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Paleolithic Implement from Cerney Wick

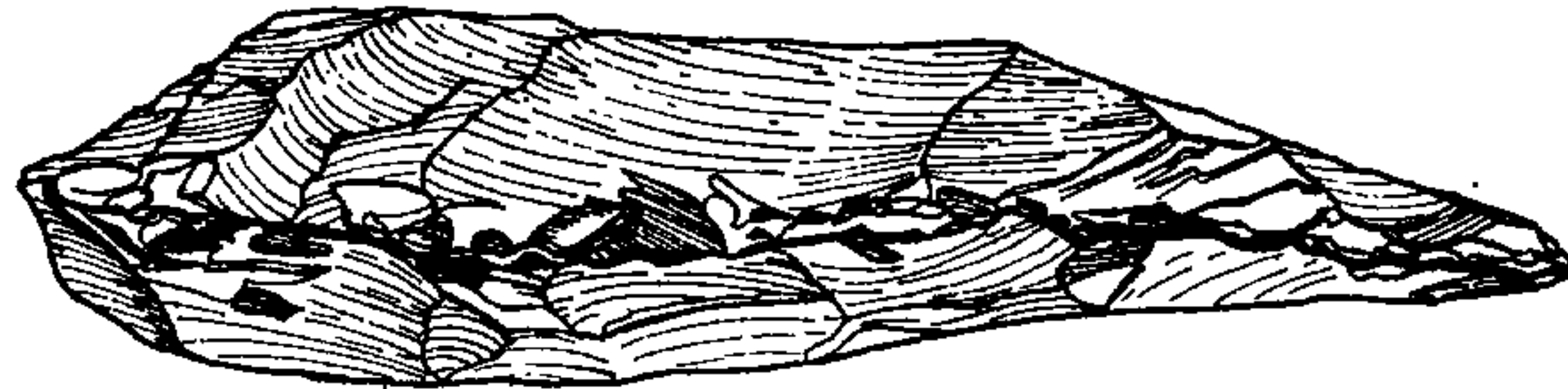
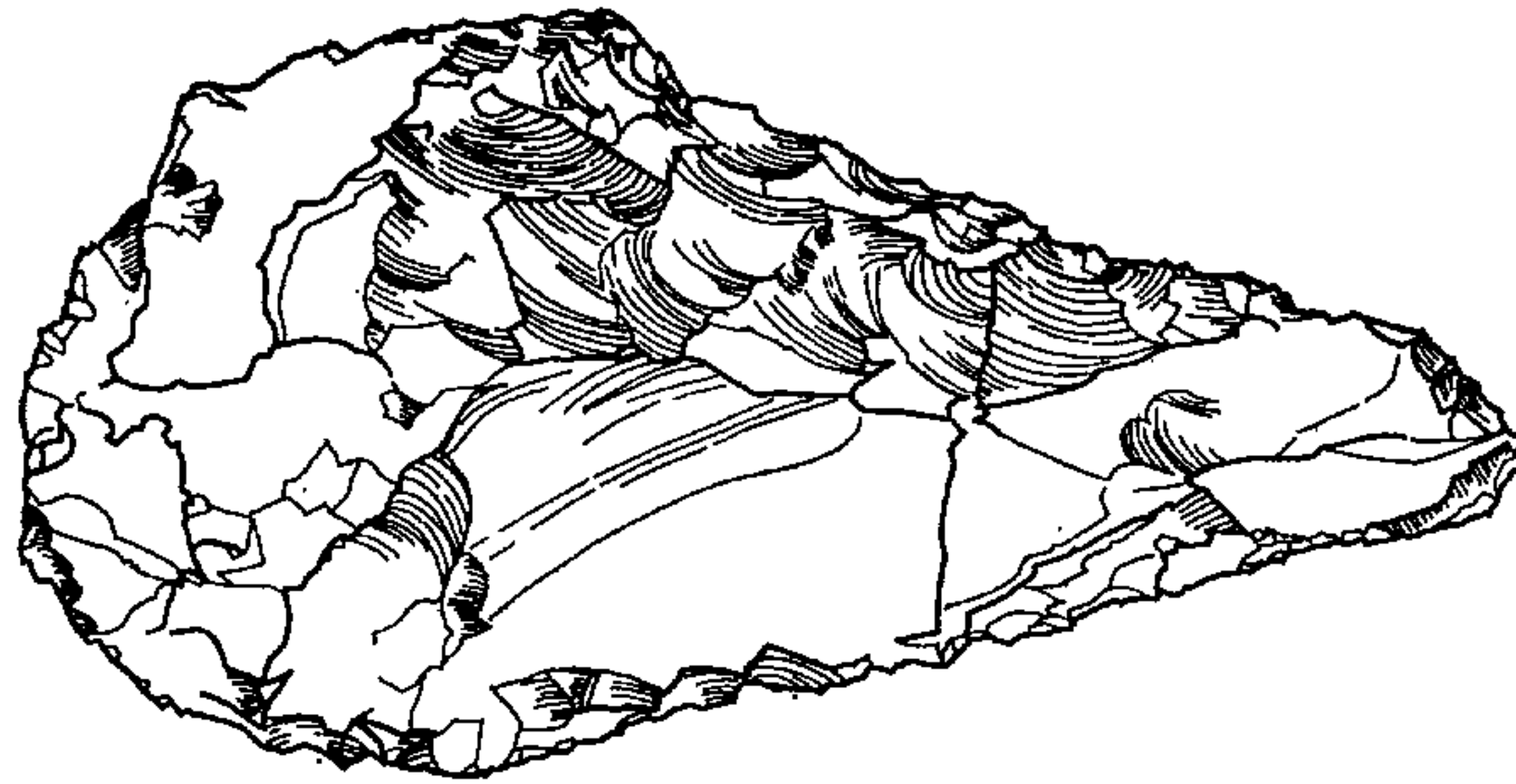
by D. J. Viner
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Notes

A PALAEOLITHIC IMPLEMENT FROM CERNEY WICK

IN 1966 Mr L. V. Grinsell published the find of a palaeolithic hand-axe from Poole Keynes,¹ and this has since been recorded as the most westerly known palaeolith in the Thames valley². In 1973 a further example was discovered in a neighbouring parish in similar circumstances, during the course of gravel extraction within the area of the Cotswold Water Park.



1. *Trans. B.G.A.S.*, LXXXV (1966), 207-8.

2. J. J. Wymer, *Lower Palaeolithic Archaeology in Britain* (1968), 84.

Given the considerable rate of gravel extraction within the area, it is a matter for conjecture (and concern) as to how many such implements have been disturbed and removed from the area without any form of recognition and no means of recording their existence. This point is supported by the fact that both were essentially chance finds, largely resulting from the interest and observation from one employee of the gravel company concerned.

The 1973 find was made on 9 October at Halford Quarry, at O.S. Nat. Grid, SU068968 approximately, being south of the new 'spine' road linking the A419 Cirencester—Cricklade road with the main gravel extraction areas of South Cerney and Ashton/Somerford/Poole Keynes. Although in the parish of South Cerney, the gravel pit in question is associated with the village of Cerney Wick to the south-east, and is so referred to here to avoid confusion with the extensive area of gravel extraction north of the 'spine' road. The find spot is approximately 6 km north-east of the Poole Keynes find.

The hand-axe was recovered from newly extracted gravel being deposited into a lorry and its discovery reported to the Corinium Museum by Mr Pockett, an employee of Roger Constant & Co Ltd. Both he and the company are to be congratulated on their observations and willingness to present their finds to public collections, the Poole Keynes implement to Bristol City Museum and the Cerney Wick hand-axe to the Corinium Museum, Cirencester (Acc. No. 1976/363) where it is now on display.

The axe is a fine example of Acheulian type, patinated and slightly rolled. It is 14.5 cms in length, almost exactly the same as the Poole Keynes example.

I am grateful to Alison Howard-Drake, museum assistant at the Corinium Museum for her illustration of the hand-axe.

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D. J. VINER.

EXCAVATIONS ON MINCHINHAMPTON COMMON IN 1973

Introduction

Following the proposal by the North-West Gloucestershire Water Board to lay two new water pipes from the reservoir on Minchinhampton common, one towards Box and the other towards the Park, a short excavation was mounted for two weeks in July 1973. As with much of the common, the areas affected by the pipe-line were scheduled as being of archaeological interest.

The major archaeological features of the common have been fully recorded by R.C.H.M.¹, of which the most notable are the Bulwarks (1), and the Amberley 'rampart' (7). Mrs Clifford's sections through the Amberley 'rampart', possibly one of the earliest earthworks, in 1937² revealed a bank 32 feet wide rising from the edge of a flat-bottomed ditch 23 feet across and 8 feet deep, producing iron age 'B' and so-called 'Belgic' pottery sherds. The most prominent earthwork is that known as the Bulwarks, an iron age bank and ditch, extending for at least 1½ miles from just north of the Halfway House inn to a point in the Park, beyond which it has been destroyed. It has an overall width of 47 to 62 feet and the bank varies from 1½ to 4½ feet in height. Neither the Bulwarks nor the 'rampart' extend over the complete summit of the common. If the Bulwarks are viewed as a defensive earthwork enclosing an *oppidum* sited under modern Minchinhampton, the acceptance of an internal ditch would be necessary. An alternative explanation for the purpose of the Bulwarks is a demarcation line separating the main area of Minchinhampton common from Rodborough common. If so, why was a shorter and more direct line between Box and Burleigh not chosen?

1. Royal Commission on Historical Monuments, *Iron Age and Roman Monuments in the Gloucestershire Cotswolds* (1977). The Commission's numbering of monuments for the parish of Minchinhampton is followed in this report.

2. E. M. Clifford, 'The Earthworks at Rodborough, Amberley and Minchinhampton, Gloucestershire', *Trans. B.G.A.S.*, LIX (1937), 287-307.