Exquisite things and everyday treasures: interpreting deposition in the bog

**Introduction: things in bogs**

Having conjured a sense of what people were doing in bogs, what they took from them and some of the experiences they had while doing so, this chapter turns to what they left there. If we are to understand the presence of bog bodies they need to be situated within the range of other non-human objects, materials and substances that people lowered into the moss (Burmeister 2013). A few of these served as wrappings or accoutrements to the human remains but most of them were stand-alone deposits in their own right: things given up out of life, to be placed beyond the human ‘grip’, as Fontijn (2020: 58) puts it. The examples that follow are drawn explicitly from bog sites, yet of course these were situated within other wetland deposits from rivers, lakes and springs, as well as dryland deposits in pits, ditches and caves. These comparative examples are well reviewed in Aldhouse-Green (2002), as are the shrines and sanctuaries of late Iron Age/early Roman Britain and Gaul. However, the purpose of this chapter is to focus more explicitly on the bog as a distinctive realm of deposition. The examples given are not exhaustive; they offer a mere sample of Iron Age and early Roman deposits from northern European bogs. They are grouped thematically to show the range and breadth of materials and artefacts left purposefully in the peat. Wherever possible, I will evoke the wider assemblages seen at some sites, for it is here that we can grasp at the range of things given in one event and thus the wider meanings such deposits might have been meant to evoke.

The first half of the title of this chapter is inspired by David Fontijn’s (2020: 123) recent study of Bronze Age deposition, in which (against a background of weapons, tools and jewellery) he singles out a particular category of artefact characterised by their exaggerated appearance. Their shape, design or material may reference more mundane examples, but there will be something about these objects – their spectacular size or weight, complexity or virtuoso crafting or use of exotic materials – that ‘aggrandise’ them above their everyday counterparts. There are also objects that are completely without parallel in the daily world. Some make explicit cosmological reference to solar or lunar bodies or utilise decoration or symbolism
that is beyond our ability to ‘read’ but can be appreciated for the affect their appearance has upon us (see Giles 2008). They may either ‘exceed the human scale’, as Fontijn (2020: 124) puts it, or expand normal material categories: being ‘too large’ or ‘too precious’, they can be thought of as transgressive, and by embodying skills or substances that appear to come from beyond the known world they can be used to help substantiate, perform or presence the ‘other-worldly’ or the ‘divine’. Here, I will adopt the concept of the ‘exquisite’ object (conjuring the notion of exceptional beauty or intensity) to describe artefacts that might fulfill these qualities, but as we shall see, there are many more mundane objects and substances that Iron Age people thought worthy of bringing to the bog. Most of them were drawn from agricultural life and they were often old, sometimes damaged yet apparently valued; to Fontijn’s concept of aggrandised or transgressive objects then I will add the notion of ‘everyday treasures’.

Agricultural tools and vehicles

The first example of these apparently mundane yet meaningful objects includes a range of farming and craft items. Ard tips made of wood, representing the capacity of the scratch plough, were placed in bogs at Erm in the Netherlands (Bergen et al. 2002: 92) and Gortygheehan and Corlea in Ireland (Raftery 1994: pl. 42–3). A ‘small Mill-stone’ was found in one of the ‘white Moss’ sites in either Cheshire or Lancashire, and given to the antiquarian Charles Leigh (1700: 59). Quern stones are also known from Blaingerzand in Germany (Bergen et al. 2002: 93). A wooden hammer was found at Wanderup in Germany (Coles and Coles 1989: 191) and finely worked wooden items were found at Fuglsøgaarder Moss (Denmark) along with pieces of white quartz, useable as ‘strike-a-lights’ but also redolent with other meanings of power and fertility. The site of Lisnacrogher in Ireland has yielded an extraordinary array of Iron Age objects, including an iron sickle, a billhook, an axe and adze. There is some debate about whether this is a true ‘bog’ find: Fredengren (2007) makes a cogent argument that at least some of these objects were associated with a crannog structure, but other metalwork was found away from the built timber features and the quantity of material suggests that we might be looking at a mix of deposits of different dates (early/middle Iron Age to Roman, see Raftery 1983), placed in a small lake or pool complex (Fredengren 2007: 39). These objects were drawn from cultivation, food processing and crafting – things that made other things possible – evoking the capacity to transform or realise something’s potential, from food to furniture to fire. The giving up of these objects to the bog was redolent with the domains of making.

Alongside the plough tip from Corlea, a wooden mallet, notched pegs and knife handle could arguably be workers’ tools, but these would not have been discarded or abandoned by accident. A bog pool to the side of this immensely impressive trackway not only contained the ‘clearing up’ of worked wood, shavings, brushwood and unused branches, but also old elements of vehicles. One has
transverse slots and slanted boards, as part of the side of a low cart box, while another was made with decorative flourishes: simple chamfering, mortice-and-tenon joints, fine transverse dowelling and out-turned finials, suggesting that they might come from the chassis of a more prestigious vehicle – a carriage or chariot (Raftery 1994: 102–3, figs 52 and 53). In contrast, block wheels made of alder have been found at Doogarymore and Timahoe (Raftery 1994: 104, 117) dating to the early Iron Age (c. fourth to third centuries BC), and these robust objects are likely to come from farm carts or wagons. A worked straight bar made of yew wood, perforated at each end (that may also relate to a vehicle), was found not far from the Doogarymore block wheel (Raftery 1994: 106). At Rappendam fen in Denmark, assemblage C, dating to 160 BC–AD 120 contained parts of block wheels, axles and sections of a heavy-duty wagon undercarriage (Figures 5.1a and 5.1b) (van der Sanden 1996: 169). (These were found mere metres away from a young female bog body which survived as skeletonised remains).

As well as wheels and boxes, over twenty yokes have been found in Irish bogs (such as Carrowreagh, Erriff and Loughduff, see Kelly 2006: 2), some whole yet worn, others fragmentary. These two-shouldered yokes have mainly been attributed to the use of a pony team but some might have been for small plough oxen, modelled on the size and form of the surviving primitive breeds such as the Irish Dexter. Other countries also produce yokes, such as the Vehnemoor bog, made of birch wood (van der Sanden 1996: 174, fig. 240). Before the improvement

5.1a The Toberdaly Iron Age yoke (01E0663:3) in situ. All rights reserved and permission to use the figure must be obtained from the copyright holder.
of the breed, prehistoric ‘horses’ should more accurately be classed as ponies (falling under 14.2 hands in height – most Iron Age examples coming in at around 13–14 hands, see Giles 2012: 20). The number of simple bog deposits of one snaffle bit with the distinctive Irish ‘Y’ shape piece (commonly interpreted as a decorative pendant/leading piece, see Raftery 1994: 110), suggests a strong Irish tradition of single-horse riding that was being celebrated and commemorated in the bog deposits (Haworth 1971). These wagons, carriages and horse gear symbolised movement and mobility in one of the most difficult landscapes to traverse: they were both the means and the model of connectedness, a conveyance not just of people but things and knowledge. Yet many authors have also pointed to the potential sacrality of such vehicles, citing the passage from Tacitus’s Germania, regarding the goddess Nerthus:

They believe she interposes in the affairs of man, and drives around to the various peoples. On an island in the Ocean stands a sacred grove, and in it stands a chariot dedicated to the goddess, covered over with a curtain. Only one priest may touch it. He senses when the goddess is present, and with profound veneration attends the motion of the chariot, which is always drawn by yoked cows. Then it is that days of rejoicing always ensue, and in all places whatsoever which she descends to honour with a visit and her company, feasts and recreation abound. (Cited in Mattingley 1970: XL: 133–4)

We must avoid reading the immanence of the divine too literally on to all the examples of broken wheels and fragmentary horse gear, as the many meanings of these objects will escape us, but we can interrogate how it achieved these affects (Giles 2008: 74). The harnessed horse or pony team was a means of exaggerating, embellishing and adorning rider and driver, in an impressive and noisy amalgam of people, animals and things (Giles 2012: 249). They magnified the human, raising them up above the bodies of others and holding out the promise of compressing...
time and space. Yet they were also visually enchanting and terrifying weapons of speed and intimidation that could be put to ceremonial, martial and ritual use, platforms for oration as much as springboards for equine display, human daring and dexterity (Pare 1989).

Any wheeled vehicle – or fragment of it – symbolised the notion of the journey but some embodied distance in their form, design or decoration, bringing a world from afar into the here and now, to create what Fontijn (2020: 37) refers to as a ‘mappa mundi’ assemblage. Such deposits show an explicit interest in ‘foreignness’: ‘to the effect that links with many distant places are emphasised’ (Fontijn 2020: 37). Their components spill out from the immediacy of local connections to exotic places, which may have been perceived not just as spatially but temporally distant; beyond a mythical horizon to an ‘other world’ of ancestors and spirits (Helms 1988). As rare, if not unique, objects they emphasised access to those other worlds: relationships of power could thus be demonstrated in such exchange. The first millennium BC was defined by rarer, more sporadic Continental connections than the middle to late Bronze Age, particularly in Ireland and Britain. Those that could ‘warm the road’ and keep these connections open may have earned not just social but supernatural renown (see Giles 2012: 229–30).

The vehicles that best embody such power come from Denmark. The Bronze Age Trondholm sun-chariot falls out of the main scope of our study but it is a bog find that suggests a deeper cosmological resonance for the wheeled vehicle. Randsborg and Christiensen (2006) argue that it represents a model of the cosmos in which the wagon or chariot was a vehicle of celestial movement, drawing the sun across the sky. It certainly displays a symbolic correspondence between the wheel and solar imagery that seems to endure well into the Roman era (Green 1984). The disassembled remains of at least two ceremonial, four-wheeled wagons at Dejbjerg in Jutland date to the last centuries BC (Schovsbo 2010: 179). These vehicle components were hemmed in with branches and wattle work, analogous to the treatment of some bog bodies. Together, they make a high-sided and elegant type of vehicle, with light, large wheels and spacious, low-sided sheet-bronze decorated box, set above an undercarriage. In contrast to some of the fragments of chariots or elements of farm wagons and carts discussed above, the Dejbjerg wagons were stately platforms for procession and display. Its components represent an impressive constellation of the local and the exotic: the iron ore did not derive from the bog – it was of Continental origin (Schovsbo 2010: 80). Like the ‘swaddledidaff’ from Lindow, it could be that this large volume of consigned ironwork had to be taken to a place that was recognised as somewhere famed for its ferrous affinity – where iron originated. Yet one of the iron wheel rims had been repaired during its use with bog iron (Schovsbo 2010: 80). At least some of the bronze work in the carriage components were probably made in central Europe, depicting characterful, hirsute male faces with combed hair scraped back, rising as if in a tall headdress to form a hand-hold on the side of the cart (Schovsbo 2010: pl. 21). Like some of the cauldrons from Denmark that had French, German and Etruscan origins, they gave Iron Age people a glimpse of faces that were not theirs, fierce
creatures they had never seen, and representations of the floral, vegetal, avian and mammalian world that blurred, melded and flowed into a very different way of 'seeing'. Perhaps such rare and exquisite vehicles were indeed thought of as hosting and conveying other-worldly beings on many journeys around the Danish countryside before finally bringing them to the bog – their fragmentary and disassembled state suggests that their sojourns, whether sacred or secular, had long passed.

**Animal offerings**

Not all of the discoveries in the bog derived from deliberate deposition: some animals fell into the bog by accident (as described in Chapter 4). Others were placed there as ‘jointed’ portions of meat (as found in the pots at Fuglsøgaardermoss, Denmark, see Asingh and Lynnerup 2007: 283). Yet the skulls of horses were also found at this site, along with whole animals sacrificed *in situ*, bound to tethering posts, with clubs lying nearby (Bradley *et al.* 2015: 312). Many of these deposits had been placed in old peat cuttings, but only after some regeneration of the turf. This type of deposit was also found at Bukkerup Langmose, where again animal bones (including bundles of cattle bones ‘tied’ to pots) and posts with rope hobbles were discovered (Asingh 2009: 202; Pauli Jensen 2009). The main carcass of the cow was missing, with just the fore and hind limbs deposited, possibly articulated to the hide. At Foerlev Nymølle, butchered remains of cattle, horse, dog, sheep and hare were discovered along with pots and more white quartz stones, and an enigmatic slender ‘bog figure’ interpreted (from the skilful use of a split branch with cut marks) as a female deity (Asingh and Lynnerup 2007: 286).

'Bog dogs' are also known from Denmark, as at Hedelisker, where thirteen dogs were killed and deposited, two of which lay bound to large stones (Asingh and Lynnerup 2007: 286). A dachshund type dog with short brown hair was found in the Dreichsmoor, Germany (Coles and Coles 1989: 177).

In Sweden, Fredengren (2015: 166) has identified a series of early Iron Age deposits of horse and dog bones in Knyllinge, associated with a later Bronze Age trackway, a pattern repeated at the site of Tadem with horse. At Läby Bog, a stone bridge dating to the late Iron Age was also associated with horse bones (Fredengren 2015: 166). Meanwhile at Torresta, a fording point over a bog marked by rock art seems to have attracted punctuated periods of butchered animal bone deposits (horse, ox and goat) during the Bronze Age, and later the deposition of a violently killed adult male in the Roman Iron Age (Fredengren and Löfqvist 2015). The authors do not posit long-term continuity here, but rather the power of a crossing point as the ‘right place’ to deal with the butchery of people and animals as part of how conceptual and classificatory boundaries – who was and wasn’t ‘human’ – were negotiated and patrolled.

Ten dogs along with potsherds were laid in Barsbeker bog in Germany, whereas cow horns (deposited both as singles and in pairs) were found at Wees: a symbol of the herd perhaps, but also a valuable raw material in its own right (Coles and
Coles 1989: 191). Yet animal deposits are rare in Britain and Ireland: a number of entire pigs were found in a bog in Somerset in 1810 and two ‘hides, heads and feet’ deposits were found on Solway Moss, which were either suspended over, or placed into, a bog pool (Wilkinson et al. 2006: 100). Sheep fleeces and a few bones were also found on Solway Moss: interpreted originally as unfortunate grazing victims (Wilkinson et al. 2006: 101). The Mobberley boar (mentioned in Chapter 4) is a more unusual ‘natural’ victim, though a hunt could have driven him on to an irretrievable area of the bog. Wilkinson et al. (2006) also cite pieces of ‘cattle skin’ found both on Lindow Moss and from Ireland (King 1685: 954), reminding us again of the value of hides and fleeces to these communities, which could be fashioned into everything from cloaks and footwear, to sheaths, shield covers, containers or woollen cloth. These examples reinforce the notion that there were regionally specific logics in what could and could not enter the bog, with some places and periods more renowned for animal sacrifice than others.

Containers and cauldrons

Jutland is distinguished for the number of ‘bog pots’ found at sites like Fuglsøgaard Mose, where over a hundred pots where discovered brimming with grain, dairy produce or butchered meat (Fischer 2012: 158) as well as ‘puffballs’ (Asingh and Lynnerup 2007: 283), perhaps representing food but also useful as styptic wound dressings or tinder. At Hedelisker bog (where the thirteen dogs mentioned above were sacrificed), broken pots were also deposited with charcoal and charred human bones, along with a branch dramatically carved to represent a phallus (Asingh and Lynnerup 2007: fig. 11). At Fjaltring, flat stones had been laid out on the bog as a setting for between twenty to fifty pots, each with a lid or flax cover (Asingh 2009: 201), as if to keep away flies. The numbers of these simple pottery vessels represent a fraction of the original, as Fischer (2012: 173) notes after conversing with the Bjældskovdal peat cutters, who reassured him that this once-common offering was normally left undisturbed. Vimose also has numerous ceramic vessel depositions, alongside bone spear points, a horse with a clear sharp-force blow to the head and numerous animal bones in among poles, brushwood and wooden planks – reminiscent of a platform or trackway (Bergen et al. 2002: 100–1; Pauli Jensen 2009: 56). Pots are also well known from Germany, including the bogs of Rüde, Wattenbek and Süsel (Coles and Coles 1989: 191) and also Büstorf, where three complete vessels were staked down with large timbers (van der Sanden 1996: 175, fig. 242).

In contrast, there does not seem to be a ceramic tradition of bog offerings in either northern England, Scotland or Ireland, but wooden containers are found. The lid and base of a wooden vessel from Lemanaghan bog in Ireland, missing its central body, suggests not all containers had to be placed whole in the bog (O’Carroll 2001: 15). Fragments of a similar tall tub or jar were found at Corlea bog (Raftery 1994, fig. 66) and wooden bowls were deposited in the peat at both Magheran and
Bog bodies

Emlaghmore (Kelly 2006). The poplar ‘cauldron’ from Altartate has ribbed lugs, skilfully carved to support two-piece handles, and is decorated around its rim with dot-and-circle patterns leaping into a flaring set of lines that give its rim a spinning movement (Raftery 1994: 118 and fig. 64). It would not have withstood heating and must have had a function for liquids (Raftery 1994: 118). One of the objects that fits the notion of an ‘exquisite’ object is the Pallasboy vessel from Toar Bog in Ireland (Murray 2001; McDermott et al. 2009). Carved from a single piece of alder (estimated to be over forty-four years old), it was manufactured with at least five different tools: chisel, axe and gouge (Gearey et al. 2019). It had cracked during the making and been repaired with small wooden wedges and during its lifetime had been damaged and repaired with wooden panels and ties. It was scorched on the edge and base and a scatter of stone chips inside might indicate its use for heating water using ‘hot-stone’ technology (Gearey et al. 2019). Sometime around cal 197 BC–68 CE it was dragged to the bog with hazel withies and then pinned down in a shallow bog pool with thee hazel stakes, each over 2 m long, in a manner directly analogous to a number of bog bodies (van der Noort and O’Sullivan 2006; McDermott et al. 2009: 54). This analogy with human flesh may relate to some of its ‘behaviour’ during crafting – experimental work by Gearey et al. (2019) have demonstrated that it would have ‘bled’ red as it was cut. The volume of this vessel, coupled with its projecting handles, leaves us guessing as to its function. It could have been a communal tub for providing drink or food, cooking, tanning or dyeing or a vessel for washing (either everyday or ceremonial). It might have even been a cradle or a quenching trough for metalworking (Gearey et al. 2019).

These wooden vessels are paralleled with a set of sheet-bronze globular cauldrons that were popular in the late Bronze Age (seen in, for example, the Dowris hoard) but continue well into the Iron Age in a slightly modified form (Joy 2016). In Scotland, the Kincardine Moss cauldron (dating to the sixth–fifth century BC) was found in a bog (MacGregor 1976; Joy 2014b: 348), as was the Abercairney cauldron, notable for its punched surface and small ‘paperclip’ style repairs (Joy 2014b: 349). Two cauldrons were supposedly found stacked one inside the other at Blackburn Moss: the top one inverted to cover a range of other objects, including yet another cauldron fragment (Joy 2014b: 350). The Whitehills Moss cauldron also came from a bog (Burns 1969), while the Elvanfoot cauldron, with its punched spiral pattern circling up around the belly of the vessel, probably also came from bogland (Burns 1969; Joy 2014b: 352). In Upper Weardale, a peat bog yielded two bronze ‘skillets’ and a ‘ladle’ of Roman date, fitting a wider pattern of a late Iron Age/early Roman peak of hoarding in the north of Britain and into Scotland, often utilising Roman material culture (Egglestone 1917; Wilkinson 2019). While it responds to, and perhaps reflects, a rather bellicose period of artistic expression in metalworking (variously seen as a vigorous, indigenous fashion in the face of conquest, ‘tourist’ art for a new consumer audience or millennialist ritual fervour, see Hunter 2012; Joy 2014a) this northern British bog custom complements the shifting nature of hoarding in other contexts – weaponry, torcs and coin hoards begin to dominate assemblages elsewhere (Wilkinson 2019). The early Roman
hoard from Lamberton Moor or Moss also fits this pattern: an extraordinary assembly of vessels that were contained in some kind of wrapping that decayed upon exposure (Anderson 1905: 367). Four Roman paterae, four bronze bowls, a beaded neck torc, two spiral rings, a dragonesque brooch and two fibulae comprise a mix of both impressive serving and body-ornament pieces that evoke a new era of diacritical display and hospitality, drawn in part from the very empire that haunted its borders.

In Ireland, the Ballyedmond cauldron has a lower sheet-bronze base topped by riveted plates to create a capacious vessel, capable of being heated: it is old and patched with over thirty repairs of decorative, punched and incised plaques, inside and out (Raftery 1994, fig. 64b; Joy 2014b: 347). Cauldrons from Urlingford, the bog of Allen and Ballymoney are also heavily repaired (Joy 2014b: 356 and 349–50). There are smaller bronze vessels from Ireland too: the elegance of the Keshcarrigon bowl with its duck-billed handle, mimicked in the bird-beak handled bowl or cup from Somerset (Co. Galway), suggests a tradition of more elaborate drinking or libation vessels. The bronze-bound, stave-built tankard from Carrickfergus fits in with a wider pattern of massive communal drinking vessels buried in bogs (such as Shapwick in Britain, and Transfynnedd from Wales, see Horn 2015). These objects remind us of how commensal bonds were reproduced in the sharing of food and drink among kin, companions or even comrades, becoming an indigenous custom that was popular well into the Roman period, especially in military contexts (Sands and Horn 2017): ‘toasts were raised to successful campaigns and fallen comrades, talk was had, memories evoked, deals were made, games were played, scores were settled’ (Sands and Horn 2017: 81). British bog cauldrons are thinner on the ground – most come from river, lake or dryland contexts (Joy 2014b). The heavily repaired Bewcastle cauldron was found in the ‘Black Moss’ (Joy 2014b: 349–50), while the antiquarian Charles Leigh (1700: 59) records that ‘a brass-Kettle … [was] given me by Major George Westby’ from the ‘white Moss’, a gift that sounds remarkably like a bronze bowl or small cauldron. Other objects from the same vicinity included ‘a small Mill-stone … as likewise Beads of Amber’, suggesting a mix perhaps of jewellery (possibly from a more formal burial) and culinary equipment. A cauldron and an ‘ox figure’ were reputedly found on Rixton or Risley Moss in Lancashire (Watkin 1883: 228–30; Leah et al. 1997: 153). These early discoveries in the north of England suggest that the precocious drainage and stripping of these boglands may have resulted in the loss of other finds in an area where antiquarianism and archaeological collectors were lacking.

In Denmark, the Rynkeby cauldron, with its plastic-style bull’s head (possibly a local ornament attached to a Gaulish vessel) and the Mosbæk cauldron (with third-century BC Etruscan affinities) both came from bog contexts (Kaul 2007). Yet of all the cauldrons and vessels found in a bog, the Gudestrup cauldron from Rævemosen (Denmark) is the nonpareil (Figure 5.2): thirteen plates, made from 9 kg of beaten and repoussé gilded silver, manufactured in the Black Sea area but apparently saturated with ‘Celtic’ mythology. An antler-headed figure sits cross-legged, grasping a torc, surrounded by stags, boar and snakes. In some
panels, animals meld and merge: a double-headed boar-snake seems to sever a human torso from its limbs in one panel, while a flat-mouthed, be-torced figure grasps dragonesque-like creatures by the throat overhead. Another scene depicts carnyx players following a line of warriors gripping shields and spears, heading towards an oversized figure who dips one warrior, head down, into a tub or vat. While Aldhouse-Green (2002: 113) suggests this is a ritualised drowning scene, reminiscent of the supposed rites to the god Teutates, she alternatively suggests it may represent the ‘cauldron of rebirth’ mentioned in the later medieval text, the Mabinogion. Yet this could also be an initiation ceremony that was a violent mix of immersion and waterboarding – away from the hapless figure march a row of helmeted horse riders; perhaps this celebrated their transition from boy warrior (envisaged memorably by Rosemary Sutcliff (1958) in Warrior Scarlet as the ‘new spears’), to fully fledged and armed cavalry. In another scene, elephants flank a female figure whose plaits of hair are tended by others. Scenes of apparent animal sacrifice, interestingly using short swords or daggers, are complemented by the basal scene of a prone boar and spent dog, flanked by a two-dimensional figure grasping a blade: another sacrifice appears to be in motion. The presence of these strangely depicted giants of the land, alongside winged and beaked beasts, speak of
both Mediterranean and Indian mythology, suggesting a fusion of ideas and belief that cannot be confined to later Celtic motifs (Taylor 2002). Much has been made of the origins, meaning and indeed purpose of this vessel. Fashioned sometime in the second to first century BC, by the time it was deposited, it was old, damaged and dismantled: one of the outer plates was missing, little of the rim survives and the base had itself been transformed from a horse-bridle disc or fitting (known as a phalera) to repair a hole. Botanical evidence from the soils around the cauldron suggest it had originally lain on drier land and had then been subsumed by the peat, placed on the bog edge or a well-raised hummock, standing proud of the mire – brimful with rain that dripped into, and raised, the bog around it.

As Joy (2014b: 341) states, it is ultimately fruitless to ask what the complex symbolism or meaning of such a cauldron was, but we can ask instead what they did. A vessel is a container: pregnant with capacity, a gaping volume that speaks of the ability to hold food or fluid. Whether its contents were still – a liquid mirror, like a bog pool itself – or bubbling and steaming with heat, it facilitated events on a communal scale. They thus evoked ‘abundance, wealth’ (Armada 2011: 168); commensal events that provided the opportunity for small and large politics to be played out through the apparent act of hospitality (Dietler 2001). Cauldrons were entrepreneurial, empowering debt creators (Joy 2014b: 342), delivering largesse and generosity that might be hard to replicate, but they could also be means of repayment, resolution, alliance building or rift healing. Communal consumption accompanied many kinds of events, from raising a raiding party to celebrating a victory, and from marking a rite of passage through ingestion or immersion to facilitating an initiation or gathering offerings or sacrifices. Such vessels may even have held fluid to use for divination (see Giles and Joy 2007). When empty it must have reminded people of its past uses: note the persistent theme above of wear, repair and patching – these were old things, well used. With bog cauldrons we are dealing once more with the end of these capacities and their crossing into a new role, ‘as containers for another kind of offering, this time to deities or ancestors, rather than attendees at feasts’ (Joy 2014b: 343).

**Food and other substances**

Other types of vessels were also placed in the bog. A hollowed-out beech trunk with several openings from Edewechterdamm in Germany has been interpreted as a beehive, containing twig ring-frames for the honeycombs and a lid to protect its industrious inhabitants (Coles and Coles 1989: fig. 142) – an extraordinary ‘sweet offering’ to the bog. Honey was not just a flavouring for food or useful for making mead: it had antiseptic and preservative properties that may have been seen as analogous to the power of the peat. It was also a source of beeswax, which was essential for the making of fine bronze moulds in the Iron Age and Roman era. Indeed, a ‘cake’ of beeswax dating to c.715 BC was found close to a trackway on Ipweger Moor (Figure 5.3a) (Brockner and Mitchell 1994).
It was originally interpreted as a skeuomorph ‘loaf’ due to cereal impressions in the wax but once correctly identified it assumed a new importance (Bergen et al. 2002: 92). This raw substance was far more valuable than bread, not just for bronze casting; Cosack (2011: 516, fig. 10) argues its main function could have been to aid ‘smooth running’: an ‘axle grease’ to lubricate joints, suppress noise and diminish the risk of combustion and friction burning on wagon and chariot-wheel axles, as seen on one example from Bohlenweg. Robert Hurford (pers. comm.), the master craftsman who made the replicas of both the Wetwang and Newbridge chariots, keeps such a block close to hand in his workshop for precisely this purpose (Figure 5.3b).

The other substance found buried in the peat particularly in Ireland and Scotland is ‘bog butter’, found in a variety of bowls, kegs, wicker baskets, stave-built tubs, buckets, methers and churns, as well as wrapped in bark and bladders (Earwood 1997; Synnott 2010). A recent comprehensive study (Smyth et al. 2019) of the Irish examples has demonstrated that they span the early Bronze Age to the
1800s, with a strong cluster in the Iron Age. In Smyth et al.’s (2019) study, both Keg/Tub 1 and 2 types (Earwood 1997) were demonstrated to be early to middle Iron Age in date alongside the decorated barrel jar or upright bowl from Killeenan More (once thought to be medieval) (Smyth et al. 2019: 5). The Rosberry keg, for example, is a handsome upright two-piece container, hollowed out from an alder tree with groove-set and dowelled base (Earwood 1997: 27; see Figure 5.4). It has projecting pierced tabs originally associated with a five-strand alder cord (now lost), and dates to 360–200 BC (Smyth et al. 2019). This vessel is similar in design to the Rosmoynlan keg, which also has a lid with raised central moulding to act as a grip (Earwood 1997: 28, fig. 3). Later Iron Age kegs were distinguished by side handles and the Roman Iron Age era keg from Kyleakin on the Scottish islands of Skye resembles a barrel jar with everted rim and small side holes, cut through the belly of the vessel (Earwood 1997: 28, fig. 5). Several bog-butter finds come from this moss, as well as a bronze cauldron that had patches where up to three repairs overlapped each other (Joy 2014b: 348; Goldberg 2015: 217). While the majority of the Irish butter has been proved to be of ruminant dairy extraction (Goldberg 2015: 6–7), a study of Scottish bog butter also revealed Iron Age examples of
ruminant carcass fat (tallow, see Berstan et al. 2004), attested in written accounts from the Faroe Islands as tasting ‘like ripe cheese’ (Evans 1947: 60; Debes 1676 cited in Smyth et al. 2019: 6).

Were people aware of the bog’s ability to keep, store and secure organic produce? As they dug through the peat for fuel or ore, Iron Age people must have re-encountered objects from earlier times, witnessing well-preserved animal bodies, wet but recognisable trackways and even the un tarnished bronze of earlier hoards. Perhaps this led them to see the bog’s potential as a cold store, realising that temporary immersion could halt or inhibit the effects of decay. In Norway and Sweden, the bog was traditionally used as a larder for butter, cheese and meat (Asingh 2009: 280). Post-medieval texts from Ireland also suggest that some of this bog butter was being deliberately ‘cold stored’ for later consumption (protecting against scarcity) or during the summer ‘booleying’ months, for sale later in the year (Synnott 2010). The same preservative properties that produced the bog bodies extended the use life of perishables and consumables placed in the bog. Analysis has suggested butter reaches its ‘bog constituency’ within a couple of years (Cronin et al. 2007). In the UK, the Iron Age marks a considerable period of underground experimentation with cold storage: the fogoues of Cornwall and the souterrains of Ireland and Scotland, for example (Christie et al. 1978; Armit
The subterranean storage pit, such as those of Wessex (Sharples 2010) or Yorkshire (Dent 2010) show similar experimentation, principally for long-term grain storage. Yet many of these structures show evidence of what could be regarded as special care in their design and interesting back-fill or closure deposits, which speak of the rituals that enfolded these utilitarian facilities, saturated in agricultural and fertility symbolism (Cunliffe 1992; Hill 1995; Armit 1999; Giles 2007). The Iron Age also marks the beginning of salt production, represented by briquetage, and its use for curing foodstuffs, culinary and medicinal purposes (Kinory 2012). We can thus see an era of concern with long-term storage and safekeeping of perishable produce, in which the bogs played their part. (Indeed, Painter, the scientist who proposed the sphagnan reaction theory, also experimented with moss as a suitable non-refrigerant for fish export, showing that *Sphagnum* successfully inhibited decay for a month and conferred about a week of inhibited bacterial decay, see Jones 2001).

Yet other accounts suggest that bog immersion was used knowingly to season and flavour the butter as a delicacy, producing ‘provision of a high taste’, as Dineley put it in 1681 (cited in Evans 1947: 60), which was perceived as enhancing its nutritious value (Earwood 1997: 33; Smyth *et al.* 2019: 1). The ‘peat reek’ is a sought-after quality of many contemporary whiskies that use peat charcoal to infuse the grain before distillation. It is also used to smoke fish (especially salmon) and seafood (where it appears to accentuate the sweetness of marine flesh like scallops) and flavour salt and butter. Even in the twentieth century, burial in a bog was considered a way to ‘ripen’ the butter in both Ireland and the Hebrides (Synnott 2010: 143–4). Bog storage might also help ‘sweeten’ dairy produce otherwise tainted by cattle feed (Synnott 2010: 147). The Irish notion of foodstuffs as ‘brave’ or ‘strong’ in taste and constituency reminds us of very different palettes to our own (Glassie 1995: 492). For Iron Age people, butter was the main comestible and culinary fat; in early medieval texts, it was seen as a high-status substance, with ‘butter stores’ targeted in raids (Smyth *et al.* 2019: 8). An entry in the diary of the Rev. Bagshaw (vicar of Castleton) recalls how on ‘Oct. 8th. 1742 Mr Wormal sent my wife a present of a pot of butter’; the same vicar who attended the Hope bog body couple’s reinterment was sending butter as a prestige gift to other clergics (Cox 1880: 83). This fat was used for more than cooking: the ‘kitchen psychic’ of the seventeenth century used butter as an oily ointment for the complexion and skin complaints, a medium for infusing plant, mineral or animal cures, directly as a salve for burns and to treat bruising or swelling (Stobart 2016). Some of these uses would have applied in prehistory. In Ireland, it was an acceptable form of food rent (Smyth *et al.* 2019: 1), and in his account of Irish Bogs, King (1685: 953–4) also notes that even aged, rancid bog butter could be used for weatherproofing: ‘Butter has bin found, that had lain above 20 years, and tho’ not fit to be eaten, yet served well enough to greaze Wool’. Rather like bog bodies, bog butter represents many things: deliberate storage, safe keeping to guard against dearth, curing for flavour, but also at times a gift or propitiatory offering meant to be left in the bog. Several authors have pointed to the rich tradition of butter in fertility rites (e.g. Evans 1999; Mudie *et al.* 2007).
Bog bodies

1947), leading Hunter (1997) to suggest that we should not be surprised by its presence in the wider suite of bog offerings made by Iron Age peoples. It embodied the riches of dairy life, representing the wealth of the herd and the effort of dashing, churning or shaking, then shaping and stacking the pats into a vessel. The visual beauty of this substance made it analogous to other bog offerings, ‘poor man’s gold’, as Synnott (2010: 148) puts it. Yet it was also imbued with other properties of well-being: in 1942, Raftery noted that butter was still being thrown into a lake near Balla, Co. Mayo (Ireland), as a ‘thanksgiving for the healing of cows and horses’ (cited in Synnott 2010: 144). Bog butter was thus a remarkable substance in its own right, but the use of a container might be thought of dressing up of such a gift, not just to convey it to the bog but to draw attention to its volume and the care with which the butter had been made. The chevrons and lines engraved in the Killeenan More vessel speak of a prestigious bowl or jar, echoed later in the medieval meather (Smyth et al. 2019: 5). Discrepancies in radiocarbon dates for the Rosberry and Teernakill kegs showed that the butter was a couple of hundred years younger than their containers; while the authors attribute this to the contamination effect of PEG used to consolidate the wood (Smyth et al. 2019: 5), it is also possible that these are old, cherished churns or containers, finally consigned to the bog with a fresh offering of the cream of life.

Personal ornamentation, jewellery and tresses

In Denmark, cast, spiral neck rings made in bronze are commonly found in later Bronze Age and early Iron Age deposits (Aisingh and Lynnerup 2007). At Smederup ‘a good way out on to the bog’, a late Bronze Age ‘well’ was sunk through the peat to tap a spring that had been lined in its base with broken pottery (possibly from early dipping cups) before an elm wood bucket was sunk into the shaft (Aisingh 2009: 197). This was followed, around 600 BC, with an oak plank well shaft, into which had been placed 360 bronze rings: twisted rings, spiral rings, neck, arm and ankle rings, as well as small ‘eyelet’ wheels with subsidiary ringlets that would have ‘jingled’ with movement (Aisingh 2009: 200). A few kilometres away, at Falling, a total of 270 eyelet rings were found in the bog, and at the nearby Sattrup bog, 148 objects – all made of bronze – were found (Aisingh 2009: 200). This suggests a localised ‘micro-tradition’ of customs, which we will see in other bog deposits. In Germany, neck rings are a common deposit in not just bogs but rivers and dryland hoards (Bradley et al. 2015: 243). A rare late Iron Age cruciform pin set with three large amber beads and one blue glass and yellow dot miniature bead, was found in a bog at Holzhause. Fibulae become a more common bog find in the Roman period, such as the hoard of twenty-eight near-identical bronze with silver wire brooches from Strückhausener Moor, apparently arranged in a crescent shape on a woollen cloak (Bergen et al. 2002: 90). Deposits of Roman and late Antique coins, often customised into amulets or necklaces, also appear in Germany by the fourth century AD, evidencing a late bog deposit
A bronze arm ring from Almosen was part of a complex set of deposits including human and animal bones, potsherds, flint tools, a bronze dress pin, granite quernstone and worked wood (Bloch Jørgensen et al. 1999: 121), dating to c.600–44 BC. The remains of over fifteen people, including children, were found in disturbed contexts, but a nearby trackway or ford may suggest a focus for this mixed and protracted series of offerings (humans, animals and pots with food) also seen at the nearby bogs of Valmosen and Tybjerg (Bloch Jørgensen et al. 1999: 123). An armlet from Ballymahon bog in Ireland suggests small and personal offerings of jewellery were sometimes made in the Irish bogs (Kelly 2006: 4). A mirror handle fragment was found at the aptly named Ballybogy bog, along with a cauldron and bridle bit. Its clever lentoid lip mouldings seem to represent the head and spoon-like beak of a waterbird, perhaps evoking a seasonal denizen of these waterlands and playing upon the analogy with the reflective surface of the bog pool (Raftery 1994: pl. 46; Kelly 2006: 2). In fact, there are only two instances of mirrors in bogs: the early Roman era Balmaclellan mirror from Scotland is the only other example recorded from Britain and Ireland. Despite the fact that bog pools provided the same kind of effect as the mirror plate, most of these objects were interred as dryland deposits or in burials, suggesting indissoluble bonds with those that wielded them (Joy 2010; Giles 2012).

Yet one of the most common finds from here and Scotland is the monumentalised Celtic art necklet – the torc. A now lost torc was reported as an antiquarian find from Low Burnham on the Hatfield Chase (Buckland 1979). In Scotland, the Lochar bronze beaded torc with its mix of globular segmented ‘beads’ and flat incised plaque appear to be part of a vigorous fluorescence of insular design fusing with new and more robust aesthetics in the early Roman period (Hunter 2010). In contrast, the Stirling hoard of four golden torcs (Figure 5.5) is more securely Iron Age in date and was found within a round structure best interpreted as a shrine, in a boggy area of ground near Blair Drummond, close to the great expanse of Flanders Moss (Hunter 2010; also discussed in Chapter 4, in terms of the historic ‘moss lairds’). The mix of indigenous design (the twisted spiral torcs with flat terminals) and Mediterranean techniques (heavy granulation and complex wirework) make this an extraordinary gathering of local and exotic, buried in a wet locale close to an expanding moss. The Broighter hoard in Ireland was not found in a bog but a waterlogged shoreline, yet the two Mediterranean chain necklaces, two south-eastern British twisted torcs and sumptuous globular collar torc (possibly an Irish model of a British or Continental object, see Kelly 2002) are similar to the composition of the Blair Drummond hoard. At Lisnacrogher, a ribbon torc adds to the range of objects found in this complex series of bog (and/or crannog) deposits, alongside two ring-headed pins, a bronze necklet, two bronze bracelets, two spiral rings, four penannular rings and a stone bead. They suggest a significant quantity of personal decorative equipment was deposited alongside weaponry and feasting objects. Eleven ‘rings’ of various types were also discovered,
5.5 The Stirling hoard. All rights reserved and permission to use the figure must be obtained from the copyright holder.
including the riveted hollow-piece type found both on the Continent (Raftery 1986) and in East Yorkshire (Giles 2012: 120), which may have been an amulet associated with fertility, vigour and protection. The Ardnaglug bog yielded an extraordinary array of torcs: a gold buffer torc of Continental manufacture and an Irish ribbon torc composed of even twists and curls, ending in acorn terminals (Raftery 1994: fig. 45). Torc hoards may thus have been meant to embody those qualities of the *mappa mundi* assemblages envisaged by Fontijn (2020), making present an alluring and beguiling distant realm alongside objects meant to evoke those places in locally made things decorated with Celtic art. The model cauldron and miniaturised seagoing vessel (with mast, benches and suite of oars) also included in the Broighter hoard touch upon other themes in this chapter, of feasting largesse and the voyaging that brought such untarnishable treasures to these shores.

Other body ornaments of exquisite character have come from bogs: a pair of so-called horns from Runnabehy, interpreted as headdress regalia, are similar to those found in the river muds of Cork and the context-less Petrie ‘crown’ (Kelly 2006). These delicate hollow tubes, sometimes fixed to a plaque, were often skilfully incised or delicately raised with *La Tène* motifs, which were meant to work in three-dimensional effect upon the viewer. They may have deliberately mimicked the horned creatures that formed ‘wealth on the hoof’ at that time – cattle, sheep, goats. Meanwhile, the Emmendorf ‘crown’ neck ring lies at the opposite end of this tradition; weighing 770 g, it is composed of fourteen pointed ‘teeth’ surmounting a triple-fluted neck ring, with a hinge mounted by a projecting spiked rivet (Bergen et al. 2002: 91) – more an object of endurance than embellishment.

The final type of body ‘ornament’ I want to discuss here is of a quite different order: the phenomenon of human braids found particularly in Danish bogs, dating to c.350–250 BC (Ebbesen 2008; Kaul 2015: 98, fig. 5.18). For example, seven near-identical plaits were found at Sterbygård (Figure 5.6) and four at Vindumhede (tied together here in a knotted bundle), whereas only one was found at Vingmose in the form of an elaborate plaited coiffure (Ebbesen 2008: fig. 7). Most are assumed to be taken from women – plaits of strands that would have hung to waist level, cut off above the braid (Randsborg 2015: 11). They would have left the woman noticeably shorn of a substance that may have embodied many attributes of personhood: age, femininity, fertility and vitality (Aldhouse-Green 2004b). Was this an act of humiliation, akin to the shaving of other bog heads shortly before their death (Aldhouse-Green 2016)? A kind of trophyism that fell short of the taking of a ‘scalp’ but had the same effect of shaming not just individuals but a community? Seizure of an enemy by their hair is a common visual trope of domination, seen particularly in Roman sculpture (Aldhouse-Green 2004b, 2004c). The triumphal glut of braids at some of these sites suggests this might be the case. Notably, in Seamus Heaney’s poem ‘Bog Queen’, the ‘plait of my hair’ becomes ‘a slimy birth-cord of the bog’ (Heaney 1975: 27), and this analogy between hair and other kinds of cords is insightful: the 90 cm long hair of Elling Woman had been plaited from seven strands that were then plied together and wound around her neck (van der Sanden 1996: 145) as if in symbolic strangulation. Yet ethnographically, the cutting
5.6 Human braids from Sterbygård dating to the Iron Age. All rights reserved and permission to use the figure must be obtained from the copyright holder.
of hair can be used to mark initiation or signal transition, sometimes to denote the shift into the realm of the sacred (Giles 2016a). It can also denote loss, bereavement and mourning periods (Giles 2016a). Were these self-offerings, at key rites of passage, events or crisis in a woman’s life? In Moesgaard Museum, the fictional narrative for the cut plait on display evokes a woman in a very small-scale, intimate act of offering, hoping for the successful delivery of a child following a previous loss. Where numerous strands or whole, elaborate ‘hairdo’ arrangements are found, this might equally be the voluminous, beautifully prepared embodiment of female virility, given, or forcibly taken, when the need arose.

Clothing

Stand-alone depositions of clothing, or cloth-/wool-related implements are rare. Loomweights, needles and spindle whorls are not a common find compared with dryland sites, although unworked balls of wool have been found at sites like Roswinkel and Smilde, in the Drenthe region of the Netherlands (Bergen et al. 2002: 89). The impressive skin cape, weighing just a pound, found at Deerykeighan bog and dating to the first century AD, was made from wolf skin (Figure 5.7) (Kelly 2006: 4) or otter pelt (MacAdam 1861: 299); sewn from ‘slips’ not wider than an inch, held neatly together with fine animal sinew. A ‘strong, neat hem’ finished off a garment with voluminous hood and water-shedding, waterproof properties (MacAdam 1861: 299). Other skin capes come from Hooghalen and True Mose (van der Sanden 1996: 64). Another fascinating textile comes from Orkney, where a woollen ‘hooded top’ or shawl was interred in the bog (Anderson 1883) in the late Iron Age/Roman era (c. third century AD). The garment was already recycled, using double-tablet woven bands with long, fine fringes to modify a length of herringbone twill, creating a composite garment with a browny golden hue and dark brown stripes (Wood 2003) that (rather like the Vindolanda moss cap) would have helped keep away the horseflies of the Isles. Small leather thongs may have enabled it to be drawn tight or fastened to an undergarment. In Scotland, the Balmaclellan Manse bog deposits consisted of four wrapped ‘little packets’ or parcels of bronze work, thought to include sheet mounts from a casket or box and a crescentic strip with basketry-infilled design, as well as an early Roman Celtic mirror (Megaw and Megaw 2015: 264) deposited between the late first and third centuries AD. Yet the textiles themselves are admirable: a single diamond twill woollen cloth (of ‘fine wool’ and ‘fine weave’), torn into strips to wrap up these curious parcels (Crowfoot 1948: 230).

The woollen tunic and trousers from Thorsberg in Denmark (an alkaline bog) show extraordinary details. The tunic, once red in hue, has a special kind of ‘seam’, an edged hole that looks like a button opening located on the back of the tunic (perhaps for a baldric?) and the use of blue stitching thread (Möller-Wiering 2011: 47–8). It has several large ‘cuts’ penetrating front to back, which were considered to have been made once the garment was off the body, and one ‘stab’ gesture
5.7 The Orkney hood. All rights reserved and permission to use the figure must be obtained from the copyright holder.
while the garment was folded in a pile (Möller-Wiering 2011: 47–8). The two pairs of trousers consist of leg coverings or stockings with integral ‘feet’ and projecting straps to be held up by a belt (Möller-Wiering 2011: 540). Two cloaks were also found: one was described soon after discovery as ‘green in colour with a yellow and dark green border with fringes’ (Engelhardt 1863, cited in Möller-Wiering 2011: 54). Numerous other fragments of textile clothing (mostly made from sheep wool) and leather were also deposited, some ‘rolled up into a lump’ and others ‘very much torn’, close to both ‘larger heaps’ and smaller ‘knots’ of ropes, cords and twisted bast (Möller-Wiering 2011: 67). This extraordinary array suggests that clothing – often damaged – accompanied the weapons deposits that have not survived as well in this bog. The Vehnemoor bog deposit from Germany consisted of a bronze and enamel dish, wrapped in a similar glorious woollen cloak, with tablet woven borders and decorative fringe. The cloaks from both sites are considered prestigious pieces of early Roman weaving known as a Prachmanteln: a show cloak (van der Sanden 1996: 132). Studies of bog cloth by Berghe et al. (2009) reveal the once-remarkable palette of dyes, mostly used to colour the completed cloth (blues, reds and yellows), which might be patterned through checks or stripes, but occasionally used to dye yarns that produced multicoloured clothing.

Linen does not survive in the bog, so we are limited to seeing survivals of wool and hide products, which may explain the apparent ‘nakedness’ of many bog bodies. Individual shoes or sandals are the most common find, particularly in the early Roman era, such as the Bentstreek shoe from Germany (Bergen et al. 2002: 89) or the pairs of shoes at Pinneberg and Lottorf (Coles and Coles 1989: 191). Whether these were once associated with human remains is unknown. Both the Hunteberg foot and the Bentstreek foot were found ‘sandaled’, so to speak, which helped to preserve the integrity of the human remains. As far as I know, the water-colours of Amscott Woman’s sandal are the earliest representation known of such bog footwear, showing the pattern of the last and its lacing (Figure 5.8).

5.8 The shoe of Amcotts Woman from the ‘Prints and Drawings Collected Before 1750’ of the Society of Antiquaries, linked to Minute Book entry October 1747: 33–4. All rights reserved and permission to use the figure must be obtained from the copyright holder.
However, the majority of clothing found in the bog is found either as dress or as wrapping for a bog body. A hide cloak was found with the bog body at Baronstown West, which shows a composite, patched structure (Kelly 2006). Kayhausen Boy (c.350–115 BC) was associated with a hide cape and woollen textiles used as bindings to render him immobile. Damendorf Man (dating to the Roman era) was found with two leather belts and two shoes, a woollen cloak, woollen breeches and leg wrappings (van der Sanden 1996: 121), but fascinatingly these were wrapped up and laid in a pile at his feet. Arden Woman, deposited c.500 BC in Denmark, was covered by the remains of a skirt, a shawl and a ‘sprang’ technique hair net (van der Sanden 1996: 128). Rendswühren Man and Osterby Man (mid and early Roman, respectively) also had fur capes and the former bog body also had a woollen cloak (van der Sanden 1996: 121). Dröbnitz Girl’s skin cape of four panels had at least eight patched repairs, as well as crude mending of a seam tear (van der Sanden 1996: 123, fig. 168). The Windeby bog also had a fur cape, along with a woollen band woven in the sprang technique (producing a flexible and elastic open-weave fabric), which has variously been interpreted as a blindfold (though this is an open design) or more probably, a fringed head covering. The two men (one in his thirties, one in his twenties) found side by side in the Great bog at Hunteberg both appeared to have been wrapped in woollen cloaks laid over their bodies and tucked around the feet. Both of these garments had worn patches mended with subtle darning stitches (van der Sanden 1996: 123). Dating to the third to fourth century AD, this treatment suggests a degree of care and comparable treatment reminiscent of formal burial more than hasty deposition (Bergen et al. 2002: 105). When freshly excavated, the quality of preservation was so good that the textile expert was able to try on one of the garments (Bergen et al. 2002: 106)! Twill woven cloth with side borders and a fringe produced a kind of sleeveless coat or cloak; where it would have fallen over the right breast and presumably been pinned, a series of old repairs were noted, with repeated darning to mend the worn cloth (Bergen et al. 2002: 106). Such a multifunctional garment served as coat, blanket and finally, shroud.

Weaponry and vessels

In an account from 1701, Abraham de la Pryme records how an acquaintance discovered – and recycled – a weapon from the Hatfield bogs. It was an ‘old Shaped Knife, with a Haft of a very hard black sort of Wood, which had a cap of Copper or Brass on the one end, and a Hoop of the same Metal on the other end, where the Blade went into it. Which Blade soon Mouldering away, the said Mr Canby, valuing his Haft exceedingly, got a new Blade put in it’ (de la Pryme 1701: 983). De la Pryme does not tell us what the blade was made of, making it difficult to date this weapon, but it is a warning that the most enduring part of a bog object may be its organic components. This chapter will not deal with bog deposits of weapons from the mid to late Bronze Age, but the site of Beith in Ayrshire, where up to six
or seven middle Bronze Age shields were reputedly found standing upright in a circle in the bog, is worth a brief mention (the only surviving bronze shield of which is curated by the Society of Antiquaries at Burlington House, object no. LDSAL 80). In Ireland, spears and swords were being deposited in the bog during the Iron Age: at the site of Lisnacrogher discussed above, four decorated scabbards or sheaths were found with three chapes (and two other possible chape fragments) and four iron swords (Raftery 1983). Two spearheads (one with a fascinating ‘rocked graver’ ornament executed on the iron stem), nineteen spear butts (decorative but robust end pieces often shaped like doorknobs – a distinctive Irish and also Scottish phenomenon, occasionally found in northern Britain), seventeen spear-shaft fragments and four ferrules/sockets as well as a wooden knife were found (Kelly 2006; Fredengren 2007). Isolated weapons in bogs, such as a sword from Ballinderry and a spear butt from Clonalee, are also known alongside surrogate, symbolic or training swords made completely of wood, such as Ballykilmurry and Cappagh (Raftery 1994: pl. 53; Kelly 2006: 2), but one of the most dramatic weapon depositions is the leather shield from Clonoura. This shield is sub-rectangular, made from calf hide covering an alder wood base and held in shape by stitched shield bindings running around its rim, with oak bar-grip and central raised wooden boss protected by a stitched hide cover (Figure 5.9). There are slits in the hide, possibly for a carrying thong (Raftery 1994: 146, fig. 89). Stabbing and slashing marks puncture the front cover, including several identifiable spear ‘wounds’; it had seen action, but may have also been decommissioned before being placed in the bog, as the lower binding is missing and the interior right corner is badly damaged as if smashed on its edge.

No details survive of the discovery of the Pilling Moss scabbard from Britain, made for a long dagger or short sword, but it is distinguished by its unique design and suspension plate that sits at the top of the weapon, unlike northern counterparts where this is usually placed in the middle of the scabbard (probably for wearing on the back, see Stead 2006: 72, cat. no. 233). The asymmetry of this suspension plate and its apparent truncation and riveting might suggest it has been altered and customised, perhaps during repair. There are many British Iron Age swords from springs, streams, major rivers (the Thames and the Witham), fenlands and wetlands but few from true bog contexts: Meare Heath might qualify as an area of small raised bog and reed-fringed pools but Congham, Dollands Moor, Wilberfoss, Embleton and Cadeby were all peaty heathlands or low-lying wetlands, with Flasby and Cotterdale found on upland moor and blanket bog (Stead 2006). Large-scale deposition of weaponry and fittings is known within Britain at some hillfort sites (such as Cadbury and Maiden Castle, or Stanwick), where such items may have been on display as trophies or deposited in ditches. Others were lowered or tossed into the waters of wetland deposition sites (Flag Fen, Orton Meadows and Fiskerton), but these tend to be riverine or estuarine in nature (Stead 2006). Only at Essenden do we see a concentration of weapons buried ‘in a shallow pool in a bog’ (Stead 2006: 51): Hoard C contained no less than eight swords in a variety of wooden, copper alloy and iron scabbards, two separate scabbards and a series of...
5.9 The Clonoura shield, Co. Tipperary. All rights reserved and permission to use the figure must be obtained from the copyright holder.
sword belt fittings, close to other hoards containing a gold tubular torc, one brass and three gold ingots, fragments of a copper alloy bowl and a hoard of coins (Stead 2006: 51).

There are thus no mass bog deposits of weapons from the UK to rival those from Denmark, such as the army of weapons buried with the 19 m long Hjortspring vessel, dating to the third to second century BC. This lime-wood vessel, plank-sewn with lime bast, sealed with resin and tarred or painted black, was augmented by hazel and ashwood fittings. It was deposited in a distinctive small bog (only 45 × 50 m), on the island of Als (Randsborg 1995: 36). The associated finds included 11 iron swords (one bent into an ‘S-shape’, another at a curving angle of just over 45°), spears with ash shafts (138 of iron, 31 of bone/antler), 64 shields and 10–12 torn and fragmented chainmail shirts, as well as the small turned wooden bowls (‘pyxides’) and decorative or personal items (a bronze swan’s neck pin, strap tags, bronze ‘button’ or fastener), as well as wooden bowls, dishes and spoons, representing the intimate personal care and consumption kit of the men. Enigmatic wooden discs with handles (a form of ‘gong’ perhaps) and a bone flute suggest the auditory kit of a war band, equipped either to intimidate or entertain (Randsborg 1995: 32). Interpreted as the result of a nearby battle (Randsborg 1995: 32), the actual deposit is seen as a martial sacrifice: ‘war booty’ seized from a small army or raiding party (with up to c. sixty-seven to sixty-nine ‘warriors’ and ten to twelve leaders distinguished by sword and mail coat, with one dog). The inference is that these enemies have been stripped of all the accoutrements that made them what they were: masculine, weaponised, ‘beautiful’ warriors (see Giles 2017). Yet there are no human remains – no corpses, no scalps and no trophy heads. The same assemblage could also be read as an extraordinary offering, perhaps the laying down of arms by a war band: an act of agreed or forced demilitarisation or even an offering meant to equip a supernatural army, who would rise at some future crises, needing to be clothed and armed. (The English legend of the ‘sleepers under the hill’ at Alderley Edge, popularised by author Alan Garner, is but one motif of a dormant, supernatural martial force that must be equipped by the living, in order to re-emerge at a time of crisis). Such times were indeed coming.

In the later (Roman) Iron Age, this kind of ‘war booty’ or large sacrifice of weaponry became more common. The site of Illerup Ádal, dating to the third to fourth century AD, provides us with what look like ‘boatloads’ of weaponry and kit (including smiths’ tools and domestic items, thought to be from the war camp), turned out into the boggy lake (von Carnap-Bornheim and Ilkjær 1996). At least four separate assemblages were identified. The ‘identikit’ weapons sets – scaled from foot soldier to cavalry officer – suggest a small army based on Roman models, losing to a superior force. In among the metalwork, wood, bone and antler were remnants of mineralised textiles representing belts and baldrics, as well as clothing (Möller-Wiering 2011: 25). Some of these objects were damaged after conflict: shield boss XBK, for instance, was hit with a hammer, causing percussive fragmentation, while most bosses and fittings were ripped from shield boards and swords were pulled from their sheaths (Möller-Wiering 2011: 26).
Bog bodies

The clothing too bore signs of cuts and splits wrought by weapons, perhaps taken from a corpse or stripped off a defeated fighter and slashed: ‘sacrifices in themselves’ as Möller-Wiering (2011: 26) puts it. Yet others were used to wrap individual weapons, torn-off components or groups of objects. Wrapped and tied bundles of plant fibre cords and ropes were also deposited whole (Möller-Wiering 2011: 29). Pauli Jensen (2017: 79) suggests this site might be the final resting place of raided treasures, not a battle deposit: offering up a commingled thanksgiving of objects.

Smaller weapons deposits are also known: three ‘wooden’ helmets, apparently copying an Italian/Alpine form, were found in Uglemose bog (Fleming 1995: 28) and a small set of arms (shield boss, two spearheads, an arrowhead, wrapped in fabric) were found at Gemersdorf-Techelwitz, further south in Germany (Möller-Wiering 2011: 99). In Krogsbølle, Denmark, swords, spearheads and part of a helmet cheekpiece, knives, axes and a mallet also have a martial feel, deposited at a stone trackway that crossed a bog brook (Randsborg 1995). Yet an altogether more massive deposition site was found at Nydam, where a clinker-built Iron Age vessel dating to the late Iron Age (AD 200–400) was only one of three ‘ships’ deposited in the open waters of this bog lake, accompanied by another suite of large-scale deposits of weaponry and personal equipment (Rieck 2009: 211). One of the oak ships was chopped up, cleaved apart and found in a spread suggesting floating pieces had gradually settled into the peat. Sword, scabbards, spears and larger lances were complemented by bows, arrows, quivers (a rare find in many Iron Age weapons deposits) and shields. Some of the shields bore traces of paint or pigment. Belt fittings along with knives, tweezers, ear scoops, bone combs and steel ‘strike-a-lights’, wooden boxes, beads and brooches, as well as coins, a drinking horn fragment and bucket components speak not just of an army but their camp, their kit and their craftsmen: a woodworking plane was also discovered in the bog (Rieck 2009: 213). Textiles were used here for wrapping objects, as offerings of clothing but also as caulking on the ship (Möller-Wiering 2011: 97).

Meanwhile, at Alken Enge (effectively an inland bog lake: its mouth framed by a narrow neck of land with projecting spurs, see Søe et al. 2017) a complex deposit appears to represent the gathering up of arms and body parts from a battlefield dating to the first century AD, approximately six months after the event (Holst et al. 2018). Skeletonised remains of around eighty-five individuals show sharp and blunt-force violence that has not healed, as well as some evidence of animal scavenging. When the time came for this ‘cleansing’ of the land, it involved the gathering up of remains and weapons: the deliberate damaging of some blades and the respectful wrapping of selected human remains (honoured fallen warriors?), sometimes associated with carefully chosen bundles of exotic stones. In contrast, the sight of four ‘os coxae’ (pelvic girdle arches) on an alder branch, stacked left/right/left/right, smacks instead of the deliberate humiliation of an enemy’s corpse (Holst et al. 2018: 5922). This differential treatment suggests subtle discrimination of the dead by those scarred by this event: needing to make an end to it through this final act of deposition.
At Vimose, meanwhile, weapons deposition in the bog spans the first to the sixth centuries AD, but Pauli Jensen (2009: 57) draws a strong distinction between the earliest deposits (small assemblages of undamaged weaponry: a handful of spears and a sword) and those from the later eras of larger-scale weaponry deposition. Even here, ‘clusters’ of wrapped or tied blades and utensils could be identified as separate deposits: some smaller items ‘nestled’ in the dome of the boss (Möller-Wiering 2011: 38). Some spears and swords had been deliberately bent before deposition (Bergen et al. 2002: 100) and spearheads ripped from their shafts and wrapped individually, before being bundled up in larger pieces of cloth (Möller-Wiering 2011: 35). As at Illerup and Nydam, the mix of weaponry from different classes of warriors was complemented by personal ‘kit’: belt buckles, decorated bone combs, horse gear, spoked wheels, tubs and bowls, boxes and tools. This range of the martial and personal suggests they were being stripped from enemies – whether living or dead – or taken from abandoned camps of a mercenary army. Their deposition in the bog may have involved deliberate destruction to prevent rearming, celebrate victory and humiliate the enemy, or they may even have marked the cessation of hostilities; but this was a palpably different scale of gesture to the earlier deposits. The custom of deliberate damage to weaponry before deposition, practised by many of the ‘barbarian’ tribes, puzzled Roman authors, as in Orosius’s account of the Cimbri’s victory over Roman forces:

Having gained possession of both camps and of a huge amount of booty, the enemy seemed driven by some strange animus. They completely destroyed everything they had captured; clothing was cut to pieces and strewn about, gold and silver were thrown into the river, the breastplates of the men were hacked to pieces, the trappings of the horses were ruined, the horses themselves were drowned in whirlpools, and men, with nooses fastened around their necks, were hanged from trees. Thus the conqueror realised no booty, while the conquered obtained no mercy. (Orosius V.16, cited in Randsborg 1995: 74)

The account tells us also that ‘enemy’ horses and men met their death after capture, in an account that would not be out of place for the site of La Tène itself. Yet by the time of many of the Danish massive weapons deposits, there may have been more of a dialogue between barbarian and Roman customs. The Roman triumph had become a piece of ritualised theatre involving the display of weaponry, vessels and vehicles or valuables, as well as captives and horses – some of whom also met their death through execution at the end of this humiliating parade (Östenberg 2009). Such a performance would have skilfully manipulated the sheen, stain, noise, texture and raw shock of blades in a numinous, sonorous and frankly frightening celebration of victory, as captured in Plutarch’s description of Aemilius Paullus’s Macedonian triumph of 167 BC:

The most beautiful and costly Macedonian arms were paraded in many wagons. The arms themselves sparkled with freshly polished bronze and iron, and were carefully and artfully arranged to look as though they had been piled together in
Bog bodies

heaps and at random, helmets lying upon shields ... Cretan shields and Thracian wicker shields and quivers were mixed up with horses' bridles, and through them projected naked swords and pikes, planted among them, all the arms being so loosely packed that they smote against each other as they were borne along and gave out a harsh and dreadful sound, and the sight of them, even though they were spoils of a conquered enemy, was not without its terrors. (Aem. 32.5–8, cited in Östenberg 2009: 23)

The disorder seems deliberate; these were still potent weapons, which should not be displayed in proper, ordered sets lest they evoke the power of an army prepared for combat and might become reanimated (Östenberg 2009: 25). In the Roman world too, such spoils were either deliberately destroyed (Amelius Paullus set fire to the other spoils he did not bring home) or were dispersed following the triumphal procession to become decorative displays and offerings at public places, temples and shrines or as personal trophies decorating doors and thresholds of the home, living on also in formalised monumental triumphal arches or literary narratives (Östenberg 2009: 20). Beyond the limes, in late Iron Age Denmark, they were similarly disassembled, damaged or wrapped: the event living on not in text but in memory and in the cold, conserving clutch of the bog.

These Danish deposits give us examples of vessels that act as massive mobile containers for arms as well as the most impressive weapon in such an assemblage. Yet smaller boats were vital to the crossing of these water worlds for more mundane activities too: hunting and fishing expeditions, plying between wetlands settlements and facilitating longer-distance journeys for exchange and communication. In Ireland, both the Bronze Age Lurgan log boat and Ardbrin canoe (the latter found with four paddles) were deposited in the peat of shallow bog lakes, but in Britain, such vessels are more commonly found scuppered, damaged or pinned down in more open or moving bodies of water – lochs, lakes and rivers. The Baddily Mere log boat and Cholmondeley log boat (antiquarian discoveries from Cheshire) and the Martinmere canoe from Lancashire, suggest that there is a northern Iron Age vessel tradition of depositing crafts in marshes and meres (Leigh 1700: fig. 4.1; Leah et al. 1997: pl. 29: 135–6). Indeed, in Gibson’s revision of Camden’s Britannia (1722: 970) he suggests ‘in draining it [Martinmeer] they found no less than eight Canooes [sic]’! The Bronze Age Ferriby boats (Wright 1990) and Brigg craft (McGrail 1994), as well as the large Iron Age log boat from Hasholme (Millet and McGrail 1987; Halkon 1997), the Iron Age Fiskerton boats (Rylatt pers. comm.; Kennedy 2002; for context see Field and Parker Pearson 2003) and the eight new Bronze Age to early Iron Age prehistoric boats from Must Farm (Must Farm 2019) were protected by wet peaty fen deposits, but were all originally sunk into the edge of major rivers, creeks or palaeochannels. Perhaps this was because boats of this size were only of use in larger expanses of water with interconnecting bog pools or lakes; their natural ‘end’ lay in the places where they plied their trade most frequently. It was only the warships of Denmark that met their fate in a land dominated by the bog.
Instruments

In contrast, there is a strong tradition of instrument bog deposition in Ireland in the later Bronze Age (such as the Dowris hoard), which continued into the Iron Age, as with the astounding trumpets or curved horns from Loughnashade, found with human crania at the foot of Navan fort in what was probably then a bog lake (Raftery 1994). Only one of the four horns survives, with its decorated end disc flowing with tendrils of La Tène art and riveted sheets repaired in at least three places with small strips. At Killyfaddy bog, four sections of wooden horn with bronze strips may indicate a similar organic version of the bronze instrument (Raftery 1983: 243). On Asby Moor in the UK, a report to the Spalding Gentlemen’s Society noted that ‘about 5 instruments of a sort of Bell Mettle [were] found in Asby Moor near Brigg … also the Skeleton and Skin of a Man found upright in the same moor’ (Minute Book of 1724, f. 86, cited in Turner 1995b: 113). Early experiments were made to ascertain the noise made by these instruments – a Mr Clibborn (Curator of the Royal Irish Academy) managed through ‘strong effort of the lungs and lips’ to ‘produce a deep bass note, resembling the bellow of a bull’ (MacAdam 1860: 101) on trumpets of Dowris style – a fascinating insight given the presence of a stack of ‘crotals’ in the Dowris assemblage (lobate ringed pendants that seem to deliberately mimic the testicles of a bull but ‘rang’ with the sound of small clay pellets inside or clattered against each other). Unfortunately, as MacAdam (1860: 101) goes on to note, ‘it is a melancholy fact that the loss of this gentleman’s life was occasioned by a subsequent experiment … he burst a blood vessel and died’. In contrast, MacAdam praises the noise produced by the Ardbrin trumpet, which when taken from the bog was ‘as bright as gold’. He goes on to note ‘The finder, as soon as he had cleared the tubes of the moss that they contained, applied the smaller end of the larger joint to his mouth and blew a blast, which immediately arrested the attention of the inhabitants of several adjacent townlands, who hurried to the spot!’ (MacAdam 1860: 103). The intent with such horns was to produce ‘a sound of extraordinary loudness’ and (noting both their extravagant size and unwieldiness) MacAdam (1860: 104) felt they would have been used ‘only on occasions of solemnity or importance, such as processions, &c, and not in battle’. Yet of course we know that Roman ears heard and were intimidated by the ‘parade and tumult’ of the Celtic or Gaulish armies with their ‘horns and trumpets’, such that ‘all the adjacent district seemed to join in the terrible din’ (Polybius cited in Shuckburgh 1962: 28: 5). The instrument being referred to here is the carnyx, of which only one true example is known from the UK: the Deskford carnyx, found in a small bog in Leitchestown, Banffshire around 1816 (Hunter 2019b). These instruments span the middle Iron Age to Roman era, from c.300 BC to AD 300, and although they appear to be most common in France, Switzerland and Italy, the design spread to Germany, Romania and up to Scotland (Hunter 2019a). Depictions of carnyces have been found on sculpture in India (presumably as part of an exotic performance by European traveller-players), but they are
most common on Roman coins and triumphal sculpture (Hunter 2019a) where it is used as a symbolic shorthand for the conquering of barbarian tribes and seizing of their honour, wealth and martial virtuosity.

Mimicking a boar, the skilfully wrought insular Celtic sheetwork of the Deskford carnyx characterfully captures the upturned snout and wrinkled folds of flesh around the boar’s eyes, which would once have been inset with contrastive materials such as red glass (as reconstructed by John Creed for the National Museum of Scotland). The bronze is actually a form of brass recycled from Roman metal (Hunter 2019a: 231) and there is a glorious irony in forging this weapon of resistance from such matter, making something that would wreak psychological terror upon the invaders of the north. Yet upon deposition, the carnyx was dismantled and fragmented; it would have undoubtedly had a flaring crest, impressive flapping ears and a hinged bladder ‘tongue’ that gave its deep tone a reverberating tremble. But these elements, along with the connecting upright tubular horn, are missing. Butchered, rendered deaf to the call for arms or assembly and silenced forever, the head was placed in a small bog close to a prominent ridge (Hunter 2019b: fig. 4). The bog had begun forming in the early Bronze Age, supporting alder growth around its fringes, but the people who placed the ‘brazen swine’s head’ in the bog (as the antiquarians described the find, see Hunter 2019b: fig. 3) had dug down through over a metre of peat to place it on the underlying clay till. This secluded damp spot had attracted sporadic deppositions: scatters of stone, ceramic and birch bark container fragments from the middle Bronze Age and two middle Iron Age poles stuck fast into the bog, interpreted by Hunter (2019b: 241) as possible ‘votive acts stimulated by the emergence of a wet site’. Yet in the later Iron Age, two pits were cut into the peat to hold the offerings of at least two butchered cows (skull and limbs only) and a sheep/goat head, apparently ‘marked’ by a worked wooden peg. These are not classic ‘head-and-hoof’ deposits that one might expect for the display of a prepared hide or fleece, but could represent the leftover cuts and products minus the main carcass, perhaps consumed during feasting, mimicking the actions carried out on the carnyx head itself (Cook cited in Hunter 2019b: 309). Hunter (2019b: 243) notes this parallel treatment of beasts of metal and flesh is also present at the carnyx site of Soulac-sur-Mer. There then followed three deposits of rounded and subangular, water-smoothed quartzite cobbles (reminiscent of the German and Danish examples), offerings perhaps ‘of a ritually charged material’ (Hunter 2019b: 243). Fascinatingly, several accumulations or caches of such pebbles have recently been recorded at Black Loch Myrton in roundhouse Structure 1: ‘placed under the floors, tucked in under the wickerwork walls, and around the base of posts’ – interpreted here, as in other crannogs as ‘symbolic acts perhaps intended to bring good fortune to the house and its occupants’ (Crone et al. 2018: 140). One scatter was cracked and shattered, perhaps having been used for cooking, supporting the notion of residues from consumption events.

The site was overlooked by a ridge upon which successive episodic inhabitation and funerary events had left their trace from the Neolithic period onwards. This site was here, Hunter (2019b: 321) argues, because the bog was here – and
A pit complex and souterrain system dating to the Iron Age was followed by a narrow palisade slot in the early Roman period, framing the natural entrance on to the ridge. The ditch contained a worn fragment of samian, local Iron Age pottery, flints, copper alloy fragments and iron, while an associated pit contained an otter or stoat mandible – a wily little hunter that might have been valued not just for its pelt but also its predatory power. A shallow, stone-lined cooking pit and a timber-lined souterrain complex was also discovered, and its proximity to the bog brings to mind the discussions about stored tribute and safekeeping, reviewed above: ‘placing material under the care of the gods, or as offerings’, as Hunter puts it (2019b: 264). Deskford embodies the notion that the bog had become the ‘right place’ in which to inter the remains of celebratory debris. Whether this was a revered object owned by this community or the seizure of a feared trophy from rivals, the decommissioned carnyx head may have needed such a place of repose after the victories or defeats it had heralded through its fearsome call.

**Mixed ‘bog deposits’**

Although the above examples have been chosen to highlight a single theme or category of object, many of them are more correctly characterised as ‘mixed bog deposits’ (Kok 2008).

The final example of this I want to consider also contains another horn tube, alongside objects from nearly all of the above categories. Llyn Cerrig Bach in Wales is part of a larger complex of bogs and lakes on the western side of the Isle of Anglesey. In the Iron Age it was part of the Cors y Gynys bog and the deposit seems to have been located between a ‘rock platform’ on the shoreline and a raised ‘islet’ in the bog, with the possibility that an unidentified causeway might have linked the two (Fox 1946; Macdonald 2007: 174). Either way, it formed a dramatic micro-locale and setting within the bog lake complex. The material was discovered during peat extraction in the Second World War to restabilise the dune system around RAF Valley. Some objects were noticed during peat digging itself, but one of the ‘slave chains’ found spread on the airfield during the harrowing of the peat was famously kept and used by a workman to ‘tow lorries out of the mud’ (Macdonald 2007: 4)! The assemblage is a remarkable mix of objects (Figure 5.10), with a heavy emphasis upon worked metal, both iron and copper alloy. The earliest phase seems to be represented by the sacrifice of animals – ox or sheep horn cores, ox radius and metatarsal, sheep/goat mandible, radius and metatarsal and dog jaw suggest at least three animals, if not more, were taken to the bog: none of the animal bone shows evidence of butchery or cooking and the fragments sound similar to the ‘heads and legs’ deposit of Solway Moss.

The second major suite of deposits is dominated by equine and martial gear. It includes the disassembled remains of a chariot pole (with iron sheath boxwork), many parts of iron wheel rims, four copper alloy nave-hoops (interestingly, a chariot’s worth but all differing in design) and seven iron ones, as well as horse
Bog bodies

5.10 Some of the artefacts from Llyn Cerrig Bach. All rights reserved and permission to use the figure must be obtained from the copyright holder.

gear: eight copper alloy and four iron bridle bits, three terrets and six rein rings, one copper alloy and one iron ring and one iron and one copper alloy linchpin (the latter modelled into a horse hoof, complete with hairy ‘fetlock’ appearance, Farley pers. comm.). Other chariot fittings might include a cylindrical pole mount and an enigmatic ‘horn cap’ heavily hacked by a sword around its rim. There are three fragments of globular or hemispherical cauldrons and a repaired curved horn or trumpet mouth and body, lacking its terminal. Two iron ‘slave’ or ‘gang’ chains give us an insight into a cruel and humiliating means of holding captives in subjugation, perhaps for their fateful journey to this peat-black water, given that human remains also appear to have been found – and then perhaps conveniently lost (Macdonald 2007: 173) – the war era discovery was not conducive to a narrative of British barbarity. Violence done to things is a distinguishing characteristic of this assemblage, with stripping, ripping, slashing, deforming, bending and breaking represented across all the categories of finds (Macdonald 2007: 172). Weaponry is represented by eight iron swords, two bronze scabbard mounts and two iron scabbards, one iron dagger, eight spearheads and the bronze pommel of a dagger or sword, a shield boss mount with elegant spines and two ‘bean-shaped plaques’ that might be shield fittings for either side of a boss. Three sheet fragments of bronze and one curved plate were decorative additions for some organic object, as well nine coiled strips of bronze (mostly unwound) whose profile would fit a spear shaft.
or staff. The famous crescentic plaque, decorated with La Tène repoussé, art might be a more personal item of bodily adornment. Five iron currency bars yet to be worked, two pairs of blacksmith’s tongs, an iron sickle and reaping hook, spatulate tool and six other iron fragments (bars, strips and fittings) were also found. Finally, there are a series of one ‘tri-disc’, three square and two rectangular plaques, which look like box or casket fittings from the latest phase of the deposit, characteristic of a late fluorescence of bold and robust peri-Conquest artwork (see Hunter 2012; Joy 2014a). Macdonald (2007: 156) points out that the deposit includes bronze work from a wide variety of sources, some from southern Britain, and the possibility of the odd piece of northern horse gear or south-eastern devices for incarceration, as well as an Irish horse bit, yet most were probably made locally.

Llyn Cerrig Bach embodies in one locale the sheer diversity of depositions found in bogs during this period in northern Europe. It has also been linked to Tacitus’s description of the Isle of Mona (Anglesey), as a centre of religious learning and refuge for fugitives at the time of Conquest (Jackson 1937: XIV, 29–30). Tacitus tells us of an apparent battle in which the Druids flanked armed men, accompanied also by ‘women dressed as Furies in funeral black with streaming hair’. The forces of Paulinus Suetonius were initially daunted by this intimidating display before they rallied and slaughtered or burnt this gathering of resistance figures. They apparently went on to ‘cut down’ the groves dedicated to their ‘savage rites’ for ‘it was part of their religion to drench their altars with the blood of their enemies and consult their gods by means of human entrails’ (Tacitus in Jackson 1937: XIV, 29–30). Yet MacDonald (2007: 186) notes that the description bears an uncanny resemblance to ‘stock clichés’ used by other Roman authors, and both his diligent object analysis and landscape survey means that we can tell a rather different story of a site that saw protracted and repeat visits for depositions that shifted in character over time, focused on the distinctive island within the bog as a likely sanctuary site. The sheer scale of the deposit and the violence of unmaking that marks it out has the feel of millennial despondency: an extraordinary act at a time of crises. Macdonald (2007: 187) accepts the notion of these as votive offerings but avoids associating this explicitly with ‘Druidic’ power. He also tempers the notion that these are distinctively masculine offerings that helped to reproduce elite male authority embodied in portable equine and martial wealth, by pointing to the frequent association in other Roman texts of women as religious specialists, with particular responsibility for rituals at island sanctuaries (Macdonald 2007: 188).

Macdonald (2007: 174–82) thus situates the assemblage within wider deposits interpreted as votive offerings, which did not simply cease with Roman occupation or their pressing influence on the borders of Ireland, Scotland, Denmark and Germany.

Hints that we have missed similar sites within the English bogs come from de la Pryme’s (1701: 982) letter to the Royal Society regarding Hatfield Moor, where he describes ‘old Trees, squared and cut, Rails, Stoups, Bars, and links of Chains, Horse-heads, an old Ax [sic] … two or three coins of the Emperor Vespasian’. The mix of late Iron Age and early Roman deposits is also seen at the site of Rossington.
Bog bodies

Bridge, near Doncaster (UK): not strictly a bog so much as the boggy crossing of a palaeochannel associated with a trackway, which became the focus for another Conquest era deposition. Although the exact original context for many of its finds remains obscure, a tankard handle, an enamelled linchpin, horse-harness toggle and terret ring, accompanied by an iron cauldron chain fragment and poker (Buckland et al. 2001) suggest a mix of personal and communal offerings near or in watery contexts. Black, organic-rich deposits and butchered bird bone might indicate midden material or feasting debris (Chadwick 2019: 70). Whatever this site was, further metal detector finds of brooches, harness fittings, fasteners and a triskele design disc-brooch add to the notion of selective, formal and ongoing deposition rather than mere Roman ‘clearance’ activity by the military (Chadwick 2019: 67). Indeed, finds of a Roman date (a ‘hipposandal’ and pilum or javelin head), along with ceramic kiln structures, suggest deposition did not stop with northern arrival of the troops to the nearby fort: this continued to be a special place for offerings now from the Romano-British world.

Interpreting votive deposition

Large and spectacular, small and mundane. The exquisite and the everyday. Vessels and vehicles, cauldrons, weaponry, agricultural tools, decorative fittings, animals, instruments and craft objects, food and drink. The range of offerings mark a distinct change away from the Bronze Age focus on metal – ‘democratising’ deposition to some extent (Kaul 2015). Yet it is hard to discern any clear or dominant patterns from the above review – the idea of deposition might be shared but how and what was offered was done ‘locally’. We can note some national contrasts: bog pots and massive weapons and ship burials in Denmark; compared with Irish and Scottish instruments, cauldrons and bog butter; German jewellery, clothing and ornamentation; and Swedish and Danish animal deposits. We can also sometimes see regional customs or micro-traditions in adjacent areas. Many of these bogs continue to receive offerings well into the Roman era (whether under the rule of conquerors or not). Indeed, in many areas, this marks a vigorous period of deposition (Macdonald 2007: 185). The bogs of northern Britain may seem spartan in comparison to other areas; this could be the result of an early exploitation of the turf and a lack of antiquarian recovery, but it probably does represent a real absence, giving the bog bodies from this area an additional weight. In mainland Britain, it is the more open or turbulent bodies of water – springs, streams, rivers and estuaries, as well as larger fens and lakes – that attract most of the artefact deposition, along with enclosure pits and ditches (Bradley 2017). What is notable is the change in depositional character in bogs compared with the Bronze Age, which (excluding the Danish ‘war booty’ finds) is small-scale or accretive, taking many visits, many moments of offering up things to the bog. It suggests that they were seldom prompted by a single event or crisis – deposition was a pattern woven into the fabric of life, a habitual custom.
The categories of objects discussed above have an emphasis on the agricultural realm, its produce, stock and craftwork. Many of them support the notion of an inescapable ‘ideological concern with agricultural fertility and the daily round’, as Bradley et al. (2015: 244) put it (see also Barrett 1989). This would have been particularly pressing in the bogslands, most of which were growing and consuming productive land during a millennium of wetter, harsher climates and shorter growing seasons (see Chapter 4). As Asingh and Lynnerup (2007: 286) state: ‘Human, animal and soil fertility were all crucial for the survival of the agricultural society. Offerings in bogs were perhaps both supplication to the gods for fertility and expressions of thanks. Great powers were at work’. Yet this was also an era of expansion, agricultural experimentation and noticeable woodland clearance in many regions. The land was changing and being changed in a constant dialectic between people, clearance, cultivation and hydrology. During the first millennium BC many people developed a more enduring bond with a particular place, increasingly marked by enclosure: with monumental longhouses (typical of Scandinavia and the near Continent, see Webley 2008; Asingh 2009) or roundhouses (characteristic of Ireland and the British Isles) often repeatedly built on similar foundations or ‘shifting’ slightly within the landscape, between generations (Sharples 2010; Giles 2012). When Tacitus talks of the making of such households among the Germanic tribes, he lists the things perceived to be fitting marital gifts: ‘yoked oxen, a horse with its bridle, or a shield, spear and sword, ’ a present of arms’ that becomes the ‘bond of union’, ‘sacred mysteries’ between husband and wife. Such objects were living reminders that woman and man were conjoined in both the ‘aspiration and perils’, the ‘toil and danger’ of farming and warfare (cited in Mattingley 1970: XVIII). They richly embody for us today something of the character of those lives and landscapes, which across northern Europe were still structured by some seasonal movement to utilise lush wetland pasture or upland grazing in the high months of summer and early autumn, often allied to the gathering of foodstuffs, hunting, craftwork or even salt production (Bradley et al. 2015: 284). There were thus many different types of ‘hydraulic communities’ as Evans (1997) describes them, moving between wetlands and drylands on a routine basis – it should not surprise us that these wet locales were increasingly drawn into their ritual lives (Kaul 2015). Those rhythms had to be negotiated with neighbouring communities and not all of these journeys would have been peaceable. Seen in another way, there were seasonal opportunities for friction, bellicosity and outright raiding, by which one might not only win spoils but fame or – when ill judged – risk revenge, blood debts or humiliation. The other side of these bog deposits tell us then of the intense experiences that punctuated pastoral life: feasting, horse riding and chariots, martial display and violence – the celebration of moments that shaped renown, prowess and honour, and bound successful partnerships, households and communities together. Whether some of those deposits represent the literal offering up of old ‘wedding gifts’ perhaps upon bereavement, or merely echo the values captured in Tacitus’s text, these are the worlds into which our deposits must also be situated.
Stepping back now from their symbolic resonances, how can bog deposits be interpreted? What unites them is the puzzling practice of giving things up, which lies outside of our own economic logic and notions of what we should do with ‘wealth’ (Fontijn 2020). We curate, we keep, we bequeath. As Fontijn (2020) points out, this is because we have a notion of possession related to the individual rather than a notion of value invested in the community. In contrast to our own accumulative economies, the logic that drives a ‘sacrificial economy’ is one where the surrender of apparently valuable things (which could otherwise be reused or recycled) makes sense only if prehistoric people believed this was the necessary or ‘right way to act’ as part of the making of their world (Fontijn 2020: 26). It charges us with rethinking our attitude towards materials, not as abstract resources to be exploited to individual gain but as ‘made things’ immersed in relations defined by exchange and reciprocity. Things might be earned but something had to be returned. Offerings were necessary if you were to receive again: they were ‘personal expressions of grace and gratitude’ (Pauli Jensen 2009: 55). Importantly, this also differs from the early to middle Bronze Age where the fragmentation and recycling of substances suggests an ontology of transformation and reincorporation (Brück 2004, 2016). We have seen that there may have been an intent to only temporarily store some things (bog butter, for example, or worked wood to keep joints swollen and prevent cracking) but for most finds, their boggy deposition rendered them irretrievable. Taken out of these short-term exchanges, the object was ‘removed from the human grip’ preventing it from being remade or reassociated with someone, exiling it from the ‘social domain’ (Fontijn 2020: 58). This actually amounts, Fontijn argues, to a kind of destruction – ‘giving for keeping’ (after Godelier, Fontijn 2020: 59). Consigning such things not into human hands but to the bog moved them into a higher realm of long-term exchange, concerned with ‘sustaining the overarching human order of sociality, culture, ideals and morality’ (Fontijn 2020: 14).

This kind of destruction therefore needs to be seen as a constructive act. Quite apart from supernatural exchange, the conspicuous consumption of possessions could be a vital means of earning fame, healing rifts or restoring balance between rivals (Graeber 2002). The nineteenth-century North American practice of ‘potlatch’ shocked missionaries who saw their precious philanthropic gifts of cooking pots, kettles and blankets either given away or burned on bonfires. Yet as Graeber points out, it was simultaneously a process of gift giving and a mode of competitive display: whatever happened to those materials, only a wealthy and powerful person or group could host such an event, enhancing their renown. Value lay here in the performance of largesse and drama of destruction (Graeber 2002). This encourages us to see deposition as a dramatic act that was an end in itself (cf. Aldhouse-Greene 2002: 20, who sees it as ‘means to end’, designed to generate a benefit): ‘Value, in a way, is created by giving up that which is valuable’ (Fontijn 2020: 155).

Yet Fontijn urges caution in how we describe such offerings, encouraging us not to see them as mere ‘gifts to the gods’ instead of one’s Iron Age neighbour. The reciprocity looked for here was of a completely different order because it involved
the supernatural realm. Gifts might have been given to initiate an ‘other-worldly’
debt, in the expectation of some kind of reward. Equally, they might be thanksgiv-
ings, appeasements and propitiations or even appeals for help and intercession. Yet
the nature of the ‘counter-gift’ that one might expect remains unclear – perhaps this
was simply the right, ‘moral’ thing to do (Fontijn 2020: 59). We do not even know
that there was a specific ‘recipient’ for these things; perhaps this was an exchange
of life forces – the raw matter of fuel and ore were being reciprocated with crafted
things, returning some kind of essence, energy or vital matter back to the bog so
that it might grow again. Even if there was a notion of a bog god or goddess, we will
never know their name – unlike Glob’s interest in Nerthus, or Aldhouse-Green’s
(2002) extensive research into the plethora of Gaulish, Germanic or British deities
glimpsed in epigraphy, sculpture and classical text, I will not therefore spend time
in speculating who they might have been. It is enough to reiterate that the bog
might have been a place of hierophany: a meeting place where the supernatural
was immanent in the moss, if not a portal or threshold between realms. It was
certainly a place where organic time – time that wrought an effect upon living
things – slowed or stopped. Some things might spend a while in that realm then,
and be returned, like the butter, but the bog transformed them: rendering them
stained, altered. Most stayed put, weighted down.

All we can know for certain then, is that depositions were made there – in the
bog: this was the fitting place for this specific act. In other regions it was the storage
pit, the enclosure ditch or the cleft in an outcrop that attracted these deposits
(Hingley 1990; Cunliffe 1992; Wilkinson 2019), but for those living close to the
bog this was their fitting locale. Yet any power or reputation earned from this
artful performance was precarious and fleeting. Bog deposits were aimed at small,
local audiences, occurring in a fluid setting with ambiguous boundaries, where the
sacrificed thing or person disappeared from view – it lived on only in the stories
people told of what had been seen or done (Fontijn 2020: 164). The trackways,
roads, platforms or islands in the bog give us examples where those places (and
the journey to them) became architecturally prescribed and framed, yet many
of these lasted less than a generation before the bog overgrew them. As Fontijn
(2020) goes on to argue, this is very different from shrine or temple sites where
things can be seen again and again on display (as in the massive collections
of Iron Age offerings at the sites of Gournay-sur-Aronde or Ribemont-sur-Ancre for
instance, see Aldhouse-Green 2016), or ‘archive’ economies where written records
or inscriptions kept account of who gave what (after Wengrow 2011). This kind of
sacrificial power was not just ambiguous, requiring skilled improvisation, it was
‘situational and hard to transmit to successive generations’ (Fontijn 2020: 168). It
also required repetition and, increasingly through the Iron Age, it may have been
enhanced through the bodily ‘paraphernalia’ that assisted ritual expertise (see
Aldhouse-Green 2002: ch. 9 for a lengthy and critically informed discussion; see
also the seminal article by Fitzpatrick 2007).

Interestingly, Iron Age deposition does not seem to be concerned with a surfeit
of one material (such as bronze) that might need to be taken out of circulation
Bog bodies

to keep its rarity and value artificially ‘high’ (the economic theory of ritual destruction, see Bradley 1998). Nor is there an obsessive focus on particular objects such as weapons – rarely do we see multiplicities of objects in the bogs – unlike currency bar hoards for example (Wilkinson 2019) or the weapons-only deposit of South Cave (Halkon and Jinks-Frederick 2018). Most of the objects discussed above are individually crafted, well worn and used, even where they are unique objects of ‘artistic merit’ as Macdonald (2007) describes them. They bore the distinctive marks of their makers in tangible traces of work – the chisel gouges of the Pallasboy vessel, the punchmarks of the Elvanfoot cauldron, the pressed pats of butter in the Kyleakin keg or else the traces of use, wear and repair – the recycled Orkney hooded top, repaired Pilling Moss scabbard and patched Ballyedmond cauldron. We seldom see the kind of ‘freshly smithed’ or newly cast bronze work that characterises many Bronze Age wetlands hoards or even some pit deposits or enclosure ditches (e.g. Houghton Down’s hooked billet buried with a fragment of forge waste, so newly worked that the soil was burned around it and hammerscale was still spitting and flaking from the surface, see Crew cited in Cunliffe and Poole 2000: 107). Whether everyday or exquisite, bog things were mostly redolent with the bodies, mouths, feet and hands that had used them, saturated not just with the symbolism of the agricultural world but the sweat, dirt and blood of it. They spoke of soil and stock, and the spectacular events that punctured life – feasts and bloodshed. They also conjured the exhilarating power of moving between worlds, through fixtures, fittings and furniture from boats, wagons, carts and chariots. Voyaging and journeying, whether in this world or to other realms, might be dangerous but the rewards were high. Such histories did not make these artefacts less of an offering; in ethnography and folklore, objects and substances imprinted or imbued with life (shoes, cloth, hair, blood, etc.) are often seen as exceptionally potent, redolent with life and thus of greater apotropaic value – capable of distracting malign spirits or providing protection from evil (Houlbrook and Armitage 2015).

Any meaning the object might once have had during its use life was now swelled and magnified by the act of handing it over. The art then, lay in selecting the ‘right’ objects, in the ‘right’ order, for deposition in the ‘right’ place (Fontijn 2020: 28). When such things were ritually damaged or spoiled just before deposition, it dramatised the moment of consignment to another domain (Macdonald 2007). While some of these acts were committed perhaps in the immediate aftermath and rage of a conflict (as indicated in the Cimbric’s victory of the Romans), other acts took time: Möller-Wiering (2011: 106) talks of the ‘meticulous wrapping up’ of thousands of weapons in the latest Danish deposits. How this was done mattered: whether things were punctured, folded or ripped; wrapped, pinned or covered; or staked and weighted – the act itself had to be appropriately conducted. It reflects an era where most bog offerings were material composites, rivetted, sewn or gummed together from a variety of substances – ritual damage suggests a concern with how these complex, composite things met their own end. An artful performance was thus part of how a fitting demise was crafted and their final value
won. This is a notion we will return to, in the context of human remains. Yet there is one last category of bog artefact to consider that arguably blurs the very boundaries of flesh and other matter. These are the bog figures.

The bog figures

The hewn stem of oak that once stood on a raised gravel beach close to Ballachulish ferry appears to have marked or overlooked the safe crossing point from shore to shore, poised between the great gorges of Glencoe and Loch Leven. It was found ‘prostrate’ on gravel and had once been covered by ten to twelve feet of black peat, but by then the moss was being heavily cut and drained away (Steuart 1880: 3). The original report in the *Inverness Courier* describes how ‘under the figure, above her and around her, were many twigs and branches, woven and interlaced’ (Steuart 1880: 3). This sounds like wickerwork or wattle and the fact that this material was well preserved suggests she did indeed have her feet in the peat bog, before she was laid face down and pinned in a bog pool by a hurdle, along with some ‘longer and stouter sticks’ (Steuart 1880: 3). Her fate thus mimics some of the bog bodies in the next chapter. Indeed, Aldhouse-Green (2004c: 91) suggests she may have been a material surrogate for a human sacrifice. Her now-warped figure was once ‘crudely but boldly carved’ from a single block of oak and time has shrivelled her mouth but it is clear it was once open, as if in utterance (Figure 5.11). This would have enhanced the sense of presence and animacy in the figure, as would the ‘two almost milk-white’ quartz pebble eyes (Steuart 1880: 3). Small, round breasts and a carved vulva identify her sex quite clearly, and the original newspaper records that her hair was ‘gathered upwards all around, and tied in a button-like knot on the head’ (Steuart 1880: 3), a detail that was already lost (probably through handling or transportation damage) by the following year, when Christison (1881) examined it. A band or strap seems to cross over her right shoulder and she seems to be clutching a handful of carved stems or wands. The base of the block contains a socket – thought by the finders to have held some additional votive object – but this may equally have been used for a tenon to secure her to laid timber. The finders dubbed her ‘Our Lady of the Ferry’ and the notion of this as a protective figure, both guiding and guarding safe crossings of the loch, endures. The same newspaper article recalls other finds from the ‘same level’ in this bog – particularly of note here are mentions of ‘ox and deer horns of large size,’ ‘casks of bog butter’ and ‘wooden basins, platters and bowls’, hinting at a much wider suite of bog offerings now lost to us (Steuart 1880: 3). It chimes with other sites on the Continent, such as Forlev Nymølle, in Denmark, where a stack of stones covered a simple bifurcated bog figure, associated with middle Iron Age pottery sherds, animal – and human – bones, worked wood (including ski-shaped slats) as well as two bundles of flax (van der Sanden and Cappelle 2001: 63). Once, these figures may have marked places of offering, but their end had finally come.
5.11 The Ballachulish figure. All rights reserved and permission to use the figure must be obtained from the copyright holder.
The late Bronze Age/early Iron Age to Roman era bog figures are one of the most eye-catching and engaging of bog finds, with good reason. Their anthropomorphic features command our attention, even where they are slightly done by the smallest carved gesture. There are ‘paper’ bog figures, just as there are ‘paper’ bog bodies (van der Sanden and Capelle 2001: ch. 3), and one of these was found in Oakhanger moss in Cheshire around in the mid-1700s, when a young man, Daniel Stringer, was digging deep into the peat. He found ‘a wooden figure, rude and grotesque, but complete with eyes, nose and mouth, concluding it to be an idol’ (Hinchcliffe 1856: 116–17): though reputedly sent to the British Museum, it has not survived. With many examples, there is a sense that a characterful knothole or suggestive forking of a branch led to the ‘recognition’ of a figure in the wood, realised with the minimum of effort. The Ejsbøl figure from Denmark is an inverted forked branch, as are the Thuringia figure and Braak ‘couple’ (all from Germany) but the latter are modified with the delineation of heads, necks and genitals (van der Sanden and Capelle 2001). The tri-forked structure of Broddenbjerg Man has lent itself to a particularly impressive priapic appearance (van der Sanden and Capelle 2001: 18, fig. 13). Others are more stake-like, formed of a single robust branch, such as a second figure from Esjbøl and one from Grimstad: both cut back to delineate a neck and hair or hat and torsos (van der Sanden and Capelle 2001: 20, figs 16 and 17). Some are two-dimensional, plank-like figures, such as at Backemoor (van der Sanden and Capelle 2001: 21, fig. 19) or the geometric Oss-Ussen figure from the Netherlands, where a circular ‘head’ and ‘belly’ are separated by projecting tabs that could be representations of arms, breasts or ribs (van der Sanden and Capelle 2001: 21, fig 36). Recent discoveries from Ireland, such as the Kilbeg figure, are tall, twisted pieces of alder roundwood, where the main modification seems to emphasise a head, the rib cage and navel (Stanley 2006). A suite of seven similar anthropomorphic figures from adjacent bogs in Co. Offaly all seem to date to the earlier Bronze Age and interestingly all but one were found near trackways or platforms, many of them ‘subsumed’ or buried under the structure (Stanley 2006). The Iron Age ‘bog figure’, found under a major rail of the Corlea trackway, is a characterful short stump, crudely fashioned into a head with snout or unturned nose (Raftery 1996), similar in its simplicity to the Birnenkopf figure (van der Sanden and Cappelle 2001: fig. 46). Yet others are heavily hewn into form, such as the Kingsteignton oak figure from the UK (Iron Age in date but technically a river-edge find), or the Lagore figure (found close to a crannog, see Coles 1990). The Ralaghan figure, dating from the late Bronze Age, is an armless block of heavily worked yew, with a clearly carved face, legs and pubic region with a hole for a separate phallus, in which were found traces of a white, crystalline substance, possibly quartz (Coles 1990: 322).

Yet there are smaller and more finely worked examples. The Roos Carr boat boat and crew of eight figures (with detachable arms and each with a separate penis, fitting into a socket) are accompanied by implements such as shields as well as clubs/paddles cleverly crafted from yew with menacing quartzite eyes (Coles 1990). They were supposedly found in a box in the peaty, estuarine deposits of Holderness, and
although miniaturised, they compress an intimidating masculinity into their long necks and defined calf muscles. The Strata Florida figure from Wales probably came from the nearby Cors Caron or Tregaron bog, which also yielded a well-preserved bog head (Turner and Briggs 1986: 187): it appears too dense, too polished and too well-made to be indigenous, yet this shiny boxwood figure has been dated to the late Iron Age/early Roman period (van der Sanden and Turner 2013: 89). While boxwood may have been a Roman reintroduction, small traces of it have been found in prehistoric contexts (van der Sanden and Turner 2013: 92) and its form certainly suggests a Celtic craft sensibility. The figure has a well-rounded head, clearly defined nose and ears, lentoid eyes and projecting knees, with a series of perforations on the sides for arms perhaps, but also in the pubic region and in the back.

The use of the wood in all of the figures is interesting (Coles 1990). There are no bog figures made of stone, bronze or even iron, yet figures and figurative art in all of these media are known from across northern Europe in the Iron Age from other non-bog contexts (see Aldhouse-Green 2004c). Oak and alder dominate (Coles 1990). Wood may have been chosen because it was organic and mimicked the properties of flesh: it grew, its bark was skin-like, when cut it often ‘bled’ (as Gearey et al. (2019) discovered and Stanley (2006) notes, in relation to alder trees that in Ireland are often referred to as the ‘red man’). Some trees ‘oozed’ sap during the most vigorous periods of spring growth in a process that might have been thought analogous to genital or vaginal fluids. (Many of the figures have a notch or niche where the addition of quartzite or other white, fatty or luminescent substances would have emphasised this suggestion). Trees and branches provided a vivid natural canvas for the Iron Age imagination, which may have encouraged realisation into a figural form – in the knots, stumps and stems, projecting branches or grain, it was possible to ‘see’ faces, arms, ribs, hips and genitals. They twisted and split, developing cracks, folds and wrinkles as they aged, gnarled and decayed. In short, wood was right for the bog and right for each figure: capturing ‘a life-force and an energy that endowed it with an effective voice in its community’s desire to contact the spirit world’ (Aldhouse-Green 2004c: 102). Interestingly, the Roman triumphs discussed above sometimes treated foreign trees as living things, exhibiting and parading exotics such as ebony and balsam in a manner reminiscent of foreign captives and animals, now bound to serve the empire (Östenberg 2009: 47). Some wood species conjured the very power the figures might have been meant to evoke: the raiding party of the Roos Carr figures, the phallic Viborg and Ralaghan figure and the multiply perforated Strata Florida manikin were made of yew and boxwood, whose leaves and fruit seeds were not just toxic but fatal. Even the wood of the yew can be an irritant. When the tree appears to be dying it can self-root and re-erupt, it is also dense yet elastic, embodying many of the properties of strength yet resistance sought in a warrior’s own body. Such evergreens never lost their leaves, and may have appeared timeless, like the bog. These properties give such intimidating figures an additional, enduring nuance.
The figures may not have simply been representations, or idols, of people, gods or deities – they were beings in their own right. Note the ability to literally animate many of the figures: whether it was to turn the claw-like grip of the Possendorf figure upwards or downwards (van der Sanden and Capelle 2001: 33), animate the removeable arms that are indeed missing from many figures (perhaps because they have been deliberately ‘disarmed’) or to decide whether to turn the socketed phalli of the Roos Carr, Strat Florida or Ralaghan figures ‘up’ or ‘down’ – the possibility existed for human intercedents to change or shift the gesture and posture of these figures. The open mouths of many of these figures suggest oration, proclamation or more disturbing noise making: crying, shrieking, screaming. It is a ritualised representation that might have been meant to bless, scare, invoke or intimidate, depending on one’s right to be in the bog. These animative features might made them suddenly present, rather than absent, or excited and potent, rather than silent and inert. In its most extreme form, this could involve the removal of male genital appendages altogether, rendering such figures female rather than male (Coles 1990; Aldhouse-Green 2004c). This gave them not just a mutability, but a fluidity of personhood that was unusual and thus doubly potent at a time when gendered identities were being increasingly patrolled and ossified through body objects, roles and burials (Jordan 2016; Robb and Harris 2018). At other sites there were explicit pairings of male and female: in Braak (Germany), a pair of larger-than-life-size figures carved from ‘single, bifurcating branches’ to form legs, were found in a kleine Kesselmoor – a small bog, as if ‘standing guard’ over the flat expanse (Aldhouse-Green 2004c: 59). Dating to the third to second century BC, the wood has been carved to produce pronounced genitalia, breasts and hairstyle (a short fringe or combed-back hair for the male, a bun topknot for the woman) (van der Sanden and Capelle 2001: 16). Like the Ballachulish figure, both are open mouthed, as if in the act of speech. Nearby was ample evidence of repeated fire building (Aldhouse-Green 2004c: 59) and the idea of these figures lit by a flickering fire that was also dancing off the black bog water is both entrancing and intimidating. It would have further exaggerated their features and their animacy, creating a luminescent spectacle that mimicked the ignis fatuus. The Oldenburg figures (also from Germany) were more stylised but once more seem to be a gendered pair, carved into semi-geometric figures in two dimensions, with sub-rounded heads and projections mimicking shoulders and ribs, breasts, hips and genitals. Dating to the late second century BC, they flanked either side of a bog trackway at a particularly dangerous and wet point (Hayen 1987). Like the Ballachulish figure, they were at some point taken down and laid flat at around the same time that the trackway seems to go out of use.

Why were they carved, raised and visited in the bog, or else made and then deposited? The bog trackway at Wittemoor was flanked by a series of five figures, all of which were ‘removed from their bases and laid down next to the rack when it became unfit for further use’ (van der Sanden and Capelle 2001: 18). One of the experimental carvers working on the Pallasboy Project (Gearey et al. 2019) commented that perhaps this was simply ‘part of the job’: the figure was integral
to the trackway or platform, just as, in England, a thatcher might add a personal motif to a rooftop, or a medieval builder might make a foundational deposit under a hearthstone or in the roof space. Both are unspoken, apotropaic gestures that helped ‘charm’ the place while adding a distinctive mark, to give its inhabitants ‘good luck’ and protection. Some are highly visible, others are hidden. Their ‘being there’ during acts of construction, crossing or deposition had an effect on those that saw or passed by them. They hailed and assailed people. Their quartzite eyes appeared to watch, their mouths were open in utterance – if only we could catch their words above the hum of insects and plashing of the mire. As Chapter 4 made clear, we are dealing with a dangerous yet rich landscape: the inclusion of figures that overtly referenced fertility might have magnified the auspicious power of this place but also mediated it. What happened when this power failed? Even if they were guardians of safe passage, these bog figures could not hold back the rising water or encroaching peat that eventually smothered them. Perhaps, having lost their efficacy, they were consigned to the waters in fitting ways: appropriate ends to these wooden denizens that bridged the domains of the animate and inanimate.

**Conclusion: crafting an end**

This chapter has reviewed what was placed in the bogs of northern Europe between the late Bronze Age and late Iron Age/Roman era. It has highlighted both the spectacular, exquisite things and everyday treasures, pointing to a particular emphasis on fertility and the agricultural world, moments of festivity, feasting, bellicosity and voyaging. Yet, as Fontijn (2020) has argued, we do not know that these were ‘gifts to the gods’, and even if this was so, we will struggle to name them until we enter the later Roman or early medieval period. The chapter has therefore focused instead on the purpose of ‘giving up’ things and the performance of their deposition, as a way in which these objects found their final value. Other authors have argued that the plethora of finds may have formed a sliding scale between the giving of the material object to the sacrifice of living, breathing animals (and, as we shall see, people). Bradley (1998: 37), for instance, described the former as ‘votives’ while the bloodshed and cessation of breath can be classified as proper ‘sacrifice’. The gravity of these latter acts have been used by Aldhouse-Green (1998) and Taylor (2008) to focus our attention on the particular power of the *taking* of life and the qualitative difference of an animal or human death. Yet in the way things were treated it is difficult to define the boundaries of such categories with certainty (Lund 2010), an observation that chimes with recent symmetrical approaches to archaeology (Harris and Cipolla 2017).

Most of the Iron Age deposits are old and worn – what should be done with them when their usefulness ended? Even a ploughshare was saturated with the symbolism of the soil and its crops. Perhaps that potentiality had to be returned somewhere, not through the recycling or hoarding of the Bronze Age, but the giving up of things into the bog from whence its power had come – an exchange.
not necessarily between humans and gods but between life forces, vitalities. Once deposited, their ‘being there’ further magnified the power of this place, through the memories of the people who had witnessed this repeatedly. The most complex and exquisite finds, as well as the anthropomorphic figures, were certainly treated in ways that suggest they were perceived as having an identity – a history that often outlived the company of humans. Yet eventually, they too had to ‘die’. Perhaps then, the bog was one particularly potent place where the end of things was crafted. It is to the ‘ends’ of the humans found among these finds that the next chapter turns.