

## **BRONZE AGE (2000 – 500 BC )**

It was not until at least 4000 yrs after the first people settled on the island in 7000 BC that there is any evidence to suggest artistic activity for its own sake in Ireland. The Stone Age people decorated their tombs with a variety of patterns, but it would seem that these were for religious rather than artistic reasons. It was at the onset of the Bronze Age that art and craftsmanship as we know it can be said to have begun. The Bronze Age started around 2000BC and lasted until 500 BC.

**BRONZE AGE PERIODS :** The Bronze Age is divided into three phases.

**Early** 2000BC – 500BC.

**Middle** 1500 – 1200 BC.

**Late** 1200 – 500 BC.

### **The Beaker people:**

During the period up to 2000 BC a style of pottery and metalwork which developed in central Europe found its way to Ireland through travel and trade. These people are often referred to as the Beaker people. They buried their dead in wedge shaped tombs and they were named after drinking vessels resembling beakers that were found in their burial sites. Population in the country continued to increase and trade between neighbouring communities improved although some inter tribal wars also occurred.

### **Metal:**

The raw material needed for the new skill of metalworking was readily available in the hills of Ireland. Copper was found in Cork and Kerry, silver in Tipperary and gold was panned from the streams and rivers in the Wicklow hills.

### **Extracting ore from rock:**

Bronze Age miners used a series of steps to retrieve the mineral ore from the rock. They lit a fire to expand the substance of the rock. They then threw cold water over the rock. The quick cooling of the rock caused it to shatter. Stone tools were employed to break down the pieces of rock further. The small fragments of rock and mineral ore were then smelted down to free the metal. (Smelted- heated to extract pure metal ) The most valuable of the objects created were ornaments, which became increasingly more ornate and beautiful as the Bronze Age civilisations progressed in expertise.



# CONNECTING STONE AGE TO BRONZE AGE

## Decoration and materials

**Stone age motifs** – abstract, freehand and elaborate

**Bronze age motifs** – Simple and geometric decoration

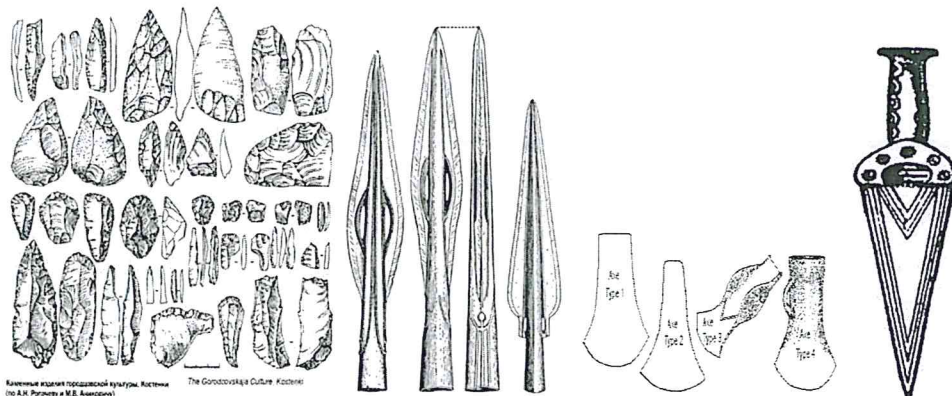
The Stone age ended when people found out how to make things from metals such as copper and gold.

Tin and Copper = Bronze ( This was the first material that could be moulded into any desired shape- it was much stronger than stone.

This made it possible to make better and more sophisticated tools and weapons from this new material ( bronze ). The Bronze Age saw a marked increase in the manufacture of weapons that were specifically designed to kill human beings.

Weapons and tools included – Axe heads, spear heads, daggers, Halberd blades and awls.

Stone age tools                      Spear heads                      Axe heads                      Daggers

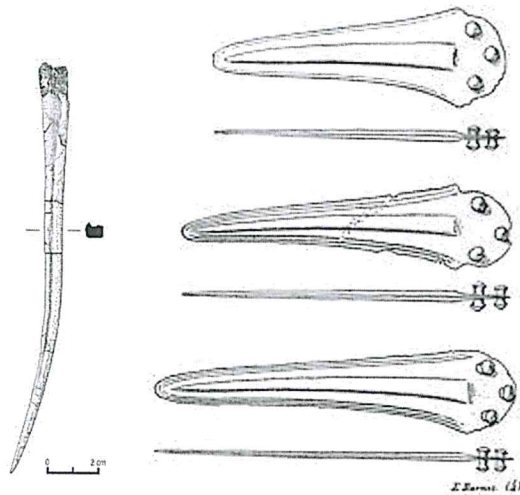


**Awl:** pointed tool for making holes warfare. rivet holes were

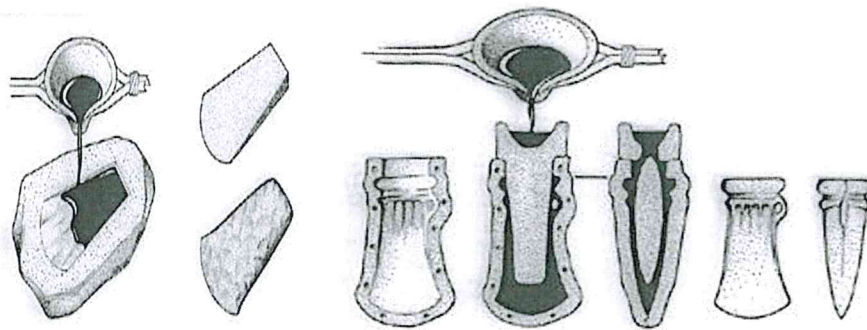
**Halberd blades:** weapons for

In other materials such as leather and wood. wood or antlers )

Used to secure handles ( made from



## MOULDS FOR MAKING TOOLS AND WEAPONS



**Flat stone mould:** pouring bronze into hollowed out stone.

**Hollow stone mould:** two part moulds replaced these two stones put together and metal poured into a gap at the top.

## **Bronze Age Keywords**

<p><b>Objects</b></p> <p><i>Pottery</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Vessels</i></li> </ul> <p><i>Weapons</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Shields</i></li> <li>• <i>Tools</i></li> <li>• <i>Trumpets</i></li> <li>• <i>Axe heads</i></li> </ul> <p><i>Jewellery</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Gold Lunula</i></li> <li>• <i>Gold Discs</i></li> <li>• <i>Torcs</i></li> <li>• <i>Armlets</i></li> <li>• <i>Fibula/Dress Fastner</i></li> <li>• <i>Ear Spools</i></li> <li>• <i>Lock-rings</i></li> <li>• <i>Gorgetts</i></li> <li>• <i>Bulla</i></li> </ul>	<p><b>Background</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Beaker</i></li> <li>• <i>Bronze</i></li> <li>• <i>Gold</i></li> <li>• <i>Alluvial</i></li> <li>• <i>Bishopsland Phase</i></li> <li>• <i>Dowris Phase</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>Function</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Decorative/ Ornamental purposes</i></li> <li>• <i>Status</i></li> </ul> <p><i>Special ceremonial rituals</i></p>	<p><b>Technique</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Incision</i></li> <li>• <i>Repoussé</i></li> <li>• <i>Ribbon Twisting</i></li> <li>• <i>Flange Twisting</i></li> <li>• <i>Casting</i></li> <li>• <i>Soldering</i></li> <li>• <i>Punching</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>Decoration</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Raised circles and dots</i></li> <li>• <i>Hatched triangles</i></li> <li>• <i>Chevrons</i></li> <li>• <i>Concentric circles.</i></li> <li>• <i>Cruciform motif</i></li> <li>• <i>Soldered fine gold wires</i></li> <li>• <i>Geometric</i></li> <li>• <i>Abstract</i></li> <li>• <i>Rope moulding.</i></li> </ul>	<p><b>Materials</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Alluvial</i></li> <li>• <i>Gold</i></li> <li>• <i>Bronze</i></li> <li>• <i>Copper</i></li> <li>• <i>Tin</i></li> <li>• <i>Lead</i></li> </ul>