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**A Neolithic flint axe from Lechlade**

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## Notes

### A NEOLITHIC FLINT AXE FROM LECHLADE

The neolithic-type flint axe forming the subject of this note was found in 1947 by Mr Green of Lechlade, in a field near Butler's Court, Lechlade (approx. SP 206004). The exact circumstances of recovery are not known, but the implement is complete, well preserved, and shows only slight traces of post-depositional damage. A milky-white patina, only occasionally interrupted by iron staining, covers the entire surface.

FIG. 1 (upper) shows elevations and a horizontal cross-section of the axe, which has a maximum length of 104 mm, a blade width of 40 mm, and a maximum thickness of 19 mm. The axe weighs 88.2 g and therefore falls at the bottom end of the range of known size classes (Tyler 1976, 5). At first sight the axe appears to be the product of reworking a broken, larger implement, but this is not so. The basic shape was formed by careful flaking, followed by a limited amount of grinding at the blade end and in small patches elsewhere. FIG. 1 (lower) shows the ground areas in black. The grinding cuts across existing flake beds and is not the remnant surface from a previous form. The overall outline is trapezoidal, the blade is straight and sharp although one corner suffered damage during use, and the cutting edge has slight traces of wear in the form of scratches and small percussion flake-scars. The profile is symmetrical, the cross-section roughly ovate. The butt end is square, broad, and thick, having been so formed by the removal of a large flake extending across the thickness of the implement. Slight shoulders can be detected about three-quarters of the way up the length of the axe, although it is uncertain whether they were produced deliberately. The sides have been lightly ground, but not sufficiently to produce facets. The weight is distributed evenly along the body, the centre of balance being immediately behind the blade. Taking account of size, the straight blade, symmetry, and weight distribution it can be suggested that the axe was used in light woodworking activities, but edge-wear studies and comparisons with experimental pieces would be needed to confirm this. No trace of hafting arrangements survive.

The distinctive morphological traits of the Lechlade axe, coupled with the unusual combination of flaking and grinding used in its manufacture, allow it to be grouped with a small number of similar implements from the region, designated Type A by Adkins and Jackson (1978, 14) in their recent survey of flint and stone axes from the Thames valley. Very few similar pieces have been found on the Cotswolds, the most notable example being from Condicote parish (Tyler 1976, fig. 5, Cc1). There are at present no known stratified examples from Gloucestershire, but of special interest is the axe found in chamber I of the Cotswold-Severn tomb of Ty-isaf, Powys (Grimes 1939, 131). In addition to displaying similar manufacturing traits, the Ty-isaf axe is almost exactly the same size as the Lechlade specimen, although the former does have a slightly wider butt and a more curved blade. Current understanding of the chronology of Cotswold-

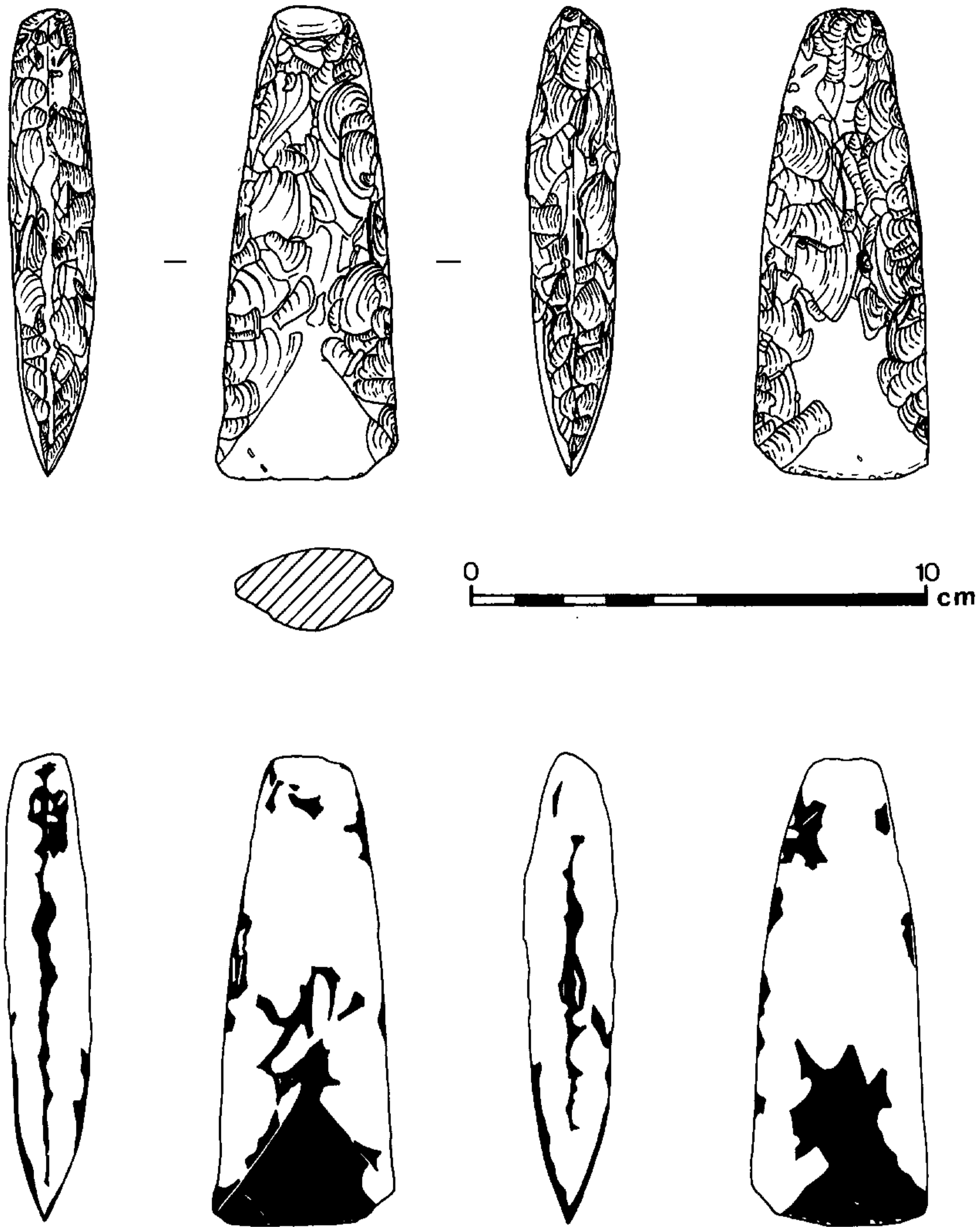


FIG. 1 Neolithic flint axe from Lechlade, Gloucestershire. Drawn by Jane Timby.

Severn tombs would suggest a date in the first half of the third millennium bc for the Ty-isaf axe. At the time of writing no neolithic settlement of this period is known in the Lechlade area, although other axes of stone are known from the parish (Adkins and Jackson 1978, 33; Darvill 1983, 368; Evens *et al.* 1962, 258) and traces of late neolithic activity are accumulating (Darvill 1984, 101).

The Lechlade axe could not have been made from locally available drift flint, and must have been imported either as a ready-made object or as suitable raw material from the flint-rich chalklands of southern or eastern England. This axe provides a welcome addition to the small number of complete neolithic axes from Gloucestershire, particularly as it exemplifies a relatively rare typological class.

*Note*

The axe was given to Mrs M.U. Jones by Mr A.J. Baxter during the course of her excavations in the Lechlade area, and has remained with the finds from that work until recently when post-excavation work began under the auspices of the Oxford Archaeological Unit. Since the axe was not recovered from an excavated area it was decided to publish it separately. The author is grateful to Mrs M.U. Jones and Mr A.J. Baxter for information regarding the finding of the axe, and for the opportunity to prepare this report. The axe will be deposited in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.

*Bibliography*

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## A ROMAN PIG OF LEAD FOUND AT SYDE, GLOS

This note serves to draw together the references for the discovery of a Roman lead pig at Syde in 1962 (*J Roman Stud* 53, 1963, 162 and pl. 17) and to comment upon its significance. The pig (FIG. 2) is preserved in the collections of the Corinium Museum at Cirencester and is available for study by appointment (accn. no. A327).

The history of the Mendip lead industry has been fully discussed elsewhere (Elkington 1970, 24–30 and 1976), with a further recent discussion and reappraisal as to dating evidence (Whittick 1982). The Syde pig is the only example of an ingot known to have been found in Gloucestershire and is one of ten such products of the Mendip mines known to date from the reign of Vespasian (AD 69–79). Its specifications are: weight: 174lb (78.9 kg); height: 102 mm; base: 584 × 168 mm; face: 520 × 76 mm. An analysis by spectroscopy in 1962–3 (courtesy of G. Clement Whittick and Dr F.R. Tylecote) revealed a silver content of 0.00324 per cent to the ton avoirdupois of lead, copper 0.005 per cent, and antimony not detected.

The inscription (FIG. 2) reads (courtesy of R.P. Wright, formerly Reader in Epigraphy, University of Durham):

face: (moulded)	Imp(eratore) Vesp(asiano) Aug(usto) VIII (plumbum) Brit(annicum) ex ar(gentariis)
left end: (impressed five times)	C(aius) P(ublius) C(. . .)