

Bronze Sickles

Period: Bronze Age (c. 2500 – c. 800 BC)

Material: bronze

Composite item: wooden handle

These bronze sickles or reaping hooks are based on an example from Dores dating to the Late Bronze Age, around 1000 – 800 BC. They



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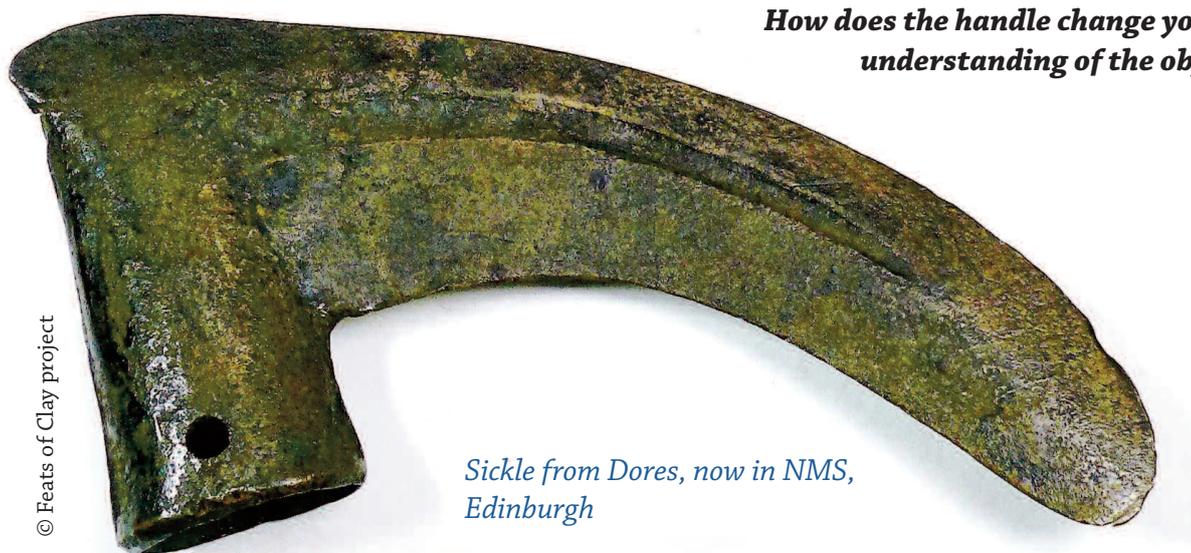
Clay sickle moulds from North Kessock

illustrate the process of making an item from cast bronze. Liquid bronze was poured into a clay mould which had the shape of the sickle impressed into it. The 'pouring cup' where the bronze was poured in has been left on the side of the first sickle. After casting, the pouring cup was cut off and any excess bronze was trimmed or filed off the edges. Finally the edge was hammered to make it hard and sharp, and a wooden handle secured into the socket with a rivet. The wooden handle is based on a find from England where exceptionally the organic wood survived. Fragments of clay sickle moulds have been found at North Kessock, showing that these tools were being made here, the only evidence surviving of making sickles in Britain.

This is a tool usually associated with cutting plants, such as cereal crops, herbs or dye plants. However, it is not known whether sickles such as this one were used as general cutting tools or whether they had a specific purpose.

How do you think this tool was used?

How does the handle change your understanding of the object?



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Sickle from Dores, now in NMS, Edinburgh

See also:

When? Bronze Age
CT Bronze Casting

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