

The unsung heroes

Article

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Hosfield, R. T. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6357-2805>
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THE UNSUNG HEROES

R. Hosfield

Dept. of Archaeology, SHES, University of Reading, Whiteknights, Reading RG6 6AB, UK. Contact e-mail: r.hosfield@rdg.ac.uk

ABSTRACT

This paper explores the roles played by local collectors, often little-known or rarely remembered, in the compilation of Britain's Earlier (Lower and early Middle) Palaeolithic record, with reference to the work of C.E. (Charles) Bean at the Lower Palaeolithic site of Broom, and the activities of George Smith and Llewellyn and Mabel Treacher in the Middle Thames Valley. Their collecting practices, publication records, and archaeological knowledge and insights are reviewed, and their impacts assessed with reference to the activities of other contemporary collectors, and the regional archaeological records of the south-west and the Middle Thames. Their archives demonstrate that while the key sites and artefact assemblages sampled by Bean, Smith and the Treachers would not otherwise have been unknown, their work left important legacies in terms of rich artefact assemblages, site archives (Bean), and the long-term monitoring of key sites and fluvial terraces.

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INTRODUCTION

This paper highlights the contributions of the local collectors in the history of Palaeolithic research and artefact collection in Britain. While the valuable activities and collections of many local workers have sadly been entirely forgotten, there are others whose researches have been documented and discussed (e.g. Wymer 1968; Roe 1981: Ch. 2; O'Connor 2007). Four collectors who fall squarely into the latter category are C.E. (Charles) Bean, Llewellyn and Mabel Treacher, and George Smith.

In reviewing the work of these four individuals, the paper is not seeking to highlight unique or outstanding

contributions. Instead the goal is to assess whether the fundamental field and observational skills of these local workers stands comparison with those of the well-known names of Palaeolithic research (see the other contributions in this volume). The roles played by these four collectors in the construction of their local and regional archaeological records, and their individual impacts upon the character of those archives is also evaluated, alongside the broader research contexts of the late 19th and early 20th century period.

BACKGROUND

Short biographical outlines of C.E. Bean,

Llewellyn and Mabel Treacher, and George Smith are provided below, prior to a discussion of the quality and scope of their working practices and their respective impacts upon the Earlier (Lower and early Middle) Palaeolithic records in their regions of interest.

Charles or C.E. Bean (1892–1983; Figure 1), Surveyor, Sanitary Inspector and Water Engineer to the Sherborne Urban District Council, was also a keen and distinguished amateur archaeologist (for further details see PDNHAS 1983; Hosfield & Green forthcoming). As well as Sherborne, Bean explored many other parts of the county of Dorset, but from a Palaeolithic perspective it was Bean's collecting of over 1,000 Acheulean artefacts from Broom (at Hawkchurch near Axminster; Figure 2) which is of central interest. Bean was in touch with contemporary archaeological figures, including Reginald (R.A.) Smith of the British Museum (who encouraged Bean to keep an archaeological diary), while his archaeological library was one of the finest in the south-west (PDNHAS 1983: 183). It is clear from Bean's archaeological archive that he was not a casual collector: his finds were labelled, accompanied by sketch maps and sections, and cross-referenced to diary entries, while site heights were surveyed and photographs taken.

Although a market gardener and fruit grower by trade, Llewellyn Treacher (1859–1943; Figure 3) was a notable amateur geologist and archaeologist (e.g. receiving an award from the Lyell Fund through the Geological Society of London in 1913; for fuller details of his geological interests see Dewey 1944; and for a fuller biography see Cranshaw 1983: 1–10). His Palaeolithic interests were initiated by Dr Joseph Stevens of Reading Museum in the 1880s, and Treacher subsequently compiled extensive artefact collections from the gravel pits of the Middle Thames valley, with a particular focus on the

areas around Reading, Twyford, where he lived, and Maidenhead (Figure 2; Wymer 1968: 168). Henry Dewey (1944: 43) clearly had confidence in Treacher's work, noting that Treacher carried with him examples of artefacts so as to train the gravel diggers, and that Llewellyn emphasised the importance of recording the exact provenance of each find. In the latter part of his life Llewellyn worked alongside his wife Mabel (–1959), whom he married in 1922. Mabel had trained as a geologist at Cambridge, prior to working as a school teacher and a cartographer, and played a key role in recording much of Llewellyn's work (Cranshaw 1983: 9). Her key publication on their work in the Caversham Ancient Channel (Treacher, M S *et al.* 1948) was also encouraged and guided by R.A. Smith (*ibid.*: 133).

George Smith (Figure 3) combined his activities as a Caversham banker with the collection of a large quantity of local antiquities, including Lower and Middle Palaeolithic artefacts: "as a young man in the Bank...He would run all the way to Caversham and back in his lunch hour to secure a specimen from a gravel pit" (Smallcombe & Collins 1946: 62). His extensive local collection is comparable only to that of the Treachers. However the Smith material is characterised both by a prevalence of 'choice' artefacts and a rather uneven documentation (*ibid.*: 62–63). Much of his lithic material, both Palaeolithic and that of later periods, was unmarked. Where labelled, details typically include reference to a particular gravel pit, with information regarding artefact depth and other details very rare (*ibid.*: 64). The collection was deposited with Reading Museum, along with Smith's three volumes of notes and short entries relating to his various discoveries between 1885 and 1941 (Smallcombe & Collins 1946: 64; Wymer 1968: 137).



Figure 1: C.E. (Charles Edward) Bean, 1892–1983 (PDNHAS 1983: 182)

Figure 2: Key locations discussed in the text

THE WIDER CONTEXT

The activities of Bean, Smith, and the Treachers were of course occurring against a rich background of research into Palaeolithic archaeology and Pleistocene geology (see O'Connor 2007 for an excellent review). The period between the 1880s and the 1930s can be broadly divided into four phases (for

details of aspects of the 'first eolith debate' of the 1890s see McNabb, this volume):

- The 1880s and 1890s saw a shift from the use of numerous individual tool descriptions and classificatory schemes (and concerns with differences and similarities between the artefacts of the caves and the river drift) towards an acceptance of Gabriel de Mortillet's 'standard terminology' (e.g. de Mortillet & de Mortillet 1900). In geological terms the leading debate was between a view of multiple glacials and interglacials, principally advocated by James Geikie (e.g. 1894), and a single glacial model (with post-glacial Palaeolithic artefacts), with the majority opinion greatly supporting this latter view (O'Connor 2007; Ch. 2). Finally this was also a period punctuated by outstanding work into the tool-making techniques and lifestyles of Palaeolithic people, for example by Worthington-Smith (Roe, this volume) and F.C.J. Spurrell (Scott & Shaw, this volume).
- Work in the 1900s and 1910s was concerned with identifying a relative chronological sequence for Britain's Palaeolithic artefacts, and resolving the number, and order, of distinct geological periods. Harmer (e.g. 1910) and Boswell (e.g. 1914), among others, explored the glacial deposits of East Anglia, while Hinton and Kennard (e.g. 1905) addressed the geology, and archaeology, of the Thames Valley. Perhaps most significant was the work of Smith and Dewey (e.g. 1913) at Swanscombe in the 1910s, and the increasing acceptance of a 'standard' sequence in this period has been argued by O'Connor (2007: 223) to be reflected in the number of apparent 'anomalies' which were being recorded (such anomalies included, for some, Warren's Mesvinian from Clacton-on-Sea). Finally, considerable attention was also being paid to the continent,

including Victor Commont's work in Somme (Tuffreau, this volume).

- Perhaps unsurprisingly in light of the earlier attention paid to the Somme and other mainland European sequences, the 1920s saw British researchers querying the apparent contrast between the continent (where Palaeolithic industries were argued to span multiple glacial and interglacial periods) and the 'home' view (a pre- and post-glacial model). Re-excavations of High Lodge, Hoxne, and Foxhall Road by Marr (1921), Moir (1927) and Boswell & Moir (1923; see also White & Plunkett 2004 with regards to Nina Layard's earlier work at Foxhall Road) resulted in a widespread acceptance of two glacials and an interglacial, although their correlation with the four Alpine glaciations remained problematic. Doubts were also being raised about the use of archaeology to explain the geological record, and by the mid-1920s the linear Palaeolithic sequence had been replaced by the notion of parallel tool-making cultures, mostly thanks to the Abbé Breuil (Davies, this volume) and Dorothy Garrod (Price, this volume).
- The 1930s saw the re-defining of certain industries and the manner in which they were utilised, especially within large-scale models and syntheses such as those of Breuil. These industries included the Clactonian, sub-divided into four stages (e.g. Oakley & Leakey 1937), while a chronological series of handaxe phases (the Abbevillian and Acheulean I–VII) were argued to run parallel to these flake industries (e.g. Breuil & Koslowski 1931). This period also saw ongoing debates regarding artefact/geological deposit correlations, principally the glacial and fluvial sediments of East Anglia and the Thames Valley (e.g. the relationships between the Clacton Channel and the Swanscombe deposits, and the attempts, particularly by Kenneth

Oakley (King & Oakley 1936), to maintain the expected sequence of Clactonian phases (for further details see McNabb 1996; O'Connor 2007: Ch. 10). Finally it is worth noting that the names of the Thames terraces (e.g. the Boyn Hill (100ft terrace) and the Taplow) were often transferred into other areas and onto the terraces of other rivers.

BEAN & BROOM

The Broom locality consists of a sequence of Middle Pleistocene fluvial sediments, OSL dated to approximately 250–300 kya (Toms *et al.* 2005; Hosfield & Chambers in press). At least 1,800 Lower Palaeolithic artefacts, probably locally re-worked (*cf.* Moir 1936; Green 1988; Hosfield & Chambers in press), are associated with the sediments. The assemblage is predominantly made up of Acheulean bifaces, the majority produced in locally available chert. The Broom assemblage is notable for the distinctive, asymmetrical plan-form of approximately one quarter of the bifaces and the site's relative richness compared to the numbers of Lower Palaeolithic artefacts elsewhere in the south-west region (Wymer 1999: 181–188; Hosfield *et al.* 2006). As the assemblage taphonomy strongly suggests that the artefacts are broadly contemporary with the age of the sediments, the biface-dominance is in contrast with the shift to prepared core (Levallois)-dominated technologies in the south-east of England this time (White, M.J. *et al.* 2006).

Broom lies in the valley of the river Axe, and its Pleistocene sediments and archaeology were exposed through commercial gravel working of three pits during the latter half of the 1800s and the first half of the 1900s. Bean collected artefacts from Pratt's Old Pit, and occasionally from Pratt's New Pit, and compiled an invaluable series of field notes (Figure 4), site plans and section drawings

(Figure 4), and a photographic archive (Figure 5) between September 1932 and October 1941, over the course of 93 visits.



Figure 3: Llewellyn Treacher (second from right) and George Smith (second from left) in Cannoncourt Farm Gravel Pit, Furze Platt, May 1931 (© Reading Museum Service (Reading Borough Council), all rights reserved)

Visit frequency, the lengths of intervals between visits, and the rate of artefact acquisition varied markedly, with Bean sometimes only visiting the homes of the quarrymen and not the pits (Green 1988; Hosfield & Green forthcoming). Bean both purchased artefacts from the quarrymen and directly collected from the pit faces, with his own acquisitions including cores, flakes and possible manuports as well as bifaces (although Roe (1968: 25) noted during a visit in the 1960s that numerous stacked trays of ‘lesser flakes’ had been overgrown by grasses and weeds in Bean’s garden). In general the average interval between Bean’s appearances at Broom was less than 30 days, although there were specific periods of

sustained month-to-month activity, most notably between late 1934 to early 1936 and late 1936 to late 1939. One factor influencing this visit frequency may have been the cost of the artefacts:

“Feb 1936...Dowel (old) had good one...10”...from Perry + Perry’s...sold it 14/6 to man at cottage for his boss...conclude items now too dear for me”
(C.E. Bean archive; Dorset County Museum, Dorchester: DORCM 1986.40.1–4; February 1936)

During late 1941 Bean documented his artefact collections from Broom, according to a range of criteria, including shape, condition, year of recovery, and metrics, with the individual records tabulated as part of his archive (Figure 6). Interestingly his 17 shape-based biface categories were idiosyncratic and appear to have been defined specifically for the Broom material. It is curious that Bean adopted his own categories, since he also used widely-shared terminology of the period on other occasions:

“St Acheul & clean Clacton III [flake industries of the High Lodge and Barnfield Pit Middle Gravel type] brought there in semi-frozen clay etc...”
(C.E. Bean archive; Dorset County Museum, Dorchester: DORCM 1986.40.1–4; 22nd May 1938; RTH’s comments in [])

Bean’s field notes also highlight that he was aware of a number of important Palaeolithic issues (both then and now), ranging from the potential presence of *in situ* material to questions of raw material availability and interpretations of early human behaviour:

“...Have the unrolled ones fallen through a sheet of ice when men were hunting animals going to drink at waterholes in the ice. All fits in except the flakes and chips. Did they live on the ice which was deserted when

thaw set in?"

(C.E. Bean archive; Dorset County Museum,
Dorchester: DORCM 1986.40.1-4; 13th
January 1935)

However Bean's interpretations were essentially 'local' in character: concerned with the nature of the early humans and their Palaeolithic occupation at Broom, rather than with the 1930s' wider issues of industrial sequences and geological correlations. By contrast Moir's (1936: 267) Broom paper was at least partially concerned with establishing a sequence of chronologically distinct industries, making reference to Early and Late Acheulean handaxes and Clacton III material of the Third Inter-Glacial.

While Bean never formally published his collections and observations, he clearly influenced Moir ("I have received invaluable help from Mr C.E. Bean"; Moir 1936: 266), and Bean's unpublished archive further reveals that his contributions to current understanding of the site and its material extend far beyond the collection of the artefacts themselves. Bean's site plans and sections, including carefully surveyed heights using a Topographic Abney Level, have enabled reconstructions of the site datum, the development of Pratt's Old Pit, and the elevations of the key sediment bodies (Green 1988). His field descriptions underpinned both general (Moir 1936) and more detailed (Green 1988) discussions of the Broom fluvial sequence, and continue to do so (Green & Hosfield forthcoming; Hosfield *et al.* forthcoming; Hosfield & Chambers in press), while the detailed documentation of his artefact acquisitions between 1932 and 1941 is suggestive of localised biface variations within the fluvial sediments.

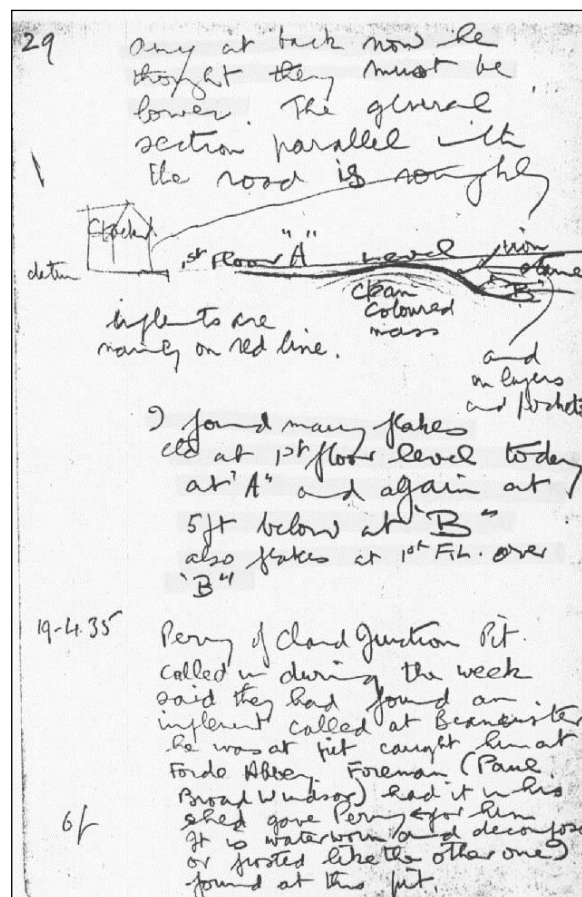


Figure 4: Example of C.E. Bean's field notes and sketches for Broom (C.E. Bean archive; Dorset County Museum, Dorchester: DORCM 1986.40.1-4)

It is evident from his archive however that Bean was not the only recipient of artefacts, with material being sent and sold to other collectors:

"The good one last week still eludes me...I hear Spurway sends them to a Professor in London..."

(C.E. Bean archive; Dorset County Museum,
Dorchester: DORCM 1986.40.1-4; 7th April
1935)

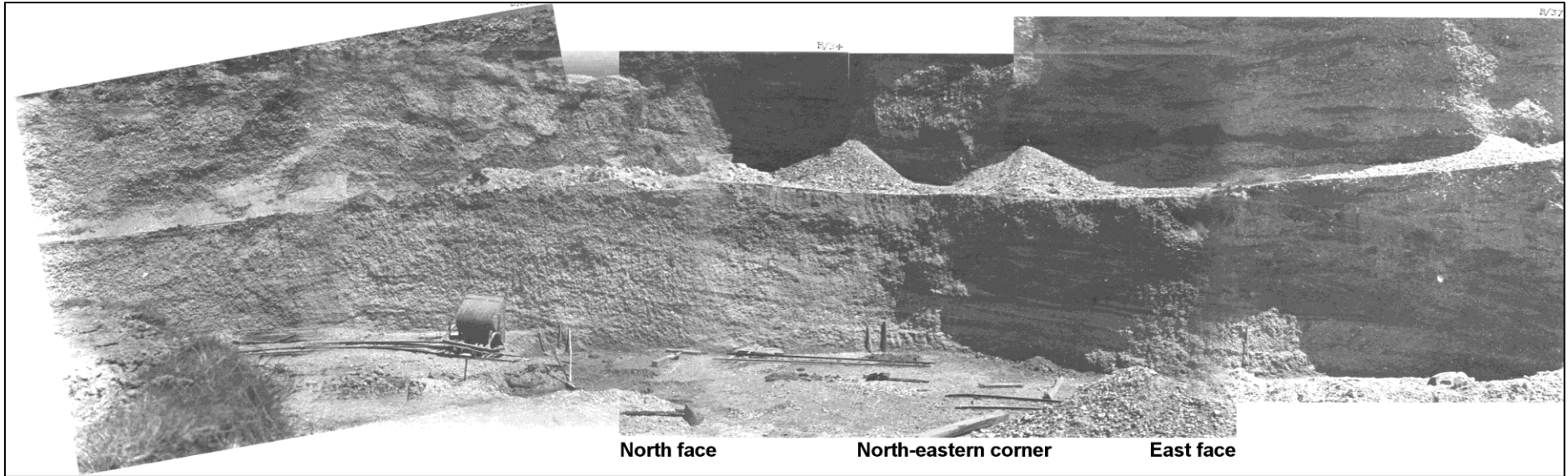


Figure 5: Panorama of the lower gravels at the eastern end and north-eastern corner of Pratt's Old Pit, 14th July 1935. Compiled from C.E. Bean's photographic archive (C.E. Bean archive; Dorset County Museum, Dorchester: DORCM 1986.40.1-4)

No	68	90	92	33	62	70	300	31	619	633	335	216	709	55	844	3
type	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
wtNF	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C
wtNF	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
shape	H	B	H	B	LH	B	LH	LH	B	B	LH	B	B	B	B	V
length	6	8	7	9	24	28	13	21	22	25	29	13	7	4	10	1
width	2 1/2	4 1/2	4 1/2	4 1/2	7	7 1/2	4 1/2	6 1/2	6 1/2	7	7 1/2	5 1/2	3 1/2	3 1/2	4 1/2	5
width	2 3/8	2 1/4	2 1/2	2 1/2	3 5/8	4 5/8	3 1/2	3 3/4	4	3 3/8	3 1/2	2 3/8	2 1/2	2 1/2	3 1/4	3
thickness	1 3/16	1 1/2	1 5/16	1 1/16	1 1/2	1 1/2	1 1/2	1 1/4	1 1/4	1 1/2	1 1/2	1 1/4	1 1/4	1 1/4	1 1/2	1 1/2
ffound																
stratum	W	W	P	W	W	W	W	W	W	W	W	W	W	W	W	W
features																
marks	P	cont	P	C	P	very	P	cont	cont	cont	cont	cont	cont	cont	cont	P
marks	cont	5	ab	cont	at	at	at	at	at	at	at	at	at	at	at	P
marks	5	8	B	at	B	at	B	at	B	at	B	at	B	at	B	B
year	1932	1939	1932	1933	1933	1935	1936	1932	1938	1938	1937	1935	1932	1939	1938	1
ref edge	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	B	D	D	B	c	c	c	c

Figure 6: Example of C.E. Bean’s artefact records for Broom (C.E. Bean archive; Dorset County Museum, Dorchester: DORCM 1986.40.1–4)

These references demonstrate how well established the Broom locality was as a source of Palaeolithic artefacts. The earliest collections were made from the Railway Ballast Pit in the latter part of the 19th century, when Broom artefacts were again being purchased by remote collectors, including Worthington Smith (O’Connor 2007: 89–90). Bean himself was familiar with this history of Broom collecting, and knew of the locations of at least some of the artefacts from the Ballast Pit (e.g. at Barnstaple and Exeter Museums). However, the regularity of Bean’s visits to Broom, combined with his well-established contacts and familiarity with the quarrymen, assisted him in evaluating provenance and highlighting the less eye-catching elements of the assemblage:

“He said none were found in the lower beds. I am afraid they miss them as I picked up a rough one. He said “we don’t bother about these”.”

(C.E. Bean archive; Dorset County Museum, Dorchester: DORCM 1986.40.1–4; 26th June 1938)

Bean’s frequent presence therefore resulted in a rich documentary record in comparison with those for the Broom artefacts in the Exeter Museum and British Museum collections, as well as the regular collection of non-bifacial artefacts and atypical or ‘non-classic’ bifaces (after Ashton & McNabb 1994). At the same time it is clear that Broom would not have been neglected or ignored as a Palaeolithic site without Bean’s activities, since the numbers of artefacts collected from the Railway Ballast Pit during the late 19th century (a minimum of 300) had already highlighted Broom as one of the major Lower Palaeolithic localities in the south-west region: to date only the known findspots in the Vale of Taunton (Norman 2000) and along the Bristol Avon (Roe 1971; Wymer 1999: 184–186) are comparable in scale. Without Bean it is likely that greater numbers of Broom artefacts would simply have made their way into the hands of other, ‘remote’ collectors.

In summary, the status of Broom as a key Lower Palaeolithic artefact assemblage from the south-west, and its dominance of the regional record, would have survived with or without the activities of C.E. Bean. Nonetheless the richness and reliability of the Bean archive (artefact records, field notes and sketches, survey heights, and site photographs) has greatly facilitated current re-analysis of the site along the lines of the recent studies of Swanscombe (Conway *et al.* 1996) and Foxhall Road (White & Plunkett 2004), and highlights the key role of the local, ‘non-professional’ archaeologist.

THE TREACHERS, SMITH & THE MIDDLE THAMES

The post-diversion Middle Thames represents one of the key Palaeolithic landscapes in Britain (Figure 2), with a rich archaeology and well documented series of Pleistocene landforms and sediments (Wymer 1968; Gibbard 1985; Bridgland 1994; Wymer 1999). The post-Anglian glaciation landforms begin with the Ancient Channel (Black Park Terrace) between Caversham and Henley-on-Thames, representing the course of the river during the late Anglian (MIS-12). After the abandonment of the Ancient Channel at the end of the Anglian, the Thames remained within its current valley, with a relatively limited southward migration resulting in the extensive removal of earlier terrace deposits as the river incised *c.* 30m, down through the Boyn Hill, Lynch Hill, Taplow, Kempton Park, and Shepperton terraces and gravels to the present floodplain level (Bridgland 1994).

The lives and works of both the Treachers and, to a lesser extent, Smith have been previously discussed (White, H.J.O 1943; Dewey 1944; Smallcombe & Collins 1946; Wymer 1968; Cranshaw 1983), and the reader is referred to these sources for fuller details. The following discussions draw upon the Treachers' own papers, including Llewellyn's short Geologists' Association excursion reports (Treacher, L. 1896, 1899, 1904, 1905, 1910, 1911, 1916, 1926, 1934; Treacher, L. & White 1906, 1909, 1910; Treacher, M.S. *et al.* 1948), and the Smith archive and the various papers annotated by Mabel Treacher, held at Reading Museum.

The Treachers

Previous authors have highlighted the Treachers' emphasis upon documenting artefact provenance, at least to a site level (Wymer 1968; although not all sites are now

identifiable: Cranshaw 1983: 6); their involvement in the purchase, exchange, and sale of artefacts, and the potential transfer of specimens between pits (Dewey 1944; Cranshaw 1983); and the limited nature of the Treachers' published records (*ibid.*: 3–4). Yet while Llewellyn published no significant papers during his lifetime (*cf.* Treacher, M.S. *et al.* 1948), his short Geologists' Association excursion reports contain valuable, if brief, observations: e.g. "but in the lower pits [at Boyn Hill and Furze Platt] instruments of the finest Acheulien [sic] type are occasionally found, which is not the case in the upper pits" (Treacher, L. & White 1909: 198–199). Similarly Mabel's notebooks, especially book III, contain valuable dated diary entries and references to key sites such as Toot's Farm, Furze Platt, and Lent Rise.

The ongoing and long-term nature of the Treachers' gravel pit visits is also much evident from their papers, with for example the acquisition of artefacts from Highland's Farm in 1889, 1892 and 1925 (Treacher, M.S. *et al.* 1948: 136). These working practices are especially valuable as they highlight the apparent clustering of artefacts within the excavated deposits ("After five years of yielding nothing, Kennylands suddenly became the most productive pit of the [Ancient] Channel"; Treacher, M.S. *et al.* 1948: 131) and provide support for evaluating the 'absence of evidence, evidence of absence' problem: "I have repeatedly searched the gravel at Remenham for implements, but hitherto without the least result" (Treacher, L. 1896: 43).

Although Llewellyn impressed upon the quarrymen the importance of exact provenance information, this was made difficult by the working practice of digging away at the base of gravel layers until the undercut gravels collapsed into the pit (Cranshaw 1983: 2): the majority of implements were collected by the workmen

when “shovelling ‘falled’ [sic] material” (Treacher, M.S. *et al.* 1948: 137). Stratigraphic information was consequently either unobtainable or rather imprecise, although entries in the Treachers’ diaries and papers indicate that they were fully aware of its value when it could be obtained: “The [Kennylands] pit is now about 30 ft. deep with a clay band about two thirds of the way up. The men say that the implements are found just above this band” (05/12/1933, quoted in Treacher, M.S. *et al.* 1948: 137); “Most of the [Toot’s Farm] implements were found at the base of No. 4 [a unit of sandy gravel]” (Treacher, L. 1904: 17).

Llewellyn Treacher ascribed to the view that Palaeolithic artefacts could be used as “zone fossils” to aid in distinguishing the various deposits of the Thames and its tributaries, very likely reflecting his own extensive geological interests. Although he doubted the validity of the various Acheulean and Mousterian sub-stages proposed in the 1930s (Dewey 1944: 43; O’Connor 2007: Ch. 9), these doubts reveal his and Mabel’s awareness of the wider research issues of the day (no doubt greatly developed through the Geologists’ Association).

The Treachers’ observations also demonstrate a sophisticated understanding of artefact condition and context, and the archaeological implications of this evidence. At Ruscombe Brickyard for example, Llewellyn observed four or five implements associated with sharp and unworn waste flakes, lying on or slightly into the underlying clay, which were in marked contrast to the bruised and worn artefacts found within the overlying gravels (Treacher, L. 1896: 41). The abraded nature of artefacts from the gravel at Twyford was argued by Llewellyn to indicate that they were derived from the higher level Ruscombe gravels (*ibid.*: 41), while with specific regard to the Ruscombe implements he was at pains to observe that: “There is no

reason to suppose that these differences in colour and condition are any test of the relative age of the implements” (*ibid.*: 41). The enduring quality of his observations is perhaps best reflected in his work’s acknowledgement by Lacaille (1940) and in the notable similarities between Llewellyn’s writing and that of Arkell and Oakley (both of whom were aware of Treacher’s earlier views), although the presence of Mabel as a co-author on the later paper may well also have been a factor:

“...Palaeolithic Man sought out spots where suitable flints were easily obtainable, probably on the banks of a stream, and there he sat down and chipped out his tools...Then the stream shifted its course, or a flood of waters came and spread a deposit of gravel over the place, covering up past recovery...At the same time, the flood would take up some of the implements and roll them about among the gravel or wash them down stream. In this way we may account for the isolated specimens found which are almost all much abraded.”

(Treacher, L. 1896: 17–18)

“...wandering groups of hunters settled for a time to manufacture thousands of implements upon the river bank...The meanderings and minor oscillations of river level...[caused] the river to sweep over the habitation sites and incorporate many of the implements in the gravels. Some of the implements were not shifted far from the spot where they were dropped and consequently they remain fresh and unrolled; others were carried perhaps for miles along the gravel bed, or swept to and fro for centuries, and consequently became more or less rolled before they came to rest. In this way can be explained the almost universal occurrence of rolled and unrolled implements side by side in the same gravel”

(Treacher, M.S. *et al.* 1948: 153)

As well as a familiarity with the emerging 'standard' typological categories of the day (e.g. Treacher, L. 1896: 18 & 42; Treacher, L. 1904), Llewellyn also gave consideration to a now-familiar range of technological and behavioural issues:

“Possibly the owners, having broken off the points while using the implements, simply trimmed the ends again to form fresh points [see also McPherron (1995), Ashton (2008) for recent examples of handaxe re-sharpening/reduction intensity debates].”
(Treacher, L. 1896: 42)

“In general the implements are not well wrought, being often nothing but nodules of flint with a few chips taken from them to bring them to a point [see also Ashton & McNabb (1994), White, M.J. (1998) for recent examples of raw material conditioning and handaxe variability debates].”
(Treacher, L. 1896: 18)

George Smith

Despite his extensive collections the notebooks left to Reading Museum by G.W. Smith are rather limited, although his plan of Palaeolithic localities in and around Reading (modified in Wymer 1968: Fig. 47) is an invaluable resource. The notebook entries are typically brief, although listed dates do allow the life of pits to be documented (e.g. from at least 1892 to 1905 in the case of Toot's Farm Pit, Caversham; Wymer 1968: 137–138). Smallcombe & Collins (1946: 63) described the notebooks as containing “much irrelevant data and many gaps”, and particularly frustrating are the occasional vagaries with regards to site names. ‘Caversham Hill’ was initially used to describe material from Toot's Farm, and while many of these artefacts were later corrected to ‘Toot's Farm’, leaving their provenance in no doubt, the origin of those pieces only marked ‘Caversham Hill’ is more uncertain. Smallcombe & Collins

(1946: 62–64) also highlighted Smith's selective collecting and tendency to ignore flakes (“only the more shapely examples or those with fine retouch were collected... Core-tools are thus unduly prominent”), although they also suggest that his approaches to collecting became more all-encompassing during the last 15 or 20 years of his life (i.e. the post-1920s).

Smith's collecting was locally focused and sustained. His activity at the Toot's Farm Pit in Caversham (Figure 2) in particular highlights his association with nearby sites over a number of years. His journal first mentions (Smith's diaries: entries 6–16) Toot's Farm in January 1892, although it is possible that his earliest acquisition of artefacts from the site occurred in 1890 (see Wymer 1968: 137 for details). His collecting continued until 1905, keeping pace with local changes: in 1898 Smith recovered artefacts from the Old Toots Pit “now being turned into a tennis lawn” (Smith's diaries: entry 13; Wymer 1968: 137), while in 1903 he refers to Toot's Pit as the ‘little pit round the corner of Darell Road’ (Wymer 1968: 137), suggesting that the gravel digging, and Smith's collecting activities, were shifting location in line with house building. By the end of 1905 houses had been built across the site, and Smith turned elsewhere. His swift awareness of local collecting opportunities are also evident at the Roebuck Pit in Tilehurst (Figure 2) where Smith had acquired a collection of fresh condition handaxes within just a few months of the opening of the pit in 1910.

However Smith was not solely restricted to Reading and Caversham, with the Middle Thames' artefacts in his Reading Museum collections coming from as far east as Cookham and Maidenhead (Figure 2), while his journal documents his friendship with G. “Deffy” Carter, finder at Furze Platt of Britain's largest Palaeolithic handaxe (Wymer 1968: 214–228 & Fig. 79). The

Reading Museum collection also reveals that Smith acquired artefacts from further afield, presumably through exchanges and/or purchases, with material from British Palaeolithic sites in East Anglia and the Solent (there are also archaeological and ethnographic pieces from across Europe and the Americas).

The Smith, and Treacher, archives also hint at the changing nature of artefact collecting opportunities in the Middle Thames during the first part of the 20th century. Within Reading and Caversham the contexts of the exposed gravels broadly shift after the First World War from large gravel pits (e.g. Toot's Farm Pit and Grovelands Pit) to smaller urban infrastructure projects (e.g. the laying down of the main Caversham drainage in 1931–1932, in Highmoor Road and Harrowgate Road; Wymer 1968: 144). Both Smith and the Treachers were sensitive to these changing opportunities, making frequent visits to Caversham after 1918.

Despite the notebooks' gaps, Smith's observational skills are evident in his entries. At McIlroy's Pit he documented the provenances of a series of well-made pointed handaxes: "from a mixture of clay and gravel — a kind of pocket", "from under 12 ft. gravel on clay", "*in situ* on clay and loam after overlying gravel and clay had been removed" (quoted in Wymer 1968: 150). At the Black Horse Pit on Caversham Hill he provides valuable data on the heights of the artefacts within the gravel: "said to be from the base of the gravel" (Smith's diaries: 24/12/1912), "*in situ* 7 feet from top" (Smith's diaries: 18/10/1913), "all found in the loose sandy level about 8 feet from the surface of the ground in the same layer as the other implements from this pit" (Smith's diaries: 1915; quoted in Treacher, M.S. *et al.* 1948: 137).

The Contemporaries of Smith and the Treachers

While Smith and the Treachers can occasionally be uniquely associated with a single site (e.g. Smith and Roebuck's Pit; Wymer 1968: 149–150), a number of other collectors were active in the Middle Thames, both before and after them (Table 1). There was undoubtedly knowledge exchange and sharing between them (Shrubsole 1890: 584 & 591; White, H.J.O 1943: xc), with Reading Museum's Smith collection including artefacts noted as "formerly in Treacher collection" for example.

Wymer (1968: 131) and Mabel Treacher *et al.* (1948: 130) noted that great collections of palaeoliths from Reading and Caversham were made by Joseph Stevens (the first curator of Reading Museum), Shrubsole and Overy, with Shrubsole (1890) claiming the find of the first Reading palaeolith (in 1879) and Stevens (1881) providing the first published record, again describing finds made in 1879. Llewellyn himself noted that Toot's Farm had yielded 600–700 artefacts by 1904 (Treacher, L. 1904: 17), while his and George Smith's museum collections from that site only total 328 artefacts (Wymer 1968: 137 & 141; although the shortfall may be partly explained by Treacher's trading and exchanging of his own artefacts rather than by the activities of other collectors). In the case of the prolific Grovelands Pit the majority of the artefacts in Reading Museum are not annotated as belonging to the Smith collection (162 of 212, 76.4%; after Wymer 1968: 155), while the richer publication records of both Stevens (1881, 1882, 1894) and Shrubsole (1885, 1890, 1893, 1898) on the artefacts and gravels of Reading and its surroundings are also notable in comparison to Smith, especially, and also the Treachers (excluding Llewellyn's Geologists' Association reports). Wymer (1968: 131) has further suggested that collecting in Caversham

declined after Stevens' death in 1899, although the closure of Toot's Farm Pit in 1905 must also have been a factor in the decline.

Although Wymer (1968: 168) has noted that Stevens did little collecting outside of Reading and Caversham, Llewellyn Treacher (1896: 16–17 & 40) made contemporary reference to other local collectors who were active beyond these areas: for example 'Mr J. Rutland and others' with regard to the low level gravels near Taplow Station, and O.A.

Shrubsole, who in 1890 reported finding and obtaining artefacts from Twyford and the Ruscombe pits. The key factors were of course available opportunities, *combined with* the presence of interested and knowledgeable participants, as indicated by the recovery of flakes and cores from Denton's Pit by W.A. Smallcombe (curator of Reading Museum, 1928–1958) in the early 1930s (the pit had been expanding from 1877 onwards; Wymer 1968: 131).

Collector	Key Sites/Localities	Active Period(s)	Reference
Rev. C. Overy	Caversham Heights (e.g. Kidmore Road)	-	Treacher, M.S. <i>et al.</i> (1948: 130)
E.W. Dormer	Kidmore Road Pit	-	Wymer (1968: 148)
W.A. Smallcombe	Denton's Pit	Early 1930s	Wymer (1968: 131)
J. Stevens	Caversham; Grovelands Pit; Maidenhead; Redlands; Shiplake; Taplow	1879–1899	Stevens (1882, 1894); Wymer (1968: 131)
O.A. Shrubsole	Caversham; Charvil Hill; Grovelands Pit; Redlands; Ruscombe; Shiplake; Toot's Farm Pit	1879—at least 1902	Shrubsole (1885, 1890)

Table 1: The role of other collectors in the Middle Thames region

In summary, the majority of major sites in the Middle Thames were targeted by multiple collectors, a consequence of the sites' reputations as rich artefact sources, the length of their 'working lives', and the large population of the Thames Valley. Unsurprisingly it was often the smaller, short-lived, sites which were the preserves of individuals. However the role of specific local collectors in developing understanding of particular contexts within the wider Palaeolithic landscape, for example individual terraces, is still apparent in the Middle Thames: Mabel Treacher *et al.* (1948) highlight Llewellyn's 'constant' observation of, and collection of artefacts from, the Caversham Ancient Channel, and his early observations regarding the significance of the deposits. While in their early years both Smith and Llewellyn

Treacher were working alongside other active collectors (e.g. Stevens and Shrubsole), their ongoing work during the first four decades of the twentieth century was a key factor in the continued compilation of large artefact collections from the gravels of the Middle Thames. The legacy of such work is not only in the richness of the artefact collections, but also in the evidence of unsuccessful periods of artefact searches. The Treachers and G.W. Smith were by no means the only such figures in the region, but they were key players nonetheless.

CONCLUSION

The importance of C.E. Bean, G.W. Smith and Mabel and Llewellyn Treacher does not

lie in their discovery of exceptional sites (*cf.* Roe, this volume) or in a legacy of groundbreaking publications and frameworks (*cf.* Davies; Pettitt, this volume). In their activities they represent the many, many other local collectors, both in Britain and elsewhere, whose researches have helped to provide the fundamental building blocks of the Palaeolithic record. It is true that in their absence other collectors would most likely have stepped into their shoes, and that the publication of their work was highly variable. And yet their contributions as individuals are also worthy of highlighting. Bean's detailed archiving has facilitated the ongoing analyses of a dominant regional assemblage, while the sustained activities of the Treachers and Smith reveal changing patterns in deposit richness over time. Their researches were also frequently characterised, if not always documented, by sound fieldwork skills and an appreciation of archaeological issues.

While their idiosyncrasies in publication, selectivity, and trading are frequently a source of frustration to new researchers, much more information would undoubtedly have been lost in their absence. The ongoing challenge is to draw sense and meaning from their collections as they are, not as we would wish them to be. But a last word on the frustrations of the human artefact record is perhaps best left, with thanks, to Mabel:

“The everlasting implements always annoyed me; they would not talk, would not tell. And now when at last made to talk, what scandal! They are messing up the Thames and my husband's work.”

(Mabel Treacher, February 24th 1946; quoted in Cranshaw 1983: 9)

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