

ON SOME DIMINUTIVE TYPES OF TASMANIAN
STONE IMPLEMENTS.

By

R. W. LEGGE, Cullenswood.

Plates V.-IX.

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It is the object of this paper to attempt to give a detailed description of some of the smaller forms of stone implements made by the extinct Tasmanians, which, on account of their comparative scarcity and diminutive size, have hitherto not figured prominently in discussions relative to Tasmanian Stone Culture, of which they constitute a very important feature.

Many of these tiny examples of Aboriginal stone-craft exhibit a high degree of skill in their manufacture, with their delicately chipped edges and cleverly fabricated points, and as an undoubted analogy exists between them and some Mainland forms, they deserve full consideration from students of Ethnology and Archæology, especially in their relation to Tasmania.

For purposes of description here, these miniature implements may be divided into three main types, which will be called, respectively, Planes, Gravers & Borers, and Scrapers, all of which have their distinct prototypes in the ordinary more or less well-defined forms which occur in and around all the chief native camping grounds on the East Coast and Midlands.

Whatever may have been the uses of these tiny implements, if they had any real usage at all, it is hard to understand, and unsafe to dogmatise upon, for knowing what we do of the Tasmanian weapons, the spear and waddy, and of the native handicrafts, such as basket and necklace making, there does not seem to be any useful purpose to which they can have been put.

One may perhaps hazard the conjecture that these pygmy tools were but models of their larger prototypes, made whilst working up the latter, from suitable flakes, and given to the children to serve as playthings, and possibly to keep them from pilfering the larger ones lying about the camp. No

one who has ever watched a little party of Australian Aboriginal children sitting on the sand at play, laughing and chattering, is likely to doubt the likelihood of our vanished native children having disported themselves at play, also, especially in such sheltered surroundings as those which obtained for them at Long Point on the East Coast, for instance. I mention this locality because it has proved by far the most prolific in yielding the material which forms the subject of this paper, especially in respect to Type B. Gravers & Borers, some remarkably fine specimens of which have been selected to illustrate this paper.

TYPE A. SCRAPERS.

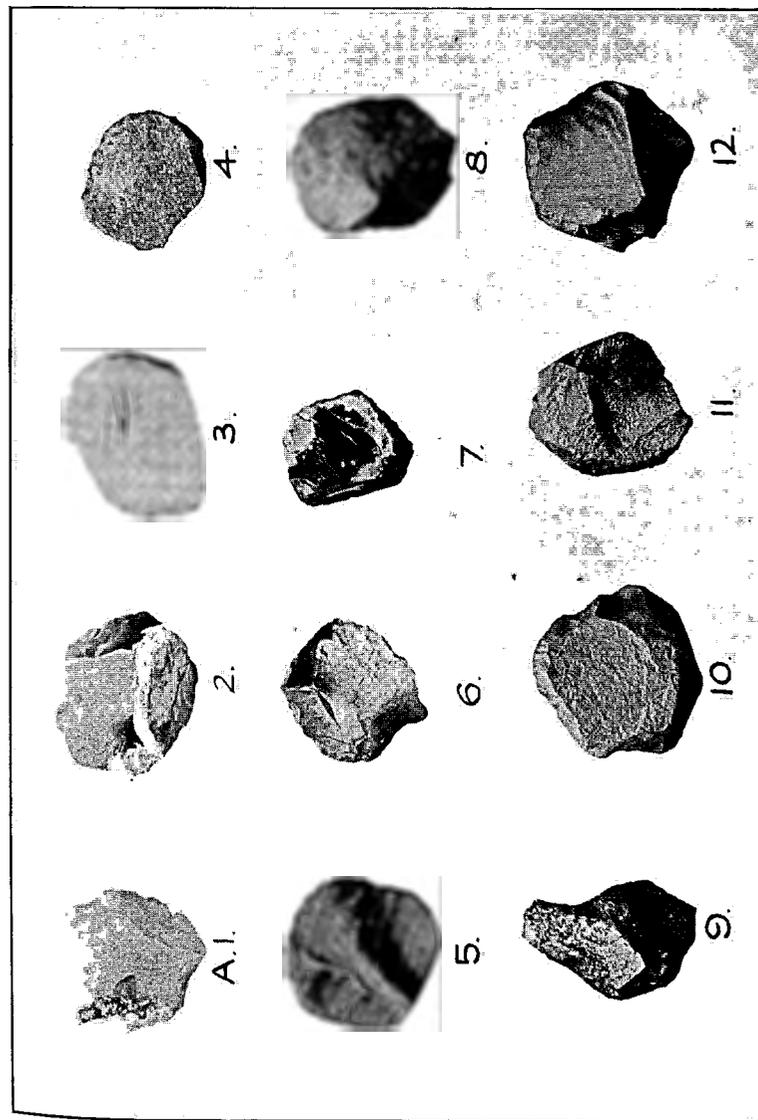
Taking Type A. *Scrapers* first, a series of 12 examples is shown on Plate V., with a list giving the measurements, nature of stone from which they are made, and the locality whence obtained.

This series may be taken as a very fair representation of the type under review. Four of the specimens, Nos. 1, 2, 6, and 7, are of rather attractive appearance. The stone, Chalcydone, from which they are made, seems to have been a favourite material with the native stone-knappers, especially in the large camps in the vicinity of Tunbridge, where they were particularly partial to it, judging from the quantity of flakes to be found on and around the chipping mounds. One such mound which has come under the writer's notice is made up entirely of flakes and fragments of orange-tinted and pearly Chalcydone. A careful investigation of this mound and of the sand upon which it stands, yielded a number of small flakes which bear distinct traces of secondary treatment to their edges. Whether it was the ornamental nature of this stone which appealed to the natives, or its particular suitability for flaking, the writer does not propose to say, but the fact remains that any flake showing the least trace of symmetry, no matter how small, was generally picked out for secondary treatment, and doubtless the numbers of untreated sharp flakes were much in demand for use as lancets for making the cicatrices on arm and chest, so much affected by the natives, and possibly for blood-letting, which practice was, we understand, much resorted to for the relief of pain.

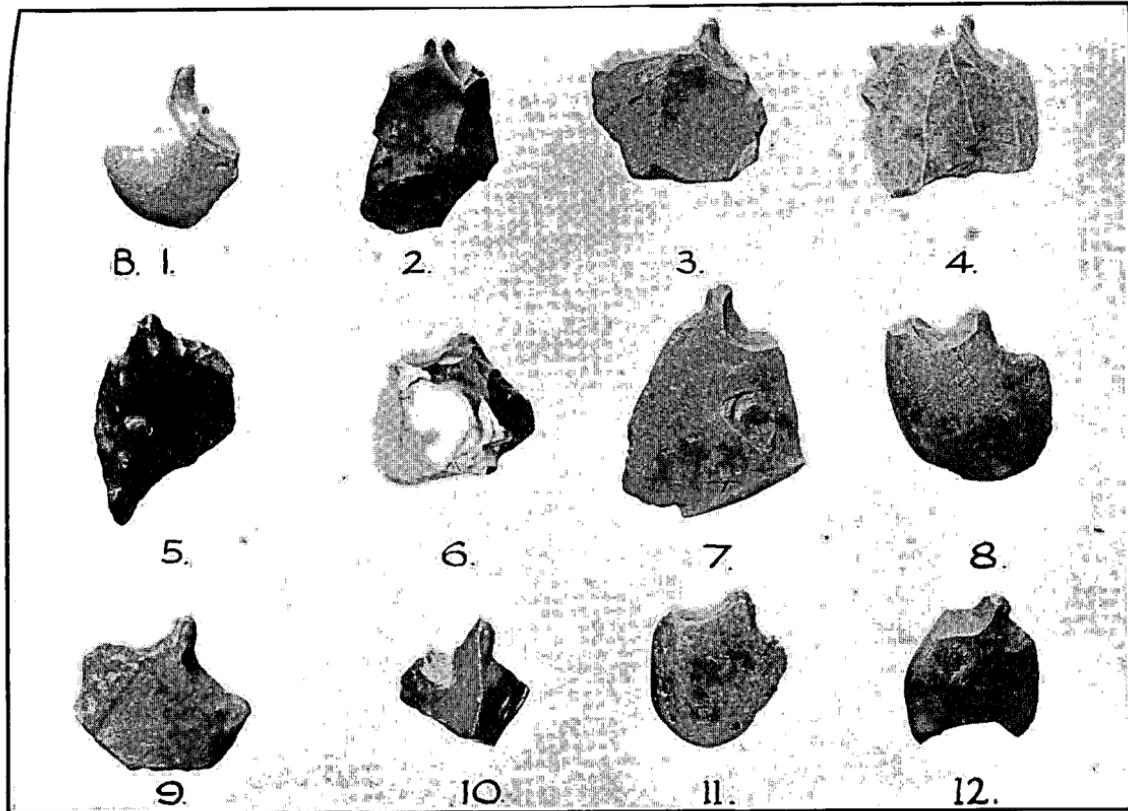
TYPE B. GRAVERS OR BORERS.

This type, which is illustrated on Plate VI., by 12 examples, is of absorbing interest. It has its exact prototype in

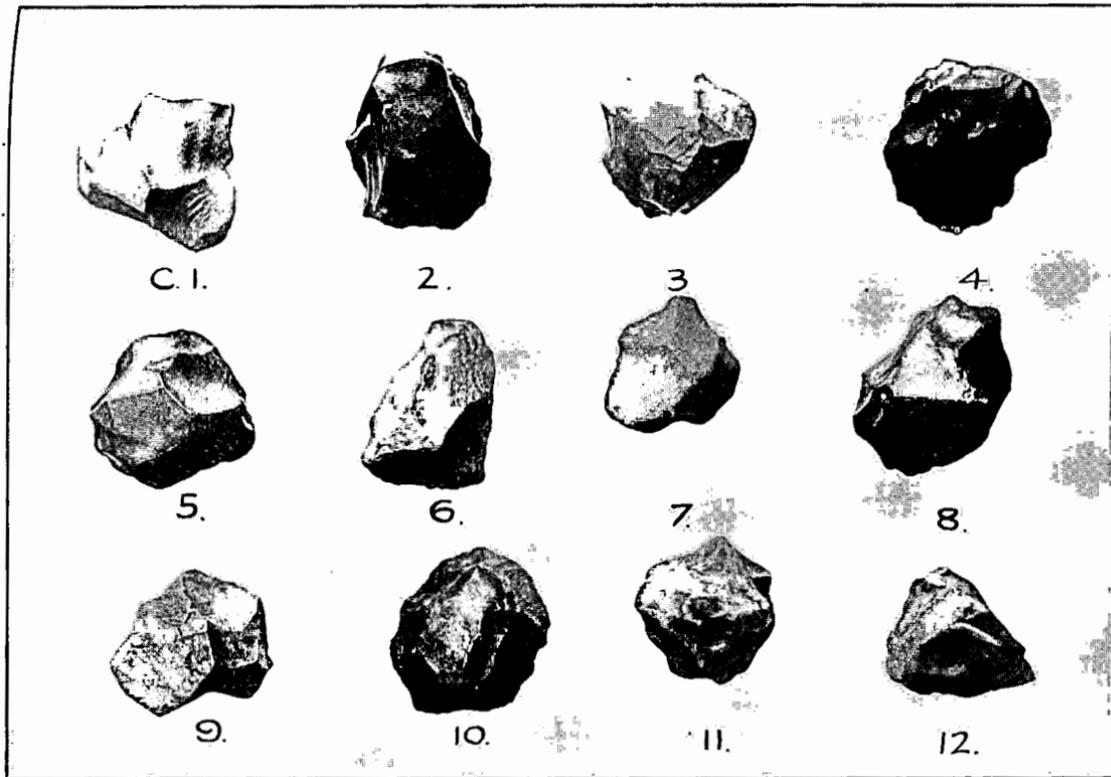
Plate V.



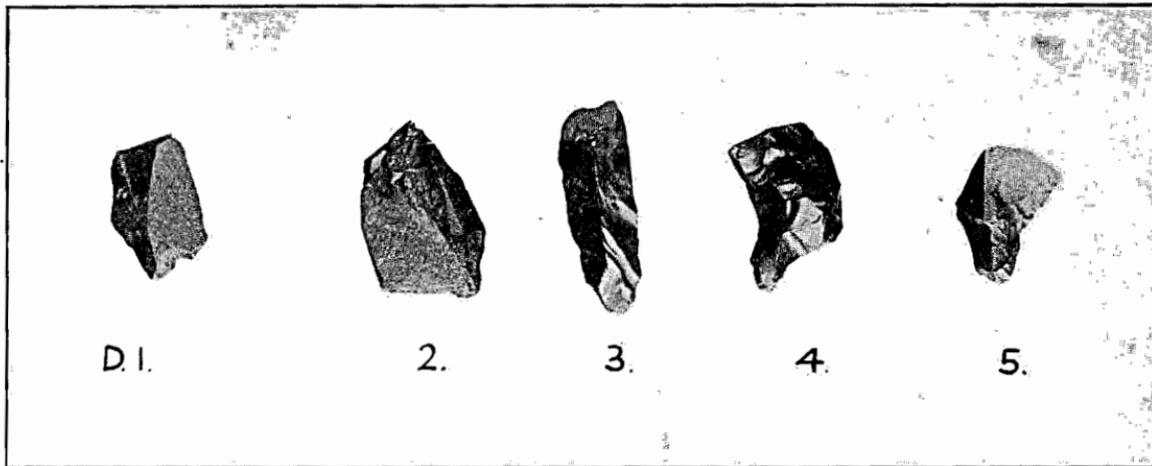
P. & P. Rev. Soc. Tas., 1928.



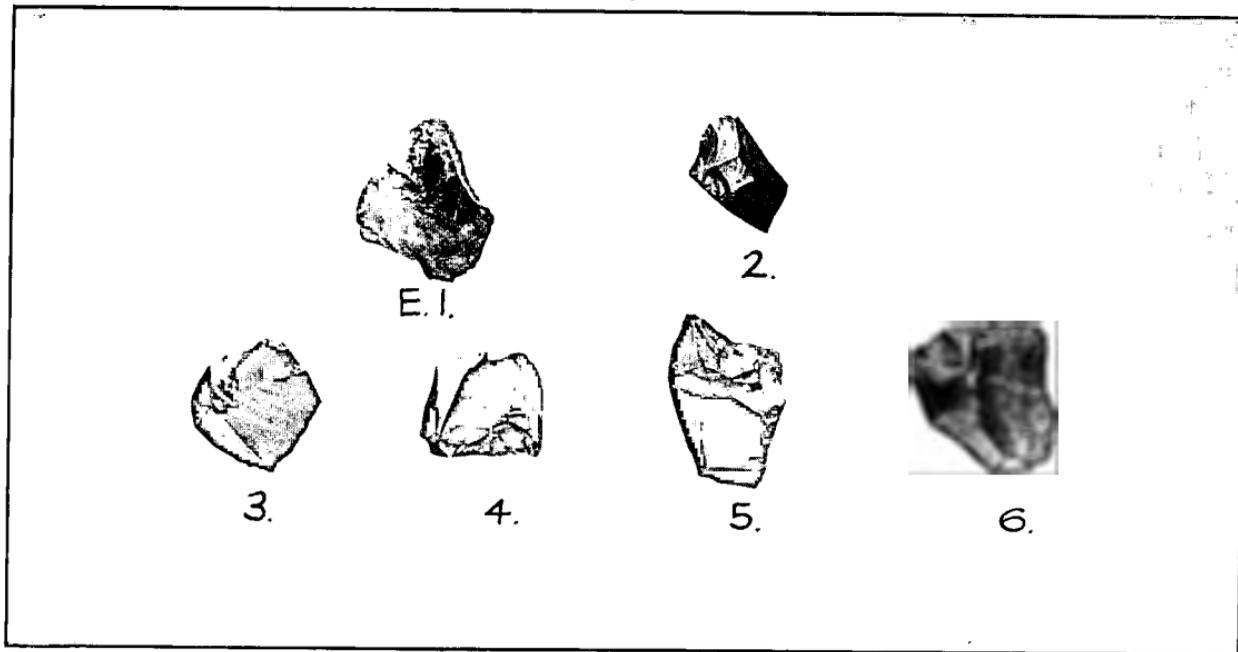
Tasmanian Stone Implements.



Tasmanian Stone Implements.



Tasmanian Stone Implements.



Tasmanian Stone Implements.

the larger forms, which are not uncommon and which deserve special mention and description themselves. The student cannot examine these delicately fabricated and diminutive implements without being greatly impressed by the high degree of skill and care which their manufacture exhibits, as also by their uniformity to type.

In the specimens shown, there is but one point in evidence, although in a number examined, there are often two, and in some cases even three will be found, giving the piece quite a star-like appearance.

Of the different forms to be described herein, this one, Type B., seems to be the most likely to have been put to some actual use, such evident pains having been taken to fashion their small points, that there surely must have been a definite purpose in view for them. Perhaps it was to make the grooves on the waddy handles in order to give a better grip?

This type is so persistent in certain localities on the East Coast, notably at Long Point, that it appears to have been a favourite with the stone-knappers who worked there, and in the opinion of the writer the delicate chipping necessary to perfect and finish these tiny points, was done with bone tools, and perhaps, like in the case of the Wonkonguru and Dieri of the Lake Eyre Basin, an odd refractory chip was removed by the teeth (Horne and Aiston, *Savage Life in Central Australia*).

In many instances the chipping of the edge is so minute as to necessitate the use of a good magnifying lens to detect it, this pointing to the wonderfully keen eyesight the makers possessed.

TYPE C. PLANES.

Taking Type C. next in order, the so-called Planes, we have the miniature of a very distinctive type, and one which is somewhat of a puzzle in itself.

There are 12 examples also of this type, which are shown on Plate VII., and which reveal remarkable conformity and likeness. It appears as if the intention was to have every fraction of the edge of the base made sharp by chipping.

A study of these 12 specimens gives the impression that the object in view was to obtain an implement that would provide a sharp edge for rubbing or smoothing off a flat surface, something upon which considerable pressure was required.

The writer has found this type exactly on the sites of the ancient camps of the once great Dieri tribe, and two of these will be exhibited to show the remarkable analogy existing between them and the Tasmanians. Consultation with Mr. Aiston on the subject of these "Grattoirs Tarté" did not have a very convincing effect upon the writer, for Mr. Aiston declares most emphatically that, both large and small, these are nothing but cast-away cores from which flakes have been struck for knives, and that they are not implements or tools in any way.

In these Tasmanian examples, however, it is hard to understand or credit that if they are but cores, why have they the carefully chipped edges to their bases, and why do they conform so regularly to type? The photographs do not give the best impression of the conical form of most of the units comprising the type, for the bases are in nearly every case almost flat.

TYPE D. SUB-TYPE OF TYPE B.

Having dealt with the three main types, Scrapers, Gravers, and Planes, let us now examine the five small flakes, illustrated on Plate VIII., which come under the heading of Type D., but which are more a sub-type of Type B.

These five pieces which were all found within an area of two to three square yards, in the sand between two small hillocks at Long Point, all show distinct traces of pressure flaking at the points, which is clearly seen from the photographs on Plate VIII., which serves to illustrate them.

Again the question arises, what was the object in touching up these diminutive flakes in this way? What uses, if any, were they put to?

These are the only pygmy implements of this kind that the writer has come across. Their diminutive size rather precludes the likelihood of many of them being found, although the writer has seen numbers of beautifully made specimens no larger, from the Woolbrook camps on the S. coast of Victoria, though these conform more to a definite type, sometimes known as "thumb-nail" scrapers, which are not uncommon in different parts of the mainland.

TYPE E.

Since the photographs on Plate IX. were taken earlier in the present year, some 15 more of this type have been col-

lected. The type is remarkable in that the secondary treatment is found on the outer edge of the plane of percussion, giving the flakes a somewhat gouge-like appearance. The chipped edge is in most cases found to be convex, whilst in others, as in fig. 4, Plate IX., it is decidedly concave.

The type is comparatively rare, but is of peculiar interest on account of the probable usages for it even being hard to guess at. It would almost seem as if the native stone-knappers just had to make an attempt to chip up any flake, no matter how small, if it would lend itself in the least degree to the process.

There is certainly a prototype in the larger implements, though this also is of rare occurrence.

Is it possible that the chipping to the edges was done *before* the flake was struck off the matrix? This hypothesis does not appear to be a sound one to the writer.

In conclusion it may be said that there is still a wide field for the investigation of these miniature implements, and it is to be hoped that this paper may help to pave the way for further research. If it does, then it will not have been written in vain.

DESCRIPTIVE LIST.

TYPE A. PLATE V.

Measurements in millimetres.

- A 1. Chalcydone. Tunbridge. 24 x 20 x 10.
- A 2. Chalcydone. Tunbridge. 25 x 20 x 7.
- A 3. Porcelainite. Tunbridge. 24 x 19 x 4.
- A 4. Quartzite. Tunbridge. 20 x 18 x 4.
- A 5. Chert. 4 Mile Creek, E. Coast. 22 x 21 x 4.
- A 6. Chalcydone. Tunbridge. 22 x 20 x 9.
- A 7. Chalcydone. Tunbridge. 18 x 15 x 6.
- A 8. Quartzite. Tunbridge. 25 x 19 x 7.
- A 9. Quartzite. Tunbridge. 26 x 17 x 12.
- A 10. Chert. Seymour. 25 x 25 x 6.
- A 11. Quartzite. Tunbridge. 21 x 20 x 6.
- A 12. Chert. Seymour. 26 x 23 x 5.

TYPE B. PLATE VI.

- B 1. Chert. Long Point, E. Coast. 30 x 24 x 7.
- B 2. Chert. Courland, E. Coast. 34 x 21 x 8.
- B 3. Chert. Courland, E. Coast. 32 x 30 x 9.

- B 4. Chert. Ironhouse Pt., E. Coast. 35 x 31 x 7.5.
 B 5. Quartzite. Long Point, E. Coast. 36 x 24 x 7.
 B 6. Chalcydone. Tunbridge. 27 x 27 x 11.
 B 7. Chert. Long Point, E. Coast. 39 x 30 x 8.
 B 8. Chert. Long Point, E. Coast. 28 x 30 x 8.
 B 9. Chert. Long Point, E. Coast. 28 x 30 x 6.
 B 10. Petrified Wood. Unknown. 20 x 21 x 8.
 B 11. Quartzite. Long Point, E. Coast. 27 x 23 x 5.
 B 12. Chert. Long Point, E. Coast. 28 x 23 x 6.*

TYPE C. PLATE VII.

- C 1. Chert. Long Point, E. Coast. 35 x 26 x 27 high.
 C 2. Chert. 4 Mile Creek, E. Coast. 35 x 26 x 27 high.
 C 3. Shale. Ironhouse Pt., E. Coast. 29 x 30 x 23 high.
 C 4. Shale. Bicheno, E. Coast. 32 x 26 x 18 high.
 C 5. Chert. Long Point, E. Coast. 31 x 30 x 16 high.
 C 6. Chert. Long Point, E. Coast. 33 x 22 x 23 high.
 C 7. Chert. Long Point, E. Coast. 22 x 23 x 19 high.
 C 8. Chert. Long Point, E. Coast. 35 x 26 x 17 high.
 C 9. Shale. Ironhouse Pt., E. Coast. 29 x 22 x 24 high.
 C 10. Shale. Long Point, E. Coast. 33 x 28 x 17 high.
 C 11. Chert. Ironhouse Pt., E. Coast. 26 x 27 x 20 high.
 C 12. Silicate. St. Helens Pt., E. Coast. 24 x 21 x 29 high.

Measurements in this type given for the two greatest diameters across base, and height.

TYPE D. PLATE VIII.

- D 1. Shale. Long Point, E. Coast. 20 x 14 x 4.
 D 2. Shale. Long Point, E. Coast. 25 x 16 x 4.
 D 3. Shale. Long Point, E. Coast. 28 x 9 x 5.
 D 4. Shale. Long Point, E. Coast. 23 x 12 x 5.
 D 5. Shale. Long Point, E. Coast. 19 x 11 x 3.5.

Photos in this plate slightly reduced size.

TYPE E. PLATE IX.

- E 1. Chalcydone. Tunbridge. 23 x 22 x 10.
 E 2. Chert. Long Point, E. Coast. 13 x 15 x 8.
 E 3. Chert. Long Point, E. Coast. 20 x 19 x 6.
 E 4. Chert. Long Point, E. Coast. 20 x 16 x 2.
 E 5. Chert. Long Point, E. Coast. 27 x 20 x 9.
 E 6. Chert. Long Point, E. Coast. 25 x 20 x 8.

Photos by Beattie, Hobart.