

# NEOLITHIC AXES FROM THE MILTON KEYNES AREA OF THE UPPER OUSE VALLEY

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During the last decade, the rapid development of the Milton Keynes area, the subsequent intensification of the demand for gravel, and the resultant increase in fieldwork both on the ground and from the air, have radically altered our knowledge of prehistoric activity in the Upper Ouse Valley.

Prior to 1971 only two Neolithic axes, one from Stoke Goldington, the other from Olney, were recorded from the area. The discovery during recent years of five complete axes and fragments of three others, making a total of ten recorded finds, suggests a certain amount of activity and perhaps occupation in the area at this date. One settlement site of this period has been located in Wolverton parish<sup>1</sup> and it is not unlikely that others await discovery. The axes mostly come from light gravel soil, the exception being the Sherington axe, which came from boulder clay.

## *The Axes*

The axes (Fig. 1.) are described in order of their discovery; all are illustrated apart from No. 1 (now lost) and the fragments nos. 3, 4 and 5 which have been previously published. No. 6 has also been published but now that a better drawing is available we have taken the opportunity to republish. References to previous publication follow each description.

### 1. *Stoke Goldington* – findspot unknown.

An axe was given to the County Museum in 1930 by a Mr. Rowland Hill. Attempts to locate it in the Museum Collection in 1961 were unsuccessful. The Museum Accessions Register records that it was of flint and seven and three-eighths inches long. Present location: unknown.

Reference: 'Acquisitions 1930' *Recs. of Bucks.*, XII (1930), 274.

### 2. *Olney* – SP 8955 5265.

This was found during a trial excavation on a Roman site near Olney by D. C. Mynard. It is a ground axe of Dacite (origin of rock uncertain) varying light to dark ochreous-grey in colour. The sides and butt are flattened, and the edge ground flat, apparently deliberately blunted. There is little sign of polish or wear. Small patches of iron staining on the butt. Length: 7.0 cms. Width: 4.6 cms. Thickness: 1.7 cms. Weight: 82 gms.

Present location: Bucks County Museum, Acc. No. 133.62.

3. *Wolverton* – SP 799 402.

A fragment of a polished axe of mottled honey-coloured flint, reused as an end scraper, was found in disturbed soil in 1971 by D. C. Mynard.

Present location: Milton Keynes Archaeology Unit.

References: D. C. Mynard: 'Archaeology in North Bucks 1970/71'. *Milton Keynes Journal* 1, (1972), 16; H. S. Green, 'A Re-worked Polished Axe fragment from Warren Farm, Wolverton', *Recs. of Bucks.*, XIX, part 1 (1971), 91.

4. *Newport Pagnell* – SP 8678 4513.

A fragment of an axe of Group VI, showing evidence of reuse, was found in plough-soil.

Present location: Bradwell Abbey Field Centre, Acc. No. 1973/68.

References: D. C. Mynard, 'Archaeology in North Bucks 1973', *Milton Keynes Journal* 3, (1974), 4; H. S. Green, 'A Polished Stone Axe from Kickle's Farm', *Recs. of Bucks.*, XIX part 3, (1973), 354.

5. *Milton Keynes* – SP 8860 4091.

From the excavation of a ring ditch on the site of the Cotton Valley Sewage Works in Milton Keynes in 1971 came a broken and reused polished axe fragment. The original was a ground axe of light grey-white patinated flint. It had been reworked on edge, sides and butt, producing a 'waisted' effect towards the butt. Of the remaining original ground surface only slight signs of polishing survive, mainly towards the edges. Length: 6.5 cms. Width: 4.3 cms. Thickness: 1.4 cms. Weight: 52 gms.

Present location: Milton Keynes Archaeological Unit.

Reference: Anne E. Sandford, 'The Cotton Valley Ring-Ditch (MK 21)', in H. S. Green: 'Early Bronze Age Burial, Territory and Population in Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire and the Great Ouse Valley', *Arch. J.*, Vol. 131, (1974), 75–139, vide p. 123 and Fig. 22.

6. *Sherington* – SP 8989 4626.

This axe was found in ploughsoil northeast of Bedlam Spinney by Mike Lewton of Home Farm, Chicheley. It is a ground axe of dark green-grey stone, unsectioned but probably of Group VI. The edge is blunt with little signs of wear. Sides flattened towards butt. Length: 9.7 cms. Width: 5.2 cms. Thickness: 2.9 cms. Weight: 205 gms.

The form of this axe is broadly paralleled by axes of Adkins & Jackson's 'Type E'.<sup>2</sup>

Present location: Bradwell Abbey Field Centre, Acc. No. 1973/90.

References: D. C. Mynard, 'Archaeology in North Bucks 1973' *Milton Keynes Journal* 3, (1973), 4 and illustration on p. 91 where the axe is incorrectly entitled 'The Chicheley Axe'.

7. *Ravenstone* – SP 505 489.

This axe was found during drainage work by Mr. J. Adams and has been kindly loaned to the Bradwell Abbey Museum Collection by the Society of Merchant

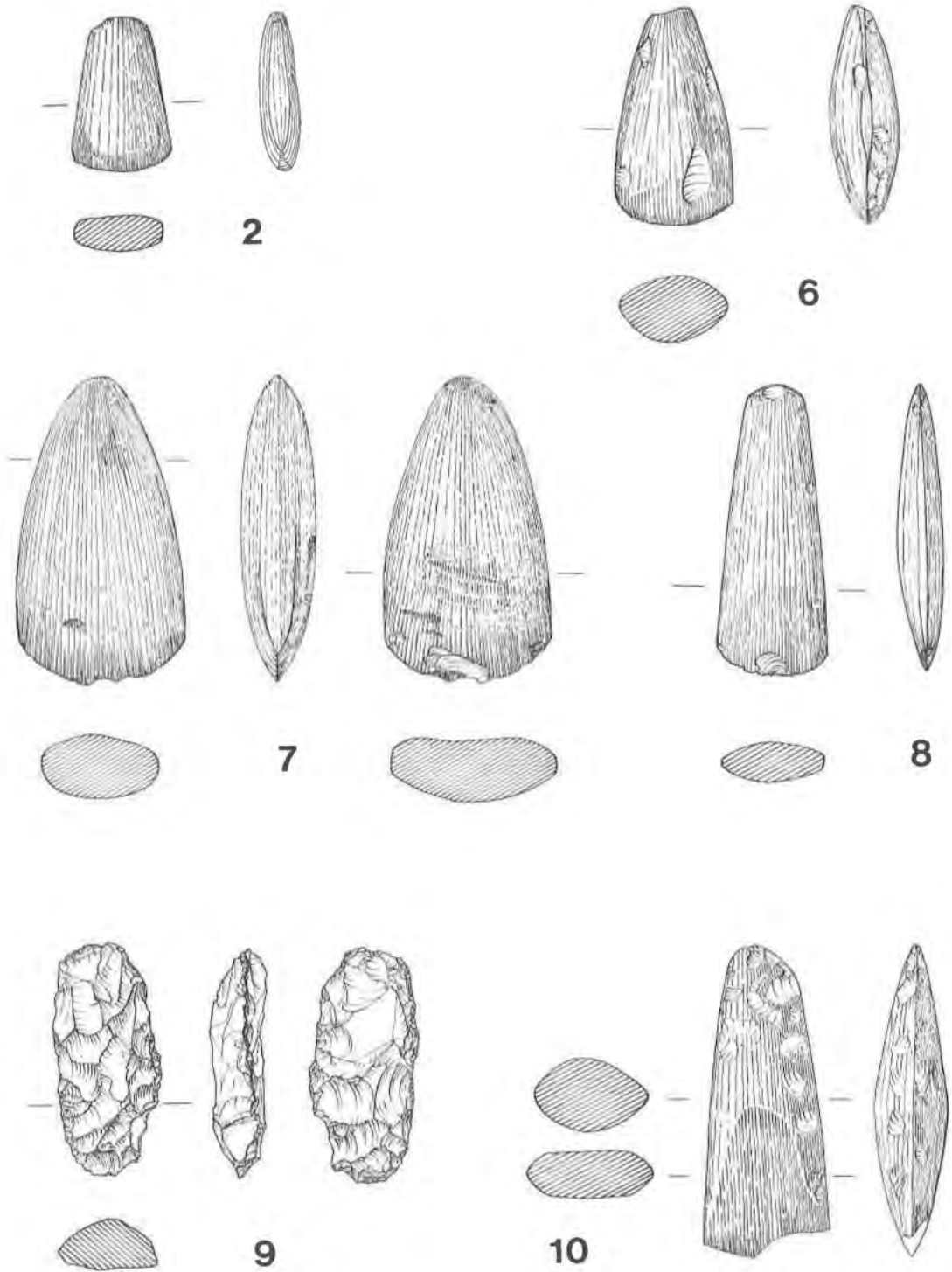


Fig. 1 Neolithic Axes (1/3 size)

Venturers of Bristol. It is a ground axe of fine-grained, olive-green stone, unsectioned, but probably Group VI. Edge damaged, but still sharp, although showing slight signs of wear. The sides are slightly flattened and there is encrustation on one face. Length: 14 cms. Width: 7.6 cms. Thickness: 3.1 cms. Weight: 462 gms. The form of this axe is broadly paralleled by axes from Livermere, Suffolk, and Ilkeston, Northumberland.<sup>3</sup>

Present location: Bradwell Abbey Field Centre, Acc. No. 1977/205.

8. *Great Linford* – SP 85215 43368.

This axe was found by Mr. R. Tomlinson, the Nature Conservancy Warden for the A.R.C. Gravel Company, at Great Linford gravel quarry, in material dredged from the River Ouse. It is a ground axe of dark grey flint, with light grey patina in places; the surface is very pitted. There is slight polish on one side only, the edge is damaged but still sharp, although showing slight signs of wear. There is a slight facet on one face, the butt is slightly damaged and the sides are flattened. Length: 13 cms. Width: 5 cms. Thickness: 1.8 cms. Weight: 141 gms. The form of this axe is broadly paralleled by axes of Adkins & Jackson's 'Type B'.<sup>4</sup>

Present location: Bradwell Abbey Field Centre, Acc. No. 1978/251.

9. *Great Linford* – SP 850 432 (approx.)

An adze also found at Great Linford pit by Mr. R. Tomlinson. This is a broken and unfinished rough-out, probably for an adze. Flaked dark grey flint with light ochreous-grey patina in places. Large flakes missing from one side and one face, probably due to flaws in the original flint block. Sides very battered. Length: 10.7 cms. Width: 4.8 cms. Thickness: 2.8 cms. Weight: 138 gms.

Present location: Bradwell Abbey Field Centre, Acc. No. 1978/252.

10. *Newport Pagnell* – SP 865 426.

An axe found in scraping for the Industrial Estate between Tongwell Lake and the M1 by Mr. R. Veness of Newport Pagnell. Ground flint axe, patinated. White/light grey, with an ochreous-yellow tinge in places. Edge sharpened by a facet on each face. Polishing on facets only. Edge damaged, but remaining portion sharp, although showing signs of wear. Butt slightly damaged, sides slight flattened. Length: 14 cms. Width: 5.7 cms. Thickness: 3.3 cms. Weight: 298 gms. The form of this axe is broadly paralleled by axes of Adkins & Jackson's 'Type G'.<sup>5</sup>

Present location: with finder.

11. *Newport Pagnell* – SP 882 437.

An axe was taken to the County Museum in 1970/71 for identification. It was submitted to Professor Shotton who identified it as of the Cunningtonite Hornfells group. The finder was a Mr. D. Low.

Present location: Unknown.

Reference: 'Archaeological Notes from the Buckinghamshire County Museum', *Recs. of Bucks.*, XIX, part 1 (1971), 93.

### *Acknowledgements*

We are grateful to the various finders for reporting their discoveries to Bradwell Abbey Field Centre and for permission to publish; Mr. R. Moore of Northampton Borough Museum for information about No. 10 which was taken there for identification; Christopher Gowing, Curator of the Bucks County Museum at Aylesbury for the description of No. 1. Roy Adkins described the axes, June Burbidge drew them and this paper was written and edited by Dennis C. Mynard and typed by Mrs. D. M. Eley.

### REFERENCES

1. H. S. Green, 'The Excavation of a Late Neolithic Settlement at Stacey Bushes, Milton Keynes, and its significance' in 'Settlement and Economy in the Third and Second Millennia B.C.' *BAR* 33, (1976), 11-27.
2. R. Adkins and R. Jackson, Neolithic Stone and Flint Axes from the River Thames, an illustrated corpus, *British Museum Occasional Paper No. 1*, (1978).
3. J. Evans, *The Ancient Stone Implements, Weapons and Ornaments of Great Britain* (1872).
4. *Op. cit.* in Note 2 above, p. 16 and particularly No. 21 in the catalogue.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 25 and particularly by axe No. 105 in the catalogue.