

## I.

## PREHISTORIC MAN AT TWEED BRIDGE, SELKIRK.

BY W. D. MASON, SELKIRK.

Early in the era of man's existence in this district, thousands of years before Sir Walter Scott opened the bridge we see in the accompanying photograph (fig. 1), our prehistoric ancestor settled on this stretch of Tweed, hunting its valleys, building and defending the neighbouring fort on the hill, and raising the mound known as the Catrail, which now winds its way over hill and dale, an everlasting puzzle to the antiquary. His children's children saw the strangers from across the sea build themselves a fort within the shadow of the Eildon Hills, they saw the grass grow again where once the proud chariots of Rome had driven, and silence came again to these valleys, for the watchers on the hill forts would wait for a foe who was fated never to return.

The years have passed and with them our early ancestors, leaving behind them little traces of their strivings on the road towards civilisation, yet here at the meeting-place of the two rivers, Ettrick and Tweed, they have left through the centuries evidence of many activities, and the landscape retains the signature of man from very early times. Previous to the erection of the fort on the hill, and centuries before the Catrail was raised, were left here archæological remains dating back to a much earlier period of man's occupation of Tweedside.

Directly below the bridge, as will be observed in the photograph, Ettrick joins Tweed. Above the bridge on the Yair road side of the river, on the farm known as The Rink, can be seen a tree-planted scaur rising to about 80 feet from the river level. On the top of this scaur is a small triangular field marked by a cross, the site of the workshop of these early inhabitants. It dominates the haugh lands through which Tweed and Ettrick flow, and is sheltered from the north by the Rink Hill, on the summit of which the Rink fort is situated; half-way up the hill the windings of the Catrail can be traced, losing themselves in the lower reaches before they cross the Tweed at a point a little further north from this spot. The site, it will be seen, has many natural advantages, of which the early occupiers were without doubt well aware.

At the edge of the field, nearest the river as marked in the photograph, most of the relics were found, and the abundance of debris observed, as well as the quantity of finished tools picked up in this very small area, was indicative of a prolonged settlement, the site of perhaps one

of the earliest flint implement factories existing in this district. Over a period of years of patient search, thousands of flakes of flint, cores, scrapers, and other worked tools have been picked up. Nearly eighty perfect little implements (pigmy) were found, along with countless tiny chips and flakes evidently discarded during their manufacture. This part of the field seemed to have been the actual floor of the workshop.

Seldom attaining 1 inch in length, and of various shapes, each followed

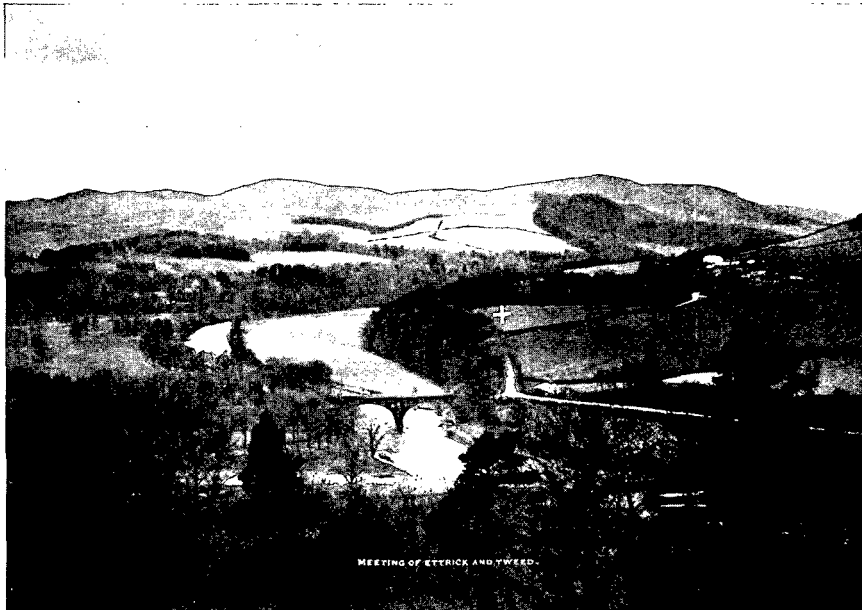


Fig. 1. View of Tweed Bridge, Selkirk, from the north-east, showing the Tardenoisian site on The Rink Farm, marked with a white cross.

a definite pattern which only a set purpose will explain. The purpose, of course, of the smaller tools has been a problem to the archæologist. The Tweed Bridge specimens are no exception; flint, green chert, and pebbles from the river-bed have all been used in their manufacture, their one similarity being the battered back, which in the case of some of the cruder specimens is the only method of identifying them from the multitude of chips of similar size which occur in the field (fig. 2).

Cores, scrapers, and hammer-stones were found in quantities equalled on no other site in the district. The scrapers and notched tools were usually crude, the pigmy implements being perhaps the high-water mark

of the craftsmen on the site. It is interesting to note, after ten years' surface work on the field, that April of last year should register the discovery of a small barbed arrow-head, the solitary example of its kind from the site, although in a field nearer the fort a very fine ripple-flaked, leaf-shaped specimen was found. Whether or not these were products of the pigmy workshop it is difficult to say, but we would be inclined to believe that the last at least belonged to a later period. The haugh land between the scaur and the river was devoid of either chips or

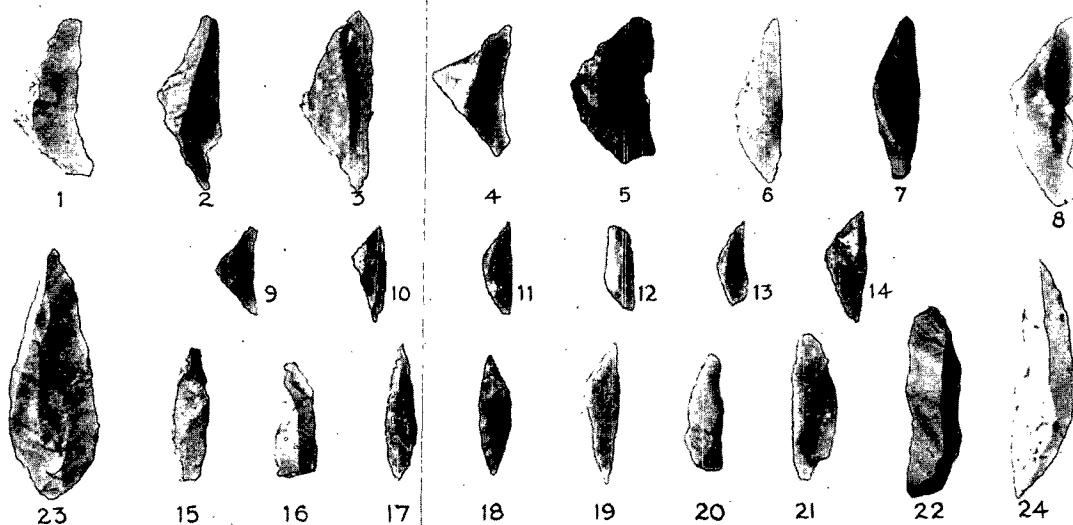


Fig. 2. Tardenoisian Flint Implements from The Rink, Selkirk. (4.)

tools, a fact which might be explained by the changing course of the river-bed, there being evidence of it having at one time run closer to the scaur, on the top of which all the finds occurred.

A finely polished stone axe, about 5 inches in length, made from a very hard material and showing signs of much use, was found, as also many stone sinkers. Some of the latter show abrasions at each end, having evidently been used as hammer-stones. Over twenty were found, and many hammer-stones were also picked up, the cruder specimens being mere quartz pebbles battered at both ends. The difficulty of assigning stone implements found on the surface to any one period is illustrated by the discovery of a dated and inscribed whorl in this area. Still we would be justified, I think, in assuming that most of the finds

mentioned have a connection with the pigmy flints, and that at this point of Tweed we have evidence of a very early factory.

The Bronze Age was represented among the relics by the fragment of a bronze penannular bracelet heavily patinated. On the same field as the leaf-shaped arrow-head a plain stone ball was found.

Pigmy implements occurred at one or two places in the vicinity. The only place where they were found in any quantity was directly across the river valley at Lindean, where in one field about thirty were found, and quite near that place others were picked up. Scrapers and cores accompanied these finds, but nowhere was there such a quantity of chips, hammer-stones, and other implements, as observed at Tweed Bridge. In the Lindean field small split pebbles of quartz with one face polished were observed, and they occurred on other sites in the district.

In all these instances the relics were found in fields which overlook or slope down to the rivers, and the proximity of the Tweed Bridge site and the similarity of the finds suggest that at this early period there were settlements along both banks of the river, whose inhabitants were in direct communication and had dealings with the factory situated at the meeting-place of the rivers. It is certain that man has been active here through the centuries, and the tiny implements and the fort on the hill are links in the chain which leads down the years to the dated whorl, and to a period when history records the struggles and achievements of the men of these valleys.