

THREE LOWER PALAEOLITHIC ARTEFACTS FROM THE SURREY WEALD

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INTRODUCTION

This brief report aims to put on the record and draw wider attention to three Lower Palaeolithic artefacts from the Surrey Weald, an area notably lacking in such material. Two of the pieces came from the village of Outwood and were fairly recently discovered by Robin Tanner as part of a long-term field-walking project. The other piece was found by Roger Ellaby in 1978 near the village of Salfords, and although a note of its finding has been published (Ellaby 1978) it has not been previously illustrated.

LOCATION

The village of Outwood straddles a ridge of Weald Clay, with local thin seams of Paludina limestone. Although the geology of the Weald is mainly clay, bands of sandstone also crop-out locally. The two pieces illustrated were found in plough soil in an area where both clay and sandstone are present. The two pieces were found separately, on either side of a small stream valley at approximately 90m O.D. The handaxe (Fig. 1) was found at NGR TQ320466, the broken piece (roughout?) at NGR TQ325464.

Salfords lies approximately two miles west of Outwood. The roughly worked find was discovered on the surface of ploughed land at a height of 70m O.D (NGR: TQ 284473). The geology here is again Wealden Clay, although the object was associated with a gravel remnant of the 'Older' or 230ft terrace of the River Mole (Ellaby 1978).

CONDITION

All three pieces have a thick ochre-brown stain and are heavily rolled, abraded and frost damaged with some pot-lidding. The smaller pieces seem to be fragments of once larger objects, and heavy white patination on most of the damaged areas suggest that this is ancient damage. Despite the surface damage to the biface (Fig. 1) it is still possible to determine that it was never fully shaped and that an area of cortex still remains along one margin. The piece also shows more recent damage, with some 'pecking' at the tip. This probably relates to frost damage although may testify to later use as a hammer-stone. Some small flakes have been removed even more recently, probably by plough damage. There is also an area of surface loss and slight re-crystallisation.

DATING

Dr. Nick Barton of Oxford Brookes University and Dr. F.F. Wenban-Smith have suggested to me that both Outwood pieces are Lower Palaeolithic in age. The Salfords piece is also considered to be Lower Palaeolithic (Ellaby 1978)

DISCUSSION

Material of this age in Surrey is more commonly found within the Farnham Terrace sequence, on the North Downs Plateau and on remnant fragments of river gravel, ie, those of the Medway at Limpsfield (Field and Nicolayson 1995). The lack of prehistoric data from the present area generally precludes lengthy discussion, but this short note will hopefully

help focus greater attention on the Weald. Given the great strides that landscape projects have made over the past 20 years, perhaps somebody might like to take this opportunity to take a new look at the Surrey Weald using such methods.

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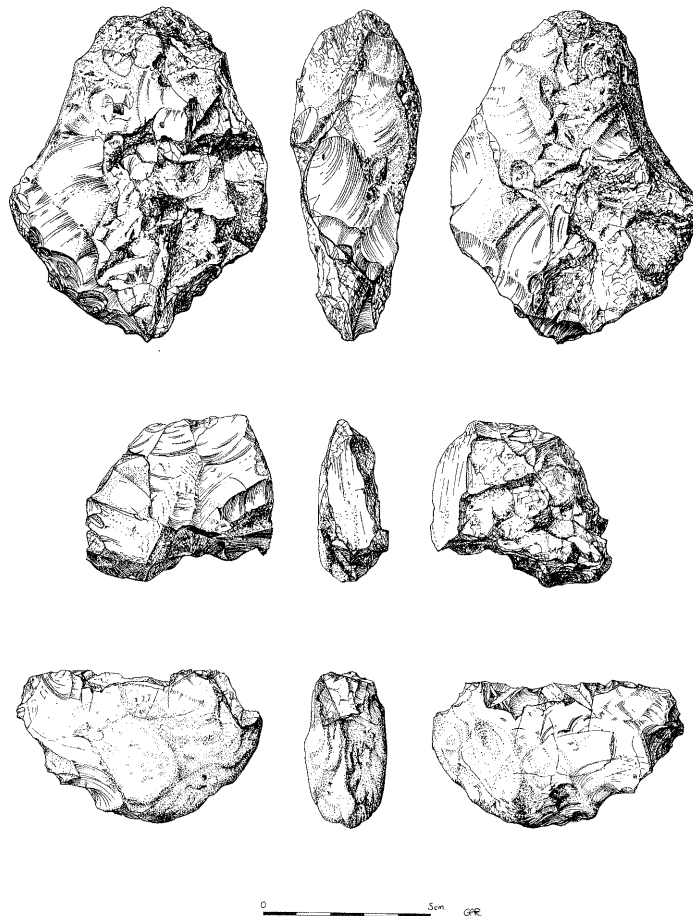


Figure 1: Artefacts from the Surrey Weald. Top & Middle: Outwood. Bottom: Salfords. (by the author)