# British Museum:
# Rooms 50 and 51
# Ancient Europe and Ancient Britain


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Ancient Europe
4000–800BC

# Ancient Europe

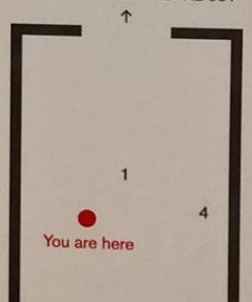
*4000–800BC*

Farming arrived in Britain around 6000 years ago bringing a new way of life. This change in lifestyle meant people competed for wealth, power and status, displaying these through jewellery, weapons and feasting. The objects in this gallery show how the people of prehistoric Europe celebrated life and death and expressed their relationship with the natural world, the spirit world and each other.

1. Gold cape found at Mold

2. Ceremonial dirk found at Oxborough

Ancient Iran *3000BC–AD651*



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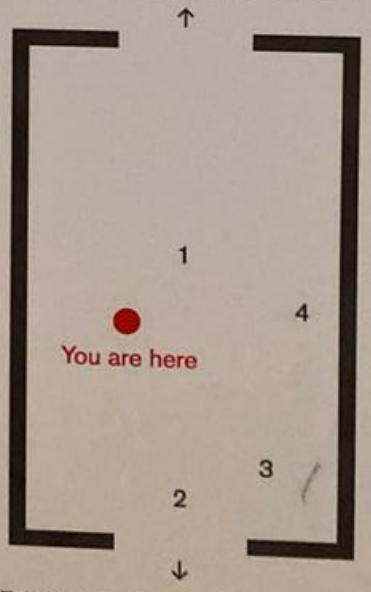



Britain and Europe *800BC–AD43*

Ancient Europe

4500–2500BC

# Making and shaping

Across Neolithic Europe people expressed themselves by decorating pottery in different ways.

In parts of eastern Europe painted styles of pottery appeared. Clay models of humans and animals played an important part in regional traditions.

Further west, for example in Britain and Ireland, people decorated their pots by incising and impressing marks into soft clay with a range of tools before it was fired. Although there are no clay models of humans or animals, a few examples of simple human figures in other materials, such as wood, survive from this period.

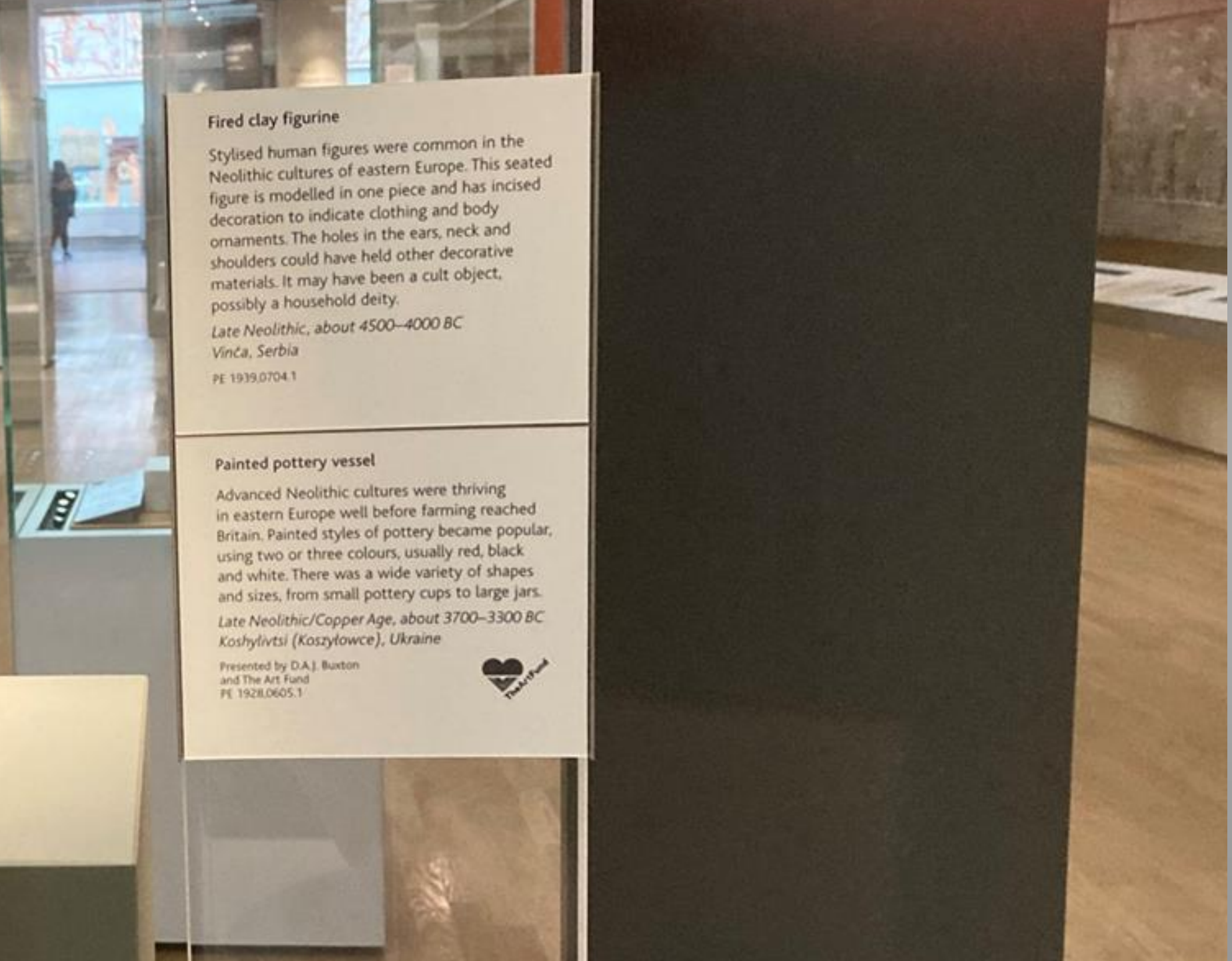
**Decorated vessels**

The decoration of British Neolithic pottery relied on techniques other than painting. Some later styles have heavy rims and richly textured decoration executed before firing. Distinctive styles reflect regional preferences.

*Earlier Neolithic, about 3700–3300 BC;*
*Later Neolithic, about 3300–2700 BC;*
*Lion Point, Clacton, Essex; Etton, Cambridgeshire;*
*River Thames at Hedsor, Buckinghamshire, England*

PE 1958,0506.210 presented by S. Hazzledine Warren; 1985,0301.2 presented by S. Whitton; 1921,0315.1 presented by Lord Boston


Fired clay figurine
Stylised human figures were common in the Neolithic cultures of eastern Europe. This seated figure is modelled in one piece and has incised decoration to indicate clothing and body ornaments. The holes in the ears, neck and shoulders could have held other decorative materials. It may have been a cult object, possibly a household deity.
Late Neolithic, about 4500–4000 BC
Vinča, Serbia
PE 1939,0704.1
Painted pottery vessel
Advanced Neolithic cultures were thriving in eastern Europe well before farming reached Britain. Painted styles of pottery became popular, using two or three colours, usually red, black and white. There was a wide variety of shapes and sizes, from small pottery cups to large jars.
Late Neolithic/Copper Age, about 3700–3300 BC
Koshylivtsi (Koszyłowce), Ukraine
Presented by D.A.J. Buxton and The Art Fund
PE 1928,0605.1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PE 1928,0605.1
The Art Fund


## Axes

Axes were useful tools as well as powerful symbols of maleness and social standing. Fine axes were traded and gifted across long distances because of their desirability and the status they conferred. Their meaning can change through time and space as they are worked into the myths and histories of individuals and communities.

Distinctive axeheads with pointed butts and wide blades carved on upright slabs in the chambered tomb at Gavrinis, Morbihan, Brittany, France, about 4000–3500 BC
akg-images/Erich Lessing

### 3 Axehead with button-shaped butt

This axe type is alien to Britain and must have been imported. It probably originated from a production area near Sélédin, Brittany where such axes were manufactured from about 3300 BC. This axe was found deeply buried during construction work. Like the jade examples, it was not meant for practical use and its function was symbolic or ceremonial.

*Date of deposition uncertain*
*Pulborough, Sussex, England*

PE 1959,0211.1

### 4 Stone and flint axes

These axes were robust working tools. Experiments have shown that tools like these were efficient in the felling and working of timber. They came in various shapes and sizes, from heavy-duty axes and adzes to more slender, chisel-like shapes.

*Neolithic, about 4000–2500 BC*
*Westmoreland, Cumbria; Southwold, Suffolk; Grantchester, Cambridgeshire, England*

St. 104.P presented by the Christy Fund; PE 1928,0412.1 presented by E.H. Runnacles; Sturge 242 Sturge Bequest


Object removed for exhibition preparations.
The world of
Stonehenge
Exhibition / 17 Feb 2022 - 17 Jul 2022
Early stage axe roughout, hammerstone, flakes and axe roughout
The large number of roughly shaped axes found here, and the manufacturing debris, indicate this was an important Neolithic quarry site. Axes from this source were heavily used locally, but some reached other regions, notably the Peak District, Yorkshire and the Midlands.
Neolithic, from about 3900 BC,
Graig Lwyd, Caernarvonshire, Gwynedd, Wales
Bequeathed by S. Hazzledine Warren
PE 1958,0506.5513, 5429, 5344, 5345, 5556

**Saddle quern and rubbing stone**

These well-worn stones were used to grind grain. They were ritually placed in a small pit at the earthwork enclosure site of Etton. This type of stone, a variety of quartzite, is not local and must have been imported.

*Earlier Neolithic, about 3700–3500 BC*
*Etton, Cambridgeshire, England*

Presented by S. Whitton
PE 1985,0301.3


**1 Group of small flint tools and arrowheads**

The early farmers had a distinctive tool-kit, different from that used by hunter-gatherers. The leaf-shaped arrowheads could be used for both hunting and warfare. Larger 'laurel-leaf' points, polished axes, scrapers, and a range of simple knives and cutting implements were used as everyday tools.

*Earlier Neolithic, about 4000–3000 BC*
*Suffolk and Cambridgeshire, England*

Sturge 2303 Sturge Bequest; PE 1965,0209.485; WG 553 Canon W. Greenwell Collection, presented by J.P. Morgan; Sturge 2304 Sturge Bequest; PE 2005,0504.98; PE 1985,0301.4 presented by S. Whitton

**2 Flint sickles**

Single-piece flint sickles are uncommon finds in Britain. They are difficult for archaeologists to date because most are isolated surface finds. Four were found with other material in pits at Grovehurst. The pottery fragments found with them suggest a date during the earlier part of the Neolithic period.

*Earlier Neolithic, about 4000–3000 BC*
*Grovehurst, Kent, England*

PE 1883,1213.44-5

**3 Polished flint and stone axes**

Polished flint and stone axes would have been essential tools in the clearance of woodland to make small plots for crops and grazing animals. Axes were also used to shape timber for construction. Sometimes the polishing was confined to the blade edge but frequently the entire surface was polished, which added durability and possibly value as well.

*Neolithic, about 4000–2500 BC*
*Maidenhead, Berkshire;*
*Langton Long Blandford, Dorset, England*

PE 1894,1210.30; 1892,0901.89

# Britain's first farmers

Farming arrived in Britain around 4000 BC. Small migrant groups of people moved west across Europe bringing the knowledge of farming with them.

The first farmers brought a package of new technologies including the making of pottery and polished stone axes. The newcomers also brought seed corn and the first domesticated animals to these islands. About 200 years after their arrival farmers began building substantial houses, suggesting that a settled way of life was taking hold.

Archaeologists refer to the time of early farming as the Neolithic period.

Reconstruction of the timber building at Balbridie, near Aberdeen, Scotland as it might have looked at the time of the early farmers

Drawing by David Hogg, courtesy of Gordon Barclay

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Reconstruction of the timber building at Balbridie, near Aberdeen, Scotland as it might have looked at the time of the early farmers

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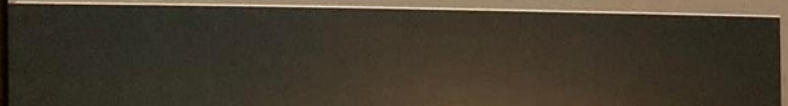
# Powerful possessions

The people of later Neolithic Britain and Ireland made some beautifully crafted objects from flint and stone. Vast resources were channelled into the building of large ceremonial monuments, such as Stonehenge.

Special items were frequently buried in the ground, sometimes in graves, or placed in rivers as offerings. At this time there was an increase in the practice of burying individuals with special grave goods. It is likely that only privileged people could own these things. These are clues to the complex social, economic and spiritual relationships being formed by people at this time.



1. Reconstruction of timber circle at Durrington Walls at sunrise


## The Folkton Drums

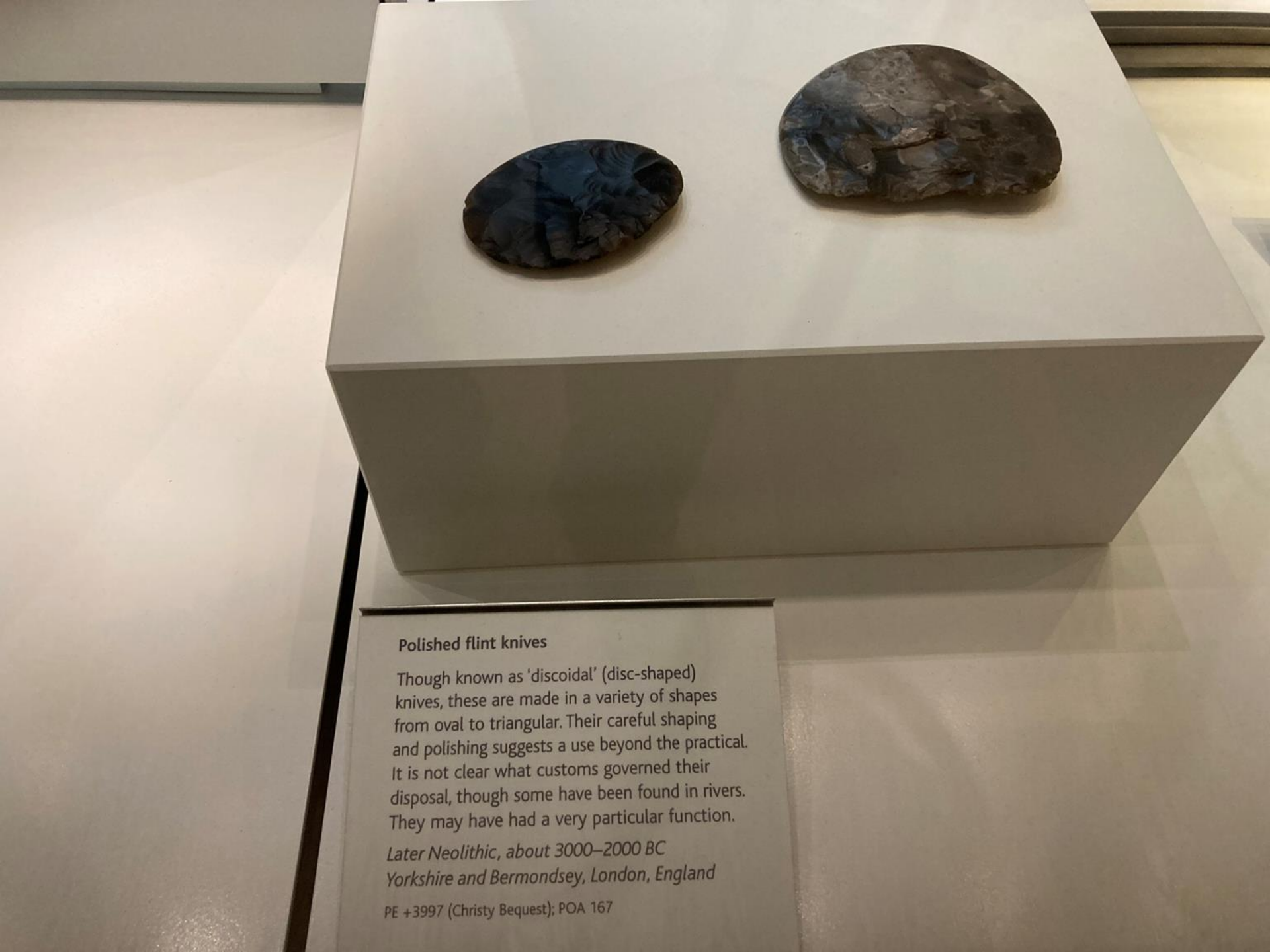
These three carved chalk cylinders were found placed behind the head and hips of a child's skeleton in a round barrow (burial mound). The elaborate designs are similar to the decoration on some Late Neolithic and Beaker pottery, as well as with the engraved patterns on Early Bronze Age sheet goldwork. The 'drums' are unique, and their use unknown.

*Later Neolithic/Copper Age,*
*about 2500–2000 BC*
*Folkton, North Yorkshire, England*

Presented by Canon W. Greenwell PE 1893,1228.15-17

## What are the Folkton Drums made from?

Analysis of the minerals present in the 'drums' tells us that they were made from chalk. Scientists also examined a minute sample in a scanning electron microscope at the Natural History Museum and identified microfossils present in the stone. These are similar to those found in chalk outcrops at Folkton Wold, Yorkshire, suggesting that the 'drums' were made from local material.



**Polished flint knives**

Though known as 'discoidal' (disc-shaped) knives, these are made in a variety of shapes from oval to triangular. Their careful shaping and polishing suggests a use beyond the practical. It is not clear what customs governed their disposal, though some have been found in rivers. They may have had a very particular function.

*Later Neolithic, about 3000–2000 BC*
*Yorkshire and Bermondsey, London, England*

PE +3997 (Christy Bequest); POA 167

**Carved stone balls**

More than 400 stone balls like these are known, mostly from isolated finds in the north and east of Scotland. The design varies, but they share a beauty and precision which lifts them out of the ordinary. They were in circulation at the same time as other distinctive items and seem to have had special regional significance.

*Later Neolithic, about 3000–2000 BC*
*Novar, Highland; Old Deer, Grampian, Scotland*

PE 1878,0902.2 presented by Sir Philip de Grey Egerton; 1930,0412.1-2

**Stone mace heads**

The natural qualities of the stone selected to make these mace heads were enhanced through grinding and polishing. Their value lay partly in the care invested in crafting them. Although their design may have been based on practical items, the best must have had some ceremonial function or symbolic value.

*Later Neolithic, about 3000–2000 BC*
*Lough Gur, Co. Limerick, Ireland;*
*River Thames, England*

PE 1864,0127.2 presented by J.F.W. de Salis; POA 52; WG 94 presented by J.P. Morgan


Hoard of axes and a discoidal knife
Five flint axes and one of stone were carefully buried together with a flint discoidal knife. Their blades were facing upwards, as shown here. They may have been originally buried in a container which has now rotted away. The burial of these items may indicate a ceremonial event. It could also be a hidden tool set, or work in progress, as the axes seem to be at various stages of completion.
Later Neolithic, about 3000–2000 BC
Great Baddow, Essex, England
Presented by H.W. Haddock PE 1950,0705.1-7


## 1 Copper daggers

The use of copper, at first limited to parts of southern Europe, swept across the continent along with a new personal identity: the dagger bearing warrior. Very similar daggers are found from Portugal to Slovakia and from Scotland to Italy. The custom of displaying a dagger became widespread and long-lived amongst males.

*Copper Age, about 2600–2100 BC*
*Sutton Courtenay, Berkshire, England; possibly Carmona, Seville, Spain*

PE 1862,0719.7; 1964,1201.465

## 2 Flint daggers

People often made fine daggers from flint in response to early metal versions. In Britain they were developed shortly after the introduction of metal working. Despite their imitation of seemingly more valuable metal, flint daggers were highly prized, and often used as status objects in grave groups.

*Early Bronze Age, about 2200–1900 BC*
*Lambourn Seven Barrows, Berkshire; Lode Fen, Cambridgeshire, England; no provenance*

PE 1862,0707.14 presented by M. Atkins; 1926,0618.1 presented by Hon. A. Keppel; +3994 presented by A.W. Franks


### 3 Barbed and tanged arrowheads

Barbed and tanged arrowheads are frequent finds in male graves from this period. Sometimes an arrowhead, or part of one, is discovered in a grave in such a position that it was the likely cause of death. The bow and arrow is equally effective as a hunting weapon. The tang projecting from the base was inserted into the split end of an arrow shaft and bound securely.

*Copper Age/Early Bronze Age*
*about 2500–1500 BC*
*Suffolk, England*

Sturge 2488-2494

### 4 Jet buttons and rings

Jet was obtained from the eastern coast of North Yorkshire, where lumps of it could be seen eroding out of the cliffs. It needs skilled working if it is not to lose its intense black colour. Both of these sets of ornaments were found in graves, one of which was certainly male. They were probably dress fastenings.

*Copper Age/Early Bronze Age*
*about 2300–2000 BC*
*Thwing and Rudston, East Yorkshire, England*

Presented by Canon W. Greenwell
PE 1879,1209.660-61; 1879,1209.1053-55

### 5 Gold ornaments

Decorated sheet-gold discs are found mostly in Ireland. Two burial finds in Britain suggest that they were worn on the head or upper body; some have been found in pairs. The decoration, made by impressing the surface on one side, is often based on a cross within a circle. This pattern is also used on jet buttons in Britain and copper pins further afield. The 'basket' ornaments could have been worn on locks of hair or on the ears. The type mainly occurs in Britain and may be a sign of high status, as the discs were in Ireland.

*Copper Age/Early Bronze Age*
*About 2500–2000 BC*
*Kilmuckridge, Co. Wexford; Douglas, Co. Cork, Ireland; Kirk Andrews, Isle of Man, Cobham, Kent (discs); Boltby Scar, North Yorkshire ('basket' ornaments) England*

**Grave group: Beaker and flint flake**

These two objects were buried with the body of a baby, aged 3–4 months. The burial was found in the same cemetery as the adult skeleton in the case behind you. Burials of children with grave goods are rare during this period, indicating that this infant may have had a special social status.

*Copper Age or Early Bronze Age,*
*about 2300–2000 BC*
*Barnack, Cambridgeshire, England*

BEP 1975,0901.5-6

**Grave group: Beaker, stone wristguard, copper dagger and amber buttons or beads**

This group of objects were found with the body of an adult man, wrapped or dressed in a woven cloth and placed in a stone-lined grave. He was buried lying on his left, with knees drawn up and his head facing east, as was typical for adult men at this time in eastern Britain. In contrast, adult women were usually placed lying on their right, with their heads facing west.

*Copper Age or Early Bronze Age, about 2300–2000 BC. Kelleythorpe, East Yorkshire, England*

Presented by Canon W. Greenwell
BEP 1879, 1209.1981-4; 1884, 0520.1

Grave group: Beaker, stone wristguard, bone toggle and copper pin

This grave contained the crouched body of an adult male. The wristguard and pin lay on the left arm. The toggle lay at the chest and the Beaker at the feet. A second adult male was later placed above the first, but without personal grave goods.

*Copper Age, about 2500–2100 BC*
*Sewell, Bedfordshire, England*

Presented by the Manshead Archaeological Society of Dunstable
PE 1976,0401.1-4


Grave group: copper dagger, stone wristguard and bone belt fitting
These objects from a male burial form one of several combinations of grave objects used to signify 'warrior' status around this time. Female graves are usually more sparsely furnished and contain no weapons, buttons or belt rings.
Copper Age, about 2500–2100 BC
Sittingbourne, Kent, England
Presented by G. Payne
PE 1892,0517.2-4

# New resources, new beliefs

By about 2500 BC the use of copper had spread throughout Europe. The so-called 'Beaker' culture reached Britain from across the English Channel bringing the earliest metal objects of copper and gold and a new burial rite. The earliest male Beaker burials in Britain contained copper daggers, gold trinkets, flint arrowheads, stone archers' wristguards and pots. It is the distinctive pots which give the 'Beaker' culture its name. These new traditions had a major impact on Britain and many parts of western Europe.

An example of a Beaker burial is on display in this gallery.

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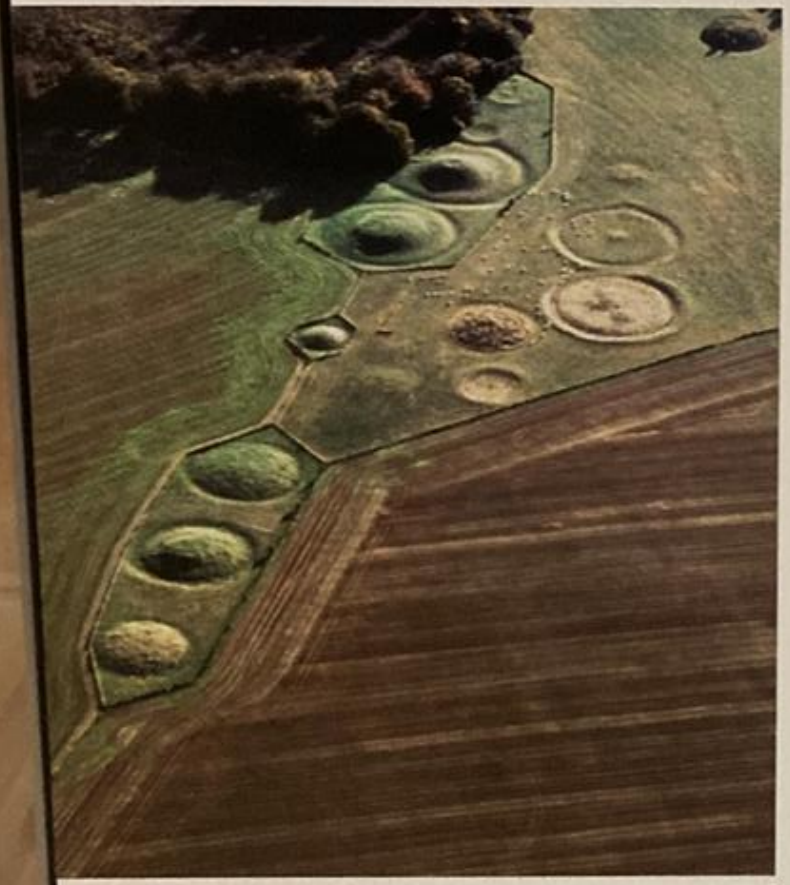

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1. Bronze Age barrow cemetery at Winterbourne Stoke Crossroads, Wiltshire. The appearance of Beakers in Britain gave rise to the widespread adoption of individual burial, often under round barrows. Round barrows were built and re-used for about a thousand years.



2. Painting of the 'Amesbury Archer', whose grave was discovered three miles from Stonehenge

By Jane Brayne, courtesy of Wessex Archaeology

### Precious materials

Access to precious materials was probably restricted, and control of resources such as copper and gold helped concentrate wealth in the hands of the elite. Wealth and status were displayed through the wearing of jewellery made from rare or exotic materials. These sometimes had special properties; amber and jet when rubbed together develop a static charge. During the Early Bronze Age gold was worked by beating into thin sheets, which could then be embossed. Many of these precious objects were buried with their owners.

## Gold lunula

These distinctive crescent-shaped ornaments were a speciality of Irish smiths, although some are known from western Britain. Some were engraved with geometric designs near each end. They may have been worn as neck rings but most of the decoration would have been hidden. Lunulae could have served as signs of rank, or been used during ceremonial occasions.

*Copper Age/Early Bronze Age*
*about 2400–2000 BC*
*Blessington, Co. Wicklow, Ireland*

Presented by J.P. Morgan PE WG 31

## 4 Hoard of gold ornaments

The group comprises two torcs, or neck rings, four bracelets and three unfinished pieces. The objects are typical of the jewellery in north-west Europe from this period. The twisted gold torc was probably inspired by earlier bronze versions. After about 1500 BC, the practice of hoarding goldwork became more common in Britain and Europe.

*Middle Bronze Age, about 1300–1100 BC*
*Towednack, Cornwall, England*

Acquired through the Treasure process
PE 1932.0511.1-8; 1932,1004.1

**Bold and beautiful**

Personal ornaments of gold and bronze became more ostentatious and often displayed strong regional character. New techniques were used such as casting, twisting from bars and making wire.

Across Europe metal objects were placed in rivers or concealed in the ground as hoards. Such hoarding may have been a way of storing wealth, displaying power or giving gifts to the gods. On the continent jewellery continued to be placed in graves as well, but this custom ceased in Britain and Ireland.

**Hoard of gold ornaments**

These neck rings and bracelets were found in a pottery bowl. They are typical of the heavier style of jewellery worn throughout Atlantic Europe in the Late Bronze Age. At this time solid torcs incised with geomteric designs replaced earlier twisted styles.

*Late Bronze Age, about 1100–800 BC*
*Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire, England*

Acquired through the Treasure process with grants from the National Heritage Memorial Fund, The Art Fund and the British Museum Friends
PE 2002,0711.6

10

**10 Quoit-headed pin and swollen-necked pins**

Quoit-headed pins are found only in southern England. The other three are a style of pin found in north-eastern France and southern England and have disc shaped heads, swollen 'necks' and finely incised geometric decoration. The swelling on all three is pierced to allow attachment to clothing.

*Middle Bronze Age, about 1400–1250 BC*
*Ramsgate, Kent, England (swollen-necked pins)*

PE POA 166; PE 1954,1002.2-4


These three armlets were each forged from a single bronze bar to form 'Sussex loops', a distinctive regional style. The twisted torc, or neck ring, has plain tapered terminals. The coiled rings are forged from rods of diamond section; one is decorated with rows of punchmarks.
Middle Bronze Age, about 1400–1250 BC
Hollingbury Hill, Sussex, England
PE 1853,0412.13-20
11
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11

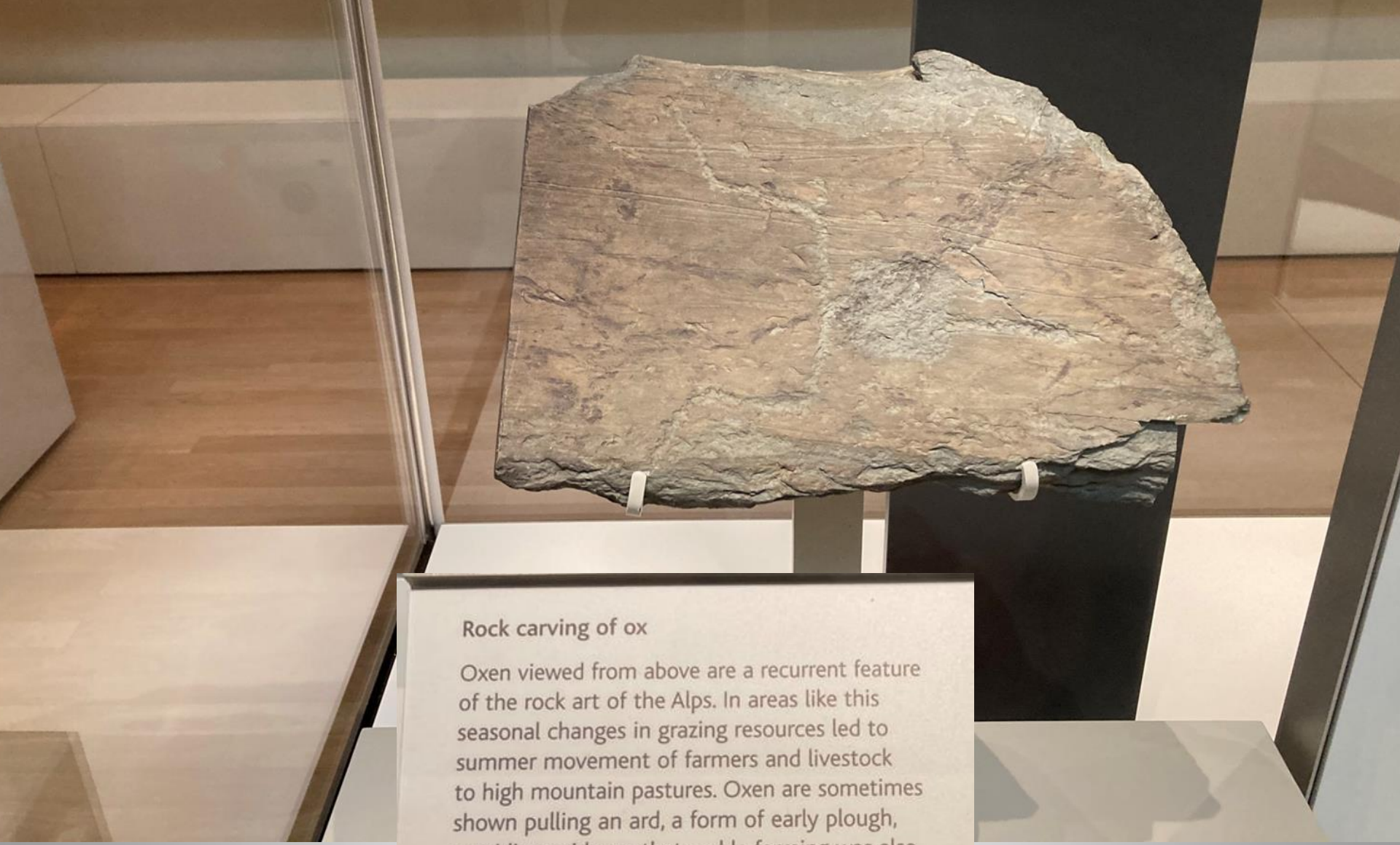
**11 Hoard of bronze ornaments**

This group of heavy and ornate bronze jewellery comprises an armring, a pair of coiled armbands, and four biconical-headed pins. The armring is loosely coiled for the upper arm; the armbands are flexible 'sleeves' for the lower arms.
The tightly spiralled terminals would probably have ornamented the elbow and the back of the hand. Of the pins, three match in detail.

*Middle Bronze Age, about 1400–1200 BC*
*Forro, Borsod-Abauj, Hungary*

Given by J.P. Morgan PE WG 1203-1208, 1211

How some central European jewellery might have been worn

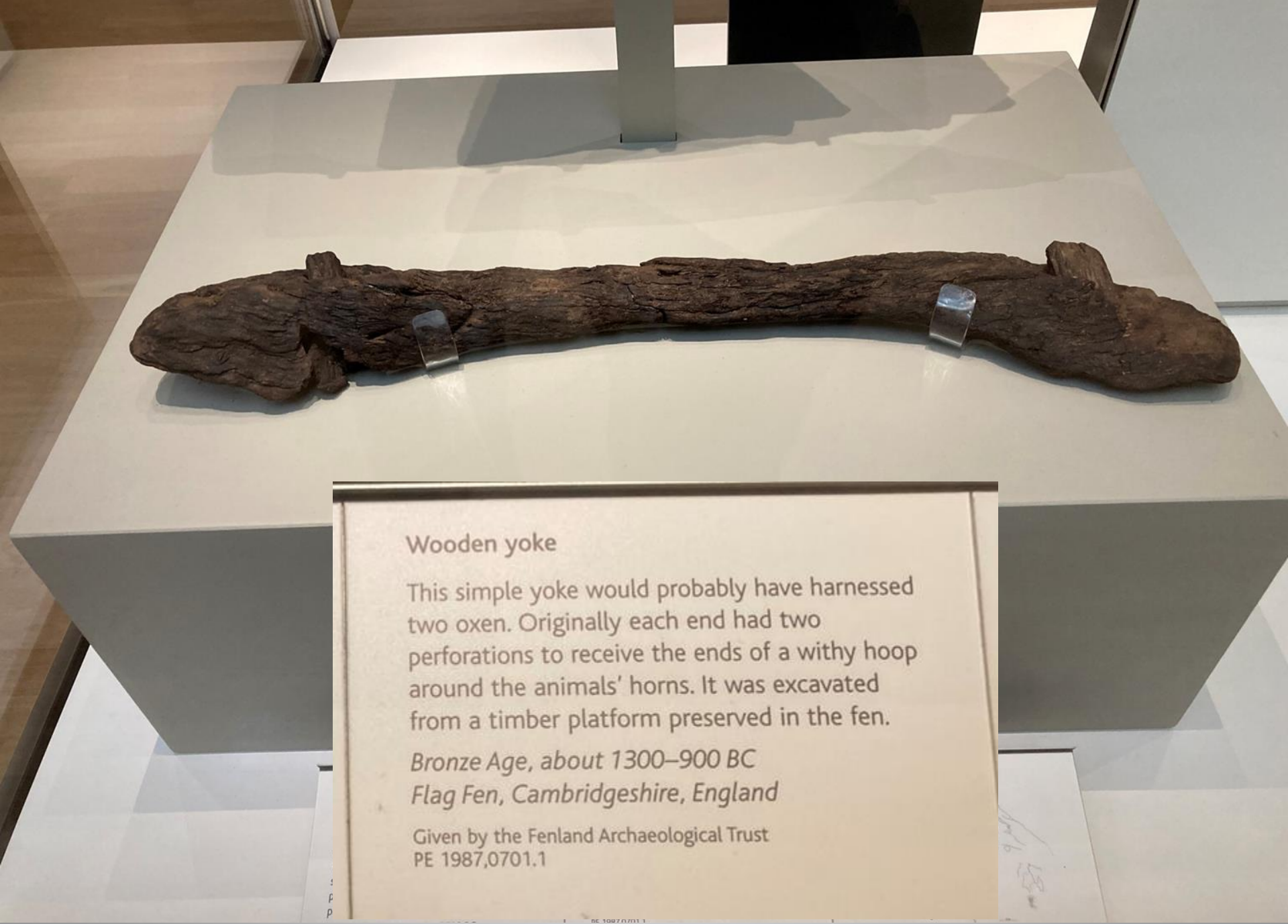


**Rock carving of ox**

Oxen viewed from above are a recurrent feature of the rock art of the Alps. In areas like this seasonal changes in grazing resources led to summer movement of farmers and livestock to high mountain pastures. Oxen are sometimes shown pulling an ard, a form of early plough, providing evidence that arable farming was also practised in these regions.

*Copper Age, about 2900–2500 BC*
*Val Fontanalba, Alpes Maritimes, France*

Given by C. Bicknell
PE 1897,1229.1



## Wooden yoke

This simple yoke would probably have harnessed two oxen. Originally each end had two perforations to receive the ends of a withy hoop around the animals' horns. It was excavated from a timber platform preserved in the fen.

*Bronze Age, about 1300–900 BC*
*Flag Fen, Cambridgeshire, England*

Given by the Fenland Archaeological Trust
PE 1987,0701.1

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*Flag Fen, Cambridgeshire, England*

Given by the Fenland Archaeological Trust
PE 1987,0701.1

Carving of a pair of oxen pulling an ard, from rock art at Bagnolo, Val Camonica, Italy
Le Orme dell'Uomo, Civico Museo Archeologico di Bergamo

# Working the land

Societies in Europe continued to thrive on the rearing of animals and growing of crops, although farm implements were now made in bronze rather than stone.

In some areas, especially Britain, early farming has left an enduring mark in the shape of field boundaries, still visible in the landscape.

Grain was still processed using grinding stones, a technique already several thousand years old. Cattle provided the main source of meat, while people also increasingly bred sheep for food and wool.

1. The fen-edge at Fengate,

Grain was still processed using grinding stones, a technique already several thousand years old. Cattle provided the main source of meat, while people also increasingly bred sheep for food and wool.

1

2

1. The fen-edge at Fengate, Cambridgeshire, around 1500 BC
   By Rob Donaldson, courtesy of Flag Fen Bronze Age Centre

2. Aerial photograph showing Bronze Age field boundaries ('reaves') at Rippon Tor, Dartmoor
   

**Two socketed bronze axes**

By the later Bronze Age a wide range of tools was cast in bronze. Axes like these could be used for felling and working timber. The socket and loop enabled the tools to be attached securely to their hafts, or handles. Thinner and sharper than stone, the blades were very efficient.

*Late Bronze Age, about 1000–750 BC*
*Petter's Sports Field, Surrey, England*

Presented by the Department of the Environment and Transport South-East Road Construction Unit
PE 1981,1104. 21,26

**Four bronze sickles**

Such tools should really be termed reaping hooks, because they would not be swung like a sickle. Often both edges are sharpened allowing double-

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Such tools should really be termed reaping hooks, because they would not be swung like a sickle. Often both edges are sharpened allowing double-action cutting. The Shinewater example still has its haft, which was carved from field maple.

*Late Bronze Age, about 1100–700 BC*
*Garvagh, County Derry, Ireland; near Halton, Buckinghamshire; River Thames, Isleworth; Shinewater Marsh, East Sussex, England*

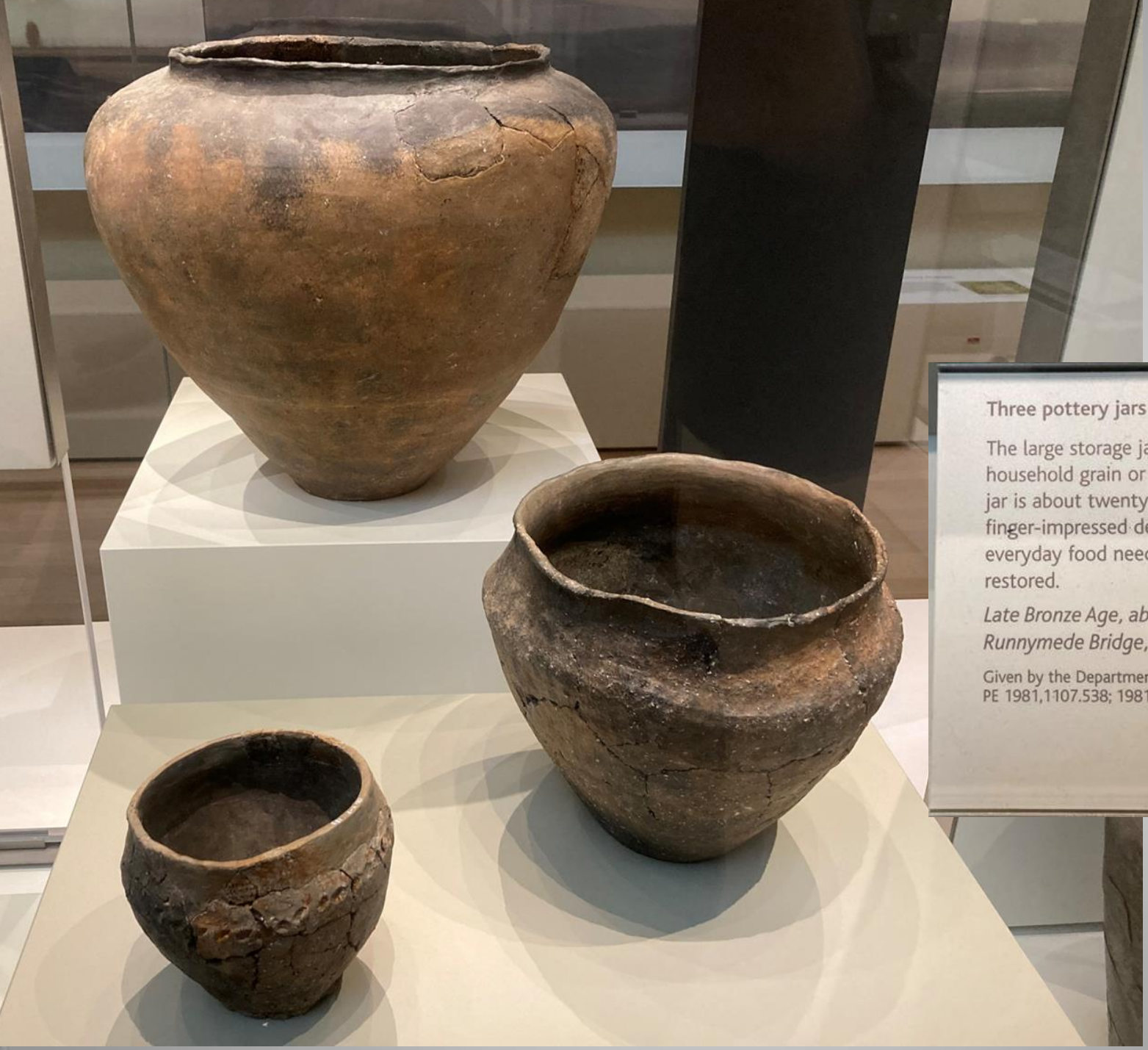
PE WG 1613 presented by J.P. Morgan; PE 1921,0215.1 presented by H.W. Stratton; WG 1776 presented by J.P. Morgan; PE 1997,1002.1 presented by Eastbourne Borough Council


**Saddle quern with rubbing stone**

This heavy saddle-shaped quern was used for grinding corn. The quern is made from coarse-grained igneous rock of probably local origin. It was excavated in 1862 from within the stone foundations of a circular house.

*Later Prehistoric, 1000–500 BC*
*Ty Mawr, Anglesey, Wales*

Given by the Hon. W.O. Stanley
PE CC 6865

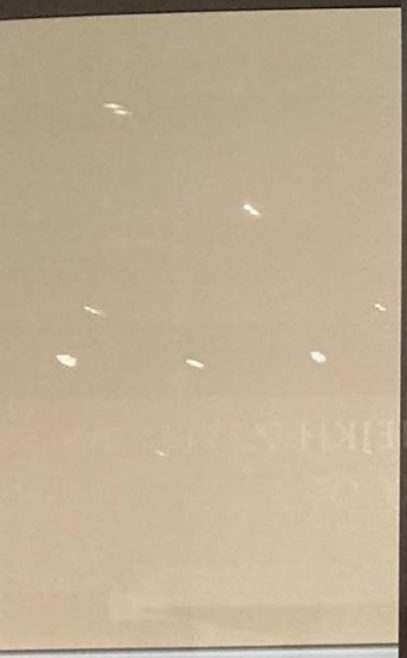


### Three pottery jars

The large storage jar was suitable for storing household grain or flour. The capacity of the jar is about twenty litres. The smallest has finger-impressed decoration and is suited to everyday food needs . All three jars have been restored.

*Late Bronze Age, about 900–700 BC*
*Runnymede Bridge, Berkshire, England*

Given by the Department of Transport
PE 1981,1107.538; 1981,1107.183; 1989,1001.407



Ancien
Europe

1300–650BC

# Feasting

The wealth which flowed from the profits of trade and agricultural produce could be distributed by powerful people at feasts.

Feasts were important social and political occasions for the people of Bronze Age Europe. Hosting a feast could reinforce loyalty and bind guests in obligation. It provided an opportunity for hosts to display their status and valuable possessions. Fine buckets and dippers were used to serve drink, while meat was prepared and served using cauldrons and flesh hooks.

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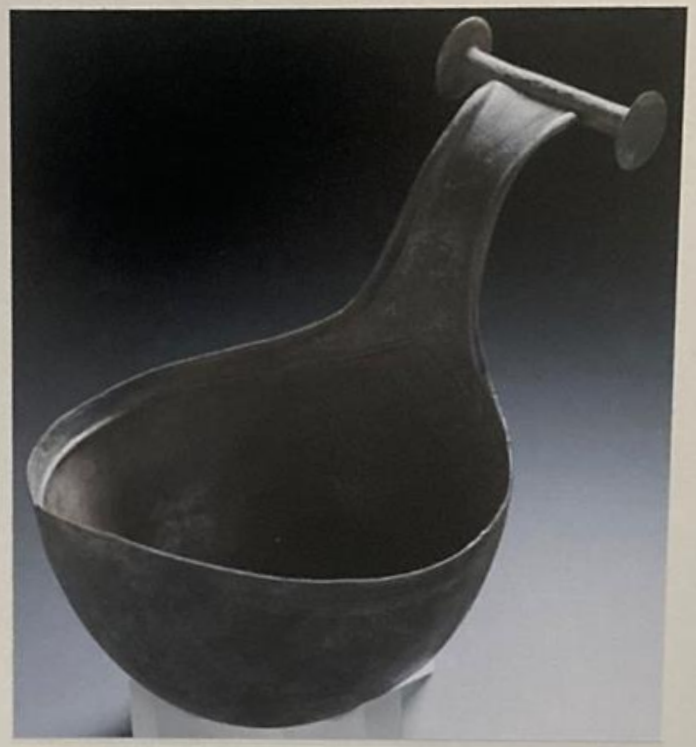

Unique bronze ladle found at Corrymuckloch, Perthshire, Scotland. This would have formed part of a Late Bronze Age feasting service.

**Sheet-bronze bucket**

The numerous repairs to this object show that it was valued by its owner. Strips and patches have been riveted to the bucket and two of the seven angle plates reinforcing the base are later replacements. The bucket is made from three pieces of bronze riveted together. The rim was strengthened by tightly turning round a wire and the neck was decorated with three grooves.

*Late Bronze Age, about 950–750 BC*
*Dowris, County Offaly, Ireland*

PE 1854, 0714.313

**Tableware**

Good quality pottery cups and bowls were used for serving, eating and drinking. One small cup displayed here has an internal division, which is perforated and must have functioned as a strainer. Small utensils made of pottery, bone and wood served as ladles, dippers and scoops.

*Middle Bronze Age/Early Iron Age*
*About 1300–650 BC, Flag Fen, Cambridgeshire; Runnymede Bridge, Surrey; Staple Howe, North Yorkshire; Maids Cross, Suffolk, England*

PE 1987,1001.1; 1981,1104.1051; 1963,1208.134; 1963,1208.74; ERB 78 A6 P198; 1963,1208.144; ERB 76 A2 431; POA 88; ERB 78 A6 P104


**Large flat bronze axe**

Impressive tools and weapons made from large quantities of metal were mainly for show, rather than for practical use. Such objects were symbolic in two ways: they stood for both their original function and the social status of the owner.

*Early Bronze Age, about 1700–1500 BC*
*Dunnygarron, Co. Antrim, Ireland*

Presented by the Trustees of the Wellcome Collection
PE 1964,1201.59

**Decorated bronze dagger**

Daggers with metal hilts are unusual in Britain. Similar daggers can be seen carved on the stone from Badbury. Daggers and later types of stabbing weapon are often found in rivers and bogs in much of western Europe. This ornate dagger is an early example of the practice of committing fine weapons to the spirit world at watery places.

*Early Bronze Age, about 1700–1500 BC*
*River Thames, England*

Ancient Europe

2500–1500BC

# Vessels, rites and ceremonies

Vessels were used in graveside rituals, as containers for the ashes of the dead and as offerings in their own right. Some were probably ceremonial drinking cups used in rituals involving communication with supernatural forces.

Clay is easily shaped and decorated allowing potters to convey information about cultural identity, society, and beliefs through design. Fired clay pots sometimes absorb traces of their contents. Scientific analysis can help us identify what they originally held and tell us more about life and death in prehistory.

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1

2

1. Food vessel from Strathallen, Perthshire and a bunch of meadowsweet. Microscopic traces of this flower were found inside the pot. This could indicate the presence of a drink flavoured with meadowsweet, or perhaps an offering of flowers.
Trustees of the National Museums of Scotland

2. Drawing of a Beaker burial at Roundway, Wiltshire, published in 1871
Society of Antiquaries

## 1 Gold cup

The Rillaton cup was discovered by accident in 1837 by workmen robbing stone from a large burial cairn on Bodmin Moor, Cornwall. It was found with a bronze dagger. Other items, including fragments of human bone, were reported but have not survived. A recently discovered letter, dated a few days after the find, has with it a sketch showing that the cup originally had a round base.

*Early Bronze Age, about 1800–1600 BC*
*Rillaton, Cornwall, England*

Loan from the Royal Collections

## 2 Gold cup

The Ringlemere cup was found during metal detecting in 2001. It is only the second of its kind to be found in Britain. After the find was reported archaeologists were able to examine the site fully. The cup had probably been placed at the centre of a mound but the land has been so heavily ploughed that little of it remained.

**The Rillaton Cup** [illegible] term loan from The Royal Collection Trust

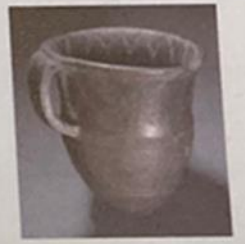
This object is currently on loan to Landesamt fur Denkmalpflege und Archaologie Sachsen-Anhalt in Halle, as part of *'The Nebra Sky Disc'* exhibition which runs from 4 June 2021 to 9 January 2022. For further information please contact the Department of Britain, Europe and Prehistory via the information desk in the Great Court

**The Ringlemere Cup** 2003,0501.1

This object is currently on loan to Landesamt fur Denkmalpflege und Archaologie Sachsen-Anhalt in Halle, as part of *'The Nebra Sky Disc'* exhibition which runs from 4 June 2021 to 9 January 2022. For further information please contact the Department of Britain, Europe and Prehistory via the information desk in the Great Court

## Precious cups

In the later stages of the Early Bronze Age a series of cups was made in north-western Europe from a variety of exotic materials – gold, silver, amber and shale. These vessels were placed in graves so they must, in life, have been associated with a particular person, perhaps a guardian of sacred knowledge who played a central role in certain rituals.



Precious cups from Britain and Europe and virtual restoration of the Ringlemere cup

Trustees of the National Museum of Scotland with permission of Rougemont House Museum, Exeter and Hove Museum. Amt für Archäologie das Kantons Thurgau

# The Rillaton cup Early Bronze Age

Gold alloy | 8.5 cm (whole object) | RCIN 69742

In an exhibition, State Museum of Prehistory [Halle]



## 1 Gold cup

The Rillaton cup was discovered by accident in 1837 by workmen robbing stone from a large burial cairn on Bodmin Moor, Cornwall. It was found with a bronze dagger. Other items, including fragments of human bone, were reported but have not survived. A recently discovered letter, dated a few days after the find, has with it a sketch showing that the cup originally had a round base.

*Early Bronze Age, about 1800–1600 BC*
*Rillaton, Cornwall, England*

Loan from the Royal Collections

## Title

Object: Object: The Ringlemere Cup

## Description

Gold cup, body beaten out from single piece of metal. With sub-conical body tapering to an omphalos base; the rim is flaring; the single rivetted strap handle links the rim to the mid carination. The rivet plates are lozenge shaped and the handle has decorative ridges parallel with its hour-glass shaped sides. Most of the body, both the neck and lower, is corrugated with continuous horizontal ribs. Above and below are plain zones, but just before the rim there is a single row of pointille punched from the outer surface.

# Ringlemere gold cup (computer reconstruction)



| | |
|---|---|
| **Image id:** | 00032698001 |
| **Object type:** | cup |
| **Object title:** | The Ringlemere Cup |
| **Technique:** | pointillé, embossed, beaten |
| **Findspot:** | Ringlemere Farm |

## The Barnack Burial

This is a reconstruction of a burial of a man who died between 2330 BC and 2130 BC. The items placed in his grave are typical of the richer graves of the early 'Beaker' period in much of western Europe. Daggers, archers' wristguards and dress fittings were the usual burial goods of powerful people. Grave goods may be the possessions and provisions needed by the dead for their journeys to the afterlife. They may also define the identity of individuals within society. This man may have used some of the items when alive; others were perhaps gifts from mourners.

The beakers themselves could have held some kind of drink, possibly alcoholic, offered or drunk as part of funeral rites. It is this distinctive shape of pot with gives the 'Beaker' culture its name.

The objects shown here are copies; the originals can be seen in the case to your right. The remnant of burned wood is original and was found alongside the skeleton in the grave.

*Copper Age, 2350–2100 BC*
*Barnack, Cambridgeshire, England*

PE 1975,0901.27

Ancient Europe

1300–700BC

# Waging war

By about 1300 BC people across Europe were waging war in different ways. Thrusting weapons like the rapier were replaced by edged weapons for slashing. Heavily armed horsemen, the warrior elites, used these weapons together with spears in group combat. Strong regional identities are reflected in styles of arms and armour at this time.

The many hoards of weapons found provide graphic evidence of the armed struggle for wealth, property and power. Some of these are personal hoards of arms, possibly buried as offerings to the gods.

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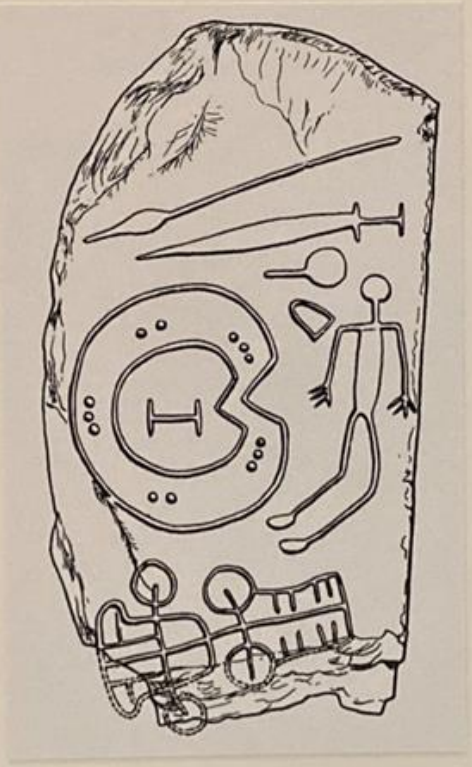

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2

1. Drawing of a stone grave slab from Solana de Cabañas, Spain, showing a human figure with the equipment of a warrior including a chariot

   Based on drawing reproduced in *Symbols and warriors: images of the European Bronze Age* by R.J. Harrison

2. Cult wagon model from Strettweg, Austria. The figures include mounted warriors.

   Landesmuseum Joanneum, Bild-und Tonarchiv, Graz

## Horse gear and cart fittings

This bronze bird is probably an ornamental cart fitting. The four bronze bands served to prevent the hubs of wooden cart wheels from splitting. The cheek pieces shown here are made of antler and have slots or sockets cut into them to allow straps to be affixed. The bronze horse bit has a two-strand twisted bar with end loops.

**Bronze bird-shaped fitting**
*Late Bronze Age, about 1200–1050 BC*
*Zsujta, Hungary*
PE 1888,0110.1

**Four bronze nave bands**
*Late Bronze Age, about 950–750 BC*
*Heathery Burn, County Durham, England*
WG 1287-9 given by J.P. Morgan; PE 1911,1021.1

**Antler cheek pieces and bronze horse bit**
*Late Bronze Age, about 1000–700 BC*
*Runnymede Bridge, Berkshire, England;*
*Mörigen, Bieler See; Switzerland*
PE 1989,1001.77284-5; PE 1981,1101.37
given by the Department of Environment and Transport;
WG 1384-5 given by J.P. Morgan; PE 1889,1101.134

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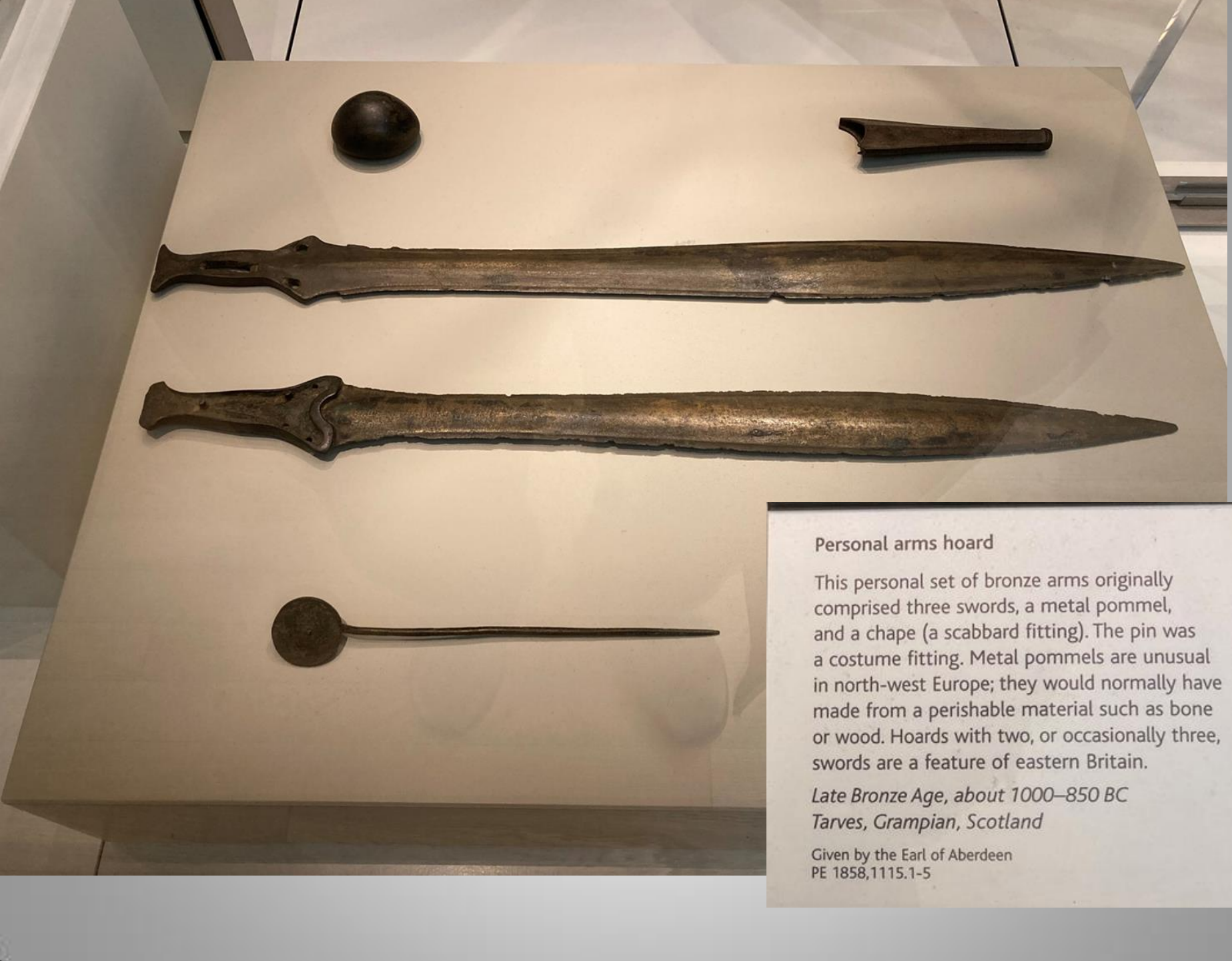
How bridle sets would have looked in use



## Personal arms hoard

This personal set of bronze arms originally comprised three swords, a metal pommel, and a chape (a scabbard fitting). The pin was a costume fitting. Metal pommels are unusual in north-west Europe; they would normally have made from a perishable material such as bone or wood. Hoards with two, or occasionally three, swords are a feature of eastern Britain.

*Late Bronze Age, about 1000–850 BC*
*Tarves, Grampian, Scotland*

Given by the Earl of Aberdeen
PE 1858,1115.1-5

**Bronze weapon hoard**

This hoard contains four matched sets of arms, possibly belonging to four warriors. Each set comprises two swords, two suspension rings and a spearhead. Also associated was a cart fitting. The swords are early forms of the leaf-shaped type. They were often richly decorated on the hilt or blade with incised geometric patterns. The rings could have served to suspend the sheath from a belt.

*Late Bronze Age, about 1200–1050 BC*
*Zsujta, Borsod-Abauj, Hungary*

PE 1888,0110. 2-21

1 **Collared Urn**
*Early Bronze Age, about 1900–1500 BC*
*Cold Kirby, North Yorkshire, England*
Presented by Canon W. Greenwell PE 1879,1209.1243

2 **'Encrusted' Food Vessel Urn**
*Early Bronze Age, about 1900–1500 BC*
*Bamburgh, Northumberland, England*
Presented by Canon W. Greenwell PE 1879,1209.1426

3 **Food Vessel**
*Early Bronze Age, about 2000–1500 BC*
*Weaverthorpe, North Yorkshire, England*
Presented by Canon W. Greenwell PE 1879,1209.440

4 **Beaker**
*Early Bronze Age, about 2200–1900 BC*
*Hemp Knoll, Wiltshire, England*
Presented by the Crown Estate Commissioners PE 1981, 0301.1

5 **Beaker**
*Copper Age, about 2500–2200 BC*
*Rudstone, East Yorkshire, England*
Presented by Canon W. Greenwell PE 1879,1209.926

6 **Collared Urn**
*Early Bronze Age, about 2100–1800 BC*
*Cransley, Northamptonshire, England*
Presented by J. Wallis PE 1882,0622.1

7 **Collared Vessel**
*Early Bronze Age, about 2100–1700 BC*
*Folkton, East Yorkshire, England*
Presented by Canon W. Greenwell PE 1879,1209.1124

8-9 **Pottery cup with lid and Food Vessel**
*Early Bronze Age, about 2000–1500 BC*
*Goodmanham, East Yorkshire, England*
Presented by Canon W. Greenwell PE 1879,1209.1197-8

10 **Pottery cup with lid**
*Early Bronze Age, about 1700–1500 BC*
*Aldbourne, Wiltshire, England*
Presented by Canon W. Greenwell PE 1879,1209.1818


1 Collared Urn
Early Bronze Age, about 1900–1500 BC
Cold Kirby, North Yorkshire, England
Presented by Canon W. Greenwell PE 1879,1209.1243
1

# Britain and Europe

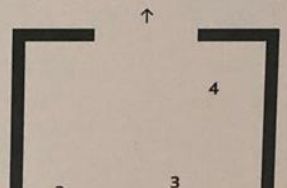
## 800BC–AD43

The period when people used iron instead of bronze to make tools and weapons is called the Iron Age. People made objects in a distinctive style of art, called Celtic or La Tène, continuing to use bronze, gold and other metals as well as iron. At the time most people lived on farms or in small villages, but in some areas there were larger settlements and hillforts.

1. Flagon from Basse-Yutz

2. Great Torc from Snettisham

Roman Britain AD43–about 411



# Burials in Gaul: the Somme-Bionne cart-burial

A wheeled vehicle was traditionally included in richly-appointed graves in many parts of the Celtic world. Buried with women as well as men, it seems that the vehicle should be interpreted as a cart – a symbol of status or even transport to the other world, rather than a chariot for warfare.

Burial with a two-wheeled vehicle was a particularly strong tradition in Champagne, where at least 140 have been recorded. Many were robbed in antiquity, or excavated without record in the nineteenth century. The burial found at Somme-Bionne in 1873 is exceptional: it had not been robbed, the excavation was recorded, and all the artefacts have survived.

The body of a youth was laid out on the floor of the cart accompanied by his sword in its decorated scabbard, a knife, a set of iron skewers, a bronze Etruscan flagon, a Greek painted cup, and a large red-coated native pot. The metal components of the vehicle survived, along with a fine collection of decorated harness-fittings.

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**Objects placed in the grave beside the body**

On the right is an iron sword in a scabbard of iron and bronze; the hilt is edged in bronze; the bronze front-plate has engraved ornament and a cast chape

On the left a set of iron rods or skewers

PRBML1349; ML2885; ML4245; ML4247

**Objects on the body**

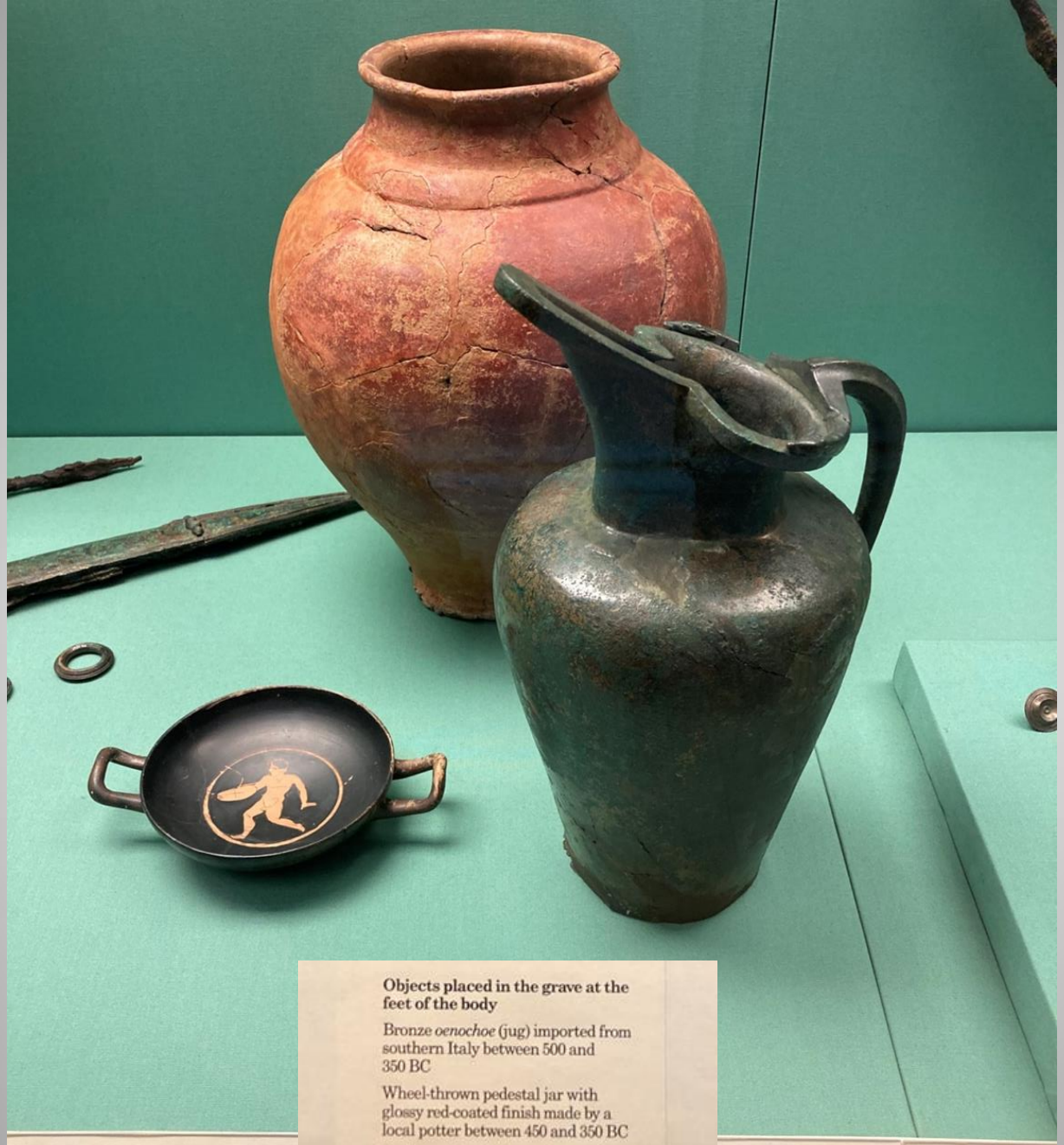
On the right hand a gold finger-ring

At the waist a cast bronze belt-hook and five rings probably part of a belt from which to suspend the sword-scabbard

At the left hip, as if also suspended from the belt, an iron knife

Lying over the right elbow a narrow iron strip with bronze and coral mounted nails; probably part of a strap handle belonging to a wooden shield which may have covered the body

PRB ML1340-1348 and replica, original in case 9



**Objects placed in the grave at the feet of the body**

Bronze *oenochoe* (jug) imported from southern Italy between 500 and 350 BC

Wheel-thrown pedestal jar with glossy red-coated finish made by a local potter between 450 and 350 BC

Red-figure handled cup imported from southern Italy between 425 and 375 BC, depicting a discus-thrower in action

PRB ML1338,1339, 2713

**Items of harness for two horses had been placed in the special 'yoke' trench at the foot of the grave**

Pair of two-link bridle-bits in iron and bronze

Pair of circular cast bronze *phalerae* with loop attachments

Nine cast bronze buttons with perforated shank and a pair of bronze strap-ends with pierced decoration for fastening leather straps

Matching pair of semi-circular bronze mounts with compass-drawn pierced decoration

Circular bronze mount with compass-drawn pierced decoration (replica)

Fragments of tubular plaques in sheet bronze with compass-drawn pierced ornament, probably nailed to wooden components of the cart

Seven bronze and iron mounts from the yoke

PRB ML1352-9, ML1363-5, ML1370-79, ML4213-29 and a replica

**Components from one of the wheels of the cart**

Iron tyre
Nailed to the wooden rim or felloe of the spoked wheel

Iron felloe-clamp
Secured on the inside the overlapped joint of the wooden felloe or rim of the wheel

Iron nave or hub band
Placed around the nave or hub of the wheel to strengthen it

Iron linch-pin
Inserted through a hole at the end of the wooden axle to secure the nave of the wheel

PRB ML1380, ML1382, ML1386, ML1390

**Components from the cart**
Six mounts of bronze and iron to attach the body of the cart to the axle

PRB ML1401-6

**Components from one of the wheels of the cart**

Iron tyre
Nailed to the wooden rim or felloe of the spoked wheel

Iron felloe-clamp
Secured on the inside the overlapped joint of the wooden felloe or rim of the wheel

Iron nave or hub band
Placed around the nave or hub of the wheel to strengthen it

Iron linch-pin
Inserted through a hole at the end of the wooden axle to secure the nave of the wheel

PRB ML1380, ML1382, ML1386, ML1390

***Components from the cart***
*Six mounts of bronze and iron to attach the body of the cart to the axle*

*PRB ML1401-6*

onents from one of the
of the cart
re
to the wooden rim or felloe of

Iron nave or hub band
Placed around the nave or hub of the wheel to strengthen it

Iron linch-pin

**Components from the cart**
Six mounts of bronze and iron to attach the body of the cart to the axle
PRB ML1401-6


Iron tyre and nave hoop
From the cart burial at Garton Station, East Yorkshire
300-200 BC
Presented by the Crown Estate Commissioners
PRB 1985 3-5 15 &19

Reconstructed chariot based on remains found in a grave at Wetwang, East Yorkshire, dating between 400 and 200 BC. The wood the chariot was made from rotted away leaving different coloured impressions in the soil. This allowed archaeologists to reconstruct what the vehicle may have looked like.

*Celtic Europe*

# Reconstruction of a wheel

Under normal soil conditions wood disappears without trace, but in a cart-burial found at Garton Station in 1986 excavators discovered replacement clay where wood had been buried. The wheels had been removed from the vehicle, according to the normal practice, but were leant against the side of the grave instead of being placed on the floor. With time the wood rotted, leaving cavities in the hard-packed gravel filling of the grave; then the site flooded, and fine clay was washed into the cavities. The form of the felloe (wooden rim), spokes and nave were all preserved in clay with the iron tyres and nave hoops still in their original positions. The impressions were carefully lifted and brought back to the laboratory, where the clay was replaced by fibreglass to make a permanent record for display.

The wheels have twelve spokes, and mineralised traces on the corroded iron showed that both nave and felloe were made of ash. Examples from other sites suggest that the felloe was constructed from a single piece of wood, bent to shape. The iron tyre was heated and then shrunk onto the felloe.

Cart-burials are ur
the cart was dismai
by side on the floor
laid in the centre, o
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systematically.

During excavation th
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terrets (rein-rings) fr
Otherwise the cart-bu
Two women had been
and two men had swo
The most striking finc
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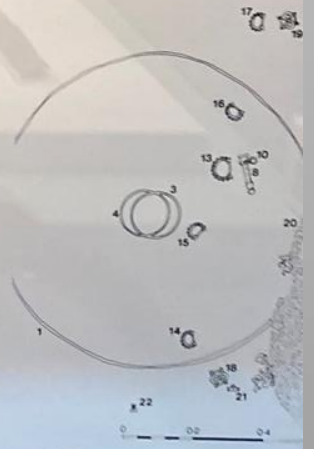


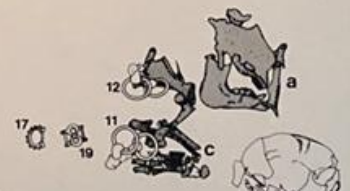
Plan of the Kirkburn cart-burial.

*Celtic Europe*

# Burials in Britain: cart-burials

Cart-burials are unique to East Yorkshire. Typically the cart was dismantled, and the wheels placed side by side on the floor of the grave. Then the corpse was laid in the centre, over the wheels, with the linked pole and axle arching over it. Finally the box-body of the cart was lowered into the grave, inverted to form a canopy over the corpse, with the yoke alongside. In all eleven have been discovered; six were excavated systematically.

During excavation the metal fittings of the carts have been found: the iron tyres and nave-hoops from the wheels, and the linch-pins to secure the wheel to the axle, along with harness-fittings such as the terrets (rein-rings) from the yoke, and horse-bits. Otherwise the cart-burials were not richly appointed. Two women had been buried with their iron mirrors, and two men had swords in decorated scabbards. The most striking find was a complete tunic of mail, draped over the corpse at Kirkburn. Perhaps the earliest mail tunic from Europe, it was very badly corroded and only a small sample can be displayed.



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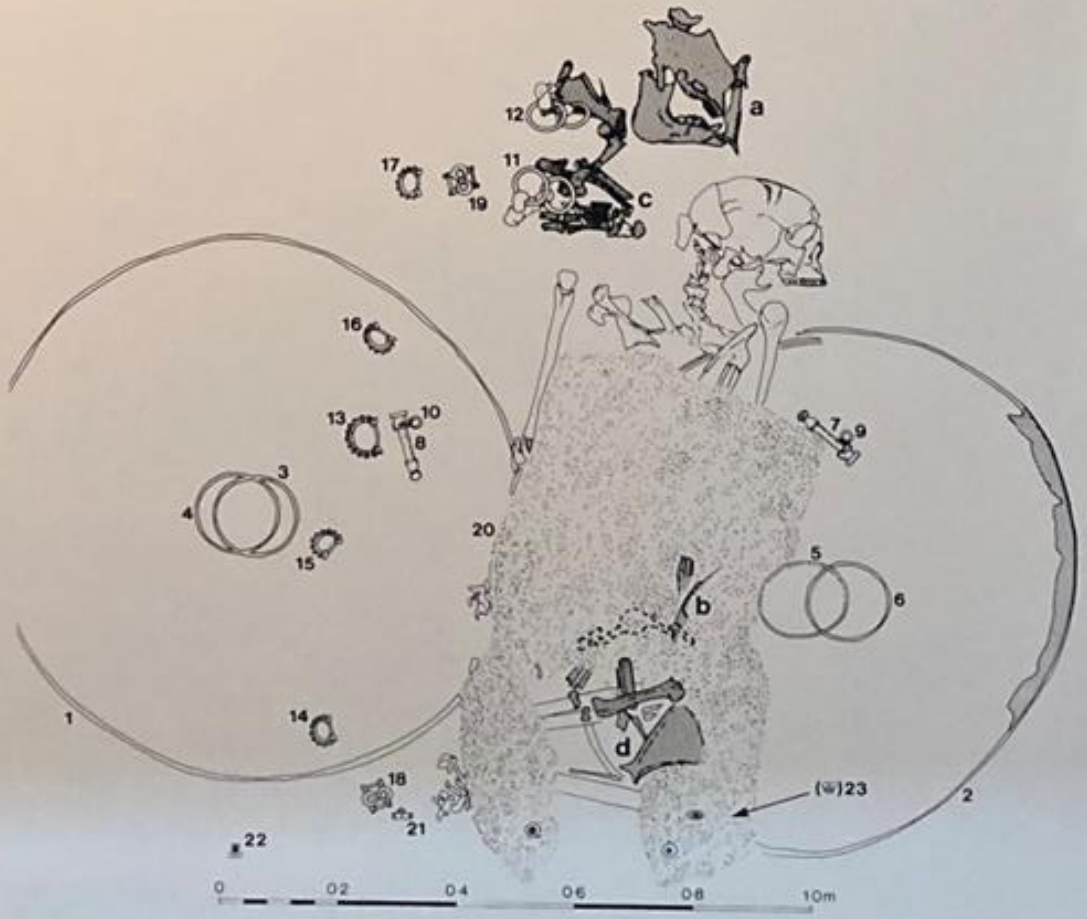


Plan of the Kirkburn cart-burial.

**Horse-harness**
Harness for a two-horse cart comprised a pair of horse-bits, four small and one large terrets which were strapped onto the yoke and were threaded with the reins. Additionally a pair of strap-unions could be used to join the girth-straps. Other decorative mounts and attachments were sometimes used. They were made in bronze or bronze and iron in a variety of different shapes usually as matched sets. Coral studs and coloured glass were inlaid into excised patterns to enhance the ornamental effect.

▼ **Five matching lipped terrets and two strap unions as found in the Kirkburn cart-burial**
300-200 BC
Kirkburn, East Yorkshire

The loops of the terrets were cast in bronze and brass onto the iron crossbar using lost-wax casting method.

Presented by J S Rymer
PRB 1987 4-4 18-24

**Bronze bridle-bit**
From the chariot burial known as the King's Barrow, Arras, East Yorkshire
300-100 BC

Horse-bits were cast in bronze with two or three interlocked flexible links. Rein rings of cast bronze or iron covered with sheet bronze were then added. Pairs of stops prevented the rein-rings from slipping out of position.

Presented by Sir A W Franks
PRB 1877 10-16 10

**Large central terret from the Garton Station chariot burial**
300-200 BC
East Yorkshire

Cast bronze with relief ornament and applied studs of precious pink coral secured with bronze rivets.

Presented by the Crown Estate Commissioners
PRB 1985 5-3 24

**Matching terrets and strap union**
Buried AD 90-150
Westhall Hoard, Suffolk

Cast bronze with coloured glass inlay

Presented by Charles Newton
PRB 1855 5-19 1 and 9

▲ **Sheet bronze nave hoop**
300-100 BC
From the chariot burial known
King's Barrow, Arras, East York

The nave hoop was used to cove
and protect the wooden nave or
of the wheel.

Presented by Sir A W Franks
PRB 1877 10-16 3

ridle-bit
chariot burial known as the
rrow, Arras, East Yorkshire
C
e were cast in bronze with
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r A W Franks
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**Large central terret from the Garton Station chariot burial**
300-200 BC
East Yorkshire

Cast bronze with relief ornament and applied studs of precious pink coral secured with bronze rivets.

Presented by the Crown Estate Commissioners
PRB 1985 3-5 24

**Matching terrets and strap union**
Buried AD 90-150
Westhall Hoard, Suffolk

Cast bronze with coloured glass inlay

Presented by Charles Newton
PRB 1855 5-19 1 and 9

▲ **Sheet bronze nave hoop**
300-100 BC
From the chariot burial known as the King's Barrow, Arras, East Yorkshire

The nave hoop was used to cover and protect the wooden nave or hub of the wheel.

Presented by Sir A W Franks
PRB 1877 10-16 3

▲ **Iron linch-pin with detachable cast bronze terminals**
300-200 BC
Found in the chariot burial at Garton Station, East Yorkshire

One of a matching pair: the terminals were cast with the triskele motifs revolving in opposite directions.

Presented by the Crown Estate Commissioners
PRB 1985 3-5 20

▲ **Iron linch-pin with detachable cast bronze terminals**
Buried AD 50-100
Stanwick Hoard, Melsonby, North Yorkshire

Presented by the Duke of Northumberland
PRB 1847 2-8 77

▲ **Iron linch-pin**
300-200 BC
Kirkburn, East Yorkshire

One of a pair found in a chariot burial.

Presented by J S Rymer
PRB 1907 4-4 13

**Terrets,**
**mounts**
Buried A
Polden H

Several
in cast b
inlay are

▲ **Sheet bronze nave hoop**
300-100 BC
From the chariot burial known as the King's Barrow, Arras, East Yorkshire

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Presented by Sir A W Franks
PRB 1877 10-16 1

▲ **Iron linch-pin with detachable cast bronze terminals**
300-200 BC
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One of a matching pair: the terminals were cast with the triskele motifs revolving in opposite directions.

Presented by the Crown Estate Commissioners
PRB 1985 3-5 20

▲ **Iron linch-pin with detachable cast bronze terminals**
Buried AD 50-100
Stanwick Hoard, Melsonby, North Yorkshire

Presented by the Duke of Northumberland
PRB 1847 2-8 77

▲ **Iron linch-pin**
300-200 BC
Kirkburn, East Yorkshire

One of a pair found in a chariot burial.

Presented by J S Rymer
PRB 1997 4-4 13

**Terrets, strap union, decorative mounts and bridle-bit**
Buried AD 80-150
Polden Hill Hoard, Somerset

Several different sets of horse harness in cast bronze with opaque red glass inlay are represented in the hoard.

Presented by Sir A W Franks
PRB 1846 3-22 58, 70, 77, 83 & 108

**Terret, strap unions and decorative mounts**
Buried AD 50-100
Stanwick Hoard, Melsonby, North Yorkshire

Cast bronze and brass decorated with inlaid opaque red glass; the terret is gilded.

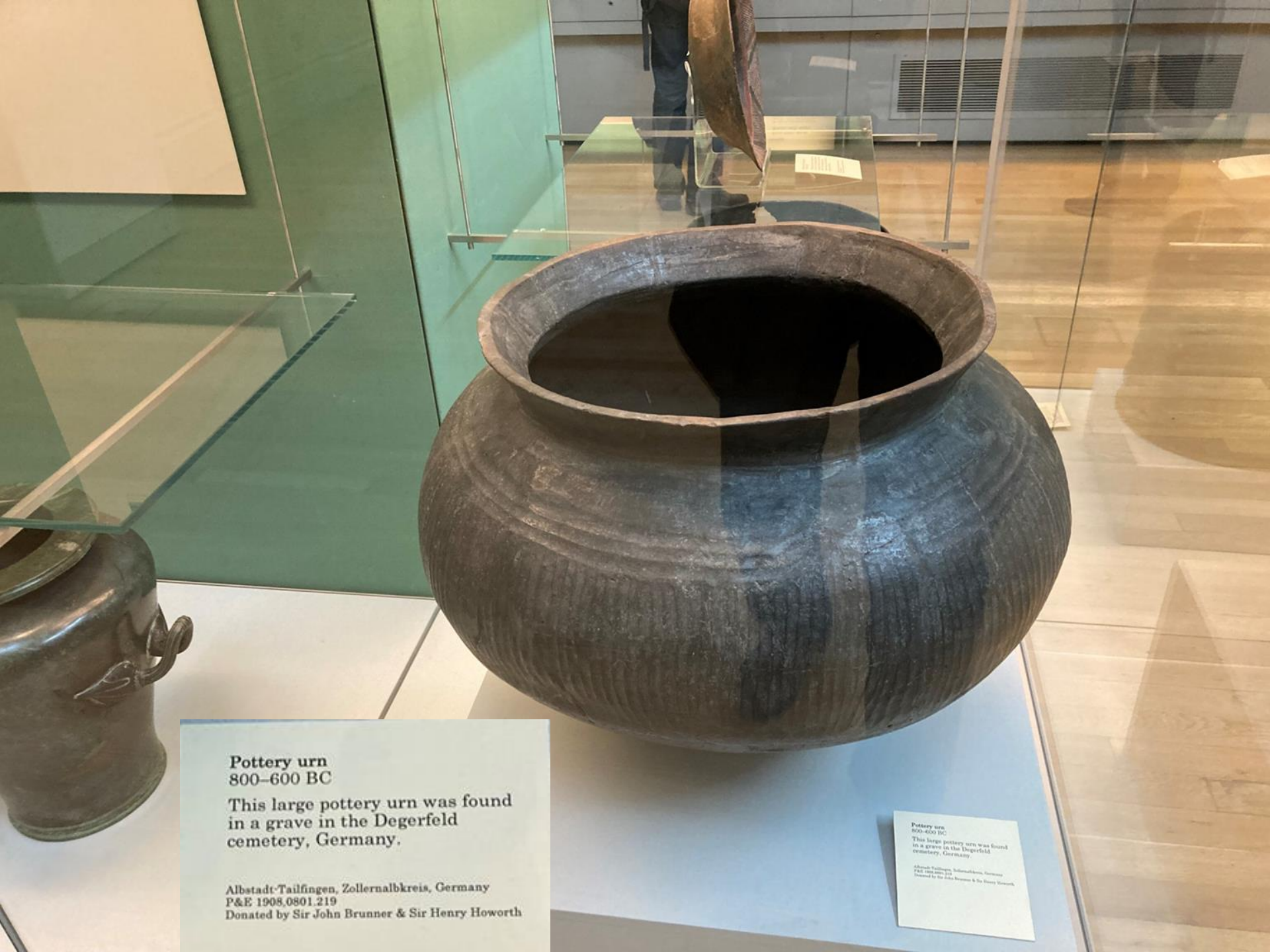
Presented by the Duke of Northumberland
PRB 1847 2-8 33 & 48. PRB 1896 1-20 2-6

*Celtic Europe*

# Feasting in Europe 750–400 BC

Feasting was an important social and political activity in Iron Age Europe. Hosting feasts enabled people to reinforce their wealth and status, binding guests in allegiance and loyalty. Hosts served large quantities of meat, bread, beer and mead in beautifully decorated metal cauldrons and flagons, such as these examples from Basse-Yutz, France. Feasts could also be celebrations, probably accompanied by music, singing, dancing and sometimes religious ceremonies.

Detail showing a duck on the spout of one of the Basse-Yutz flagons


Pottery urn
800–600 BC
This large pottery urn was found in a grave in the Degerfeld cemetery, Germany.
Albstadt-Tailfingen, Zollernalbkreis, Germany
P&E 1908,0801.219
Donated by Sir John Brunner & Sir Henry Howorth


Decorated pottery platter
700–600 BC
This pottery platter was found in a burial in the 'Degerfeld' barrow cemetery, Germany, excavated in 1890. It has a complex multi-coloured design with excised and stamped decoration.
Allstadt-Tailfingen, Zollernalbkreis, Germany
P&E 1908,0801.251
Donated by Sir John Brunner & Sir Henry Howorth

**Pair of bronze flagons**
Basse-Yutz, eastern France
About 450 BC

These bronze flagons were found with two Etruscan bronze *stamnoi* (vessels used for mixing wine) at Basse-Yutz, Lorraine, France in 1927. It seems likely that they came from a grave.

The flagons are masterpieces of what is known as 'early Celtic' or 'La Tène' art. This art first appeared on metal objects from eastern France and western Germany around 450 BC. It borrowed from and altered motifs found on Greek and Etruscan objects, which are sometimes found in Iron Age graves. The overall shape of the flagons is similar to Etruscan beaked flagons. Dogs, which form the flagon handles, are also found in Greek art.

P&E 1929,0510.1, 1925,0511.1-3
Acquired with contributions from The Art Fund and private individuals, including Lord Melchett, F.A. Szarcasy, Sir Perceval David, Chester Beatty and C.S. Gulbenkian


Decorated sheet-bronze bucket
750-550 BC
Hallstatt, Austria
This bronze bucket was made of two separate sheets of bronze secured by rivets. The raised decoration is made up of alternating wheel and bird motifs, which are typical of early European Celtic art.
P&E 1916,0605.356
Donated by JB Lubbock, 2nd Baron of Avebury

# How archaeologists establish the age of Iron Age objects

There are various techniques for estimating the age of an object. One way of attributing a date range to an item is by looking at its style, form and design.

Objects which show similarities can be categorised into groups, for example iron swords sorted by length, which can then be placed in a tentative chronological order. Archaeologists try to give these groups concrete dates, sometimes by looking at other items found at the same site, such as coins.

New finds can then be placed into the established chronology, such as the swords shown to the right. Contextual finds may lead to a reassessment of the estimated dates of some objects.

**Iron dagger with cast bronze cross-shaped hilt and matching sheath**
600-550 BC, from Cookham, Surrey

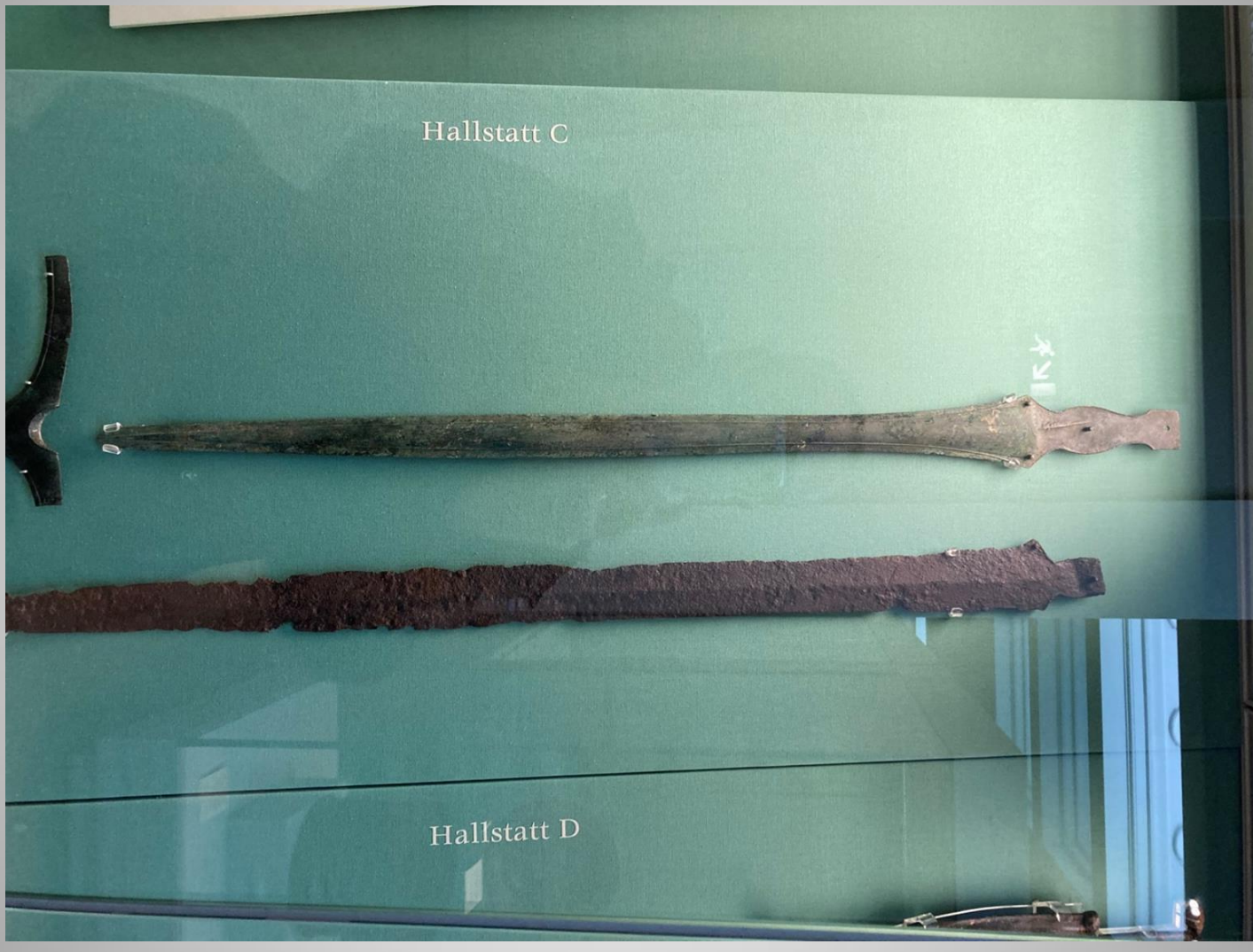
The fine blade is of wrought steel. The circular openwork settings of the cast bronze hilt and chape originally held red coral studs.

PRB 1860 9-27 1

**Copper alloy and iron brooch**
400-250 BC
Near Chorleywood, Hertfordshire

The pin is pivoted on an iron crossbar. This may be a repair with the original in copper-alloy. The four concentric circles on the bow were settings for studs, probably of coral but now missing.

Presented by Mr R. D. Barlow
P & E 2010, 8024.1


Hallstatt C
Hallstatt D


Hallstatt D Swords
600–450 BC
Short iron daggers appeared at this time. They were kept in sheaths. Changes in the form and style of scabbards, especially the bottom component, called a chape, are helpful for dating.
Charvais, Marne P&E ML1731
Champagne, France P&E ML 2401
From the River Thames P&E1898,0618.1
From the River Thames at Barn Elms.
Given by J. Pierpoint Morgan P&E WG2356
From the River Thames at Wandsworth
P&E 1853,0324.1
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From the River Thames P&E1898,0618.1
From the River Thames at Barn Elms.
Given by J. Pierpoint Morgan P&E WG2356
From the River Thames at Wandsworth
P&E 1853,0324.1


**La Tène I Swords**
450–320 BC

La Tène I swords were long, with sharp points and a prominent rib running along the middle of the sword.

Marson, Marne, France P&E ML1517
Morry, St. Quentin, Aisne, France
Given by Sir A.W. Franks P&E 1896,0807.5
Probably France P&E ML2946
Miribel, Ain, France. Given by Sir A.W. Franks
P&E 1884,0606.2
(Replica) Orton Meadows, Orton Waterville, Cambridgeshire P&E 1994,0407.34
London. Given by C.Roach Smith P&E 1856,0701.1402

600 BC

**Hallstatt D Swords**
600–450 BC

Short iron daggers appeared at this time. They were kept in sheaths. Changes in the form and style of scabbards, especially the bottom component, called a chape, are helpful for dating.

Charvais, Marne P&E ML1731
Champagne, France P&E ML 2401
From the River Thames P&E1898,0618.1
From the River Thames at Barn Elms.
Given by J. Pierpoint Morgan P&E WG2356
From the River Thames at Wandsworth
P&E 1853,0324.1

**Hallstatt D Brooches**
600–450 BC

Hallstatt D brooches were small and light. The spring mechanisms on these brooches were prone to failure.

'Hautmont' Venault-les-Dames, Marne, France
P&E ML2152
Marson, Marne, France
P&E ML1544
Probably Champagne, France
P&E ML2230, ML2140

**La Tène I Brooches**
450–320 BC

During the La Tène period brooches became more standardised across Europe. The foot of the brooch was finished with a decorative knob which is bent backwards towards the bow.

Probably Champagne, France P&E ML1823
Prosnes, Marne, France P&E ML1604
Dux, Bohemia, Czech Republic
Given by Charles Hercules Read P&E 1902,0419.2
Auvernier, Neuchâtel, Switzerland
Given by J. Pierpoint-Morgan P&E WG2331
Giubiasco, Ticino, Switzerland
Given by Sir John Brunner P&E 1904,1226.21


**La Tène II Swords**
320–120 BC

La Tène II swords had a less tapered blade. Chapes were shaped to fit more closely around the end of sword scabbards.

London. Given by the Lawrence Collection
P&E 1929,1111.2
River Thames, London. Given by Sir A.W. Franks
P&E 1891,0418.8
River Thiéle, Switzerland. Given by O.C. Raphael
P&E 1915,0503.1
Spettisbury, Dorset. Given by the Durden Collection
P&E 1892,0901.464


## La Tène III Swords
120 BC–AD 43

La Tène III swords were designed for slashing rather than thrusting. They were very long, broad and flat with rounded ends. The chape of the scabbard was barely distinguishable from the metal binding.

Clansayes, Drôme, France P&E ML 2937
River Thames at Amerden Lock, Buckinghamshire.
Given by Sir A.W. Franks P&E 1893,1219.3
Shepperton Ranges, Spelthorne, Surrey.
Given by Tarmac Quarry Products P&E 1995,0704.1
River Thames at Battersea, London P&E 1858,1113.1

**La Tène II Brooches**
320–120 BC

The foot of La Tène II brooches was extended, bent backwards and clasped to the bow.

Quincieu, France P&E 1935,1018.49
Villers-le-Sec, Marne, France P&E ML1838
Wargemoulin, Marne, France P&E ML1704
Quinçeux, Isère, France P&E 1860,0117.93


**La Tène III Brooches**
120 BC–AD 43

The foot, catch plate and bow of La Tène III brooches were cast as a single piece.

Possibly Lake Neuchâtel, Switzerland. Given by Sir A.W. Franks P&E 1894, 0727.29
No provenance P&E 1907,1024.2
Komárom, Hungary P&E 1915,1208.90

# The Salisbury Hoard: an archaeological detective story

In 1988 an antiquities dealer offered the British Museum a collection of miniature shields. Curator, Dr Ian Stead, could tell the unusual shields were clearly from the Iron Age, but the dealer could not provide full details of where and when they had been excavated. The British Museum acquired the collection in the hope that the place where the material was found could be identified in the future.

After eight years of detective work Stead discovered that the shields were originally part of a much larger hoard of items uncovered near Salisbury and illegally sold on the black market. His perseverance led to the arrest of two people for possession of stolen property.

The British Museum was able to excavate the site and reveal more items from the hoard.

Dr Ian Stead (top right) and colleagues searching for the burial pit of the Salisbury hoard

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**The Salisbury Hoard**
Near Salisbury, Wiltshire
About 200 – 50 BC

At the time of discovery, this was one of the largest known prehistoric hoards ever found in Britain. The hoard contained Iron Age decorated miniature bronze shields and cauldrons. These shields probably had a symbolic significance.

The hoard was buried over 2,000 years ago during a period archaeologists call the Iron Age.

Some of the objects in the hoard are much older than this. We are not sure why people in the Iron Age collected ancient axes, spearheads, knives, razors and a trumpet, already up to 2000 years old, and reburied them together with their own objects.

Purchased with assistance from The British Museum Friends
P&E 1994,0502. 1, 2, 4, 5
P&E 1998,0401. 1-22
P&E 1998,0601. 1
P& E 1998,0901. 1, 4, 8, 14, 118, 158, 160, 178, 192, 200, 201, 203, 287 & 299


Celtic Europe: objects on display.

# Early Celtic Art in Europe

The earliest centres of development included the Rhineland and adjacent areas of eastern France, where the new art was used to decorate fine metalwork for the rich and powerful. Exotic patterns, such as classical palmettes and lotus flowers, were not slavishly copied, but borrowed, adapted, and re-arranged in new designs. They were used alongside 'oriental' masks and animals, and geometric motifs including some elaborate compass-drawn patterns to spectacular effect, as in the harness mounts in the Somme-Bionne cart-burial.

In the fourth century BC a new pattern emerged that featured strings of triskeles (three-limbed whirligigs) and wave tendrils. Known as the Waldalgesheim Style, after a rich grave discovered in Germany, it occurs on a wide variety of objects found from Britain to Hungary and is illustrated here by the Prunay Vase.

Regionally distinctive sword styles emerged in the third century BC, when the use of engraved tendrils proliferated, most notably in Hungary. The torc from Courtisols and the brooch from Prosnes are decorated in the 'Plastic Style', a parallel development where cast bronze artefacts were decorated in high relief.

**Cast bronze belt hook depicting confronted stags**
450-400 BC
Found at the waist of the skeleton in the Somme-Bionne chariot burial, Marne, France (Case 11)

The stags are in low relief with further engraved detail.

PRB ML 1347

**Bronze plaque and *phalera* with compass-drawn pierced design**
450-400 BC
Part of the set of horse-harness found in the Somme-Bionne chariot burial, Marne, France (Case 11)

PRB ML 1366 & PRB ML 1369

**Bronze and iron cheek-piece ornamented with repeated palmette motifs**
450-400 BC
Italy

One of a pair hinged to a bronze helmet. Three circular settings within the ornament originally contained studs of red coral.

Presented by Sir A W Franks
PRB 1865 5-7 28

**Cast bronze handle decorated in 'plastic' style**
350-250 BC
Bought in Mâcon, Côte d'Or, France

PRB 1872 3-20 18

**Handmade tripartite carinated jar with geometric decoration**
500-400 BC
Found in an inhumation cemetery at Marson, Marne, France

The sharply carinated and beautifully finished vessel is decorated with an incised geometric pattern and is typical of pots made in the 5th century BC. Red pigment, probably haematite, was inlaid in grooves to provide added colour.

PRB ML 2633


**Wheel-thrown pedestal jar with bichrome negative ornament**
400-350 BC
Found in an inhumation cemetery at Prunay, Marne, France

The scroll consists of three upright and three inverted repeats of the same motif and required careful measurement of distance and angle. The pattern is produced by the reserved red coating with secondary fired black areas forming the background.

PRB M1.2734

**Iron linch-pin decorated with applied bronze plaques**
400-300 BC

The basic hook is of wrought iron. The plaques were cast in bronze and decorated with typical tendril scrolls of 'Waldalgesheim' style.

PRB 1989 1-7 1

**Sheet bronze strainer plate decorated in typical 'Waldalgesheim' style**
400-350 BC
?France

The decoration comprises four repeats of a convoluted tendril motif in reserved metal with a pierced background.

PRB ML2167

n linch-pin decorated with

Sheet bronze strainer plate
decorated in typical


**Iron swords with a cast bronze anthropoid hilt**
400-200 BC
Found near Sulmona, Aquila, Italy
The hilt was cast in three separate sections with the head securing them onto the tang. This early example is extremely stylised demonstrating how it was developed from earlier antennae hilt shapes.
PRB 1890 12-3 1
300-100 BC
Salon, Aube, France
The hilt was cast in two components joined at about the waist-line. The head modelled in the round to depict a clean-shaven male with a miserable expression.
PRB ML.3809

300-100 BC
Salon, Aube, France

The hilt was cast in two components joined at about the waist-line. The head modelled in the round to depict a clean-shaven male with a miserable expression.

PKB ML3669

**Bronze torc with cast decoration in high relief typical of the 'plastic' style**
400-300 BC
Found in an inhumation cemetery at Courtisols, Marne, France

A human face supports each of the two buffer terminals which form wide head-dresses.

PRB ML1711

**La Tène I cast bronze brooch ornamented with a 'Waldalgesheim' tendril on the bow**
400-300 BC

Found in an inhumation cemetery at Prosnes, Marne, France

PRB ML1614

**Cast bronze annular torc decorated with three repeats of the same relief ornament**
350-250 BC
Avon-Fontenay, Aube, France

The decoration wraps round the neck-ring like a ribbon. It comprises 'hidden face' motifs emerging from repeated s-scrolls in relief.

PRB ML1709

**Cast bronze torc with zoomorphic terminals**
400-300 BC
Vieille-Toulouse, Haute-Garonne, France

Both terminals depict a horse's head modelled in the round with the ears laid back. A head-band decorated with incised cross-hatching lies in front of the ears and presumably indicates part of the harness.

PRB ML1708


**Sheath with sheet bronze front-plate and cast openwork chape**
550-450 BC
From the Thames at Richmond, London

The engraved geometric pattern is typical of the 6th and 5th centuries BC.

PRB 1858 10-20 1

**Sheet bronze bucket**
Brooklands, Weybridge, Surrey
700–450 BC

Like many other objects on display in this case this bucket was deposited in a river. It was found by workmen building a bridge over the River Wey in 1907. The body of the bucket was beaten out from a single sheet of bronze and attached to a circular base. The handles are made of twisted bronze.

Presented by William Dale
P&E 1907,0715.1

*Celtic Europe*

# Early Celtic Art in Britain: early stages

The earliest Celtic Art in Britain, in the fourth century BC, is similar to that on the continent, although few examples are known. First there are simple geometric designs, and the occasional use of classical-inspired palmette and lyre motifs; later wave-tendrils of the Waldalgesheim style were added. By 300 BC an idependent insular style flourished along with the technical skills necessary to produce masterpieces of cast and sheet bronze and iron.

Smiths achieved spectacular results when simple motifs were repeated, inverted and arranged symmetrically over a domed shield boss using low and high relief repoussé techniques. The Witham Shield shows the quality of inventiveness and technical skill achieved.

The third century saw the creation of British Scabbard Styles where sheet bronze scabbards were richly engraved with flowing scrolls. Examples from a burial at Bugthorpe in East Yorkshire and from the bog at Lisnacrogher in Ireland demonstrate how engravers evolved strong regional identities.


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flowing scrolls. Examples from
in East Yorkshire and from the
in Ireland demonstrate how
rong regional identities.

**Shield facing in sheet bronze**
400-300 BC
From the river Witham near Lincoln

The boss is ornamented with complex raised and engraved motifs highlighted with red coral studs. It exhibits great style, quality and technical expertise yet re-used sheet bronze forms the facing. The outline of a stylised boar disappears behind the boss: it is preserved in differential corrosion and nail holes and belongs to the original period of use.

Given by Sir A W Franks
PRB 1872 12-13 1

**Shield boss in sheet bronze**
350-150 BC
From the Thames at Wandsworth, London

The high relief repoussé decoration comprises repeated abstract motifs which together can form hidden faces.

Given by the Royal Archaeological Institute
PRB 1858 11-16 3

**Circular shield boss in sheet bronze with repoussé ornament in the form of stylized bird-heads**
350-150 BC
From the Thames at Wandsworth, London

The decoration is a reworking of motifs incorporated in the Ratcliffe and Witham bosses.

Given by the Royal Archaeological Institute
PRB 1858 11-16 2

Circular shield boss in sheet

**Sheet bronze front plate from a sword scabbard**
350-200 BC
Found in the river Bann, Northern Ireland

The engraved ornament illustrates the asymmetry of early phases of the Irish 'sword style'.

Lent by Cultbahn Ltd

**Sheet bronze scabbard with cast bronze chape**
300-200 BC
From the Lisnacrogher bog, Skerry, County Antrim, Ireland

The symmetry of the arrangement belongs to later phases of the Irish 'sword style'.

Given by Sir A W Franks
PRS 1880 8-2 125

# Early Celtic Art in Britain: later stages

In about 200 BC a new motif emerged, the 'trumpet void', a triangular shape with one side convex, the second concave, and the third S-shaped. Initially the background area of a tendril design, it developed a life of its own and features again and again in British art over the next two hundred years. Also exclusive to Britain are decorated mirrors. Made of bronze, the front was highly polished to a reflective surface, while examples from Aston and Desborough show how the back provided an ideal field to display the talents of the engraver.

The motifs of British art were abstract. Human figures or animal forms were not included until the second century BC while monumental sculpture in stone and bronze was introduced by the Romans. The anthropoid sword has a tiny human head acting as a pommel. The earliest boar figurines, such as those found at Hounslow, may have been helmet crests.

From a peak of achievement in the third century BC, the art of later centuries declined in variety and originality with a limited range of reversed and repeated motifs used to make symmetrical patterns. Added colour was an innovation adopted in the first century AD by a few smiths who inlaid areas of the decoration with coloured glass: sealing-wax red was most popular and widely used. Despite the centuries of Roman occupation, some elements survived and Celtic Art flowered again in the sixth century AD.

**Cast bronze knife in the shape of a bird**
300-150 BC
St Stephens, Hertfordshire

The overall shape of the knife and the bird-motif repeated on both sides of the handle closely resemble the decoration of the circular Wandsworth shield boss.

PRB 1993 11-4 1

**nife in the shape**

rtfordshire

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**Terminal from a gold tubular torc**
400-250 BC
Hoard F, Ken Hill, Snettisham, Norfolk

Scroll motifs in raised and engraved techniques encircle the neckring; they were adapted to fit the circular disc within the terminal. The torc was fabricated from several individual components. The fragment has been re-shaped to display the full extent of this fine ornament.

Treasure Trove
PRB 1991 5-1 29

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It comes from a vehicle and
sibly part of linch-pin from a
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ated in a raised pattern
n as the 'Plastic Style' which
re commonly seen on the

**Iron sword with cast bronze anthropoid handle**
200-100 BC
Possibly from Yorkshire

The hilt was cast as one component with the head cast separately: it is one of the earliest representations of a human head in the British Iron Age.

PRB 1888 7-19 36

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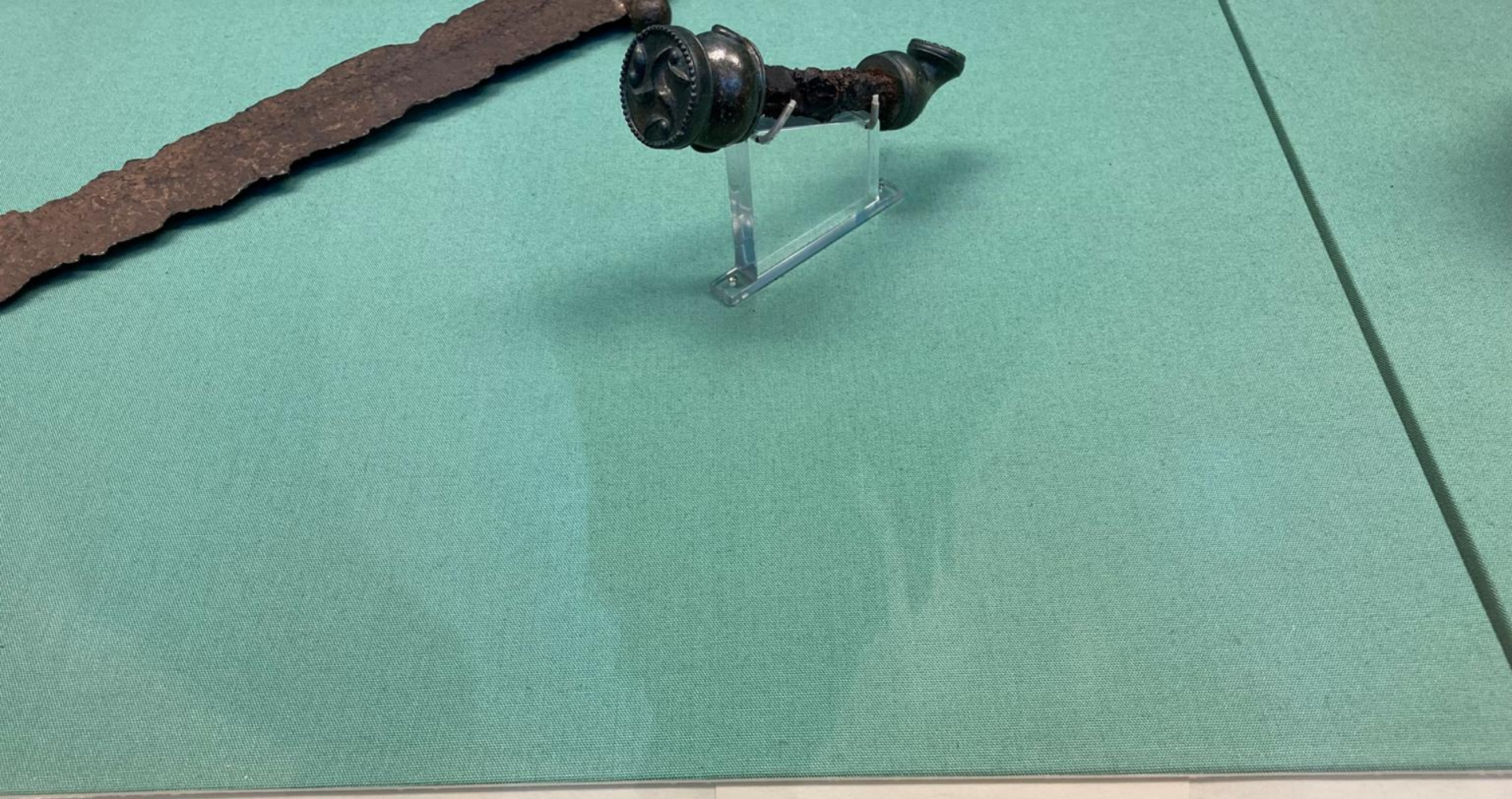

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**Iron linch-pin with cast bronze terminals ornamented in high relief**
300-200 BC
One of a pair in the Kirkburn chariot burial, East Yorkshire

The triskele motif is typical of the 'plastic style' as it evolved in Britain.

Given by J S Rymer
PRB 1987 4-4 12

**Iron spearhead with applied decorative panels in bronze**
200-100 BC
From the Thames at Datchet, Surrey

The pattern is in reserved polished metal with engraved basket-weave texturing forming the background.

Given by Captain John Ball
PRB 1938 5-4 1

**Bronze scabbard with engraved decoration on the front-plate and a cast chape**
200-100 BC
From an inhumation burial at Bugthorpe, East Yorkshire

The pattern was outlined with a fine line and then engraved to produce basket-weave texturing; the background is plain polished metal.

Given by Viscount Halifax
PRB 1905 7-17 1

**Bronze sc**
**decoratio**
*120-50 BC*
*From the ri*
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**spearhead with applied**
**rative panels in bronze**
*00 BC*
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*with engraved basket-weave*
*ng forming the background.*

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*4 1*

**Cast bronze 'horn-cap' ornamented in relief with triskele motif**
200-100 BC
Saxthorpe, Corpusty, Norfolk

Several 'horn-caps' have been found but their function is unknown.

PRB 1984 12-1 1

**Bronze scabbard with e**
**decoration on the front**
**and a cast chape**
200-100 BC
From an inhumation bu
Bugthorpe, East Yorksh

The pattern was outlin
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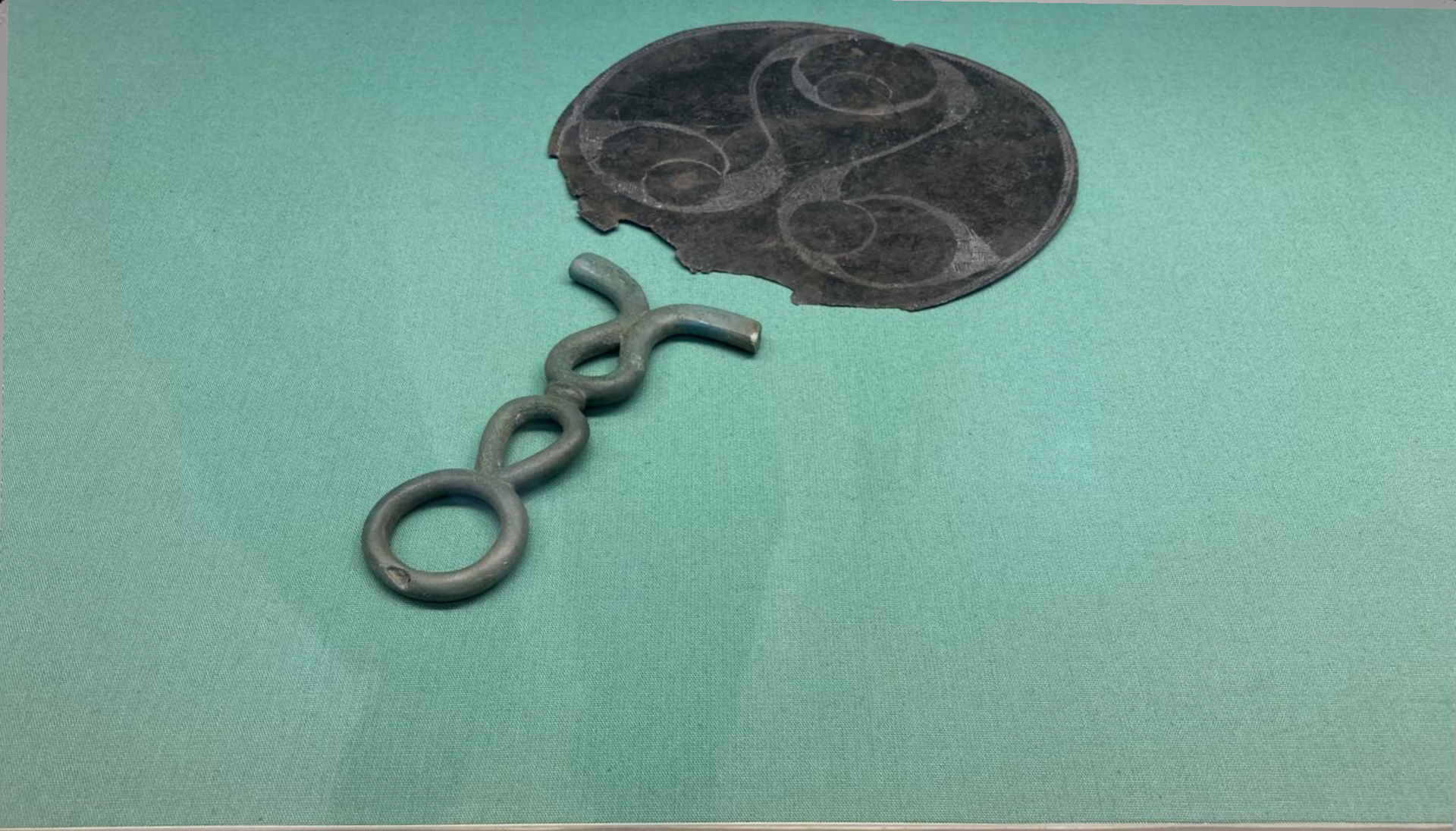

**abbard with engraved**
**n**

river Lark at Isleham,
eshire

rn is in reversed polished
e background was stippled
rcular punch.

**Bronze mirror**
50 BC-AD 50
Probably from a cremation burial at
Aston, Hertfordshire

The back is decorated with a positive symmetrical pattern produced with engraved basket-weave texturing.

Given by W S Jefferies
PRB 1979 10-2 1

**Masks in sheet bronze representing moustachioed male faces and the head of a horse**
*Buried AD 50-100*
*Stanwick, Melsonby, North Yorkshire*

*Found in a hoard with many items of horse harness.*

Given by the Duke of Northumberland
PRB 1967,1-9.83-4

**Horned helmet**
Found in the River Thames at Waterloo Bridge, London
150–50 BC

Originally this helmet would have been a gleaming golden colour and decorated with red glass studs. The helmet is unlikely to have been used in battle and was probably a form of ceremonial headdress.

The helmet is a very rare find, it is the only Iron Age horned helmet to be found in Europe. The helmet is made from sheet bronze sections held together with bronze rivets. The raised decoration is repeated on the back and front of the helmet. The decoration on the helmet is similar to the Great Torc from Snettisham, on display in case 19 in this gallery.

Gift of the Port of London Authority
P&E 1988,1004.1

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Gift of the Port of London Authority
P&E 1988,1004.1

**Cast bronze boar figures**
150-50 BC
Hounslow, Middlesex

These were found together and may be the crests from sheet bronze helmets rather than free-standing figurines. Stylistically they are the earliest animal figurines found in Britain.

PRB 1864 5-1 8-9

**Cast bronze**
**long-snoute**
300-100 BC
Snettisham,

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**Cast bronze masks representing moustachioed male faces**
Buried 50-20 BC
Found in a rich cremation burial at Welwyn, Hertfordshire

In detail each face is different: two are bare-headed with hair combed back, but one wears a head-dress or helmet.

Given by Mrs A G Neall
PRB 1911 12-8 5-7

**Masks in sheet bronze representing moustachioed male faces and the head of a horse**
Buried AD 50-100
Stanwick, Melsonby, North Yorkshire

Found in a hoard with many items of horse harness.

Given by the Duke of Northumberland
PRB 1847 2-8.82-4

**Iron linch-pin with cast bronze terminals**
AD 50-100
Kings Langley, Hertfordshire

The fan-shaped head is inlaid with opaque red glass to form the background to a motif in reserved polished metal.

PRB 1940 2-3 1

**Bronze strap union inlaid with opaque red glass**
AD 80-125
Polden Hill, Somerset

The inlaid opaque red glass forms the background to symmetrical repeats of the same motifs in reserved polished metal. One of the varied items in a large hoard of horse-harness.

Given by Sir A W Franks
PRB 1889 7-6 78

**Decorated bronze mirror**
50 BC-AD 70
Holcombe, Devon

The bronze mirror with engraved decoration on the back and a cast openwork handle was the only object found in an isolated pit during excavations on the site of a Roman villa. Such mirrors are rare but mainly found in southern Britain.

PRB 1971 4-1 1

# Iron Age shields

Most Iron Age shields were made of wood, leather and metal. As the wood and leather decay, we are left with metal parts such as the boss or rim bindings. Three unusual Iron Age metal shields have been found. All three had been deliberately placed in rivers. These shields were not for use in battle but were probably made for flamboyant display.

Bronze shield from the River Witham displayed in case 9

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Bronze shield from the River Witham displayed

**The Battersea Shield**
Found in the River Thames at Battersea Bridge, London
Around 350–50 BC

The Battersea shield is one of the finest examples of La Tène, or Celtic art, from Britain. It was deposited in the river perhaps as an offering to the Gods.

The shield is decorated with three raised circular panels. The decoration is enhanced with inlayed red glass or enamel. The thin metal and short length of the shield would not have provided adequate protection in battle. Instead the shield was probably made for flamboyant display.

It is made of several bronze sheets and a binding strip, held together with bronze rivets. Originally these bronze sheets would have formed the facing for a wooden base, which no longer survives.

P&E 1857,0715.1


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P&E 1857,0715.1

**The Chertsey Shield**
Abbey Meads, Chertsey, Surrey
400–200 BC

This shield was made around 2400 years ago and it is the only shield from the period to be made entirely of bronze. Other bronze shields had wooden backings. It was probably made for display rather than for battle. The shield was deliberately placed in the River Thames, perhaps as an offering to the gods.

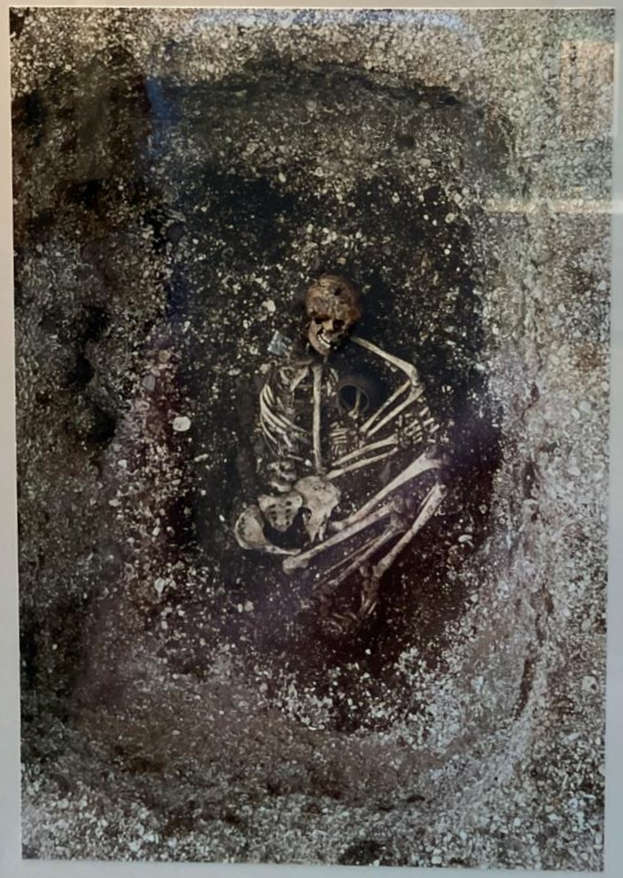
This shield was found by Douglas Blake in 1985. When Mr Blake was driving a digger in a silted up channel of the River Thames, he noticed a large odd shaped metal object in the digger's bucket. It was a shield, but it had been bent and crumpled by the machine. Scientists at the British Museum spent months working on the shield, returning it to its original shape.

Gift of RMC Group Plc
P&E 1986,0901.1

# Everyday life in the Iron Age

Although this gallery contains many beautiful objects from the Iron Age, they were actually very rare at the time. Most people lived on farms or in small villages.

Everyday utensils – such as tools and cooking pots – were often very plain, or had simple decoration. People in Iron Age Britain would have used pots like these every day for cooking and storing food.



The grave of a young woman cradling a handmade pottery jar in her left arm. The grave was found at Rudston in East Yorkshire.

**Handmade pots and sheep bones**
Rudston, Burton Fleming and Danes Graves, East Yorkshire
350–100 BC

A number of handmade pots, all containing the left humerus of a sheep, have been found in graves in East Yorkshire.

We do not know why these bones were put inside the pots or why the left fore-limb of a sheep was specifically selected. In other graves found in East Yorkshire people were also buried with the remains of pigs.

Analysis of the sheep bones from these pots tells us that Iron Age sheep were smaller in size than most modern breeds.

P&E 1975,0401.4, 23 & 79 & 1978,1202.7
Presented by G R Wilson and TE Wells & Sons and bequeathed by Reverend W G Greenwell

*Celtic Europe*

# Gold and silver in Iron Age Europe

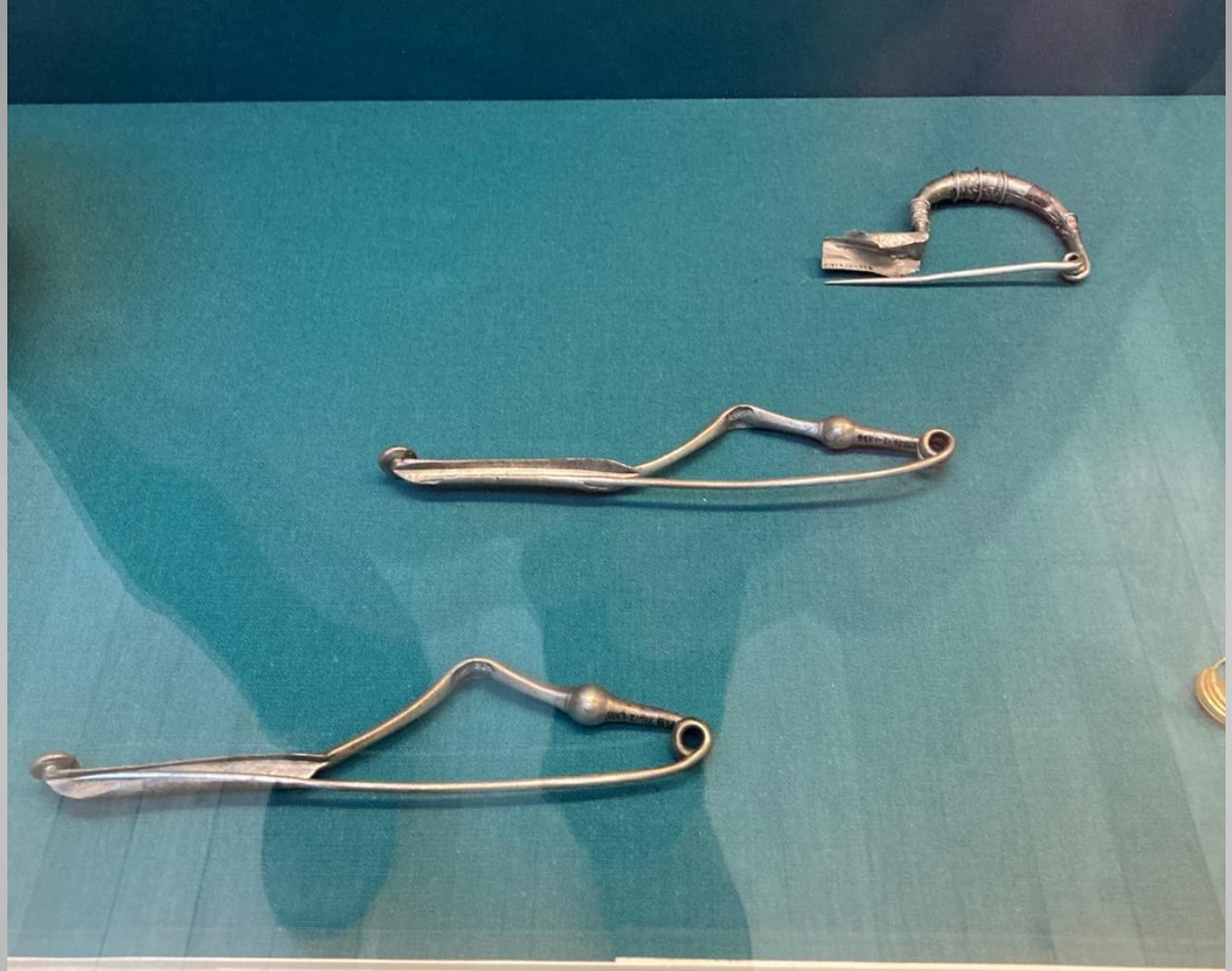
Gold has always been prized, it is bright and shining, does not corrode and is scarce, so any particular piece could be passed down through generations as an heirloom, or melted-down and made into a replacement according to the current fashion. It was used to decorate weapons, for jewellery and personal ornaments and vessels.

The gold torc or neckring is now regarded as the principal piece of jewellery of the warrior Celt. The most influential evidence for the symbolism of gold torcs is in the description of the battle of Telamon in 225 BC when Rome defeated Celtic-speaking Gaulish tribes in Italy. Polybius, the Greek historian records:- '...all the warriors in the front ranks were adorned in gold necklaces and bracelets', but other evidence is less clear cut. No gold torcs of the La Téne Iron Age occur in warrior burials while bronze torcs and bracelets are commonly found with women and girls. Where torcs are depicted in statuary, it is impossible to tell whether they are in precious metal or bronze such as the Roman marble relief which is of a young woman wearing torc, armlet and brooch

**Gold Cup**
800-500 BC
Angyalföld, near Budapest, Hungary

This conical gold cup has embossed decoration comprised of a triple band of circular impressions between rows of dots. The handle is made of wire and bears four lozenge-shaped gold rings. The cup was discovered sometime between 1912 and 1913. It is believed to have been part of a hoard of gold objects.

P&E 1925,1007.1



Three similar brooches with hollow decorated bow
800-700 BC
Hungary

At least one has an iron core supporting the bow.

PRB 1976.124.336-8

Matching pair of one-piece brooches
550-450 BC

PRB 1974.124.334-5

**Sheet gold basket-shaped earrings with répoussé ornament**
550-450 BC
From an inhumation burial in the cemetery at Marson, Marne, France

Earrings for pierced ears, more usually of bronze, were worn by women in early Iron Age Gaul but were not common again until the 1st century AD, after the Roman conquest (see Case 13).

PRB ML1532

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PRB 1916 6-5 2

**Bronze Figure**
AD 100 – 200

Bronze figure of a woman wearing a torc and bracelets.

River Seine, France
G&R 1867,0508.748

**Marble relief of a young woman wearing a torc, armlet and brooch**
Hellenistic, 250–130 BC

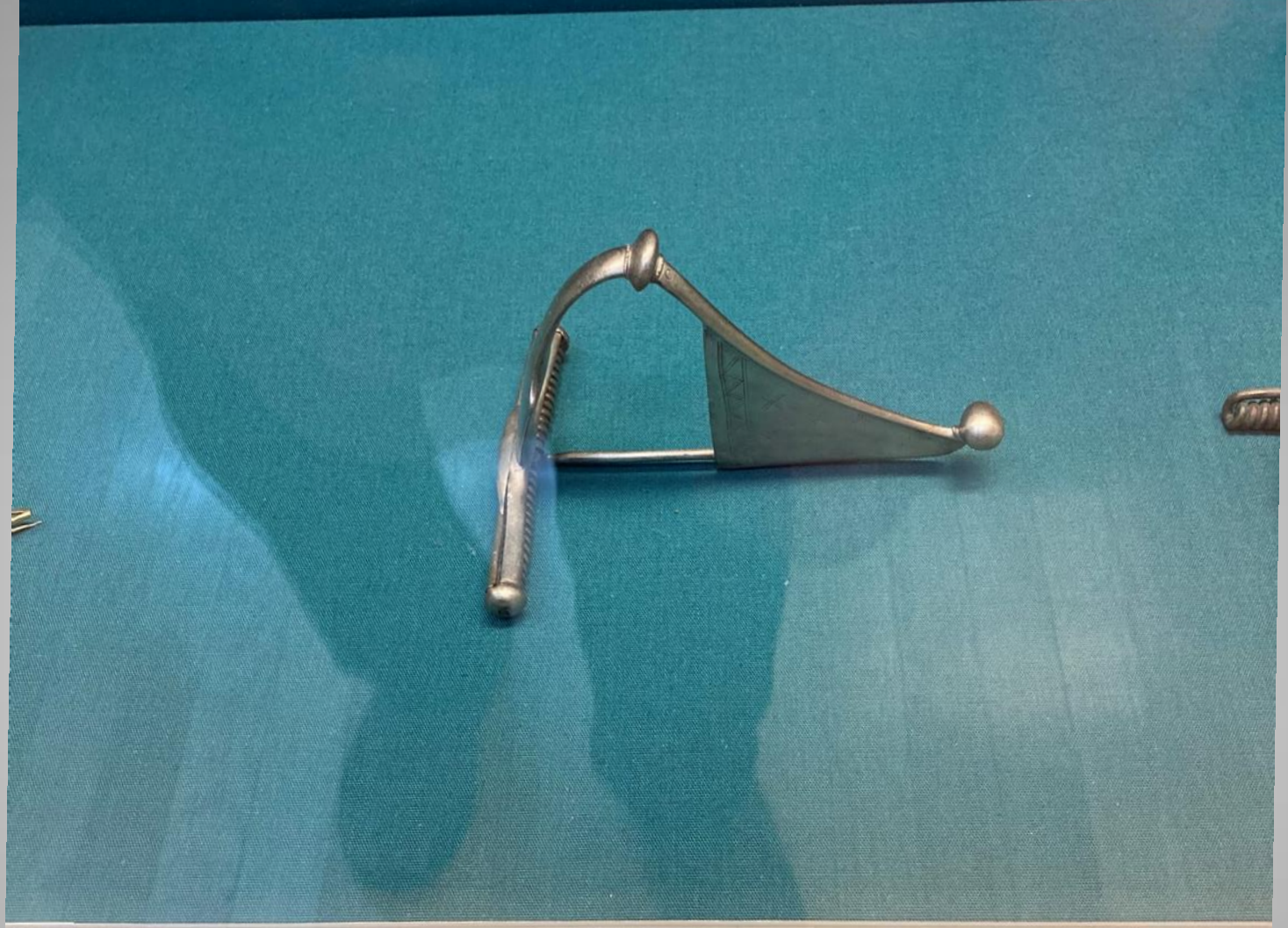
Fragment of a marble relief showing the head and shoulders of a young woman. She wears a torc around her neck, an armlet around her upper arm, and her cloak is secured by a brooch. The torc and brooch are types which were made between 400 and 250 BC.

G&R 1958,0213.1

**Gold brooch with cast moulding on the bow and pierced catchplate**
La Tène III, 100-50 BC
No provenance

A typical La Tène III type commonly made in bronze and also silver.

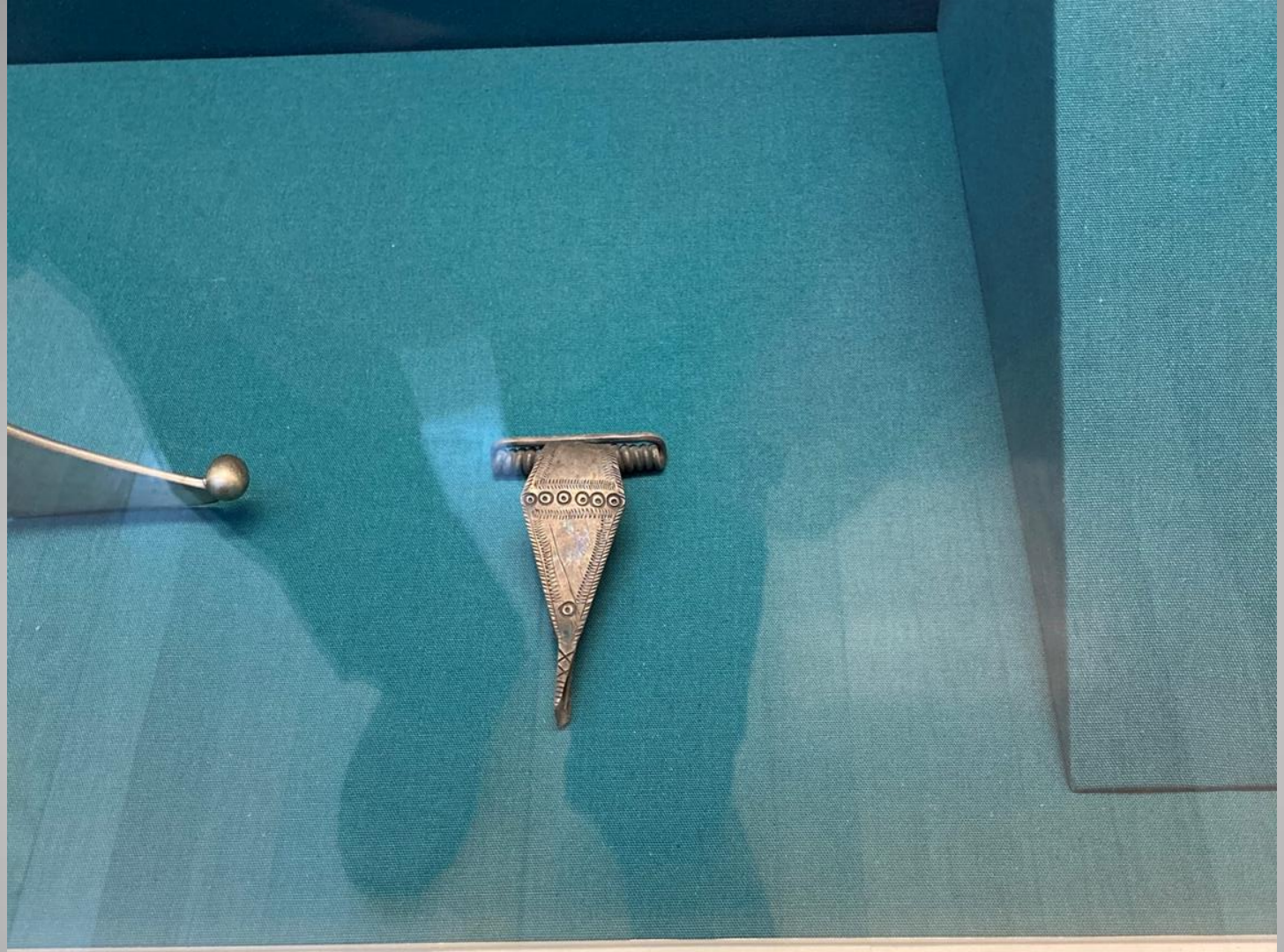
PRB 1994 9-1 1



**La Tène III silver hinged brooch**
La Tène III, AD 1-100
Székesfehérvar, Fejér, Hungary

A dolphin is engraved on one side of the catch-plate and a possible snake on the other.

PRB 1860 6-9 3



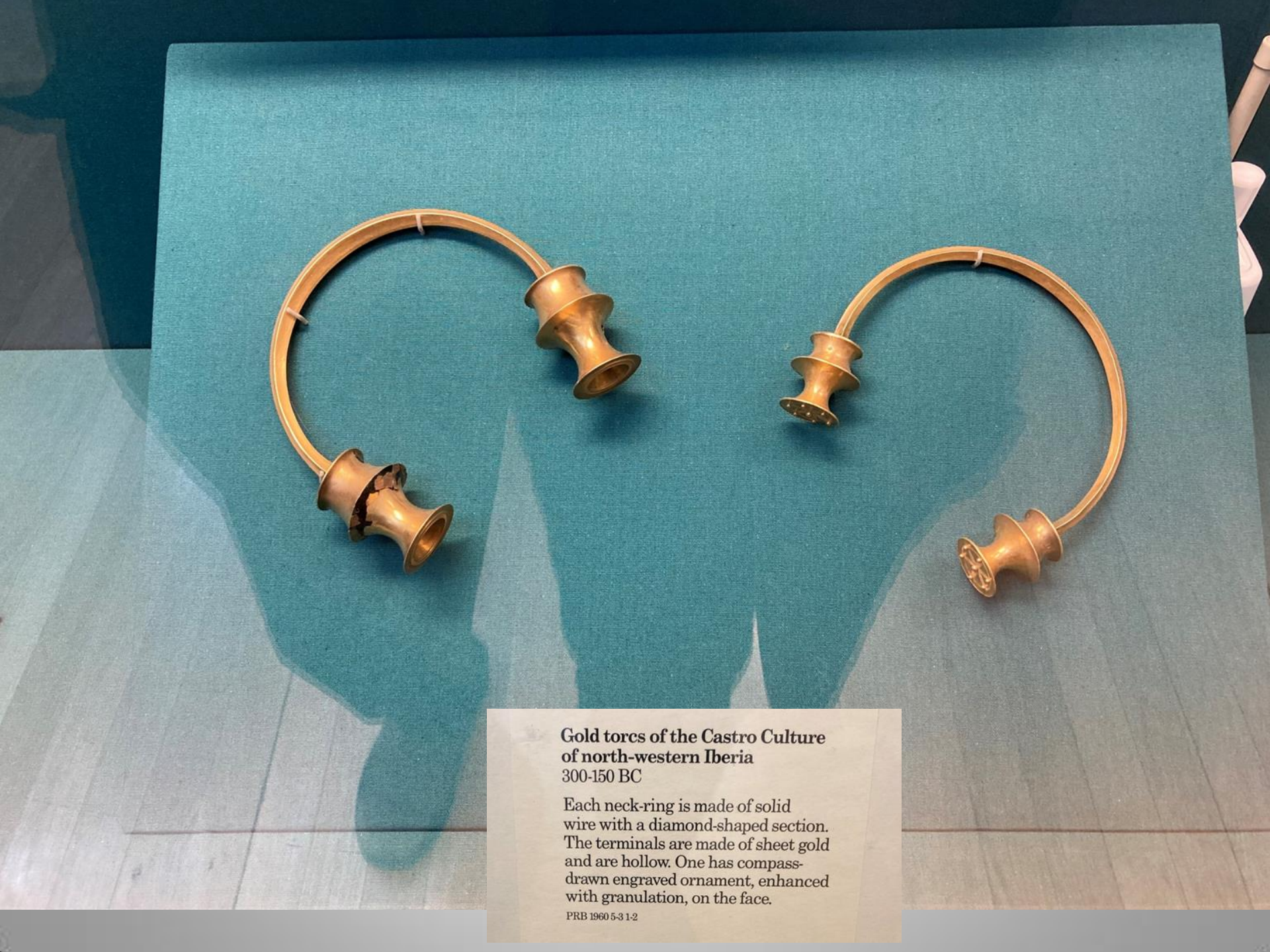
**Silver brooch with engraved decoration**
AD 1-100
Hungary

The multi-coiled spring has an external chord.

PRB 1939 5-1 2

# Gold and silver in Iberia

Iberia has rich deposits of silver, which initially attracted Phoenician traders from the eastern Mediterranean as early as the eighth century BC, followed by the Greeks, Carthaginians, from the north African coast, and Romans. Iron Age metalworkers used both silver and gold to make their own highly individualistic forms of jewellery including torcs, bracelets, anklets and brooches. Large and spectacular brooches cast in silver and then partially gilded were ornamented with small three-dimensional figures engaged in violent action - mounted warriors and hunters and fighting animals.



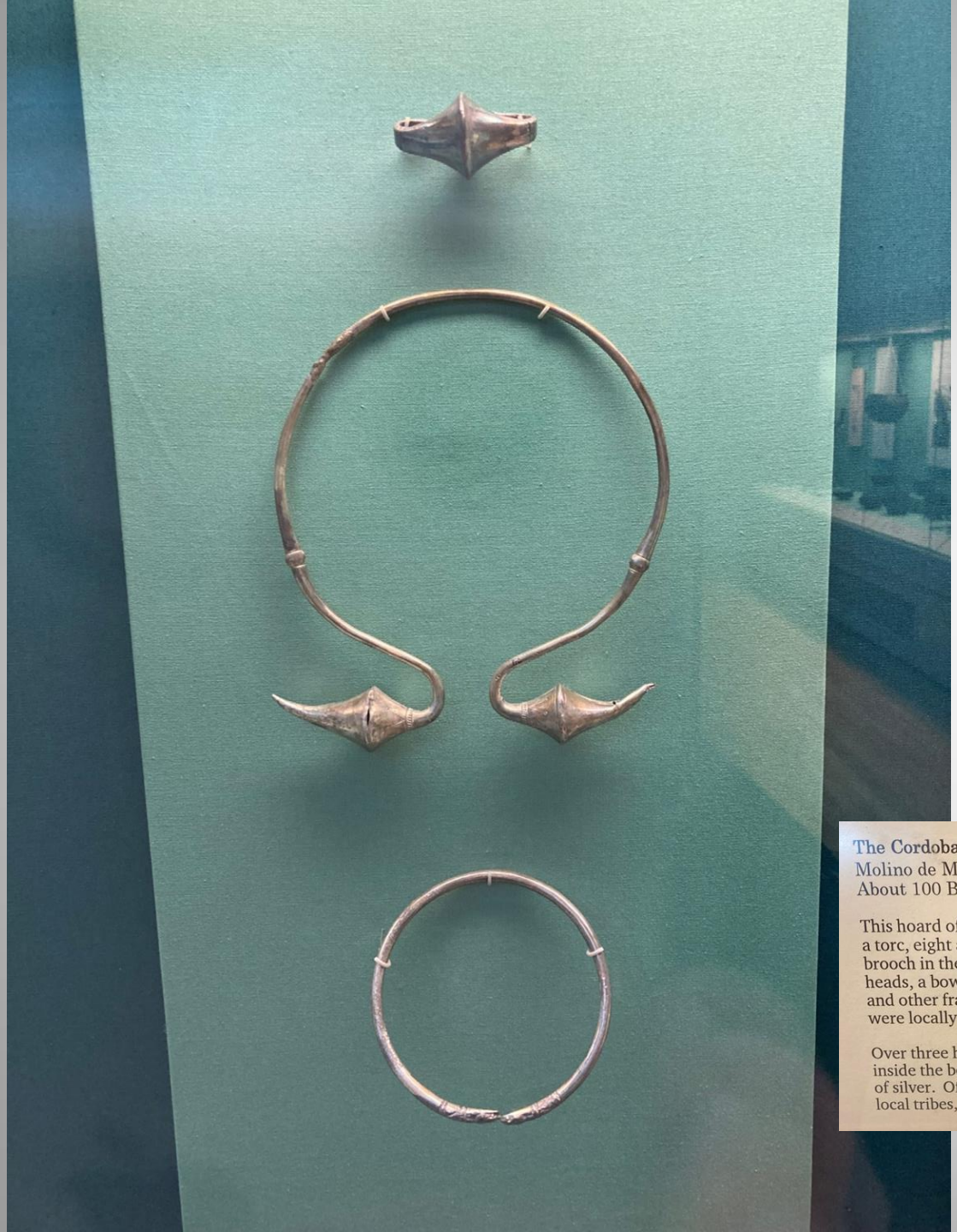
**Gold torcs of the Castro Culture of north-western Iberia**
300-150 BC

Each neck-ring is made of solid wire with a diamond-shaped section. The terminals are made of sheet gold and are hollow. One has compass-drawn engraved ornament, enhanced with granulation, on the face.

PRB 1960 5-3 1-2

# The Cordoba treasure

Important hoards of silver artefacts were deposited in the Iron Age, and the example displayed here was found by chance in 1915 at the Molino de Marrubial, on the outskirts of Cordoba. The objects had been buried in a pit, the coins and two lumps of silver were in the bowl with the rest of the hoard outside. The treasure includes a torc, eight armlets, the head of a brooch (in the form of a pair of horses' heads), rough lumps of silver and other fragments. The coins, 82 native and 222 Roman, show that the hoard was buried about 100 BC. Some of the objects are damaged and distorted, and the hoard might well have been the stock of a silversmith.



**The Cordoba Treasure**
Molino de Marrubial, Spain
About 100 BC

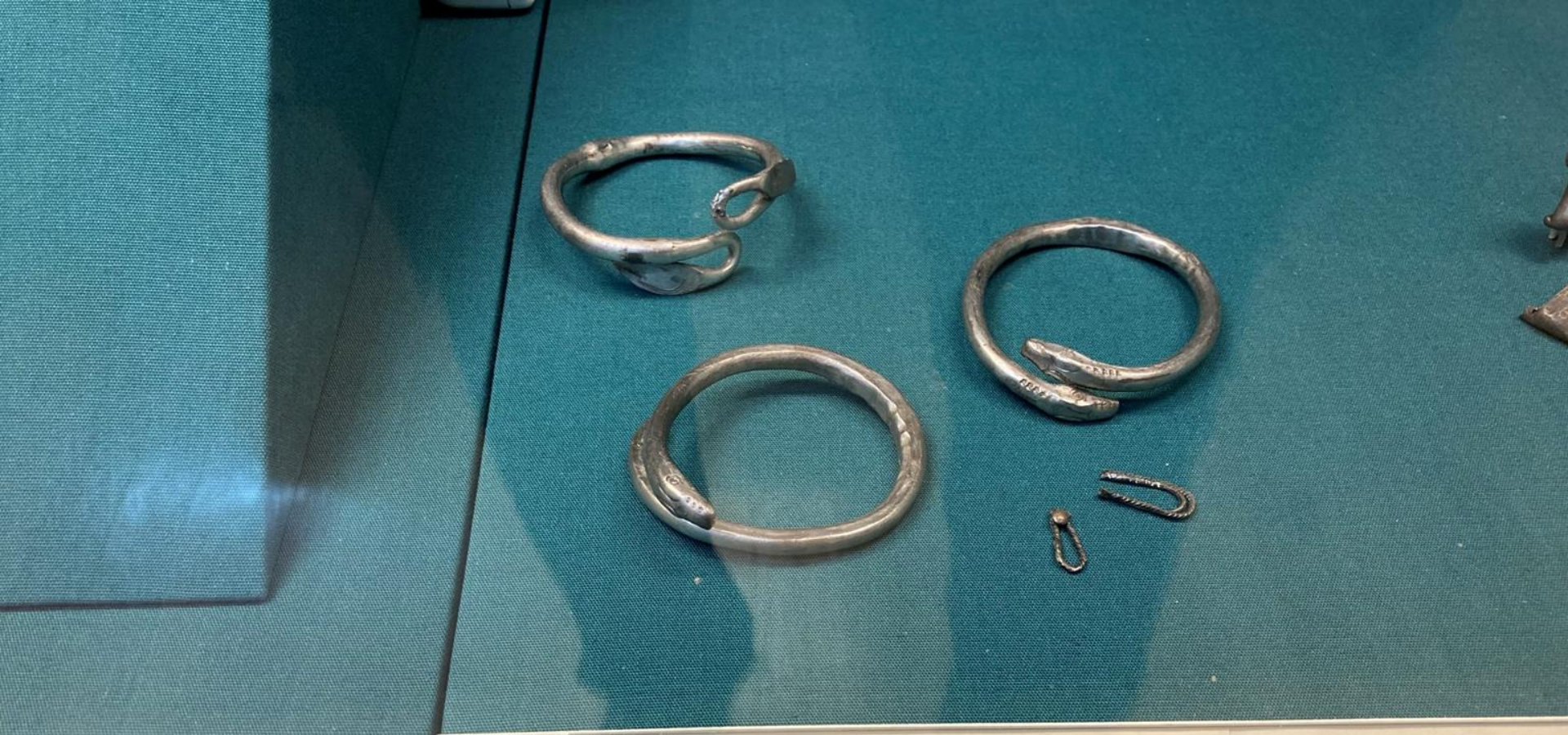
This hoard of silver artefacts includes a torc, eight armlets, the head of a brooch in the shape of two horses' heads, a bowl, rough lumps of silver and other fragments. All these objects were locally made.

Over three hundred coins were found inside the bowl, along with the lumps of silver. Of these coins, 82 are from local tribes, but 222 are Roman.

The Roman coins show that the hoard was buried around 100 BC, when this part of Spain had recently been conquered by the Roman Empire.

Some of the objects were damaged and distorted. The coins and ornaments may have belonged to a local silversmith who had planned to melt them down to make new ornaments. Or they could have been a ritual offering.

P&E 1932,0706.2-7, 9-15 &19-22



**The Arcillera Hoard**
Buried about 25 BC
Arcillera, Zamora, Spain.

Three silver spiral bracelets with snakehead terminals found together with a small fragment of twisted wire and a number of silver coins dated to 120-20 BC. Snakes represented good health and healing to Greek and Roman societies.

PRB 1935 7-11 1-4

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About 100 BC

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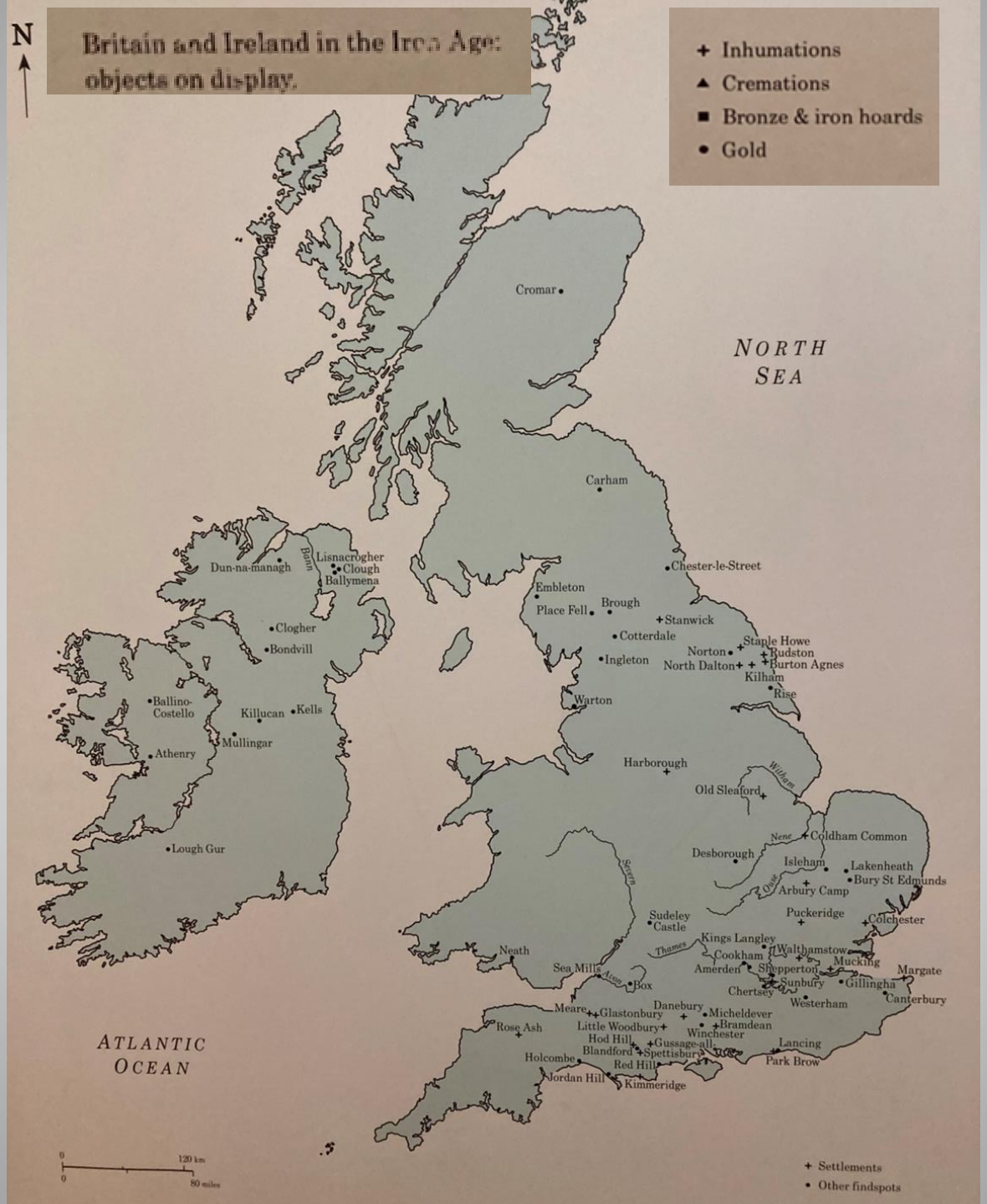
P&E 1932,0706.2-7, 9-15 &19-22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Britain and Ireland in the Iron Age: objects on display.
+ Inhumations
▲ Cremations
■ Bronze & iron hoards
• Gold
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Chester-le-Street
Embleton
Brough
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Stanwick
Cotterdale
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Staple Howe
Rudston
North Dalton
Burton Agnes
Kilham
Rise
Warton
Harborough
Old Sleaford
Wilham
Nene
Coldham Common
Desborough
Isleham
Lakenheath
Bury St Edmunds
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Arbury Camp
Puckeridge
Colchester
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Jordan Hill
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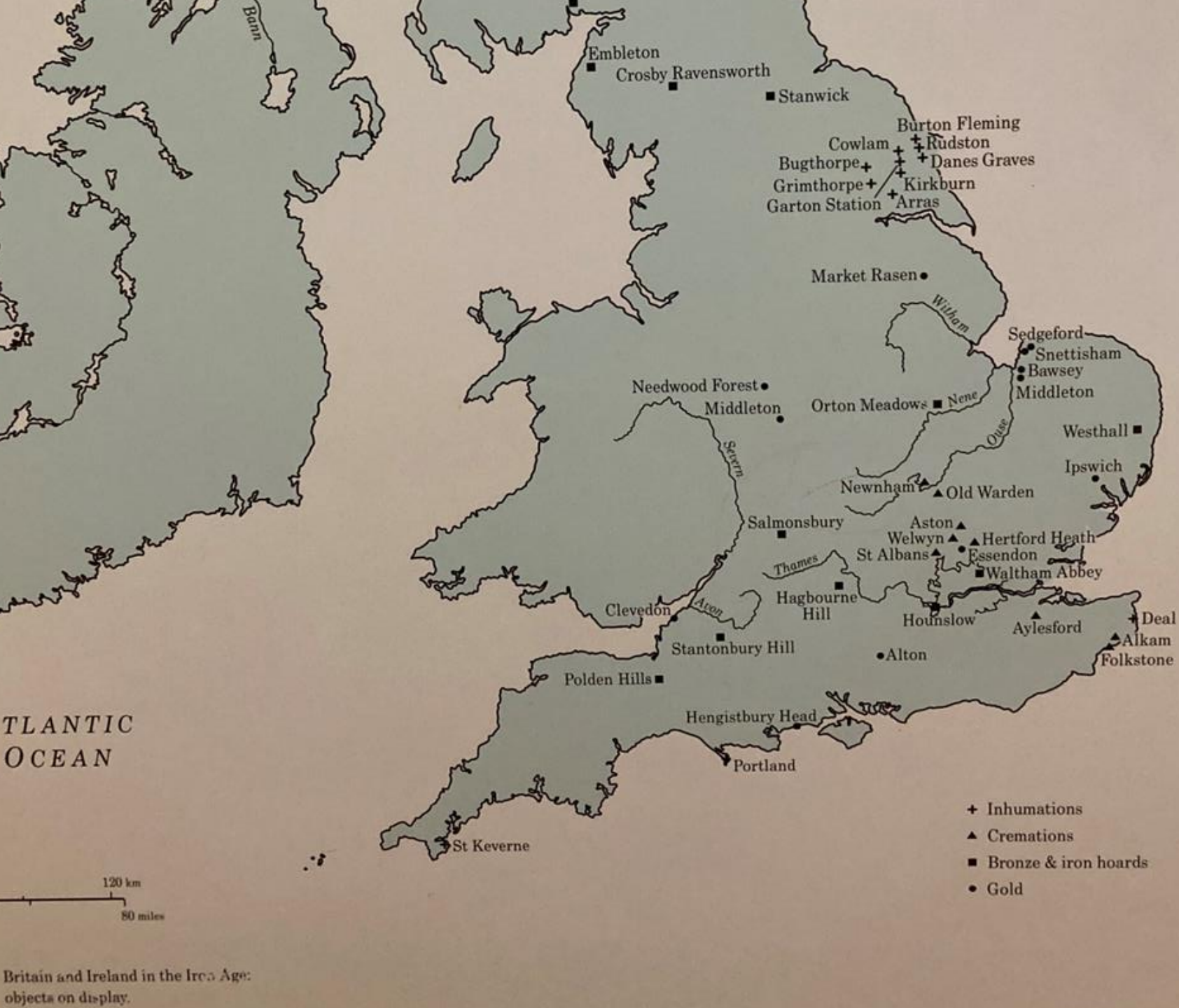


Britain and Ireland in the Iron Age:
objects on display.

## What is a Hoard?

A hoard is a group of valuable objects deliberately gathered together and buried in the ground. Hoards often contain coins and jewellery. But why did people put these objects in the ground? Was it to keep the objects safe during times of war or uncertainty? Or perhaps they were offerings to the gods? At least twelve hoards were deposited at Snettisham in Norfolk, but we do not know why.

One of the hoards, known as hoard L, contained 21 torcs placed in a small hole in the ground. Archaeologists found seven torcs, carefully placed in the ground. Below a layer of soil, they then found another 14 torcs placed on top of one another along with two bronze bracelets.

P&E 1991,0407.7,23-7,30,32-9

## The Snettisham Treasure

Ken Hill, Snettisham, Norfolk
Buried around 100 BC

Snettisham is one of the key sites of British prehistory. Occupying a wooded hillside near the north-west coast of Norfolk, near Hunstanton, it first began to reveal its secrets in 1948 when five torcs were uncovered during ploughing. Further finds were made at the site in subsequent years. Some of these objects are now in Norwich Castle Museum. The objects now in the British Museum were discovered in 1950 and 1990.

At least 12 groups of objects, known as hoards (hoards A–L), have been found at the site. They were buried in shallow pits, some barely large enough to contain a large torc. In addition to complete torcs, fragments of broken torcs, coins, rings and ingots were also deposited.

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of the smaller bronze torcs have
al as a core between the twisted
Scientists have identified the
species as dogwood (*Cornus*
*nea*) and alder (*Alnus glutinosa*).
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How to see inside the torcs

X-ray images of some torcs help the interpretation of complex structures by revealing internal and obscured features such as ancient repairs, the hollow terminals and construction

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## What is a torc?

A torc is a large ornament made from precious metals or bronze, and worn around the neck. Torcs were common across Britain and Europe during the Iron Age. Some were very heavy and others needed to be flexed so that they could be placed around the neck. Torcs are worn with the terminals pointing forward and would be uncomfortable to wear for long periods. They may only have been used on special occasions.

## Rings, bracelets, ingots, coins and broken torcs

In addition to complete and broken torcs many of the hoards included objects such as coins, rings, bracelets and ingots. Sometimes these objects were strung together. Other objects were deliberately deformed by cutting and some were partly melted. We do not know why this was done. It could be that the objects were being prepared for recycling.

## What was the intended colour?

The colour of some of the bronze torcs was changed by plating with a thin layer of gold, to simulate a solid gold torc. This has been identified as mercury gilding, the earliest example found in Britain.

The surfaces of some other gold alloy torcs were treated during manufacture to remove copper and thus enhance the gold and silver at the surface.

**A golden face**
Ken Hill, Snettisham, Norfolk
100 BC

This torc is made from a single sheet of flattened gold. The face design on the end of the torc was formed by hammering the back of the gold sheet to create a raised impression. The torc was broken before it was deliberately placed in the ground over 2000 years ago.

P&E 1991,0407.40

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## There is charcoal in some torcs

Some of the smaller bronze torcs have charcoal as a core between the twisted wires. Scientists have identified the wood species as dogwood (*Cornus sanguinea*) and alder (*Alnus glutinosa*). Thin round twigs from these flexible woods were used originally as the core around which the torc wires were tightly twisted and bent to the curved shape during their manufacture.

## How to see inside the torcs

X-ray images of some torcs help the interpretation of complex structures by revealing internal and obscured features such as ancient repairs, the hollow terminals and construction details.

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**The Snettisham Treasure**
Ken Hill, Snettisham, N
Buried around 100 BC

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**Objects found with the Snettisham Great Torc**
150–50 BC

These objects (a bracelet, a torc terminal and a small gold coin) were found tangled in the terminals of the Snettisham Great Torc.
The coin is an important find because it can help to date the other objects.

P&E 1951,0402.2-4; C&M 1951,0507.1

## How were torcs made?

Most torcs were made from multiple wires with cast terminals. Twisted wire of various sizes was hammered from thicker rods. The terminals were added using a process called lost wax casting. Hollow wax models of the terminals were added to the wires, encased in clay, then heated to melt the wax and harden the clay mould. Molten gold or silver was poured into the moulds, where it solidified taking the exact shape of the original wax models.

Some of the torcs and terminals were made of gold sheet. The thin sheet was made by hammering thin cast gold blanks on an anvil. The basic torc parts were cut from the flat sheet, gently hammered into curved shapes, then the seams and edges were soldered.

Decoration was sometimes added using small punches.


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**The Great Torc**
Snettisham
Buried around 100 BC

This torc is one of the most elaborate golden objects from the ancient world. It is made from gold mixed with silver and weighs over 1 kg. Torcs are made from complex threads of metal, grouped into ropes and twisted around each other. The ends of the torc were cast in moulds and welded onto the metal ropes.

Gift of The Art Fund
P&E 1951,0402.2

TheArtFund

*Celtic Europe*

# Gold and silver in Iron Age Britain

Before the days of banks, the earth was regarded as the most secure hiding place for wealth. Until coinage was introduced, gold was buried in the form of torcs and occasionally other jewellery. In Iron Age Britain gold was only used for personal ornament; no vessels have been identified. It was seldom placed in graves, but was carefully buried in hoards.

Hoards of gold torcs have mostly been found in East Anglia. Besides large deposits at Snettisham, Norfolk, there are six from Ipswich, Suffolk, and others from Bawsey, Middleton and Sedgeford, all in Norfolk. Elsewhere, discoveries have been made in Staffordshire including the example from Needwood Forest displayed here. In comparison, finds of other ornaments, like the Snettisham bracelet and the Market Rasen brooch, are extremely rare.

Silver jewellery is not common. The finger-ring from Park Brow, Sussex, dates to the fourth century BC and is the earliest piece of silver yet found in Britain. In the first century BC more use was made of it for brooches and torcs and many items in the Snettisham Hoards are in fact silver.

**Late Iron Age brooch-types in silver and gold**

La Tène III silver brooches typically worn in pairs joined by a chain
100-50 BC
East Weir Bay, Folkestone, Kent and King's Field, Faversham, Kent

Presented by Sir A W Franks
PRB 1891 3-20 18; PRB Gibbs 1090.A70

Cast gold brooch with grotesque stylised head on the bow
AD 50-100

PRB 1993 7-2 1

Cast gold brooch with projecting hook and fretted catch-plate
AD 50-100
Near Market Rasen, Lincolnshire

The hook produces the effect of a bird-head. A tiny motif with stippled background decorates the catch-plate.

Purchased with donations from Mrs P.M. Bergin in memory of her husband, and The British Museum Friends
PRB 1996,6-1,1

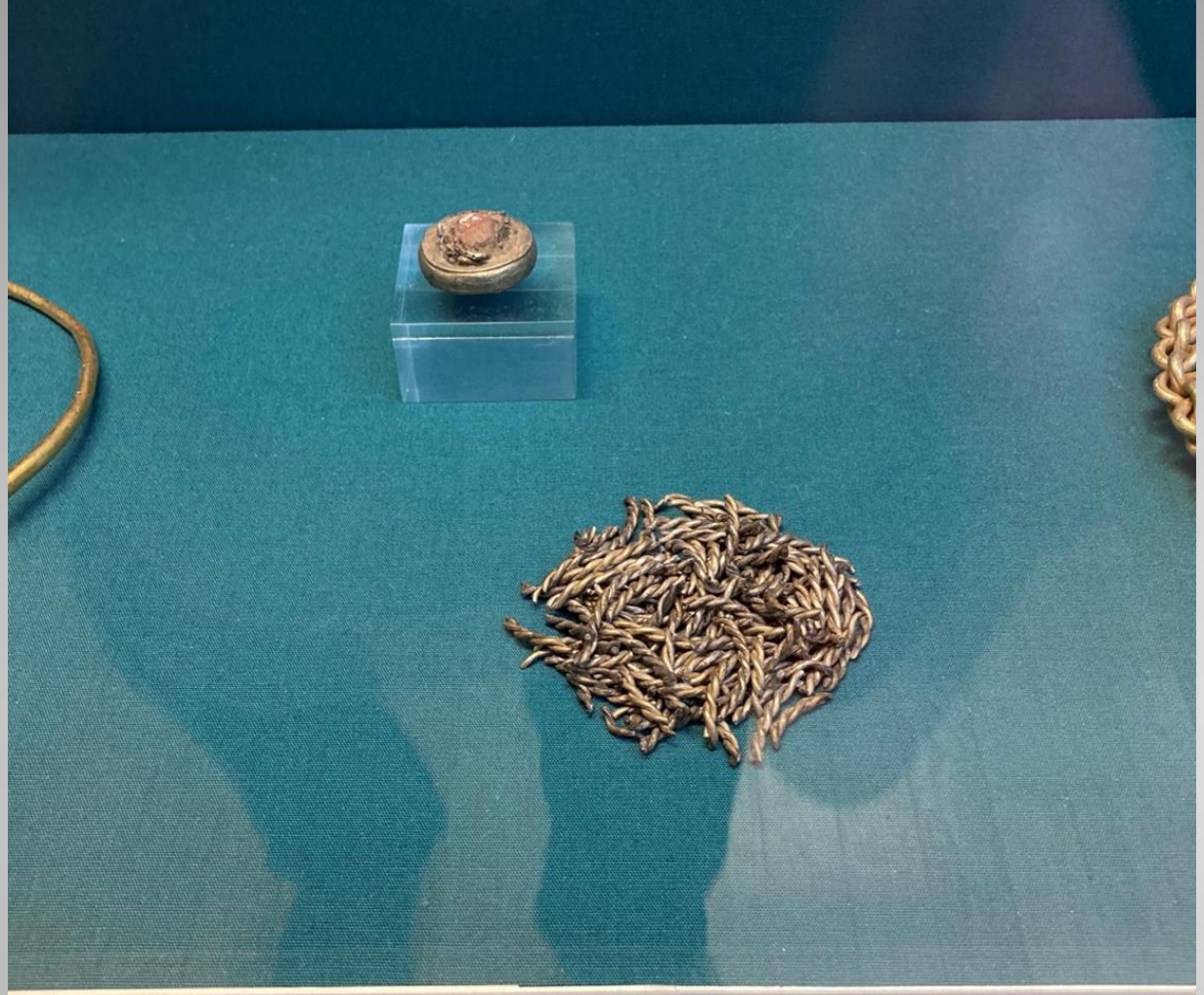
THE BRITISH MUSEUM FRIENDS

Hollow gold t
terminals
350-200 BC

The knot dem
gold is to wor
after the torc
without using
terminals fro
found in Hoar
(Case 19).

**Hollow gold torc with buffer terminals**
350-200 BC

The knot demonstrates how soft gold is to work as it was made after the torc was finished without using heat. Twelve terminals from similar torcs were found in Hoard F at Snettisham (Case 19).



**One of a matching pair of buffer terminals and fragments of the neck-ring of silver alloy torc**
Buried about 75 BC
Bawsey, Norfolk

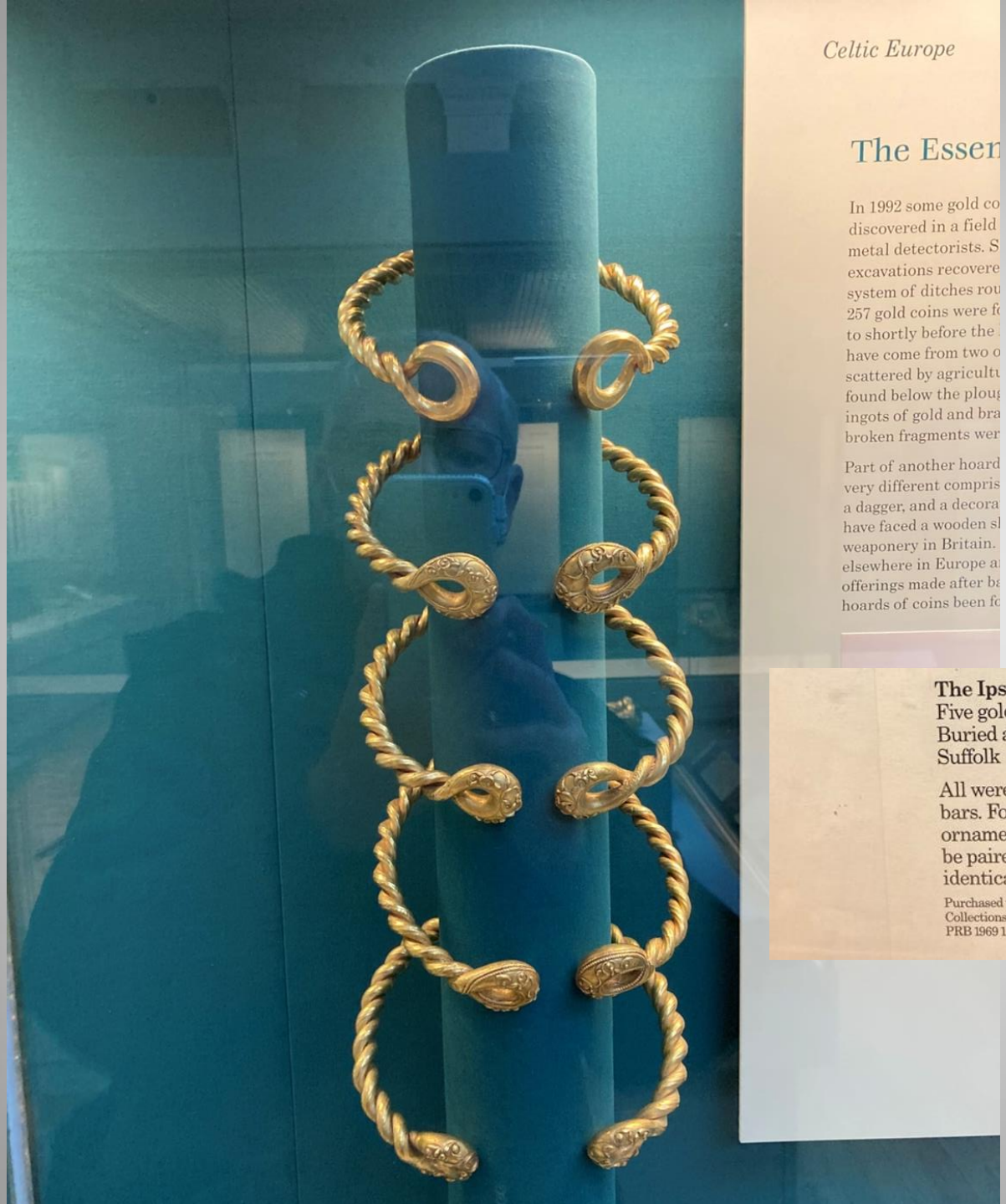
The torc had been deliberately cut into lengths sufficiently small to fit into an crucible for melting down. The fragments were recovered from ploughsoil over several years.

Treasure Trove
PRB 1985 12-4 1 + PRB 1990 3-4 1-135

**Gold alloy torc with loop terminals**
Buried about 75 BC
Middleton, Norfolk

The neck-ring was twisted in two stages using four wires.

Treasure Trove
PRB 1985 3-3 1





## The Essen

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Part of another hoard
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**The Ipswich Torcs**
Five gold torcs found together
Buried about 75 BC, near Ipswich, Suffolk

All were made from two twisted solid bars. Four have cast terminals ornamented in high relief: they can be paired but their patterns are not identical.

Purchased with contributions from the National Art Collections Fund, Goldsmiths Company and Pilgrim Trust
PRB 1969 1-3 1-5

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ons from the National Art
ths Company and Pilgrim Trust

Gold torc with loop terminals
Buried about 75 BC
Ipswich, Suffolk

A single item found subsequently at the site of the previous find. The neck-ring was made in two stages. Two pairs of bars were twisted to the right and then the two strands were twisted in the opposite direction, to the left, to produce a more decorative effect.

PRB 1971 2-3 1

**Fragments from a gold tubular torc with globular terminals, triangular gold alloy ingots and British coins**
Essendon, Hertfordshire

Ten coins had been wrapped in part of the torc, otherwise the artefacts were found separately in the same field. Evidently two or more gold hoards had been disturbed by ploughing. The ingots are the same shape and size as crucibles used widely in the Iron Age for casting metal.

Treasure Trove
PRB 1994 4-1 1ff

**Gold and silver**
**finger-rings**
**400-200 BC**

The people of Iro
rarely wore finge
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Britain but may
imported from C
Europe, where th
common.

Silver ring: Park Brow, Sompti
Presented by Major Tristram
BEP 1926.0313.12

Gold alloy ring: Chislet, Kent
BEP 2018.8003.1

**Gold and silver V-shaped finger-rings**
**400-200 BC**

The people of Iron Age Britain rarely wore finger-rings. These two V-shaped rings were found in Britain but may have been imported from Continental Europe, where the design is more common.

Silver ring: Park Brow, Sompting, West Sussex
Presented by Major Tristram
BEP 1926,0313.12

Gold alloy ring: Chislet, Kent
BEP 2018,8003.1

**Coins from the Essendon hoard**

The 257 coins discovered at Essendon represent the remains of at least two large hoards. One hoard contained some of the earliest types of coins that circulated in Britain and dates to the mid first century BC. The other consisted mostly of coins of the British kings Tasciovanus and Cunobelin who ruled between about 20 BC and AD 40.

▲ **Torcs fou**

Gold alloy
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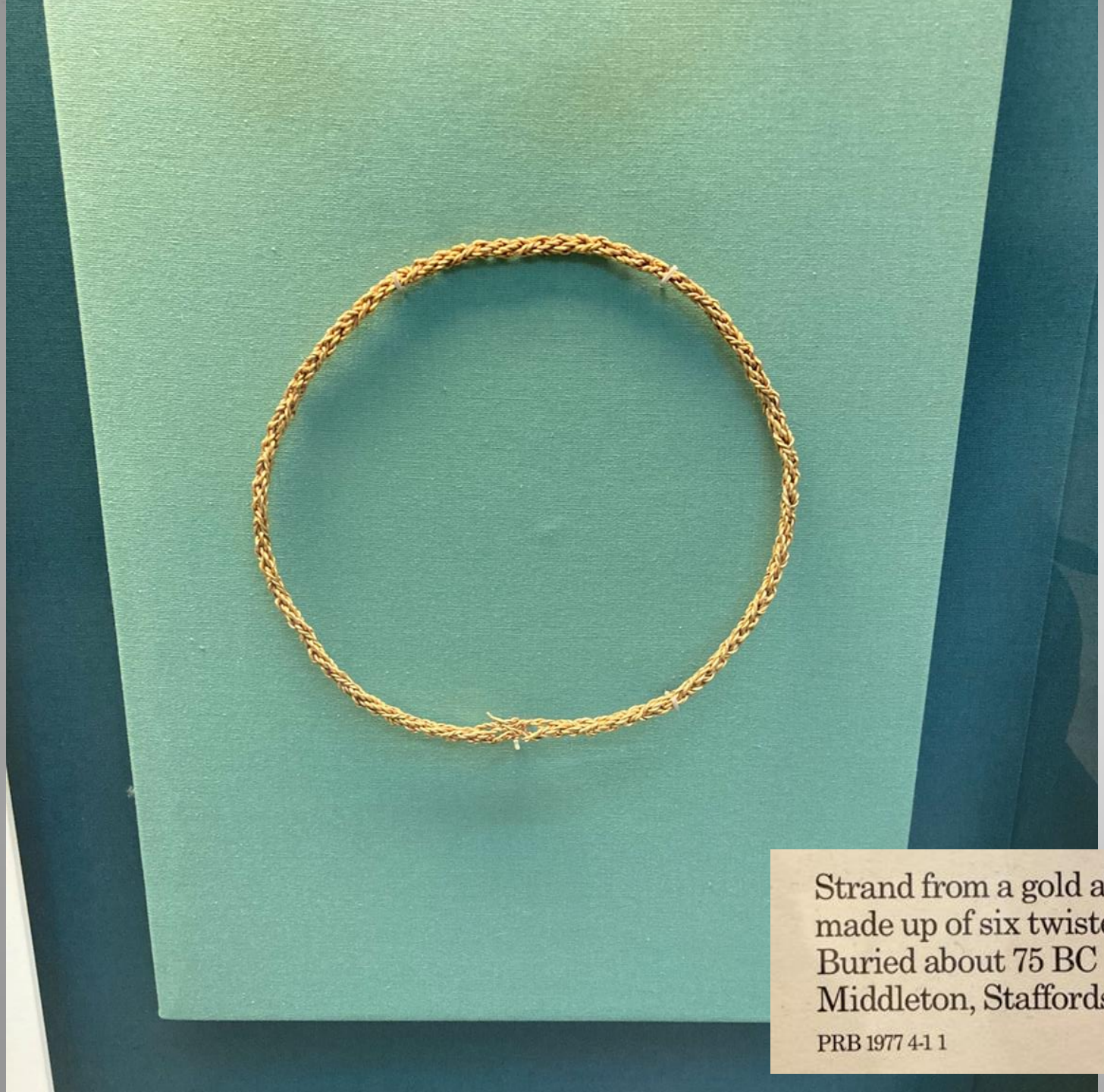
▲ **Torcs found in Staffordshire**

Gold alloy torc with cast cushion terminals
Buried about 75 BC
Greaves Wood, Needwood Forest, Staffordshire

The neck-ring was made in three stages. Initially 16 wires were coiled in pairs, the resulting eight components were again twisted in pairs and finally the four strands were given a single loose twist. The simple ornament on the terminals was cast, chased and engraved.

Deposited on loan by HRH King Edward VIII



Strand from a gold alloy neck-ring
made up of six twisted wires
Buried about 75 BC
Middleton, Staffordshire

PRB 1977 4-1 1

-ring

**Silver alloy ring terminal from a torc**
Buried about 75 BC
Hengistbury Head, Dorset

The cast terminal still has a ceramic core *in situ*.

Deposited on loan by the Society of Antiquaries of London

# The Winchester Hoard
75-25 BC

How the Winchester Hoard may have been worn

The hoard contains two sets of jewellery made of pure gold. Each set has a necklace and two brooches that were originally chained together.

The jewellery was probably made for two important people, perhaps a king and a queen. They lived at about the same time as the Roman army, led by Julius Caesar, conquered France and twice invaded England in 55-54 BC.

The necklaces were crafted differently from other torcs made in Britain at this time, such as those from Snettisham or Ipswich. Roman jewellery-making techniques were used and they were not decorated with native Iron Age designs. It is possible that a Roman craftworker made them. They showed how important their wearers were and that they had contacts with the Roman world and other parts of Iron Age Europe. Gold brooches of this type were also rare. Only two other Iron Age examples have been found in Britain.

The hoard was discovered by Kevan Halls scattered in a ploughed field while he was metal detecting near Winchester, Hampshire in 2000. It had been deliberately buried for safe keeping or as a gift to the gods.

Purchased with the assistance of

NATIONAL HERITAGE MEMORIAL FUND

THE ART FUND

# The Winchester Hoard
# 75-25 BC

How the Winchester Hoard may have been worn

The hoard contains two sets of jewellery made of pure gold. Each set has a necklace and two brooches that were originally chained together.

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THE NATIONAL ART COLLECTIONS FUND

THE BRITISH MUSEUM FRIENDS

**Part of a bronze bowl**
25 BC–AD 50
Found near Winchester,
Hampshire, England

Part of the handle, in the shape of a bird's head, from a bronze bowl. The eyes are inlaid with silver. It is a Roman object, probably made in Italy. It was found by Kevan Halls, who found the Winchester Hoard 500 metres from the same spot.

PEE 2001.7-1.1

**Wrought iron frame with oxhead terminals**
La Tène III 50-25 BC
Welwyn (Burial B) Hertfordshire

Found in the second, even richer cremation burial at Welwyn with silver cups and five wine amphorae, its function is unknown. The frame may have been used to spit-roast meat. Traces of wood preserved in the corrosion may indicate that it was a sacrificial table or altar.

Ten components were cut and forged from iron bars. Two square horizontal stretchers are secured to the legs with domed rivets. Heavy twisted iron wire decorates the lower legs. The horns were formed from bars threaded through each head-shaped terminal.

Presented by Mrs A J Neall
PRB 1911 12-8 20-22

This reconstruction shows the inside of an Iron Age roundhouse. People not only slept in roundhouses, they prepared and ate their food, as well as conducting daily tasks such as weaving. At the centre of this roundhouse is a firedog as it may have been used to cook meat over a fire.

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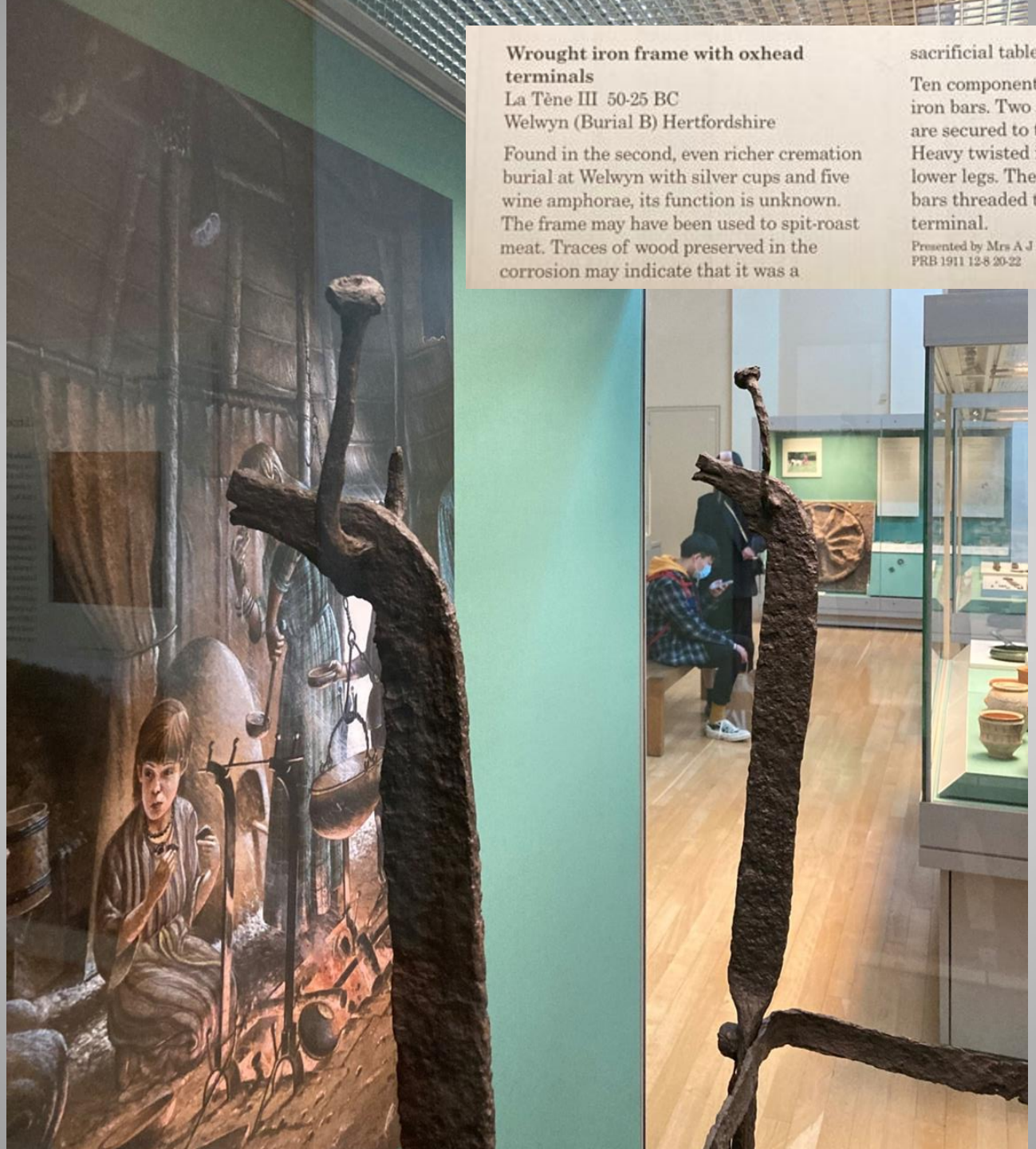
PRB 1911 12-8 20-22



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PRB 1911 12-8 20-22

**A wrought iron firedog**
La Tène III 50-25 BC
Welwyn (Burial A), Hertfordshire

Found in the cremation burial of a man of wealth and power with the paraphenalia for feasting, including imported metal vessels and a wine amphora. Firedogs may have been used to spit-roast meat over an open fire for the funeral feast. The oxhead terminals with flaring horns are typical.

The firedog comprises 13 cut, forged and welded components, the basic H-shaped frame being formed from bars slotted together using mortice and tenon joints. It illustrates the mastery of forging techniques achieved by blacksmiths in the Iron Age. Firedogs were rare and prestigious objects which have been found in only four burials, all sited north of the river Thames.

Presented by Mrs A J Neall
PRB 1911 12-8 2

# Making a living: the blacksmith

History records how important iron-working had become by the first century BC: Strabo lists it as an export while Caesar describes the use of iron bars of standard sizes as a unit of exchange.

Sources of ironstone are widespread and even deposits of low-grade iron were well worth exploiting in antiquity. Ironstone was extracted by open cast mining. Waste from iron-working in the form of smelting and smithing slag occurs on most permanent Iron Age settlements giving a picture of dispersed production.

Artefacts were forged by the blacksmith, not cast, because temperatures achieved in the simple furnaces of the time were too low to melt the iron. At the smithy the metal was re-heated and then cut, bent, twisted and hammered into the required shape using an anvil, hammer and long-handled tongs like those found in the hoard of tools from Waltham Abbey, Essex.

**Metal- and wood-working tools**

Files, gouges and chisels
Tiefenau, Berne, Switzerland

Given by Sir A W Franks
PRB 1875 10-6 10 & 17, 14-5 &20

Adze
Lisnacrogher, Skerry, County Antrim, Ireland

Given by Sir A W Franks
PRB 1880 8-2 118

Circular disc cutter
AD 1-50
King Harry Lane cemetery, St Albans, Hertfordshire

Given by William Old Ltd
PRB 1976 5-1 874

**Semi-finished ingots**
Semi-finished ingots of fairly standard shapes and sizes were prepared for distribution to settlements where they were wrought into tools and weapons. They are termed 'currency bars' because of a reference in Caesar to the use of iron bars as currency at the time of his campaigns.

Currency bars
Salmonsbury, Gloucestershire
PRB 1861 8-6 1

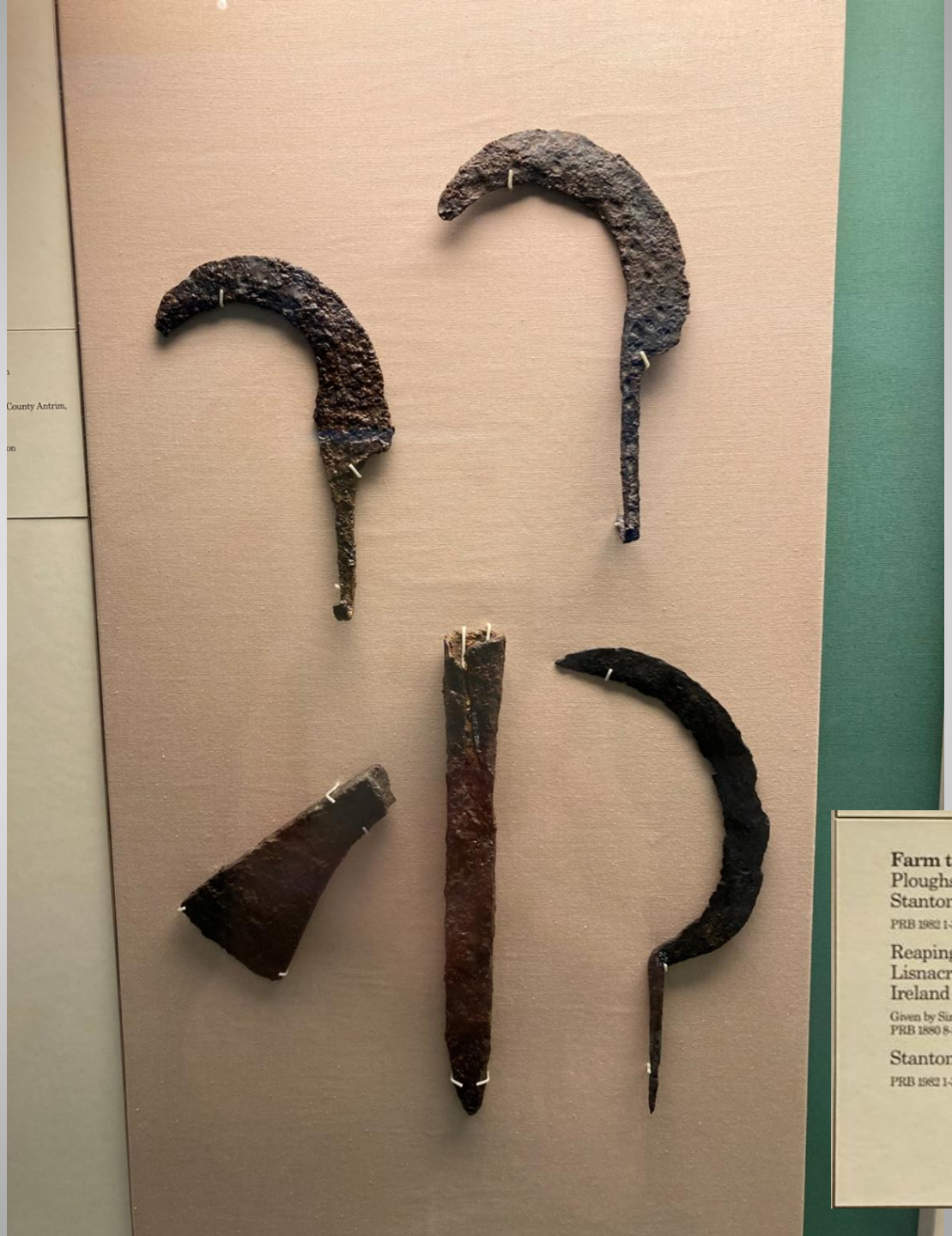
Spettisbury Rings, Spettisbury, Dorset
PRB 1862 2-27 18

Bar ingot
Hod Hill, Stourpaine, Dorset
PRB 1975 7-1 6

**A selection of tools used by a black-smith**
Buried AD 50-100 Waltham Abbey, Essex

Part of a large hoard of tools including anvil, tongs, hammer, chisel and poker. Many had been bent or broken before deposition.

Deposited on loan by Epping Forest District Council



**Farm tools**
Ploughshare
Stantonbury Hill, Avon
PRB 1982 1-3 308

Reaping hooks
Lisnacrogher, Skerry, County Antrim, Ireland
Given by Sir A W Franks
PRB 1880 8-2 119

Stantonbury Hill, Avon
PRB 1982 1-3 309-10

**Socketed Axes**
Walthamstow, Greater London and the Thames at the Tate Gallery, London

Given by J Pierpoint Morgan
PRB 1882 4-24 6 & PRB WG 1785

Socke
type
Possi
Thur

Altho

**Shears**
50 BC-AD 50

Hertford Heath, Hertfordshire

Given by Hertford Heath Rural District Council
PRB1958 7-4 667

King Harry Lane cemetery,
St Albans, Hertfordshire

Given by William Old Ltd
PRB 1976 5-1 1028 & 610

**Knife**
450-50 BC France
PRB ML 2514

**Hollow-backed knife or cleaver**
450-50 BC
Hod Hill, Stourpaine, Dorset
PRB 1975 7-1 2

**Razor**
AD 1-50
King Harry Lane cemetery,
St Albans, Hertfordshire
Given by William Old Ltd
PRB 1976 5-1 497

**Triangular knives or razors**
AD 1-50
King Harry Lane cemetery,
St Albans, Hertfordshire
Given by William Old Ltd
PRB 1976 5-1 1182 & 1029

**Composite terret of cast bronze with wrought iron cross-bar**
250-100 BC
Hagbourn Hill, Berkshire
Given by Thomas Evans
PRB 1861 9-20 4

St Albans, Hertfordshire
Given by William Old Ltd
PRB 1976 5-1 1182 & 1029

**Composite terret of cast bronze with wrought iron cross-bar**
250-100 BC
Hagbourn Hill, Berkshire
Given by Thomas Evans
PRB 1861 9-20 4

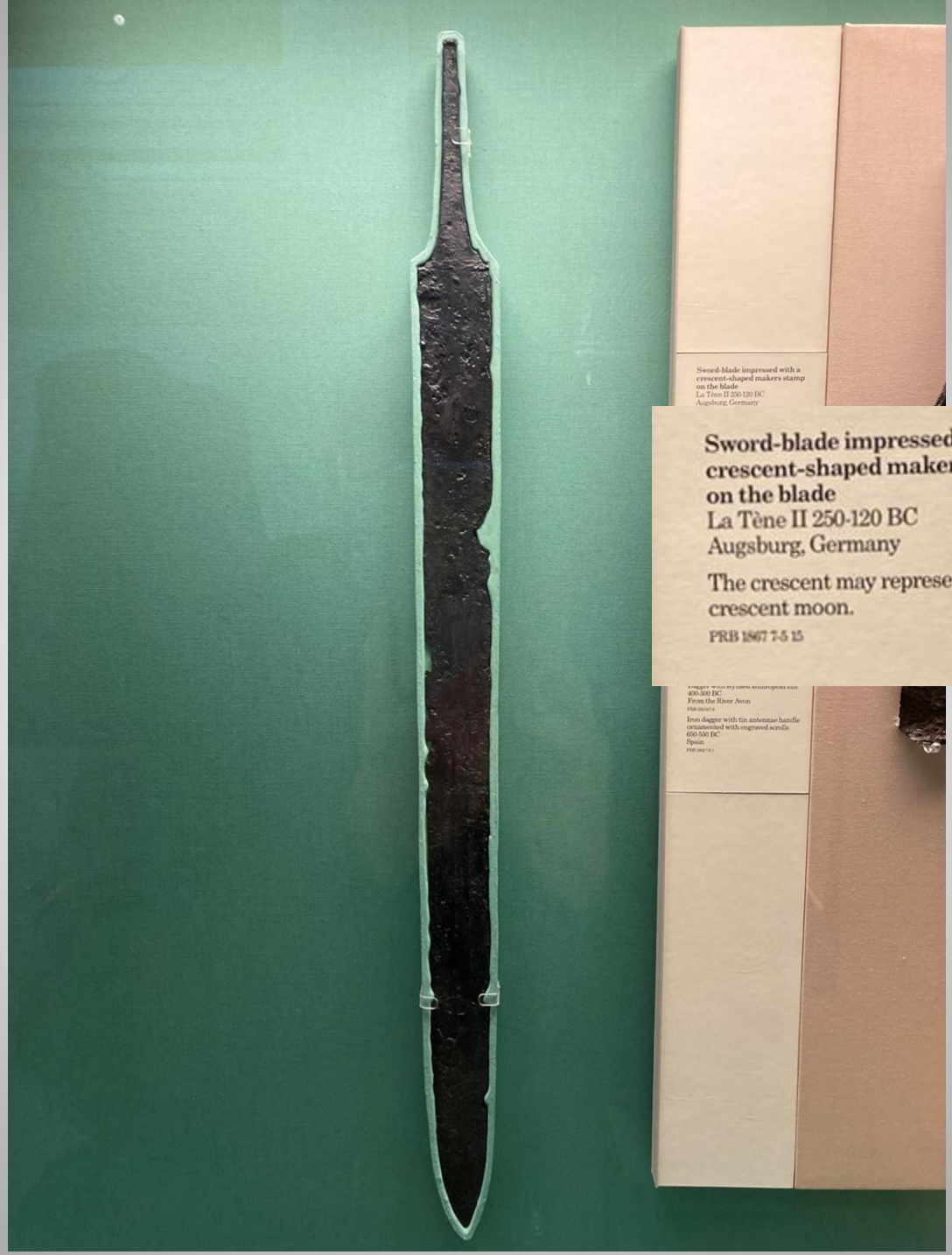
**Personal ornaments made from twisted iron wire**
Dress-pins and brooches were easily formed from iron wire twisted into the required shape.

Ring-headed pin
800-500 BC
Kilham, East Yorkshire
Given by William Brown
PRB 1960 4-4 12

La Tène I brooch
500-350 BC
From an inhumation cemetery at Marson, Marne, France
PRB ML 1523

La Tène II brooch
250-120 BC
France
PRB ML 2850

'Colchester' brooch
AD 1-50
King Harry Lane cemetery, St Albans, Hertfordshire
Given by William Old Ltd
PRB 1976 5-1 1206


Sword-blade impressed with a crescent-shaped makers stamp on the blade
La Tène II 250-120 BC
Augsburg, Germany
The crescent may represent the crescent moon.
PRB 1867 7-5 15
From the River Avon
Iron dagger with tin antennae handle ornamented with engraved scrolls
650-500 BC
Spain

**Suspension chain to attach a sword scabbard to a belt**
La Tène II 300-150 BC
From an inhumation grave at Somsois, Marne, France

The front surfaces were ornamented with circular punch marks.

PRB ML 1569

**Special decorative effects used for weapons**

Dagger with stylised anthropoid hilt
400-300 BC
From the River Avon

PRB 1913 6-7 8

Iron dagger with tin antennae handle ornamented with engraved scrolls
650-550 BC
Spain

PRB 1902 7-6 1

**Ladle**
Orton Meadows, Orton Waterville, Cambridgeshire

PRB 1981 12-2 3

**Spoon**
AD 1-50
King Harry Lane cemetery, St Albans, Hertfordshire

Handled spoons were introduced from the Roman empire

Given by William Old Ltd
PRB 1976 5-1 72

**Ladle**
Orton Meadows, Orton Waterville,
Cambridgeshire

PRB 1981 12-2 3

**Spoon**
AD 1-50
King Harry Lane cemetery,
St Albans, Hertfordshire

Handled spoons were introduced from the Roman empire

Given by William Old Ltd
PRB 1976 5-1 72

*Celtic Europe*

# Art in northern Britain after the Roman conquest

The Romans introduced new artistic ideas to Britain, such as the representation of the human body. Even after the Roman Conquest of AD 43 some people, particularly in northern England and Scotland, continued decorating their objects with traditional, abstract Celtic designs.

The Romans invaders were also inspired by native Celtic art. This helmet dates to the Roman period and features flowing Celtic decoration on the neck guard.

▲ **Personal ornaments of northern types**

Beaded collar
AD 100-250
Lochar Moss, Dumfriesshire

The collar consists of a flat cast segment completed with an articulated section composed of fluted beads with concave spacers originally threaded onto bronze or iron wire. It was found inside the bronze bowl during peat-cutting.

Given by Thomas Gray
PRB 1853 11-5 2

Dragonesque brooch in cast bronze with blue, red, yellow and white enamel inlay
AD 50-200
Norton, North Yorkshire
PRB 1862 7-1 18

Cast copper alloy belt mounts
Cumberland
PRB 1898 6-18 16

**Glass bead**
Chester-le-Street, Durham
PRB 1883 7-5 107

**Helmet**
AD 50-150
Possibly found in northern Britain

Copper alloy helmet with repoussé ornament on the neck guard. Originally the cross-hatched studs were covered with opaque red glass.

Given by Sir A W Franks
PRB 1872 12-13 2

**Iron sword with brass hilt fittings and scabbard**
Embleton, Cockermouth, Cumbria
AD 50 – 200

The cast hilt and scabbard fittings are inlaid with red and yellow enamel. The front plate and suspension loop have engraved decoration.

P & E 1870, 1013.5

**Cotterdale Sword**
Cotterdale, North Yorkshire
AD 50 – 200

Iron sword with brass hilt fittings and scabbard with cast pierced suspension loop.

Deposited on loan by the Society of Antiquaries of London

**Helmet**
AD 50-150
Possibly found in northern Britain

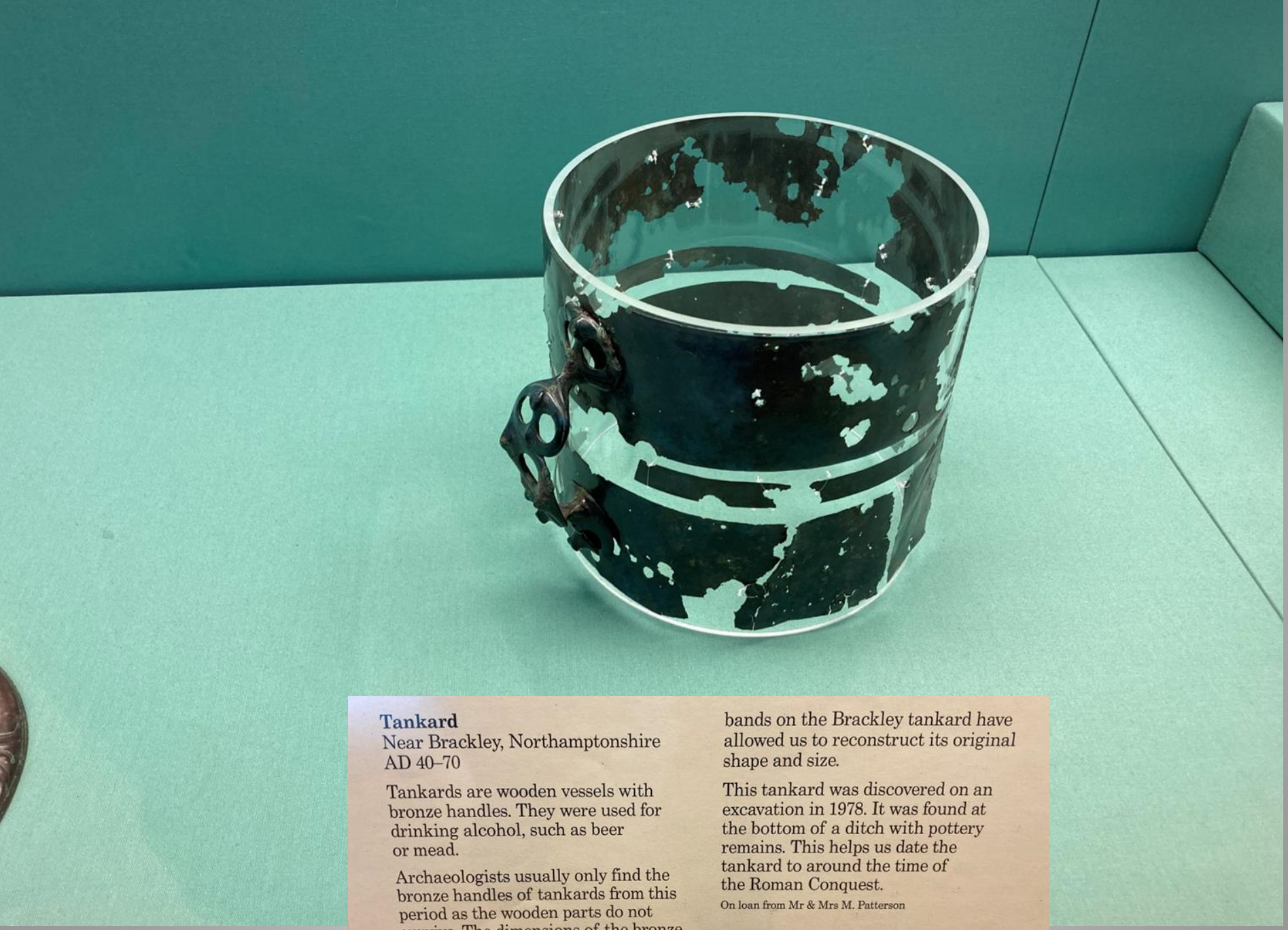
Copper alloy helmet with repoussé ornament on the neck guard. Originally the cross-hatched studs were covered with opaque red glass.

Given by Sir A W Franks
PRB 1873 12-12.2

**Hinged collars cast in bronze and brass**
AD 100-200
Isle of Portland, Dorset

Collars of cast bronze hinged at the back and secured at the front with a mortice and tenon joint. The decoration is in low relief with opaque red glass inlaid into the excised motifs.

Given by J L Luff
PRB 1889 7-15 1. PRB 1963 4-7 1



**Tankard**
Near Brackley, Northamptonshire
AD 40–70

Tankards are wooden vessels with bronze handles. They were used for drinking alcohol, such as beer or mead.

Archaeologists usually only find the bronze handles of tankards from this period as the wooden parts do not survive. The dimensions of the bronze bands on the Brackley tankard have allowed us to reconstruct its original shape and size.

This tankard was discovered on an excavation in 1978. It was found at the bottom of a ditch with pottery remains. This helps us date the tankard to around the time of the Roman Conquest.

On loan from Mr & Mrs M. Patterson

## Tankard Handles
50 BC – AD 60

These cast bronze handles were originally attached to wooden tankards. Unfortunately Iron Age wood rarely survives. Tankard handles vary in size and shape. Many are beautifully moulded and some have incised decoration.

Camerton, Somerset
P&E 1982,0103.119-120

Hod Hill, Dorset
P&E 1892,0901.486-7

Archaeologists excavating th
cauldrons found together in a
Photo: Courtesy of Wessex Archae

# Eating and drinking in Iron Age Britain

Scientific research into the food residues found in pots from this period tells us that people ate stews and porridge. Some pots and wooden tankards were used exclusively for drinking alcohol.

Feasting was an important political and social activity in the Iron Age. The elaborate serving utensils used at feasts helped hosts to impress their guests, reinforcing status, wealth and power. At such feasts people ate large quantities of meat and drank wine, beer and mead.

Archaeologists excavating the remains of at least 12 bronze cauldrons found together in a pit at Chiseldon, Wiltshire in 2005
Photo: Courtesy of Wessex Archaeology

**Handmade pots**
300 BC–AD 43

People used handmade pots like these to cook, store and serve their food.

Coldham's Common, Cambridgeshire
P & E 1870,1208.8

Glastonbury Lake Village, Glastonbury, Somerset
P& E 1951,0705.1
Donated by Somerset Archaeological Society

**Bronze bowl**
AD 100-250
Lochar Moss, Dumfriesshire

Raised from a single piece of bronze. Found with the beaded collar when peat digging.

Given by Thomas Gray
PRB 1853 11-5 1

**Sheet bronze cauldron with iron rim**
Spettisbury Rings, Dorset

Made of three pieces of sheet bronze secured together with bronze nails, the cauldron was strengthened with an iron rim to support two loops for iron suspension rings. The cauldron is unusually small, perhaps half the usual size.

PRB 1862 6-27 1

**Bron**
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large quantities of meat and drank
ead.



**Bronze hanging bowl**
25 BC-AD 75
Rose Ash, Devon

Hanging bowl raised from a single sheet of bronze with a cast handle mount in the form a stylised animal head. The metal was so thin it cracked and molten lead was poured in to effect repair. Found by chance during peat digging. Few bronze vessels survive from the pre-Roman period.

PRB 1961 10-7 1

# Ireland

In Ireland it is even more difficult than in Britain to decide where the Bronze Age ended and the Iron Age began. Most finds are from lakes or rivers or bogs and lack a secure context so that they are dated to the Iron Age on functional or stylistic grounds. Metal-smiths developed a recognisable regional style which shares some characteristic artefact-types and decorative techniques with northern Britain.

Horse-bits are more numerous than any other Iron Age artefact showing how horses were important to the way of life at that time. Harness methods for draught animals differed from those in Britain. Curious Y-shaped fittings unique to Ireland but of unknown function are assumed to be part of horse-harnesses because they have occasionally been found with bridle-bits and are so common. Equally distinctive is the engraved decoration and cast chape of the Irish scabbard style which was developed from the third century BC. In contrast to northern Britain, brooches as well as pins were used to fasten and ornament costume and characteristic forms were developed.

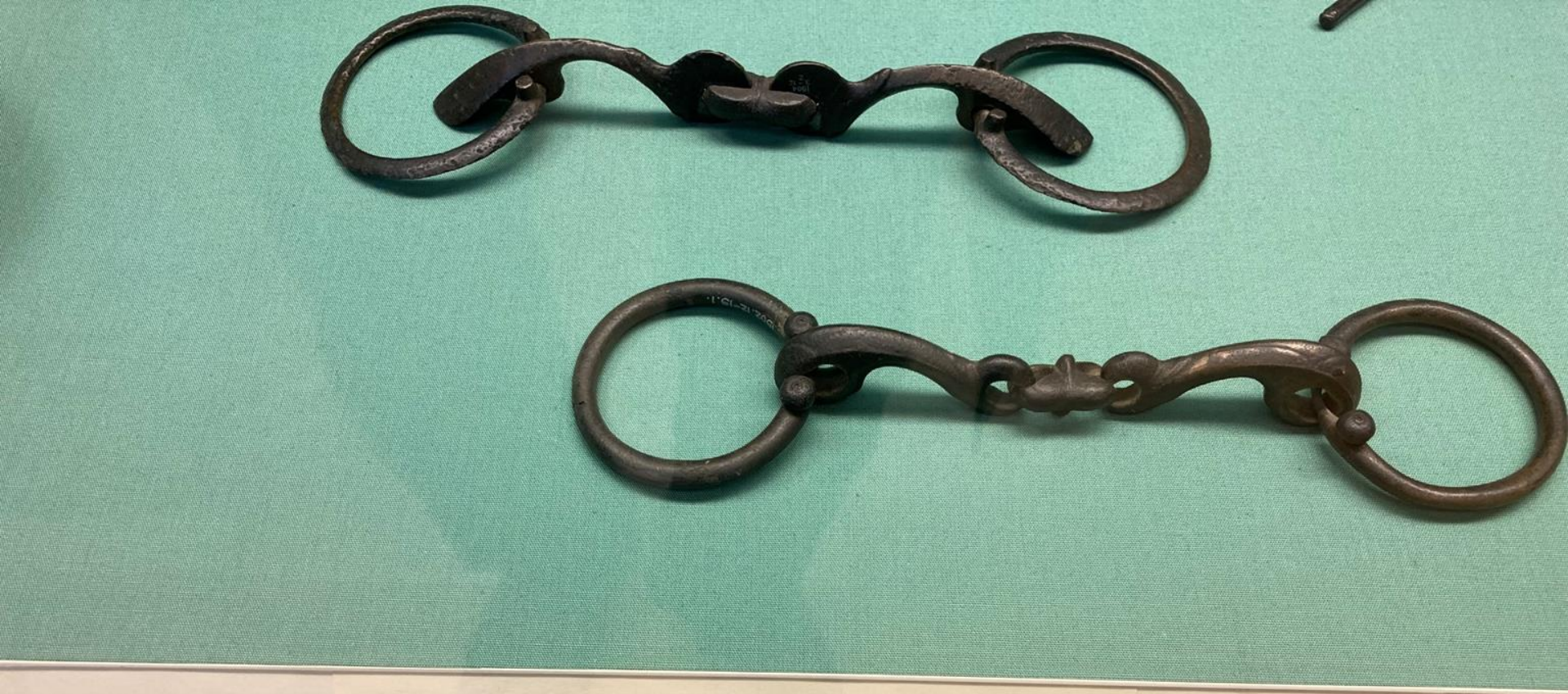
**Bronze bowls raised in a single piece**

Lisnacrogher, Skerry, County Antrim

Given by Sir A W Franks
PRB 1880 8-2 120

From near Cookstown, County Tyrone

Given by J W H Robinson
PRB 1885 6-22 1



**Horse-harness**
Recognisably different types were developed in Ireland, particularly two-link bridle-bits

Bridle bits
Ireland
PRB 1868 7-9 14

Killucan, County Westmeath
Given by Sir C H Reade
PRB 1902 12-19 1

Y-shaped mounts cast in bronze
Ballina-Costello, County Mayo and Mullingar, County West meath
PRB 1854 7-14 294 ; PRB 1913 7-15 1

Platform terret
County Antrim
Given by Canon W G Greenwell
PRB 1870 12-27 1

▲ *Irish Ir*

*La Tène*
*with two-*
*and settin*
*red glass*
*50 BC - AD*
*County Ty*
*PRB 1854 3-7 2*

*One-piece b*
*stylised bird*
*AD 1-100 Bon*
*County Arma*
*PRB 1862 6-17 4*

**Horse-harness**
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Bridle bits
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PRB 1868 7-9 14

Killucan, County Westmeath
Given by Sir C H Reade
PRB 1903 12-19 1

Y-shaped mounts cast in bronze

Platform terret
County Antrim
Given by Canon W G Greenwell
PRB 1870 12-27 1

▲ **Irish Iron Age pins and brooches**

La Tène III bronze one-piece brooch with two-coil spring, external chord and settings for precious coral or red glass
50 BC - AD 50 near Clogher, County Tyrone
PRB 1854 3-7 2

One-piece brooch in the form of a stylised bird with folded wings

One-piece brooch with open catch-plate, two-coil spring and internal chord
120-50 BC Kells, County Meath
Given by Sir A W Franks
PRB 1880 8-2 131

▲ **Bronze ringheaded pins**

Ballymena and Clough, County Antrim
PRB 1888 6-18 13 & 31

## ▲ Irish Iron Age pins and brooches

La Tène III bronze one-piece brooch with two-coil spring, external chord and settings for precious coral or red glass
50 BC - AD 50 near Clogher, County Tyrone
PRB 1854 3-7 2

One-piece brooch in the form of a stylised bird with folded wings
AD 1-100 Bondville, near Middletown, County Armagh
PRB 1862 6-17 4

One-piece brooch with open catch-plate, two-coil spring and internal chord
120-50 BC Kells, County Meath
Given by Sir A W Franks
PRB 1880 8-2 131

## ▲ *Bronze ringheaded pins*

*Ballymena and Clough, County Antrim*
*PRB 1898 6-18 13 & 31*

ed pins
ough,

## Glass beads

Blue and white 'Eye' bead
Dun-na-managh, County Tyrone

PRB 1890 2-15 11

Opaque yellow spirals in a clear ground
County Antrim

Given by Sir A W Franks
PRB 1892 4-21 16

**Irish disc**
Ireland

An artefact of unknown function and iconography unique to Ireland. The convex circular disc is made of sheet bronze engraved with a basket-weave pattern. The circular scoop has been placed off-centre and surrounded by a repeated scroll motif in high relief.

Given by G W A Drummond
PRB 1841 11-10 1

**Cast bronze yoke pole terminals with engraved ornament**
Lough Gur, County Limerick

Matching terminals for the yoke-pole to harness two horses to a cart.

PRB 1850 8-1 1-2

**Swords and scabbards**

La Tène I iron sword with bronze hilt fittings
Lisnacrogher Bog, Skerry,
County Antrim

Given by Sir A W Franks
PRB 1880 8-2 116

Cast bronze 'snake-head' scabbard chapes with settings for red coral or opaque red glass studs
350-250 BC
Northern Ireland and Athenry, Galway

PRB 1868 7-9 3 ;
Given by Margaret Stokes
PRB 1886 12-2 1

**Iron spearhead**
Lisnacrogher, Skerry, County Antrim

Given by Sir A W Franks
PRB 1880 8-2 117

**Cast bronze 'spear-butt'**

The 'spear-butt' is just like that found in Scotland at Crichie.

PRB 1853 10-13 2

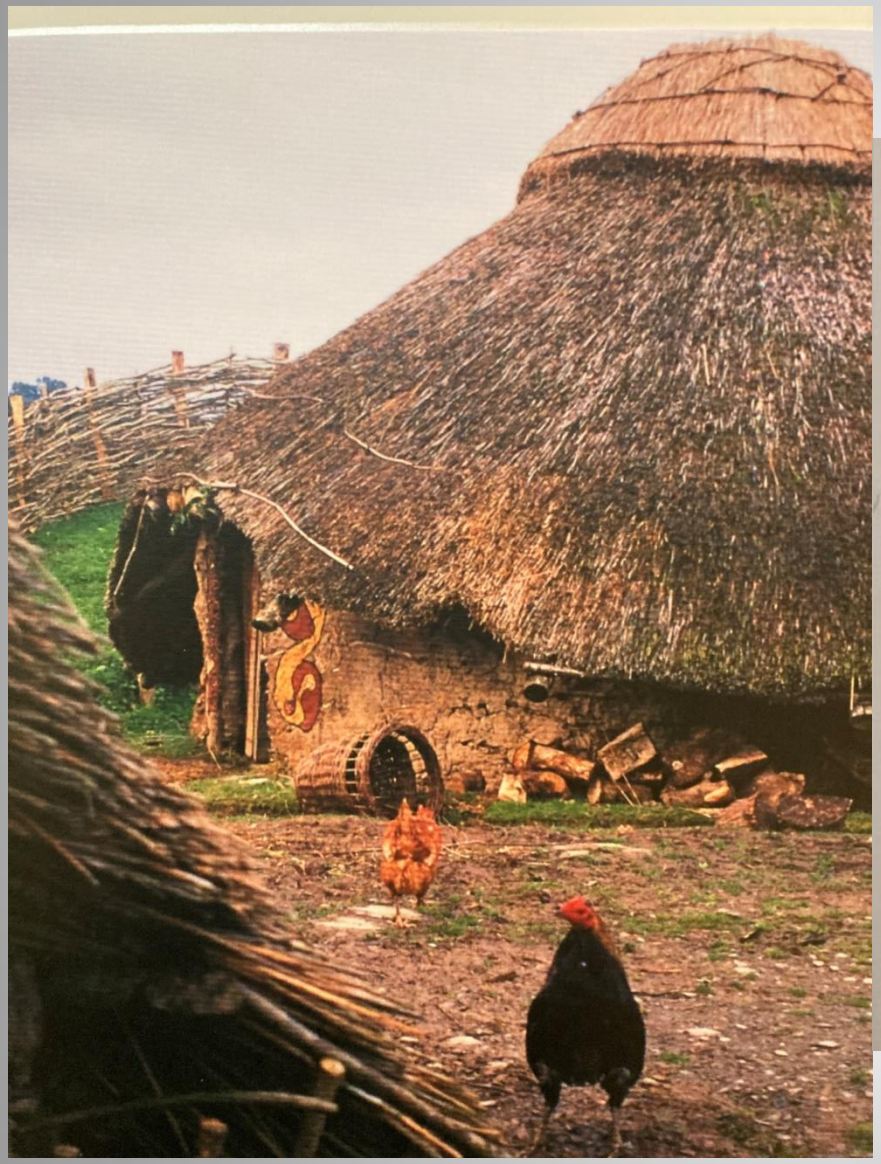
**Cast bronze terminals or 'spear-butts'**
Lisnacrogher, Skerry, County Antrim

Given by Sir A W Franks and Canon W G Greenwell
PRB 1880 8-2 123-6; PRB 1870 12-27 (2 pair to 123)

These images show reconstructed roundhouses. People in Britain first lived in roundhouses in the Bronze Age and they continued to be used in the Iron Age. In other parts of Iron Age Europe people lived in rectangular shaped houses. Most round houses were built from local materials. Walls were made of wattle and daub and sometimes, stone or turf. Roofs were thatched with reeds or straw.

Round houses were not the same size at all times or places in the Iron Age. Most were small in size, between five and eight metres across, but they could be up to fifteen metres across. Most round houses had a fireplace at their centre. This provided heat for cooking, warmth for the house and light.

Following the Roman conquest, some British people began to build rectangular houses, although others continued to live in traditional round houses.



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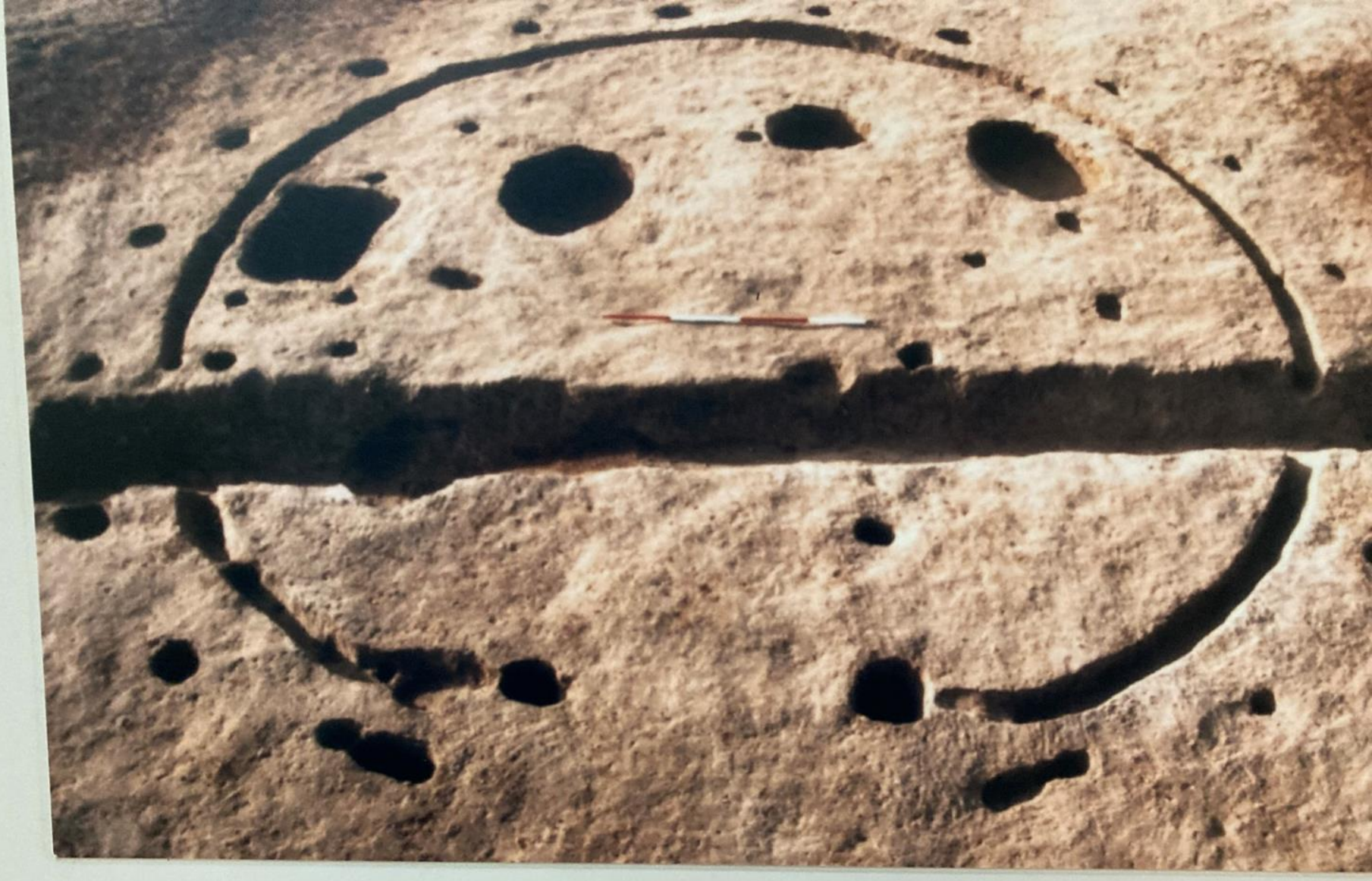
Castell Henllys Iron Age Fort in Pembrokeshire, which is owned and managed by the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority



The excavated remains of an Iron Age round house at King's Dyke West, Whittlesey, Cambridgeshire, showing postholes and other features

Photo: Cambridge Archaeological Unit, University of Cambridge

*Celtic Europe*

# Making a living: acquiring the luxuries

By providing a list of British exports, the Greek geographer Strabo, who was writing at the end of the first century BC, hints at the complex networks of gift, exchange and trade involved in obtaining raw materials and distributing finished products. Slaves, cattle and hunting dogs add a living dimension to trade not accessible by archaeological methods. Perishable goods may have been carried far and in bulk but little evidence has survived. Salt was a vital commodity whose distribution is known only from broken fragments of the coarse ceramic containers in which it was transported.

Scarce commodities were transported over great distances, such as Mediterranean coral which was used in Britain from the fourth century BC for decorative inlays. Kimmeridge shale was widely distributed in Britain in the form of personal ornaments and vessels. Some necessities like stone suitable for grinding cereals and sharpening iron blades was obtained from distances in excess of 200kms within Britain. By the first century BC decorative pots had a ready market.

**Amber beads**
500-350 BC
Giubiasco, Ticino Canton,
Switzerland

Bronze bangles threaded with an amber bead and necklaces of amber beads.

Given by Sir John Brunner
PRB 1901 12-26 57, 72 and 108 PRB 1935 10-16 57

**Coral**
Precious red and pink coral was imported from the Mediterranean and beyond.

Coral bead necklaces
Provenance unknown
PRB ML2240, ML2241

**Glass beads and bangles**
Blue was the most popular colour for glass beads in the Iron Age. Some were marvered with scroll or spiral patterns into which opaque glass was inlaid: identical types have been found in Britain and Gaul. Often single beads were threaded onto bronze rings or bangles.

Giubiasco, Ticino, Switzerland
PRB 1935,10-17 53

Mesnil, Marne, France and Champagne
550-400 BC

Large embossed blue beads with white spirals
AD 1-100
Westerham, Kent and Bexler Hill, Eastbourne, East Sussex
Given by Capt. H W B Streatfield PRB 1928 11-5 1; Given by T Oldham Barlow PRB 1928 12-17 1

Bangles of colured glass
300-100 BC
France
PRB ML300, ML4235

**Jet and shale**
Roughouts for bangles and beads before finishing and polishing, and lathe-turned waste objects
Kimmeridge, Dorset

Given by Dr Henrietta F Davies
PRB 1937 12-7 2 & 7
PRB 1882 9-1 70, PRB 1892 9-1 1648 & 1657

Staple Howe, North Yorkshire

PRB 1963 12-8 24

Burton Agnes, East Yorkshire

Given by Burton Agnes Estate Trust
PRB 1992 2-5 74

Finished bangles of different widths
500-300 BC
From an inhumation cemetery at
Marson, Marne, France

PRB ML 1943, ML 1672, ML 4233

**Lathe-turned jar**
Buried about 50 BC
Found in cremation burial at Old Warden, Bedfordshire

Pedestal jar made in three sections with concealed joins. Initially the sections were hollowed out by hand but the exterior was finished on a lathe.

PRB 1855 7-10 1

**Pots for trade and exchange, 150-75 BC**

Handmade jars with relief decoration were traded and exchanged to different communities from about 150 BC. The most widely distributed in southern Britain were 'Glastonbury Wares' named after the Glastonbury Lake Village where they are very common. Pots like that from Margate were distributed to various coastal settlements in the South-East so that identical vessels have been found at Eastbourne, Sussex and Mucking, Essex.

Margate, Kent

Given by Dr A W Rowe
PRB 1926 10-19 44

Kent's Cavern, Devon

Unregistered

Glastonbury, Somerset

Deposited on loan by the Glastonbury Antiquarian Society

*Reverse of*
*out a stemn*

**Wine from Italy**

Wine was exported in great quantities from Italy to Gaul in large ceramic containers. By the end of the 2nd century BC trade included southern Britain and sherds from amphorae of Dressel type 1A amphora have been found in settlements in southern Britain.

Hengistbury Head, Dorset
Deposited on loan by the Society of Antiquaries of London

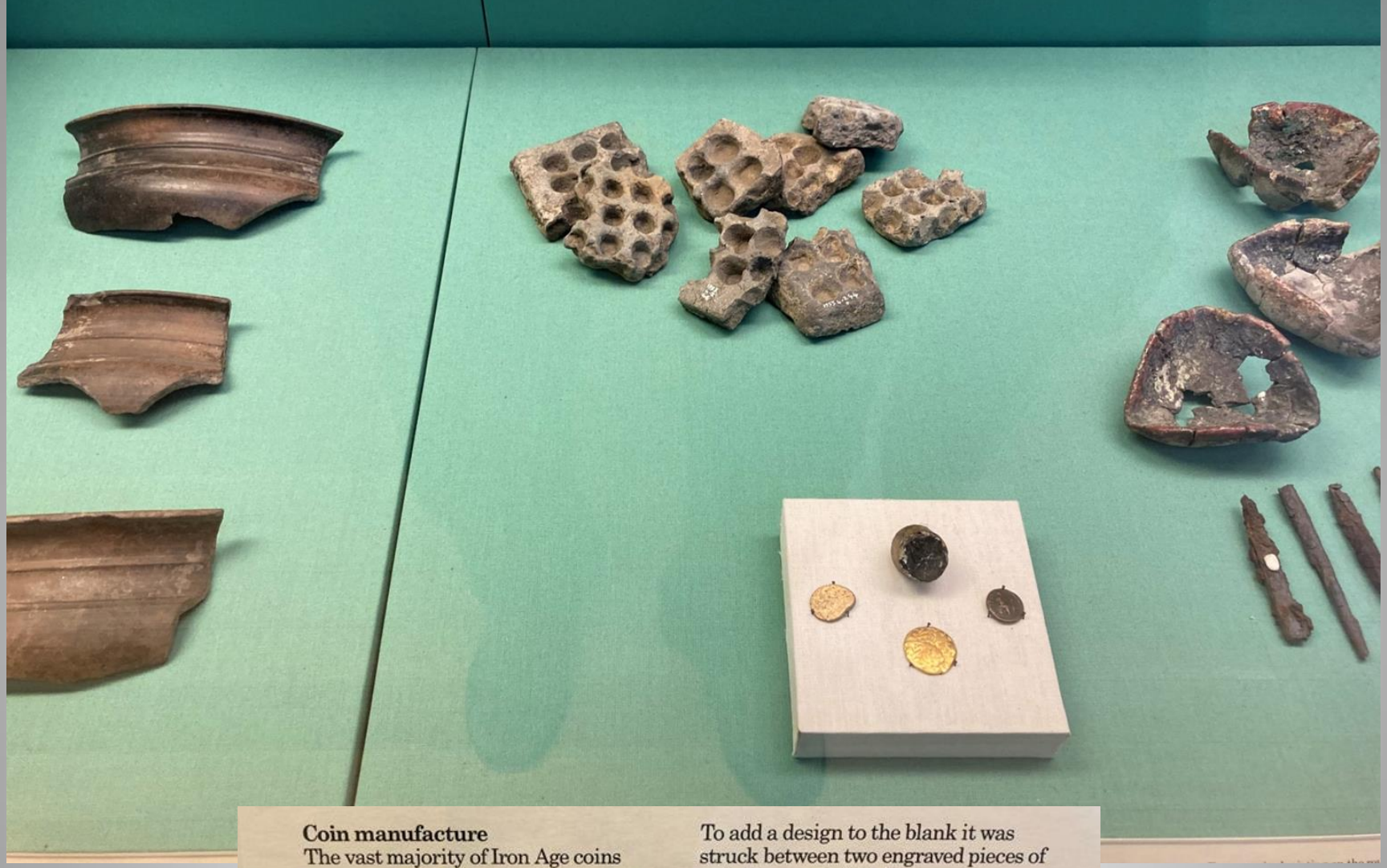
*Celtic Europe*

# Making a living: casting bronze

The workshop at Gussage-all-Saints, Dorset has provided some of the most detailed evidence for bronze-casting methods. The settlement was small and was occupied from the fourth century BC into the Roman period, but bronze-working took place only for a brief period early in the first century BC.

The bronze-smiths made harness and cart fittings, using the lost-wax process. Objects were modelled in wax and some of the bone and iron modelling tools survive. Clay moulds were prepared from the models, fired, filled with molten bronze, allowed to cool and then broken open to extract the artefact. Many fragments of fired clay moulds were found and pieces from 80 ceramic crucibles which were used to melt the bronze. The products included horse-bits assembled from nine cast components, at least ten different terret-types and the decorated bronze terminals for iron linch-pins.

Not one of the finished products was found during the excavations at Gussage-all-Saints but possible examples have been found elsewhere at Hagbourne Hill, Berkshire, Hod Hill, Dorset and Polden Hill, Somerset.



**Coin manufacture**

The vast majority of Iron Age coins were produced by a technique known as 'striking', for which a considerable level of technical sophistication was required. The process began with the production of a blank. It seems likely that in most cases this was formed in a clay mould; many fragments of these pellet moulds have been discovered on late Iron Age sites. Metal was probably put into the mould in powder or nugget form, so that it could be carefully weighed, and was then heated.

To add a design to the blank it was struck between two engraved pieces of metal known as 'dies'.

Coin pellet moulds
*Camulodunum*, Colchester, Essex

Molten metal was measured into the moulds. The resulting pellets were then struck with a die.

PRB 1953 4-2 39-46

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Coin pellet moulds
*Camulodunum*, Colchester, Essex

Molten metal was measured into the moulds. The resulting pellets were then struck with a die.

PRB 1953 4-2 39-46

Coin blank ready for striking

Given by C Rudd
CM 1996 9-6 1

Coin die for striking a Gallo-Belgic A stater

CM 1994 5-5 1

Gold stater of the type produced with the die

T G Barnet Bequest
CM 1935 17-12 1

Bronze coin depicting on the reverse a metal-worker working on a stemmed drinking cup such as that in the Welwyn Garden City burial.

CM 1948 6-6 1

**Bronze casting and enamelling in the Iron Age**
Few workshops have been identified. The most comprehensive range of tools, moulds and crucibles and other equipment was found at Gussage-all-Saints, Dorset.

Iron and bone tools for modelling the wax patterns from which clay moulds were made.
Lent by The Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society at The Dorset County Museum

Broken used moulds for casting terrets (rein rings), side-links, centre-links and linch pin terminals
Lent by The Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society at The Dorset County Museum

Crucibles for melting the metal
Lent by The Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society at The Dorset County Museum

Brass ingots shaped like a crucible ready for smelting.
Essendon, Hertfordshire
Given by C H R Crosland

**Cake of raw opaque red glass of the type used for enamelling metal**

Fish Street Hill, London

PRB 1931 10-19 8

Decorative discs formed of opaque red glass studs mounted on a bronze back-plate and secured with iron nails
200-100 BC
Bugthorpe, North Yorkshire

Given by Lord Halifax
PRB 1905, 7-17, 4-5

Framed studs
Buried 50-25 BC
Hertford Heath, Hertfordshire

The red glass was heated gently and softened so that it could be pushed into the frame from the back.

Given by Hertford Heath Rural District Council
PRB 1958, 7-4, 78-79

**Patterns using excised cells**
After casting the areas to be inlaid with red glass were excised.

Terret
Buried AD 90-150 Westhall, Suffolk
PRB 1855 5-19 2

Strap union
AD 50-150 Canterbury, Kent
PRB 1876 7-7 4

**Patterns using cast cells**
The cells to be inlaid with glass were prepared in the clay mould before casting.

Strap unions
Buried AD 50-150 Neath, Glamorgan
PRB 1928 1-16 1

Britain
PRB 1881 5-9 17

**s using excised cells**
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l glass were excised.

l AD 90-150 Westhall, Suffolk
5 5-19 2

o union
50-150 Canterbury, Kent
1876 7-7 4

**Patterns using cast cells**
The cells to be inlaid with glass were prepared in the clay mould before casting.

Strap unions
Buried AD 50-150 Neath, Glamorgan
PRB 1928 1-16 1

Britain
PRB 1881 5-9 17

**Patterns using gem-setting techniques with cut glass inlays**
Two techniques were combined, the blue glass being gem-set.

Bridle-bit
AD 50-100 Rise,
East Yorkshire
Given by Sir A W Franks
PRB 1866, 7-14, 2

Strap union
Buried AD 90-150
Westall, Suffolk
PRB 1855 5-9 10

*Celtic Europe*

# Making a living: producing the necessities

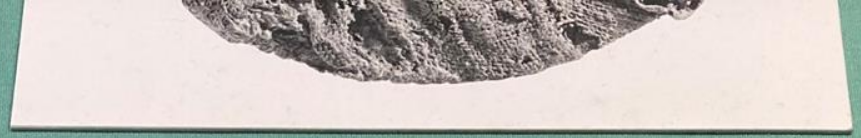
There is sparse but widespread archaeological evidence in the form of raw materials, waste, tools, and finished goods for a variety of specialised crafts: metal-working in gold, silver, bronze and iron; enamelling bronzes; making ornaments in glass, shale and jet; making vessels in shale and manufacturing coins. By the first century BC British exports included gold, silver, iron and hides.

Crafts using perishable agricultural products for the necessities of life - food, shelter and clothing - are represented in settlements solely by the tools and containers made of metal, stone, bone or fired clay used in their processing. Only ceramic spindle whorls and loom-weights, bone combs, shuttles and needles are left to illustrate the crafts of spinning yarn, weaving cloth and sewing garments. Wood was the most important raw material basic to all construction from houses to carts, boats, tools, vessels and personal ornaments. But wood survives only when buried in a permanently water-logged situation and hence has virtually disappeared from the archaeological record.

**Woollen cloth**
Little survives of the woollen textiles woven in the 1st millennium BC, although fragments are sometimes preserved on corroded iron artefacts. Iron corrosion impregnates the threads before they disintegrate entirely, fixing an impression of the woven textile on the surface.

**Fragment of patterned stole, cloak or shroud pinned with an iron involuted brooch and reconstruction of the woven pattern**
Buried 250-100 BC
Burton Fleming, East Yorkshire
Given by T E Wells
PRB 1978 12-2 36-7

Impression of woven woollen textiles wrapped around razors and a scabbard to protect them and preserved by iron corrosion
Buried 500-300 BC
Prosnes and Connaitre, Marne, France and France
PRB ML3600, ML3608, ML3691



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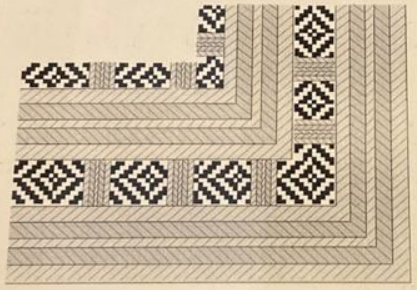


**Impression of woven woollen textiles wrapped around razors and a scabbard to protect them and preserved by iron corrosion**
Buried 500-300 BC

Prosnes and Connaitre, Marne, France and France

PRB ML1600, ML1668, ML3991

**Cloth-making tools**
Spindle whorls (small fly-wheels) used to weight spindles when spinning yarn were made in a variety of materials including stone, ceramic fragments and fired clay

Glastonbury, Somerset

Given by the Glastonbury Antiquarian Society and Sir A W Franks
PRB 1916 10-16 35-6, PRB 1896 4-11 102-04

Staple Howe, North Yorkshire

PRB 1963 12-8 118, 120-2, 125-6, 129, 131-3

Loomweights

**Craft tools and ornaments made from antler and animal bone**
Antler and animal bone were important materials for making a wide variety of craft tools and personal ornaments. Identical tools were in use in widely separated settlements.

**Plaques points and awls**

Burton Agnes, East Yorkshire

Presented by Burton Agnes Estate Trust
PRB 1992.2-3.34, 41, 47, 48, 52, 53, 68. PRB 1989.2-6.6. PRB 1990.4-3.2

Staple Howe, North Yorkshire

PRB 1961.12.8.42 & 50

Little Woodbury, Wiltshire

Given by F J Durban
PRB 1908.10-11.150

North Dalton, East Yorkshire

Presented by Lord Mulgrave
PRB 1968.4-9.1

▶ **Spatulae**

Little Woodbury, Wiltshire

Given by F J Durban
PRB 1908.10-11.149

Burton Agnes, East Yorkshire

Presented by Burton Agnes Estate Trust
PRB 1986.4-7.9, PRB 1988.4-3.5, PRB 1992.2-3.42,56,92, PRB 1989.2-6.12

▶ Personal ornaments and amulets in the form of a bird-shaped pin, finger-ring and skull-shaped pendant

Braughing, Hertfordshire, Courtisols and Somme-Bionne, Marne France

Given by W S Pinhorn PRB 1978.1-1.1, PRB ML3642, ML3569

▶ **Handles for bronze and iron tools**
Burton Agnes, East Yorkshire

Given by Burton Agnes Estate Trust
PRB 1992.2-3.97, PRB 1988.4-7.7

Antler cheek-pieces (part of a bridle)
Glastonbury Somerset

Given by Sir A W Franks and the Glastonbury Antiquarian Society
PRB 1896.4-11.105, PRB 1918.10-16.1

Combs

re

Danebury, Hampshire

Given by Mrs Blunt
PRB 1852 8-12 1

Meare, Somerset

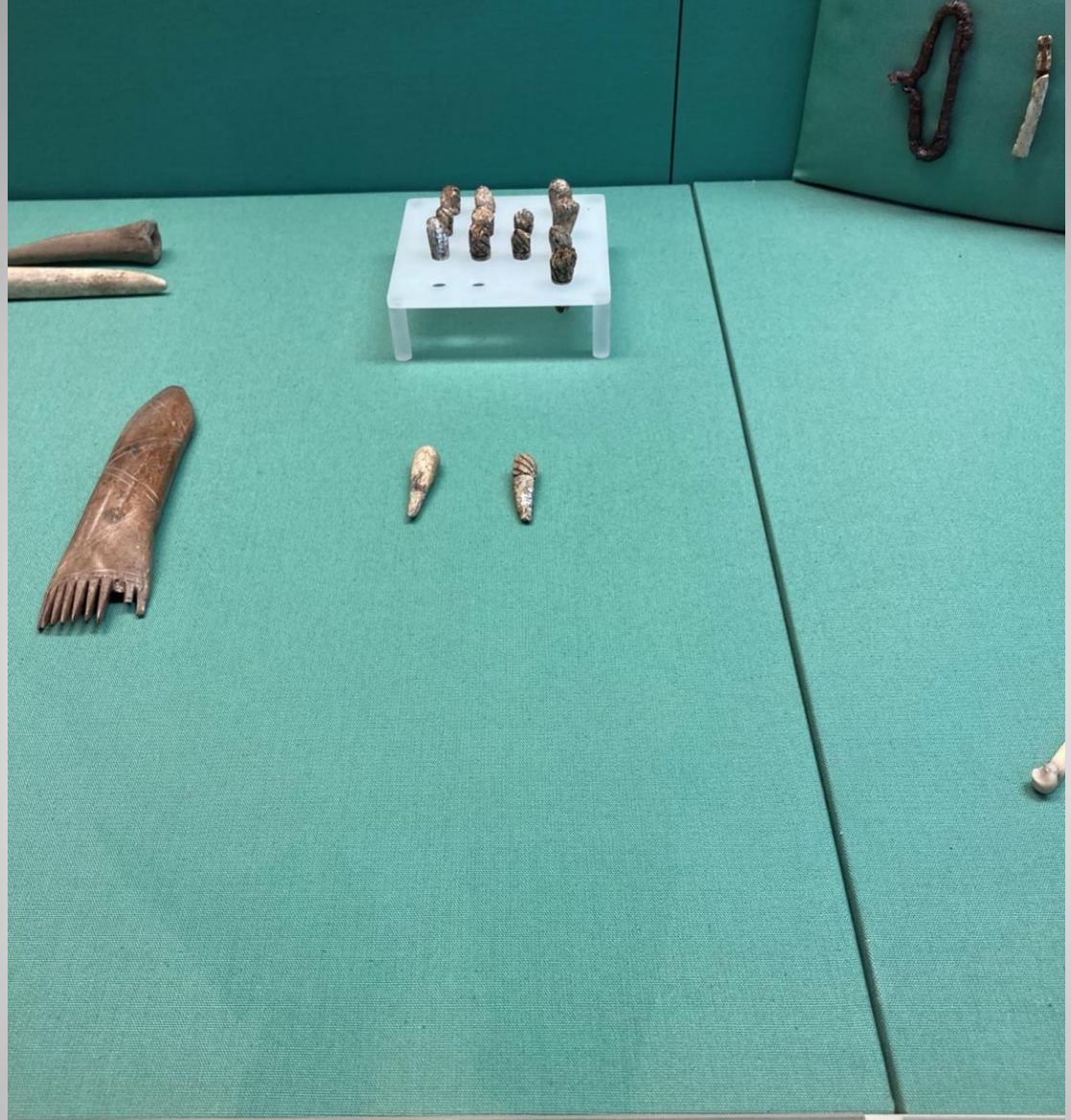
Given by Somerset Archaeological Society
PRB 1951 7-5 7

Sewing needles
Burton Agnes, East Yorkshire

Presented by Burton Agnes Estate Trust
PRB 1992 2-5 2, 48, 88; PRB 1989 2-6 3, 11

Little Woodbury, Wiltshire

Given by F J Durban
PRB 1939 10-11 151



**Gaming pegs**
King Harry Lane cemetery,
St Albans, Hertfordshire

Gaming pieces from a set of 24 found amongst the cremated bone in a burial.

Given by William Old Ltd
PRB 1976 5-1 621ff

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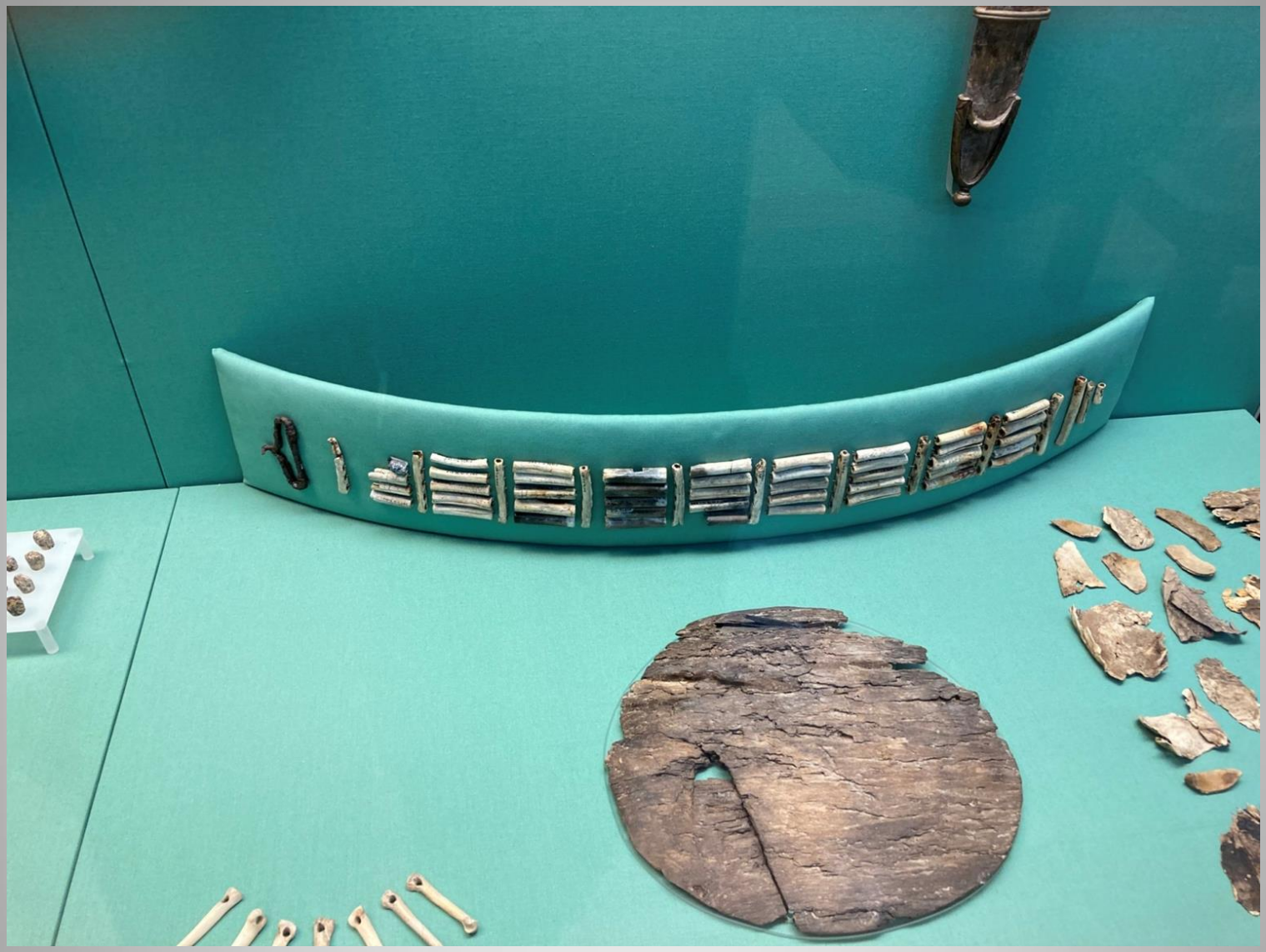
Given by Wil
PRB 1976 5-1



**Reconstruction of a belt or necklace**
King Harry Lane cemetery,
St Albans, Hertfordshire

Fifty-seven bone components with an iron hook-fastening found amongst the cremated bone in a burial

Given by William Old Ltd
PRB 1976 5-1 684-90


Antler pick
Burton Agnes, East Yorkshire
Given by Burton Agnes Estate Trust
PRB 1992 2-5 18

**Reconstruction of a belt or necklace**
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PRB 1976 5-1 684-90

**Antler pick**
Burton Agnes, East Yorkshire

Given by Burton Agnes Estate Trust
PRB 1992 2-5 18

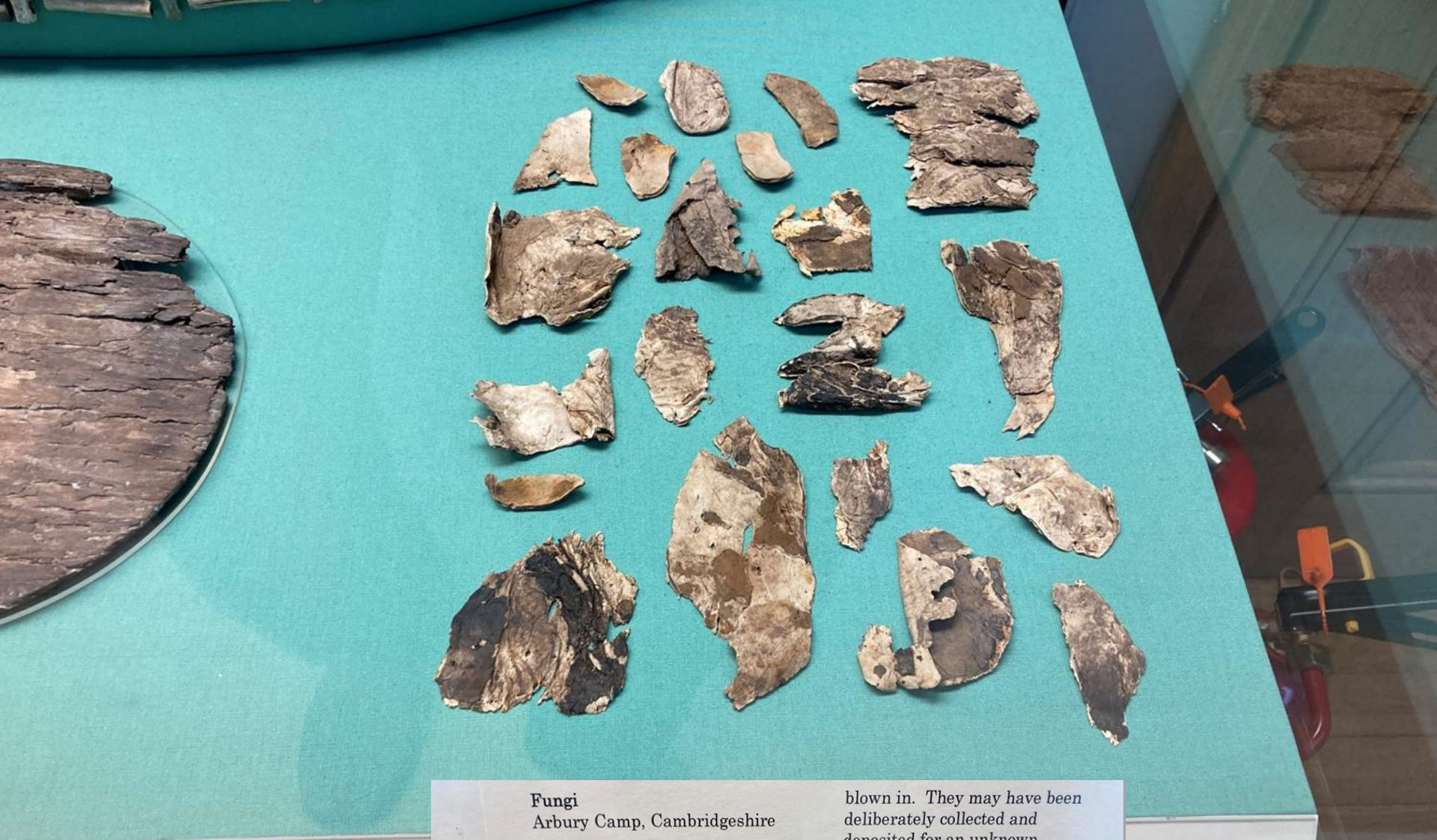
**Pierced toe-bones of a dog forming a necklace or pendant**
400-200 BC
Bramdean, Hampshire

PRB 1976 2-3 215-221

**Wood**
Wood was the most important raw material for construction – houses, defences, fences, carts, boats – and for a wide range of other tools, equipment, vessels and ornaments.

Bucket base of ash carved from a single plank
1100-850 BC
Sunbury-on-Thames, Surrey

PRB 1995 9-1 1



**Fungi**
Arbury Camp, Cambridgeshire

Originally thought to be worked leather, these fungi (probably pieces of puffball or earthball) were found in the ditch of an Iron Age enclosure.

How they came to be in the ditch is uncertain, as this would have been a most unusual place for them to grow. Also many of the fungi were not ripe so could not have been blown in. They may have been deliberately collected and deposited for an unknown purpose. Ancient uses for fungi include for medicine, as tinder to help light fires, or as a packing material like expanded polystyrene.

Given by W N Chivers
P&E 1990,1203.1ff


Why did Lindow Man last so long in the bog?
How has Lindow Man been conserved?

# Lindow Man

Lindow Man after conservation, as displayed

Lindow Man is a well-preserved human body found in a peat-bog at Lindow Moss, near Manchester, in 1984. He died a violent death, sustaining many injuries before he was placed face down in a pool in the bog.

Lindow Man's discovery triggered an unprecedented scientific investigation, which ultimately led to his display at the British Museum. Radiocarbon dating indicates that he was killed sometime between 2 BC –119 AD. This means that he was probably killed shortly before or after the Roman conquest of this part of Iron Age Britain in the early 60s AD. The Romans outlawed human sacrifice, but without a more precise date of death we cannot say for certain whether this was the most likely reason for him to be killed. Lindow Man could also have been the victim of a violent crime or an executed criminal.

Detail of the peat-bog at Lindow Moss, where Lindow Man was found


# Why did Lindow Man last so long in the bog?

The conditions in peat bogs mean that bog bodies such as Lindow Man have been very well preserved. Bogs are cold, acidic places lacking in oxygen, which makes them hostile environments for micro-organisms that break bodies down. Sphagnum mosses that grow in bogs also help preserve bog bodies. When the mosses die, they release a sugary substance that acts as a tanning agent. This turns skin, tendons, ligaments and muscle into leather. It also turns skin brown and hair red.

The body emerges from the peat

# How has Lindow Man been conserved?

Scientists at the British Museum had to find a suitable way of preserving Lindow Man. They wanted to prevent his remains from decaying after he had been removed from the bog. Lindow Man was first immersed in a solution of polyethylene glycol, a chemical that prevented the body shrinking when it dried out. He was then wrapped in cling film and frozen after which he was freeze-dried to remove water. This treatment successfully preserved his body and meant that it could be displayed.

Scientists removing peat from the body

*(Back of case above)*
Lindow Moss, where Lindow Man was found.

# What do we know about Lindow Man?

Scientists discovered many facts about Lindow Man. Naked except for a fox-fur armband, he was 1.73m tall and weighed 64kg. He was around 25 years old when he died. He was well groomed, with trimmed beard and filed fingernails. Just before he died he ate a flat, unleavened griddle cake baked over an open fire. Several grains of mistletoe pollen were also found in his stomach. It is not certain whether he swallowed these deliberately or accidentally.

Lindow Man being x-rayed at the Royal Marsden Hospital

Photo courtesy of the Royal Marsden Hospital

# How did Lindow Man die?

Lindow Man sustained many injuries before being placed in the bog. Experts have debated their nature and extent. For example, the twisted sinew around his neck could have been used as a garrotte - or it may just have been a necklace. Other injuries included blows to the top and back of the head, a possible stab wound to the neck and a broken neck, which finally killed him.

Injuries in the top of Lindow Man's skull

Detail of the peat-bog at Lindow Moss, where *Lindow Man was found*