

AXE

Unique ID: HESH-792474

Object type certainty: Certain

Workflow status: Awaiting validation

A complete, but damaged, knapped (?), and ground axe head of probable later Neolithic date (2900-2100 BC). The axe is knapped from a mid brownish green black igneous rock, possibly a Gabbro. This rock could be knapped in a similar way to flint to form tools. However, the composition of the rock which forms the axe head is different to that of the majority of stone axe heads from the period. The axe head also has a thin seam of softer material probably a pyroxene inclusion. Pyroxene is common as an inclusion in many igneous rocks but is not often found in stone axe heads. The presence of the pyroxene may suggest that the axe head was formed with minimal knapping as it is possible that the seam would have acted as flaw in the stone. Other inclusions within the matrix are feldspar and olivine. It is also possible that the presence of this deep black seam as well as the white feldspar would have meant that the axe was highly prized as it would be different to other axes being used locally.

This axe is sub-rectangular in plan and sub-oval (humped) in cross section. It measures 135.6mm length, 66.5mm width, is 39.3mm thick and weighs 569 grams. The butt of the axe is rounded; the long sides of the axe expand along its length until they meet the cutting edge which is crescent shaped. The two longitudinal edges have clear facets which have been blurred by grinding / polishing and abrasion in the ploughsoil. The surface of the axe is relatively rough and course and is unlike axes of similar date which have a finely polished smooth finish. The coarseness of the surface is due to the crystalline nature of the igneous rock.

The main area of damage is to the cutting edge of the axe. Here there is a large oval flake removed the upper face of the axe. It is difficult to tell whether this is a deliberate flake taken to sharpen the edge or whether it is as a result of later damage. In my opinion it is likely to be the later as the scar has not been polished or ground out and also the removal of the flake has left an irregular cutting edge. Other damage presence is due to movement in the plough soil; this has resulted in the edge of the axe being rounded and a series of longitudinal scratches being formed. This axe falls into a well known form of tool which is used during the Neolithic period. The procurement sources (where the rock naturally outcrops) are relatively well studied and maps showing the distribution of the findspots in relation to the source are useful in understanding the complex nature of movement, exchange and gift giving during this period. However, it is impossible to source axes such as these without a detailed petrological analysis of the rock. The rock type, Gabbro, is commonly found across both Scotland and England as well as in Continental Europe.

Thanks are extended to Mr Daniel Lockett, Curator of Natural Sciences, Shropshire Museum Service for his help in identifying the rock type.

Class: Ground

Subsequent actions

Subsequent action after recording: Returned to finder

Chronology

Broad period: NEOLITHIC

Subperiod from: Late

Period from: NEOLITHIC

Date from: 2900 BC

Date to: 2100 BC

Dimensions and weight

Quantity: 1

Length: 135.6 mm

Width: 66.5 mm

Thickness: 39.3 mm

Weight: 569 g

Discovery dates

Date(s) of discovery: Tuesday 20th September 2005

Personal details

This information is restricted for your access level.

Materials and construction

Primary material: Stone

Manufacture method: Multiple

Completeness: Incomplete

Spatial metadata

Region: [West Midlands](#) (European Region)

County or Unitary authority: [County of Herefordshire](#) (Unitary Authority)

District: [County of Herefordshire](#) (Unitary Authority)

Parish or ward: [Vowchurch](#) (Civil Parish)

Spatial coordinates

4 Figure: SO3537

Four figure Latitude: 52.02758684

Four figure longitude: -2.94880082

1:25K map: SO3537

1:10K map: SO33NE

Grid reference source: GPS (from the finder)

Unmasked grid reference accurate to a 1000 metre square.

Discovery metadata

Method of discovery: Fieldwalking

General landuse: Cultivated land

finds.org.uk