

Two Bronze Vessels from Stanground

by Carolyn Dallas

The two bronze vessels illustrated in fig. 21 were found in 1966 about three metres south of the present line of Cnut's Dyke at Stanground (TL 215967), when a pipe trench was being cut through the silt of the old dyke.

It is not possible from the remaining fragments of the cauldron to reconstruct the complete profile, although it was probably carinated. The upper portion illustrated in fig. 21b is virtually complete and is made of one piece of metal, including the rim and lugs. The intact lug shows that they were clipped into triangular shape and that the cord-hole has been punched through from the inside of the vessel. The metal thickness ranges from 2.5mm at the lug to 1.1mm on the body wall.

The bronze pan is complete except for some corrosion holes and missing handle(s) (fig. 21). It is also made from one piece of metal, up to 2mm thick on average. It has been patched three times in antiquity — once with solder and twice by rivetting sheet-bronze over the hole with small bronze rivets (as shown on fig. 21).

Bronze cauldrons with triangular ears occur among the grave-goods of Pagan Anglo-Saxon graves of the fifth and sixth centuries A.D., and have mainly a Midlands and East Anglian distribution (Thompson (1956); Kennett (1971)). This kind of vessel, however, was being made as early as the third century A.D. on the Continent (Hawkes (1951), 182; Kennett (1971)) and, becoming more common in the fourth and fifth centuries, was exported to Britain from the Rhineland in the Pagan Saxon period. It is, therefore, difficult to argue a closer date than A.D. 300-700 for an unstratified example such as this. Similar problems occur with larger groups of vessels, such as that from Halkyn Mountain in Flintshire (*Archaeologia* XIV, 1803, 275). Some pottery kiln-wasters of third-century date were found further along Cnut's Dyke on the same occasion on which the bronze vessels were recovered. Although this suggests that the Dyke may have been open in the later Roman period, it does not mean that the bronze vessels are of this date, as the dyke may have been open for several hundred years. The cauldron at least would seem more likely to have been discarded during the Pagan Saxon period; for a high proportion of known examples

come from contexts of this period and they are more likely to be imported or copied in Britain at a late stage of their Continental development.

The bronze pan is extremely difficult to date as such shallow examples with no rim are very rare. It is unlikely to have been a "frying pan" such as that from Sturmere in Essex (*Archaeologia* XVI, 1812, 364, pl. LXIX), as there is no handle attachment. Assuming that the pan was used for hot food, drop-handles soldered to the outside are most probable as on the very similar seventh-century Frankish vessel from Morken in the Rhineland (Lasko (1971), 49, fig. 40). It is also possible that there were no handles at all; for the vessel could have been used for cold food as well as hot. The pan has exactly the same rim diameter (28cm) as the cauldron, which is obviously a cooking vessel to be suspended over a fire, and the possibility of the two having been used in conjunction cannot be ignored. The pan will fit comfortably over the cauldron mouth, either right way up to heat food over boiling water, or inverted as a lid. However, until further examples are found, this must remain speculation.

I am grateful to Dr J. P. Wild and Mr G. B. Dannell for suggesting that I review the objects.

Bibliography

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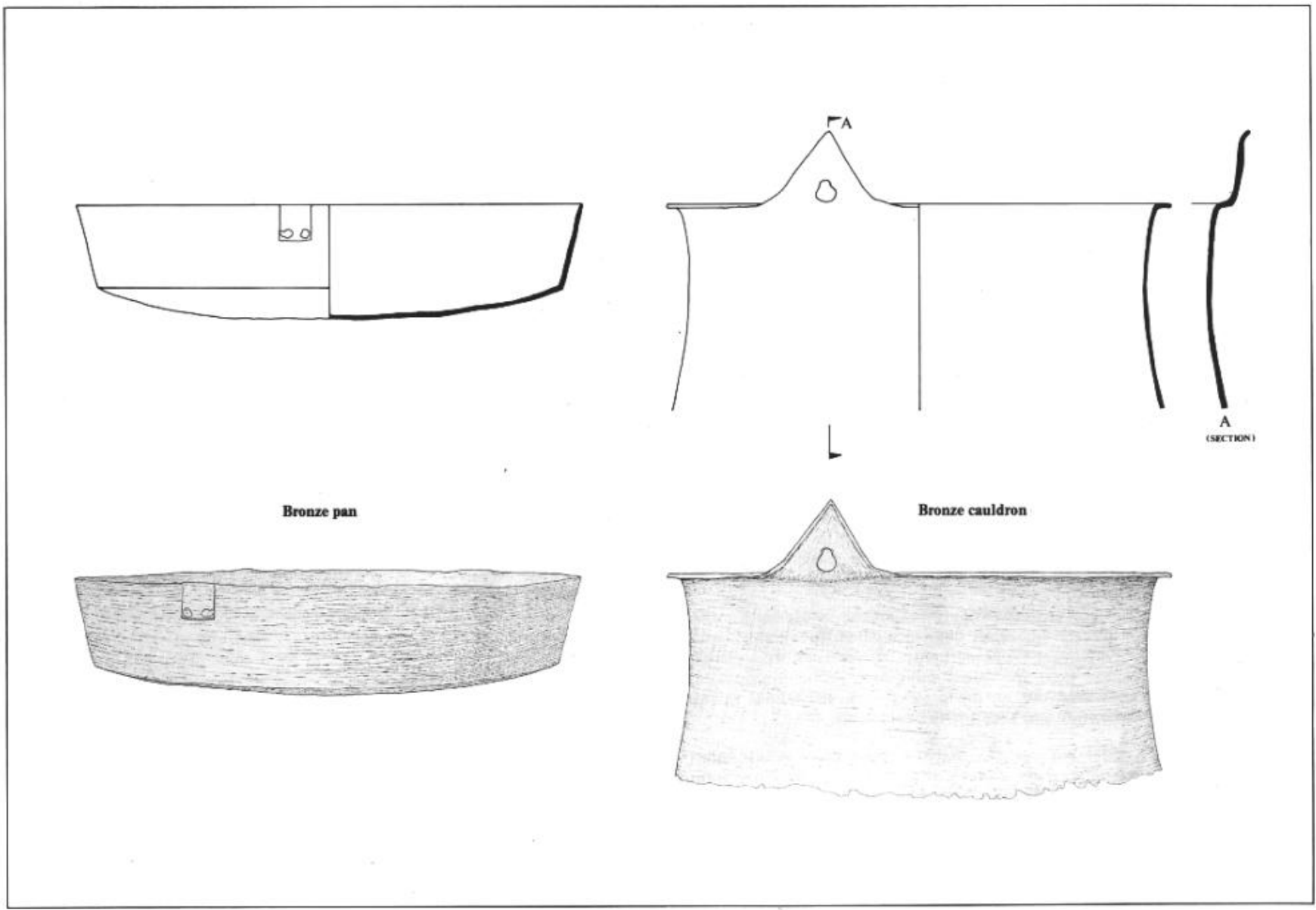


Fig 21a, b The bronze pan and bronze cauldron from Stanground