

ESSEX BRONZE IMPLEMENTS AND WEAPONS IN THE COLCHESTER MUSEUM.

BY CHARLES H. BUTCHER.

NUMEROUS discoveries of ancient bronze have been made from time to time throughout Essex, but few accounts of what has been brought to light have been placed on record. Finds of bronze are not commonplace, and it is to be regretted that several of some importance have become scattered and cannot be traced. As little or no record of these discoveries has been preserved, many facts relating to the art and industry of the British Bronze Age have undoubtedly been lost.

Some notes upon bronze implements and weapons found in Essex, and now preserved in the Colchester Museum, then I trust will be acceptable as a contribution to these *Transactions*.

INTRODUCTION.

Isolated implements and weapons have occasionally been found, but it is mainly due to the hoards of the founder that we are indebted for finds of ancient bronze. These hoards are the most characteristic of the traces which have been left by the bronze-using people. From their distribution they give some indication of the diffusion of bronze age communities and of the activity and extent of bronze age commerce, and the bronze which they contain furnishes valuable evidence as to the working of metal in ancient times. Some of them may have been the property of merchants rather than founders, or personal deposits of the period. But when we discover rough masses of metal associated with broken and worn-out tools and weapons, and in some instances bronze moulds, there can be little doubt that the deposit belonged to some founder.

There is great variety in the hundreds of bronze implements and weapons that have been discovered throughout Britain, either in hoards or scattered over the surface. But in the barrows raised by the bronze-using races a very small proportion of types has ever been found. Those that have occurred, either in association with interments, or lying apart in the material of the mound, are comprised under the head of the flat axe, the knife-dagger, and the awl. Tanged spears, swords and socketed spearheads, palstaves, winged

and socketed axes, gouges and hammers are conspicuously absent, and in general are types found in hoards of bronze. The latter rarely furnish an example which has been discovered with interments. They show that tanged implements of any kind are rarely found with socketed axes ; that flanged axes and palstaves sometimes occur together, but more often palstaves are found with socketed axes ; and that rough masses of metal are generally associated with hoards in which socketed axes are found. It is concluded that the barrows of Britain belong to a period before bronze had entirely superseded stone, and that the British Bronze Age may be divided into three periods :

(i.) *The Period of the Barrows*, characterised by primitive forms, such as flat axes and knife-daggers, frequently found associated with implements and weapons of stone in barrows and burial mounds.

(ii.) *The Period of the Flanged Axe and Tanged Spear*, represented by such types and rather better by contemporary pottery.

(iii.) *The Period of the Bronze Founder*, characterised by the hoards of bronze which have been left behind, in which swords and socketed axes and spearheads are principal and more or less contemporary types.

To the total duration of the Bronze Age in Britain some fourteen centuries or more have been assigned. The use of bronze in all probability commenced here *circa* B.C. 1800, or earlier, and B.C. 400 seems to be an approximate date for the close of the period. The transition from bronze to iron was a gradual one, and weapons to some extent, and ornaments more largely, were made of bronze long after the introduction of iron.

From the general character of the bronze found in the county it seems that Essex retained its Neolithic influences until a comparatively late date, and that the period contemporary with barrows and burial mounds was of short duration. The greater proportion of the bronze unquestionably belongs to a time when the art of bronze founding was universal, and when socketed axes were used, and leaf-shaped swords and spearheads of bronze were carried by the people. Founders' hoards which have been discovered testify that at the time these deposits were made bronze founding in Britain had reached a high degree of development. Their socketed axes and spearheads, and their swords, are gracefully proportioned and well cast, and would do credit to the most skilful founder of modern times. Some are in the state in which they came from the mould, and still retain the runners and have the rough edges

untrimmed. Others are more highly finished and contrast with the accumulation of fragments, and broken and worn-out tools and weapons, collected by the founder and destined to be recast.

BARKING CREEK.

2201 H.¹ Socketed Axe, length 4 4 inches, found near Barking Creek. Square in section and moulded at top, and with a single raised pellet on each face. The socket is choked with fragments of bronze set in a matrix of patina, and suggests that the axe formed part of a hoard. A similar example, with two raised pellets, was found with a hoard of bronze at High Roding, Essex (Evans,² fig. 122). Received in exchange, 1911.

BERECHURCH.

1612 08. Socketed Axe of the ordinary type, length 3 1 inches, found at Berechurch. Considerably battered and apparently a defective casting. From the Collection of Alderman H. Laver, F.S.A., 1908.

BRAINTREE.

3200 15 Socketed Axe, length 3 9 inches, found near Braintree. Square in section and moulded at top, and with the loop imperfect. On the sides the curved wings of the palstave type survive as decoration. Similar to an axe from the hoard found at High Roding, Essex (Evans, fig. 110). Presented by Rev. J. W. Kenworthy, 1915.

3200 15. Socketed Axe, length 2 8 inches, found near Braintree. Oval in section, with triple moulding below the brim of the expanded mouth. Considerably battered at the cutting edge. Similar to an axe found at Belfast, in Ireland (Evans, fig. 169). Presented by Rev. J. VV. Kenworthy, 1915.

3353 15 Small knife-dagger of bronze, length 4 0 inches, found in Rayne Road, Braintree. The blade is considerably worn and corroded, and has the broad flat base perforated for two rivets. A similar example was found with a contracted interment in a barrow at Helpertorpe, Yorkshire (Evans, fig. 280). Presented by Mrs. J. W. Kenworthy, 1915.

CHELMSFORD.

P.C. 1874 Palstave, length 6 8 inches, found at Chelmsford, 1837. Spatulate in form and provided with loop. Much the same decoration as an axe found at Oldbury Hill, Herefordshire (Evans, fig. 78). Acton Collection, 1862.

COLCHESTER

P.C. 1887. Socketed Axe of the ordinary type, length 2 8 inches, found in the neighbourhood of Colchester. Slightly mutilated and battered. Presented by Mr. George Joslin, *ante* 1863. (See *Catalogue of the Antiquities in the Colchester Museum*, 1863, No. 236.)

890 05. Socketed Axe of the ordinary type, length 3 3 inches, found at the Hythe, Colchester. Presented by Mr. A. G. Wheeler, 1905.

Jarmin Collection Upper portion of a palstave, with loop broken, found at Colchester. Jarmin Collection, 1892.

¹ Accession No., Colchester Corporation Museum. P.C. refers to Price's *Catalogue of Antiquities*, 1884.

² Evans, *Ancient Bronze Implements, Weapons and Ornaments of Great Britain and Ireland*, 1881.

DOVERCOURT.

2347 11 Hoard of Bronze Socketed Axes found near Dovercourt, 1911. Acquired by purchase, 1911.

The hoard comprises fifteen socketed axes in fine preservation and ranging in length from 4.4 to 3.5 inches. Three of the axes are octagonal in section, similar to an example found at Wallingford, Berkshire (Evans, fig. 150), and one of these, length 3.7 inches, has the blade considerably recurved. Three others, length 4.0 inches, are square in section and decorated on each face with three raised ribs. Another, length 3.5 inches, is square in section and decorated with a single raised pellet beneath the moulding round the socket. The remainder are of the ordinary type, with sockets square or circular in section, and the blades in several instances spatulate or recurved. Portions of an earthen vessel found near the hoard have been pieced together and partly restored to form the greater portion of a pot with horizontally pierced lugs.

EPPING FOREST.

3125 14 Palstave, length 60 inches, found in Epping Forest. Fine and well preserved specimen, without loop. Decorated below the stop-ridge with a semi-elliptical ornament and vertical rib. A similar example was found at Harston, near Cambridge (Evans, fig. 60). Deposited on loan by Mr. W. C. Wells, 1914.

ESSEX (locality unknown).

P.C. 1869. Leaf-shaped Spearhead, length 90 inches, found in Essex. With loops at the base of the blade connecting the latter with the socket. Similar to one found with bronze at Stibbard, Norfolk (Evans, fig. 407), but with a somewhat rounded midrib to the blade. Imperfect and broken across the blade. Acton Collection, 1862.

P.C. 1873 Bayonet-like Blade, length 14.1 inches, found in Essex. The blade is narrow and tapered to a fine point, and at the base is expanded and perforated for two bronze rivets, which still remain. Similar to an example found at Coveney, Cambridgeshire (Evans, fig. 313), but with a midrib rather like that of one from the Thames, near London (Evans, fig. 314) Acton Collection, 1862.

P.C. 1875, 1876. Two Socketed Axes found together in Essex. Both are square in section and are decorated on each face with raised parallel ribs, the extreme ones at the edges of the socket. One, length 3.9 inches, has four ribs which start from the moulded top and die into the face of the blade. On one face the extreme ribs are indistinct. A similar example, with three ribs, was found in the Fens near Barrington, Cambridgeshire (Evans, fig. 125). The other, length 5.1 inches, has five ribs ending in flattened pellets, similar to the axe found at Fornham, near Bury St. Edmunds (Evans, fig. 133). It is interesting in having the remains of a wooden handle attached to the sides of the socket. Presented by Mr. Jas. A. Tabor, *ante* 1863. (See *Catalogue Of the Antiquities in the Colchester Museum*, 1863, No. 210.)

P.C. 1879. Socketed Axe, length 3.8 inches, found in Essex. The socket is oval in section and expanded at the mouth. Similar specimens have been found at Castle Hill, Usk, Monmouthshire (Evans, fig. 119), and in Ireland (Evans, fig. 167). Acton Collection, 1862.

P.C. 1880. Palstave, length 60 inches, found in Essex. With loop and with a shield-shaped decoration consisting of two triangular depressions below the stop-ridge. A similar example was found in the neighbourhood of Ely (Evans, fig. 81). Acton Collection, 1862.

P.C. 1885. Socketed Axe of the ordinary type, length 30 inches, found in Essex. Acton Collection, 1862.

P.C. 1886. Socketed Axe, length 3.0 inches, found in Essex. Decorated with three raised ribs on each face. Acton Collection, 1862.

180 96. Two lumps of metal from hoards of bronze found in different parts of Essex. *Proc. Soc. Antiq.*, 1896, Sec. Ser., vol. xvi., p. 96. The hoards to which these lumps belonged have unquestionably become scattered and lost. Acquired by purchase, 1896.

GRAYS.

2491 12. Small Bronze Founder's Hoard discovered at Belmont Park, Grays, 1911. Deposited on loan by Mr. W. C. Wells, 1912.

The hoard comprises three socketed axes, a socketed gouge, length 33 inches, and nine lumps of metal. Two of the axes are of the ordinary type and quite plain, one square in section, length 40 inches, and the other circular in section, length 36 inches. The remaining axe has lost its cutting edge and has a single raised pellet on each face beneath the moulding round the mouth of the socket.

4282-4283 22. Two Palstaves, without loops, found together near Grays, about 1870. One, length 65 inches, shows traces of a vertical rib on each face below the stop-ridge. The other, length 64 inches, shows a semi-elliptical ornament as decoration. Both are very much corroded with warty patina. Deposited on loan by Mr. Charles H. Butcher, 1922.

GRAYS THURROCK.

2362 11. Large Hoard of Ancient Bronze discovered at Grays Thurrock, 1906. *Antiquaries Journal*, 1922, vol. ii., p. 105. Deposited on loan by Mr. W. C. Wells, 1911.

The hoard was found in a cavity of the chalk and seems to be the largest and most remarkable find of bronze which has been unearthed in the county. It comprises some 298 pieces, and includes several fine implements and weapons, numerous fragments of others broken and worn-out and collected as waste metal, lumps of copper and bronze, waste pieces and imperfect castings, and portion of a bronze mould for casting socketed axes. The bronze is described and illustrated in the *Antiquaries Journal*.

GREAT TEY.

161208. Socketed Axe, length 4.3 inches, found in Bogland Field, Great Tey. On one face of the axe is a thick raised rib, extending about one inch below the moulding. From the Collection of Alderman H. Laver, F.S.A., 1908.

GREAT WAKERING.

400820 Socketed Axe, length 3.8 inches, found at Great Wakering. Square in section, and with traces of raised beading below the moulding. Acquired by purchase, 1920.

HALSTEAD.

P.C. 1895. Large Lump of Metal found in the Recreation Ground, Halstead. Presented by Mr. Manning, *ante* 1884.

HATFIELD BROAD OAK.

15194. Fine Bronze Founder's Hoard discovered at Matching Barnes, in the parish of Hatfield Broad Oak, 1893. *Trans., Essex Arch. Soc.*, 1896 (N.S.), vol. vi., p. 172; *Proc. Soc. Antiq.*, Sec. Ser., vol. xvi., p. 96; *Essex Review*, 1894, vol. iii., p. 273; *Proc. Soc. Antiq.*, 1910, Sec. Ser., vol. xxiii., p. 166. Presented to the Essex Archaeological Society by Lord Rookwood, 1894.

The hoard was found at the side of the brook, in a cavity extending about eighteen inches into the bank, lined with a black earthy material subsequently proved to be the remains of a decayed earthen vessel. Unfortunately only a very small portion of this lining was preserved, but there is sufficient to show that it was part of a black pot with quartz incorporated into the clay of which it was made. The hoard comprises a number of socketed axes, some spearheads, two large cauldron handles with circular rings, portions of a bronze vessel, a socketed hammer, and the usual masses of metal.

16 socketed axes, lengths 4.5 to 2.9 inches.

14 imperfect ditto and fragments.

1 socketed hammer, length 1.8 inches.

4 pieces of the rim of a bronze vessel.

1 leaf-shaped spearhead, length 7.3 inches.

1 fragment of another, similar.

1 spearhead of unusual type, length 5.1 inches.

2 cauldron handles with rings, 3.5 inches diameter.

1 hollow loop (Evans, fig. 493).

20 lumps of copper and bronze.

The majority of the socketed axes are of the usual type and apparently plain, but on some the raised beads representing the wings of the earlier palstave type occur as a survival. Many are in a decayed condition and show signs of considerable use in ancient times. Two of the more perfect specimens, length 3.4 inches, are apparently from the same mould and resemble the axe found in Wiltshire (Evans, fig. 112). Another, length 3.5 inches, is of the

same type, but has the horizontal bead imperfect. The fourth axe, length 41 inches, has raised beads similar to that found in the neighbourhood of Dorchester, Oxon (Evans, fig. III), but in addition has two raised pellets between the beads. The fifth axe, length 31 inches, has two raised pellets, similar to one found with bronze at High Roding, Essex (Evans, fig. 122). Another, length 29 inches, has curved beads extending over the faces and almost touching each other, and the remaining ten, lengths 45 to 31 inches, are of the ordinary type.

The first spearhead and the fragment of the second are of the usual leaf-shaped type, and closely resemble specimens from the hoard discovered at Reach Fen, Cambridgeshire (Evans, fig. 390). The third specimen is rather unusual in type. It has all the features of this class of weapon, and seems to constitute an interesting link in the development of the barbed type. The socket is somewhat oval and large in proportion and has a pair of rivet holes immediately below the ends of the blade which form rudimentary barbs. The edges of the blade are parallel for some distance, and between them the socket is obliterated.

The two large handles with circular rings undoubtedly belonged to a fine bronze vessel of spheroidal form (Evans, fig. 510). They have portions of the original vessel remaining, and the lugs through which the rings pass are corrugated, in one case with five ridges and in the other with six. The latter ring is distinctly diamond-shaped in section and uniform in thickness, but the former has a section somewhat circular and is rougher in its finish. In places it is considerably thicker and seems to have been repaired in ancient times.

The bronze socketed hammer is moulded at the mouth of the socket, and resembles one found with bronze in the Isle of Harty, Sheppey (Evans, fig. 211). The pieces from the rim of the bronze vessel are decorated in a style characteristic of the Bronze Age with alternate horizontal and vertical hatching, and still retain the bronze rivets by which they were secured. The rough masses of metal are of the type usually associated with hoards of ancient bronze, but some of the pieces have a peculiar colour as the patina is disseminated with oxide of tin and blue carbonate of copper.

HAVINGING.

428122. Palstave, length 64 inches, from a hoard of palstaves found near Havinging, about 1883. Without loop, but with semi-elliptical ornament and vertical rib below the stop-ridge, similar to the example found at Harston, near Cambridge (Evans, fig. 60). The septum between the flanges is grooved vertically on each face. Deposited on loan by Mr. Charles H. Butcher, 1922.



BRONZE FOUNDER'S HOARD, found at HATFIELD BROAD OAK, ESSEX.
Given to the Essex Archæological Society by Lord Rookwood, 1894.
[Trans. Essex Arch. Soc. N.S. VI. 172] [181-94]

PORTION OF BRONZE FOUNDER'S HOARD FROM HATFIELD
BROAD OAK, SHOWING SPEARHEADS, SOCKETED HAMMER,
CALDRON RINGS AND PORTIONS OF THE RIM OF A BRONZE
VESSEL.

HIGH EASTER.

71204. Diminutive Socketed Axe, length 2.3 inches, found at Great Garnetts, High Easter. Presented by Mr. Miller Christy, F.L.S., 1904.

LEIGH.

P.C. 1889-1894. Small Bronze Founder's Hoard discovered at Leigh. Presented to the Essex Archaeological Society by Mr. H. W. King, *ante* 1884.

The hoard comprises four richly patinated socketed axes, a lump of bronze, and fragments of a socketed axe, gouge, and leaf-shaped spearhead. One of the axes, length 4.1 inches, is square in section and decorated with raised beads similar to an axe found in the neighbourhood of Dorchester, Oxon (Evans, fig. III), but in addition has a raised pellet between the beads just below the moulding. Another, length 4.3 inches, square in section and with similar raised beads but no pellet, is rough cast and has the socket choked with fragments of a socketed axe. The third axe, length 4.5 inches, square in section and similarly decorated, is rather remarkable for its heavy incrustation of rich green patina. The remaining axe, length 3.3 inches, is of the ordinary type, circular in section and quite plain, and has the socket choked with fragments of a spearhead.

LITTLE OAKLEY.

4089 Portion of a Socketed Axe "discovered with several others" at Little Oakley. Presented by Rev. Geo. Burmester, 1889.

PLESHEY.

1612.08. Winged Axe, length 5.3 inches, "found with others" at Pleshey, *ante* 1892. With loop, and with the side wings hammered over to form a semi-circular socket on either side of the blade. A similar example was found with a hoard of bronze at Carlton Rode, Norfolk (Evans, fig. 85). From the Collection of Alderman H. Laver, F.S.A., 1908.

1612.08. Socketed Axe, length 3.6 inches, found at Pleshey, *ante* 1892. Square in section, and with the outlines of the wings of the earlier palstave type surviving as two projecting beads extending over the sides and faces. A similar example was found in the neighbourhood of Dorchester, Oxon (Evans, fig. III). From the Collection of Alderman H. Laver, F.S.A., 1908.

RIVENHALL.

P.C. 1877, 1878. Two Socketed Axes found with others at Rivenhall. One, length 4.2 inches, resembles the axe found in the neighbourhood of Dorchester, Oxon (Evans, fig. III). The other, length 4.0 inches, is of the ordinary type, similar to the example found with bronze at Reach Fen, Cambridgeshire (Evans, fig. 116). Presented by Mr. Geo. Clapham, 1846. (See *Catalogue of the Antiquities in the Colchester Museum*, 1863, No. 223.)

SHOEBURY.

84004 Portion of a Socketed Axe, some fragments of bronze mounting with rivets, and a number of lumps of metal found at Shoebury. Acquired by purchase, 1904.

161208 Socketed Axe, length 39 inches, found with a hoard of bronze at Shoebury, 1891. Square in section, and decorated with four raised ribs extending some distance down the face of the blade. Similar to an axe found at Frettenham, Norfolk (Evans, fig. 129). From the Collection of Alderman H. Laver, F.S.A., 1908.

234911. Large Lump of Copper found with a hoard of bronze at Shoebury, 1891. Considerably battered, and from its appearance seems to have been used as a hammer in ancient times. Presented by Alderman H. Laver, F.S.A., 1911.

SHOEBURYNESS.

161208. Palstave, length 60 inches, found at Shoeburyness. Without loop, but decorated with semi-elliptical ornament below the stop-ridge. Considerably worn at the cutting edge. A similar example was found at Harston, near Cambridge (Evans, fig. 60) From the Collection of Alderman H. Laver, F.S.A., 1908.

161208. Small Bronze Spearhead, length 39 inches, found at Shoeburyness. Diminutive type with extremely narrow blade and loops at the side of the projecting socket. The point of the weapon and the loops are now broken away, and the socket is slightly imperfect. An example of this type of spearhead was found at Lakenheath, Suffolk (Evans, fig. 395). From the Collection of Alderman H. Laver, F.S.A., 1908.

161208. Socketed Axe, length 41 inches, found at Shoeburyness, *ante* 1897. Square in section and of the ordinary type, but rough cast. From the Collection of Alderman H. Laver, F.S.A., 1908.

161208. Socketed Axe of the ordinary type, length 42 inches, found at Shoeburyness. From the Collection of Alderman H. Laver, F.S.A., 1908.

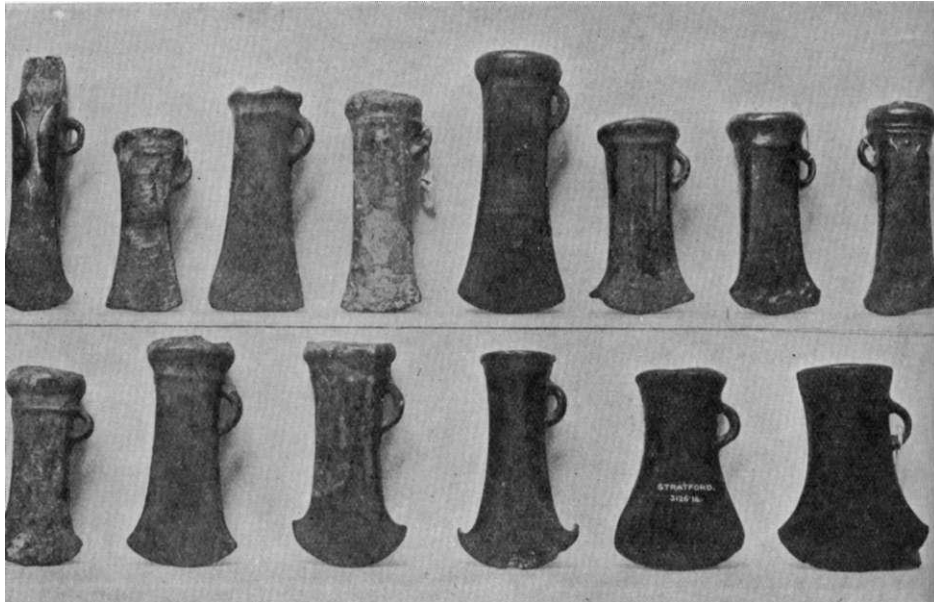
161208. Socketed Gouge, length 22 inches, found at Shoeburyness, *ante* 1897. Considerably shortened by use in ancient times. From the Collection of Alderman H. Laver, F.S.A., 1908.

SOUTHCHURCH.

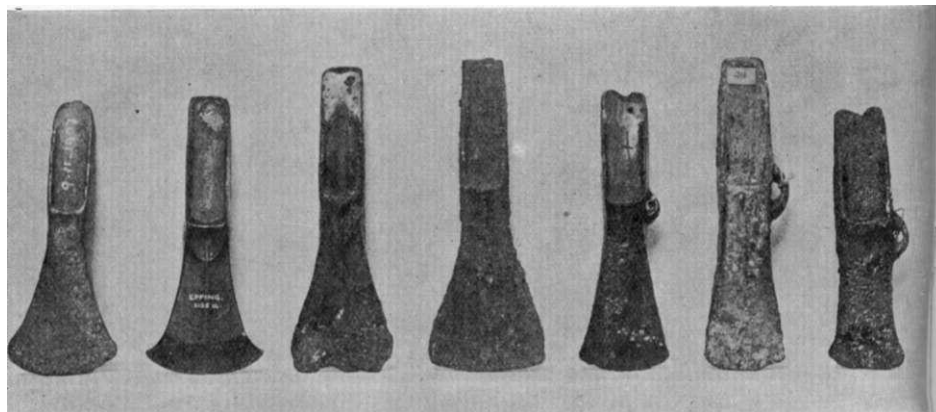
18096. Bronze Founder's Hoard discovered in the brickfields at Southchurch, 1896. *Trans., Essex Arch. Soc.*, 1896 (N.S.), vol. vi., p. 173; *Proc. Soc. Antiq.*, 1896, Sec. Ser., vol. xvi., p. 98. Acquired by purchase, 1896.

The hoard was unearthed about two feet below the surface in a decayed earthen vessel of similar character to that discovered with bronze at Hatfield Broad Oak, 1893. It comprises numerous fragments of socketed axes, leaf-shaped swords and spearheads. In addition there are the remains of two socketed knives, with the blades broken and worn away; a bronze sickle-handle of peculiar form with three rivet holes; and an imperfectly casted socketed gouge. The usual masses of metal, and a number of fragments and waste pieces are also present, but as oxidation has united several of the fragments it is doubtful to say what implements or weapons they represent.

161208. Palstave, length 67 inches, found at Southchurch, *ante* 1904. Without loop and spatulate in form. Rough cast, with the side-ridges and runners attached. A similar example, rather less spatulate, was found at Harston, near Cambridge (Evans, fig. 60). From the Collection of Alderman H. Laver, F.S.A., 1908.



WINGED AXE FROM PLESHEY, AND SOCKETED AXES FROM PLESHEY, DOVERCOURT, BARKING CREEK
 ESSEX (P.C. 1876, 1875). KIVENHALL (TWO), DOVERCOURT (FOUR), ESSEX (P.C. 1879).



PALSTAVES FROM SHOEBURYNNESS, EPPING, HAVERING, SOUTHCHURCH, ESSEX (P.C. 1880),
 CHELMSFORD, WAKERING.

STRATFORD.

312614. Socketed Axe, length 35 inches, found at Stratford, 1910. The socket is oval in section and slightly expanded at the mouth. A similar specimen was found at Castle Hill, Usk, Monmouthshire (Evans, fig. 119). Deposited on loan by Mr. W. C. Wells, 1914.

WAKERING.

161208 Palstave, length 56 inches., found at Wakering. The axe is provided with loop, and is very heavily patinated. In shape it resembles an axe found at Oldbury Hill, Herefordshire (Evans, fig. 78, but the decoration is similar to that of one found near Ross, in Scotland (Evans, fig. 79). From the Collection of Alderman H. Laver, F.S.A., 1908.

For the photographs of the bronze and for assistance in the preparation of these notes I have to thank Mr. Arthur G. Wright, Curator of the Colchester Museum. It is hoped that the facts collected will constitute a trustworthy record and be an inducement to bring to light others relating to our antiquities of the Bronze Age. It is collections of facts that serve as foundations for others to build upon.