

A Lower Palaeolithic quartzite chopping tool from Pershore town, Worcestershire, with observations on derivation.

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Introduction

Entrained in sediments underlying the terrace sequence of the Avon Valley and its correlating tributaries and sediments is a significant record of Palaeolithic tool usage (Shaw, Daffern & Russell, 2015; Whitehead, 1988, 1990, 2015). These include technology which utilised quartzite pebbles and occasionally other igneous rocks which also extended widely in Britain (MacRae, 1988; Shotton, 1988).

Discussion

This chopping tool (01 to 03) was found on 8 February 2017 in New Road, Pershore, Worcestershire (VC37 SO9445 24 m altitude) on a land surface developed on Avon No. 2 terrace (= Wasperton Member) as defined by Tomlinson (1925). Much of Pershore town is built on Avon No. 2 terrace; further confirmation of this is provided by a tooth of Woolly Rhinoceros (*Coelodonta antiquitatis* Blumenbach, 1799) found during excavations there on 1 July 1978 (Vince & Whitehead, 1979).

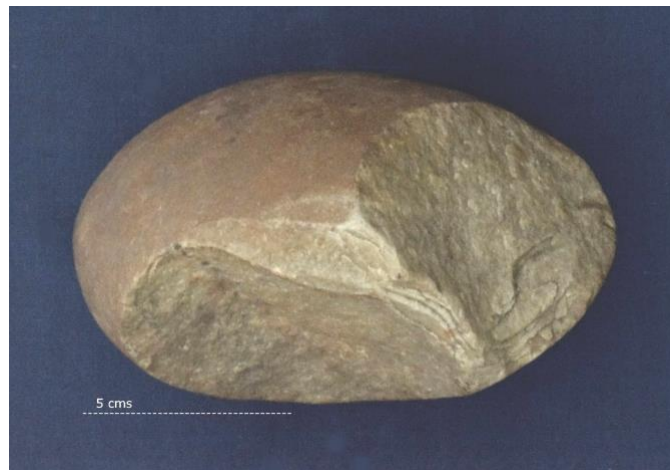
The chopping tool weighs 1400 gms and measures 130 mm in length and 79 mm in width. Three large flake scars are evident with two points of percussion visible implying fabrication with durable pointed rock hammers, presumably also made from quartzite. Rippled laminae at the edges (03) appear to have been created either by contemporaneous use or weathering. Although the primary removals define a heavy chopping tool the fabricator also had an option to utilise the detached flakes.



01. Quartzite chopping tool (or flake core), Pershore town, Worcestershire, 8.2.2017.



02. Quartzite chopping tool (or flake core), Pershore town, Worcestershire, 8.2.2017.



03. Quartzite chopping tool (or flake core), Pershore town, Worcestershire, 8.2.2017.

The number of quartzite palaeoliths entrained in the terrace sediments of the Avon Valley tends to increase with terrace age; there is a particular focus of such artefacts in Avon No. 4 terrace (= Twynning Member *sensu* Whitehead, 2014) but they can also be found in and on the surface of other terraces and their tributary correlatives. The radiocarbon chronology of Avon No. 2 terrace extends from 26000 years BP to 38000 years BP (Shotton, 1977) within which time period modern man *Homo sapiens* L., 1758, was regionally extant and founded what is now termed Upper Palaeolithic technology. Since this chopping tool is not demonstrably Upper Palaeolithic it must be considerably older than the end of the formation of Avon No 2 terrace; it has to be observed also that a single pebble tool cannot be regarded as typologically diagnostic. Nevertheless, a realistic presumption is that this artefact is Lower Palaeolithic and although of relatively fresh appearance could predate the establishment of the modern River Valley; it could equally have been introduced to the site from sediments higher up the valley side by either natural or human agencies following its initial removal from the Bunter Pebble Beds.

A second quartzite tool (04 & 05) from exactly the same site in New Road, Pershore as the chopping tool already described was found on 21 October 1997, also on the modern land surface. This is a well-resolved stepped side-scraper developed on an edge created by the removal of two flakes (05) from a quartzite pebble split vertically, probably during the Mesozoic, and weighing 265 grams also with an abortive point of percussion evident (05). No explanation is offered here for the occurrence of two Palaeolithic quartzite artefacts on a modern land surface at one spot other than by chance. The technology of the scraper is evidently more advanced and could mark a relatively more recent use of quartzite as raw material.



04. Quartzite side scraper, plan form, Pershore Town, Worcestershire, 21.10.1997



05. Quartzite side scraper lateral view, Pershore town, Worcestershire, 21.10.1997

The dating of derived artefacts in terrace sequences will nearly always be problematical (MacRae, 1988). 06 illustrates for the first time one of the largest Lower Palaeolithic ovate bifaces known from the English midlands, namely a well-worked biconvex hand axe fabricated in cherty flint, one side with a sponge cavity, found at Beckford Gravel Pit (SO9836) by the writer on 15 June 1974. These particular gravels aggraded about 28000 years ago during the run-up to the maximum cold of the last glacial; the point here is that this biface could be five or eight times that age and certainly sustained episodes of battering long before it arrived at Beckford. It was probably recycled on numerous occasions by fluvial and possibly glacial processes and its raw material suggests sources in eastern England.



06. Large Lower Palaeolithic or Acheulian ovate biface derived in Carrant Main Terrace sediments, Beckford, Worcestershire, 15 June 1974.

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Images

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