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AN IRISH HALBERD FROM ROERMOND (DUTCH LIMBURG)

THE halberd here illustrated (fig. 1) was recovered through gravel dredging by the company Ballast Mij De Merwede, N.V., of Rotterdam, near the brick-works in 't Hatenboer west of Roermond, in Gem. Roermond, but on the western side of the

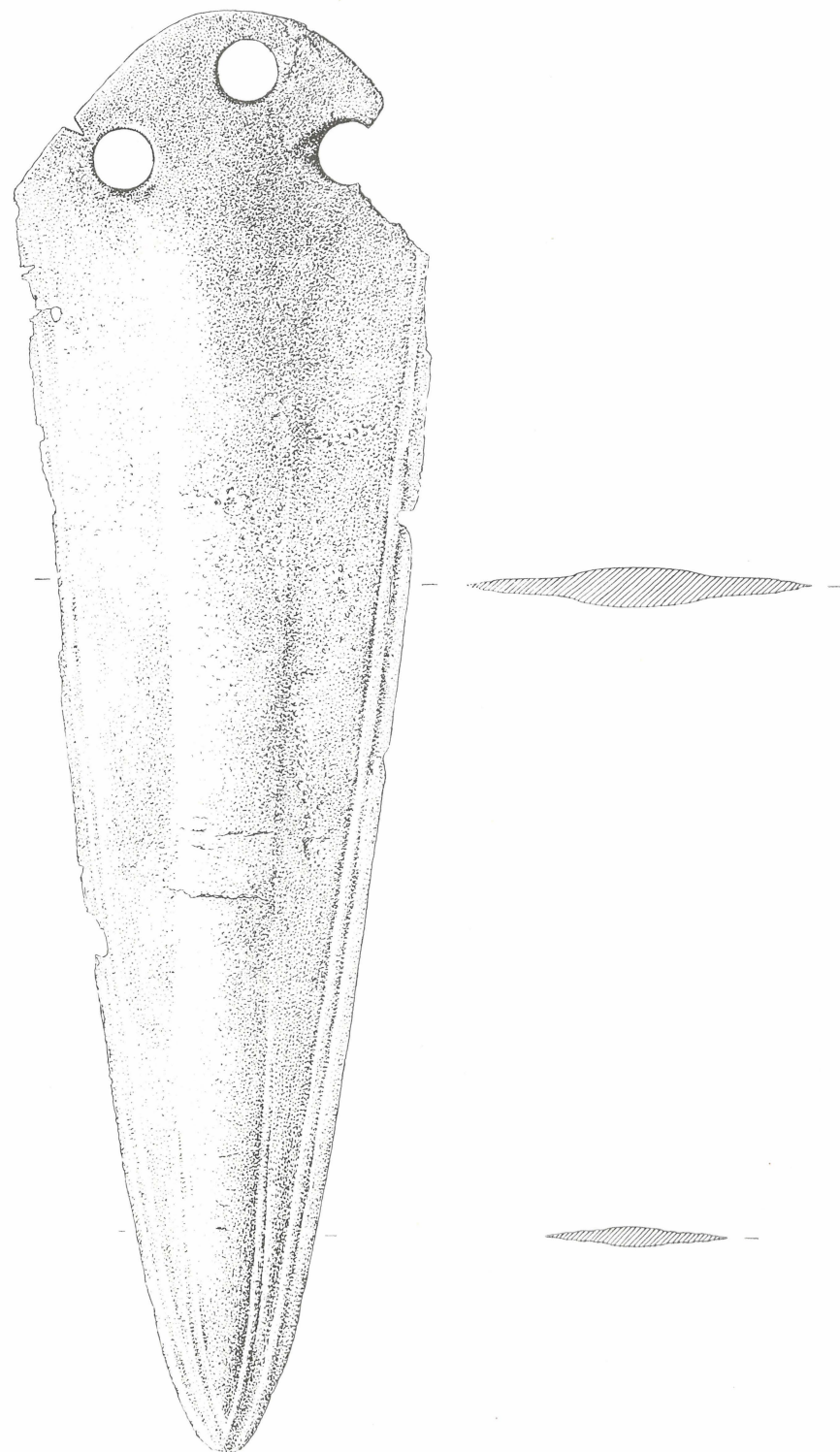


FIG. 1. Irish halberd from Roermond (Dutch Limburg). 2 : 3.

(Drawing B. Kuitert, B.A.I.)

present river Maas. The find-spot lies in what is undoubtedly an ancient channel of the river. A number of other important archaeological finds have been made in the course of the gravel dredging operations here, and were preserved by the *chef-machinist*, the late Mr. L. Chr. van der Pijl.

On 28 May 1957 the action of the dredging machine was halted by a metal blade being caught up in it. The blade was bent by the machine to an angle of 60°, but was heated and bent back into its original shape by the finder.

The blade is of reddish copper or bronze; it has a rough surface with occasional small pits (probably casting defects). Several transverse cracks in the surface and a pronounced reddening around them are the result of the recent bending and straightening. The halberd is intact except for a fragment recently broken out at one of the three large rivet-holes. The blade has a broad midrib, the point-end of which is outlined by slight grooves, which fade away about 8 cm from the tip. The edge of the blade, still quite sharp, is outlined by two grooves. The butt is also rather sharp. Length 29,4 cm; width 8,4 cm; thickness 0,8 cm; diameter of rivet-holes, 1,25 cm.

The Roermond halberd, of large size with three rivet-holes, belongs to Type 4 in the classification of Ó Riordáin (*Archaeologia* 86, 1937, p. 195 ff.). Halberds of this type are very common in Ireland (more than 30 examples); a number have been found in Britain, and about 15 specimens, probably exports from Ireland, are known from Denmark and South Sweden. Examples are also known from France and elsewhere.

A Type 4 halberd, much smaller than the Roermond specimen, was found with a flat axe, a dagger and other copper or bronze objects at Wageningen, Gelderland (*Honderd Eeuwen Nederland*, 1959, pp. 126-129, fig. 1). Ó Riordáin also cites Type 4 halberds from Nijmegen, Gelderland (of which there is no record in the Leiden Museum), and one from Upsprunge, Kr. Büren in Westphalia (his *Germany* 1, fig. 63 : 1). These together with a number of Irish axes, seem to mark out an Early Bronze Age trade route between Ireland and Saxo-Thuringia by way of the Lower Rhine, Westphalia and South Hanover. (Modderman and Butler, *Ber. R.O.B.* 1959, pp. 289-292, and Butler, *Palaeohistoria* 8, in press). At the terminus of the route is the well-known Dieskau I hoard, Saalkreis, with a decorated Irish axe and a halberd closely resembling the Irish Type 4 specimens, found together with numerous Saxo-Thuringian bronzes and Northern amber beads (*Jahresschrift für die Vorgeschichte der Sächsisch-Thüringischen Länder* 4, 1905, p. 3 ff.; Irish axe Taf. I : 1, Irish halberd Taf. IV : 1; *Ibid.* 29, 1938, p. 174 ff., Taf. 48, with metal analyses; *Proc. Prehist. Soc.* 4, 1938, p. 292, Register No. 256).