

## FIND OF CELTS AT BOGNOR

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A PACKET of bronze Palstaves of the flanged type was recently found at Bognor, during road-making works on the Marshall Estate. They were uncovered, all lying close together, as if they had been contained originally in a wicker or fabric receptacle which had subsequently decayed. They were lying, at a depth of about thirty inches, beneath the surface of an old meadow. All are of different patterns, faulty or broken, and must have been in this condition at the time of deposit, having been presumably gathered together with the object of utilising them as metal. They may have been gathered by a rag and bone man of the period, in a packet, or sack, and weighing about fifty pounds, found too heavy for transport in this then marshy district, abandoned, by being cast derelict on the surface, or hidden among the herbage, and the then owner prevented from reclaiming them. The surface of the meadow at the site lies a foot or so higher than that of the roads near by. The adjoining Nyewood Lane I can remember, as at times a quagmire, and there is still water in the sheepwash in Sheepwash Lane.

The southern part of Nyewood Lane is probably conterminous with an ancient road which led from the sea shore at a point where there may possibly have been an inlet or harbour formed by the outfall of the Aldingbourne (Ryebank) or Paghams rife, which led to South Bersted church. To the northward this road leaves the lane and passes as a greenway across the field on the Marshall Estate at about 300 ft. to the north-west of the site of the find. The carrier may

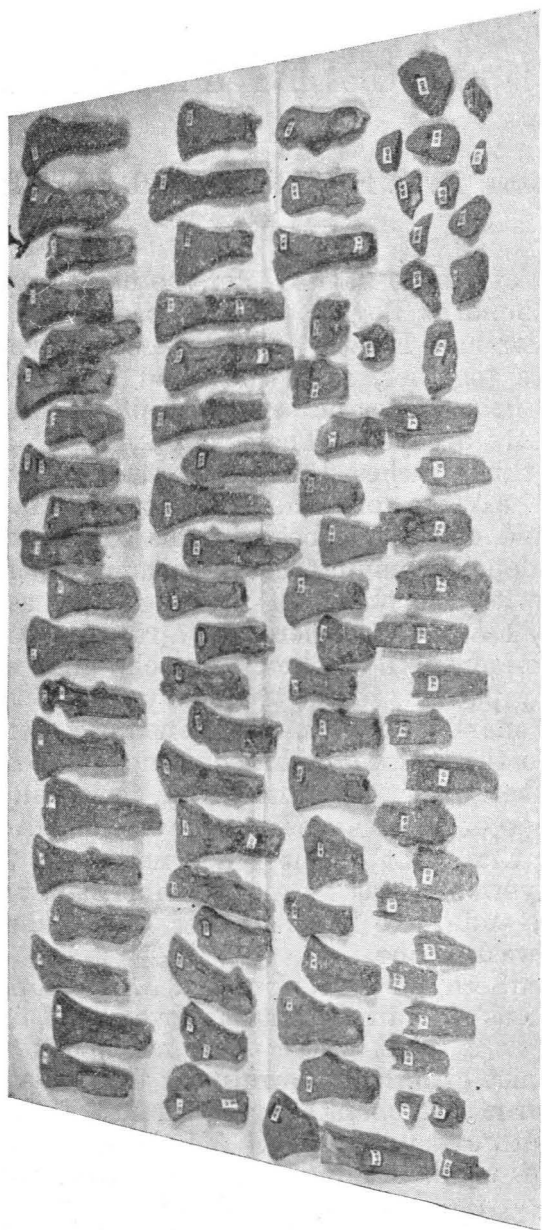


PLATE I. CELTS FOUND AT BOGNOR.

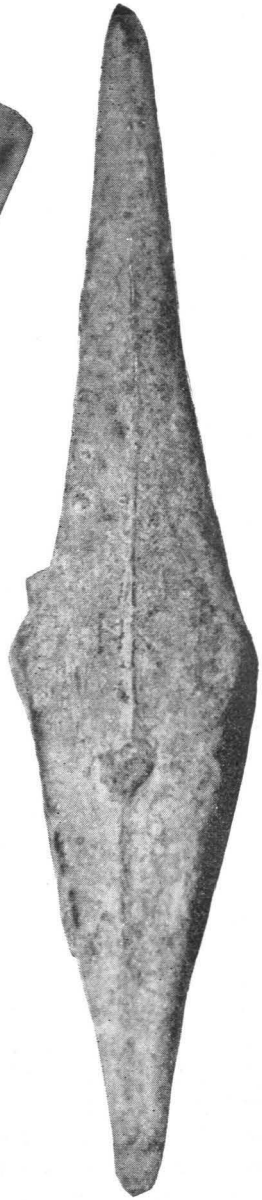
have been on his way to the coast after having garnered them far to the north, with the object of passing them to the continent. For this road may well have been then a line of direct access from north to south. Passing through Bersted, where Roman coins of Nero and Domitian have been unearthed on its course, it leads by Lidsey to Eartham, crosses Stane Street, on to Up-Waltham, Duncton, Petworth. The rare coin of Julianus which I recorded as having been found in 1915, was obtained from the sea shore near the debouchment of this road. A third brass of Claudius Gothicus has also been recently unearthed near by. Dixon in his *Geology of Sussex* records the finding of a first brass of Agrippina Senior, in 1842, near the same place, when digging a ditch close to the shore.

The Palstaves may quite possibly have been of British manufacture, especially if Dr. Waddell's contention is correct, that Britain from 1500 B.C. was peopled by a highly civilised race, pioneers of civilisation, and a branch of the famous Phœnicians, these could have been the users of the moulds found in Dorset and Wilts., for the metal was also available in our country.

What the date of abandonment may be is hard to say, but from the absence of any specimen of the socketed type we may guess 1000 B.C. Such time elapse should suffice for the burying, by sinking in and accretion by earth worms, as found. Sussex is notorious as having been a miry country, as witness the royal journeys even as late as Queen Elizabeth, and the state of the lowland near the sea was proverbial, especially near Bognor, on that plain of re-deposited surface beds, lying on the glacial ice-eroded face of the stratified rocks, the shallow foreshore water having been filled in by the detritus washed in from the Downs. In the *British Traveller* we read: "The air near the coast is aguish and very prejudicial to any but the natives. Many farmers and others, natives of the aguish and unhealthy parts of this county, marry women born in the Uplands, who when they are



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PLATE II. A TYPICAL CELT FROM THE BOGNOR FIND.

brought here soon lose their health, and die in a few years; by which means some of the Sussex men (as well as others in Essex and Kent where the air is similar) have been known to have had seven or eight successively. One of these who had a knack of rhyming, wrote the following lines on his various nuptials, a copy of which we obtained when in Sussex.

“ My first wife (nam'd Peggy) was noisy and rude;  
My next was a coquet; my third was a prude;  
My fourth was so so; and my fifth was precise;  
My sixth was but silly; my seventh mighty wise;  
But the air of the county deprived them of life,  
And left me without either trouble or wife.  
So now I'll contented a widower die,  
Nor more matrimonial experiments try.”

The Palstaves are of the usual axe-edged flanged type, about six inches long and weighed about a pound each when perfect. They are of cast-bronze. They represent about fifty examples in a hundred pieces. The accompanying plates exhibit: Plate I., a photograph of the hundred pieces laid out; Plate II., No. 1, seen in face, and No. 2, in profile nearly full size; Plate III., outlines to show the various types present. The general pattern is of type as No. 1, with a single rib on the axe face. Some vary in having the central rib forked at base, or the fork only being present, or being quite plain. One has apparently a concave convex head, No. 44, or is only a faulty casting. The main interest of this one is, that it seems to prove that the objects are of local manufacture, for this would not have been imported. The moulds formed in stone, sand or clay would be of but short durability, necessitating the making of fresh moulds, this would lead to much variation as shewn in these examples, or if the founding was contemporaneous with the bronze mould found in Wiltshire, from which many duplicates could have been produced, then the gathering may have been from a wide area in which various moulds took part differing in width of head and pattern.

What the purpose these instruments subserved,

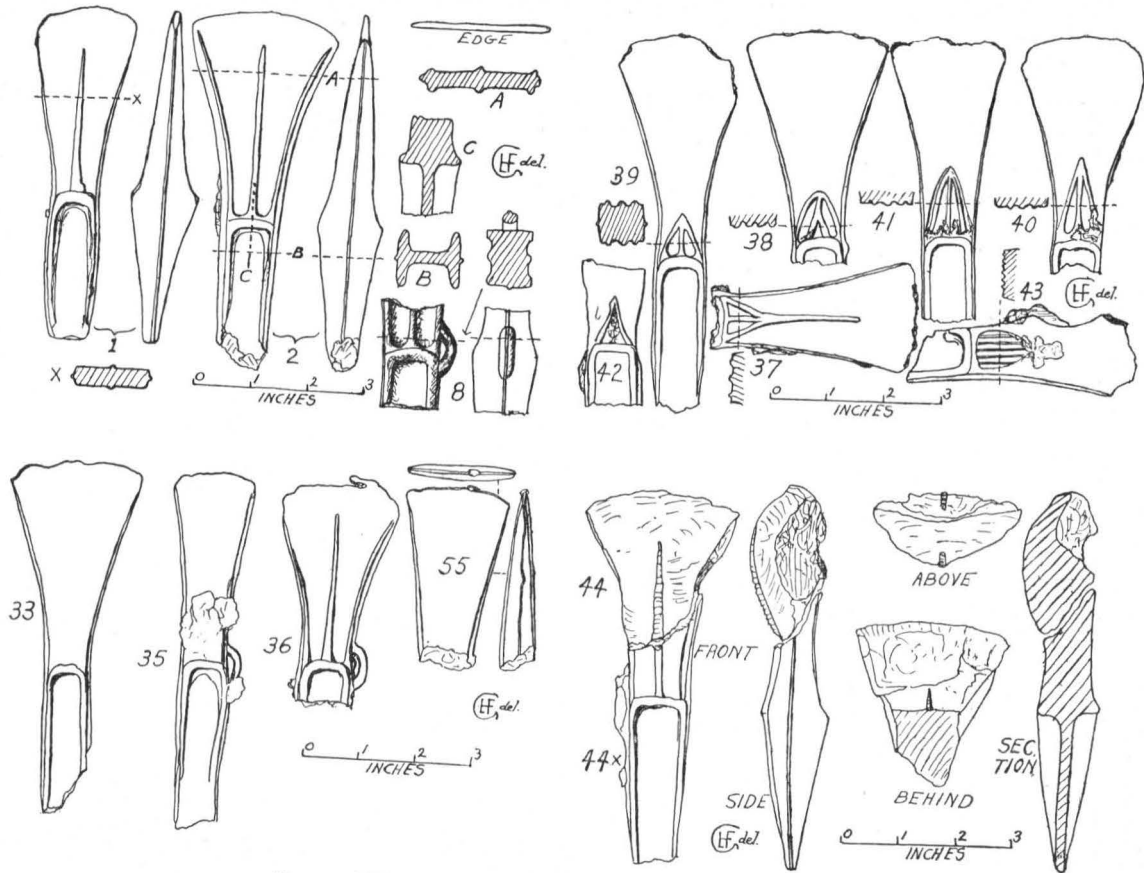


PLATE III. TYPES OF CELTS FOUND AT BOGNOR.

whether as tools or weapons, I leave for others to speculate on. They seem to have been usable in a thrusting way. One example is on record as having been found in Denmark attached in a straight line to a shaft about five feet long, as if for use as a hoe or spear. Bronze is known to have been worked and tempered to a sharp cutting edge as seen in sickles, knives and razors.

#### DETAIL OF PIECES.

- Nos. 1 to 43 and 45 to 59 are pieces showing axe blade, the blade being nearly flat or slightly convex.
- Nos. 1 to 30, 36, 45 to 52, axe blade with central rib and often lateral ribs, one on each edge, more or less pronounced, width of flat axe edge varying from  $1\frac{1}{2}$  to  $2\frac{1}{2}$  inches.
- Nos. 31 to 35 and 53 to 59, axe blade quite plain and flat.
- No. 37, central rib tri-forked at base, fork  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch.
- No. 38, the tri-fork only without prolongation of central rib; the central rib again forked at base.
- No. 39, tri-fork only.
- No. 40, tri-fork longer,  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inch.
- No. 41, tri-fork  $1\frac{1}{4}$  inch, channelled at sides of outer rib.
- No. 42, two-forked?
- No. 43, five parallel ribs in a sunk inch-long oval.
- No. 44, apparently a curved convex concave head nearly 3 inches across and  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inches thick, central-ribbed on both sides, might have been attached to 44\*, a typical ordinary lower part, but the fact of the fractured faces somewhat agreeing may be only a coincidence. It may be merely a run-faulty casting.
- Nos. 60 to 79, pieces of shaft and haft.
- Nos. 80 to 90, small amorphous pieces.
- Nos. 5, 7, 8, 10, 12, 15, 16, 18, 20, 21, 23, 28, 30, 32, 35, 36, 44, and 49 have loop or traces of same.