

KITCHEN MIDDENS—CO. CLARE.

By M. C. KNOWLES.

When at Lisdoonvarna with the Royal Society of Antiquaries, in July last, I took advantage of being in that part of the country to pay another visit to some of those kitchen middens along the coast of County Clare which I had examined with the help of Mr. R. D. O'Brien and Dr. Fogerty, in July, 1899.

I gave a short account of the work we did on that occasion in the last number of this Journal, and, as it may interest some of the members of the Limerick Field Club to know what further investigation was done in August, 1900, I contribute another short paper, and, in order to make it more instructive, I have had illustrations made by my sister of the more important objects that we found.

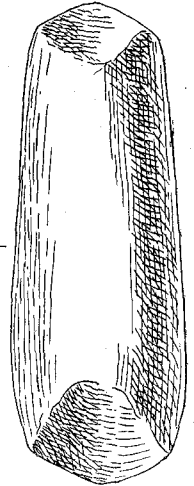
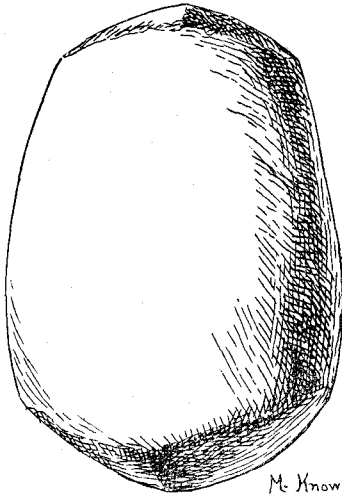
The party consisted of Mr. R. D. O'Brien, Canon O'Brien, Dr. George Fogerty, and Dr. William Fogerty, members of the Limerick Field Club; Mr. and Mrs. Coffey, and Miss Edith Oldham of Dublin; Dr. D' Evelyn, of Ballymena, and myself. We had not time to revisit all the places we had been to in July, 1899, as I had only a few days at my disposal, and I was anxious to examine the sand-hills at Lahinch, from which Mr. O'Brien had sent me some things in September, 1899. We were able to visit in all three settlements, and I think the best plan will be to take them up in the order in which we visited them, and give a short account of what we did at each.

FANORE.

We went to these sites first, as we had found both flint and pottery in them in July, 1899, and we wanted to do some further excavation of the old surface. We did a considerable amount of digging, and were very well rewarded for our labour. We got quite a lot of flakes and small pieces of chert, two hammer-stones, and several small flakes of flint, the largest of which is shown (natural size) in Plate i, Fig. 3. It was found by Mr. O'Brien, who kindly gave it to me. A few scraps of

PLATE II.

I



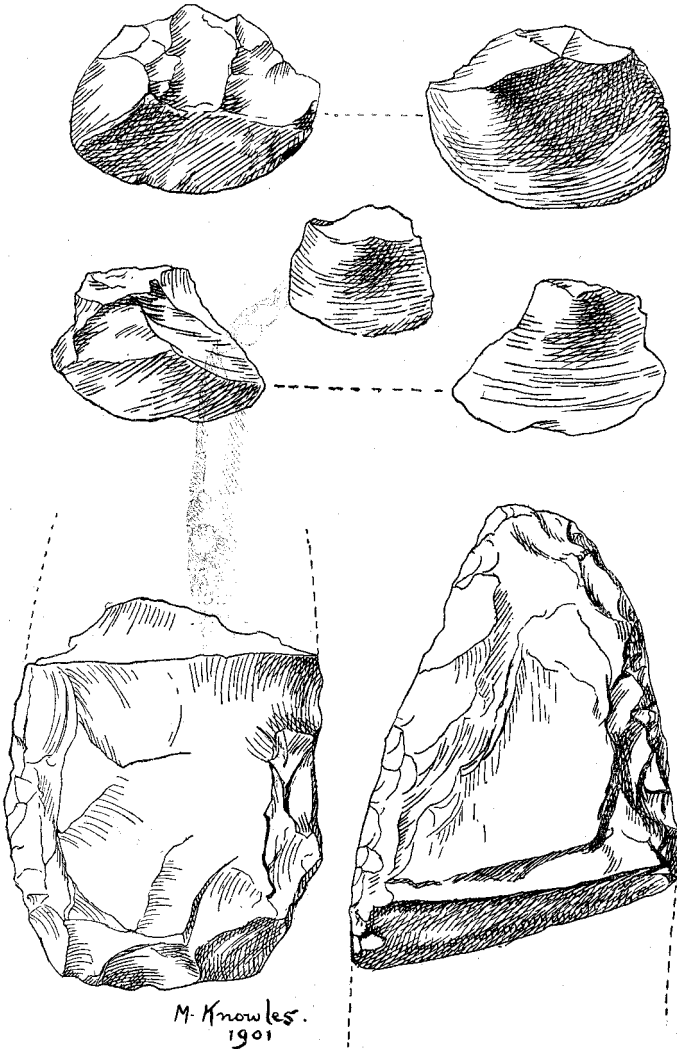
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2

2a

ANVIL-STONE FROM LAHINCH.
HAMMER-STONE FROM FISHERSTREET.
(Half Linear Scale.)

PLATE III.



M. Knowles.
1901

1

2

4

3

1a

2a

5

FLAKES AND BROKEN AXES—FISHERSTREET.
(Half Linear Scale.)

pottery, shells of limpet, oyster, periwinkle, mussel, etc., and some broken bones and teeth were also dug out. On the surface we found hammer-stones and flakes similar to those we got from the black layer by digging. Mr. Coffey and Dr. George Fogerty each found a hammer-stone, making in all eight implements of this kind which have been found in these kitchen middens. Dr. D' Evelyn picked up a small polished stone celt, and a flaked stone that, he thinks, may have been used as a scraper, and I got a very fair anvil-stone. The two flint scrapers which were found here in 1899 are shown (natural size) in Plate i, Figs. 1 and 2—a front and back view of each. They are very perfect examples, beautifully chipped and well patinated, and they are also interesting on account of being found in a district where flint does not occur naturally.

Sir John Lubbock (now Lord Avebury) defines a scraper as “a flake brought to a bevelled edge by a series of small blows.” The chipping, or secondary work, is generally on the face, which has not the bulb of percussion, as is the case in these two specimens, but occasionally it is on the side with the bulb. These flint scrapers, which are found associated with prehistoric remains in the sand-hills, are very similar to those which were used until quite lately by the Esquimaux in scraping and preparing the skins of animals for clothing, and there is little doubt but prehistoric man used them for the same purpose. Those who would like further information about scrapers will find them treated of very fully in a paper on the subject in the *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries, Ireland, Vol. viii.*

LAHINCH.

In September, 1899, Mr. R. D. O'Brien wrote to me that he had found some kitchen middens here, and sent me some broken bones and teeth (mostly pig and horse), shells, and split pebbles. He also sent a bit of hæmatite, which he had found near a site, and described a large pitted stone which was too heavy to bring away.

Although there is a large extent of sand-hills at this place, they are closely covered with grass, and used as golf links, so that there are very few sites exposed. However, we found sufficient evidence to convince us that Lahinch had once been a prehistoric settlement of some importance. The golf links and part of the present village are on what was probably the principal part of it, and it was only in bared places nearer

PLATE IV.



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AXE—FIHERSTREET.
(Half Linear Scale.)

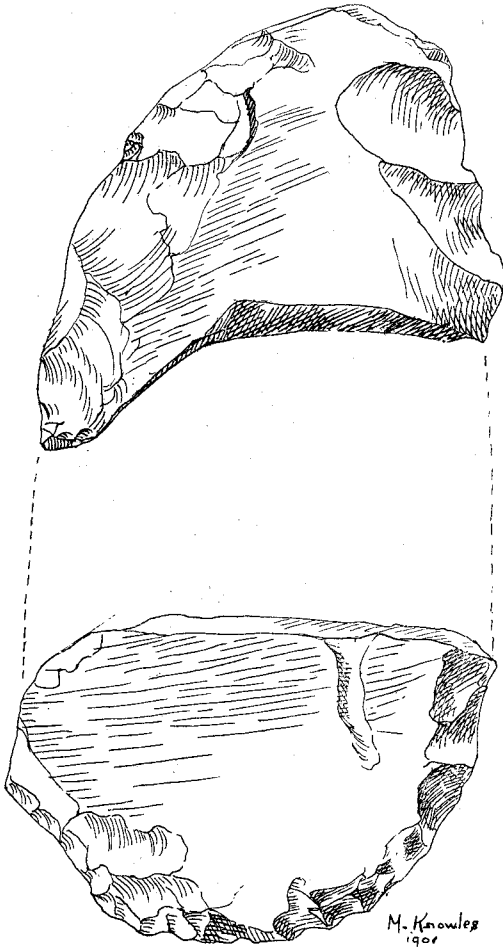
the sea that we found any remains. In one exposed place we found a well-marked black layer, and dug out of it one or two little bits of pottery of the same kind as we got at Fanore, also broken bones and shells (chiefly limpets), and rough flakes, but nothing of exceptional interest. Dr. George Fogerty found an anvil-stone and a hammer-stone on the surface, both of which he gave to me; the former is shown in Plate ii, Fig. 1, half natural size. It has had a bit knocked off one end, but when perfect was a somewhat oval stone of quartzite, and has the usual pit or hollow on each face.

Anvil-stones were used to rest the core on while dislodging flakes with a hammer-stone, and are found of all sizes, sometimes weighing as much as three pounds, and even more. They are usually made of some hard, close-grained rock like quartzite. Small implements, combining anvil and hammer-stone, are common in kitchen middens and other parts of Ireland, and are called oval tool-stones. These are the "Tilhuggersteens" of the Danish Antiquaries. The pits on either face of these stones were regarded by some antiquaries as places for the finger and thumb, to give a secure hold when using them as hammers but the theory does not seem to have been well founded, for we find small stones with pits, which have no marks of battering on the ends, and have never been used as hammer-stones, and many of the hammer-stones we find have no pits or hollows. We also find the pits on the oval tool-stones, varying from the smallest indenture up to deep, cup-shaped hollows, and some have a hollow on one side only. The large pitted stone that Mr. O'Brien wrote to me about was seen in one of the sites. It measured 18 inches square and 4 inches thick, and was pitted systematically over one surface to within an inch from the edge. Similar stones have been frequently found at Whitepark Bay, but it is not known for what purpose they were used.

FISHERSTREET.

In July, 1899, we had only time to take a mere run over these sand-hills. We saw flakes of stone, shell heaps, and broken bones, but nothing of sufficient interest for me to mention in my report. Mr. O'Brien and Dr. George Fogerty, however, thought this place would repay further investigation, and it was on their suggestion that we again visited it. The party now consisted of Mr. O'Brien, Dr. George Fogerty, Dr. William Fogerty, Dr. D' Evelyn, of Ballymena, and myself.

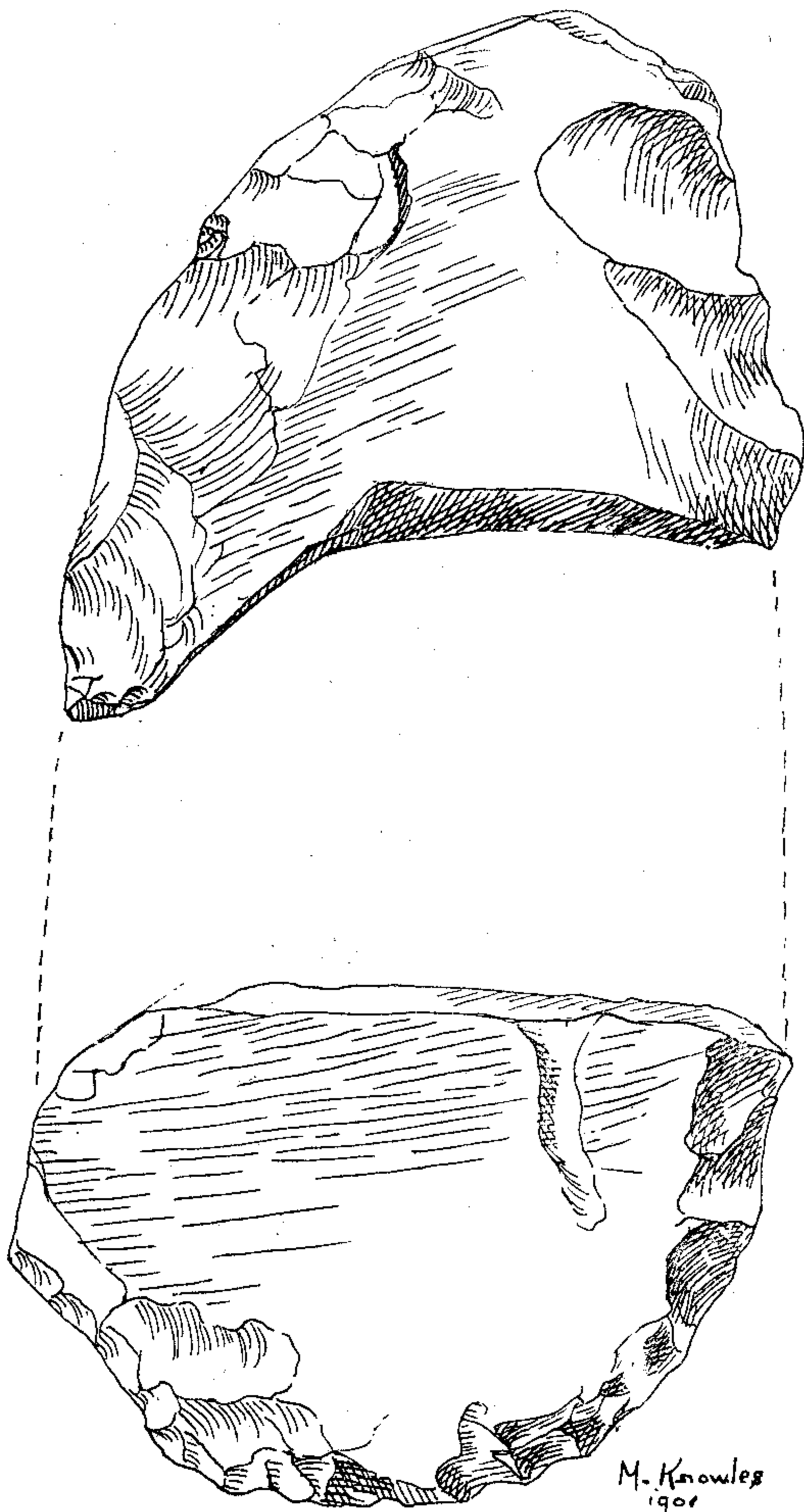
PLATE V.



M. Knowles
1908

BROKEN AXE—FISHERSTREET.
(Half Linear Size.)

PLATE V.



BROKEN AXE—FISHERSTREET.
(Half Linear Size.)

The sand-hills lie mostly on the right bank of the River Aille, and there is an escarpment of sand from 20 to 30 feet high close to the river bed. On our first visit we only examined the higher ground, but on the present occasion Dr. D' Evelyn thought it advisable to explore the foot of the escarpment, and was rewarded by finding what must have been a regular stone axe factory. Flakes, hammer-stones, and broken axes were lying all about the place in a very instructive way. The axes were probably broken in the process of manufacture, and thrown aside as useless. Some were chipped, ready for grinding, and a few had the marks of grinding on the surface. Dr. D' Evelyn found one perfect specimen, which he has kindly allowed me to figure (see Plate v). It is drawn half-size, and I show a section. In Plate iii, Fig. 4, the cutting end of what would have been a very fine implement, if perfect, is shown. It was found by myself. Fig. 5 on the same plate is the butt end of another axe, and is one of those found by Dr. D' Evelyn. About two dozen axes, including broken ones, were got altogether. In Plate iv two pieces, a butt end and a cutting end, which my father thinks are probably parts of the same implement, are shown. They are drawn in the position which they should occupy towards each other if this were so. Both pieces are of the same thickness and of the same slatey stone, and the weathering also supports the idea. I have submitted a piece of the stone to Professor Cole, F.G.S., and he says it is "a very tough, fine-grained, clayey 'flagstone,'" belonging to the Coal Measures Series. The flakes were abundant. I brought away about a dozen, all of which have good bulbs of percussion. Among those that Dr. D' Evelyn brought is one which is dressed slightly along the edge, and may have been used for scraping. Some of these flakes are shown half-size in Plate iii, Figs. 1, 2, and 3. At Plate ii, Fig. 2, a very fine hammer-stone which I found is shown. It is made of a close-grained quartzite, and has been used at both ends, showing several facets on the used parts. From the smoothness of these facets, it is probable it has been used for rubbing or grinding, perhaps paint or grain, instead of as a pounder.

I do not think that these kitchen middens are by any means thoroughly worked out, and I believe they would well repay further exploration by the members of the Limerick Field Club. Mr. O'Brien, in company with Lord Dunally, went back to this place in September last, and they found two whole axes, which are now in Lord Dunally's collection.