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SURFACE PALÆOLITHS FROM STANDARDHILL FARM, NEAR ELHAM

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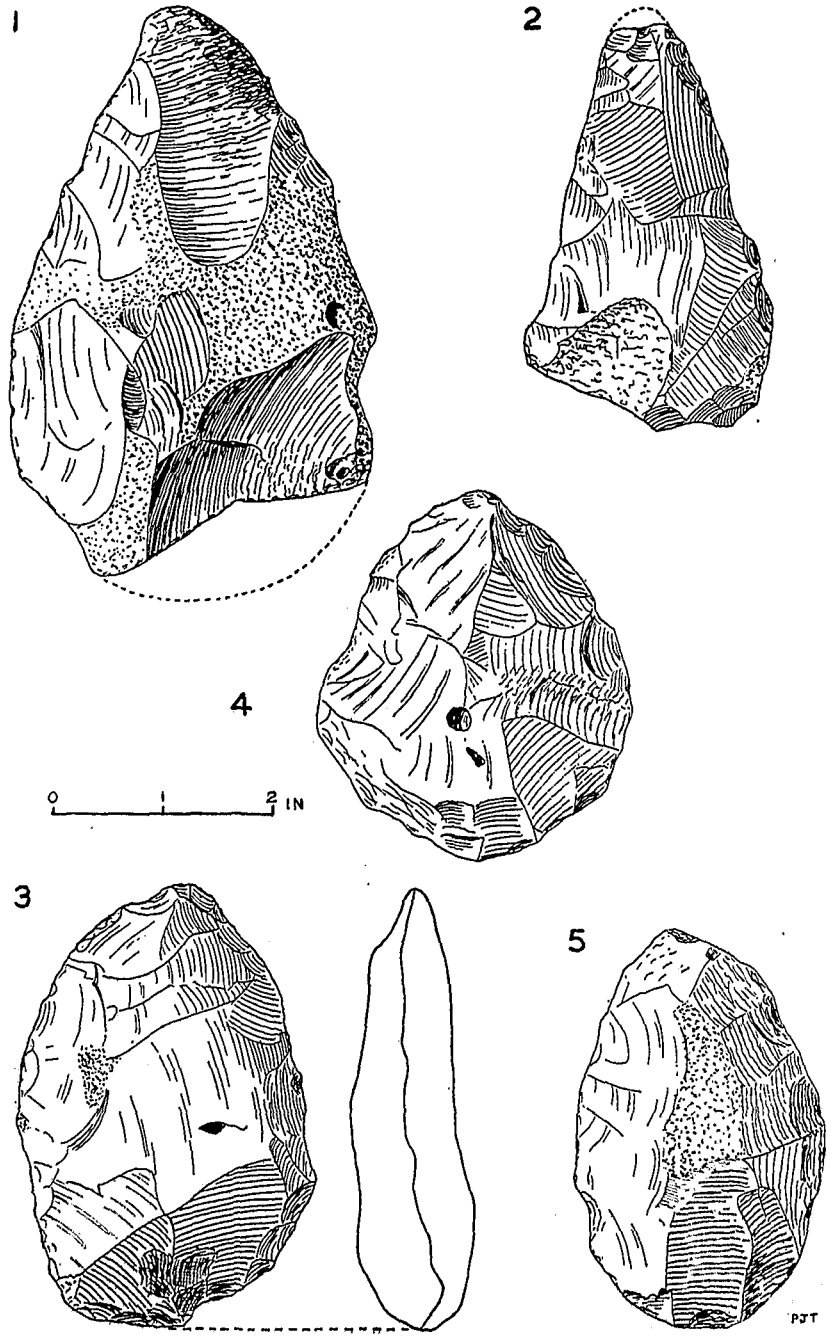
The seven Palæolithic implements shown in the accompanying illustrations were collected by the writer from the surface of a ploughed field on the south-west side of Standardhill Farm, ¾ mile east of Elham Church (O.S. 1 in. Sheet 173, National Grid Reference 188437). This field is situated on high ground, about 400 ft. O.D., at the summit of the eastern side of the Elham Valley. Here the chalk plateau has a characteristic covering of clayey drift, including a sprinkling of ochreous stained flints and much tabular iron sandstone, the latter presumably being derived from the Lenham Beds, areas of which occur in the locality. In some parts of the field the plough has turned up patches of reddish sandy soil which may also be connected with these Beds.

All the implements have suffered varying degrees of natural abrasion in antiquity, but this is unlikely to be due to fluviatile action. Their surfaces are deeply patinated and stained from buff to deep ochreous brown. There is no reason to regard them as more than "surface" finds for there is no evidence of a Pleistocene gravel in the vicinity from which they could have been derived.

Concentrations of surface palæoliths have been noted elsewhere at high levels on the Kentish Downlands, particularly on the plateau at Ash near Wrotham, and in other similar situations on the west side of the Medway. An earlier theory that these high-level implements must necessarily have come from river gravels, and, therefore, belong to an age before the establishment of the existing system of river drainage, will not now receive general acceptance.[1] It is quite likely

[1] Worthington G. Smith clearly recognized that the high-level palæoliths were not earlier than those of the valley gravels. See his *Man the Primeval Savage* (1894) where, on page 160, he remarks: "The slight abrasion, the absence of scrapers, and the deep ochreous or chocolate colour of the implements from the higher levels, may indicate a greater antiquity; but no antiquity whatever is indicated beyond the antiquity of the older river-drift tools." This view was opposed to that of Sir Joseph Prestwich who worked largely on data collected by Benjamin Harrison and De Barri Crawshay. The paper by Prestwich in the *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, February, 1892—"Primitive characters of the flint implements of the chalk plateau of Kent"—had a profound effect on opinion at that time. Later, however, the centre of the controversy shifted from the age of the accepted hand-axe forms found in such situations, to the authenticity of the supposed "Eoliths" which often occur in the same situations as the undisputed artifacts. The development of these ideas can be readily followed from Harrison's own notes and correspondence contained in his biography *Harrison of Ightham* (1928), by Sir Edward Harrison.



Acheulian Implements from Standardhill Farm, near Elham
(Slightly over $\frac{1}{2}$ actual size)

that where they occur in concentration the implements mark ancient squatting sites, the locations of which were determined by some former natural advantage, such as a clearing in the forest or the proximity of a water pool. Scratches and other marks of natural abrasion evident on many high-level surface palæoliths were probably caused by sub-aerial soil-flow, or " solifluxion ", which took place during a glacial period subsequent to their manufacture. In the periglacial[1] region seasonal thawing reduced the surface soil to a sludge which moved on even slight slopes, with consequent grinding together of the material incorporated in it. Intensive weathering of implements which have lain for a long time on the surface can have the effect of reducing the sharp angles of the flaking ridges and imparting a smoothness which may easily be mistaken for the results of rolling in the bed of a stream.

Description of the Implements

In the following descriptive notes the specimens are numbered in accordance with the figures accompanying the text. Numbers 1-5 are Acheulian in type and worked on both faces, while 6 and 7 are flakes, the side opposite to that illustrated being the plain, unworked bulbar surface.

1. A roughly made hand-axe with considerable areas of cortex remaining on both faces. It is stained an ochreous orange-yellow. The butt may have been originally rounded, but is now formed by an angular fracture which is patinated to the same extent as the worked surfaces and is, therefore, not of recent origin. Length 5·2 in.

2. Implement with a thick rounded butt and elongated point. A recent " pot-lid " fracture has left a large hollow near the butt on the face shown. Patina is an even orange-brown. Length 3·6 in.

3. Ovate with uneven yellow-orange patina and lustrous surface. The right edge seems to have been deliberately blunted while the other more curved edge is still remarkably keen. This is a common feature of Acheulian ovates and may illustrate the manner in which they were held, the blunted edge being where pressure was applied by the inside of the first and second fingers in using the tool for cutting purposes. Length 4 in.

4. A much weathered ovate with slightly ochreous-buff surface. Length 3·3 in.

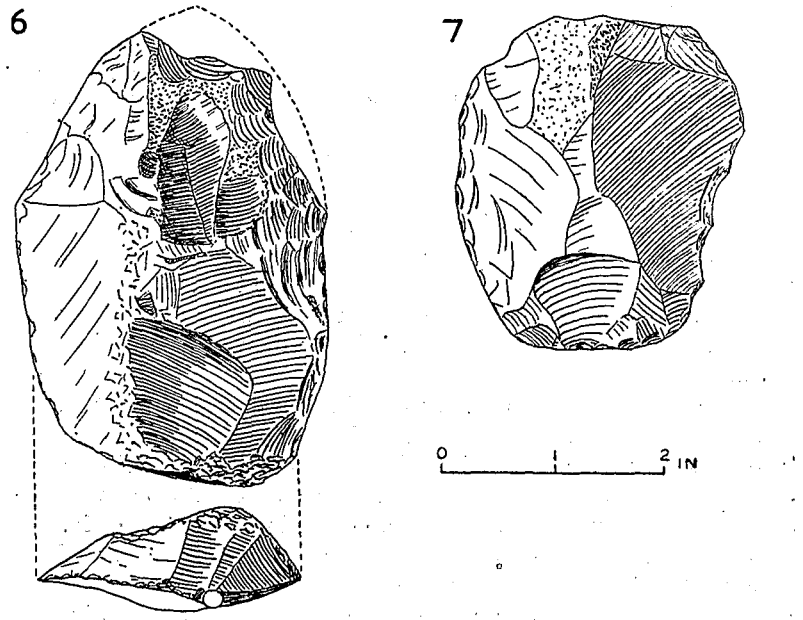
5. Ovate with surface condition closely similar to No. 4. Length 3·6 ins.

6. Levallois-type flake with well-marked faceted butt and traces of retouch on right margin. Mutilated at point and bearing two deep

[1] The term " periglacial " is used to describe the region bordering the ice-sheet during a glaciation. Tundra conditions must have obtained in the periglacial area of southern England during the major glaciations of the Quaternary period.

thermal fractures on the convex face ; also very bruised on main ridge and on the forward angle of butt. Patina, ochreous-yellow to orange-brown. Length 4 in.

7. Scraper made on thick flake with flat striking platform and obtuse flaking angle. There is evidence of retouching on both edges. Ochreous yellow-brown patina. Length 3 in.



Palaeolithic Flake Implements from Standardhill Farm, near Elham
(Slightly over ½ actual size)

Dating

In the absence of geological data it is only possible to suggest the age of these implements from typological considerations. On this evidence the bifaces might well be regarded as Middle Acheulian and of the same age as those from the Boyn Hill terrace at Swanscombe. The large Levallois flake, No. 6, resembles those of the Baker's Hole industry, but as faceted-butt flakes occur in the Boyn Hill gravels of the Middle Thames in association with Middle Acheulian, this Elham flake may be contemporary with the bifaces. The other flake tool, No. 7, is not out of place in association with Middle Acheulian.

On the whole, we may reasonably place this assemblage in the period of the Boyn Hill terrace aggradation. The following glaciation, which

is generally believed to have been the Riss,[1] produced extensive solifluxion in the Lower Thames area, notably the Coombe Rock covering the Levallois working-floor at Baker's Hole. It may well have been responsible also for the solifluxion on the surface of the North Downs which resulted in the abrasion of many of the Palæolithic implements found in that area.

[1] On the other hand it may have been the Würm Glaciation. There is at present a division of opinion as to whether the Boyn Hill aggradation is Mindel/Riss or Riss/Würm. The Baker's Hole industry is usually called Levallois I—II and assigned to the early part of the Riss Glaciation on geological grounds, but it is typologically very similar to the Levallois V of the Somme, which is early Würm. Similarly, some of the Acheulian implements in the upper parts of the Swanscombe terrace closely resemble the advanced stages of the culture which on the Continent are referred to the Riss/Würm Interglacial. A satisfactory solution of this problem is urgently needed, and further evidence, both geological and archæological is required before an entirely satisfactory correlation of the English and Continental successions can be effected. For further discussion of these points see: *A Survey and Policy of Field Research in the Archæology of Great Britain*, I (1948), published by the Council for British Archæology, particularly pp. 16-17, 20 and 23.