



ON A NEWLY DISCOVERED NEOLITHIC
SETTLEMENT
AT THE RED NOSES, NEW BRIGHTON,
NEAR LIVERPOOL.

By C. Roeder.

Read 15th December, 1898.

OUR evidence of the occupation by neolithic people of Cilgurry,¹ or the Wirral Peninsula, has steadily increased during recent years, thanks to the indefatigable labours of Messrs. C. Potter and E. W. Cox.² I have myself been interested for many years in the geology and pre-history of the more northern part of the Peninsula, and discovered flint flakes at Hilbre Point, where Mr. Potter has also recorded them, though in both cases only in limited numbers. The same gentleman procured them likewise from the ancient land surface at Meols; and, more recently, Mr. Cox has come across specimens at Spital, on the boundaries of Bebington and Rock Ferry, on Prenton Hill, Storeton, Grange Hill, and Liscard.

¹ Probably from Welsh *kil* = corner, and *cwr*, pl. *cyrau* = extremity, border, nook, corner = the corner of the borderland of the Cornavii.

² To the great loss of Cheshire antiquarian research, the above two gentlemen have died since the paper has been read.

These finds, however, were few and far between, and their artificial make in some cases appears rather doubtful.

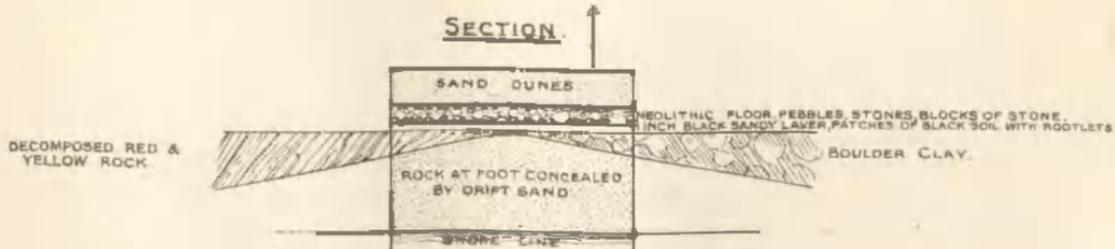
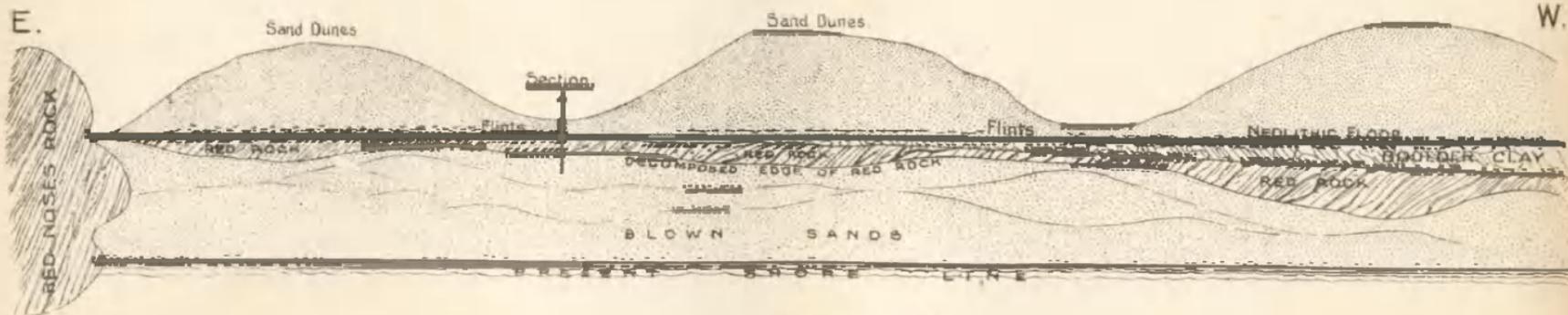
Early in July this year I made another exploring excursion to New Brighton, and, on searching the rocky platform at the Red Noses, I had the good fortune to obtain clear proof of the former existence of a neolithic settlement at this point. I visited the spot on various occasions for a more minute survey, and once in company with Mr. Mark Stirrup, of the Manchester Geological Society, and Mr. Cox, when we again explored the area, with the result that both gentlemen were perfectly satisfied with the evidence.

Mr. Cox has informed me since that he and friends of his searched the place before without success. I arrived at an opportune moment, for the stripping of this platform by the wind is comparatively recent, and five years ago only the head of the westernmost Red Nose was laid bare, and one or two knolls of the clay beyond it.

I have prepared a section to show the appearance of this platform. As you will see from the section, the area on which the flint implements were found extends from the Red Noses for a distance of 460 feet to the west, but continues, no doubt, also on the east part (now built upon). Its heights are at present occupied by a succession of sand dunes, which sweep down to the foot of the neolithic floor. The surface of this rocky eminence is covered and strewn with small pebbles, stones, and middle-sized erratic blocks; and amongst this heterogeneous accumulation we meet at every step quantities of chipped flints. Here and there we find patches and crusts of black soil, due to vegetable decay, but this layer is very thin, and never more than one inch thick. Below this deposit, on the east side, we dig at once into the decomposed strata of

SECTION 460 FEET LONG.

NEW BRIGHTON, N^R LIVERPOOL.
TO SHEW SITUATION OF NEOLITHIC SETTLEMENT.



the outcrop of the new red sandstone; while to the west we are on the fringe of the boulder clay, which creeps here gradually to the surface. Its thickness does not exceed a few feet. This boulder clay merely lines the edge of the rocky uplands of Wallasey, and drops off into an extensive trough, or pre-glacial valley, which descends to an unknown depth. At Leasowe Lighthouse the clay was penetrated to a depth of 37 feet, and breaks out again at the far end at Hilbre Point.

At the Red Noses, in consequence of sub-ærial agencies, boulder stones and shell fragments have been washed out from this cap of boulder clay, and it appears the neolithic people who subsequently occupied this platform availed themselves of the larger stone blocks derived from it, as anvils for splitting and dressing their flints, while the rounded granite boulders served them for hammer-stones. We have all the indications of a neolithic factory before us. We see the still-unworked raw flint material, spoiled and chipped cores, splinters, flakes, knives, scrapers, spear- and arrow-heads, and burnt flakes, of which about 600 or 700 have been found.

The occurrence of nodules of flints in the boulder clay of Lancashire and Cheshire is very rare and sporadic, as all practical field-geologists know. Their supply for neolithic purposes is too insignificant to account for its derivation from that source. The same must be said of the Isle of Man, where flint implements have been found in thousands by myself³ and others subsequently. I venture to say that in the main the raw material was procured by the neolithic hunters from great distances by barter and traffic, and I am inclined

³ I exhibited a map of the Isle of Man at the meeting of the British Association, held in Manchester, 1887, on which I traced the various neolithic settlements discovered by me over the island.

to think that we have to trace them, both on the Wirral shore-line and in the Isle of Man, to intercourse with the neolithic people of the Antrim district, who not only were excellent implement makers, but who also commanded inexhaustible beds and stores of flint. Recently the source of the material of an old flint working place in Kintyre has also been traced home to the coast of Antrim.⁴

If we compare patination, colour, and lithological structure of the flints from Wirral and the Isle of Man with those from Antrim, we find no appreciable difference. Unfortunately, and it is a circumstance which detracts largely from the scientific value and importance of many finds, it has been too much the habit of former and present investigators to be satisfied with merely searching the immediate surface ground for flint implements; and, as a natural consequence, but little light has been thrown, on the whole, on neolithic life. The study of comparative development and evolution, at various centres and districts, has been also more or less neglected. It is therefore with pleasure we turn to the Isle of Man, where much has been done in this respect within recent years. There neolithic factories and settlements are extremely rich along the north, east, and south coasts. Accounts of the results of various systematic excavations are published in the *Llioar Vanninagh*, the organ of the Isle of Man Natural History and Antiquarian Society, in the volumes for 1890-1. At Castletown an undoubted neolithic burial ground has been laid open, another one at Ramsey, and again at Glen Wyllan, &c.; and at all these points many cinerary urns and fire-places have been

⁴ See "An old Flint Working Place in the 30-foot Raised Beach of Millknowe," by Alexander Gray, *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*, vol. xxviii, session 1893-4, pp. 263-270.

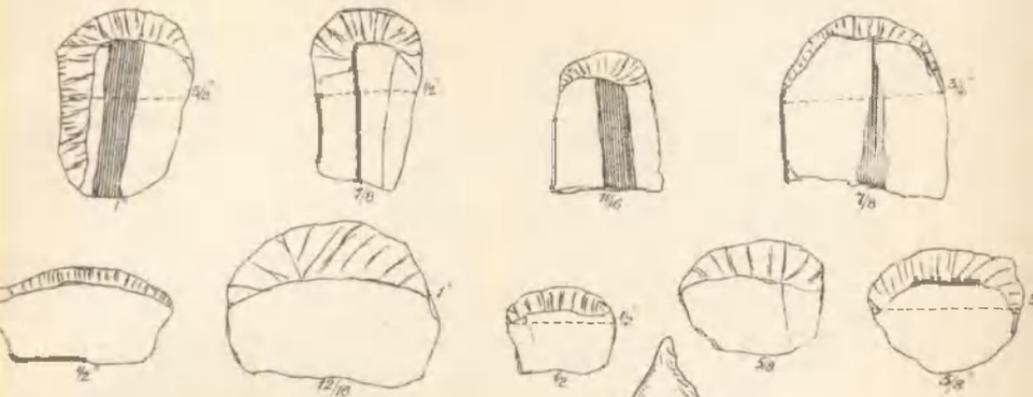
NEOLITHIC FLINT TYPES FROM NEW BRIGHTON. NR. LIVERPOOL.

ALL WITH WHITE PATINA.

PLATE XII.

H. S. OF L. AND C.

SCRAPERS. VARIOUS



SICKLE-SHAPED

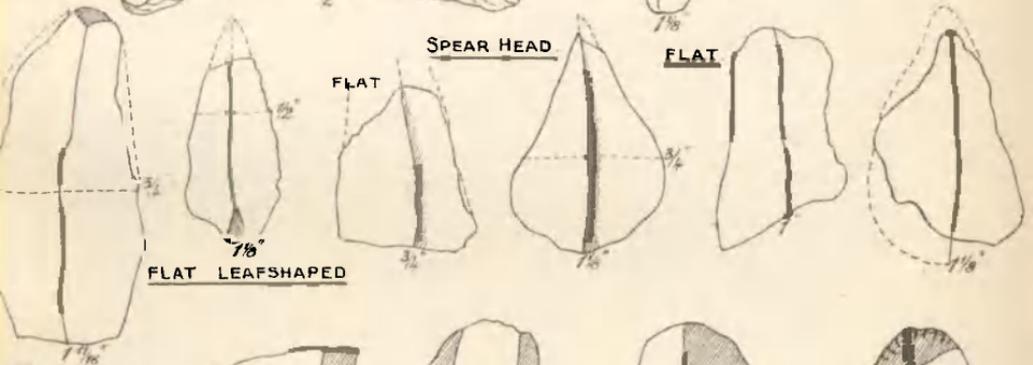
ARROW HEAD



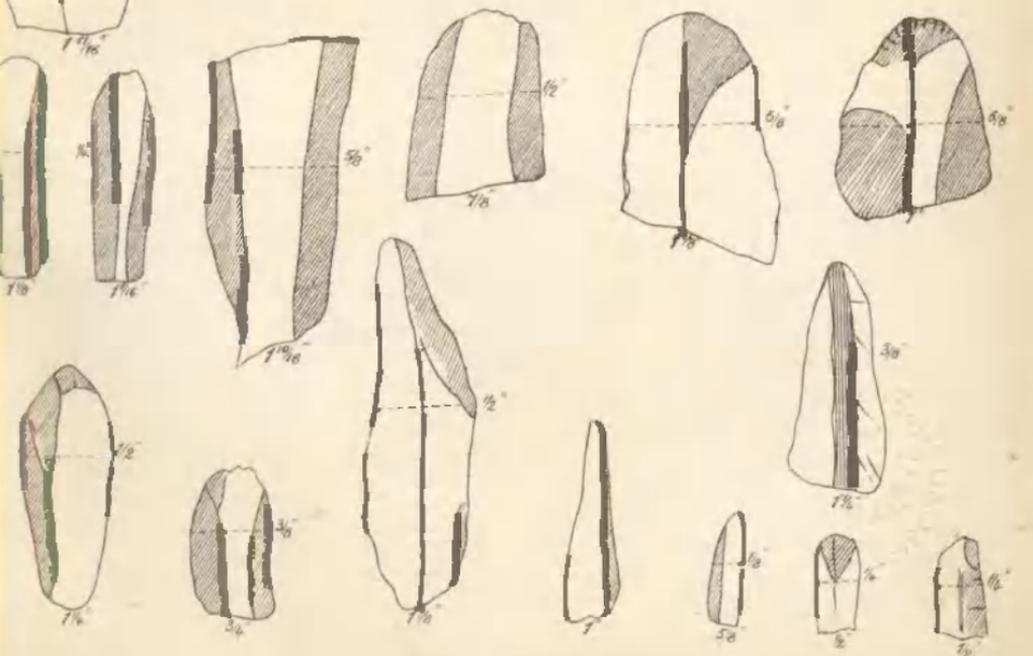
SPEAR HEAD

FLAT

FLAT



FLAT LEAFSHAPED



ALL NATURAL SIZE.

brought to light. The pottery was hard burnt, of grey, black, or red colour, unglazed, and either plain or ornamental; the matrix of dark clay, mixed largely with crushed granite. There were immense quantities of drills, scrapers, arrow-scrapers, minute flakes, flake knives, arrow heads, notched stones, cores in all stages of progress, charcoal, kidney ore, limpet shells, &c. The flint earth lay from 1 foot to 18 inches beneath the level of the ground, followed by a thin stratum of mould about 6 inches thick, which probably formed the original surface. In the fire-holes quantities of charred twigs and flints were found, several hammer-stones, or common round stones, evidently for breaking off the flake from the nuclei. And in comparing these artifacts from the differently scattered settlements of the neolithic tribes in the island, we find that there the art of flint manufacture exhibits not only great variety of form and make, but gives also proof of a gradual specialization, a matter which is often overlooked. Of these most interesting discoveries in the Isle of Man, Evans' *Ancient Stone Implements*, second edition, 1897, is silent, although this standard work refers to some other minor finds in the island.

At the Red Noses, as mentioned before, we also have these granite hammer-stones and anvil-blocks, of which I also discovered, some eighteen years ago, great numbers near Jurby Point, Isle of Man. I hope that the spade will add further to our knowledge in the Wirral district, and induce investigators to emulate the example of the Manx, so that we may increase at home our knowledge of neolithic life and habits.

The chipping of flints was with the neolithic people a fine art, and those initiated into the craft and mystery formed a superior caste. It is well to remember what Catlin says, in his *Last Rambles*

amongst the Indians of the Rocky Mountains and the Andes, 1868 :—

Every tribe has its factory, in which the arrow-heads are made, and in these only certain adepts are able or allowed to make them for the use of the tribe. The nuclei are broken with a sort of sledge-hammer, made of a rounded pebble of hornstone, set in a twisted withe holding the stone and forming the handle. For the flaking a mallet of very hard wood is used, and a chisel or punch made of bone, or the incisor of a sperm-whale or sea-lion, which are often stranded on the coast of the Pacific. The punch is six or seven inches long, and one inch in diameter, with one rounded side and two plain sides, and presenting one acute and two obtuse angles, to suit the points to be broken. This operation is very curious, both the holder and the striker are singing, and the stroke of the mallet is given exactly in time with the music, and with a sharp and rebounding blow, in which, the Indians tell us, is the great medicine (or mystery) of the operation.

When the platform at the Red Noses was occupied by these neolithic dwellers, the configuration of the land and the coast must have presented a very different picture compared with its present appearance. Wallasey, no doubt, formed a distinct detached rocky island; its foreland not standing out, as now, as an abrupt cliff, but gradually sloping away probably 60 to 100 yards further out to sea at the Red Noses, and the fresh-water springs which are now lost, or are welling up at the tide-line, issued then from *terra firma*. What we really see now of the platform is merely a crumbling fragment of this ancient promontory. The western and eastern uplands were more sharply divided by marshes and lagoons of the lowland plain, whose level oscillated at various times, and extended from beyond Hilbre Point, along the northern shore-line, round Wallasey Pool, to Birkenhead; the oak, pine, beech, and undergrowth creeping up the slopes of the valleys.

Mr. Potter correlates this period with the land surface he has studied so attentively for many

years at Meols. In that deposit we have the remains of man, the urus, horse, wild boar, red deer, dog, &c., along with neolithic implements, and, in succession, remains of the Cornavii, Romans, Anglo-Saxons, and Normans.

Mr. Cox has ascertained the erosion of the rocks at New Brighton at the rate of 1 to $1\frac{1}{2}$ feet for the harder strata (the pebbles beds, or F 2 of the Geological Survey), and 3 feet for the softer ones (the water stones, or F 5), within the last 65 years. The great fault which runs through Wallasey and crosses the lighthouse at New Brighton, divides the softer rocks of the Red Noses, which have been cut back considerably, from the outlying rocks at the lighthouse. We cannot ascertain now with precision how much further the Red Noses exactly stood out in neolithic times, but even if we allow a far greater rate of erosion, or a much more contracted extension of the promontory, than assumed, we see what a great gulf of time still divides us from the neolithic people that dwelled near the shores of Wirral.

Before closing my remarks, it may not be out of place to allude to the important discoveries made a few years ago in the prehistoric rock-shelter at Schweizerbild, near Schaffhausen, by Doctor Nuesch,⁵ which throw new light on the neolithic period on the Continent. In his grey relic bed (40 cm. thick), which corresponds with the neolithic epoch, twenty-two interments were discovered. The examination of the skeletons proved that this shelter was frequented by two distinctly different races, one of fair stature (1600 mm. and more) and the other much smaller—a true pigmy race. Their pottery was red and unglazed. The fauna included the

⁵ See the *Scottish Geographical Magazine*, vol. xiii, No. 9, September, 1897, translated by Professor Geikie.

brown bear, badger, marten, wolf, fox, mole, hare, beaver, squirrel, hamster, water rat, urus, ox, goat, sheep, red-deer, roe-deer, wild boar, horse, and ptarmigan, all types of a true forest fauna which ushered in the neolithic man. From an estimate made by Doctor Neusch, the accumulation of his neolithic bed required 4000 years, and the overlying humus bed another 4000 years, or a lapse of 8000 years.

