A GREEN BARBED AND TANGED ARROWHEAD FROM OXFORDSHIRE

During excavations by Oxford Archaeology at Ireland’s Land, a site located between Northmoor and West End in Oxfordshire (SP 422 040), an unusual green-coloured, early Bronze Age, barbed and tanged arrowhead was recovered from the fill of a late Iron Age/early Roman enclosure ditch. The arrowhead has a broken tip, which could have occurred during use, and uneven barbs. The raw material is dark green in colour with obvious shell fragment inclusions and pale speckles (silicified carbonates), and was identified as a carboniferous chert by Professor John Allen (University of Reading). This material is found as a band within the Clifton Down and Black Rock Limestones, which outcrop in the Mendips, Somerset, for example at Broadfield Down (ST 480 640), a distance of approximately 100km from the place of discovery. Although chert artefacts are common in south-west and northern England, they are rarely found in Oxfordshire, presumably due to the relative local abundance of chalk-derived flint. The transportation of either the finished tool or the raw material suggests links between the Mendips and Oxfordshire during the Bronze Age and the unusual nature of the arrowhead may imply that the artefact carried a higher level of significance than those made from local materials. The only other lithic artefacts from the site were one broken and heavily corticated flint flake and one broken flint blade. A full excavation report will shortly be published in South Midlands Archaeology.

Figure 1: The arrowhead

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