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# SUSSEX IN THE BRONZE AGE.

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## INTRODUCTION.

IT has been said by Lord Abercromby that during the Bronze Age "nearly all the material civilisation and metallic wealth of Great Britain are confined to the territory lying south of the Thames" (*Bronze Age Pottery*, Vol. II., p. 36). It is not surprising, therefore, that Sussex alone has yielded a considerable number of bronze implements, nearly five hundred of which are at present in various museums and private collections, chiefly, it is gratifying to know, in the county.

These implements, and other articles of Bronze Age, will be described in due course, but before doing so it is well to review briefly the geography and climate of Bronze Age Sussex, in the light of the prevailing theories and with the help of the small amount of evidence at present available.

*The Chalk Cliffs* from Brighton to Beachy Head certainly extended a short distance further south than they do now, but probably not more than a mile or two.

*The Submerged Forests*, which exist along the coast in various areas between the Isle of Wight and Hastings, are at present of unknown date. Clement Reid, in his interesting book *Submerged Forests*, suggested that they were submerged before the beginning of the Bronze Age, and his suggestion was based partly upon his view that nothing of Bronze Age had ever been found in them. The stone axe-hammer found in the Southampton Dock submerged forest was at that time (about 1912) regarded by many authorities as

## PART I.—THE EARLY BRONZE AGE.

## A. THE BEAKER FOLK.

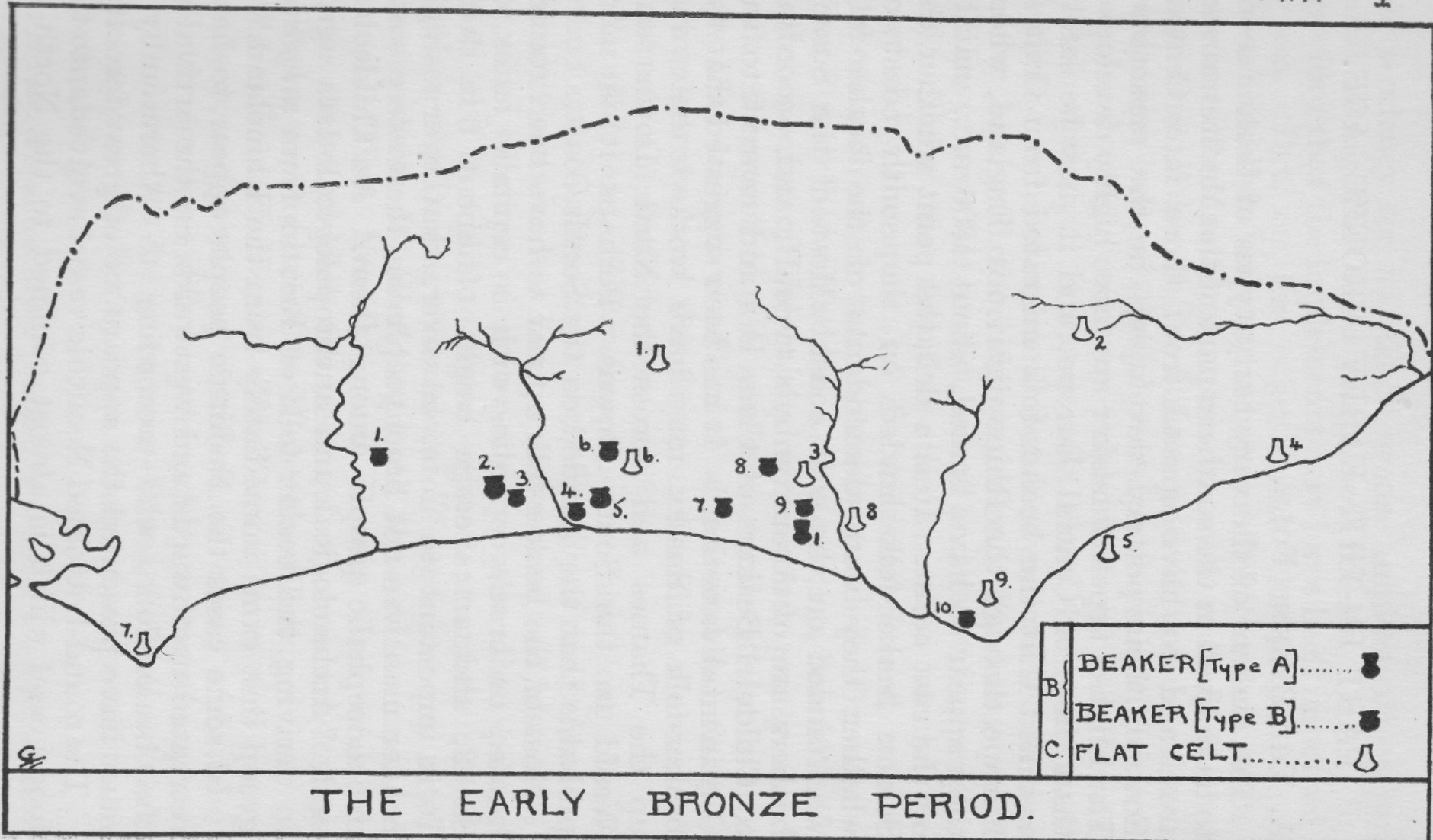
The makers of the very early types of beaker seem to have lived in the southern part of the Mediterranean area, and to have spread from there into Central Europe, their pottery developing in the meantime. The English types of beaker are more highly developed than those of Central Europe, and it may be safely assumed that the beaker-folk migrated from Central Europe through the Rhine district to England, where they appear to have landed, about 1800 B.C., mainly on the east coast. It is a debated point whether the Sussex beaker-folk landed on the south coast or whether they were descendants of the beaker-folk who landed on the east coast. Most of the Sussex beakers are of Abercromby's type B; and, according to Childe, "Beakers of Class B stand nearest to the Continental varieties." It has been suggested that the beaker-folk of Sussex may have worked their way up the Thames and across the North Downs and Weald to the South Downs. Perhaps it is more probable that they landed on the South Coast.

Most of the beaker-folk appear to have been round-headed or brachycephalic, with a cephalic index of 80-82, and an average height of about 5 ft. 9 in. It is important to note, however, that every single beaker man was not brachycephalic; there were some dolichocephalic people among them. As Childe has said, "Archæological and anthropological data agree in deriving the beaker-folk of Britain from a *hybrid*<sup>2</sup> group that came immediately from the Rhineland."

In some cases the Neolithic people appear to have retreated northwards and westwards on the arrival of the beaker-folk, who—according to Abercromby—must have presented the appearance of great ferocity.

The round-bottomed Neolithic vessel evolved into the food-vessel which is almost confined to the North of

<sup>2</sup> Italics mine.



England, scarcely any undoubted examples having been found in the Southern Counties, and none—so far as I am aware—in Sussex. (See, however, *S.A.C.*, Vol. LXIII., p. 8, and Vol. LXXI., p. 242; also Abercromby's *B. A. Pottery* for a doubtful example from the Black Burgh.)

But in other instances the Neolithic and Bronze Age folk mingled, and this was the case with some at least of the Sussex folk. Thus in a flint-mine shaft at Cissbury was found a skeleton of a woman, which—according to Rolleston—suggested a first cross between two races; and Mr. J. H. Pull found a skull in a grave near Blackpatch which Sir A. Keith regards as a first cross between the Long and Round Barrow races. (See *Sussex County Herald*, 5th December, 1930. J. H. Pull's article.)

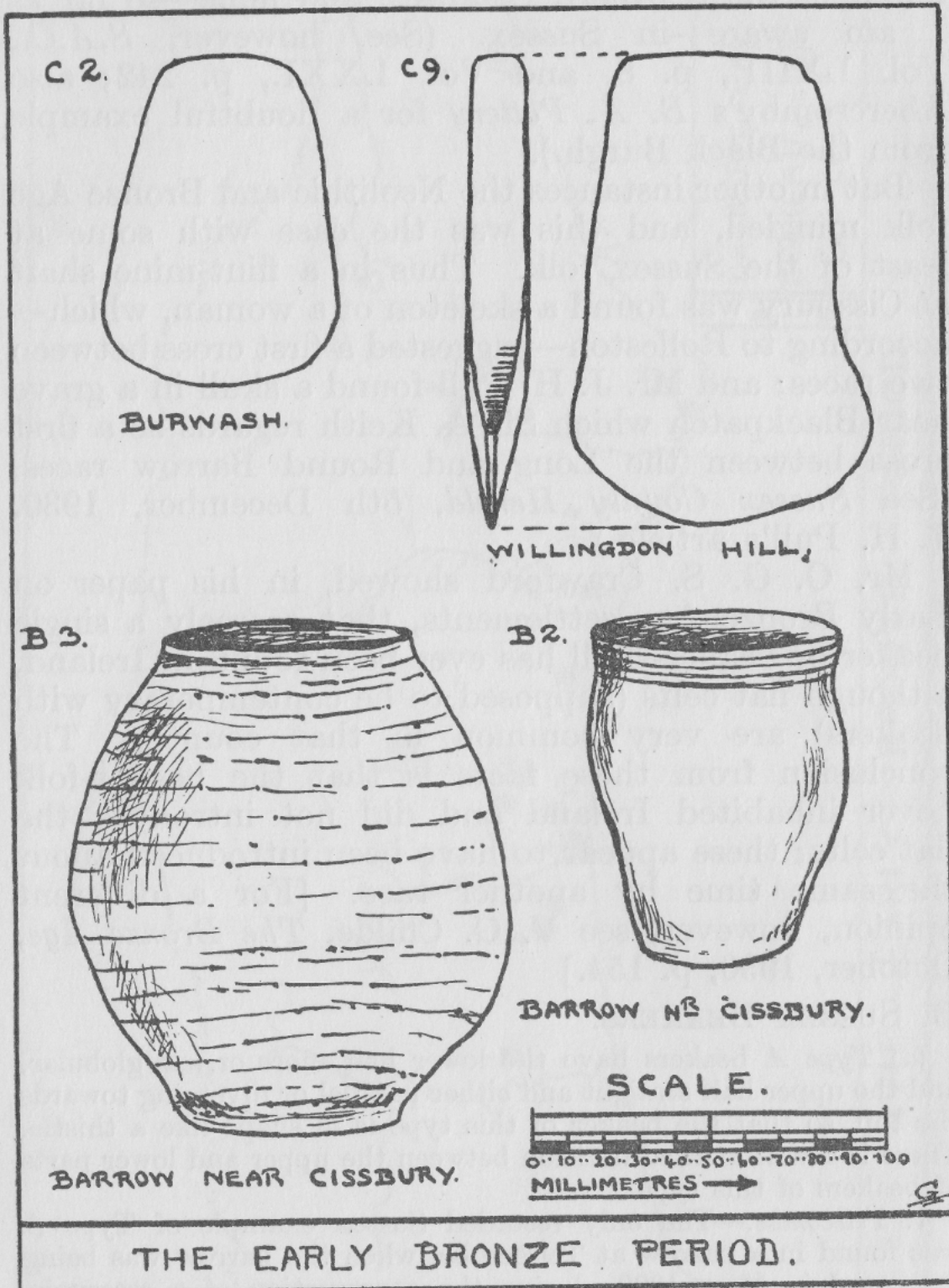
Mr. O. G. S. Crawford showed, in his paper on Early Bronze Age settlements, that scarcely a single beaker or beaker-skull has ever been found in Ireland, although flat celts (supposed to be contemporary with beakers) are very common in that country. The conclusion from these facts is that the beaker-folk never inhabited Ireland and did not introduce the flat celts; these appear to have been introduced about the same time by another race. [For a different opinion, however, see V. G. Childe, *The Bronze Age*, October, 1930, p. 154.]

## B. SUSSEX BEAKERS.

(a) *Type A* beakers have the lower half more or less globular, and the upper half straight and either parallel or diverging towards the top, so that the beaker of this type is in shape like a thistle. There is a well-marked division between the upper and lower parts of beakers of this type.

1. *Telscombe*.—The only recorded Sussex example of Type A was found in a barrow at Telscombe, when the barrow was being destroyed in May, 1909, during the construction of a reservoir. The type of the barrow does not appear to be known for certain, though it was doubtless of the usual "bowl" variety. The upper half of the beaker is cylindrical and the lower half globose, and the whole is richly ornamented with a twisted cord. The beaker is now in private hands, but a photograph is in Brighton Museum. With the vessel was a contracted skeleton.

## PLATE I.



(b) *Type B* beakers are more or less globular with a gently curved rim, and there is no hard and fast distinction between the upper and lower parts. The upper part is also much smaller than in type A. But there are many variants of type B.

*Results of Prof. C. H. Desch's Analyses.*

FLAT CELTS.				
	Pevensey (?)	St. John's Common	South Heighton.	Saddles- combe
Copper ..	89·15%	88·00%	99·80%	86·58%
Tin ..	10·59%	11·23%	0·19%	11·58%
Lead ..	—	Trace.	—	—
Iron ..	Trace	0·117%	Trace	Trace
Nickel ..	0·10%	0·08%	Trace	—

The figures do not add up to 100, as there was a little oxidation.

From the above figures it is noted that the South Heighton celt was almost of pure copper.

In the British Museum is a flat celt labelled as of copper from Burwash; a copper celt from Ore is in Hastings Museum; and in the collection of Rev. F. G. Walker at Upton Lovel is a flat celt found near Eastbourne which appears to be of copper, though it has not been analysed. I am much indebted to Rev. F. G. Walker for lending me this implement for examination, and in Plate I. (c. 9) is an illustration of this primitive type of flat axe. My thanks are also due to Mr. H. D. Roberts, M.B.E., Director of the Brighton Museum, and to the Council of the Sussex Archæological Society, for loan of implements for analysis.

(b) FLAT CELTS.

1. *Burgess Hill* (St. John's Common).—Lower part of celt, expanding at cutting-edge. Now in Lewes Museum. Literature: *Geog. Jour.*, Sept., 1912.

2. *Burwash*.—Small celt with straight sides. Labelled as of copper. Now in British Museum (See Plate I., c. 2).

3. *Lewes*.—Flat celt, found 1870. In collection of Mrs. H. Knowles, 49, Shakespeare Road, Hanwell.

4. *Ore, near Hastings*.—Straight-sided celt, of copper, according to the British Assoc. Catalogue of Bronze Implements. In Hastings Museum (Butterfield Collection).