

Notes and News

ARCHAEOLOGICAL NOTES, 1955

A. PREHISTORIC, ROMAN AND SAXON

Asthall, Oxon. Miss K. Walker reported the discovery of two small bronze objects on the well-known Roman site (Nat. grid : 42/285112). One is a small jug-handle in the shape of a swan (PL. xv, c), the feet of which are missing. The ends of the rim-splays are in the form of birds' heads, and there is a hinged attachment for lid or strainer. The second object is a model axe, similar to those found at Woodeaton (*Oxoniensia*, xiv (1949), p. 39, fig. 8). Both are now in the Ashmolean Museum (1955.477-8).

Benson, Oxon. The Rev. G. P. Palmer reported the discovery of a large ditch or pit during grave-digging in the new burial ground (Nat. grid : 41/606916). Eight sherds of Iron Age C pottery and bones of ox were discovered, 3 ft. from the surface, in reddish loam.

Chimney, Oxon. Mr. V. Christophers, 20 Cunningham Avenue, St. Albans, Herts., has a leaf-shaped Late Bronze sword (PL. xv, A) said to have been found about 50 years ago in dredged material from Shifford Lock (Nat. grid : 42/371011).

Culham, Oxon. Mr. W. Miller reported the discovery of eroded sherds of Iron Age A pottery (Ash. Mus. 1955.554) during digging of a silage pit on Hill Farm (Nat. grid : 41/502959).

Dorchester, Oxon. In December Mr. and Mrs. K. Marshall, excavating for the Ashmolean Museum, with financial assistance from the Ministry of Works, made cuttings across the two circles revealed by air-photography SSW. of the Big Rings beside the Abingdon-Dorchester road (*Oxoniensia*, iii (1938), pl. xv). No datable objects were found.

Mr. D. J. McCullough reported the discovery of Roman and 17th century pottery in the garden of Ladymead, south of the Dorchester-Abingdon road, 200 yards from the junction with the Dorchester-Oxford road (Nat. grid : 41/575947).

Frilford, Berks. Mr. A. H. Griffiths reported Roman pottery, including one piece of Samian ware, found when a well was dug for a new bungalow on the east side of the Oxford-Wantage road (Nat. grid : 41/445979).

Harwell, Berks. Workmen digging a drainage trench in the garden of Mr. R. Gregory's bungalow (Nat. grid : 41/489882) discovered an early Saxon pot, with unusual decoration. Mr. and Mrs. K. Marshall excavated the site for the Ashmolean Museum, and six graves, some with grave-goods, were found. The objects are now in the Ashmolean Museum (1955.464-473 : *Ash. Mus. Report* 1955, p. 31, pl. vi). A full report will be published in the next volume of *Oxoniensia*.

Headington, Oxon. Mr. A. E. Sperrin excavated the second of the two kilns at the Churchill Hospital reported in 1953 (*Oxoniensia*, xvii/xviii (1952-53), pp. 224f.). Most of the body of the kiln had been exposed ; it was of the usual oval type. The south wall was standing to a height of 2 ft. 3 in. ; the north wall had disappeared, perhaps dug away, and the west end had been much damaged. The kiln measured

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3 ft. 6 in. across, and 4 ft. from the stokehole entrance to the back wall. The stokehole arch was still standing, and was 1 ft. 6 in. high, but the stokehole itself had not been excavated. In the dump was found a small piece of the perforated kiln floor. Large quantities of pottery similar to that illustrated in *Oxoniensia*, xvii/xviii, fig. 45 was found, and a representative selection is now in the Ashmolean Museum (1955-497).

Hinksey, Berks. Mr. H. G. Faulkner found a flint core of 'tea-cosy' type (H. 2 in.) in allotments near Galley Hill, between North Hinksey and the Southern By-pass (Nat. grid : 42/495054).

Mr. Bennett reported the upper stone of a rotary quern of beehive shape (H. 11 in., D. 1 ft.) found during pipe-laying (Nat. grid : 42/524044).

Horspath, Oxon. Miss Callard found a coin of Constantine, c. A.D. 330, by the road leading up to Redshard Field (Nat. grid : 42/574056).

Nettlebed, Oxon. Dr. Williamson reported an hour-glass perforated quartzite pebble from Croker End (Nat. grid : 41/712868).

Thame, Oxon. Mr. M. Hassall reported a recumbent stone (about 3 ft. by 1½ ft.) supported by two uprights (about 1½ ft. long) discovered during ploughing on Black Ditch Farm, east of Chinnor road (Nat. grid : 42/722048). A piece of bottle glass and a sherd of brown glazed ware appear to have come from beneath the stone.

Waterperry, Oxon. Miss S. Turner reported : (1) A microlith (right-hand side completely blunted) with other struck flints, including a small scraper and blades (some snapped, notched and fire-pitted) from near the greenhouses at the Horticultural College (Nat. grid : 42/630064).

(2) A transverse-derived flint arrowhead, indeterminate struck flints, indeterminate Iron Age sherds, and sherds of Romano-British wares mostly of the third-fourth centuries, but possibly some earlier (Nat. grid : 42/627060).

Wheatley, Oxon. Workmen laying a gas main near the site of the Roman villa (Nat. grid : 42/606045) found Roman pottery and tiles. The site was filled in before it could be visited.

Woodeaton, Oxon. Mr. A. G. Fenwick reported flint flakes found on the east bank of the Cherwell at Nat. grid : 42/524126.

Woolstone, Berks. Miss Ann Hamilton, with volunteers from Shrivenham Royal Military College, carried out a week's trial excavation on the Roman villa-site (Nat. grid : 41/289878 ; *V.C.H. Berks.*, I, p. 222). Several rooms of the north wing were uncovered, and a tessellated pavement with geometric design found. It is hoped that further work will take place.

B. MEDIEVAL AND LATER

Burford, Oxon. A number of objects and some pottery were reported by Dr. B. E. A. Batt from a water trench beside the old mill at the bottom of the High Street (Nat. grid : 42/252126). The finds included fragments of stoneware, knives and a fork probably of the 17th century, some tiny brass pins, and a silver sixpence of William III. No structures were visible.

Oxford, All Souls College. A fourteenth-century baluster jug, and another pot of later date, were found while digging foundations for the reconstruction of the Manciple's house.

Oxford, Christ Church. Mr. David Sturdy reported that excavations were undertaken by the Oxford University Archaeological Society in the garden of the

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Canon of the Sixth Stall from August 1954 to May 1955 by kind permission of the Rev. Canon C. A. and Mrs. Simpson. In most of the trenches time and the weather only permitted the excavation of the post-Reformation layers, which produced a tangle of walls of outbuildings and terraces built by various canons. In trench 1 some twelfth-century and late-Saxon-type pottery was obtained (including a buff-glazed sherd of late-Saxon ware) in what was apparently the filling of a watercourse immediately outside the south gate of the city. Over this a floor had been laid in the late twelfth or thirteenth century and there had been continuous later occupation of the site except in the fifteenth and possibly the sixteenth centuries. A full report will be published in due course.

Oxford, Cornmarket Street. Mr. Brian Hope-Taylor undertook a fortnight's excavation for the Ministry of Works in February along the street frontage of Messrs. F. W. Woolworth's new store, where the vaulting and archway of a twelfth-century cellar had been discovered in position at the entrance to one of the Clarendon Hotel's cellars. The plan and extent of this twelfth-century cellar, later used as a coal-cellar, were recovered, and earlier pits found beneath the floor.

The site was also watched by various archaeologists throughout the year. It was honeycombed with medieval and later pits and wells, most of which yielded pottery of many different periods. Traces of late-Saxon houses and pits or cellars about 8 ft. square were also discovered. The pits contained typical 'St. Neots' pottery, mica-schist hones, Rhineland lava and millstone grit querns, bunshaped loom-weights, bone combs and wattle-and-daub. These Saxon structures extended about 8 ft. into the present line of Cornmarket Street (see further E. M. Jope in *Dark-Age Britain: studies presented to E. T. Leeds* (1956), p. 258).

The stones of the archway, and much pottery and other objects from the site are in the Ashmolean Museum. A full report will be published.

Oxford, Nuffield College. Mr. and Mrs. K. Marshall, excavating for the Department of Antiquities, Ashmolean Museum, with financial aid from the Ministry of Works, made two further cuttings across the Castle Ditch, lower down the hill than Mr. Parr's cutting of 1953 (*Oxoniensia*, xvii/xviii (1952/53), p. 228). The structural remains and the small finds (mainly post-medieval sherds and fragments) confirmed the evidence of the previous cuttings. It is now clear that the Castle Ditch underwent repeated cleanings up to at least the sixteenth, if not the seventeenth century, and that it is unlikely ever to yield significant and extensive stratified traces of the earlier centuries of its existence. A full report will be published.

JOAN R. KIRK ; HUMPHREY CASE.

A ROMAN COIN-HOARD FROM APPLEFORD

On 31 December 1954, during ploughing, a hoard of Roman coins was discovered between Sutton Courtenay and Appleford about 50 yards south of the road. Two pots of coarse grey ware had been buried side by side a short distance below the surface; their rims, broken away by the plough, were missing.

Apart from a handful of earlier coins extending back to Gallienus, the great bulk of the hoard was made up of the issues of Constantine the Great and his sons from about A.D. 320-347. The latest coins were five examples of the *FEL TEMP REPARATIO* types of Constantius II and Constans, so that the hoard must have been buried within the few years before 350. Although the coins had been removed from

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their containers by the finder, it was evident from the metal stains that each pot had held different-sized coins. One had contained over 1,650 Constantinian issues minted from about 320-326. All except about 100 were from the mint of London and were in very fine condition with their silver coating often intact. Of the coins of London those of Constantine II Caesar far outnumber those of Constantine I or Crispus. Among the remaining coins nearly all the imperial mints (except Alexandria) were represented by occasional specimens.

The second pot contained nearly 4,000 coins, of which the great majority were issued after 335; *GLORIA EXERCITUS* (one standard) and *VICTORIAE DD AUGGQ NN* far outnumber any other reverse type, and the great majority were struck at the mint of Trier. The very thin representation of types struck between 326 and 335 (*GLORIA EXERCITUS* (2 standards), *URBS ROMA*, *CONSTANTINOPOLIS*) is remarkable.

The owner, Mr. F. G. Napper of Didcot, has placed the hoard on loan at the Ashmolean Museum, where a full analysis is being prepared.

C. M. KRAAY.

A PALSTAVE ADZE FROM PUSEY, BERKSHIRE (PL. XV, B)

An interesting palstave adze was recently found in topsoil by Mr. R. Barrett when hoeing near Cherbury Camp, Pusey, Berks. (Nat. grid : 41/374963).

It seems to be the first example of such an implement recorded from lowland England, for of the other thirty-one known specimens from the British Isles, six come from the north of England and Scotland, and the remainder from Ireland. Closely analogous to the Pusey implement are those from Martin Mere, Lancashire,¹ and an unlocalized example in the National Museum, Dublin. The type does not occur on the continent, although the flanged chisels recorded from Holland² may perhaps share a common ancestor with these palstave adzes.

Since so many have been found in Ireland, it seems inescapable that the palstave adzes found in England and Scotland were either traded from Ireland, or made by bronze-smiths from Ireland working in Britain. The second alternative is to a degree substantiated by the finding of one-half of a two-piece mould for the casting of such a tool on the Yorkshire Moors.³ This fragment, made from the green-black soapstone commonly used in Ireland in the Middle Bronze Age, has an almost identical counterpart from Dundalk, co. Louth.

So far palstave adzes have not been found associated with other bronze tools, and we are thus fortunate in having the evidence of these moulds by which to establish their chronological position. In Ireland and northern Britain, the use of soapstone as a moulding matrix appears to have been replaced by baked clay at the beginning of the Late Bronze Age; and in Ireland this change was so abrupt that it may conveniently be used to define the period.⁴ However, since the Late Bronze Age in Ireland was clearly a rather later phenomenon than it was in southern England, the Pusey palstave adze may well have been in use within the opening phase of the local Late Bronze Age.

¹ *V.C.H. Lancs.*, I, 231, fig. 15.

² Zwartenberg (*Palaeohistoria*, III (1954), 169, fig. 72); and Huneberg 38 (Nijmegen Museum).

³ British Museum, no. 99.5-23.1.

⁴ *Ulster J. Archaeol.*, xvii (1954), 75.

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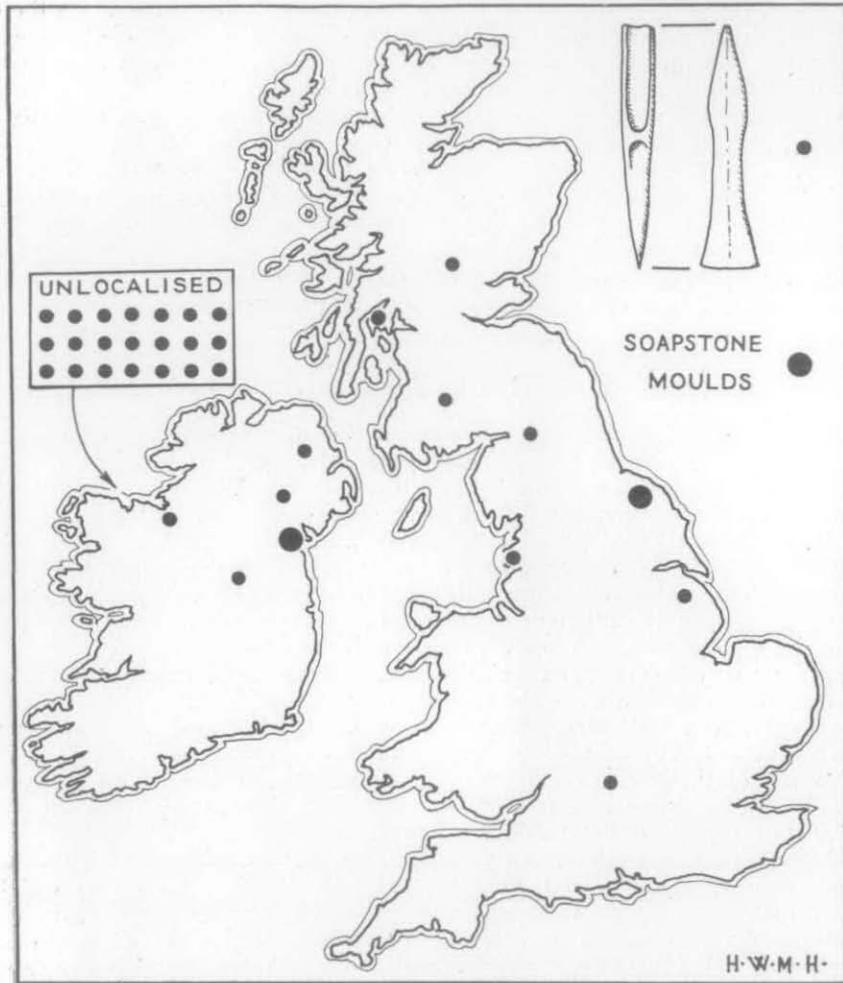


FIG. 18

Map showing the distribution of soapstone moulds and bronze palstave adzes in the British Isles during the Bronze Age

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This tool from Pusey confirms our knowledge of the importance of the upper Thames valley as a focal point of trade during the later Bronze Age. It could have been brought from the north (presumably by way of the Lincolnshire Wolds and Cotswolds) as must have been, for example, the sword with bronze pommel and hilt found in the River Cherwell⁵ (a type known elsewhere only in northern England and Scotland), or directly from Ireland by way of the Severn estuary or through north Wales. Examples of such trade are to be seen in the small bronze bucklers from Dorchester and Eynsham,⁶ to which parallels are to be found only in Ireland ;⁷ or in the cauldron of typically Irish form recovered from the river Cherwell.⁸

There seems little doubt that this tool was set in a kneehaft and used as an adze, although it could conceivably have been mounted as a chisel. In either event it must have been primarily a carpenter's tool and would have been used for the final finishing of woodwork rather than for felling trees or rough trimming. As opposed to Ireland and highland Britain, the people of lowland England of the Middle Bronze Age seem to have been remarkably ill-equipped for this type of work, and indeed it is not until a mature phase of the Late Bronze Age that suitable tools, in the form of chisels and gouges, appear here. Thus the distribution map (FIG. 18) probably reflects differences of economic conditions rather than the pattern of trade current in the British Isles at this time.

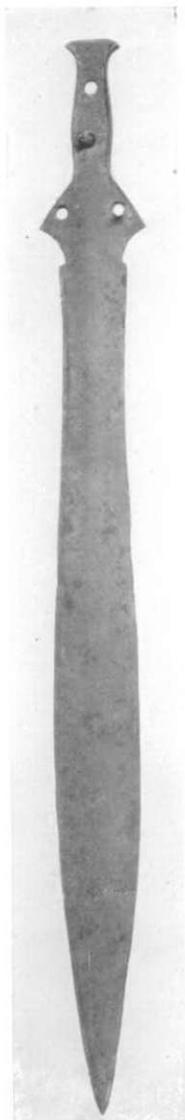
H. W. M. HODGES.

⁵ [Sir] John Evans, *Ancient Bronze Implements* (1881), 286, fig. 349 ; Ashmolean Mus., no. 1885-453.

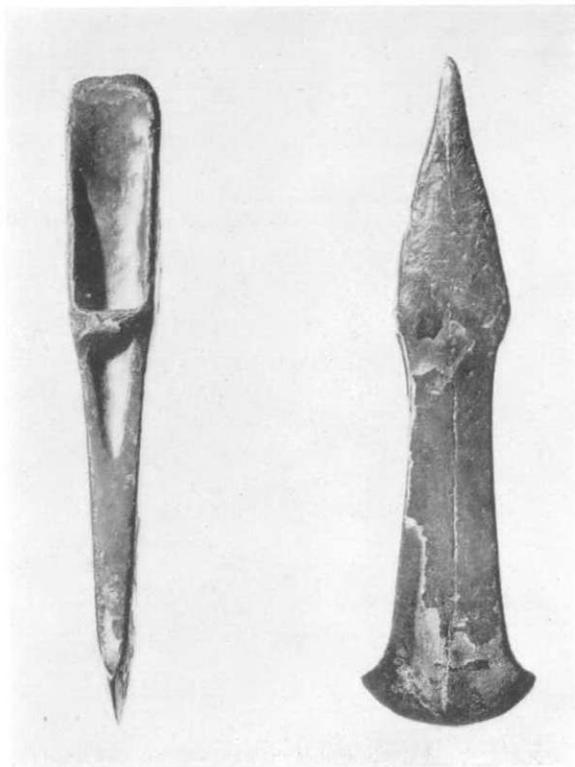
⁶ Evans, *op. cit.* in note 5, p. 344.

⁷ Toome (Pitt-Rivers Museum, Farnham, Dorset) ; and Athenry (J. M. Kemble, *Horae Ferales* (1863), pl. xi, no. 1).

⁸ E. T. Leeds in *Archaeologia*, LXXX (1930), 12.



A



B



C

A. Late Bronze Age bronze leaf-shaped sword dredged from the Thames at Shifford Lock, Chimney, Oxon. (p. 90). Scale : $\frac{1}{4}$.

B. Late Bronze Age bronze palstave adze from near Cherbury Camp, Pusey, Berks. (p. 93). Scale : $\frac{1}{8}$.

C. Roman bronze handle in the shape of a swan, from Asthall, Oxon. (p. 90). Scale : $\frac{1}{4}$.

Phh.: A, Anon.
B, C, Ashmolean Museum.
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