A note on Terminology

The transition from "Lower" to "Middle" Palaeolithic is conventionally marked by the appearance of prepared core technology such as Levallois and/or the manufacture of *bout coupé* handaxes, termed ‘Mode 3’. Several sites in Oxfordshire contain ‘Levallois’ but nearly always in conjunction with Mode 2 Acheulian (handaxe-based) or Mode 1 (flake and core) technology. It also seems that Levalloisian technology in Britain is broadly contemporary with later handaxe industries in the earlier part of Wolstonian complex (c. 340,000 - 125,000 BP), so it is inappropriate to attempt a distinction between Lower and Middle based on the presence of (often only one piece) of Levallois material. In contrast, it seems that *bout coupé* handaxes are associated with occupation from c. 60,000 BP in the middle of the subsequent (Devensian) glaciation (White & Jacobi 2002), so, whether or not labelled "Middle" they genuinely represent a distinct phase of occupation.

Therefore in this Oxfordshire Lower/Middle Palaeolithic resource assessment, as in all the other Solent-Thames county assessments, the separation of Lower from Middle Palaeolithic has not been attempted. Culturally, Levallois material is included alongside Mode 1 and Mode 2 industries under the umbrella of "Lower/Middle Palaeolithic". *Bout coupé* material has been attributed to a later period, which could be regarded as "true" Middle Palaeolithic, but has been renamed "British Mousterian" to avoid confusion. Chronologically, three broad cultural stages have been adopted within four Pleistocene epochs (Table 1), and finds/deposits allocated to one of these so far as possible.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Marine Isotope Stage</th>
<th>Cultural stage &amp; dates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>pre-Anglian</td>
<td>pre 475,000 BP</td>
<td>before MIS 12</td>
<td>early Lower/Middle Palaeolithic (no Levalloisian) pre 475,000 BP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anglian</td>
<td>475,000 to 425,000 BP</td>
<td>MIS Stage 12</td>
<td>Britain unoccupied?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hoxnian /Wolstonian complex</td>
<td>425,000 to 125,000 BP</td>
<td>MIS 11 to MIS 5e</td>
<td>later Lower/Middle Palaeolithic (includes Levalloisian) c. 425,000 to c. 200,000 BP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Devensian</td>
<td>125,000 to 12,000 BP</td>
<td>MIS 5d to MIS 2</td>
<td>British Mousterian c. 60,000 to c. 40,000 BP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 1. Chronological periods and cultural correlation*
1. INTRODUCTION

The Lower/Middle and British Mousterian phases of the Palaeolithic comprise at least 90% of the total Palaeolithic, and most Palaeolithic finds in Oxfordshire belong to these earlier phases. The Palaeolithic period was characterised by huge climatic fluctuations embracing substantial periods when Britain was devoid of human population, for example during the Anglian glaciation c. 475-425,000 BP. No Palaeolithic human remains have been located in Oxfordshire, but from other sites in Britain and Europe we know that the stone tools of the period were the work of pre-sapiens hominids, of the general northwest European branch of the Homo erectus/ergaster group Homo heidelbergensis.

During warmer periods human populations occupied the terrain in small family groups, probably preferring to remain for several seasons in home base zones, from which they ranged outwards in search of food. Longer treks, for example following big game migration, may have also served the purpose of augmenting their knowledge of the wider landscape and making contact with other groups.

In the Lower/Middle Palaeolithic there is some evidence that hominids were tied to lithic resource distribution, so the patterns of occupation would the reflect the availability of suitable stone resources. In Oxfordshire this pattern can still be discerned from the geological map of the Pleistocene terraces and the Chalk of the Chilterns.

The recent publication of artefact finds from the Cromer Forest Bed on the Norfolk coast at Pakefield (Parfitt et al. 2005) has pushed back the terminus post quem of the British Palaeolithic to c. 700,000 BP. It now has to be asked what other regions of Britain might have been occupied in the pre-Anglian period, 700,000 to 480,000 BP? In Oxfordshire, as in most other counties, firm evidence for such an early date is unlikely to be forthcoming, although a hint of pre-Anglian date for some artefacts has come from the Northern Drift (Hardaker 2004, 32), and late Anglian gravels in the south of the county contain artefacts (see section 4.2.3 below).

In contrast to the Lower/Middle Palaeolithic there are very few "true" Middle Palaeolithic (or British Mousterian) sites, representing Neanderthal occupation in Britain in the last (Devensian) glaciation. In the absence of clear evidence of human presence in Britain from c. 200,000 to c.60,000 BPP, British Mousterian occupation is taken here as being restricted to the period between 60,000 and 40,000 BP, when populations recolonised Britain.

2. LANDSCAPE AND TOPOGRAPHY

The geographical configuration of the county of Oxfordshire embraces three contrasting physiographic regions, the Cotswolds, the Upper Thames Valley, and the Chalk Downs of the North Berkshire Downs and the Chilterns (see map 1). All lie within the catchment of the Thames, and its tributaries the Cherwell, Thame, Windrush the Evenlode, as well as minor tributaries.
The Cotswolds comprise a Jurassic upland plateau of mainly soft yellow limestones offering no potential for lithic raw materials, save for the tongue of Plio-pleistocene Northern Drift that crosses it from north to south along the course of the Evenlode valley (see section 3.2). The Upper Thames valley follows the course of the Thames and its tributary the Cherwell, whose floodplains are filled with Devensian gravels and whose slopes are intermittently occupied by older terrace gravels, mostly bearing Palaeololiths. On its southern edge the Oxford Clay vale is occupied by Upper Jurassic rocks merging into the Cretaceous which defines the third zone, the Chalk Downlands. These only occupy the far south and southeast of the county but in the flint-rich valleys between Henley and Reading come the most abundant Palaeolithic finds in the county.

3. PLEISTOCENE BACKGROUND AND PALAEOGEOGRAPHY

3.1 Pleistocene sediments (see map 2)

The Pleistocene sediments are mostly restricted to river terraces in the broad valley of the main Thames, the Cherwell and the Thame. The ‘staircase’ of terraces here has been described (e.g. by Bridgland 1994, Maddy 1997) as ranging from MIS12 to 5/2. Lying above this, the Northern Drift is described (Maddy 1997) as a pre-Anglian fluvial deposit that brought Bunter cobbles and erratics from north of the present Cotswolds. Exceptionally, the northern Drift lies not within present valleys but on the lower parts of the Cotswold plateau, into which post-Anglian drainage has incised the present Evenlode valley.

In the southeast of the county, the Wallingford Fan Gravels lie on the slopes of the Chalk east of Wallingford between 140 and 80 metres OD. They represent an Anglian solifluction deposit (Horton et al 1981).

Above the Fan Gravels, on the top of the Chilterns, lie the Clay-with-Flints deposits which are chalk solution residues and/or clays derived from Tertiary beds (Scott-Jackson 2000, 25).

3.2 Landscape palaeo-zones

3.2.1 The Cotswolds

Evidence for Palaeolithic occupation of the Cotswolds would be largely wanting were it not for the surface finds from the Northern Drift (see Section 4.2.1). The Northern Drift contains hard Bunter quartzite cobbles from which tools were made. From these finds (Hardaker 2004) it is concluded that (a) palaeo-surfaces survive in some at least of the Cotswold terrain, (b) Lower Palaeolithic occupants at these sites probably ranged over all accessible landscapes, rather than confining themselves to river environments, (c) the date of these finds lie within the range 700,000-200,000BP but no further refinement can be offered.

3.2.2 The Upper Thames Valley

The landscape of the Thames valley has undergone continuous evolution in its absolute elevation, its relative elevation, and its precise course in the period under
review (Maddy 2001). It is currently choked by Devensian floodplain gravels; any palaeo-surfaces here would lie beneath the present flood plain on the pre-Devensian bedrock. That such surfaces exist and contain artefacts close to in situ, as opposed to being derived by fluvial action from other places upstream, has been argued on the basis of observations during a 15 year study at Cassington pit near Wolvercote (Hardaker 2001). The higher terraces of the Upper Thames likewise contain artefacts close to or on the bedrock, which may have had a similar history. If so, human presence along major water courses, in addition to the adjacent hills, is likely.

3.2.3. The Chalk Downlands

The chalk escarpment of the Chilterns and Berkshire Downs has been an enduring feature in much of the Pleistocene. It must be assumed that these Chalk hills were accessible to Palaeolithic hominids and it is evident from finds of flint artefacts in the upper Thames (e.g. at Wolvercote or Stanton Harcourt) that the Chilterns, and the streambeds issuing from them, provided a raw material source not only locally but for communities up to 20 km away.

The Goring Gap cuts through the chalk in the far south of the county; most of the terrace material in this part of the Thames has been washed downstream. In the far south of the county, between Reading and Henley, lies the ‘Ancient Channel’ of the Thames, representing its course prior to MIS Stage 12. It is thought to be associated with the Black Park Gravel (Bridgland 1994, 142-4).

3.3 Pleistocene History

Through the Palaeolithic, great changes occurred in these landscapes, mainly caused by the climatic oscillations of the Ice Age. At its most dramatic this saw the extension of the polar icecap into the north of the county during the great Anglian Glaciation (MIS Stage 12) of c. 480-423,000 BP. South of this icecap for much of this period the landscape was a barren outwash tundra zone, containing vast braided rivers and rocky hills.

Prior to this glaciation, the Thames flowed from the Midlands south across what is now the escarpment of the Cotswolds and into the Upper Thames basin along the course of the present Evenlode Valley; the present Thames upstream of the Evenlode was but a tributary at this time. This extended Thames laid the highest and oldest of the Upper Thames fluvial terraces, the Northern or Plateau Drift, which can be seen today as scattered patches of Bunter cobbles, gravels, sands and clays lying in a tongue extending from the Evenlode near Moreton in Marsh to the Thames beyond Abingdon. Subsequent warm/cold climatic oscillations (MIS Stages 11 to 5), combined with slow tectonic uplift, deepened the present valleys and produced four more major fluvial terrace groups, all of which play an important role in the Palaeolithic record.

4. LOWER/MIDDLE PALAEOLITHIC RESOURCE

4.1 Oxfordshire overview
Oxfordshire lies partly within and partly beyond the zone where natural flint occurs in Cretaceous Chalk bedrock, and this places it near to the edge of the assumed Palaeolithic occupation zone of Britain. Until the techniques for recognising of non-flint tools were developed by MacRae (MacRae 1988), the number of Palaeolithic artefacts from the county was considerably smaller than it is today, and comprised largely flint material. The realisation that quartzite and occasionally other materials were regularly employed by Palaeolithic hominids where flint was not naturally present, has caused archaeologists to redouble their search for artefacts beyond the flint zone, with spectacular results in some of the Midlands counties including Oxfordshire.

The oldest Pleistocene terraces in the county comprise the Sugworth Terrace, west of Abingdon, and the Northern Drift on the Cotswold plateau. Both are pre-Anglian. The former contained no artefacts, but the latter has recently yielded Palaeoliths (see section 4.2.1). The ‘Ancient Channel’ of the Thames between Henley and Reading, and the Wallingford Fan gravels close by, are thought to be of Anglian date and contain abundant artefacts (see section 3.2.3 and Appendix 1). The vast majority of sites yielding artefacts belong to the post-Anglian terraces that span MIS Stages 11 to 2. However, where artefacts lie on bedrock overlain by gravels, as opposed to lying within the gravels themselves, the artefacts may predate the gravels by a considerable time (see 3.2.2 above). This is clearly indicated where gravels of Devensian age (e.g. from c. 75,000 BP at Cassington) have yielded Acheulian and Mode 1 material on the bedrock even though there is generally believed to have been no human presence in Britain after MIS Stage 7 c. 200,000 BP, until the reappearance of Neanderthals c. 62,000 BP (see 4.2.2 below).

At the latter end of the timescale, Mode 3 finds have been rare, scattered through the middle and south of the county, and generally without precise context.

4.2 Lower/Middle Palaeolithic resource

4.2.1 The Cotswolds

Upland areas in Britain seldom provide rich hunting ground for Palaeolithic finds and the Cotswolds are no exception. Until recently, only a handful of Lower Palaeolithic finds came from the Cotswolds. The Cotswold region, being entirely of limestone, did not offer attractive lithic raw materials for artefact manufacture. No artefacts made of limestone have been found, and its soft and friable properties make it an unlikely choice for stone tools. There is as yet little evidence to suggest that Lower Palaeolithic people ranged more than about 20km to source their lithic raw materials. If correct, this would have rendered the Cotswolds an unattractive zone for occupation since it was a long way to the flint-rich Chalk bedrock of the Chilterns. The only other suitable local resources were a few flints from the Thames terrace gravels and quartzites from the Northern Drift. The former are usually small and unworkable, although attempts at working them have been noted at Cassington pit (Hardaker 2001, 190). Their scarcity and fragility, plus difficulty of access in temperate climates due to vegetation cover, meant they would seldom provide enough raw material to satisfy
human requirements. The quartzites are extremely hard to work and undoubtedly this had a strong influence on the typology, with few good handaxes and many more flake, chopper and core products.

The recently-discovered surface finds from ploughed fields in the parishes of Combe, Freeland and Long Hanborough (Hardaker 2004), have changed our perspective of upland occupation. They represent scatters left by Palaeolithic visitors exploiting the quartzite cobbles of the Northern Drift. They demonstrate that in certain circumstances land surfaces have remained largely unchanged since the Palaeolithic. Where such surfaces contain lithic clasts suitable for artefact manufacture, Palaeolithic visitors found and used them and discarded at least part of their toolkit on site. These surfaces are difficult to recognise, but in the Cotswolds they comprise flat uplands where quartzite lithic resources are present, often highly concentrated on the surface. There is consequently a need for careful monitoring of the Cotswolds in the Northern Drift zones before any development takes place.

Pre-Anglian: none certain but some artefacts from the Northern Drift have the possibility of a pre-Anglian date.

Hoxnian/Wolstonian complex: There is only a thin scatter of mostly single finds from this area.

British Mousterian: None

4.2.2 The Upper Thames Valley

Most of the fluvial terraces from the Pleistocene in the county are embedded into the river floodplains or valley sides, and this is where most of the Palaeolithic artefacts are found. As gravel extraction has accelerated in the post-war period so these finds have multiplied. The Pleistocene terraces of the Upper Thames have been most recently described by Bridgland (1994, 35-79). In chronological sequence, the (oldest) Northern Drift group, described above (4.2.1), is followed by the Hanborough Terrace, probably of MIS Stage 10, and then the Wolvercote Terrace variously dated to MIS 10, 9 or 8). At the classic Wolvercote site the latter has been cut into by the Wolvercote channel, the exact date of which remains to be established. This is followed by the Summertown-Radley Formation, which contains the Stanton Harcourt Channel (MIS7), the Stanton Harcourt Gravel (MIS 6), and the Eynsham Gravels (MIS 5e and 5d). Finally the floodplain gravels (called the Northmoor gravel in some places) date to MIS 4-2.

Artefacts in fluvial gravel contexts present ambiguities. As they are often recovered after excavation in commercial gravel pits, their exact place in the stratigraphy may be hard to establish. Where they lie entirely below the gravel they probably predate it and may represent lag deposits close to their original home. In the few cases where they lie within the gravel stratigraphy, they may be derived from previous terraces, or they may be contemporary with the terrace in which they are found. When such items are rolled, the likelihood of their having been fluvially transported is greater. Even though no truly in situ scatters can be proved in the gravel terraces of the Upper
Thames, unrolled artefacts are more likely to be close to their original place of deposition.

The Upper Thames valley also records a remarkable number of single finds where no gravel pit context is mentioned, and it is probable that many of these will have been chance finds from the surface. They are almost always located on a gravel terrace. As most artefacts recovered from the Upper Thames gravels come from the base of the gravel, it is arguable that surface finds (except those from the Northern Drift) are unlikely to be from ancient land surfaces that have been there since Palaeolithic time, but represent artefacts eroding out from terrace bases as they slowly become exposed. This is particularly evident in North Oxford where numerous single finds have been reported from the Summertown-Radley formation (MIS Stage 8 or 7, Wymer 1999, 57).

Nearly all the gravel terraces of the Upper Thames have yielded artefacts, from the Northern Drift to the Devensian floodplain deposits laid down from c.75,000 years ago. There are some nationally important sites as described in Appendix 1.

Below the floodplain terraces at Cassington, Hardwick, Stanton Harcourt, Ducklington and Sutton Courtenay, frequent artefacts of flint and quartzite have been recovered, dating to MIS Stage 7 or earlier (Hardaker 2001).

Despite the prolific number of sites in the Upper Thames valley, none can be claimed as truly ‘in situ’. There are hints that some finds have not moved far: clusters of fresh artefacts, and some with similar styles of manufacture, e.g. at Wolvercote Brick pit (Tyldesley 1986) and Gravelly Guy, Stanton Harcourt (MacRae 1988). The precise dating of the finds is seldom possible although floral and faunal contexts and a widening number of dating methods are beginning to bring some precision (e.g. at the Stanton Harcourt Channel, Buckingham, Roe & Scott 1996).

Pre-Anglian: none.

Hoxnian/Wolstonian complex: The vast majority of finds belong to this period. The principal sites are those listed in Appendix 1: Wolvercote Brick Pit, Cassington, Hardwick- with-Yelford, Ducklington (Gill Mill Pit), Iffley (Cornish’s Pit), the Stanton Harcourt complex of pits, Sutton Courtenay, and Berinsfield.

British Mousterian: A scatter of single finds along the course of the Thames near Abingdon. Although thin, the concentration of these finds in a small area may point to a Mousterian localised occupation area.

4.2.3 The Chalk Downs

After fluvial terraces, the Chalk Downlands (which here includes the Thames and other streams running through the Chilterns) are some of the richest sites for palaeoliths, a testament to the presence of early humans on these landscapes. These well-drained and fertile grasslands would have attracted large herbivores thus providing a valuable food source, whether through hunting or scavenging, for early humans (see Wymer, 1999). The flint in the chalk would potentially have been a ready source of raw materials for knapping into stone tools. As with the fluvial
terraces, the ‘in situ’ nature of the artefacts is difficult to establish due to the myriad of factors, such as bio- or cryo-turbation, that could affect their location. However, where examples in the Chalk have been buried by loessic sediments (‘brickearth’) they appear to be in primary context. The Clay-with-flints deposits on the Chalk are sometimes associated with artefacts, either within them or close by.

Pre-Anglian: None, but the Wallingford Fan Gravels are thought to be MIS 12 (Anglian). Certain parts of these gravels have yielded Acheulian handaxes notably Turners Court (Crowmarsh) and Rumbold’s Pit (Ewelme). The Highlands Farm pit (Henley-on-Thames) and several others between Caversham and Henley are located in the gravels of the Ancient Channel of the Thames when it ran to the northwest of its present course (see below 4.2.3). This channel is developed on the Black Park gravel and is thought to be late Anglian.

Hoxnian/Wolstonian complex: Most finds fall within this bracket, notably Kennylands Pit (Sonning Common) and Farthingworth Green.

British Mousterian: None

5. SUMMARY

Oxfordshire, close to the limits of Palaeolithic occupation at the best of times, and lying partly beyond local flint resources, is naturally less well endowed with sites than counties further to the southeast. Even so, some 218 Early Lower Palaeolithic and ten Middle Palaeolithic entries appear in the Inventory. The survey has laid bare the imbalance between the number of Lower and Middle Palaeolithic finds. This is not entirely due to timespan – the Lower Palaeolithic duration is perhaps six times longer than the Middle yet it has over 20 times as many entries.

The county is uniquely instructive in providing a narrative of different human responses in an area much of which has a paucity of lithic resources. Given that generalisation is impossible within a timespan of perhaps 500,000 years, when hominid presence was intermittent and conditions varied from warm temperate to arctic, certain threads can still be picked out. Looking at the meagre quartzite implements of the Northern Drift in the Upper Thames valley, the crude choppers and cores, the barely recognisable attempts at handaxes, we discern man’s tenacity in a hostile environment. Contrast the beautifully made Wolvercote handaxes from only 10km away (though unlikely to be contemporary), where we see man in control of his resources – clearly different lifestyles are implied. Further to the south where flint was close by, the greater abundance of finds suggests a more frequent, or denser, population. One question arises, which is often touched upon by archaeologists: were hominid occupation patterns dictated by the scatter of lithic resources? Oxfordshire would suggest that good lithics at least acted as a strong magnet.

More details of principal sites are given in Appendix 1.

5.2 Site inventory (see maps 2 & 3)
Many of the finds listed in this inventory were discovered before modern analytical methods were developed, so much of the potential information that could have been derived from them has been lost. Sites containing flora, fauna and artefacts are rare enough: it is all the more important therefore that the remaining potential is properly monitored. Since archaeology mainly follows in the footsteps of development activity, it would be a gross dereliction of our duty to Britain’s national heritage were we to overlook the opportunities that this offers, however challenging this task may be.

Data has been taken on trust from the sources mentioned; in these cases it has not generally been possible to check material in museum collections. As the sources do not always provide all the information sought, there are gaps in the inventory.

Many of the listings are single surface finds. Unfortunately without detailed context these are of little value in reconstructing the Lower Palaeolithic prehistory, as they may be eroding out of a fluvial terrace (often the base of a terrace), part of an original palaeosurface, or transported from their original location by more recent forces.

Gravel pits are not pinpoint items on the map; they can sometimes stretch for more than a kilometre. Likewise fields in which single finds are made have spatial extent. Map references to locate such sites are in most cases not exact, so a system of assessing accuracy has grown up and is followed in this report. Because almost all map references are “estimated” or “general”, there will always be some uncertainty about the location of sites, and this can be confusing in areas where there is a dense concentration of finds. The records cannot for the most part be further refined. Fortunately the “broad-brush” nature of archaeologically rich gravel deposits means that loss of pinpoint accuracy is not detrimental to our general overview.

Single finds where the reference is given only for a town of some size have mostly been omitted from the map, as plotting the findspot as a town centre could be misleading.

Dates of the finds, where known, are given in order to place them in a time perspective. From the time of Roe’s Gazetteer (1968) the contextual background to finds has been increasingly well documented, as analytical techniques and knowledge of the Palaeolithic have improved.

Only the briefest summary of the artefacts and their typology is included in the inventory, the reader is referred to the more detailed references for further information.

Whereas in most parts of Britain flint is the assumed material for Palaeolithic artefacts, we now know that in Oxfordshire quartzite is as likely to be employed, especially away from the immediate environs of the Chilterns. Therefore a column indicating the raw material has been included. For many of the older finds this is not recorded; where flint is the likely material it is shown with a question mark.

**Inventory sources**

The principal sources used to compile the inventory data were:

MacRae, R.J., & Moloney N., Non-flint stone tools and the Palaeolithic occupation of Britain

Oxfordshire County Council Sites & Monuments Record (SMR), Centre for Oxfordshire Studies, Westgate, Oxford.


The Roe Gazetteer is mainly a record of artefacts in museums and was the first detailed survey of its kind.

In the same year John Wymer published Lower Palaeolithic Archaeology in Britain, which concentrated on the Thames and overlaps Roe but contains entries from a wider range of sources.

The OCC SMR’s were compiled mainly from the 1970’s onwards using selected sites from both Wymer and Roe, and occasional other information as it came to the notice of the Centre.

MacRae and Moloney include a gazetteer of all non-flint Palaeoliths found up to 1988.

Lee’s work is a detailed study that includes Wolvercote, Iffley, Highlands farm,, Stanton Harcourt Channel and Stanton Harcourt Gravelly Guy sites. Complete lists of individual artefacts are given.

6. FUTURE RESEARCH

6.1 Priority research questions

As mentioned above, Oxfordshire offers the chance to study the Palaeolithic against a spatially variable lithic resource background – from total absence to abundance. The empty spaces may say as much as the dense clusters in helping us to understand what drove early hominids to occupy, or not occupy, terrain. The physical features of the landscape, different though they were in the remote past, still retained the underlying geology and perhaps some of the topographic surfaces; thus we can attempt to weave in the part played by limestone hills, clay vales and chalk downlands.

6.2 Specific research projects
Apart from archaeological work that precedes commercial development, and is thus not dictated by archaeologists, it is desirable for there also to be a plan for the Palaeolithic (the “research strategy” of Francis Wenban Smith) that represents the desideratum of archaeologists themselves. Such a plan would prioritise research that addresses key topics in the county, formulated from our cumulative knowledge to date. These topics might include:

- A further attempt to locate and date the Wolvercote Channel, excavating on land that still remains undeveloped in north Oxford.

- A fieldwalking programme on all the remaining areas of Northern Drift to establish presence of artefacts. Perhaps a search of other Cotswold plateau areas away from the Drift, to test the hypothesis that lack of lithic resources meant a lack of Palaeolithic occupation.

- Detailed study of selected Devensian gravel pits (in the course of gravel extraction) to monitor the distribution of quartzite clasts on the bedrock surface, their relationship with the micro-topography, and their association or otherwise with artefacts, with the objective of testing the theory that these surfaces are ‘lag’ deposits possibly of pre-MIS 6 age.

- A further attempt to locate the Sugworth Channel near Abingdon to amplify the data and especially to try to locate artefacts in it.

- Placement in the public domain of the detailed and as yet unpublished supplementary data for the county collected by Roe in the course of the compilation of the Gazetteer (Roe 1968), currently held manually on a card index. This task is underway for Oxfordshire as a pilot study.

6.3 Palaeolithic potential and future land development

The map of Pleistocene fluvial terraces shows the areas where potential for Palaeolithic material is likely to occur. In every case except the Northern Drift terrace, such material is likely to lie either at the foot of the gravels on the bedrock floor, or somewhere in the gravel stratigraphy. In these cases, archaeological survey prior to land development or gravel extraction will not yield Palaeolithic archaeology, because it is generally not found on the surface. It is therefore desirable for a watching brief to be kept as excavation proceeds, especially where commercial gravel extraction occurs. In a few cases, Palaeolithic artefacts occur in a surface or near-surface context. The area of the Summertown-Radley terrace in north Oxford is a good example. Here the terrace margins are cutting through an archaeological stratum and thus the artefacts are emerging in gardens and shallow excavations, e.g. building foundations.

References


**Maps**

Map 1 Geographic divisions of Oxfordshire
Map 2 Lower/Middle Palaeolithic findspots
Map 3 Levallois/ British Mousterian findspots
APPENDIX 1. PRINCIPAL SITES

Northern Drift Group of sites (Freeland, Combe, Long Hanborough and East End) 1999-present
The surface finds on the Northern Drift comprise about 40 quartzite items and one of flint to January 2007 (Hardaker 2001, 2004). Latterly Long Hanborough has yielded a crop of finds. Crude handaxes, cores, flakes, chopper cores, and cleavers are represented. The distribution nearly always coincides with clusters of larger quartzite cobbles whereas in between, where the raw material is smaller than artefact size, there are almost no artefacts. Variation in weathering suggests the area was revisited many times; absolute dating is impossible, but the time bracket could extend from 700,000 to 200,000 BP.

Cassington ARC (Hanson) pit active 1989-present
This pit has been monitored on a regular basis since its opening in June 1989. As a result new information has emerged about the nature of artefacts in Devensian Floodplain gravel. A distribution in ‘clusters’ with substantial voids in between, with all finds coming from the palaeo-surface below the gravel, has led to the suggestion that Lower Palaeolithic artefacts in Devensian gravels may be closer to in situ than previously believed (Hardaker 2001), and may have been deposited prior to the onset of cold conditions represented by MIS 6 some time after 200,000 BP. A further discovery in this pit is the separation of the archaeology into flint in the east and predominantly quartzite in the west, indicating two different gravel components. This pit covers an area 2.5 x 0.5km. A small area of Summertown-Radley terrace excavated in 2000-1 yielded a quartzite chopper, the only implement from this terrace at this pit.

Hardwick-with-Yelford pit complex active 1980’s-2002
These pits lie on Floodplain gravels astride the river Windrush near its confluence with the Thames and have yielded a trickle of mainly quartzite Palaeoliths apparently not in any dense clusters. The excavation covers an area of 1 x 1.5 km. Notably, eight flakes came out over a two year period, highly unusual in this context, suggesting a single industry may be represented. Once again it is likely that the artefacts predate the gravels. All but one of the artefacts are of quartzite.

Ducklington Gill Mill pits active 1980’s-present
A large area of gravel extraction yielded a concentration of purely quartzite finds close to the Windrush river on Floodplain gravel, comprising a wide range of tool types, once again probably from a single industry. Excavated area is 1.3 x 1 km ongoing but sterile since 2000. No flint artefacts were found in this pit; all were quartzite.

Wolvercote brick pit active c. 1900-1920
The Wolvercote Channel was discovered around 1900 in a brick pit in north Oxford (Roe 1981, 118, Tyldesley 1986); it is important for the 100 plus artefacts lying at the base of the channel in fresh condition and containing handaxes of a wide range of skills including a few large, finely made slipper-shaped (plano-convex) ones. The date of this channel has never been finally established but is generally thought to belong to MIS stage 8 or 9.
Iffley Cornish’s pit active 1920’s
Located in the Floodplain gravels close to the Thames on the south side of Oxford, this pit was worked too early for modern analysis of the big game fauna that accompanied the 28 handaxes and 5 flakes that were recovered.

Stanton Harcourt pit complexes active 1950’s to c. 1996.
Gravel extraction in the Summertown-Radley and Floodplain gravels in the wide fluvial basin occupying the Windrush-Thames confluence has been active at least since the 1950’s. The archaeological records from this area give a confusing number of site names and map references, and the SMR’s, Wymer and Roe sources do not always concur. The records are reproduced here as they stand in these sources but where identical sites seem to be clear they have been amalgamated.

Yielded 103 artefacts including 22 quartzite (Lee 2001, 152) lying beneath the MIS Stage 6 cold gravels. The number of large flint tools (including a ficon handaxe 269mm long) demonstrates that at this site the flint raw material was being sourced from afar, probably the Chiltern escarpment some 20 km distant. The site is also notable for the wide range of tools in use (26 types listed by Lee), and for the admixture of quartzite, suggesting that local Bunter cobbles from fluvial gravels were accessible and utilised. The artefacts may represent one of the last occupations before the retreat of hominids from Britain at the onset of cold conditions from c.186,000 BP.

Stanton Harcourt Dix Pit
An important palaeochannel was excavated at Stanton Harcourt in 1990-99 (Buckingham, Roe & Scott 1996). Here a species of Steppe mammoth of unusually small size lived in a warm environment towards the end of MIS Stage 7. A total of 27 flint and quartzite artefacts were recovered but exact human contemporaneity with the channel and its fauna is hard to prove. The site, still not yet fully published, provides the most detailed evidence of an epoch during the Stage 7 Interglacial environment in Britain.

Sugworth Channel
In the south of the county, the Sugworth channel was discovered in 1972 during the construction of the Abingdon bypass; it gave important evidence of a warm fauna of Cromerian age but contained no artefacts.

Highlands Farm active c.1960’s-1980’s
By far the most prolific site in the county, this gravel pit cut through an ancient channel of the Thames. Bridgland (1994, 142-4) has summarised the controversy over the dating of this channel and concludes that it is of late Anglian age. Excavation by Wymer in 1975 and subsequent collecting by MacRae yielded over 3000 items, mostly flint flakes and cores, although more than 250 handaxes were also present, some of ‘archaic’ appearance. The abundance of Mode 1 material, although not stratigraphically separate in the channel deposits, hints that a Clactonian industry forms a part of the assemblage. The occupation, which may span a considerable time, probably coincides with an otherwise unknown warm interval in the late Anglian (Wymer 1999, 51). The same ancient channel yielded artefacts at Farthingworth
Green, Kidmore End (Tanner’s Farm), Emmer Green, Henley (Hernes Farm) and Sonning Common (Kennylands).

**Berinsfield active 1950’s-1981**
A group of gravel pits in the Floodplain terrace by the Thames yielded 240 items of which 36 were quartzite (MacRae 1988, 128).

**Benson: Turners Court active 1880’s to c.1900.**
The most prolific of the gravel pits in the Wallingford fan gravels, thought to be of Anglian age (MIS Stage 12) (Horton et al 1981) and thus the oldest in the county apart from the Northern Drift.

**Table xx. Oxfordshire Lower/Middle Palaeolithic resource summary**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Palaeo-zone</th>
<th>Fluvial complex</th>
<th>Colluvial/solifluction</th>
<th>Clay - with-flint/residual</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Cotswolds</td>
<td>Site presence *</td>
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<td><strong>Key sites</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Combe, Freeland</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Thames valley</td>
<td>Site presence</td>
<td>XXX</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Key sites</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Stanton Harcourt, Cassington, Wolvercote, Sutton Courtenay, Berinsfield</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Chalk Downs</td>
<td>Site presence</td>
<td>XXX</td>
<td>XX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Key sites</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Kennylands Pit (Sonning Common) and Farthingworth Green, Highlands Farm</td>
<td>Benson, Crowmarsh: (Turners Court) Ewelme: Rumbolds Pit</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Site presence

- NA, no deposits in zone
0 No sites known
x Few or very few sites, none of them prolific
xx Moderately common sites, one/some of them prolific
xxx Common sites, often prolific
## Solent Thames Project Palaeolithic Artefacts: Oxfordshire

**Jul-06**  
**Draft 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site ID</th>
<th>SMR No</th>
<th>Map ref &amp; accuracy</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Material</th>
<th>Context</th>
<th>Main Ref</th>
<th>Dispos'n</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Pre or Post Date of find or accession</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Abingdon Culham Hill</td>
<td>SU 508962</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1 handaxe, 1 flake</td>
<td>flint &amp; q</td>
<td>Ex</td>
<td>Oxonensia</td>
<td>Wallis</td>
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<td>W</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>1921-2</td>
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<td>Abingdon Radley Road pit</td>
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<td>Ab</td>
<td>&gt;1968</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Abingdon Sewage wks</td>
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<td>handaxe</td>
<td>flint</td>
<td>Ex</td>
<td>ER</td>
<td>Walls</td>
<td>c.1995</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Abingdon Start Street</td>
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<td>flake</td>
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<td>S</td>
<td>ER</td>
<td>Walls</td>
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<td>Abingdon Tythe Fm</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>handaxe &amp; choppers</td>
<td>flint &amp; q</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>Wallis</td>
<td>c.1990</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Abingdon Thripl</td>
<td>SU 520971 A</td>
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<td>Ex</td>
<td>ER</td>
<td>Walls</td>
<td>c.1970-90</td>
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<td>Abingdon Lodge Hill</td>
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<td>S</td>
<td>N Drift</td>
<td>Walls</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Benson 12882 SU 517 917 G</td>
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<td>flint</td>
<td>Ex</td>
<td>SMR; Roe 247 A</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>1917-1921</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Benson Goulds Grove pit</td>
<td>4115 SU 644 802</td>
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<td>11 handaxes, 1 rtf</td>
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<td>Ex</td>
<td>SMR</td>
<td>A, P</td>
<td>1885-1950</td>
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<td>flint</td>
<td>Ash</td>
<td>A</td>
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<td>Ex</td>
<td>SMR; W, 101 A, R</td>
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<td>SMR</td>
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<td>Berinsfield pit SW of The Copse</td>
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<td>flint</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>SMR</td>
<td>1953</td>
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<td>Berinsfield Mount Farm ARC airfield pit</td>
<td>13013 SU 585 967 E</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>handaxes</td>
<td>flint &amp; q</td>
<td>Ex</td>
<td>SMR</td>
<td>&gt;1968</td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Berinsfield Mount Farm pit/Queenford pits</td>
<td>15807 SU 583 960 E</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>handaxes, flakes, cores</td>
<td>flint &amp; q</td>
<td>Ex</td>
<td>MacRae 1982; ER</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>1973-1981</td>
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<td>Bladon 583 SP 4488 1496 A</td>
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<td>flint</td>
<td>(foundation)</td>
<td>B5</td>
<td>OX</td>
<td>1975</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>Blenheim Grim's Dyke</td>
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<td>W</td>
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<td>Brightwell-cum-Solwold Rush Court (nr.)</td>
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<td>Ex</td>
<td>ER</td>
<td>A</td>
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<td>Brightwell-cum-Solwold Nr kibids Ditch</td>
<td>7628 SU 5693 8967 A</td>
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<td>handaxes</td>
<td>flint &amp; S</td>
<td>SMR; W, 105 R</td>
<td>1962-5</td>
<td>andesite</td>
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<td>W</td>
<td>84</td>
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<td>22</td>
<td>Broughton</td>
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<td>handaxe</td>
<td>flint</td>
<td>Ex</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>1921</td>
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<td>23</td>
<td>Burcot</td>
<td>12884 SU 557960 (G)</td>
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<td>flint</td>
<td>Ash</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>1941</td>
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<td>Roe 247</td>
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<td>chert</td>
<td>SMR</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>&gt;1968</td>
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<td>flint</td>
<td>Ex</td>
<td>Roe 247</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>&gt;1960</td>
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<td>flint</td>
<td>Ex</td>
<td>SMR</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>&gt;1968</td>
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<td>28</td>
<td>Cassington ARC (Hanson) pit East</td>
<td>SP 480106 A</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Handaxes, cleaver, etc</td>
<td>flint</td>
<td>Ex</td>
<td>H1</td>
<td>Hardaker 1989-93</td>
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<td>29</td>
<td>Cassington ARC (Hanson) pit West</td>
<td>SP 475106 A</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>cores, choppers, flakes, quartzite,</td>
<td>flint</td>
<td>Ex</td>
<td>HT</td>
<td>Hardaker 1992 on</td>
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<td>46951117 A</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Chopper</td>
<td>flint</td>
<td>Ex</td>
<td>Cassington</td>
<td>Hardaker 2001</td>
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<td>31</td>
<td>Cassington Evenlode river bed</td>
<td>SP 44 10 G</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>handaxe</td>
<td>flake</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>SMR</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>&gt;1968</td>
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<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Cassington near village hall</td>
<td>SP 454 106 E</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>handaxe</td>
<td>flint</td>
<td>ER</td>
<td>Cassington</td>
<td>Hardaker 2001</td>
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**Early Lower/Middle Palaeolithic**

1. **Abingdon Culham Hill** - SU 508962
2. **Abingdon Radley Road pit** - SU 509982 E
3. **Abingdon Radley Road pit** - 15446 SU 495 975 E
4. **Abingdon Sewage wks** - SU 496953 A
5. **Abingdon Start Street** - SU 499671 A
6. **Abingdon Tythe Fm** - SU 484958 A
7. **Abingdon Thripl** - SU 520971 A
8. **Abingdon Lodge Hill** - SU 50898 A
9. **Benson** - SU 517 917 G
10. **Benson Goulds Grove pit** - 4115 SU 644 802
11. **Benson Gould's Heath** - SU 645 900 E
12. **Benson Turners Court farm pits** - 2486 SU 6423 884 A
13. **Berinsfield** - SU 580 969 A
14. **Berinsfield Mount Farm** - 1849 SU 578 960 E
15. **Berinsfield Mount Farm ARC airfield pit** - 13013 SU 585 967 E
16. **Berinsfield Mount Farm pit/Queenford pits** - 15807 SU 583 960 E
17. **Bladon** - 583 SP 4488 1496 A
18. **Blenheim Grim's Dyke** - SP 406183 G
19. **Brightwell-cum-Solwold Rush Court (nr.)** - 2130 SU 60789132 A
20. **Brightwell-cum-Solwold Nr kibids Ditch** - 7628 SU 5693 8967 A
21. **Broadwell** - 12883 SU 557964 (G)
22. **Broughton** - SP 235040 G
23. **Bucot** - 12884 SU 557960 (G)
24. **Bucot** - SU 557960 (G)
25. **Buscot** - 16470 SU 241 969 E
26. **Caroe End** - SU 678796 (G)
27. **Cassington** - 8074 SP 465 102 A
28. **Cassington ARC (Hanson) pit East** - SP 480106 A
29. **Cassington ARC (Hanson) pit West** - SP 475106 A
30. **Cassington ARC (Hanson) pit North** - 46951117 A
31. **Cassington Evenlode river bed** - SP 44 10 G
32. **Cassington near village hall** - SP 454 106 E
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site Name</th>
<th>Coordinates</th>
<th>Findings</th>
<th>Age</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cassington</td>
<td>SP 453103 A</td>
<td>1 handaxe</td>
<td>flint</td>
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<td>Caversham, Kidmore Road Pit</td>
<td>SU 705765 E</td>
<td>1 handaxe</td>
<td>flint</td>
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<tr>
<td>Charlbury</td>
<td>12888</td>
<td>1 unspecified</td>
<td>S</td>
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<tr>
<td>Charlbury</td>
<td>SP 360 195 E</td>
<td>1 implement</td>
<td>S</td>
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<tr>
<td>Checkendon Rumarhedge Bottom</td>
<td>8089</td>
<td>1 core</td>
<td>SMR E</td>
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<td>Chilton ARC Gravel pit</td>
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<td>Ex</td>
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<td>Chilsehampton Allen's Pit</td>
<td>SU 575977 E</td>
<td>2 handaxes</td>
<td>flint?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cholsey</td>
<td>15447</td>
<td>1 handaxe</td>
<td>flint</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cholsey Nr. Papst Way</td>
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<td>1 handaxe</td>
<td>flint</td>
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<td>Combe</td>
<td>SP 408166 A</td>
<td>1 handaxe &amp; cores, flakes</td>
<td>quartzite</td>
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<tr>
<td>Crownshar Tumours Court pit</td>
<td>SU 462882 E</td>
<td>52 handaxes</td>
<td>flint?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Crownshar/ Newham Murn Lonesome Fm</td>
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<td>1 handaxe</td>
<td>others</td>
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<td>13591</td>
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<td>SMR R</td>
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<td>Dorchester Allen's pit</td>
<td>12880</td>
<td>1 implemented</td>
<td>flint?</td>
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<td>SU 578692 U</td>
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<td>flint</td>
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<td>Dorchester Oxford Road pit</td>
<td>15323.23</td>
<td>1 clear</td>
<td>flint</td>
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<td>8 handaxes etc</td>
<td>f &amp; q</td>
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<td>Drayton Curtis pits</td>
<td>SU 491745 A</td>
<td>19 handaxes, cores, flakes</td>
<td>f &amp; q</td>
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<td>Drayton Stonehath Fin (nr.)</td>
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<td>1 handaxe butt</td>
<td>flint?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ducklington Gill Mit pit</td>
<td>SP 374006 G</td>
<td>35 various</td>
<td>Quartzite</td>
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<td>Dunstend</td>
<td>SU 730780 (G)</td>
<td>1 handaxe</td>
<td>flint</td>
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<td>East End Start Copse</td>
<td>SU 401148 A</td>
<td>4 bifaces, cores</td>
<td>f &amp; quartz</td>
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<td>Emmen Green</td>
<td>SU 723767 A</td>
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<td>Emmen Green Hathaways pit</td>
<td>SU 720770 (G)</td>
<td>1 handaxe</td>
<td>flint?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ewelme general area</td>
<td>SU 649515 (G)</td>
<td>25 21 handaxes, 4 other</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ewelme Painters pit</td>
<td>2500</td>
<td>SU 644430 A</td>
<td>4 handaxes</td>
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<td>Ewelme pit nr. Humblow Copse</td>
<td>SU 649515 (G)</td>
<td>1 flake</td>
<td>Ex</td>
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<td>Ewelme Humblows pit</td>
<td>SU 645297 (G)</td>
<td>5 59 handaxes, 6 misc.</td>
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<td>Eye &amp; Dunsmore</td>
<td>SU 74027632 A</td>
<td>1 handaxe</td>
<td>flint</td>
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<td>Eye &amp; Dunsmore c.150m SE of Playhatch</td>
<td>SU 74277604 A</td>
<td>2 handaxes</td>
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<td>3 20 handaxes, 13 other</td>
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Note: The table contains a list of finds from various archaeological sites in Oxfordshire, England, including handaxes, flakes, and other artifacts. The references indicate the specific locations and details of each find, along with the quantities and dates of discovery.
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<tr>
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<td>Oxford Iffley see Iffley</td>
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<td>Oxford Longdale Road</td>
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<td>Oxford Marston Farm</td>
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<td>5 handaxes, 1 flake (one q) R Roe 252; ER A 1897</td>
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<td>1 handaxe flint S N Drift Wallis 1988</td>
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<td>8098 SU 768788 E</td>
<td>57 handaxes, 3 flakes flint Roe 254; W 200 U 1926-69</td>
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<td>Stanton Harcourt Vicarage pit</td>
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<td>Shredley Shredley farm</td>
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<td>Sunningwell SW of Blakes Oak</td>
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<td>Tokers Green Tanners Farm/pit</td>
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<td>Wallingford Rush Court</td>
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<td>Wolvercote Pear Tree pit</td>
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**Later Lower/Middle Palaeolithic**

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**British Mousterian**

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<td>Clayhill</td>
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