

PROCEEDINGS
OF THE
CAMBRIDGE ANTIQUARIAN
SOCIETY

(INCORPORATING THE CAMBS & HUNTS
ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY)



VOLUME LXXII

for 1982 and 1983

IMRAY LAURIE NORIE AND WILSON

1984

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THE PROCEEDINGS

1. The Editor welcomes the submission of articles on the history and archaeology of the County for publication in the *Proceedings*, but in order to avoid disappointment potential contributors are advised to write to the Editor, to enquire whether the subject is likely to be of interest to the Society, before submitting a final text. The Editor, if necessary with the advice of the editorial committee, reserves the right to refuse to publish any papers even when an earlier approval of the subject has been given.
2. Authors are reminded that the cost of printing is high and that, all other things being equal, a short and succinct paper is more likely to be published than a long one. It would also assist the Editor if contributors who know of possible sources for subventions towards the cost of printing their paper would inform the Editor of this when submitting their manuscript.
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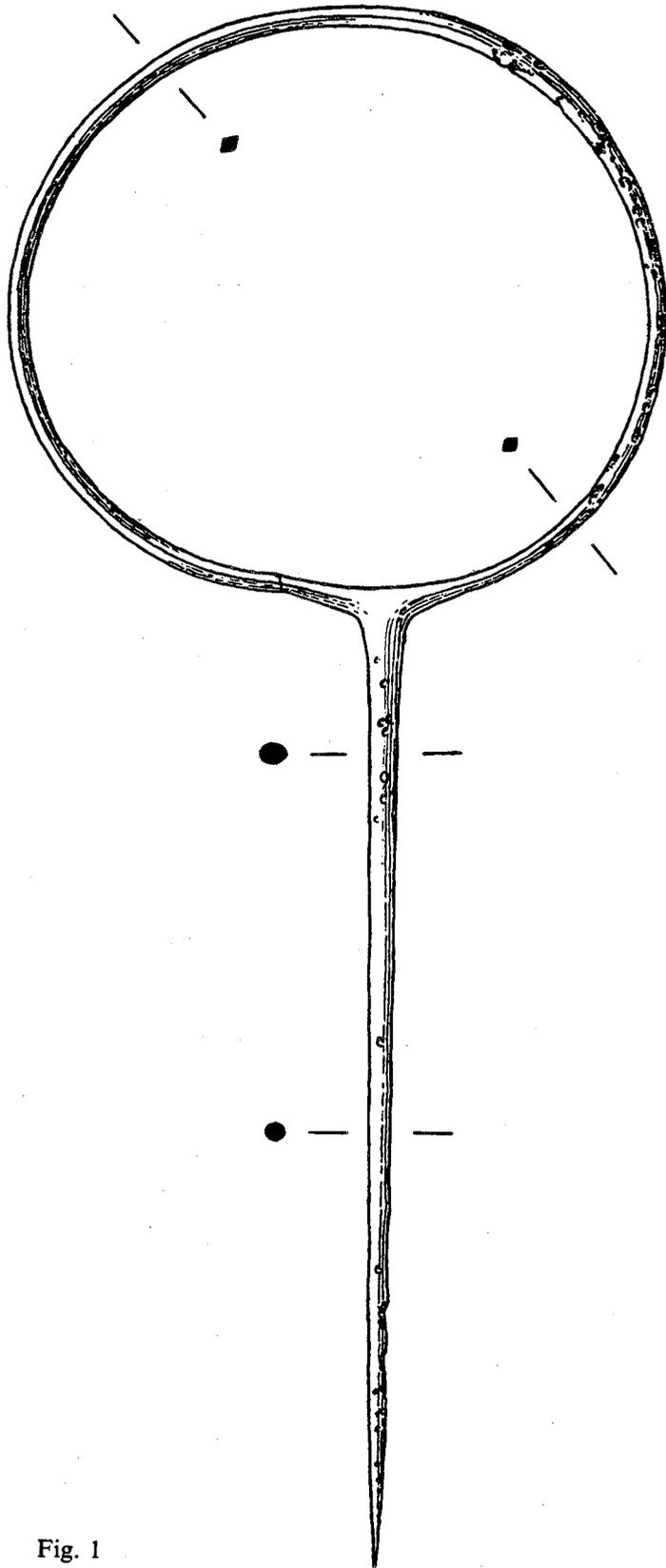


Fig. 1

THREE MIDDLE BRONZE AGE FINDS FROM BAINTON, NORTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE

GAVIN SIMPSON

The three objects described here were all found in different locations in Bainton parish, North Cambridgeshire. All belong to the Middle Bronze Age and two of them have not been previously published. The third object, a quoit-headed pin, was first published by Miranda Green (1977) and has since been noted in at least one other publication (Lawson, 1979) but since the pin was acquired by Peterborough Museum in 1962 (Accession No. L972) a little more information has come to light concerning the findspot and circumstances of discovery which seems worth putting on record.

The pin (fig. 1) has an overall length of 22.5 cms. and the maximum diameter of the head is 9.3 cms. The quoit-head, which is of lozenge cross-section, is set rather lop-sidedly on the shank and is broken just to one side of the junction with it. There are inactive corrosion pits on the right side of the quoit and on the shank, particularly near the point. Apart from these defects it is in excellent condition.

The best parallel to it is among the fragmentary pins from the Taunton Workhouse (Somerset) hoard of the final Middle Bronze Age containing objects and ornaments showing influence from the Nordic Bronze Age of Denmark and North Germany (Smith, 1959). The Bainton pin seems to be particularly close both in its size and form to Taunton, no.2 in *Inventaria Archaeologica*. Like the majority of other examples these pins are undecorated. Quoit-headed pins are found only in southern and eastern Britain and the Bainton pin nicely complements in the west those decorated examples from Barton Bendish and Boughton Fen on the eastern edge of the fens and extends the overall distribution of the type. (*Inventaria Archaeologica*; Lawson, 1979; Rowlands, 1976).

The Museum register gives its provenance as 'near Maxey'. Among historical records compiled by successive vicars of Maxey kept in the rectory is a letter from Donald R. Atkinson, Research Fellow in Archaeology, University College, Reading, giving his opinion of the pin (Sweeting *et al*). The letter dated 21 January 1915, confirms the locality of its findspot as 'near Maxey' and gives a *terminus ante quem* for its discovery. It may also explain its good condition and apparently unpatinated state for 'the colour of the metal is that often or usually found in objects which have lain long in wet heavy soil. The Roman bronze (*sic*) from deep pits at Newstead, near Melrose was almost exactly similar' (Curle, 1911). Finally, a note accompanying the letter records that the pin was exhibited in a cabinet in the Vicar's Museum in the Church vestry. An important source of antiquities near Maxey around the turn of the century was the Helpston Ballast Pits - actually just in Bainton (TF 104067) a parish adjacent to Maxey. Audrey Meaney (1964) records a window urn and other Saxon material from here and also a bronze pin found c. 1915 and kept in the Church vestry. These were the only substantial gravel pits in the Maxey area at this time and their situation in a former flood-channel of the River Welland makes it very likely that waterlogged conditions would have prevailed in any deep-cut archaeological features that existed there. Here would seem to be the findspot of the pin.

The other two objects were surface finds from fields in Bainton. The flanged chisel (fig. 3) which was in the Stamford Museum (Accession No. STN 1310) was found on the western boundary of the parish at TF 088056. It is 11.5 cms. long and 3.1 cms. at its widest point across the blade.*

The earliest metal chisels are the flat chisels of the Early Bronze Age. Flanged chisels without a stopridge as in this example represent the next stage of development and may be assigned to the early Middle Bronze Age. They have a comparatively numerous distribution in East Anglia and the best parallel to this example seems to be an isolated find from Swaffham, Norfolk (Rowlands, 1976).

The palstave axe (fig. 2) was found by Mr H. Wilkinson of Bainton on his land near the hamlet of Ashton (TF 102061) and remains in his possession. It is 16.7 cms. long and 8 cms at its widest across the blade. It is in fine condition with the exception of some recent shallow surface scratches across the lower part of the blade. It has some slight faults from the casting process. There are three small bubbles in the septum and the head of the haft is imperfectly formed. The line of junction of the two parts of the mould may be seen on the side of the axe.

It is an early (shield pattern) palstave as defined by Butler (1963) and Burgess (1964). These developed from the haft flanged axes with a U-rib decoration joining the flanges at the neck of the blade and are thought to be of Irish origin. Rowlands (1976) assigns the type to his Class I, group 1 of palstaves of the early Middle Bronze Age and notes the principal characteristics as the sharp division between blade and septum, the stopridge level with and fused to the flanges and the curved ends of the flanges forming a shield motif on the neck of the blade. He illustrates a similar palstave found in a hoard of rather more evolved palstaves (his Class I, group 5a) at Burley, Hants, but a closer parallel is a single example from

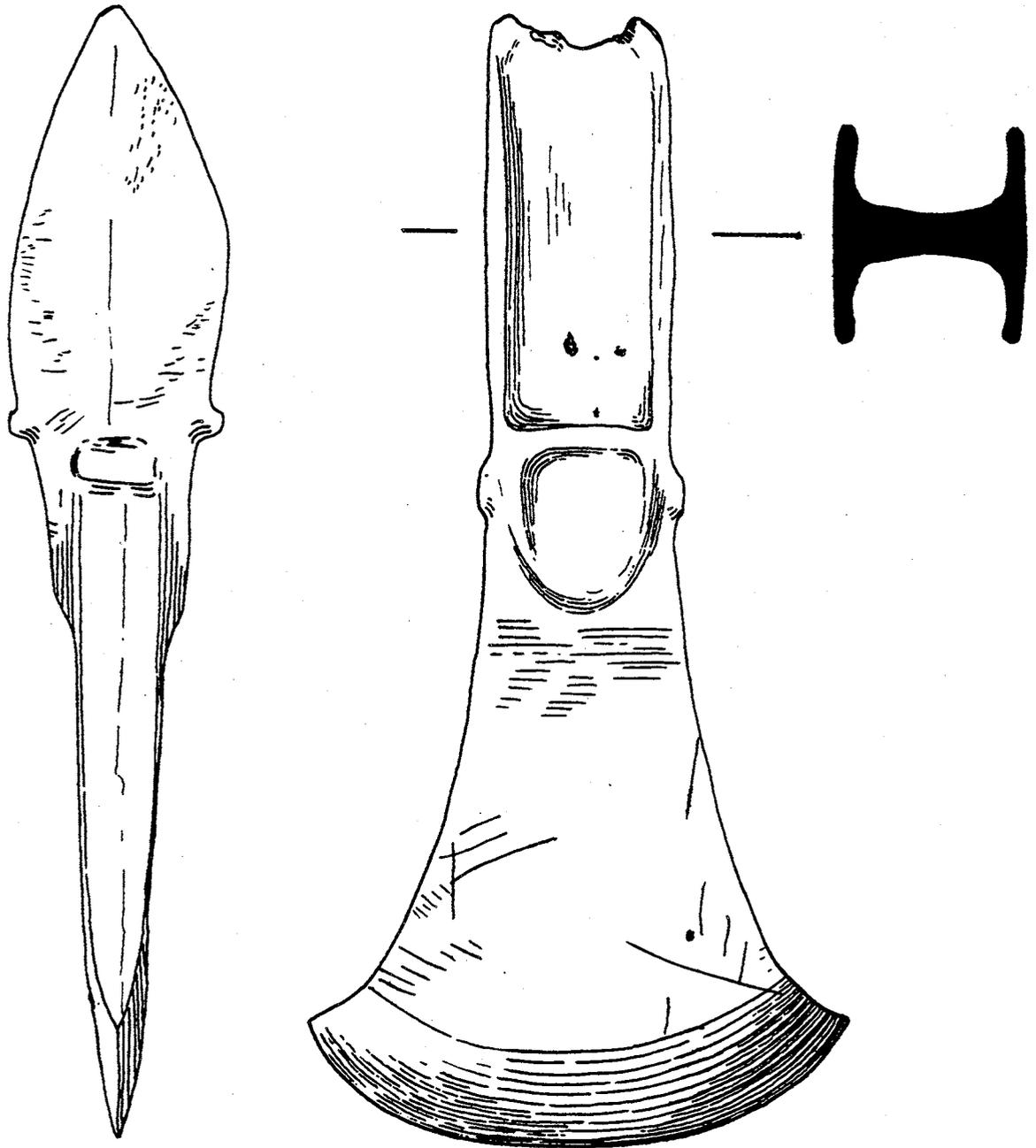


Fig. 2

the River Thames at Tilehurst, Berks. which, like the Bainton example, has a widely splayed blade, which is also a feature of the type (Rowlands, 1976).

* The chisel was stolen from the Museum in a burglary on the night of 24 March 1979 and has not been recovered.

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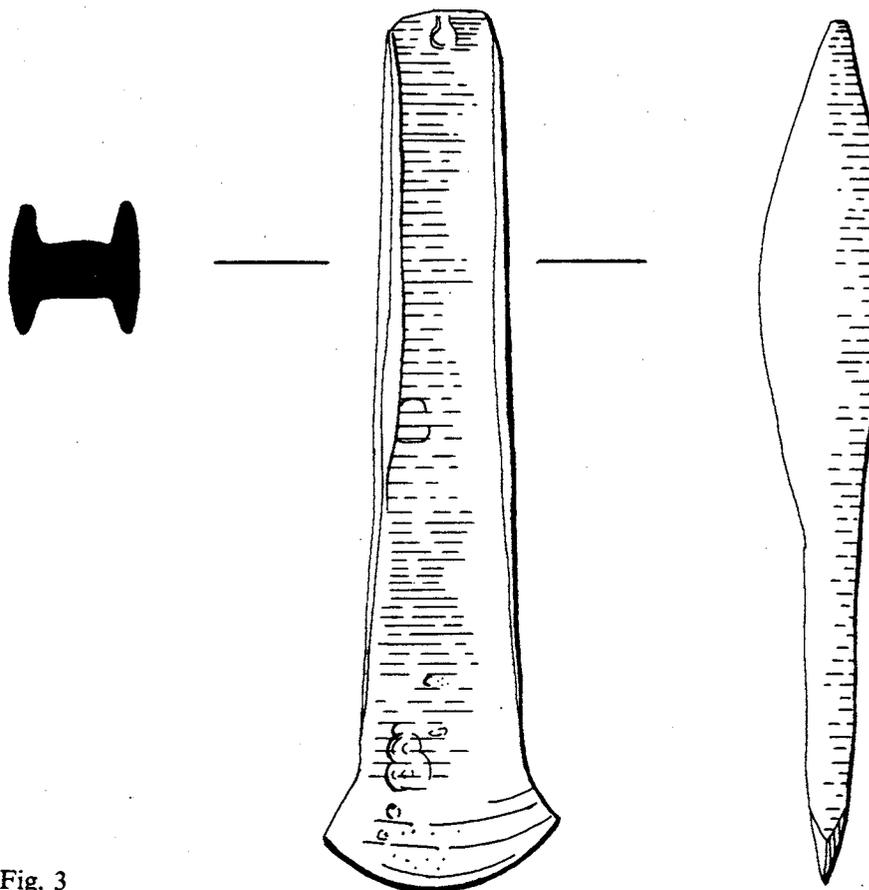


Fig. 3