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An Acheulean handaxe from Gladysvale Cave site, Gauteng, South Africa.

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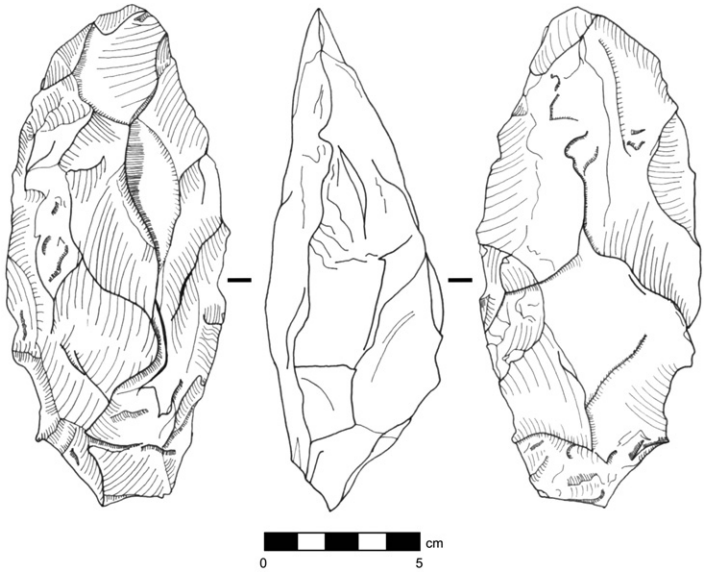


Fig. 3. Line drawings of the Gladysvale handaxe GV15605 (from left to right: dorsal surface, profile, ventral surface, cm scale).

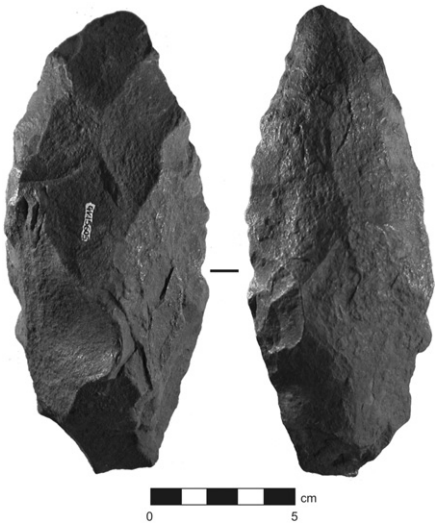


Fig. 4. Photograph of the handaxe (from left to right: dorsal and ventral surfaces, cm scale).

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 in plan form and made from quartzite, diabase and dolerite. Another well-made handaxe was described by Clark, who tentatively identified the raw material as hornfels.[25] 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 quartzite 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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