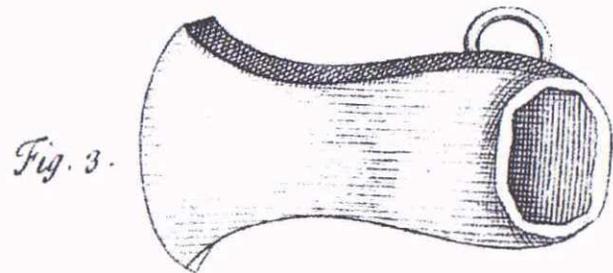
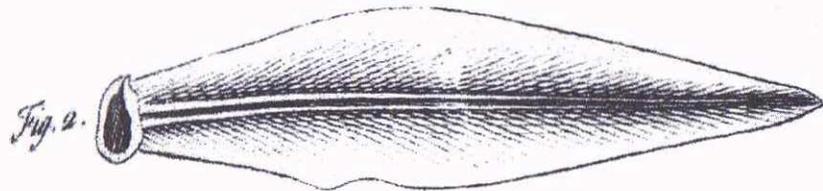
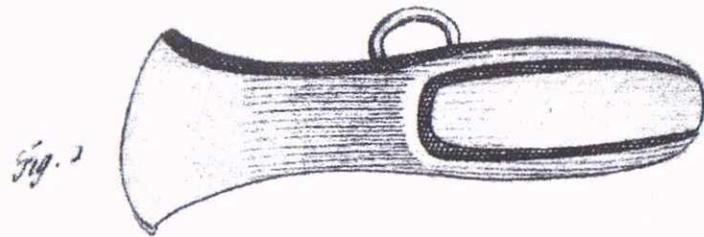


Archaeological Discoveries at St Leonard's Hill, Windsor in 1705-1720

An exciting discovery was made at the top of St Leonard's Hill as early as 1705, one of the earliest known antiquarian finds to be made in Berkshire. It is described in detail in Elias Ashmole's *Antiquities of Berkshire* which was printed in 1719.¹

Ashmole's narrative says that the finds were made by a Mr Robert Butler who was a gardener who lived at the nearby Hermitage (now St Leonards and Legoland). There is a possibility that at that time the Hermitage may have owned the land which now forms part of the former St Leonard's Hill Estate. John Norden's much earlier *Survey of the Forest of Windsor* of 1607² certainly shows a single substantial building on St Leonard's Hill. By 1737 the Hermitage was in a poor state of repair and was totally rebuilt by Mr Lilley Ainscombe in



1750.³ It did not acquire its familiar name of St Leonards until 1854.

In Ashmole's book Robert Butler is reported to have found some interesting objects underneath a large stone on the 'brow' or top of St Leonard's Hill. The removal of the stone produced a layer of burnt material and beneath this were several complete pots and a number of broken ones of varying shapes and sizes. The gardener thought that these could be moulds, perhaps suggesting some sort of pottery manufacturing on the site. It would appear from the drawing which accompanied Ashmole's report that a couple of Bronze Age socketed axes and a spearhead were also found. In the vicinity a number of coins were discovered mostly of silver or copper which were dated to the Roman period. Also included in this collection was an unusual long-stemmed flute-like musical instrument.

In 1717 Robert Butler unearthed a brass lamp which was later acquired by William Stukeley (who had become a fellow of the Society of Antiquaries in that year). It was presented by Stukeley while he was Secretary of the Society of Antiquaries in 1720. The lamp was proclaimed by Stukeley to be Roman but as later research by Professor Ian Richmond⁴ showed, all such finds were thought to be Roman due to the new renaissance of classical idealism when antiquarians such as Stukeley 'regarded Roman civilization as the zenith of achievement in the sphere of ancient activity.' The lamp was found to date from the

