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**A Bronze Age palstave from near Cinderford, Gloucestershire**

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## A BRONZE AGE PALSTAVE FROM NEAR CINDERFORD, GLOS.

The palstave described here was discovered in March 1974 by Mr G. Phelps during the working of clay beds at Hawkwell Brickworks (SO 64261538), near Steam Mills in Cinderford parish, Forest of Dean. The implement subsequently came into the possession of Dr Cyril Hart and has not been published previously except for a brief note in *The New Regard of the Forest of Dean* 1 (1985)28.

This implement (FIG. 6) is an example of the unlooped, high-flanged and broad-bladed type of palstave, with in this case V-pattern ridges on the blade. The flanges have been considerably damaged by modern hammering and filing and are much reduced from their original form. There is also some modern damage to the butt and to the cutting edge. The latter has the signs of tentative resharpening and reuse, which have caused some burring-over. Other traces of modern use occur elsewhere over the surface of the palstave, the most pronounced of which are the patches of bright bronze colour and the striations through the patina on one face of the blade (as shown on the illustration).

The ancient surface of the palstave is patinated, having a variegated dark gold, olive-green, and brown colouration. The surface is extensively pock-marked and damage in antiquity to one face of the blade (not shown) has obscured the V-pattern ridges. An ancient break on one of the flanges may have inspired some of the modern harsh treatment of them in an attempt to equalize their height. The flanges rise from markedly curving septa floors, which are of slightly different length, the septum on one side ending in a swallow-hole at the junction with the stop. Below the stop the lines of the flanges extend on to the blade in vestigial form to give the now rather faint V-pattern. The casting-flash is distinctly visible along both sides of the implement and the two faces of the blade have a slightly staggered juxtaposition resulting from an inaccurate registration of the mould sections. The dimensions of the palstave are as follows:

length	154 mm
width (blade)	66 mm
thickness (stop)	26 mm
weight	366.7 grams

This version of the palstave with high flanges and a broad blade has been termed the 'south-western type' (Burgess 1980, 152) because of its predominant regional distribution. It can be associated with the so-called 'ornament horizon' (Smith 1959) of the southern English bronze age and related to the Taunton industrial stage of middle bronze age metalworking dated to around 1350–1200 BC.

Some eleven previous finds of palstaves are known from Gloucestershire, two of them from west of the River Severn (Ellison 1984, 120). None of the earlier finds, however, appears to have been of the same type as the Cinderford palstave, which is of considerable interest in extending the distribution of the 'south-western' type into the county.

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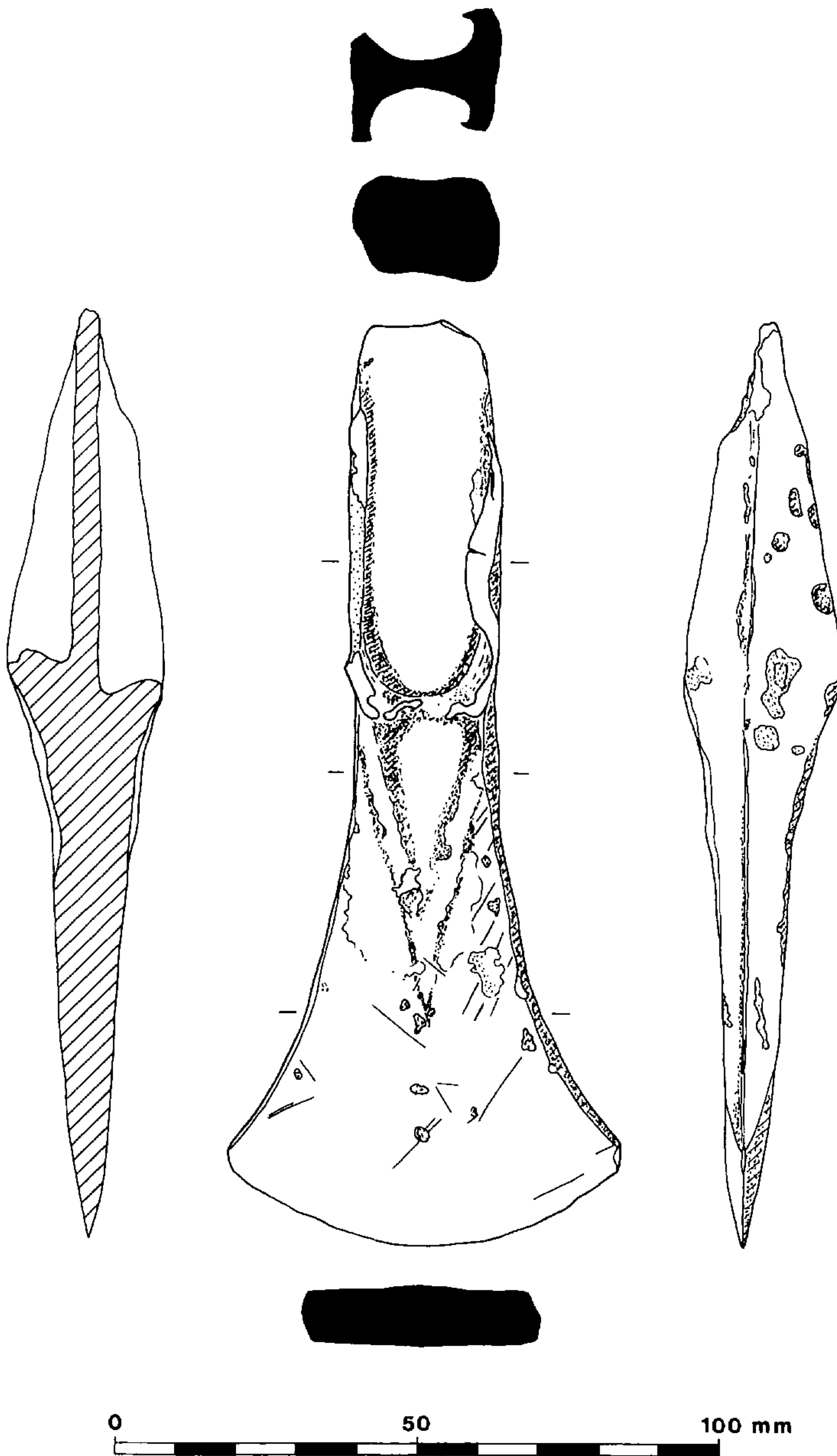


FIG. 6 Palstave from Steam Mills, Cinderford. Scale 2:3. Drawn by A. Saville.