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Two Socketed Bronze Axes from Gloucestershire

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The earthwork is situated centrally for the fairly extensive prehistoric population of the North Cotswolds, if one may judge this from the number of long and round barrows in the neighbourhood. Though a precise date for the erection of the monument is not possible as yet, it no doubt served as a focal point for those people whose remains were laid in the barrows. There are seven long barrows and twenty-four round barrows within a radius of two miles. Of special account is a coppice, Hull's Plantation across the Dikler valley, where eight round barrows are closely grouped together. The remarkable collection of flints, including leaf-shaped and barbed and tanged arrow-heads, polished flint axes, scrapers, borers and many other types of flint artifacts collected by Mr Swainston around Condicote, also points to a concentration of human occupation in this area.

In conclusion it seems that the spring of water at Condicote must have been largely instrumental in attracting human occupation in a somewhat waterless neighbourhood, and that the spring being held in particular veneration accounted for the siting of the sacred circle, to be followed in the due course of time by a Christian Church.

I am much indebted to Mr and Mrs George Lane of Condicote and the Ministry of Works for the opportunity to examine the site prior to building operations. I also wish to thank Mr G. H. Swainston of The Glebe Farm, Condicote, for his permission to draw attention to his collection of flints.

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TWO SOCKETED BRONZE AXES FROM GLOUCESTERSHIRE

(a) From Sling Common near Coleford.

A socketed and looped Bronze Age axe has recently been found on Sling Common near Coleford (Nat. Grid Ref. 581081) by Mr S. Prest. The find was made whilst digging in an orchard on the Common. It has been presented to the Forest of Dean Local History Society.

This axe, belonging to the Late Bronze Age, has an almost square socket reinforced around the rim. Its dimensions are shown in the drawings (Fig. 1) made by Mr A. G. Hunter of Gloucester City Museum.

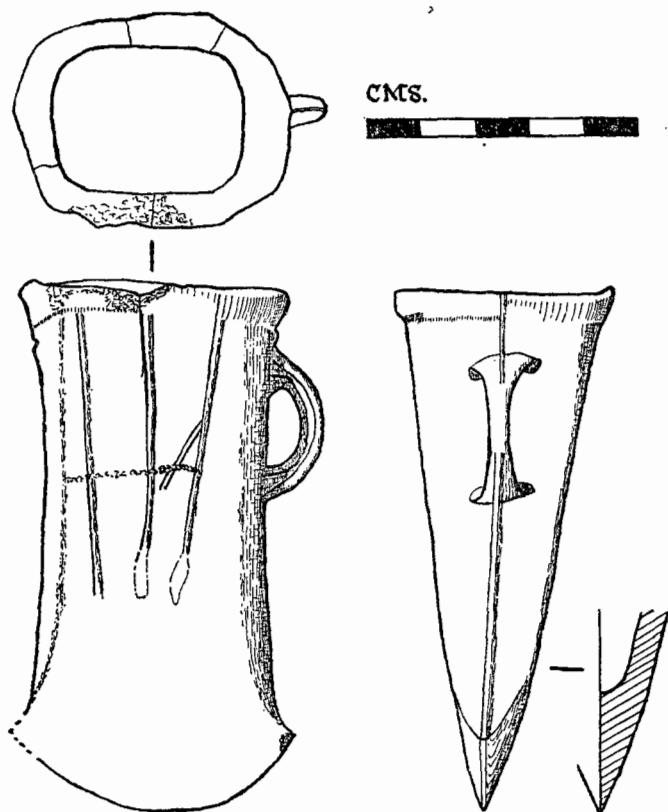


Fig. 1. Socketed bronze axe from Sling Common, Coleford, Glos.

The three ridges found on both faces are convergent so we can place this specimen in the British or South Wales group suggested by the many specimens occurring in that region, e.g. at Llantwit Major, at Ynryshir and St. Fagans, Glam., at

Cyncoed, Cardiff, and also in Monmouthshire and Radnor. The group was first described by Sir John Evans in *Ancient Bronze Implements* (1881), p. 119; and afterwards, with the precision made possible by later discoveries, by Wheeler in *Prehistoric and Roman Wales* (1925), p. 156; and following him by Sir Cyril Fox in *Antiquaries Journal*, XIX (1939), p. 390.

One peculiar feature noticeable in this particular specimen is the bifurcation of one convergent ridge on each face. On the drawing it is the ridge nearest the loop, and on the reverse the ridge farthest from the loop. The axe has a fine green patination.

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(b) From Oldland near Bristol.

In August 1957, the socketed axe here illustrated (FIG. 2) was found by Mr A. C. Bye in California Road (formerly known as Dodd Lane) in the parish of Oldland, Glos., in a developing building estate on the south-eastern outskirts of Bristol (Nat. Grid Ref. approx. ST 663 715). It was presented by him to the City Museum, Bristol, where it is registered as F 3751.

There are several varieties of socketed bronze axe with three vertical or nearly vertical ribs, and Mr H. W. M. Hodges has recently¹ attempted to provide a Map showing the distribution of three main types, concentrated in (1) Scotland and N.E. Ireland; (2) Eastern England, especially Yorkshire; and (3) South Wales and S.W. England. A glance through the British Association's Card Index Catalogue of Bronze Age bronze implements, now housed in an extension of the Ashmolean at Oxford, suggests however that the typology and distribution of three-ribbed socketed axes may be somewhat more involved than Mr Hodges' Map suggests.

It is none the less clear that the predominantly 'Welsh' type is short and stumpy and often has the ribs converging. Of this type is the example recently found on Sling Common near Coleford, Forest of Dean, described by Dr Scott-Garrett on p. 146 of these *Transactions*. The example from Oldland, Gloucestershire, is of a general type which appears to be too

¹ *Ulster Journal of Archaeology*, XVIII (1955), pp. 29-56 and map (Fig. 6).

widely distributed over England and Wales to be referred to any particular region of origin until a fuller study of the type and its variants has been undertaken.

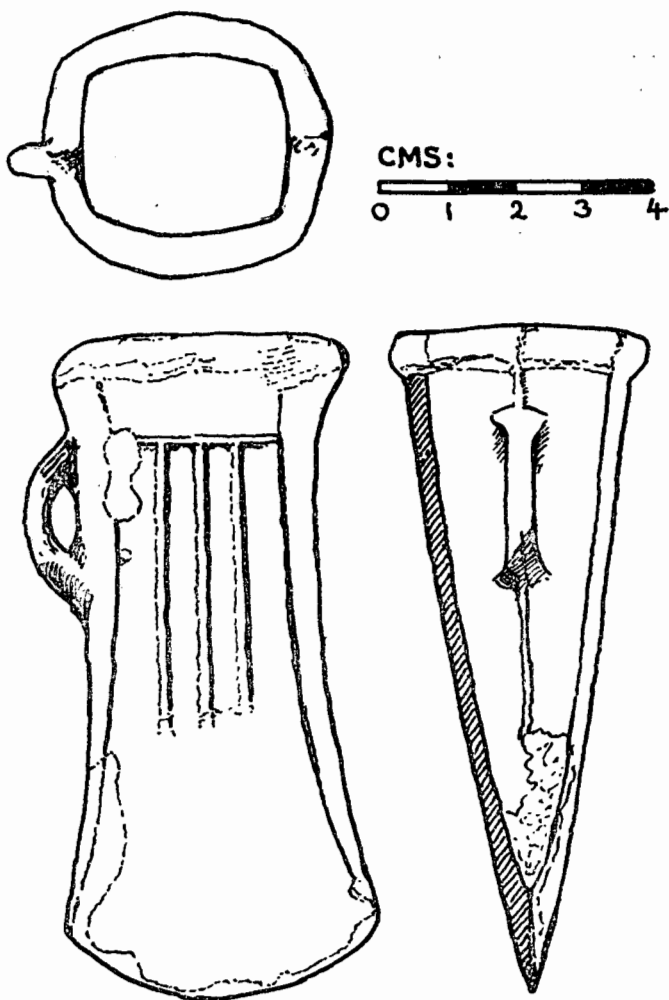


Fig. 2. Socketed bronze axe from Oldland, Glos.

The writer is grateful to the finder Mr A. C. Bye, and to the Committee of the City Museum, Bristol, for permission to publish this implement.

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