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AN AXE QUARRY AT MOOR CREEK, TAMWORTH DISTRICT, NEW SOUTH WALES.

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(Plate iv.)

Some years ago Mr. E. Wyndham, of Daruka Station, Moor Creek, informed me that there was an aboriginal axe quarry on his property, and in May, 1940, I was able to visit the site. The station is now owned by Mr. G. Powell, who was absent at the time of my visit. One of his employees, Mr. Dell Fisher, kindly escorted me to the quarry.

The quarry is situated on top of a high ridge, running north and south, which separates Moor Creek valley from Tamworth. At several points along this ridge are outcrops of basalt, consisting of weathered columnar slabs. The main outcrop extends for about 300 yards and is from fifteen to twenty feet in width. The flat-sided slabs vary from rectangular to trapezoid, occasionally triangular, in section, and range from small pieces to columns several feet long. The stream-like outcrop is broken at several points where there are depressions in the mass of stones; several of these depressions occur beside one end of the outcrop. Places at which the aborigines worked are denoted by patches of flakes, among which, or nearby, hammerstones were found (Plate iv, fig. 6).

The artifacts collected are as follows:

Group A.—E.48647, 48652-57, 48659-63. (Pl. iv, fig. 1).

These are pieces of basalt, with one or two lateral edges chipped. They are 11-17 cm. long, 7-11 cm. wide, 2-5½ cm. thick, and 9 oz., 16-40 oz. in weight. Three have been broken and discarded. They may represent the first stage in the flaking of an axe-blank, and those pieces which proved unsatisfactory for axes were probably used as scraping and cutting implements.

Group B.—E.48640-41, 48643-44, 48646, 48648.

This group apparently represents the second stage in preparing the axe-blank. It consists of pieces of basalt, quadrangular and trapezoid in section, 13-23 cm. long, 5-11 cm. wide, 4½-6 cm. thick, and 1½-5½ lb. in weight. They are flaked along three or four of the edges. E.48642 has a battered end as though used as a hammerstone. The ends on most of these specimens are roughly flaked, especially E.48642 and E.48648, but are not bevelled.

E.48639 (Pl. iv, fig 2) is 35 × 10 × 3-7 cm., and weighs 8 lb. It is trapezoid in section and is unusually large. Three edges are flaked from two faces, and the whole of the thick side has had the crust flaked away. The two ends are rough, and on one the semi-circular edge has been flaked. The size of this "blank" suggests that it is not an axe, but it could be a grooved conical stone (McCarthy, 1939) in the making; I was told by Mr. Fisher that one of the latter implements (which hitherto have not been recorded north of Oberon) was ploughed up by a local resident of Moor Creek valley, who gave it to the local school, but inquiries failed to locate it.

Group C.—E.48650-51, E.48685. (Pl. iv, figs. 3-4.)

This group represents a further stage in preparing the axe-blank. The specimens are 11½-17 cm. long, 5½-8 cm. wide, 5-6½ cm. thick, and weigh 1¼ lb. They are all shaped to a bevelled blade at one end. On E.48651 the blade has been shaped along both sides

and one end, but the butt end is broken off. On E.48649 (28 oz.) advantage has been taken of the two sloping surfaces of a wedge-shaped piece of stone to form a blade where they meet. E.48685 is an axe-blank from Moor Creek, and is of the same material as at the quarry. It is $9\frac{1}{2} \times 7\frac{1}{2} \times 2\frac{1}{2}$ cm., and weighs 8 oz. It is a typical example of the carefully worked lenticular axes from the Tamworth district.

The final shaping and the grinding of the blade were not done on the quarry, but were carried out in the camp or some convenient place near water. This custom was followed at the quarries at Mt. Foster and Mt. Harris (Towle, 1939, pp. 206-9), and at Mt. William, Victoria.

Group D: Hammerstones.—E.48642, E.48645, E.48668-76. (Pl. iv, fig. 5.)

The specimens in this group are similar in form to those of group B, but they have been used to such a degree as percussion stones that they cannot be considered as potential axe-blanks.

E.48672-73 and E.48675-76 each have one end battered to a flattened face with rounded edges; they are 12-13½ cm. long, 7-8 cm. wide, 4-5 cm. thick, and weigh from 1½-2 lb. E.48676 is only the hammered end of the tool. They are quadrangular and trapezoid in section. E.48668 and E.48674 have the percussion face along a bevelled edge formed by flaking at one end; they are 10 and 17 cm. long, 1¼ and 3 lb. in weight.

E.48670-71 have the percussion edge along the thin lateral side of trapezoid pieces of stone, so that the weight is employed to full advantage. They are 12 and 14 cm. long, 1½ and 2 lb. in weight. E.48669 is a small fabricator with a lateral percussion face. It is 9 cm. long, and 8 oz. in weight.

Group E: Flakes.—E.48664-67.

These vary in size up to 11 × 7 cm. Some of the large examples are chipped along one edge. One flake, 10 × 6 cm., has a well chipped concave edge along one side. They are flakes struck off the axe-blanks in the process of shaping.

References.

- McCarthy, F. D., 1939.—The Grooved-Conical Stones of New South Wales. *Mankind*, Vol. ii, pp. 161-169, plate T.
- Towle, C. C., 1939.—Stone Arrangements and other Relics of the Aborigines found on the Lower Macquarie River, N.S.W., at and near Mount Foster and Mount Harris. *Mankind*, Vol. ii, pp. 200-209, plates W and X, and figures 1 and 2.

EXPLANATION OF PLATE IV.

Fig. 1.—Example of Group A. E.48663.

Fig. 2.—Example of Group B. E.48639.

Figs. 3, 4.—Example of Group C. E.48650 and 48685.

Fig. 5.—Example of Group D. E.48642. Hammerstone, waisted.

Fig. 6.—Portion of the outcrop of columnar basalt, showing a place where the stone-axe makers worked. Note the flakes among the boulders.

Photographs by G. C. Clutton (1-5) and F. D. McCarthy (6).

