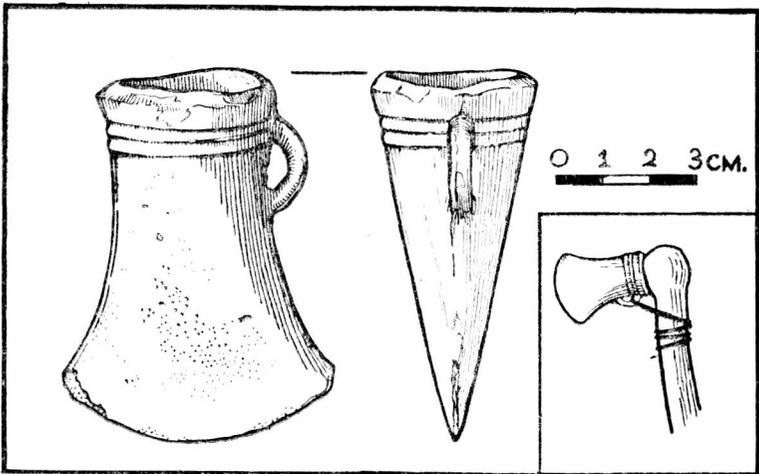


Bronze Axehead from Co. Kilkenny

THE discovery of a bronze axehead was made by Mr. Edward Murphy on his land at Annaleck Upper, in the Barony of Gowran, in October, 1956. It was brought to the notice of the Kilkenny Archaeological Society and was subsequently presented by the finder to the National Museum. (Reg. No. 1957: 4) (Figure 2). It was found about a foot below the surface while making a new roadway through a field.

This is a fine specimen of a socketed bronze axehead in a good state of preservation although the cutting edge is no longer sharp. The socket mouth is oval and there is a bevel on the outer face with two ornamental mouldings below it. On the under side there is a rounded semi-circular loop. The maximum length of the axehead is 7.50 c.m.

The manufacture of bronze objects was a highly skilled craft and Irish smiths in prehistoric times were pre-eminent for the quality and quantity of their products. Such an axehead would have been cast in a two-piece mould similar to the stone mould found in a bog at Ballydagh, Co. Kilkenny (J.R.S.A.I. 7 (1862-3), 307-8 where it is illustrated.



Bronze Axehead from Annaleck, and Method of Mounting

OKR 1958

Ellen Prendergast: Bronze Axehead from Co. Kilkenny



This type of axehead was mounted on a wooden shaft with a right-angled projection at the top shaped to fit the socket; the internal ribbing would have tightened the grip and it was further secured by a cord or thong passed through the loop and tied firmly to the shaft. This was then an implement as useful as a modern hatchet for chopping wood, felling branches and such work. It was in general use in the late Bronze Age from about 1000 to 500 B.C. Similar axeheads have been found in most parts of the country and there are at least two others from Co. Kilkenny, though the localities in which they were found is not known. One of these is almost identical with the Annaleck example but is quite plain, the other is a miniature one with a double moulding below the rim and three pairs of ribs on the inside of the socket. They are in the possession of Dr. G. Little, Dublin, who kindly loaned them for inspection. They were given to him by Miss Lucy Callanan and were formerly in the possession of her brother, Rev. Edward Callanan, of Kilkenny, who was associated with the Archaeological Society there in the last century.

A large collection of these axeheads is preserved in the National Museum and it is only by assembling them together that the individual finds from every region may be compared and the various stages of development observed. Our thanks are due to those finders who report these ancient objects and to those who take care to have them preserved so that they may add to our knowledgs of the past.

ELLEN PRENDERGAST.