This single stone artefact is important, as it is the second in situ mid to late Acheulean handaxe recovered from a fossil-bearing site in the COHWHS, where there are few similar examples. Three handaxes, a cleaver and a pick-like artefact were recovered from miners' dumps at nearby Swartkrans and described by Leakey$^{24}$ as elongate to elongate-ovate.

The Swartkrans artefacts were recovered from dump sites and are thus poorly provenanced and so difficult to age. Sterkfontein has produced few comparable artefacts and, until this discovery, was the only site in the Sterkfontein Valley to have yielded in situ artefacts.$^{23}$ The Sterkfontein tools consist of a single 11 cm handaxe from M5 West, which is dated to c. 1.7–1.4 Myr ago, two proto-bifaces and a single cleaver.$^{19,20,22,23,26}$

Given the relative scarcity of such tools, the recovery of the Gladysvale handaxe from a well-provenanced location and dateable deposits represents a significant addition to the artefact assemblages from the Plio-Pleistocene sites of the COHWHS.

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