NOTES

FOUR SHAFT-HOLE IMPLEMENTS FROM DUNSTER

Three shaft-hole implements found at Dunster have recently been submitted for petrological examination. They were all discovered around 1889, since when they have been in the possession of the Luttrell family of Dunster Castle. Their provenance is not absolutely certain but the Ordnance Survey archaeological record card, number SS 94 SE 10, reports that Mr. A. L. Wedlake of Watchet was reasonably certain that they were all found in the now disused ballast pit to the east of Dunster Station at approximately SS 999446. Although varying in form, they can all best be described as shaft-hole adzes.

Before giving details of the examination, the fourth implement should be mentioned. This is a perforated macehead found on the same site by Mr. A. V. Cornish in 1927 and donated to the Somerset County Museum in 1962 (Accession Number 62–A–63).

1. *Shaft-hole adze* (Fig. 1)

It is virtually undamaged except for one or two surface chips. The whole of the surface has been polished. The edge has been sharpened in such a way as to produce a marked chamfered effect around much of its length. It has an hour-glass perforation.

The implement measures:—Length 11·4 cms. Width 10·3 cms. Maximum thickness 2·5 cms. Diameter of shaft-hole 3·6 cms.

Given the serial number 1705(SO134) by the Implement Petrology Survey of the South West, the report on its microscopic examination was as follows: 'A sandstone similar to 1706 from the same site. This has different mineral fragments which are not in 1706, but nothing traceable. More iron stained than 1706 but not as much as 1707. Local?'

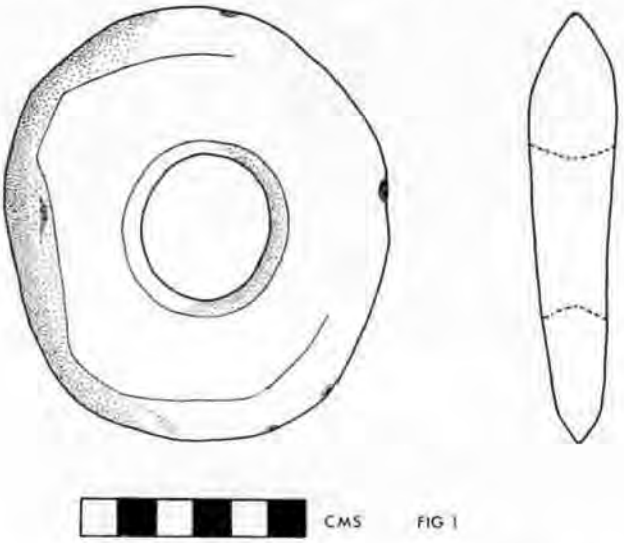

FIG 1

2. *Shaft-hole adze* (Fig. 2)

This is also an undamaged specimen. It was never completely polished on both surfaces. There is a highly polished band, averaging about 7 cms. in width, across the centre of the adze which encloses the shaft-hole. Except for the two cutting edges which are also polished, the remainder of the surface was not given a final smoothing and was left rather pitted and rough. It has an hour-glass perforation.

The implement measures:—Length 20·4 cms. Width 10·1 cms. Maximum thickness 4·3 cms. Diameter of shaft-hole 2·5 cms.

This piece received the serial number 1706(SO135) and was described by the Survey as 'Sandstone-medium grained, few biotite flakes, little iron ore, quartzitic grains, shows reasonable bedding arrangement. Local?'

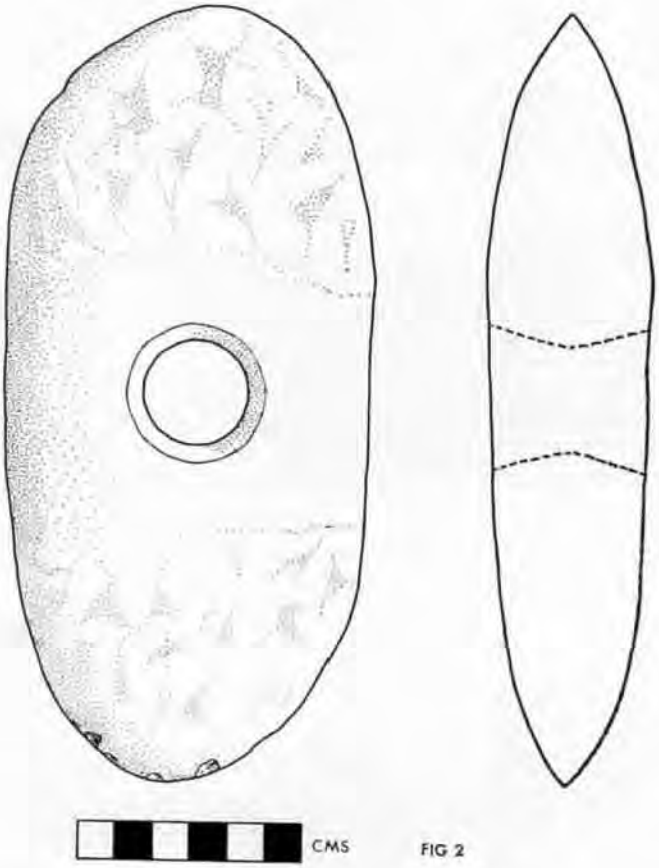

FIG 2

3. *Shaft-hole adze* (Fig. 3)

The edge of this adze has been damaged nearly all the way around. It is quite clear that the whole of the surface was originally polished. An interesting feature is that one side has a practically straight edge and that instead of being sharpened was given a flat face averaging about 1·3 cms. wide and 9·5 cms. long. It has an hour-glass perforation.

The implement measures:—Length 15·7 cms. Width 11·6 cms. Maximum thickness 3·2 cms. Diameter of shaft-hole 3·4 cms.

This adze has the serial number 1707(SO136). Microscopic examination showed it to be 'Medium to coarse grained, heavily iron stained sandstone. Sub-angular quartz grains with little sphene and few mica flakes. Interesting felspar laths and a few schistose fabic grains which could prove useful for comparison in the future. Any red sandstone outcrop, more likely Devonian than iron stained coal measure sandstone.'

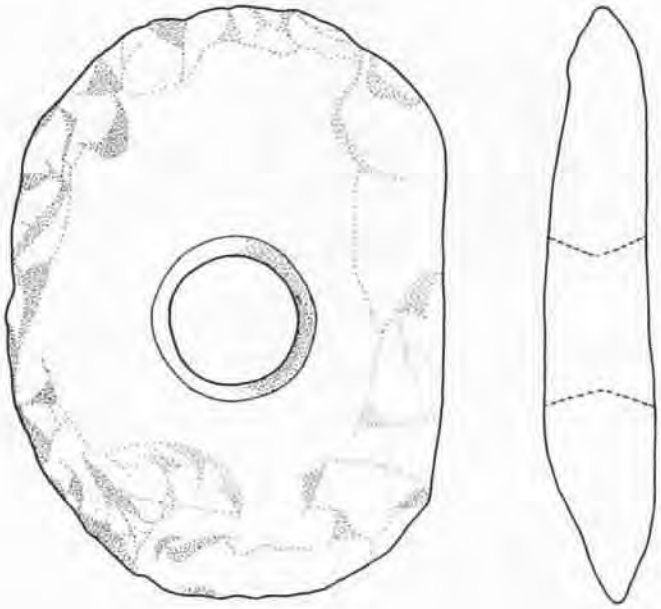

FIG 3

4. *Macehead* (Fig. 4)

The macehead is badly damaged on three sides but enough survives to show that it was originally almost square in shape. The existing edge was never sharpened but is rounded. The whole of the undamaged surface is polished. It has an hour-glass perforation.

The implement measures:—Length 7·7 cms. Width 6·5 cms. Maximum thickness 1·6 cms. Diameter of shaft-hole 1·3 cms.

This piece which is substantially smaller than those described above, was examined by the Petrological Survey shortly after being accessioned by the Somerset County Museum in 1962 when it was given the serial number 1216(SO70). It was described as 'Very fine grained black slate. Very fine grained quartz mosaic set in a brown matrix.'

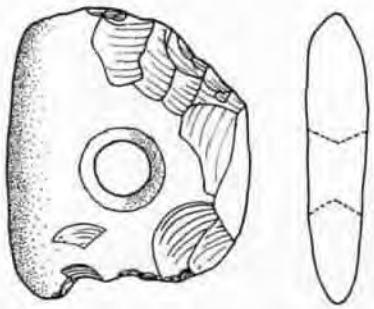

FIG 4

DISCUSSION

So far as dating is concerned, the shaft-hole adzes can be reasonably certainly dated to the Late Neolithic-Early Bronze Age. The macehead is more of a problem as they were being produced as early as the Mesolithic. However, bearing in mind the fact that its provenance is in close proximity to the shaft-hole adzes and that it was associated, according to the rather limited information available, with a small number of flints of Late Neolithic-Early Bronze Age date, also in the County Museum, a similar date would be reasonable. The discovery of four unusual types of implement in a concentration and all made of stone almost certainly derived from the Devonian Series of west Somerset is a most interesting occurrence.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My thanks are due to Lt.-Colonel Walter Luttrell, M.C., for loaning me the axes to send for petrological examination and Mr. Dudley Dodd for arranging the loan, Dr. Isobel Smith for arranging the analysis and Mr. R. V. Davis for carrying it out.

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A LATE BRONZE AGE SOCKETED AXE FROM LUCCOMBE

A Late Bronze Age socketed axe (Fig. 1) found by Mr. Adrian Partridge at Ebshill Lodge, Luccombe, near Minehead (SS 91254540) was brought into the Somerset County Museum in late 1976. The axe is of the slender, facetted variety with a single moulding around the socket. It measures 11·5 cms. in length and 4·9 cms. across the blade. It is very similar in form and size to an axe in the County Museum, purchased from the Stradling Collection in 1902, which was found in the 'turbaries west of Glastonbury'.

Fig. 1. Socketed axe from Luccombe.

From their association with other types of bronze work, facetted socketed axes can be dated to the developed period of the Late Bronze Age, that is the 7th-6th centuries B.C. Notable amongst these associations is the Wick Park Hoard from Stogursey (McNeil, 1973) where they were found with 'South Welsh' type socketed axes.

REFERENCE

McNeil, R. 1973, 'A Report on the Bronze Age Hoard from Wick Park, Stogursey, Somerset', *Proc. Som. Arch. Soc.*, *117*, 49-50.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Mr. Partridge for reporting the discovery of the axe, Mick Aston, the County Archaeologist, for bringing it to my attention and Sandy Morris for the drawing.

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TWO FLINT ARTIFACTS FROM THE GRAVEL CLIFFS AT DONIFORD, WEST SOMERSET

In December 1972, a large flint blade (Fig. 1b) was discovered in the gravel cliffs at Doniford, at a point approximately fifty metres west of the Doniford stream (ST 09034324). This artifact was embedded in a lens of fine, well sorted gravel which was overlain by 1 m. of coarser, poorly sorted material and a further 70 cm. of loam (Fig. 2). On a subsequent visit to this part of the cliff, the middle section of another large flint blade (Fig. 1a) was seen 'in situ' 5 cm. above the junction between the lens and the overlying gravel. Both artifacts are very slightly rolled and show peripheral damage consistent with their having been incorporated in a gravel deposit.

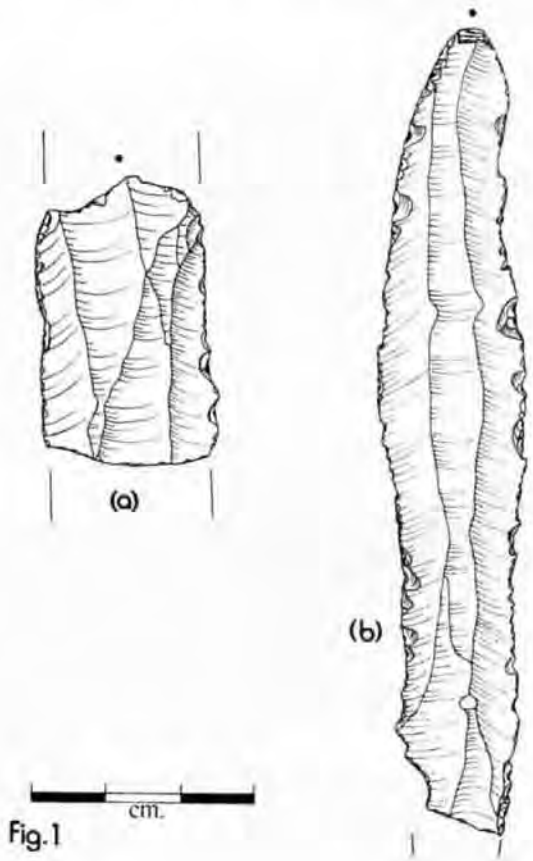

Fig.1

Technically, this material could belong in either an Upper Palaeolithic or a Mesolithic context. Large blades are a regular feature of Late Upper Palaeolithic industries from cave sites in Southern Britain and are present in the large assemblage from Gough's Cave, Cheddar.[1] Present radiocarbon evidence indicates that these industries belong to the closing phases of the Devensian glacial period (12,000-8,300 bc).[2] However, blades of the size and quality of the larger Doniford example are rarely encountered in British Mesolithic assemblages and the writer has seen only two comparable artifacts amongst the many thousands of Mesolithic flints from Somerset which he has examined. Furthermore, the few typically Mesolithic flints which have been found in the cliffs to the west of the Doniford stream have all been located in the uppermost 40 cm. of the loam deposit and are markedly different in condition to the blades from the underlying gravel.

Following a detailed study of the Quaternary deposits at Doniford, Gilbertson and Mottershead[3] concluded that the gravels exposed in the cliffs were essentially periglacial in origin and could be interpreted, at least in part, as reworked river gravels. The lenses of sand and fine gravel near the present Doniford stream were thought to be the infilled channels of small streams which ran temporarily over the surface of the accumulating gravel deposits. On the evidence available, it was suggested that the gravels represented one continuous depositional sequence which could be referred to the Devensian glacial period. During a visit to Doniford by the International Union for Quaternary Research in August 1977, Professor C. Kidson and Dr. D. Mottershead examined the cliff section which had produced the artifacts. They were able to confirm that the lens which had contained the larger blade was a fluvial deposit and agreed that the available evidence suggested a Devensian date for the entire gravel sequence at this point.

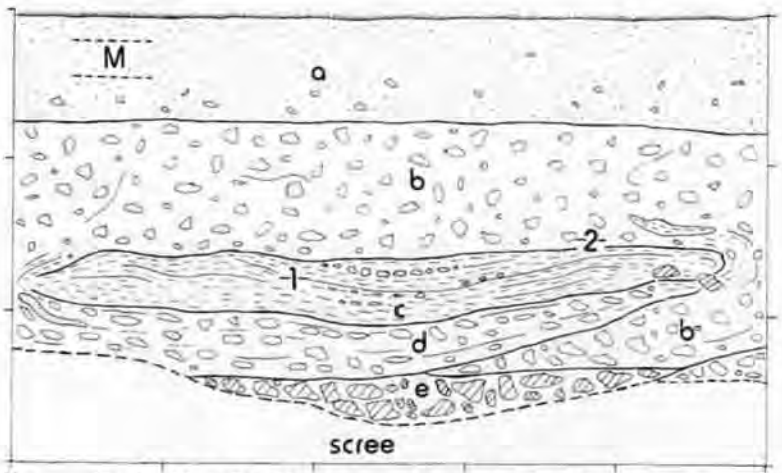

Fig.2 The Doniford gravels at ST 09034324.

a loam
b poorly sorted gravel
c bedded fine gravel
-1- level of large blade
d weakly bedded gravel
e coarse gravel
M level of Mesolithic artifacts
-2- level of broken blade

On the basis of the evidence outlined above, it is apparent that the blades from the gravel antedate the Mesolithic artifacts occasionally found in the upper loam. Furthermore, it would seem reasonable to suggest that this earlier material is likely

to belong to a Late Upper Palaeolithic industry of late Devensian date. At present, convincing evidence for open-air occupation in Southern Britain during this period is very sparse[4] and thus it is hoped that future finds of artifacts stratified within the Doniford gravels will establish beyond all doubt that a Late Upper Palaeolithic industry is represented here.

1. Garrod, D. A., *The Upper Palaeolithic Age in Britain* (London, 1926).
2. Dates given in uncalibrated radiocarbon years bc.
3. Gilbertson, D. D. and Mottershead, D. N., 'The Quaternary deposits at Doniford, West Somerset, *Field Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (1975), pp. 117-129.
4. Mellars, P. A., in *British Prehistory, a new outline*, ed. Colin Renfrew (Duckworth 1974), pp. 70-77.

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