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Abbreviations

Abbreviated titles are used in each article after the first full citation. In addition, the following are used throughout the volume or in particular articles:

BAR	British Archaeological Reports (Oxford, 1974–)
BAR BS	British Archaeological Reports, British Series
BAR IS	British Archaeological Reports, International Series
BL	British Library, London
Bodl.	Bodleian Library, Oxford
BRO	Berkshire Record Office
<i>Cal. Pat.</i>	<i>Calendar of Patent Rolls</i> , 54 vols. (London, 1891–1916)
CBM	ceramic building material
CCA	Christ Church Archive, Oxford
EPNS	English Place-Names Society
EVE	estimated vessel equivalent
Fig./Figs.	figure/figures
f./ff.	folio/folios
Hants. RO	Hampshire Record Office
HER	Historic Environment Record
IFA	Institute of Field Archaeologists
JMHS	John Moore Heritage Services
<i>L&P Hen. VIII</i>	<i>Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII</i> , 23 vols. (London, 1862–1932)
MOLA	Museum of London Archaeology
<i>MedArch</i>	<i>Medieval Archaeology</i> (London, 1958–)
MS	manuscript
n.	note
n.d.	no date
ns	new series
OA	Oxford Archaeology
OBR	Oxfordshire Buildings Record
OD	Ordnance Datum
<i>ODNB</i>	<i>Oxford Dictionary of National Biography</i> (Oxford, 2004)
<i>OED</i>	<i>Oxford English Dictionary</i>
OHC	Oxfordshire History Centre (formerly Oxfordshire Record Office)
OHS	Oxford Historical Society
ORS	Oxfordshire Record Society
OS	Ordnance Survey
os	old/original series
OXCMS	Oxfordshire County Museums Service
<i>Pe&P</i>	<i>Past and Present. A Journal of Scientific History</i> (London/Oxford, 1952–)
r.	recto
RCHME	Royal Commission on Historical Monuments (England)
<i>SMidLA</i>	<i>South Midlands Archaeology</i> (Oxford, 1983–) (formerly <i>CBA Group 9 Newsletter</i>)
TNA: PRO	The National Archives, Public Record Office, Kew
TS	typescript
TVAS	Thames Valley Archaeological Services
UC	University College Archives
v.	verso
VA	<i>Vernacular Architecture</i> (York, 1970–)
VCH	<i>Victoria History of the Counties of England</i> (London, 1900–) [<i>Victoria County History</i>]
vol.	volume

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Lost and Found: A Flint Dagger from the River Thames at Henley

This paper discusses a previously misidentified flint dagger in the collection of the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford which was found in the Thames at Henley during the nineteenth century (accession code: 1892.66.5). It is the only complete flint dagger currently known from Oxfordshire (Fig. 1). The dagger was rediscovered during research carried out for the Developing Archaeo-Prosopography Project, funded by the John Fell Fund of the University of Oxford and by the Prehistoric Society.

In the eighty years since W.F. Grimes published his seminal typology of British early Bronze-Age flint daggers,¹ our understanding of these objects has not greatly changed. Grimes saw them as an intrinsic part of the Bell Beaker culture, primarily visible as funerary goods, and recent research has not questioned that attribution.² Similarly, Grimes' maps of flint dagger distribution have not been questioned and have only been added to in piecemeal fashion, for example in the addition of a full distribution of flint daggers found in Wales.³

None of the 145 flint daggers and dagger fragments recorded by Grimes is listed as coming from pre-1974 Oxfordshire. One of his three Berkshire finds, from the Abingdon causewayed enclosure, lies within the modern county, but thanks to a better understanding of the material culture and chronology of the British Neolithic and Bronze Age, this piece is now identifiable as a middle Neolithic ovate knife, rather than an early Bronze-Age flint dagger.⁴ Few daggers have subsequently been discovered in or around Oxfordshire. One has been found in Gloucestershire, one in Warwickshire, three in Berkshire and two in Buckinghamshire. The eight in Wiltshire cluster mainly in the Stonehenge area and the five in Northamptonshire are located in the east of the county, on the edge of the area of extremely

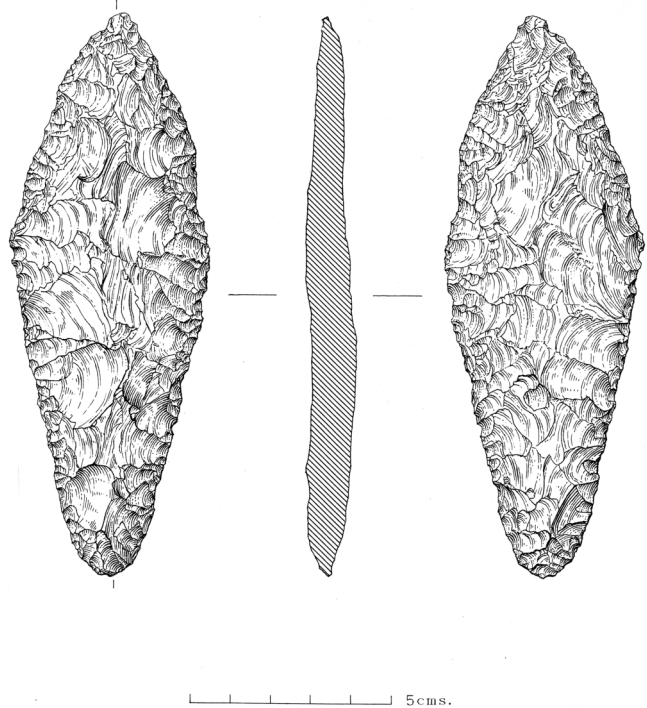


Fig. 1. Faces and profile of the flint dagger found in the River Thames near Henley. Illustration by Jeff Wallis.

¹ W.F. Grimes, 'The Early Bronze Age Flint Dagger in England and Wales', *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society of East Anglia*, vol. 6, no. 4 (1932), pp. 340–55.

² For example, S. Needham, 'Competing Ethos of Seniority', *Material and Spiritual Engagements: Britain and Ireland in the First Age of Metal* (The Rhind Lectures, 2011): <http://www.screencast.com/t/4w5ZwbjwTTwc>.

³ H.S. Green et al., 'A Flint Dagger from Ffair Rhos, Ceredigion, Dyfed, Wales', *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society*, 48 (1982), pp. 492–5.

⁴ H.J. Case and A.W.R. Whittle (eds.), *Settlement Patterns in the Oxford Region: Excavations at the Abingdon Causewayed Enclosure and other Sites* (1982), p. 40.

dense flint dagger deposition in East Anglia. A dagger tip found in Swyncombe in the far south of Oxfordshire in the 1950s has not been located in any museum collection and nothing is known about its appearance.⁵

This sparse evidence makes the complete flint dagger found in the Thames near Henley of particular interest. The piece, erroneously recorded as a 'sub-oval flint knife' in the museum catalogue, is actually a very fine, bifacially worked flint dagger. It is 140 mm long, 50 mm at its widest point and roughly lozenge shaped, with the blade end slightly wider than the handle end which tapers to a rounded butt. In profile, it is lenticular and flat, 8 mm thick at the blade thickening to 10 mm at the handle end. The blade is slightly asymmetrical, perhaps due to it having been resharpened. Resharpener probably also accounts for the slightly finer retouch on the blade end. The blade and handle ends are clearly distinguishable by the smooth, rounded edges on the latter end. The blade makes up 69 mm of the total length. The dagger is made in a very high-quality, translucent, dark brown flint, and scaled knapping scars cover both faces. There are traces of handling polish on both faces of the blade and handle. Although the Pitt Rivers catalogue lists the presence of cortex on one face, this most likely refers to a small, chalky inclusion which had been knapped across.

The name of the collector, J.C. Clutterbuck, is written on one face in red paint along with the year 1872, the presumed date of acquisition. Clutterbuck, vicar of Long Wittenham (formerly Berks.) 1829–85, held a degree from Exeter College, Oxford and was active in geological and archaeological circles.⁶ He was a noted expert on the gravels and drainage of the Thames valley,⁷ and he corresponded with British archaeologists about finds from the Thames/Isis.⁸

The dagger itself, having been found in the Thames, has no direct associations or context of use. Flint daggers of similar morphology and manufacture have been found in burials across Britain with material dating to the last quarter of the third millennium BC – called the early Bronze Age, Chalcolithic or Beaker period depending on the publication.⁹ Moreover, in examining the larger corpus of British flint daggers, now known to number around 400, it is apparent that while forty-three have been recovered from burial contexts, a further forty-three have been recovered from rivers, thirty-three of those (including the Henley dagger) from the Thames. Most of the Thames depositions come from Greater London, and the find from Henley is the most upstream find of the Thames daggers.¹⁰ Anderson-Whymark notes that the Thames was frequently the site of depositions of contemporary material often associated with the burial sphere in dry contexts, for example Beaker pottery, bone and metal daggers and stone battle axes.¹¹ He argues that the Beaker material from the Thames is not unique, but is simply the continuation of a Neolithic practice of deposition of complete objects, often those with mortuary associations, in the river – an activity which remained in practice through much of the early Bronze Age.¹²

While it lacks datable or cultural associations, the flint dagger from Henley adds another piece to the puzzle of prehistoric activity in the Thames valley and of flint dagger production and use in Britain. Furthermore, its identification is a reminder of the riches to be found in Oxfordshire's museums for those with the time, knowledge and inclination to look.

CATHERINE FRIEMAN

⁵ H.J. Case and J.R. Kirk, 'Archaeological Notes: Prehistoric, Roman and Anglo-Saxon', *Oxoniensia*, 19 (1954), pp. 117–19; HER, PRN 2067.

⁶ M.E.N. Witchell and C.R. Hudleston, *An Account of the Principal Branches of the Family of Clutterbuck* (1924); above, p. 63.

⁷ J. Morrell, *John Phillips and the Business of Victorian Science* (2005), p. 291.

⁸ For example, J. Gage, ['An Account of a British Buckler, Found in the Bed of the River Isis, between Little Wittenham and Dorchester, in Oxfordshire'], *Archaeologia*, 27 (1838), pp. 298–9.

⁹ Needham, 'Competing Ethos of Seniority'.

¹⁰ Grimes, 'The Early Bronze Age Flint Dagger'; R. Smith, ['The Chronology of Flint Daggers'], *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of London*, 32:1 (1919), pp. 6–22.

¹¹ H. Anderson-Whymark, *The Residue of Ritualised Action: Neolithic Deposition Practices in the Middle Thames Valley*, BAR BS, 466 (2008), p. 34.

¹² *Ibid.* p. 45.