

MESOLITHIC DISCOVERIES AT PERRY WOODS, SELLING, NEAR CANTERBURY, KENT

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THE villages of Selling and Shottenden lie approximately seven miles to the west of Canterbury. Mesolithic material is found fairly generally in this area and the collections of the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford contain two tranchet axes; one said to have been found at Selling Station (A.M. 1927-4013), and the other two miles east of Selling (A.M. 1927-4014). There are, however, two sites in particular which are worthy of more detailed attention Site 1 (N.G.R. TR 045555; Site 2, N.G.R. TR 056557). Both lie within the area of woodland known as Perry Woods and were located where footpaths had exposed Mesolithic material on the surface. In the autumn of 1964 a limited excavation was undertaken to obtain the maximum amount of information about the industry itself whilst leaving the majority of the site untouched for future investigation.

The excavations were conducted with the kind permission of Lord Sondes, by members of the Kent Mesolithic Research Group and with the aid of a grant from the Kent Archaeological Society. Thanks are due to Mr. Whitehead for his kind co-operation, to Mr. Bruce and Mr. Mann for their help with the excavations, to Mrs. Upton for drawing the flints, and to the many others who made this research project possible.

The finds are at present in Canterbury Museum together with a detailed record of the excavations.

Geologically, the area consists of Thanet Beds overlying the Upper Chalk, in places crowned with outliers of Oldhaven and Woolwich Beds and infilled with Brickearth. Complicating the picture are intermittent wind-blown sand deposits. Both sites lie within a quarter of a mile of present-day springs and within half a mile of readily accessible flint-bearing chalk deposits.

Site 1 (N.G.R. TR 045555)

Site 1, the more important of the two sites, is situated on the summit of high ground to the north-east of the 'Rose and Crown' Inn and east of Shottenden Camp. It commands a good view of the coast towards the north and the Stour Valley towards the east. In spite of the fact that the hilltop has been severely disturbed in recent times, at least half of the site remains intact. The soil profile is that of a typical

Podsol with a leached A horizon, and Mesolithic artifacts were found distributed fairly evenly throughout that layer. Although excavation progressed in 6-in. spits and the finds from each layer kept separately, it was not possible to detect any changes within the assemblage. The finds from the site are therefore considered below as a homogeneous industry.

Site 2 (N.G.R. TR 056557)

The majority of mesolithic material from this site had weathered out of the sand and occurred as 'surface' finds. Although lacking any stratigraphical relationship, the artifacts did appear to belong to the same industry and are considered as such below.

The Flint Industry

Almost without exception the flints from both sites were found in a perfectly fresh and sharp condition. Patination was minimal and the majority of the flints were a pale grey colour. Where the cortex was present it had a white chalky appearance. Little use was made of the plentiful gravel and pebbly flint existing in the vicinity of both sites.

(i) *Primary flakes, blade like flakes, etc.*

Site 1 3,310 Site 2 583

Out of a random sample of 250 flakes from Site 1:

| | 1-2 | 2-3 | 3-4 | 4-5 | 5-6 | 6-7 | 7-8 | 8-9 | cm. |
|--------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Length | 55 | 88 | 51 | 21 | 12 | 12 | 5 | 1 | |
| Width | 109 | 63 | 28 | 12 | 2 | 2 | 2 | — | |

Whilst Site 1 seems to represent a reasonable cross-section of the industry Site 2 does not. By the very fact that much of the material was surface collected, it is the larger more easily spotted artifacts that predominate.

(ii) *Cores*

| | Site 1 | Site 2 |
|-------------------------------|--------|--------|
| Single-platformed undeveloped | 5 | 3 |
| Single-platformed conical | — | — |
| Two platformed prismatic | 5 | — |
| Four-platformed | 2 | 1 |
| Multi-platformed | 2 | 1 |
| Chopper type | 3 | — |
| Shattered pieces | 28 | 6 |
| | <hr/> | <hr/> |
| | 45 | 11 |
| | <hr/> | <hr/> |

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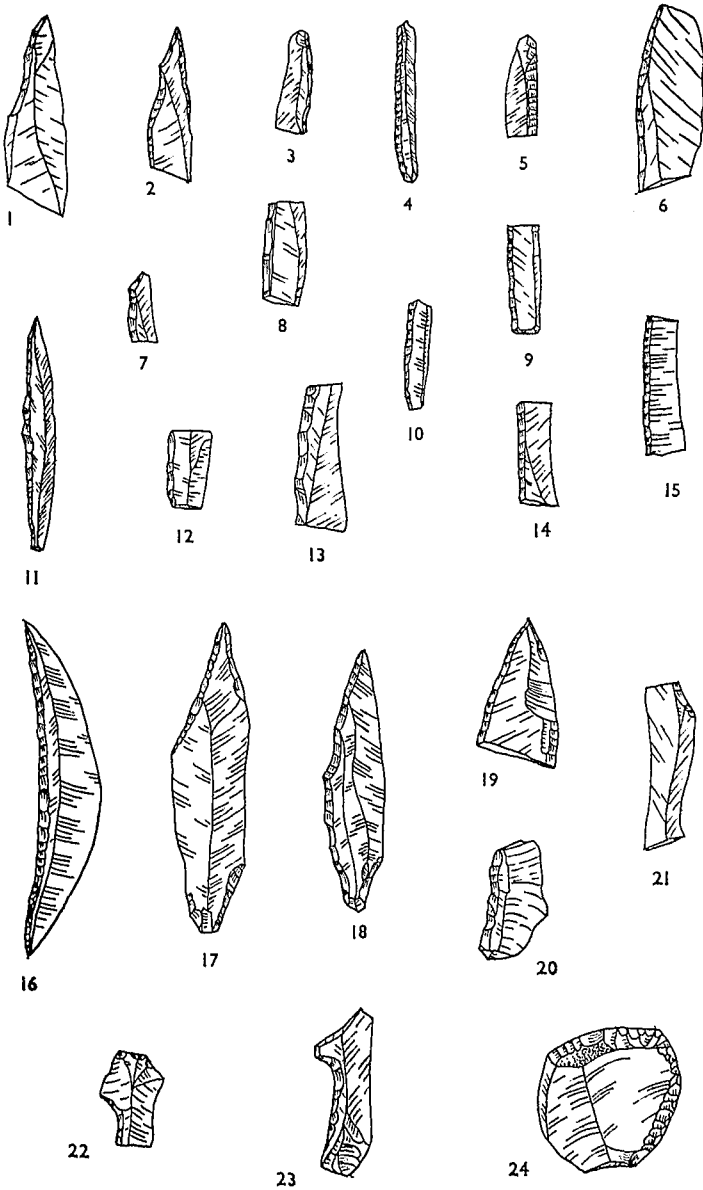


FIG. 1. Site 1 (Scale: $\frac{1}{2}$)

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| | Site 1 | Site 2 |
|--|------------|-----------|
| (iii) <i>Core rejuvenating flakes</i> | | |
| Struck across platform | 16 | 1 |
| Struck across edge | 11 | 2 |
| Struck down edge to remove the base | 2 | — |
| | <hr/> | <hr/> |
| | 29 | 3 |
| | <hr/> | <hr/> |
| (iv) <i>Microoliths</i> | | |
| Obliquely blunted points (Nos. 1 and 2) | 2 | — |
| Points totally blunted down one edge only (Nos. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 11) | 6 | — |
| Rods totally blunted down one edge only (Nos. 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14 and 15) | 7 | — |
| Crescents (No. 16) | 1 | — |
| Shouldered or tanged forms (Nos. 17 and 18) | 2 | — |
| Broken or unidentifiable (Nos. 19, 20 and 21) | 3 | — |
| | <hr/> | <hr/> |
| | 21 | — |
| | <hr/> | <hr/> |
| Although it is possible that some of the so-called 'rod' forms may represent points blunted totally down one edge which have lost their tips, they do appear as a distinct type. | | |
| (v) <i>Micro-burins</i> | | |
| Micro-burins (No. 22) | 12 | — |
| Unseparated forms (No. 23) | 2 | — |
| | <hr/> | <hr/> |
| | 14 | — |
| | <hr/> | <hr/> |
| (vi) <i>Core axes and adzes</i> (Nos. 29, 32 and 33) | Parts of 3 | Part of 1 |
| (vii) <i>Axe and adze sharpening flakes</i> (Nos. 34 and 42) | 13 | 1 |

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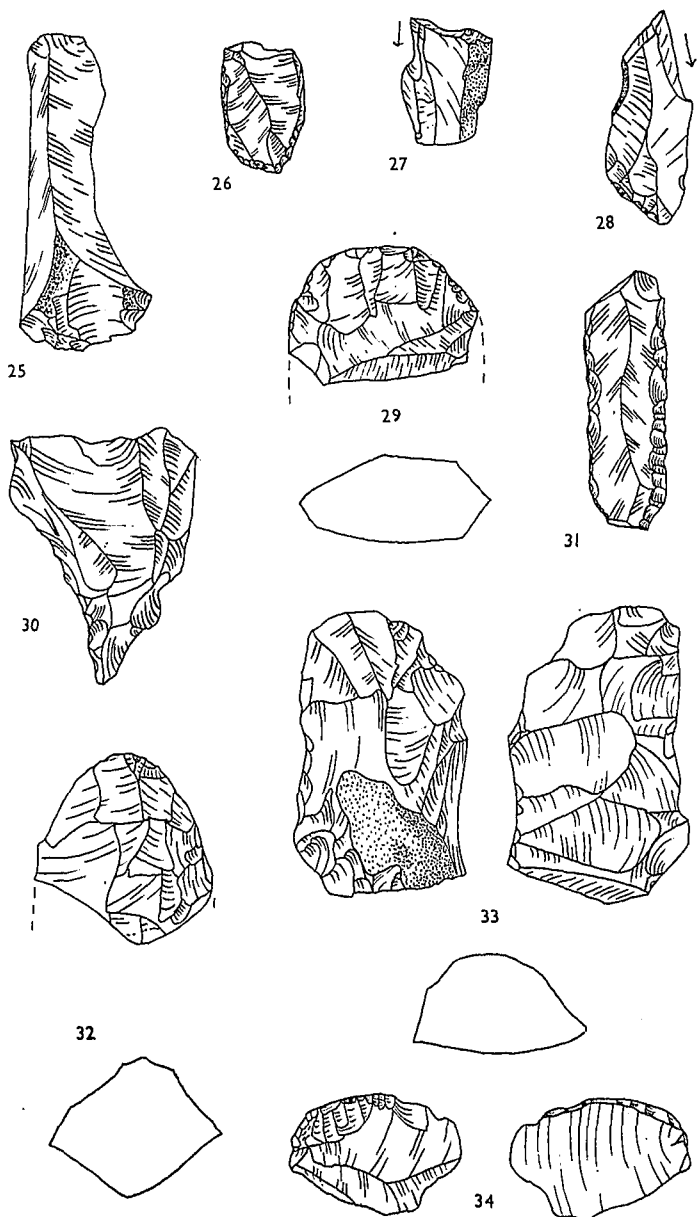


FIG. 2. Site 1. (Scale: $\frac{1}{2}$)

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| | Parts of 3 | Part of 1 |
|--|-------------------------|-----------|
| (viii) <i>Blade segments</i> | | |
| Incorporating striking platform | 9 | 4 |
| Without striking platform or base | 17 | 11 |
| Incorporating base | 14 | 6 |
| | <hr/> | <hr/> |
| | 40 | 21 |
| | <hr/> | <hr/> |
| <p>Although all appear to be deliberately snapped, none show signs of wear definitely attributable to their having been used as tools.</p> | | |
| (ix) <i>Burins</i> | | |
| Simple (Nos. 27 and 28) | 3 | — |
| Double-ended (No. 45) | — | 1 |
| | <hr/> | <hr/> |
| | 3 | 1 |
| | <hr/> | <hr/> |
| (x) <i>Burin spalls</i> | 2 | — |
| (xi) <i>Scrapers</i> | | |
| Convex (Nos. 24, 25, 26, 37, 38, 39, 40 and 41) | 10 | 12 |
| Concave | — | — |
| Miscellaneous (No. 44) | 1 | 2 |
| | <hr/> | <hr/> |
| | 11 | 14 |
| | <hr/> | <hr/> |
| (xii) <i>Awls</i> (No. 30) | 2 | — |
| (xiii) <i>Saws</i> | 1 | — |
| | (broken fragment of) | |
| (xiv) <i>Fabricators</i> (No. 36) | 1 | — |

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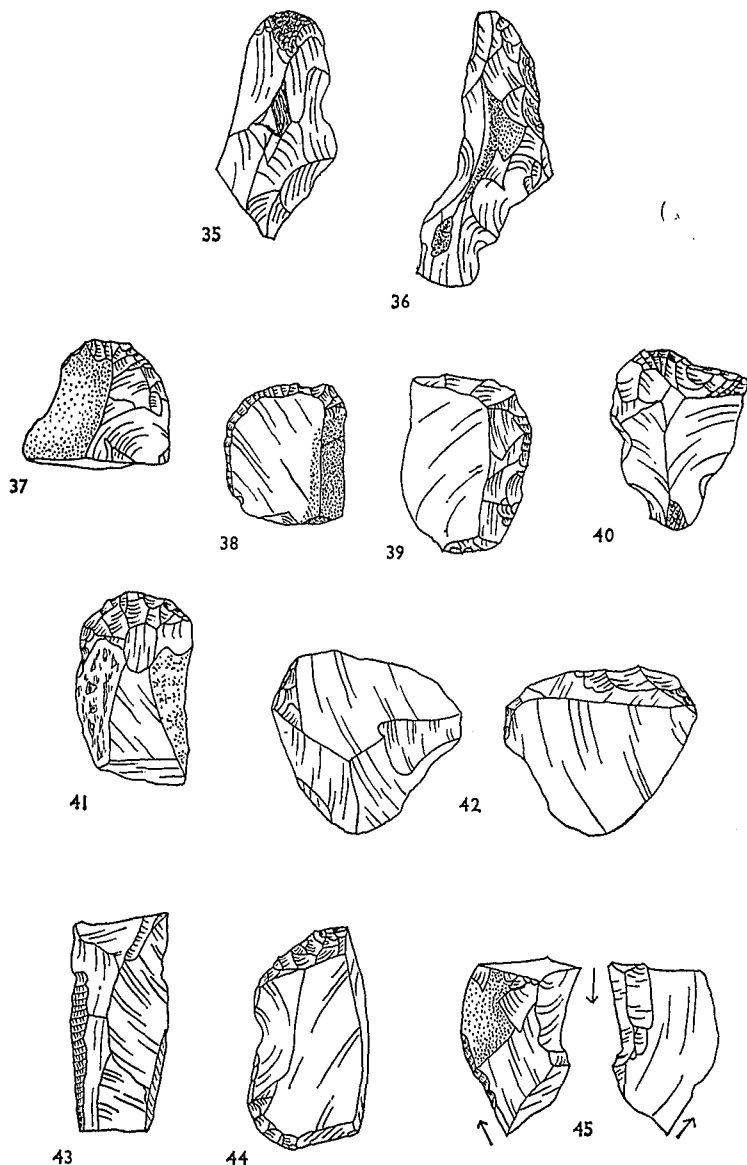


FIG. 3. Site 1, nos. 35 and 36;
Site 2, nos. 37-45. (Scale: $\frac{1}{2}$)

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| | Parts of 3 | Part of 1 |
|---|---------------|-----------|
| (xv) <i>Punches</i> (No. 35) | 1 (broken) | — |
| (xvi) <i>Backed blades</i> | | |
| Retouch on one edge (No. 43) | 1 | 1 |
| Retouch on both edges (No. 31) | 1 | — |
| | 2 | 1 |
| (xvii) <i>Blades and flakes with miscellaneous wear and retouch</i> | | |
| Blades and flakes with polish on edge | 10 | 1 |
| Blades and flakes with wear and possible retouch on edge | 25 | 12 |
| Blades with flakes with miscellaneous retouch on edge | 7 | 5 |
| | 42 | 18 |
| Total number of artifacts | 3,540 | 654 |

One further artifact not mentioned above was the discovery on Site 2 of a fine Neolithic leaf-shaped arrowhead. As a surface find, it probably represents a loss during hunting rather than indicating possible Neolithic settlement in the area.

CONCLUSIONS

Because comparisons between industries and a discussion of their dating are based to a considerable degree on the study of microlithic types, and as Site 2 has produced no microliths so far, my remarks on these matters will be confined to material from Site 1. The premise that both sites are likely to represent basically the same groups of people still stands, however, despite the fact that such a connection can only be implied. Any variations that occur are more likely to be attributable to differences in either industrial activity or domestic use.

At the present stage of research into the Mesolithic in this country, it is perhaps unwise to attempt to define industries in 'cultural' terms. Rather it is better to seek similarities with other industries in the

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immediate area. This is difficult as few such Mesolithic sites are known, a situation more likely to reflect the state of current research rather than an actual absence of sites. Connections with the so-called 'Wealden Industries' could be made, though this term is generally of such a nebulous character as to have little meaning. Certainly the presence of 'rods' and tanged forms (Clark's form G), would tend to forge links in that direction.

Dating evidence is likewise difficult to obtain. No help can be gained from a study of the geology of the site. Preliminary results from pollen samples taken during the excavations would seem to indicate a date approximating to the Boreal/Atlantic transition. Typologically, the presence of 'rods', tanged microliths, and definite inverse retouch on at least one of the microliths (no. 16), all point to a date somewhere in the Atlantic period.

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