

HILLFORTS, WARFARE AND SOCIETY IN BRONZE AGE IRELAND

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ARCHAEOPRESS ARCHAEOLOGY

ARCHAEOPRESS PUBLISHING LTD

Gordon House
276 Banbury Road
Oxford OX2 7ED

www.archaeopress.com

ISBN 978 1 78491 655 8
ISBN 978 1 78491 656 5 (e-Pdf)

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Cover: James O'Driscoll

Front Cover: Brusselstown Ring, Baltinglass, Co. Wicklow.

Back Cover: Bronze Age spearheads from Ireland, Clashanimud Co. Cork, aerial view and reconstruction.

*For John Waddell,
in acknowledgement of his major contribution to research on the Irish Bronze Age.*

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Printed in England by Oxuniprint, Oxford
This book is available direct from Archaeopress or from our website www.archaeopress.com

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The many hundreds of hillforts dotted across the UK and Ireland offer a connection to our long-distant past and some clues as to how our Iron Age ancestors lived. Hillforts is something of a misnomer, though; they aren't always on hills, and they probably weren't "forts" in the sense of the word we think of today. "Otherwise, it's a perfectly good name for them!" says Professor Gary Lock of the University of Oxford. Professor Lock is one of the co-leaders of a project that reaches its fruition today to document, map and make accessible "at least online" these fascinating glimpses into how we The later part of the Bronze Age (1500-700 BC) was a time of settlement expansion and economic prosperity in Ireland. This was a landscape of small autonomous farming communities, but there is also evidence for control of territory and population, involving centralized organization of trade and economy, ritual and military force. That concentration of power was connected to the emergence of chiefdom polities active in the consolidation of large regional territories. This is the first project to study hillforts in relation to warfare and conflict in Bronze Age Ireland. New evidence for the destruction of hillforts is connected to territorial disputes and other forms of competition arising from the ambitions of regional warlords, often with catastrophic consequences for individual communities. Hillforts in Britain refers to the various hillforts within the island of Great Britain. Although the earliest such constructs fitting this description come from the Neolithic British Isles, with a few also dating to later Bronze Age Britain, British hillforts were primarily constructed during the British Iron Age. Some of these were apparently abandoned in the southern areas that were a part of Roman Britain, although at the same time, those areas of northern Britain that remained free from Roman