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Esoteric Knowledge? Ancient Bronze Artefacts from Iron Age Contexts

By RICHARD HINGLEY¹

‘Esoteric knowledge is knowledge of the unusual, the exceptional, the extraordinary; knowledge of things that in some way lie beyond the familiar everyday world’ (Helms 1988, 13)

This paper explores the ways in which Bronze Age bronze artefacts may, on occasions, have been used in the commemoration of place during the southern British Iron Age. The chronologically-based typological systems adopted by archaeologists indicate that these artefacts occur out of their time as they were already several centuries old when they were buried, but it should not be supposed that Iron Age societies necessarily viewed these items entirely in terms of a linear sequence of time. While broadly similar in form and material to items in the cultural repertoire of contemporary society, the bronzes were also quite distinct in the particular forms that they adopted. That these items often appear to have been deposited at sites with a pre-existing monumentality may suggest that objects and places were felt to share ‘otherworldliness’. These items and places may have been used to construct esoteric knowledge through reference to spirits but it is also likely that particular acts of curation and deposition created genealogical associations, incorporating ideas of the mythical past into the context of the present. Drawing on the evidence for the form and contexts of depositions of these objects, this paper addresses the connected topics of what Iron Age society did to objects and sites derived from its own past and what we, in turn, do to (and can do with) the information derived from the Iron Age.

THEORIES OF TIME AND PLACE

Prehistoric histories and historicity?

During the last two decades, new approaches to later prehistory have developed which place a primary emphasis upon symbolic and ritual practices (Bowden & McOmish 1987; Bradley 2005, 31; Gwilt & Haselgrove 1997; Hill 1989; 1995). Explanations for the deposition of objects have drawn upon such approaches, as have a number of studies of the symbolic character of prehistoric metalworking.¹ One particular area of recent focus has been on the idea of what has been termed ‘prehistoric histories’. In a study of Iron Age monuments close to the Ridgeway in Oxfordshire, Chris Gosden and Gary Lock (1999)

have proposed that people during later prehistoric times drew upon ideas of history that related to the remains of past monuments. They stress that ideas about mythical and genealogical pasts co-exist in all societies and influence the manner in which continuities and change were handled (*ibid.*, 2). A number of additional studies have outlined a variety of approaches to prehistoric histories.² For example, my own study of the reuse of Neolithic chambered cairns in Atlantic Scotland during later prehistory (Hingley 1996) explored the idea that these monuments were entered, deposits uncovered and manipulated, and that the construction of houses on some of these sites drew upon observation of the monumentality of the these earlier constructions.³ Comparable practices elsewhere in the world have been addressed through the concept of the ‘commemorative place’ (van Dyke and Alcock 2003, 5). Many of these accounts have drawn upon the reuse, re-commemoration, incorporation, or

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destruction of earlier monuments, or physical places, addressing space as both the medium and the outcome of social practice (Giles 2007b, 240). Comparatively little work has been undertaken so far on how ancient artefacts may have been received and reinterpreted.⁴

Hirsch and Stewart (2005) in a study of the ethnography of history have provided a useful summary of understanding of 'history' and 'historicity' that helps to contextualise these recent readings (comparable issues are discussed in Lucas 2005). They argue that the Western concept of history is culturally particular and is generally predicated on the idea of a 'past' that is separated off by its difference from the present (Hirsch & Stewart 2005, 261). They support this observation with the comment that:

'Our use of "historicity" ... draws attention to the connections between past, present and future without the assumption that events/time are a line between happenings "adding up" to history. Whereas "history" isolates the past, historicity focuses on the complex temporal nexus of past-present-future. Historicity, in our formulation, concerns the ongoing social production of accounts of pasts and futures.' (*ibid.*, 262).

In many of the societies studied by anthropologists (including some in the 'Western' world), the past, present and future are mutually implicated (*ibid.*, 261). If activities during the Iron Age that utilised ancient remains drew upon the idea of ancestors, they are unlikely to have been conceived according to ideas of time as a formal linear process. It is argued here that ancient objects may sometimes have been cherished for their value in defining mythical pasts that connected with present times.

Objects from another world?

This paper uses a number Bronze Age bronze weapons and tools that occur out of time to consider Iron Age ideas of past and present. It argues that the actions of people in southern Britain between around 800 BC and AD 40,⁵ may sometimes have been informed by ideas about the existence of another world that, while distinctly different in its cultural products from the present, was, on occasions, brought into an intimate connection with contemporary times. To address this idea it is necessary to explore how objects with

histories, items that may be said to occur *out of their time*, might have been interpreted when people encountered them several centuries after their initial creation.

Such items, and the acts of deposition through which they have come down to us, may have made powerful and original statements; ideas that drew upon the ways that they differed from the products created at the present time. The 'biographies' of the objects, together with the life histories of the commemorative places in which they were deposited, may help to provide a comprehension of the nature of these highly variable individual acts that derived from conceptions of a contrasting world that was received and reinvented in the creation of the present (see Hirsch 2006, 153). James Whitley (2002) has raised a problem with accounts of British prehistory that imagine the universality of benevolent ancestors, proposing that unrelated 'others' and troublesome spirits may be more appropriate categories for thought when exploring the use of ancient remains. Despite these comments, it will be suggested below that in some, although not necessarily all, of the cases studied here, deposition may have drawn upon ideas of genealogical ancestry in which past culture was partially rearticulated through its use and deposition.

The material character of the Bronze Age bronze objects discussed in this paper, which leads archaeologists to be able to define them as ancient, appears to have enabled the people who handled them several hundred years after their production to draw contrasts and similarities with the products of their own cultures (Stead 1998, 123; Barber 2005, 53). From the perspective adopted here, artefacts are certainly not mute. It has recently been argued that, although objects require to be interpreted if they are to be understood, the nature of their materiality constrains (or influences) the ways in which they are conceived (Daston 2004). In these terms, objects can be claimed to have some agency, since they help to influence the ways that people think and act (Gosden 2005). As Lorraine Daston has observed, 'the language of things derives from certain properties of the things themselves, which suit the cultural purposes for which they are enlisted' (Daston 2004, 15–7). Since objects have to be interpreted, matter also constrains meaning and, in these terms, objects can sometimes help to challenge the categories that are used to define them (Barkan 1999, xxi).

It is also true that the 'historical condition' of the

time deeply influences the ways that objects are interpreted. As Foucault has stated:

‘The conditions necessary for the appearance of an object of discourse, the historical conditions required if one is to “say anything” about it, and if several people are to say different things about it, the conditions necessary if it is to exist in relation to other objects, if it is to establish with them relations of resemblance, proximity, distance, difference, transformation ..., these conditions are many and imposing. Which means we cannot speak of anything at any time; it is not easy to say something new; it is not enough for us to open our eyes, to pay attention, or to be aware, for new objects suddenly to light up and emerge out of the ground.’ (Foucault 1979, 49; see Barkan 1999, xxi-ii).

Is it possible to interpret something of the historical condition of Iron Age society through a study of the life history of certain artefacts and the contexts in which they have been found (Bradley 1998, 5–6)?

A number of authors have explored the idea of cultural biographies, proposing that artefacts (and sites) effectively have cycles of life, including production (birth), circulation and use (life), and deposition and fragmentation (death) (see Appadurai 1986; Bradley 1998; Chapman 2000; Woodward 2002). The reworking of bronzes, iron objects, and pots to create new objects (Bradley 1998, 82; Richard Bradley pers. comm.; Hingley 1997) may in some contexts have drawn upon the idea of rebirth. From this viewpoint, objects have a materiality that influences how people re-conceptualise them. It is likely that, at the same time that they appeared strange to people during the Iron Age, Bronze Age bronze objects were still recognisable in relation to items of contemporary culture, since they were made of a metal which remained in widespread use and because their forms were not entirely different for those used for contemporary tools and weapons. Some of the individual objects considered in this paper may have been handed down from generation to generation, while young people will have learned to live surrounded by the physical remains – the tombs, houses, and fields – left by earlier populations. The otherness of these objects and sites, together with tales that addressed their origins, may have marked them out as different and a more immediate impact is likely

to have occurred when individual items and collections of such objects were discovered during cultivation and digging and also when the visible or hidden remains of otherworldly constructions were disturbed, uncovered, and observed.⁶ In these cases, people may have come to handle objects and to observe structures that were more distinctly unfamiliar and otherworldly. This unfamiliarity, together with tales of origin, may explain the treatment of the items and the contexts in which they were deposited.

METHODOLOGY AND DATA COLLECTION

Identifying ancient objects

Bronze Age bronze items that occur out of their time are not particularly common, but their significance should not be played down. Three authors writing during the twentieth century drew attention to Iron Age uses of such objects. In 1906, William Greenwell wrote about one particular artefact discovered in 1815 during the excavation of one of the small barrows (‘W57’) in the Iron Age cemetery at Arras.⁷ He noted:

‘A most remarkable relic is a miniature socketed and looped axe of bronze, 1 inch long... It is difficult to believe that at the time in question axes or any other implements were in use, for the burial at Arras belonged undoubtedly to a period when the manufacture of iron and the cultivation with which that metal was associated had reached a high state of development... A suggestion may perhaps be hazarded about the cause of its being deposited in a grave at Arras. It was originally made during the Bronze Age, lost, and found many years afterwards, treasured as a curious thing, possibly worn as an ornament or charm, and in the end laid in the grave with the woman on whose neck it was hung when living.’ (Greenwell 1906, 303–4)

Greenwell’s uncertainty about the character of this pendant, which was in the form of a model of an ancient object, is understandable. The other items from the excavated burial mounds at Arras clearly identified the date of the cemetery to the Iron Age and archaeologists had been working for over half a

century to construct evolutionary sequences of prehistoric metalwork (Morse 2005).

A further discovery during the late 1980s, the immense ‘Salisbury hoard’ (hoard A) from Netherhampton in Wiltshire (Stead 1998), raised once more the probability that Bronze Age bronze objects were deposited in Iron Age contexts. This collection of material, uncovered by metal-detector users, contained items that ranged across a broad chronological span of around 2000 years, but which appear to have been buried around 200 BC. Ian Stead’s groundbreaking publication of the information from this site also addressed a number of other hoards that contained items of a comparably date range (*ibid.*, 119–22). One object from this hoard, probably a miniature axe, led Stead to propose that the Arras axe pendant was likely to represent an Iron Age copy of a Bronze Age original rather than an ancient example of rediscovery (*ibid.*, 117). A third highly significant find, which has not yet been published, is a side-looped bronze spearhead of probable Middle Bronze Age date,⁸ was uncovered during the excavation of a Middle Iron Age causeway that crossed a palaeochannel at Yarnton, Oxfordshire, during the 1990s (Hey & Timby forthcoming; Gill Hey pers. comm.). Detailed analysis suggests that it was buried in the 5th–3rd century BC, possibly as a foundation deposit, when it was already around 1000 years old. Evidence for the curation of this spearhead suggests that it had been cared for in a dry place before being deposited (Hey & Timby forthcoming). The Yarnton spearhead was evidently highly significant to the people who built the causeway, recalling the symbolic value of the model axe from Arras.

Database creation

Despite these discoveries, Bronze Age objects from Iron Age contexts across southern Britain appear very rare in absolute terms, while not all of the examples identified here are as securely defined as others. The study for this paper located twelve probable ‘sites’ in England and Wales,⁹ involving several hundred Bronze Age weapons and tools, dating from the earliest Iron Age to the early 1st century AD (Fig. 1, Table 1, Appendix).¹⁰ These items sometimes occur singly, in multiples and, in one case, in a collection of over 500 objects. This is a minute sample of sites in contrast to those where Bronze Age artefacts occur in contexts that would appear to be of approximately the same date as the items themselves. The ‘sites’



Fig. 1.

Distribution of sites mentioned in the text. Also marked is the Late Iron Age and Romano-British temple site at Ashwell, which has produced a collection of Bronze Age bronze objects from an early Romano-British context

discussed in this paper were identified through a number of means, including:

- discussion with period specialists;
- the examination of excavation reports of Iron Age sites; and
- study of the major monographs that list and discuss Bronze Age hoards of bronze.¹¹

The bronze objects incorporated in these twelve deposits have been dated on typological grounds to the Early, Middle, and Late Bronze Age and earliest Iron Age, but many may have been deposited hundreds of years after their supposed date of manufacture (Table 1).

The earlier dating proposed by Darvill (2006, 410) for various iron objects from Britain does not invalidate the arguments in this paper, since the items discussed here occur in contexts that date from the 7th century BC to 1st century AD. The evidence for the late date at which Bronze Age objects were deposited is provided, in a few cases, by absolute dating but, more often, by the occurrence of distinctive Iron Age artefacts deposited alongside the Bronze Age objects.

TABLE 1: BRONZE AGE OBJECTS FROM LATER PREHISTORIC CONTEXTS (FOR DETAILS, SEE APPENDIX 1)

Site name	Context	Items represented (all bronze)	Confidence of association	Likely date of object(s)	Likely date of deposition	Reference
Arras, Queens barrow (Yorkshire)	Grave offering in Iron Age burial	1 complete miniature socketed axe,	certain	Iron Age copy?	5th–3rd century BC	Stead 1979
Barford (Warwickshire)	Infilling of pit with other items dug into earlier monument	1 complete miniature socketed axe,	Probable (date of IA pottery uncertain)	Late Bronze Age object?	5th–2nd century BC	Oswald 1969
‘Batheaston’ hoard	Probable hoard, uncertain context	At least 301 artefacts, mostly of 1st millennium date, but inc. EBA & MBA pieces.	possible	Early, Middle, Late Bronze Age & Iron Age objects	c. 300 BC	Stead 1998, 120–2
Breiddin (Powys, Wales)	From post-holes in hillfort, dated through C14 to the IA	1 frag. socketed spearhead; 1 frag. leaf-shaped sword	certain	Late Bronze Age objects	3rd–2nd century BC	Coombs 1991
Colchester, Lexden tumulus (Essex)	Grave offering in early 1st century AD burial	1 palstave	certain	Middle Bronze Age object	Late 1st century BC/early 1st century AD	Foster 1986
Danebury hillfort (Hampshire)	Hoard, buried on site of later rampart of hillfort	2 massive socketed axes, 2 broken Breton axes, frags spear, sword hilt, & 2 razors	probable (stratigraphy disturbed)	Middle & Late Bronze Age objects	c. 600–550 BC	Cunliffe & O’Connor 1979; 1983; Britton, <i>et al.</i> 1984
Hagbourne Hill (Oxfordshire)	Hoard buried in pit, unknown context	1 socketed axe, 1 looped spearhead, 1 terret, 2 three-link horse-bits, 1 cast ring-headed pin, coin	probable	Middle & Late Bronze Age & Iron Age objects	1st century BC/early 1st century AD	King 1812; Harding 1972, 91
Hayling Island (Dorset)	From post-hole forming N entrance of Phase 2b ‘shrine’	1 broken Middle Bronze Age spearhead	certain	Middle Bronze Age	1st century BC/early 1st century AD	King & Soffe 1998, 41
Hengistbury Head (Dorset), Site 33	Associated with IA coins, gold hoard & other finds on <i>oppidum</i>	1 slightly damaged socketed axe & frag. of another	certain	Late Bronze Age & Late Iron Age objects	1st century BC–1st century AD	Bushe-Fox 1915; Cunliffe 1978; 1987
Hounslow	Hoard, uncertain context	BA elements include E, M, and L BA types; IA finds included 5 animal figurines, a wheel ornament & remains of a (crown?)	possible	Early, Middle & Late Bronze Age & Iron Age objects	3rd century–1st century BC	Franks 1865; Stead 1998
Salisbury hoard A (Netherhampton Wiltshire)	Hoard, pit in settlement close to ?Bronze Age ring-ditch	At least 535 artefacts, mostly BA date but inc IA examples (see appendix for details)	probable	Early, Middle, Late Bronze Age & Early & Middle Iron Age	2nd century BC	Stead 1998
Yarnon (Oxfordshire)	Placed in timber & stone causeway date by C14 to the IA	Socketed spearhead	certain	Late Bronze Age object	4th–3rd century BC	Hey & Timby forthcoming

It is unfortunate that the deposits from the majority of these 'sites' have not been excavated according to modern standards. Many of these finds were made in situations where we cannot be entirely certain that the collection of metalwork was found in a single sealed location (see Table 1) and this can make interpretation problematic (see below), but the body of material cannot easily be dismissed, especially since the emphasis of previous archaeological work has usually been to provide justification for a linear and developmental chronological scheme. The date of deposition on these twelve sites span the Iron Age, but with a focus on the later Iron Age (3rd century BC to 1st century AD), a pattern that may be illusory, since later Iron Age sites have been excavated in far larger numbers than those of the earlier Iron Age.

Representation

These occurrences of ancient bronze items in Iron Age contexts would seem to form a rare exception to a general rule of the deposition of such objects close to the date at which they were manufactured; the nature of data collection may, however, have constrained the available information. Archaeologists analysing and classifying Bronze Age collections of objects have usually, for understandable reasons, used typological schemes derived from the classification of the objects in hoards to provide dates for the individual act by which particular collections of objects were deposited and sealed (for typologies of Bronze Age bronzes, see Barber 2003, 37–42; Bradley 2005, 145–6; Needham 1996; Needham *et al.* 1997, 56–8; Rohl & Needham 1998). Indeed, since many of these hoards have been discovered during development and by metal-detecting, and because organic finds associated with Bronze Age hoards are comparatively rare, the objects often form the only likely source of information for the date of deposition (Barber 2003, 43, 54–63). The explanation of many of the later Bronze Age collections of objects as 'founders' hoards', that is items collected to be reworked as new bronze objects, encourages such an approach by envisaging that the deposition of individual items formed part of a rational process of industrial production (for founders' hoards, see Barber 2003, 55, 56; Bradley 1998, xviii–ix; 2007, 214; Needham 2001, 279).

Since relatively few hoards are accurately dated by any means other than artefact typology, how can we know that the type of situation represented at Arras, Netherhampton, and Yarnton were not once far more

common? It is likely that the finds itemised in this paper constitute examples of a practice that was once a more usual event than the evidence currently suggests; since the mid-19th century, archaeological typologies and chronologies are likely to have militated against the recognition of what may have represented common practices. Stead has proposed that one of the 12 'sites' discussed here, the collection of objects found at Hounslow in the 19th century, was deliberately sub-divided into two distinct Bronze Age and Iron Age hoards by the archaeologists who classified it (1998, 119); many other artefacts and collections may have been placed into simple chronological categories that militate against alternative understandings. It is notable that, at Yarnton, the causeway under which the object was located would have been dated to the Bronze Age if organic elements had not been subject to radiocarbon analysis (Gill Hey pers. comm.). This indicates that Bronze Age objects from within or close to Iron Age sites may have been deposited later than the date usually assumed.¹² The absolute dating of new and old finds in future will provide a fuller picture of the extent and significance of this practice.¹³

Problematic typologies?

I am not proposing that we need to abandon our artefact typologies for Bronze Age bronzes or the chronologies that they help to construct (Bradley 2007, 179). The independent dating of these items using radiocarbon analysis has provided support for the traditional classifications (Needham *et al.* 1997). Indeed, the account provided in this paper, together with other studies (those by Gosden and Lock, Greenwell, and Stead), are based on the premise that people *were* able to recognise a materiality that differed from the products of their own world. I am arguing that we must look at the nature of the contexts in which artefacts were deposited in ways that allow for creative actions amongst people in the past. Excavations, post-excavation analysis, and publication should address these issues. By considering how we have created our understandings and databases, we can work to re-orientate our methodology and theory in order to recognise the possibility of different pasts from the ones that we have constructed (Barrett 1999). These approaches should recognise the possibility that ancient people were able to form new objects, structures, and

landscapes in creative and critical ways by drawing upon ideas derived from materials they had inherited, or derived, from their environments. Through these actions, inherited materials may have been drawn into the present through the creation of esoteric knowledge.

The occurrence of miniature socketed axes in Roman contexts (below) may illustrate that the depositing of Bronze Age bronzes out of their time was not restricted to the Iron Age. The probable Late Iron Age and Romano-British temple site at Ashwell near Baldock, Hertfordshire, has produced a number of Bronze Age bronze items from early Romano-British contexts (*Britannia* 37 [2006], 411–3; Gil Burleigh pers. comm.). It is also possible that the Bronze Age items found at Hengistbury Head, Dorset, were derived from an early Romano-British rather than a Late Iron Age context, while other hoards that are dated merely by the latest items present may also have been buried in Roman times. Romano-British occurrences of Bronze Age bronze items are not considered further in this paper but will be explored in another publication. Bronze Age bronze weapons and tools also occur in some early medieval and medieval contexts, indicating that the use to which these items were put during the Iron Age are unlikely to be unique.

contexts are reviewed in this article but discussed in greater detail in the Appendix. Exploring the objects from these contexts, it is significant that the term ‘hoard’, which included five of the finds, is a difficult one (Barber 2005, 52; Haselgrove & Hingley 2006, 148; Hingley 2006, 214). Hoards are often imagined to constitute sealed contexts of deposition, meaning that, once the objects they contain had been buried, they would remain *in situ* until discovered (see Needham 2001 and Hingley 2006, 214–5). The discovery of the objects from Netherhampton and Yarnton, however, indicate that finds may have been deposited in very much later contexts than the items themselves. The variety of bronze objects of differing date from hoards considered in this paper at ‘Batheaston’, Danebury, Hagbourne Hill, and Houndslow suggest a similar interpretation.

Examination of the nature of individual objects can provide possible evidence for their significance to people prior to their deposition (Bradley 1998, xx–i; Bridgford 1997). Some relevant Bronze Age objects were highly fragmented, while others were complete and relatively undamaged (Fig. 2). There is evidence for the curation of bronzes, including the excellent preservation of a cutting edge (Barford), the wrapping of an item in cloth (Lexden), and the protection of a spearhead in a dry place (Yarnton). In other cases, artefacts were highly fragmentary and at the Breiddin and Hengistbury Head this may indicate that they had been discovered on site before deposition; it is only the

IRON AGE HISTORICITY

The 12 examples of Bronze Age artefacts in Iron Age

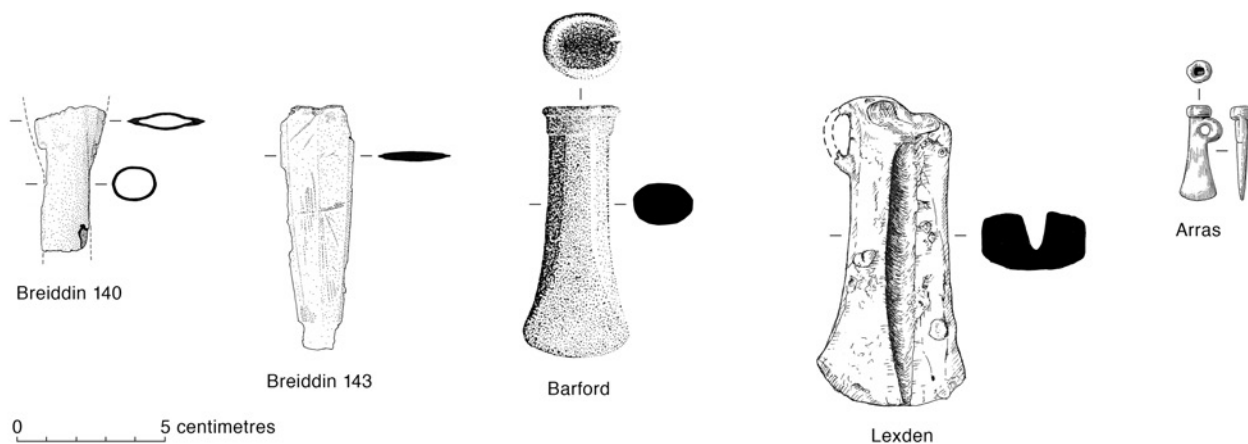


Fig. 2. Selected Bronze Age objects from Iron Age contexts (after Coombs 1991, 136; Oswald 1969, fig. 16; Foster 1986, fig. 28; Stead 1979, fig. 34.3)

contexts in which these objects were buried that suggests that they were seen as significant. The fragmentation of objects is often interpreted in terms of the idea that they were being offered up to the gods or spirits in some form of ritual act (eg, Pryor 2005, 155). The object from Lexden had been modified at a later date (see below), while the model axe from Arras may well have been a copy of an earlier item.

Exploring the form of the bronzes that occur out of their time, socketed objects appear to be very well represented. Salisbury hoard A contained at least 270 socketed items, including axes, spearheads, and gouges (Stead 1998, 113, fig. 8, colour pls 2 & 3), while comparable items were present at all but one of the other 12 'sites' (Table 1). Although Greenwell suggested that the miniature socketed bronze axe from Arras had been lost in the Bronze Age and found by the Iron Age people who buried it, Stead (*ibid.*, 117) perceptively remarked, with reference to a potentially comparable item, a 'small and very crude bronze socketed axe' from Salisbury hoard A, that perhaps such objects were produced and used during the Iron Age.¹⁴ That full-sized socketed bronze axes were found in the Salisbury hoard alongside miniature examples may well support the idea that the few known occurrences of socketed axes in Iron Age contexts represent copies of earlier artefacts (Brendan O'Connor pers. comm.). Robinson (1995) has reviewed miniature socketed bronze axes from Wiltshire and show that they occur in a variety of contexts from the late Bronze Age to the Roman period, with a preponderance in apparently Romano-British contexts (although few have been found in stratified contexts). He has proposed that, when found in Britain on Iron Age and Romano-British sites, such axes were perhaps 'venerated and copied as amulets' (*ibid.*, 61). By no means all the objects considered here were socketed, however, and the palstave from Lexden illustrates that a variety of bronze items held significance.

The 'Batheaston', Hagbourne Hill, and Hounslow hoards all appear to have contained bronze objects of Bronze Age and Iron Age date, but it is not possible to say very much about their contexts of deposition. Indeed, the nature of the recording of each of these hoards means that it is not entirely certain that the Bronze Age and Iron Age objects were buried together. Many of the remaining nine 'sites' considered here appear to have been associated with evidence for earlier human activity that had left physical traces,

locales that may have defined commemorative places. The deposition of such objects on sites that held traces of past activity may suggest that they were being used to make statements about the cultural identity of particular places, possibly focusing attention on constructed memories of place and structure (Blake 2003, 218–9).

Commemorating and modifying particular locations

At *Barford*, Warwickshire, a bronze chisel was found in a possible Iron Age context (Oswald 1969, 13). When excavated, the socket of the chisel was split at the mouth, but the rest of the implement, particularly the cutting edge, was in excellent condition (Thomas 1969, 41), indicating that it had been cared for before deposition. The pit that produced the implement (feature no. 12) was dug into the remains of an earlier hengiform monument (Fig. 3). The exact date of this monument is unclear, although Neolithic pottery and

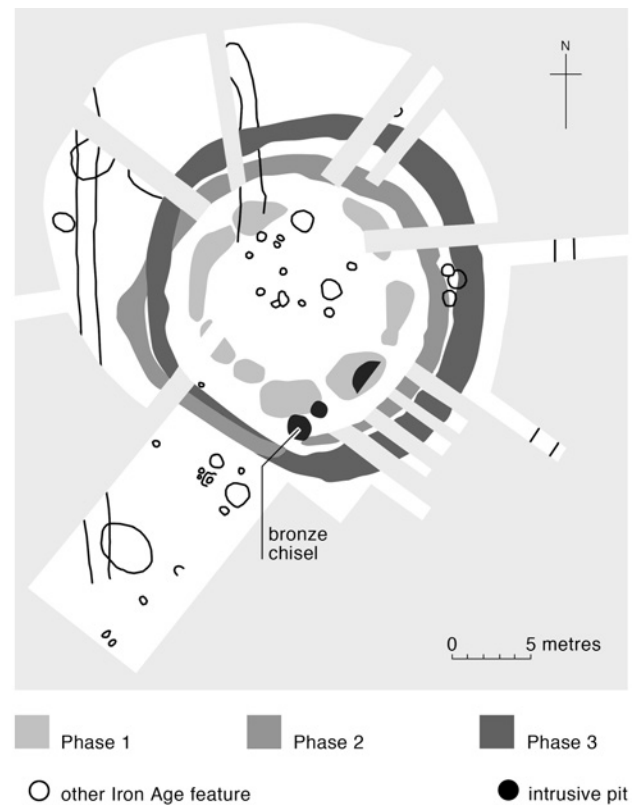


Fig. 3. The hengiform structure at Barford (Warwickshire) and the 'intrusive pits' (after Oswald 1969, fig. 3)

a single early radiocarbon date were derived from the site and the ditched structure clearly had three main phases of use prior to the later prehistoric phase. The pit that produced the bronze implement also contained at least one sherd that appears to be from an Iron Age vessel (see Appendix). Unfortunately the material from this pit appears to be lost and could not be studied further, but it also produced additional pottery and a fossil sponge (Oswald 1969, 13). The feature formed one of a cluster of pits constructed across the southern and south-eastern part of the earlier monument; the other pits produced later prehistoric finds, including a number of saddle querns.

The exact date of the construction and redefinition of this hengiform structure is unclear. Recent research by Richard Bradley suggests that, in north and east Scotland and south-west Ireland, stone circles and various forms of ditched henge-like enclosures continued to be built and amended into the Late Bronze Age and perhaps beyond (Bradley & Sheridan 2005). Richard Bradley (pers. comm.) has also noted some possible evidence for the late construction or adaptation of such monuments in south-western England and activity at this date would provide an explanation for the presence of the bronze chisel at Barford. Perhaps the chisel was disturbed during activity on the site during the Iron Age and reburied (Oswald 1969, 13). Alternatively, the object may have been brought to the site in the Iron Age and placed in a pit because of the commemoration of this place, which involved digging pits and depositing significant objects. The later prehistoric pottery and the saddle querns may have represented additional offerings at this otherworldly site, since querns often appear to have formed meaningful deposits, although it should be noted that these are usually deposited at domestic sites rather than at earlier ritual and burial monuments (Moore 2007, 94). Perhaps the remains of the hengiform structure were viewed as the surviving traces of an old round-house and commemorative activities celebrated the likely entrance area that formed the monument's second earlier prehistoric phase to its south.

At *Netherhampton*, the find spot of the immense Salisbury hoard, the pit in which the hoard was discovered was part of an Iron Age occupation area located through excavation and geophysical survey. This comprised a scatter of pits and part of a circular ditch, which may have represented the enclosure

around a Bronze Age round barrow (Fig. 4; Stead 1998, 111, figs 3 & 4). Excavation was carried out on too small scale to identify conclusively the character of this circular monument, but it may have formed a focus for the deposition of two hoards just to its south. 'Hoard A' contained over 535 artefacts dating from about 2400–200 BC (*ibid.*, 118). Many of these objects, according to the information in Ian Stead's volume, survived in good condition and relatively few appear fragmented (*ibid.*, colour pls 2–6 & 16–17). 'Hoard B' was found close by during excavation and was much smaller in scale but included parts of what may have been a bronze horn or trumpet together with two Bronze Age socketed axes, one of which was fragmentary (*ibid.*, 70, 111, 122). While some doubt exists about the security of the Hoard A assemblage, Hoard B was well stratified, although it is not necessarily of Iron Age date.

Other finds may have had potentially comparable

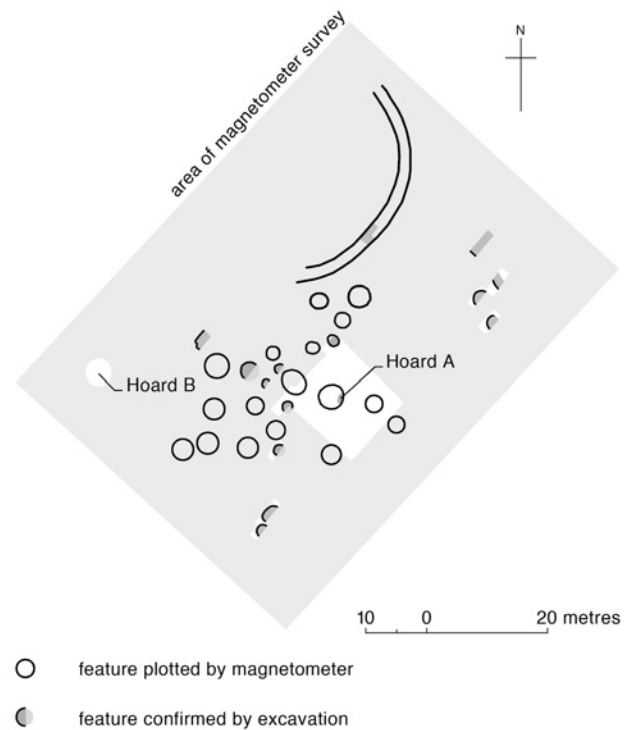


Fig. 4.
The context of the Netherhampton hoard
(after Stead 1988, fig. 4)

associations with constructions that were already ancient. At *Hengistbury Head*, the two Bronze Age bronze axes from the Late Iron Age 'Site 33' were found within the extensive Late Iron Age occupation area, defined by the substantial earthwork that cut across the coastal promontory (Fig. 5). They were uncovered close to a very large number of Iron Age coins and a gold hoard, although it is notable that the entire area of Site 33 had been disturbed by rabbits. Unlike the chisel from Barford, the cutting edge of the most complete of these Hengistbury axes shows signs of considerable wear and part of the mount of the socket was missing (Cunliffe 1987, 33–5, 151, illus. 111). Another fragment of a Late Bronze axe came from close by and comprised only the tip, and a third axe from an unstratified context survived in a comparable condition. The Iron Age earthwork at Hengistbury enclosed the coastal headland with 11 Bronze Age barrows, while two others were excluded (Gardiner 1987). Although one Early Bronze Age bronze axe has been found close to one of these barrows (Barrow 10) in recent times (*ibid.*, 51, 59), it

is unlikely that the axes from Site 33 derived from any of these barrows, since all the excavated burials date to the first half of the 2nd millennium BC (Cunliffe 1978, 23). These Late Bronze Age axes could have been reworked and redeposited, possibly during activity connected with bronzeworking, perhaps having been found within the area of the *oppidum* or close by (Cunliffe 1987, 47–60).

A hoard at the extensively excavated hillfort of *Danebury* contained objects of a wide variety of dates (Fig. 6; Cunliffe & O'Connor 1979; 1983, 41, 46–8; Britton *et al.* 1984). The excavator suggested that it was probably buried around 600–550 BC, either just before or just after the construction of the early rampart. This would place the date of some of the objects close to the proposed period of deposition, although it should be noted that the objects could have been buried a century or two later than proposed by Cunliffe, since the only evidence for dating was the sealing of these objects by an extension to the rampart that was probably built in the 4th century BC (Britton *et al.* 1984, 335). This is a highly mixed hoard of

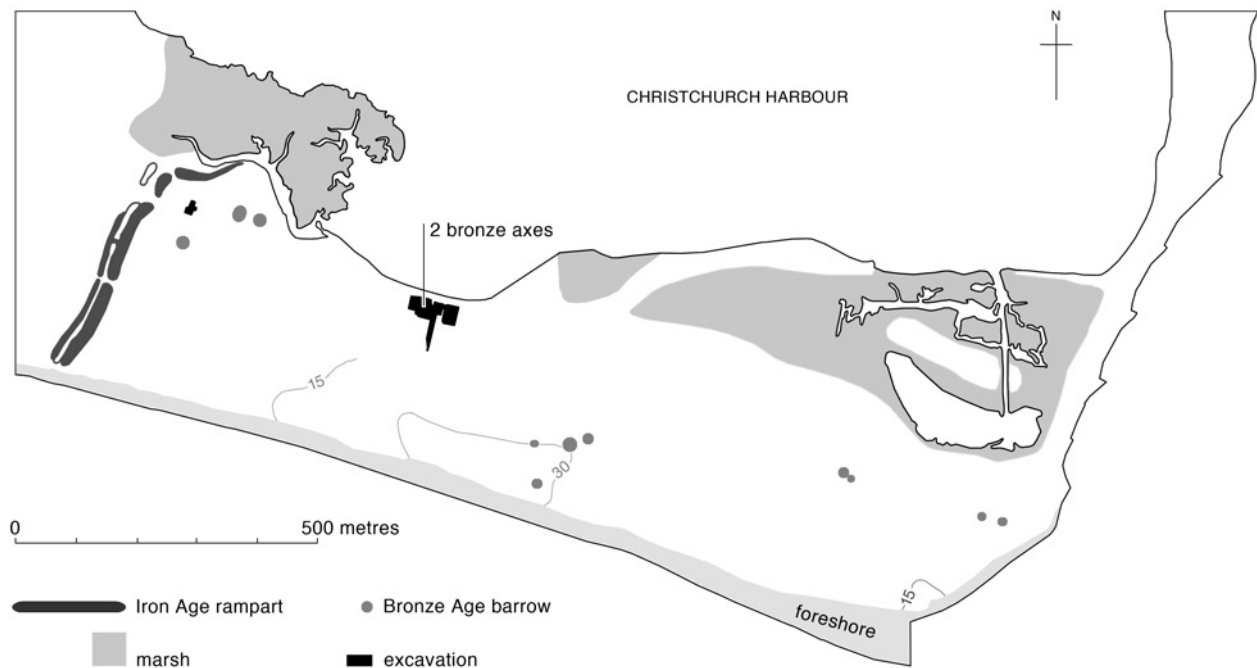


Fig. 5.
The barrows and oppida at Hengistbury Head (after Cunliffe 1987, illus. 6)

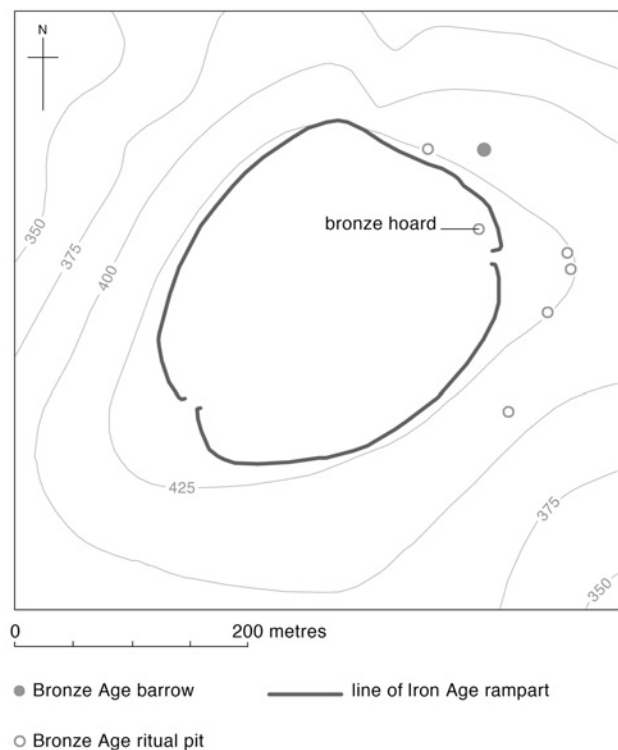


Fig. 6.

Early phases at Danebury (after Cunliffe 1983, fig. 14)

artefacts produced between 1800 and 700 BC. Several of these items were represented by fragments or damaged objects, but the majority was relatively complete (Cunliffe 1983, figs 7.3 & 7.4). The Danebury hoard contained a collection of ancient items placed at a site with pre-existing monumentality. The hoard was probably placed into a pit that was excavated close to a group of earlier pits that had defined, or partly defined, the top of the hill prior to the construction of the hillfort (*ibid.*, 46). Five such pits have been found and the example discussed by the excavator produced evidence for an upright stake and a variety of animal bones, prompting him to call these features ‘ritual pits’ (*ibid.*). Although the hoard may well have been deposited prior to the construction of the rampart, it was placed on the eastern summit of the hill close to a pre-existing round barrow and also to the location of the hillfort entrance that my well have been constructed later.

The *Breiddin*, a Late Bronze Age hillfort defined by

a relatively simple rampart, was re-defended and re-occupied during the Middle Iron Age, apparently after a period of abandonment (Musson 1991). A number of Bronze Age bronze artefacts were deposited in Iron Age contexts at this site. As at several of the sites reviewed above, these Bronze Age objects were fragmentary (*ibid.*, fig. 56), possibly supporting the proposal that they were uncovered during construction work in the Iron Age. At least two of the Bronze Age ‘weapons’ were deposited in post-holes, suggesting that these artefacts retained meaning for the Iron Age people who uncovered them, since the only Iron Age weapon discovered during the excavation was also placed in a post-hole.¹⁵ It is unlikely that the association of three or four of the Bronze Age and Iron Age weapons on the site within post-holes is entirely coincidental. Other Bronze Age artefacts were found in the excavation of the south-eastern entrance of the hillfort (*ibid.*, 9).

At *Yarnton*, the complete and well-preserved Middle Bronze Age bronze side-looped spearhead was placed as a foundation deposit under a timber and stone causeway crossing a watercourse during the Middle Iron Age (Hey & Timby forthcoming). The composition of the metal indicates that the spearhead may have been manufactured in Wales or the Marches, which, if some knowledge of these aspects survived in a later age, could have reinforced that the object was of special significance to those who deposited it (Dennis *et al.* forthcoming). The context in which the spearhead and a few other bronze items were deposited recalls the Neolithic, Bronze Age, and Iron Age traditions of the deposition of bronze weapons and other objects in and alongside trackways and platforms; for example, at Flag Fen, Cambridgeshire (Pryor 2001; 2005), Shinewater Marsh, East Sussex (Greatorex 2003), and Fiskerton, Lincolnshire (Field & Parker Pearson 2003). Environmental evidence from the socket of the *Yarnton* spearhead indicated that it had been kept in a relatively dry place prior to its deposition, suggesting that this item was cared for and valued. The possibility that a Bronze Age river crossing existed in the same location (Dennis *et al.* forthcoming) may explain the presence of several additional Bronze Age bronze items in the excavated area. Lying within and on top of the causeway were parts of at least 30 cattle, five horses, three deer, and other animals (Hey & Timby forthcoming), suggesting that this became a commemorative place

following its construction.

In discussing the Salisbury hoard, Stead considers the idea that the miniature objects may indicate that this was a collection of holy relics built up over millennia, but he argues that it is far more likely that members of an Iron Age community, during the course of farming activities, happened to find several hoards of bronze objects (1998, 123). He suggests that any individual finding such items would realise that the axes, spearheads, and knives were very different from those in contemporary use and might have related them to ideas of ancestors, spirits, or gods. Stead quotes a passage in Suetonius's *Life of Galba* (8) that links a discovery of axes in a lake in Cantabria to the idea of divine intervention in the rule of this weak emperor to explore the potential significance of the Netherhampton objects. Barber (2005, 53), considering the deposition of a Middle Bronze Age palstave on a Late Bronze Age context at Iwade, Kent, may represent the curation of an ancient object. He also explores an alternative scenario, that the palstave may have been found nearby during earth disturbance, observing that 'the decision to return the object to the ground would have involved recognition of its historical and/or mythical origins and connotations', which was emphasised by the unfamiliar form of the object.

Many of the objects assessed in this paper were probably uncovered during ground disturbance and it is likely, as Whitley proposes (2002, 122), that the peoples, spirits, or gods who were felt to have made these objects and the places at which they were found/deposited were not always seen to represent the benign ancestors of current populations. Cases such as the bronze chisel from the hengiform structure at Barford, or the Bronze Age weapons redeposited in post-holes at the Breiddin, may have been left with care and attention because of concerns arising from the idea of supernatural retribution. Deposits made at the foundation and termination of the use of particular features (pits and ramparts) and locations are common during later prehistory (Hingley 2005, 200), but objects that were marked by their evident material differences, possibly possessing a connection with the spirit world, may have made such acts of commemoration even more powerful. Otherworldly items often appear to have formed elements in foundation (Breiddin, Danebury, Hayling Island, and Yarnton) or termination (Barford, Arras, and Lexden) deposits. Perhaps, as Mary Helms suggests (1988, 13)

these items were the preserve of 'specialists who delved into esoteric matters removed from the much more localised (geographically and ideologically) world of mundane everyday life.' If so, the commemorative places at which these items have been found provide information about the locus and character of such activities.

Creating genealogical connections?

At Yarnton, the spearhead may well have been brought onto site for incorporation in a significant locale because such an offering was felt to be particularly appropriate in helping to contribute to the commemoration of this place. The fact that the spearhead was well preserved and had been curated suggests that it was not found and immediately redeposited, but perhaps the act of construction at this location of earlier river crossings demanded the placing of an object that incorporated memories under the new structure. The curation of the item appears significant, since such an object would presumably carry with it ideas about its origin in a previous generations; it is even possible that such knowledge of the Yarnton item, together with other inherited objects, might have influenced interpretations of comparable items that were uncovered elsewhere during construction or agricultural operations. Two artefacts from Iron Age burials and one from a Late Iron Age shrine/temple may help to provide justification for the idea that Bronze Age artefacts sometimes helped to communicate genealogical knowledge.

At the *Lexden* tumulus, Colchester, a palstave was one of the numerous burial offerings left with the deceased. It is very damaged and highly corroded, the upper half and most of the loop are missing and the breaks in the object are very worn (Fig. 2). A deep groove has been cut or worn into the blade and three studs (crude irregular blobs of a grey metal) fill-in holes on the surface to either side of the groove (Foster 1986, 78, 80). This evidently constituted a deliberate insertion into the burial and indications of fabric as a corrosion product suggest that it was wrapped in cloth; Foster concludes that 'the palstave, despite its condition, was of special significance to the person buried' (*ibid.*, 80). Perhaps the modifications made to this otherworldly object helped the people who buried it to recall its ancestry and life history (eg, Lucas 2005, 69–71). It constituted part of a large group of burial offerings deposited in the grave of a

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Late Iron Age tribal leader, one of which was a medallion of the Emperor Augustus. The burial was situated within the area defined by the dykes of the Iron Age *oppidum* of *Camulodunum*.

The Late Iron Age and Romano-British barrows in south-eastern Britain, of which Lexden is one, are usually thought to derive from the tradition of constructing burial mounds in *Gallia Belgica* or Italy at this time (see Creighton 2000, 187–8; Cunliffe 1991, 140; Foster 1986, 188–9; Struck 2000, 88, 92; Toynbee 1971, 179). While it is likely that contacts from overseas influenced those who built the Lexden tumulus, it is also probable that people at *Camulodunon* (Colchester) at this time would have been aware of the existence of a pre-existing Bronze Age tradition of barrow burial, since these monuments will have remained highly visible across the landscape of southern Britain. Although there is only limited evidence that the construction of barrows continued beyond the later Bronze Age in Britain (Foster 1986, 189), the remains of these monuments will have been evident during the Iron Age (Barrett 1999, 258) and observations of them may have provided a context for the new forms of monumental burial (Toynbee 1971, 180). Whimster (1981, 155) has suggested that Lexden, and two further Late Iron Age cremation barrows at Lord's Bridge, Cambridgeshire, and Blagden Copse, Hampshire, were exceptional constructions, devised to honour high-ranking individuals.

The Arras pendant is also of particular significance, since it may well have been a miniature copy of an ancient object (see above). Salisbury hoard A contained a variety of other miniature objects of probable Iron Age date, including cauldrons and shields, so the possible model axe from this hoard and the example from Arras may represent part of a more widespread tradition that is currently poorly understood. Although they were both associated with burials, the objects from Arras and Lexden contrast directly with each other in terms of dating, character, and significance; but the evidence may support a comparable association. The East Yorkshire Iron Age barrows, which are often associated with square barrow enclosures,¹⁶ are usually thought to derive from the contemporary practice of barrow burial on the Continent (Cunliffe 1991, 499; Whimster 1981, 116). Like Lexden, however, they were presumably constructed with knowledge of a pre-existing tradition of barrow burial, since people will have

remained aware of these earlier monuments. Melanie Giles (2007a, 113) has discussed evidence for the maintenance, re-use, and destruction of Bronze Age round barrows in East Yorkshire through their incorporation into linear dyke systems during the Early Iron Age.¹⁷

With regard to the nature of burial monuments at Lexden and Arras, it is possible that the barrows and the burial offerings at the two very different sites recalled and transformed Bronze Age practices of burial. If Iron Age people possessed stories to explain the character of the earlier burial monuments of southern Britain and if they uncovered burials in Bronze Age barrows, whether by accident or design, the nature of the burial monument itself and of the objects buried with the dead might have been observed and used in the creation of new burial practices. There is no direct evidence for the deliberate 'excavation' of Bronze Age burial monuments in southern Britain during the Iron Age, although there is good evidence that such structures were often incorporated within the circuits of hillforts and respected (Bowden & McOmish 1997),¹⁸ but anyone disturbing earlier burial deposits would be likely to notice the remains of human internments and the accompanying bronze artefacts (although this association might have been far more difficult to imagine where dead individuals were cremated). Richard Bradley (1998, 98) has discussed the general reduction in the significance of bronze objects as grave goods during the later Bronze Age and the increased significance of the deposition of metalwork in wetland contexts, but Lexden and Arras represent a later reintroduction of the practice of the incorporation of bronze weapons in burials.

The idea that the deposition of bronze items at Lexden and Arras drew on physical observations of earlier Bronze Age burial traditions may appear problematic. In Atlantic Scotland, however, it appears that people in later prehistory modified Neolithic chambered cairns on sites such as the Howe, Orkney, constructing substantial houses out of the remains of these monuments while drawing directly upon the form of the earlier structures and the burial remains that were buried within them (Hingley 1996; 1999; Sharples 2006). In Orkney, no contemporary tradition of barrow burial existed and the chambered cairns were recreated as houses. When, in Eastern England and Yorkshire, barrow burial was reintroduced, pre-existing monuments may well have acted as direct

inspirations for new practices of interment. If, as Stead suggests, the Arras model axe is of Iron Age date, people were evidently also copying some of the objects that they inherited or uncovered.

At the Late Iron Age temple on *Hayling Island*, Hampshire, a broken Middle Bronze Age spearhead was found in the northern post-hole of the eastern entrance to the Phase 2b circular structure (Fig. 7; King & Soffe 1998, 41). Worked flint was also found among the extensive offerings at this Iron Age and Romano-British temple site and the excavators concluded that 'It seems likely that objects from earlier prehistory, perhaps found casually during the Iron Age as a result of activity that disturbed earlier material, were brought to the temple as votive offerings' (*ibid.*).¹⁹ There was an earlier phase to the shrine, but, although the site may not have had a long history of use, the quantity of worked flint and Bronze Age bronze objects on Hayling Island suggest a long history in the use of this sacred island and the surrounding area which was drawn upon through the deposition of the Bronze Age item (I am grateful to Richard Bradley and Julie Gardiner for discussion of this point).

Attitudes to ancestors at Lexden and Hayling Island possibly drew upon the concept of the local hero, celebrating an eponymous or even named ancestor. Creighton (2000, 193) proposes that the Hayling Island ancestor-hero may have been the Iron Age leader Commius. Perhaps the fragmentary spearhead from the Late Iron Age shrine was offered up to the spirit of this former leader, who was commemorated through several phases in the construction of an elaborate temple. At Lexden and Hayling Island, we may witness individual isolated acts that formed part of what John Barrett (1999, 256) has titled a 'political appropriation' through which the 'timeless values which seemingly governed order in the world were increasingly mediated and ... controlled by the actions of a restricted group'.²⁰ This is not to suggest that the people who invoked these remains had a conception of time that linked their ancestors directly to them in a formal linear historical narrative; instead it is likely that concepts of past, present, and future were enmeshed in ideas about the present. The deposition of esoteric objects at Hayling Island, Lexden, and Arras brought the present and future directly into relationship with the past in relatively newly constructed locales that drew upon complex genealogical associations in variable ways.²¹

Helms (1988) has explored the way that locales and orientations can embody concepts of the past, while Fitzpatrick (1997a, 77) has used Iron Age settlement evidence to propose that the predominantly southeasterly or southerly entrances of roundhouses marked out the dawning of the day, the success of light over dark and life over death (see also Fitzpatrick 1997b; Oswald 1997; Parker Pearson 1996). Although these arguments have recently been contested on empirical grounds (Pope 2007), the easterly or southerly orientation of Iron Age constructions may have related to ideas of sunrise and growth. It has been suggested that at three out of the six commemorative sites for which detailed information exists (Barford, Netherhampton, Hayling Island, and the south-eastern entrance to the Breiddin), Bronze Age items may have been deposited in contexts that lay to the east or south of pre-existing monuments (Figs 3, 4, & 7). At Danebury (Fig. 6), the item was deposited to the east of a hilltop in a location that may recently had been redefined through the construction of a hillfort rampart. This may suggest that acts of ritual that drew upon these otherworldly items embodied a sense of direction that focused on an

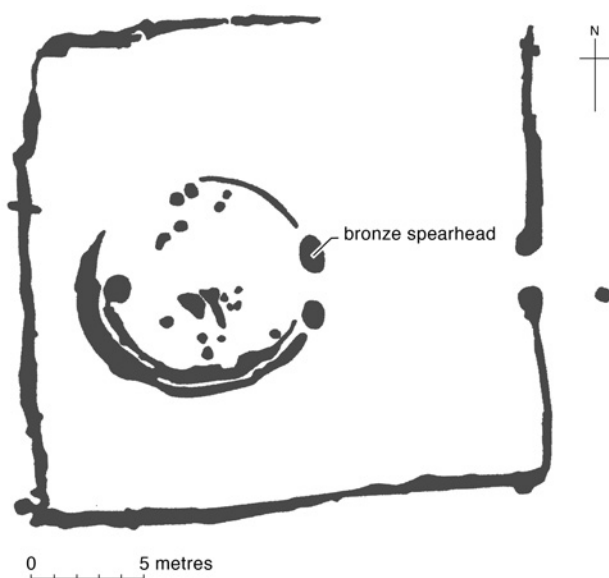


Fig. 7.
Hayling Island temple in Phase 2b
(after King and Soffe 1998, 1)

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idea of regeneration. This south/east orientation is shared by most Late Iron Age and Romano-British shrines and temples, the homes of mythical and ancestral spirits (Forcey 1998; Creighton 2006, 123–6), including the Romano-British temple that succeeded the Iron Age shrine on Hayling Island.

ORIENTATING COMMEMORATION

‘The currency of the ancestral past can ... become a guideline for future expectations, and places or directions with space-time significance may herald that-which-is-to-come as well as that-which-has-been’. (Helms 1988, 42)

In the context of the important issue raised by Hirsch and Stewart (above), this paper has explored the historicity of the deposition of objects at commemorative places, arguing that the items involved in these actions and the locales that they helped to transform, differed in significant ways from the objects and constructions of Iron Age populations. The material contrasts in form between items of Bronze Age and Iron Age culture, that have been used by archaeologists since the mid-19th century to construct typological sequences, was also evident to people during the Iron Age, although these variations were interpreted in a very different manner. The variety of types of depositional context and the differences in the character of the preservation of individual objects indicate that different artefacts had directly contrasting life histories and association, but the contexts in which many of the objects have been found suggest that Iron Age people were using locales, geographical orientation and objects to communicate and commemorate their origins.

I have suggested that the character of the materials available to Iron Age societies – the landscapes, sites, and objects that were inherited or rediscovered – played a significant role in helping to connect people to their present, creating variable forms of imagining which drew upon the otherness of earlier material remains. In these situations, objects and commemorative places may have been linked with ideas of spirits and others but on other occasions, interpretations may have aimed to create complex genealogical associations that drew ideas of a mythical past into present contexts. In some places and times, Iron Age people may have possessed a genealogical

understanding of the origins of particular objects and places. If a substantial number of these objects were handed down through the generations, an idea that the Netherhampton hoard might support, genealogical imaginings may have been relatively common, influencing ideas about other objects that were found during ground disturbance. The inclusion of a bronze miniature axe and a palstave in the burials at Arras and Lexden may have drawn on esoteric knowledge derived from the disturbance and recognition of earlier deposits, suggesting that the people who performed such actions viewed otherworldly remains as having a significant connection with themselves.

This paper has explored a restricted body of information which could certainly be taken to indicate that such approaches have only limited value in the study of the Iron Age. Central to this paper, however, is the principle that the relative rarity of otherworldly objects was fundamental to the definition of their symbolic significance. Recent works have suggested that ancient monuments were significant to Iron Age populations. Other ways to study the reuse of earlier culture during the Iron Age, draw upon the enclosure and re-use of potential commemorative places such as long barrows, round barrows, chambered cairns, and henges (eg, Barrett 1999; Bowden & McOmish 1987; Bradley 2007; Hingley 1999). Future study of objects and places, and the inter-relationship of location and orientation, should allow a more subtle understanding of the ways that peoples at this time drew upon material evidence from the past in creating their own lives and locales.

This study has deliberately sought to find pattern in a complex body of data. It is clear that the hoards from Netherhampton, Batheaston, and Hounslow each contain a far greater quantity of Bronze Age items than the other contexts that have been discussed. The variety of individual practices represented by the re-use of Bronze Age bronze items on sites across Britain is likely to be far more complex than the arguments developed in this speculative paper. It is not my intention to argue that Bronze Age items that occur out of their time all form part a simple, extensive, and predictable series of well-defined Iron Age ritual actions. Rather, these objects may have been used to make independent and original statements that drew on the past and present in varying ways. Evidently, the low quality of the information from a number of the 12 ‘sites’ indicates that further discoveries from well-stratified

contexts are required to assess the ideas that have been proposed.

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Endnotes

- ¹ For the symbolism of metalworking and metal items in the Bronze Age see Barber (2003, 132–4) & Bradley (1998, xviii–xix) and for later prehistory see Budd & Taylor (1995), Aldhouse Green (2002), Haselgrove & Hingley (2006) and Hingley (1990; 1997; 2005; 2006).
- ² For studies that develop relevant perspectives see Barrett (1999), Bradley (2002), Giles (2007a), Hingley (1996), Lillios (2003), and Sharples (2006). For the archaeology of time and memory, see Lucas (2005), *World Archaeology* Vol. 30, 1, and van Dyke & Alcock (2003), and for the broader context of commemoration, see Harrison (2003).
- ³ See Hingley (1999, 2005), Sharples (2006), and Phillips *et al.* (2006) for additional relevant observations.
- ⁴ A notable exception is the work of Lillios (1999; 2003). My study of Atlantic Scotland provides a brief exploration of the idea that the forms of some later prehistoric pots, together with the decoration on their bodies, might have been inspired by ancient pottery uncovered on Neolithic sites (Hingley 1996, 240).
- ⁵ Which included the periods usually identified as the earliest, Early, Middle, and Late Iron Age. Needham (2007, 40), drawing on the work of Cunliffe, defines the period from 800–600 BC as the 'earliest Iron Age'; this is characterised by hoards including metalwork of the 'Llyn Fawr assemblage', predominantly of bronze but with occasional iron objects, while distinctive pottery assemblages have also been identified (Needham 1996, 137). The recent discovery of iron hammerscale from a settlement of likely 10th century BC date at Hartshill Copse (Berkshire; Collard *et al.* 2006), means that it is probable that iron was being worked from a rather earlier date than the production of Llyn Fawr bronzes (Darvill 2006).
- ⁶ Some evidence exists in Atlantic Scotland for the uncovering of ancient sites during the Iron Age (Hingley 1996; 1999). Diggings undertaken in ancient places may, indeed, have provided some of the Bronze Age bronze objects discussed here.
- ⁷ For 'Arras burials' and the 'Arras Culture' or Arras Group' see Stead (1979) and Cunliffe (1991, 77–9).
- ⁸ I am extremely grateful to Gill Hey for allowing me use the information for this find in advance of its full publication.
- ⁹ Other hoards and collections of ancient objects may contain items of Bronze Age and Iron Age date. An example is the hoard from Llyn Fawr (Glamorgan), which included late Bronze Age/earliest Iron Age metalwork, alongside iron socketed items (for recent accounts, see Needham 2007 and O'Connor 2007). A collections of metalwork from fairly close to the hillfort at Ivinghoe Beacon, Buckinghamshire, may have included Bronze Age and Iron Age objects (Dalwood 1987), but the information does not conclusively demonstrate an Iron Age date for deposition, since one of the objects appears to be post-Iron Age.
- ¹⁰ Significant collections that would appear to be deposited in the Late Bronze Age are not considered here, but a number of relevant hoards are known. The Yattendon hoard, Berkshire, contained a variety of Early and Late Bronze Age finds, including an Early Bronze Age flat axe, three palstaves, and a basal-looped spearhead, alongside late Bronze Age material (Burgess *et al.* 1972, 236, figs 15–18; Brendan O'Connor pers. comm.). A spiral finger ring and bronze spearhead from Perry Oaks, Heathrow, Middlesex may also have been curated before being placed in archaeological features during the Late Bronze Age (Brown *et al.* 2006, 101–2), while a palstave of likely Middle Bronze Age date was found in one of the ditches that formed a Late Bronze Age trackway at Iwade, Kent (Barber 2005; Bishop & Bagwell 2005, 15, 16). Barber (2005, 52) discusses a number of other Late Bronze Age hoards in which Early and Middle Bronze Age items have been found (I am very grateful to Brendan O'Connor for these references).
- ¹¹ The most useful source of information was Stead's discussion (1998, 119–23) of possible parallels to the Salisbury hoard, which includes the five hoards from 'Batheaston', Danebury, Hounslow, Hagbourne Hill, and Salisbury. For experts consulted, see acknowledgments. Publications addressing Bronze Age hoards include Burgess & Coombs (1979), O'Connor (2007), and Pearce (1983), but few new finds were made from these sources, perhaps as the result of the focus of previous scholars on bronze hoards as fairly simple and single phase deposits. In addition, the author has recorded any relevant materials from later prehistoric site reports that he has come across during his research, including Barford, Hayling Island, and Yarnton. Without doubt, further examples of such objects exist in the archaeological literature to be discovered and studied.
- ¹² A complete Late Bronze Age sword from the hillfort of Ivinghoe Beacon may also have been deposited in an Iron Age context (Marshall & Northover 2003). It was found by a metal-detector user but a small excavation at its findspot suggested that it was discovered on the top of a layer of material derived from the Iron Age rampart that was pushed downslope at some time to fill the ditch.

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- The excavators (*ibid.*, 30) also note other Bronze Age items from comparable defensive earthworks in Bedfordshire, none of which has been found in stratified contexts (I am grateful to Richard Bradley for this reference). Another possible example is the bronze cauldron from Sheepen, Colchester (Hawkes & Smith 1957, 160–5; Hawkes 1995, 3) which could represent a Late Bronze Age object deposited when the Iron Age activity in the area was occurring.
- 13 Study of the occurrence of Bronze Age and later prehistoric objects in Romano-British and post-Roman contexts and Neolithic and Bronze Age stone tools in later contexts would also help to supplement the picture.
 - 14 One miniature axe was found on an Iron Age site at Long Wittenham, Oxfordshire (Savory 1937) on a site that produced decorated wares. It should be noted that iron socketed axes also occur and some of the miniature bronze axes may represent copies of Iron Age items.
 - 15 The discovery of an iron sword and spearhead in post-holes at the Iron Age site of Culduthel Farm, Inverness, Scotland (*British Archaeology* 2007) and the deposition of a fragmentary Bronze Age spearhead in an entrance post-hole at the Late Iron Age shrine on Hayling Island (below) indicates that comparable acts of deposition occur elsewhere.
 - 16 Ian Stead (pers. comm.) informs me that the Blagden Copse burial mound is a small square barrow and that additional square barrows are present on this site and at other locations in Kent.
 - 17 Comparable information for the incorporation of barrows into later landscapes is available for other areas of southern Britain (eg, Hingley 1999, 242–3).
 - 18 Giles (2007a, 113) notes the evidence for the effective destruction of one such monument close to the Tatton Sykes Memorial in East Yorkshire.
 - 19 The temple also produced a number of Iron Age weapons, human bone, and significant additional finds. Analysis of the recently-excavated Romano-British temple/ritual site at Ashwell will throw considerable light on the issue of the potential creation of a commemorative place through the placement of numerous Bronze Age bronze artefacts (Gil Burleigh pers. comm.).
 - 20 Lillios (1999) has discussed the potential significance of ‘heirlooms’ to the establishment of chiefdoms.
 - 21 Hingley (2005) and Sharples (2006) propose that a comparable motivation lay behind the construction during Iron Age of buildings that drew on the symbolism of Neolithic chambered cairns in Orkney and Shetland.
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one substantial example (no. 3) at the base of the pit (*ibid.*, 13; Smith 1969, 33); stratified above this was a complete bronze chisel, which was carefully covered with another sherd (no. 4) and associated with a fossil sponge. Oswald (1969, 13) suggested that these objects might have represented a ‘secondary disturbance of the pit fill for the insertion of this curious deposit’, even proposing that the objective may have been a reburial of earlier objects ‘perhaps disturbed by the intrusive pits’. The bronze chisel was a miniature example of a faceted socketed axe of later Bronze Age date (Thomas 1969). Nicholas Thomas raised the possibility that the chisel was buried in a Late Bronze Age pit and that the pottery was contemporary. Despite Thomas’s comments, the published illustration and fabric description of sherd 3 indicate that this may have been of Iron Age in date (Paul Booth, pers. comm.), although this cannot be confirmed without re-examination. A search in Warwick Museum store in April 2007 failed to locate the pottery from this feature, although the bronze chisel is on display in the County Museum. Sherd 4, as Smith recognised (1969, 33–4), is likely to be Bronze Age in date, but exact parallels are difficult to find.

A number of additional ‘intrusive’ pits were found. One (no. 15) contained a deposit of seven saddle querns, which the excavator described as ‘deliberate’ (Oswald 1969, 13). Oswald (*ibid.*) proposed that these pits – of which three lay within the hengiform structure, two cut its ditch and two lay outside – were intrusive and clearly demonstrated that the ditches of the monument had been totally forgotten. I would argue, however, that the sequence of deposition here indicates that the earlier earthworks remained visible.

‘Batheaston’ hoard, Avon

Metal-detector users discovered these objects, thought to have represented a single hoard, and it is uncertain where the find was made, or even that that this was indeed a single hoard (Stead 1998, 120–2). It was probably found in one or two pits, possibly in the vicinity of Wylde (Wiltshire). The bronzes included items of Bronze Age and Iron Age date, including axes (five palstaves and seven socketed axes), spearheads, arrowheads, daggers, chapes, knives, tools, three tweezers, dress items including a La Tène I brooch and 138 pins, two possible miniature cauldrons, and other items including wheel pendants (*ibid.*).

APPENDIX: DETAILS OF BRONZE AGE BRONZE OBJECTS FROM IRON AGE CONTEXTS

Arras, Barrow W57, Yorkshire

W57 was one of a group of around 90 small round barrows that formed a cemetery that included three ‘chariot burials’ (Stead 1965, 2; 1979, 7–11; see Whimster 1981, 77; Stoertz 1997, map 4 provides a plan of the cemetery). The records of the excavation of this barrow in 1815 mention the finding of a pendant in the form of a bronze model of a looped socketed axe (Greenwell 1906, 303, fig. 57; Stead 1969, 60; 1979, 84, fig 34, 3), which appears to have been ‘connected’ to a small blue glass bead.

Barford, Warwickshire

Excavation of a hengiform structure of several phases on ‘Site A’ produced evidence for several later features cut into the earlier structure (Oswald 1969). These included feature no. 12, which contained what the excavator described as ‘Iron Age’ sherds, including

Breiddin hillfort, Powys

Excavation at this extensive hillfort between 1969 and 1976 suggested that the hill on which it stood had seen sporadic activity prior to the Late Bronze Age, when an enclosing timber-framed rampart was constructed; few traces of structures were located inside the enclosure. After a time at which the hill appears to have been used for little more than grazing, possibly in the 3rd century BC, a more massive rampart was built and traces of circular and rectangular buildings were found inside (Musson 1991).

The excavation of the hillfort produced 22 Bronze Age bronze objects, which were probably contemporary with the early timber-framed rampart (Coombs 1991). A few typologically undistinctive artefacts were derived from Late Bronze Age contexts (*ibid.*, 133–8; Musson 1991, 33), while several of the diagnostic examples came from Iron Age features. Assessment of the published material suggests that certain weapons (swords, spearheads, and axes) may have been used in particular ways during the Iron Age reuse of the site. A fragmentary socketed spearhead (no. 140) came from the packing of an Iron Age post-hole in the interior of the hillfort (Coombs 1991, 134), while part of the blade and tip of a leaf-shaped sword (143) was found in the packing of a post-hole belonging to Iron Age four-post structure F16; charcoal from this post-hole produced an Iron Age date (*ibid.*). A fragment of a sword hilt of Late Bronze Age type (142) was found near these two objects but not in a clearly defined feature. A bronze socketed axe (138) was found standing upright 40 mm below the modern surface about 7 m south-west of the cluster of bronzes, but this was not in an obvious feature. Further fragments of a socketed axe and a penannular bracelet (158–9) were found, associated with Iron Age pottery, during O’Neil’s earlier excavation on the hillfort south-eastern entrance (Musson 1991, 9). Other bronze objects of Bronze Age date included tweezers and nail-headed pins which came from both Bronze Age and Iron Age contexts (nos 144–57; Coombs 1991, 135–8), while a socketed hammer (139) was found in a Bronze Age deposit.

The concentration of bronze objects (nos 140, 142, and 143) was found close to an area of Bronze Age metalworking to the south of the hillfort interior. The items may have formed part of a collection of objects for reworking (Musson 1991, 58–60) which were not

used, and were rediscovered during the construction of Iron Age round-houses and four-post structures in this area. Several of the fragmentary bronze ‘weapons’ from the site appear to have been incorporated in Iron Age contexts and it is notable that the only iron weapon from site, a dagger which lacked most of the tang (no. 196), was found standing upright in what appeared to be a deliberately refilled (undated) post-pipe (Saunders 1991, 144) located about 25 m east-south-east of the concentration of Bronze Age finds. That at least two of the Bronze Age weapons were found in comparable context suggests that they may have been found on the site by chance during the Iron Age and placed in the post-holes of new constructions.

Colchester, Lexden Tumulus, Essex

A bronze palstave was found with this Late Iron Age burial, which was excavated in 1924 (Foster 1986, 78–80, fig. 28, pl. 15). Probably a Group IV transitional palstave from the Penard phase of the Middle Bronze Age, this artefact had been altered in various ways (see above). It was found in the approximate centre of the mound and was not from the disturbed area of the burial deposit (*ibid.*, 26).

Danebury, Hampshire

At the extensively excavated hillfort of Danebury, a ‘scrap hoard’ was located (Cunliffe & O’Connor 1979; 1983, 41, 46–8; Britton *et al.* 1984) which included seven axes, two spearheads (one of which was a fragment), two rapiers (one a fragment), parts of a sword and a knife, four chisels, two razors, and a pin (Stead 1998, 119). The likely date of production of these items ranges between 1800 BC and 700 BC, two from the first half, six from the second half of the 2nd millennium BC, and the remainder of early 1st millennium date (*ibid.*; for details of objects, see Britton *et al.* 1984; O’Connor 2007).

Cunliffe proposed that the hoard may well have been deposited around 600–550 BC (Cunliffe 1983, 46–8), but a date of *c.* 700 BC is now suggested for the latest objects (Brendan O’Connor pers. comm.). The objects appeared to have been buried in a small pit dug just before the construction of the initial rampart, but it is possible that the pit was actually excavated and the objects deposited just after rampart construction. The hoard had been disturbed and its contents were found in a number of distinct contexts at different times during the excavation; but it was felt that that they formed a coherent group (Britton *et al.*

1984, 335). It is suggested that the pit that held them had been partly cut away by a quarry hollow behind the extended rampart. Seven of the finds were found in an occupation deposit in a quarry hollow and had probably been washed down from the pit to this location. The remaining finds were made in a variety of contexts in the vicinity. The only absolute dating for the pit was that it appeared to have been sealed by an extension to the hillfort rampart which probably dated to 4th century BC. The feature was located just to the north of the eastern entrance to the hillfort (Fig. 6), which was extended and elaborated during the Early and Middle Iron Age.

Hagbourne Hill, Oxfordshire

During spring 1803, several oblong pits were discovered on Hagbourne Hill, which are described as having been 7 ft long and 3 ft (c. 2.1 x 0.81 m) wide (King 1812). One pit had a circular excavation at the bottom, about 1½ ft (0.45 m) in diameter, in which were deposited various items which King sent to the Society of Antiquaries, together with others that he had not managed to see (*ibid.*, 348). The latter finds included 'several large rings of brass' and one silver and one gold coin. This hoard, exhibited by King, included a bronze socketed axe and at least one bronze looped spearhead which is likely to be of Middle Bronze Age date (Harding 1972, 91). It also contained Iron Age finds, including one terret, two three-link horse-bits, and a cast ring-headed pin. It is likely that the large flat gold coin mentioned by King is the gold stater which is recorded as having been found in the parish in 1803 (Stead 1998, 120). The objects were probably deposited no earlier than the 1st century BC.

Hayling Island, Hampshire

See text for details.

Hengistbury Head, Dorset

Two fragments of Bronze Age axes were found in a later prehistoric context on this Late Iron Age coastal *oppidum* (Cunliffe 1987, 151; for some possible additional finds, see Northover 1987, 186). The headland, which was also the site of a Bronze Age barrow cemetery, appears to have been re-occupied from the middle of the 1st millennium BC and intensive settlement occurred during the Middle and later Iron Age, defended by a very substantial rampart that is currently undated (Cunliffe 1978; 1987, 336–45).

A bronze socketed axe was found by Bushe-Fox on 'site 33' (Bushe-Fox 1915, 26, 62, pl. 30, 12; Cunliffe 1987, 336–45). The cutting edge of this object shows signs of considerable wear and the mouth of the socket is missing. It probably belongs to the South Eastern type and analysis of metal from the object suggests the Ewart Park phase which was dated at the time of publication to the 9th–8th centuries BC (Cunliffe 1987, 151; Northover 1987, 186), but revision of the dating sequence would now suggest a date in the 10th–9th centuries (Brendan O'Connor pers. comm.). A fragment of a second axe was found on the same site during the early excavation (Bushe-Fox 1915, 26) and metal analysis might indicate a Llyn Fawr date for this item (Cunliffe 1987, 151; Northover 1987, 186), while the exact findspot of the fragment of a comparable object with similar metal composition is uncertain. Site 33 produced considerable evidence for metalworking in an area which also produced a very large quantity of Iron Age coins (Cunliffe 1978, 40–7). Bushe-Fox described site 33 as an irregular patch of clay and gravel with ironstone blocks of approximately 8–10 m diameter scattered around, adjacent to an area of burnt clay (Bushe-Fox 1915, 24–6). It had been badly disturbed by rabbits, but produced 3000 coins, including 1660 cast bronze issues attributed to the Durotriges. There were also more than 100 Roman coins, ranging from Domitian to Antoninus Pius and a few Gaulish and other issues (Cunliffe 1978, 44). The coins appear to have been deposited in separate bundles, perhaps wrapped in organic material, one of which contained 743 coins. These could have been deposited at the same time or on a series of occasions. Evidence was found for cupellation nearby together with scraps of gold, a copper ingot, an ingot of silver, and copper-alloy and a casing ingot found close by. No conclusive evidence was found for the minting of coins (*ibid.*, 45), but the three Bronze Age items may well have been in the process of being reworked on Site 33 for their metal content.

Hounslow, London

In 1864, labourers discovered a collection of Bronze Age and Iron Age metalwork (Stead 1998, 119), which was taken to the British Museum, where A.W. Franks was initially told that all the items were found together. The Iron Age finds included five animal figurines, a wheel ornament, and the remains of a crown (*ibid.*). The Bronze Age elements include Early,

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Middle, and Late Bronze Age types, rather reminiscent of the Salisbury hoard. On further enquiry, it emerged that two bronze objects and the animal figures came from different parts of the same field (Franks 1865, 90), but Stead (1998, 119) wondered if Franks had talked his informant into this position. The Museum acquired the finds in two lots of mixed objects but, in the 1930s, Christopher Hawkes annotated the register to distinguish two hoards, one Bronze Age and one Iron Age (*ibid.*). It remains a possibility that the two groups of objects formed part of two separate hoards.

Salisbury (or Netherhampton) hoards, Wiltshire

Hoard A has been thoroughly studied by Ian Stead (1998). It was found in a pit which formed part of a settlement in a field at Netherhampton, near Salisbury (*ibid.*, 110). The pit that contained the hoard appears to have held at least 535 artefacts, although these were all removed without any recording by metal-detector users before archaeologists became aware of the site, after which the pit and areas of the settlement were excavated. The finds included 173 socketed axes, 46 spearheads, 9 daggers, 7 chapes, 37 knives, 90 tools, 17 razors, 16 pins, miniature items (24 shields, 46 cauldrons, a socketed axe), and a variety of miscellaneous items (*ibid.*, 113–8 and table 8), all of which probably dated from about 2400 BC to 200 BC. The miniature socketed bronze axes from this hoard are discussed by Robinson (1995, 62 [no. 3] and 64 [no. 16]).

A second small hoard of later prehistoric date (Hoard B) was found in a shallow feature during the excavation of this site (*ibid.*, 70, 111). It contained fragments of what may have been a bronze horn or trumpet, a socketed spearhead, a fragment of a similar object, and an awl (*ibid.*, 70) and the date of deposition of these objects is unclear.

Yarnton, Oxfordshire

A substantial Middle Iron Age limestone causeway was built across the ‘Oxey Mead palaeochannel’ and was uncovered on site 9 during the extensive excavations (Hey & Timby forthcoming; for the general context of sites in the area, see Hey 2007). This was one of six causeways across the palaeochannels likely to be of Iron Age date. The excavations indicated there were at least three phases of causeway construction sealed beneath Roman and later alluvium. The second phase was built of limestone with occasional quartzite pebbles and was dated through radiocarbon to the 4th–late 3rd centuries BC at 95% probability; Bayliss & Hey forthcoming). This directly overlay a complete side-looped spearhead in a manner suggesting that the spearhead formed a foundation deposit (*ibid.*). The spearhead, according to the excavation report, is ‘unequivocally Bronze Age’ (Hey & Timby forthcoming) and a Middle Bronze Age date is likely (Dennis *et al.* forthcoming). A plug of waterlogged plant remains, packed within the spearhead socket, provided two radiocarbon dates which are broadly comparable to the date for the causeway. Insect remains were preserved further inside the socket which demonstrated that, before the plug was inserted, it was kept in a relatively dry place.

Hey and Timby suggest that the spearhead may have been an heirloom, placed in the channel as an offering when the causeway was laid down (*ibid.*). Other finds within or directly below the causeway included a small quantity of Bronze Age or Early Iron Age pottery, a bronze double-pointed awl, and some Neolithic/Bronze Age flint. The Bronze Age awl, spearhead, and a fragment of tin-alloy strap-end, which have good parallels at Flag Fen (Dennis *et al.* forthcoming), together with certain deposits in the palaeochannel that pre-dated the Iron Age causeway, may indicate that there was an earlier crossing at the point at which the Iron Age causeway was built.

