

A MESOLITHIC VILLAGE IN HAMPSHIRE

SIR THOMAS TROUBRIDGE, Bt., F.S.A., sends the following :
The site is at Beaulieu in the New Forest, on a spur of gravel falling somewhat steeply from the plateau (which is here about 100ft. above sea-level) in a south-westerly direction to within a few feet of sea-level (fig. 1). The subsoil is the upper Eocene Clay, and the gravel above it varies from 2 to 6 or 7ft. In some places it is rather whiter and more sandy than in others.



FIG. 1. PLAN OF THE SITE.

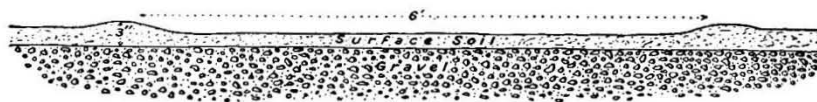


FIG. 2. SECTION OF A 'CIRCLE.'

The area so far investigated is about five acres, and has woods on the north-east and south sides, with a pond on the west side at the foot of the slope. The woods are not old, having been planted about 1810. The pond is about the same age, and was formed by constructing a dam across a small stream, the overflow of some springs about three-quarters of a mile distant (mentioned in a deed of 1205), and provides excellent drinking water.

The field is almost a square, and is—and I think always has been—grass. It had forty-eight circular patches (fig. 1) dotted irregularly all over it, though rather more on the upper part than on the lower side by the pond. These circles varied in diameter from 5ft. to 12 and 15ft., and one was 23ft. They were all filled with brambles growing to a height of about 3 or 4ft., and many had a low bank round them about 4in. in height and about 18in. wide at the base. There was no ditch on either side of them, so the bank must have been formed of earth thrown out from the centre—probably the turf taken up and laid round the circle to form a low bank (fig. 2).

The site was let as a building site for one house, which was to be built on the plateau on the north-east corner. As soon as the builder began to level the ground for the foundations, I went to

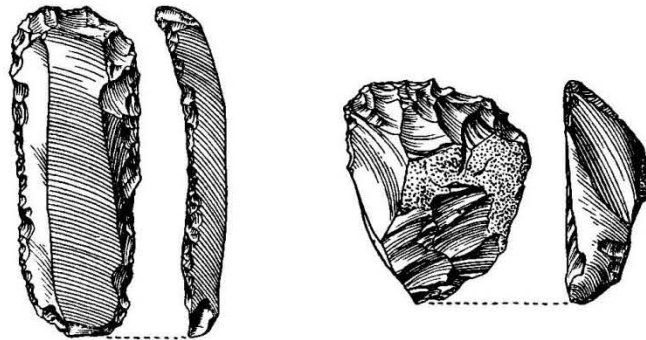


FIG. 3. FLINT IMPLEMENTS FROM BEAULIEU ($\frac{2}{3}$).

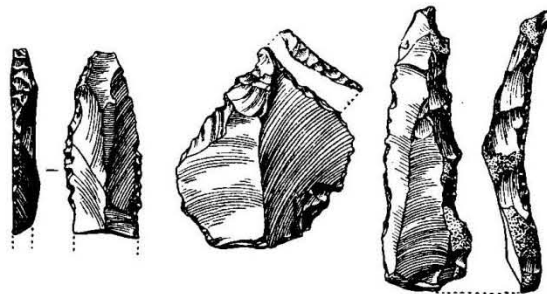


FIG. 4. MICROLITHS FROM BEAULIEU ($\frac{1}{3}$).

investigate, and almost immediately began to find flakes, scrapers, and various artifacts quite near the surface; mostly in the top 3in. of the gravel, under about 1ft. of humus.

As four or five of these circles were on the actual site of the house, it was clear that they would be completely dug away in preparing the foundations, in some places the excavations going down as far as 7 and 8ft. below the original surface. In these cases I kept a careful watch, but except in one case nothing but a few flakes were found in any of them, nor was it possible to distinguish the sides of any from the surrounding gravel.

A few pot-boilers were found in and around some of them, and occasionally small pieces of charcoal or burnt wood, and these were always in the upper few inches. Nothing like a hearth was found, and no bones or any other article other than flints. No pottery whatever has been found at all, except a few bits of medieval date.

In one of these shallow pits there was the base of a wooden post, 8in. long, exactly in the centre of the floor, and the top of it 15in. from the surface. There were no signs of post-holes in any of the low surrounding 'banks.'

Several of the smaller pits did not even have any flakes in them; but if the pits were at any time used for occupation, the smaller ones may have been used for stores, or other purposes, as they were certainly not large enough to live in.

The high ground at the south-east corner of the site was levelled to make a hard lawn-tennis court, and here the gravel was of a lighter colour and more sandy. Here I found six or seven knives and scrapers all lying together (fig. 3). In addition to these, I got several 'microliths' (fig. 4) and many flakes—all in a space of 112ft. by 56ft., the area levelled for the tennis-court. The site is considerably farther west than any shown in the Frontispiece map of J. G. D. Clark's book on *The Mesolithic Age in Britain*, except perhaps Mottistone in the Isle of Wight and, of course, the sites in Devon and Cornwall.

There are hardly any large flints in the district, and consequently all the artifacts have been struck off rather poor material. There are a few cores from which microliths have evidently been struck.

[Reprinted from "THE ANTIQUARIES JOURNAL," April, 1936 (Vol. XVI, No. 2).]

Since the note in *Antiquaries Journal* for April was written further discoveries have been made which I think are worth recording. Not more than 150 yards from the Mesolithic settlement in the valley on the south side of it I discovered a long barrow. It lies north and south, with the wide end towards the north. It has at some time been cut almost in two, and the north end

has been dug away, but the outline of the part dug away is clearly to be seen on the ground, and the site of it is entirely covered with gorse, the rest of the valley being grass. The portion that remains is 110ft. long and 10ft. high. The top widens out from 4ft. 6in. at the south end to 18in. at the point where it now ends, and the base widens to 40ft. which includes a ditch on each side. The material forming the barrow is a clayey loam somewhat similar to the long barrow near Christchurch, dug recently by Mr. B. Calkin, who found some neolithic pottery in the ditch, but the primary burial had almost entirely disappeared. I found two more round barrows on the Manor, one fairly large about 62ft. in diameter and about 3ft. high with no ditch round it, the material being brought from the surrounding ground. The other smaller, only 32ft. diameter and barely 3ft. high. The large one is on the Bagshot sand, of which there is a small outcrop here. There is no ditch round this barrow, and as a road was at some time cut through a corner of it, it is clear from the face of this "cut" that the earth forming it was brought from round about as it varies a good deal in colour and texture. It is probable that one of these barrows will be excavated this summer.

With Commander E. Wrey, upon whose land the Mesolithic settlement was found, I looked carefully over the ground round about his house and garden, and within 300 yards, in the wood which forms the eastern boundary, we found a good many artefacts, which on being brought under the notice of experts were pronounced to be, some neolithic and some bronze age. This would seem to show that there had been continuous occupation of the site for a considerable time, though, of course, there may have been intervals when the site was not occupied. It only shows, I think, how important it was to find a site with advantages of position, aspect, drainage, proximity of water, shelter, etc., and having found it, how our ancestors never left it, so long as the conditions remained favourable, and were not altered by changes of climate, or irruptions of hostile peoples, from overseas or otherwise, to which the site might become exposed.