

## IRON WORKING AND IRON AGE ARTIFACTS.

### 1. The Archaeology of Sussex by E. C. Curwen, Methuen, 1937.

#### Extract from Chapter IX, The Iron Age.

In Asia Minor iron had been known and worked at least as early as 2000 B.C. The working of ores was already known at a very early date, but seldom practised. In general the earliest iron objects were made from meteoric iron, the 'metal from heaven', which contains a large proportion of nickel, and which was so costly that a Hittite tablet gives its value as at least six times its weight in silver. Iron appears to have been first mined in Asia Minor, and when the Hittite Empire collapsed about 1200 B.C. the knowledge of its working was spread far and wide by such wandering peoples as the Philistines, who introduced it to Palestine at about that time. Even in Homer, who deals with a period which should be within a few years after 1200 B.C., weapons and armour were still normally of bronze, while iron was rarely used for small tools and was still of sufficient value to be awarded as a prize, like gold or silver.

Beyond the confines of these ancient Empires the knowledge of iron travelled slowly, for the iron sword did not appear in the Eastern Alps before 900 B.C., and it was about 500 B.C. before the new metal became established in Britain. How early it began to appear in our own country is uncertain; chemical analysis of the whetstones found in the Late Bronze Age settlements on Plumpton Plain hints at the possibility of iron tools having been used on them. While, however, the Late Bronze Age was in some ways culturally akin to the Iron Age rather than to the Middle Bronze Age, our Iron Age proper begins with the popularization of iron about 500 B.C. by another wave of immigrants from the Continent.

### 2. South West England by Aileen Fox, Thames & Hudson, 1964.

#### Extract from Chapter VII, The Celtic Peoples.

The first Celtic peoples differed little in their way of life from the Bronze Age agriculturists.....  
..... They brought, however, to this region (Devon & Cornwall) the knowledge of iron-working which had eluded the metalworkers at Dean Moor. The process differs from that of tin and copper smelting in that the metal has to be extracted from the ore in two stages; the first smelt produces only a spongy bloom that is full of impurities; it has then to be reheated, hammered on an anvil and quenched to purify, toughen and consolidate the metal. In the metalworker's hut at Kestor the dual process was in evidence; there was a small bowl furnace full of iron slag, the residue from the last smelt, a forging-pit burnt red, a quenching place with a drain and an anvil stone. The ore used was a specular haematite from the Pennock district ten miles away. The new metal thus produced was malleable; tools and weapons no longer had to be cast and were easier to produce and to repair.

3. The Lake-Villages of Somerset (Glastonbury and Meare) by A. Bulleid  
The Glastonbury Antiquarian Society, 1924.

Extract from Relics: Objects of Bronze, Tin, Lead and Iron, I.

The greatest number of iron objects found in a single swelling was in Mound V (Glastonbury), which produced fifteen specimens, and it is a noteworthy fact that the remains of a furnace for smelting was discovered on the fifth floor of this mound. Associated with this furnace was crucibles, and part of a tuyère or baked clay funnel used in conducting air from the bellows. Similar relics were discovered on the second floor of Mound LXII. This dwelling-site produced six objects of iron, including two bill-hooks, and there was distinct evidence that it was destroyed by fire. Pieces of iron slag were found on three dwelling-sites