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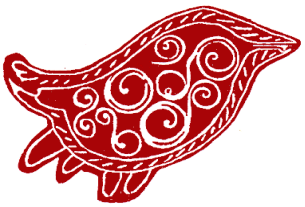

Title: Note: A stone battle-axe from County Cork

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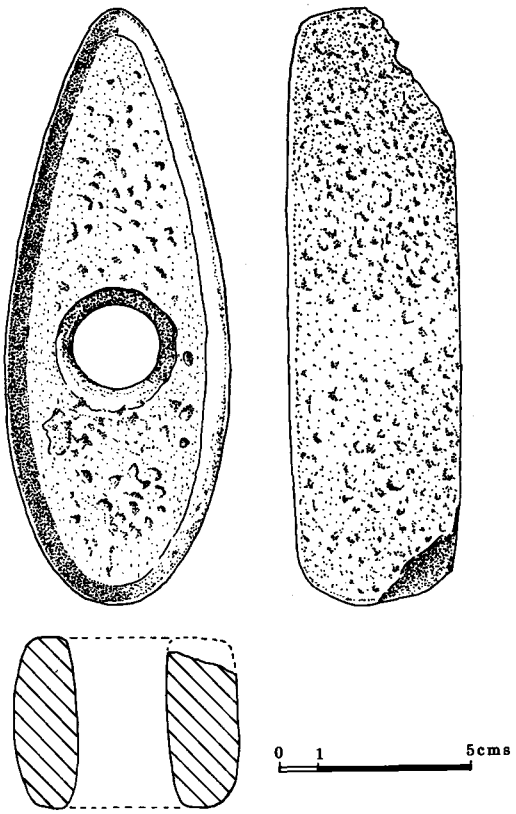
Note

A STONE BATTLE-AXE FROM COUNTY CORK

The stone battle-axe which is the subject of this note was originally housed in the Geological Museum, London, and was subsequently transferred, along with other archaeological material, to the Dept of Prehistoric and Roman Antiquities in the British Museum. The only information concerning the circumstances of its discovery is the accompanying label, 'Found in the old working of a copper mine, Co. Cork'. The axe is parallel-side in profile and boat-shaped in plan, having the slightly hour glass-shaped perforation set towards the butt end. The artefact has not been petrologically sectioned but is made of a fine-grained igneous rock with a severely pitted outer surface as the result of weathering.

The axe is one of a group of twenty-nine such axes from Ireland. These have a generally northern and north-eastern distribution pattern. The majority of examples in this group have no context although four were recovered from rivers. For their dating one therefore has to rely on British associations of such axes where a number have accompanied Beakers in a funerary context (Roe 1966, 219) and there are contemporary associations without a ceramic element with flat riveted bronze daggers. The range of artefact associations with early copper mines is extremely limited, being largely confined to stone mauls, a few wooden objects and a possible hoard of flint axes from Ballyrizzard (Ballyrisode), West Carbery (*Journ. RSAI* 1881, 15, 341). The possible association of a battle-axe of Beaker date is therefore interesting in suggesting an earlier date for the beginning of copper-mining in south-west Ireland than the existing C-14 dates would indicate (O'Brien, 1987).



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The original drawing of the axe was made by Mr Phil Dean of the British Museum and prepared for publication by Mr Dermot Moore, QUB. I am grateful to Dr Ian Kinnes for drawing my attention to this object.

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O'Brien, W.F. 1987. The dating of the Mt Gabriel type mines of West Cork. *Journ. Cork Hist. & Arch. Soc.* 92, 50-70.

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