present in south-east Europe after its earliest occurrence in Asia Minor, but some thousand years before its previously first-documented appearance in Europe. This discovery would appear to confirm Helbaek's hypothesis (1960) that 'flax reached central and western Europe from the Near East via the Balkans and the Danube'. Until the plant husbandry of Mesolithic settlements in Europe is investigated more fully, however, we cannot be certain that flax was not developed as an indigenous rather than an introduced cultivar.

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The Cretan 'hornet' pendant

PLATE XXVI*b*

Professor O. W. Richards, FRS, Emeritus Professor of Zoology and Applied Entomology, Imperial College, London, sends us this interesting note on the Cretan golden pendant commonly described as representing two hornets. This beautiful golden pendant preserved in the museum at Heraklion came from the cemetery of Mallia (17th century BC) (PL. XXVI*b*, left). The postcard commonly obtained in Crete describes the insects as bees which is certainly incorrect. Reynold Higgins, in *Minoan and Mycenean art* (London, 1967) illustrates the pendant in colour, calls the insects hornets (as do other authors) and dates it from 1700–1550 BC.

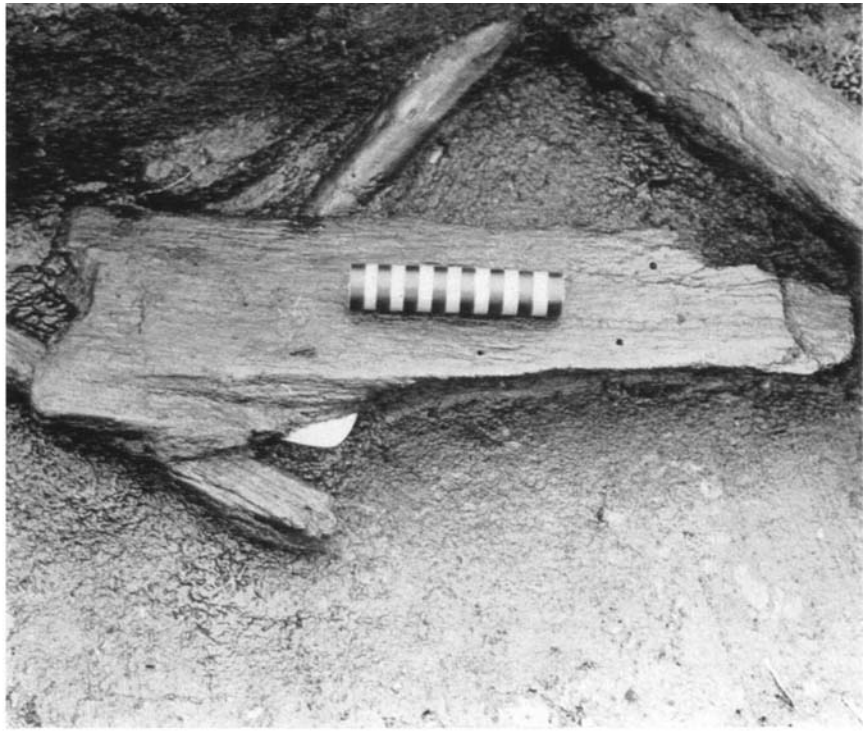
To an entomologist, it is clear that the insects represented are not bees and almost certainly not hornets, but very likely a social wasp of the genus *Polistes*. These wasps have no English name as they do not occur in England though the Germans call them 'Feldwespen'. There are several common species in the Mediterranean which would be indistinguishable to the layman. They can be quite common in gardens and sometimes build their small combs under the eaves of sheds or houses.

There is a species of hornet in Crete (*Vespa orientalis*) but the base of the abdomen of the hornet is much more truncate, falling perpendicularly to the point where it is attached to the thorax. The abdomen of *Polistes* tapers quite gradually to its point of attachment and the pendant gives a very reasonable though somewhat schematized representation of the insect. It is possible that some details of other insects have been incorporated and certain features (e.g. the crenellate wing-margin) have been added purely for decorative effect. The nest of *Polistes humilis*, an Australian species, illustrated here, gives a somewhat inadequate idea of what I am talking about, but there is one wasp in profile at the back (marked with a white arrow) that gives some idea of its shape (PL. XXVI*b*, right).*

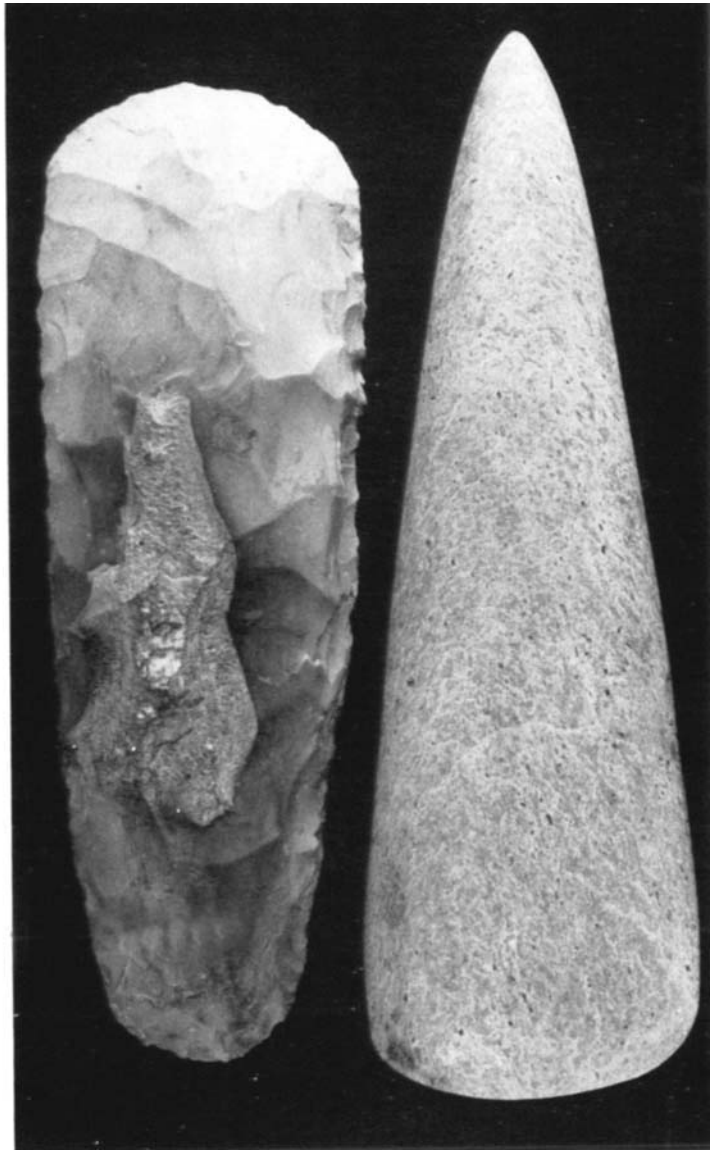
* We apologize to Professor Richards for adding to his difficulty in obtaining a good photograph by not being able to print it in colour. (*Ed.*).

Archaeology at Lancaster University

The purpose of this note is to report briefly on the development of archaeological studies at Lancaster University. The University has for some time been keen to establish archaeology as a degree subject and, with recent appointments, degree courses are now planned to begin in 1974–5. The development is taking place in the Department of Classics—now renamed the Department of Classics and Archaeology—under Professor M. M. Willcock. There are



a



b

PLATE XXIV: A JADE AXE FROM THE SOMERSET LEVELS

(a) Discovery of the jadeite axe during excavations on the Sweet track, Somerset.
(b) Stone axes from the Sweet track. Left, flint axe; right, jadeite axe. The length of the jadeite axe is 203 mm.

See pp. 216–20

Photos: John Coles