

Bronze Age Background and Summary

- ❑ **Early 2000-1500 B.C.-** Gold Discs, Lunulae, Pottery and earthenware.
- ❑ **Middle 1500-1200 B.C.-** Flanged Gold Earrings
- ❑ **Late 1200-500 B.C-** Torc, Gorgets, Hair Lock Rings, Dress fasteners, Bulla, Leather wooden and bronze shields, Bronzed cauldrons.
- ❑ The Bronze Age was a gradual development from the Stone age



- ❑ There was no sharp division between the early and late Bronze age
- ❑ The Bronze Age is the first evidence of art and design in Ireland
- ❑ Unlike the Neolithic people who used decoration on tombs for possibly religious reasons this new era used decoration for artistic reasons

Where did they get their Materials?

- The Shannon estuary formed an important transport route for various influences from abroad.

***Copper** was found in **Mt. Gabriel in west Cork**

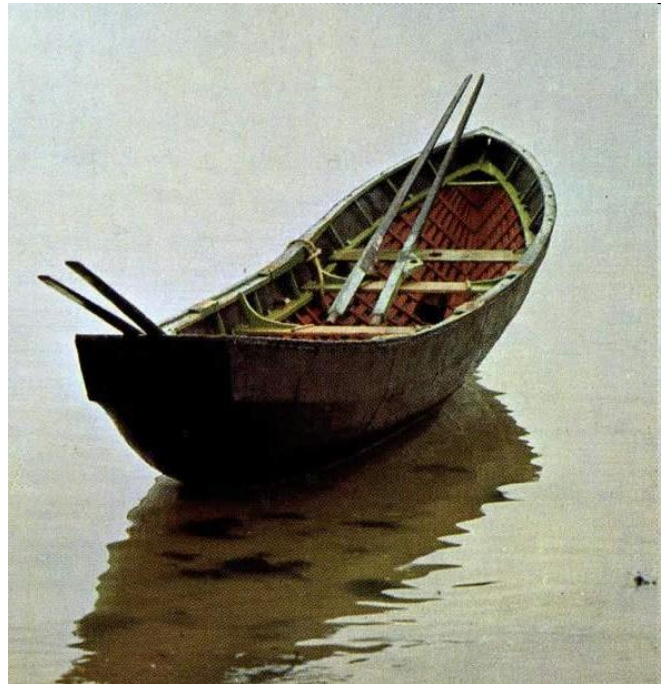
***Silver** in **Tipperary**

***Alluvial gold** was panned from the stream and **rivers in Wicklow.**

- But not all of the raw materials needed for this new metal were not readily available around Ireland.
- ❑ **Tin** was imported from **Cornwall, Wales.**

Transport

- The invention of the **Curragh** was one of the biggest influences in Irish History.
- It allowed the Irish to travel and trade bring back foreigner techniques and knowledge to the island.



How did they make Bronze?

Tin + Copper = Bronze

***Alloy:** a metal made by combining two or more metallic elements, especially to give greater strength or resistance to corrosion

Tin was imported from Cornwall, Wales

Copper was **smelted**

Smelting: Extracting (metal) from its ore by a process involving heating and melting

Smelting Copper in Ireland

- Mount Gabriel, Co Cork consists of 25 shallow mine shafts extending about 5 to 10 metres into the slope. Evidence from inside the mines indicates that the copper ore was probably extracted by lighting fires inside the mine and then, when the mine walls had become hot, water was splashed onto them, thus shattering the ore which could then be removed.
- Much of the copper was made into bronze axes and daggers
- A few of these items have been found decorated with geometric patterns

What was Bronze used for?

- knives, hammers, axes, razors, needles
- cauldrons which could be hung over a fire or heated the old way by placing hot stones in them
- decorative objects such as collars, bracelets, rings, pins, beads, dress fasteners - often made from gold
- musical instruments
- military equipment such as daggers, swords, spearheads and shields.

Reasons for using gold

- As gold was useless for any practical purpose, and also because of its beautiful colour and rarity, it quickly became a highly desirable ornamental material.
- Its use may have coincided with the rise of the first 'aristocracies' in these communities. It is for this reason that the period is sometimes called Ireland's first "golden age".

Other Artefacts

- Metal was not the only material used in Bronze Age Ireland. Stone tools were still very important, and there was a large pottery industry.
- Beaker pottery - named for its distinctive shape - was very common in Bronze Age Ireland, as it was across much of western and central Europe at the time.
- Beaker pottery was shaped into more complex shapes than in the Neolithic period, and there were a variety of types of pot. Most are ornately decorated.



Bowl Food Vessel, Lisnamulligan, Donegal, 2000-1800 BC (cist grave) Bowl Food Vessel, Golbally, Tyrone, 2000-1800BC (cist grave)



Encrusted Um, Ballyconnell, Wicklow, 1900-1700 BC (pit Burial)

Bronze Age people:

They were buried in cist graves.

They lived in crannogs.

Cooking was done outdoors in a Fulacht Fia.

Farming:

- Areas of lowlands were flooded.
- Increasing population must have led to competition for the remaining resources and the need to protect the possessions of the group from theft.
- The consequence of the above factors meant pressure on remaining farm land.

- Bronze weapons are the first that seem to have been designed with humans in mind.

Decoration Techniques

- **Repoussé**- was common in both Bronze and Gold objects.
- The term repoussé comes from the French word meaning pushed back.
- It is a method of hammering a design on the reverse side of thin gold objects/sheets so it creates the design in low relief.
- **Incision/Chasing**- refers to a groove, furrow, channel or indentation. It is hammering the design in from the front of the metal.
- There is no loss of metal in either process, as it is stretched locally and the surface remains continuous.