

ART. VI.—*Bronze Age connections between the Lake District and Ireland.* By CLARE I. FELL.

WHEN plotting the find spots of the various Irish Bronze Age types known in the Lake District, it at once became apparent that none of these types have been found within the area usually understood by the term "Lake District." All the finds were peripheral to that region, but all lay within those counties inside whose boundaries the Lake District proper is situated, namely the counties of Cumberland, Westmorland and Lancashire North of the Sands. The original title of this paper was therefore inapplicable and would better be "The connections between the Lake Counties and Ireland during the Bronze Age."

The geographical position of the Lake Counties is such that they should be studied as a single area, either from a Historical, or from an Archaeological aspect. The natural boundaries formed by the Irish Sea to the west, by the Solway and Border Esk to the north, by the crest of the Pennine Chain and by the upper Lune valley to the east, and by the sands of Morecambe Bay to the south, have always tended to make the character of the district different from those parts of England with which it comes in contact. The difference is still apparent in dialect and in customs. It seems to have originated right back in prehistoric times, when Ireland and Western Britain were affected by the Atlantic Sea Route as described by Sir Cyril Fox,* while Southern and Eastern Britain were open to continental trade and inroad via the shorter sea routes. Indeed, at any time when the western sea route

* Fox, *Personality of Britain*, pp. 17-22 and 34-35.



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PLATE I.

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was in operation one finds the differences between eastern and western Britain more clearly emphasised.

Those who know the Lake Counties well will realise how very close together are the lands around the north of the Irish Sea. On any fairly clear day the Isle of Man can be seen from the West Cumberland coast, while the hills, from Dumfries to Galloway, stand out clear and enticing across the Solway. Even Ireland itself may sometimes be seen by those who choose to climb Black Combe, or other hills on the western fringe of the Lake District. It is only, therefore, to be expected that contact, from early times, was maintained between these various shores of the Irish Sea, which are all within sight of one another.

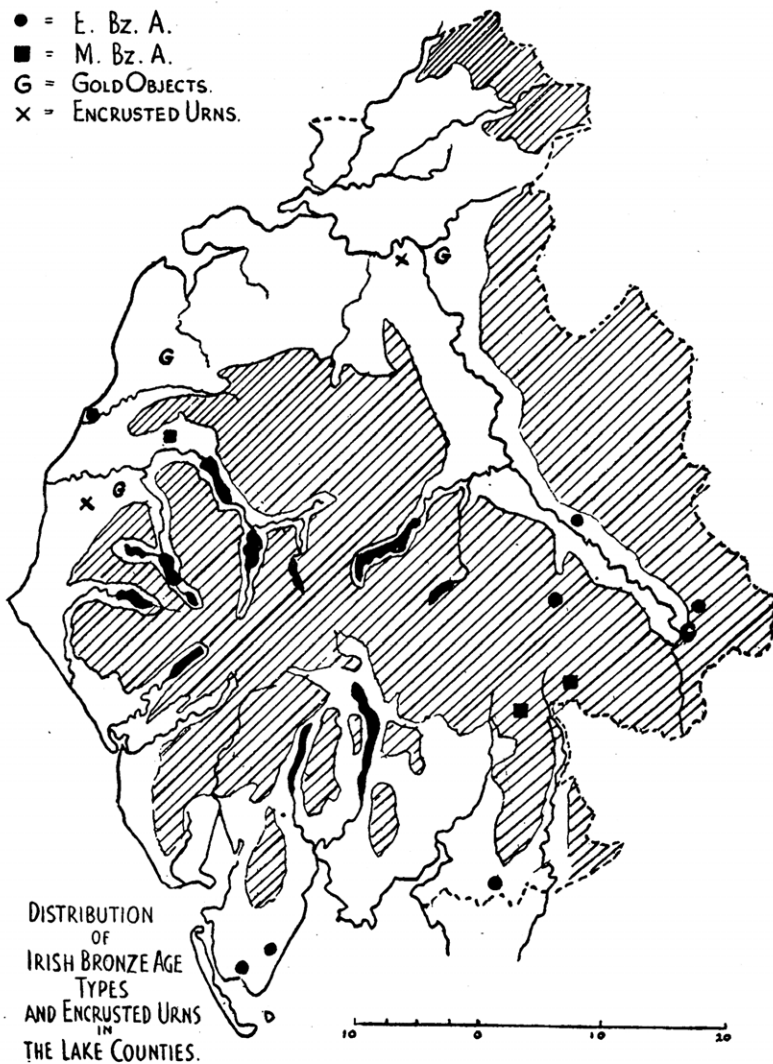
The following notes are merely of a preliminary nature. They hope to point out in which directions we may look in the future for an increase of our knowledge of the inter-relation between Ireland and the Lake Counties in the Bronze Age. They also represent an attempt to put together any existing information concerning this subject.

To start with, there are certain definitely Irish bronze and gold types which have been found in the Lake Counties. These have been plotted and appear on map 1. Of the Early Bronze Age types we have two halberds. One from Maryport (Plate I, 1, by courtesy of the British Museum), which is of O'Riordain's type 4 and is described by him as being "sufficiently Irish in type to cause one to think of it as being an Irish specimen"* The other example from Haberwyn Rigg, Crosby Ravensworth, is of type 6, of which there are more examples in England than in Ireland (Plate I, 2).† O'Riordain suggested a date of about 1800 B.C. as the beginning of the dispersal of type 4 from Ireland. Therefore our area must early have received bronzes from their Irish makers.

* *Archaeologia*, 86, 1936, p. 276 and p. 312, No. 1, Fig. 56 England 1; B.M. 1905/11/6; Ebert, *Realexicon*, Vol. IV, p. 251.

† *Archaeologia*, 86, 1936, p. 312 No. 8, Fig. 57, England 8; *Proc. Soc. Ant.*, n.s.iii, 258; Evans, *Ancient Bronze Implements*, fig. 337; B.M. W.G. 2060.

- = E. Bz. A.
- = M. Bz. A.
- G = GOLD OBJECTS.
- x = ENCRUSTED URNS.



Map 1.



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PLATE II.

Other Early Bronze Age types are also represented. An axe of Megaw and Hardy type I, with no decoration, was found at Gleaston Castle, Furness, in 1776.* Flanged axes of type III are recorded from Temple Sowerby† and from Brough-under-Stainmore in the Eden valley‡ (Plate II by courtesy of the British Museum).

The latter is beautifully decorated on the face with alternate hatched and unhatched lozenges. Very similar but undecorated examples come from Roose, near Barrow-in-Furness§ (Plate III, 1, by courtesy of the Barrow Museum), and from Whittington, Westmorland.|| These axes, though perhaps not of Irish origin, conform very closely to type III and may be local copies of the Irish type. One other Early Bronze Age type may be mentioned, namely a tanged dagger found in Helsington peat moss, 5½ inches long, with what is described as an engraved vandyke pattern at the base.¶ I cannot find an illustration, nor discover its present whereabouts. From the description it sounds suspiciously Irish.

From the distribution of these few examples, it can be seen that two main trade routes were used during the Early Bronze Age. Firstly, coastal trade and secondly, via the Solway and the Eden valley. Maryport on the north-west Cumberland coast, was probably reached by traders following the Solway. It provides a good harbour, while the river Ellen leads inland towards the limestone area not many miles away, one of the formations which provided easy settlement for people of a primitive economy. Connection with Furness and with south Westmorland may either have been made by following

* *Transactions*, o.s. xv, 161-164; Evans, *Ancient Bronze Implements*, 43; *Archaeologia*, V, p. 106, pl. vii, i; Barrow Nat. F. C. XV, p. 118. It was at Holker Hall in 1909. Present whereabouts uncertain.

† *Transactions*, o.s. xiv, 1895, p. 446, pl. II, No. 5.

‡ Evans, *Ancient Bronze Implements*, p. 53; B.M. 71. 3. 28. 75.

§ *Transactions*, o.s. xiv, p. 446; Barrow Nat. Field Club, XI, p. 96.

|| *Transactions*, n.s. xxxvi, 142, fig. 1.

¶ *Proc. Soc. Ant. N.S.* ii, p. 370; Evans, *Ancient Bronze Implements*, p. 246.

down the west Cumberland coast, or by way of the Isle of Man.* Two axes of type I are recorded from the island. It is again the limestone areas of Furness and south Westmorland which seem to have been most densely populated during the Bronze Age.

The second route, via the Eden valley, is probably of more far reaching importance. Firstly, it leads inland with hills of limestone only four or five miles distant from either bank. Higher up the valley, these hills approach the river far more closely. The considerable population established there, will to a certain extent, have attracted this early trade. In addition, the valley provided a direct link with the north-east coasts and, in turn, with Scandinavia. The Tyne gap and the route over Stainmore, both seem to have been used at an early date. The connexion with the Northern Continent in Mesolithic and in Neolithic times,† as pointed out by Childe and Piggott, continued in the Bronze Age. This point has also been emphasised by Dr. Mahr in his Presidential address to the Prehistoric Society.‡ Here he said "I believe that the implantation of the megalithic conceptions even in distant Scandinavia, not linked up with the western Atlantic world by a chain of promontories and islands (as existed between Galicia and the Orkneys) and right across the tempestuous North Sea, is never explicable if the descendants of the Forest people to the west of the North Sea and their distant cousins to the east of it did not continue to be conscious of their old relationship and keep up more intercourse than we are so far able to see."§ Thus we find the Eden valley and its tributary the Irthing forming possible links in the route between Ireland and Scandinavia in the Early Bronze Age. It was certainly by these routes that the

* *Proc. Prehist. Soc.*, 1938, p. 300, fig. 8.

† *Journal Royal Anth. Inst.*, 1931, p. 325ff. Childe; *Arch. Journ.*, 88, 1931, 67-158. Piggott.

‡ *Proc. Prehist. Soc.*, 1937.

§ *Ibid.*, Vol. III, ii, pp. 323-4.



PLATE III. 1.

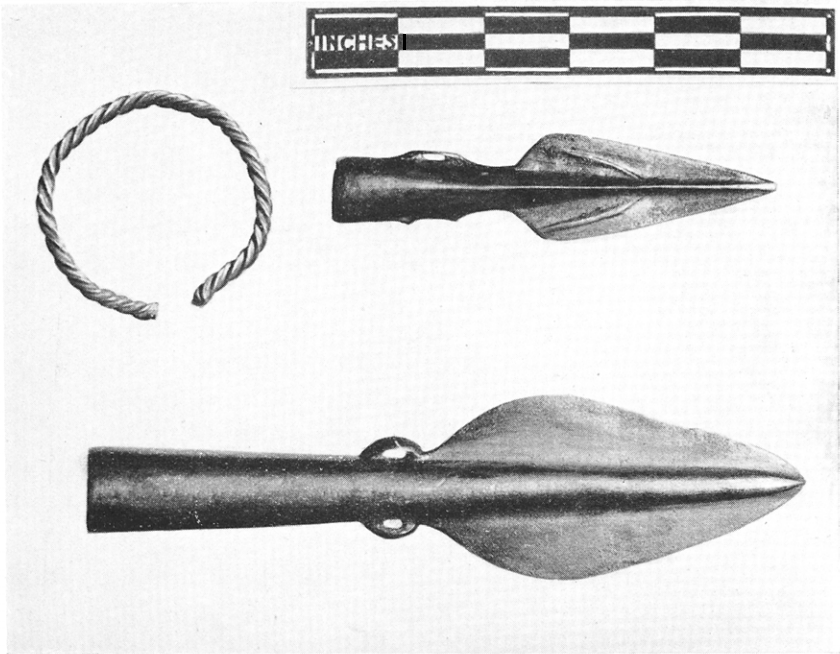


PLATE III. 2.

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Beaker people made their way into the district from Yorkshire or Northumberland at this time.

Turning to the Middle Bronze Age, we find that the same routes were still in use. (See Map 1). Two typically Irish looped spear-heads, Greenwell type III, occur. One from Blindbothel, near Cockermouth, has not previously been published (Plate III, 2, left, by the courtesy of the Director of the Carlisle Museum). A very similar example was found at Whinfell Tarn, a few miles north-east of Kendal, and is privately owned.* The former will have reached Blindbothel up the Derwent from Workington, while the latter may either represent penetration far up the Eden valley and down the upper Lune, or may have come up the Kent from Morecambe Bay. Other spearheads with loops on the sockets, but with leaf-shaped blades, are recorded from Whitbarrow,† Caldbeck‡ and a new and unrecorded find from near Penrith. A broad, leaf-shaped example, with large circular loops, comes from Tebay Fell (Plate III, 2, right),§ while a stone mould from Croglin on our north-west boundary, exhibits both loops and a peg hole.|| All these latter spear-heads may be of Late Bronze Age date, as they have been shown by Estyn Evans to represent the transition between type III and the socketed Late Bronze Age variety.¶ Similar types occur in Ireland, while the retention of the method of casting in stone moulds is also a feature of Irish metallurgy. The retention of Irish methods and perhaps of Irish craftsmen, demonstrates the continued connection with Ireland of this part of

* *Transactions*, n.s. v, 184-185, fig. 5; *Proc. Soc. Ant.*, n.s. XII, p. 22ff. Owned by H. S. Cowper, esq., High House, Hawkshead.

† *Transactions*, n.s. xxi, p. 273.

‡ W. G. Collingwood, *Lake District History*, p. 7, fig. facing.

§ *Transactions*, o.s. xii, 57; *Proc. Soc. Ant.*, n.s. XIII, 349; Evans, *Archaeologia* 83, p. 193.

|| *Transactions*, o.s. vii, 279ff.; cf. Evans, *Ancient Bronze Implements*, fig. 411.

¶ E. Evans, *Archaeologia*, 83, p. 192-3.

England well on into the Bronze Age. Two twisted gold armlets, also of middle Bronze Age date have been found at Winton, near Kirkby Stephen* (Plate III, 2, lower), and at Eaglesfield near Cockermouth. The latter was found while quarrying limestone and was sold to a watchmaker in Cockermouth.†

The flanged axe from Roose, the dagger from Helsington Moss, and the spear-heads from Deep Moss, Tebay Fell, and from Blindbothel, are all recorded as having been found under the modern peat. These finds make it all the more desirable that the method of pollen analysis, as an aid to dating, should be applied to this, as well as to other areas hitherto not dealt with. The importance of this new method or research as demonstrated by the work of the Fenland Research Committee in Cambridge and by the Committee of Quaternary Research in Ireland, cannot be over-emphasised.

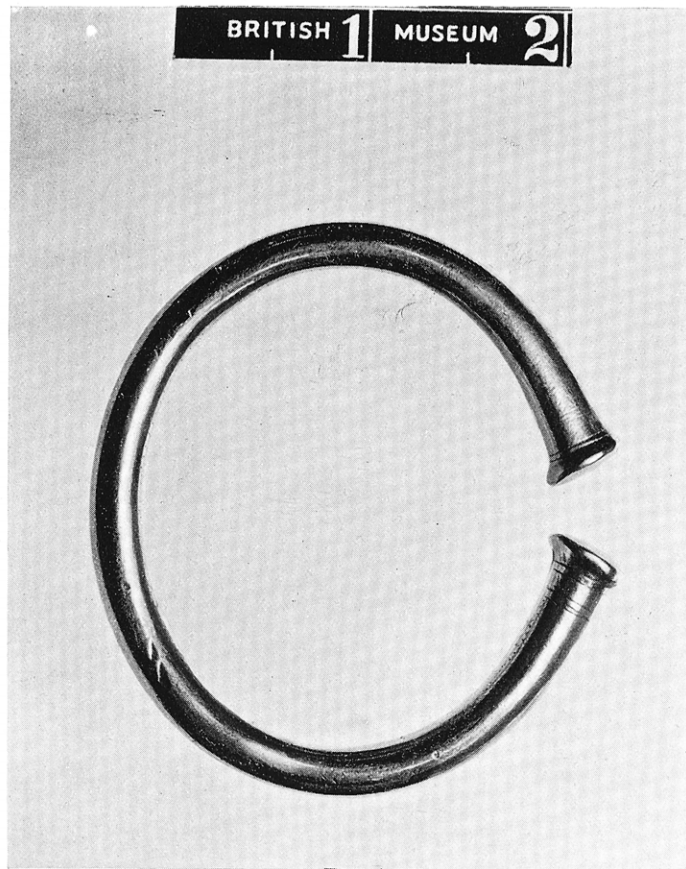
Finally, in the Late Bronze Age, connexion still seems to have been maintained. (See Map 1). Some of the foregoing spearheads may well date from this period. Two gold finds are known. One pennanular armlet, with broadened ends, was found at Aspatria in 1828.‡ It is plain except for four parallel engraved lines encircling the wire at either end near the broadened ends. There is also a row of tiny punch marks on the inner surface (Plate IV, 1, by the courtesy of the British Museum). Three armlets of a similar type were found at Hayton, near Brampton, in about 1796 when removing a bank of sand and gravel. They were sold to a dealer in Carlisle.§ No characteristic diminutive socketed axes of Irish type have been found here, though a small example

* *Transactions*, o.s. xi, 98; *Proc. Soc. Ant. N.S.* XII, 322.

† *Transactions*, o.s. iii, 343.

‡ *Arch. Aeliana*, o.s. iii, p. 269; *Archaeologia*, XXII, p. 439; *Ant. Journ.*, VI, p. 59.

§ *Vic. County Hist., Cumb.*, Vol. I, 233; *Hutchinson, Cumberland*, I, p. 151. References thanks to Miss Chitty.



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PLATE IV. 1.



PLATE IV. 2.

from Stone Close, Stainton in Furness is not unlike them.*

The difference in the distribution from that of the foregoing periods suggests that intercourse now became concentrated with the Eden valley and the north-west Cumberland coastal area. From the map by Chitty and Fox,† showing the distribution of gold objects of the Late Bronze Age, it can be seen that the Tyne route and that over Stainmore were being used, while the eastern shores of the Irish Sea, from St. Bees Head to the Mersey, are bare of finds. It seems that the coastal trade in this area dwindled in the Late Bronze Age. The Furness District was definitely in touch with Yorkshire at this time, probably by way of the Aire gap, as seen in the axe with square socket from Urswick. This source of bronze implements may have cut out the Irish traders.

So much for the distribution of types. Let us turn towards the cultural connexions. Connexion at an early date has already been suggested by Mahr.‡ He suspects several of our west Cumberland sites of being connected with his Riverford people of Ireland. Recent finds on Walney Island would also suggest that the Bann River culture should be looked for here. A small, broken point with a tang made in similar technique to the larger tanged points from the Bann area, shows a very suspicious similarity to that culture. As it was strongly established in the Isle of Man,§ there is no reason why its influence should not have reached the western fringe of the Lake counties. The Megalithic movement, coming by the Atlantic route affected all the shores around the Irish Sea, though its contact does not appear to have been so strong here as it was in Ireland, Wales and Scotland. So far, the megaliths of the Lake Counties have been somewhat

* N. Lonsdale Mag., Vol. I, 1896, p. 91 and plate.

† Fox, *Personality of Britain*, Map, fig. 20.

‡ *Proc. Prehist. Soc.*, 1937, p. 310.

§ *Ibid.* 1935, p. 74-75.

deserted, except for the stone circles and so called henge monuments. It is to be hoped that, under the Committee for Prehistoric studies formed by the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society, information may soon be forthcoming which will enable a clearer view of relation between the megalithic cultures in these areas to be made.

The rarity of food vessels in the Lake Counties will not permit the supposition that these types originated here and passed hence to Ireland. If this area had any cultural effect on Ireland at this time, it was merely to transmit from Yorkshire and Northumberland pottery forms created there. Connexion between Ireland and Yorkshire at this time is well demonstrated in Megaw and Hardy's distribution map of decorated axes.* It is only natural that influence, or immigration, flowed also in the inverse direction. It is surprising that the Irish bowl type of food vessel is not represented in the Lake Counties, but the connexions between Ireland and Scotland seem, at this time, to have been even more close.

As Dr. Mahr re-stated in his presidential address to the Prehistoric Society in 1937 (p. 391), in the Late Bronze Age all the existing cultural currents were reversed. Ireland, instead of creating and diffusing new types, now received and modified them. These new types came by the Tyne gap and over Stainmore and up the Eden valley. They also came into the Furness District by the Aire gap. The only two hoards recorded in the Lake Counties come from the south of this area. As well as new bronze types, new pottery types appear. In the Highland Zone these are the encrusted urn and the hooped variety of cinerary urn. Sir Cyril Fox in his paper on encrusted urns,† suggested that the limited distribution of the type in Ireland pointed to their having come with colonists from Wigtown, or

* *Ibid.*, 1938, p. 280-281, figs. 7, 8, 9.

† *Ant. Journ* VII, 2.

Arran, or the Cumberland coast. He considers that the movement came from Yorkshire over the Tyne gap to Cumberland and on from there via the Solway to Ireland, and the Isle of Man. He quotes Irish examples to compare with the two Cumberland specimens, which were found at Branthwaite,† and at Aglionby, near Carlisle (Plate IV, 2, by the courtesy of the Director of the Carlisle Museum). It is interesting to note that the Late Bronze Age gold bracelets, found not far from both these examples, clearly show that contact between these areas and Ireland existed and that the cultural interplay, was, in all probability, mutual.

Of settlement sites, little can be said for lack of excavation. Two sandhill sites, recently recorded, should be noted. One on the north end of Walney Island,* and the other at Eskmeals on the Cumberland coast.† Both sites are among the sand dunes on the 25 foot raised beach. The finds suggest that the settlements were seasonal and continued over a long period. It was at Walney that the suspiciously Bann River type of point was found. Sandhill sites along the Solway (e.g. Glen Luce)‡ and in north-west Ireland, such as Grangemore, Portrush, Bushmills and others* belong to a similar period. Dr. Mahr has suggested that sandhills sites in Ireland may represent an economic symbiosis with his Riverford people.†

In conclusion, it is interesting to study the distribution of flint in the Lake Counties (Map 2). No flint occurs naturally in this area, though chert from the limestone, and slate, both of which are suitable for implements, are common. Both were used, as recorded by Greenwell* and

* Abercromby, *Bronze Age Pottery*, No. 498, pl. XCVII, p. 54.

† *Ant. Journ.*, 1927, VII, No. 2, Pl. XX, 4.

‡ *Transactions*, N.S. xxxviii.

§ *Ibid.*, xxxvi.

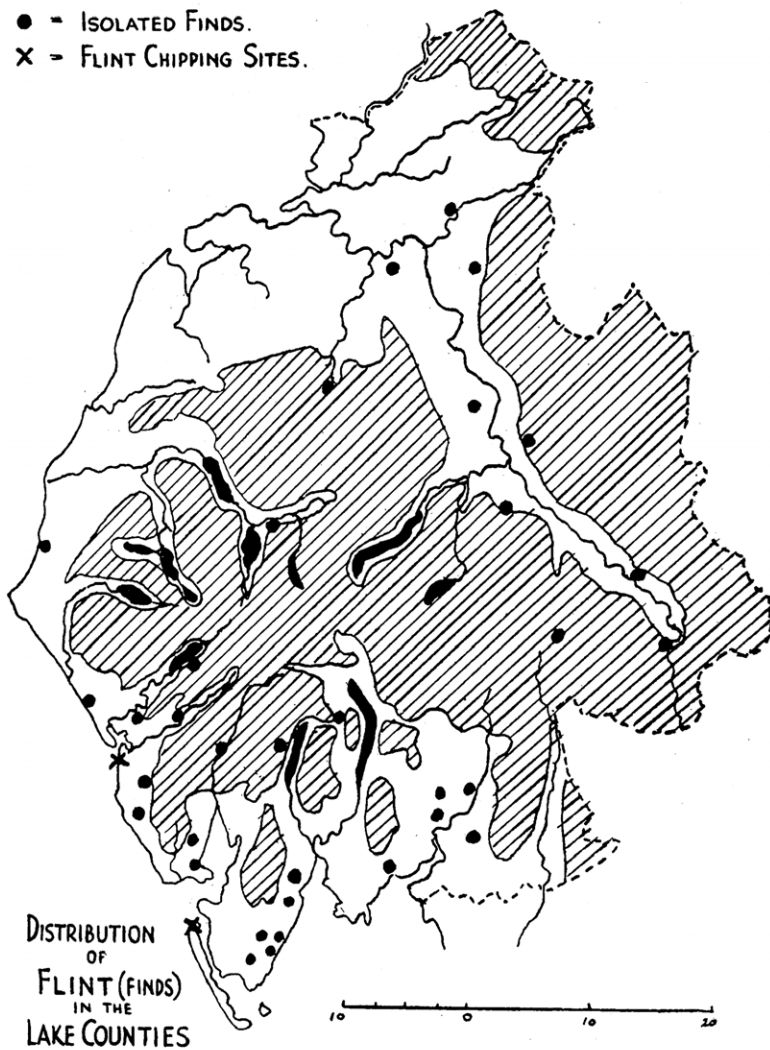
|| *Proc. Soc. Ant. Scot.*, LXVII, 291.

¶ *Journ., Royal Soc. Ant.*, Ireland, 1935 and 1936, L. M. Hewson.

** *Proc. Prehist. Soc.*, Vol. III, p. 336.

†† Greenwell, *British Barrows*, Barrow CLXXIV, nr. Crosby Ravensworth.

- = ISOLATED FINDS.
X = FLINT CHIPPING SITES.



Map 2.

as recently found at Walney, while most of the polished axes must have been made of local stone. The markedly coastal distribution points to two possibilities

- (a) That the flint occurs as pebbles on the beach.
- (b) That the flint was imported. Being of a westerly distribution, the nearest source would be Antrim.

The small size of the cores, scrapers and arrow-heads from the sandhill sites and the waterworn appearance of some of the cores, suggests that they were washed up from the sea, resulting from the denudation of some flint bearing chalk formation. However, Dr. Dunham of the Geological Survey, who has recently been studying the Furness District, and was conversant with the Walney Site, strongly affirmed that the flints were imported. To substantiate his theory he emphasised that all the flints at Walney occur on the top of the 25 foot raised beach. If they had been washed up by the sea, they would have been incorporated in the beach at different levels. The frequent occurrence of flint at widely scattered points on the coasts of the Irish Sea, and the small size of the tools from these sites, suggests that the material available was poor, probably sea-worn pebbles. However, certain flakes which have been found on the west coasts of the Lake counties are too large to have been likely to have been struck from water-worn pebbles. One from Harrington Mill measured six by three inches;* another from Seascale was $3\frac{1}{8}$ inches long,† while an unpublished flake from Urswick Stone Walls was slightly longer. Thus, it will appear that some better class flint reached these shores. The colour of the flint varies from a rich reddish brown to a pale blossom-honey colour and is very similar to Antrim flint. Flint is known to have been exported from Antrim from pre-neolithic times to Scotland‡ and

* *Transactions*, N.S., xxxv, p. 178.

† *Ibid.*, xxxviii.

‡ *Proc. Soc. Ant.*, Scotland, LVI, 1921-22.

later.* Hoards of Antrim flint have been found under the peat at Portpatrick.† Similar finds in Ireland prove that flint was widely traded within that country. It may well be that it was traded with the inhabitants of the Lake Counties. The other flint finds in this district come from the Eden valley. Here they are of less frequent occurrence than on the coast. The flint here is obviously imported, though it may only be from the west Cumberland coast. Two other sources are equally possible, firstly Antrim and secondly Yorkshire. As the Beakers came over from Yorkshire and as a Beaker flint dagger was found at Irthington,‡ it is probable that some, at any rate, of the flint in the Eden valley, came from Yorkshire.

From these notes it can be seen that both trade and cultural relations existed between the Lake Counties and Ireland throughout the Bronze Age. It is to be hoped that further investigation will tend to make this connection more clear.

* *Proc. Prehist. Soc.*, 1937, p. 337.

† *Proc. Soc. Ant.*, Scotland, 62, p. 173.

‡ Evans, *Ancient stone Implements*, 316.