

# Beaker Pottery



**Item:** Beaker Pottery

**Date:** 2500-2200 BC

**Find Location:** Newgrange

**Current Location:** National Museum of Ireland

## **Description:**

The passage tomb at Newgrange served as a focus of ceremonial activity in the Late Neolithic and Beaker periods. The pottery assemblage at Newgrange was composed of about 11,000 sherds of some 210 vessels representing four principal varieties: fine Beaker and coarse domestic Beaker, Grooved Ware, Late Neolithic decorated ware, and Food Vessel. A "beaker house" discovered at Newgrange was constructed of wattle and clay and was used for flint napping—a process of removing nodules of flint. During the Late Neolithic, it appears that Newgrange was no longer being used by the local population, who did not leave any artefacts in the passage tomb or bury any of their dead there. As the archaeologist Michael O'Kelly stated, "by 2000 BC Newgrange was in decay and squatters were living around its collapsing edge." These "squatters" were adherents of the Beaker culture, which had been imported from continental Europe, and made Beaker-style pottery locally.

## **Further Information:**

# Bronze Axehead



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**Item:** Bronze Axehead

**Date:** 2500- 1700 BC

**Find Location:** Lisboy, Siddan, Slane.

**Current Location:** National Museum of Ireland

**Description:**

Metalsmiths learned that if they mixed another metal called tin with copper, they could produce a stronger metal called bronze. They created objects from bronze such as this bronze axehead which was found at Lisboy, Co. Meath.

**Further Information:**

# Knife



nef

**Item:** Tanged Copper Knife

**Date:** 2500-2200 BC

**Find Location:** Probably Dunshaughlin

**Current Location:** National Museum of Ireland

## **Description:**

Early Bronze Age metalwork began with the production of simple copper and bronze axes and daggers and some gold ornaments. Tanged copper dagger with trapezoidal outline. This dagger has a wide triangular blade. These metal weapons were the preserve of the higher ranking members of the society whereas the rest of the community used a bow and arrow for hunting or fighting. The find circumstances of this item are not known but they may be associated with the royal site at Lagore. Ireland had significant copper and gold resources during prehistory, making it arguably, one of the most important metal producing areas in early prehistoric Europe. Copper ore was used to make tools of copper, and later mixed with tin to make bronze tools.

## **Further Information:**

# Encrusted Urn



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**Item:** Encrusted Urn

**Date:** 1900-1700 BC

**Find Location:** Keenoge, Duleek

**Current Location:** National Museum of Ireland

## **Description:**

The site was discovered in early January 1929. The landowner and two workmen came across a triangular cairn which included a cist burial. Fourteen burials, six in cists were recovered in 1930s from the cemetery mound. Predominant rite was crouched burials and grave goods amounted to eight Food Vessels, one Cinerary Urn and a jet necklace. The excavation was directed by the then Director of the National Museum, Dr Adolf Mahr between 1929 and 1936.

The site, a flat cemetery consisted of six cist burials and several pit burials were also excavated. Over three hundred bowl food vessels have been found in Ireland but this is the largest assemblage found at any one site. Other finds from the burials at Keenoge include both cordoned and encrusted urns, a bronze razor and flint artefacts. This food vessel was found in Burial 9 which was a small rectangular cist built from two long stone slabs and two narrow ones. There would normally have been a massive capstone over the burial but this had been moved at some earlier date. The burial contained the unburnt remains of a child which appears to have been placed in a crouched position within the cist and lying on its right side with its head to the west. The vessel has a narrow rounded rim and internal bevel and has a tripartite body form providing for three distinct areas of decoration. The decorative motifs include horizontal lines, convex and concave impressions, comb impressions and chevrons. A cruciform pattern on the base of the vessel is reminiscent of the design and layout of early Bronze Age gold sun discs in the Museums collections. A boar's tusk was found at the other end of the cist, also perhaps intended to accompany the child into the afterlife.

## **Further Information:**

Adolf Mahr's Excavations of an Early Bronze Age Cemetery at Keenoge, County Meath Author(s): Charles Mount and Laureen Buckley Source: Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy. Section C: Archaeology, Celtic Studies, History, Linguistics, Literature, Vol. 97C, No. 1 (1997), pp. 1-59, 61-68

See also Jet Necklace from Keenoge

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# Jet Necklace



**Item:** Jet Necklace

**Date:** 1900-1700 BC

**Find Location:** Keenoge, Duleek

**Current Location:** National Museum of Ireland

## **Description:**

Burials with jet beads are very unusual in Ireland. Around the neck of the woman in Grave 13 beneath the jaw were 40 jet beads of varying sizes which formed a tight necklace or choker about 15cm in diameter. The beads were mostly fusiform but two were cylindrical and one of the ends of no. 40 was internally bevelled. They range from 1.1cm to 2.25cm in length and all have a uniform perforation of 0.3cm. Most of the beads were perforated through their length but some have been perforated. Sources of jet are limited, and the most important is on the eastern coast of Yorkshire, near Whitby.

## **Further Information:**

Adolf Mahr's Excavations of an Early Bronze Age Cemetery at Keenoge, County Meath Author(s): Charles Mount and Laureen Buckley Source: Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy. Section C: Archaeology, Celtic Studies, History, Linguistics, Literature, Vol. 97C, No. 1 (1997), pp. 1-59, 61-68  
See also Encrusted Urn from Kennoge

# Bronze Age Axehead



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**Item:** Battle Axe

**Date:** Early Bronze Age c.1800

**Find Location:** Tara – The Mound of the Hostages

**Current Location:** National Museum of Ireland

## **Description:**

The battle-axe made from stone, was found with cremated human bones underneath an upturned urn and has been vitrified by the heat. Found in three parts, now joined, fractured by fire of cremation pyre. Made from igneous rock, possibly marble. The blade is polished to a smooth finish. This axe was found in an urn in burial 38 in the Mound of the Hostages.

## **Further Information:**

M. O'Sullivan, *Duma na nGiall. Tara. The Mound of the Hostages.* (Bray, 2005)

[https://www.ucd.ie/news/mar06/030306\\_mound\\_of\\_the\\_hostages.htm](https://www.ucd.ie/news/mar06/030306_mound_of_the_hostages.htm)

# Sword



**Item:** Sword Blade (Photo: National Museum of Ireland)

**Date:** 1600-1200 BC

**Find Location:** Rossan, Kinnegad.

**Current Location:** National Museum of Ireland

## **Description:**

Middle Bronze Age 'rapier' blade has been discovered at a bog in Rossan. It was identified on the surface of the bog by Christie Nolan and then reported to the National Museum by Pat Dunne, both of whom work for Bord na Mona.

The find-place was subsequently investigated by Mary Cahill, Keeper of Irish Antiquities and no additional artefacts were identified. However, several other important finds including a bog body and bog butter have been made at Rossan in recent years. The sword blade measures c. 40 cm in length and is fashioned out of bronze. The handle of the 'rapier', which was attached via two rivet holes, was probably made from an organic substance such as wood or bone and this no longer survives.

Rapiers were most likely used as thrusting rather than slashing weapons and they are recorded from both Britain and Ireland. Where finds spots are known, the majority appear to have been discovered in watery contexts, such as bogs, rivers or lakes and this may be indicative of ritual deposition rather than casual loss.

Rapier in this context is an archaeological term for a relatively short, narrow, double-sided blade that emerged in the Middle Bronze Age and represents Ireland's earliest type of bronze sword (rather than a dagger).

## **Further Information:**

# Tara Torcs



**Item:** Torcs (Photo: National Museum of Ireland)

**Date:** c.1200 -1000 BC Bronze Age

**Find Location:** Tara

**Current Location:** National Museum of Ireland

## **Description:**

Discovered in 1810 by a boy digging close to the Rath of the Synods on the Hill of Tara. Two similar torcs, four flanged variety, one larger than the other. The larger torc is 42 cm in diameter and the smaller one, 21 cm. The two torcs contain over a kilogram of gold, which was a very large amount for the time. These torcs would have been worn around the waist of a very important person or possibly wooden idol. Irish antiquarian George Petrie purchased it in the 1830s for the Royal Irish Academy for £180. A torc, also spelled torq or torque, is a large rigid or at least stiff neck ring in metal, made either as a single piece or from strands twisted together. The word comes from Latin torquis (or *torques*), from torqueo, "to twist", because of the twisted shape many of the rings have. The terminals are bands of gold bent back so as to hook one around the other. It is also suggested that these were ritual offerings.

## **Further Information:**

Fintan O'Toole *A history of Ireland in 100 objects*

# Gormanston Log Boat



**Item:** Log Boat

**Date:** 1132-1013 BC

**Find Location:** Sea bed off Gormanston

**Current Location:** County Louth Museum, Dundalk.

## **Description:**

A wooden boat was been discovered c. 1km offshore at Gormanston by workers laying a gas pipeline between the UK and Ireland. Seven timbers were retrieved by the backhoe dredger. Archaeologists monitoring the dredging for Dúchas, the Heritage Service, immediately halted the work and called in the services of an archaeological diving company to investigate.

‘This is a unique find,’ said Dr Niall Brady, director of ADCO (Archaeological Diving Company) Castlecomer, who oversaw the four/five person diving team. ‘It’s a very exciting find because whilst logboats are common enough on rivers, they are much rarer in a maritime context. This is the first successful raising of a seagoing vessel that emerged as part of an infrastructural programme in Ireland.’”

The boat is a substantial seagoing vessel built out of a single tree trunk, probably oak. It was buried under two metres of sand. It has a number of interesting features along both sides which relate to seagoing usage. Nooks in the side suggest outriders making it a coastal craft and it is one of the only off-shore marine vessels so far discovered in Ireland.

The logboat was conserved at the Mary Rose Trust in Portsmouth, England, and returned to Ireland. The National Museum of Ireland arranged for the vessel to be loaned to the County Louth Museum in Dundalk, where it is to feature as part of its collections. A C14-determination of a sample of the timber was analysed at Queen’s University Belfast, and returned date of 1132-1013 BC.

## **Further Information:**

Niall Brady, 'Gormanston boat discovery', *Archaeology Ireland* 16.3 (2002),  
<http://adco-ie.com/gormanston-landfall-co-meath-prehistoric-logboat/>

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# Sleeve Fastener



**Item:** Sleeve Fastener

**Date:** Late Bronze Age 1150BC-750BC

**Find Location:** Near Hill of Tara

**Current Location:** British Museum

**Description:**

Gold sleeve fastener. The crescent-shaped body is decorated with longitudinal incised grooves on the outer surface. The ends are decorated with a fine diamond pattern between two bands of three horizontal incised grooves. The terminals expand to form two flat plain discs set at an angle to the body. Acquired by British Museum in 1849.

**Further Information:**

Cahill, M., 1994. Mr. Anthony's Bog Oak Case of Gold Antiquities, Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy.94C, 3, 53-109.

# Ring



**Item:** Ring

**Date:** 1150BC-750BC (circa) Late Bronze Age

**Find Location:** Clonard

**Current Location:** British Museum

**Description:**

Gold penannular plain ring. The circular solid body is circular in cross-section and it is slightly thinner at the ends rather than in the middle. The ring has parallel squared flat endings facing each other.

Acquired by British Museum in 1909. Donated by John Pierpont Morgan.

**Further Information:**

# Bracelets



**Item:** Two gold bracelets, one a replica

**Date:** 800-700 BC

**Find Location:** Tremblestown, Trim.

**Current Location:** National Museum of Ireland

**Description:**

A bracelet of gold, with a quadrangular row of pellets, was found, with another more solid article of the same kind, but unornamented, near the castle of Trimblestown. Punched indentations are the only decorations. The find was recorded in the Dublin Penny Journal in 1833. These objects were one of the thousands of objects that were acquired by the Royal Irish Academy shortly after the death of Dean Henry Richard Dawson of Saint Patrick's Cathedral in 1840.

**Further Information:**

Eogan, G. 1983 *Hoard of the Irish Later Bronze Age*. Dublin, University College

# Three Bracelets and a sun flower pin



**Item:** Three Bracelets and a sun flower pin

**Date:** 800-700 BC

**Find Location:** Drissoge, Athboy.

**Current Location:** National Museum of Ireland

## **Description:**

This hoard of four gold objects was discovered at Drissoge in 1953 by Martin and Michael Coffey during ploughing. The ploughing was being carried out by tractor for the first time and so was deeper than previously tilling of the land. A large penannular bracelet was made from sheet gold bent round and joined with molten gold with terminals formed from flat disks of gold which were soldered on. There are two penannular bracelets approximately crescent shaped made from solid bar gold of round section terminating in expanded hollow extremities. A dress pin is unique and is similar but not identical to the sunflower type. Its two parts were manufactured separately. The hoard was probably deposited for safety.

## **Further Information:**

George Eogan, 'A Hoard of Gold Objects from Drissoge, Co. Meath' in *The Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* Vol. 87, No. 2 (1957), pp. 125-134

# Hoard of Bronze Objects



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**Item:** Hoard of Bronze Objects consisting of a sword fragment, a ring, a chisel and a sunflower pin.

**Date:** 800-700 BC

**Find Location:** Park, Co. Meath

**Current Location:** National Museum of Ireland

**Description:**

**Further Information:**