



#### RIVALS FOR AGE DISTINCTION

The skull at the left, recently excavated, may prove to be the remains of the most ancient man in England, removing that distinction from Piltdown Man. A restoration of Piltdown Man, from the National Museum of Washington, is shown at the right.

ANTHROPOLOGY

## Skull Just Found in England May Be of Oldest Englishman

### Discovery in Old Thames Valley of Bones Believed To Be 180,000 Years Old Provides Rival to Dawn Man

**M**ERRIE ENGLAND's oldest inhabitant, 180,000 years old, has been dug out of the ancient Thames Valley, near London. It is a human skull dug from river gravel 24 feet underground, by its discoverer, Dr. Alban T. Marston, London dentist and archaeologist.

High importance is assigned to this forerunner of modern man who is coming to light in a succession of discoveries. The newest find, the left parietal bone of the skull, reveals how the top and sides of the ancient man's head were shaped.

From examination of the skull as it can now be fitted together, Dr. Marston pronounces this individual a creature of the Old Stone Age, definitely earlier and more primitive than England's famous Piltdown Man.

Piltdown Man is thus pushed down into second place among England's oldest inhabitants.

#### When Burial Was Unknown

The Stone Age man now coming to light belonged to a stage of culture so early that man had not yet learned to bury his dead. It is only some fortunate chance that enables searchers to find part of one of these rare skeletons, and perhaps, if very fortunate, to extract

from the earth nearby some of the stone weapons that the primitive fellow and his associates had used in hunting. Such weapons, and bones of animals of the time, are highly valuable clues to the era when the individual was alive.

The discoveries by Dr. Marston have been made in gravels of a 100-foot Thames terrace at Swanscombe, in Kent. The bones are fossilized, and are described as in a remarkable state of preservation. Enough of the skull is now available, Dr. Marston has reported, to permit of precise measurements of many features of the ancient man's skull and brain.

#### Scientists Argue Over Skull

Dr. Marston's discoveries, now being reported to scientific journals, add new fuel to the long, hot controversy over the age and character of England's oldest specimen of man.

Fragments of the curious skull found at Piltdown in 1912 have heretofore been accepted as "England's oldest," but the skull has been a bone of scientific contention ever since it came into the limelight.

So ape-like was the jaw of the Piltdown Man that scientists dubbed him Eoanthropus, meaning the Dawn Man.

Some anthropologists have considered that this Dawn Man must have been almost as old as that grandfather of all ancient men, Pithecanthropus, the Ape-Man of Java. And some who examined the Dawn Man's fragmentary remains said he might be an earlier type of creature than even Pithecanthropus himself.

#### Date Shifted

Other scientists argued from other clues, and pointed out that the Dawn Man had a good forehead and that they refused to believe he ever made the crude stone implements found near him and thought to be fitting tools of a Dawn Man's clumsy fingers. England's Dawn Man, these scientists said, was old, indeed, but more of a man and perhaps 100,000 years or so younger than the most radical theorists believed.

The age when the Dawn Man of Piltdown lived has thus shifted back and forth, with the tide of theories, between 100,000 and 300,000 years ago.

Now, Dr. Marston enters this controversy with the declaration that his Stone Age discovery was a man of the same general type as the Piltdown specimen, but earlier and more primitive. And the age of the new contender for first inhabitant of England is judged to be no earlier than 180,000 years ago. This is based on the tools found near the bones.

#### Remarkable Patterns

These tools have been referred for examination to the noted French archaeologist, Abbé Henri Breuil. He classes them as the kind of stone craft achieved by men in the Acheulean period of the Old Stone Age. When Europeans made the Acheulean type of tool—named after the place in France where these tools were first found—the Stone Age was still extremely primitive and savage, but men had learned to use their hands to make good stone tools and weapons.

The verdict that the new Dawn Man lived no earlier than about 180,000 years ago would lend support to the faction of scientists who have considered Piltdown Man not extremely ancient and ape-like. However, even robbing the British Dawn Men of evolutionary crudeness still leaves them distinction. They are being revealed as very early and remarkable patterns of humanity, patterns which appear to have been discarded before Homo sapiens, the modern type of man, began his spectacular rise toward civilization.

*Science News Letter, September 26, 1936*