



Bronze Age 2500-800 BC Surrey



Early Bronze Age pottery and flint

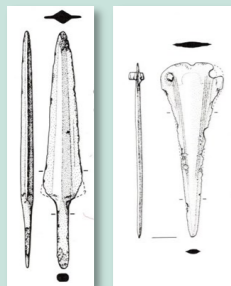
Defining the Neolithic to Early Bronze Age transition – around 2500 BC – relies heavily on artefact types such as those associated with the ‘Beaker culture’, which had a particular concentration in the Kingston area.



Most of the Early Bronze Age pottery in Surrey are food vessels encountered in funerary contexts, whether collared and biconical urns or inverted-bell beaker vessels, such as that from Ham (*below*). Despite the invention of metallurgy, flint objects were still commonly in use, including knives, barbed and tanged arrowheads (as found at Frensham, *above*) and daggers



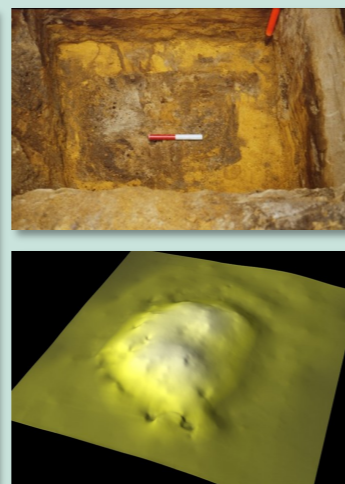
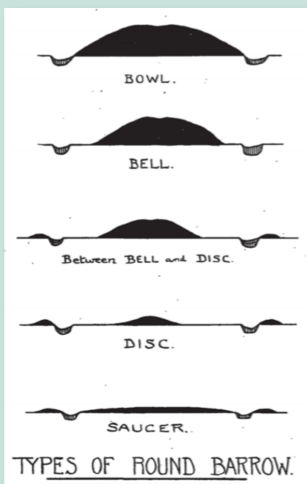
(Barn Elms, Thames, *left*). (Photos: © Museum of London, David Graham)



Metalwork

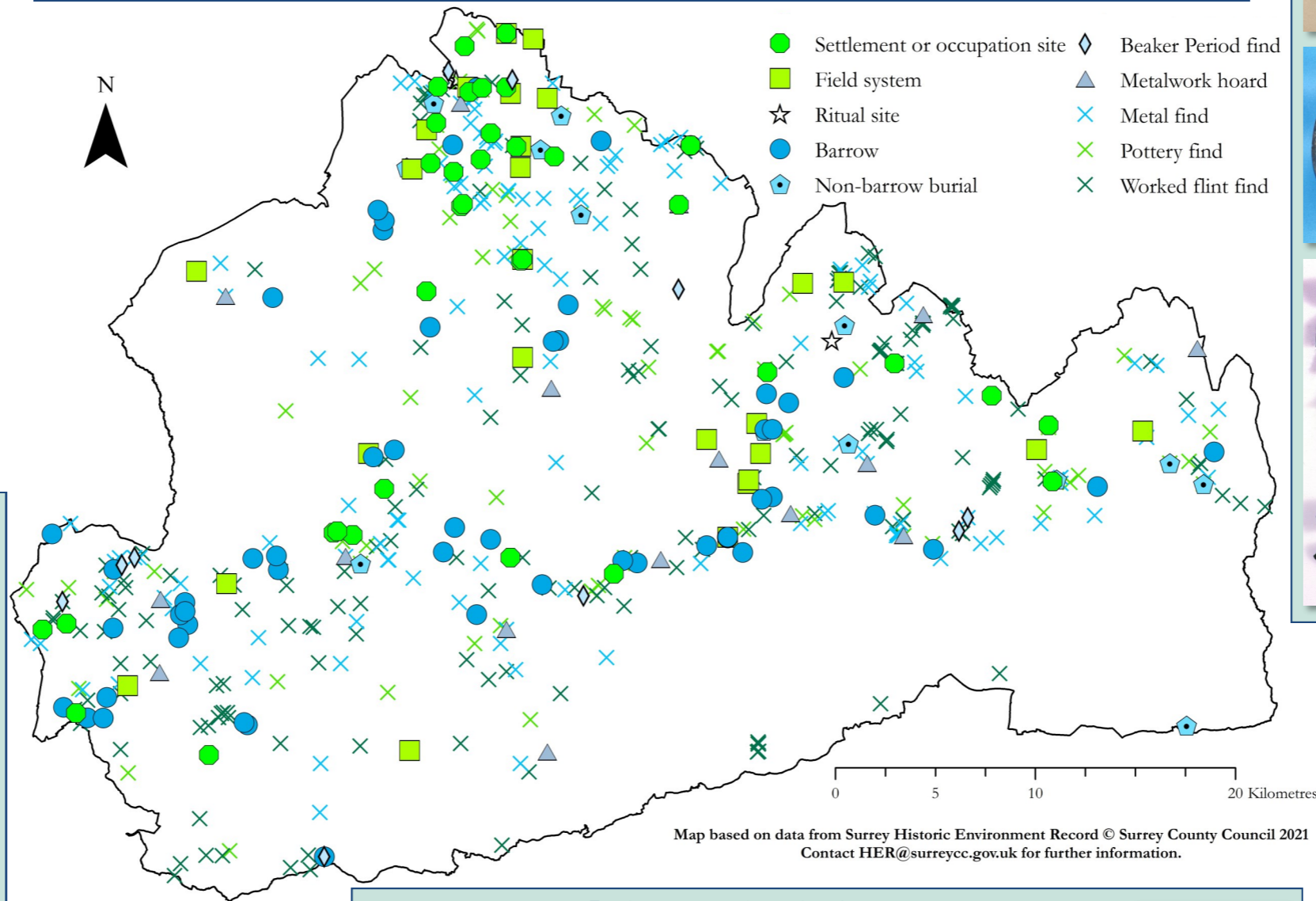
Axes are the most common type of early metalwork, and the earliest ones often had refined flat axe forms with low flanges – as with the one from Bagmoor (*left*) – sometimes with ornate decoration. The period also saw new tool and weapon innovations, including tanged spearheads (as at Lightwater, *upper left*), lugged chisels and elaborate daggers (Ankerwyke, *upper right*). While the palstave form (Crooksbury, *bottom left*) characterised the Middle Bronze Age, the socketed axe dominated the end of the period. A unique discovery at Shepperton also showed how the socketed head attached to its jointed wooden haft, functioning as a practical tool.

(Photos: David Graham, Anne Sassini, Brian Wood © Chertsey Museum; Drawings: Stuart Needham)



Barrows in the landscape

Barrows are the most common prehistoric monument type and focus on individual – rather than communal – burial. There are many different classifications based on their profile (*far left*), and although the county lacks large barrow cemeteries as in other regions, many appear in nucleated – and often linear – clusters, as at the quadruple group at West End Common, Chobham (*right*). At one time, many Surrey barrows were deemed no more than natural sand dunes, however excavation at sites such as Thursley (*left*) have revealed their turf construction, along with features including pit burials. (Images: David Graham; © Environment Agency; Drawing: L V Grinsell)



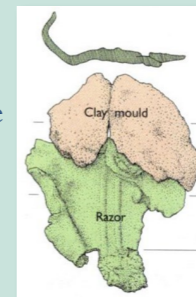
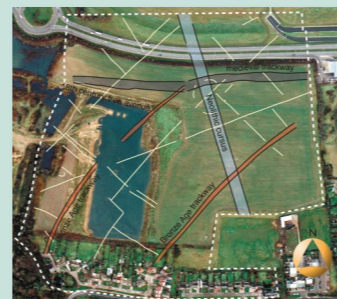
Metal Detecting

If undertaken responsibly, detecting can make important contributions to archaeological knowledge. Detectorists are reminded that it is illegal to trespass – remember all land has an owner! – and to record finds with their local Finds Liaison Officer and the Portable Antiquities Scheme. For more on the Code of Practice, please see www.finds.org.uk.



Industry and agriculture

Access to resources and skilled craftsmen were essential to production. While many relied on travelling smiths, specialist activity items at the sizeable manufacturing and trading site at Runnymede Bridge included a bronze razor still in its clay mould (*right*) and antler pieces for bridle equipment (*below*). With less reliance on wild resources and more woodland clearance, land tenure was also formalised, resulting in field systems as at Stanwell (*left*) being laid out, often with associated droveways. (Images: SCAU/Surrey County Council, Stuart Needham)



Hoards and ritual deposition

An organised social structure is also indicated by the weaponry born by the military elite, in particular swords and shields such as from Chertsey (*below*), as well as regional differences in hoard types. In the south-west, small hoards with 2-5 objects – usually axes and spearheads, as with the Crooksbury or Hankley Common hoard (*below*) – seem to suggest personal armouries or tool-kits. Elsewhere, hoards largely comprise obsolete or mis-cast objects and ingots, buried either for safekeeping or as offerings. This can be seen with the smelters’ hoard from Esher, containing 32 fragments of copper ingots, as well as the substantial hoard of tools and weapons from Petters Field (*bottom*) that had been possibly hidden in a ditch by the local bronzesmith. (Photos: S A Oliver Charitable Trust © Chertsey Museum, Surrey County Archaeological Unit)



Occupation sites and centres

Postholes provide an indication of the size and layout of the roundhouses of the time, some – such as Petters Field – with imposing porches (as in the reconstruction from Butser *below*). Regional centres like Carshalton (*bottom*) were constructed in the Late Bronze Age to act as defensive points and meetings places, as well as display the occupants’ means to order their construction. (Image: Butser Ancient Farm, Museum of London).

