

Another survey, using the same equipment and techniques, was carried out in January 2009, on the site of a second stone, also, it is assumed, a single orthostat, which lies just under 400m east of the Yarborough Stone, at NGR ST 394 579. This stone is now lost, although it is not clear exactly when it was removed. It is shown as still present on the OS 6" map of the 1880s, and the North Somerset HER reports that it is also depicted on the revised OS 6" sheet of the early 1960s (NSHER 108). However, if this is correct, then the OS map is in error, because in 1954, Hunt explicitly remarked that the stone 'has now been removed' (Hunt 1954, 28). In any event, the zig-zag and cross-section resistivity surveys conducted at the site of this stone appeared to reveal what may be a large socket hole at a depth of about 1.2m. This is not unexpected, as the field in which the stone lay has been regularly ploughed in recent times, and this depth may represent the build-up of a modern colluvial layer, only a few decades old, over the stone's former location. To the east of this an oval feature some 24m by 10m is delineated by high resistance, as well as a straight line thought to be a modern land drain. These results may be consistent with the existence of a second previously unrecorded barrow, which, as at Yarborough, appears to have a direct relationship with the (presumably earlier) orthostat.

We should also note that both stones, occupying as they do positions on the north side of the Lox Yeo Valley, lie along the line of a clear east-west

'ecotone' – a resource boundary between the arable farmland on which they were actually sited, and the low-lying valley marshland immediately downslope to the south.

Taken together as a small but related group in relatively close proximity, these two sites clearly require additional research, which might include an examination of LIDAR data and test auguring. In the final analysis however, archaeological excavation, even of limited scope, would be needed to confirm the date and nature of these previously unsuspected features.

The writers would like to thank the respective landowners for their kindness, co-operation and interest in allowing the surveys to take place: at Yarborough, Mrs Susan Griffin of Yaberry Farm; and at the second stone, Mr Simon de Shapland, of Knoll Hill Farm; and also the group of enthusiastic and hardy helpers who turned out twice in freezing weather to assist with the work, and without whom it could not have taken place. The full reports of both surveys have been deposited in the North Somerset HER.

#### Reference

- Hunt J, 1954. 'Ancient Banwell, Part 1', *Journ Axbridge Caving Group and Archaeol Society 2*, No 2.

NICK CORCOS and BOB SMISSON

### THE STORY OF A STONE ADZE FROM WINSCOMBE PARISH

In January 2009 a polished stone adze was found by Steven Bridges and Stewart Smith at Hillcrest Cottage, Hillyfields, in Winscombe parish, at a depth of c. 0.1m while digging a posthole for a side entry to the property. The find spot is at approximately ST428576 on the end of a westward projecting spur with valleys with streams to north and south. The local geology is Dolomitic Conglomerate. The find spot was formerly in what is locally called Observatory Field, after an astronomical observatory used by the nearby Sidcot School, but part of the field was added to the finder's property some years ago. The topographical position with good views all round suggested initially that the adze might be from a Neolithic settlement on the end of the spur but local search of soil failed to locate any other finds such as flints.

The adze was taken to the County Museum in Taunton in January where Steve Minnitt raised doubts about the adze suggesting it might be a modern ethnographic import. Luckily the South-West Implement Petrology Group met at Taunton in late January and the adze was taken and shown to the assembled experts. There Roger Taylor (of Exeter) and others confirmed that it was most likely an import from abroad, and probably from the South Pacific. The adze was sent to be examined by Tony Eccles of the Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Exeter, an expert on ethnographic material. He confirmed this it is of volcanic stone and almost certainly a Pacific island, probably Polynesia, where such items were used until recently as high status gifts and for wood working and boat building.

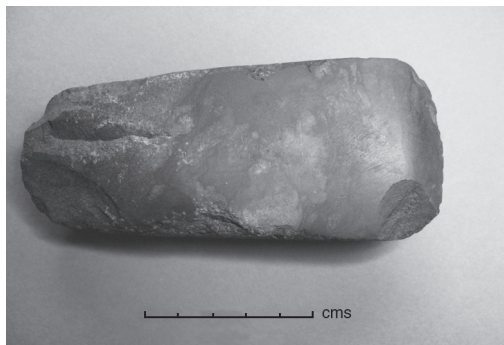


Figure Polynesian stone adze from Winscombe

This all raises the question of how it came to be buried in a field in Winscombe. The connection with Polynesia is not however necessarily so bizarre. The cottage where the adze was found formerly belonged to Sidcot School and was lived in by either a gardener or carpenter (or both). Christine Gladwin, the historian of the school, suggests that some connection with staff, students or even missionaries of the Quaker foundation could have brought back or sent back the adze in the late 19th or early 20th century. Research on this aspect continues. No doubt

it would have been used in teaching or put on display in some cabinet of curiosities in the school. It may later have been thrown out and used by one of the workers at the school and eventually been lost or thrown away into the field.

The find generated considerable local interest and surprisingly (to this author at least) this did not wane, indeed it increased, when the adze was suggested to be foreign rather than a prehistoric British find.

Thanks are due to Steve Bridges for reporting the find so promptly, largely a result of his being a fan of Channel 4's *Time Team* programme and a local parish councillor, and of donating the adze to the author. It will be deposited in either the Somerset County Museum or Weston super Mare museum.

#### Note

This is one of several axes to have turned up in the parish. A palaeolithic hand axe found in 1995 is reported elsewhere in this volume (Harding and Aston above), and a perforated stone macehead was found at Max Mills in Winscombe in 1865 which is now in Bristol City Museum.

M. ASTON

### THE SILVER *SILIQUEAE* FROM GREEN CUTTING, KINGSHAMS, ILCHESTER

The aim of this short note is to highlight the possible significance of five late Roman silver coins excavated under Peter Leach's direction at Kingshams in Ilchester during the mid-1970s.

Two hundred and forty-two Roman coins were recovered from the excavations and of this total five are silver issues known to archaeologists and numismatists as *siliquae* (Leach 1982, 237–8). The *siliqua* was the standard silver unit of the late empire, introduced c. 325, reduced in weight c. 355 and supplied to Britain by continental mints up until the usurpation of Constantine III in 407 (Casey 1994, 18; Guest 2005, 41–4). Silver *siliquae*, like all coins struck in precious metals, are rare as site finds but do occur occasionally in large assemblages of 4th-century coins (Reece 1973, 241). Therefore, the recovery of five from the relatively small area excavated at Kingshams is noticeable, especially when only a single *siliqua* is recorded from elsewhere in Ilchester (Leach 1982, 239).

Most inter-site syntheses of Roman coin data (eg Reece 1991) treat each coin as an individual unit of

data. It is thus difficult to quantify the number of *siliquae* from a large number of sites without recourse to a multiplicity of coin reports. Fortunately, some data is available in an early study by Reece (1973, table 1) and this information has been combined with data from a series of excavations in and around Ilchester to produce the Figure. This histogram shows the ratio of *siliquae* to other coins and it suggests that (generally speaking) a group of at least 300 coins is required to produce a single *siliqua*. In practice I suspect the figure is actually higher, perhaps somewhere in the region of 1:1000. Interestingly, a number of local sites (Bradley Hill, Ilchester Mead, Ilchester Little Spittle) produce low ratios of less than 1:100 and this may suggest that there is a local or regional pattern of *siliquae* loss. However, confirmation of such a phenomenon and its interpretation requires a more detailed study beyond the scope of this note.

The five *siliquae* from Kingshams included: an issue of Julian (Cat. No. 189), two coins of the usurper Magnus Maximus (Cat. Nos. 215 and 216)