To conclude, thanks are owed to Caroline Wickham-Jones and Professor Peter Woodman for organising the workshop. Thanks are also due to the Royal Museum of Scotland for their hospitality in the facilities of the Artifact Research Unit.

Contributors to the workshop
C. Wickham-Jones, Edinburgh
The viewpoint from Scotland

Professor P. Woodman, Cork
The viewpoint from Ireland

Don Henson, Sheffield
Quartz and rhyolite in County Waterford, Ireland

Russel Barber, San Bernardino, U.S.A.
Models of lithic trade in prehistoric southern New England

Ann Clark, Edinburgh
Sandstone tools from the north of Scotland

Nora Moloney, London
Experimental production of bifaces

Lena Holm, Umeå, Sweden
Quartzite working in northern Sweden

Jackie Taffinder, Uppsala, Sweden
Lithic raw materials in southern Sweden

Bill Finlayson, Edinburgh
Microwear on chert tools from southern Scotland

Those interested in future workshops should contact:
Caroline Wickham-Jones, Artifact Research Unit, 5, Coates Place, Edinburgh EH3 7AA, Scotland

THE GREAT GIANT HANDAXE STAKES
by R. J. MacRae

With some trepidation I offered to this journal an account of a macrolithic phenomenon found lately in the gravels of the upper Thames. I was hesitant to intrude into the polysyllabic solemnity of the world of lithic studies - the fascinating analyses of technological variability in multi-period cultural/behavioural patterns in little bits of flint. I suffered resource stress until the Editor kindly assured me that Lithics was quite human, and indeed intended for light bedtime reading. Nothing like a little gamble, as will be related.

The Guinness Book of Records, in its obsession with the trivia of athletics, motor-racing, and walking sideways across Britain turned up in 1932 at Purse Platt, Maidenhead. This pushed into second place the jumbo-sized specimen from Shrub Hill in Norfolk, which had held the record since the mid-nineteenth century. Judged by R. J. MacRae for the Pitt-Rivers Museum, Oxford, the great giant handaxe found in 1913 at Sonning Town, Berkshire, was found in 1911.

Only a whisker separated Sonning Town from Warren Hill, where a big ovate took up the running in 1932. Excitement ran high among Sainty, Reid-Moir, Haz Warren, Burchett and other prominent racegoers of the time when monster bifaces from Wolvercote in Oxfordshire and Keswick in Norfolk made their challenge. The stewards upheld a protest against the Keswick runner, scornfully rejecting a plea that, although it was only the butt of a handaxe, if projected it would be a world-beater. At the same time, they refused to permit the addition of a plasticine tip to Sonning Town to replace the missing end which, had it been there, would have moved it up to second place.

The shades of Evans, Flower, and Worthington Smith looked on from the grandstand in their hunter-gather Ellysium, which they shared with some notable Acheulean craftsmen. With them was Prigg, who had changed his name to Trigg in order to invent trigonometrical computerisation as applied to handaxe statistics. In 1968 MacRae, not yet in Limbo, entered the stakes with a prize colt from Romsey, but the bookies only offered 100 to 1. Eighteen years later the Form Book read as follows (measurements from nose to tip of tail only, in millimetres):

1. Purse Platt, pointed, 1919, British Museum 323mm
2. Shrub Hill, pointed, 1869, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford 285mm
3. Sonning Town, ovate, 1913, Reading Museum 266mm
4. Warren Hill, ovate, 1932, Chicago Museum 260mm
5. Wolvercote, plano-convex, c. 1904, Pitt-Rivers Museum, Oxford 244mm
6. Romsey, pointed, Pitt-Rivers Museum, Oxford 235mm

A lot of research has gone into that race-card. I would be glad to hear of dark horses I may have missed, but I feel I've
got them all. Except for a dramatic last-minute entry! In the past few years an eagle-eyed digger-driver and I have rescued thirty-two flint bifaces from a pit at Stanton Harcourt, a few miles west of Oxford, as well as twelve quartzite handaxes, about which we are getting excited in a forthcoming BAR (advt.). A dozen or so of the flint tools are neat, elegant, lightly-rolled, with an attractive butter-colour which has nothing to do with their technology, but it's nice all the same. With a suitable preening gesture, I announce that until 1982 only two Lower Palaeolithic implements came from this pit. The average size of the flint bifaces is 139.763 mm (I insist on exactitude).

One day in December 1986 Victor Griffin met me at the pit, climbed down from his excavator cab, and handed me the unbelievable - an enormous demi-ficron, only slightly abraded and miraculously having escaped the ravages of time, ice and fluvial transport during the last two hundred thousand years or so, give or take the odd interstatial. There was no damage at all because Victor had actually spotted it on top of the gravel in his digger-bucket as the load swung towards the waiting lorry. His cheerful grin did much to lower my blood-pressure.

Measured at the Quaternary Research Centre in Oxford by a coolly impartial Derek Roe, the giant's vital statistics were 269 mm long, 127 mm broad, and 54 mm thick. It became the third largest British handaxe, out of the 40,000 or so recorded. Insert 269 into the above list of runners and clear the course for the next race.

Which might well be for the smallest-ever microlith.

REFERENCES

Evans, J. 1887, The ancient stone implements, weapons and ornaments of Great Britain, 369


Wymer, J., 1968, Lower Palaeolithic archeology as represented by the Thames valley (London, John Baker), 87 - 90, 178 - 179, 225

Wymer, J., 1985, Palaeolithic sites of East Anglia, (Norwich, Geo Books), 65, 79 - 81, 91