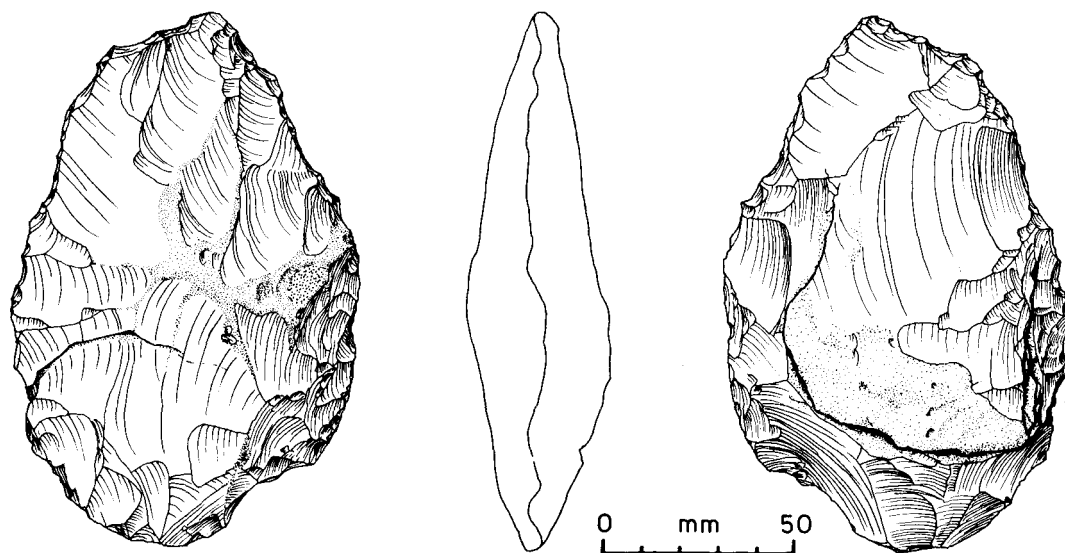


AN ACHEULEAN HANDAXE FROM THE THAMES AT MORTLAKE

GALE CANVIN

A palaeolithic handaxe was found on the Surrey shore of the River Thames at Mortlake in May 1977.¹ The findspot lies on the gravel of the south foreshore at NGR TQ 1997 7659 in the London Borough of Richmond 400 metres north-west of Chiswick Bridge. This part of the river has only produced a few recorded handaxes. Wymer² lists eight from the river in the borough of Richmond, although none are specifically from Mortlake. Roe's gazetteer³ is also unable to attribute positively any handaxes to the Thames along this reach.



The axe is 143mm long, with a maximum width of 93mm and thickness of 38mm. It weighs 431.6 grams. It has been made from mid orange-brown flint, with lighter brown inclusions and is partly stained olive brown, with a small oval patch of cortex remaining on one face. Rolling has smoothed most of the ridges between the flake scars (shown as faint stippling on the drawing). A large frost crack almost bisects the axe, and the extreme tip is missing.

The axe is of cordate form, with a cutting edge all round the tool, and is finished by the fine flaking of bar hammer technique. The cutting edge is straight, without the reversed 'S' twist present on many cordate axes. One cutting edge has been sharpened by tranchet blows.

Wymer's coding for this axe is Je/vi,⁴ and he suggests these are typical products of the latter part of the Middle Acheulean.

The axe is currently retained by the author.

I should like to thank Cathy Dagg for her fine drawing.

NOTES

1. Found by the author during part of a systematic riverside survey of the borough by the Fulham and Hammersmith Historical Society, Archaeological Section. Other finds are currently being prepared for publication.
2. J. Wymer *Lower Palaeolithic Archaeology in Britain* (London 1968) 274.
3. D. Roe "A Gazetteer of British Lower and Middle Palaeolithic Sites" *C.B.A. Research Report 8* (1968) 292.
4. J. Wymer *op. cit.* 56.