

FINDS.

SOCKETED CELTS.

L. B. CANE, F.S.A.

Bronze axe-heads have been found in many parts of England, and in the British Museum may be seen also specimens from Denmark, France, Hungary, Russia, and also two, in copper, from Thebes in upper Egypt.

To these the name of "Celts" has been given, not because they were conceived to be characteristic of the Celtic race, but because our earlier antiquaries supposed them to be the instruments to which the Romans gave the name of "celtis" (a chisel). Thomas Hearne for instance, in 1709, in "A Discourse concerning some Antiquaries found in Yorkshire," published as an appendix to the first volume of his edition of Leland's Itinerary, stated his opinion that these instruments were Roman, and Thomas Wright, in his book, "The Celt, the Roman, and the Saxon," published in 1852, wrote that "the general shape and character of these instruments seem to be much more like Roman than anything we know of Celtic make."

Though all are now, however, generally agreed in ascribing their origin in this country to the Britons of the bronze age, subsequent writers have retained the convenient, though somewhat misleading name "celts."

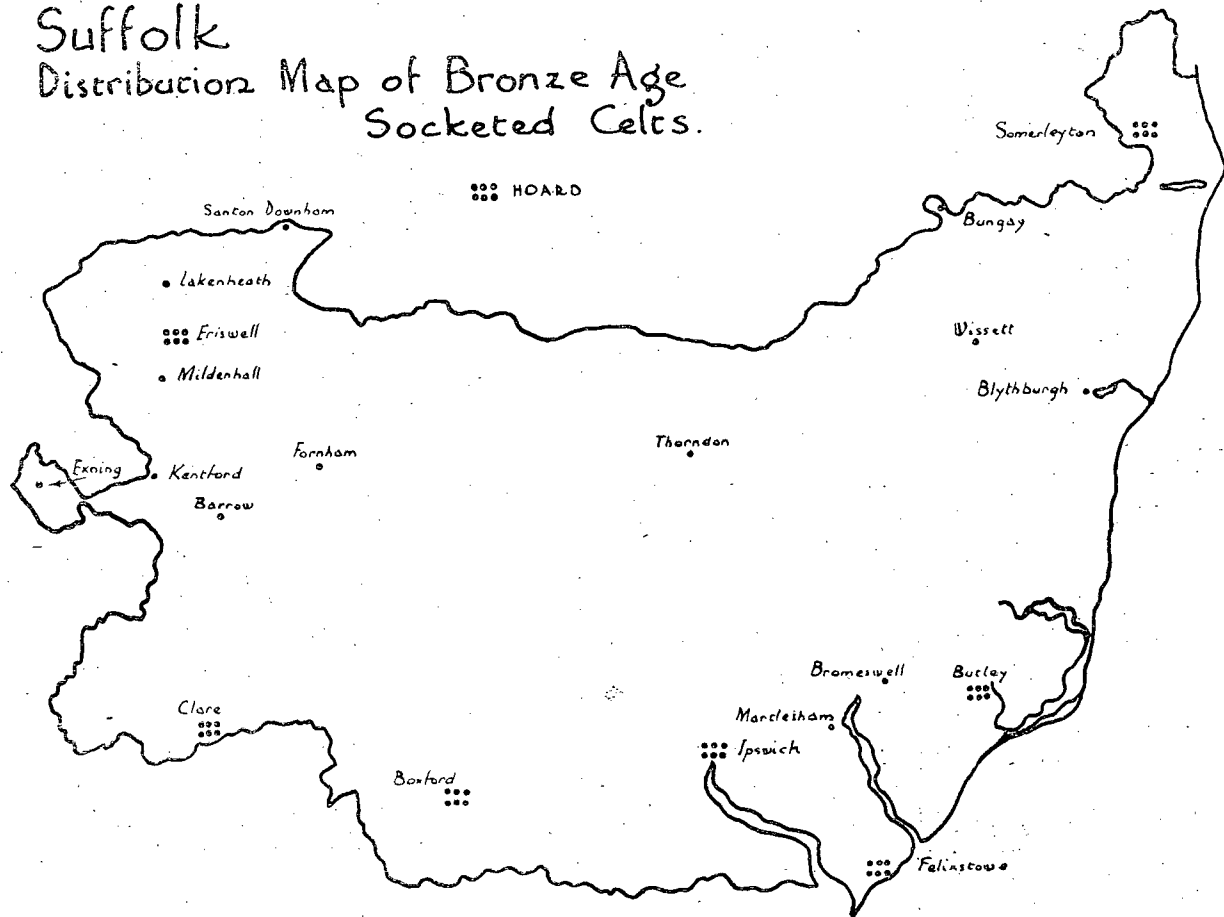
The earliest form of bronze axe-head, resembling its predecessors the flat stone implements of the neolithic age, were doubtless found difficult to attach securely to the wooden handle, so in course of time flanges were evolved to partially enclose the end of the wood. Later these were improved by the addition of a stop ridge to prevent the axe-head from slipping back when in use, and finally, with the introduction of core-casting, the flange was further developed into a socket into which the wood fitted, with a side-loop to hold the leather ligatures that bound it on firmly.

These axe-heads were cast in moulds, of which examples may be seen in the British Museum, the museum of the Society of Antiquaries, and elsewhere, and frequently a certain amount of ornamentation was added round the neck.

Socketed celts have been found in many places in East Anglia, though few have been recorded since the list published in the Victoria County History of Suffolk in 1911.

This noted finds at Barrow, Blythburgh (in Bury Museum), Bromeswell, Butley (hoard of 19), Clare (hoard), Eriswell (hoard, of which British Museum has 2, and Bury Museum 3), Exning (in British Museum), Felixstowe (hoard, some in Norwich Museum), Fornham (illustration V.C.H. I, 267), Lakenheath (in British Museum, illus. V.C.H. I, 268, very similar to the one here illustrated, found at Bungay), Martlesham, Mildenhall (illus. V.C.H. I, 268), Thorndon, and Wissett.

Suffolk Distribution Map of Bronze Age Socketed Celts.





Two examples of Celts from Outney Common, Bungay, Suffolk

Though no subsequent finds in the county appear to have been recorded since 1911, either in the Proceedings of the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology, or in those of the Prehistoric Society of East Anglia, some additional examples may be seen in the Ipswich Museum, notably in the Clouston collection, which includes specimens from Lakenheath, Mildenhall, Kennett, Kentford Heath, and Santon Downham.

Two additional specimens were found also at Lakenheath in 1934, and one in the Woodbridge district, though this is not in the museum.

The locations of most of the recorded Suffolk finds are marked in this sketch map, kindly prepared for me by Mr. Hugh Braun, F.S.A.

It may be noted that there are two main areas. The majority seem to be on the plains, the "breckland," and the rest on the coastal rivers. No doubt during the Bronze Age most of the interior of Suffolk was uninhabited forest.

The latest "celt" find in Suffolk is the one here illustrated, from Outney Common, Bungay.

This was picked up on the site of an ancient ford over the Waveney, on the mud left on the river side by a dredger.

As the writer of "A Country Woman's Diary" in the "Eastern Daily Press," who first recorded the find, remarks: "The river bed at fords is apt to hold many relics. Parties crossing were ambushed and attacked, pack horses slipped in floods, and wagon trains were overturned. A hundred and one accidents happened entailing the loss of possessions, which lie century after century until some chance puts back into one's hand the little relic of a man's life, a life lived in this valley several thousand years ago."

Considering that this axe-head may have lain in the river here for about three thousand years it is in a remarkably good state of preservation, with well-marked longitudinal ornamentation on the sides, and the usual loop for holding the thongs that once attached it to its now perished wooden handle.

A considerable number of socketed "celts" have been found also in Norfolk.

Those recorded in the Victoria County History of Norfolk were from Carlton Rode (hoard), Castle Rising (4), Caston, Eaton (celt mould), Frettenham (2), Fulmodeston, Great Carbrook (celt mould), Hunworth (2), Ingham, Longham, Methwold, Mundesley, Norwich, Unthank Road (celt mould), Reedham, Reepham (31), Rougham, Stibbard, and Swaffham (3).

Many of these, and others, from Bacton, Stalham, Hingham, West Dereham, Marham, Burnham Market, Horning, Hoe (hoard), Carleton Rode, Hunworth, Thetford, and Surlingham, may be seen in Norwich Museum.

My thanks are due to Mr. Hugh Braun, F.S.A., and to the Curators of the Ipswich and the Norwich Museums for information about celts in East Anglia.

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