sale in 1920. The building ceased to be a public house between 1911 and 1914 (Wright’s sub Town Hall Lane).

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