

PREHISTORIC LONDON: ESPECIALLY CONCERNING THE
LATE CELTIC SETTLEMENT, AS REPRESENTED IN THE
GUILDHALL MUSEUM.

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Of the four great divisions of the prehistoric period in Britain, the "drift," or palaeolithic age, is practically the earliest, when man simply chipped his implements into form, without subsequently grinding them; and, inhabiting the banks of the rivers, lived a precarious hand-to-mouth existence, oftentimes contesting for his very life with large and fierce beasts, and enduring probably great extremes of heat and cold.

The relics of these early settlers consist merely of their tools and weapons, lying mixed up with the debris on the banks of some ancient rivers, such as the Thames, whose gravel deposits, some of which are 60 feet above the present level, contain many relics of this far-off time. The mere fact of the promiscuous finding of these remains is strongly against any proof as to where the larger settlements of this period were. Stoke Newington Common was one, no doubt, but no other spot, nearer the City, has afforded reasonable evidence of its being a palaeolithic station.

Stray flakes and implements certainly occur, but the nature of the deposit, which appears to be merely a sweeping-up of the accumulated refuse from the original banks of the stream, by the sudden floods of the period, is against any settlement being still *in situ*. In fact, the probability is that the site of the City of London was covered by the river during this period, and that the higher gravels at Acton, Wandsworth (East and West Hill, where I have found numbers of implements), Erith, and other places were the river margins of that time, the lower gravel being deposited later (by the

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erosion of the river) from the breaking up and re-distributing of portions of the higher terraces ; thus accounting for the worn appearance of the few worked flints found near the City.

The length of time occupied by this transformation of the river levels, and the precise time of the next period of prehistoric man, is a very vexed question. Being distinctly a geological one, it probably will never be definitely settled.

The decided difference shown by the next phase of culture (the polished Stone period), the beautiful workmanship of the implements themselves, the skilful grinding and polishing of the axes, the delicate chipping shown upon the knives and arrow-heads, all evince a distinct and decided advance in the civilisation of the human race.

Unfortunately the City proper has yielded so very few specimens of this period, that I cannot trace that it was largely inhabited during this time.

The British Museum has a polished flint hatchet or adze from Great Winchester Street ; Mr. Hilton Price a celt from Southwark ; I also know of another polished axe from London Wall, and the Guildhall Museum possesses a polished flint chisel from Holborn, and a scraper from London Wall ; but flakes and minor implements do not appear to have been found, and as these, by their frequent occurrence, mark an inhabited site, it is impossible to say at present that the City had a settlement in Neolithic times.

The next period, the Bronze Age, is also represented in the City by very few specimens, and there appears to be no connection between the spots where they were found. A perforated stone hammer from Queen Victoria Street ; a bronze spear butt from Fetter Lane ; two horn weapons, one from London Wall and one from Monkwell Street ; a bronze socketed celt said to have been found in Austin Friars, now in the Guildhall Museum, I think, sum up the total.

Of course both during the previous period and the Bronze Age, the river banks were inhabited by these folk, for numbers of their implements have been found within the London reaches of the Thames ; but as I am

dealing with the City only, it is not in order to mention them here as proofs of my case.

We are now coming more to my subject proper, where I can show evidence of a veritable settlement within the City boundary.

The next period, the early Iron Age or late Celtic epoch, although probably lasting only a short time (from about 100 B.C. to 100 A.D.), marks, as I trust I shall now show, the first settlement of any importance in the City; and as I have had the opportunity of examining practically every specimen in the Guildhall Museum, and many others from the Thames having passed through my hands, I think I may venture to trespass on your patience to the extent, at least, of telling you what I think upon this matter.

For some years it has been known that iron was in use in Britain prior to the Roman invasion, and that with the introduction of that metal a knowledge of enamelling was also developed by the Britons; but it was not considered that ancient London was inhabited to any extent by these people.

Numbers of London relics, although exciting some doubt as to their being of true Roman workmanship, were classed as such by many of the last generation of antiquaries, but owing to the discovery, by Mr. Arthur Evans, of a cemetery of the late Celtic people at Aylesford, in Kent, we are now able to speak with more certainty as to the age of other specimens, which, although exciting curiosity and admiration as to their artistic skill and difference from Roman objects, yet were not considered to be more than perhaps local or accidental vagaries of Roman art.

Mr. Evans first, I believe, called attention to most of the Celtic specimens in the Guildhall Museum, and since I have been there I have found others, in all quite enough to make a respectable group of themselves.

Although lasting such a short period, yet the art of this race in Britain rose to a high degree of development, differing, in fact, from anything even of this same period found abroad.

Their bronze articles especially show great artistic motive, unsurpassed in Roman times; in fact, it is thought

that Greek art influenced their designs, for the cult can be traced from ancient Etruria, spreading other parts of Europe to Britain: settlements have been found at La Tène in Switzerland, Hallstadt in Austria, and the British Museum has recently acquired a magnificent collection from early Gaul.

The art reached here probably through trade channels, but it shows the state of culture to which the inhabitants of Britain had attained, when it is found that they even improved on the original and developed designs of their own.

A comparison of the Celtic specimens and the Roman antiquities will show at once the great difference in the sources from which they individually came, and it also shows that when the Roman power was once established here, the native art gradually died out.

Of course transitional forms occur, showing that it was not the policy of the Romans to depopulate a conquered country (for they were excellent colonists) but to gradually assimilate the new province to themselves and so, by causing them to adopt Roman usages, to make them not only Roman in name but in manners and customs.

It would be well perhaps after this, I feel somewhat long, preamble to give a short account of the relics found in the City and its environs.

The bronze work of course stands pre-eminent. Some of it is pierced with a sort of openwork, forming a spiral pattern; other specimens are covered with devices of hatched lines, dots, circles, herring-bone pattern and other like ornaments, but the most typical are those objects having a pattern deeply incised in them, the hollows having then been filled with enamels of various colours, some of which are still bright and beautiful at the present day.

The enamelling art is mentioned by Philostratus, a Greek in the Court of Julia Domina, who says that "the barbarians who live by the ocean pour these colours on heated brass, and that they adhere, become as hard as stone and preserve the designs that are made in them."

Sir A. W. Franks considered that this statement

referred to the excellence of the British enamel work, which excited interest even in Roman times.

The fibula, being an article of dress, occurs most frequently, its distinctive feature being that the whole of it, bow, spiral, and pin, is made in one piece, and not like the Roman examples, where the pin is fastened to the body of the object by a rivet as in our modern brooch.

One enamelled fibula in the Guildhall Museum, found in Tokenhouse Yard, is in the form of a hippocamp, or sea horse. Another from London Wall has a body of circular form with enamelled cruciform design. Others have a loop at the base for the attachment of a chain; one with a portion of chain remaining is in the Museum.

There are also several in the same collection having a triangular plate at the end where the point of the pin catches into the slot; this plate is pierced with holes of various forms. In some instances there are only two holes divided by a thin wavy irregular strip of bronze. Iron fibulae also occur, but naturally rarely; however, these few instances will show that there is a high degree of artistic skill evinced even in the humble dress fastener of the Late Celtic times.

I ought perhaps to have commenced with a description of the implements of war, but I took the fibulae first, as they are more important in point of number.

The magnificent shields of the period are unfortunately extremely rare. One found in the River Witham is perhaps the finest known; it measures 3 feet 8½ inches long, is of oval form with raised ornaments composed of spirals, bosses, and other characteristic designs, covered in various places with the beautiful enamel before referred to.

This shield also has traces of an ornament, now missing, in the form of a pig; as this same device occurs frequently on British coins of this same general period, it may have been a religious symbol, or had some tribal significance. Perhaps pigs were to these people what cattle (*pecunia*) were to the early Romans, a form of barter.

A smaller shield was found in the River Thames of the same oval form decorated simply with raised spirals and

scrolls; this also had been enamelled in places, traces of which still remain.

The swords have blades of iron, with bronze sheaths and mountings; the blades taper towards the sharpened point, usually of such thin iron, unfortunately, that little remains of the blades at the present day.

The ornaments on the sheaths are very varied and artistic; engraved patterns of lozenge and other forms, raised bosses with spirals, enamel inlay, and even gold fittings, show that these barbarians, as the Romans esteemed them, had a high artistic feeling.

The Guildhall Museum possesses the blade of a sword of the ordinary form 24 inches long, found in Fenchurch Street.

The daggers show the same design in form of blade, and the decoration of the hilts and sheaths. The Museum has a curious specimen, apparently of cast-iron, which had two horned projections at the pommel end; the central tang is also prolonged, having on one side the representation of a human face, which appears to have been tooled over after casting; the other end of the grip has two similar horned projections, from between which springs the blade. It measures $13\frac{3}{4}$ inches, and was found at Southwark; a somewhat similar weapon, the hilt of cast bronze, was found in the River Witham.

The javelin and spear heads are of ordinary form, with tubular sockets. There is one, however, in the Museum, found at Lambeth, which is extremely like the ordinary leaf-shaped bronze spear-heads found so often in the Thames. It is $10\frac{1}{4}$ inches long, 3 inches wide, has a large hollow socket $\frac{1}{2}$ inch in diameter, which extends nearly to the point of the weapon, and which forms a strong mid-rib down the centre of the blade; the inside is made unusually hollow, thus strengthening its similitude to the earlier bronze spear-head from which there is strong reason to believe it was modelled.

Spear-heads have also been found in Lombard Street, London Wall, Finsbury, Moorfields, Tooley Street, Minories, Tokenhouse Yard and other places. Comparatively few arrowheads have been discovered of this period. One with leaf-shaped blade and tang for insertion into the socket of the shaft was found at Three

Cranes Wharf, and three or four of bone of varied form from the Thames are in the Museum.

The knives are usually provided with a tang and have curved blades, tapering to a sharp point, but there are two or three with solid handles, having a loop for suspension to the girdle; there is also one specimen with a portion of the wooden handle still remaining—this was found in London Wall. Two or three specimens in the museum are very similar to those found by General Pitt Rivers at Mount Caburn, near Lewes, which was a Late Celtic Camp.

The sickles are also of iron, with an open socket, which has a hole for the rivet through the centre.

There is a curious sickle-like weapon in the Museum with the curved outer edge sharp: it is a heavy implement, and has a thick blade measuring $7\frac{3}{4}$ inches long in the blade; the socket is open and pierced for two rivets; it was found in the Thames. Similar objects occurred at Mount Caburn Camp.

The Museum also possesses a portion of a gorget of bronze ornamented with rows of embossed dots, lines and herring-bone pattern, but unfortunately, as in the case of so many of the objects in the Museum, there is no locality given; I have, however, every reason to believe that it was found in London.

There is a splendid example of a spoon in the same collection, the bowl measuring $4\frac{3}{8}$ inches, is of ordinary form, hammered into shape; the handle, springing from the bowl in a V shape, terminates at each end in a closely bent spiral. It was found at Holborn Viaduct.

There are several bronze bowls and paterae in the Museum, but again no locality is assigned to any of them.¹

A torque of thin bronze was found at Moorfields in 1873, and a British coin of the same metal, of the uninscribed type found in London Wall, has been recently acquired. Hair pins of various forms were found at the

¹ Since writing this I have discovered a bronze basin of hammered work, the inside decorated with incised wavy ornament, found in Farringdon Street, from the Mayhew Collection, and the Museum has recently acquired a splendid

example of a bowl, also of hammered bronze, with flat broad rim dentated at intervals, with straight sides and a ringed base. This specimen measures $14\frac{3}{8}$ inches in diameter, is $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches high, and was found in Cheapside.

same spot, and also at Smithfield, and a razor of bronze of extremely unusual form unearthed in Tokenhouse Yard. This last specimen is interesting; it has a spud-shaped blade, sharpened at the broad edge and for a short distance up the sides. The handle shaft of the object is slender and nearly cylindrical, terminating in a flattened conical knob. It measures $5\frac{1}{2}$ inches in length.

The horn and bone implements are, as might be expected, fairly numerous; in fact, as so few undoubted Bronze Age specimens occur in the City limits, it is probable that most of the bone needles, pins, and other like objects which so frequently occur in London, especially in London Wall, are of the Late Celtic period.

An implement in the collection, from London Wall, of stag's horn, has two prongs. The basal end is cut away, and a square hole bored in the remaining portion, presumably for the insertion of a handle.

The Romans had a fork of this form in iron for raking up or loosening the soil, and called by them *capreolus*, literally a roebuck or chamois. May not the Romans have copied their implement from this earlier tool?

Two bone clubs made from the leg bones of some large animal and smoothened over a greater portion of their surface, were also found in the same place as the horn implements.

There is a curious object in the Museum found in Moorfields, consisting of a stag's horn carefully polished and trimmed to a seven-sided section, and ornamented along each face with a double ring and dot pattern incised in the horn; possibly this was some sort of ceremonial baton or staff.

There is also an ear-pick of bone, the head of which terminates in a figure of a sea-horse. There are three or four objects in the collection having this unusual ornament, which was probably symbolic and typical of this period.

The pottery is usually of a thin blackish ware, turned on the wheel and hand-polished. Some specimens occur which are hand-made and rougher in finish than the more typical specimens.

It has struck me while working at this subject that some of the Upchurch ware, figured in Jewitt's and other

books on the subject, is very Late Celtic in appearance, and as Aylesford is not far from Upchurch, I believe it is possible that the latter place was a pottery of the Late Celtic period, afterwards occupied by the Romans. It would explain a puzzling branch of the question; certainly two or three of the vases from Upchurch in Jewitt's *Ceramic Art*, cited as Roman, are represented in the Guildhall Museum by some now classed as Late Celtic. Again, some of the vases found by Mr. Arthur Evans at Aylesford have the narrow tubular base so usual in the Castor and Cologne ware. I fear we have much to learn about Roman pottery in Britain ere the matter can be satisfactorily decided; at any rate it helps to bear out the opinion that the extinction and absorption of the Late Celtic race was gradual and that its culture left strong traces in the later art of the Romans.

Pile dwellings naturally excite strong interest, being associated so much with prehistoric times, and one instinctively looks to see if any piles are found in the City. I find mention of them in Queen Victoria Street, Southwark, Lothbury, and last but not least in London Wall.

We also see that Southwark, Lothbury, and London Wall, or at least the two latter, have produced the greater number of our smaller Late Celtic objects.

The late General Pitt Rivers, who first called attention to these structures in London Wall, considered them to be Roman, but I trust I shall be forgiven for contesting the statement of so learned and cautious an archaeologist, pleading in extenuation that some of his Woodcuts and Rotherley specimens are certainly of Late Celtic type, although he calls the settlements Romano-British.

London Wall was marshland for ages, and why should not the earlier Celts, who in many parts of Europe dwelt in pile dwellings, be the first to erect these structures in the City of London? There are traces of an undoubted settlement of this period in the Thames at Hammersmith, from which I have had many interesting specimens, the most noteworthy being a bronze bowl, a horn cheek piece for a bit, pottery (more or less broken), and, most important of all, a stag's horn pick with its original wooden handle.

Now to marshal my somewhat disjointed array of facts.

I contend that the City proper was originally a settlement of Late Celtic folk, afterwards occupied and extended by the Romans.

Mr. J. E. Price in his book of the *Antiquities of the Roman period found on the site of the National Safe Deposit Company's premises* (in which book, by-the-by, he figures two or three Celtic specimens) says, "that the earlier Roman London was situated on the ground covered by the Dowgate, Wallbrook, Broad Street, Bishopsgate Without, Vintry, Cordwainers, Cheap and Coleman Street Wards."

Now on referring to the map in Mr. Price's book and also to the Guildhall Museum Catalogue, it will be noticed that, including the western portion of Langbourne Ward, this district includes the spots where most of the Late Celtic objects were found. It will also be seen that the London Wall site, probably the most important both from its position and the number of inhabitants (the last evinced by the quantity of relics found there), has yielded specimens of all the classes of objects of this period. Fibulae, pins in bronze and bone, iron implements, bone spear-heads, pottery, and a British coin are all known to have been discovered there and are now in the Guildhall Museum.

Coming to the head of the outlet of the Wallbrook, Bucklersbury, Barge Yard, and Wallbrook itself are also fairly prolific spots, most of the various types occurring there.

It will also be noted that although pottery has been found within the radius, yet that no undoubted cinerary urns occur within my limits, but that they occur regularly outside them; this goes, I contend, to support my proposition.

We know that the Romans buried their dead outside their city boundaries, and there is no reason to doubt that the early Iron people did the same; in fact, their civilisation makes it more than probable that they did so. Cinerary urns and other funereal objects have been found at St. Martin's-le-Grand and Holborn.

One found in St. Martin's-le-Grand contained, besides

the calcined bones, a bone pin, fragments of glass, vitreous matter, globular beads, and a curious bone object in the form of a flattened oval, with a pattern of dots six and five respectively on the broad faces, and four and three on two of the narrow sides; these objects had all passed through the fire.

There are naturally a few exceptions to my rule; specimens of this period have been found at other places outside the radius, but not in any considerable numbers. This may simply mark small settlements outside the main one, and not in any way affect my special argument that the City proper, within the limits mentioned above,¹ was the site of an original Late Celtic settlement, and that the Romans, after the subjugation of the people, occupied this spot in the first place, and finally, as was their custom, assimilated them and Romanised their characteristic art, ultimately extending their area to the more generally known confines of the Roman Londinium.

¹ See also map in Mr. Price's book and the Guildhall Museum Catalogue.