

RECENT DISCOVERIES OF LATE BRONZE AGE METALWORK IN NORFOLK

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AMONG the many items of archæological interest which were brought to Norwich Castle Museum in 1968 were several examples of Late Bronze Age metalwork. These have not all entered the Museum's collections but due to the generosity of the several finders it has been possible to record the discoveries and to present the material in this journal.

HOARD OF METALWORK FROM AYLSHAM, NORFOLK (N.G.R. TG 19752695)

A widely dispersed Late Bronze Age hoard has been discovered over a period of some months by residents in a new housing estate at Aylsham as they have been starting work on their gardens. The objects which have been recovered so far are mostly undecorated socketed axes, some complete, others damaged or deliberately broken; there are also various octagonal faceted axes and two half-hollow spearheads. Other types represented only by fragments include a spearhead, a knife and what may be a vehicle fitting. There is also a socketed hammer, very similar to the Carleton Rode example,¹ which probably formed part of the bronze-smith's equipment; the other material, including a small piece of ingot, represents his stock-in-trade. A full report illustrating the material is in preparation.

SOCKETED AXE FROM STIFFKEY, NORFOLK (N.G.R. TF 9743 approx.)

A single axe was ploughed up on a field in this north Norfolk parish, and can be described as follows:

Socketed axe of rectangular section with single loop; heavy mouth moulding with smaller moulding level with top of loop; three parallel ribs depending from lower moulding on each face; cutting edge sharpened and splayed. Length 11.1 cm. (4.35 inches). Fig. 1 (A).

Axes decorated with ribs are common in the Late Bronze Age of eastern England. They may be divided into two groups: the first consists of rather squat axes, like one of the implements in the Eaton, Norwich, hoard, which has three widely spaced ribs;² the second comprises the longer, heavier and probably more effective axes decorated with three or more closely spaced ribs. The first group includes the numerous "Yorkshire" axes found in the Heathery Burn tradition.³ The Stiffkey axe belongs to the second group, which has a wide distribution in Britain as a whole and is generally found in contexts which are dated to the eighth and seventh centuries B.C.

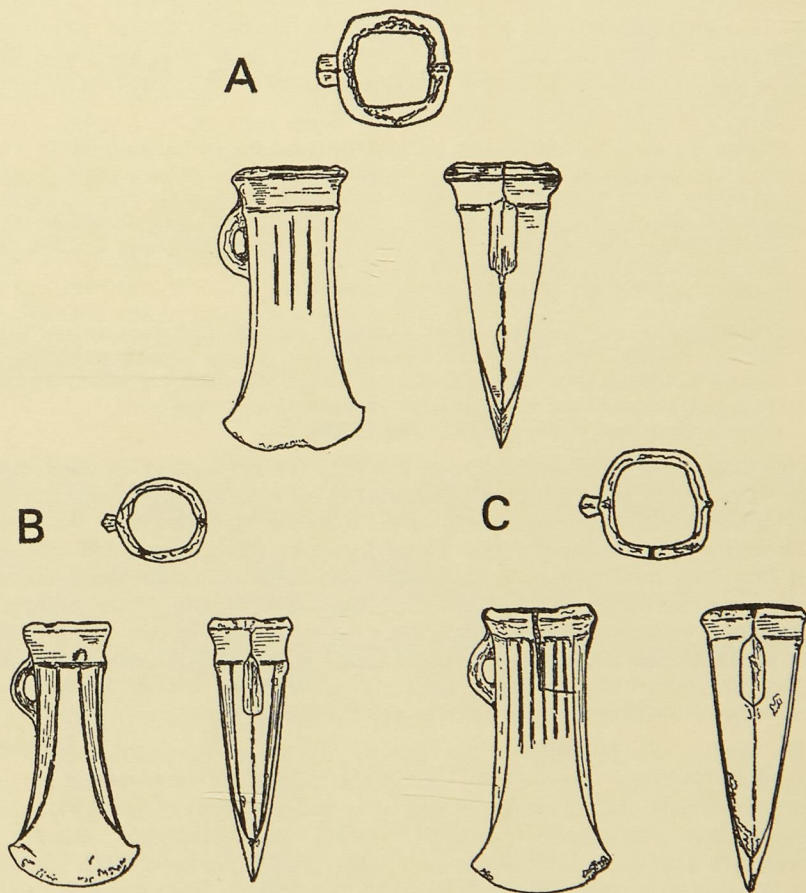


Fig. 1. (A) Socketed axe from Stiffkey.
(B & C) Socketed axes from Hindringham. Scale 1:3.

SOCKETED AXES FROM HINDRINGHAM, NORFOLK
(N.G.R. TF 96343823)

At least two socketed axes were found by workmen laying ducts for telephone cables at Hindringham and were brought to Norwich Castle Museum for identification. Others are said to have been found at or near the same spot at the time, but so far it has not been possible to trace these. The two axes which have been recorded can be described as follows:

1. Socketed axe with single loop; sub-rectangular mouth; sides slightly faceted to give hexagonal rather than rectangular body section; heavy mouth moulding with second very slight moulding level with top of loop; five parallel narrow ribs, closely spaced, depending from lower moulding on each face; cutting edge sharpened and splayed; crack extending 3.0 cm. down centre of one face; socket only 6.9 cm. deep.
Length 11.1 cm. (4.35 inches). Fig. 1 (C).
2. Socketed axe with single loop of flattened section with pronounced midrib; circular mouth with octagonal faceted body; heavy mouth moulding with second moulding level with top of loop; raised ribs defining facets depending from lower moulding; cutting edge sharpened and expanded.
Length 10.2 cm. (4.00 inches). Fig. 1 (B).

Axes decorated with as many as five ribs are infrequent in East Anglia. In the collection of Norwich Castle Museum there are examples from the Eaton hoard,⁴ a hoard which belongs to the carp's tongue series, and from Whittington, near Stoke Ferry (an isolated find).⁵ These, however, differ from the Hindringham axe in that they have pellets at the end of their ribs. Various other axes from Norfolk have four ribs without pellets,⁶ but none of these has such an insignificant lower socket-mouth moulding. Although this newly discovered axe stands apart in this way from the most usual types of East Anglian socketed axe, the differences are too slight for it to seem out of place. Its association with an axe of a different type here is quite acceptable.

The smaller axe belongs to the narrow faceted octagonal-sectioned series discussed by Butler.⁷ The way in which the angles are emphasised by raised ribs is particularly characteristic of this axe, and is a feature absent from most octagonal axes, undecorated examples being more common. Raised ribs, however, are found on individual axes with double socket-mouth mouldings (as on the example under discussion) from two hoards from eastern England: Meldreth, Cambridgeshire,⁸ and Norgate Road/Peckover Road, Norwich,⁹ both of which have been dated to Late Bronze Age 2 (eighth or seventh century B.C.) according to the unpublished scheme proposed by Professor C. F. C. Hawkes. Butler has listed some axes of this type which are recorded in the Card Catalogue of Bronzes (British Museum); to his list one can now add from the same source those from Baldock, Hertfordshire, and from the Thames at Whitchurch, Berkshire. On other occasions the ribs are elaborated with small pellets at their lower ends. The distribution of this type in Britain is mainly south-eastern, with something of a concentration in East Anglia. Another axe, ribbed but with a single socket-mouth moulding—a combination not usually

found in Britain, has recently been noticed in the Eaton hoard during conservation work.¹⁰

It has been suggested that some at least of the British faceted axes occur early in the Late Bronze Age under inspiration from Germany. It is difficult to point to many definitely early examples but the Eaton axe may, on the basis of its single mouth moulding, be one of these; the hoard awaits more detailed examination. Most finds, whether continental or British, belong to the Hallstatt B-C/Montelius IV-V/British Late Bronze Age 2 period, and others are later still.¹¹ A double socket-mouth moulding seems to be a feature of western European, but not specifically British, inspiration. Its appearance on some of the German and Scandinavian axes of this eighth or seventh century date may be thought to represent British influence as a result of trade contacts. Although it does not do full justice to these ribbed faceted axes to discuss them so briefly without reference to their plainer brethren, the discovery of another example from Norfolk seems to point towards one of the more favoured routes of communication. Certainly there is much evidence for flourishing trade contacts across the North Sea in this period.¹²

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¹Evans, J., *Ancient Bronze Implements* (1881), 178, fig. 213.

²*Bronze Age Metalwork in Norwich Castle Museum* (1966) fig. 60.

³Burgess, C. B., *Bronze Age Metalwork in Northern England c. 1000-700 B.C.* (1968) fig. 20, 4-6.

⁴*op. cit.* in note 2, 29 and fig. 63.

⁵*id.*, 20.

⁶It should be noted that the axe from Burnham Market, *id.*, fig. 54, has five, not four, ribs on each face.

⁷Butler, J. J., "Bronze Age connections across the North Sea", *Palaeohistoria*, IX (1963) 86-91.

⁸*Inventaria Archaeologica*, GB 13.32 (1955).

⁹*op. cit.* in note 2, 29.

¹⁰*id.*, 28 and fig. 62: conservation by J. V. Tidder, Area Museums Service for South-Eastern England.

¹¹Butler, *op. cit.* in note 7, 88.

¹²*id.*, 226.