

# Mesolithic Distribution in South-East Hampshire

## INTRODUCTION

### *Introduction*

THE area covered by this survey is bounded on the north by the downland from Butser to Winchester; the valley of the Itchen to Southampton; the coastline to Langstone Harbour; and a line from here northwards to Butser.

The Greensands area of north-east Hants has been investigated already by Rankine.<sup>1</sup> The Chalklands immediately north of the Downs have not been searched yet to see if mesolithic sites exist there.

The sites around Basingstoke found by Willis are already recorded.<sup>2</sup> Some sites are known from the New Forest<sup>3</sup> but the nature of the terrain must preclude the discovery of some sites, but it seems by some recent finds that the settlement was along river valleys.

The subsidence of the Old Solent River must also now cover many more sites. It may well be that the preponderance of sites in West Sussex along the Greensands outcrops north of the Downs and the apparent absence on the Downs and to the south, mean that the mesolithic people preferred the easier terrain of the Greensands for their movements: it will be shown later that these people wandered as far as Devon and no doubt used regularly a system of trackways covering southern England.

A link-up of the sites shown on the map, Fig. 1, emphasises this fact.

### *Geological background*

The area of Chalklands which forms the northern part of this survey is covered in parts with Clay-with-Flints, a variable formation which in places is almost pure loam. Most of the downland sites have been found on this formation. Today and no doubt in prehistoric times these parts supported more vegetation and tree growth than did the rest of the area.

The Bagshot Beds outcrops to the north of the Portsdown anticline were important to the mesolithic people; these areas were dry compared with the surrounding London Clay. This clay area was avoided it seems, except for two small sites, both of which are near streams.

The alluvial/coastal plain must have been more extensive than now. The Portsmouth and Langstone Harbours at extreme low tide today present the scene as it was in mesolithic times, a plain intersected by small rivers and streams.

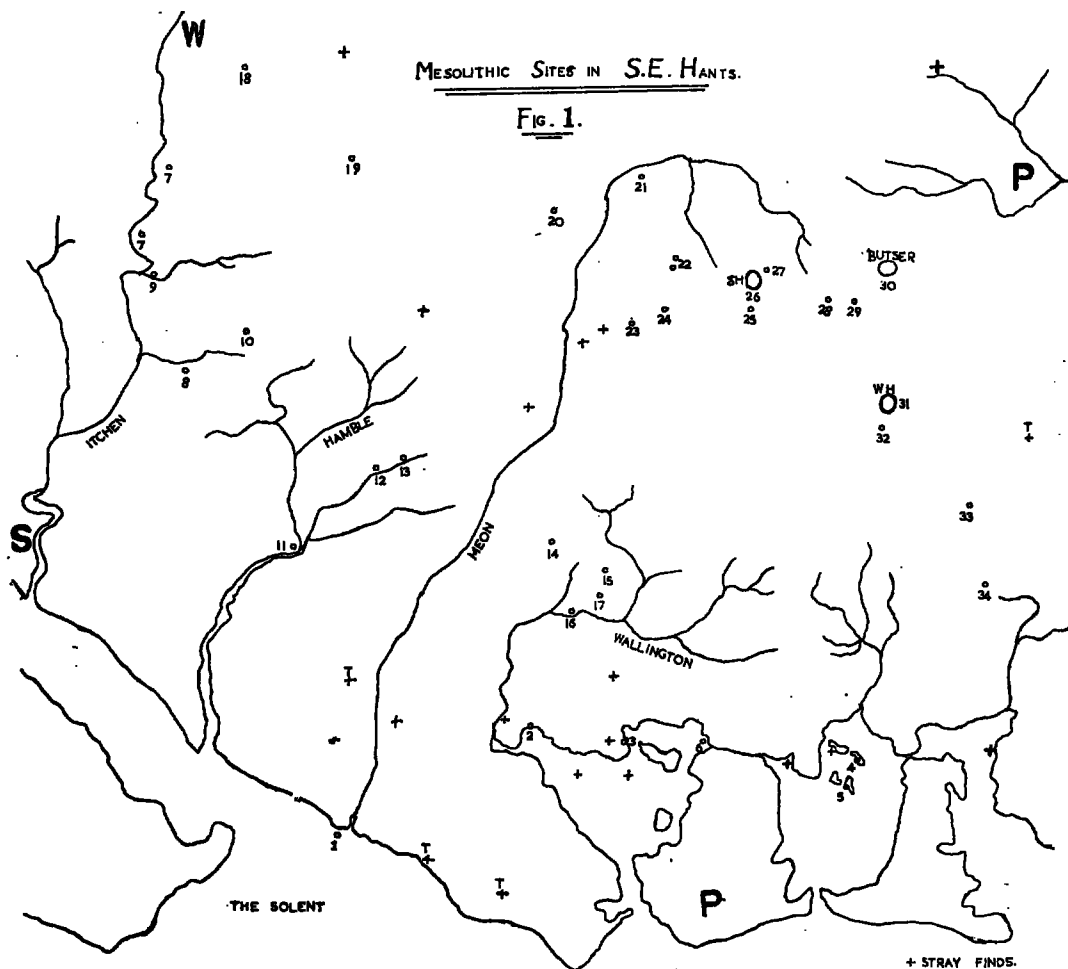
### *The distribution and pattern of the sites*

After looking at the map and the distribution of the sites two facts become clear: firstly, the majority lie along the east-west run of the geological formations; and secondly these are linked by the river valleys which run from north to south.

This seems to point to lines of communication. In certain places these lines link up with nearby mesolithic settlement, for example the sites at Butser are near the well-known sites on the Greensands extending far into Sussex; sites to the north of Butser link, via Longmoor, to the many sites at Oakhanger discovered by Rankine<sup>4</sup>, and sites to the south of Butser are linked via Windmill Hill and Rowlands Castle to the coastal sites.

The Solent and in particular Langstone Harbour would have given shelter to seaborne folk arriving from the opposite side of the Channel.

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The sites along the Hamble and Itchen rivers may show penetration to inland areas or activities connected with fishing and wild fowling. The sites along the Bagshot Beds outcrops may have been connected with hunting, for all except the one at Shedfield are small.<sup>5</sup>

The great number of sites at Butser and Salt Hill, East Meon, points to the importance of this area, good flint for knapping was to hand from outcrops on the northern escarpments. Unfortunately the disturbance on the sites by agriculture has made it impossible to prove by archaeological methods that hut sites existed here similar to the Farnham examples.<sup>6</sup> Also the finding here of pebble rubbers of West Country origin show that these places were on a migration route; furthermore Butser, the highest point on the South Downs, provided a look-out; camp fires over a large area would be visible from here.

### *Survey of Sites*

Some indication of the size of sites is given by the number of cores recovered, since all the finds were collected from the surface, in some cases from a single search, others from repeated

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visits over a number of years, the numbers of cores does not always truly indicate the size of the site.

Except where mentioned all the sites and finds have been found by the writer, and the material from these sites is in his collection. Only the important finds from each site are named in this brief survey. Figs. 2 and 3 shows examples of the finds.

### *Transect Axes*

The majority are rough examples of the type and vary in length from 7½ inches down to 2½ inches; only a few show evidence of resharpening. On examining the axe-sharpening flakes one notes that the majority have been struck from finely worked axes. None of the axe flakes match up with any of the axes, this would suggest that the finely worked axes were carried away by the mesolithic people on their wanderings, especially to the Greensand sites in Sussex, where large flints suitable for conversion to axes are scarce. An equal number of axe-flakes have been struck from opposite sides of the cutting edges of axes.

### *I. Coastal Sites*

1. Rainbow Bar, Hill Head. Submerged site exposed at low tide: 6 cores, 1 pick (in B.M. collections), blades.<sup>7</sup>
2. Wicor Shore, Cams Bay, Fareham. Site in gravel on foreshore, found by C. J. Mogridge in the 1930's: 11 cores, 2 axes (one Hassocks type), 1 large microlith.<sup>8</sup>
3. Seabanks north of Portchester Castle: flints collected from material dredged to strengthen banks. The site is on an old land surface below estuarine mud: the flints were deeply patinated originally: 4 cores and blades.
4. Long Island, Langstone Harbour: 3 cores, 1 axe and blades.<sup>9</sup>
5. Baker's Island, Langstone Harbour: 2 axes and a pick, a core and blades.
6. Small island off Western Road, Cosham: 1 core, 1 microlith and blades.

### *Stray Finds*

Axe; found at Titchfield and given to the writer.

Axe; dug up at R.N. Air Station, Lee-on-the-Solent by K. Snow (Cumberland House Museum).

Axe; found in stream bed by bridge at Grange Farm, Gosport by M. J. W. Clark.

Microlith in field at Great Posbrook Farm, Titchfield.

Microlith in field west of Fort Southwick, Portsdown.

Microlith on western shore at Farlington Marshes.

Microlithic core at Sandringham Road, Catisfield.

Microlithic core at Parish Hall, Castle Street, Portchester.

Microlithic core on shore west of Portchester Castle.

Microlithic core and blades on shore south of viaduct at Cams, Fareham.

Microlithic core-trimming from Pewit Island, Portsmouth Harbour.

Microlithic core-trimming from Vicar Point, Thorney Island.

Microlithic blades from North Binness Island, Langstone Harbour.

Two blades from mud and shingle flats in Portsmouth Harbour.

A Bunter quartzite macehead with hour-glass perforation found about thirty-five years ago on Castle Farm, Wickham, is in the possession of Mrs. A. E. Marchant, 2 Southampton Road, Fareham.

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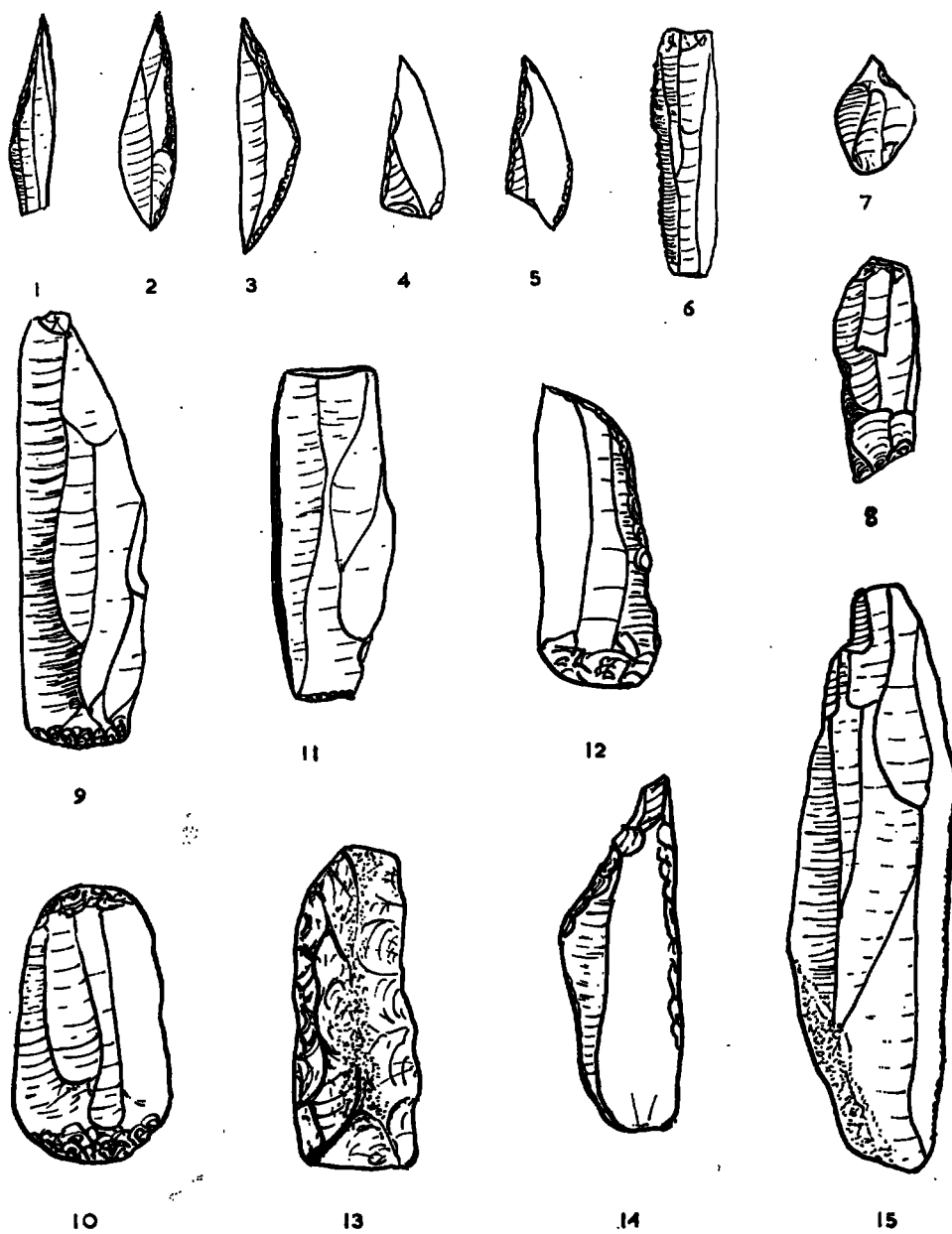


Fig. 2

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### *II. Inland Sites (mostly) on or near Bagshot Beds outcrops*

7. Twyford and Brambridge: cores and blades from these areas are in the Tudor House Museum, Southampton.
8. Allington Manor Farm, Fair Oak: this site was found by J. Hooper, 5 cores.
9. Stoke Common, Bishopstoke: two tranchet axes and blades found by J. Hooper; this site is on London Clay.
10. Knole Hill, Fair Oak: this site was revealed by sand digging and found by J. Hooper: 10 cores, 5 microliths.
11. Manor Farm, Botley: three sites on the western bank of the river Hamble around Sewage Works and found by J. Hooper: 16 cores, 5 microliths, 1 microburin.
12. Row Ash, Shedfield: found by J. Hooper, 6 cores, 2 microliths.
13. Sandy Lane, Shedfield: large site found by A. Corney, revealed and now destroyed by sand quarrying. Some hundred cores, 6 axes, 1 pick, 4 axe flakes (one of Broom Chert) about 50 microliths.<sup>10</sup>
14. Sandpit, North Boarhunt; 2 cores and blades.
15. Hipley Copse; in field to south, 12 cores, one axe, 4 axe flakes, 1 microlith.
16. Boarhunt Mill; 3 cores and blades. This site is on London Clay.
17. Walton Heath, Southwick, 12 cores, 2 axes, 1 axe flake<sup>11</sup>, microliths and microburins.

N.B.—Material from sites 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 are in J. Hooper's Collection, but some flints from sites 10 and 11 were collected by the writer. Some excavated material from Site 13 is in Cumberland House Museum; including a very rare type of double-ended pick 12 inches long. The bulk is in the writer's collection; and three axes and some microliths from Site 13 are in J. Hooper's collection.

### *III. Sites on South Downs*

18. Deacon Hill, Chilcomb; 4 cores, blades.
19. Longwood House: Large site found by K. R. Edwardson. Material including axes is in Winchester Museum, 14 cores, etc. are in the writer's collection, including a blade and a flake of Portland Chert.
20. Beacon Hill, Exton: mesolithic flakes in path on east spur.
21. Warnford, field by road to East Meon: 2 cores, graver.
22. Old Winchester Hill: two sites, one with tranchet axe,<sup>12</sup> and scattering of cores and blades over the hill.
23. Sheardley Farm above old race course: 40 cores (mostly very small), microlith, 2 axes.
24. Westend Down: 4 cores.
25. Chidden Down: 7 cores, 2 axe-flakes.
26. Salt Hill, East Meon: 7 Sites.  
No. 1 site, 53 cores, 3 axes, 4 axe flakes, 3 microliths including a Horsham point.  
No. 2 site, 150+ cores, 9 axes, 1 flake axe, 7 axe-flakes, 12 microliths uncluding a Horsham point.

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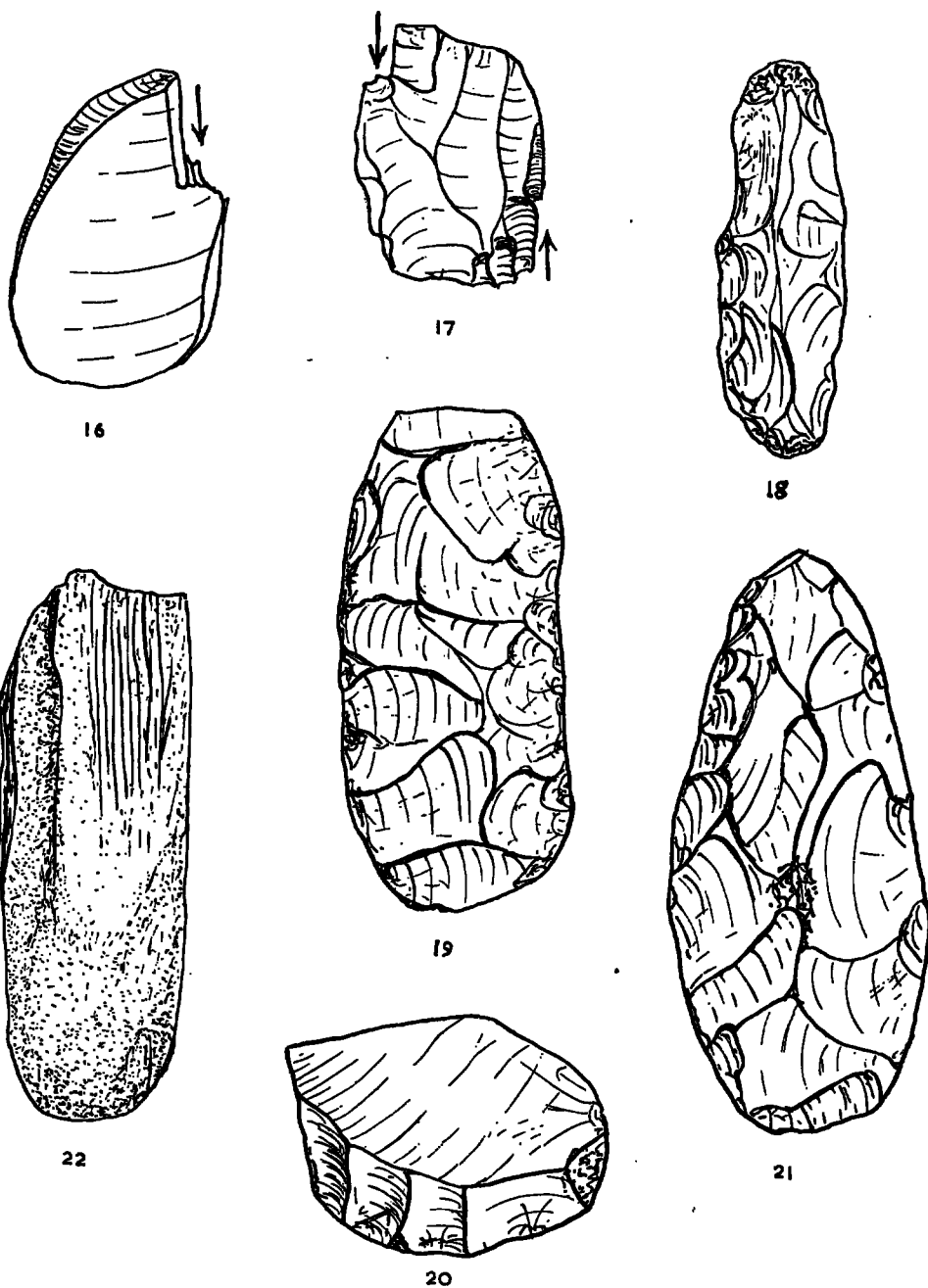


Fig. 3

## HAMPSHIRE FIELD CLUB PROCEEDINGS

- No. 3 site, 9 cores, 1 axe flake, 1 microlith.
- No. 4 site, 12 cores.
- No. 5 site, 21 cores, 1 axe 1 axe flake, 1 microlith.
- No. 6 site, 12 cores.
- No. 7 site, 18 cores, 3 microliths, including 2 Horsham points.
- 27. Wether Down: 2 sites.
  - No. 1 site, 18 cores.
  - No. 2 site, 6 cores.
- 28. Tegdown Hill: 16 cores, 1 microlith.
- 29. Oxenbourne Down: 6 cores, 2 microliths.
- 30. Butser Hill. 12 sites scattered over an area of 10 acres or more.
  - No. 1 Site, 3 cores.
  - No. 2 Site, 16 cores, 1 axe flake, 4 microliths, 6 microburins.
  - No. 3 Site, 9 cores.
  - No. 4 Site, 9 cores.
  - No. 5 Site, 4 cores, 1 axe flake, 1 microlith.
  - No. 6 Site, 25 cores.
  - No. 7 Site, 12 cores, 4 axes, 1 axe flake, 1 microlith.
  - No. 8 Site, 15 cores.
  - No. 9 Site, 23 cores, 2 axes, 4 axe flakes, 3 microliths, including a Horsham point.
  - No. 10 Site, 7 cores, 4 microliths, 2 microburins.
  - No. 11 Site, 7 cores.
  - No. 12 Site, 14 cores, 1 axe, 1 axe flake.

Stray finds include 5 axes (one Hassocks type), 1 axe flake.
- 31. Windmill Hill, Chalton: sites are scattered over the S.W. and S.E. slopes.
  - No. 1 Site, 9 cores.
  - No. 2 Site, some 100+ cores, 4 axes, 1 axe flake, 5 microliths.
  - No. 3 Site, 15 cores, 1 axe, 2 microliths.
  - No. 4 Site, some 90 cores, 1 axe flake, 1 pick, 3 microburins including one of Portland Chert.
- 32. New Barn, Blendworth, 10 cores.
- 33. Dean Lane End, Rowlands Castle, cores and blades found by C. Stanley.
- 34. Home Farm, Rowlands Castle, cores and 1 microlith found by C. Stanley.

### *Stray finds*

- Microlithic blade at Cheesefoot Head, Winchester.
- Microlithic core at the Dean, Bishop's Waltham.
- Microlithic core at St. Clair's Farm, Droxford.
- Microlith at Oakshot, Stoner Hill, near Petersfield.
- Microlith and flakes at Brockbridge, Droxford.
- Axe at Compton Down on Romano-British site ( $\frac{1}{4}$  mile over Hampshire border in Sussex).

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### *Tranched Axes and axe-sharpening flakes*

	Axes	Axe Flakes
Titchfield, gift to writer	1	
Lee-on-the-Solent, R.N. Station	1	
Grange Farm, Gosport	1	
Wicor fields, Fareham, found by C. H. Mogridge	2	1
Bakers Island	2	
Long Island	1	
Stoke Common, Bishopstoke	2	
Sandy Lane, Shedfield	6	4
Hipley Copse	1	4
Walton Heath, Southwick	2	1
Longwood House	2	
Old Winchester Hill. No. 1 site	1	
Sheardley Farm, Droxford	2	
Teglease Down	1	
Salt Hill, East Meon. No. 1 site	3	4
No. 2 site	9	7
No. 3 site		1
No. 5 site	1	1
Chidden Down		2
Butser Hill. No. 2 site		1
No. 5 site		1
No. 7 site	4	1
No. 9 site	2	4
No. 12 site	1	1
Stray finds, Butser	5	1
Windmill Hill, Chalton. No. 2 site	4	1
No. 3 site	1	
No. 4 site		1
Compton Down	1	
Total	56	36

### *Gravers*

There are over 90 gravers from the following sites: Manor Farm, Botley; Sandy Lane, Shedfield; Hopley Copse; Old Winchester mill; Salt Hill; Butser; Sheardley Farm; Wether Down; Windmill Hill, Chalton. The majority of the gravers are core type and some of these are double-ended.

### *Portland Chert*

Longwood House: Blade and flake.

Windmill Hill, Chalton: No. 4 Site, microburin.



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### *Utilised Pebble Tools, analysis*

Salt Hill. No. 2 Site. No. 917 of South-Western Group Report of Stone Axe Sub-Committee (a Sandy Slate).

Butser. No. 2 Site. No. 940, ditto, (Sandstone).

No. 7 Site. No. 1044, ditto, (a Limonitic Sandstone).

Also two sarsen and one sandstone pebbles.

Tegdown Hill. Broken Siltstone and one sandstone pebbles.

Windmill Hill, Chalton. Sandstone pebble.

Two of the pebbles sent for analysis show that their origin was in the West of England, as also is the Siltstone.

### *Description and location of finds*

1. Microlith, Form A; Shedfield.
2. " Form B; "
3. " Form D1; "
4. and 5. Microliths, Horsham Points; Salt Hill, Site 7.
6. Saw, Shedfield.
7. Micro-burin of Portland Chert; Windmill Hill, Site 4.
8. Blade of Portland Chert; Longwood House.
9. Blade scraper, length  $2\frac{3}{4}$  ins.; Shedfield.
10. Double-ended scraper; Salt Hill, Site 2.
11. Blade with one ground edge; Shedfield.
12. Backed-knife; stray find, Butser.
13. Fabricator; Windmill Hill, Site 2.
14. Awl; stray find, Butser.
15. Utilised blade, length  $3\frac{3}{4}$  ins. Shedfield.
16. Blade-graver; Windmill Hill, Site 2.
17. Double core-graver; Salt Hill, Site 1.
18. Punch; Shedfield.
19. Tranchet axe; Walton Heath, Southwick.
20. Axe-sharpening flake; Butser, Site 9.
21. Tranchet-axe, Hassocks type; Wicor fields, Fareham.
22. Pebble tool showing evidence of utilization; Salt Hill, Site 2.

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## A NOTE ON THE SOLENT SUBSIDENCE

(contributed by the late W. F. Rankine)

To bring the importance of the foregoing list of Mesolithic finds, particularly the transversely sharpened axes, into focus some reference to the region originally drained by the Old Solent River is essential since south-east Hampshire was an integral part of the river basin before the solent subsidence in pre-Bronze Age times, when the Isle of Wight was insulated.

The late H. F. Poole carried out continuous mesolithic research on the island, and in the comprehensive literature for which he was responsible was a paper on the distribution of tranchet axes there. In all, some fifty axes were recorded, and some of these were found in deep deposits, as at Werrar on the Medina: others were taken from Brickhearth and it is interesting to note that other tranchets have been found in similar conditions along the Sussex coast. Regarding the Isle of Wight record of tranchets together with J. C. Draper's list we have impressive evidence of intense human activity in this part of the country during the spread of the northern forest culture, of which the tranchet is an index. It would seem that there was a Maglemosian folk-movement into the Old Solent River<sup>1</sup> similar to that which entered the Thames in Boreal-Atlantic times, and this assumption is further strengthened by the macehead with Mesolithic flint flakes and a polished stiletto-like implement discovered in peat of Boreal-Atlantic age in 1883 during the excavation of the Ocean Dock at Southampton.<sup>2</sup> It is probable that this infiltration of Maglemosian hunters spread into the Salisbury Avon corridor as at Downton and other sites.

## REFERENCES

1. RANKINE, W. F. *Mesolithic of Southern England*. P. 54, Fig. 10.
2. P.P.S. 1949, VX, 70-6.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It was the discovery of the site at Wicor Shore, Fareham in 1946 that started the writer's interest in the Mesolithic Period.

Finds from here were sent to Mr. W. F. Rankine of Farnham, who visited the site and because of its importance wrote a note on it for the P.H.F.C.

From that time onwards until Mr. Rankine's decease in 1962, the writer enjoyed the friendship and knowledge of one who was a leading expert in Mesolithic Research; and it was his wish that the writer should fill in the gap as it was in this corner of Hampshire.

J. Hooper, now a school teacher, became interested in 'flints' while a schoolboy and later found the sites around Botley during fieldwork. This work covers a gap on the map for which the writer is grateful.