

HENRY STOPES (1852-1902): ENGINEER, BREWER AND ANTHROPOLOGIST

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Introduction

Henry Stopes is a minor, and to most, unknown figure in the canon of 19th century antiquarians whose activities provided the foundations of today's Palaeolithic archaeology. He made no seminal discoveries, or at least none published sufficiently for posterity to recognize, although he was one of the first to collect at Barnfield Pit, Swanscombe. He carried out no groundbreaking methodological work acclaimed in the present day. And, worst of all, he backed the wrong horse in devoting the majority of his anthropological energies to passionate pursuit and promotion of Tertiary Man and the "Eolithic" cause. And yet, there is much to be gained from revisiting Stopes' anthropological contribution, inevitably diminished by his early death, which, as revealed below, occurred on the threshold of what might have been his flagship legacy. This brief paper attempts to present a more rounded picture of Stopes the man, to review his Eolithic advocacy within the wider context of his other anthropological endeavours, and to consider his work not just as of historical interest, but for its enduring legacy.

Family background and professional life

Henry Stopes was born in Colchester, 17th February 1852, youngest child of Christopher and Maria Stopes, into an affluent, professional background. Christopher Stopes (a Quaker elder, born in Britwell, south Oxfordshire, and from a long line of predominantly clergy stretching back to Bishop Aylmer of Tudor times) had spent time in America, but returned to Colchester and prospered there, having established a brewery in 1828. His first wife Ann gave birth to Henry's eldest

brother Alfred in 1834, but then died in May 1835. However, Christopher Stopes rapidly remarried to Maria Nice (born in Layer Marney, not far from Colchester) who gave birth to a succession of six children from 1837, concluding in the birth of Henry in 1852. Henry was privately educated at two Colchester schools, firstly Stockwell House until the age of 12-13, and subsequently Linton House Academy, where he was a very capable all-round pupil, excelling particularly in mathematics, and developing an interest in fossils and archaeological remains that would continue throughout his life.

As recounted in the *British Journal of Commerce* (9th July, 1887) in the article accompanying his pin-up portrait, issued as a loose enclosure with that edition of the journal (Fig. 1), his eldest full brother Aylmer died after a hunting accident in September 1871, and Henry was summoned from a city apprenticeship at the age of 19 to replace Aylmer as his father's junior partner in a rapidly expanding business. Henry was evidently highly successful in this partnership, and furthermore developed a complete understanding of every aspect of the brewery process, and of the engineering and structural technicalities underpinning the equipment used and the brewery premises themselves. He was made a full partner in the family business at the age of 21 in 1873, alongside his slightly older brother Arthur; their father retired shortly after, making over the whole business to his sons. At the same time, Stopes became friendly with W.H. Dalton of the Geological Survey, who was mapping in Essex between 1873 and 1876. With Dalton's support, Stopes, who had distinguished himself in helping map the Essex Red Crag, from which he was a keen fossil collector, was elected one of the youngest ever Fellows of the Geological Society in

1874 at the age of 22. In 1876 he was also elected to the Royal Historical Society, and thereafter he continued to accumulate an astonishing array of Fellowships and Memberships in both the commercial and academic worlds, later being made a Freeman of the City of London. At this point Stopes, although only in his mid-twenties, was now the complete package of brewer, engineer and architect, not to mention geologist and antiquarian.

Stopes was a regular attendee of the annual late summer meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science (henceforth, the British Association). He met his wife Charlotte (née Carmichael, daughter of a well-known Edinburgh painter) at the Plymouth meeting of 1877, and they were married in her home town of Edinburgh in June 1879. They set up home in Upper Norwood, south London in summer 1880 on return from their honeymoon tour of Europe, the Middle East and Egypt. Their eldest daughter Marie was born shortly after, in October 1880, and they later had a second daughter Winifred (usually called Winnie) early in summer 1884.

Stopes doted on his daughters, and on the family dog Daisy, but does not seem, despite the fact of his daughters' birth, to have had an especially warm relationship with his wife. This has been extensively dissected by others, particularly Hall,¹ since this relationship was instrumental in the psychological and emotional development of their eldest daughter Marie, subsequently and consequently to become such a key figure in the related fields of birth control and satisfactory marital relations that she was voted 'Woman of the Millennium' by *Guardian* readers in 1999. There must have been an unbridgeable chasm between Henry's unbridled and passionate enactment of his Victorian male role and his wife Charlotte's independent intellect - she was a prominent Shakespearean scholar and proponent of female suffrage - allied to her own restrictively puritanical instincts, as she was to later write to him on his deathbed: "The sensual look has passed away from your face that so pained me, & you seem to have regained the chastened expression of your youth which made me trust you".² Nonetheless, there was no question of infidelity or divorce; rather they seem to have remained on friendly and mutually supportive terms but evolved increasingly separate lives, spending increasing time apart and pursuing their own academic and intellectual



Figure 1. Henry Stopes, pin-up of the Victorian commercial world from *British Journal of Commerce*, 9 July, 1887.

interests, not to mention business interests in Henry Stopes' case, which included frequent travel across Britain and Europe, as well as to Canada and the US.

Coinciding with the start of his married life in London, Stopes established his own independent firm of H. Stopes & Co, with premises in Southwark. One of his early projects was the rebuilding of his own family's brewery in East Hill, Colchester, conducted in two phases between 1880 and 1888, the frontage of which still survives in the present day.³ H. Stopes & Co flourished through the 1880s, carrying out a range of jobs across the UK from minor installations of technical equipment to complete brewery rebuilds. According to Lynn Pearson his architectural style was severely functional with zero decoration, with the dramatic exception of his brewhouse tower column for Barrett's Brewery in Vauxhall, south London, known locally as Barrett's Column, which was topped by an illuminated bottle, on its side, weighing 3½ tons and 20ft long, free- rotating

to act as both dominating advertisement and weather vane. His main contribution to the Victorian brewing profession, however, was in his understanding of the technicalities of the malting stage of the fermentation process, whereby barley was part-germinated prior to steeping. Wanting to support British farmers, but feeling that British barley was of insufficient quality for this process, he instigated an annual exhibition and competition for British barley producers in an attempt to raise standards, remaining Chair of the judging committee until the end of his life. And he published what, for many decades, was regarded as the standard text book on the subject: *Malt and Malting*.⁴

It was, as the brewing fraternity saw it, his betrayal of brewers in support of farmers that lay at the root of his professional downfall. As an undesired result (from the perspective of British farmers) of the repeal of the malt tax in 1880, brewers were focusing on use of the cheapest imported grain enhanced by additives such as gelatinised rice. These factors led British barley producers to agitate for a Pure Beer Bill restricting ingredients of beer to barley, hops, water and yeast. Henry Stopes initially took the lead in resisting this move on behalf of the brewing community, becoming founding president in June 1886 of the Free Mash-Tun and Pure Beer Association - formed to lead opposition to the Pure Beer Bill, the effect of which would be, the brewing lobby anticipated, to greatly increase brewing costs and restrict use of a number of convenient additives. However, Stopes rapidly became converted to the Pure Beer cause, into which he then threw himself “heart and soul” and “greatly distinguished himself”,⁵ having become shocked and astonished by evidence of the range of often poisonous additives used by less scrupulous brewers. His brewing client base then conspired to boycott his business if he persisted in figure-heading support for the Bill, which he did, and then so did they.

Although his business did not formally fold, it underwent a substantial upheaval in the early 1890s. Following a nervous breakdown on a trip to Toronto in July 1891,⁶ he was advised to rest more and get more fresh air, so, although retaining much reduced business premises in London, he moved to Swanscombe, renting Mansion House, the largest property in the village - deliberately chosen as an advantageous centre for flint-collecting activity. He was forced to give up Mansion House in June 1898 for financial reasons and the desire

to have his daughters educated in London, where he set up a house with his wife in Denning Road, Hampstead. He still regularly returned to Swanscombe, however, presumably renting overnight accommodation when needed. From his Swanscombe base, despite increasing bouts of illness culminating in a last 6 months of severe suffering, he devoted the last ten years of his life to accumulation of what may be the most substantial private collection of lithic artefacts ever assembled. He died on December 5th 1902 at the age of only 50, leaving his wife Charlotte struggling financially and frantically hawking his flint collection around prospective purchasers, although remaining sufficiently principled to his memory to keep the collection together rather than cash in on selling off its best specimens separately.⁷

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