

III.

NOTES ON A GROUP OF CHIPPED STONE IMPLEMENTS FROM
ROXBURGHSHIRE AND BERWICKSHIRE. BY J. M. CORRIE,
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In the *Proceedings* of this Society, vol. 1. pp. 307-13, I described a series of stone and flint implements from a restricted area on the lands of Dryburgh in the parish of Mertoun, Berwickshire. Since that communication was submitted many additional finds have been made, and it seems desirable to make a closer and more extended examination of certain of these primitive implements that so far have received but slight or passing notice. I refer particularly to the stones chipped wholly or partially round the edges from one face only. Two types were mentioned in my earlier paper, but new varieties that invest this class of implement with additional interest have since been recorded from the area, and it is because they seem to indicate an entirely different purpose from what has generally been attributed to such relics that I wish to revert to them on this occasion. Hitherto very little attention seems to have been devoted to these chipped stones, and they do not appear to have been generally recognised, although the characteristics that give these objects their main interest must have been imparted to them by artificial means. Possibly they may have been overlooked in some parts of the country by reason of the fact that many of the cruder examples are not readily distinguished from the results of natural agencies.

My attention was first of all directed to these chipped stones by the discovery, in 1913, of a well-made, oval and somewhat curved specimen (fig. 1, No. 1) on the site of the Great Camp at Newstead Roman Fort, near Melrose. This, at the time, was an isolated find, but I have since met with examples at Ancrum Mains, Harrietsfield, and Fairnington, in the county of Roxburgh, and I have discovered them in considerable numbers and in a variety of forms at Dryburgh and Bemersyde, in the county of Berwick.

One type has been referred to by the late Sir Arthur Mitchell, who described it as follows: "A flat thin stone, roughly reduced by chipping to a circular shape, showing no polishing or grinding, and varying from 3 to 25 inches in diameter, and in thickness from $\frac{1}{4}$ to $1\frac{3}{4}$ inch." And he adds: "I have seen these stones extensively in use in Shetland, Orkney, Caithness, the Hebrides, Sutherland, Ross, and

Inverness. They are nothing but lids; and they are to be found acting as lids on the top of the water-pail, meal-cask, cream-jug, sugar-basin,

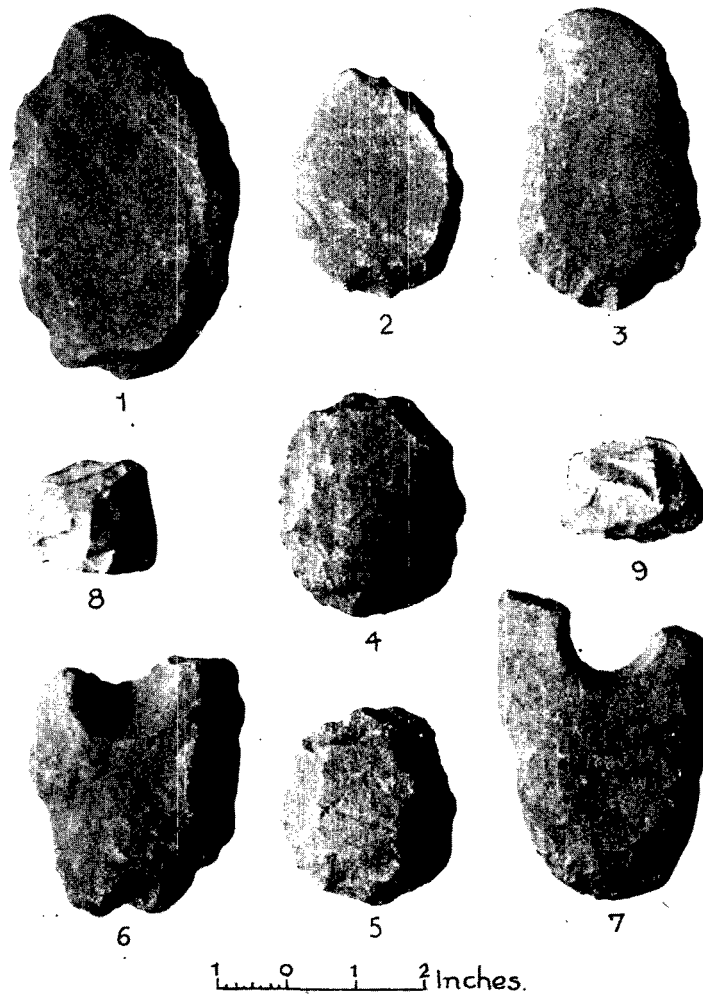


Fig. 1. Chipped Stone Implements from Roxburghshire and Berwickshire.

etc. Why people should continue thus to make lids of stone, even in districts where wood is abundant, it is very difficult to see, but the

fact that they do so, it is important to know."¹ In a further reference he records: "Such stone lids are often found in excavations about brochs and other prehistoric ruins. Most of those so found are small . . . but I have obtained two from Unst in Shetland—one of them, which formed the lid of a meal-cask or gernal, is 19 inches in diameter, and the other is 12 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches."² We have here a trustworthy and conclusive account of the use of certain examples from the northern counties of Scotland, but an interesting problem emerges when we extend their geographical distribution to include sites in the southern counties of Roxburghshire and Berwickshire. No such definite record is available, and the purposes attributed to these northern examples—if such objects ever existed in the south—are, as far as my knowledge goes, entirely unknown to-day in the Border country. I have, indeed, been forced to the conclusion that certain forms may, at varying stages of human progress, have served a variety of purposes in different parts of the country, and I hope to show that this theory is more or less confirmed by the group of flaked products to which I am now specially directing attention.

Before passing to the consideration of these shaped stone objects, however, the character of the ground where they are found, and the manner of occurrence of the materials employed, again require a brief survey. Alternating with sandy ground are areas which, at an earlier period, must have formed old lake basins that artificial drainage has changed for the most part into cultivated fields. Along the higher ridges the ramparts of the Clintmains and Butchercote camps, together with the scattered relics of aboriginal life, indicate the former dwelling-sites and factories of the prehistoric craftsmen. The relics I refer to are found generally throughout the neighbourhood and consist, in addition to the usual workshop refuse, of the completed implements, weapons, and ornaments of stone and other materials. Articles formed of less durable substances are exceptional. An occasional gun-flint or curiously shaped lead-bullet connects the district with the period of Border turmoil and warfare, but throughout the whole area the refuse of stone-, as distinct from flint- and chert-flaking of the earlier periods, is abundant, and is well amplified by the interesting series of stone flakes and cores that have been recovered from the area, a few of which (fig. 1, Nos. 8 and 9) are exhibited with the finished relics under discussion.

The chipped stone implements are made from ordinary flattish river or water-worn materials, but in the partially flaked examples there is a marked difference between the two sides of the stone. The one is smoothly rounded by the action of water and by friction

¹ *The Past in the Present*, p. 128.

² *Ibid.*, p. 61.

against other stones, while the other is carefully chipped from the opposite face (fig. 1, No. 2). They are mostly of a somewhat ovoid form, and they vary in size from about $1\frac{1}{4}$ inch to $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches in diameter, and from $\frac{1}{4}$ to $1\frac{1}{4}$ inch in thickness, the special characteristics of the chipping varying considerably according to the size and nature of the stone employed. In at least one instance the edge appears to have been subjected to a double flaking, a specialised form of treatment that may have been rendered necessary by the thickness and intractable nature of the stone. A variant of an oval and somewhat curved form from the Monksford Field, Dryburgh, shows exceptionally neat and regular flaking carried almost entirely round the circumference (fig. 1, No. 3). Other variants from the Riverside Field, Dryburgh, and from Fairnington show respectively two notches, a portion of one side chipped, and distinct evidence of the stone having been employed as an anvil. In the common or roughly circular type wholly chipped round the circumference (fig. 1, Nos. 4 and 5) there are two distinct classes, the one showing perpendicular trimming, and the other oblique flaking round the edges, something like that seen on the peculiar stone discs found in such numbers on the Culbin Sands, Morayshire. Some of the specimens are very crude; but there are others, especially in the obliquely flaked class, that show beautiful symmetry of outline, and afford conclusive evidence that the flaking was done with minute care, and was not the result of any haphazard operations such as might be suggested by the rougher examples. They vary in size from $1\frac{1}{2}$ inch to $4\frac{1}{4}$ inches in diameter, and from $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ inch in thickness. Modifications of the edge and surfaces due to wear occur in some cases, and adaptation to certain usages are to some extent indicated on a few examples by the sharp edges being dulled to roundness or by being still further chipped, notched, or battered; in one instance, which, however, finds a counterpart in another form to be described later, we find the implement provided with a central shaft hole. The next type, represented by a single imperfect specimen, is very curious, for it has a cavity that has been worked almost entirely through the stone in the centre of the face that shows the edge-chipping (fig. 1, No. 6). It was found on the Monksford Field, Dryburgh, in December 1921. The cavity appears to have been carefully made, and it reaches to within an $\frac{1}{8}$ th of an inch of the reverse side of the stone. Its purpose is not clear, but the implement may have been intended to have had a completed perforation, such as we find occurring in our next example, which, like the one I have just referred to, is also imperfect, and the only variant of its class I have met with (fig. 1, No. 7). In this instance the chipping of

the edges has become somewhat water-rolled, but it is still distinctly in evidence.

In no instance in Roxburghshire and Berwickshire have I come across a split boulder or pebble treated in the manner of these chipped stones. The choice of the Border craftsmen seems to have been restricted to specially selected water-worn stones. I have, however, a single specimen from the Ardeer Sands, near Stevenston, in Ayrshire, that has been made from a portion of a split pebble of hard texture.

Reviewing the series as a whole, and paying special attention to the distinctive features and peculiarities of the varied types, we notice first of all the entire absence of large specimens, and we can hardly escape the conviction that these southern examples are representative of various requirements and may have been used in such processes as "skinning, cutting wood, stag's horn, bone, and hide, or for flaking or breaking up other small and finer stones, or for putting the finishing touches to some specialised attainment connected with their social habits or workshop routine." It would appear as if the shaft hole was suggested and intentionally designed for the purpose of greater efficiency in the specific operations to which they were applied; and further, that whatever their true application, the numbers found indicate that they were implements of common and everyday use.