

CHAPTER I

HISTORICAL

Southern Rhodesia has, for the past thousand years or so, been inhabited mainly by a number of tribes which, for our present purpose, we may group together as the Shona people, together with a nineteenth-century immigrant people of Zulu extraction known as the Ndebele. The earliest historical records tell us nothing of other peoples having lived here previously, and the information given us by mediaeval travellers presents a picture blurred in outline and limited in extent. In this country, therefore, the prehistoric period may be said to have existed almost until our own time. Viewed in this light, the vast numbers of ancient ruins with which the colony abounds belong to the prehistoric period. We do, however, know that these ruins, even at the most liberal computation, cannot be remotely old, and the most competent investigators are of the opinion that they are of mediaeval age and of Bantu origin. To this conclusion they have been led by a detailed study of the objects found in them, which indicate a comparatively advanced state of development. At the time when they were built the art of working in iron was generally practised; the art of building in stone had been acquired; agriculture and animal husbandry were practised, and contacts had been established with countries outside Africa, whence came many imported objects. Between that time and the time when the earliest representatives of the human race first came to seek out new hunting grounds in a country uninhabited save for the wild animals of the veld, there was a vast interval, measured by thousands of years, during which the human race developed by slow and painful degrees from the simplest imaginable beginnings to a highly complex mode of life. While, therefore, we might quite rightly include our ruins within the prehistoric period, it is convenient to make a separation, using the term "protohistoric" for the later period, and reserving the term "prehistoric" for the earlier. There is, so far as we can ascertain, no overlapping between the two, except in so far as it is possible that the people of the stone-building period might have arrived at a time when the last of the Stone Age peoples were on the point of disappearing. If this was the case, as it might well have been, it is an indisputable fact that the builders were on a cultural

level far and away above that of the makers of the stone implements. For our present purpose we are concerned only with the more remote period from the time when prehistoric man first made his appearance until he finally became merged in the broad stream of human history. We speak of this great period of time as the Stone Age, and find it convenient to make an arbitrary division into Early, Middle and Late, which is based largely on certain cultural developments, but does not necessarily imply a break in them.

Sufficient research in prehistory has by now been accomplished in Southern Rhodesia to warrant a summarising of the results obtained. While it is fully realized that no more than a beginning has been made, it is perhaps permissible to express the hope that what has been done will prove a trustworthy foundation for the work waiting to be done in the future. While it is the inevitable fate of all theorising to become modified by further discovery, the factual results of the initiatory period of scientific investigation must remain. These facts it is the purpose of the present memoir to collate with no more theorising than they warrant, and it is fully recognised that the constructive period of African prehistory can hardly be said to have begun until the collation of the data obtained in the main centres of research becomes possible. While most of the material here made use of has appeared in various papers by myself and others, the work done within the boundaries of the colony cannot be conveniently surveyed as a whole until some attempt has been made to synthesise it. There is moreover a special reason why this work is called for. The prehistoric collection in the National Museum of Southern Rhodesia is sufficiently comprehensive to call for a guide for the use of those who have enough interest in the subject to want to know more about it than is possible from the mere reading of descriptive labels. The collection consists of an introduction to the study of prehistory; a comprehensive exhibit which attempts to illustrate the cultural development of the human race from its beginnings, so far as we know them, to the present day; an extensive series of stone artifacts with such explanatory notes as are necessary to make them intelligible; and



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a fairly representative comparative collection from many European and African areas where scientific investigation has been carried out. It sets out to be, in essence, a teaching collection, and the object consistently aimed at has always been to present a picture that will be complete in itself, as far as it is possible to make it so. An exhibited collection has, however, its limitations, and it is not always possible to make such inferences or to draw such conclusions as a study of the exhibits may appear to warrant.

I have not hesitated, where I think it necessary, to include simple explanatory matter in order to make this memoir intelligible to general readers, who are, I anticipate, likely to constitute the majority. At the same time I have omitted no detail likely to be of interest to my co-workers who, it is hoped, will forgive the inclusion of such explanations as has seemed to me to appear necessary.

Though references are made to sources of information, it is not proposed to give a detailed bibliography of prehistoric research as it has developed in Southern Rhodesia, since this work has already been done by Mr A. J. H. Goodwin in a comprehensive bibliography of South African prehistory (1), but the more important features of it rightly find a place here.

It is of interest to note that the possibility of Rhodesia as a field for a research in prehistory was revealed through the finding of stone flakes in an ancient ruin. It was of course to be expected that attention should first of all have been attracted by these more conspicuous evidences of former habitation, and it was when visiting the Khami Ruins near Bulawayo that Mr Franklin White, in 1900, noticed the presence of stone flakes among the débris littering the site(2). He says they "are scattered in all parts and are to be found on the surface and amongst ash deposits. It is possible that the soil which was used to fill up behind the walls to form the platforms contained some of these flat chips." In this respect Mr White was perfectly right. Recent investigations made at Khami, to which reference will be made later, have revealed the presence of a gravel, in various parts of the ruins area, which is rich in stone implements, and there is no doubt that it was extensively used for the purpose mentioned by Mr White. Apart from the Khami Ruins, at which the apparent association of stone flakes with the mediaeval débris was first noted, and the Dhlodhlo and Niekerk Ruins, no other ruins have to my knowledge revealed the same feature, and there can be no doubt that the association is fortuitous. Since in certain areas the surface

of the ground is thickly strewn with Middle Stone Age flakes, it would indeed be surprising if some of them did not become incorporated in ruined structures, where surface soil was extensively used for infilling.

The Rhodesia Scientific Association, to which Mr Franklin White reported his discovery, at once began to take an interest in the subject, and its members lost no time in reporting further discoveries. Messrs F. Eyles, F. P. Mennell and H. Marshall Hole were among the first who found stones showing "signs of human handicraft, having both primary and secondary chippings on the edges" (3) in the caves of the Matopo Hills which they examined, while Father Gardner made surface finds near Bulawayo and collected a series of stone tools in the quarries in the Gwelo Kopje (4).

The first hand-axe from either Northern or Southern Rhodesia, of which we have any record, was that found by Mr A. J. C. Molyneux at the Victoria Falls, and presented by him to the Rhodesian Museum in 1903 (Fig. 1). It is described in the report for that year as "a large hitherto unique specimen from the Zambesi" and is still preserved in the collection. It is an ovate hand-axe and is still one of the finest late Acheulean implements from that area. This discovery was followed in 1904 by the gift of a collection of stone implements, mostly handaxes, "from Mashonaland" made by a prospector, Mr W. H. Kenny, who continued his donations over the next eight years, during which period he also collected from the "Bembesi and Charter Districts". It is most unfortunate that the exact localities of these very fine implements were never divulged, and their value is thereby lessened to that extent. In the report of the Museum for 1904 the Curator, Mr F. P. Mennell, published an appendix entitled "Some Stone Implements in the Rhodesia Museum", which was largely inspired by the Kenny collection. He commented on this material and stated that it included "some very neatly chipped and symmetrical examples, together with others as rough as the St Acheul types, all, however, being comparable with the European Palaeoliths". He further (without I think, sufficiently convincing evidence) added the remark that "a few implements are no doubt to be ascribed to the builders of the ruins". The paintings ascribed to the Bushmen also received attention mainly from Mr R. N. Hall, who made a number of copies. His interest was, however, centred on the location of the various groups of paintings and in the enumeration of the different kinds of objects depicted, rather than in establishing

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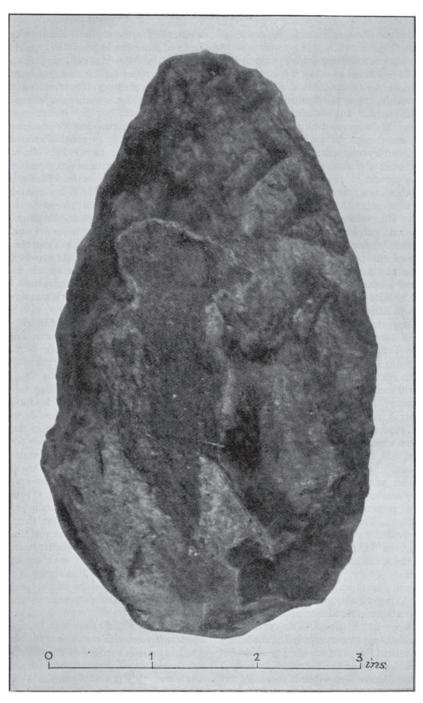


Fig. 1. The first recorded hand-axe found in Northern or Southern Rhodesia. It was found by Mr A. J. C. Molyneux at the Victoria Falls in 1903. It is a chalcedony ovate of Acheulean facies.



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any sequential classification based on superposition and the use of pigments (5).

The year 1918 saw the first attempt to deal with the subject of prehistory on scientific lines. In that year Dr Arnold, the Director of the Museum, and I did some excavating in the Bambata Cave in the Matopo Hills which I had located during the previous year. We attempted no more than a trial excavation, and though the work we did has since been superseded by more thorough work, we were able to establish the fact that another cultural element was present below the superficial layer in which, in other caves, previous visitors had found their small flake tools. Although we only excavated to a depth of 8 ft., we had every reason to believe that this second cultural layer extended to a far greater depth. Relatively unimportant as this work was, it served the purpose of putting Southern Rhodesia on the map as a field for prehistoric research, and so inaugurated a new era. It was, moreover, the first cave excavation work undertaken in South Africa (6).

Of equal importance was the discovery in 1918 by Dr Arnold of stone implements of different cultural ages in the Umgusa Valley at Sawmills, which formed the subject of a paper written by me in 1924(7). This site has since proved of great importance, and will receive attention later.

The discovery of large numbers of stone implements by Mr A. M. Macgregor, of the Geological Survey, in 1920 was of major importance. The localities from which he collected were tributaries of the Bembesi and Umgusa Rivers to the north of Bulawayo, and in these he found hand-axes and cleavers under generally similar conditions. He notes that "a stony alluvium overlain by black vlei soil was present wherever implements were to be found" (8). Though the area over which Mr Macgregor worked was more restricted than that of Mr Kenny, the knowledge gained has greater value since the actual localities and local conditions are recorded.

The foregoing historical summary leaves out of account the Victoria Falls, which, on account of its extreme importance in Rhodesian prehistory, needs to receive separate attention. Two years after Molyneux's discovery already referred to, the British Association visited South Africa and a great deal of attention was focused on the Victoria Falls area as well as on the Batoka Gorge below them. Molyneux (9) and Lamplugh (10, 11) published lengthy and informative papers dealing with the topography and geography of the area, and Col. H. W. Feilden, in

a letter to Nature (12), drew attention to the occurrence of stone implements "of typical Palaeolithic types". The following year Lamplugh produced an illustrated paper on the stone implements he had found at the Falls (13). These did not include any hand-axes (which is rather surprising as they are fairly numerous) but only flakes and flake tools which "show a secondary chipping which corresponds more nearly to rough European Neolithic work than to the earlier Palaeolithic method". H. Balfour, however, in an accompanying paper (14), describes a hand-axe he found on a pile of road metal at the Falls, and he says it resembles "a type of flint implement well known from the River-Drifts of Western Europe and England". Codrington, in 1909, published a paper (15) which is mainly concerned to produce evidence that the presence of stone implements at the Falls may be due to their having been brought down by tributary streams, rather than deposited in the actual bed of the Zambesi itself at a time when it was flowing at veld level below the present Falls.

The pioneer period of prehistoric research in Southern Rhodesia practically came to an end when, in 1926, my book, The Stone Age in Rhodesia, was published (16). It is of very little use to-day except to record how little was then known. It did, however, serve a useful purpose in directing some attention to Southern Rhodesia as a field for future research. Its publication happened to coincide with the date of the Pretoria Conference held in the same year when a tentative cultural sequence for the Stone Age in the sub-continent was formulated. With this important step forward I was at the time, to my great regret, entirely ignorant. Those were the days when workers in this department of research barely knew one another, and were blindly groping about in their respective areas, making their collections and collecting their data. Since that time a bond of happy and useful collaboration has been established and those engaged in this work are able to enjoy much mutual benefit and assistance.

To sum up, the results of the pioneer period of Southern Rhodesian prehistory may thus be tabulated:

- (a) Flakes and flake tools were first discovered in an ancient ruin and in the caves of the Matopo Hills, which were later ascribed to the Bushmen, as were also the paintings in apparent association with them.
- (b) Large stone tools, hand-axes and cleavers were discovered in widely separated areas, including the Umgusa and Bembesi Valleys, concerning which we now possess reliable data.

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- (c) Trial excavations were made at the Bambata Cave in the Matopo Hills, which indicated a great depth of cultural deposit, and brought to light a flake industry with unknown cultural correlations.
- (d) A varied assemblage of stone tools was found at Sawmills on the Umgusa River.
- (e) The importance of the Zambesi Valley deposits was recognised and material was collected which proved the area a "promising" field of investigation.

In 1932, when my prehistoric collection was incorporated with that of the Museum, the importance of the study of Rhodesian prehistory was sufficiently recognised for it to be accorded departmental status in the scheme of the Museum's activities.

Before embarking on the subject of the next chapter it will be necessary to set down a summary of the Stone Age cultures that have been recognised in Southern Rhodesia, in order to facilitate the use of cultural names without explanation in each case. This may be done in tabular form, as follows:

lean" are now generally used by South African prehistorians in place of the term "Stellenbosch", since there is general agreement that these divisions of the great hand-axe culture generally compare with the European divisions of the Lower Palaeolithic. The "Hope Fountain" appears to be contemporaneous with the Acheulean, with its roots in the Abbevillian.

The "Bembesi" appears to form a cultural nexus between the hand-axe culture and the Middle Stone Age, in which latter it is included as it marks the definite emergence of the Levallois flake technique which is regarded as the hall-mark of this period.

The next definite stage of which we have any knowledge is the Proto-Still Bay, between which and the Bembesi industry there may have been some considerable lapse of time. It may be possible to bridge this gap, if there be one, when we know more of the indeterminate Middle Stone Age industries found in the various parts of the country. There is, however, this much to be said. Whereas the

Europe	Southern Rhodesia		
Typological equivalents	Main Divisions	Cultural phases	Main tool types
Mesolithic	Late Stone Age	Rhodesian Wilton	Microliths and bone tools
Palaeolithic	Middle Stone Age	Magosian Rhodesian Still Bay Proto-Still Bay Bembesi	Late Levallois tools with microliths Bi-faced points produced by pressure flaking, burins, scrapers, etc. Simple points, burins and scrapers Hand-axes and flake tools of Levallois and Clacton technique
	Early Stone Age	South African Acheulean South African Abbevillian Here are and the same of th	Hand-axes and cleavers Hand-axes Pebble tools

I have used the term "Pre-Abbevillian" to include such tools as appear, from their form and conditions of discovery, to antedate the Abbevillian. By how much they do so is a point that we have no means of demonstrating, nor can we compare them with the recognised pebble cultures of Europe, the geological age of which in some cases appears to be fairly well established.

The European terms "Abbevillian" and "Acheu-

Bembesi industry is characterised by large and coarse flakes, the Proto-Still Bay provides a small type of tool including many specialised forms which previse the Still Bay and are absent in the Bembesi. Between these two it is only reasonable to suppose that some time interval may have existed.

The "Rhodesian Still Bay" clearly represents the

The "Rhodesian Still Bay" clearly represents the same development in Middle Stone Age technique that characterises the Still Bay Culture of the Cape Cambridge University Press

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Peninsula. That is to say, the secondary retouch of the point by pressure flaking which is the culminating lithicultural stage of the Middle Stone Age. ascribed to the immediate ancestors of the Bushman, who was the last representative of the Stone Age to inhabit this country.

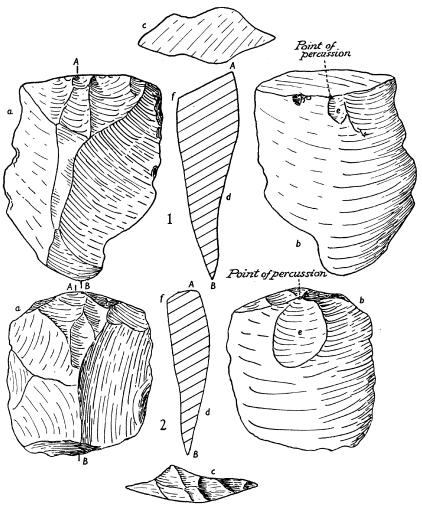


Fig. 2. Diagram to illustrate the two main flaking techniques. I, The "Clacton" technique. 2, The "Levallois" technique. a, the upper, or obverse, face; b, the under, or reverse, face; c, the butt, which in I is unfaceted, but in 2 is multifaceted; d, section through the line A-B (it will be noted that the flaking angle (marked f) is, in the Clacton, $\pm 120^\circ$, and, in the Levallois, $\pm 90^\circ$); e, denotes the flake scar, or *éraillure*. The Clacton flake has been struck from an unprepared core, and exhibits "parallel" flaking, while the Levallois flake has been struck from a prepared core and shows "convergent" flaking.

In the "Magosian" we have a culture that combines the characteristics of the Still Bay with an infusion of microlithic tools which, in general form, resemble those of the "Wilton" Culture.

The "Wilton" is essentially a microlithic culture

It needs to be borne in mind that these cultural names are used for convenience only, and are intended to indicate distinct phases of human development. The history of the human race is a continuous one in which there are no gaps, and the



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work of the prehistorian is to reconstruct, from the great mass of data at his disposal, a complete picture.

It will be necessary to make use of two terms, "Levallois" and "Clacton", and a brief explanation of them is called for. They are names given to two methods employed by early man for detaching flakes from the stones he selected for the manufacture of his implements.

The "Clacton" flake is struck from a lump of stone or core which has received no previous preparation. It is recognisable by its inclined striking platform, or butt, which is unfaceted and generally flat.

The "Levallois" flake, on the other hand, is from

a core which has been previously prepared so as to provide a suitable striking platform, and is so trimmed as to produce a flake of the kind required. This is done by removing a number of small flakes from the side of the core, with the result that the detached flake bears on its butt a number of small flake scars, and it is said to be "faceted" (Fig. 2).

It is hardly necessary to enter into a description of the various tool forms referred to since the illustrations will afford sufficient explanation, but, for those who may be unfamiliar with the meaning of certain terms which I shall have occasion to use frequently, I have appended a glossary which I hope will be found helpful.



CHAPTER II

THE EARLIEST MEN

Southern Rhodesia may perhaps best be described as a high plateau between the Zambesi and the Limpopo Rivers. It has an area of approximately 152,000 square miles of which about a quarter is over 4000 ft. above sea level. The highest ground, which stretches south-west to north-east, forms a watershed which feeds the two great rivers, and if to-day the tributary streams are dry or reduced to a trickle of water in winter, there is abundant evidence to prove that, since the human race arrived, they have carried great quantities. The country has, however, been subject to varying climatic conditions during this period, as we shall see later, but it has proved itself capable of supporting human life under very favourable conditions for a long time. It is, in short, a country where we might reasonably expect to find some evidence of the presence of the earliest men who came to South

It will be readily understood that man, as soon as he had become what we understand by the use of the word, had everything to find out for himself. His dawning intelligence could not long rest content with things as he found them. He early felt the urge to adapt nature to meet his needs. Naked and defenceless, he needed to provide himself with food, to protect himself from the wild animals, and to shield himself from the cold. His inventive faculty thus came early into operation. While his first tools must surely have been pointed sticks, natural stones, or splinters of rock naturally fractured, these did not long satisfy him, and the first stage in his development was of necessity the adaptation of natural objects to his particular needs. In order to meet these, he doubtless experimented with all the suitable materials nature provided. Of his achievements we know nothing except in so far as his working in stone is concerned. In the absence in this country of the actual remains of these early people, we are thus limited in our knowledge of their cultural achievements, and the stone implement provides the only means by which we can measure them. Then it is only when we can satisfy ourselves that man has shaped it for his use that we can recognise it. The recognition of an artificially shaped stone in its earliest and crudest form is not

an easy matter, and the subject has engendered a great deal of discussion among prehistorians for many years, and controversy is by no means dead yet. Without entering into details which hardly concern us here, it will suffice to say that a stone that is fractured in such a way as to suggest design and intention, and is moreover found under conditions that suggest the probability of human workmanship, is potentially a stone implement, and is at least worthy of study. Nature can account for flakes removed, but it is in the highest degree unlikely that she will remove many in such a manner as to produce an edge, which would be useful as a chopping tool. Such primitive forms have been generally recognised in Europe and elsewhere, and the prehistorian working in a country like Southern Rhodesia, that has proved itself so rich in stone implements, needs to be constantly on the watch for the simpler forms of tools which must have preceded the more highly developed hand-axes of the Early Stone Age. Nor have we been altogether unrewarded. Few though they are, we have sufficient evidence to satisfy us that the human race arrived at a very early date in Southern Rhodesia.

The pebble tools (Fig. 3) that have been found are of two kinds: an edge which might function as a chopping tool; and a point, possibly used as a weapon. Either of these might, under special conditions, be naturally formed, but the finding of more than one of them under similar conditions is supporting evidence of their human origin. Some of them have been found apparently associated with Middle Stone Age tools. The occasional occurrence of pebble tools on sites which have yielded Middle Stone Age tools is not, however, in the least disturbing since the late Middle Stone Age people lived and worked on what is still to-day the surface of the country. When they found a patch of gravel containing pebbles of the kind they desired, they frequently worked them in situ, but they did not normally use such tools as those which experience has taught us to associate with man's earliest days.

Some pebble tools have also been found in deposits containing hand-axes, but it must not be assumed that they were necessarily contemporaneous since the earliest gravels have, to a great



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Fig. 3. Pebble tools from various localities in Southern Rhodesia. 1, Pointed form suggesting a primitive hand-axe, both trimmed edges are sharp though irregular, but the point is blunt. Considerably rolled. Shelala River. 2, Tool with roughly semicircular edge, slightly rolled. Hunyani River. 3, Straight-edged tool, unrolled. Mondoro Reserve. 4, Tool with curved edge formed on a flat pebble. Much rolled. Kutama. (The "end-on" figure shows the flakes removed on both sides of the pebble.) 5, Crudely made tool, little rolled. Avondale, Salisbury.

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THE EARLIEST MEN

extent, been disturbed and re-sorted at times of very abundant rainfall. The first wet phase, which took place during the development of the great hand-axe culture,* effected great changes in this direction, and it is only under exceptional circumstances that we can ever hope to find the original gravel in an undisturbed condition. Where this resorting has taken place it is generally found that the degree of rolling to which the pebble tools have been subjected is much greater than that of any of the hand-axes that may have been found in apparent association.

Mr A. M. Macgregor of the Geological Survey, while investigating the geology of the Que Que district in 1932 (17), discovered near the confluence of the Umniati and Sangowu Rivers, well-defined high-level terraces with gravel deposits varying from 45 ft. to 75 ft. above the present river bed. He noted the occurrence of Middle Stone Age tools and flakes in abundance and a few rather small hand-axes, and in the same locality he also found an implement which is probably of much earlier date. It is marked as having come from the 70 ft. gravel at Sangowu Drift, and is a natural flattish pebble, originally more or less circular in outline. Two converging edges meeting in a point have been formed by the removal of large flakes, thus giving the implement somewhat the appearance of a very crude hand-axe. This, however, is probably more fortuitous than intentional. Since this implement came from a high-level gravel there is every indication of its very early date.

In the Hunters Road area Mr Macgregor also found gravel terraces on various levels up to 100 ft. The highest of these, he states, yielded stone implements of very primitive character. On Somerset Estate in the Gwelo Valley, too, he reported very early types of implements, and noted that the region offered considerable scope for archaeological investigation.

Further finds of these primitive implements are recorded from the 50–60 ft. gravel on the left bank of the Sebakwe River, almost opposite the Shamwari; from the "P. & F." claims on the right bank of the Bembeswana River one mile above the confluence with the Sabawe in the 50–60 ft. gravel; and from the high terrace of the Shelala River (18) (Fig. 3, 1). These, together with the Sangowu Drift implement, are preserved in the Museum.

* The three recognised wet phases referred to by number throughout are those which took place during the human period. The earliest of these was not necessarily the first Pleistocene wet phase, nor is the possibility of other wet phases during the human period ruled out.

The evidence afforded by the Lochard site in favour of the presence of Pre-Abbevillian man in this country is probably the strongest we have yet obtained. I shall need to deal with this in detail later, but this survey would be incomplete without mention of the discovery of a pebble tool in a gravel bed held up by a granite bar across, and near the source of a small tributary of the Bembesi River. It is quite probable that this gravel is all that is left of a large bed, the rest of which, not being so well protected, was carried downstream during the first wet phase. It is in fact just where we should expect to find pebble tools. This tool is formed on a quartzite pebble and shows two large flake scars on one side of the edge, backed by another which has been struck off the point where the two adjacent scars intersect (Fig. 11). Although no other implement or artefact of any kind was found in association, it would be unwise to deduce the presence of a pebble industry on the evidence of a single find. It should be mentioned that three other pebble tools were found in the vicinity, but these were not actually found in the gravel though they may have been derived from it.

Mrs M. R. Izzett of Salisbury, a keen student of Rhodesian prehistory, has found pebble tools in three sites examined by her. One of these is in the vicinity of her home at Avondale, where she examined gravel that had been dug out in excavating for a storm drain. She was able to examine the bed from which this gravel was obtained and found it to be in the region of 2 ft. 6 in. thick and lying on red earth of unknown thickness. With a few other crude artefacts of indeterminate age she found one unmistakable pebble tool (Fig. 3, 5). It is of the "cutting edge" variety, and is formed in the usual way by removing flakes from opposing surfaces of a flattish pebble. Another locality was a pebble spread in the Hunyani River, 400 yd. above its confluence with the Gwebi. It yielded two pebble tools with curved chopping edges (Fig. 3, 2). A few other implements, including a hand-axe and some Levallois flakes, were found with them, and it therefore seems probable that the spread is a gravel that was re-sorted during the second wet phase. These pebble tools are somewhat rolled and heavily patinated and there can be little doubt that they are very old. The third locality is Kutama Siding, between Makwiro and Lydiate. Here Mrs Izzett found, lying on the surface, on the edge of a vlei, a pebble tool that is as convincing as any I have seen (Fig. 3, 4). The edge is fairly straight and the flaking alternate. The flake edges are almost obliterated, but this is more likely to be