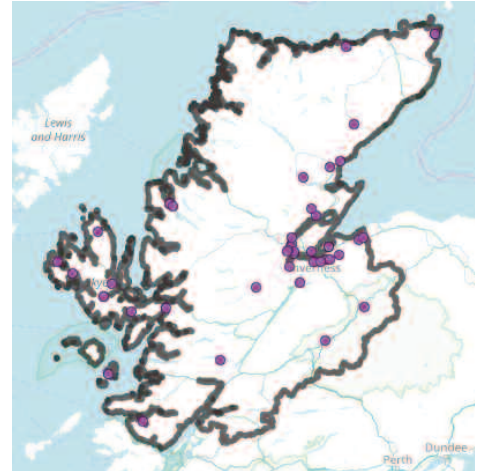


Bronze Socketed Axe

Period:	Late Bronze Age (c. 2500 – c. 800 BC) to very early Iron Age (c. 800-600 BC)
Material:	bronze
Composite item	wooden haft

During the Bronze Age axes changed their form over time. In the early Bronze Age, we find flat axes, easily made in stone or clay moulds. In the Middle Bronze Age, flanges were hammered on the edges, presumably to help secure the axehead to the haft. In the late Bronze Age (c. 1000 – c. 800 BC) a new innovation occurred, as axes were made with a socket, using two-piece moulds of either stone or clay. In addition to the socket, these axeheads also have a small loop to help

tie the axehead onto the haft. We know that socketed axeheads were being made in the Highlands, as evidenced by clay mould fragments found from North Kessock and a stone mould from Stittenham near Ardrross.



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Middle Bronze Age flanged axehead probably from between Clava and Cantray, now in the NMS, Edinburgh

many of them would surely have been made by melting down old fashioned axeheads and other metalwork. Socketed axeheads are also found in a number of hoards, buried in many case as ritual deposits, which also accounts for the large survival of these objects.

The axehead in the box has casting flaws, and a Bronze Age smith would certainly have remelted the bronze to try again.

No complete hafts survive, but in a few cases wood was preserved in the socket. Analysis of the wood in one of the axes from the Poolewe hoard (now on display at Gairloch Museum) showed that the axe was used in the very early Iron Age, between 800 and 600 BC. This

shows that the tradition continued longer than we had previously thought. The hafts may well have been at right angles to the blade.



Axehead from Ballifeary in Inverness with a modren haft



The Late Bronze Age hoard from Baile-a-chladaich near Dores contained axeheads of different forms, two of them incomplete, together with other metalwork and casting debris. It may have been a metalworker's hoard. The hoard is in Inverness Museum and Art Gallery

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See also:

Box 1 object sheets: Bronze Flat Axes
CT Bronze Casting
When? Bronze Age, When? Iron Age

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