

The SCYTHER

Donated by: Agro Machinery – Ian & Ann Neal – Bob & Mavis Holdsworth

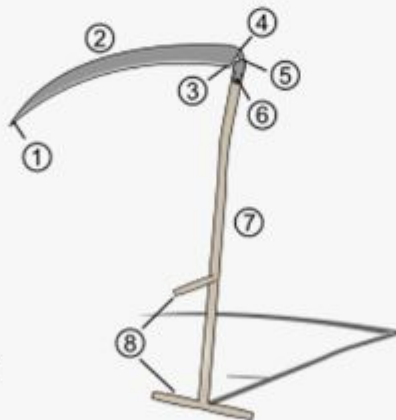
A **scythe** is an agricultural hand tool for mowing grass or reaping crops and its use dates back as far as 5000 BC. It has largely been replaced by horse-drawn and then tractor machinery, but is still used in some areas of Europe and Asia.

The word "scythe" derives from old english *sīðe*. In middle english and after it was usually spelt *sithe* or *sythe*. However, in the 15th century some writers began to use the *sc-* spelling as they thought (wrongly) the word was related to the Latin *scindere* (meaning "to cut"). Nevertheless, the *sithe* spelling lingered and notably appears in Webster's dictionaries.

Its use became wide spread with agricultural developments becoming common world-wide. Initially used mostly for mowing hay, it had replaced the sickle for reaping crops by the 16th century as the scythe was better ergonomically and consequently more efficient. In about 1800 the *grain cradle*, was sometimes added to the standard scythe when mowing grain; the cradle was an addition of light wooden fingers above the scythe blade which kept the grain stems aligned and the heads together to make the collection and threshing easier. In the developed world the scythe has largely been replaced by the motorised lawn mower and combine harvester. However, the scythe remained in common use for many years after the introduction of machines because a side-mounted finger-bar mower, at which stage the horse or tractor drawn, could not mow in front of itself and scythes were still needed to *open up* a meadow by clearing the first swathe to give the mechanical mower room to start.

Parts of a scythe:

1. Toe
2. Chine
3. Beard
4. Heel
5. Tang
6. Ring
7. Snath or Snaith
8. Grips



The **SICKLE** is the short handled equivalent that predates the Scythe, it remained common in the Bronze Age, both in the Ancient Near East and in Europe. Numerous sickles have been found deposited in hoards in the context of the European Urnfield Culture suggesting a symbolic or religious significance attached to the artifact.

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