

# Palaeoliths from the North Downs at Lower Kingswood: some new finds

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Since the publication, in the pages of these Collections, of a group of Lower Palaeolithic flint artefacts from the Clay-with-Flints deposit on the summit of the North Downs at Lower Kingswood (Walls & Cotton 1980), five additional pieces have been recovered by Mr Tom Walls during subsequent fieldwalking in the same area. Four of the five artefacts, comprising one small handaxe (fig 1:1), part of a second, larger example (fig 1:2) and two small flakes, were recovered from ploughland overlooking the western slope of a formerly dry chalk valley now in-filled with refuse (previously referred to as 'Site A' and centred TQ 243 542) (*ibid*, 19), while the fifth, the butt of a third handaxe (fig 1:3) was found further south near a small pond on the north side of Mogador road (previously referred to as 'Site C', approximately TQ 242 532) (*ibid*, 19). In addition, inspection of the line taken by the M25 motorway, which runs just to the south and west of these sites – and whose construction might therefore have been expected to yield further finds of Lower Palaeolithic date – failed to reveal anything other than a scatter of struck flint of probably post-Glacial age (information from Tom Walls, Steve Nelson and members of the Surrey Lithic Tool Research Group, including David Field and Pat Nicolaysen).

The latest finds generally retain the lustrous creamy-white frost-glazed patina and sharp edges and flake ridges typical of the Palaeolithic artefacts already recorded from the locality (*ibid*, 19; Carpenter 1956, 7–8). They may be described – using Wymer's handaxe classification (Wymer 1968) – as follows:

## Site A (centred TQ 243 542)

- 1 (E a/ii) Small pointed handaxe of creamy-white patina with much cortex surviving about the heavy butt. One face bears some slight traces of iron moulding on the prominent flake ridges. With an overall length of only 59mm it is the smallest true handaxe yet found on the heaths.
- 2 (DF ?/?) Roughly flaked, fragmented handaxe of a light blue-grey patina, which lacks a point and much of its butt. A fossiliferous inclusion on its unillustrated face has allowed frost to penetrate with the result that much of the surface has shattered away 'pot-lid' fashion. The remaining areas of both faces are hair-cracked, and bear traces of iron moulding. Surviving length 104mm.

Discounting flake tools interpreted as handaxes (Walls & Cotton *op cit*, 19), these two new pieces bring the number of true handaxes recorded from Site A to 26, and fragmented examples to 20. The majority of the complete axes are of pointed form, with those like no 1, of Wymer's type E (ie less than 100mm (4in) in length), predominating.

In addition to the two handaxes, two small waste flakes were also recovered from Site A, bringing the total to 29. The first, some 40mm in length, retains much cortex on its ventral face, which also has a recent small pot-lid fracture; the second represents the distal end of a broad flake 48mm in width. Both have slight traces of iron moulding on their higher parts.

## Site C (c TQ 242 532)

- 3 (?DF) The butt of a large, crudely flaked, heavy handaxe with a mottled dark blue-grey/brown patina, much affected by fire which probably resulted in its subsequent fracture. Both faces bear traces of iron moulding together with other more modern marks, perhaps attributable to plough damage. Surviving length 78mm.

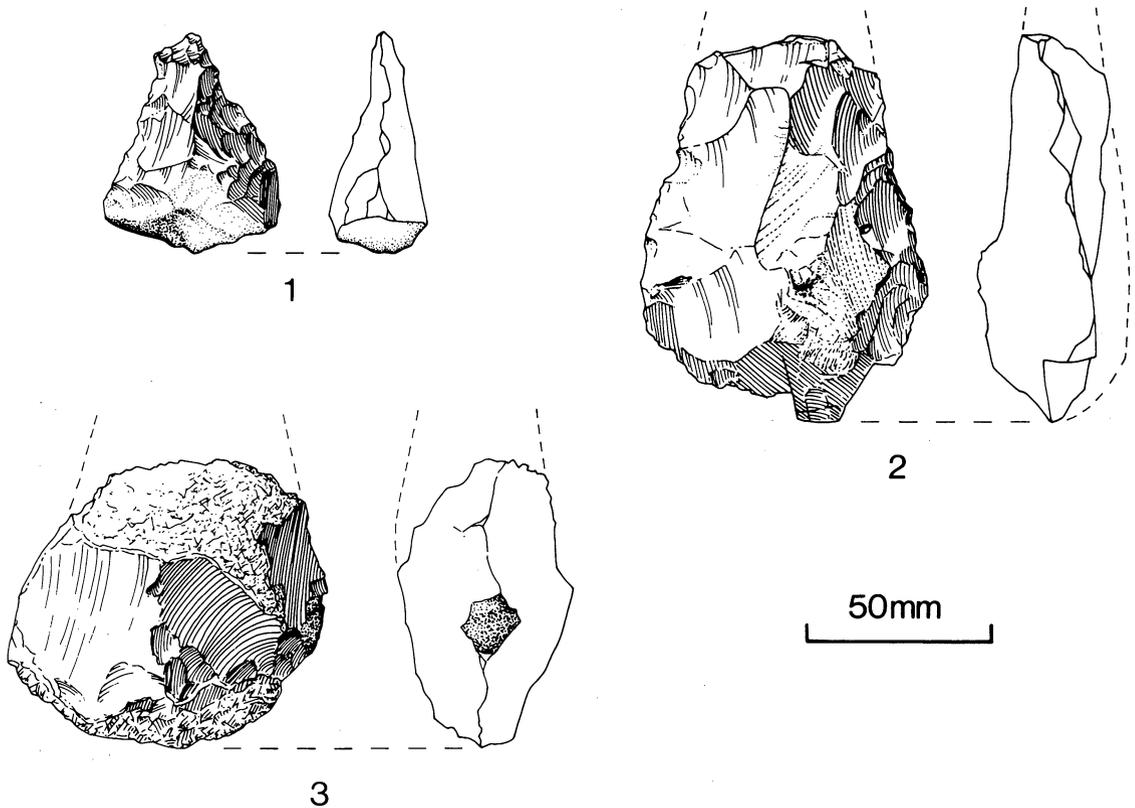


Fig 1. Palaeoliths from Lower Kingswood

### Discussion

The five new pieces noted here bring the total number of Lower Palaeolithic artefacts recorded from Walton and Banstead Heaths to nearly 250. A further handaxe can be added (Dance 1966) to those listed in the paper cited above (Walls & Cotton 1980). Handaxes, not surprisingly, are the dominant tool type with 46 complete and 25 fragmented examples – the majority coming from Site A. The next most common tool type by comparison, the scraper, is represented by only eleven examples, with no obvious concentration on any one site.

Although thus a relatively small sample when compared with, say, the numbers of artefacts recovered from the Farnham gravels (Oakley, Rankine & Lowther 1939; Roe 1968), the importance of the material lies in its remarkable consistency – expressed both in terms of its general condition (sharp and white-patinated) and cultural affinities (Late Middle Acheulian). Equally notable is the dominance of the small pointed handaxe form, mentioned above, which contrasts sharply with the reportedly high proportion of ovates – many of them twisted – and smaller numbers of ‘bout coupé’ axes amongst the material recovered from similar high level locations in the Limpsfield area by A Montgomerie Bell and others (Roe 1981, 266). The presence of such Mousterian elements amongst the material recorded from the heaths has yet to be established, and although detailed comment on this potentially significant disparity is already overdue, it must needs await full publication of the Limpsfield evidence, and of Bell’s collection in particular – surely now a priority for the Surrey Palaeolithic. (For a preliminary assessment see Cotton *et al* 1984)

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