



BRONZE WEAPONS, FROM THE NEIGHBOURHOOD OF SOUTHAMPTON.

ANCIENT BRONZE WEAPONS
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SOUTHAMPTON.

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In the first part of the present volume of our Proceedings, p. 53, is an account by Mr. W. E. Darwin, F.G.S., of an interesting find of bronze implements at Bitterne Park, near Southampton. These implements were of the kind known as palstaves and socketed celts, and belong to the earlier period of the Bronze Age. It has been thought worth while that other single finds of bronze weapons should be recorded, and on the accompanying plate are figured two lance heads and a leaf shaped sword belonging to the later bronze period, probably not long anterior to the introduction of iron into Britain, the date of which has been estimated at about 500 B.C.

Fig. 1 is a drawing of a leaf shaped sword found at Checkenhall, near Bishopstoke. Weapons of this type are by no means common in England, although more plentiful in Ireland. The sword figured No. 354 in Sir John Evans' "Ancient Bronze Implements of Great Britain," from Newtown Limavady, in Ireland, is almost an exact counterpart of that found at Checkenhall. The way in which this sword came into my possession was somewhat singular. While visiting some workmen at Bishopstoke, and shewing them some Neolithic celts, for the purpose of training them to look for such things, one of them informed me he had a sword in his possession. He had once been in the employ of the late Earl of Northesk, whose interest in prehistoric remains is well known, and in this way had acquired some knowledge of ancient weapons. The sword was found at a depth of

12-ft. in the gravel, and evidently formed part of an unburnt interment. When exposed one or two large bones were visible, but quickly fell to powder. The nine rivets were all in their holes, although several were much corroded, and all fell out when the sword was removed. Six of them are in my possession. The finder carefully preserved the sword and subsequently refused a sovereign for it from a retired military officer, who wanted it to help garnish his staircase. I considered myself fortunate in saving it from this fate by an advance in price.

The sword is quite perfect and well preserved, the surface being very finely patinated. For a detailed description of such weapons the reader is referred to the standard work of Sir John Evans already cited. One characteristic of them is the apparent smallness of the part grasped by the hand, which has given rise to the suggestion that they were used by a small handed race. But as Sir John Evans points out, the part of the hilt where it expands to embrace the base of the blade, was probably intended to be within the grasp of the hand. The handle was cast separately from the blade, and the line of the fusion of the two can distinctly be seen in the Checkenhall specimen. The rivet holes were cast with the handle. As already mentioned the rivets were all in place when the sword was uncovered, and it is quite probable that a careful examination would have discovered some traces of the covering of horn or wood, which it was the business of the rivets to secure. Swords have been found in bogs in Ireland, where parts of the hilt covering have been preserved.

Figs. 2 and 3 are two lance heads. Fig. 2 is a beautiful piece of casting and has two loops at the side. It was found also in the gravel at Bishopstoke, about half a mile north of the station.

Fig. 3, is a smaller weapon, a good deal corroded and without loops. It was found at St. Denys in 1877, and is in the Hartley Museum, at Southampton.