
Manx Bronze Age

(2000 BC - 500 BC)

The Bronze Age takes its name from the development of metalworking techniques. Bronze, an alloy of tin and copper, became a popular choice of material for metalworkers during this period. Stone implements such as axes and knives still continued in use. Their replacement by metal tools was probably a long and gradual process.

Moulding and Casting

Bronze Age metal tools were formed using moulds to shape the molten metal into the desired form. Items were cast by pouring the molten bronze into hollowed out stone moulds. By the Middle Bronze Age, people had invented two part moulds, where two hollowed stones were put together and metal poured into a gap at the top. Previously axes had been made in flat moulds.

By the end of the Bronze Age, metalsmiths were making wax or fat models of what they wanted to cast, putting clay around them and then heating the clay to melt the wax. The melted metal was then poured in and when the metal solidified, the clay would be chipped away and discarded.

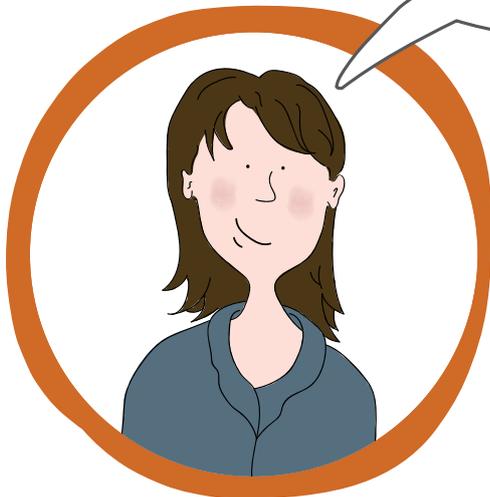
Tools

Socketed Axe Head (mounted)

Some metal axe heads had wooden handles that were fitted into a socket at the blunt end of the axe. The axe head was then secured by lashing it in place with twine or binding. This socketed axe is based on an axe head found at Port Moor in Maughold. The original axe head is thought to date between 1000 BC and 700 BC. At the end of the Bronze Age, when iron had already started to be used, it is thought that symbolic axes were used as a form of currency or as a measure of wealth!



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Tools

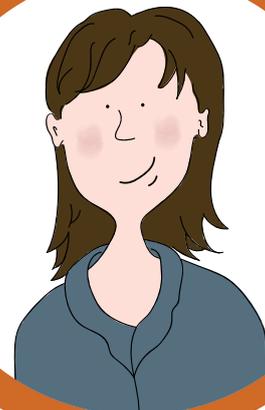
Palstave

The palstave is a type of bronze axe that was made for a short period during the Early Bronze Age (1500 BC – 1000 BC).

The characteristic of this axe type is the narrow butt, which inserts into a split wooden handle. The blade is often flared and the sides may be decorated. The palstave was mounted in the split end of a wooden handle and then tied in place with leather straps.



Palstaves have been found in Ballachrink in Lezayre and Orrisdale in Kirk Michael on the Isle of Man.



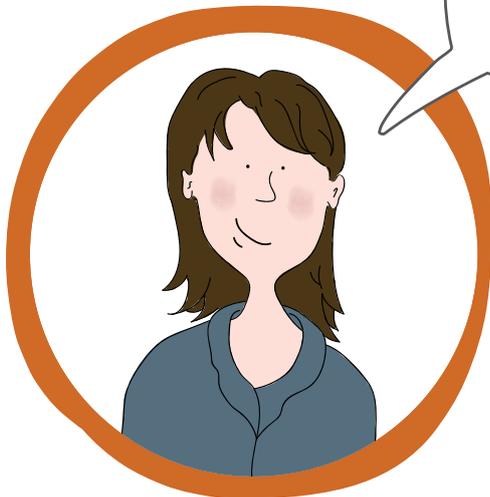
Tools

Flanged Axe Head

The flanged axe is a distinctive Bronze Age shape. This type of axe was introduced at the end of the Early Bronze Age. The curved 'half-moon' shape was thought to stop the axe head moving around at the attached point in the haft. Flanged axes have been discovered on the Isle of Man which date from about 1650 BC- 1500 BC.



Imagine how different bronze would have looked and felt to people who had been used to working only with stone, flint and bone.



Tools

Sickle

The flanged axe is a distinctive Bronze Age shape. This type of axe was introduced at Sickles would have been used for harvesting grain and other vegetation such as rushes and reeds. Some sickles even may have had a ceremonial purpose.

The inside of the blade's curve is very sharp, so that the user can either draw or swing it against the base of the crop, catching the stems in the curve and slicing them at the same time.

The material to be cut may be held in a bunch in the other hand (for example when reaping). It was necessary to keep the sickle cutting edge very sharp and would have required regular sharpening and polishing.



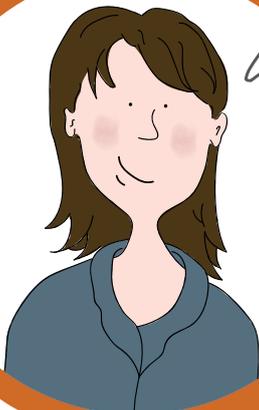
Weapons

Leaf Sword

This reproduction sword was made using the design of a leaf sword from. The sword's wooden handle has been riveted to securely hold the bronze sword. The original sword is thought to date from 900 BC - 700 BC. It was during this time that defended hill top settlements were established and powerful warriors controlled the land, cattle and local peasant farmers. This object would be very valuable and warriors also controlled the manufacture and trade of metalwork.



These swords weren't just for show. Archaeologists have detected tiny nicks and notches in some blades! – caused by the blade clashing with another metal object.



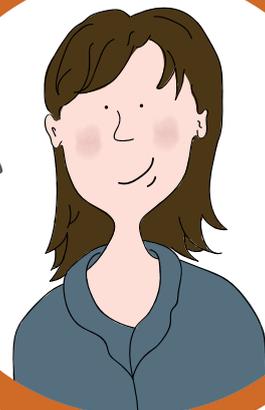
Pottery

Funerary Food Vessel

This pot is a copy of a funerary food vessel that was discovered at Killeaba in Maughold. This food vessel was found in a pit and is dated from 2000 BC-1400 BC. The food vessel has been decorated with incisions (a cut in the wet clay before firing).



Why do you think vessels containing food was stored with burials? What could this tell us about Bronze Age beliefs?



Decorate your own Bronze Age funerary pot

