

Bronze Halberd - as cast

Period: Bronze Age (c. 2500 – c. 800 BC)
Material: bronze
Composite item: other materials include wooden shaft

This bronze halberd is based on an example found in Culloden, near Inverness, dating to the Early Bronze Age (around 2300 - 1900 BC) and now in the British Museum. It was made by casting liquid bronze in a mould. Casting bronze is tricky, and frequently flaws develop within the item as it is produced. This item has some casting flaws, around the curved end and along one side where the bronze has not quite reached the edge of the mould, leaving uneven edges. An unsuccessful casting like this would have been melted down for another attempt. Once successfully cast,



Halberd with rivets from Helmsdale, on display in Inverness Museum

holes would have been made in the large curved end to allow a wooden shaft to be fitted. The pointed end and edges would then have been hardened by hammering, and sharpened with a whetstone.

The blade would have been set at a right angle to the long wooden shaft. They are thought to have been weapons, but many seem to have been either little used or too flimsy to make an effective weapon, so it has been suggested that they were ceremonial. As a design it is relatively short-lived and they are not found in the later Bronze Age. These objects represent a significant investment of skill, time and valuable material so they are thought to be prestigious despite their apparently narrow function.

What do you think halberds were used for?



Halberd from Culloden, now in the British Museum

See also:
 CT Bronze Casting
 When? Bronze Age

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