Alan Saville was a true scholar and a true gentleman. His substantial contributions to lithic studies and to Holocene prehistory in general will continue to be valued. The bibliography, which follows this account, although doubtless incomplete, serves to illustrate the scope and quantity of his publications.

He grew up in south-east London, where he attended Colfe’s School. Study at Birmingham University brought him into the Midlands and into contact with two exceptional scholars, Lawrence Barfield and F.W. Shotton. While Barfield focussed on the Neolithic and early Bronze Age of northern Italy, his field of vision encompassed the whole of European prehistory, including the immediately local. Shotton had a lifetime commitment to the then under-considered, even ignored, Pleistocene geology and Palaeolithic archaeology of the Midlands. Both men were important influences and Alan’s early publications correspondingly dealt with both the Holocene and Pleistocene archaeology of the Midlands (e.g. Saville 1973; Saville & Shotton 1975). Like many of his contemporaries, Alan favoured progressive politics and music, hippy clothing, a beard and longish hair.

By the turn of the 1960s (when Alan was only 14/15 years old) and 1970s, Alan had embarked on research on the Mesolithic and Neolithic of the west Midlands, and had also established what was to be a long-running association with Roger Mercer, working with him on excavations at Carn Brea in Cornwall and Grime’s Graves in Norfolk and analysing the lithics from these sites as well as from other Mercer excavations at Hambledon Hill in Dorset and Helman Tor in Cornwall. Grime’s Graves was an introduction to flint-mining and the massive industries that it generates, as well as, unexpectedly, to the smash-it-and-see technology of a post-mining Bronze Age domestic occupation. Alan’s analysis of the six-tonne collection, numbering 400,000 to 500,000 pieces, was undertaken, over the space of two years, in the then vacant Norman Shaw ‘Old Scotland Yard’ building in Whitehall, this being the only available London government office with adequate floor loading. The resulting publication (Saville 1981) was and remains a landmark. It was the first systematic technological and typological analysis of completely recovered flint-mine material in Britain, pre-existing collections all deriving from the more relaxed collecting and recording methods of previous generations. The achievement is all the more remarkable in that Alan had previously worked with generally small Midland assemblages. He demonstrated that the late Neolithic, mining-period, industry was a multi-product one, rather than geared solely to axe production.

With the establishment of archaeological units in the 1970s, research gave way to employment with the Committee for Rescue Archaeology in Avon, Gloucestershire and Somerset and with its successor, the Western Archaeological Trust. Alan, based in Cheltenham, was responsible for surveys and excavations of sites of all periods (e.g. Saville 1979; 1980a & b). The highpoint of this period was his complete excavation of the Severn-Cotswold long cairn at Hazleton North, Gloucestershire (Saville 1990). The painstaking and meticulous quality of the excavation, recording and analysis made it possible to reconstruct the detailed building

---

1HealyFM@cardiff.ac.uk

Figure 1. Alan on Hambledon Hill in the 1970s.
sequence of the monument and to demonstrate that all of the finally jumbled and disarticulated human bone probably derived from individuals originally introduced as flesheaped corpses and progressively displaced. The exemplary archive has facilitated much subsequent research.

It was while working in Cheltenham that, in 1978, Alan became a founder-member of the Lithic Studies Group, at the invitation of Mike Pitts, its convenor (Saville 2010). This initially small group soon became the Lithic Studies Society. It brought together scattered, relatively young, workers, all enthusiastic about the potential of lithic analysis and eager to take the discipline forward, providing a stimulating sounding board, together with a healthy amount of peer criticism, for people who often worked in isolation. Between 1979 and 1990 Alan served at various times as Treasurer, Editor and Chair, very much helping to shape the way the Society developed. The Illustration of Lithic Artefacts: A Guide to Drawing Stone Tools for Specialist Reports (Martingell & Saville 1988) achieved an invaluable combination of graphic and technological expertise and raised the standard of lithic illustration.

The analysis and publication of Hazleton were dogged by funding problems and by the related collapse of the Western Archaeological Trust. In 1989 Alan moved to Edinburgh to a post with the National Museums of Scotland, where he remained until retirement. He engaged wholeheartedly with Scottish lithics in and beyond the Museum’s collections. Excavations at Den of Bodda and Skelmuir Hill in Grampian showed that these were flint extraction sites of late Neolithic date, with 3 m deep pits sunk through boulder clay to the Buchan Ridge gravel from which flint cobbles had been quarried (e.g. Saville 2005; 2008a). This was a masterly technical operation that revealed a new aspect of the Scottish Neolithic.

He raised the profile of the Scottish Mesolithic (e.g. Saville 2004a, b & c) and underscored its...
geographical and chronological extent (e.g. Saville 2000; 2008b). Most importantly, he was, with Torben Ballin, a prime mover in the recognition and publication of upper Palaeolithic material from Scotland (e.g. Saville & Ballin 2009; Ballin et al. 2010). When it came to the country’s sometimes wishfully sought lower and middle Palaeolithic he retained a rational scepticism (Saville 1997; 1998). Investigation of alleged Palaeolithic finds from Scotland did, however, put him on the track of Mary Boyle, a Scotswoman who had for many years assisted the Abbé Breuil, and whose intriguing story he researched with characteristic thoroughness (Saville 2016).

The genuine lower and middle Palaeolithic of the English midlands remained an abiding interest and Alan played a significant role, with Anne Graf, in documenting and publishing the remarkable collection of Ron Waite of Nuneaton (Saville 1986 & 1988), whose obituary the two of them wrote for Lithics (Saville & Graf 2014). Other long-running threads included a concern for significant individual artefacts as well as assemblages (e.g. Saville 1974; 1999; 2015). Relations with Japanese colleagues, established early on, were maintained and were reflected in his curation of the exhibition Prehistoric Japan: the Collections of Neil Gordon Munro in 2001–2002. A network of nearer contacts was developed during a long history of attendance and speaking at European conferences.

Alan made an immense contribution of service to various societies and organisations, as well as to LSS. To name only some of his roles, he was, at various times, Conservation Co-ordinator of the Prehistoric Society; Editor of the European Journal of Archaeology; Co-Chair of the Scottish Archaeological Research Framework’s (SCARF) Upper Palaeolithic-Mesolithic panel; Treasurer, Vice-President and Convener of Publications and Research Committees of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland; and ultimately President of that Society.

His work was characterised by immaculate photographs, graphics and lecture slides, which reflected the painstaking care — perfectionism in the best possible sense — that Alan brought to all he did. A concomitant of this rigour was a measure of caution in interpretation, a wariness of straying too far from the data. One sometimes wished that such an able and insightful scholar would let his imagination off the leash. Care and conscientiousness were extended to colleagues: his comments on the often imperfect texts of others were thorough, constructive, generous and sympathetic, while remaining critical where necessary. His subtle sense of humour made him engaging company. He was the best of friends and colleagues and will be much missed. He is survived by Annette Carruthers, whom he married in 1986.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am immensely grateful to Annette Carruthers for supplying the two photographs and for correcting and improving the text. Roger Mercer also made improvements and supplied additional information.

REFERENCES


