

Medieval arrowheads from Oliver's Mound, Shrawley, Worcestershire

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1. Summary

Two Fe arrowheads were among surface finds recovered during fieldwork at the castle of Oliver's Mound, Shrawley, between July-October 2009. Both arrowheads are 'military' types with armour-piercing qualities, probably produced between c.1000-1400 AD, and have parallels with finds from several castle sites across England and Wales. It is highly likely that the finds are directly associated with contemporary activity at Oliver's Mound, potentially including the presence or training of military archers in the immediate vicinity.

2. Introduction

2.1 Finds context and recovery

Between July and October 2009 the North Worcestershire Archaeology Group (NWAG) conducted excavations at the site of Oliver's Mound, Shrawley, Worcestershire (SO 8133 6547). The site revealed evidence of medieval activity dating primarily between the 12th-14th centuries, including a small ceramic assemblage and structural remains suggestive of a gatehouse complex (Clarke 2012, p 31), presumably evidence of the castle built by William Beauchamp c.1100 and held by the Pohers soon after (Sproat 2009, p 2).

Accompanying the excavated material were a small number of surface finds recovered by hand in the immediate vicinity of the site, including two arrowheads (*001*, *002*), one of which (*002*) has subsequently gone missing (Sproat pers comm.). The remaining arrowhead, and the photographic record of the missing find, have been examined by the author and are considered below.

3. Discussion

Visual inspection of the arrowheads indicates that both are made of wrought Fe. Arrowhead *001* - the only example that could be examined in detail - appears to have been constructed by beating the metal into a flat plate-like sheet, to be subsequently hammered into a conical shape producing both point and socket. Both arrowheads are socketed forms; no evidence of hafting material was visible in *001*.

Dating medieval arrowheads outside of archaeological contexts is notoriously difficult (Borg 1991, p 79), although Jessop's (1996) typology of excavated specimens indicates some reasonably broad chronological trends. *001* is consistent with Jessop type M6, dated to c.1000-1300, while *002* is Jessop type M9, suggesting a date of c.1250-1400. Both are notably shorter than those recorded by Jessop although this may simply reflect a lack of standardisation, particularly visible in the varied dimensions of comparable 'arrowheads' recorded in the London Museum catalogue (Ward-Perkins 1993, pl XV). Both are 'military' types with slender bodies, possibly designed to pierce plate armour (Jessop 1996, p198); while recent metallographic studies have called this assumption into question (Starley 2005), the forms may nevertheless have been quite capable of penetrating the mail armours in common use until the mid-late 14th century. A slight bend and blunting of the tip of arrowhead *001* is consistent with percussion damage sustained during use, although this is hard to prove given severe corrosion on the reverse side.

The combination of provenance, likely date and military characteristics is interesting. Most comparable finds have been recovered from castle sites (*001* – e.g. Goltho, Beresford et al 1987; *002* – Dryslwyn Castle, Jessop 1996), a pattern clearly shared by the Oliver's Mound examples; similarly, the suggested dates correspond well with excavated evidence for site activity between the 12th-14th centuries (Clarke 2012, p 29). As such, it seems fairly reasonable to suggest a relationship between the arrowheads and roughly contemporary activity at Oliver's Mound; this may relate to the presence or training of military archers in the vicinity of the castle, a practice well documented in the Medieval period (Bradbury 1985, p 160), although the usual caveats apply.

4. Bibliography

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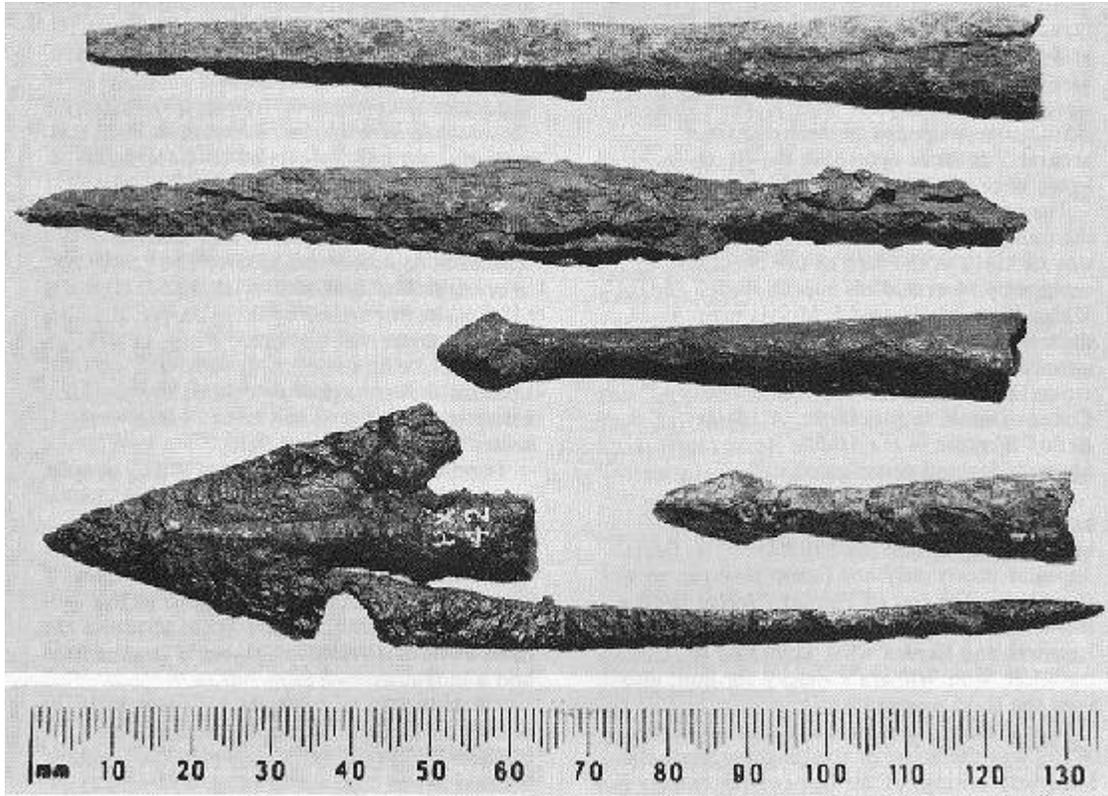
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5. Catalogue

001.		<p>Arrowhead Wrought Fe Oliver's Mound Medieval (c.1000-1300 AD)</p> <p>Length 36mm Width 13mm Thickness 1.5mm Weight 5g</p>
002.		<p>Arrowhead Wrought Fe Oliver's Mound Medieval (c. 1250-1400 AD)</p> <p>Length 73mm</p>

Other examples of medieval Bodkin Point Arrowheads.



From top down:

- 1) Kindrochit Castle, Aberdeenshire
- 2) The site of Flodden
- 3) Craigmillar Castle, near Edinburgh
- 4) Hunthills, Roxburghshire
- 5) unprovenanced.