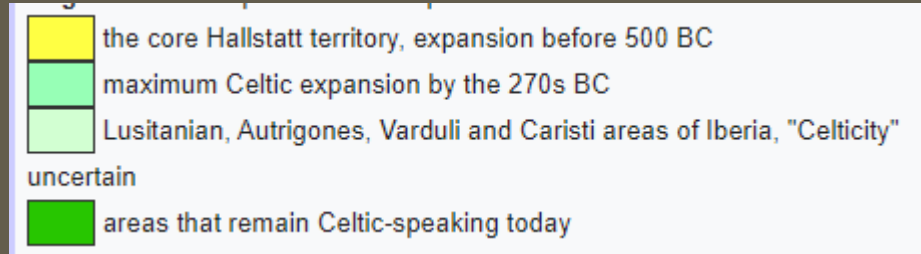
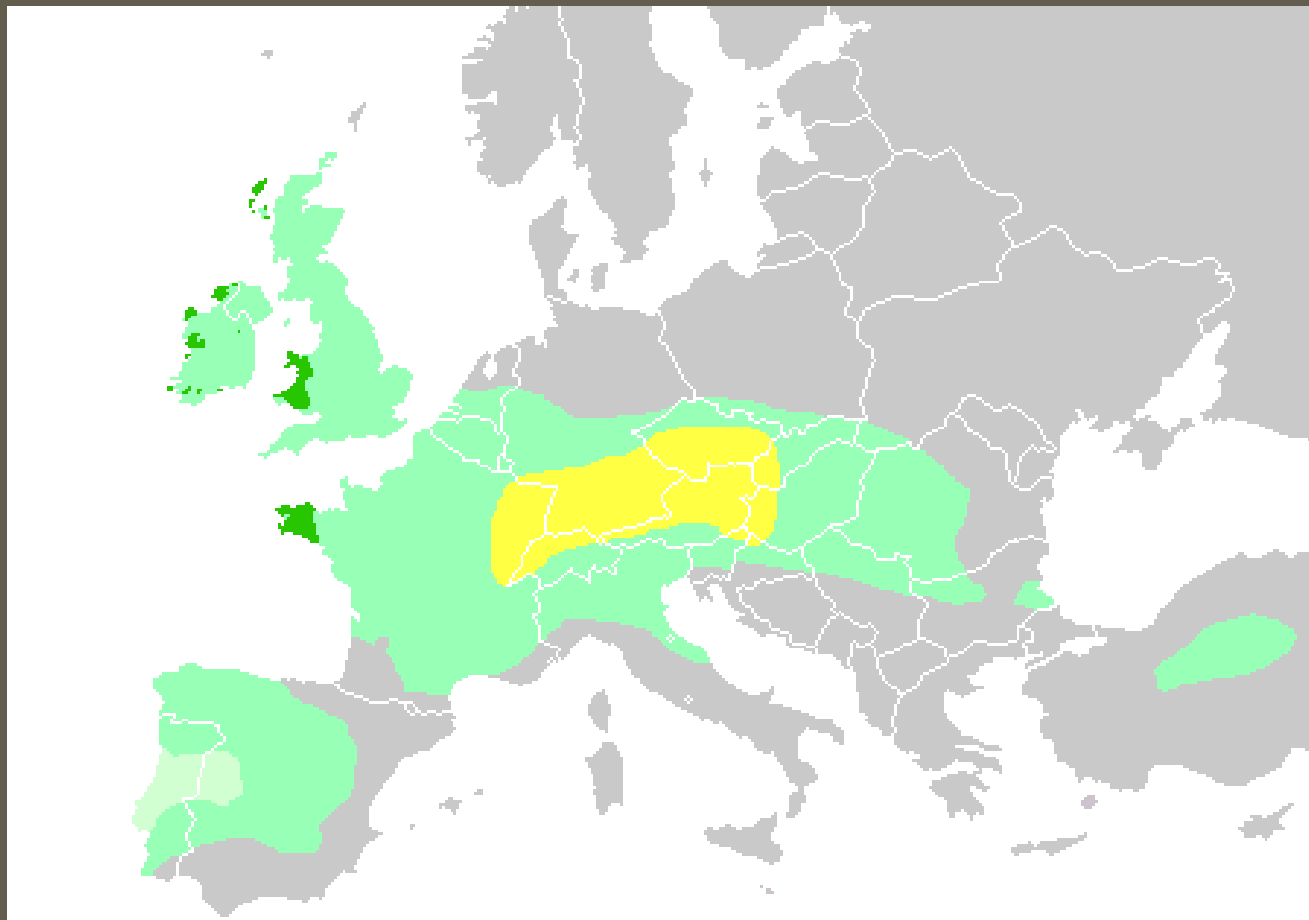


IRON AGE ORKNEY: CREATING A REGIONAL SPECIFIC CELTIC PERSONA

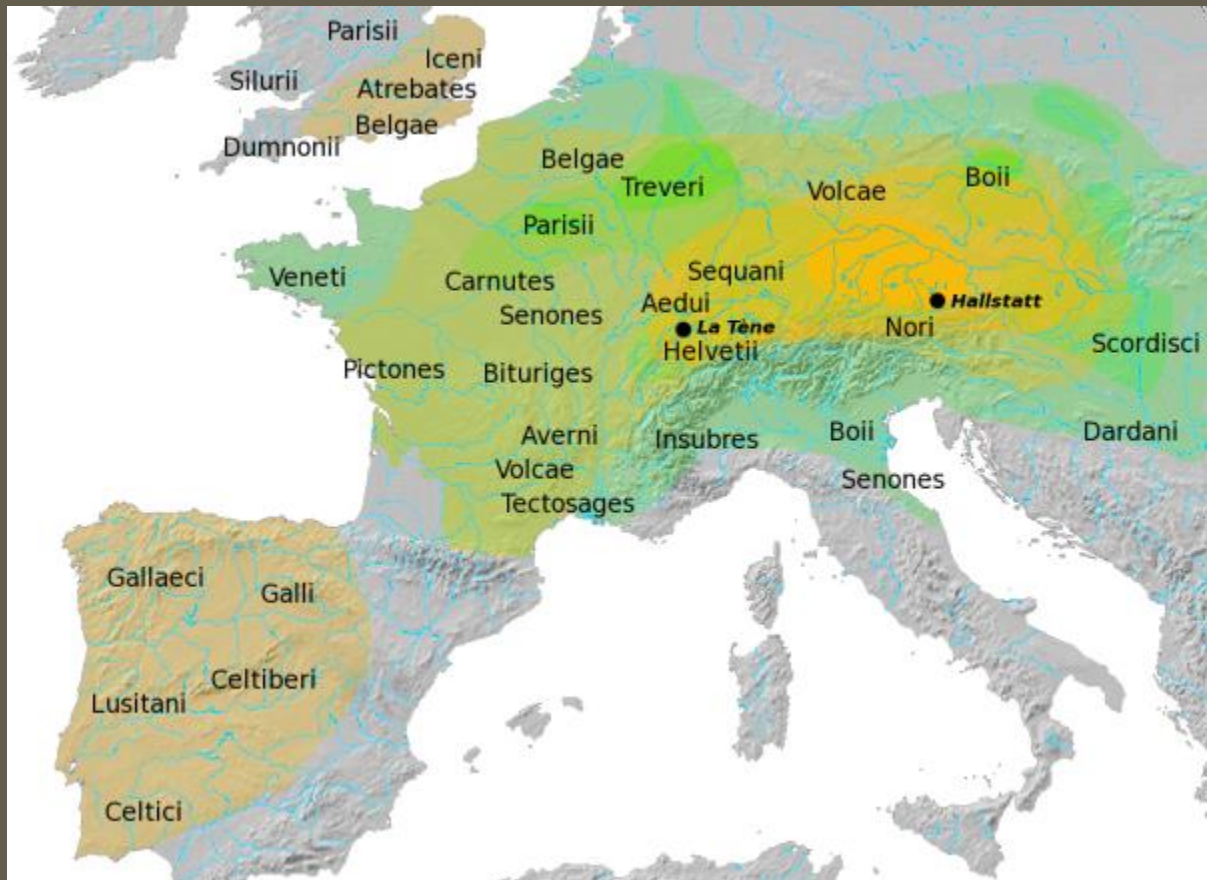
Esa inghean Donnchaidh
University of Atlantia, Session #105

THE CELTIC WORLD



By Dbachmann, CC BY-SA 4.0,
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THE CELTIC WORLD



Overview of the Hallstatt and La Tène cultures.

- The core Hallstatt territory (HaC, 800 BC) is shown in solid yellow.
- The eventual area of Hallstatt influence (by 500 BC, HaD) in light yellow.
- The core territory of the La Tène culture (450 BC) in solid green.
- The eventual area of La Tène influence (by 250 BC) in light green.

The territories of some major Celtic tribes of the late La Tène period are labelled.

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CELTS THROUGH TIME

Traditionally,

- Neolithic Age 7000 BCE – 1700 BCE
- Bronze Age 3200 BCE – 600 BCE
- Iron Age 800 BCE – Classical Rome

But in Orkney,

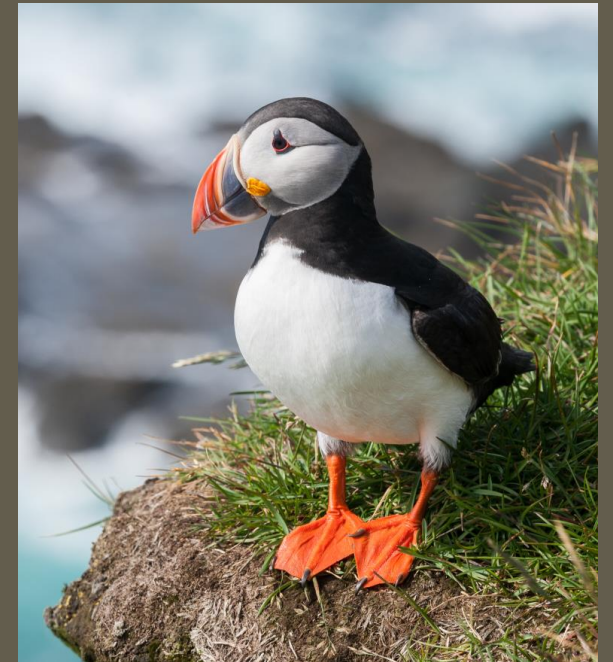
- Neolithic Orkney: 4000 BCE – 2200 BCE
- Bronze Age Orkney: 2200 CE – 800 CE
- Iron Age Orkney: 800 BCE – 500 CE
- Pictish Orkney: ca. 500 CE – 700 CE
- Norse Orkney: 700 CE +

WHERE DO I START?

- Start out and work your way in
- Start in and work your way out

A CASE STUDY: IRON AGE ORKNEY

Orkney is a magical place. The Orkneys are often lumped together with **Shetland**, together referred to as the **Scatterlands**; however, the culture, landscape, and history of the islands are highly unique. The Orkney Islands are found directly north of mainland **Scotland**, bookended with the **Atlantic Ocean and North Sea**, and linked by trade and seafaring with **Shetland, Iceland, Caithness (mainland Scotland), and Norway**. At various times in history, Orkney has been **Celtic, Pictish, and Norse**; a part of the Kingdom of the **Hebrides, Norway, and Scotland**. Today, Orkney is part of Scotland, and by extension, the United Kingdom.



GETTING DRESSED IN IRON AGE ORKNEY

My “Best Attempt” Iron Age Orcadian look, including the *leine* (chemise, or under dress), wool *peplos*, woven belt, and reproduction Orkney Hood. Colors, weave, and styling are period inspired, in a best possible attempt sans a completely dressed extant example to replicate.



Let's break it down....

GETTING DRESSED IN IRON AGE ORKNEY

Dressing the Iron Age Orcadian woman poses a significant challenge: No surviving textiles exist in Orkney sans the infamous Orkney Hood.

So how does the wayward Orcadian enthusiast dress themselves? Necessity dictates looking beyond the Scatterlands, and more broadly considering Iron Age Celts, trade and culture exchange, and neighbors in space and time.

Now what?

- Loenne Hede (Iron Age Denmark)
- Huldremose Woman (Iron Age Denmark)
- Zweeloo Princess (Iron Age Netherlands)



GETTING DRESSED IN IRON AGE ORKNEY

Textile Samples: Hallstat Culture



Shetland Heritage Wools Soay & Shetland



GETTING DRESSED IN IRON AGE ORKNEY: THE ORKNEY HOOD

The only extant textile from Orkney, this Iron Age bog find was possibly a salvage piece (meaning, created from cast off clothing items) intended for a child.

While it is common to see the hood recreated in the state of its discovery, golden yellow, **the original was a rose tone 'moorit' Shetland wool, undyed.** The yellow coloring was a chemical reaction produced in the bog environment.



*Left: The extant Orkney hood; Right: moorit
Shetland wool*

ACCESSORIES

The Rousay Brooch, Viking Era, Orkney

From The National Museum of Scotland: *“These objects were found in a woman’s grave at Westness on Rousay in Orkney. She died in childbirth and was buried with her valuable jewellery and a range of tools between 850 and 900. The grave goods show that she was a woman of wealth and status. Some of the objects, such as the oval brooches and necklace, were brought over from Scandinavia. Others, such as the brooch pin, brooch made from a Gospel book plate and strap ends derive from the British Isles, obtained by looting or trade. Some of the items are typical of women’s burials, for example tools relating to textile production such as the heckles, weaving sword, sickle and shears. Other objects such as the comb are found in both men’s and women’s graves.”* ([Source found here](#))

More about the breathtaking brooch found in the Rousay grave site can be found [here](#), along with spectacular images and further reading.



ACCESSORIES

Scar Boat Burial, Viking Era, Orkney

The Scar Boat burial is that of a woman in Orkney, and is most known for her “shield” with which she was buried. This intricate linen smoothing board is one of the most iconic archaeological finds for an early medieval Orcadian woman’s recreation. Additional item of interest: the beautifully carved bone comb.

Norse; dates to between 875-950 CE.



ACCESSORIES

Glass Beads (Anglo Saxon and Viking)

As seen in the grave goods uncovered at Orcadian sites, beads survive, although they were likely imports with Anglo-Saxon and Viking immigrants.

The cobalt blue, amber, and “eye” (blue and white) motifs are common. For more on this, check out the beads found at the late bronze age/ early iron age settlement of Blackberry Field, Potterne and the early La Tene period/ early iron age settlement of Swallowcliffe Down, Swallowcliffe, Wiltshire. Beads from these sites can be explored online at the [Wiltshire Museum, Devizes](#).

ACCESSORIES

The Cairns: An excavation site in Orkney

- What Orkney archaeological sites lack in textiles, they make up for in jewelry. Extensive work is being done at The Cairns (a site in Orkney) by the University of the Highlands and Islands.
- Objects at the site include remains of Iron Age metalworking, including two iron furnaces, moulds, metal waste, etc.
- Objects of note relative to an Orcadian kit might include moulds for rings, projecting ring headed pins, and penannular brooches.



Ring headed pin moulds with cast pin [Credit: University of the Highlands and Islands]

FILLING IN GAPS IN THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORD

- Trade Routes
- Culture Exchange
- Geographic proximity
- Lifeways

LIFEWAYS

- Dwellings
 - Roundhouses (Iron Age Britain)
 - Crannogs, roundhouses on artificial islands that are exclusive to Scotland, Ireland, and Wales.



LIFEWAYS

Brochs

Exclusive to Iron Age Scotland
(more specifically, the Caithness-
Orkney-Shetland triangle)



LIFEWAYS

Brochs

The wellknown Midhowe Broch in Roussay, Orkney is central to a surrounding Iron Age settlement surrounded by smaller buildings and structures, including the Midhowe chambered cairn. These outbuildings were likely originally used as smaller houses and later become specialized workshops, including one with a surviving iron smelting hearth. Midhowe Broch includes a surviving water tank, hearth, and room walls.



LIFEWAYS

Wheelhouses

Wheelhouses are more complex roundhouses, distinct to the Iron Age northern and western isles (Hebrides and Scatterlands), Caithness, and Sutherland.

Notable examples of wheelhouses include Jarlshof (Shetland) and Gurness (Orkney)

The majority of the “aisled roundhouse” style (the distinctly Hebridean/Scottish style wheelhouse) are unique in that they are not associated with Broch sites, unlike the wheelhouses found elsewhere, and they were typically dug into the landscape with only their thatched roof visible above ground.

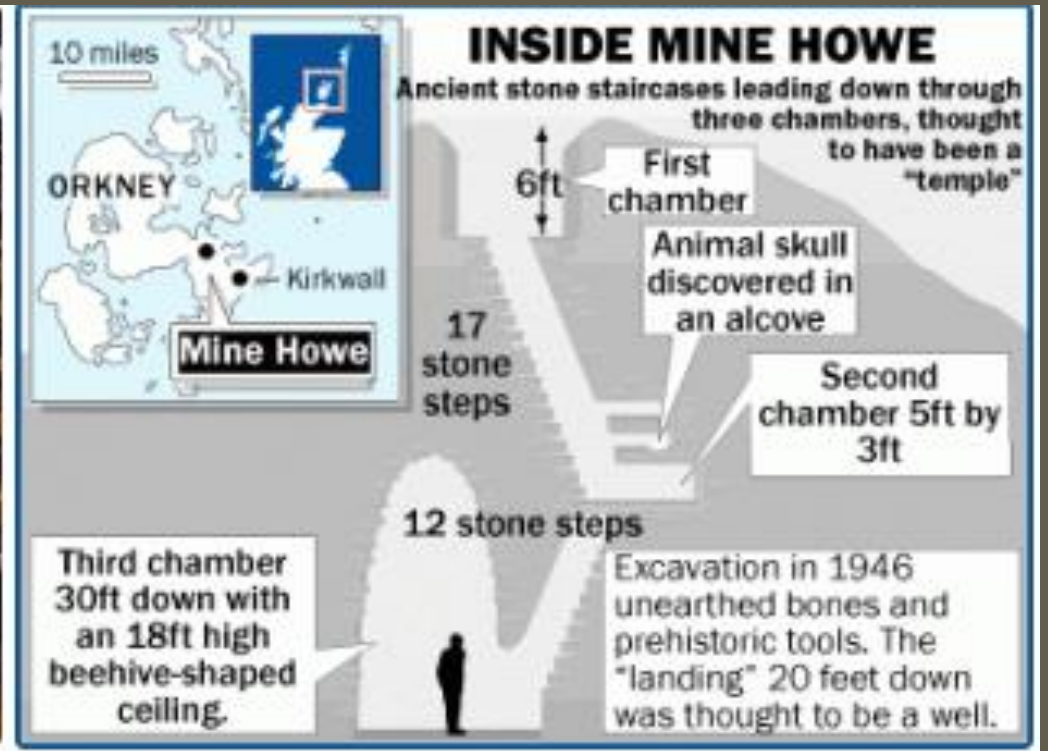
Distinct features include: Menhir (middle Bronze Age standing stone), animals buried under floor, use of red and black mortar.



LIFEWAYS

Death and Dying: Cairnes

- Mine howe, one of the most famous Orcadian burial site, is an Iron Age subterranean chambered Cairn in Tankerness, just south of Kirkwall.



ORCADIAN MISCELLANY



LINKS, SOURCES, AND FURTHER READING

Sources for the information and photos included in this presentation, along with added resources and links, can be found in the blog posts *Iron Age Orkney: Orcadian Kit Redux* and *Iron Age Orkney: Lifeways*, included in your student email.

Class materials can be found at LadyEsa.wordpress.com → Classes, where they are organized in reverse chronological order by event.

LET'S KEEP IN TOUCH

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