

**A REMARKABLE FIND OF HISTORICAL
ARTIFACTS AT GRIFFYDAM**



BY SAMUEL T STEWART

At the rear of the Griffydam Wesleyan Chapel are several allotments one of which is cultivated by David Maltby of Griffydam. Whilst digging his allotment, David found various historical artefacts' which are recorded in the following photographs.

PREHISTORIC FLINT TOOLS

The most historically important of the findings are undoubtedly the collection of flint tools shown in the photograph below. In the opinion of the Leicestershire Museum Service, these were flint tools that had been made some 5,000 years ago by a nomadic group of hunters. This would have been during the Neolithic Period (4,500 to 2,300 B.C). Although most likely passing through the area, this prehistoric group had clearly chosen an eminently sensible place for an encampment on a ridge overlooking the valley and close to a spring fed water supply which we can reasonably assume to have been what became commonly known as Griffy – Well.

If one considers that following the great ice age some 10,000 years ago Great Britain only became completely separated by sea water from mainland Europe circa 6000 BC. Before circa 4,500 BC, early and middle Stone-Age people were nomads, hunting and gathering wild plants. In the middle of the fifth millennium BC, a new way of life based on farming plants and animals, was introduced from the continent. The replacement of hunting and gathering was gradual and wasn't completed until the latter part of the third millennium BC in Britain.



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The flints vary between 3cm in length and 2cm in width and could have been used for a variety of purposes such as scrapers, knives, arrowheads, borers, awls etc. Because the flakes are naturally very sharp, they can be used as a cutting tool often without further dressing or modification. As they tend to be quite small, they were often attached to wooden shafts.

Flake & blade Knapping will produce many flakes before finding one suitable for reworking into a finished tool. The amount of waste flakes depends on the skill of the knapper & the quality of the flint.

Flint was formed in the chalk deposits in S England, 70 to 100 million years ago when water percolated through the chalk & dissolved the silicon molecules within the chalk. Over the years the silica built up to form layers or nodules of flint. The silica frequently grew around a fossil & this produced the curious shaped nodules. As there is little natural chalk in Leicestershire there are very few large flint stones to be found & most of the flint is in the form of smaller stones which presumably the glacialation process would have moved from other areas.

METHOD OF MAKING FLINT TOOLS

Flint was used as the raw material for making hard tools before any other material, and fortunately it does not decay. The knapping process starts by striking a stone core (see photograph below) to knock off the flakes which may then require further dressing to bring them to the desired shape and sharpness dependant on what they were to be used for.



A STONE CANNON BALL

The approximately 5 cm diameter carved round stone shown in the photograph below, and discovered in the same allotment as the flints, is a cannon ball almost certainly dating from the Civil War period when Ashby Castle and Coleorton Hall were occupied by the Royalists. A similar stone was found in The Woolrooms, Coleorton. Stone cannon balls were still commonly being used in the Civil War period although cheap iron balls had also been introduced. The British Museum website describes a stone of a similar diameter (1.901 inches) as being a Late Medieval or Post Medieval cannon ball dating between AD 1450-1750. This makes it a correct size for a Falconet cannon. Falconets were invented in the late 15th century and were used throughout the 16th and 17th centuries.

