

AXEHEAD

Unique ID: CAM-5D8F2E

Object type certainty: Certain

Workflow status: Published

An iron axehead of Early-Medieval date. These early Anglo-Saxon 'Francisca', Frankish throwing axes date from the 5th to the 8th century AD. The example recorded in this PAS record is a type from early in the chronology of Francisca. The remains of this socketed tool-head weigh c.0.6kg (600.00g). It has a length of c.146.0mm, maximum width of c.37.0mm and maximum height of c.85.0mm.

The butt-end of the tool is flat and sub-rectangular in shape measuring 41.5mm x 36.7mm with angular corners on all, but the upper, edges. The sides of the tool-head expand slightly with a convex curve to accommodate an oval socket. The socket, which has straight vertical walls, measures 31.6mm x 23.4mm. The top edge of the butt-end gently curves over to start the upper surface around the socket. In contrast the lower edge of the butt-end has a very pronounced, almost lipped rim, between the butt-end and start of the lower surface surrounding the socket.

Past the socket, the width of the artefact then starts to taper forming a triangular cross-sectioned bladed end. The tip of the blade has a width of 5.2mm.

The height of the socket is c.33.0mm. Although the socket walls are straight and almost vertical to the butt-end the artefact rises up in a diagonal angle. A neck of solid metal between the socket and blade maintains a height of c.32.0mm but curves in profile concluding the incline of the socketed area. The fan shaped blade angles downwards as it flares out away from the socket. This results in the top corner of the blade being positioned only slightly higher than the top surface of the neck zone while the lower corner bends down almost as far as the base of the butt-end. This gives the artefact a profile where the upper edge and butt-end look like two straight edges with the 90 degree corner cut off, the lower edge resembles a wide inverted 'U'.

Some iron decay in the form of rust is present on this artefact and in places it is obvious that a few small sized chunks have flaked off. Overall the condition of the metal is relatively good.

These axes were used as weapons. The drooping blade was intended to make it difficult to stop one with a shield: if it hit the shield's edge it would go into a spin behind the shield. The hook could also be utilised to help pull shields out of the way exposing the person behind.

Notes:

This Francisca can be best placed in Logan Thompson's Type II which he dated to Early 6th century to c. AD 580 (Mortimer, 2011, 160).

Find of note status

This has been noted as an interesting find by the recorder.

Subsequent actions

Subsequent action after recording: Returned to finder

Chronology

Broad period: EARLY MEDIEVAL

Subperiod from: Early

Period from: EARLY MEDIEVAL

Subperiod to: Early

Period to: EARLY MEDIEVAL

Ascribed Culture: Anglo-Saxon style

Date from: Circa AD 500

Date to: Circa AD 580

Dimensions and weight

Quantity: 1

Length: 146 mm

Height: 85 mm

Width: 37 mm

Weight: 600 g

Discovery dates

Date(s) of discovery: Wednesday 1st November 2017 - Thursday 30th November 2017

Personal details

This information is restricted for your access level.

Materials and construction

Primary material: Iron

Completeness: Complete

Spatial metadata

Region: [Eastern](#) (European Region)

County or Unitary authority: [Cambridgeshire](#) (County)

District: [Huntingdonshire](#) (District)

To be known as: Huntingdon District Area

Spatial coordinates

Grid reference source: From a paper map

Unmasked grid reference accurate to a 0.01 metre square.

Discovery metadata

Method of discovery: Metal detector

General landuse: Cultivated land

Specific landuse: Character undetermined

Mortimer, P., 2011 [Woden's Warriors](#) UK: Anglo-Saxon Books 160

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