

Bogs, Pits and Spears: Attitudes Towards Death and The Dead During the Iron Age in the
Celtic British Isles

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Abstract

This dissertation will attempt to explore beliefs surrounding death in Celtic communities in the British Isles during the Iron Age. In order to do this, pre- and post-death identity will be analysed, as well as the locations which were chosen for interment. Whilst previous work has attempted to identify the bog bodies, the grain pit burials, and the weapons burials of East Yorkshire, here what their identity implies for Celtic funerary beliefs will be speculated on. Archaeological data shall be the basis for this, due to problems regarding the reliability of Classical written sources.

Certain burial sites were appropriate for certain people, due to the manner of death or characteristics of the deceased. Additionally, how the community and its memory were affected were also important, suggesting that Celtic funerals were equally about the living.

Additionally, whilst this dissertation does not discount the possibility that bog bodies such as Lindow Man were druidic sacrifices, other possibilities will be considered based upon the evidence available. In turn, theories surrounding Lindow Man should not automatically be applied to other bog bodies, such as Old Croghan Man. Furthermore, sacrifice is not the only possible explanation for the other burials discussed in this dissertation – disease and warfare are also likely.

This suggests that how people died was an important aspect of Celtic attitudes to death. This could have been due to a possible wide-ranging belief in revenants, although it should not be assumed that all Celtic communities had the same beliefs, and alternative explanations are available. Among these are the dead being used to serve the community after death, albeit not necessarily willingly.

As such, who a person was and how they die affected how and where they were treated after death, as well as their relationship with the living.

Introduction

Rites of passage rituals, such as funerary rituals, are among the most important customs for a community.¹ This statement, Loleta Collins argues, is supported by the current understanding of the religious beliefs of the Celtic peoples.² This dissertation will aim to analyse Celtic attitudes to death and the dead, by investigating the role of identity within funerary rituals in the British Isles during the Iron Age. For the purposes of this dissertation, the Iron Age will refer to the years between 800 BCE and 50 CE.³ Additionally, Celtic will refer to the peoples and places that spoke a Celtic language and/or have yielded La Tène artefacts, such as Britain and Ireland.⁴

Of those people who lived in the British Isles during the Celtic Iron Age, only approximately 6% left behind archaeologically recoverable remains.⁵ As such, the archaeological record lacks evidence for formal burial.⁶ Of the bodies that have been recovered, Thomas Booth and Richard Madgwick argue that the variety seen suggests a diverse range of mortuary rites.⁷ However, as these burials are unable to account for the total population of the Iron Age, it has been proposed that such bodies represent minority rites – they did not follow their culture’s usual funerary process.⁸ Before discussing these minority rites, it is worth quickly describing what the majority rites – the usual form of burial – are

¹ Loleta B. Collins, ‘Celtic Funeral Practices’, *California Institute of Integral Studies*, (2011), pp.1-6, [p.1].

² Collins, ‘Celtic Funeral Practices’, p.1

³ Blaise Vyner, ‘The Neolithic, Bronze Age and Iron Age in West Yorkshire’, *West Yorkshire Archaeology Advisory Service*, vol. 1, (2008), pp.1-47, [p14]; Stuart, P. Needham ‘800 BC, The Great Divide’, in *The Earlier Iron Age in Britain and the Near Continent*, eds. Colin Haselgrove and Rachel Pope, (Barnsley: Oxbow Books, 2007) pp.39-63, [p. 55].

⁴ John Collis, ‘The Origin and Spread of the Celts’, *Studia Celtica*, vol. 30, (1996) pp.17-34, [p.23]; Simon James, *Exploring the World of the Celts*, (London: Thames and Hudson, 1993), p.15

⁵ Richard Madgwick, ‘Patterns in the modification of animal and human bones in Iron Age Wessex: revisiting the excarnation debate’, in *Changing Perspectives on the First Millennium BC*, eds Oliver Davis, Niall Sharples and Katherine Waddington, (Barnsley: Oxbow Books, 2008), pp.99-118, [pp.10-11, p.14]; Gerald A. Wait, *Ritual and Religion in Iron Age Britain*, (Oxford: British Archaeological Report, 1985) p. 90.

⁶ Madgwick, ‘Patterns in the modification’, p.1.

⁷ Barry Cunliffe, ‘Celtic Death Rituals’, *Archaeology*, vol. 41, (1988), pp.39-43; Ian M. Stead, *Iron Age Cemeteries in East Yorkshire: Excavations at Burton Fleming, Rudston, Garton-on-the-Wolds, and Kirkburn*, ed. Ian M. Stead (English Heritage, 1991); Rowan Whimster, *Burial practices in Iron Age Britain: a discussion and gazetteer of the evidence c.700 B.C.-43 A.D.*, (Oxford: British Archaeological Report, 1981); Rowan Whimster, ‘Iron Age Burials in Southern England’, *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society*, vol. 43, (1977) pp.317-327; Timothy Darvill, *Prehistoric Britain*, (London: Routledge, 2010); Thomas J. Booth and Richard Madgwick, ‘New evidence for diverse secondary burial practices in Iron Age Britain: A histological case study’, *Journal of Archaeological Science*, vol. 67(2016), pp.14-24, [p.14]; Wait, *Ritual and Religion*.

⁸ Booth and Madgwick, ‘New evidence’, p.14; Jennie Bradbury, and others, ‘Making the Dead Visible: Problems and Solutions for ‘Big’ Picture Approaches to the Past and Dealing with Large ‘Mortuary’ Datasets’, *Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory*, vol. 23, (2016), pp.561-591; Wait, *Ritual and Religion*.

thought to have been. Excarnation and cremation are usually proposed.⁹ Excarnation is the removal of flesh from a corpse by any means, such as sub-aerial exposure where the body was left in a protected place to decompose.¹⁰ This method has been proposed, because the weathering that excarnation would inflict upon such skeletons would render them archaeologically unrecoverable.¹¹ However, Barry Cunliffe notes that it is difficult to assess how widespread excarnation may have been.¹² Exhumation – burying a body and allowing it to decay, then exhuming it at a later point – is another possibility, as well as cremation.¹³ That being said, it has been proposed that there were majority rituals in Iron Age Britain, and so no divide between living and dead.¹⁴

By contrast, the funerary rites that will be discussed in this dissertation were those that left behind human remains, marking them out as unusual. The ways in which the bog bodies, Danebury grain pit burials, and Yorkshire weapons burials were disposed of, as well as the implications that these particular funerary rituals have for identity and attitudes towards the dead, will be discussed throughout. This will be undertaken in the first chapter by analysing where the bog bodies, grain pit burials and weapons burials took place, as well as why these places were selected. Afterwards, Chapter Two will explore how the living identity of the

⁹A. Ellison and P. Drewett, 'Pits and Postholes in British Early Iron Age', *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society*, vol. 31, (1971) pp.183-194; Booth and Madgwick, 'New evidence', p.14; Barry Cunliffe, *The Ancient Celts*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), p.308; C. Wilson, 'Burials within Settlements in Southern Britain during the Pre-Roman Iron Age', *Bulletin of the Institution of Archaeology*, vol. 18, (1981), pp.127-170; Gillian Carr, 'Excarnation to cremation: continuity or change?' in *The Later Iron Age in Britain and Beyond*, eds. Colin Haselgrove, and T. Moore, (Oxford: Oxbow, 2007), pp.446-453; Gillian Carr and Christopher Knüsel 'The ritual framework of excarnation by exposure as the mortuary practice of the early/middle Iron Age of central southern Britain', in *Reconstructing Iron Age societies*, eds. Adam Gwilt and Colin Haselgrove, (Oxford: Oxbow Books), pp.167-173; J.D Hill, *Ritual and Rubbish in the Iron Age of Wessex*, (Oxford: British Archaeological Report, 1995); Justine Tracey, 'New Evidence for Iron Age Burial and Propitiation practices in Southern Britain', *Oxford Journal of Archaeology*, vol. 31, (2012), pp.367-379; R. Craig and Christopher Knüsel and Gillian Carr, 'Fragmentation, mutilation, and dismemberment: an interpretation of human remains on Iron Age Sites', in *Warfare, Violence and Slavery in Prehistory*, eds. Mike Parker Pearson and I. J. N. Thorpe, (Oxford: British Archaeological Report, 2005), pp.165-180; Madgwick, 'Patterns in the modification', pp.1-12; Wait, *Ritual and Religion*.

¹⁰ Booth and Madgwick, 'New evidence', pp.14-15; Cunliffe, *The Ancient Celts*, p.308.

¹¹ Booth and Madgwick, 'New evidence', p.15; Carr and Knusel, 'The ritual framework of excarnation', pp.167-173; Barry Cunliffe, 'Celtic Death Rituals', *Archaeology*, vol. 41, (1988), pp.39-43; Barry Cunliffe, *Danebury: An Iron Age Hillfort in Hampshire. Vol. 6: A Hillfort Community in Perspective*, ed. Barry Cunliffe (York: Council for British Archaeology Research Report, 1995); Barry Cunliffe, 'Pits, Preconceptions and Propitiation in the British Iron Age', *Oxford Journal of Archaeology*, vol. 11, (1992) pp.69-83; Ellison and Drewett, 'Pits and Postholes in British Early Iron Age', p.185; Madgwick, 'Patterns in the modification', p.3; Rebecca Redfern 'Evidence for Iron Age Secondary Burial Practice and Bone Modification from Gussage All Saints and Maiden Castle', *Oxford Journal of Archaeology*, vol. 27, (2008), pp.281-301.

¹² Cunliffe, *The Ancient Celts*, p.308.

¹³ Booth and Madgwick, 'New evidence', p.14; Dennis W. Harding, *Death and Burial in Iron Age Britain*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p.9; Miranda Aldhouse-Green, *Bog Bodies Uncovered: Solving Europe's Ancient Mystery*, (London: Thames and Hudson, 2015), p.9.

¹⁴ Harding, *Death and Burial*, p.vii.

deceased affected how their corpse was treated, with a focus on theories regarding who they were and how they died. The final chapter will analyse how a person's identity changed after they had died. A discussion on the concept of revenants shall form a major part of this examination, as well as other possible post-death transformations.

Additionally, in order to explore how the bog bodies, grain pit burials and Yorkshire weapons burials may have died, skeletal trauma – damage done by an external force that disrupts bone integrity –¹⁵ as well as when the injuries took place, will be analysed. Antemortem injuries are those caused prior to death, with signs of healing.¹⁶ Perimortem injuries occur at time of death, whilst postmortem trauma takes place after death.¹⁷ When particular injuries occurred can carry implications for exactly how the deceased died, by ruling out certain injuries as being the ones which ended their life.

The only bog bodies that will be analysed are those currently thought to be from the Iron Age, though examples do exist from the Neolithic and Roman periods.¹⁸ Additionally, the focus will be upon those that retain soft tissue. Regarding Lindow Man specifically, it shall not be assumed that he was a druid or a sacrifice, and alternative theories will be explored, in part because ritual violence can appear similar to 'normal' burial practices.¹⁹

In turn, whilst there is generally speaking little evidence of formal burial in Iron Age Britain, the same cannot be said for the Arras Culture of East Yorkshire.²⁰ The Arras culture

¹⁵ Alexandra Boucherie and Marie Louise S. Jørkov and Martin Smith, 'Wounded to the bone: digital microscopic analysis of traumas in a Medieval mass grave assemblage (Sandbjerget, Denmark, AD 1300-1350)', *International Journal Paleopathology*, vol. 19, (2017), pp.66-79; Charles Merbs, 'Trauma', in *Reconstruction of Life from the Skeleton*, eds. Mehmet Yasar Iscan and Kenneth A.R. Kennedy, (New York: Alan R. Liss, INC, 1989), pp.23-40; Donald Ortner, 'Trauma' in *Identification of Pathological Conditions in Human Skeletal Remains*, ed. Donald Ortner, (San Diego: Academia Press, 2003), pp.119-177; O.D. Erdal, 'A possible massacre at Early Bronze Age Titris Hoyuk, Anatolia' *International Journal of Astroarchaeology*, vol. 22, (2012), pp.1-21.

¹⁶ Melad Gad Paulis and Dalia Mohammed Ali, 'Antemortem, Perimortem And Postmortem Bone Fracture: Could Histopathology Differentiate Between?', *Egypt J. Forensic Sic. Appli. Toxicol.*, vol 18, (2018), pp.135-155, [p.136]; Simms, 'How Useful Are Osteoarchaeological Methods', p.3; Vicki L. Wedel and Alison Galloway, *Broken Bones: Anthropological Analysis of Blunt Force Trauma, second edition*, (Charles C. Thomas Publisher: Springfield, 2013), pp.49-58.

¹⁷ Jami George and others, 'Histopathological Evaluation of Postmortem Autolytic Changes in Bluegill (*Lepomis Macrochirus*) and Crappie (*Poxomis Anularis*) at Varied Time Intervals and Storage Temperatures', *Peerj*, vol. 19, (2016); Paulis and Ali, 'Antemortem, Perimortem And Postmortem', p.136; Simms, 'How Useful Are Osteoarchaeological Methods', p.3.

¹⁸ Aldhouse-Green, *Bog Bodies Uncovered*, pp.8-9;

¹⁹ Andrew Simms, 'How Useful Are Osteoarchaeological Methods in Supporting Current Interpretations for Violent Death? A Review of the Data from Iron Age Burial Contexts in England', *Studies in History, Archaeology, Religion and Conservation*, vol. 4 (2020), pp.1-23, [p.14].

²⁰ Cunliffe, *The Ancient Celts*, p.308; James, 1993, pp.99-102; Frank Roy Hodson 'Cultural Groupings Within the British Pre-Roman Iron Age', *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society*, vol. 30, (1964), pp.99-110, [p.105]; Harding, *Death and Burial*, p.vii, p.2; Ian M. Stead, *The Arras Culture*, (York: The Yorkshire Philosophical Society, 1979); Sarah S. King, *What Makes War? Assessing Iron Age Warfare Through Mortuary Behaviour*

are famous for their barrow cemeteries,²¹ and Rebecca Cannel writes that much work is focused upon the contents of these graves, the deceased's identity and role within their community, as well as the graves' economic and political implications.²² The particular Yorkshire burials that shall be discussed here are the Acklam Wold Warrior, who John Dent explains is unusual even in East Yorkshire,²³ as well as the speared burials scattered across the county.

Here it should be said that this dissertation does not wish to argue that these burials and the beliefs they imply existed across all Celtic communities. The concept of a pan-Celtic social structure has already been criticised by authors such as Jane Webster, who argues that Iron Age funerary traditions were so localised that it is inadvisable to take a mortuary ritual in one Celtic community as evidence that all Celts practiced it.²⁴ However, specific funerary rituals can shed light onto the possible funerary beliefs of particular groups.²⁵

With regards to identity specifically, James Johnson argues that it cannot be detached from identification, as how a person's identity is presented and altered cannot be separated from the people creating the context around them.²⁶ Additionally, Elanor Casella and Chris Fowler argue that discussions of identification itself have become too focused on ontological studies of identity, and that research should instead consider social identity as both having many meanings and being subject to change.²⁷ Furthermore, Fowler writes that identities are affected by the cultural context around them, and how identity can be manipulated and

and Osteological Patterns of Violence. (Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Bradford, 2012) p.71; Whimster, 'Iron Age Burials in Southern England', pp.317-327; Whimster, *Burial practices*.

²¹ King, *What makes war?*, p.71.

²² Rebecca J. S. Cannell, 'What Makes a Mound? Earth-Sourced Materials in Late Iron Age Burial Mounds', *Cambridge Archaeological Press*, vol. 31, (2021), pp.687-703, [p.687].

²³ John Dent, 'Weapons, Wounds and War in the Iron Age', *Archaeological Journal*, 140, (1983), pp.120-128, [p.123].

²⁴ Jane Webster, 'A Dirty Window on the Iron Age? Recent Developments in the Archaeology of Pre-Roman Celtic Religion' in *Understanding Celtic Religion Revisiting the Pagan Past*, ed. by K. Ritari and A. Bergholm, (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2015), pp. 121-154, [p.124, pp.127-128]; John Collis, *The Celts: Origins, Myths and Inventions*, (Cheltenham: The History Press Ltd, 2003) pp.133-194; Simon James, *The Atlantic Celts: Ancient People or Modern Invention*, (London: British Museum Press, 1999).

²⁵ Webster, 'A Dirty Window on the Iron Age?', p.127-128.

²⁶ James A. Johnson, 'Assembling Identities-in-death: miniaturizing identity and the remarkable in Iron Age mortuary practices of west-central Europe', in *Incomplete Archaeologies: Assembling Knowledge in the Past and Present*, eds. Emily Miller Bonney, Kathryn J. Franklin and James A. Johnson, (Barnsley: Oxbow Books, 2016), pp.48-63, [p.49].

²⁷ Chris Fowler, *The Archaeology of Personhood: An Archaeological Approach*, (London: Routledge, 2004); Rosemary Joyce 'Embodied subjectivity: gender, femininity, masculinity, sexuality', in *A Companion to Social Archaeology*, eds. Lynn Meskell and Robert Preucel, (London: Blackwell, 2004), pp.82-95; Eleanor Casella and Chris Fowler 'Beyond Identification: an Introduction', in *The Archaeology of Plural and Changing Identities*, eds. Elanor Casella and Chris Fowler, (New York: Kluwer/ academic, 2005), pp.1-8; Johnson, 'Assembling Identities-in-death', p.49; Lynn Meskell and Robert Preucel *A Companion to Social Archaeology*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004).

changed would be a productive area for further research.²⁸ This dissertation will attempt to investigate how identity is impacted by the cultural context around it, though the exploration will not be free of theoretical discussions, due to the attempt to also analyse funerary beliefs.

Archaeological data will be the primary body of evidence employed in this dissertation, with Classical sources being used sparingly. There are several reasons for this, among them being that Classical writers created their accounts of Celtic Britain in the 1st century CE.²⁹ During this time, writers such as Tacitus positioned the Celts against the corruption and excess of the Roman aristocracy, and this context is often not addressed in discussions of the Celts.³⁰ Neither is the issue of the Celts being portrayed by a people attempting to conquer them, particularly when the conquerors did not understand the Celts.³¹ Furthermore, Miranda Green comments that even if Classical writings were accurate to the 1st century CE, there is no reason to suppose that they were also accurate to the sixth century BCE.³² This approach is described by Jane Webster as a methodological ‘can of worms’, that at best provides only ‘a dirty window’ through which to observe the Iron Age.³³ Additionally, attempts by scholars to find connections between archaeological artefacts and the druids, fuelled by a focus on Classical writing, has had inconclusive results at best.³⁴ Taking this into consideration, as well as the Celts having relied upon oral traditions to transmit information,³⁵ archaeological evidence will be primarily utilised, with Classical literature being used when most relevant.

In turn, whilst the extant evidence does not allow for definitive arguments regarding Celtic death beliefs, solid conclusions can be drawn.³⁶

²⁸ Chris Fowler, ‘Identity politics: personhood, kingship, gender and power in Neolithic and Early Bronze Age Britain’ in *The Archaeology of Plural and Changing Identities*, eds. Elanor Casella and Chris Fowler, (New York: Kluwer/ Academic, 2005), pp.109-134, [p.110]; Johnson, ‘Assembling Identities-in-death’, p.49.

²⁹ Aldhouse-Green, *Bog Bodies Uncovered*, p.88;

³⁰ Aldhouse-Green, *Bog Bodies Uncovered*, p.88; Webster, ‘A Dirty Window on the Iron Age?’, p.122.

³¹ Jane Webster, ‘Ethnographic Barbarity: Imperialist Discourse and the Archaeology of “Celtic” Society’, in *Roman Imperialism: Post-Colonial Perspectives*, eds. Jane Webster and Nick Cooper (Leicester: School of Archaeological Studies, 1996) pp.111-123; T. Champion ‘Written sources and the study of the European Iron Age’, in *Settlement and Society: Aspects of Western European Prehistory in the First Millennium BC*, eds. T. C. Champion and J. V. S Megaw (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1985), pp.9-22; Webster, ‘A Dirty Window on the Iron Age?’, p.122, p.147.

³² Miranda Aldhouse-Green, *Dying for the Gods: Human Sacrifice In Iron Age and Roman Europe*, (Stroud: Tempus Publishing, 2002), p. 13.

³³ Webster, ‘A Dirty Window on the Iron Age?’, p.122

³⁴ Andrew P. Fitzpatrick, ‘Druids: Towards an Archaeology’, in *Communities and Connections: Essays in Honour of Barry Cunliffe*, eds. Chris Gosden and others (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) pp.287-316, [p. 307]; Webster, ‘A Dirty Window on the Iron Age?’, p.126.

³⁵ Collins, ‘Celtic Funeral Practices’, p.1.

³⁶ Collins, ‘Celtic Funeral Practices’, p.2.

Chapter 1

This chapter will investigate why the bogs, grain pits, and burials mounds were chosen as burial sites. It will first explore bogs, focusing on their preservative properties and status as liminal places, and the perceived connection between such watery places and Celtic gods. Afterwards, the use of grain pits shall be discussed, with reference to both the established theory that bodies interred in these pits were seen as little more than rubbish, and the newer theory that such bodies were offerings to chthonic deities. The chapter will conclude with an analysis of burial mounds within Yorkshire, beginning with why these mounds were used, before moving onto exploring the weapons within these mounds. A discussion of the role of iron working within East Yorkshire funerals will also be included, with particular attention paid to why the spears within the speared burials were broken.

Bogged Down

Before discussing the beliefs of Iron Age Celts surrounding bogs, it is necessary to quickly explain how these bogs affected human remains. The anaerobic environment found within bogs is crucial to their preservative properties, as it halts the usual process of decay.³⁷ Additionally, sphagnum moss in these bogs produces sphagnum and humic acid, which tan and leach calcium from bones and immobilise digestive enzymes of bacteria.³⁸ Other key factors are low temperatures, and the bodies being completely immersed in the bog.³⁹ If complete immersion is not consistently maintained, the body is at risk of rot recommencing, as well as

³⁷ Barber, 'Forensic Pathology', p.7; Melanie Giles, 'Bog Bodies: Representing the Dead', *Respect for Ancient British Human Remains: Philosophy and Practice*. (Manchester: Manchester Museum, 2006), pp.1-14, [p.2]. Available at: <https://www.academia.edu/67277913/Bog_Bodies_Representing_the_Dead> [Accessed 6th February 2024].

³⁸ Giles, 'Bog Bodies', 2006, p.2; Ian M. Stead, J. B. Bourke, and Don Brothwell, *Lindow Man: the body in the Bog*, (London: British Museum Publications, 1986); V. Ellermann, 'En ejendommeligt forandrings af lig ved henliggen i tørvemoser.' *Ugeskrift for Læger*, vol.45 (1916), pp.1969-1978; Niels Lynnerup, Niels 'Bog Bodies', *The Anatomical Record*, vol.298, (2015), pp.1007-1012, [pp.1007-1008]; Stuart McLean, 'Bodies from The Bog: Metamorphosis, Non-Human Agency And The Making Of 'Collective' Memory', *Trames*, vol.12, (2008), pp.299-308, [pp.301-302]; Terence J. Painter 'Chemical and Microbiological Aspects of the Preservation Process in Sphagnum Peat' in *Bog Bodies: New Discoveries and New Perspectives*, eds. R.C. Turner, and R.G. Scaife (London: The British Museum, 1995) pp.88-99, [p.99].

³⁹ Lynnerup, 'Bog Bodies', p.1007; Niels Lynnerup, 'Mummies', *American Journal of Physical Anthropology*, vol.134, (2007), pp.162-190; Paul Barber, 'Forensic Pathology and the European Vampire', *Journal of Folklore Research*, vol.24, (1987), pp.1-32, [p.7].

carrion-eating animals devouring the parts of the body that can be reached.⁴⁰ Niels Lynnerup argues that it is important to note that some limbs shrink more than others due these processes, and that this alteration can lead to the wrongful diagnosis of congenital conditions and rare diseases.⁴¹ Additionally, using measurements from these skeletons to calculate the appearance of the person can result in estimates that are too small, such as in the case of Graubelle Man, whose cranial and post cranial measurements were ten percent smaller than Iron Age bodies not found within bogs.⁴² As such, this should be carefully considered during discussions of apparent disability among bog bodies, particularly those whose proposed disability is thought to have contributed to their death. In turn, Lynnerup states that the lack of evidence of hard manual labour seen on the hands of Graubelle Man may not point towards a noble birth, but could instead be another side effect of his years spent in the bog, with the outer layers of his skin peeling off.⁴³ This should be taken into consideration when discussing Lindow Man and Old Croghan Man, for whom lack of wear and tear has been taken as evidence of high birth.

Lynnerup argues that it is probable that Iron Age peoples knew that bodies deposited in bogs would be engulfed, and that some degree of preservation would take place.⁴⁴ C. Briggs is not so convinced, and in discussing D. Liversage's proposal that graves could have been dug into bogs and then peat laid on top, challenges the assumption that Iron Age Celts knew of the preservative properties of bogs.⁴⁵ Whilst Briggs admits that it is possible that peat was placed over graves in order to prevent the smell of decomposition spreading, he states that evidence for such a practice would be difficult to find.⁴⁶ Furthermore, Briggs claims that Liversage's theory is improbable, as it is unlikely that such graves would stay consistently immersed, and that the bog's composition is another element to consider.⁴⁷ However, items such as weapons, jewellery, horse harness, ploughs, quern stones, butter and

⁴⁰ C. S. Briggs, 'Did he fall or was he pushed? Some Unresolved Questions About Lindow Man' in *Bog Bodies: New Discoveries and New Perspectives*, eds. R. C. Turner and R. Scaife, (London: British Museum Press, 1996), pp.223-251, [p.4]; S. RY Andersen and Preben Geertinger, 'Bodies Investigated in the Light of Forensic Medicine', *Danish Archaeology*, vol. 3, (1984), pp.111-119, [p.117].

⁴¹ Lynnerup, 'Bog Bodies', p.1008.

⁴² Lynnerup, 'Bog Bodies', p.1009.

⁴³ Lynnerup, 'Bog Bodies', p.1010.

⁴⁴ Lynnerup, 'Bog Bodies', p.1007.

⁴⁵ Briggs, 'Did he fall', p.3; D. Liversedge 'La Femme de Huldremøse' in *Elements de Pre- et Protohistoire Européenne: Hommages a Jacques-Pierre Millotte*, *Ann. Litt. de L'Univ. de Besançon*, eds. A. Bocquet and others, (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1985), pp.639-644.

⁴⁶ Briggs, 'Did he fall', p.3.

⁴⁷ Briggs, 'Did he fall', p.3; Harry Godwin, *Fenland: its ancient past and uncertain future*, (Cambridge: U.P., 1978, p.124-33.

many more have been excavated from bogs.⁴⁸ Whilst this does not definitely prove that the Iron Age Celts knew these items would be preserved, it does suggest that there was a pattern of depositing valuable items within bogs. Furthermore, sites around Glastonbury's wetlands appear to have been used as centres for metal, glass and wood working,⁴⁹ and this level of activity suggests that Iron Age Celts spent time around bogs. This possibility may also be offered support by excavations at Glastonbury and Meare in Somerset, as well as Fenlands in eastern England and bog trackways in Ireland, which suggest significant effort was expended to make crossings and pathways through the bogs using brushwood hurdles or planks.⁵⁰ The necessity to make such pathways suggests that there was the need for frequent ventures into the bog, though this dissertation does not seek to imply that such pathways were used specifically to deposit bog bodies. Instead, it appears that Celts across the British Isles made use of bogs, which in turn may suggest that they had knowledge of the preservative properties of bogs.

Bogs are often described as liminal places, and by the Middle Ages were seen as locations where 'dangerous dead' were to be buried.⁵¹ Despite their use, bogs may have been considered uncontrollable places to be feared, being seen as sources of disease and toxic vapours.⁵² As such, it could be that their liminal status was important and part of what made them dangerous, which may have in turn made them ideal places to inter what Miranda Aldhouse-Green calls 'the inexcusable dead'.⁵³ Possibly, burying a feared individual within a bog was a containment method, or may indicate that burial should reflect the deceased, thereby meaning that dangerous people ought to be buried in places just as treacherous as they were, which will be discussed in more depth in Chapter Three. Alternatively, Aldhouse-Green suggests the liminality of bogs, being places between land and water, could have made them the appropriate resting place for individuals seen as existing between life and death, not just those who were explicitly dangerous.⁵⁴ This could have been because just as the victim's

⁴⁸ Eamonn P. Kelly, 'An Archaeological Interpretation of Irish Age Bog Bodies', in *The Archaeology of Violence*, ed. S. Ralph. (New York: State University of New York, 2012) pp.232–240, [p.232].

⁴⁹ Giles, 'Bog Bodies', p.9; John Coles and Stephen Minnit, *Industrious and fairly civilised: the Glastonbury Lake Village*, (Exeter, Somerset Levels Project and Somerset County Council Museum Services, 1995).

⁵⁰ Bryony Coles and John Coles, *The Sweet Track to Glastonbury*, (London: Thames and Hudson, 1986); Barry Raftery *Trackway Excavations in the Mountdillon Bogs, Co. Longford. 1985-1991. Irish Archaeological Wetland Unit. Transactions: Volume 3*, (Dublin: Department of Archaeology UCD/Irish Archaeological Wetland Unit, 1996); Coles and Minnet *Industrious and fairly civilised*; Francis Pryor, *Flag Fen: Life and Death in a Prehistoric Landscape* (Stroud: Tempus, 2005); Giles, 'Bog Bodies', p.9.

⁵¹ Giles, 'Bog Bodies', p.2.

⁵² Aldhouse-Green, *Bog Bodies Uncovered*, p.83.

⁵³ Aldhouse-Green, *Bog Bodies Uncovered*, p.83.

⁵⁴ Miranda Aldhouse-Green, *Bog Bodies Uncovered: Solving Europe's Ancient Mystery*, (London: Thames and Hudson, 2015), p.45.

life was suddenly interrupted, so too was the natural process of decay.⁵⁵ As a result, it may be that it was not just the deceased the location needed to reflect, but also how they died. However, this concept cannot equally be applied to all bog victims, for example Old Croghan Man, whose death was potentially part of a kingship ritual connected to tribal boundaries.⁵⁶

On the connection between watery places and the gods, Kevin Smith writes that the Bakongo people of the Congo river draw parallels between pools and mirrors, seeing watery places as possible doorways to the underworld.⁵⁷ Melanie Giles discusses this with reference to bog deposits, proposing that the Celts may have held similar beliefs to the Bakongo people, seeing water as a gateway to the Otherworld.⁵⁸ If, as will be discussed in Chapter Three, the deceased were supposed to communicate with the gods on their community's behalf,⁵⁹ the choice to bury people such as Lindow Man in a bog could have been a key part of the funerary process. The idea that the Celts saw bogs as being connected to the Otherworld could be offered some support, if theories that the British Celts saw watery places as sacred hold merit.⁶⁰ Miranda Green writes that the Celts viewed water sources as their own supernatural entities, which were part of the underworld and deserving of worship.⁶¹ As such, it has been tentatively suggested that deposits in bogs could be thank offerings to the bog itself, in which case bog bodies such as Lindow Man could have been sacrifices to a local bog deity.⁶² Said offerings could have been made to thank the bogs for providing and preserving food, although Aldhouse-Green is not convinced by this proposal, and argues that bog bodies are a much more complicated phenomenon.⁶³ Additionally, the theory does not convincingly explain the Irish bog bodies, such as Old Croghan Man. As such, even if bodies such as Lindow Man were thank offerings, this does not explain bog bodies in their totality.

⁵⁵ Aldhouse-Green, *Bog Bodies Uncovered*, p.45.

⁵⁶ Kelly, 'An archaeological interpretation of Iron Age Bog Bodies', p.232.

⁵⁷ Giles, 'Bog Bodies', 2006, p.9; Kevin P. Smith *Through a Clouded Mirror: Africa at the Pan-American Exposition*, (2002). Available at: <http://www.sciencebuff.org/africa_at_the_pan_am_introduction.php> [Accessed 25th July 2024].

⁵⁸ Giles, 'Bog Bodies', p.9.

⁵⁹ Giles, 'Bog Bodies', p.9.

⁶⁰ Madgick, 'Patterns in the modification', p.10; Aldhouse-Green, *Dying for the Gods*; Anne Ross *Pagan Celtic Britain: Studies in Iconography and Tradition*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967); Briggs, 'Did he fall', p.1; Jean Jacob Asmussen Worsaae, 'Untitled' in *Historisk Tidsskrift*, vol.3, (1842) pp.249-92.

⁶¹ Miranda Green, *Animals in Celtic Life and Myth*, (London: Routledge, 1992), p.2, p.95; Madgwick, 'Patterns in the modification', p.10.

⁶² Aldhouse-Green, *Bog Bodies Uncovered*, p.49; Hilda Davidson, *Myths and Symbols in Pagan Europe: Early Scandinavian and Celtic Traditions*, (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1988), pp.62–63, pp.131–133; McLean, 'Bodies from the bog', p.301.

⁶³ Aldhouse-Green, *Bog Bodies Uncovered*, p.49.

Disease and famine have been proposed as an alternative theory as to why bog bodies were created.⁶⁴ Eamonn Kelly explains that, with reference to the Irish bog bodies, the king was believed to be the consort of the Earth goddess, and that in times of famine where she had rescinded her favour, it was the king's responsibility to find a solution.⁶⁵ Failing this, the king would pay with his life, thereby suggesting that several of the Irish bog bodies may have been both an attempt to placate the Earth goddess and punish the king for his failure.⁶⁶ Kelly argues that the deposition of bog butter, quern stones, plough parts and a sickle were reminders of the king's primary task being to (via his marriage) ensure the land was fertile and the people tended to.⁶⁷ Following this line of argument, deposition in the bog may not have always been a case of matching the deceased and their manner of death, but also of burying them in a sacred place, or to sooth vindictive deities.

In the pits

It has previously been argued that the bodies deposited in the Danebury grain pits were the result of a wider Iron Age belief that human remains were little more than rubbish.⁶⁸ The reason for this, Maud Cunningham argues, was the druidic belief in reincarnation, resulting in British Celts being indifferent to corpses.⁶⁹ Additionally, Lucy Walker suggests that pit burials required little expenditure, making them an ideal method of disposing of a large and useless carcass.⁷⁰ Over the last several decades, an alternative theory that these people were outcasts denied normal funerary rites became increasingly popular.⁷¹ This theory posits that these people were murderers, witches, infertile women, or victims of suicide, although Peter

⁶⁴ Kelly, 'An archaeological interpretation of Iron Age Bog Bodies', p.238.

⁶⁵ Kelly, 'An archaeological interpretation of Iron Age Bog Bodies', p.238.

⁶⁶ Kelly, 'An archaeological interpretation of Iron Age Bog Bodies', p.238.

⁶⁷ Kelly, 'An archaeological interpretation of Iron Age Bog Bodies', p.238.

⁶⁸ Barry Cunliffe, 'The Middle pre-Roman Iron Age, 400-100BC', in *A History of Wiltshire, vol.1, part 2*, ed. E. Crittall, (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), pp.417-425, [pp.423-424]; Barry Cunliffe *Iron Age Communities in Britain, 3rd edition*, (London: Routledge, 1991); Gerhard Bersu 'Excavations at Little Woodbury, Wiltshire, part 1', *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society*, vol. 6, (1940), pp.30-111; Giles, 'Making Metal', p.395; Harding, *Death and Burial*, p.vii, p.5; Madgwick, 'Patterns in the modification', p.2.

⁶⁹ Maud Cunningham, 'Excavations in Yarnbury Castle Camp', *Wiltshire archaeological Magazine*, vol. 46, (1993), pp.198-213, [p.207]; Madgwick, 'Patterns in the modification', p.2.

⁷⁰ Lucy Walker, 'The Deposition of the Human Remains', in *Danebury: An Iron Age Hillfort in Hampshire, vol 2. Excavations 1968-1978: the finds*, ed. Barry Cunliffe, (London: Council for British Archaeology, 1984); Madgwick, 'Patterns in the modification', p.2.

⁷¹ Harding, *Death and Burial*, p.5; Madgwick, 'Patterns in the modification', p.2.

Ucko has also proposed that these graves represent low status burials.⁷² As such, it could appear that the right to a proper burial could be denied, due to a lack of status, or because of the individual having transgressed against their community in some way.

However, it has also been suggested that these people were sacrificial offerings to chthonic deities, in thanks for a good harvest and protecting the grain over the winter, or an appeal for the gods to do so, with the deposits being made during important points in the agricultural cycle.⁷³ This would in turn place these depositions within a cycle of digging and preparing the pits, and then depositing humans (and animals) within them once they fell out of use.⁷⁴ Such a practice could have itself been part of what Cunliffe describes as an increasing focus on agriculture, possibly due to a shift towards more earth-based belief systems, which had the effect of intensifying the Celt's focus on deposition during the second millennium and onwards.⁷⁵ Additionally, Jean-Louis Brunaux suggests that the rotting of the bodies within the grain pits, and the earth's subsequent absorption of the putrefaction juices, could have been a key aspect of this ritual, functioning similar to libations given at La Tène

⁷² Barry Cunliffe, *Danebury: An Iron Age Hillfort*, volume 6; Madgwick, 'Patterns in the modification', pp.2-3; Wait, *Ritual and Religion*, p.120; Walker, 'The Deposition of the Human Remains', p.461; Peter J. Ucko 'Ethnographic and archaeological interpretation of funerary remains', *World Archaeology*, vol. 1, (1969), pp.262-277.

⁷³ Aldhouse-Green, *Bog Bodies Uncovered*, p.49; Aldhouse-Green, *Dying for the Gods*, p.54; Barry Cunliffe, 'Behaviour and belief', in *Danebury: An Iron Age Hillfort In Hampshire, Volume 6: A Hillfort Community In Perspective*, ed. Barry Cunliffe, (London: Council for British Archaeology, 1995), pp.72-79, [p.75]; Barry Cunliffe, *Danebury: Anatomy of an Iron Age Hillfort*, (London: Batsford, 1983), p.164; Barry Cunliffe, *Pits, Preconceptions and Propitiation*, p.77; Barry Cunliffe and Cynthia Poole, *Danebury: an Iron Age Hillfort in Hampshire, volume 6: hillfort community in perspective*, (London: Council for British Archaeology, 1995), p.83; C. Richards and J. Thomas, 'Ritual activity and structured deposition in later Neolithic Wessex' in *Neolithic Studies: A Review of Some Current Research*, eds. R.J. Bradley and J. Gardener, (Oxford: Bar Brit. Ser. 133, 1984), pp.189-218; Giles, 'Making Metal', p.395; Cunliffe, *The Ancient Celts*, p.284, p.289, pp.293-294; John C. Barrett 'Food, Gender and Metal: Questions of Social Reproduction' in *The Bronze Age-Iron Age transition in Europe*, eds. M. L. S. Sorensen and R. Thomas, (Oxford: British Archaeological Report, 1989), pp.304-320; J.D. Hill, *Ritual and Rubbish in the Iron Age of Wessex*, (Oxford: British Archaeological Report, 1995); Richard Bradley 'Economic growth and social change, two examples from prehistoric Europe' in *Economic Archaeology*, eds. A. Sheridan, and G. Bailey, (Oxford: British Archaeological Report, 1981), pp.231-238, p.234; Richard Bradley *The Passage of Arms: an Archaeological Analysis of Prehistoric Hoards and Votive Deposits*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Ronald Hutton, *Pagan Britain*, (London: Yale University Press, 2014) p.190; Madgwick, 'Patterns in the modification', p.3; Melanie Giles, 'Making Metal and Forging Relations: Ironworking in the British Iron Age', *Oxford Journal of Archaeology*, vol. 26, (2007), pp.395-413, [p.402, 408]; Miranda Green, *Exploring the World of the Druids*, (London: Thames and Hudson, 1997), p.76; P. V. Glob *The Bog People*, (London: Faber and Faber, 1969); Valérie Delattre, 'The Ritual Representation of the Body During the Late Iron Age in Northern France', in *Atlantic Europe in the First Millennium BC: Crossing the Divide*, eds. Tom Moore and Xosê-Loise Armada (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012) pp.608-614, [p.608]; Walker, 'The Deposition of the Human Remains', p.462.

⁷³ Aldhouse-Green, *Bog Bodies Uncovered*, p.49; Hutton, *Pagan Britain*, p.190.

⁷⁴ Aldhouse-Green, *Bog Bodies Uncovered*, p.49; Hutton, *Pagan Britain*, p.190.

⁷⁵ Cunliffe, *The Ancient Celts*, p.274.

sanctuaries.⁷⁶ This could suggest that the choice to inter people within these pits was not a case of ridding the community of refuse, but may have instead been part of a natural cycle that required a significant sacrifice to Celtic deities, offering up both flesh and fluid.

However, Giles points out that such depositions are rare, and that this in turn suggests two things about the practice of depositing remains in grain pits.⁷⁷ Firstly, that this ritual was carried out in times of crisis, such as a poor harvest that threatened the community's life,⁷⁸ suggesting that perhaps a human life was sacrificed to save more lives. Alternatively, the ritual may have taken place when the pit had reached the end of its own life, warranting a special deposit.⁷⁹ A new pit would then be dug, and the cycle would begin again.⁸⁰ In both circumstances, it appears that these individuals' death was a service to the community, as well as a form of communication with the gods – either begging for help or thanking them for services rendered. Such practices, John Barrett argues, could have led to an increased social investment in the land's fertility and its occupants (both human and animal), and the conflation of political authority with control over agriculture.⁸¹ As the places where grain pits were dug appear to correspond to areas that depended on agriculture, this relationship could have been especially important.⁸² This is because, considering how dependant such communities would have been on the productive capacity of the land, offerings aimed at maintaining it would have been of vital importance.⁸³ As such, the grain pit burials were perhaps not only religiously significant, but also played a vital role in maintaining Danebury's economic security and existing political relationships. In this way, life and death were potentially intertwined at Danebury.

Burial mounds

The construction and use of burial mounds was an important aspect of East Yorkshire funerary rituals during the Iron Age. James Johnson argues that burial mounds were never

⁷⁶ Delattre, 'The Ritual Representation of the Body', p.610; Matthieu Poux, *L'Âge du Vin. Rites de boisson, festins et libations en Gaule indépendante*, (Montagnac: Ed. Monique Mergoil, 2004); Jean-Louis Brunaux, *Guerre et religion en Gaule. Essai d'anthropologie celtique* (Paris: Éditions Errance, 2004).

⁷⁷ Giles, 'Making Metal', p.402; Cunliffe, *The Ancient Celts*, p.290.

⁷⁸ Giles, 'Making Metal', p.402.

⁷⁹ Giles, 'Making Metal', p.402.

⁸⁰ Hutton, *Pagan Britain*, p.190.

⁸¹ Barrett, 'Food, Gender and Metal', p.313; Giles, 'Making Metal', p.403.

⁸² Hutton, *Pagan Britain*, p.190.

⁸³ Cunliffe, *The Ancient Celts*, p.290.

truly finished, instead the Celts added to them over time, suggesting the meaning of each mound was being constantly created.⁸⁴ In turn, burial mounds contained references to time, place, and transformation, as well as earlier mounds.⁸⁵ This indicates that these places were, at least partially, preoccupied with group memory, as well as individual and communal identity.⁸⁶ As such, Rebecca Cannell argues that they became ‘anchors for social memory.’⁸⁷ The relevance of this to the speared burials could be that, if burial mounds were connected to social memory and if we suppose these men died in similar ways, certain forms of burial were suitable for certain people, based upon how they fit into a pre-existing funerary beliefs. In the next chapter, this topic will be discussed with reference to who these men may have been whilst alive, but here it will be argued that this implies that group memory was of vital importance in Celtic Yorkshire funerary rituals. For instance, perhaps social memory and its reinforcement was partially responsible for the creation of mounds, and the repetition found in their designs. Michael Given discusses this using the concept of conviviality – the idea that for something to endure, there needs to be a consensus, and for the factors affecting its continued existence and relevance to be balanced.⁸⁸ As such, the memories created and reinforced by burial mounds, and the rituals performed relating to them, prolonged the burial mound tradition itself. Additionally, funerals in Celtic East Yorkshire could have established solidarity within the community, whilst also keeping the dead happy and in their resting place.⁸⁹ According to Marian Diepeveen-Jansen, this is because mortuary practices and other areas of symbolic violence were instances where social hierarchy and cohesion are

⁸⁴ Andrew Jones, *Memory and Material Culture: Tracing the Past in Prehistoric Europe*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp.84–7; Cannell, ‘What Makes a Mound’, p.689; Historic England, *Prehistoric Barrows and Burial Mounds: Introductions to Heritage Asset* (Swindon: Historic England, 2018), p.1; Johnson, ‘Assembling Identities-in-death’, p.55.

⁸⁵ Andrew Jones, *Prehistoric Materialities: Becoming material in prehistoric Britain and Ireland*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp.20–21; Cannell, ‘What Makes a Mound’, pp.687–689; Bjørn Myhre, *Før Viken ble Norge: Borregravfeltet som religiøs og politisk arena [Before Viken became Norway: the Borre cemetery as a religious and political arena]* (Tønsberg: Vestfold fylkeskommune, 2015); Julie Lund and Elisabeth Arwill-Nordbladh, ‘Divergent Ways Of Relating To The Past In The Viking Age’ *European Journal of Archaeology*, vol. 19, pp.415–438; Jones *Memory and Material Culture*, pp.80–84; Howard Williams ‘Viking Mortuary Citations’, *European Journal of Archaeology*, vol. 19, pp.400–414.

⁸⁶ Cannell, ‘What Makes a Mound’, p.688.

⁸⁷ Cannell, ‘What Makes a Mound’, p.689; Martin Furholt, Martin Hinz and Doris Mischka, ‘“As time goes by?” Monumentality, landscapes and the temporal perspective’ in *Proceedings of the International Workshop “Socio-environmental Dynamics over the Last 12,000 Years: The creation of Landscapes II (14th–18th March 2011)”* eds. Martin Furholt, Martin Hinz and Doris Mischka, (Bonn: Kiel University, 2012), pp.13–20.

⁸⁸ Cannell, ‘What Makes a Mound’, p.689; Michael Given, ‘Conviviality and the Life of Soil’, *Archaeological Journal*, vol. 28, (2018), pp.127–143; Michael Given, ‘The Precarious Conviviality of Watermills’, *Archaeological Dialogues*, vol. 25, (2018), pp.71–94.

⁸⁹ John Robb, ‘Burial Treatment as Transformations of Bodily Ideology’, in *Performing Death: Social Analyses of Funerary Traditions in The Ancient Near East and Mediterranean*, ed. Nicola Laneri, (Saline: McNaughton & Gunn, 2007), pp.287–298, [p.293].

established and confirmed.⁹⁰ As a result of such rituals, social changes can occur, due to institutions and practices becoming part of the fabric of society.⁹¹ In turn, according to Catherine Bell, ritual builds community by channelling conflict, focusing grievances, negotiating relationships and creating ways in which the individuals can think of themselves.⁹² Therefore, the decision to inter the Yorkshire weapons burials in mounds may not have only been about how to appropriately process these men, but also the effect said ritual would have upon the surviving community. Additionally, Aldhouse-Green suggests that collectivism played a role, in that such funerals could have linked the mourners and the deceased, and that this may have been necessary to honour the dead, demonstrate their prowess, or was simply an act of shared remembrance.⁹³

However, Adam Smith cautions against using memory in order to analyse the politics surrounding burial, due to the resulting assumption that it was easy for ancient peoples to transition from seeing something as being in the past, to how things should be.⁹⁴ This has led to reverence for the dead also being interpreted as reverence for the social hierarchy.⁹⁵ Yet, a man buried with a sword may not have been a high ranking warrior, but instead given it as a gift from those who loved him in life. Furthermore, memory and ritual are not simple, in part because ritual obligations and the outcome of that worship are not always closely connected, although the effect of memory is vital in ritual practice.⁹⁶ For instance, in some cases of the speared burials, the spears themselves stuck out of the mound, creating a clear marker that distinguished these burials from others and reminded the community of the deceased.⁹⁷ However, these markers may have been a by-product of the ritual, not an intended outcome. As such, whilst group memory may have played an important role in these funerary rituals, its impact should not be overstated.

⁹⁰ Marian Diepeveen-Jansen, 'Early La Tène burial practices and social (re)constructions in the Marne–Moselle region' in *The Early Iron Age in Britain and the Near Continent*, eds Haselgrove, Colin and Pope, Rachel (Barnsley: Oxbow Books, 2007), pp.374-389, [p.385].

⁹¹ Anthony Giddens, *The Constitution of Society. Outline of the Theory of Structuration*. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1984); Diepeveen-Jansen, 'Early La Tène burial practices', p.385.

⁹² Catherine Bell, *Ritual, Perspectives and Dimensions*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p.235; Nicola Laneri, 'An Archaeology of Funerary Rituals', in *Performing Death: Social Analyses of Funerary Traditions in The Ancient Near East and Mediterranean*, ed. Nicola Laneri (Saline: McNaughton & Gunn, 2007), pp.1-14, [p.3].

⁹³ Aldhouse-Green, *Dying for the Gods*, p.55.

⁹⁴ Adam T. Smith, 'The Politics of Loss: Comments on a Powerful Death', in *Performing Death: Social Analyses of Funerary Traditions in The Ancient Near East and Mediterranean*, ed. Nicola Laneri (Saline: McNaughton & Gunn, 2007), pp.163-166, [p.165].

⁹⁵ Smith, *The politics of loss*, p.165.

⁹⁶ Smith, *The politics of loss*, p.165.

⁹⁷ Aldhouse-Green, *Dying for the Gods*, p.55; Giles, 'Performing Pain', p.543.

The weapons found within the speared and Acklam Wold warrior burials were damaged.⁹⁸ These are not the only weapons burials containing damaged objects; other specifically English examples being a man in Whitcombe buried with an iron sword and spear whose shaft had been snapped, as well as a man found at Owsberry with a spear that had been snapped in half and stuck into the edge of the grave.⁹⁹ Giles suggests that these damaged weapons were substitutions for real people.¹⁰⁰ The Acklam Wold warrior was found with a blade that was bent at 150 degrees and, based upon mineralised impressions of wood on the blade, the excavator proposed that the blade was inside the scabbard when it was ritually ‘killed’.¹⁰¹ Giles questions whether this sword had belonged to this man, or was the weapon which had killed him.¹⁰² Dent states that the practice of ‘killing’ swords is well attested within the Celtic world.¹⁰³ Keeping this in mind, if the sword belonged to the Acklam Wold warrior, perhaps it was destroyed so that he could continue to use it in the afterlife. Alternatively, if the weapon had belonged to the one who killed him, perhaps the sword was killed in place of the murderer, who for whatever reason was unavailable for punishment.¹⁰⁴ However, as Giles points out, it is also possible that the blade represented the deceased himself, with the sword’s destruction reflecting his death and forcing the community to relive it.¹⁰⁵

This act of breaking the weapons may have in itself held great significance for the mourners, which could in turn suggest that smiths were also funerary specialists.¹⁰⁶ Valérie Delattre states that, if libations of wine and the decay of corpses are considered foundational ritual acts, then so too should the manipulation of weapons, as such acts involve symbolic degradation.¹⁰⁷ As such, the destruction of the sword and spears found in Arras funerals could

⁹⁸ Dent, ‘Weapons, Wounds and War’, p.123; Giles, ‘Performing Pain’, p.542.

⁹⁹ David Fontijn and Harry Fokkens, ‘The emergence of Early Iron Age ‘chieftains’ graves’ in the southern Netherlands: reconsidering transformations in burial and depositional practices’ in *The Earlier Iron Age in Britain and the Near Continent*, eds. Colin Haselgrove and Rachel Pope, (Barnsley: Oxbow Books, 2007) pp.354-373, [p.367]; Giles, ‘Performing Pain, Performing Beauty: Dealing with Difficult Death in the Iron Age’, *Cambridge Archaeological Journal*, vol. 25, pp.539-550, [p.544]; G. M. Aitken and G.N. Aitken, ‘Excavations at Whitcombe 1965–1967’, *Proceedings of the Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society*, vol. 112, pp.57-94, [p. 69]; J. Collis, ‘Burials with Weapons in Iron Age Britain’, *Germania*, vol. 51, (1973), pp.121-133, [p.126].

¹⁰⁰ Giles, ‘Performing Pain’, p.542.

¹⁰¹ Dent, ‘Weapons, Wounds and War’, p.123; Giles, ‘Performing Pain’, p.542.

¹⁰² Giles, ‘Performing Pain’, p.542.

¹⁰³ Dent, ‘Weapons, Wounds and War’, p.123; L.V. Grinsell, ‘The breaking of objects as a funerary rite’, *Folklore*, vol. 72, (1961), pp.475-91, [p.477].

¹⁰⁴ Giles, ‘Performing Pain’, p.542.

¹⁰⁵ Giles, ‘Performing Pain’, p.542.

¹⁰⁶ Giles, ‘Making Metal’, p.405.

¹⁰⁷ Delattre, ‘The Ritual Representation of the Body’, p.610.

have been a foundational aspect of these particular rites. Furthermore, smithing may have been important to Iron Age communities due to its association with the ability to both create and destroy.¹⁰⁸ This relationship, Giles suggests, made new ways of thinking possible and may have been used in order to negotiate crises, as well as offer the mourners a way to think of social change,¹⁰⁹ which could have proven especially useful following the death of a community member. Additionally, due to the connection between iron and the ability to transform substances, such as metal or flesh, smiths may have also altered how power and authority were discussed.¹¹⁰ As such, metalworking could have offered the Yorkshire mourners a metaphor for the power of life over death, which also symbolised the deceased's continued authority within the world¹¹¹ – effectively, they were simultaneously reminded of the deceased, given a framework through which to mourn, and reminded of their power. For the Acklam Wold warrior and speared burials, this could mean that by bending the sword and snapping the spears, the mourners were given a means to navigate their loss in a socially acceptable way. This could in turn have allowed the community to negotiate new power vacuums and ruptured relationships left by the deceased, which may have been particularly important if the deceased were a warrior or of high status. In Iron Age communities, which are usually thought to have been small and defined by kinship, the loss of someone of such status and managing the subsequent situation may have been of particular importance, and so required a specific ritual to minimise the collateral damage.¹¹² Therefore, in Celtic East Yorkshire, funerals may not have been simply about creating a suitable memorial for the deceased, but also ensuring that the community itself could continue to function.

Conclusion

It is possible that Iron Age peoples were aware of the preservative properties of bogs, and made use of such places, despite their liminal status and the danger they presented. As a result, they may have been considered appropriate burial places for individuals believed to

¹⁰⁸ Giles, 'Making Metal', p.395, p.399; Hingley, 'Iron, Ironworking and Regeneration', pp.9-15.

¹⁰⁹ Giles, 'Making Metal', pp.395-396, p.409.

¹¹⁰ Giles, 'Making Metal', p.404, p.409.

¹¹¹ Giles, 'Making Metal', p.404.

¹¹² Giles, 'Making Metal', pp.396-397; J. D Hill, 'How should we understand Iron Age Societies and Hillforts? A Contextual Study from Southern Britain' in *Different Iron Ages. Studies on the Iron Age in Temperate Europe*, eds. J.D. Hill, and C. Cumberpatch, (Oxford: British Archaeological Reports Oxford Ltd., 1995) pp.45-66.

either be trapped between life and death, or those who were particularly dangerous in life. This suggests that perhaps for the Celts it was appropriate to bury people in areas which reflected the circumstances of their life and death. Alternatively, bogs may have been considered portals to the Otherworld, potentially meaning individuals tasked with contacting the gods were interred within them.

Previously, it has been argued that human remains in sites such as Danebury were considered nothing more than rubbish cast into pits to discard them. This argument is not especially convincing, and a new theory has emerged that these people were offerings to chthonic gods, suggesting that identity was less important in Celtic funerary rituals than the services the deceased could continue to provide.

In Celtic East Yorkshire memory may have been of particular importance in the funerary process, as memory could be used to reinforce the social structure which demanded burial mounds. Additionally, the destruction of weapons may have offered an emotional framework through which the mourners could process not only their grief, but the process of restating communal connections after the societal rupture death had caused. In this respect, not only were certain burials appropriate for certain people, but how the death itself and the deceased could serve the community may have been of great significance in British Celtic funerary rituals.

Chapter Two

This second chapter will examine how an individual's identity whilst alive affected their treatment after death. In order to do this, the chapter will begin with a discussion of druidic sacrifice, with a focus on Lindow Man and the implications this has for his identity. Other possible identities for Lindow Man shall be discussed throughout this and the following chapter, though an attempt will not be made to decide which is 'correct'. This is because archaeological evidence for ritual murder is often open to interpretation, but also because whilst we know how Lindow Man died, it is impossible to conclusively determine the motive for his death.¹¹³ In turn, as the theories surrounding Lindow Man do not convincingly explain other bog bodies from the British Isles, Old Croghan Man's living identity will also be explored. Afterwards, how violent deaths altered identity will be analysed, with a focus on murder and death due to martial warfare. The final section will discuss death due to disease, in particular infection.

Druids and kings?

Bog bodies such as Lindow Man have been taken as evidence that druidic sacrifice was practiced among Celtic communities in Iron Age Britain.¹¹⁴ Before discussing this theory, it is worth describing the state in which he was found. Currently, Lindow Man is thought to have lived in the first century BCE.¹¹⁵ Except for intestinal worms, he was a healthy man in his mid-twenties, with well-manicured hands, few signs of manual labour, and no evidence of prior injuries or diseases.¹¹⁶ His stomach contents suggest that his last meal was a griddle

¹¹³ Aldhouse-Green, *Dying for the Gods*, p.14; James, *Exploring the World of the Druids*, p.97.

¹¹⁴ Aldhouse-Green, *Dying for the Gods*, p.14; Barry Cunliffe, 'Celtic Death Rituals', *Archaeology*, vol. 41, (1988), pp.39-43, [p.43]; Barry Cunliffe, *The Ancient Celts*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), p.284; Miranda Aldhouse-Green, *Bog Bodies Uncovered: Solving Europe's Ancient Mystery*, (London: Thames and Hudson, 2015), p.9; James, *Exploring the World of the Celts*, p.97.

¹¹⁵ Jarrett A. Lobell and Samir S. Patel, 'Bog Bodies Rediscovered', *Archaeology*, vol. 63, pp.22-29, [pp.22-29]; Simon James, *Exploring the World of the Celts*, p.96; Miranda Green, *Exploring the World of the Druids*, (London: Thames and Hudson, 1997), p.81.

¹¹⁶ James, *Exploring the World of the Celts*, p.96; Green, *Exploring the World of the Druids*, p.81; Lobell and Patel 'Bog Bodies Rediscovered', pp.22-29.

cake containing mistletoe.¹¹⁷ It is thought that he was hit on the head, strangled, his neck slit and one rib broken, and then deposited into Lindow Moss.¹¹⁸

Due to the above, Lindow Man has often been interpreted as a ritual sacrifice.¹¹⁹ Many other bog bodies appeared to have endured violent death,¹²⁰ such as Old Croghan Man who had a stab wound to the chest, a defensive wound on his upper left arm which could suggest he attempted to defend himself, nipples which were sliced off, as well as being decapitated and his thorax severed from his abdomen.¹²¹ The violence done to these people is important as, Barry Cunliffe states, convincing evidence of human sacrifice is rare in the archaeological record.¹²² Nevertheless, the injuries Lindow Man endured (which are thought to have happened in rapid succession) are sufficient evidence for Cunliffe to conclude Lindow Man was a sacrifice.¹²³

Additionally, it is possible that Lindow Man was deliberately drowned in the bog, rather than dying before deposition. It has been estimated that the pool in which he was drowned was at least knee deep when he was deposited, though it is likely he sunk deeper, due to lack of damage from decay or animals.¹²⁴ Initially, Briggs comments that this would make the pool a plausible place for intentional drownings.¹²⁵ That is until, Briggs further argues, it is considered that the pool was two hundred meters from the edge of the peat bog, as it would be difficult to drag a body across such a distance to find a suitably deep place without also putting the executors at great risk.¹²⁶ This could cast doubt on the sacrifice theory, however, Leo Howe argues that risk is a key aspect of rituals, in part due to the contact between

¹¹⁷ Green, *Exploring the World of the Druids*, p.81; Lobell and Patel, 'Bog Bodies Rediscovered', pp.22-29.

¹¹⁸ James, *Exploring the World of the Celts*, pp.96-97; Green, *Exploring the World of the Druids*, p.81; Lobell and Patel, 'Bog Bodies Rediscovered', pp.22-29.

¹¹⁹ Hutton, 'Why Does Lindow Man Matter?', p.138; Cunliffe, *The Ancient Celts*, p.284; James, *Exploring the World of the Celts*, pp.96-97; Samuel F. Engel, 'Learning from The Dead: How Burial Practices in Roman Britain Reflect Changes in Belief and Society', *Student Publications*, vol. 710. (2019) pp.1-31, [p.26].

¹²⁰ Aldhouse-Green, *Bog Bodies Uncovered*, pp.82-83; Engel, 'Learning from the Dead', p.26; J.R. Beuker, 'The Girl and the Devil' in *The Mysterious Bog People (Exhibition Catalogue)*, eds. C. Bergen and M. J. L. Th. Niekus and T. van Vilsteren, (Zwolle: Waanders Publishers, 2002), pp.107-109; Glob, *The Bog People*, pp.144-192; W. van der Sanden *Through nature to eternity: the Bog Bodies of Northwest Europe*, (Amsterdam: Batavian Lion International, 1996), pp.154-165; McLean, 'Bodies from the bog', p.301.

¹²¹ Giles, 'Performing Pain', p.546; Kelly, 'An archaeological interpretation of Iron Age Bog Bodies', p.236.

¹²² Cunliffe, *The Ancient Celts*, p.284; Engel, 'Learning from the Dead', p.26

¹²³ Cunliffe, *The Ancient Celts*, p.284; Engel, 'Learning from the Dead', p.26

¹²⁴ K. Barber, 'Peat Macrofossil Analyses as Indicators of the Bog Palaeoenvironment and Climatic Change', in *Lindow Man*, eds. Ian M. Stead, and J. B. Bourke, and Don Brothwell (London: British Museum, 1986), pp.86-9, [p.89]; Briggs, 'Did he fall', p.5.

¹²⁵ Briggs, 'Did he fall', pp.5-15.

¹²⁶ Briggs, 'Did he fall', pp.5-15.

‘powerful and unpredictable forces’,¹²⁷ which the participants must attempt to control, or at least harness, depending upon the ritual’s aims. In his discussion of risk theory, Howe explores intrinsic risks - risks that are integral to the rite itself.¹²⁸ Perhaps in order for Lindow Man’s sacrifice to be successful, the executors needed to place themselves in mortal peril by depositing him in the bog – they needed to take a risk for great reward. Therefore, his placement deep within the bog does not rule out the possibility that he was a human sacrifice, or other theories connected to this perception.

One such theory is that Lindow Man was a druid. The lack of evidence of manual labour, such as his manicured hands, has led to the proposal that Lindow Man was of high status, possibly a druid.¹²⁹ Mistletoe pollen found within his stomach was taken as supporting evidence, due to Pliny having written about the alleged importance of said plant for the druids.¹³⁰ It has been suggested that a sprig of mistletoe was dipped into Lindow Man’s food, as no other fragments were found in his stomach, or that he was given a special drink containing the plant.¹³¹ Ronald Hutton proposes that this could have been part of his ‘consecration as a victim’¹³², whilst Engel has suggested it may have sedated Lindow Man, as mistletoe can cause toxic shock.¹³³ Whilst there are issues with using his manicured hands as evidence for high status, as the bog itself could have erased evidence of manual labour, if we take the mistletoe as evidence that he was a druid, this could suggest that druids were both practitioners of rituals and potential sacrifices. Bearing in mind the suggestion that bog bodies were created in times of hardship, it is possible that such situations required special sacrifices, who would themselves be taken from prominent members of the community.

¹²⁷ Leo Howe, ‘Risk, Ritual and Performance’, *Royal Anthropological Institute*, vol. 6, (2003), pp.63-79, [pp.63-67].

¹²⁸ Howe, ‘Risk, Ritual and Performance’, p.68.

¹²⁹ Engel, ‘Learning from The Dead’, p.26.

¹³⁰ James, *Exploring the World of the Celts*, p.97; Green, *Exploring the World of the Druids*, p.81; Pliny The Elder, *The Natural History*, trans. John Bostock (London, Taylor and Francis, 1855), 16.95; Ronald Hutton, ‘Why Does Lindow Man Matter?’ *The Journal of Archaeology, Consciousness and Culture*, vol. 4, pp.135-148, [p.140]; Thomas Cahill, ‘Ending Human Sacrifice’, *Christian History*, vol. 17 (1998), p.16, [p.16].

¹³¹ Gordon Hillman, ‘Plant Foods in Ancient Diet’, in *Lindow Man*, eds. Ian M. Stead and J. B. Bourke, and Don Brothwell (London: British Museum, 1986), pp.99-115; James, *Exploring the World of the Celts*, p.97; R. Scaife, ‘Pollen in Human Palaeofaeces’ in *Lindow Man*, eds. Ian M. Stead, J. B. Bourke and Don Brothwell, (London: British Museum, 1986), pp.126-135; Hutton, ‘Why Does Lindow Man Matter?’, p.140; T. Holden ‘Preliminary Report on the Detailed Analyses of the Macroscopic Remains from the Gut of Lindow Man’ in *Lindow Man*, eds. Ian M. Stead, J. B. Bourke, and Don Brothwell, (London: British Museum, 1986), pp.116-125.

¹³² Hutton, ‘Why Does Lindow Man Matter?’, p.140.

¹³³ Engel, ‘Learning from the Dead’, p.26.

However, Hutton states that there are significant problems with using mistletoe as evidence that Lindow Man was a druid.¹³⁴ Firstly, excluding how problematic Classical sources are, Pliny was recording an alleged custom that had died out by his time, and the validity of his sources are unknown, therefore the importance of mistletoe to druids could be apocryphal.¹³⁵ Furthermore, only four pollen grains were found in Lindow Man's digestive system, which could have got into his meal accidentally.¹³⁶ As such, not only is the importance of mistletoe to the druids dubious, but there is not a significant amount present to definitively say it's inclusion was purposeful. Therefore, whilst it is not impossible that he was a druid, the existing evidence is insubstantial at best. Additionally, in 1987 a second body was retrieved from Lindow Moss, whose gut did not contain mistletoe.¹³⁷ As such, it was concluded that there was no ritual significant to either man's last meal.¹³⁸ Therefore, the possible implications that this has for Celtic death beliefs stand on shaky ground.

Furthermore, even if Lindow Man were a druidic sacrifice, this theory does not convincingly apply to other bog bodies, nor can theories relating to a lone bog body be used to analyse wider funerary beliefs. Many other bog bodies have been found exhibiting little evidence of manual labour and well-manicured hands, such as Old Croghan Man from Ireland.¹³⁹ Additionally, analysis of Old Croghan Man's hair and nails suggest that he regularly ate meat, which Jarrett Lobell and Samir Patel argue would have been a luxury in Iron Age Ireland.¹⁴⁰ These attributes, as with Lindow Man, led to the suggestion that Old Croghan Man was of high status, possibly a captive who had been taken for sacrifice after his own tribe had been defeated, or after an insurrection against a king.¹⁴¹ Ignoring his hands, the problems with which have previously been analysed, the issue of his missing nipples will now be discussed. Old Croghan Man is not the only Irish bog body whose nipples were sliced off, another example being Clonycavan Man, and Kelly has interpreted this as being part of a

¹³⁴ Hutton, 'Why Does Lindow Man Matter?', pp.140-141.

¹³⁵ Hutton, 'Why Does Lindow Man Matter?', p.141; Ronald Hutton, *Blood and Mistletoe: The History of the Druids in Britain*, (London: Yale University Press, 2009), pp.14-17.

¹³⁶ Hutton, 'Why Does Lindow Man Matter?', p.141; Don Brothwell, *The Bog Man and the Archaeology of People*, (London: British Museum, 1986), p.96.

¹³⁷ Hutton, 'Why Does Lindow Man Matter?', p.141; R. Scaife, 'Pollen Analysis of the Lindow III Foord Residue' in *Bog Bodies*, eds. R. Turner and R. Scaife (London: British Museum, 1995), pp.83-85; T. Holden 'The Last Meals of the Lindow Bog Men' in *Bog Bodies*, eds. R. Turner and R. Scaife, (London: British Museum, 1995), pp.76-82.

¹³⁸ Holden, 'The Last Meals of the Lindow Bog Men', pp.76-82; Hutton, 'Why Does Lindow Man Matter?', p.141; Scaife, 'Pollen Analysis', pp.83-85.

¹³⁹ Giles, 'Bog Bodies', p.6; Giles, 'Performing Pain', p.546; Kelly, 'An archaeological interpretation of Iron Age Bog Bodies', p.235.

¹⁴⁰ Lobell and Patel, 'Bog Bodies Rediscovered', pp.22-29.

¹⁴¹ Giles, 'Bog Bodies', p.6.

ritual killing related to kingship and sovereignty.¹⁴² Kelly proposes that sucking a king's nipple in ancient Ireland was a sign of submission, and as such the severing of these men's nipples could indicate that they were failed candidates for kingship, or deposed kings who were rendered ineligible for their role, due to this mutilation.¹⁴³ Additionally, Lobell and Patel propose that the multiple injuries that these men endured could point not only to them being sacrifices to the goddess to which Irish kings were wed, but may suggest that she was also a deity of war, sovereignty and death, as well as land and fertility.¹⁴⁴ This could therefore indicate that not only was it an Irish king's responsibility to suffer death should a famine arise, but that this threat was fundamentally tied to his status as king.

However, following this theory, it is still possible that Old Croghan Man, Clonycavan Man, and other similar Irish bog bodies were not kings. G.F. Dalton has proposed that once every seven years, the Kings of Tara were at risk of a ritual death, and could avoid this fate either by abdicating or providing a fitting substitute.¹⁴⁵ As such, death and sacrifice may have been inherent aspects of Irish kingship, with kings being both at risk of sacrifice should their tenure go badly, or being able to select another to die in their place. This could imply that, for Lindow Man and the Irish bog bodies, their deaths were connected to and influenced by who they once were.

Murder most foul

Violent death is a possible explanation for the bog bodies, grain pit burials and weapons burials of East Yorkshire. Whilst the 'multiple deaths' bog bodies are thought to have endured is usually taken as evidence against them having being murdered for common gain,¹⁴⁶ R.C. Connolly has proposed that bog bodies, such as Lindow Man, may have been victims of a mugging.¹⁴⁷ Although this theory was poorly received, due to the perception that Lindow Man's multiple injuries could only be explained ritually, Briggs points out that

¹⁴² Giles, 'Performing Pain', p.546; Kelly, 'An archaeological interpretation of Iron Age Bog Bodies', , pp.232-236, p.239.

¹⁴³ Giles, 'Performing Pain', p.546; Kelly, 'An archaeological interpretation of Iron Age Bog Bodies', p.236, p.239; Lobell and Patel, 'Bog Bodies Rediscovered', pp.22-29.

¹⁴⁴ Lobell and Patel, 'Bog Bodies Rediscovered', pp.22-29.

¹⁴⁵ G. F. Dalton, 'The Ritual Killing of Irish Kings', *Folklore*, vol. 81, (1970), pp.1-21; Kelly, 'An archaeological interpretation of Iron Age Bog Bodies', p.239.

¹⁴⁶ Aldhouse-Green, *Bog Bodies Uncovered*, p.95.

¹⁴⁷ Robert C. Connolly, 'Lindow Man: Britain's Prehistoric Bog Body', *Anthropology Today*, vol. 1, (1985) 15-17; Briggs, 'Did he fall', p.1.

robbery and murder were among the inherent dangers of long-distance travel during the period, so it is possible Lindow Man was the victim of an opportunistic murder.¹⁴⁸ As such, the multiple wounds could have potentially been the result of a mugger killing their victim to hide the initial theft. Furthermore, Aldhouse-Green suggests that hiding the body in a place already considered dangerous could imply an illicit killing, rather than a ritual sacrifice.¹⁴⁹ Additionally, Turner proposes that other bog bodies may be potential murder victims whose bodies were then dumped in remote locations, such as the bodies found at Quintfall, Caithness and Arnish Moor.¹⁵⁰ Therefore, the deceased's identity may have no bearing upon their treatment postmortem, but instead whatever goods initially attracted their murderer, although this does not exclude the possibility of the deceased having themselves done something that motivated their murder. As such, it is possible that these people were deposited within the bog to hide evidence of a crime.

However, Aldhouse-Green comments that it is also possible that the deceased was placed in the bog with care, and that their interment in the bog was the result of friends, family, or compassionate strangers attempting to give them a proper burial.¹⁵¹ Additionally, perhaps the deceased were considered to have suffered a 'bad death' (see Chapter Three), and the resulting harmful energies needed to be negated in some way, meaning that the usual funerary rites were unacceptable.¹⁵²

Bog bodies are not the only individuals who may have been deposited in a ritual manner during the Iron Age. Whilst the circumstances differ, the bodies excavated from grain pits at Danebury, Hampshire, may have been buried in this way due to who these people were in life. Before going into how these burials may be connected to martial violence, it is worth giving a quick overview.

¹⁴⁸ Briggs, 'Did he fall', p.12; Ian M. Stead and J. B. Bourke, and Don Brothwell, *Lindow Man: the body in the Bog*, (London: British Museum Publications, 1986) p.178.

¹⁴⁹ Aldhouse-Green, *Bog Bodies Uncovered*, p.93.

¹⁵⁰ R.C. Turner, 'Recent Research into British Bog Bodies', in *Bog Bodies: New Discoveries and New Perspectives*, eds. R.C. Turner and R.G. Scaife, (London: The British Museum, 1995), pp.108-122, [p.117]; Giles, 'Bog bodies', p.2.

¹⁵¹ Aldhouse-Green, *Bog Bodies Uncovered*, p.95.

¹⁵² Aldhouse-Green, *Bog Bodies Uncovered*, p.95.

At the site more than two thousand pits have been found, with 1707 having been examined by archaeologists.¹⁵³ A third of these pits contain deposits, with roughly twenty percent of the overall two thousand containing human or animal remains, and roughly three hundred human deposits being found.¹⁵⁴ Of the human remains, ninety-one individuals have been identified, with twenty complete bodies being found, eighteen of which were buried alone.¹⁵⁵ Cunliffe and Poole state that these individuals cannot account for Danebury's total population; Davis further suggests that many of these people likely did not live within the hillfort permanently.¹⁵⁶ Therefore, Davis proposes that the deceased must have been specially selected.¹⁵⁷ Engel suggests that this selection could have been due to the deceased standing out in some way, either because of the life they led or how they died.¹⁵⁸ This, he argues, is evidenced by the clear attempt to keep body parts together, in contrast to the usual funerary rites, which he theorises could have been intended to stop the dead reincarnating.¹⁵⁹ Possibly, this was a punishment for a crime, or simply because the deceased was considered an undesirable, although Engel admits that it is also plausible that the deceased chose this method of burial.¹⁶⁰ Regardless, it appears that they had stood out, whether that be for good or ill.

It is possible that these people were distinguished due to having suffered a violent death, perhaps ritual in nature or due to warfare.¹⁶¹ Although Cunliffe discusses violence at Danebury in terms of domestic disputes between community members, it is possible that the hillfort had a contentious relationship with its wider neighbours.¹⁶² According to Cunliffe this is suggested by six skeletons found at Danebury, which indicate a possible 'major killing

¹⁵³ Aldhouse-Green, *Exploring the World of the Druids*, p.87; Cunliffe, 'Pits, Preconceptions and Propitiation', pp.69-85; Engel, 'Learning from the Dead', p.10; Ronald Hutton, *Pagan Britain*, (London: Yale University Press, 2014), p.190.

¹⁵⁴ Barry Cunliffe, Philip Farrell and Michael Dee, 'A Happening at Danebury Hillfort – But When?', *Oxford Journal of Archaeology*, vol. 34, (2015), pp.407-414, [p.407]; Engel, 'Learning from the Dead', p.10; Hutton, *Pagan Britain*, p.190.

¹⁵⁵ Barry Cunliffe and Cynthia Poole, *Danebury: an Iron Age hillfort in Hampshire, volume 4: the excavations, 1979-88: the site*, (London: Council for British Archaeology Research Report, 1991), pp.418-419; Cunliffe, Farrell and Dee, 'A Happening at Danebury', p.407; Oliver Davis, 'Re-interpreting the Danebury Assemblage: Houses, Households, and Community', *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society*, vol. 79, (2003), pp.353-375, [p.367].

¹⁵⁶ Cunliffe and Poole, *Danebury: an Iron Age hillfort in Hampshire, volume 4*, p.424; Oliver Davies, 'Re-interpreting the Danebury Assemblage', p.367.

¹⁵⁷ Cunliffe and Poole, *Danebury*, p.424; Davies, 'Reinterpreting the Danebury Assemblage', p.367.

¹⁵⁸ Engel, 'Learning from the Dead', p.10.

¹⁵⁹ Engel, 'Learning from the Dead', p.10.

¹⁶⁰ Engel, 'Learning from the Dead', pp.10-11.

¹⁶¹ Cunliffe, 'Celtic Death Rituals', p.41; Cunliffe, Farrell and Dee, 'A happening at Danebury', p.407.

¹⁶² Barry Cunliffe, *Danebury Hillfort*, (Stroud: Tempus, 2003); Davis, 'Re-interpreting the Danebury Assemblage', p.367; Craig, Knüsel and Carr, 'Fragmentation, mutilation, and dismemberment', pp.165-180.

event' during the late fourth or early second century BC.¹⁶³ This was partly because of the position of three of the six bodies: Deposition 27 was found lying on their right side, legs flexed; Deposition 46 was on their back with their spine curved and one leg extended; and Deposition 241 was on their left side.¹⁶⁴ Cunliffe argues that these positions suggest that these bodies were thrown into the pits, possibly whilst alive.¹⁶⁵ Additionally, Deposition 214 was only a torso, missing its arms, and with its legs fragmented, whilst Deposition 33 was intact, but accompanied by the scattered remains of five individuals and four skulls.¹⁶⁶ Furthermore, these were not the only bodies found at Danebury who showed signs of injury, as Deposition 30 appears to have been attacked with a blunt object that, at best, left his right eye severely damaged.¹⁶⁷ In turn, Deposition 47's pelvis appears to have been butchered, the girdle and femur heads having been severed from the torso and legs, though it is unclear whether this killed him or was inflicted postmortem as part of a ritual.¹⁶⁸ If this is taken as evidence that Danebury was in conflict with its neighbours, this could suggest that in the area around the hillfort, those who died as a result of warfare were unable to undergo the usual funerary rites. Possibly, this was due to them having suffered a 'bad death' (see Chapter Three), but perhaps it also marked them out from their peers. Or, if we take these people as offerings to chthonic deities as discussed in Chapter One, perhaps a violent death was one of the criteria for such sacrifices.

That being said, Bari Hooper conducted a study into the grain pit burials and did not find significant traces of trauma.¹⁶⁹ For example, the cut on Deposition 46's skull and the scar on the back of Deposition 27's left parietal bone need not be the result of battle damage.¹⁷⁰ Additionally, skeletal trauma can be caused by accidental injuries, meaning that damage to these individuals should not automatically be taken as evidence that they endured violent

¹⁶³ Cunliffe, Farrell and Dee, 'A happening at Danebury', pp.408-410; Martin M. Shafer and others, 'Enhanced methods for assessment of the trace element composition of Iron Age bone', *Science of the Total Environment*, vol. 401, pp.144-161; Philip Farrell and others, 'Discovery of the principal cystic fibrosis mutation (F508del) in ancient DNA from Iron Age Europeans', *Nature Proceedings*, (2007). Available at: <<http://proceedings.nature.com/documents/1276/version/1>> [Accessed 6 January 2024].

¹⁶⁴ Cunliffe, Farrell and Dee, 'A happening at Danebury', p.412.

¹⁶⁵ Cunliffe, Farrell and Dee, 'A happening at Danebury', p.412.

¹⁶⁶ Cunliffe, Farrell and Dee, 'A happening at Danebury', pp.412-413.

¹⁶⁷ Aldhouse-Green, *Dying for the Gods*, p.53.

¹⁶⁸ Aldhouse-Green, *Dying for the Gods*, p.53; Bari Hooper, 'Anatomical Considerations' in *Danebury: An Iron Age Hillfort in Hampshire, vol 2. Excavations 1968-1978: the finds*, ed. Barry Cunliffe, (London: Council for British Archaeology, 1984, pp.463-74; Walker, 'The deposition of human remains', pp.442-63.

¹⁶⁹ Cunliffe, Farrell and Dee, 'A happening at Danebury', p.413; Hooper, 'Anatomical Considerations', pp.463-474.

¹⁷⁰ Cunliffe, Farrell and Dee, 'A happening at Danebury', p.413.

deaths.¹⁷¹ This is especially important as it is difficult to determine whether skeletal trauma was caused postmortem or by an actual injury.¹⁷²

However, an absence of skeletal trauma does not mean that these bodies were not the result of warfare, as lethal injuries could have been limited to the soft tissue and so left little evidence.¹⁷³ Furthermore, Alexandra Boucherie, Marie Jørkov and Martin Smith write that mass burials following battles are the best evidence of past violence, but the skeletons within these burials are usually only examined microscopically and can offer only broad conclusions regarding what happened to them.¹⁷⁴ As such, little evidence of skeletal trauma does not invalidate Cunliffe's proposal. Furthermore, Cunliffe points to the construction of a new hillfort, Bury Hill, during the late second century BCE, with excavations there suggesting that chariot construction and horse training were carried out extensively there.¹⁷⁵ The establishment of a rival hillfort could have resulted in hostilities that led to multiple deaths at Danebury,¹⁷⁶ and so may explain the state of the grain pit burials. Additionally, Andrew Simms writes the architecture of many hillforts suggests that they had defensive capabilities,¹⁷⁷ so even if Bury Hill was not hostile, this does not rule out an attack from another rival.

The weapons burials of East Yorkshire may have also met violent ends. The number of weapons burials ranges from seventeen to eighty, with the majority belonging to the Arras culture.¹⁷⁸ Inall argues that the weapons found within these burials were an important element

¹⁷¹ Simms, 'How Useful Are Osteoarchaeological Methods', p.2.

¹⁷² Boucherie, Jørkov and Smith, 'Wounded to the bone', pp.66-79; N.J Sauer, 'The Timing of Injuries and Manner of Death: Distinguishing Among Antemortem, Perimortem and Postmortem Trauma' in *Forensic Osteology: Advances in the Identification of Human Remains*, ed. K.J. Reichs, (Springfield: Charles, C. Thomas, 1998), pp.321-332.

¹⁷³ Clark Spencer Larsen, *Bioarchaeology: Interpreting Behaviour from the Human Skeleton*, 2nd edition, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p.115; Cunliffe, Farrell and Dee, 'A happening at Danebury', p.413; Simms, 'How Useful Are Osteoarchaeological Methods', p.2.

¹⁷⁴ Boucherie, Jørkov and Smith, 'Wounded to the bone', pp.66-79.

¹⁷⁵ Cunliffe, Farrell and Dee, 'A happening at Danebury', p.413; Cunliffe, *Danebury: An Iron Age Hillfort*, volume 6, p.100.

¹⁷⁶ Cunliffe, Farrell and Dee, 'A happening at Danebury', p.413; Cunliffe, *Danebury: An Iron Age Hillfort*, volume 6, p.100.

¹⁷⁷ Ian Armit, 'Hillforts at War: from Maiden Castle to Taniwaha Pa', *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society*, vol. 73, (2007), pp.25-37, [p.36]; Simms, 'How Useful Are Osteoarchaeological Methods', p.6.

¹⁷⁸ Charles Johns, 'An Iron Age sword and mirror cist burial from Bryher, Isles of Scilly', *Cornish Archaeology*, vol 41, pp.1-79, [pp.64-68]; Collis, 'Burials with Weapons in Iron Age Britain', pp.121-133; F. Hunter, 'The Image of the Warrior in the British Iron Age – coin iconography in context', in *Iron Age Coinage and Ritual Practices*, eds. Colin Haselgrove and D. Wiff-Wolf, (Mainz: Studien zu Fundmünzen der Antike, 2005) pp.43-68; Inall, 'Burials of Martial Character', p.44; Jim Stevenson, *Living by the Sword. The archaeology of Brisley Farm, Ashford, Kent* (Portslade: Spoil Heap Publications, 2013); Paul R. Sealy, *A Late Iron Age Warrior Burial from Kelvedon, Essex*, (Colchester: Colchester Museums, 2007), p.33; Yvonne L. Inall, 'Burials of Martial

in constructing the identity of the deceased.¹⁷⁹ This possibly applies to the Acklam Wold Warrior, a thirty-year old man found at Acklam Wold, Yorkshire, who died as a result of a bladed weapon striking the back of his head.¹⁸⁰ The bent sword was found placed in front of his knees, and I.M. Stead proposes that its inclusion indicates that this man was a warrior.¹⁸¹ The argument that weapons deposited within graves represented a facet of their owner's identity is not unique to Stead, or the Acklam Wold Warrior.¹⁸² Burial goods are often interpreted as being directly connected to the identity of the deceased, therefore leading to arguments that weapons are evidence of a warrior.¹⁸³ Considering this, and the injury to the back of the Acklam Warrior's head, this could suggest that the man in question was a warrior who had died as a result of combat, with his interment in the mound possibly being seen as the appropriate way to lay to rest someone of both his social class and demise.

However, there are other possible explanations for the placement of the sword, such as it having symbolised the warriors's age, skill, or been a provision for the afterlife.¹⁸⁴ Harding comments that whilst it may appear pedantic to argue that an individual buried with martial weapons was not a warrior, few burials within Britain have such irrefutable evidence of identity, and exceptions do exist.¹⁸⁵ For example, Harding points to a young child buried with a spearhead at Gravelly Guy, Oxfordshire.¹⁸⁶ This child was unlikely to have been a warrior, suggesting that perhaps the burial of the spearhead may have represented something other than status, such as the desire to imprint a warrior identity onto a child who never grew old enough to be one.¹⁸⁷ As such, whilst grave goods are often seen as reflecting the role of

Character in the British Iron Age', in *Proceedings of the 17th Iron Age Research Student Symposium, Edinburgh*, eds. J. R. Graeme and others, (Oxford: Archaeopress Publishing LTD, 2014), pp.44-61, [p.44].

¹⁷⁹ Inall, 'Burials of Martial Character', p.54.

¹⁸⁰ Giles, 'Performing Pain', pp.541-542; J. S. Dent, 'Weapons, Wounds and War in the Iron Age', *Archaeological Journal*, 140, (1983), pp.120-128, [pp.120-122]; Giles, 'Performing Pain', pp.541-542; Sarah S. King *What makes war?*.

¹⁸¹ Melanie Giles, 'Making Metal and Forging Relations: Ironworking in the British Iron Age', *Oxford Journal of Archaeology*, vol. 26, (2007), pp.395-413, [p.404]; Stead, *Iron Age Cemeteries*, p.33.

¹⁸² Giles, 'Making Metal', p.400; Igor Kopytoff, 'The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process' in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. A. Appadurai, (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1986), pp.64-91; Janet Hoskins, *Biographical Objects: How Things Tell the Stories of People's Lives*, (London: Routledge, 1998); R. Hingley, 'Iron, Ironworking and Regeneration: a study of the symbolic meaning of metalworking in Iron Age Britain' in *Reconstructing Iron Age Societies*, eds. Adam Gwilt and Colin Haselgrove, (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 1997), pp.9-15, [p.10].

¹⁸³ Andrew P. Fitzpatrick, 'Ritual, Sequence and Structure in Late Iron Age Mortuary Practices in North-West Europe', in *Burial, Society and Context in the Roman World*, eds. J. Pearce, and others, (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2000), pp.15-29; Giles, 'Making Metal', p.404; Harding, *Death and Burial*, pp.13-14.

¹⁸⁴ Dent, 'Weapons, Wounds and War in the Iron Age', pp.120-122; Giles, 'Making Metal and Forging Relations', p.404; Stead, *Iron Age Cemeteries*, p.33.

¹⁸⁵ Harding, *Death and Burial*, p.14.

¹⁸⁶ Harding, *Death and Burial*, p.14.

¹⁸⁷ Harding, *Death and Burial*, p.14.

the deceased, the source or purpose of the items should not be ignored, as they may hint towards alternative possibilities.¹⁸⁸ Therefore, whilst the presence of the sword and spears can be taken as evidence that the Acklam Wold warrior and speared burials were men of martial status, it is also possible that the mourners buried them with these items to give this impression, rather than the grave-goods reflecting their ‘actual’ living identity.

Furthermore, Harding argues that assuming grave goods were indicative of the deceased’s identity is a simplistic assumption, as it is not self-evident that grave goods actually belonged to the deceased, if they were gifts given by mourners to honour the dead or calm an angry spirit, or if this was just part of the funerary process.¹⁸⁹ Whilst investigating a pre-Roman cemetery at King Harry Lane, St. Albans, Martin Millett states that grave goods may not have belonged to the dead, but instead been gifts that represented the identity of their friends and family.¹⁹⁰ From here, Millett argues that the grave goods could indicate the size of the deceased’s social circle, which could in turn offer hints towards their wealth and social status, albeit indirectly.¹⁹¹ For instance, Harding suggests that grave goods may have been deposited by a client to pay a debt.¹⁹² Therefore, perhaps the Acklam Wold Warrior was not a warrior who had perished in battle, but the victim of an attack who was then simply buried with martial weapons to repay an outstanding debt. Following this line of argument, the damage done to the Acklam Wold sword may not have been intended to give the mourners a framework through which to process their grief, or ‘killed’ in place of a possible murderer, but might instead have represented a client being freed of a now paid debt.¹⁹³

Outside of this possibility, the reasons why weapons may have been given as gifts is unclear, although Harding has suggested that they may have been family heirlooms.¹⁹⁴ In the case of the Acklam Wold warrior, the sword may have been passed down through generations and became associated with the deceased and so buried with him; or it may be that such items were thought to have their own life cycle, at the end of which it was deemed appropriate to bury them.¹⁹⁵ Therefore, perhaps when a family member’s death coincided

¹⁸⁸ Harding, *Death and Burial*, p.13.

¹⁸⁹ Harding, *Death and Burial*, pp.13-14; Martin Millett, ‘A Cemetery in Transition: King Harry Lane Reconsidered’ in *Römerzeitliche Gräber als Quellen zur Religion, Bevölkerungsstruktur und Sozialgeschichte*, ed. M Strück. (Mainz: Johannes Gutenberg Institut für Vor- und Frühgeschichte, 1993), pp.255–282, [pp.275–276].

¹⁹⁰ Harding, *Death and Burial*, pp.14-15; Millett, ‘A Cemetery in Transition’, pp.275-276.

¹⁹¹ Harding, *Death and Burial*, p.15; Millett, ‘A Cemetery in Transition’, pp.275-276.

¹⁹² Harding, *Death and Burial*, p.15.

¹⁹³ Harding, *Death and Burial*, p.15.

¹⁹⁴ Harding, *Death and Burial*, p.15-16.

¹⁹⁵ Harding, *Death and Burial*, p.15-16.

with the end of the weapon's life, it was deemed appropriate to put them to rest together. In this respect, it may be that the item's, as well as the deceased's, identity had an impact upon the burial and its details.

Whilst these theories are compelling explanations for the Acklam Wold Warrior, they are less convincing when applied to the speared burials, which also exhibit signs of deliberate wounding and were buried with weapons.¹⁹⁶ At least fifteen speared burials have been confidently identified; Inall counts at least twenty-two in Yorkshire, with two lying outside of East Yorkshire at Owslebury, Hampshire and Brisley Farm, Ashford.¹⁹⁷ Garton Station is one site where such burials have been excavated, with several men being found with a range of weapons, including spearheads.¹⁹⁸ Some of the spearheads seem to have been thrown at the deceased whilst the grave was backfilled, as they were found lying in the soil above the body with their tips pointing downward.¹⁹⁹ Therefore, it has been suggested that they were not usual grave goods, but instead were part of a burial ritual.²⁰⁰ Additionally, several bodies at Garton Station had been impaled, such as GS7 who had four spears plunged into the waist, one in the chest, and three more near the body.²⁰¹ Prior to the excavation of such bodies, it was thought that the speared burials were individuals who had been impaled and subsequently died in hunting accidents.²⁰² If stock is put in this accident theory, this could also imply that certain deaths and classes of people were associated with certain burials. However, the hunting accident theory is no longer favoured, as shall now be discussed.²⁰³

¹⁹⁶ Dent, 'Weapons, Wounds and War in the Iron Age', p.125.

¹⁹⁷ Collis, 'Burials with Weapons in Iron Age Britain', p.126; Inall, 'Burials of Martial Character', pp.49-50; J. R. Collis 'Excavations at Owslebury Hants.: An interim report', *Antiquaries Journal*, vol. 48, (1968) pp.18-31, [pp.25-27]; John Robert Mortimer, *Forty Years' Researches In British and Saxon Burial Mounds of East Yorkshire*, (London: A. Brown and Sons LTD, 1905) p.237; J. S. Dent, 'Three cart burials in Wetwang, Yorkshire', *Antiquity*, vol. 59, (1985), pp.85-92, [pp.88]; Jim Stevenson, 'Brisley Farm', (York: British Archaeology, 2014), pp.16-17, p.40; Stead, *Iron Age Cemeteries*, pp.33-35; Stevenson, *Living by the Sword*, pp.152-158; Melanie Giles, *A Forged Glamour: Landscape, Identity and Material Culture in the Iron Age*, (Oxford: Oxbow, 2012), pp.1-2.

¹⁹⁸ Giles, 'Performing Pain', p.543; Inall, 'Burials of Marital Character', p.49.

¹⁹⁹ Aldhouse-Green, *Bog Bodies Uncovered*, p.95; Aldhouse-Green, *Dying for the Gods*, p.55; Giles, 'Performing Pain', p.543; I. M. Stead, *Iron Age Cemeteries in East Yorkshire: Excavations at Burton Fleming, Rudston, Garton-on-the-Wolds, and Kirkburn*, ed. Ian M. Stead (English Heritage, 1991), pp.33; Melanie Giles, 'Transformational implements and the control of substances in the middle-later Iron Age landscapes of East Yorkshire', *Warfare, Violence and Slavery in Prehistory and Protohistory*, (Sheffield: The Prehistoric Society and University of Sheffield Archaeology Society, 2001); Inall, 'Burials of Martial Character', p.49.

²⁰⁰ Stead, *Iron Age Cemeteries*, p.33.

²⁰¹ Aldhouse-Green, *Dying for the Gods*, p.55; Harding, *Death and Burial*, p.204; Inall, 'Burials of Martial Character', p.49; Simms, 'How Useful Are Osteoarchaeological Methods', p.14.

²⁰² Simms, 'How Useful Are Osteoarchaeological Methods', p.14; Stead, *Iron Age Cemeteries*, p.136.

²⁰³ Stead, *Iron Age Cemeteries*, p.136.

The bodies at Rudston, Yorkshire were among the speared burials previously believed to have been victims of such accidents.²⁰⁴ Whilst six bodies were found accompanied by spears that faced downward or lay flat (R50, R144, R170, R174, R154, and R146), an additional three had spearheads pointing upward, embedded into their skeletons.²⁰⁵ Two of the bodies, R152 and R94, appear to have been speared from behind prior to burial, with R152 having been hit next to thoracic vertebra 7, likely piercing his heart, whilst R94 had been impaled to the right of his spine.²⁰⁶ The third body, R140, seems to have been attacked from the front, as he had been struck in his right pubic bone at a downward angle that would have been difficult to achieve whilst he lay at the bottom of the mound.²⁰⁷ As such, whilst it is not impossible that such trauma was caused postmortem, Simms suggests that it could be perimortem.²⁰⁸ This could in turn suggest that R94, R140 and R152 were killed by these spears, and that the spearing of these corpses did not only take place postmortem.²⁰⁹

However, four of the Garton Station burials, which Stead describes as being the best examples of this rite, have wounds that do not appear consistent with hunting accidents.²¹⁰ GS4 had been covered with a shield, with one spearhead above the body and two below, whilst GS5 featured three bone spearheads in the skeleton and four beside it.²¹¹ GS7 had four spearheads driven into the waist and chest, with three around the skeleton and a further three grouped together in the grave filling.²¹² Finally, GS10 had been impaled by six spearheads, with eight more scattered about the body.²¹³ Whilst it is not impossible that these men died due to hunting accidents, other forms of traumatic death cannot be ruled out.²¹⁴ For instance, perhaps these men were attacked with spears, and it was deemed appropriate to bury them with the weapons that killed them. As will be discussed in the next chapter, this could have been considered a 'bad death' which warranted a special funerary procedure in order to quiet the restless dead. This could in turn suggest that those who were murdered, as at Danebury, could not be afforded the usual funerary processes – something different had to be done in

²⁰⁴ Stead, *Iron Age Cemeteries*, p.136.

²⁰⁵ Simms, 'How Useful Are Osteoarchaeological Methods', p.14; Stead, *Iron Age Cemeteries*, p.33, p.136.

²⁰⁶ Simms, 'How Useful Are Osteoarchaeological Methods', p.15; Stead, *Iron Age Cemeteries*, p.33, p.137.

²⁰⁷ Simms, 'How Useful Are Osteoarchaeological Methods', pp.14-15; Stead, *Iron Age Cemeteries*, pp.136-137; Giles, *A Forged Glamour*, p.105.

²⁰⁸ Simms, 'How Useful Are Osteoarchaeological Methods', p.15.

²⁰⁹ Simms, 'How Useful Are Osteoarchaeological Methods', pp.14-15.

²¹⁰ Stead, *Iron Age Cemeteries*, p.33.

²¹¹ Stead, *Iron Age Cemeteries*, p.33.

²¹² Stead, *Iron Age Cemeteries*, p.33.

²¹³ Stead, *Iron Age Cemeteries*, p.33.

²¹⁴ Stead, *Iron Age Cemeteries*, pp.136-137.

order to minimise damage, therefore implying that the way in which people died was as important as who they were whilst alive.

Diseases and infections

Disease, infection and perceived uncleanness may have also played a part in the deposition of the grain pit burials and Yorkshire weapons burials. Engel argues that the lack of evidence of violent death could suggest that they were not sacrifices, but rather people who had died of natural causes.²¹⁵ Cunliffe has proposed that the outbreak of a virulent disease could have been the cause of death, and such a death may have marked them out as unclean and therefore inappropriate candidates for other funerary rites.²¹⁶ Perhaps this was because the body was considered to be corrupted by a disease,²¹⁷ and this meant the body could neither be burned or excarnated due to a fear of the corruption spreading, or the decomposition juices leaking into and poisoning the soil. If the deceased was considered to be corrupted, perhaps their deposition in the grain pits, rather than excarnating or cremating them, was intended to trap them in place due to a fear that they were now spiritually corrupted, and therefore a threat to the ancestral community.²¹⁸

However, whatever the death event at Danebury was, it does not appear to have affected the site's population, as radiocarbon dates indicate that the hillfort was occupied without significant interruption during the time the event was thought to have occurred.²¹⁹ This suggests that their deaths may not have been caused by a virulent disease, as this would be expected to cause a significant change in Danebury's population, either due to a great number of deaths or from the hillfort being abandoned until the disease had past. That being said, that does not rule out the deceased having died due to an infection or an illness that

²¹⁵ Engel, 'Learning from the Dead', p.11.

²¹⁶ Barry Cunliffe, 'Behaviour and Belief' in *Danebury: An Iron Age Hillfort in Hampshire, vol 6: A Hillfort Community in Perspective*, ed. Barry Cunliffe (York: Council for British Archaeology Research Report, 1995), pp.72-79; Cunliffe, 'Celtic Death Rituals', p.41; Cunliffe, Farrell and Dee, 'A happening at Danebury', p.413; G. A. Wait, *Ritual and Religion in Iron Age Britain*, (Oxford: British Archaeological Report, 1985), p.120; Lucy Walker, 'The Deposition of the Human Remains', in *Danebury: An Iron Age Hillfort in Hampshire, vol 2. Excavations 1968-1978: the finds*, ed. Barry Cunliffe, (London: Council for British Archaeology, 1984), pp.442-462, [p.461]; Madgwick, 'Patterns in the modification', pp.2-3.

²¹⁷ Aldhouse-Green, *Bog Bodies Uncovered*, p.83.

²¹⁸ Aldhouse-Green, *Bog Bodies Uncovered*, p.83.

²¹⁹ C. Orton, C. D. Litton and C. Buck, 'The Radiocarbon chronology', in *Danebury: An Iron Age Hillfort in Hampshire, vol 6: A Hillfort Community in Perspective*, ed. Barry Cunliffe (York: Council for British Archaeology Research Report, 1995), pp.129-136; Cunliffe, Farrell and Dee, 'A happening at Danebury', p.413.

spread slowly, and as such the theory that these people were considered unclean due to contracting a disease is not implausible. Therefore, whether it be due to dying from warfare or disease, the bodies at Danebury may have been selected for deposition because they stood out. This could suggest that identity in the Celtic Iron Age was always being altered and created, with how a person's life progressed in its totality determining the appropriate funerary rites. In this case, it is possible that how the Danebury bodies died made the usual burial rites inappropriate.

Infection may have also played a part in the death of some of the Yorkshire weapons burials. Giles argues that the speared burials do not exhibit evidence of a violent death, and considering the men were in the prime of their lives, proposes that they may have died from a disease or infection.²²⁰ Similarly, the Acklam Wold Warrior appears to have endured a chronic pulmonary disease prior to dying, which may have put him at a disadvantage during combat, thereby contributing to his abrupt death.²²¹ Such a death is not implausible, as even today septicaemia and blood infections can be lethal, and surviving such infections was even less likely during antiquity.²²² Whilst such a death did not totally prevent the usual funerary rites from being carried out, as the speared burials and Acklam Wold Warrior were buried within mounds that were not sequestered away from the rest of the community,²²³ perhaps in the case of the former additional actions needed to be taken due to the nature of their death. If the grain pit burials and Yorkshire speared burials both died due to an infection, the difference in their treatment – one being excluded from the usual burial rites whilst the other was not – could suggest that a belief in disease corrupting the deceased was specific to Danebury. This could in turn indicate that a belief that death from disease altered a person's living identity was not universal, thereby suggesting that factors affecting funerary rites in one area should not be taken as evidence that this happened across the Celtic British Isles.

²²⁰ Giles, 'Performing Pain', p.543-544

²²¹ Giles, *A Forged Glamour*, p.169; Giles, 'Performing Pain', p.542.

²²² Charlotte Roberts and Keith Manchester, *The Archaeology of Disease, Third Edition*, (Stroud: The History Press, 2005), p.171.

²²³ Inall, 'Burials of Martial Character', p.50; Gundula Müldner, Carolyn Chenery and Hella Eckardt, 'The 'Headless Romans': multi-isotope investigations of an unusual burial ground from Roman Britain', *Journal of Archaeological Science*, vol. 38, (2011), pp.280-290.

Conclusion

Whilst it is possible that bog bodies such as Lindow Man were druidic sacrifices, alternative theories are available. In turn, even if Lindow Man were a druid and a sacrifice, this theory cannot be applied to other bog bodies unquestioningly, as it is possible that Irish examples such as Old Croghan Man were kings. If these men were both of high status – a druid and a king – this could imply that high status within the Iron Age came with its own risks and obligations, namely that their life should be sacrificed if the situation proved dire enough. Additionally, with regards to the Irish bog bodies, it is possible that it was specifically their failure as kings which led to their demise, perhaps suggesting that kingship and sacrifice were intertwined in Iron Age Ireland.

By contrast, if the Danebury grain pit burials died as a result of warfare, this could indicate that a violent death had marked them out as different, therefore preventing the usual funerary process from being carried out. A similar possibility is available for the Yorkshire weapons burials, which could indicate that not only did living identity impact burial, but this identity was being constantly formed, even upon death. However, it should be noted that weapons should not be unquestioningly be taken as evidence of martial status, as it is possible that these weapons were indicative of the deceased's social circle, or other aspects of their identity.

Alternatively, infection and disease may have been the cause of death of the Danebury and Yorkshire weapons burials. It is possible that at Danebury disease was thought to be corrupting, both bodily and spiritually, thereby making the dead a threat to the ancestral community. However, such a belief may have been limited to Danebury, as whilst the Acklam Wold Warrior and speared burials show evidence of infection, they were not segregated. As such, whilst in some communities infection may have altered a person's identity significantly enough that they were excluded from usual burial practices, this theory should not be applied to all Iron Age communities.

Chapter Three

This final chapter will explore how identity changed after death. The first major section will examine the belief that the dead were able to come back. Whilst these beings, which shall be called revenants for lack of a better term, were often perceived as posing a direct threat to the living,²²⁴ the Iron Age Celts' relationship with the dead may not have been strictly negative. This section will also analyse 'overkill' – using extreme force to create multiple life ending injuries.²²⁵ Possibly in some cases it was believed that the dead became messengers to the gods, created by purposeful rituals rather than the failure of the usual burial rites, and this shall be discussed in the second section. Finally, the concept of dehumanisation will be explored, analysing whether the individuals this dissertation has focused upon were groomed for sacrifice, or were revered members of the community. In turn, the possible use of Irish bog bodies as boundary markers will be investigated.

Revenants

In the context of the Middle Ages, 'revenants' is a term that refers to the walking dead, who were believed to be the result of some failure in the funerary process.²²⁶ Such failure was considered to be dangerous, due to the revenant's ability to bring about calamity to the community they once belonged to.²²⁷ The failure of this ritual process is in itself connected to the concept of the 'good' and 'bad' death, the difference between these concepts being that a bad death is one that is sudden, or in some other way prevents the usual funerary rites being adequately performed, with the risk of said failure being the creation of a revenant.²²⁸ Such deaths could include those caused by violence, or the murder of lone travellers.²²⁹ The good death, by contrast, is considered to be the ideal ending to a person's life, with sufficient time

²²⁴ Elif Boyacıoğlu, 'The Revenant on the Threshold', *Electronic Journal of Folklore*, vol. 62, (2015), pp.7-36, [pp.11-12].

²²⁵ Aldhouse-Green, *Dying for the Gods*, p.50.

²²⁶ Boyacıoğlu, 'The Revenant', p.7.

²²⁷ Boyacıoğlu, 'The Revenant', pp.11-12.

²²⁸ Boyacıoğlu, 'The Revenant', p.8-9, p.12, p.16.

²²⁹ Boyacıoğlu, 'The Revenant', p.16.

to allow the proper funerary preparations to be made.²³⁰ This was because a smooth transition was most desired, both religiously and socially, due to the dead still being considered a member of the community; death was a change in status, rather than a complete disconnect from their living relatives.²³¹ Additionally, in considering structural-functionalist ethnographies, John Robb discusses the concept of the ‘life-cycle’ which analyses human lives through the use of biographies, which have ideas of the ‘proper’ way a person’s life should progress.²³² This included the idea that there are appropriate ways for a person’s life to end, dependent upon their biography.²³³ In the case of the Yorkshire speared burials, if said men were warriors, death in battle may have been considered the ‘appropriate’ end to their biography, whilst dying slowly of an infection could classify as a bad death. However, it is important to note that, even when a person died a ‘bad’ death, their biography could be revised using funerary rituals, which would prevent the deceased coming back as restless and malevolent spirits.²³⁴ Revenants are therefore more than the consequence of ritual failure, but also the embodiment of a bad death, resulting in a creature that was trapped between the worlds of the living and the dead, belonging truly to neither, suffering loss of identity whilst also wearing a familiar face.²³⁵ Once created, the revenant was a liminal creature, incapable of moving onto the next stage of their existence without aid from the living, effectively segregating them from their community and unable to reintegrate as a member of the ancestral dead.²³⁶ In discussing Victor Turner and Arnold Van Gennep’s theories of revenants, Elif Boyacıoğlu argues that revenants were stagnate creatures, who had become divorced from the ritual process, which was now without a concrete end.²³⁷

²³⁰ Boyacıoğlu, *The Revenant*, p.12; Robb, ‘Burial Treatment as Transformations’, p.293; Gherardo Gnoli, and Jean-Pierre Vernant, *La Mort, Les Morts Dan Les Sociétés Anciennes*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

²³¹ Boyacıoğlu, ‘The Revenant’, p.10; Patrick J. Geary, *Living with the Dead in the Middle Ages*, (London and New York: Cornell University Press, 1994) p.2.

²³² Robb, ‘Burial Treatment as Transformations’, p.288.

²³³ Robb, ‘Burial Treatment as Transformations’, p.288.

²³⁴ Nicola Laneri, ‘An Archaeology of Funerary Rituals’, in *Performing Death: Social Analyses of Funerary Traditions in The Ancient Near East and Mediterranean*, ed. Nicola Laneri, (Saline: McNaughton & Gunn, 2007), pp.1-14, [p.10].

²³⁵ Boyacıoğlu, ‘The Revenant’, p.9, p.14.

²³⁶ Boyacıoğlu, ‘The Revenant’, pp.14-15; Victor W. Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), p.95.

²³⁷ Boyacıoğlu, ‘The Revenant’, p.15; Arnold Van Gennep, *Les Rites de passage: Étude systématique des rites* (Paris: E. Nourry, 1909); Arnold Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960); Victor W. Turner, *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967), p.97, p.107; Turner, *The Ritual Process*, p.95.

Several bog bodies – such as Old Croghan Man and Gallagher Man – were discovered pinned down, and it has been theorised that this was intended to prevent the victim from escaping, both before and after dying.²³⁸ In the latter case, it has been suggested that the living believed the dead would return to cause problems for the community, such as by spreading sickness.²³⁹ Aldhouse-Green argues that this threat could extend to the community's dead as well, as the spirit of the bog body may have been considered tainted, and therefore it was of the utmost importance that their spirit be prevented from joining the community's ancestors and contaminating them, lest they too become a threat.²⁴⁰ Engel suggests that the desire to prevent the dead moving on to their next destination was the reason the bogs were selected, and that this could explain the need to preserve the body,²⁴¹ potentially making bog bodies an unusual example of anti-revenant procedures. This is because medieval anti-revenant procedures usually involved the destruction of at least part of the revenant's body, whereas the bog bodies were preserved within the bogs.²⁴² This could suggest that Iron Age Celts believed that in order for the person's spirit to pass on to the afterlife, the corpse itself needed to be at least partially destroyed. Following this, preserving the body would trap them in place,²⁴³ but this trapped spirit would then present a threat to the living community, requiring them to be pinned down so as to prevent retribution.

However, Briggs takes issue with the theory that these bodies were purposefully pinned down, arguing that these suggestions seem too far-fetched.²⁴⁴ Instead, he proposes an interesting theory that the withies found in bodies such as Old Croghan Man are evidence of failed rescue attempts, with the attempted rescuers grabbing whatever was on hand and throwing it into the bog, or holding it out to their drowning companion, only for the wooden stakes to fall into the bog and sink.²⁴⁵ This theory, however, does not explain how the withies penetrated Old Croghan Man's arms through small cuts, tying them together, as it seems unlikely that such a thing could happen due to a rescue attempt.²⁴⁶ Additionally, Kelly proposes that the withies could be the remains of spancels – a type of animal hobble –²⁴⁷

²³⁸ Briggs, 'Did he fall', p.17; Giles, 'Bog Bodies', p.6; van der Sanden *Through Nature to Eternity*, pp.98-99.

²³⁹ Aldhouse-Green, *Bog Bodies Uncovered*, p.83.

²⁴⁰ Aldhouse-Green, *Bog Bodies Uncovered*, p.83; Boyacıoğlu, 'The Revenant', p.22; Tim Taylor, *The Buried Soul How Humans Invented Death*, (London: Fourth Estate, 2002), p.128.

²⁴¹ Engel, 'Learning from The Dead', p.27.

²⁴² Aldhouse-Green, *Bog Bodies Uncovered*, p.83.

²⁴³ Aldhouse-Green, *Bog Bodies Uncovered*, p.83.

²⁴⁴ Briggs, 'Did he fall', p.17.

²⁴⁵ Briggs, 'Did he fall', p.17.

²⁴⁶ Aldhouse-Green, *Bog Bodies Uncovered*, pp.86-87; Kelly, 'An archaeological interpretation of Iron Age Bog Bodies', p.236;.

²⁴⁷ Kelly, 'An archaeological interpretation of Iron Age Bog Bodies', pp.236-237.

which if accurate could lend further support to the theory that the withies were intended to prevent Old Croghan Man escaping. In turn, Brigg's argument, that it was impractical to purposefully pin down a submerged body to prevent the victim or their spirit escaping, discounts the concept that belief does not in itself have to be logical.²⁴⁸ For instance, dead bodies in the Middle Ages were not capable of climbing out of their graves to murder their living relatives, but this does not debunk evidence of bodies being dug up and their organs removed to silence the revenant.²⁴⁹

'Overkill' has also been discussed in conjunction with bog bodies and trapping malevolent spirits. Tim Taylor argues that the excessive violence inflicted upon Lindow Man could have been aimed at creating maximum harm, whilst also keeping the victim hovering between life and death, thereby placing them in a liminal state that would be reflected and rendered permanent by deposition in the bog.²⁵⁰ Alternatively, Aldhouse-Green proposes that overkill could be an example of the classical practice of 'hobbling ghosts', wherein a body was wounded to weaken the spirit within and prevent it from taking revenge.²⁵¹ With reference to Lindow Man and Irish bog bodies such as Old Croghan Man, who both displayed multiple injuries, overkill could have been part of the rituals that potentially surrounded their deaths, or may have been an attempt to prevent their spirits taking revenge upon those who killed them. As risk is part of ritual, perhaps the creation of a revenant was one of the dangers their killers faced, and overkill was an attempt to mitigate potential harm.

However, evidence of overkill should be treated with caution, as the bogs themselves can cause postmortem damage. For example, detailed CT-scans of Grauballe Man in 2001 determined his fractured skull was not caused by an attack, but instead caused by the pressure of the bog.²⁵² Therefore, Lynnerup states that what was previously thought to be perimortem trauma was instead postmortem damage inflicted by the bogs.²⁵³ As such, the presence of overkill in bog bodies should not be overstated.

²⁴⁸ Brigg, 'Did he fall', p.18.

²⁴⁹ Boyacıoğlu, 'The Revenant', pp.18-32.

²⁵⁰ Aldhouse-Green, *Bog Bodies Uncovered*, p. 45, p.96; Tim Taylor, *The Buried Soul*, pp.145-146.

²⁵¹ Aldhouse-Green, *Bog Bodies Uncovered*, p.96.

²⁵² Lynnerup, 'Bog Bodies', p.1010.

²⁵³ C. Fischer, *Tollundmand. Gaven til guderne*, (Silkeborg: Hoveland, 2007; Lynnerup, 'Mummies', pp.162-190; Lynnerup, 'Bog Bodies', p.1010; Pauline Asingh and Niels Lynnerup, *Grauballe Man. An Iron Age Bog Body Revisited*, (Jutland: Archaeological Society Press, 2007).

Nevertheless, Aldhouse-Green argues that there is considerable evidence for overkill in Celtic Britain, and points to skeletal deposits at Danebury such as Deposition 30, whose right eye had been badly damaged; Deposition 47 whose pelvis was butchered; and other individuals whose bodies had been crushed with flint or chalk blocks.²⁵⁴ The exact reason for this violence is unclear, but, in addition to previously discussed theories, it has been proposed that the trauma found on some of the grain pit burials was the product of a desire to prevent the deceased from interacting with the living community.²⁵⁵ This could suggest several things. Firstly, that death via disease or warfare may have been considered a bad death by the inhabitants of Danebury, and the reason these people were not afforded the usual burial rites was that such a death rendered their spirit dangerous to both the living and the dead. This in turn could be connected to the belief that a revenant, possibly due to their liminal nature, would poison the community through their presence alone.²⁵⁶ As such, following the idea that the Danebury grain pit burials may have been seen as tainted, perhaps it was not directly due to a disease, but a resultant bad death. Secondly, if the bog bodies and the Danebury burial pits were both attempts to prevent the formation of a revenant, or to keep a revenant trapped and therefore protect the community, this could suggest that revenants were a widespread concern among Celtic communities within the Iron Age British Isles. Furthermore, whilst there are differences in how these bodies were treated – one being deposited in a wet environment that would preserve them, and the others placed within grain pits where they would decay, whilst remaining intact – this could indicate that whilst a belief in revenants was widespread, communities maintained their own methods and means of dealing with such creatures.

It is possible that the speared burials were another example of an anti-revenant procedure. These burials being ghost killings has been one of the most common interpretations, the argument being that the community came together to throw spears into the grave as it was being filled to neutralise dangerous spirits.²⁵⁷ Similar ghost killings have been found at Kirkburn and Rudston, possibly suggesting that this practice was spread across Yorkshire,

²⁵⁴ Aldhouse-Green, *Dying for the Gods*, p.53; Hooper, 'Anatomical Considerations', pp.463-74; Walker, 'The Deposition of the Human Remains', pp.442-63.

²⁵⁵ Aldhouse-Green, *Dying for the Gods*, p.54

²⁵⁶ Boyacıoğlu, 'The Revenant', p.15; Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*, (New York: Routledge, 1966), p.5; Turner, *The Forest of Symbols*, p.97.

²⁵⁷ Aldhouse-Green, *Bog Bodies Uncovered*, p.95; Simms, 'How Useful Are Osteoarchaeological Methods', p.16.

perhaps indicating a regional belief that men who died of disease or hunting accidents needed to be tethered to their graves.²⁵⁸ For instance, Inall argues that the position of a spearhead found at Rudston, near R148's left foot and pointing toward the body, represented an inversion of the natural order.²⁵⁹ Regarding revenants, this could suggest that R148's death violated the usual idea of how a warrior's life should end. Following this, the spearhead could suggest that he was marked as a potential future revenant.

However, evidence from Rudston itself could challenge this, as three individuals appeared to have been killed using spears, potentially during the spearing ritual itself.²⁶⁰ This is indicated by the lack of healing on the bones, which rules out antemortem injuries.²⁶¹ Additionally, the fracture patterns suggest the wounds were not postmortem, therefore indicating the bodies were impaled perimortem.²⁶² However, it bears mentioning that current osteoarchaeological techniques are unable to determine whether the spears were the cause of death, or if the ritual was carried out soon after death.²⁶³ At the very least, the location of the injuries suggest violent trauma prior to burial.²⁶⁴ If the men were alive when speared, this could contradict the proposal that the ritual was intended to prevent them returning as revenants. Yet, if the spears were the murder weapon, this does not answer why they were left in the body during burial.²⁶⁵ Simms suggests that the bodies at Rudston could represent a local rite, that had been derived from the Yorkshire speared burials.²⁶⁶ If looked at through the lens of anti-revenant procedures, perhaps keeping the spears within these bodies was necessary to prevent a revenant being created by the ritual, this being one of the risks the community had to take in order for the ritual to succeed. Alternatively, it is possible that these people were warriors who had died in battle and were being honoured by their burial in this manner.²⁶⁷ This could account for the perimortem trauma, and explain why the spears were left in the body, as this burial rite could have been intended to honour dead warriors by burying them with the weapons that felled them.

²⁵⁸ Aldhouse-Green, *Dying for the Gods*, p.55.

²⁵⁹ Inall, 'Burials of Martial Character', p.53.

²⁶⁰ Simms, 'How Useful Are Osteoarchaeological Methods', p.16.

²⁶¹ Simms, 'How Useful Are Osteoarchaeological Methods', p.16.

²⁶² Simms, 'How Useful Are Osteoarchaeological Methods', p.16.

²⁶³ Simms, 'How Useful Are Osteoarchaeological Methods', p.16.

²⁶⁴ Simms, 'How Useful Are Osteoarchaeological Methods', p.16.

²⁶⁵ Harding, *Death and Burial*, p.205; Simms, 'How Useful Are Osteoarchaeological Methods', p.16.

²⁶⁶ Simms, 'How Useful Are Osteoarchaeological Methods', p.16.

²⁶⁷ Simms, 'How Useful Are Osteoarchaeological Methods', p.16.

Additionally, those subjected to anti-revenant procedures are usually buried away from the rest of the community, whereas the speared burials are neither isolated, nor deviate heavily from the usual Arras burial rites.²⁶⁸ This is especially important as Inall argues that Owslebury was the site of many later burials, and Brisely Farm has become associated with acts of veneration; the speared burials were not excluded from their community.²⁶⁹ However, it has been argued that this does not rule out ghost-killing, as spearing corpses may be less a deviation from funerary tradition, and more a case of steps being added to the usual funerary process to prevent bad deaths creating revenants.²⁷⁰ This could suggest that, rather than being a local version of a funeral rite seen across Yorkshire, the speared burials were an attempt to neutralise spirits created by bad deaths. Furthermore, at Rudston, the aim was not to separate these people from the community's dead, but instead reintegrate them. As such, at Rudston at least, a bad death may not have overridden a person's living identity. Effectively, rather than the deceased becoming a revenant and so being cut off from their community, not only was this process halted, but who they were in life was more important than the creature they became in death.

Messengers to the gods

Becoming a revenant may not have been the only possible post-death transformation. Other potentialities exist, and this chapter will now discuss the theory that the bog victims specifically were intended to be messengers to Celtic gods. Catherine Bell states that ritual has been interpreted as a means of sociocultural transformation.²⁷¹ Therefore, it stands to reason that funerary and sacrificial rituals may have induced a change in the deceased. Cunliffe argues that the Celts believed they could use augury to commune with the gods, who could then be convinced to act through sacrifices.²⁷² Additionally, it has been suggested that those selected to be messengers may have been highly regarded within their community,

²⁶⁸ Inall, 'Burials of Martial Character', p.50; Müldner and others, 'The 'Headless Romans'', pp.280-290.

²⁶⁹ Collis, 'Burials with Weapons in Iron Age Britain', pp. 121-133; Inall, 'Burials of Martial Character', p.50; Stevenson, *Living by the Sword*, p.17.

²⁷⁰ Inall, 'Burials of Martial Character', p.50; Siv Kristoffersen and Terje Oestigaard, "'Death Myths': Performing of Rituals and Variation in Corpses Treatment during Migration Period of Norway", in *The Materiality of Death. Bodies, Burials, Beliefs*, eds. F. Fahlander, and T. Oestigaard (Oxford: Archeopress, 2008), pp.127-140, [pp.127-128].

²⁷¹ Boyacıoğlu, 'The Revenant', p.11; Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), p.16.

²⁷² Cunliffe, *The Ancient Celts*, p.309.

honoured for their exceptional skills.²⁷³ Giles proposes that some of these people could have been those who planned and carried out rituals, and were already considered to have a foothold in the otherworld, therefore making them ideal messengers in times of crisis.²⁷⁴ Essentially, those who were close to the gods would be honoured in life, but must sacrifice themselves should the situation prove dire enough. This could suggest that the messengers were willing sacrifices, and that authority came with risks.²⁷⁵ Therefore, if Lindow Man was a messenger, and bearing in mind Old Croghan Man may have been a failed king, this could suggest that authority and death were entwined across the Celtic British Isles, even if the beliefs that motivated these rituals were different.

Additionally, there are several physical characteristics found on bog bodies that could have been perceived as marks left by the gods, which demonstrated their appropriateness as messengers.²⁷⁶ There is a high prevalence of disability and physical differences among bog bodies, with Robert Garland stating that adolescents with disabilities that affected their mobility are over-represented compared to their non-disabled counterparts.²⁷⁷ From the British Isles, examples include Lindow Man who was polydactyl – had six fingers – and Old Croghan Man who was abnormally tall for the time, being approximately 6'6".²⁷⁸ In turn, Engel argues that most bog bodies do not show signs of malnutrition or manual labour, suggesting that they were of high rank in their communities.²⁷⁹ However, this could also suggest that these people were groomed for sacrifice.²⁸⁰ Therefore, the transformation that the bog bodies underwent may not have been into revenants, but instead into messengers. In this respect, it was less a case of a bad death isolating them from their community, and more that they were doing their duty.

Alternatively, the deceased may have been a scapegoat through which the community could vent their anxieties. The deceased need not have committed any particular crime, but Green argues that this would not have stopped the community using them to assuage guilt

²⁷³ Giles, 'Bog Bodies', 2006, p.11.

²⁷⁴ Giles, 'Bog Bodies', 2006, p.11.

²⁷⁵ Giles, 'Bog Bodies', 2006, p.11.

²⁷⁶ Engel, 'Learning from The Dead', p.27.

²⁷⁷ Aldhouse-Green, *Bog Bodies Uncovered*, p.43, p.93; Engel, 'Learning from the Dead', p.27; Robert Garland, *The Eye of the Beholder. Deformity and Disability in the Graeco-Roman World*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995).

²⁷⁸ Kelly, 'An archaeological interpretation of Iron Age Bog Bodies', p.234; Lobell and Patel, 'Bog Bodies Rediscovered', pp.22-29.

²⁷⁹ Engel, 'Learning from The Dead', p.27; Mike Parker Pearson, *The Archaeology of Death and Burial*, (Stroud: Texas A&M University Press, 2000), pp.70-71.

²⁸⁰ Engel, 'Learning from The Dead', p.27; Parker Pearson, *The Archaeology of Death and Burial*, pp.70-71.

and fear.²⁸¹ Here, the victim's physical differences may not have been interpreted as marks left by Celtic gods, but instead set them apart from the rest of the community, which in turn made them into a scapegoat.²⁸² This could therefore suggest that disability did not result in an honoured identity during life that came with certain responsibilities, but that standing out attracted dangerous attention. As such, sacrifice and death were not the culmination of their potential, but threats that disabled individuals faced in times of societal hardship.

However, suggesting that this was the only role disabled people played in Iron Age societies would be reductive at best. Excavations carried out by MAP Archaeological Practice found many individuals from a cemetery in Iron Age East Yorkshire who exhibited signs of antemortem trauma which would have impacted their mobility or posture, such as broken bones, and were buried in clusters.²⁸³ Whilst being buried in this manner could suggest that people in East Yorkshire isolated disabled people from their non-disabled counterparts, this does not also indicate that they were used as sacrifices. As such, whilst the bog bodies may have been considered marked by the gods and possibly used as messengers, the same should not be assumed of all disabled Celts. Additionally, this could be indicative of differing attitudes to congenital disabilities and those acquired later in life, with the former being marked by gods and the latter by their own lived experiences.

Dehumanisation

As has previously been discussed, the Danebury grain pit burials may have been offerings to chthonic deities. Humans are not the only corpses found within these pits – faunal remains have also been found, leading to the suggestion that they were part of a practice which entailed the deposition of different creatures.²⁸⁴ Horses and dogs feature most prominently, though cattle, pigs, and sheep also appear.²⁸⁵ These animals do not appear to have been

²⁸¹ Aldhouse-Green, *Dying for the Gods*; Giles 'Bog Bodies', p.6; Miranda Green, 'Humans as Ritual Victims in the Later Prehistoric of Western Europe', *Oxford Journal of Archaeology*, vol. 17, (1998) pp.169-189, [p.183].

²⁸² Giles 'Bog Bodies', 2006, p.6; Green, 'Humans as Ritual Victims', p.183.

²⁸³ Fraser Hunter, 'Chariots, swords and spears. Iron Age burials at the foot of the East Yorkshire Wolds', *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal*, vol. 95, (2023) pp.201-205, [pp.201-202].

²⁸⁴ Aldhouse-Green, *Dying for the Gods*, p.43; Green, *Exploring the World of the Druids*, p.87; Madgwick, 'Patterns in the modification', p.1.

²⁸⁵ Aldhouse-Green, *Dying for the Gods*, p.44; Green, *Exploring the World of the Druids*, p.87; Hill, *Ritual and Rubbish*, p.103; Hutton, *Pagan Britain*, p.190; Jean-Louis Brunaux, *The Celtic Gauls: Gods, Rites and Sanctuaries*, (Paris: Errance, 1988); Miranda Green, 'Concepts of sacrifice in Later Prehistoric Britain', in *The Indo-Europeanization of Northern Europe*, eds Jones-Bley, Karlene and Huld, Martin, (Washington DC: Journal of Indo-European Studies Monography No. 17, 1996), pp.191-203, [p.199].

skinned or butchered, therefore Hutton proposes that, unless they died of disease, they were also sacrifices.²⁸⁶ Aldhouse-Green points to deposition of faunal remains which seem to mirror the humans they were interred with, arguing that they appear almost interchangeable.²⁸⁷ For instance, Deposition 19 from pit 437 contained a neonatal infant and newborn calf.²⁸⁸ Aldhouse-Green states that this leads to questions regarding the concept of surrogacy, and suggests that animals may have been considered suitable sacrificial substitutes for humans, which for the Celts may have included social outcasts or disabled individuals.²⁸⁹ Therefore, perhaps the grain pit burials were dehumanised by their deaths, becoming seen as little more than animals to be offered up as sacrifices.

Such an argument, however, ignores that there are clear differences present in the treatment of these human and animal remains.²⁹⁰ For instance, the human remains display far less evidence of modification, with modification in this context referring to the animal bones being significantly more weathered, gnawed on, abraded and trampled upon.²⁹¹ This could indicate that both were excarnated, but the human remains were kept in an environment that protected them from the elements and scavengers, or were exposed for less time.²⁹² Alternatively, perhaps only the animal remains were excarnated, whilst the humans were buried and later exhumed, as this would account for the latter's total or partial disarticulation, but simultaneous lack of taphonomic modification.²⁹³ This could indicate that a greater degree of care was taken with the human remains, and that human sacrifices were not treated the same as their animal counterparts. Therefore, it does not appear that the people sacrificed at Danebury were being stripped of their humanity in death. Additionally, it has been theorised that domestic animals were selected for reasons outside convenience in acquiring them, as they were potentially seen as having a greater affinity for humanity than wild animals.²⁹⁴ As such, perhaps it was these animals' connection to humanity that made them ideal substitutes for humans, rather a lack of status in life leading the chosen humans to be dehumanised in death.

²⁸⁶ Hutton, *Pagan Britain*, p.190.

²⁸⁷ Aldhouse-Green, *Dying for the Gods*, pp.43-44.

²⁸⁸ Aldhouse-Green, *Dying for the Gods*, p.44; Walker, 'The Deposition of the Human Remains', pp.442-63.

²⁸⁹ Aldhouse-Green, *Dying for the Gods*, p.47-49.

²⁹⁰ Madgwick, 'Patterns in the modification', p.1;

²⁹¹ Madgwick, 'Patterns in the modification', pp.1-8

²⁹² Madgwick, 'Patterns in the modification', p.1, p.5, p.10;

²⁹³ Madgwick, 'Patterns in the modification', p.1

²⁹⁴ Aldhouse-Green, *Dying for the Gods*, p.42; Green, *Animals in Celtic Life*, pp.92-127; Patrice Menial, *Chasse et élevage chez Les Gaulois*, (Paris: Errance, 1987), pp.101-43.

However, across Ireland, bog bodies appear to have been used as boundary markers, which could suggest a level of dehumanisation. This practice appears to have its roots in the Bronze Age and survived, in some form, into the Middle Ages.²⁹⁵ Various Bronze Age deposits have been found across county boundaries, such as weapons, horns, cauldrons, a variety of valuable objects and bog bodies, such as Old Croghan Man and Clonycavan Man.²⁹⁶ Old Croghan Man was found along the townland and parish boundary, which formerly marked the territories of the Tuath Cruacháin and Tuath na Cille.²⁹⁷ By comparison, the townland Clonycavan is along the boundary between Meath and Westmeath, once the territories of Brega and Mide.²⁹⁸ Additionally, forty other bog bodies have been found along boundaries, such as the one discovered near the townland boundary of Coolronan.²⁹⁹ Other bodies from Kinnakenelly, County Galway, Derrymaquirk, county Roscommon, and Baronstown West, Kildare were also found close to barony boundaries specifically, and though Gallagher Man's exact location was not recorded, it is thought that he too was found near the townland and parish boundary.³⁰⁰ Giles suggests that such depositions could have reinforced these boundaries, arguing it was a practice during the Iron Age to bury remains across thresholds, enclosure ditches and other territorial boundaries.³⁰¹ Therefore, this practice may have been rooted in land rites, with bog bodies defining territorial boundaries, and potentially also restating the community's control over a certain area. However, Giles suggests that some of the places where these bodies were deposited are characterised by changes in the landscape itself, such as the edges of fenlands, in which case perhaps such areas attracted deposits as they represented a different kind of boundary, although the two do occasionally overlap, for instance a bog may also define a political territory.³⁰² This could suggest that the Irish bog bodies functioned as fence posts – they were a means by which a community could define

²⁹⁵ Eamonn P. Kelly, 'Kingship and Sacrifice: Iron Age Bog Bodies and Boundaries', *Archaeology Ireland, Heritage Guide*, vol. 35, (2006), pp.1-7, [p.7].

²⁹⁶ Giles, 'Bog Bodies', p.6; Kelly, 'An archaeological interpretation of Iron Age Bog Bodies', p.237; Kelly, 'Kingship and Sacrifice', p.7.

²⁹⁷ Kelly, 'Kingship and Sacrifice', p.3; Eamonn P. Kelly, 'Secrets of the Bog Bodies: The Enigma of the Iron Age Explained', *Archaeology Ireland*, vol. 20, (2006), pp.26-30, [p.26].

²⁹⁸ Kelly, 'Secrets of the Bog Bodies', p.26.

²⁹⁹ Kelly, 'Secrets of the Bog Bodies', p.26.

³⁰⁰ Kelly, 'Kingship and Sacrifice', p.3.

³⁰¹ Giles, 'Bog Bodies', p.7; Giles, 'Performing Pain', p.547; Kelly, 'An archaeological interpretation of Iron Age bog bodies', pp.232-240; Hill, *Ritual and Rubbish*; Melanie Giles, 'Iron Age Bog Bodies of north-western Europe: representing the dead', *Archaeological Dialogues*, vol. 16, (2009), pp.75-101; R. Hingley, 'Boundaries surrounding Iron Age and Romano-British Settlements', *Scottish Archaeological Review*, vol. 7, (1990), pp.96-104.

³⁰² Giles, 'Bog Bodies', p.7.

their land. Perhaps, for victims who may have been fallen kings, this was especially important, as the defeat of one ruler by another could have necessitated a restating or remapping of political boundaries, with a new ruler laying claim to his predecessor's land.

Yet, it is worth remembering that other Iron Age objects have been found deposited at territorial boundaries. Lisnacrogher bog, near the boundary between Lower Antrim and Kilconway has been the site of many finds, now being regarded the 'type site' for Iron Age boundary deposits.³⁰³ These finds include weapons, as well as personal items such as bowls, torcs, tools and jewellery.³⁰⁴ Other Irish bogs have yielded similar finds, albeit smaller, with three bogs in county Galway containing bridle bits or y-shaped pendants.³⁰⁵ Additionally, cauldrons have been found in bogs across four counties, such as Ballybogy, County Antrim and Urlingford, County Kilkenny.³⁰⁶ Weapons have also been found in bogs along barony boundaries, such as a sword from Ballinderry, County Westmeath and a spear butt from Clonalee, County Meath, not too far from where Clonycavan Man was discovered, as well as a shield found across the Slieverardagh/ Eliogarty barony boundary from a female bog body.³⁰⁷ As such, the Irish bog bodies appear to have been used similarly to objects, deposited along territorial boundaries, possibly to strengthen them. Therefore, perhaps Irish bog bodies were not only used as tools to define political boundaries, but also lost some of their humanity due to their death, taking on the same importance as a sword or cauldron to their former community.

Alternatively, whilst the Irish bog bodies' connection to boundaries is not disputed, it has been suggested that they may have also fulfilled a protective function.³⁰⁸ Kelly points to the withies in Old Croghan Man's arms, the garrot around his neck, and a passage from the *Táin Bó Cuailnge*, wherein it is said that placing a wreath made of withies upon a standing stone on the Ulster border prevented the Connacht army invading.³⁰⁹ This was because the withies invoked a powerful taboo, which forced the army to use a less direct route.³¹⁰ Therefore, perhaps instead of becoming nothing more than boundary markers, or being feared as potential revenants, Old Croghan Man and other bodies with their arms tied together with withies were instead intended to offer protection from enemies to the living community. As

³⁰³ Kelly, 'Kingship and Sacrifice', p.3.

³⁰⁴ Kelly, 'Kingship and Sacrifice', p.3.

³⁰⁵ Kelly, 'Kingship and Sacrifice', p.3.

³⁰⁶ Kelly, 'Secrets of the Bog Bodies', p.28.

³⁰⁷ Kelly, 'Secrets of the Bog Bodies', p.28.

³⁰⁸ Kelly, 'Kingship and Sacrifice', p.5.

³⁰⁹ Kelly, 'Kingship and Sacrifice', p.5.

³¹⁰ Kelly, 'Kingship and Sacrifice', p.5.

such, rather than becoming a threat or losing their humanity after dying, they were drafted into continual service to their people.

That being said, Kelly argues that a more compelling theory is that these bodies were part of a sovereignty ritual focused upon sacred kingship and inauguration.³¹¹ Kelly proposes that, as part of the king's marriage to the Earth Goddess, objects associated with his kingship would be buried along the tribe's boundaries to define his sovereignty.³¹² Furthermore, the deposition of bog butter, quernstones and a sickle at Lisnacrogher would act as reminders that the king's marriage was primarily aimed at ensuring the land's fertility, as the livelihood of his people would depend upon it for survival.³¹³ As such, these bodies may have represented both the new king's authority over the land and his former rival, if bodies such as Old Croghan Man were indeed defeated kings. Therefore, perhaps the transformation that these particular bog bodies underwent was not into revenants, but instead into symbols of protection and their own defeat. This could place them in stark contrast to bodies such as Lindow Man, who may have been turned into messengers, as whilst both were drafted into serving their community after death, one was potentially an esteemed position wherein the candidate communed with gods during a crisis, whilst the other was a humiliating fall from grace following defeat in battle.

However, it should be noted that dismemberment was not necessarily dehumanising or humiliating for Iron Age Celts, possibly due to them considering humans to be partial beings.³¹⁴ It is not unusual for archaeologists to encounter fragments of human or animal remains during excavation, and Katherine Rebay-Salisbury, Marie Sørensen and Jessica Hughes suggest that this could be evidence of deliberate fragmentation.³¹⁵ Furthermore, these fragmented body parts could acquire their own meaning due to their relationship with the rest of the body, or as a representation of said body.³¹⁶ Alternatively, these fragments may have developed their own meaning and significance, with John Chapman proposing that they were

³¹¹ Kelly, 'Kingship and Sacrifice', p.5.

³¹² Kelly, 'Kingship and Sacrifice', pp.5-6; Kelly, 'Secrets of the Bog Bodies', p.30.

³¹³ Kelly, 'Kingship and Sacrifice', p.7.

³¹⁴ Giles, 'Bog Bodies', 2006, p.11.

³¹⁵ Katherine Rebay-Salisbury, Marie Louise Stig Sørensen and Jessica Hughes, 'Body Parts and Bodies Whole: Introduction', in *Body Parts and Bodies Whole*, eds. Katharine Rebay-Salisbury, Marie Louise Stig Sørensen and Jessica Hughes, (Barnsley: Oxbow Books, 2010), pp.1-5, [p.1].

³¹⁶ Rebay-Salisbury, Sørensen and Hughes, 'Body Parts and Bodies Whole', p.2.

part of a process of ‘enchainment’, wherein an object being broken does not mean it is lost.³¹⁷ Regarding the theory that Irish bog bodies were created as part of protection rituals, perhaps this could suggest that the dismembering of these bodies was not intended to humiliate or dehumanise them, but instead indicates that an intact body was not required for the ritual to work.

Furthermore, Madgwick argues that dismembering a body is suggestive of a culture wherein strong communal bonds are emphasised over individual identity.³¹⁸ Regarding the Irish bog bodies and Danebury grain pit burials, this could suggest that these communities valued interpersonal bonds over their member’s individuality, placing greater emphasis on what could be done for the community as a whole, rather than specific constituents. This could therefore suggest that the idea of valuing the community over individuals was spread across parts of the Celtic British Isles, and that in such areas, purposeful dismembering was not indicative of intentional dehumanisation. Therefore, perhaps the post-death transformation which took place was not one wherein a person was stripped of status and literally objectified, but instead one where their constituent parts took on meanings that were both related and distinct from their former self. For example, perhaps Old Croghan Man did not simply become a torso used to mark a political boundary, but instead an individual who continued to serve his community after death, a protective symbol, and a territorial marker. Consequently, to imply that dismemberment in Iron Age communities could only indicate that these dead were being treated as little more than objects would be reductive at best. Instead, post-death transformation in relation to dismembered bodies may have been far more complex. Furthermore, this could be indicative of a perception of human remains and humanity in general that was not tied to completeness, but rather an attitude that humans were made of their many moving parts, the absence of which did not strip the person of their humanity. Essentially, an Iron Age body could be divided into many components, but a lone leg or arm was no less human than a complete body.

³¹⁷ John Chapman, *Fragmentation in archaeology: People, places and broken objects in the prehistory of South-eastern Europe*, (London: Routledge, 2000); Rebay-Salisbury, Sørensen and Hughes, ‘Body Parts and Bodies Whole’, p.2.

³¹⁸ Madgwick, ‘Patterns in the modification’, p.9.

Conclusion

Possibly, the bog bodies, grain pit burials and speared burials all represent ways that different Celtic Iron Age communities dealt with revenants. This could indicate that concerns over a bad death were spread across the British Isles, in turn suggesting that how people died was of utmost importance. Other possible post-death transformations have been suggested, such as the dead turning into messengers. Many of these messengers may have been physically disabled or different, suggesting that perhaps they were considered marked by the gods for that purpose. As such, post-death transformations may not have been into threatening creatures, but rather a culmination of a person's potential. Alternatively, this position could have been a constant threat faced by disabled Celts, with such people being used as scapegoats when the situation their community faced proved dire enough. That being said, burials from Yorkshire indicate that not all disabled people were sacrifices, although this could possibly suggest that there were different attitudes towards congenital disabilities and those acquired in life. By contrast, Irish bog bodies may have found employment as boundary markers, possibly losing their humanity and becoming little more than fence posts in death. However, such people could have also been protective symbols, instead suggesting they continued to serve their community as protectors. This is especially as dismemberment may not have been seen as dehumanising for Iron Age peoples, potentially indicating this treatment did not diminish their humanity. In relation to the grain pit burials, this could suggest Danebury was a society that emphasised communal bonds over individual identity. Additionally, the mixing of human and animal bones, despite initial theories that these humans were considered as little better than animals, may instead indicate that animals were selected with strong ties to humanity. Therefore, there may be many beings a dead Celt could transform into, but this need not negate their humanity or identity.

Conclusion

This dissertation set out to investigate the connection between death and identity within Celtic communities in the British Isles during the Iron Age. This was with the aim of analysing how identity impacted treatment of the deceased, in order to examine beliefs relating to death and the dead. In order to do this, archaeological sources were primarily used, with writing by Classical authors being used sparingly.

There has been much discussion regarding the identities of the bog bodies, and whilst this dissertation partakes in this conversation, it also attempts to analyse several theories without coming to definitive conclusions. This is especially the case regarding Lindow Man, who it has been assumed was a Druid, despite issues with the evidence for this. Additionally, an attempt has been made to go into greater detail on the possible connection between bog bodies, the Danebury grain put burials, Yorkshire weapons burials and the concept of revenants. Concepts that are entwined with revenants, such as the bad death, may provide another way of considering not only the consequences these peoples' deaths may have had for the communities they belonged to in life, but also the potential risks involved in the rituals possibly used to create these particular burials.

If depositions of bog bodies within British and Irish bogs were intentional, it is possible that these locations were selected due to reflecting the deceased in some way. For example, dangerous individuals being buried in an equally dangerous place, or people who were seen as being trapped between life and death being deposited in a similarly liminal environment. Alternatively, if it is believed such places were considered gates to the Otherworld, and bearing in mind the theory that bodies such as Lindow Man were messengers to the gods, perhaps it was the function the deceased served their community, and not their own attributes, which made the bog an appropriate burial place. Although the Irish bog bodies may have been intended as sacrifices to the Earth goddess in times of famine, this also suggests an attempt to bury people in places relating to the task they were to fulfil for the living. This concept, that certain places were appropriate for certain dead, may be present within the Yorkshire weapons burials, as it is possible that it was considered correct to bury warriors with weapons that had belonged to them or were responsible for their deaths. However, it should be remembered that the weapons may have represented something else, such as the relationships the deceased had made whilst alive, or aspirations they had once

held. Additionally, this dissertation argues that the grain pit burials are not evidence of Iron Age Celts viewing human bodies as rubbish, but instead finds the argument that they were offerings to chthonic deities more convincing.

Regarding identity prior to death, there are many possibilities for who these people once were, and so many implications for Celtic death beliefs. For instance, Lindow Man may have been a druid and a sacrifice, suggesting that power and high status came with certain risks, namely that should the situation prove dire enough, those of high rank should lay down their lives. Alternatively, if he were a murder victim, this could suggest that proper burial was of the utmost importance, possibly to calm malevolent spirits. However, such theories do not adequately explain Irish bog bodies such as Old Croghan Man and Clonycavan Man, who may have been kings sacrificed to an earth goddess. This, too, could suggest that authority came with risk, with Irish kings being punished for their shortcomings. Warfare may have played a role in the death of grain pit burials, the Acklam Wold warrior and speared burials, with evidence of skeletal trauma appearing in all three to varying degrees. In the case of the former, perhaps this marked them out from their fellows, whilst for the weapons burials such deaths demanded that martial weapons be interred with them. Alternatively, the weapons burials showed signs of infections which may have contributed to their demise. It has also been proposed that the Danebury grain pit burials could be the result of a disease that resulted in their bodies being considered tainted and therefore inappropriate candidates for the usual burial rites.

Revenants may have been a widespread fear across the Iron Age British Isles, suggesting that a person's life ending appropriately – a 'good death' – was of utmost importance in the area. However, other possibilities exist, such as the bog bodies being intended to serve their communities. This could have been as messengers to the gods, marked out for service due to physical disabilities or differences, though disabled people's lives in the Iron Age were more complicated than this implies. For instance, this may not have been a revered position, but instead the threat of becoming a scapegoat. Alternatively, Irish bog bodies may have become little more than boundary markers – being literally objectified – or were drafted into protecting their community after death, implying a neutral to positive relationship with the dead respectively. Additionally, Iron Age Celts may not have seen dismemberment as dehumanising, as people may have been seen as partial beings – a human could be separated into their constituent parts, but this made them no less human. Altogether, this could imply that post-death transformations themselves were part of Celtic beliefs across

the British Isles, but this should not be automatically taken as evidence for belief in revenants, as there are other possible interpretations.

An avenue for future research, which due to size restraints this dissertation has not explored, could be investigations into how the gender of the deceased impacted the manner in which their body was treated, and the implications this has for Celtic death belief. This is especially the case for women's burials, which were largely absent from this dissertation. Additionally, more extensive studies into the burial treatment of people with congenital disabilities and those acquired later in life, such as through injury or disease, could further illuminate Iron Age funerary beliefs.

To conclude, who a person was in life and how they died appears to have impacted how their body was treated after death, whether that be burial in a bog, a pit, or a mound. Death due to warfare or disease were potentially bad deaths, which necessitated special measures to be taken to quell a newly formed revenant, or at the very least distinguished a person from their fellows. However, procedures may have existed to prevent the revenant causing harm, either by trapping it in place, or by adding additional steps to pre-existing funerary rituals to prevent its full formation. That being said, a variety of other post-death transformations may have existed. Additionally, theories that appear plausible for one particular body, should not be applied to all other burials in the British Isles, indicating that the Celts perhaps had many different and perhaps contradictory attitudes towards death and the dead.

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