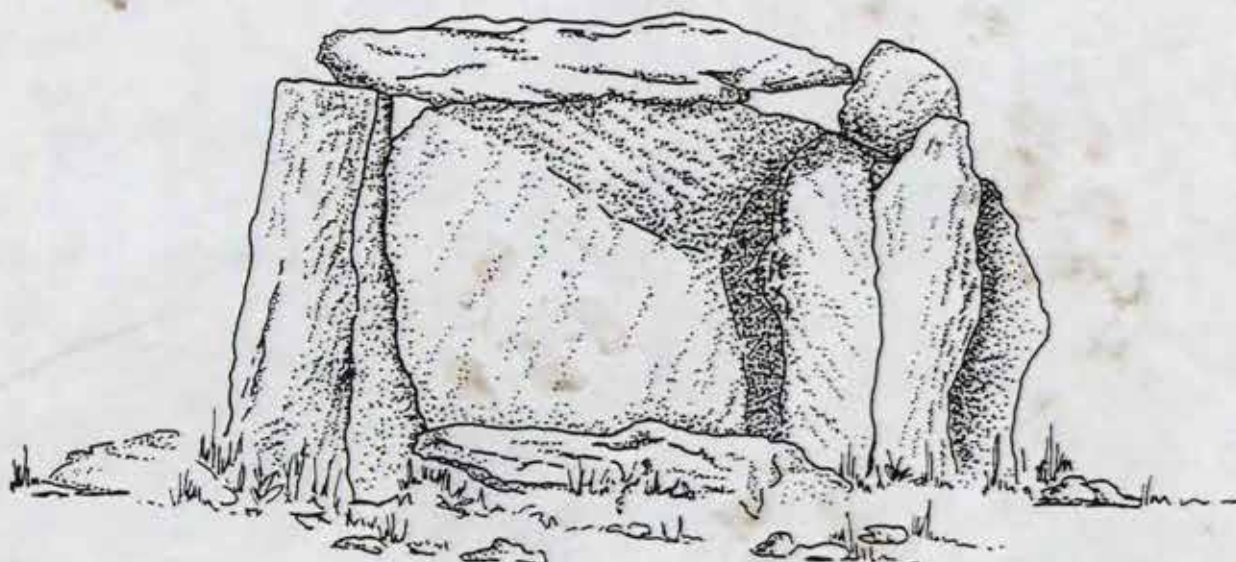


# ***JOURNAL OF THE GREAT ORME EXPLORATION SOCIETY***

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## **A GLIMPSE OF LLANDUDNO IN PREHISTORY**

**A BRIEF ACCOUNT OF THE CAVE ARCHAEOLOGY  
OF THE LLANDUDNO AREA, BASED ON  
EXCAVATIONS BETWEEN 1973 AND 1983.**

**TOM STONE**

**1994 Supplement 2**

***£2.00 to Non-members***

## FORWARD

Tom Stone came to Llandudno in 1919 from Liverpool at the age of six. He began his career as a mechanical apprentice at Silver Motors on the Mostyn Broadway in 1928. The company was taken over by Crossville and on completion of his apprenticeship he went to work for them at their Nantwich depot. In 1937 he had come a little closer home and was maintaining the Post Office vehicles in Wrexham. During the war he joined the Home Guard and in 1943 was called up as an artificer into the REME with whom he went to India being demobilised as a Warrant Officer. Having returned to civilian life after the war he joined the Territorial Army, was commissioned and rose to the rank of major before retiring with the Territorial Decoration and a Lord Lieutenant's Certificate. He returned to the Post Office on demobilisation in 1945 and remained with them until he retired in 1977. He was also awarded the Imperial Service Medal in 1977.

Having more time available in the early 1970s he became actively involved in archaeology, particularly the cave archaeology of Ogof Pant y Wennol, Ogof Tudno and Kendrick's Cave. The specimens excavated have been recorded by the National Museum of Wales, they remain in Llandudno and are currently on display at the Great Orme Bronze Age Mine Centre. Tom has spoken to local history societies on many occasions but to date he has not had the opportunity to record his work in the local history literature. Drawing from his original notes, Tom describes the cave archaeology of the Great Orme and area, his findings during caves digs conducted between 1973 and 1983 and puts forward his hypotheses.

The diagrams accompanying the text were reproduced from Tom's original work. The artefacts from his excavations have been redrawn by David Chapman RCA. However, because of editorial constraints, they could not be included in the supplement but have been published as a limited edition appendix. Copies are available from the Society and may also be consulted at the National Library of Wales and Llandudno Library where reference copies have been deposited.

Don Smith  
Plymouth, June 1994

Editor  
Journal of the Great Orme Exploration Society

Front cover: Llettyr Filiast redrawn by Alison Walton from a photocopy of Tom Stone's pen and ink drawing. Regrettably Tom's original was destroyed by flooding in June 1993.

## A Glimpse of Llandudno in Prehistory

### INTRODUCTION

The last Ice Age suffered by the northern hemisphere was at its height about 30,000 years ago, when the polar icecap extended south almost as far as the Midlands and across the Welsh valleys to the north of Cardiff. The Irish Sea was covered over with ice some 1,500 to 2,000 feet thick. This ice mass was not just local, it covered vast areas of the northern hemisphere resulting in the sea level worldwide to be about 300 feet lower than it is today.

As a consequence of a lower sea level the English Channel and the northern part of the Irish Sea were dry making Britain and Ireland part of the continental land mass. These ice sheets eventually began to thaw under the influence of global warming, marking the beginning of events which shaped the coast line around the area of Llandudno as we know it today. Although this process took many millennia, erosion and sedimentation continue to change the landscape, actions which can be clearly illustrated if we consult coastal maps of only 100 years ago.

It is the intention of this account to give an impression, based on the archaeological evidence present around the area, of what took place from the end of the Ice Age to the dawn of the historical period, the latter commencing with the arrival of the Claudian invasion in 43 A.D.

The first part deals with the ice beginning to thaw and the valleys and cwms of Snowdonia coming alive with the noise of running water. A very gradual process in the beginning and many thousands of years were to pass before visible effects such as lakes were to be seen. One effect that to some extent shaped the area in which we live was that the course of the river we call the Conwy was altered. Before the Ice Age the river leaving the valley turned at Glan Conwy and flowed to the Irish Sea via the Mochdre valley into Penrhyn Bay as a low range of hills running from Llandudno Junction to Conwy Mountain formed a barrier diverting the river into that valley.

The ice covering the land mass thawed at a faster rate than that over the sea and for a considerable period the ice in the Irish Sea blocked eastward passage of melt-waters pouring into the Conwy valley. This resulted in the formation of a lake or delta estimated to be about 50 feet in depth which in time eroded away the hills at their lowest point allowing the river to flow northwest as it does today. Embleton, writing in 'Snowdonia', describes the post-glacial permanent diversion of the river.

The remains of the low hills that blocked the egress of the Conwy prior to its diversion can still be seen in the form of a small islet in the middle of the river. The road running west from Llandudno Junction over the cob to meet the bridge also terminates on it. Known locally as 'Ynys', Thomas Telford built the eastern foundation of his famous suspension bridge here and it now carries the foundation of the modern road bridge. This islet can also be seen in the centre of the river on

## A Glimpse of Llandudno in Prehistory

several old paintings of the district.

In 'Snowdonia', Embleton also states that the Mochdre valley was once a second estuary for the Conwy until infilled by alluvium, presumably referring to the historic period. Naturally, the volume of melt-water that was pouring out of Snowdonia brought down huge amounts of debris into the lower valleys which we can still see today. In the Ogwen valley, the lower slopes are covered with large boulders, erratics to give them their proper name. If one examines them, the marks made as they were carried along by the ice are plainly visible in the form of scratches and striae.

Boulder clay, composed of fine material left by the receding water, covers most of the surrounding hillsides. On the west bank of the Conwy, facing the bridge at Tal-y-Cafn, is a large deposit of boulder clay left by the river as it poured around a gentle bend in the river. The example mentioned at Tal-y-Cafn was cut into when the roads leading to the bridge were constructed. The exposed clay on the face of the mound shows quite clearly the sequence of its deposition, layers of fine material interspersed with coarser material tell us of periods when the river was running fast and only heavy items sank to the bottom, finer grains of clay sank only when the river was flowing gently.

This stratigraphy, as the layering is called, gives the geologist information about the climatic conditions prevailing at the time. In Llandudno a good example can be seen on the western side of the Great Orme below the Marine drive and again at the far end of the promenade beyond Craig-y-Don on the beach where the lower slopes of the Little Orme are similar.

When the ice, including that covering the sea, eventually melted, and before the water very slowly regained its former level, dry land would have extended almost to Ireland, a land still in the grip of permafrost and hostile to any life form not acclimatized to such cold conditions. The Great Orme and Little Orme would have had gentle slopes with the steep cliffs covered with boulder clay which would remain until the sea level rose and started to eat into the clay thus exposing the rock that we see today. The sea level is still rising and eating into low-lying areas around the coastline.

Slowly plants, such as mosses, lichens and eventually hardy shrubs, began to gain a hold and cold climate loving animals such as woolly rhinoceros, reindeer, bears, wolf and arctic fox moved in to take advantage of them. Mammoths, whose bones have been found in the south of England and in parts of the Midlands, were herbivores and lived on the edges of the prevailing tundra. To date no evidence of this animal has been found in Wales; they were extinct on the continent by 13,000 B.C. It is quite possible that they were present on the low lying land now covered by the Irish Sea. As the ice retreated further north more and more animals moved in to take advantage of the vegetation taking its place and behind them came the predators, both animal and the most dangerous of all 'Man'.

## **A Glimpse of Llandudno in Prehistory**

As the vegetation became more lush, animals such as deer, wild horse, ox and pig migrated north following the food source, however, this trend was not to last. As the thaw continued the sea level gradually rose. The Straights of Dover were breached separating Britain from the continent; the Irish Sea rose too and thus we became two islands. Much of man's food supply was cut off as the migration of animals from the continent was prevented by the newly formed channel. This resulted in many animals, including rhinoceros, reindeer and wild horse being hunted to extinction, only their bones remain to prove they were ever present.

Here in Llandudno and the surrounding countryside evidence of their presence has been found mostly in the caves used by both animal and ancient man. The North Wales coast from the Great Orme's Head to Abergele is mostly limestone, a rock subject to erosion by water and which therefore contains many caves. Several caves on the Great and Little Ormes have been occupied by prehistoric man. The location of some important sites with a brief description of what they contained will be found in the following pages.

As sea levels continued to rise both man and the animals he hunted were forced to retreat and take to higher ground. Some of the animals not adapted to living on hilly or mountainous regions moved on or died out. Man himself was forced to find more suitable habitation and there was probably competition between man and beast for the tenancy of caves and rock shelters.

Approximately 10,000 years ago the caves of the Great and Little Ormes, along with those on the high ground at Craig-y-Don, were occupied. Any overhanging rock could have served as a shelter; parties of hunters could also have used them in warmer periods. The caves which have been examined, such as Ogof Pant-y-Wennol at Craig-y-Don and both upper and lower Kendrick's caves on the Great Orme, tell us a fascinating story.

### **OGOF PANT-Y-WENNOL**

Ogof Pant-y-Wennol is one of the most important cave archaeology sites in the Llandudno area as its occupation covers such a long period. The last excavation carried out there by the author was on a small scale principally to assess the importance of the site. The cave interior had been previously excavated Mel Davies and has been well documented by him in various journals. He gives an excellent record of the climatic conditions prevailing from the late Pleistocene to the Bronze Age and also a record of the large number of animal and human bones found in the cave.

The cave appears at one time to have been a den, well used by a wide variety of animals including hyena and wolf. Man certainly used it during one period as a burial site, but as yet we do not know whether he actually lived in it. Several inhumations were found just within the entrance and one in a fissure at the rear of

## A Glimpse of Llandudno in Prehistory

the cave. No artifacts have been found that might provide a clue as to their antiquity. Although Davies inclines to their being of late Neolithic or Bronze Age, others have said they may possibly be Mesolithic.

Fragments of animal bone from red and roe deer, ox, reindeer, pig, sheep and goat were found and at a depth of around 2.5 metres an astragalus (ankle bone) of a woolly rhinoceros was found. This gave the cave and Davies some renown as it featured on Welsh Television. The cave is sheltered by overhanging rock that provides protection from the weather on the western side. This overhang also shelters the flat area excavated by the author which is outside the entrance to the cave. Excavation was necessarily confined to the limits of this overhang as all round access to a small dilapidated building close by was required by a local builder who uses it as a store.

Commencing on the western side against the cliff wall it was a short time only before flint and chert flakes and bone fragments were found a few centimetres below the surface. A few of the bone fragments were fossilised and therefore probably of palaeolithic origin and, as they were fairly thick, may have come from large animals. Unfortunately they are not large enough to be given a positive identification though are possibly ox or reindeer as teeth from these animals were found in the cave. One bone appears to have been used as a tool as the ends are worn down as though having been utilised as a scoop.

Several fragments of deer bone were found, also black chert microliths. These last items are of the Mesolithic period which follows on from the Palaeolithic ending some 8,000 years B.C. Similar microliths have been found at a Mesolithic site at Brenig on the Denbigh Moors and at another site outside Rhuddlan. Other items found consisted of a molar and fang of wolf, a molar of wild horse, incisors of wild pig and bone fragments of goat and sheep. Some human teeth, those of a young person, were found scattered around this area, presumably from one of the inhumations within the cave.

Many beach stones were uncovered and showed evidence of their having been used as tools. One flat sided fist-sized stone had been modified with a notch on two edges, presumably to hold some form of cord and is thought to be a net sinker. Two similar stones had been found by Davies at the back of the cave and quite a large quantity of mussel, limpet and winkle shells were found around the site it does give credence to the cave's use as a shelter by hunters and fishermen.

Pottery found consisted of two or three plain fragments from the Neolithic period, a decorated piece identified as 'Peterborough' and small shards of decorated 'Beaker', the latter from the Bronze Age. The most important artifact found was a fine bone needle, the eye unfortunately was broken but sufficient remained to show that the maker was a craftsman of infinite patience. Another item of importance thought to be part of an artifact was a fragment of bone four cm in length decorated with incised lines; it is similar to one found on a site in Mold and

OGOF PANT Y WENNOL

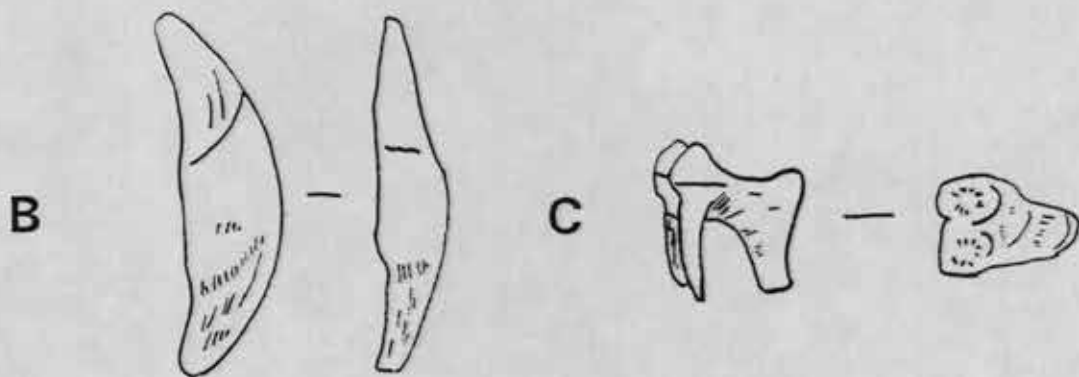
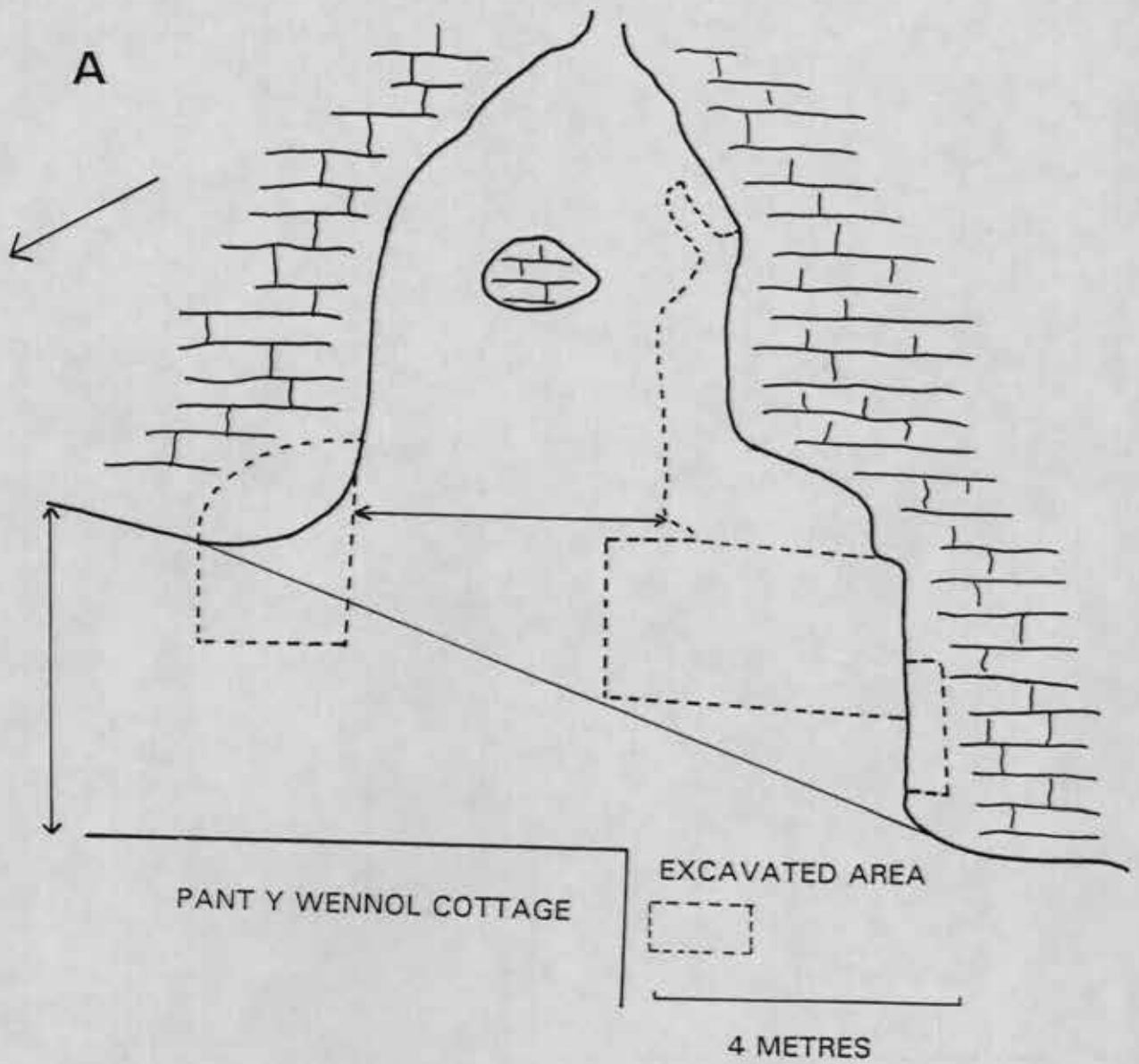


Figure 1

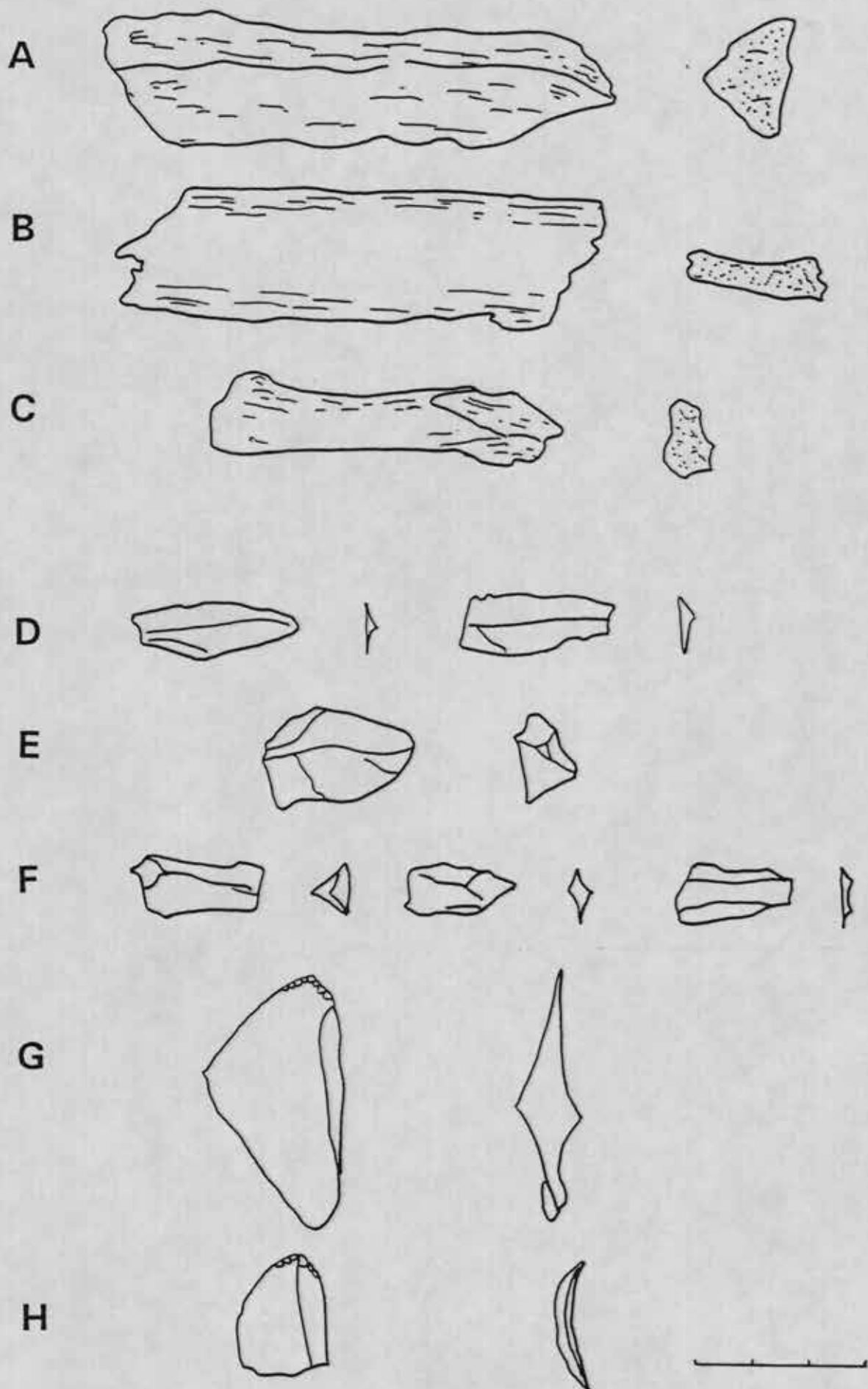
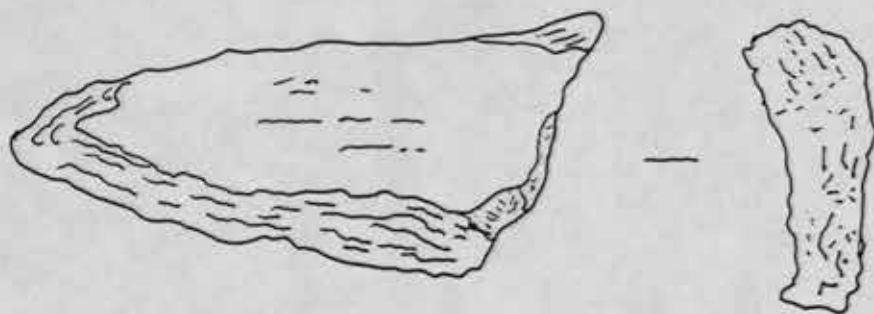


Figure 2

A



B

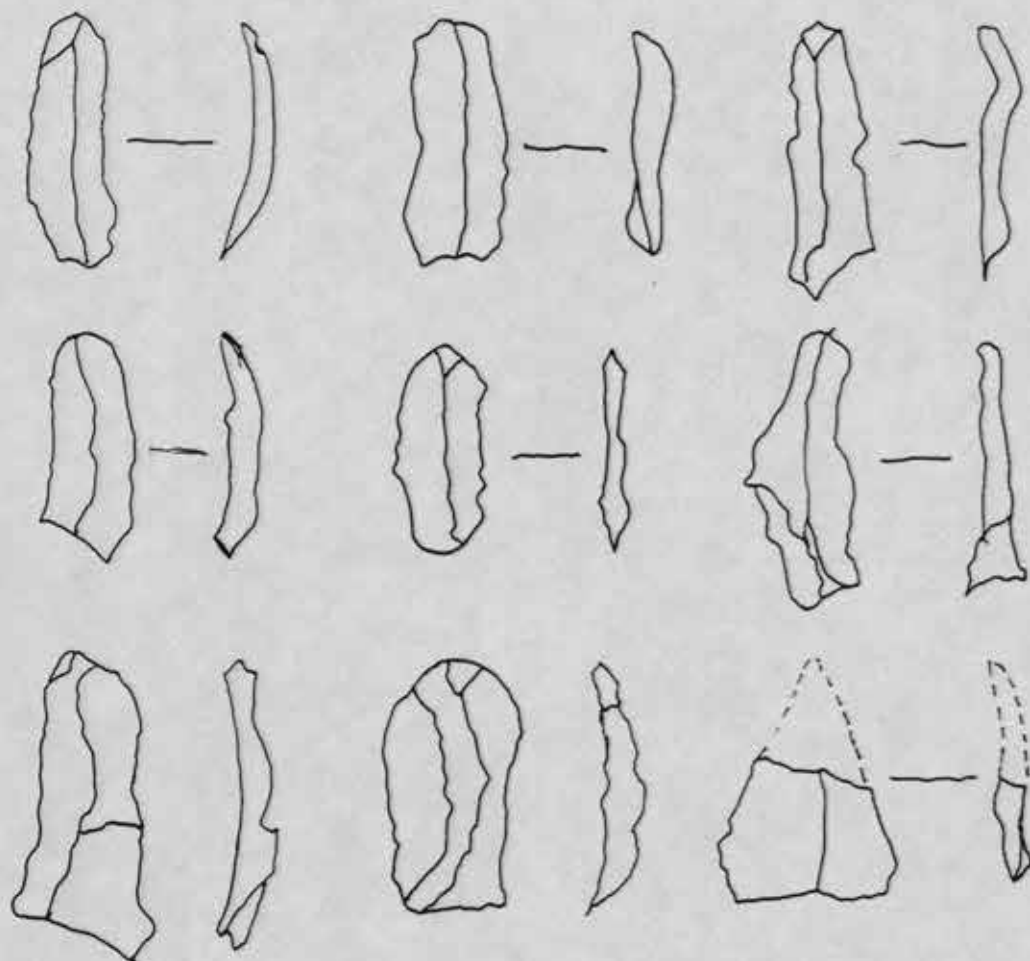


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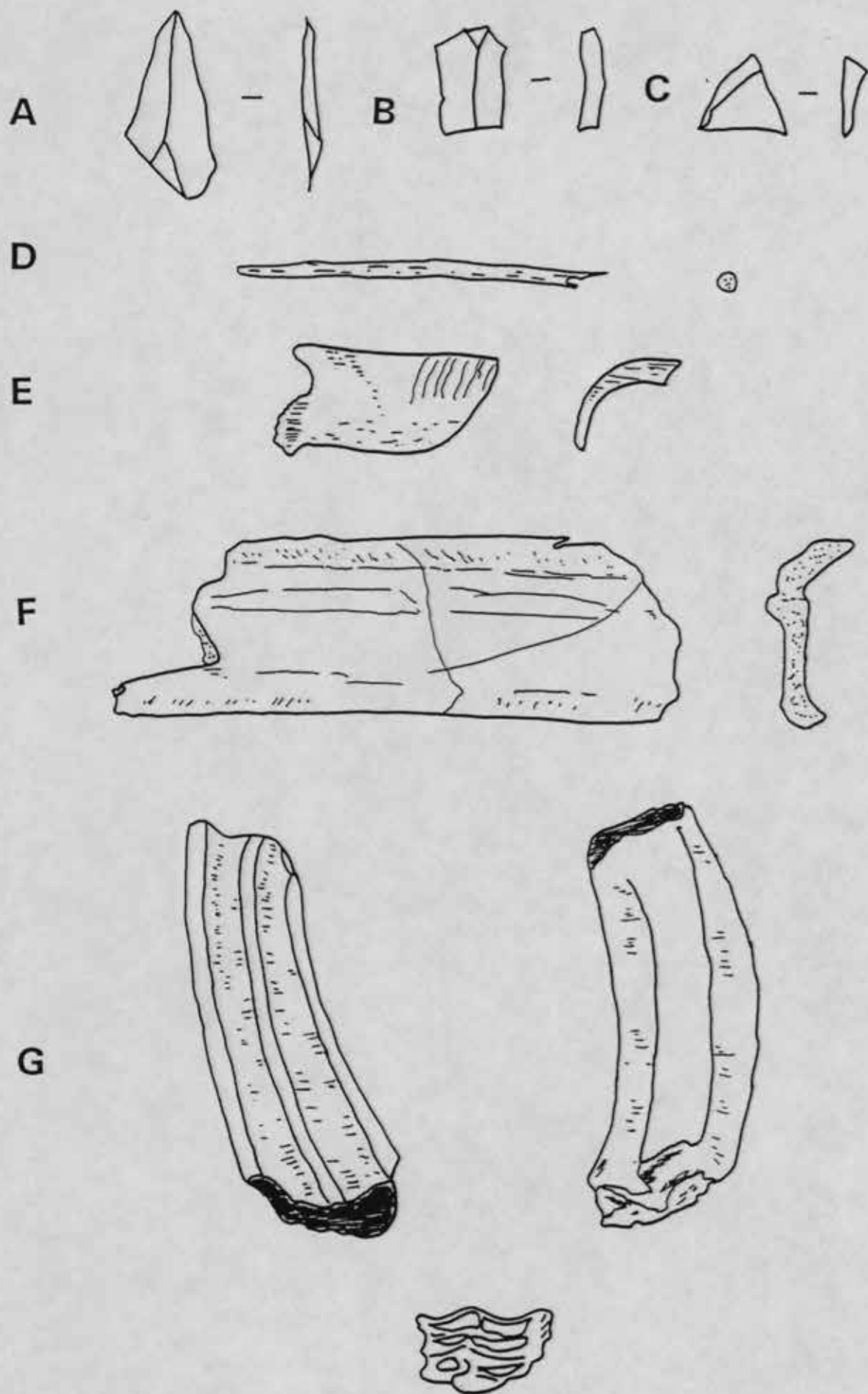


Figure 4

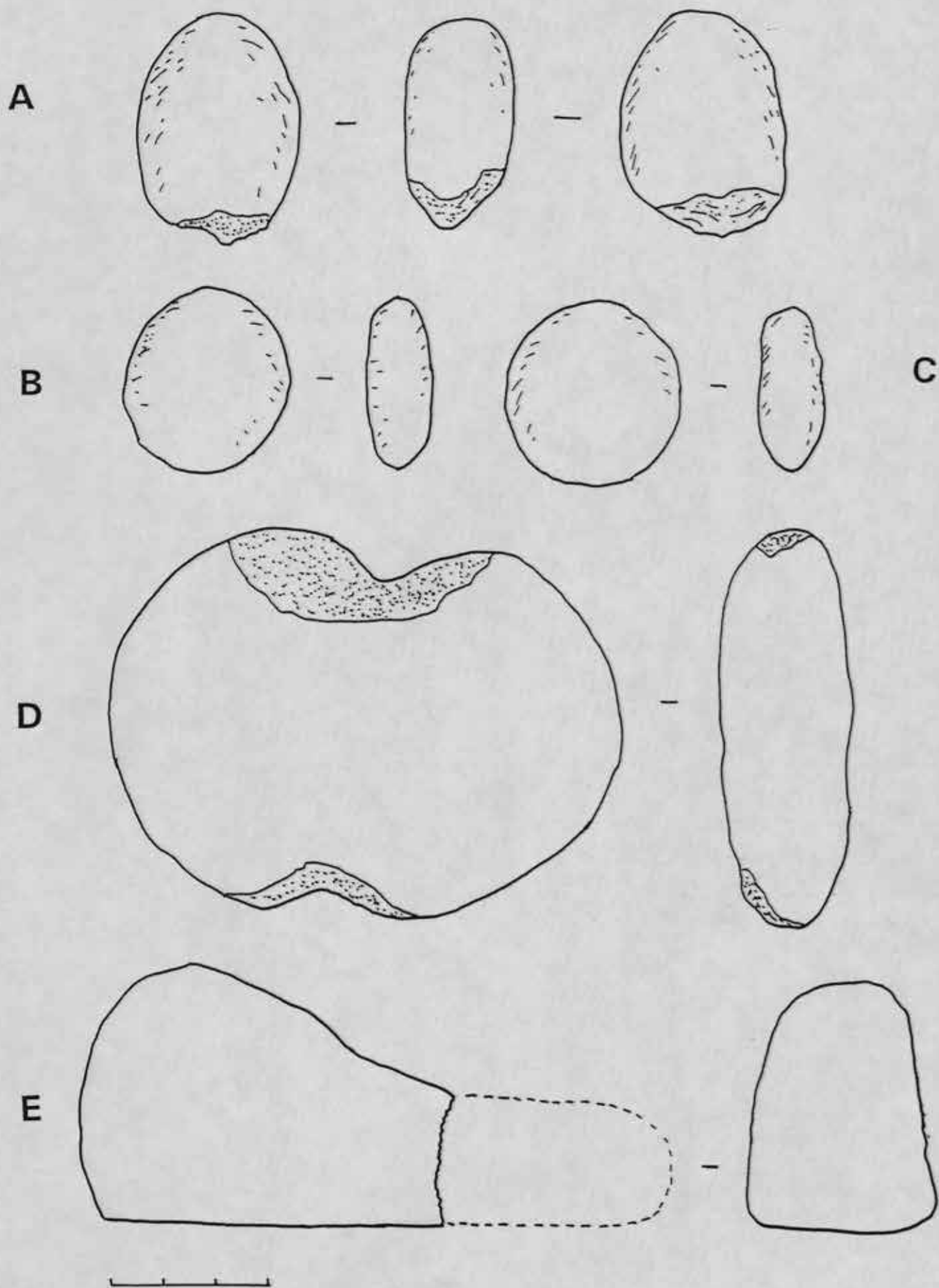


Figure 5

## A Glimpse of Llandudno in Prehistory

### OGOF PANT Y WENNOL

#### Figure 1:

- A Ogof Pant y Wennol showing the position of the excavations
- B-C Mesolithic wolf teeth

#### Figure 2:

- A-C Mineralised Palaeolithic bone fragments from a large animal
- D Palaeolithic flint microliths
- E Palaeolithic flint burin
- F Palaeolithic flint flakes
- G Retouched Mesolithic flint engraver
- H Retouched Mesolithic flint burin

#### Figure 3:

- A Mineralised Palaeolithic bone fragment from a large animal
- B Mesolithic black chert microliths and blades

#### Figure 4:

- A Mesolithic black chert microlith
- B-C Mesolithic black chert flakes
- D Mesolithic antler needle
- E Mesolithic etched bone fragment
- F Mesolithic bone fragment from which slivers had been carved
- G Mesolithic equine molar

#### Figure 5:

- A Mesolithic pebble tool
- B-C Mesolithic pebble found in association
- D Mesolithic beach stone modified for use as a net sinker
- E Mesolithic stone grinder

Unless otherwise stated, scale 3 cm.

## A Glimpse of Llandudno in Prehistory

which is believed to be part of a horse's bridle.

Heat crazed beach stones that obviously had been used as pot boilers were also excavated. Until iron was discovered, clay pots were unsatisfactory for use as cooking utensils as they broke in intense heat, therefore, these pot boilers were heated in a fire and then thrown into a water-filled clay-lined trench in the ground. By continually changing the stones as they cooled the water eventually boiled and meat etc. placed in the boiling water was cooked. Shellfish could also have been cooked in this manner and were a popular item of food as the large quantity of empty shells found here suggests. Limpet shells, which are prolific on prehistoric coastal sites, appear to us to be unpalatable but are rich in protein and are still to be found in some Oriental dishes.

Whilst tidying up the site at the conclusion of the excavation a disturbed human burial was found which was submitted to the National Museum of Wales. Two other bones, found at the rear of the cave, were identified as human humeri (upper arm). When removed, lying beneath them were four pieces of slate, two shaped like blades and two as scrapers. Since slate is too soft for use for tools it is the author's opinion they had been placed with the burial as token grave goods; proper tools would have been made of chert or flint. Similar slate artifacts, if one may call them that, have been excavated from a cave burial on the Little Orme. Flint is rare in this locality and is found mostly on beaches onto which it has been washed from flint deposits further north; most of the flint tools found on archaeological sites in this area are derived from beach stones.

### LOWER KENDRICK'S CAVE

Lower Kendrick's Cave is another important site situated on the southern slopes of the Great Orme, overlooking the town and came into prominence in the 1880's. Thomas Kendrick, a retired miner and quarryman, set himself up as a lapidary and for premises used a small cave in what is now the grounds of Ardwy Orme, a large house at the bottom of Ty Gwyn road. He became well known to the visitors who were now beginning to flock to this popular seaside resort and who took to him coloured beach pebbles to be cut and polished.

One day, visitors from Bangor called to see him and remarked on the contents of a heap of stones, soil etc. outside the door to his workshop. He told them he was enlarging his work place and that the debris came from the rear of the cave. One of these visitors, being a medical man, was quite knowledgeable about archaeological matters recognised human bones in the heap of rubble. He asked Kendrick if he knew what they were and his reply was 'no'. They informed Kendrick that the bones were human, of great antiquity and should be reported so that further investigation of the site could be carried out.

Professor Boyd Dawkins, a notable Palaeontologist of the day, examined the bones together with a number of other animal bone fragments, broken, he stated, to

## A Glimpse of Llandudno in Prehistory

extract marrow by the hand of man. The exact point within the cave where these items were unearthed is rather confused, no proper records of the excavation were kept and today the floor is concreted. The cave was converted into an air raid shelter during the Second World War and is currently in use as a store.

The human remains consisted of four incomplete skeletons from three adults and a child, according to Dawkins of Iberian origin. Animal bone was identified as belonging to bison, ox, wild horse, sheep and goat. Included in this collection of rubble, as Kendrick called it, were a number of artifacts; a polished stone axe-head, a flint knife and a perforated stone spindle-whorl similar to those produced in Neolithic times; an Iron Age bone weaving comb with some of its eleven teeth broken. Most important of all was the mandible of a wild horse, decorated with four panels made up of several lines of incised chevrons and one single assembly of ten chevrons.

Many arguments have been put forward as to the date of this bone. To date it is thought to be upper Palaeolithic, comparable to bone found in other Welsh caves. A group of nine bovid and deer teeth of bovid, drilled through the tip of the root, are part of a necklace common in prehistory. These particular teeth are not so common, eight of them are engraved with lines transversely across the root, a form of tooth decoration that is very rare and confined to just a few sites in Europe. A gentleman named Eskrigge, who published a paper on the cave with Boyd Dawkins, said drilled teeth were excavated from the cave in 1880 and Canon Ingram writing in 1885 said the teeth were drilled and engraved. These engraved teeth are in the Museum at Rhos-on-Sea (Curator Frank Jowett) to whom they were presented by Mrs Dowler in 1964. Six fragments of animal bone incised with lines at regular intervals along their length and thought to be some form of tally or way of keeping a record were included in with Kendrick's finds. However, they are not labelled so one cannot be certain whether they are from this cave. Professor Sieveking writing in the *British Museum Quarterly* 1971;35: 230-250 is in some doubt as to their being genuine because they do not conform to other well known patterns. Nothing has been published about them but, as they are in the same cabinet as the other cave material, they have always been accepted as originating from Kendrick's Cave.

### UPPER KENDRICK'S CAVE

Upper Kendrick's Cave, as this new cave is called, is only a few metres above the lower cave and it is thought that at sometime in the geological past they formed one cave. The roof of the lower cave is lofty and tapers to a narrow fissure, now sealed from the upper by large rocks and boulder clay pushed into it, one assumes during the last ice age. The floor of this upper cave was originally covered to a considerable depth by rock fragments, frost shattered during some period of intense cold. Permission to excavate the site was given to the author by Miss H.E. Humphreys, the owner of the property, on condition that whatever was found on the site remained in Llandudno.

## A Glimpse of Llandudno in Prehistory

This is where Thomas Kendrick had lived and on first entering the cave it was quite a surprise to see where he had constructed four rooms within it. True, it was over a hundred years ago and little remained but some rubble, the wall footings and some remains of walling which quite clearly showed the outlines and dimensions of his dwelling.

The cave is 11 metres in depth, 8.5 metres wide and about 3 metres at its highest point. Facing the south it was warm and dry, an ideal situation to live. Its elevation gave its occupants a clear view of animal movements and an early warning of visitors, friendly or otherwise, crossing the flat ground below which is now Llandudno. There are two entrances separated by two metres, the smaller of which Kendrick had slightly enlarged and made into a window, the larger was his front door.

Kendrick had realised that this was the ideal place to make his home, everything was to hand by way of building material, rock for walls etc. Levelling the floor and giving it a thick layer of limestone dust mixed with cow dung, in the manner used in medieval times, ensured him a solid and dry surface. With a plentiful supply of rock and a few bricks he constructed four rooms. Wooden steps, complete with handrail, leading down to his place of workshop gave him easy access up and down. A small alcove to the rear of the cave was used to store coal and all the other items usually found within a household. It was here where the excavation began. It did not reveal very much, a small fragment of Beaker pottery, some winkle shells together with some small foot bones of a pig.

The eastern side did yield some items of interest, Beaker pottery shards with a clear pattern of chevrons, two bone points and another fashioned from an antler tip. These points are probably awls for piercing animal skin when lacing them together to make clothing and suggest a Neolithic provenance. Several pot-boilers and a well battered hammer stone were also found. It was not possible to excavate to any depth owing to large boulders and bed rock at various points below 1 metre. The trench 8 metres long, varied in width as it followed the cave wall from 1 to 2 metres its deepest point being 1.6 metres at half way along its length.

To have gone any deeper would have caused problems as the fissure in the roof of the lower cave was immediately below. A draught from below could be felt as the dig progressed. Several pieces of Neolithic pottery were found here including rim fragments, very crudely made with no visible pattern. Human bone, metacarpals and phalanges were discovered in a crevice also, but no other bones which gave rise to a question, where were they? Long bones such as femur, tibia ulna and humerus, plus all the other bones that make up the human skeleton, were absent. The only answer was that someone had removed them. At this point the author was inclined to think as Canon Ingram had in 1885, that the finds in the lower cave actually came from this upper one.

Apart from a few flint blades and pot-boilers there was nothing. It did not appear

UPPER KENDRICK'S CAVE, PLAN

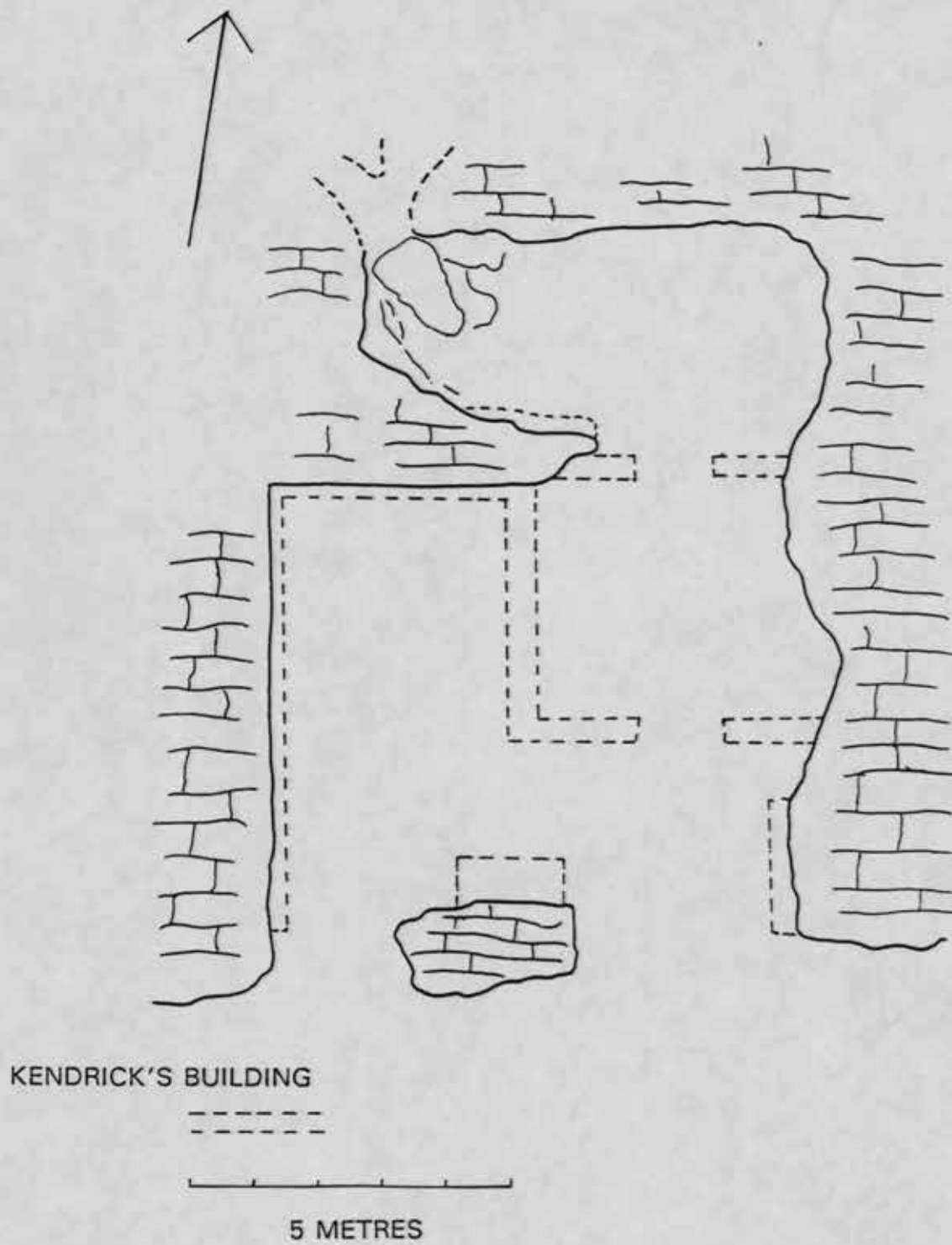


Figure 6

# UPPER KENDRICK'S CAVE, SECTION

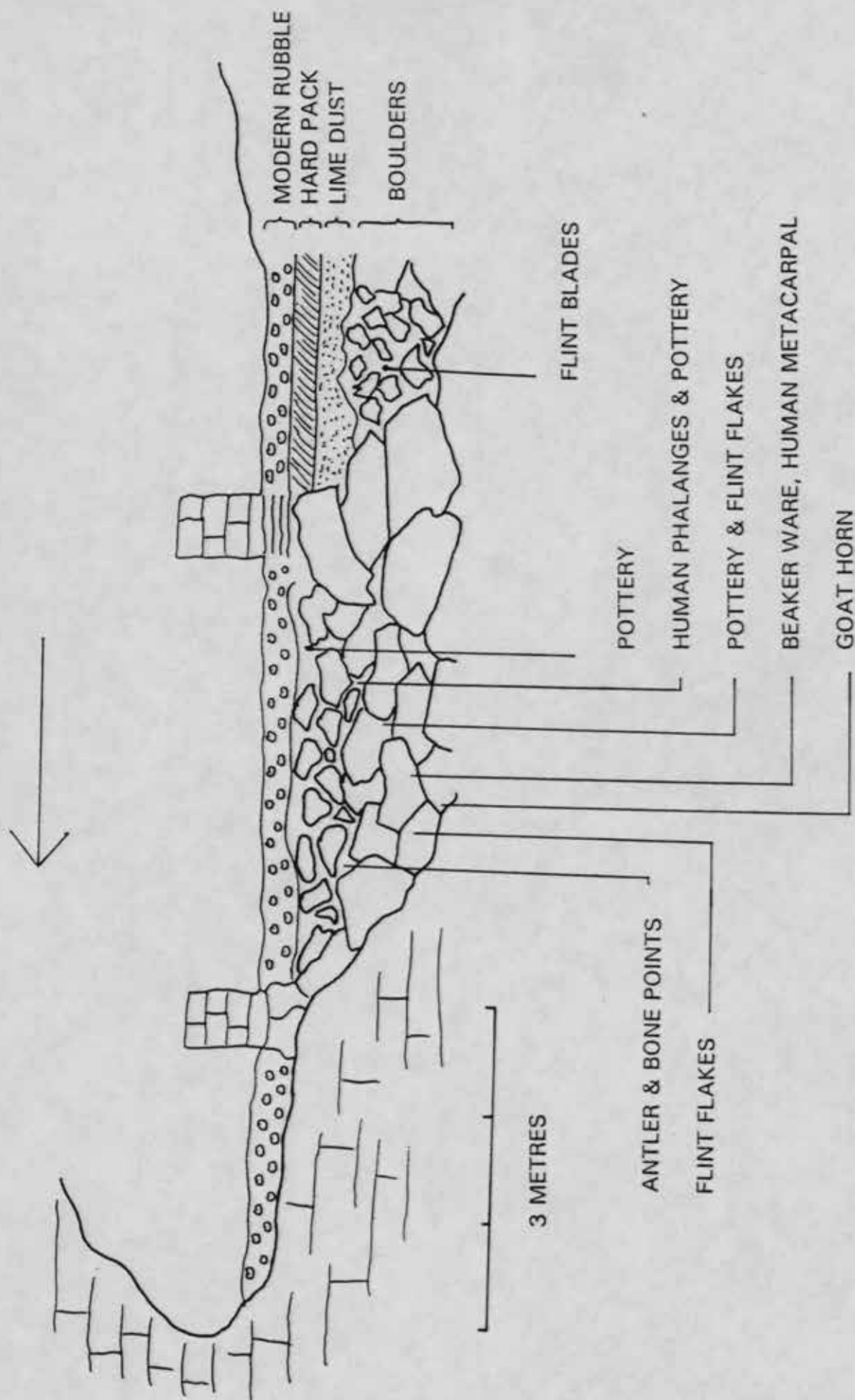


Figure 7

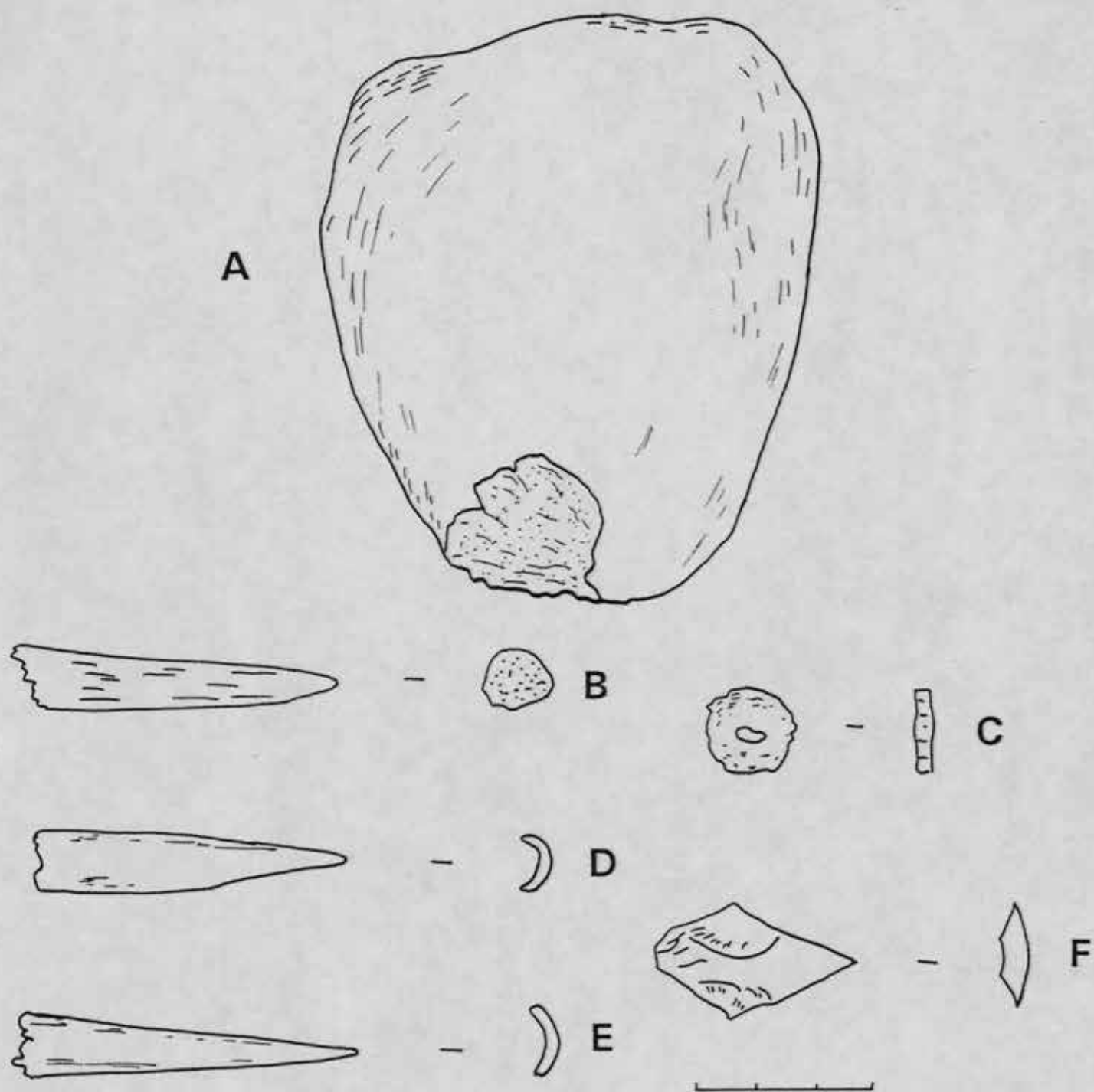
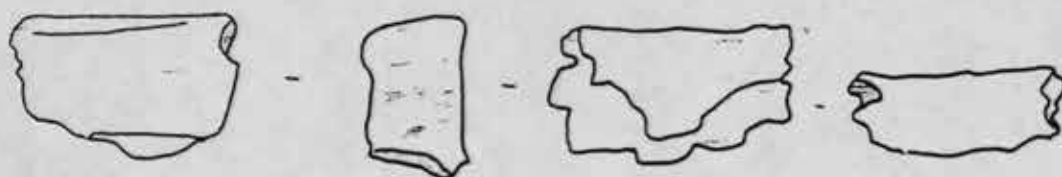
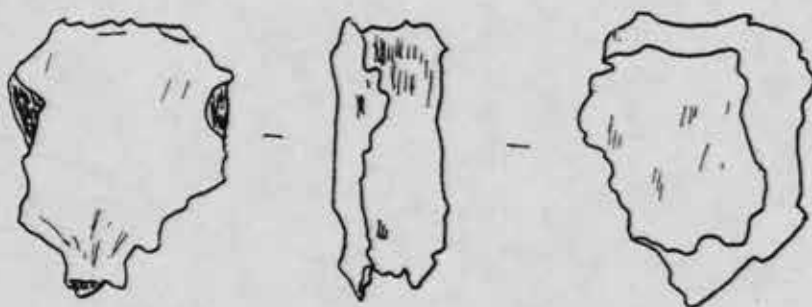


Figure 8

A



B



C

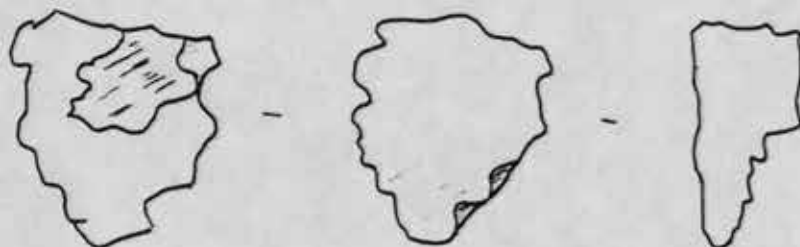


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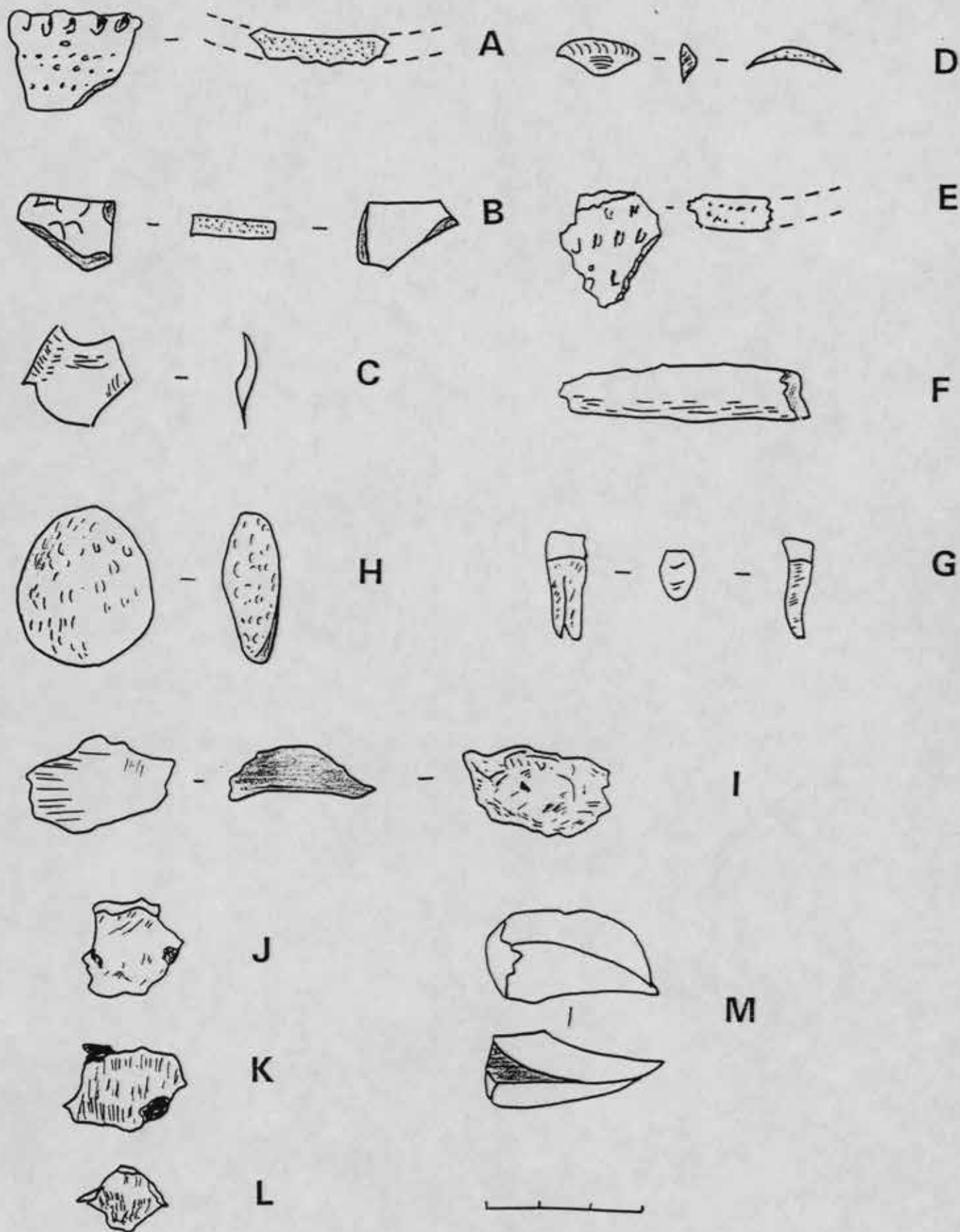


Figure 10

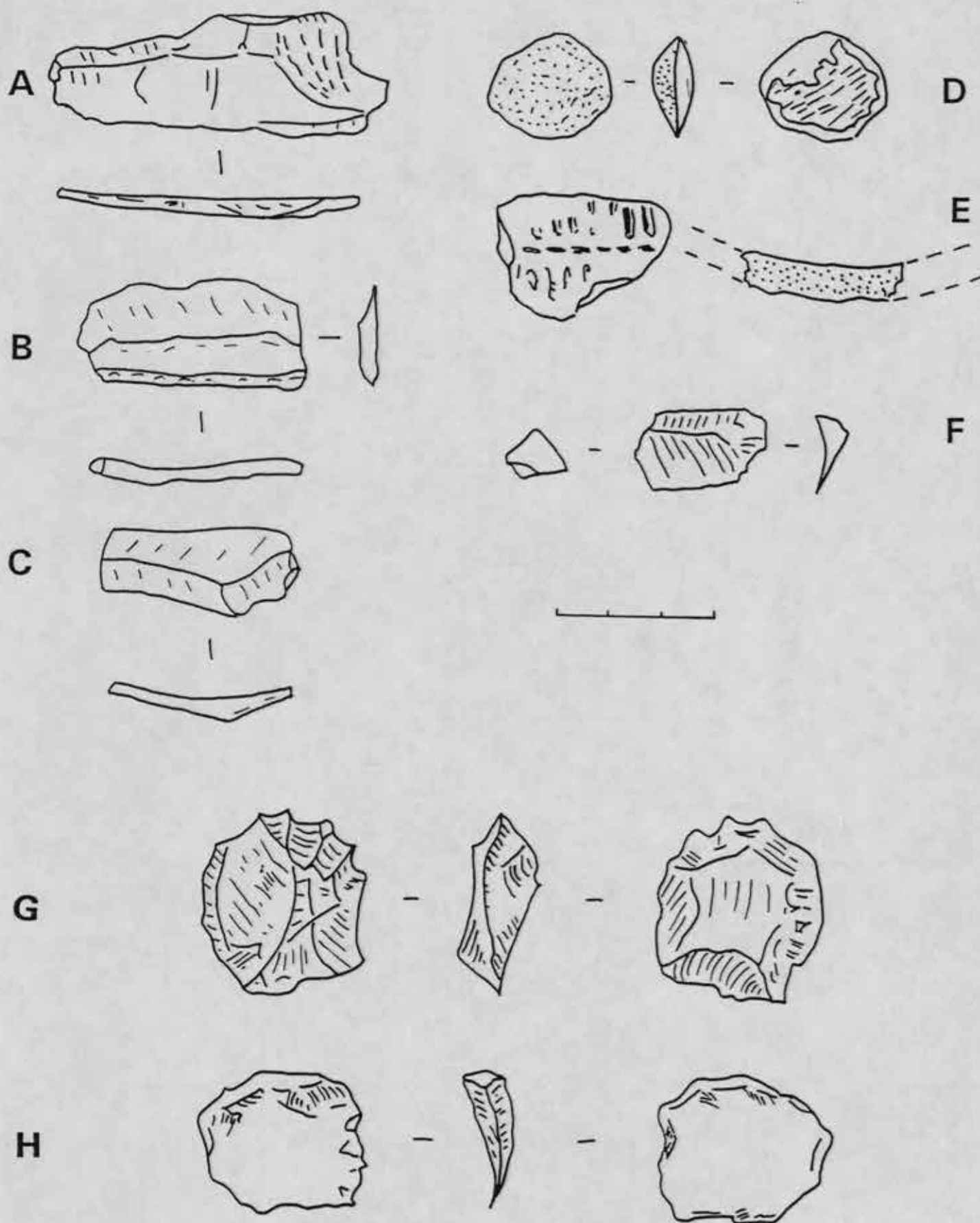


Figure 11

## A Glimpse of Llandudno in Prehistory

### UPPER KENDRICK'S CAVE

#### Figure 6:

- A Upper Kendrick's Cave, plan; scale 5 metres

#### Figure 7:

- A Upper Kendrick's Cave, section; scale 3 metres

#### Figure 8:

- A Neolithic stone hammer, 15 cm below the stalagmite floor, August 1977  
B Neolithic antler pin, 20 cm in brown cave earth, September 1977  
C-D Neolithic bone points, September 1977  
E Bead, September 1977  
F Neolithic flint flake, September 1977

#### Figure 9:

- A-C Pottery fragments, east alcove, September 1977

#### Figure 10:

- A Beaker pottery fragment, centre trench at 1m, April 1978  
B Black Romano-British pottery fragment, centre trench at 76 cm, April 1978  
C-D Neolithic flint flakes, centre trench at 1 m, April 1978  
E Beaker pottery fragment, centre trench at 45 cm, April 1978  
F Broken antler point, centre trench at 45 cm, April 1978  
G Pre-molar from the genus Homo, centre trench at 1.75 m, April 1978  
H Black polished beach pebble found in association with F  
I Fragment of Beaker pottery, centre trench 1.75 m, April 1978  
J-L Pottery fragments, centre trench at 1.75 m, April 1978  
M Neolithic chert flake, centre trench at 1.75 m, April 1978

#### Figure 11:

- A Neolithic flint blade, 65 cm in brown cave earth, January 1978  
B Broken Neolithic flint blade, 60 cm in brown cave earth, January 1978  
C Struck flint flakes (Neolithic), 60 cm in brown cave earth, January 1978  
D Flake from the end of a flint beach pebble, found at 60 cm, March 1978  
E Fragment of Beaker pottery, central trench at 65 cm, March 1978  
F Broken Neolithic flint flake  
G Neolithic flint core, centre trench, March 1978  
H Flake from a beach pebble, centre trench 65 cm, March 1978

Unless otherwise stated, scale 3 cm.

## **A Glimpse of Llandudno in Prehistory**

natural that a cave, a superior cave too, had so little evidence of ancient occupation unless it had been removed. What may prove the latter point was the discovery made by Davies who, when excavating on the western side of the cave whilst the author was ill, found a drilled tooth similar to the ones found by Kendrick supposedly in the lower cave. This is in the possession of the excavator. Items discovered by the author, together with those purchased by the local council, have been loaned to the Great Orme Mines Ltd and are on display at the Bronze Age Mine Centre.

### **BADGER'S CAVE AND OGOF TUDNO**

Another important cave site is on the northern flank of the Great Orme, just beyond a point known locally as Austin's Rock. Situated above the Marine Drive, it is called Badger Cave. It was enlarged by 19th century copper miners who made a tunnel, or adit, just within the entrance on the left hand side following the line of the natural cave, apparently to follow a seam of copper but lost track of it after about 40 metres. If this site was archaeological it was destroyed by this activity as they cleared away the original cave floor. Three metres to the left of the entrance is a small overhang in the cliff face which, when examined, looked like a possible site worth excavating. Permission was obtained from Mostyn Estates and a small scale dig proved it to be so. A low tunnel running eastward was revealed. It was a low crawl over a floor covered with clay and rotten vegetation following the line of the cliff face for some 3 metres ending in a sharp turn to the south.

Digging at the entrance below the overhang a large flat rock with a few fragments of burned bone and limpet shells showed it to be a hearth, but there was nothing to indicate a date. Presumably this represents a temporary shelter and not a long term habitation. For the lack of evidence and the depth in the ground it was assumed to be Neolithic, used by a hunter to make himself a meal and to take a rest from his exertions. At the same level on the eastern side a small fissure was located, a very tight squeeze to get into, but once inside one could move about with some difficulty.

This tiny chamber had a floor of cave earth which contained a quantity of animal bone, sheep, goat and some odd fragments of horse bone. As there was also a quantity of mollusc shells, limpet and mussel, it was felt unlikely to be an animal den or a fox's earth. The impression was that it was a burial site. No burial was found but there could be one somewhere deeper inside the bedding planes of the limestone and not yet excavated. This site was registered by the author with Mostyn Estates as 'Ogof Tudno', the name being chosen because of the cave's proximity to St Tudno's Church.

### **A SELECTED TOUR OF THE GREAT ORME**

Over the many thousands of years that man has lived on the Great Orme, hunted,

## A Glimpse of Llandudno in Prehistory

made his home in the many caves and built his round and long huts, it has always been a mystery as to what happened to him when he died. True, the odd burial has come to light in caves; there are two or three burial cairns, now destroyed, and there is the odd Cromlech. From the ruins of their round and long huts and other remains of their activities, quite a large number of people must have lived on this isolated limestone headland. There is therefore a considerable amount of work for future archaeologists to investigate, enough to last a whole career and more.

The Cromlech close to the Old Mine in Pyllau hollow was probably the final resting place of a person of some importance. It is in a state of ruin but has at least kept its capstone, the earth that was covering it was removed, undoubtedly by treasure hunters during the last two centuries. When examined in the early years of this century only a small bone of a dog and a fragment of pottery were found there. Part of the mound remains but there is some doubt as to it being manmade or natural rock. Dated to the early Bronze Age it is quite likely to be contemporary with the Bronze Age copper mine site. Some burial mounds were destroyed when the Marine Drive was built, one is recorded to have been removed from the Drive close to the lighthouse and adjacent to the settlement site.

The gaps in the rock bedding planes were used very often. One such opening just above the Haulfre Gardens overlooking the town was examined by Geoff David and was found to contain human bone. It has two openings, is rather a low crawl and twists to the right as one moves around to the smaller opening, hence its name, 'Corkscrew'.

Several other sites of archaeological importance are worth mentioning here; map references will be found at the end of this article. Starting at 'Pen Dinas', the rocky mass overlooking the town, there is a remnant of the Ice Age known as the Rocking Stone or in Welsh 'Crud Tudno', 'Tudno's Cradle'. It is, of course, a glacial erratic but, because it was left balanced on the rock beneath, it would rock if touched and this attracted various legends. A felon would be found guilty if the rock moved when he was placed on it and one local legend holds he would have been thrown over the cliff!

There are several hut circles on Pen Dinas and it is often referred to as a hill fort, a place of refuge yes, but hardly a fort. A low wall or rampart does cross the narrowest point on the hill forming a barrier of sorts. As there is no water source within the defensive position it could not survive a siege beyond a few days and certainly would not have sufficient space to accommodate livestock. Evidence shows that there was a lot of pastoral activity on the Great Orme in the Iron Age about 500 B.C. The site is much ruined and the hut circles difficult to locate today, however, a community based project, led by Tom Parry, began clearing part of the site in 1993, in preparation for a selective excavation.

Another interesting site is the plateau known as 'Mynydd Isaf', a large flat area of ground which has the added bonus of a fresh water spring in its centre, a

## A Glimpse of Llandudno in Prehistory

convenient place for the people who settled there. The plateau faces north with a low escarpment to the south and just below, in the shelter of this rising ground, are a group of well defined Iron Age fields. The field banks can be discerned easily amongst the bracken.

Traces of round huts can also be seen within the bracken showing that this site was popular in earlier times. Our first farmers, the Neolithic people, would certainly have taken advantage of such an attractive site. Around the spring and barely visible in the undergrowth are stones which suggest either a wall to keep farm stock from fouling it or to form a pavement for those using it. Moving away from here towards the tram track and the halfway station one comes to the source of the Great Orme's greatest activity, the copper mines. The town of Llandudno owes much to copper mining, the greatest period of activity being between 1830 and 1850 when three mines operated

Up to the 1840s Llandudno was just a small village situated on the lower slopes of the Great Orme around the area of the King's Head Inn. Its main industry being the mines with some fishing, the latter during the summer until the weather deteriorated. A glance at the census papers of those days will also tell one that many of the inhabitants came from places as far away as Cornwall, Derbyshire and Anglesey and that their occupation was recorded as miner. These can be said to be the people who form the background of many families living in the town today. The first mining on the Great Orme started a long time before Llandudno even had a name, many thousands of years before and even in those times attracted people from far afield. In the 1970s two local young men, Duncan James and Keith Griffiths, were exploring the derelict mine passages when they came across some rib bones of an ox. They were on a shelf of rock above where they were standing and when examined proved to have been used as tools, digging implements and scrapers.

Further investigation showed that the shelf in question was actually a cave floor cut through by the later mining operations. The bones were carbon dated which showed they were of Bronze Age origin. An extensive survey of the whole mine system, as then known, was carried out by James which proved beyond any doubt that the Great Orme played a very important role in ancient copper mining. Indeed the site ranks amongst <sup>the</sup> oldest mine sites in Britain and Europe.

Subsequently, a group of local people interested in the history of the mines and their preservation formed the 'Great Orme Exploration Society'. This society has carried out a great deal of research and are currently concerned in making safe areas of importance and archaeological interest, locating new areas of great interest as well as making sure that mining equipment and tools are protected and left in-situ. There were three companies working the mines known as the Old Mine, the New Mine and the Ty Gwyn Mine. The period of 'modern' mining began with the granting of a lease to the Mostyn family in 1692. There followed a period of intermittent activity during the 18th century before a period of prosperity between

## A Glimpse of Llandudno in Prehistory

1830 and 1850 following which the fortunes of all three mines waned and by 1881 the last mine closed.

Further up the road from the mine site we come to the summit and looking to the southwest just below us are two quarries well worth visiting. The faces of the two contain fossils of marine plant life (crinoids, sea weeds,) also shells and corals deposited on the sea bed 350 million years ago. Turning to the north there is a flat area at the bottom of the slope which, if looked at closely, one can see the traces of ancient agriculture in the form of plough marks and the outlines of fields. At the base of the slope a platform has been dug back into the hillside which probably had a building on it. A map drawn by Lewis Morris in 1748 shows a nunnery on the site, but the site was possibly used in prehistoric times too. Vague outlines of long huts can be seen in places.

Standing on the road leading from the tram station to St Tudno's church and facing the summit, to one's left there is another enclosure with field banks around it and also for a short distance back along the road. A little lower down is the church of St Tudno from which the town derives its name. Above the church, hidden in the bracken, are the outlines of more long huts and a little further on following the old golf links, or Parc, wall, is another source of fresh water. Called locally 'Ffynnon Rhufeinig', Roman Well, although there is no evidence to support the appellation, the edifice built into the wall was put there when the wall was erected, the spring being behind the wall.

Below the road at this point is a group of round huts with a larger rectangular building outline to the left of them. Water from the spring is at the moment flowing between them and following a curve formed by a manmade bank. The bank forms what could be a trackway leading from the lower ground up to the farmstead or part of a Romano-British settlement similar to the one at 'Din Lligwy' just behind Moelfre in Anglesey. A little further down the slope there is a field system surrounded by field banks and standing on the edge of a low escarpment we can see an avenue of stones leading down to the cliffs overlooking the Marine Drive and the sea. This is 'Hwylfa Ceirw', or the 'Deers' Walk'. The purpose of the alignment is not clear, was it connected with some ceremonial use or is it just some field boundary?

At the lower end of the alignment and to the west is the remains of a well defined round hut, the remaining stones some 40 to 50 cm high. As a point of interest here, grasses growing in these field systems have been identified as similar to those used by prehistoric man to make flour by grinding their seeds. Returning to the roadway and the wall and moving to the west, one crosses a dip marking the top end of a defile known as 'Hafnant', we arrive at a bend in the wall. On the hillside to our right, or to the north, are two large boulders about two metres apart, one actually made up of two stones in the form of a sugar loaf. They are, of course, glacial erratics, a remnant of the Ice Age now forming a conspicuous and well known landmark. One wonders if were they used for any purpose in

## A Glimpse of Llandudno in Prehistory

prehistory?

Close to them to the northwest is the limestone pavement, another reminder of the Ice Age. When the ice flowed over the Great Orme it took the top soil with it leaving at this point a bare rocky landscape. Weathering over the millennia since has left the rock full of crevices, or grykes as they are called. These are protecting some rare plants, some that cannot be found anywhere else in Britain. They are watched over by the Warden of the Great Orme country park, and as rare plants should be, are protected by law.

A concrete road built, by the army during World War Two when the Great Orme was used as a gunnery school, leads down to the Marine Drive from this area, and brings one to another settlement site, on the left as one approaches the Marine Drive. Cars now park on what is actually a field system but a careful study of the site will show some low banking. The eastern side has the military road built above it and down its centre the stones of another wall are discernable above the turf. To the west, amongst the bracken, are a group of nine round huts and close to the Marine Drive is a long hut, its outlines quite clearly marked. They are probably Bronze Age or earlier.

A few metres to the west of the settlement is a robbed out burial cairn. It can easily be identified, an outline of stones with several of the larger ones leaning inwards as if they were the base of a cairn. A similar structure, said to have been in the vicinity of the junction between the Drive and the concrete road, is recorded as being destroyed when the Marine Drive was built.

Further west along the Drive are the remains of a Victorian water trough, placed there for the benefit of horses drawing the landau's that visitors of those days used to view the scenery around the headland. What one cannot see from the Drive is the spring of water that feeds the trough. It is just above eye level below the escarpment higher up the slope and was the water supply which served the settlement. Water rises to the surface between flat slabs of stone obviously placed there, both to contain the water and to give a base to stand on. It never appears to dry up even in conditions of drought and a peep over the Drive wall will show it meandering to the cliff edge. The spring is known as 'Ffynnon Caseg', the trough itself, constructed of slate, has vanished, only its limestone retaining stones remain.

Ascending the low hill on to the high ground one comes to the edge of a high cliff looking directly down the Menai Straits, this is Creigiau Cochion, 138 metres above sea level. Another ancient cairn is situated here consisting of a low mound of earth and stones about 50 cm high surmounted by a modern cairn two metres high used as a trig point. An arc of small boulders, the remains of a kerb, is visible to the northeast; some larger boulders on the west may have formed an inner ring.

If one looks around this windswept cliff-top there are the faint outlines of huts

## A Glimpse of Llandudno in Prehistory

visible in the short mountain grass. To the south, a short distance from the cairn is a steep path leading down to the Marine Drive again, this is the Monks' Path, said to have been used by the monks from the Gogarth Abbey when making their way to a small cave or cell, called Llech, below the cliffs under the lighthouse or possibly to the church of St Tudno. The path is probably much older than that, having been made by the inhabitants of the two previously mentioned settlements on their way down to the beach. As the path is always green by virtue of a trickle of water, the locals attributed it to constant use by those in Holy Orders!

Stopping halfway down the path, glancing up a small pile of scree marks the small cave and spring called 'Ffynnon Llygaid' or the 'Eye Well', said to have medicinal properties, but not to be recommended these days. Below more scree shows the entrance of a mine adit. On reaching the Drive the ruins of the Abbey are situated on the cliff edge below. Erected towards the end of the 13th century by Bishop Anian as his palace it was razed by Owen Glyndwr. There is very little left of the building and what remains has almost been swallowed by the sea as the cliff has crumbled down to the shore. A quarter of a mile further on is the toll gate marking the end of the Marine Drive. Just above it can be seen the entrance of another very small cave known as 'Ogof Arth', the cave of the bear. Bones of various animals were found here but there is no indication of where they are now. Standing by the yacht pond and looking back to the Great Orme up to the highest point above the toll house, a further cave is situated on the underside of an overhang. Again it is very small and derives its name from a Neolithic skeleton found within it, now in Cardiff.

One other little known burial site is situated on the corner of the golf links at Penrhyn Bay, just beyond the cross roads of Llanrhos Lane and the road to the beach. It is a large mound close to a house wall and quite near the pavement to the southeast of the crossroads. There is no evidence of any Roman activity anywhere in the vicinity of Llandudno, with the exception of the inscribed stone found at Bodafon by Lewis Morris in 1731 and now in St Mary's church Llanrhos. Inscribed in Latin, it was thought at first to be of Roman origin but is now believed to be early Christian from around the 5th century.

Many Roman coins have been found in various places around the district but one has to bear in mind that quite a large amount of trading was carried out on this coast during the Roman occupation with both the continent and Ireland and that once established on these Islands their coinage appeared everywhere. They maintained a fort at Caerhun in the Conwy valley and the road network along the coast. Their main aim would have been minerals, chiefly the copper produced from the Great Orme mines. The mines were most likely supervised by people trained by them, Romano-British as we now call them. But there is no trace of an actual Roman settlement around the area of the Great Orme, not even a tile or trace of any building. It is quite possible that they would not venture across the marshy ground to reach the Great Orme, any trading would have been carried out from the high ground to the south of the marsh, and then via such people as occupied the

## A Glimpse of Llandudno in Prehistory

settlement high on the hill above Bodafon.

That settlement was in an ideal position to control the affairs of those on the far side of the marsh. The historian Lewis Morris mentions in 1731 that "There are a vast many ruins about this place". It could well be that there was a trading post here, a large hoard of coins was found in the defile between the Little Orme and Craigside opposite Simdda Hir. Buried in the ground as it was, one wonders, was it hidden on purpose after being stolen from a Roman quartermaster or local agent? Dumped in haste during pursuit or just lost! It is an ideal place for an ambush. This is but a brief sketch of the archaeology of the Great Orme and its immediate area but I hope it is evident that on looking around this lovely area of ours there is plenty of scope left for serious study of our past history, providing the developers leave enough to be looked at!

Tom Stone, Llandudno, January 1994

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| FFYNNON RUFEINIG   | SH 765838 | CROMLECH       | SH 772829  |
| SETTLEMENT         | SH 754841 | CAIRN          | SH 756835  |
| FFYNNON LLYGAID    | SH 761831 | TUMULUS        | SH 824813  |
| SETTLEMENT         | SH 812816 | OGOF ARTH      | SH 768824  |
| CORKSCREW CAVE     | SH 774824 |                |            |

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Nigel Bannerman  
Llandudno, June 1994

Chairman  
Great Orme Exploration Society

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