

HOARD

Unique ID: CORN-2F1074

Object type certainty: Certain

Workflow status: Awaiting validation

Hoard of two incomplete cast copper alloy unlooped palstaves, or axeheads, dating from the Middle Bronze Age. One palstave has been broken cleanly into two pieces, probably by farming machinery since deposition, and the other palstave has just the butt end remaining, missing part of its flanged sides and its stop ridge to hold the haft or handle, and all of its blade. The more complete palstave is decorated below the stop-ridge with a raised shield shape with curved sides that tapers to a point as it extends on to the blade section. The butt end of the palstave is squared off and then stepped where a section has broken away. The butt is 25 mm wide and 9 mm thick and expands on either side into flanges, the taller of which protrudes upwards from the septum, or the base of the slot, by 13 mm. The septum measures 16.5 mm wide and the stop ridge is 53 mm down the length of the septum and 11 mm deep. The shield-shaped moulding is 28 mm long from the stop ridge to the blade and 22 mm wide. The shield moulding on the opposite face is more corroded but what is left of it measures 24 mm long and 21 mm wide. At either side of the axehead as the flange tops slope downwards after the stop, there is a transverse ridge, 24 mm long and 8 mm thick, that has been mostly chiselled away after casting. The blade is 34 mm wide and 13 mm thick at the broken edge which is 18 mm below the shield moulding. The length of the blade from the end of the shield-shaped pattern to the edge of the blade facet measures 48 mm and the blade then slopes downwards to the cutting edge, which is 8 mm in depth. The blade splays outwards nearer the edge to form a crescentic shape with both of the blade corners having been stunted through use and corrosion since deposition. The cutting edge is now quite uneven through use and damage since deposition. Most of the surface of the palstave is pitted and blistered by corrosion and only tiny patches of the dark green surface patina survive on one side of the blade, just above the facet. The broken section of the blade affords a glimpse of what the original colour of the palstave was before corrosion, a slightly pink bronze with a few patches of green corrosion, suggesting that the break happened in modern times. The casting seam has been chiselled flat on either side of the palstave and there is no evidence of it down the side of the blade either.

The butt end from the other palstave is more complete and measures 22 mm in width and 5 mm thick. The more complete flange on one side rises up from the septum to a height of 12 mm and the septum is slightly wider at 17 mm. The broken edge in section is also a bronze colour, again suggesting a relatively recent break since deposition, while the rest of the surface of this fragment is pitted and blistered. This other palstave cannot be typologically identified with just part of the butt end remaining, but as it was found with the more complete palstave, it is likely to have been the same type, though the measurements suggest that it was not made in the same mould.

Palstaves with shield-shaped decoration and expanded blades can be found during the Acton Park II metalwork phase (c.1500-1400 BC) of the Middle Bronze, such as the palstave illustrated in 'The Circulation of Metal in the British Bronze Age: The Application of Lead Isotope Analysis' (Rohlf & Needham 1998, p.128, fig.29, no.96). They are referred to locally as Crediton Type and have been found in Cornwall in hoards from Truro and Veryan (Pearce 1983, pp.577-581, plates 18-20, nos.144a, 147b & 165).

Schmidt & Burgess (1981) illustrate a similar palstave with shield-shaped moulding from Openshaw in plate 57, no.783, which is classified as a primary shield pattern palstave and dated from the Acton

metalwork phase on pages 118 & 125.

Knight, Ormrod & Pearce (2015) illustrate a similar local shield-pattern palstave with a crescentic blade from a hoard found at St Tudy in Cornwall on pp.37 & 79, pl.6, no.78g.

Notes:

The measurements below are for the more complete palstave in two pieces when put together.

Class: Acton Park II

Subsequent actions

Subsequent action after recording: Returned to landowner after being disclaimed as Treasure

Treasure details

Treasure case tracking number: 2018T418

Chronology

Broad period: BRONZE AGE

Subperiod from: Middle

Period from: BRONZE AGE

Subperiod to: Middle

Period to: BRONZE AGE

Date from: Circa 1500 BC

Date to: Circa 1400 BC

Dimensions and weight

Quantity: 2

Length: 131 mm

Height: 29 mm

Width: 56 mm

Thickness: 27 mm

Weight: 377 g

Discovery dates

Date(s) of discovery: Sunday 3rd June 2018 - Tuesday 5th June 2018

Personal details

This information is restricted for your access level.

Other reference numbers

Treasure case number: 2018T418

Materials and construction

Primary material: Copper alloy

Manufacture method: Cast

Completeness: Incomplete

Spatial metadata

Region: [South West](#) (European Region)

County or Unitary authority: [Cornwall](#) (Unitary Authority)

District: [Cornwall](#) (Unitary Authority)

To be known as: Polperro

Spatial coordinates

Grid reference source: GPS (From FLO)

Unmasked grid reference accurate to a 0.01 metre square.

Discovery metadata

Method of discovery: Metal detector

Discovery circumstances: The larger butt end was found in the subsequently excavated pit and the blade was found two meters away to the north and the other butt end another 2 meters away, all in a line.

General landuse: Grassland, Heathland

Specific landuse: Disturbed

Schmidt, P. K. and Burgess, C. B., 1981. [The axes of Scotland and Northern England](#) Munchen : C.H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung pp.118 & 125, pl.57