

A Middle Bronze Age side-looped spearhead from Buckland

The bronze spearhead that forms the subject of this note has only recently come to light but appears, from information passed verbally, to have been found in 1907 by workmen employed on the Buckland estate of F H Beaumont, the great-grandfather of the present owner, Mr A N M Sanders, in whose possession it remains. There is no further information about its provenance. With the spearhead is the pierced tooth of a fox.

The spearhead (fig 1), which measures 218mm × 45mm, can be classified as a basal-looped leaf-shaped spearhead. It dates to the Middle Bronze Age, being supplanted later in the period by spearheads with triangular-shaped blades. Ehrenberg (1977) sees the leaf-shaped type as in use in the middle of this period (ie c 1400–1200BC) while Rowlands (1976) sees the type as having been introduced from Ireland in the later Middle Bronze Age. This type of spearhead has a wide but diffuse distribution mainly across eastern and southern England but with a particular concentration in the Thames valley. Rather fewer have been recorded from the south-east. Ehrenberg illustrates some close parallels; for instance an example from the Thames at Eton (1977, fig 13, 55), measuring 225mm by 52mm, and weighing 220g; and from Sandford, Oxon (1977, fig 14, 99), a somewhat longer example measuring 253mm by 58mm and weighing 330g.

The tooth (fig 2) has been identified by Dr Peter Andrews as the canine of a fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) but in the absence of any further information it must necessarily be doubted whether spearhead and tooth are in any way connected. The tooth has been pierced by a hole drilled close to the centre of balance and could have formed a component of a necklace.

Although poorly provenanced there seems no reason to disbelieve that these finds came from Buckland although it may appear surprising that the spearhead has not come to archaeological attention previously. The spearhead is in very fine condition with no signs of corrosion or obvious damage. For these reasons it could be suggested that it was retrieved from a watery or boggy context and could thus be a ritual deposit, as has been suggested for finds from the Thames in particular. Few weapons of the Middle Bronze Age have been found in Surrey away from the Thames; Needham (1987, 114) cites only three, one of which, the spearhead from Wandle Park, is almost certainly votive. For a findspot for the Buckland spearhead the river Mole, which forms the southern boundary of the parish, is an obvious candidate, as are its tributary streams, two of which spring within Buckland from below the Downs to flow into the Mole at Wonham and Betchworth.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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DAVID WILLIAMS

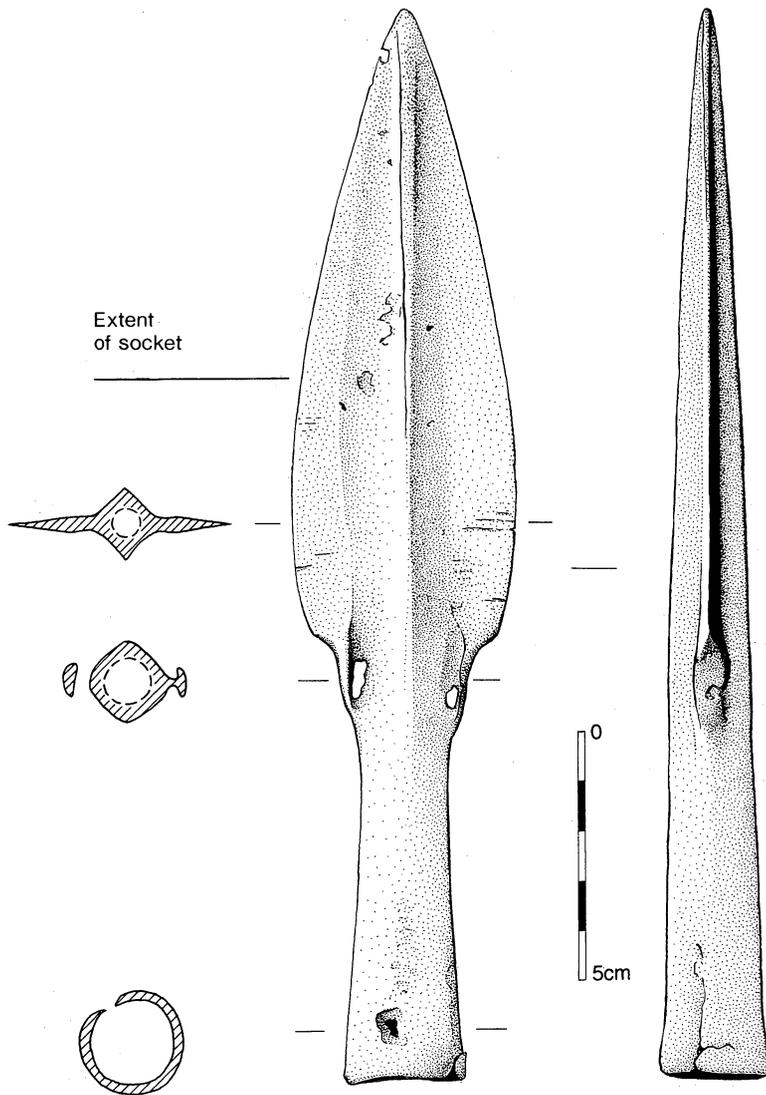


Fig1 Middle Bronze Age spearhead from Buckland

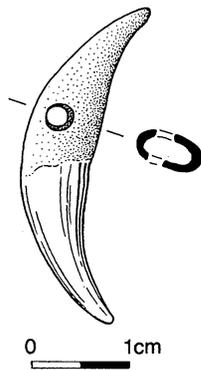


Fig 2 Drilled canine of a fox from Buckland