

BOG BODIES

FACE TO FACE WITH THE PAST



MELANIE GILES

Bog bodies



Manchester University Press

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In his famous book *The Bog People* P. V. Glob dedicated his work to a class of English schoolchildren who had written to him asking for more information on the Danish discoveries. In that spirit, this book is dedicated to Max, Marina and Rhianna, who I hope will continue this work. It is also dedicated to my twin, Kate Giles, for intellectual companionship, and given with love to Dan, Bob and Rosie – who know the true cost. Finally, it is dedicated with respect and affection to Professor Sir Barry Cunliffe.

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Preface

A year after my mother's death, I leaf through the pages of an old sketchbook. It is filled with ink-and-watercolour sketches of industrial Manchester in the 1950s where she grew up: towering with chimneys, densely packed terraced streets and fairgrounds at night. Towards the back is an unexpectedly pastoral scene: parallel rows of vegetables depict an allotment or market garden, with potting sheds in the middle distance. She has delineated each row with an ebony streak, representing the dark cut of a spade through peat. The city, with its belch of white steam and



Ashton Moss by Jean Cowperthwaite, c.1950. All rights reserved and permission to use the figure must be obtained from the copyright holder.

smog, is distant on the horizon. By a clutch of dock weeds and grass stems in the foreground, she has neatly written '10th July, Ashton Moss'.

When I began this book, I did not realise its topic would take me so close to my own past, nor that the archaeological territory of death would gather this raw relevance. I remember her speaking of the pallid stems of celery grown here on the moss as unparalleled in taste. Yet from this fertile mire in the mid-1800s, came a rather different harvest: the dark matter of leathered flesh and stained bone – the skull of at least one 'bog body'. Known as 'Ashton Man', his remains had been deliberately interred in the wet moss in the later Bronze Age to early Iron Age, forming part of a phenomenon found across north-western Europe. Often violently killed, these remains haunt us with their remarkable preservation. They have become archaeological icons, sources of intrigue, fear and creative inspiration.

I first encountered Lennart Larsen's black-and-white images of Grauballe and Tollund Man as a child, holding open a copy of P. V. Glob's *The Bog People* (1969) for my father, as he made slides for teaching. Like many before me, I was fascinated by the finger-tip whorls and worn heels of Grauballe Man, and the leather cap and noose that still looked wet and pliable around Tollund Man's neck. My father had no qualms about showing his high school students these images, believing that this was an important part of their education: understanding what we could learn from the dead, and how that past shaped our present.

The Ashton head was sent to Cambridge University, to become part of its anatomical collection of crania. His journey from moss to archive shelf is one this book will trace, trying to understand how he (and many others like him) died, why they were buried on the moss, and how we have become fascinated with such ancient remains. In so doing, this research foregrounds the importance of the northern British bog bodies, resituating them within the more famous examples from Scandinavia, Germany and Ireland. This has become both a professional as well as a personal endeavour. When I began teaching archaeology at The University of Manchester, the desiccated remains of a 'bog head' known as Worsley Man could be viewed in the Manchester Museum, alongside a facial reconstruction that was the collaborative work of the then curator of archaeology, Professor John Prag, and his medical colleague, Richard Neave. While Worsley Man is no longer to be seen on open view, the chance to work further upon his remains as part of the Manchester Museum team enables me to place his story at the heart of this book, alongside his neighbours from Ashton, Droysden, Red Moss and Lindow Moss. Elsewhere, I have described this work as an obligation, an act of advocacy for the dead, but it is also, as the late Don Brothwell (1986: 13) put it, an honour.

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This research would have been impossible without the support of the following experts from Manchester Museum and the Worsley Man Research Project: John Prag, Bryan Sitch, Irit Narkiss, Sam Sportun, Tristan Lowe, Martin Smith, Neil Garland, John Denton, Pat Bradley, Mike Buckley, Andrew Wilson and the Oxford Radiocarbon Accelerator Unit. Bringing this research to publication has taken time, and along the way fond collaborators have been lost, particularly Jim Bourke and Judith Adams; this book is dedicated in part to them. The completion of this book would not have been possible without the generosity and honesty of its anonymous peer reviewers and the diligent editorial assistance of Meredith Carroll from Manchester University Press, Kelly Derrick and Lizzie Evans of Newgen Publishing, and Cath Neal's production of the index. The Institutional and Supplementary Research Leave provided by the School of Arts, Languages and Cultures at The University of Manchester (facilitated by Roy Gibson), and a small research grant from The University of Manchester to fund the radiocarbon date and computed tomography (CT) scan of Worsley Man were invaluable. Colleagues within classics, ancient history, archaeology and Egyptology, as well as history and environment and spatial planning at The University of Manchester have provided me with rich interdisciplinary expertise on what Romans do with heads (Ruth Morello and Andy Fear), how to preserve a corpse (Joyce Tyldesley and Nicky Nielsen) and why bogs really *do* matter (John Morgan and Joanne Tippett).

Local archival research was assisted by Duncan McCormick (Salford local history librarian) and Jill Morris (Tameside Local Studies and Archives Centre) as well as Tony Morris (archives officer, Manchester Central Library), Mike Nevell, Andy Myers and Norman Redhead (from the Centre for Applied Archaeology, University of Salford). The author thanks the Duckworth Laboratory, University of Cambridge, for permission to study the material within its collections, namely Ashton Man, facilitated by collections manager, Trish Biers. Meanwhile the support and research of Bill Shannon (of the Warrington Literary and Philosophical Society) has been inspiring, and Ceri Houlbrook's research on the folklore of the boggart has been invaluable. Sian Jones, Sally Foster and Rod McCullagh provided

invaluable insights into bog landscapes and issues of authenticity on a most memorable trip to Stirlingshire.

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Archaeological, artistic and poetic inspiration continues to spur me on: deepest thanks to Mark Edmonds, Gabriel Cooney, Alan and Griselda Garner, Rose Ferraby, Christine Finn and John Wedgewood-Clarke. I have had the great privilege of hearing Seamus Heaney read from his bog body poems at University College Dublin, the impact of which I hope resonates throughout this book. It is a hymn to the wetland expertise of all of the above individuals – curators, field archaeologists, archivists, forensic scientists, cultural critics, artists, historians of the moss and poets who have also crossed into the bog with me. If we can re-enchant our readers with these places, through their pasts, and encourage their curation and growth, we will have worked towards a very small part of restoring our wider environment.

Introduction



Once upon a time, these heads and limbs existed in order to express and embody the needs and impulses of an individual human life. They were the vehicles of different biographies and they compelled singular attention, they proclaimed 'I am I'. Even when they were first dead, at the moment of their sacrifice or atrocity, their bodies and their limbs manifested biography and conserved vestiges of personal identity: they were corpses. But when a corpse becomes a bog body, the personal identity drops away; the bog body does not proclaim 'I am I'; instead it says something like 'I am it' or 'I am you'. Like the work of art, the bog body asks to be contemplated; it eludes the biographical and enters the realm of the aesthetic. (Heaney 1999: 4)

The matter of the bog

Bog bodies are the most recognisable faces of prehistoric peoples from northern Europe, giving them international stature. Their preserved remains are the result of a unique natural phenomenon that provides archaeologists with unparalleled insights into the lives and deaths of people from the past. Aspects of appearance, dress, disease and trauma can be examined in ways that are simply not possible for the majority of skeletonised and cremated human remains from prehistory. This book will argue that there is no more powerful archaeological lens through which to view not just daily life in later prehistory but also conflict, customs, beliefs and relations with the environment. Through a synthesis of new discoveries and novel analytical techniques deployed on existing remains, alongside original archival, folkloric and landscape research, it will present the most up-to-date study of these remains. It will also challenge a number of conceptual boundaries that have circumscribed and limited bog body studies for too long, particularly the division between well-preserved and more skeletonised bog remains, and the opposition between 'pragmatic' and 'ritualised' violence used to interpret their deaths. The methodological framework used here is also groundbreaking: adopting what I will call an 'after-life cycle' approach, starting from when *we* encounter them

in the bog. This is an attempt to be more honest about the fact that the work of archaeology is always situated *in* the present, leading the reader through the archaeological process: the work of making sense of these remains, from discovery through conservation to analysis, interpretation and display. While other studies have touched on these themes, no other volume has adopted this unique stance and structure, which allows us to continually scrutinise how the reception of those remains shape our interpretations.

I have taken this approach because bog bodies *matter*, quite literally, in their stubborn resurfacing into our world, making the past present to us in ways that both touch and appal our humanity. Finally then, this study is distinguished by its deeply historiographic approach: showing how and why our attitudes to bodies as well as artefacts from the moss and the mire have changed over time. For we are at the threshold of a very different relationship with the places in which they are found. Once seen as marginal, unproductive and stagnant, the bog now offers a vital part of our response to climate change and the global crisis in biodiversity. The book thus probes when and why we relegated the bog to the brink of society, and to what ends, seeking to learn from our prehistoric counterparts how we might re-establish a new relationship with both moss and mire, enriched by the archaeology that comes from their depths.

Seamus Heaney's opening address for the 1996 exhibition 'Face to Face with Your Past', at Silkeborg Museum in Denmark (cited at the start of this chapter) thus provides not just the title but the starting point for the three main objectives of this research. First, to explore the lives and deaths of people found in the bogs of north-western Europe, and the meanings of these places in the past. Second, to re-examine the processes, both practical and philosophical, through which they have been preserved to become cultural as well as archaeological icons. Finally, to critically consider why these human remains, above all others, have come to capture the northern European imagination – for better or worse – in ways that prompt us to re-examine both our own humanity and our mortality.

Only archaeology can achieve this, because as a discipline it crosses the territories of forensics, environmental analysis, social and landscape history and material culture studies. Its blindness to the boundaries of prehistory and history, of matter *and* text and its willingness to foray into folklore and journalism as much as ethnography, invigorates the evidence upon which archaeologists can draw. From peat cutting or farmer's mantlepiece to conservation laboratory, archive shelf and museum store, this book will trace that journey into the public light of the gallery and on into the images and ideas about the dead that can inspire or disturb – what Heaney (1999: 4) deems their unique 'riddling power'.

The subjects of this book are thus the well-preserved human remains that are collectively known as 'bog bodies' (Glob [1969] 1971), described by rectors, surgeons, antiquarians and diarists, from the 1600s onwards (van der Sanden 1996: 39), but undoubtedly disturbed and examined for as long as people have been cutting into the bog. Iron Age people themselves may well have been the first curators of such remains, given that examples from the Mesolithic, Neolithic

and Bronze Age have been recovered, as have numerous examples from the medieval and historic periods. Bogs are generally found in cool, northern climates but stretch from Greece to Russia, including one of the largest extant areas in the Siberian lowlands (van der Sanden 1996: 21). North America too has its bogs, focused around the Hudson Bay lowlands and Mackenzie River basin. Blanket bogs cover large areas of upland, as for example in the Flow Country of Scotland or the Pennines. Swamp peatlands can be found in Southeast Asia and the largest tropical peatland was recently discovered under the forests of the Congo Basin in 2017 (Dargie *et al.* 2017). However, the scope of this book will focus on the later Bronze Age to late Iron Age/Roman period, c.1200 BC– AD 400, when we see a swell in dated interments in bogs across Ireland and Britain, Sweden, Denmark, Germany, Poland and the Netherlands (Turner and Briggs 1986: tab. 19; van der Sanden 1996: fig. 92). It is these latter countries that will form the basis of research here.

As argued above, this study is not only timely but pressing. Peatlands represent the world's largest natural terrestrial carbon store (Page *et al.* 2011; IUCN 2019), with a crucial role to play in carbon sequestration as a way of combating climate change (Strack 2008; Joosten 2010). Since the destruction of such wetlands (particularly from the nineteenth century onwards) have been identified as a major factor in carbon release (Immirzi *et al.* 1992), the cessation of extraction and active bog regeneration is now a key global policy priority (Limpens *et al.* 2008; Keddy *et al.* 2009; Cris *et al.* 2014). While they might not be thought of as particularly biodiverse, bogs shelter highly adapted, unique fauna and flora (see Chapter 4), and they also assist in flood and fire prevention while enhancing local water quality (IUCN 2019). We often underestimate the volume of lost peat, which once fuelled cities in the UK such as York and Norwich, as well as periods of major experimentation for peat bath spa treatments, paper making, litter for animal bedding, chemical extraction and market gardening (Rotherham 2009). It is the latter use that has survived longest but pressures to avoid further release of carbon have seen a northern European pressure to move away from peat use in the horticultural industry. Cutting for fuel in Ireland, the Highlands and the Islands of Scotland as well as countries such as Norway is likely to require a sensitive balance of local rites and risks against these global priorities (see Crawford 2018). Tensions around even small-scale commercial extraction versus repurposing or restoration now abound, seen in recent planning applications, appeals and conservation objections on both Chat Moss and Lindow Moss in northern Britain. In October 2018, Bord na Móna (Ireland's quasi-state peat extraction company) announced that seventeen of its sixty-two active bogs would cease milling peat for commercial sale immediately, with the rest scheduled for closure by 2025, to mixed response (Carroll 2018; RTÉ 2018). More active restoration projects have been funded in the UK (H.M. Government 2018: 45), Denmark (Danish Ministry for the Environment 2011) and Germany (NABU 2018), led in part through the International Peatland Conservation Fund and 'EU LIFE' initiatives (Andersen 2017), such as the 'peat restore' programme pioneered in Germany, Poland and

the Baltic states (NABU 2018) and the 'Moors for the Future Partnership' (2015) on the Pennine's upland blanket bogs.

This historically significant shift in our relationship with the peat bog is of great importance for the climate and it offers protection for the surviving pre-historic archaeology still buried in its depths, yet its impact on discoveries from the bog will be felt. In van der Sanden's (1996: figs 86 and 88) masterful study, he selectively charts historical patterns of bog body recovery with demonstrable spikes in Ireland and Britain from the 1800s onwards but particularly from the 1950s to 1990s. In Ireland, there was a sudden surge from the new millennium onwards but this has now slowed again (Kelly 2013). New discoveries are still being made in some peatlands (e.g. Bauerochse *et al.* 2018), whereas areas such as the Netherlands ceased peat production some time ago, leading to fewer discoveries (van Beek *et al.* 2015). This general decline in discovery is likely to be matched across northern Europe for a number of reasons. Drainage of the wetlands in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries disturbed remains that had been hidden since their interment, but few were kept or curated. It was the nineteenth century that saw the rise of more popular antiquarianism and a specific interest in human remains (especially crania) as indicators of racial history (Morse 2005; Trigger 2006). This led to the wider reporting and curation of bog bodies, or at least fragments from them. War-time pressure on indigenous fuel production, the provision of animal bedding or litter and the post-Second World War urge to drain and improve surviving wetlands for farming were coupled with the commercial extraction of peat, and both were assisted by mechanised milling, tilling and drainage. Again, this led to an increase in discoveries during the early to middle part of the twentieth century, but the legislation regarding both the reporting and ownership of such remains and associated artefacts, as well as any financial rewards, varied greatly from country to country. In the UK, from the 1950s onwards, archaeology gathered force as both an academic discipline and an exciting area of amateur interest. Post-war rural and urban regeneration programmes enhanced the unveiling of ancient sites, supporting the growth of museums and their collections as well as archaeology's prominence in the media (Aitchison 2011). Indeed, the BBC's first-ever commissioned archaeology series, *Buried Treasure* (Clack and Brittain 2007), featured an initial programme on archaeology as a form of 'big science' before episode two, 'The Peat Bog Murder Mystery of Tollund Man' (BBC 1954 – trumping Stonehenge, which fell to episode three). Starring the clipped tones of Glyn Daniel and Mortimer Wheeler, it brought the phenomenon of the well-preserved bog mummy to the British public long before the translation of P. V. Glob's 1965 book into English (Glob [1969] 1971) and also introduced rival interpretations (including theories of sacrifice as part of fertility rites or the celebration of martial victories) to the general public. During the 1980s, the reformation of the planning process, the emergence of developer-funded archaeology and the reform of treasure legislation in many northern European countries has generally resulted in more rigorous reporting of bog finds. Yet as peat cutting slows, fewer finds will be made. The golden era of discovery is probably over, unless

regeneration schemes accidentally disturb buried remains as part of re-wetting or re-planting schemes.

Instead, we are moving into a rather different era of ‘cold case’ bog body research, where known examples and their rather neglected samples lingering in laboratory refrigerators and stores have new potential. Scientific advances, including enhanced accelerator mass spectrometry (AMS) dating methods, light stable isotope analysis and ancient DNA (aDNA) analysis, material culture studies and non-invasive scanning methods, as well as forensic expertise, have all been brought to bear on bog bodies. In Denmark, new programmes of analysis on Tollund Man (Fischer 2012), Grauballe Man (Asingh and Lynnerup 2007; Asingh 2009), the prehistoric textile collections in the National Museum of Copenhagen (e.g. Frei *et al.* 2009), as well as isotope studies (e.g. Frei *et al.* 2017) have yielded new information about some of the world’s most iconic bog bodies. ‘Paper’ bog body research is also yielding dividends; archive work in Sweden (Fredengren 2015; Karlsson 2019) has been complemented by in-depth studies in Scotland (Cowie *et al.* 2011) and folklore work in Lithuania (Kama 2016). Meanwhile, reflections on curatorial practice and policy (Joy 2009; Jenkins 2011), exhibition design (Mulhall and Briggs 2007; Giles 2009) alongside cultural studies of the meaning of these remains (e.g. Sanders 2009; Ravn 2010) have widened the remit of bog body studies. This makes it a rich and timely moment to reset that agenda.

Defining bogs and bog bodies

The term ‘bog bodies’ is a translation of ‘*Moorleiche*’, a concept first defined by Johanna Mestorf in her 1871 catalogue of twelve sets of well-preserved remains from Ireland, Denmark and Germany (van der Sanden 1996: 49). The once-lauded but now deeply problematised survey by Dieck in 1965 was supplanted for the UK and Ireland by publications such as Turner and Briggs (1986) and van der Sanden (1996), who included a wide variety of remains, skeletal and well-preserved, from blanket bogs and raised mires as well as fenlands. In common with those catalogues, this book argues for a reconceptualisation of the bog body: to bring within our discursive orbit not just the ‘paper’ bodies known through archival research and desiccated or shrivelled body parts that have not benefitted from conservation treatment, but skeletal remains such as those from Sweden (Bergerbrant *et al.* 2013) and Denmark (Ravn 2011). Due to an accident of temperature or hydrology, they may not be mummified in the same way as their most iconic counterparts yet there is nonetheless an intent to bury or inter these remains in a similar locale (Fredengren 2018). This study also argues that our contextualisation of these bog bodies must embrace other wet contexts – the mere, the lake, the spring and watering hollow, even the damp ditches of enclosures – if we are to properly understand the reasons behind the association of human remains and bodies of water in later prehistory. Finally, it will resituate the apparently horrific violence meted out to many bog bodies within wider evidence for violence in the Iron Age

and Roman world. The book follows Redfern's (2016: 4) use of World Heritage Organisation definitions to draw wherever possible, a distinction between violence and trauma; the former implies the intentional use of physical force (threatened or actual) against another human, with the high likelihood of causing injury, harm, death or deprivation. Trauma, meanwhile, may arise from accident as much as human incident, and where there is doubt over the cause of injury, this will be raised and discussed. The book will go on to argue that it is ourselves, as archaeologists, who have tended to elevate these bog figures above their dryland counterparts, as victims of 'overkill'. In fact, recidivism as well as selective display and deposition is seen at many Iron Age and early Roman sites. The book will argue that this is in part because we have unduly focused upon one reductive yet popular explanation, heavily influenced by the iconic study of Glob ([1969] 1971): ritual sacrifice. In fact, many of these deaths should remain as 'open verdicts', certainly in terms of the motivations behind such deaths. Following Joy (2009), it will propose a variety of possibilities relating to different case studies, including accidental death, formal burial and suicide while resituating obvious cases of violence within the anthropology of bellicosity and the performance of power in small-scale societies. As such, the division between apparently 'pragmatic' and more 'ritualised' explanations of bog body violence will become blurred. Instead, the notion of the generative affect of violent performance will be critically discussed within the notion of both a 'sacrificial' and a 'destructive' economy (after Fontijn 2020). It will also critically consider how these practices might have been shaped and transformed anew by the Roman Empire, in those countries facing conquest and occupation, as well as those on the edge of this colonial 'ripple effect'.

The book will also think differently about the bog, too often seen as a marginal place or cultural backwater, with pejorative associations. Their ecology might be restricted but the environmental and archaeological evidence suggests that such peatlands were wet clots of life: seething with rather strange inhabitants, fuelling both household needs and spiritual beliefs, endowed with the power of appearing to hold death in stasis. In sum, the book seeks to humanise but contextualise the dead who come from its depths, setting them back within the wider martial character of later prehistoric society, and it will ultimately champion both these places and these human remains not just as of international archaeological significance but as extraordinary loci for the human imagination.

The afterlife of the bog body

The book takes a rather different approach to prior studies. It does not attempt the masterly synthesis of an international catalogue (e.g. van der Sanden 1996), or report in detail on a single, iconic example (e.g. Stead *et al.* 1986; Asingh and Lynnerup 2007; Joy 2009; Fischer 2012), although Chapter 7 will present in brief the results of a new programme of analysis on Worsley Man – the bog 'head' from Manchester Museum. Nor does it adopt a single interpretive lens (Ross and Robins

1989), conceptual framework (such as sacrifice, Aldhouse-Green 2002) or trope (such as forensic discovery and examination, Aldhouse-Green 2016). Instead, the book's value lies in taking an afterlife approach to the discovery, conservation, analysis, interpretation and display of bog bodies. While the 'biographical' turn pioneered by Kopytoff (1986) has been criticised in relation to object studies (see Gosden and Marshall 1999; Hahn and Weiss 2013; Fontijn 2020), I argue that a form of this approach is apposite for the archaeology of human remains because it situates the reader appropriately within both the 'life' or rather the 'afterlife' of these bog bodies, as they manifest themselves to us in the present.

The book thus starts with how they come to us: beginning in [Chapter 2](#) with the discovery of these well-preserved remains, arguing that their reception must be contextualised within attitudes of the day. The antiquarians of the 1600s and 1700s who marvelled at the preservation of flesh and hair were shaped by ideologies of saintly preservation, where the state of a corpse embodied something of its spiritual purity. Others were excited by the processes that led to this well-preserved state of being as well as the artefacts found nearby, torn between biblical and scientific explanation. This differs palpably from nineteenth-century discoveries where ideas about racial origin and population movement drove the selective retention and study of remains (as we shall see with Ashton Man). In some countries, such as Denmark, nationalist agendas sought to 'name' them as historically attested royal or political figures. Yet the nature of these discoveries almost always resulted in a parallel local narrative of a folkloric 'lost' figure – a well-renowned drunkard, ne'er do well or lost maidservant, whose mysterious disappearance might finally be resolved. By the 1950s–1980s, the first thought that often sprang to mind from Britain to Denmark was that these were more recent murder victims. Treated first and foremost as police cases, using the nascent but burgeoning suite of forensic techniques, these methods would ultimately transform not just the discipline but the very metaphors through which it was conceptualised. Meanwhile, the discovery of human remains in the borderlands of Ireland had much starker contemporary parallels with those 'disappeared' as part of the sectarian violence known euphemistically as the 'Troubles' (dating from the 1970s–1990s), giving these bog bodies quite a different societal weight. As the [final chapter](#) will discuss, Heaney's skill in making the bog bodies 'speak back' to current fears – Nobel Prize notwithstanding – was not without criticism. The call for reburial of some of these remains in the twenty-first century, particularly in the UK, has shaken archaeological presumptions: some professionals have themselves questioned their rights to curate these remains (discussed later in [Chapter 8](#)). [Chapter 2](#) thus shows how sociopolitical, cultural and religious beliefs have shaped the recovery and fate of those remains: whether they were kept, reburied, defiled or curated.

[Chapter 3](#) then considers the next step on their 'afterlife', as they enter the archaeological archive or laboratory. It introduces the concept of the aura of the bog body as a key quality of their special status in the archaeological world, and draws in particular on ideas from Moshenska (2006) and Sanders (2009) on the disquieting effect of remains that appear to defy time. Yet it faces head-on the conundrum

that as soon as these bodies are exhumed, time ‘starts’ again, altering not merely appearance but scientific value. It conducts a historical review of the methods, processes and recipes used to defer their ultimate decay, highlighting best practice as well as the practical problems that curators face in both laboratory and gallery. The chapter’s main thrust, however, is to situate this task within the wider debates in conservation philosophy. It will evaluate how the initial preservation ethic of managed decay (preserving an object’s ‘pastness’ and ‘age-value’, Holtorf 2017 – concepts that will be critically discussed) butted up against the more vigorous and interventionist strategies to replicate the effects of the bog and keep time at bay. It discusses not only how scientific progress shaped these curatorial policies but how cultural attitudes to well-preserved human remains also created ideological quandaries for museum experts. Through the example of Tolland Man (among others) it will consider whether the ‘sleight of hand’ performed through museum conservation is deceptive: altering the authenticity of the object. Yet through curatorial testimonies, it will ultimately defend their practice as a form of care that should be more robustly foregrounded in exhibition narratives.

Chapter 4 mimics the archaeological process to ask where and why they were placed in the peat, through a cultural and environmental ‘crossing’ of the bog landscape. It describes different kinds of peatlands and their peculiar and restricted ecology, evoking the changes in climate, precipitation and landscape management that characterised later prehistory. It will evidence the growth of bogs during this era, and consider how these communities might have navigated its quaking surface. The chapter will consider the risks they faced, not just physically but through the supernatural phenomenon that might have been thought to dwell there. Using historic archives and folklore, it will bring this perceived animacy of the bog to life through accounts of ‘bog bursts’ and boggarts. It will use this to conjure the notion of the bog as a place where this and other worlds might touch: a ‘thin’ place, a place of safekeeping but also a threshold or portal, where the sacred might be revealed. The negative meanings attached to this by the Christian Church, as well as the dangers increasingly faced by working in the bog, will help explain the pejorative attitudes that became common in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. These will be situated with the landscape politics of the day: the discourse of ‘improvement’ and contest over peat itself, heralding the slow disappearance of this valuable environment. Yet by considering its hidden wealth – its plant and animal life, its craft materials and fuel and its role in the psychogeography of later prehistoric people – it will try to see these landscapes differently. Having examined why and how people crossed into the bog, and what they took from it, the next chapter turns to what was given back.

Chapter 5 considers the range of both ‘exquisite’ and ‘everyday’ things interred in mosses across northern Europe, from wagons, chariotry and horse gear, weapons and cauldrons, to agricultural tools, foodstuffs, cloth and jewellery, even hair. Having conjured the range of depositions made, it will then consider how we interpret these acts: were they gifts with supernatural beings, gods or deities? The bog may have been seen as a threshold where exchanges had to be made or merely the

'right' place to leave things. These open up to us the character of these people, the issues and themes that consumed them and the skills and achievements embodied in the things given to, or kept by, the bog. It seeks to understand the moral logic of these acts, their concepts of value and the purpose of sacrificial exchange. Yet the chapter also argues (in common with Fontijn 2020) that in some ways it was in the act of giving up that things achieved their true value in a shifting and threatening world. Finally, it will end with the phenomenon of the wooden bog figures, to bridge discussions of the artefactual and corporeal, dissolving some of the conceptual boundaries between people and things.

Chapter 6 looks death directly in the face, through the forensic evidence of bog body trauma and violence, examining how a variety of different individuals lived, before they met their 'violent ends'. It will tease out evidence from both surviving skeletal elements and flesh, hair, teeth and nails, pre-mortem injury, disease and diet, to address questions of origin, life history and mobility. Recent discoveries in Ireland and new scientific analysis undertaken particularly in Denmark have challenged our understanding of how and why some individuals ended up in the bog, rethinking how these communities dealt with difficult or dangerous death through this powerful locale. The chapter engages critically with the notion that some of these figures were selected on the basis either of disfigurement or disability, as if 'marked' out as some kind of natural victim or scapegoat. It goes on to evaluate recent ideas by Fredengren (2018) on the notion of 'slow violence' meted out to marginal figures that might lead successfully to their final fate as suitable sacrifices. Yet it will contrast this notion with evidence that other bog bodies were robust, well-fed and well-treated individuals, considering how these individuals came to be singled out for death. This idea must be situated within evidence from other later Bronze Age, Iron Age and early Roman sites, using mortality data and wider understanding of later prehistoric society to think critically about the boundaries of such communities and the motivations that might lead to exile or execution, particularly at times of societal stress or crises.

Its starting point is thus not the texts of the classical authors, although these will be critically considered in passing. The risk is that in evoking the shocking levels of violence seen in these remains we create a contemporary exoticising and othering of these 'populations of the north' (Webster 1999). Instead, it will use ethnographic and historical approaches to conflict, to examine how bellicosity, injury, torture and killing were used as tropes of power in small-scale agricultural communities, and it will confront both the politics and poetics of that violence, through a consideration of the *affect* of taking life in very specific ways. By contrasting the evidence from well-known to new examples, it will situate these wounds and modes of death within the wider evidence for violence in the middle to late Bronze Age, Iron Age and importantly, early Roman communities. Both place and performance, weaponry and wounds will be brought into sharp focus, to show that the reasons behind these deaths were numerous. Accidental drowning, suicide, mugging and murder, execution of captives, blood debt and revenge, punishment for betrayal and crime, as well as a critical approach to sacrifice, will all

be considered. The chapter will point in particular to the violent ‘boundary’ work that went on to define and defend a community (Sharples 2010), as well as the performative stages of violence that might precede death itself (Giles 2012). It studies not only how these individuals died but what they might have considered a ‘good death’ to rethink how people conceptualised sacrifice, especially where death may not have been seen as the end of life, but a threshold into the agency of the ancestral or the divine. It will feature some of the evidence for this post-mortem agency, as both curated relics, unsettling corpses and vivid memories for those caught up in such deaths.

Chapter 7 brings these ideas to bear upon the ‘cold case’ study of Manchester Museum’s own ‘bog head’: Worsley Man. From first-hand eyewitness accounts and newspaper reports of its discovery, to a discussion of his rather robust conservation, current care and curatorial history, it will present the full biography of this ‘bog head’. This will include results of a new dating programme, non-invasive imaging and forensic examination of the trauma associated with the head. Worsley Man will be situated within the turbulent and dangerous world of the conquest of the north and the to and fro of troops on the ground. The chapter will return to the comments of the classical authors in this light, to think both about their perspective on indigenous violence that their army, with its novel forms of combat and punishment, wrought. It will end with a critical review of how Worsley Man has been displayed since the 1980s, noting how he became a strange exile: confined back into the museum’s store, during Lindow Man’s latest return to the north in a 2008–9 exhibition. As the peculiar case of Lancashire and Cheshire shows, these discoveries led to a feeling both of responsibility and even ownership, the long-term consequences of which became apparent as these remains moved into museological care. In seeking to understand why northern British bog bodies seem to inspire such strong feelings, the chapter will contextualise these tensions not just within the politics of cultural capital but the north-west phenomenon of the ‘screaming skull’ and the folklore associated with ‘caring for’ and respecting the ancient dead.

Worsley Man will thus act as an interpretive bridge to the penultimate Chapter 8 on ‘disquieting exhibits’: an examination of how bog bodies are displayed across northern Europe. Moving between archival records of past exhibitions and contemporary displays, enlivened by curatorial interview, the chapter examines the narrative tropes, contextual scene-setting and artefactual relations, as well as modes of display employed in what might be deemed ‘difficult’ or ‘dark’ heritage (Sather-Wagstaff 2011; Stone *et al.* 2018). Building on previous work (Giles 2009; Joy 2009) it engages critically with the notion that there has been a curatorial ‘loss of confidence’ and overt concern with marginal viewpoints (Jenkins 2011) in the display of human remains particularly in the UK (see Williams and Giles 2016). It argues that with bog bodies this is particularly acute due to the ethics of displaying violent death, often ‘sanctified’ through the trope of sacrifice. It will then analyse the curious fascination for facial reconstruction that has obsessed bog body studies (Prag and Neave 1999), asking why this further act of bringing us ‘face to

face' with the past is felt necessary for well-preserved remains. Finally, it will highlight examples of museological innovation across northern Europe that manage to both appal and enchant: connecting visitors with the humanity of these remains while not diminishing the violence they have witnessed.

The conclusion of this book, [Chapter 9](#), returns to the 'riddling power' of the bog body and its unnerving and moving sway over our imagination, navigating its resonant power in bringing difficult truths to light. Ultimately, it will argue that alongside more formal burials, these remains should be foregrounded as ways of encouraging debates over violence, mortality and the human story – encouraging both public and professionals to 'talk more of the dead' (Büster *et al.* 2018).

Conclusion

Drawing this introduction to a close, it should be clear to the reader that the central topic of this book is death, often at the end of a blade or garotte, and what people do with the remains of the dead, both in the past and in the present. It seeks to avoid judging those communities while, hopefully, bringing to the fore something of the shock that we surely should feel in understanding the violence dealt out to these individuals. Yet in telling their stories, and trying to understand the seemingly warped logic of these worlds, the book needs also to touch on very stuff of life. It seeks to understand violence as a strategy of control, negotiation and exchange, which is inevitably bound up with beliefs around identity, power and the enduring theme of fertility. Importantly, it does not diminish the variety of evidence, nor the difference in motivations, that might have led people to those moments – it tries to keep that interpretive door open. To do so, as I have argued, requires a post-biographical approach to the remains that takes us from the moment of discovery, through analysis and interpretation, to display and the creative legacy they leave imprinted upon our imagination. To that end, let us begin, by turning the pages of one of the very first written accounts of a British 'bog body'.

2 Discovering bog bodies

Introduction

They lay in the peat moss 28 years and 9 months before they were looked at again, when some Countrymen, having observed, I suppose, the extraordinary Quality of this Soil, in preserving dead bodies from corrupting, were curious enough to open the ground to see if these Persons had been so preserved, and found them in no way altered, the Colour of their Skin being fair and natural, their Flesh soft as that of Persons newly dead. (Part of a letter from Dr Charles Balguy of Peterborough, to Cromwell Mortimer, MD, cited in Balguy 1735: 413)

This correspondence between two men of science alludes to the bog bodies that have become known (somewhat ironically) as the ‘Hope couple’ (van der Sanden 1996: 19). While a historic case, whose tragic end on the upland peat bog of Hope Woodland was well documented by the local vicar, Wormald, this telling line in Balguy’s letter alludes to a phenomenon of peat preservation that was apparently well known by the locals. Balguy had grown up in the parish of Hope; his forebears were ‘Overseers of the Poor’ and their signatures litter the accounts of small payments to widows and orphans or countersign canny expulsions of unmarried mothers crossing to ‘the other side’ of a parish boundary to defray any ongoing financial responsibility towards these poor women. He himself took a medical path, which perhaps explains his curiosity about the local couple who died in a snowstorm and were buried where they fell.

The background to these events is intriguing. On 14 January 1674, a man named Barber – a ‘considerable Grazier ... well-known by the People that found him ... [but] reduced in Circumstances’, as Balguy (1735: 413) puts it – set off for Ireland with his maidservant. Whether Barber was married or not, or whether this was an elopement due to their servant and master relationship, is unclear. The route they took was precarious: marked for the first half only by prehistoric cairns, sheep walks and perhaps a packhorse track, but lacking many of the stone-built enclosure walls and formal paths visible on the later first edition Ordnance Survey

map. It is thought that they were trying to cross Whin Hill: the sharp eminence that overshadowed their valley. Perhaps it was the most visible landmark on a dark day, but before them lay the upland bog that skirted this peak. They did not make it. Intimate details are revealed in Balguy's account, gleaned from his close colleague Dr Bourn of Chesterfield, who saw the remains in 1716 and recalled that the woman was dressed 'in new serge' while the man had on 'a Broad-cloth coat, which he had tried to tear a skirt off, but could not' (Balguy 1735: 414). The detail of this well-preserved clothing, which had nonetheless failed to protect them from the engulfing snow, is both moving and appalling. They were not found until May of that year, with 'Snow lasting probably the greatest part of the Time' (Balguy 1735: 413), by which point the smell of the decaying bodies prompted the coroner to recommend that they be buried on the spot (Cox 1877). Yet there was another reason to bury them there: dying in a non-ecclesiastical parish, without so much as a chapel nearby, absolved anyone of the responsibility – or cost – of formal burial. The 'whiff of scandal' that Briggs and Turner (1986: 183) detect in this case might also explain their abandonment to the peat. It was only forty-eight years later, as we shall see, that they were accorded Christian interment: Barber's grandson being 'at the Expense of a decent Funeral for them' (Balguy 1735: 414).

Balguy's letter was motivated by his scientific interest in the phenomenon of the bog body, eager to communicate this to the wider audience of the Royal Society, following a number of letters and reports about such remains (e.g. King 1685; Leigh 1700). Yet his view is poised on the cusp of conflicting interpretations about these bodies, and how their remarkable preservation was understood by contemporary society. This chapter concerns the discovery of such remains – what people felt and why they were sometimes motivated, like the locals of Hope valley, to seek them out. The chapter traces transformations in attitudes towards bodies from the bog, from the earliest archival records to the recent past: examining how these bodies were reported and to whom, how the condition of such corpses was understood and how this shaped the fate of their remains. It charts the move from late medieval supernatural awe and folkloric fear to antiquarian curiosity; historic tensions in religious beliefs about the dead and their afterlives during the Reformation and its aftermath, to the rise of Enlightenment paradigms that sought to explain through science rather than to sacralise. It then turns to the claims laid upon these remains as they became evidence in nineteenth-century nationalist narratives: examining the role bog bodies played in racial and then ethnic debates over the long-term past of a people. Finally, it shows how their lives and deaths are now firmly shaped by forensic discourse. Throughout, the chapter argues that despite their marvellous preservation, the dead will not simply 'speak' to us; their stories are filtered through beliefs of the day, which determined whether they were reburied, kept or curated. This historiographic approach also reveals the poetics of encounter, helping us to understand the shifting, peculiar power of these remains.

'Such a cry about a corpse' ... stories of the marvellous dead

The poem of St Erkenwald was composed around AD 1400, and judging by its dialect, it was written by a native of Cheshire or someone living close to the north border of Wales, around the time of the Glyndwr rebellion (Anon. 1977). Its central concern was an understanding of the turbulence through which English Christianity had emerged, providing cautionary context to the later medieval rebellion that was unfolding around the author. But what interests us here is an overlooked passage concerning well-preserved remains. Like the disruptive effect of the body revealed in the poem, its opening lines disorientate the reader in time and disabuse them of any simple, linear history (Schwyzer 2006: 4). Set in the Anglo-Saxon period, lines 43–158 tell of the destruction of a pagan shrine by Erkenwald's congregation, in order to raise the 'New Werke' of what would become St Paul's Cathedral. But as the workmen 'dyght and delve so depe into the earth / They founden formyt on a flore a fery faire tombe' ('dug and delved so deep into the earth / they found formed on a floor a wonderfully fair tomb') (Anon. 1977: lines 45–46). The description of the interment, with its gold-inscribed lettering and stone sarcophagus, sounds more Roman than Iron Age, as does the description of the 'a blissfull body', a 'marvel' resplendent with gold-hemmed raiment, crown and sceptre, but it is the state of the body and its clothes that attracts the poet's main attention:

His clothes were spotless, without any sign of being mouldered, spotted or moth-eaten, and were as brightly coloured with glistening hues, as if they had been woven yesterday in that churchyard. Likewise his face was fresh, and the visible flesh of his ears and hands was fresh and ruddy as the rose, with two red lips, as if he in full health had slipped suddenly into sleep. (Anon. 1977: lines 85–92)

As Schwyzer (2006: 6) goes on to explain, any later medieval reader of this stanza would have immediately connected this discovery to the miraculously preserved bodies found in other Christian settings, such as Joan of Acre from Clare Priory in Suffolk or the iconic remains of St Cuthbert that formed the centrepiece of pilgrimage at Durham Cathedral (O'Brien 2016). As Bede himself put it, 'opening the tomb, [they] found his body entire, as if he were still alive, and his joints flexible, as if he were not dead but sleeping. His clothes also, were still undecayed, and seem to retain their original freshness and colour' (Giles 1863: 343). Likewise, the tenth century account of the *Passio Sancti Edmundi* by Abbo of Fleury made much of the fact that despite a violent decapitation, repeated exhumations and inspections of both the body and head of St Edmund found them to be miraculously rejoined: the cut represented only by a thin red line, arrow wounds marvellously healed and the body immaculately preserved, attributed by Abbo to his chaste life and martyrdom (van der Sanden 1996: 65). For medieval audiences, incorruptibility was part of the means through which saintliness was evidenced. Yet the poet of St Erkenwald imaginatively conjures instead the shock of the Saxons, who do not yet conceptualise corporeal preservation as a miracle. Tellingly, Schwyzer

(2006: 7) uses the example of Iron Age bog bodies at this point in his study to evoke the rupturing effect of such a discovery, and likens Erkenwald's disconcerted flock to those of British Museum visitors, gathered around Lindow Man – ironically (given the original authorial locus of the poem), one of Cheshire's own prehistoric 'bog bodies'.

In the poem, the discovery causes 'such a cry about a cors / crakit evermore' ('such a cry about a corpse / sounding constantly') (line 110) that Bishop Erkenwald himself is called to intervene. He confronts the remains and bids them (in Christ's name) to talk. The figure is momentarily animated by 'sum lant ghostlyfe' ('some borrowed ghost-life') revealing himself to be no king, knight nor Caesar but a judge from the time of Belinius, in 'New Troie' (London), c.382 BC (king, city and date borrowed from Geoffrey of Monmouth's hagiography, 1966). Thus the poem presents us with an apparently well-preserved Iron Age body discovered under the very foundations of St Paul's. This is unlikely to be true – while there are isolated pockets of peat recorded on the south side of the river, the sub-surface geology recorded in borehole data for St Paul's consists of sands and silts overlying the blue clays of the Langley Silt Member (British Geological Survey 2019). This could not have been a traditional 'peat' preserved bog body, or at least not from this exact locale.

Unlike his congregation, Erkenwald is not perturbed by its appearance, musing that 'Thi body may be embawmyd / hit bashis me nought' ('thy body may be embalmed / it does not disconcert me') (Anon. 1977: line 261). Yet the corpse replies his preservation is not by human hand but by God himself, by virtue of a life lived in exemplary service of his people: his combined 'meekness and manliness'. However, while his body was bestowed with incorruptibility, he groans wearily that his soul is in limbo, being pagan and thus ignorant of 'Thee and thy laws' – in other words, God and his covenant with humanity. At this story, the bishop is moved to tears, and one drop falls on the body, performing a remarkable post-mortem baptism that releases the soul from purgatory into heaven. The act itself becomes of one the miracles that ensure Erkenwald's own sainthood, but there then follows a remarkable alliterative account of rapid putrefaction that suggests first-hand witness of the opening of a well-sealed tomb:

Whyt this cessayd his owne, sayd he no more.
 Bot sodenly his swete chere swyndid and faylid
 And all the blee of his body wos blakke as the moldes
 As roten as the rottek that rises in powdere.
 For as sone as the soule was sesyd in blisse,
 Corrupt was that of thir crafte that coverte the bones.
 (With this his voice ceased and he said no more.
 But suddenly his sweet expression faded and failed
 And all the colour of his body was as black as mould
 As rotten as the decayed matter that rises in powder.
 For as soon as the soul was possessed of bliss,
 the material that covered the bones decomposed.) (Anon. 1977: lines 341–6)

What intrigues us here is not the veracity of the incident nor the theological debate that the poem posed to medieval and later scholars, but how the discovery of an incorruptible body was not just received in medieval times but *used*. Schwyzer (2006: 15) sees the Iron Age judge as an example of quasi-*inventiones* – an act of revelation used in this passage not to give veracity to a medieval relic (as was normally the case), but to ‘confront the enduring presence of the old possessors just beneath the shallow surface of English life’: a kind of ‘colonial archaeology’ designed to give respect and reverence to virtuous pagans even as the act of exhumation consigned them to dust. It is a quite brilliant insight, germane to the making not just of written history but ‘of homeland’ as Schwyzer (2006) puts it: a power exuded by our very real ‘bog bodies’, to which I will return later.

This is not the only medieval story of a well-preserved corpse underlying a Christian site. A folkloric tale from Clonmacnoise, Co. Offaly, tells of how the monks here initially refused to believe a local poet’s tale that a great warrior was buried in the midst of this early foundation (Carey 1999). During the digging of a grave however, the well-preserved body of a ‘yellow-haired giant’ emerged, marred by a head wound and covered in blood and birch leaves. Yet the following day the corpse had disappeared. Carey (1999: 13) considers whether this was either a forerunner for the ‘Arthurian’ burial myth later associated with Glastonbury, or the effect of monastic readings of classical texts pertaining to barbarian bodies interred in the bog. Either way, the parallels with the St Erkenwald tale and the haunting presence of an earlier, pre-Christian inhabitant of a sacred place are rather uncanny.

Why do these earliest accounts of well-preserved bodies matter? All of our written accounts of bog bodies (from Britain and Ireland to Denmark, Germany and Sweden) are viewed through the lens of Christian eschatology: Catholic, Protestant and non-Conformist, until the early twentieth century. To understand what their *discovery* meant requires us to understand how a preserved corpse was perceived within these faiths, and yet it is here we find the conundrum embodied in the St Erkenwald poem. Not all well-preserved bodies were ‘marvels’. Despite the common perception of a perfect corpse as a sign of sainthood (such as Bede’s account of Etheldreda, whose flesh ‘could not suffer corruption’ having never been defiled by man, see Giles 1863: ch. XIX), other narratives such as *The Golden Legend* instead present us with troubled bodies, as in the monk who had renounced his vows and was thus ‘rejected by the earth’ (Schwyzer 2006: 10). These latter incorruptibles were plagued not by piety but unfinished pursuits: whether sacred (needing to redeem themselves through consecration or blessing) or secular (fulfilling a debt or righting a wrong). Such individuals may have received the normal Christian rites of burial but their post-mortem behaviour was a sign that something was amiss. Their state need not necessarily mimic the corporeal perfection of the Iron Age magistrate: swollen putrescence was particular grounds for concern. As Watkins (2013: 36, my emphasis) evokes, ‘bloating bodies ... were hauled from the graves, their supernatural corruption, their failure to *dissolve naturally in the churchyard earth, but rather to survive and swell*, demonstrating their ongoing

vitality and capacity for harm. Revenants might also be horribly emaciated yet still lifelike, as in the case of the ghost met by Mr Snowball of Ampleforth who combined the ghastly thinness of the dead with animacy: walking abroad (Watkins 2013: 27). It was thus the corporeal failure to decay *properly* that could lead to the suspicion that further intervention was required by the living, on behalf of the dead.

In rare monastic accounts, such as those written down by a monk from Byland Abbey in North Yorkshire, this often led to violent solutions: disinterment, decapitation, dismemberment or cremation, even for a 'Christian' body (Watkins 2013: 37). Rarely, this also required removal or reburial in a different locale, as in the case of the revenant priest John Tankerley, who was exhumed from Byland Abbey itself and consigned (at his abbot's behest) in the black lake of Gormire (Watkins 2013: 34), or Abbot Brihtwold of Malmesbury, whose evil disposition and death in a drinking bout led to his exhumation from the consecrated ground of St Andrews and burial in a 'marsh' (Blair 2009). (Note the watery fate of such remains, suggesting a well-practised use of lake, mere or marsh, to deal with the 'difficult' dead). St Etheldreda herself may have been preserved through an uncanny set of coincidences: an aesthete whom Bede assures us ate only once a day, she finally fell victim to a tumour on the jaw, which must have further inhibited ingestion, and was interred in a simple wooden coffin in the marshy ground of the abbey of Ely. Aesthetic lifestyles no doubt reduced bacteria in the stomach that normally initiated decay, while the 'cold storage' effect of a crypt or frozen and waterlogged burial grounds all help explain the preponderance of early medieval 'saintly' incorruptibles (Chamberlain and Parker Pearson 2001: 21). Turner has even suggested that St Edmund's incorruptible body might indicate that it was originally a 'bog body' from the Fenlands, interpreted by its discoverers as the remains of this local saint (cited in van der Sanden 1996: 65). The power of such remains in the medieval period were astonishing: a 'headstrong young man' who insisted on seeing the remains of St Edmund 'lost his mind when it was shown to him', whereas the 'doubting' Abbot Leofstan, motivated in the mid-eleventh century to forcibly test the join of head and body, found his hands to be paralysed and his 'speech and sight' damaged (van der Sanden 1996: 65). By the seventeenth century, however, when our couple from Hope set out as the snow clouds gathered, attitudes towards the miraculously preserved dead had changed.

The 'dangerous dead'

The split from the Catholic Church that began in England as a political affair under the reign of Henry VIII, was of course part of a much greater process of Reformation across northern Europe, affecting most of the countries within the scope of this study – principally Germany, the Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden, Belgium and Scotland, with Ireland notable for its resistance to religious change. This Protestant faith officially removed belief in purgatory. Such a radical shift

in eschatology took time to percolate, or rather, to be reluctantly and sometimes violently implemented, at the level of the parish – let alone within the confines of a household dealing with the dying (Duffy 2005; Watkins 2013). While purgatory existed, a corpse that failed to decay or a ghostly apparition that haunted the living could be explained as a being who was delayed or detained (normally through sin) in a place of suffering; their fate could be expediated through prayer, memorial masses, even papal indulgence (Watkins 2013: 50). If all else failed, there was a suite of apotropaically effective measures (usually combining Christian texts or blessed substances with binding prayers, gestures or funereal acts) that were remarkably effective (Gordon 2020). Our Byland Abbey monk made a habit of recording as many as possible (Gordon 2020). This was augmented by what Gilchrist (2008) has described as ‘magic for the dead’: anticipatory folkloric apotropaism at the graveside that combined the best of both worlds in a mix of material and ritual practices to ensure successful passage into the afterlife or deal with fears about a future restless spirit.

Yet we have already seen a tension emerging in the later medieval period that haunted both clerics and laity through to the eighteenth century, regarding these well-preserved bodies. They might be a ‘marvel’ as the imagined Saxon congregation described Erkenwald’s pagan – they might even be a saint like Etheldreda – but others were feared as both bodies and souls that were not at peace and required some kind of efficacious intervention. Reformed eschatology could not explain this phenomenon since there was no purgatory in which to be detained. Worse, what if one could not, now, influence the fate of the deceased through prayer or apotropaic offering? Both the putrescent and incorruptible dead gained a power that was new, dangerous and troubling, and the Reformation had stripped away many of the mortuary techniques and folk methods used to deal with such bodies.

We do not know how many human remains from bogs were uncovered during the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries, only to be immediately reburied during this turbulent era, not least because antiquarianism itself was in its infancy. The moment of discovery is thus rarely recorded, usually because the finder was a peat cutter or ditch digger and we only hear of those whose discovery reached the ears of a diarist, literate cleric, medical man, gentleman scholar or, in the case of Ireland, the Ordnance surveyors who conducted extensive interviews during the mid-nineteenth century. In some of the earliest records, we sense the immediate effect of such remains on those who discovered them. The Amcotts Woman from the Isle of Axholm in Lincolnshire was found in 1747 by a ‘labouring man’, when his peat spade cut through the toe of a sandal and a foot. It ‘dropped into the cut he was greaving Peat in ... which terrified the Man, and he left it’ (Stovin 1747: 571). Even in 1866, the sight of a well-preserved coffin burial in Bressay, Shetland had a similar effect upon the men assisting a figure no less than James Hunt, one of the founders of the Anthropological Society:

When the men who dug up this coffin saw the contents they could not be got to render any further assistance, and declared the sight and smell had turned their

‘insides out’, this was, however, purely the effect of imagination. It was with some difficulty I could get them to bring some clean water for me and to deposit it at some yards distant. I had gone to Lerwick for a packing case, and the sailors who brought me over hesitated to take back a skeleton. (Hunt 1866b: 369)

In many instances, it was the clothing or footwear that attracted detailed description and was often retained: a pair of shoes from Hatfield Chase Moss found in the Elizabethan period had apparently hung in the hall of the Trigotts at South Kirby, South Yorkshire (Hunter 1828), but of the body itself we have no record. In 1813, in Drumadreen (Ireland), Robert Fleming and his wife discovered a fascinating long garment belonging to a woman while digging peat. It was retrieved and sold for two shillings and sixpence to be ‘brought to Belfast’, but the discovery of a puncture wound, a substance resembling clotted blood and locks of hair disconcerted the finders who ‘did not make a further search but believe[d] the body or bones are still near the spot’ (Briggs and Turner 1986: 190, no. 79). A later entry in the Ordnance Survey Memoirs suggests that someone did indeed return to search again, for a grave in the local farm was reported to contain the body of this woman alongside the hat of a ‘Highland soldier’ who fell ‘in the troubles of 1641’ (Briggs and Turner 1986: 191, no. 79). A long wooden sword also reputed to have been found in the bog was long lost. Later Ordnance Survey Memoirs record that the grave was ‘in a dilapidated state ... altogether composed of turf moss. From the beating of the tempests the grave is partly stripped and many of the bones are exposed to wind and weather’ (Briggs and Turner 1986: 191, no. 79). We can sense here the power of a degraded bog skeleton to disconcert these early British map makers, trying to chart the fluid boundaries of what must have been to them an unfamiliar and unwelcoming land (see Friel 1980).

Some of these remains were firmly dealt with through the authority of the contemporary church. The Danish discovery in 1797 of a ‘small, stocky man’ wearing two capes led to the making of a simple coffin and interment in Holbøl churchyard (van der Sanden 1996: 41). A church burial was also accorded to the Korselitse bog find, on Falster island, of a ‘strand of long hair’, bones, glass beads and a bronze brooch (van der Sanden 1996: 42) – though as we shall see later in the chapter, this was a temporary fate. In the Netherlands, the remains of Terhaarsterveen Man, found in 1891, were ‘properly laid in a coffin’ before reburial in the cemetery at Ter Apel, scuppering the plans of the museum correspondent, Landweer, to make a full report (van der Sanden 1996: 53). A photograph of the coroner’s report reveals that the doctor tasked with this autopsy confirmed that ‘the person in question is truly dead’ (van der Sanden 1996) – a strange phrase that hints at ongoing concerns with such well-preserved remains, now proved to date between 195 BC and AD 110. Meanwhile, in the UK, an individual colourfully arrayed in green ‘toga’, scarlet dress, yellow stockings and fine sandals was found on Grewelthorpe Moor (an upland blanket bog) by the Grainge brothers in 1850. The clothes were associated with flesh ‘tanned into a kind of fatty white substance [that] had a very offensive smell’ (Lukis 1892: ix). One sandal and fragments of stocking were salvaged

by the local constable and presented to the Yorkshire Philosophical Society (now in the Yorkshire Museum) but the human remains were buried in the churchyard of Kirby Malzeard (Lukis 1892). The post-mortem claiming of the dead for Christ is also recorded at Grinton in Swaledale, where a bog body was formally recorded as having been interred in the churchyard in 1797 (Briggs and Turner 1986: 146, no. 43). Human remains from Whixall Moss in Cheshire found in 1889 were similarly interred in the local cemetery, as soon the coroner disclaimed any interest in an inquest (van der Sanden 1996: 62). Likewise, the bones and skin of a decapitated individual from Dolfawr Fair in Ceredigion, Wales were reburied in a church at Ystrad Meurig in 1811 (Turner and Briggs 1986: 146, cat. no. 48). In Scotland too, the bog bodies from Hoy (Cowie *et al.* 2011: 23, cat. no. 11) and Mochrum (Cowie *et al.* 2011: 34, cat. no. 37) were given 'decent interment' in Christian soil, as Dr James Kennedy – tasked with investigating the former body – put it (in Cowie *et al.* 2011: 24, 34).

In contrast, the Drumard bog skeleton in Co. Derry, Ireland was 'buried on the site where found' in 1836 (Cowie *et al.* 2011: 191) and Terrydremont South Woman found with a crutch in the bog in 1832 was 'collected together and buried *very deep* in the same place where they were found' (Cowie *et al.* 2011: 192, cat. no. 89, my emphasis). The depth of reinterment may have been part of the strategy through which locals ensured they did not physically or spiritually 'rise again' to the surface of the bog.

A body found in Drumkeeragh, Co. Down in 1780 was the subject of an extended essay by the Countess of Moira (1783) and once again, clothing was retained and analysed while the 'bones were re-interred nearby in the bog' (Cowie *et al.* 2011: 192, cat. no. 94). In the course of her 'praiseworthy study' and diligent search for remains of body and textile evidence (van der Sanden 1996: 47) she perceptively changed her interpretation of these remains from those of an unfortunate Elizabethan famine victim to someone from the time of the 'druids' (van der Sanden 1996: 48). Meanwhile, a decapitated murder victim found in Flanders bog in 1804 (Co. Derry) associated with a suite of 'deadly weapons' caused 'great sensation throughout the neighbourhood and many persons came to the spot to inspect the body and garment', but 'after some deliberation the body and garment were re-interred near the spot where it was found' (cited in Briggs and Turner 1986: 191, no. 84). In the case of the Mulkeeragh bog 'Highland Soldier' (so-called due to his 'tartan' cloak and uniform dress) found in 1753, the Ordnance Survey Memoirs record:

Many persons came from all parts of the surrounding neighbourhood to inspect the body of the Highland Soldier. They consulted with each other where he should be re-interred and after some hours of deliberation, they came to the conclusion that there should be an inquest held upon it on the spot ... This was considered the more necessary in consequence of the extraordinary state of preservation of both the body and garments They agreed to bury the body in the same spot ... as nearly as possible in the order in which they were found. (Briggs and Turner 1986: 192, no. 88)

In Scotland too, oral testimony records immediate reburial in the bog at Foula 5: the remains of a woman were 'put back in the place where it was found' (Gear 1883: 2, cited in Cowie *et al.* 2011), and at the Gravens (West Liog, Foula 6) the peat cutter reported that after the discovery of a mittened or gloved hand one year and 'fair hair' the next, the remains were 'left where it was, and that end of the bank was left uncut thereafter' (cited in Christiansen 1998). As we shall see in Chapter 4, the giving up of part of an ancestral peat cutting or 'moss room' as it would be known in Lancashire, would not have been lightly done.

There is a sense in many of the above cases that the act of discovery was experienced as a dangerous disturbance of the dead, and that there was something about the locale itself, the original place of 'rest' (even if this followed violence), which should be respected. Even the strange discovery of a complete set of 'intestines' found in 1835 in Camus bog (Briggs and Turner 1986: 190, no. 78) led to their immediate reburial 'in the place where they were found' (Briggs and Turner 1986: 190). Most tellingly, in Bonstorf, Lower Saxony, the discovery of a 'dead man' (now known as Bormwisch Man), whose head protruded from the bog, prompted villagers to consult their local priest, Magnus Lauenrod, as to whether he should be buried in the churchyard. As van der Sanden (1996: 23) records, the priest's response was a curious mix of Christian and folkloric belief: he exhorted them to leave the man where found since the 'elves had pulled him into the bog and would soon pull him down further ... a person who ventured into a place where elves resided had to be possessed by the devil'. The next day, the body had indeed sunk from view. In this unique account, we see a landscape where malign spiritual beings dwelt alongside Christian forces and those who had the temerity to interfere with them should expect such creatures to take their due.

Other bog bodies, such as Rasharkin Man from Co. Antrim (Briggs and Turner 1986: 190, no. 68) and Boghill Man in Coleraine (Briggs and Turner 1986: 190, no. 76) were interpreted by local communities as 'known' suicides and there is no record of them being salvaged for Christ. This is hardly surprising. At the time, many men of the church believed that mysterious or violent death, drownings and especially a suicide, had to be strategically dealt with outside consecrated ground. Ignored by a church that refused to mediate with these dangerous dead, local communities turned to their folkloric knowledge of a landscape pregnant with not just Christian but supernatural forces. For example, in Lancashire in 1800, the servant girl of Dr Ogden from Ashton-under-Lyne was 'deceived by her lover, took poison and died' and was buried 'in unhallowed ground, but at a spot where the holy sign made by the crossroads would deter her ghost from walking' (Bowman 1960: 358). In the adjacent parish in 1774, after the landlord of the Red Lion in Droylsden was found hanged, he was initially buried at the 'Four Lane Ends' on Newton Moor on 31 May. This place combined the symbolic power of the crossroads with the bog, but at 3 a.m. the following morning, his friends exhumed the body and interred it illegally in Ashton parish churchyard. By 13 June rumours relating to this act had reached the local priest and these witnesses were 'compelled to disinter and rebury the corpse in Newton Moor' (cited in Bowman 1960: 358 n. 41).

In the above examples, the well-preserved dead were a concern not a mere curiosity, analogous to or often synonymous with the suicides, murders and mysterious deaths of the contemporary world, and dealt with in a similar manner. Perceived as potentially malignant, the fear they wrought required skilful Christian or folkloric practice to deal with such ‘dangerous dead’. Whether this involved a cleric or the rural poor themselves, it required a respectful understanding of the forces of life and death, a cycle in which the living were precariously and temporarily positioned to intervene. It drew upon an understanding of corporeal ‘stuff’ as well as spirit: how flesh should decay and why this, quite literally, mattered. It relied on an intimate knowledge of place – *where* was the right place to do something, given the worlds of the living and the dead. And finally, to be efficacious, it depended on a consummate performance – how to do it *well*. The risk was that the dead were not quite yet done with the living. As Watkins evokes, ‘Disintegration, profane burial and non-burial all hinted at damnation ... Visceral fears were at work under the surface of this folk theology. Dead bodies were numinous things. For a time they still had life in them ... All too lifelike, the dead person seemed merely to sleep’ (Watkins 2013: 165).

The stuff of wonder

Bog bodies did not merely elicit fear. They also inspired wonder. Writing in 1857, William Wilde wrote with awe of the Castlewilder bog body, Co. Offaly, found with shoe, woollen garments and ‘an abundance of long, black hair on the head ... decorated with golden ornaments’ (cited in Briggs and Turner 1986: 194), going on to note both ‘the mystery attending this discovery and the endeavour to conceal the body’. At West Tofts in Norfolk, an ‘oaken coffin’ yielded bones and ‘30 small beads’ (of blue glass) with a ‘black face of Lancashire coal, a golden funnel and a cipher’ (Norfolk SMR no. 5137, cited in Briggs and Turner 1986: 185, no. 31). In 1824, at Kentucky on Pilling Moss, Lancashire, the local historian Birch described the discovery of a ‘piece of coarse woollen cloth, of a yellow colour ... in which were contained, the remains of human skull, with a great abundance of hair, of a most beautiful auburn, and two strings of large black glass beads, together with a part of the first vertebra of the neck’ (letter dated 4 June 1824, cited in Edwards 1969: 101–2). The description fits a decapitated head, wrapped in cloth but with a necklace apparently interred with it – in a subsequent letter he describes two strands: one of jet beads half an inch in length and cylindrical in form, the second strand of more irregular length jet beads alongside a large, round amber one (letter dated 5 February 1825, cited in Edwards 1969). Birch goes on: ‘the hair was plaited, and of great length; in many parts, about three inches from the extremities of the braids, it was cut off ... the ends were exactly level, not a hair projecting’ (letter dated 4 June 1824, cited in Edwards 1969: 102). Over the wrapped head, he records a sod of turf, ‘bearing evident marks of being cut with a spade’, covered over by the solid mass of subsequent peat (cited in Briggs and Turner 1986: 184, no. 22).

Whether the Burwell Fen bog body ever existed or not is much debated (see Briggs and Turner 1986: 181) but the way in which it was evoked by the author and early broadcaster Wentworth Day tells us much about the affect people associated with such remains. He describes the 'Ancient Briton' standing upright in a dug-out canoe and garbed in leather jacket and belt as 'most shudderingly entrancing ... [the] lank black hair dropped to his shoulders ... his right arm raised as though about to cast a spear' (Clarke 1960). Like the Erkenwald pagan, however, he apparently 'crumbled to dust in the sharp Fen air' (Clarke 1960). Other fantastical finds include that of Solway Moss, where sometime before 1772, peat diggers claimed that they had found 'a man and horse in complete armour' noting 'the skeleton of each was well preserved and the different parts of the armor [*sic*] easily distinguished' (Gilpin 1786, cited in Lyell 1838: 724). The find was thought by locals to be one of a troupe of Scottish cavalry, driven into the morass during the Battle of Solway in the reign of Henry VIII, c.1542.

In Scotland itself, the turbulent history of the 1600s–1700s provided a ready set of explanations for bog bodies, who were variously linked with Scottish and English battles (Alford, Aberdeenshire: Cowie *et al.* 2011: 26, cat. no. 22; Kilsyth: Cowie *et al.* 2011: 27, cat. no. 25), inter-clan violence (Torr na Cabar, Argyll: Cowie *et al.* 2011: 27, cat. no. 23) and the execution of Covenanters (Moorscalloch Moss, Kirkcudbrightshire: Cowie *et al.* 2011: 36, cat. no. 40; Carsgailoch Hill, Ayrshire: Cowie *et al.* 2011: 30, cat. no. 32). The religious 'martyrdom' of the three Carsgailoch men, shot on this upland bog for their beliefs, may explain why fragments of clothing and locks of hair were taken as relics. Fragments were also taken from the Berrybrush bog body (Cowie *et al.* 2011: 30, cat. no. 33), interpreted as a local herdsman who had committed suicide and found with a rope around his neck. Pieces of cloth and long yellow hair were cut and sent to men such as James Hogg, the 'Ettrick Shepherd', who wrote an account of the discovery and the 'fragments of these *enchanted garments*' (Cowie *et al.* 2011: 31, my emphasis). The keeping of these latter quasi-relics suggest a perceived apotropaic power: materials that defied the decaying hand of time, perhaps because they were associated with the sudden succession of life.

Another example of the acquisition of clothing from a bog body was written by the Countess of Moira (the first female author to address this phenomenon) as discussed above. She conjures the delicate beauty of 'gauze-like drapery ... bright-pale green, of a most beautiful colour, and of a light and delicate texture, though woven in troilled work' as well as two plaits of hair from Drumkeragh in Ireland (Moira 1785: 93). Her interrogation of the finder (initially 'rewarding the man beyond his hopes') then took a strange turn (Moira 1785: 93). When she pressed him on whether any implements or weapons had been found with the body, 'he became terrified, and grew so cautious and undecisive in his subsequent answers' that nothing further could be gleaned (Moira 1785: 94). He was apparently frightened by the story of a local man who was also rumoured to have found a great 'treasure' in a nearby bog, which led both to a suspicious rise in his personal fortune, and a subsequent spell in gaol (Moira 1785: 94n.f). Moira realised he feared

a similar fate, and did not press him further but her suspicions may have been well founded, for when she sought to 'revive' a piece of fabric 'originally ... of a red dye' there 'resulted a precipitation of verdigrease' that she suspected was from 'having lain in contact with some implement of brass or copper' (Moira 1785: 93). This diligence with which she pursued this discovery and the wonder it incited in her still impresses. Secular well-preserved 'relics' were sought after. Countess Moira herself removed a lock of hair from the tomb of Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, lying in his crypt in St Albans, in the year 1747; later noting that it had the same hue as the hair from her bog body (Moira 1785: 104n.r). She states that it was 'so perfectly Strong, I had it woven into Bath rings [a piece of mourning jewellery, usually fashioned from a loved one's hair]' (Moira 1785: 104n.r).

For some, the power of these remains lay not in their ability to awe but the perception that magically or mysteriously preserved bodies somehow concentrated life force, giving them protective or curative properties. Egyptian '*mumia*' had long been renowned as a medicinal cure-all: French king Francois I carried a concoction of mummy and rhubarb with him at all times (van der Sanden 1996: 43). Like mummies, the remains of those who died sudden or violent deaths on the gallows were also sought after, so long as their body parts could be swiftly procured from the still-twitching corpse, such as the fabled 'Hand of Glory' (Watkins 2013). Indeed, the final part of Coles's (1657: 32) chapter XV on mosses in his herbalist tract describes the peculiar power of 'dead Men's Skull' moss, which should preferably have grown upon 'Skulls of those which have died by a Violent Death'. Though 'rare, and hardly gotten' in his times, he noted it was a key ingredient in '*Unguentum Sympatheticum*, or Weapon-Salve, which cureth wounds without locall application' (Coles 1657: 32). The notion of sympathetic magic here is key. It was to become a favourite medicine of King Charles II, who bought the recipe from a physician, Goddard, and practically patented this 'remedy' as 'the king's drops' (Sugg 2011: 96). It is no wonder that parts of well-preserved bodies from the peat thus began to gain a similar reputation as these other substances, with an apparent power over both time and mortality. Kibbelgaarn Man and the Bourtanger bog body in the Netherlands in the late 1700s, and Ahlintel Man dating to 1794 as well as the Obenaltendorf skeleton dating to 1895 (both from Germany) were bought, pulverised and sold as cheap alternatives to the Egyptian *mumia* (van der Sanden 1996: 39, 43; Lund 2002: 28). It was against the background of such evocative accounts and folk practices of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries that a different voice of authority began to emerge: a voice that in many cases took literal possession of these remains.

Dissecting bog bodies

The fears of the peat diggers who disturbed the dead and the hopes of those curating an enchanted token or ingesting the pulverised remains of them, are largely recorded by men and women for whom this seemed risible. The antiquarians who

documented these discoveries (e.g. King 1685; de la Pryme 1701; Stovin 1747) were educated middle- and upper-class scholars, clerics, landed gentry, independent gentlemen, doctors and surgeons (Pearce 2007). Many of them had an explicit medical interest in the human body. Others were more fascinated by antiquities – collections gleaned from travel abroad or perambulations around their own county, district or country (Trigger 2006). Early ‘cabinets of curiosity’ had morphed into more formal collections, to which these individuals were eager to add new novelties (Bennett 1995; Pearce 1999). Across northern Europe, in their scientific, medical, ethnographic or archaeological meetings, they jostled for renown through the acquisitions of things or knowledge. Wealthy scholars might commission or publish their own volumes and pamphlets, contribute to journals or have letters read to a society (such as Countess Moira (1783), whose letter was read by a Mr Barrington; or Hunt’s (1886a, 1886b) letters). Their personal diaries and correspondence evidenced their illustrious scholarly networks (e.g. Leigh 1700; Gough 1768): collaborative communities that were the product of the Enlightenment, informed by the paradigms of rational and scientific thought and the methods of observation, analysis and comparative study (Porter 2001).

The marvel and wonder of the bog body still lay at the heart of many of these accounts but rarely featured as its main subject, being nestled among records of artefacts, leather or textiles, animal remains and trees found in the mosses and mires. One of the earliest detailed accounts of bog bodies was provided by William King in his 1685 letter to the Dublin Society, exhorting the improvement of the peatlands, in which he notes, almost incidentally: ‘I know not if it will be worth the observing, that a Turf-bog will preserve things strangely, a Corps will lye intire in one for severall Years; I have seen a piece of leather pretty fresh dug out of a Turf-bog, that had never in the memory of man been dug before ... Trees are found, and intire in them’ (King 1685: 953–4). For the ‘ignorant vulgar’ as King puts it, these deep deposits of ruined trees were evidence of the biblical ‘Flood’ (King 1685: 954), but many scholars posited a more recent date for these deposits. In Charles Leigh’s *Natural History of Cheshire, Lancashire and the Peak* (1700), he describes a series of finds from Martin-Meer including well-preserved trees (discussed further in Chapters 3 and 4), which caused him to doubt the interpretation that they were the result of ‘Noah’s deluge’. As if in afterthought, he adds, ‘One thing had almost slipt me, how sometimes in Mosses are found human Bodies entire and uncorrupted, as in a Moss near the Meales in Lancashire’ (Leigh 1700: 65, original emphasis).

Writing about Hatfield Chase, Abraham de la Pryme (1701: 981) also described the ‘infinite Millions of the roots and bodies of Trees of all bignesses’, many of which were ‘black as ebony, and very lasting and durable’. De la Pryme (1701: 988) was particularly taken with the idea that the trees were the work of Roman deforestation as the conquerors improved their new territories and removed the woods that might harbour further resistance. He then continues:

That which is also very strange, is that about 50 years ago, at the very bottom of a Turf-pit, was found a Man lying at his length, with his head upon his Arm, as in a common posture of sleep, whose skin being as it were tann’d, by the More

Water preserved his shape intire, but within, his Flesh, and most of his Bones were consum'd and gone, an Arm of whom one of the Workmen cut off, and brought home to his Master, which is now in the possession of my honoured Friend, and great Antiquary, Dr Nat. Johnson, whose Antiquities of this country are earnestly inspected by all Ingenious Gentlemen. (De la Pryme 1701: 983)

Sadly, Johnson suffered a fall from political grace, becoming in de la Pryme's words 'exceeding poor' (cited in Hunter 1830: vol. I: 39n.). Ralph Thoresby (a fellow of the Royal Society) noted after a visit in 1695 that he was 'by his unhappy circumstance ... little better than buried alive' – a strange phrase given the bog arm in his collection, which was left in Pontefract and would have been seen by Thoresby himself in 1703. Afterwards, Thoresby wrote: 'Went to view Dr. Johnston's collection of natural curiosities, which has been very considerable: there yet remain some things which are very remarkable, but in very ill condition, exposed to injuries in more ways than one' (cited in Hunter 1830: entry for 1703 April). The Hatfield arm is a microcosm of antiquarianism: human remains valued as a marvel, exchanging hands between working-class labourer to landowner, to gentleman scholar where they helped secure his intellectual fame, but frail to the fortunes of this individual and thus lost to posterity. Meanwhile, the shoe and foot of Amcotts Woman, which so shocked the Axholm peat digger, merely excited the interest of the antiquarian Stovin, who sent them to the Royal Society, also enclosing a second sandal 'whole and firm ... with all the Bones of that Foot found in it, and the Grisly part of the Heel' (Stovin 1747: 572). Other parts of the body and hair confirmed this to be the burial of a woman, whose arm resembled 'the Top of a Muff or Glove, when the Bones were shaken out' and he also forwarded a hand, 'with the Nails as fresh as any Person's living,' though he noted ruefully that the skin of the hand had been 'stuffed ... having suffered by the Spade' (Stovin 1747: 572). His purpose in enclosing these relics was clear: 'I want to be informed what Age they wore those sandals in ... and by what Nation' (Stovin 1747: 572–4). They were then taken across the quad to the Society of Antiquaries, and the note appended to the publication of this communique states: 'When the above Letter was read at the Society of Antiquaries, there was produced the Hand of the Woman therein mentioned, and a Sandal or Shoe taken from one of her Feet ... This being of an ancient Form, the Society order'd an exact draft to be taken of both that and the Hand' (Stovin 1747: 575).

We might imagine the atmosphere in the Society of Antiquaries on 1 October 1747, when it is minuted by the Secretary, Mr George Vertue, that seven gentlemen sat around the table to inspect these peat-stained artefacts and body parts. Long believed to be lost (Turner and Rhodes 1992: 78n.10), the watercolours produced from that evening by Vertue himself (Figure 2.1) capture more than the formal engraving of the shoe published in the *Philosophical Transactions* of the Royal Society. The reddish colour of the lace weaves in and out of the scalloped loops of her sandals, to 'close them at the toes like a purse' (Minute Book of the Society of Antiquaries: vol. V: 1 October 1747). The watercolours of both this and the sandal were glued into the accompanying album where they



2.1 The hand of Amcotts Woman from the 'Prints and Drawings Collected Before 1750' of the Society of Antiquaries, linked to Minute Book entry October 1747: 33–4. All rights reserved and permission to use the figure must be obtained from the copyright holder.

have lain unseen and unknown since then, as far as I can tell, representing the earliest representation of a bog body, even if it is merely a hand. Trapped between plans of Roman villas, architectural facades, images of heraldry and castle elevations, the picture is altogether too human somehow. The delicate fingers and nail beds curl inwards slightly, on to the palm, the hand is small, shrunken by the 'morass' or 'more' as they describe it (Society of Antiquaries, 'Prints and Drawings Collected Before 1750', vol. V: 34). These human remains fascinated yet appalled; they were not yet a subject fit for public reproduction, and have never before been reproduced.

This distaste is embodied in a remarkable letter by Mary Wollstonecraft, author and defender of women's rights (Sanders 2009). Despite her progressive views in many areas, Wollstonecraft derided attempts to preserve the corpse, such as the mummified remains in a vault in St Mary's, Tonsburg, Norway (now demolished), which she saw in 1796:

A desire of preserving the body seems to have prevailed in most countries of the world, futile as it is to term it a preservation, when the noblest parts are immediately sacrificed merely to save the muscles, skin and bone from rotteness. When I was

shown these human putrefactions, I shrunk back with disgust and horror. 'Ashes to ashes' thought I – 'Dust to dust!' – If this be not dissolution, it is something worse than natural decay. It is reason against humanity, thus to lift up the awful veil which would fain hide its weakness. (Wollstonecraft 1976: 71)

Her daughter, Mary Shelley, would go on to write *Frankenstein*: an early Gothic ghost story, written on the shores of Lake Geneva in the company of the Romantic era poets Byron and Shelley (her future husband). Mary Shelley was in wonderment of the kinds of modern science practised by Galvani and Volta, in their demonstrations of animal and metal-induced 'electricity'. Although her mother died soon after her birth, she may have known of her mother's letters and clearly enjoyed her own creative 'experiments' that mused on whether the living should really intercede with those already consigned to death. Both women lived on the cusp of an era in which the anatomical scrutiny of human remains was controversial. The legacy of Christian beliefs about maintaining corporeal integrity in the hope of final resurrection lingered. The procurement of enough suitable dead bodies for both research and training was still a problem for the medical profession, yet public dissections were not only attended by physicians: the enlightened public enjoyed this as a spectacle as much as a scientific endeavour. The judiciary of the day believed this could have a moral as well as medical purpose and helped sanction certain kinds of corpses for examination through the revision of the 1752 Murder Act, which stated that no body of a convicted murderer should be permitted burial (Watkins 2013: 161). This expanded the remit of a judge to pass a sentence of 'death *and* dissection' not only to murderers but lesser felons, condemning them to the 'added terror' of a post-mortem afterlife as medical specimen (Watkins 2013: 162). It is no surprise then that bog bodies were seized upon for further opportunities to dissect and examine the human corpse. The remains of a bog body from a peat moss in Whitaside (Grinton in Swaledale) were eagerly examined by the triumvirate of 'Messrs. Barker, Thompson and Metcalfe sagoones [*sic*]' (Grinton Parish Registers, cited in Briggs and Turner 1986: 186). Stovin (1747) himself clearly had no qualms in rendering parts of Amcotts Woman limb from limb for further analysis. Reports on these remains allowed the scientist Charles Lyell to contemplate the antiquity of the discovery: 'six feet under' the peat, with 'antique sandals ... [that] afforded evidence of her having been buried there for many ages', while puzzling over the fact that 'her nails, hair, and skin, are described as having shown hardly any marks of decay' (Lyell 1838: 22). On Shetland, Hunt's trench-side de-fleshing of the Bressay bog body must have shocked his peat diggers: 'In cleaning the skull and long bones I found considerable difficulty, and also in separating the skin and muscles of the arm from the bone. I had an easy task scalping the long sought for treasure, and found that with one good grip I had a pretty good wig in my hand' (Hunt 1866b: 369). The record of his discovery in the Anthropological Society records he 'then exhibited' the remains to his colleagues, leading to a vigorous debate over both the variable preservative properties of peat and, as we shall see in what follows, the racial identity of the deceased (Hunt 1866a: ccvi).

It is at this point then that bog bodies (as well as more skeletonised body parts) started to enter antiquarian or medical museums. One major collection was the Sedgewick Museum (later the Duckworth and Shore collection) at the University of Cambridge, containing remains from Burwell Fen, Shippea Hill and Reach Fen, as well as select examples from Lincolnshire and Lancashire (Briggs and Turner 1986: 181–2). The Museum of the Royal College of Surgeons (now the Hunterian Museum) received remains from Birkdale in Lancashire and Smallburgh in Norfolk (Briggs and Turner 1986: 184–5), as well as Clywd in Wales (Briggs and Turner 1986: 187). Some were gifts, as in the Northamptonshire frontal and parietal bones ‘from a peat bog’ bequested by J. Prestwich, Esq. (Briggs and Turner 1986: 185, no. 40). The Geological and Polytechnic Society of the West Riding preserved its own skeleton from Austwick Common, in North Yorkshire (Briggs and Turner 1986: 185, no. 41). Meanwhile, it took time for the Natural History Museum in London to acquire the remains from Scaleby Moss in Cumbria. Excavated in 1845, this black-haired body wrapped in a deer skin and ‘holding’ a thick stick was bought by the antiquarian Thomas Bateman in 1853 and sold as lot no. 428 upon his death forty years later (apparently to a collector named ‘Rathbone’), before final bequest or acquisition by the museum (van der Sanden 1996: 45, fig. 50). This pattern of acquisition is repeated across the institutions of Ireland, Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands. The Bareler Moor body for instance, was nearly complete when discovered in 1784, but was dissected and distributed to ‘different interested scholars’ (van der Sanden 1996: 40).

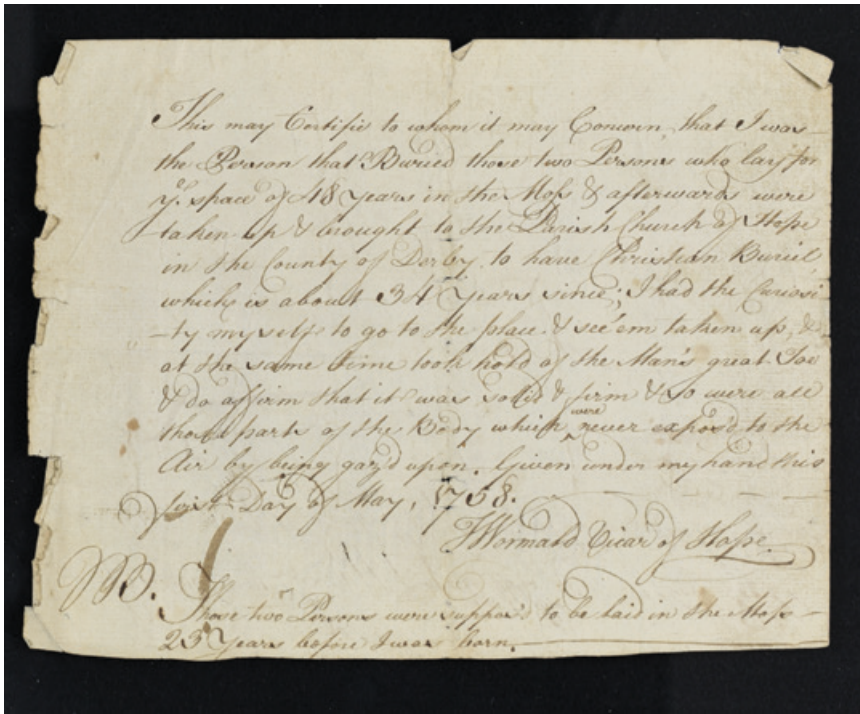
We can thus locate this era of bog body discovery and research within the Enlightenment’s rational, scientific methods and an exhortation to understand organic life through close inspection, dissection and analysis. Following the work of Descartes, the human body was now seen as analogous to a machine, whose processes of growth, decline and eventual decay could be studied and charted (Robb and Harris 2013: 24, tab. 1). Yet well preserved bodies demanded further examination and explanation: was their fleshy survival an attribute of the corpse itself or its depositional context? As the title of Hunt’s (1866b) article makes clear (‘Observations of the Influence of Some Kinds of Peat in Destroying the Human Body, as Shown by the Discovery of Human Remains Buried in Peat in the Zetland [*sic*] Islands’), some antiquarians and ethnologists were aware that while peat *could* preserve human remains, this was not a universal characteristic. Variation between adjacent bodies and even within a single corpse was noted, with some limbs better preserved than others; better survival of hair and nails, as well as the flesh of the body; and sometimes, textile or hide fragments associated with clothing or wrapping. However, many of these writers commented on the lack of good bone preservation, rendering such remains pliable, floppy and disconcertingly malleable.

All of these themes can be seen in the account of the Hope couple. Dr Charles Balguy (1735: 413) noted that while it was ‘very common to see dead bodies preserved by Art; But that they should lie unchanged by means of the Soil in which they were Interred, will appear Strange to most People’. His account, written as a

young man, did not dwell upon the personal circumstances of the Hope couple – he was honed by his scientific training to report on both the detail and causes of their preservation, for the audience for whom he was writing: the Royal Society. He lived at a time of increasing experimentation with embalming methods and when other well-preserved bodies were the subject of scholarly discourse and acquisition: the saintly remains that opened this chapter, lime-encrusted Romans from stone sarcophagi or the Egyptian mummies that were also unwrapped on the autopsy tables (Riggs 2014). As Balguy records, after the initial curiosity of reopening the improvised grave for this couple, there followed a twenty-year period of repeated exhumation to satisfy the curiosity of people from near and far (see Chapter 8). In 1716, they were seen by a Dr Bourn of Chesterfield, who reported that the ‘Man was perfect, his Beard strong ... his Skin hard and of a Tann’d-leather Colour, pretty much the same as the Liquor and Earth they lay in’ (cited in Balguy 1735: 414). The woman was much less well preserved, by dint of more vigorous inspection: she had ‘by some rude People ... been taken out of the Ground, to which one may impute her greater Decay’ (Balguy 1735: 414). Dr Bourn himself was not beyond some relic taking: ‘He took out one of her Fore-teeth, the upper part of which, as far as was contained in the Socket, was as elastic as a piece of Steel; and, being wrapp’d around his finger, sprung again to its first form. But this Power was lost in a few Minutes after it had been in his Pocket’ (cited in Balguy 1735: 414). Balguy (1735: 414) also notes that ‘People had cut away the greatest part [of their Cloaths] [*sic*] to carry home as a Curiosity’, in a passage that evokes Countess Moira’s exasperation in trying to retrieve all the textile fragments from the Drumkeragh bog body, many of which had been taken ‘by different people soon after they were found’ (Moira 1783: 91). Meanwhile, the young curate sent to oversee their final exhumation, Thomas Wormald, told Balguy that ‘the Joints played freely and without the least Stiffness’ (cited in Balguy 1735: 415). In his own affidavit, preserved in fine copperplate in the Derbyshire Record Office archives (Figure 2.2), he gives a fuller description:

I was the Person that Buried these two Persons who lay for ye space of 48 years in the Moss & afterwards were taken up & brought to the Parish Church of Hope in the county of Derby, to have Christian Burial ... I had the Curiosity myself to go to the place & see ’em taken up, & do affirm that it was solid & firm & so were all those parts of the Body which were never expos’d to the Air by being gaz’d upon.’ (Wormald 1758, D.1828 A/PI 449/1, see Figure 2.2)

Despite their ‘decent funeral’ (Balguy 1735: 414), there is no official record of the interment in the Burial Register itself. Rumours of the phenomenon travelled and it seems that in 1760 Wormald was asked to write a personal letter to the antiquarian Samuel Pegge, about the case (originally filed in volume V of Pegge’s correspondence but apparently not preserved among the four bound volumes of letters acquired by the Bodleian Library). Instead we must rely on the full transcription of this letter by Charles Cox in volume 2 of *Notes on the Churches of Derbyshire* (1877), where Wormald reconfirms his observations that ‘those parts of



2.2 Affidavit written by Rev. Thomas Wormald, Vicar of Hope, relating to the Hope couple. All rights reserved and permission to use the figure must be obtained from the copyright holder.

ye body that had never been exposed to ye air were as entire and firm as when they were lay'd in, the other part of ye body that was exposed to ye air by opening so often were putrified and gone, only the bones and joynts hung together'. He signs off this account: 'This is a matter of fact and you may rely on it as such from, Your faithful friend and very humble servant, S. Wormald' (cited in Cox 1877: 267).

The vicar was not expressing sentiment or even religious feeling about these bodies; he was using his authority, position and skills of accurate observation to give weight to the veracity of this account. This was how science was conducted: established as a matter of fact not mere wonder or rumour. Yet notably, their remarkable preservation and unsettling power still demanded Christian intervention to assure the living that they had been appropriately dealt with. Huldremose Woman, for instance, was temporarily buried in the local churchyard, although her marvellous clothing was cleaned and dried on the washing line of the local doctor (National Museum of Denmark 2019). Fear lingered still, magnified perhaps by the kinds of places in which such remains were found. Yde Girl from Drenthe, for instance, was found in 1897: a well-preserved young woman, covered by a thin robe-like

garment, with a tightly wound strip of fabric around her throat and a cut hank of hair laid at her side. The peat diggers apparently cried ‘I hope the Devil gets the man that dug this hole,’ and fled the scene, rendered speechless by their gruesome discovery (Beuker 2002: 107). Over the next hundred years, more accounts of such peat bodies would emerge, but, as Watkins (2013: 164–5) observes: ‘Apprehension that the body itself might return to life, might turn into a vengeful revenant, had evaporated by the nineteenth century but unusual corpses were still thought by some to be charged with special powers.’ It was only with the creation of wider private and museum collections of such human remains that an altogether different value began to be attributed to these bodies, focused not on their remarkable tissue but the bony matter within their well-preserved heads.

Bog body crania: nation states and racial histories

The exact date and circumstances of the discovery of Ashton Man (Figure 2.3), described in the Preface of this volume, are at present unknown. As far as we know only a cranium was found, making it a likely candidate for a decapitated but perhaps slightly decayed ‘bog head’. There were growing reasons, however, for selectively retaining just the skull. Its discolouration and staining support the provenance of Ashton Moss and it is thus (as the table drawn together by Duckworth and Shore (1911) describes) a classic example of a ‘cranium from peat deposits’. It entered the Anatomical Museum at the University of Cambridge sometime in the mid to late 1800s, where someone elegantly inked upon the forehead the accession number ‘658’ (Figure 2.3). The archival records indicate that it was donated by Sir Alexander Binnie (Nevell pers. comm.), a British water engineer, whose hydrological infrastructures for London survive to this day. How did he come into the possession of this Lancashire head? As a young man, he was briefly articled to Mr J. F. La Trobe Bateman until 1862 (Grace’s Guide 2019). During this time, his master was completing the waterworks supply scheme for Manchester, which included cutting through Ashton-under-Lyne. It is possible that in this brief period at least one ‘bog’ head came to light, though there is no record of it in the local newspaper, the *Ashton Weekly Reporter*, and *Stalybridge and Dukinfield Chronicle* which did elsewhere (Anon. 1869: 2), report the find of an Irish bog body at Morville. La Trobe Bateman’s maternal grandfather was a well-known Moravian minister from Ashton-under-Lyne, and the young John Frederick had been sent to the Moravian school in Fairfield, Ashton-under-Lyne, to study during which he might have acquired such a find. The ‘heads’ from the mosses hereabouts might thus have been in the possession not of Binnie but of his master’s family, or some other renowned cleric or schoolteacher living on the edge of this distinctive landscape, and thence passed into his hands.

In later life, Binnie certainly corresponded with archaeologists such as Sir John Lubbock (Lubbock n.d) on antiquities from the London gravels or depths of chalk in boreholes, so perhaps he had always had an interest in the past. His son studied the Natural Science Tripos at Cambridge University and it is highly likely that it



2.3 The Ashton skull, no. 658. All rights reserved and permission to use the figure must be obtained from the copyright holder.

is at this point that the Ashton head was given to the growing collection of crania that may have been part of the teaching materials that Binnie's son used. Perhaps the 'donation' was a means of currying favour or earning the gratitude of his professors at the time; these would have included Professor Alexander Macalister and Hughes (respectively, chairs of anatomy and geology). It is these scholars that W. L. H. Duckworth and L. R. Shaw thank profusely for access to the 'peat skulls' from the Sedgwick Museum collections (including another, no. 659, from a 'peat moss' in Lancashire, 'locality and description as in the case of' no. 658 (Duckworth and Shore 1911: 134, sec. I). This gives us two heads from the mosses surrounding Ashton and Droyslden Moss. Duckworth and Shore studied a total of eight other 'peat deposit' heads: five of them from Cambridgeshire (mainly Burwell Fen) and the others from Lincolnshire and Norfolk (recognised as authenticated 'bog bodies' in Briggs and Turner's *Gazetteer of 1986*: nos. 1, 26 and 28). The Kilsyth skull from Stirlingshire, 'black from the action of the peat' (Cowie *et al.* 2011: 27, cat. no. 25) also found itself in the hands of the Edinburgh Phrenology Society by 1851, where it was recorded by none other than Daniel Wilson (1851) who used both archaeology and ethnographic analogy alongside linguistics, to chart the 'history' of the peoples of Scotland. Indeed, there seems to have been an avid collector of peat heads by the name of Dr Scott, who acquired two further skulls from Linton Loch (Cowie *et al.* 2011: 33, cat. no. 35). Yet where these skulls survived, they were swiftly cleaned of any flesh: literally scraped to the bone, in order to reveal the anatomy underneath. This was the case in other countries too such as Denmark, where as late as 1942, the National Museum had a policy of 'clean[ing] the bones of bog bodies of any soft tissues before, in the form of a skeleton, these were handed over to the Normal-Anatomical Institute' (Fischer 2012: 101–2). The very phenomenon that made them notable, infamous even, and drove their recovery, reporting and collection was now stripped away to reveal something more *essential* about the individual. That essence was 'race'.

Craniology was the technique of measuring human skulls to reveal their racial or ethnic type, emerging in Scandinavia in parallel with Thomsen's artefact-based, typological approach (Morse 2005: 98). It was Eschricht's invention of the cephalic index that particularly caught the imagination of British scholars, publicised as a comparative ethnological method alongside linguistics by Pritchard in his fourth edition of *Researches into the Physical History of Man* (1841). As Morse (2005) has convincingly argued, it was the craniological technique that drove not just early arrangements of archaeological material in Britain but the collecting habits of its antiquarians. Its advocates believed that 'typical ethnic peculiarities' visible in the skull were 'not transmutable between the races' (Davis and Thurnham 1865: 2). This was part of a much wider global study of human variation within the context of colonial encounter and the problematic use of physical evidence to naturalise and justify the rule of one race over another (see Robb and Harris 2013: 24, tab. 1). While using crania in a limited way himself, Pritchard (1843: xxi) lamented that there was no 'national collection of the sepulchral remains of our ancestors' in contrast to both Scandinavia and Ireland, the latter being diligently assembled

through the work of William Wilde. This vision was realised over the next few decades in part through the barrow digging of Thomas Bateman and the synthesis of material by Davis and Thurnham in their volume *Crania Britannica* (1865). The latter two authors were explicit about their aims here, citing the controversial work of Knox that the Celt (conceived in their work as one of the primary prehistoric races of Britain) 'was, as a race, inferior to the Saxon', making explicit links between prehistoric skulls from northern Britain, Ireland and the Hebrides with the 'most barbarous of contemporary tribes' (Davis and Thurnham 1865: 66).

These views were typical of the 'polygenists': those that believed races had distinct cultural characteristics, intellectual abilities and predispositions that were racially innate, fixed and unchanging. It was Knox's student, James Hunt, who not only led the splinter group 'Anthropological Society of London' but stripped clothing and flesh from the Bressay body discussed above to get at her skeleton. When Hunt presented his findings to the Anthropological Society of London (of which he was president) heated discussion arose between several members regarding the length and form of the crania (Hunt 1866a). While Hunt himself reported there was 'nothing particularly remarkable about the skull', it having a cranial index of '.76', his colleagues debated vigorously whether this might be a 'Zealander' (Shetlander) or Scandinavian, drawing on comparative measurements of long- and short-headed specimens known to them. One member seemed most put out that Hunt's paper 'conveyed no idea of the period at which they had been buried, nor of their nationality', and as the secretary went on to note, 'these he considered were the whole points of interest in the subject' (Hunt 1866a: ccvii). After further vigorous debate and point scoring about the transverse breadth of Scandinavian skulls, the chair, Mr R. Tate, was required to call 'order'.

It now looks likely that the Ashton skulls (one of which has been firmly dated to the later Bronze Age, see Robinson and Shinwell 1996) were sent as part of this endeavour to trace the racial history of Britain and form a comparative suite of skulls for the international examples also entering Cambridge's collection. When finally studied as a group, Duckworth and Shore (1911: 134) claim their study of crania from peat deposits was 'justifiable', 'for the purposes of description and comparison' since 'in regard to other mammalia the peat fauna is certainly a distinctive one' (Duckworth and Shore 1911: 136). In other words, despite different find-spots, perhaps they expected to unveil some kind of typical prehistoric 'marsh man' race. In this they were frustrated, for the results presented them with a great 'diversity of cranial form' (Duckworth and Shore 1911: 136). They themselves do not use the term 'Celtic'; they noted their probable antiquity and commented they did not consider them to be older than the Neolithic period. However, they did conclude that they were not 'a fair sample of modern *British* crania' due to their distinct 'brachycephalic' (i.e. round-headed, foreshortened) qualities (Duckworth and Shore 1911: 137, original emphasis). To the modern archaeologist, the motivation for this study of peat skulls seems suspect. What were they hoping to find out about prehistoric populations that lived in and around the bogs and fens of Britain? To what end were they hoping to put such a study?

During this period, craniology was fundamental to the histories that were told about how racial types ‘changed’ over time. Though some scholars attributed this to the influx of more superior groups from the Continent and population replacement, the ambiguity of the cranial evidence frequently led to fraught debate (e.g. between the antiquarians Mortimer, Greenwell and their craniological specialists, see Giles 2006: 298–9). Duckworth and Shore’s desire to focus on remains from the peat cannot have been isolated from wider pejorative attitudes to the marsh, mere and bog (which as Chapter 4 will show, was thought of as unproductive and in need of drainage and improvement) – an attitude all too often applied not just to the landscape but to its denizens. They were privileged, elite academics living in a city fringed by the Fens, but they would also surely have been aware of narratives pedalled in the popular press, about the ‘bog Irish’ for example – this was after all, the beginning of the civil and political movement for Irish independence from Britain. We can only speculate about whether they hoped their evidence would elucidate or muddy the waters of contemporary debates on race, national identity and cultural politics. But what we can note is their belief that the past had the power to answer such questions, mobilising the remains in their care to address them. Another country keen to search for its nation’s origins among the prehistoric dead was Denmark.

Queens, sailors and ne’er do-wells: naming the dead

The discovery of Haraldskjær Woman in 1835, in eastern Denmark, was initially reported by the district physician in matter-of-fact terms. He described her physiognomy (middle-aged, rather corpulent), her teeth (well-worn), hair (long and thick), with fine, small hands (‘hardly belonging to someone of the working class’) (Christens 1836–37: 166, translated and cited in Sanders 2009: 91). There was an expression on her face of apparent ‘despair’ that, along with wooden pegs and crooks, staking down her knees, elbows and chest (van der Sanden 1996: 41), led him to believe she had been ‘nailed into the mud while still alive’ (Sanders 2009: 91). While Christens (1836–37) then offered some astute observations on both the bog’s preservative effects and the shrivelling and shrinkage of the body following exhumation, it was not his scientific observations that were seized upon by fellow Danish scholars. Denmark had only regained its sovereignty from Sweden in 1813, and archaeology was playing a vital role in the building of a distinct sense of Scandinavian identity with a long *durée* (Trigger 2006). Figures such as Thomsen (director of the Museum of Northern Antiquities from 1816 to 1817, see Jacobsen 2004) and his protégé, Worsaae, were the product of a period of investment in archaeological research that was quite distinct from the privately funded antiquarianism of Britain, sometimes state sponsored but also in receipt of royal funds, through the interests of Frederick VI. In contrast to the increased interest in anatomy and craniology described above, Thomsen’s Three Age System was not overtly concerned with ‘peoples’ or their ‘migrations’ but rather the order

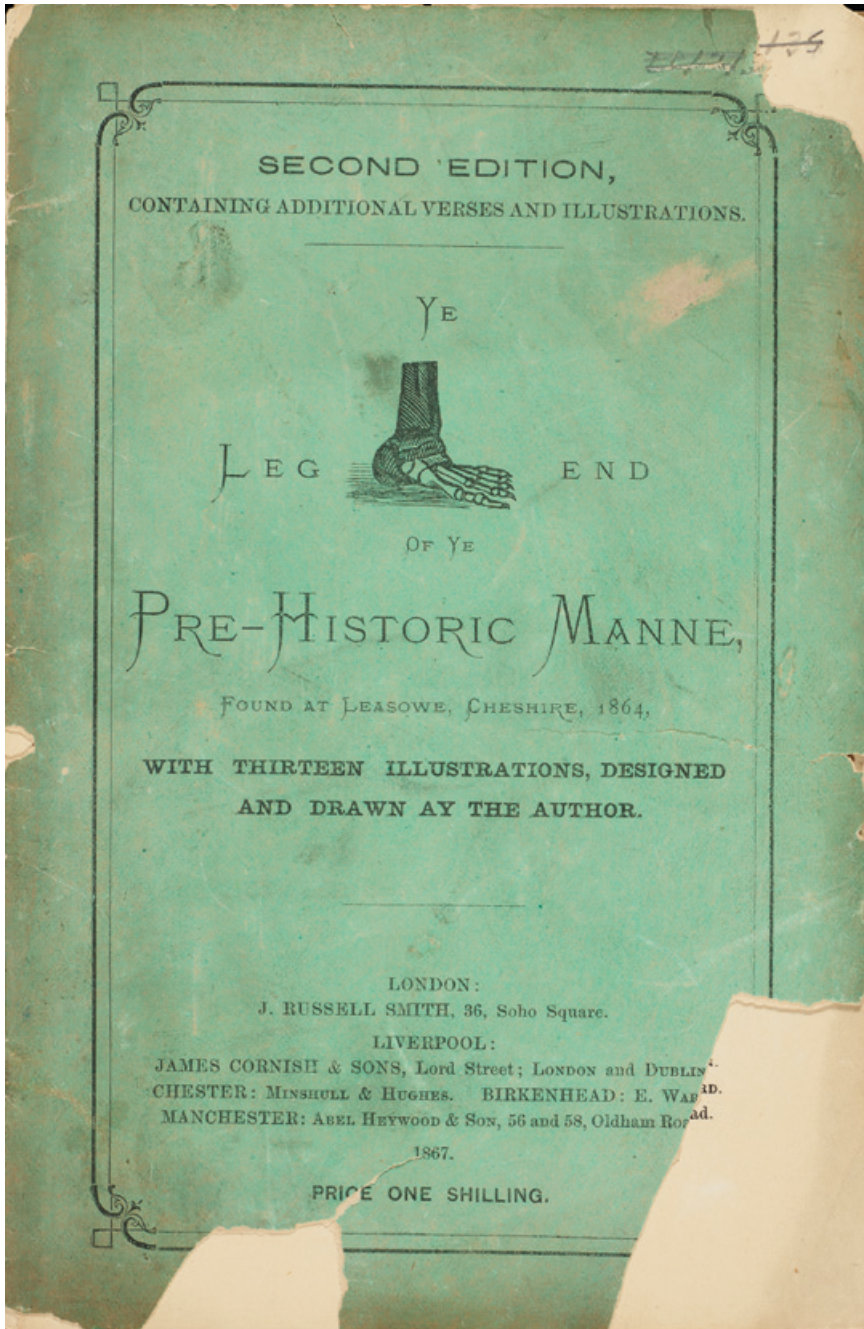
of successive change, objects and periodisation (Morse 2005: 97). Archaeological evidence assumed a new narrative importance in a country that was in both political and cultural flux, showing the *depth* of its successive histories in this one region of Scandinavia, revealed increasingly through excavation as well as artefacts (Trigger 2006).

It was as Denmark moved into this period of progressive change that Haraldskjær Woman was reinterpreted as the body of a Norwegian Viking queen named Gunhild (once married to Erik Blodøxse), lured to Denmark in AD 970 under false pretence of marriage. The Icelandic saga (*Jómsvíkinga*) tells that the Danish king Harold Bluetooth instead ordered her murder and that she was drowned in a deep bog in *c.* AD 977. The philological professor, N. M. Petersen, used a variety of texts, along with place-name evidence (Gutsmose – translated by Peterson as Gunhild's bog) to authenticate the historical connection with this body (Sanders 2009: 92; Ravn 2010: 108). King Frederick VI, fascinated by this apparent connection with ancient royalty, commissioned the crafting of an impressive oak casket to house her remains within St Nicholai Church, Vejle. On open view, this bog body now fell somewhere between a sacred relic and public spectacle, controlled through the sanctity of the Christian Church but uninterred, bringing 'proximity for ordinary men, women and children to a past and a royal body whose physical attraction and legendary power were lost, but whose allure continued' (Sanders 2009: 94). Yet the young archaeologist Worsae vigorously objected to this arbitrary connection between text and artefact. In a bitter debate with Petersen – a contest of disciplines and the appropriate uses of historical evidence – the remains should, he felt, be allowed to be an 'authentic witness in its own right' rather than be manipulated in a 'beautiful poetical hypothesis' (cited in Sanders 2009: 92). Worsae's concerns were well founded: in 1977, the body was radiocarbon dated to the early Iron Age (van der Sanden 1996: 41) and Gunhild lost her royal name to become Haraldskjær Woman, still on view in Vejle.

This story epitomises the ways in which bog bodies can be caught up in the search for nation state histories, or to give historical legitimacy to identity of 'a people'. (It is at this point that we need to remember St Erkenwald's pagan Belinius, under St Paul's Cathedral, confronting his Saxon present with the obdurate pre-historic possessor of British soil.). Another Danish bog body, found in 1979 in Undelev Mose (Jutland), led to much speculation as to whether he was 'a Tartar, a gypsy or a member of the Germanic Cimbri' (cited in van der Sanden 1996: 41). We can note the elision here between 'types' of people, ancient and modern, felt to fit the bill of a stocky bog body. Like Haraldskær Woman, his remains were also handed over into Christian care and control, for burial in Holbøl churchyard (van der Sanden 1996: 41). However, another Christian interment of a bog body, from Korselitse (mentioned above), found on the island of Falster in Denmark in 1843, was re-exhumed at the behest of the crown prince, later Frederick VII. By now, these Danish remains had a cultural capital that outstripped any Christian concerns, and the human remains, along with a few glass beads and a brooch, were sent to the museum in Copenhagen.

Meanwhile, the power of a bog body to attest to an *ancient* past was not unproblematic. In 1864, a British navy working on the shoreline of what would become the Leasowe embankment fetched out from the peat what he initially took to be a basin but soon discovered to be a human cranium (Cust 1864: 193). His ganger then extracted the remains of a ‘nearly perfect male human skeleton’, whose exposed bones swiftly turned from white to inky black (Cust 1864: 194). The local antiquarian, Sir Edward Cust, made careful notes on the stratigraphic position of the body, providing three first-hand testimonies from the navy, the ganger and the local castle gardener sent to observe both body and find-spot (see Cust 1864: app.). Lying on the blue clays below three to four feet of peat, Cust (1864: 193) concluded that this must represent ‘a most ancient inhabitant of our land’. The remains were sent to the Museum of the Royal College of Surgeons in London where they were examined by none other than Charles Lyell, whose research had transformed understanding of the geological time-depth and early human inhabitation of the British Isles. At a subsequent meeting of the Ethnological Society, Professor Busk reported certain ‘peculiarities in it [the Leasowe skull] which indicated an original race or savage tribe’ (cited in Cust 1864: 194), hoping that in conjunction with other skulls this might help elucidate the ‘three tribes by whom Britain was populated before the invasion of the Romans’ (Cust 1864: 194; see also Busk 1865). Cust himself dismissed a relationship with Roman finds from the nearby Cheshire sea-coast complex of Meols, concluding from the deposits that he was dealing with one of the very earliest inhabitants of Britain: ‘We claim for him an antiquity beyond any existing parchments ... this pre-historical, aboriginal Britain’ (Cust 1864: 199). Yet this argument did not sit well with his rival, Henry Ecroyd Smith (1865: 212), who rejected the antiquity of these remains, preferring the explanation that they were from a ‘sea-drowned person ... buried at most within three hundred years’.

Ecroyd Smith was not the only dissenter. In an anonymous pamphlet published in 1867, the bog body itself ‘spoke’. Written as an extended satirical poem, available for one shilling, *Ye Leg End of Ye Prehistoric Manne* (Figure 2.4) berates the diggers for disturbing his rest and castigates Cust for claiming ‘My skeleton was *his!*’ Indeed, in a fine pun that represents the first ethical discussions about the ownership and display of bog bodies in Britain, he describes himself in ‘Custody’ (Anon. 1867: 9). Interestingly, the front cover engraving indicates that despite the description of this as a ‘skeleton’ some flesh was preserved. This was not the first bog body to be given theatrical ‘voice’: that privilege appears to rest with Haraldskjær Woman herself, in a satirical play written by one of Worsaae’s friends, Hostrup, called *A Sparrow Amongst Hawks* (Glob [1969] 1971: 56–7). In contrast to Leasowe Man, she is relieved to be disturbed by the journeyman-tailor Peter Ravn to breathe again. However, in the cod-Latin phrase cited in the preface, ‘*Vir Bone-Us Est Quiz*’, the Leasowe corpse refers to the notion of a good man becoming a source of ridicule: the skeleton is not angered merely by his exhumation but resents being labelled as prehistoric – akin to a biblical figure, ‘Pheonician ... or Sistantian Chief ... / Or, p’raps, ‘an Aborigine’ / Who somehow



2.4 Front cover of *Ye Leg End of Ye Prehistoric Manne*, 1867. All rights reserved and permission to use the figure must be obtained from the copyright holder.

came to grief' (Anon. 1867: 5). He goes on: '*They* said perchance my blood had run / In some outlandish *race!*' confiding that his true 'calling, kith and kin' was that of a brandy-soaked sailor from Bangor, washed overboard in a gale from a coal-and-slate vessel (Anon. 1867: 5, original emphasis). The poem ends with the assertion that 'I'm not a Pre-Historic Manne!' and in this the poet was right, but both he and Ecroyd Smith would have been dismayed by the radiocarbon date from the skull (now in the Natural History Museum) revealing the body to be Roman (dated to AD 95–385, Gonzalez and Schulting 2007: 350) and thus still the earliest human remains from Merseyside (Griffiths *et al.* 2007). The actual author of this poem and pamphlet was probably the amateur local historian, James Stonehouse (Ecroyd Smith 1873: 151). The preface makes clear his personal distaste not merely that 'Learned Bodies ... snarled over [the remains] in a dog-matic way' but 'The Skeleton [was] feeling annoyed at the idea of being charged with living in times so remote' (Anon. 1867: 2). For Stonehouse, whose main publications focused on the marvels of early to mid-nineteenth-century civic organisation and technological infrastructure (housing, road networks, railways), the notion that this Merseyside man might have been an ancient primitive, analogous to contemporary 'aborigines', was not just distasteful but unthinkable.

In another line of the poem, the skeleton seems to extoll the views of Ecroyd Smith in arguing, 'They this conclusion drew / That I must be a modern man / And therefore *some one knew*' (Anon. 1867: 8). This latter couplet reveals the other habit we see emerging in this period, of local populations naming the bog dead as someone they knew – usually a local colourful figure who had mysteriously disappeared. For example, in June 1853, notes made by a Mr Samuel Finney dating to 1785 were published in the *Cheshire and Lancashire Historical Collector* recording that:

A very extraordinary discovery was made a few years ago, by some people getting Sand in the Sand holes in Morley Gorses, where at about two feet under the surface was found the skeleton of a Man. This was supposed to be the Remains of one Richard Hamman, of Ringway, who having occasion to go to Wilmslow, about eighty years before this discovery, was seen in the Dungefold upon his return homewards, but never head of after till these Bones were discovered ... in which conjectures have been made that Hamman was murdered, stript, and buried here. (Finney cited in Worthington Barlow 1853: 45–6)

Morley Gorses lies only a few fields to the east of Lindow Common and its 'Black Lake', which is itself adjacent to Lindow Moss: the site of at least three bog body discoveries in the 1980s (Stead *et al.* 1986). The description seems to indicate a skeletonised body buried in the heath close by the mosses – since bone would normally be damaged by the acidic sands, such survival supports the notion this was a quite recent interment. Sand was used by peat cutters to stop the desiccated turf from blowing away in the wind (John Morgan pers. comm.) but everything depends upon the micro-environment of these remains. Since the remains were given Christian burial back in the late 1700s, we can speculate no further

as to whether this was a prehistoric or more recent body but we *can* probe why local communities wanted to name and identify the dead who reappeared from these bogs.

The classic example of this is Red Christian. Grauballe Man (who will be discussed in fuller detail in [Chapters 5 and 6](#)) was recovered and studied extensively by P. V. Glob – arguably the father of bog body studies (Asingh 2009). On 26 April 1952, in Nebelgård Fen, Denmark, peat cutters reported the discovery of a body from the bog to a local doctor and antiquarian, Dr Balslev. The next day (a Sunday), Glob – then the curator of the Museum at Aarhus – was out on the bog, joining a throng of interested locals. Glob's talent in galvanising public opinion is clear: after he had brought Grauballe Man to the museum, two thousand visitors queued to see him over the following week before scientific research commenced (Glob [1969] 1971: 46). In so doing, he arguably transformed the perception not just of this well-preserved phenomenon but of the display of human remains in Denmark and further afield. Yet soon concerns were raised that this was not a prehistoric bog body at all, but the remains of a local drunkard, Red Christian, thought to have drowned in this small bog (measuring only sixty yards across) around the year 1887. An elderly farmer's wife, who had known him from childhood, swore to the likeness of the body with the consumption-ridden labourer, who had gone missing after a poaching trip that had ended in a long session at an inn at Svstrup (Glob [1969] 1971: 47). Glob's own account of the 'Red Christian' tale is frank, publishing part of a satirical poem written against him, published in a local paper that lampooned the 'scientists':

And now the folk who know what's what
Want to speak out and tell what they know.
... Glob must admit it's so. (Cited in Glob [1969] 1971: 48)

It was only the publication of the radiocarbon date that silenced these local voices, and yet they are worth listening to a little longer. This need to 'name the dead' and explain the sudden appearance of a corpse surely speaks of a continued concern to deal respectfully and appropriately with these remains. It is telling that both of these 'locally' named figures went missing within the living memory of the witnesses; their disappearance must have been disruptive, mysterious, concerning – the stuff of childhood nightmares. Folklore also played its part. In the Moss of Evie, Scotland, another bog body (this time definitely historic in date and wrapped in petticoats) was tentatively identified as Mary Linklater, supposedly murdered in 1600 by a pair of 'local witches', or else interpreted as a 'poor friendless creature' from the famines of the 1730s–1740s (cited in Cowie *et al.* 2011: 21, cat. no. 7). Meanwhile in 1978, the burial place of Johann Spieker – a 'hawker' (or itinerant merchant) who was known to have died suddenly while crossing Goldenstadr Moor in 1828 – was finally identified. He was exhumed for formal Christian burial but his short green coat with colourful buttons, a sample of hair and the coins from its pocket were kept as museum curiosities, allowing the recent confirmation of his identity through radiocarbon dating (van der Plicht *et al.* 2004: 478). The Große

Moor men (also prehistoric) were assumed to be executed members of the SS (van der Sanden 1996: 102). Even recently, the discovery of 'Moor', a bog body from Uchter Moor in 2000 (and a further find in 2005) led to hopes she might be Elke Kerl: a girl who had gone missing in 1969 after attending a dance hall (Bauerochse *et al.* 2018). We can thus appreciate this deep, local desire to explain and name – to demystify a corpse and lay it to rest – as a continuity of efficacious folk beliefs discussed earlier in the chapter.

While some of these strategies were disrupted and eclipsed by scientific enquiry, local knowledge could keep the remains out of professional hands, especially in the case of bodies that needed to remain hidden. Human remains from Rørbæk, Denmark in 1893 were attributed to the handiwork of a 'known' local murderer, Ni-Kristian, and swiftly reburied in the bog (van der Sanden 1996: 42). As van der Sanden (1996: 42) notes: 'As everybody was afraid of him, no one dared report the find'. Yet seventy years later, the coffin used to give a 'decent' reinterment to the victim was accidentally exhumed, dredged up by the plough as this recently drained land was brought into cultivation. The successive acts of revelation and reburial had taken their toll: little was now left of the original body but a few bones, hair and part of a leather cap, probably indicting a prehistoric date (van der Sanden 1996). In 1920, a body exhumed at Hogenseth in Lower Saxony was left uncovered, awaiting the arrival of experts. Whomever he was thought to be (or feared to become?) the townsfolk apparently destroyed the corpse overnight (Hayen 1979). Meanwhile at Garrynahine, on Lewis, the 'red-haired' bog body found in 1878 was 'held locally to be a tacksman who was murdered by a group of local people for molesting women' (Cowie *et al.* 2011: 25, cat. no. 15): an example of 'rough justice' executed at a parochial level, which we will return to in Chapter 6.

In the mid to later nineteenth century then, discoveries of bog bodies were made to speak to new concerns. They might be national in ambition, looking for royalty in the face of the bog 'queen', or they might be intensely parochial, seeking to lay to rest the ghosts of the past (as with Hamman, Red Christian and Ni-Kristian's victim) or validate the fate of perpetrators themselves. The 'run-away' lovers from Hope provide an example of why such stories should not be lightly dismissed, but some of the above examples *were* probably prehistoric, conveniently reinterpreted according to a local need to 'bury' the past. Yet this era was at least generally respectful of these dead ... queens, lovers, drunkards, murder and mugging victims, as well as criminals: all deserved to be noted or brought to mind at least, to set everyone's concerns to rest, before being reburied. The next era of bog body manipulation, however, was altogether darker in tone.

Dark harvests

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Germany had taken the lead in bog body studies, both in terms of volumes of finds but also the level of

recording and depth of scientific enquiry used to investigate the remains (van der Sanden 1996: 49). Like Lady Moira, one of the most important figures in this era was a woman: the self-educated Johanna Mestorf, who published the first 'survey' of bog bodies from Ireland, Denmark and Germany in 1871 (van der Sanden 1996: 49). In time, she would become both professor and museum director, with a particular interest in the textiles and clothing found in the bogs. It was she who coined the term '*Moorleiche*' (bog body) to describe this distinct category of human remains. Mestorf used the fabric and weave of their clothing to make links with formal burials, arguing that this was a distinct German phenomenon dating to c. AD 200–400. Although she had initially divided her analysis into 'drowned, murdered and executed' examples, by 1907, she had narrowed her interpretation (Ravn 2010: 108), drawing on the work of Ahrends. In 1824 he was the first scholar to make a direct connection between the bog bodies and the work of Tacitus, citing: 'ignavos et imbelles et corpore infames caeno ac plaude, iniecta insupecrate, mergunt' ('the coward, the unwarlike and the man stained with abominable vices are drowned in bogs and swamps and are covered with hurdles' (Tacitus, *Germany and Its Tribes* XII, cited in Church and Brodribb 1942: n.p.). Mestorf thus argued that 'the bodies were those of members of German communities who had been published for some offence' (cited in van der Sanden 1996: 51). Her ideas found resonance with scholars in the Netherlands, as well as the later German archaeologist, Hahne, who reiterated the notion that bog bodies represented a 'culturally and chronologically distinct group' characteristic of 'certain German legal practices [that] led to the burial of human beings in bogs and swamps' (cited in van der Sanden 1996: 52).

It was their work that laid the foundation for the studies of Alfred Dieck, once seen as a 'grandmaster' of bog body studies for the depth of archival research he conducted, which by 1965 had risen from Hahne's 1918 catalogue (from north-west Germany, the Netherlands, Denmark and Ireland) of 56 bog bodies to 712, and by 1985 to a total of 1,859 examples (Ravn 2010: 109). Dieck made many important contributions to scholarship on the topic: he argued strongly that bog bodies dated from the Mesolithic to the Second World War itself, refuting the notion that this was a chronologically restricted phenomenon. In this analysis he was undoubtedly right, but unfortunately, many of his 'paper' examples have since been called into question (van der Sanden 2006). His original manuscript dating to 1939 was destroyed in the Allied bombing of Leipzig, and although his archive was accessioned by the Institute für Denkmalpflege in Hanover, his primary informants are now deceased and many of the records that he cites have been lost, damaged or cannot now be located. Recent scholars, particularly van der Sanden (1996: chaps 4 and 5) have criticised the way in which mere mentions of possible finds were counted as definite examples in order to elevate his total bog body count. He was uncritical with his sources, never questioning odd cross-period conflation of weapons and clothing, and he recorded extraordinary objects found with bog bodies that are now mysteriously lost (van der Sanden 1996: 65). Seminally, he never examined any human remains himself yet reported in detail on fantastical tattoos or

discoveries of ‘wreaths of flowers’ placed over the dead. Some of his more erotic comments now appear both distasteful and impossible to verify (e.g. reports of young women whose hymens were apparently intact, perhaps noted as a comment upon their ‘virginal’ status). As van der Sanden (1996: 54) puts it, there was in many of his reports ‘a grain of truth’ shrouded in ‘cloak of fantasy’.

Dieck’s career also cast a shadow over this work. During the Second World War, when other Iron Age scholars such as the Celtic art specialist Paul Jacobstahl were forced to flee Germany, losing their archives in the process (see Crawford and Ulmschneider 2020), Dieck kept his position. During this time archaeology was increasingly deployed by Himmler (through the SS-Ahnenerbe) and the Nazi archaeologist Kossina to prove the direct descent of the German people from a pure Aryan race. The new culture history approach to archaeology and material culture allowed Kossina to chart both the supposed ethnic superiority of the ancient Germanic race and to map the original extent of their ancestral ‘homelands’ (to which the Third Reich thus argued it might now legitimately lay claim, see Trigger 2006; Lund 2002). In this manipulation of the archaeological evidence and classical texts, Tacitus’s phrase *corpore infames* was reinterpreted by Professor and SS-Untersturmführer Karl-August Eckhardt to mean ‘homosexual’ (Lund 1995: 61). Ravn (2010) reveals how the very public dissemination of this idea, through the weekly SS magazine, *Das Schwarze Korps*, gave an authenticity and ancestral legitimacy to homophobia, resulting in Adolf Hitler’s 1941 declaration of the death penalty for any homosexual within the Waffen-SS or police force and interment in a concentration camp for civilians convicted of this crime. Sanders (2009: 63) argues that this notion of the ‘degenerate body’ was all too easily elided with qualities of the bog itself: a kind of psychogeography of the ‘soft’, ‘feminine’, ‘uncanny’ and ‘abnormal’ – such remains became the dead testimony of ‘what the race had to be cleared and cleaned of’. Yet this phrase – *corpore infames* – can be interpreted in many different ways: the ‘stained’ man, those ‘marked with abominable vices’, the ‘disreputable’ body or Glob’s ([1969] 1971: 114) own ‘notorious evil-livers’ all give very different nuances to the term, the original intent of which in Tacitus’s text seems to be to draw a distinction between crimes that required public display and execution and those that should remain ‘hidden’. It suited German politics of the day to legitimate what was in fact contemporary prejudice through supposedly attested ancient practice.

Quietly, though notably, Dieck disagreed. In the two hundred articles he published on the phenomena, he repeatedly cited the range of different evidence and dates to try and disrupt such a simplistic narrative (Ravn 2010: 109). This cannot have gone down well and despite Dieck’s membership of the Nazi Party, the dispute marred his prospects. He was then injured during the war and taken captive by the Americans, before falling foul of post-war attitudes towards Nazi academics, and he was prevented from working formally in archaeology again. Both Eisenbeiss (1994) and van der Sanden’s (1996: 62) research reveals the ‘slippery ground’ that Dieck trod in this post-academic limbo: a netherworld where folklore or even place-name evidence was enough to create a ‘new’ record. The sheer volume of his

apparent finds earned him plaudits, renown and even awards despite his by then amateur status (van der Sanden 1996). By 2006, van der Sanden and Eisenbeiss (2006: 120) concluded that Dieck had largely fabricated much of his 'phantom population' of bog bodies, which by this time was a well-regarded topic in wider northern European scholarship. Dieck's motives can only be guessed at – perhaps this semi-fictional population was a riposte to both the Nazi ideology that sought to 'purify' Germanic prehistory as well as revenge upon an academic community that officially excluded him from research. What it does reveal though is the unstable ground of the early to mid-twentieth century and the way bog body discoveries (real or not) became 'ventriloquists' or 'mediums' (Sanders 2009: 61) for contemporary prejudice, anxiety, resistance and revenge.

'Big Science' and the forensic turn

In the last section of this chapter, I want to discuss the major trope that still dominates bog body studies: the lasting impact of the post-1950s 'Big Science' paradigm of scientific archaeology and the way this has morphed into the forensic approach. Archaeology as a discipline was revolutionised in the 1950s–1980s, through the new scientific techniques available for analysing both human remains and material culture (Trigger 2006). The most germane advances for bog body study included radiocarbon dating and its calibration, archaeobotanical and faunal analysis (of the surrounding peat, pollen and stomach contents), the microscopic analysis of textile and skin products from clothing, wood species identification and the palaeoenvironmental analysis of the bog itself (see Chapter 4). In terms of the human remains, X-radiographs were drawn from medical research into bioarchaeology, to reveal dental histories, fractures and bone preservation, while microscopic examination of well-preserved tissue enabled disease histories and histology as well as evidence for violence and trauma to be investigated. All of these techniques were deployed in the study of both Tollund and Grauballe Man, in what Glob ([1969] 1971) explicitly termed a 'post-mortem investigation'. Glob may have ended his famous account with rich, sometimes speculative forays into mythology and folklore, but the very foundation of his study was rooted in this new science and the 'evidence' it brought to light.

By the time that Ian Stead led the investigation of the Lindow Moss remains, he could draw upon the subdisciplines of microbiology, the chemical analysis of skin and potential surficial pigments, hair and nail analyses, along with charcoal, peat macrofossil, insect and parasite studies and spectroscopy on dietary remains (Stead *et al.* 1986). The opportunity to investigate a well-preserved corpse was conceptualised from the start as a forensic investigation, drawing upon the expertise of surgeon Jim Bourke alongside the human remains specialist, Don Brothwell. They added detailed medical approaches to the study of tissue and skeletal remains, alongside photogrammetric recording, computer tomography and facial reconstruction, in a pioneering interdisciplinary study that changed the public

face of bog body studies in the UK (magnified through the televised *QED* science documentary series of 1985 – a fascinating shift from the *Buried Treasure* series discussed in [Chapter 1](#)). This suite of approaches continues to underpin contemporary research but with the addition of isotope, aDNA, micro-CT scanning, scanning electron microscopy (SEM) analysis of hair and fingernails, infrared reflectography, endoscopy, spectroscopy and magnetic resonance imaging, as evidenced in recent studies of Grauballe Man (Asingh and Lynnerup 2007), Tollund Man (Fischer 2012) and ‘Moorá’ from Uchter Moor (Bauerochse *et al.* 2018). Advances in textile studies (e.g. Berghe *et al.* 2009), landscape reconstruction (e.g. Chapman 2015) and the interrogation of related deposits (such as the lipid analysis and dating of bog butter, see Downey *et al.* 2006), have widened the scope of scientific enquiry beyond the bodies themselves. The insights gained from this seminal new research are extensively discussed in [Chapters 5](#) and [6](#), and also inform the methods adopted in [Chapter 7](#) for Manchester’s own bog head: Worsley Man. Yet what interests me here is the way that this shift in what was now scientifically *possible* framed bog body research in a new light.

In studies of archaeological theory dating to the height of British bog body fever (the late 1980s and early 1990s) the impact of this scientific turn was criticised by post-processual scholars. They believed the major proponents of the processual, scientific paradigm conceptualised archaeology as a mere act of *discovery* of the past (with the archaeologist predominantly portrayed as detective, see Shanks and Tilley 1987: 6–7), rather than a hermeneutic process of *analysis and interpretation* (Harris and Cipolla 2017). Writers such as Holtorf (2007, 2012) have criticised how this shaped a popular image of archaeology either as simple ‘treasure hunting’ (where the past can be simply discovered, revealed) or ‘forensic examination’ (where the ‘facts’ will emerge unproblematically from a crime scene). Most scholars of the humanities would now accept that archaeological understanding arises through a dialogue between scientific data and theoretical ideas. It is important that we remember this and pay attention to where our bog bodies come from *in time*, not just in terms of their origin but the moment of their discovery. As we have seen, what we decide to ‘keep’ from the bog, the names and voices given to the dead, whether they are seen as marvels or revenants, saints or sinners, and the histories they are made to bear witness to, all are shaped not just by archaeological methods but by the beliefs of the day and the role of the past in the present.

Today, the forensic trope has come to dominate our vision of bog body research. At one level this is understandable, grounded in a long-standing belief that many of the remains are the result of murders, often committed within living memory – such as Ni-Kristian’s ‘victim’ from Denmark or Morley Gorses Man, discussed earlier. From the 1850s onwards, while surgeons and doctors eagerly sought to acquire such remains to develop their anatomical expertise and enhance their collections, they began to find themselves clashing with criminal investigations of the dead. Thus, Ecroyd Smith (1865: 212) notes with annoyance that the archaeologists had to deal with ‘the foolishly officious police officer of a neighbouring village

[who had] ... informed the County Coroner of the suspicious discovery'. Likewise, in Kildress, Co. Tyrone, the body of a man was unearthed close to (but outside of) a churchyard in 1900, apparently dressed 'in a coachman's coat with brass buttons' with an injury to the skull that suggested it had been 'split by a blow from a turf spade' (cited in Briggs and Turner 1986: 195, no. 118). This discovery launched a murder enquiry but the suspected 'victim' named by locals was later proved to have recently died a normal death in Scotland after emigration some years earlier. It is likely the Kildress body represents the furtive interment of a suspicious death, as close to consecrated ground as possible. Yet such was the notoriety of the case that on 9 June, the neighbouring parish of Moneymore (whose rivalry with Kildress was, the newspaper reported, 'well known') reported its own 'bog head', remarkably found on the same day as Kildress, by local Moneymore man James Dowdall, on their own Ballylonghan Moss! Sergeant Bell, Dr McIver and Constable Lynch duly attended but could find nothing more than the skull. Drily, the reporter concluded that although he had certainly come to his death by 'decapitation' the police murder case had been abandoned. Wittily, he went on: 'Perhaps if as many bones as could be found as would about patch up a complete set the inquest might yet come about' (Anon. 1900: 3). While the Kildress body clearly dates to this historic era, this so far unrecorded 'paper bog head' from Moneymore sounds much more likely to be a new prehistoric example.

The detailed study of the paper bog bodies of Scotland by Cowie *et al.* (2011) also reveal a rich number of new post-medieval examples, many of which could be interpreted as violent or sudden deaths, from poor weather, fleeing of disputes and battles, summary executions or muggings and murders, including the case of an early eighteenth-century Arnish youth, who was killed in a quarrel with his companion on a nesting expedition. As Cowie *et al.* (2011) note, the murderer then fled the scene but was later caught; he confessed and was hanged for the crime, even though the victim's body took nearly three hundred years to resurface from the bog, complete with horn spoon, comb and quills. The Glenhead bog body from Wigtownshire was also assumed to be the result of a murder: a 'dark deed' as the 1852 reporter from the *Dumfries and Galloway Standard* put it (cited in Cowie *et al.* 2011: 33, cat. no. 36).

The association of bogs with nefarious goings-on was not fanciful: by the nineteenth century these landscapes were physical and culturally marginalised, as the pages of the *Ashton Weekly Reporter* reveal. Private boxing fights run for bets, vendettas, drunk-fuelled altercations and illicit affairs often took place on Ashton and Droyslden Moss. In 1898, the corpse of a woman was found on Little Moss at the edge of Ashton. She had died from two deep wounds to the neck and throat, apparently administered by a fruit knife that was discarded nearby (Anon. 1898: 2). She was well-dressed in black kid gloves with a silver-handled umbrella and the police noted that on her finger was a 'worn' wedding ring. Many newspaper reports later, it transpired that she had probably been murdered by a chemist of her acquaintance and the two were suspected of having an affair that had soured; had she threatened to expose him, or did she arrange this secluded

meeting to terminate their liaison? We will never know, since the guilt-ridden chemist committed suicide some weeks later, when his handwriting was matched to a note found in the victim's purse. This body on the moss reminds us eerily of some of the female remains we will encounter in [Chapter 6](#) and it prompts us to think of rather different motivations for the killing and hiding of women in the bog than those usually deployed for Yde Girl or Huldremose Woman – not just public shame or punishment, but private humiliation, rejection or revenge.

The forensic case that overshadows all others is that of Lindow Moss and the set of remains picked out from the peat depot elevator by Andy Mould and Stephen Dooley in 1983 (Briggs and Turner 1986: 10). Initially identified as a football and hosed down in the yard, the peat workers then recognised them as the remains of a human cranium and reported the case to the police (Briggs and Turner 1986: 10). The Macclesfield force were in the process of investigating a missing-person case from twenty years prior to these events – a cold case reinvigorated by a reported confession by the husband (Peter Reyn-Bardt) to his cellmates while interred for another crime. Maria Reyn-Bardt had only been married for a couple of years before she disappeared, and as her home backed on to the moss, the police became convinced this was the missing wife. When confronted with the discovery Peter Reyn-Bardt confessed, but despite an extensive forensic search nothing other than an odd, ribbed iron pin or rod was discovered. Suspicions about the skull itself began to surface: the murderer stated he had burned and dismembered the body but no signs of this could be found on the cranium. Radiocarbon analysis was commissioned and soon revealed that the individual dated to 1740 +/- 80 BP, the later Roman era (Briggs and Turner 1986: 11; Joy 2009: 17); Peter Reyn-Bardt had confessed to a murder that he himself could not possibly have committed.

This scientific, clinical and forensic approach to bog bodies has been paralleled by more speculative, some would say neo-Romantic responses. The remains of Lindow Man II were rather fancifully interpreted as those of a Druid prince, 'Lovernios' (inspired in part by his fox fur armband), by Ross and Robins (1989). Neo-pagan interpretations to, and claims over, Lindow Man may have revitalised his importance (Rathouse 2016) but they have also reinvigorated debates over who can claim scholarly and cultural ownership of such 'pagan' remains (see Restell Orr and Bienkowski 2006a, 2006b; cf. Jenkins 2011, 2016). Much has been made of the 'Celtic' triple-fold death of Lindow Man (see Aldhouse-Green 2002: 89, 124) resulting in attempts to 'de-bunk' what are seen as over-interpretations of the evidence (e.g. Briggs 1995: 168–82), which will be critically discussed in [Chapter 6](#). Even quite reasonable discussions of the violence and methods of death suffered by Lindow Man (such as Hill 2004b) have earned the ire of sceptics, keen to demystify this phenomenon (Hutton 2004b; see also response by Hill 2004a). Meanwhile in 1960s Denmark, Glob's emphasis upon ritual sacrifice to a goddess of fertility, in the cases of Tollund and Grauballe Man, have been critically situated by Asingh (2009: 18) in a similar backlash: 'In the post war years, National Romanticism was dusted off ... Just think – we Danes are descendants of a people who practised such a noble tradition as to sacrifice to the goddess of love.' These ideas continue

to shape public interpretation but for cultural as well as methodological reasons, the forensic paradigm has come to dominate bog body studies, shaped in part by a millennial appetite for factual and fictional 'CSI'-style investigations. While Sanders's (2009) study of the cultural life of bog bodies focuses more upon texts than film and television, it is these latter media that arguably now shape the image of bog body remains (Holtorf 2007, 2012). In the UK, an episode of the fictional forensic drama *Silent Witness* (entitled 'Lost', 2011) began with the discovery of a supposed bog body from 'Bleaklow Moor' that was soon revealed to be a more recent murder victim. In contrast, in an episode of *Endeavour* (the Inspector Morse prequel) entitled 'Harvest' (2017), a body initially thought to be that of a missing local scientist turns out to be a true bog body: 'Brampton Man'. While the creative legacies of bog bodies will be further touched on in [Chapter 9](#), it is notable that the most recent monograph by one of Britain's foremost scholars on the topic, Miranda Aldhouse-Green, draws keenly on the forensic trope, with the title of *Bog Bodies Uncovered: Solving Europe's Ancient Mystery* outlining an approach driven by scientific evidence, supported by a foreword by renowned crime writer, Val McDermid. We are drawn into the academic study by McDermid's promise of 'forensic techniques', how bog body studies 'peel back the layers', 'uncover' or 'expose the violence', 'examine the detail' and 'delve under the shroud' (Aldhouse-Green 2016: 6–7). Yet McDermid warns us of the 'pieces of this puzzle' that won't fit, that can't be intuited from the evidence – the theories, the stories, the never-quite knowing – that leaves both a creative space for the crime writer as well as for the archaeologist. It is a fair warning.

Lynnerup (2015: 1010) records that the youngest 'bog body' known comes from South Zealand: the unfortunate pilot of a Second World War German aircraft that had crashed into a bog, which had subsequently been drained. Plans to turn it into a golf course relocated the wreck and the airman (complete with his well-preserved leather flying jacket) who was exhumed and examined at the Institute for Forensic Pathology, University of Copenhagen. Though largely skeletonised due to the drying out of the peat, patches of soft tissue, especially skin, showed similar characteristics to his prehistoric counterparts (Lynnerup 2015: 1011). While this case ultimately led to the reburial of one of the war dead, the search for bodies within the bogs of Ireland has a more disturbing and disruptive meaning. In the turbulent period known as the 'Troubles', men and women in Ireland were abducted by the Provisional IRA for a variety of perceived crimes. Sixteen victims were identified by the Independent Commission for the Location of Victims' Remains (ICLVR) for intensive forensic search. Of these, thirteen have been located, initiated by sketch maps or anonymous oral testimony – tip-offs negotiated through the Peace Process in order to locate these extrajudicial executions. While coastal sand dunes, forests and lakes were used to hide such remains, bogs were particularly favoured. Most recently, in 2015, the remains of Seamus Wright and Kevin McKee were discovered, stacked in a double grave, on Coghalsstown bog, Co. Meath (BBC Online News 2015). We should remember that these modern forensic investigations unfolded against the background of the most exciting era of



2.5 *Innocent Landscapes* sequence entitled 'Oristown' (graffiti), David Farrell, 2000.
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prehistoric and medieval bog body discoveries Ireland has ever seen (Grice 2006). Yet the murder investigations often stirred up local antipathy: early searches often led to nothing, frustrating not just the bereaved families but local communities who wanted the body found so that this era of violence might disappear again for good. A remarkable photograph by the landscape photographer David Farrell, from his collection *Innocent Landscapes* (2001), captures something of this resentment at apparent incompetence. In 'Oristown' (Figure 2.5), the foreground shows a narrow country track, as if lit by car headlights, winding between the fringes of mossy woodland. It is an eerie and menacing frame. Stencilled on to the road is the single word 'Bodies' with an arrow pointing directly into the bog.

Conclusion

This historiography of discovery has probed the changing reception of bog bodies: what their discovery meant, whether they were kept, reburied, defiled or curated, and how the remains were used in each era, to speak to pressing contemporary concerns. In the early historic period they were either marvels or horrors, relics or curios. There was confusion about how to deal with their remains and where they should be interred or kept. It has shown how contemporary

eschatology – what people believed about death and the dead themselves – could be thrown into confusion by such remains, resulting in Christian and folkloric improvisation. By the nineteenth century, however, such bodies were used as part of the rethinking not just of ‘deep time’ but the origins of races and nations, entering institutional collections as key, if unwilling, witnesses to these pasts. Some of those narratives involve abhorrent manipulations of meaning to serve racist and homophobic ends. Yet this chapter has also shown that the claiming of the dead for scholarship vied with a more local sense of ownership or responsibility for these remains, in a struggle that continues to haunt debates over ownership and curation, particularly in the UK. Finally, it has looked at the dominance of the forensic trope in current studies, which promises us a level of insight into the lives and deaths of bog bodies beyond any antiquarian imagination. Will we, as the front cover of Aldhouse-Green (2016) seems to promise, be able to finally ‘solve’ the mystery? And will this put an end to what Heaney (1999) calls their ‘riddling power’, the ‘doubling force’? I think not, for it lies, as Heaney (1999: 4) goes on to explain, in the way that ‘the bodies erase the boundary-line between culture and nature, between art and life, between vision and eyesight’. What he was alluding to was the effect of a chemical and biological process that was nonetheless ‘artistic’ in the moment of encounter with a bog body. It was the power of being in their presence that, he argued, prompted the imagination to wonder. Thus it is to that process – of natural preservation and conservation – that the following chapter turns, as the next stage in the ‘afterlife’ of our bog bodies.

3 Preserving the dead

Haunting auras

From the earliest antiquarian letters to the poetic evocations of Heaney, the words used to describe bog bodies conjure their remarkable yet unsettling power. They are 'entire and uncorrupted' (Leigh 1700: 65), found as 'in a common posture of sleep' (de la Pryme 1870: 983), 'as fresh as if death had occurred the preceding day' (Gear 1883, cited in Cowie *et al.* 2011: 8). Yet the bog has inevitably altered and stained these remains; they are described by Low as 'rolled up in their own leather' (cited in Anderson 1879: liii) or 'tanned and dried in a remarkable manner' (Lukis 1892: ix). The slightly glossy, madder-brown hue produced by the peat thus lends such remains a sense of antiquity, even permanence. Heaney (1972: 36) captures this beautifully in 'The Tollund Man': the fen's 'dark juices working / Him to a saint's kept body'. Glyn Daniel also evoked how this corpse produced a sense of 'humanity, serenity ... as if carved in ebony' while his fellow presenter, Mortimer Wheeler, described him as 'the most haunting relic of antiquity I have ever seen' (BBC 1954).

Such 'haunting power' arises from the eerie lifelikeness of a bog body. Even recently, Irish curator Rolly Reed revealed that he felt 'freaked' by the enormous reach of Old Croghan Man's arms and his perfect fingerprints, admitting to flashbacks and nightmares (cited in Grice 2006: 19–21). He could have been, as Reed put it, anyone from the streets of Dublin. The bog appears to have stopped decay, or at least to have stilled it. The things caught in its waters appear to stand outside of time – although we know they are dead these ancient bodies somehow defy mortality. For some, this near-living afterlife creates a sense of immortality, of hope even, in the face of our own finitude. Yet their unique material valence, their 'fleshiness and overt corporeality', is unsettling – mirroring life while being clearly estranged from it (Sanders 2009: 50). For others, it creates unease, since 'what should be dead appears to be alive' (Wallace 2004: 57). Meeting such remains can produce 'feelings of confusion, alarm, surprise, even trickery, prompting us to reconcile what can seem to be contradictory facts and categorical boundaries' (Fredengren 2016: 492). Bog bodies thus epitomise Freud's concept

of ‘the uncanny’, a quality related principally to ‘death, dead bodies, revenants, spirits and ghosts’ (Sanders 2009: 49): ‘everything is uncanny [*unheimlich* – literally ‘unhomely’] that ought to have remained secret and hidden but has come to light’ (Freud [1919] 2003: 126). Accordingly, Moshenska (2006: 93) argues that it is strictly the *process* of exhuming remains from the peat – the transgressive act of bringing the hidden to light – which renders them uncanny, not any innate material property. Yet Sanders (2009: 49) also grounds their troubling power in the fear that that an apparently lifeless find could once more be made animate, reading into these remains a provocative, revenant agency.

This power of bog bodies was realised in an incident in Freud’s own life. He was an ardent collector of classical antiquities, being fascinated in particular by Pompeii and the plaster casts of bodies, revealed by infilling the bodily voids immortalised in consolidated tephra and ash (Sanders 2009, fig. 2.1). These ‘traces’ of bodies became, through Fiorelli’s reproductions, analogous to the marbled skin of classical sculptures. Freud also used the metaphor of stratigraphic excavation to drive his psychological method, believing that analysis could ‘uncover’ the deep and repressed layers of a patient’s psyche in an ordered, rational manner. Yet he found himself psychologically overwhelmed by his protégé Jung’s description of the black morass of the bog from which spilled such distorted, warped remains (Sanders 2009: 50–1). Freud fainted, repulsed by this spewing mire and its regurgitation of the primitive and uncivilised: a ‘black tide of mud’, as Freud himself put it, without ordered depths. He was, Jung recalled, ‘vexed ... [by] all this chatter about corpses’, convinced this was part of Jung’s subliminal, fratricidal thoughts towards his past mentor (cited in Sanders 2009: 51).

Why was Freud repulsed and haunted by such archaeology? By their nature, bog bodies do not simply endure *through* time, like a ruin. They do not gradually erode in profile, fragmenting, gathering lichens, cracks and repairs that become the material manifestation of what the late nineteenth-century art historian Riegl ([1903] 1982: 31–2) called an object’s ‘age-value’: a concept developed for architecture and artefacts not human remains (DeSilvey 2017). Yet the bog body can be considered an excellent example of Riegl’s (1903] 1982: 24) ‘catalysts’, which ‘trigger in the beholder a sense of the life cycle, of the emergence of the particular from the general and its gradual but inevitable dissolution ... evoked by mere sensory perception’. Nonetheless, their very failure to rot and decay immediately causes a problem. The leather-like appearance noted by many archaeologists and poets might give them a weather-beaten, wrung and worn-out finish but there is no ‘steady decay’, no sign of the gradual ‘wear and tear’ that Riegl (1903] 1982: 31–2) sought, where footfall or handhold has rubbed a recognizable patina. They disrupt our expectations of the ancient. This gives them a very different ‘aura’ to other archaeological fragments.

What do we mean by the term ‘aura’? In 1936, Walter Benjamin (1969: 221) defined an artwork’s ‘aura’ as the ‘unique existence’ of a thing in time and space, its ‘substantive duration’ as well as ‘the history it has experienced’. Aura is perceived as a sensory closeness to that which is distant in time (Riegl [1903] 1982: 24).

However, unlike the monuments we live alongside (from which, as Musil puts it, our attention drips like water from an oilskin, cited in Taussig 1999: 91), the aura of a bog body derives in part from its sudden and rupturing emergence. The peat cutter's spade collapses time in its incisive 'cut', throwing the past up and out into the present. They are the living embodiment of the way in which Olivier (2015) and Lucas (2004) encourage us to conceptualise time not as a simple successive and linear sequence from past to present but as points of contact between materialities of different time depths. As Fredengren (2016: 489) summarises, 'the deep time of archaeology ... is better described as scrunched or folded, "touching" in unexpected, particular or specific points'. Bog bodies then, are not merely uncanny but unnerving in their subversion of the order we expect *in* time and the effect we expect time to *take*: summoning us, demanding attention as they burst into our present.

Few of these corpses, as Sanders (2009: 56) notes, can lay claim to 'physiognomic beauty' – they are distorted, flattened, warped. Pye (2001a: 175) likewise questions whether it is appropriate to display human remains retaining soft tissue, 'since their power to horrify is greater than human bones alone'. Yet this obdurate 'thereness ... their stubborn materiality' (Sanders 2009: xiv–xv), is both morbid *and* touching. Individualised humanity is still recognisable: trimmed nails, beautiful plaits of hair and skeins of cloth with their coloured weave. As a result, archaeologists often refer to them as 'bodies' not 'corpses', even retaining a personal pronoun where known ('he', 'she' not 'it') (Sanders 2009: 7). The power of encounters with well-preserved 'deep-time' objects can thus also be 'enchanted' (Fredengren 2016: 492). Indeed, Fredengren (2016) argues vociferously that the eruptive emergences of bog bodies can be part of how we become more viscerally connected to the temporality of human occupation in a place, and our intergenerational obligations to these environments – now, apparently, so central to our future survival (see Chapter 1). She draws here on Bennett's definition of being enchanted as 'being struck or shaken', and 'a state of open-ness to the disturbing-captivating elements of everyday experience' in such a way that it generates ethical potential (Bennett 2010: 131). Well-preserved human remains, Fredengren muses, can thus be particularly powerful kinds of cultural ghosts, for as often as they inspire awe, they shock us with evidence for violence: the 'dark elderberry place', as Heaney puts it, of Grauballe Man's gashed throat ('The Grauballe Man', 1975), the 'soiled bandage' of Yde Girl's 'blindfold' ('Punishment', 1975). Beyond the stilted fear, the hesitancy to approach, comes the urge to tend to these lives, described evocatively by conservator Valerie Hall when dealing with the same remains that so haunted her colleague: 'Nothing was said, but I noticed how we all reached out and held Old Croghan Man's hand. It was a reassurance across the aeons that we intended no harm. The harm done to those men in their lives was heart-wrenching' (cited in Grice 2006: 20). As Sanders (2009: 223) simply puts it: 'their having-been speaks to our being'. This ambiguous aura is created through preservation: both 'natural' (in the bog) and cultural (though the acts of conservators in museums). The next section begins with the musings of the antiquarians and early scientists before

reviewing contemporary theories on peat preservation. As we shall see, there is still much to discover.

'Kept bodies': the preservative power of the bog

Many of the antiquarian writers described the bog's effect in terms of its analogy with hide and leatherwork. Low considered the Summersdale body to be 'preserved by a natural tanning ... by the action of the moss water ... as if in a tan pit' (cited in Anderson 1879: liii). Writing about remains from Austwick Common near Leeds, Denny also refers to 'the tanning property of the peat', but he also cites John Lubbock's report on the coffin burials at Tremhoi, to wonder if such preservation was the result of bog 'water ... strongly impregnated with iron' (Denny 1871: 177). He goes on to note that in the case of the Austwick bog skeleton 'the bones are excessively light ... they have lost all their earthy material, probably owing to the action of some acid' (Denny 1871: 162, 168). Here we have an early, detailed report on cases where 'nearly all the animal substance disappears ... as relates to the human body ... while the woolen clothing and the wooden coffins remains in a completely perfect condition' (Denny 1871: 176). Another skeletonised body was found at Lochar Moss I, where the bones and clothing were preserved but the flesh had decomposed apart from a single toenail (Cowie *et al.* 2011: 37). In contrast, Abraham de la Pryme (1701: 983) notes the power of 'Moor water' to preserve the flesh but consume the bone. Hunt's (1866a, 1866b) work on Shetland was motivated by this suspicion that it was not purely the peat nor the bog water that led to the preservation of skin and tissue, noting the differential preservation both within and between corpses even within the small area of the Bressay 'cemetery'.

The power of the Peak District's peaty soils were well known to its inhabitants. As Balguy (1735: 415) reported to the Royal Society, 'There are no Means known (I believe) of preserving Bodies so well'. Charles Cox (1877: 265) also mentions the 'antiseptic qualities of the soil', which he comments led to 'various extraordinary instances ... in preserving dead bodies', including one unfortunate interment in Hathersage churchyard. Mr Benjamin Ashton was exhumed by a relative fifty-six years after his burial in 1781, whence 'the body was found congealed and hard as flint' and was seen by one Jenny Sherd 'reared upright in the church'; however, the corpse fell in the nave, and its head became detached (Cox 1877: 236). Her father tried to saw a piece out of the corpse 'as a relic' but the blade 'would not make the slightest impression' (Cox 1877: 236). Cox (1877: 265) goes on to cite in full the letter of the minister, Wormald, who attended the final exhumation of the Hope couple. In old age, Wormald recalls that while the peat was moist, it was not waterlogged (Balguy 1735: 413, 415). Yet in Balguy's (1735: 414) account of this repeatedly disturbed burial we can see a finer observation that the repeated exhumation and manhandling of the woman's body led to her disproportionate decay, compared with the grazier himself. By the mid to late nineteenth century there was an

awareness that while peaty bog water was involved in the process of preservation, the results of immersion were not constant or predictable.

Such observations led these authors to make comparisons with other well-preserved remains – the Grewelthorpe Moor bog body was described as ‘tanned and dried in a remarkable manner, somewhat like an Egyptian mummy’ (Lukis 1892: ix). Leigh (1700: 64) (who noted almost in passing the discovery of bodies ‘entire and uncorrupted’ from the bogs of Cheshire and Lancashire) notes the peculiar power of a ‘bituminous Turf’ from Hasil (near Ormskirk) that was highly flammable but also acted as a preservative: ‘I have seen strange Effects of it in preserving Raw Flesh, which comes near to the Aegyptian *Mummy*’. Balguy (1735) also cites Egyptian remains and contemporary British embalming techniques. These early experimenters mixed mineral, culinary, herbal and medicinal substances (including the power of natron or the antiseptic property of honey) to delay decomposition. Embalming was certainly used in the case of Oliver Cromwell, whose rapidly decaying body threatened to undermine his post-mortem reputation (corporeal decay being an index of sanctity, see Tarlow 2008: 70). Ironically it was this very act of preservation that later allowed Cromwell’s corpse to be disinterred during the restoration of the monarchy, where it was tried, hanged by the neck and ‘decapitated’ to become a humiliating display on a spike above Westminster Hall (Tarlow 2008: 74–5). Searching for other analogies, the antiquarian Denny (1871: 173) not only cites ‘the frozen and entire bodies of mammoth and rhinoceros in Siberia’, but the instance of the mineralisation of a worker trapped deep in a mine, as well as a young pilgrim/trader in the Alps, found frozen in a glacial crevice: ‘embalmed in ice, decay had not yet touched his flesh’. Medical and chemical intervention, extreme heat, extreme cold and extreme wetness, as well as the airless aridity of the vault – the classic explanations of corporeal preservation had already been fathomed by these authors (see Chamberlain and Parker Pearson 2001; Giles 2013). Yet living in an era of pre-refrigeration, they also have lessons for *us* to learn. In his account of Scottish ‘mummies’, Low mourns the reburial of some remains but informs his readers of how these particular corpses seem to have been curated:

In Walls, likewise, there were well preserved mummies but they were buried by a superstitious old woman. These were preserved in the same manner as you have no doubt heard of mutton or beef by skewing, that is by placing the body in a situation where the air can get in to absorb the juices, but insects are excluded; so that in time, the body becomes like a dried haddock. (Cited in Anderson 1879: liii–liv)

His knowledge of localised wind-drying techniques is instructive, as Chamberlain and Parker Pearson (2001) make a cogent argument that the mortuary skills needed to ‘cure’ or preserve a corpse would have been drawn from analogous domains of knowledge: cooking (salting, preserving, maturing and curing, wind-drying, desiccating, cooling, smoking), textile and hide work (retting, stitching, stuffing and packing) and of course, primitive medical interventions (wound dressing and binding, excision and amputation) (see also Giles 2013: 489–90; Tollefsen 2016).

One of the key research questions that [Chapter 6](#) will probe is whether later prehistoric communities knew of the preservative properties of the bog itself and knowingly exploited it, to different ends.

Another factor repeatedly cited by these authors to explain the phenomenon of preservation was the medicinal, ‘antiseptic’ power of bog water, referred to by Pitiscus of Oldenberg (1791, cited in van der Sanden 1996: 19) as ‘the real quintessence’. In a prescient passage that anticipates modern modes of passive conservation, he suggests that bog bodies could be stored in peat water so that future generations might see what they looked like. Simpson (1846, cited in Cowie *et al.* 2011: 16) also comments on ‘the antiseptic quality of the moss’, while Low (cited in Anderson 1879: 140) considered ‘the styptic quality of the waters of our mosses’ to be an additional factor in the tanning process. Charles Lyell (1838: 723) mused that the ‘antiseptic properties of the peat’ arose from the charcoal or resinous-like decay of the trees found in its basal layers. However, he also cites the ideas of one Dr MacCulloch that the marvellous properties of bog water were somehow influenced by its plant species— an idea ahead of its time (Lyell 1838: 723). While Pitiscus suggested experiments to test his ideas (burying animals in bogs both with skins and flayed, to evaluate their ‘tanning’ every fortnight), van der Sanden (1996: 19) identifies three antiquarian experimenters who actually tested the properties of peat to preserve – von Pfeiffer, Thorey and Gieske. Gieske immersed small sections of skin in water infused by peat dust, removing it after ten days to dry, and reported that it resembled the worn sole of a shoe (van der Sanden 1996: 19). Finally, in an experiment that would be unlikely to receive ethical approval today, the Danish pathologist Ellermann buried ‘human skin and bones’ in a peat bog, at the turn of the twentieth century, for a period of two years and four months (van der Sanden 1996: 19). He noted that even after this relatively short period, the skin had turned dark brown while the bones were partially decalcified. Ellermann went to conduct further comparative experiments and worked on the bog body known as Vester Torstad (Lynnerup 2015). He concluded that the ‘*Sphagnum* acid’ was key to this process and argued that only raised bogs would produce this ‘tanning’ effect (Ellermann 1916).

Modern scientific analysis of the bog environment has honed our understanding of what is actually behind this marvellous effect of preservation. We know that the rapid growth of peat and the manner in which it compacts results in an anaerobic (oxygen-excluding) environment (Stead *et al.* 1986). This helps reduce organic decomposition both of local plant matter and anything organic – strayed cattle, lost wooden tools or bog bodies – entering its domain (van der Sanden 1996). The dominant model that explains what happens next is known as the ‘sphagnum theory’ (Painter 1991). *Sphagnum* exchanges hydrogen ions for metal ions, gradually producing small quantities of sulphuric acid that mix with the humic acid formed by bacterial decay of lignin in the peat (Granite 2014). This results in a common pH value of 3.2–4.5 (Asingh 2009), and a nutrient poor habitat, fed only by rainwater. Surrounding tree roots, reeds and other plant life cannot tolerate this acid environment, dying to create a plant-rich basal layer to the

bog (to which we will return in [Chapter 4](#)). As the bog grows and expands, these acids further inhibit the growth of bacteria in both plant matter and bog water. As indicated above, this antibacterial effect has been known for centuries: the powerful phenol compounds in *Sphagnum* moss were invaluable in the days before penicillin, drawing on centuries of folkloric knowledge in Scotland, Ireland and Germany among others (Asingh 2009: 135). Dried *Sphagnum* moss was used in field dressings during the First World War due both to its antibacterial (or in antiquarian terms, antiseptic) qualities (Boissoneault 2017). The same ability to absorb rainwater into the largely ‘empty’ cells of *Sphagnum* tissue made it an excellent absorbent for bodily fluids and infectious matter (Watson 2014).

Painter (1995: 98–9) argues it is the sphagnum itself (a natural sugar that he identified) – released from the moss – that neutralises any nutrient-rich nitrogen, binding with the digestive enzymes of putrefactive bacteria to starve and immobilise them, preventing further decay. Meanwhile, fen carr, benefitting from greater mineral input, can sometimes produce an alkaline environment, explaining those examples of bog bodies where the skeleton is preserved but tissue is eaten away (Gill-Robinson 2007). The above biochemistry explains the cessation of decomposition and the differential preservation of tissue and bone, but it does not explain the characteristic ‘tanned’ appearance of a bog body. Painter (1998) argues this is due to a further ‘Maillard’ reaction in which sugars and amino acids form dark-brown polymers, giving the bog body its final leathered appearance and characteristic red hair (Painter 1995: 134–5; Painter 2003). It is important to note that the ‘sphagnum model’ has been queried by Ballance *et al.* (2008), who propose instead that electrostatic interactions between amino groups and sugars are responsible for such ‘tanning’ and preservation (see also Nguyen and Harvey 2001; Hsu and Hatcher 2006; Lynnerup 2015: 1008). Research by Stankiewicz *et al.* (1997) and Freeman *et al.* (2004), meanwhile, suggests Painter’s model still has merit. Their results particularly support the importance of phenolic compounds in the acid bog water as crucial to the preservative effects noticed in bog bodies.

What is not disputed is that the acidic environment tends to decalcify bone (Asingh 2009: 134). Bone mineral is leached from the skeleton while simultaneously mineral salts (often rich in iron) are readily absorbed into the collagenous soft tissues (Lynnerup 2007). Unfortunately, this complicates any attempts to identify applications such as pigments on human skin or certain kinds of tanning agents and dyes on hide products (Lynnerup 2007; see also [Chapter 5](#)). The soft tissues are transformed into a leather-like substance, affecting skin, cartilage and sinew. Waterlogging will saturate a well-immersed body but this can lead both to the loss of the outer epidermis of the skin, which Lynnerup (2015: 1008) compares with the forensic phenomenon of ‘washer-women’s hands’ and dramatic warping and notable shrinkage, if such wet remains are allowed to dry out naturally.

As Granite (2014: 15) notes, the exact preservative power of the peat bog is still ‘a challenging area of research’, which continues to slightly mystify us, as it did antiquarian scholars. What we can certainly take from all these studies is the

realisation that additional factors determine whether a body will be well preserved or not. Some of these are anthropogenic, relating to the condition of the individual near death and the treatment of the body soon after, such as whether a head was decapitated or whether remains retained bodily integrity or were kept, displayed or curated for a while (see Nieuwhof 2015; Fredengren 2018; see also Chapter 6). Assuming a whole body was deposited in the bog, however, we know that immersion in cold weather (with a water temperature below 4°C) seems key (Fischer 2012: 67), preferably in a damp/wet pit, open pool or bog lake (Lynnerup 2015), which would lead to swift submersion in limnic muds (Buckland 1995). Thus, the season of death, weather conditions and rapid encapsulation of the body are also important (Ravn 2010, fig. 2). While it is unlikely that a corpse would resurface from such a pool, since putrefaction and thus the formation of post-mortem gasses were suppressed, the additional weighting or ‘staking down’ of several bog bodies (such as the Windeby Youth, see Aldhouse-Green 2016: front cover) would reinforce deep immersion. Given the fear of the revenant discussed above, it might suggest this was as much a thanatological strategy as a practical concern (van der Sanden 1996: 98–9; Aldhouse-Green 2004a). Having discussed different understandings of the biochemistry of the bog, we now turn to the strategies by which archaeologists have tried to finish the process the bogs had begun.

The archaeological conservation of bog bodies

The moss and mire may have ‘sabotaged and subverted’ the hand of time (Sanders 2009: 60), but the moment a body emerges from the bog, time’s handiwork starts again. This not only alters the aesthetic appearance of such remains but also their scientific value. Lynnerup (2015, fig. 1) dramatically illustrates the risks of allowing a body to dry out with the image of a twisted mandible, initially compressed by the overburden of peat and then warped as water has evaporated, so the condyles are bent double upon each other. It is, he warns, all too easy to attribute the damage wrought by such bone diagenesis to peri-mortem injuries. Yet for many of the antiquarian finds discussed in Chapter 1 there was no alternative than air-drying these remains, if they were to be curated for a collection.

This was the fate of late nineteenth-century discoveries such as Gallagh Man (found in 1821) as well as the Baronstown West body (found in 1953), both in the National Museum of Ireland (O’Floinn 1995). Bog bodies from the Netherlands (such as the Weerdinge couple, found in 1904, Exloërmond Man, found in 1914 and Emmer Efrscheifenveen Man, found in 1938); from Germany (Damendorf II, found in 1900, Jürdenerfeld Man, found in 1934 and Neu England Man, found in 1941); from Denmark (Elling Woman, found in 1938 and Huldremose Woman, found in 1879) and even from Poland (Dröbnitz Girl, found in 1939 but sadly destroyed in the war) were all ‘air-dried’. As well as the warping and shrinkage deplored by Lynnerup, the technique also had other risks: museum basements and stores were not always the ideal atmosphere for such air-drying – Bunsöh

Man and Husbåke I from Germany decayed so swiftly and pungently that all of their surviving remains were destroyed soon after (van der Sanden 1996: 79). The delicate balance between curating the remains and trying to gently dry them meant that bacterial growth and decay could not always be halted. Desiccation could also arise from the mere fact that the remains were subject to police or forensic interrogation, preventing remedial action (as we shall see with Worsley Man from Manchester, in the mid-1950s). Summarising the coarse conservation measures used on Rendswühren Man, Gill-Frerking (2014: 67) used digital radiographs to reveal the wire, steel rods and unidentifiable materials (which probably included modelling clay and cotton wool) to reconstitute and stabilise his fragile head.

Experiments in the conservation of waterlogged, peat-preserved human remains appear to have begun as part of a bolder move to ‘intervene’ in the decay cycle of an object, supported by changes in conservation philosophy, practice and the confidence of museum curators. This went hand in hand with the growth of archaeological science techniques from the mid-twentieth century onwards. Most of these interventions are thus post-war and accompany the growing cachet of bog bodies as an archaeological phenomenon, motivated by the desire to preserve the very properties and characteristics that made these remains remarkable (Tollefsen 2015). However, some pre-date the fame that Glob’s monograph, Heaney’s poetry and the archaeological documentary would bring. In 1871, Rendswühren Man was partially preserved through ‘smoke tanning’ or curing (Asingh and Lynnerup 2007: 308). This was based on the burning of wood to produce aldehydes that react with collagen and prevent further putrefaction (Brothwell 1986: 22) – a technique borrowed from millennia of culinary knowledge. The rather toxic substance of pentachlorophenol was used in the case of Dätgen Man, along with the use of copper and steel wire, small metal nails and a wooden rod, while the brain tissue of Windeby Girl was removed and replaced with putty (Gill-Frerking 2014: 68, 71). Meanwhile, in the 1940s, the bodies from Borremose were kept in zinc boxes, filled with formaldehyde: a forensic method used to preserve dead tissue that works on the principle of liquid substitution – fats and fluids being gradually replaced by formalin in an early kind of ‘plastination’ (Strehle cited in Asingh and Lynnerup 2007: 40). However, organic samples preserved in formaldehyde tend to become shapeless, inhibiting exhibition (as the conservator of Grauballe Man, Lange-Kornbak, later argued) (Strehle cited in Asingh and Lynnerup 2007: 40). These remains are still stored behind the scenes in the National Museum in Copenhagen. In the case of Kreepan Man, ‘as the body became mouldy ... it was first treated with formalin, later with sublimate and later still paraffin wax was injected into it’ (van der Sanden 1996: 89).

The first major conservation programme for bog bodies arose in the case of Tolland Man (Figure 3.1). When he was discovered in 1950, the Silkeborg Museum (then staffed voluntarily) took Glob’s advice to send the remains to the National Museum in Copenhagen. With new premises about to be opened, the Silkeborg staff were eager to display these remains as soon as possible. Yet the senior



3.1 Tollund Man, shortly after discovery. All rights reserved and permission to use the figure must be obtained from the copyright holder.

curator of the National Museum and head of the Prehistoric Department, Therkal Mathiassen, did not share their enthusiasm, writing:

I see that Silkeborg Museum wishes to exhibit the find conserved in its entirety. However, I am not sure this would be a good idea. It is quite a macabre sight and ... it will be very difficult to conserve ... I believe we will have to suffice with simply retaining the head, which is exceptionally well preserved with facial expression etc., as well as the leather cap, the cord and the belt. (Cited in Fischer 2012: 31)

As Fischer (2012: 35) points out, images played a significant role here: the black-and-white newspaper images of the day portrayed Tollund Man lying on his right-hand side (which was significantly more decayed and partially defleshed) and this exaggerated the disquieting effect of the remains. But the damage was done. In 1965 Glob himself described this decision in a restrained manner: ‘Unfortunately it was only thought practicable to undertake conservation with the splendid head’ (Glob [1969] 1971: 32). Knud Thorvildsen (Glob’s conservator at Borremose, charged with the excavation and conservation of Tollund Man) wrote more bluntly: ‘Following examination, Dr Vimtrup severed the corpse’s head from the body’ (cited in Fischer 2012: 50). The rest of the remains were retained but allowed to dry out with a few exceptions (Knudsen 1990), becoming desiccated, shrunken and deformed.

In the laboratory of the National Museum, the technique selected by conservators Thorvildsen and Christensen was apparently influenced by methods used to prepare specimens for microscopy, involving paraffin wax and dehydrating solutions (Strehle 2007: 4, Fischer 2012: 53). The head spent six months steeped in water, formalin and acetic acid, effectively creating an antibacterial fluid to replace the peaty bog water. The solution was then changed to 30 per cent alcohol, and then a further change to 99 per cent alcohol and a solvent, toluol, to avoid ‘curdling’ (Fischer 2012: 53). The final fluid contained paraffin with carnauba wax and a little beeswax, heated to dissolve and impregnate the head. One year later, the remains showed a shrinkage of approximately 12–14 per cent. Meanwhile, the leather cap, belt and cord were conserved using a lanolin mixture that has proved remarkably stable.

In addition, both feet were kept in a preservative fluid believed to be alcohol, but this substance has long since evaporated from one of the jars, damaging one foot considerably (Fischer 2012: 101). The well-preserved right thumb and toe were in better condition but only the former was returned to Silkeborg. In 1970, both right thumb and foot were conserved using polyethylene glycol (PEG) and freeze-dried, but the foot was later reported to show ‘flaking’ (Fischer 2012: 101). Desiccated remains of the torso were found on a shelf in the National Museum along with ‘stripped’ skeletal remains given to the Normal-Anatomical Institute (see Chapter 2). Preserved gut contents found in a jam jar at Moesgaard Museum were also discovered. This disassembling of the corpse might seem horrific to us, but as Fischer recalls, the ethics of displaying the dead at this time were very different: in Mathiassen’s mind ‘they should preferably be hidden away, and in the

case of Tollund Man, ideally be forgotten altogether' (cited in Fischer 2012: 102). It was an era when senior curatorial staff of a national museum were seldom questioned, but Glob's own star was rising. By the time Grauballe Man was discovered in 1952, he reported that: 'it was unanimously agreed that the whole of this Iron Age man should be preserved for posterity ... [to ensure] that, at the end of the lengthy process of treatments envisaged, the dead man would still have the same bodily appearance and posture as when he had been uncovered in the bog' (cited in Glob [1969] 1971: 44). We can sense here the discourse of preservation as a way of ensuring an authentic encounter with the bog body; by now, having seen the ten thousand visitors queuing to see him on temporary display, Glob knew that they had an exhibit that people would flock to. Through this bold initiative, he had successfully transformed attitudes towards the display of the dead in Danish museums (Asingh and Lynnerup 2007: fig. 6) and after six months of analysis it was handed over to the skills of the conservator, Lange-Kornbak. During the research period, Lange-Kornbak repeatedly sprayed the body with distilled water, keeping it damp by 'watering' morning and evening, covering with wet sheets and oilcloth and using a phenol solution as a disinfectant to try and minimise the growth of white spores and insect infestation (Strehle 2007: 35). His diaries reveal that he then used a glycerin coating to create a complete and accurate plaster cast of the body and its death posture (analogous to the 'funerary masks' of the Victorian period), before immersing the corpse in an oak trough containing 875 kg of oak bark chips (Asingh and Lynnerup 2007: 29).

Moesgaard's conservator believed that the bog had begun 'an incipient tanning process which it was my task to complete' (cited in Strehle 2007: 42). Over the course of eighteen months, his bark solution was renewed three times (Glob [1969] 1971) before the 'tannic acid slime' was washed off (Asingh and Lynnerup 2007: 29). The chemical reaction induced by Lange-Kornbak's techniques had the advantage of creating a 'fuller and firmer leather' as Painter puts it (1995: 98): it shrank less upon drying but hardened. Grauballe Man was subsequently placed in a 10 per cent 'bath' of Turkish Oil (used as a softener (Strehle 2007: 44) not a detergent (cf. Omar *et al.* (1989)) and injected with a synthetic resin called 'Cellodal' to prevent further shrinkage. Minor cracks and splits as well as lighter patches in the skin were then 'finished' with a mixture of glycerine, lanolin and cod liver oil (Strehle 2007: 45), otherwise known as 'leather dressing' (Knudsen 1990; Asingh 2009: 61). The plaster cast acted as a model for Lange-Kornbak as he knew that the manipulation of the body during this period would have subtly altered Grauballe Man's disposition. He finally set about creating a 'good-looking' corpse by selective filling of the abdominal cavity with synthetic sponges and filling out of muscles with more Cellodal. These 'cosmetic' transformations might now be regarded as going beyond the contemporary conservation ethos of minimal or reversible intervention. Yet we must understand this treatment within the wider context of trying to shift Danish attitudes towards human remains, and Tollund Man's very selective curation (Strehle 2007: 46). The conservator was also dealing with the consequence of the fact that many people literally wanted a 'piece' of this

body: the recent scanning and patient archival analysis undertaken by Asingh and Lynnerup (2007: 221) has revealed how four vertebrae were extracted from his back and sent to America for the study of blood groups. It was left to Lange-Kornbak to fill the hole (with sponge) and hide the post-mortem damage. Thus, there was not only a need but an ideal behind this work, great skill and some daring, much of which is not recorded in any notebook or archive; as Lange-Kornbak put it, 'like all good craftsmen, I will take my secrets with me to the grave' (cited in Asingh 2009: 64). There is a fitting irony that this master-conservator's fame rests in the preservation of another man's corpse.

Glob and his team aimed to produce an aesthetic encounter true to Grauballe Man's awe-inspiring yet intimidating appearance when lifted from the bog. The efforts they made continue to underpin how the Moesgaard Museum ensures he is 'exhibited with dignity and respect for the dead' (Asingh and Lynnerup 2007: 29). Overall shrinkage was recorded as *c.*9–10 per cent, an improvement on Tolland Man. Subsequent treatments were ministered by Lange-Kornbak, but by the 1980s, there was greater conservation resistance to the application of foreign substances to the body as well as a realisation that the heating and humidity arrangements within the gallery were taking a toll upon the corpse (although damaging ultraviolet (UV) light had been excluded). Today, after cleaning and application of lanolin in 2002, he lies in an oxygen-free case maintained at a slight positive pressure by nitrogen, in a relative humidity of *c.*55 per cent (Fredericksen and Glastrup 2007: 63; Strehle 2007: 50).

By the 1980s, the approach taken to the conservation of Lindow Man was influenced by advances in treating waterlogged remains from a series of wetland sites in the UK discovered in the 1970s–1980s, particularly the use of impregnation with (polyethylene glycol (PEG) and freeze-drying of wood and other organics (Daniels 1996; Joy 2009: 36). Freeze-drying had been attempted with Tolland Man's foot but this had never before been attempted for a complete body (Joy 2014c: 15). Ian Stead (curator of the Iron Age at the British Museum) thus commissioned a series of experiments from his conservation team (Omar and McCord 1986: 19). The first stage was a chemically induced pre-drying treatment using PEG to minimise shrinkage. Samples of pigskin were impregnated with a 15 per cent solution of PEG 4000 in distilled water for ten weeks. They were then removed, wrapped in cling film and frozen to -26°C for three days, then freeze-dried for four weeks, before re-acclimatising to a relative humidity of 55 per cent at room temperature. Results showed that there was shrinkage of less than 5 per cent, which was a marvellous improvement on the prior Danish methods, but this was at the expense of appearance: there was a lightening of colour and greater rigidity of body, though the treatment did enhance the clarity of skin (Omar and McCord 1986: 20).

The conservation experiments gave the researchers time to conduct their forensic examination and sampling programme, but pressure on both teams (as well as the risk of elevated temperature) was intensified by the QED camera team filming for a documentary released by the BBC in 1985 (Omar and McCord 1986: 17). Following the excavation of the remains in the lab to remove peat, a

mount was made to support the handling and turning over of the body using cling film as a fine intermediary layer, covered by strips of fibreglass casting tape that set hard, further strengthened by a polyester resin and further strips of fibreglass (Omar and McCord 1986: 17). After careful cleaning, Lindow Man was then placed on a Perspex slab and treated with the above 15 per cent PEG 4000 solution for twenty-nine days at -28°C (Omar and McCord 1986: 20). The time period seems to have been determined by repeated weighing, ceasing sublimation when 'negligible weight loss occurred' (Omar *et al.* 1989: 107). The body was then allowed to slowly acclimatise to a relative humidity of 55 per cent at room temperature (Omar and McCord 1986: 20). The success of the freeze-drying method has made it the accepted conservation technique for new bog bodies (principally employed in Ireland, see Mulhall 2010).

However, there were problems. Fine cracks and differential colour streaking prompted further remedial surface treatment in June 1986, with three applications of 10 per cent PEG 4000 in distilled water followed by one 50 per cent PEG 4000 application to the lightest and driest areas of skin (Bradley *et al.* 2008: 274). Despite the technique's minimisation of shrinkage, the 'lightening' effect of the treatment was compounded by Lindow Man's variable display, which by 1988 (after a brief tour to Manchester) was relocated in the Central Saloon (galleries 36 and 37) making a captivating display at the top of the main flight of stairs (Bradley *et al.* 2008: 274). The conservation parameters for the case at this time were a relative humidity of 55 per cent \pm 5 per cent at ambient room temperature (which slightly fluctuated according to the season) and light levels permitted to 100 lux, although UV light was excluded. While he was a well-visited ambassador to tempt visitors further into the prehistoric galleries of the British Museum, he lay under the natural spill from skylights and fluorescent lighting illuminating the nearby Hinton St Mary mosaic, exposing him to up to 1200 lux (Bradley 2005: 161–2; Bradley *et al.* 2008: 274). By 1990 a canopy was erected to reduce light damage and covers were placed over the body out of hours (Bradley *et al.* 2008: 275). But by 1997, these effects led Ian Stead to move the remains into the more sheltered, dimmer light of the main Iron Age gallery in room 50 (Joy 2014c: 17). His current steel and glass case ensure his remains have been stabilised to within 1°C of the 20°C limit with a relative humidity to within 2 per cent of the 55 per cent threshold, and to light levels of within 30–50 lux (Joy 2009: 37). By turning the case inwards towards the walls, the risk of UV damage has also been minimised, arguably also giving these remains their own space and privacy (Giles 2009; Joy 2014c; see Figure 3.2). The re-evaluation of his remains in 2005 monitored the light damage, evaluated an apparent white bloom on the skin (identified as residue from the polyester bonded fabric used to support the body during PEG treatment) and confirmed the success of the final surface treatment with PEG, in closing cracks and continuing to act as a humectant (Bradley *et al.* 2008: 278). Some oxidation of the PEG had occurred, but (other than the effect of light damage) the body was considered to be in stable and good condition after twenty years of display (Bradley *et al.* 2008: 281).



3.2 Lindow Man on display (© The Trustees of the British Museum).

The lessons learned from Lindow Man have certainly informed the conservation of the latest bog bodies to emerge from the peat – principally those of Meeneybradden Woman (Omar *et al.* 1989), Tumbeagh (Birmingham and Delaney 2004), Old Croghan Man and Clonycavan Man (Mulhall and Briggs 2007; Kelly 2013), all from Ireland. These remains were preserved using the same 15 per cent PEG 4000 solution employed with Lindow Man for four weeks, followed by six weeks of freeze-drying (Mulhall 2010: 36). Similar to Lindow Man, a final surface dressing of 5 per cent PEG in ethanol was applied to the bog bodies (Mulhall 2010: 36). Detailed publication of the Irish case studies is still eagerly awaited, as is a longitudinal evaluation of their stability, appearance and shrinkage factors, but the early results appear impressive. Meanwhile, other remarkable discoveries from Irish bogs have prompted new innovations in the treatment of fragile organic skin products. PEG treatment and freeze-drying was not considered effective for the delicate surfaces of ink on vellum posed by the Fadden More Psalter (Gillis 2014). Challenged to develop another method of gently drying and separating its pages, vacuum-drying with ethanol replacement has proved effective and offers a new technique yet to be tested on human remains (Reed pers. comm.).

In reviewing the different methods used to conserve bog bodies, we have seen the use of late-nineteenth-century culinary and storage knowledge shift to

a mid-twentieth-century era of curatorial skill and improvisation with preservative fluids and substances. Finally, the rigours of scientific testing, experimentation and monitoring that accompanied the rise of conservation science in the later twentieth and twenty-first century were brought to bear on this phenomenon. Yet it is obvious that it is not just the ‘recipes’ and methods deployed on these remains that determine their fate: the circumstances of their exposure, delays in conservation, the contemporary ideology of what should or should not be seen, along with the history of their display, lighting and humidity, also shape their final appearance. As a result, the challenges faced by archaeologists not only in the field and the laboratory but the gallery itself, should be brought within the compass of these conservation histories. We need more longitudinal studies of bog bodies to inform future care, for even the ‘best practice’ standards set out above will, in time, fail. The illusion that we too now possess the skill to stop time is just that – we have delayed it, deferred it, but at some point must ultimately surrender these bodies to decay. Why even try? What prompts us to finish this work of the bog, as Lange-Kornbak put it (cited in Asingh 2009: 54)? It is to the philosophical ideas that underpin conservation and how this relates to the experience of being with the dead that this chapter finally now turns.

Conserving the dead: a form of deceit or a kind of care?

There is an ontological dilemma at the heart of bog body studies. Put simply, their value lies in the fact that they are human remains that appear to stand outside of time. Yet as the above section has revealed, this ‘preservation of naturalness is done artificially’ (Sanders 2009: 178). They only continue to survive by *our* hand. Is the conservation through which they continue to stall time a form of deceit or a kind of care?

No body brings this into sharper focus than the remains of Tollund Man. For many years, his head was displayed in its ‘decapitated’ state: the result of a modern conservation decision rather than any Iron Age brutality. Yet under the visionary curatorship of Christian Fischer it was decided that the viewing public might like to see what he looked like when he was found in 1950. In one sense this was the physical realisation of Glob’s volume, in which Sanders (2009: 19) argues that he ‘sutures the dissected body through poetic and photographic glossing’, achieving ‘almost a re-embalming’. The idea of rehydrating or trying to restore the different body parts collated from the National Museum in Copenhagen was quickly dismissed, due to the inevitable damage this post-mortem ‘resurrection’ would have upon the original remains (Fischer 2012: 106). Instead, the remaining body parts coupled with the exquisite black-and-white photographs were used as models for a three-dimensional cast made by the Natural History Museum in Denmark under the direction of conservator Lars Bo Nielsen (Fischer 2012: 107). As Fischer (2012: 107) puts it, the final reconstruction was ‘to be carefully evaluated aesthetically and ethically’. There was a very real possibility that the replica

would be rejected. The first people to view the simulated whole were the Højgaard family who had discovered the remains. In a telling phrase, Fischer (2012: 106) recalls, ‘They were in no doubt – it was him they found’.

This was not literally true of course, yet what does it tell us? The cultural heritage author Cornelius Holtorf (2007: 118) has argued that ‘visitors ... experience authenticity and aura in front of originals to exactly the same degree as they do in front of very good reproductions or copies, as long as they do not know’. Yet this deception is, for others, unethical, touching deeply upon the philosophical tenets of William Morris, to only carry out ‘fair repair’ that is honest about its interventions (see Pye 2001b). In Silkeborg Museum, a small label warns visitors about the complex history of what they are seeing, but it can be quite easily overlooked and the eventual encounter does not foreground this fact, generating instead an aesthetically moving, one-to-one, eye-level encounter with the remains. Its effectiveness is clear – while the body that inspired Heaney to write ‘Tollund Man’ was of course the photograph taken in 1950, the one he finally saw in person would have been this hybrid simulacrum. Holtorf (2017: 497) is right in thinking that ‘clever copies, reconstructions and imaginative inventions can possess age-value too’. Yet does the post-cranial simulacrum of Tollund Man matter? The issue hinges on our obsession with authenticity. We have already encountered the ‘uncanny’ power of the bog body, but as Sanders (2009: 50, original emphasis) argues: ‘[Their] uncanniness rests on our experience of authenticity: they are the real thing! On the other hand, their uncanniness rests on the possibility that they are *not real*, that they are ghostly *simulacra* harboring a double uncanniness of being both “un-heimlich” (un-homely) and “un-zeitlich” (un-timely) – a unique “material reality”’. In the case of Tollund Man, this uncanny power is redoubled by the fact that the very corpse is both real *and* unreal. This conundrum was brought into even sharper focus when in 2016 the current curator of Silkeborg, Ole Nielsen, received a phone call from the descendants of the conservator Brorson Christiensen, who had worked on Tollund Man. The ‘missing’ right big toe had been found wrapped in tissue paper in their mother’s effects, prompting them to remember that their father used to bring this body part out from his housecoat pocket at the end of the day or to show guests (Museum Silkeborg 2019). Whether it was to shock or appal, we can only guess, but the toe was in good company: old coins and fragments of conserved wood from the Roskilde Viking ships were also among this ‘pocket treasure’. I like to think he carried with him fragments from the past that could hold others spellbound, knowing it was his skill that helped produce this moment of contact with the past. For Nielsen, however, it created a new dilemma: should the toe now go on display in its own right, drawing further attention to the simulacrum, or should it be kept behind the scenes (Nielsen pers. comm.)?

The problem relates to the undue emphasis that the West places upon the material authenticity of the past, as Jones and Yarrow note (2013). This ideal is based in the nineteenth-century debates over the value of ‘original fabric’: whether to permit the heavy restoration of ruins and relics to their past glory (seen in the work of Eugène Viollet-le-Duc) or to effectively manage the decay that the

Romanticists argued actually gave sites and finds their aura – the ‘golden stain of time’ (Ruskin 1849: 177; see also Pye 2001b). We now recognise that authenticity can be found also in intangible concepts; in Glasgow cathedral, this includes the ‘prayerfulness’ that continues to shape a religious building or the skills that its stonemasons believe they are both learning from their forebears and continuing to practice in their own carvings (see Jones and Yarrow 2013). How then can we ensure that people have the kind of ‘magical communion’ Jones (2010: 142) evokes or the ‘near religious or spiritual experiences’ that Fredengren (2016: 484) argues can be common with waterlogged materials *without* any ‘sleight of hand’ about what people are seeing? The answer could be found in Jones’s notion that the ‘authentic’ value of the past lies not just in the obdurate matter of a thing but in our *experience* of the relations between objects, people and places that such things embody:

The materiality of objects is crucial here, as is some form of physical contact or intimate experience of them. This is not to do with their origins, material, form, or provenance, in a materialist sense, but rather because the materiality of objects embodies the past experiences and relationships that they have been part of and facilitates some kind of ineffable contact with those experiences and relationships. This leads to a powerful magical or enchanting quality, in that these past experiences and relationships appear to be carried along by the object in an almost contagious manner. (Jones 2010: 137)

If we include not just the touching or violent relations that have wrapped or wounded these people in the past, but the hands of those who lifted them from the peat and the curators and conservators who have further worked upon them, we do not diminish but enrich their biography (Narkiss 2009: 239). We become mindful of Benjamin’s (1969: 221) original definition of aura as encompassing all the histories these remains have experienced: Ruskin’s (1849: 15) ‘passing waves of humanity’ that collectively accrete within these bodies. The ‘afterlife’ of these remains, once they enter a museum is not static, an end point (Muños-Viñas 2005). We should not narratively ‘cut off’ time again in the moment of exposure from the peat; the story of those discoveries and their conservation histories become accounts of care given to the dead. Part art, part science, curators and conservators are, in their own way, members of the profession of ‘death workers’ in which archaeology should rightly claim a place (Williams and Giles 2016).

Human remains thus have a unique role in this conservation philosophy debate. As a category of archaeology, they have an ‘evidential power’, a forensic capital, as Crossland (2009) rightly warns us, which is created in part *through* the performative practice of exhumation, analysis and curation. Conservation is thus part of their afterlives: an influential way in which new skeins of social relations are made with the living, which as we have seen, can determine what is kept or thrown away, reburied or displayed (Narkiss 2009). Even if we accept this resolution, we face another problem. How do we draw attention to the traces of age-value that Riegl exhorted us to look for? Holtorf (2013: 427) argues that ‘pastness’ as a quality is experienced not through intellectual knowledge or scientific analysis but our sensory engagement with things: ‘patina, cracks and missing bits ... evoke

the notion of a fragile heritage from another time ... that seem to beg for the attention of a conservator' (Holtorf 2013: 432). Yet the mummification of the bog slows and halts the very processes that give most finds their auratic power. Whether it is with diligent dabs of 'leather dressing' or PEG washes, bog body conservators have also sought to hide the traces of time that Holtorf looks for in a vessel, garment or sculpture to convey its age-value. If 'decay informs the experience of authenticity as a tangible mark of age and "the real"' (Douglas-Jones *et al.* 2016: 823), then we are indeed in difficult terrain. This principle will not work for bog bodies: we would be accused of failures of care, precisely because this was once, and arguably still is, human.

Instead, I would suggest that we can strategically foreground intimate connections with past humanity: those delicate whorls on Grauballe Man's feet, the neat hair plait of Elling Woman, the scrap of fox fur wrapped around Lindow Man's arm. Such moving insights into the personal attributes or possessions of the dead help evoke the 'ineffable contact' and 'numinous or magical quality' that Jones (2010: 193) argues encourages people to reach out, to try to touch 'as if this would achieve some magical communion with the past' (remember Valerie Hall and her team, reaching out to the hand of Old Croghan Man). We can also use this strategy to guard against Sanders's (2009: 30) concern that conservation risks 'aestheticising' bog bodies by substituting 'trauma with nostalgia' (Sanders 2009: 34). Death may be a difficult theme to illustrate archaeologically (Giles 2016b: 418), 'resisting representation' (Scarry 1995). Yet as Scarry (1995: 22) advocates, we can connect with someone's pain by visualising the wound, or with their labour by seeing the material traces of their work in the world: the fracture or cut, violently enacted upon the body alongside their life work, engrained in hands, feet, teeth.

In Moesgaard Museum, a whole room is dedicated to the conservation history of Grauballe Man, detailing the ideology as well as the methods behind his preservation and introducing the visitor to the people who discovered and cared for him. That web of relationships, and the science and knowledge behind it, is fulsomely exposed for the viewer, in a way that only deepens the marvel of his remains. Grauballe Man himself lies next door in a peat-coloured room. His glass case is surrounded by a bench that brings you face to face with the warped ebony of his skin and the 'elderberry' gash of his slashed throat. In the dim light of this personal communion, his humanity appeals to us, just as his fate appals us. Heaney would, I am sure, approve.

Conclusion

The chapter has discussed the uncanny humanity of the bog body and how this has affected their reception. It has argued that this can create both unsettling and moving encounters, given them a unique haunting power. In common with other authors, it has suggested that this iconic aura arises from the way in which these remains defy time. Yet it has revealed that this appearance is a deceit, maintained

through methods of archaeological conservation. This has created a philosophical quandary for curators about how much of this process they should show or reveal. Having reviewed both the science of bog preservation and the methods employed in curating bog bodies, the chapter argues that the two processes entwine in a form of artful science that together produce Heaney's 'riddling power'. Instead of criticising such work as an intervention that undermines the authenticity of a bog body, conservation here has been embraced as a kind of care. It has argued that this deepens the experiences we have with these remains: magnifying our encounter, enriching the connections we make with them and widening the relations through which the afterlife of these individuals is assured. Having dwelt for a while with the remains themselves, I want now to turn – as any archaeological investigation would – to the context of this discovery, to ask: why were they buried *here*?

4 Crossing the bog

Mossbawn

Mossbawn is the name of Seamus Heaney's family home: a farm in Co. Derry, located at the edge of bogland near Lough Beg (Heaney 1980). Though 'bawn' is the anglicised word for a cattle enclosure, the notion of his being 'moss-born' seems fitting. Of the bogs he once said, 'It is as if I am betrothed to them', remembering an earthy 'initiation' of swimming in a moss hole, from which he emerged steeped in the peat, marked from then on by 'this hankering for the underground side of things' (Heaney 2002: 5–6). If the iconic work by Glob ([1969] 1971) brought the bog bodies into the public light, Heaney's poems magnified their meaning, giving them a contemporary resonance. Yet those poems also made people look again at the bog landscape. Heaney brought a dwelling eye to the place, making us see them again, not as a marginal landscape or cultural backwater, but as the place he was born and brought up: an omphalos, the navel of the world that surrounded it (Heaney 2002: 1). He did not shy away from their dangers but showed how such fear could be mobilised in the cultural imagination, while also bringing to light its riches and treasures. This chapter attempts to achieve the same re-envisioning of the bog, through palaeoenvironmental, archaeological and archival evidence.

The bog, the moss, the mire and the moor

Peat forms under waterlogged conditions where plant matter grows faster than it can decay, due to an oxygen-excluding environment that slows the normal breakdown of organic matter (van der Sanden 1996: 21). Highly humified peat contains well-decomposed plant matter that has created a dark-brown, blackish amorphous mass, but where plant remains are still identifiable it is described as poorly humified (van der Sanden 1996: 21). Peat can grow at variable rates: Godwin ([1981] 2009) records 6 cm per century at Scaleby Moss (Cumbria) compared with 3.3 cm

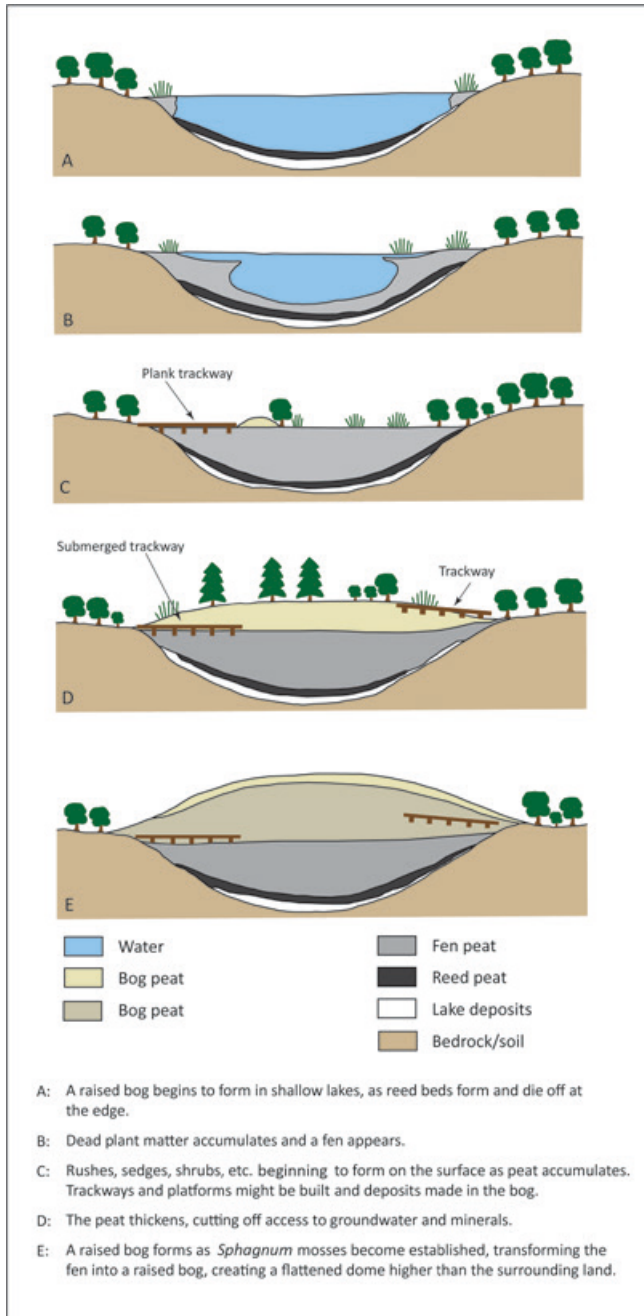
at Red Moss (Lancashire), within the UK. Bog peat growth in north-western Europe began around 5000 BC, coinciding with the onset of higher rainfall and more humid conditions known as the 'Atlantic' phase. Wetter phases after this threshold (notoriously a climatic downturn in the later Bronze Age and early Iron Age) have exacerbated both bog growth and human reactions to it (Godwin [1981] 2009), but these are complicated in later prehistory by local variation. Topography, drainage, vegetation cycles, land ownership and agricultural histories must all be considered on a case-by-case basis, which require detailed investigation (Chapman and Gearey 2013). In order to understand the contexts of bog bodies, we must first draw a distinction between the two main types of peat formation: fen and bog peat.

Fen peat develops in contact with groundwater, and continues to be fed by inorganic minerals from the surrounding subsoil, thus being known as 'minerotrophic' (Chapman and Gearey 2013) or 'eutrophic' (Godwin [1981] 2009: 5). It tends to form in a damp depression, being heavily determined by the local microtopography. Plant matter dies and falls in at its edges, creating a stagnant pool of water in the centre with a recognised hydrosere – a progression of plant colonisation and growth (Godwin [1981] 2009: 4). These environments are initially characterised by sedges, reeds and some bulrushes, while the growth of peat begins to permit shrubs such as willow, hairy birch and alder to colonise, developing into fen woods with alder, oak and ash joining the smaller tree cover (Godwin [1981] 2009: 4). Low-lying, constantly flooded areas such as this are often described not just as fens but mires; they are often alkaline, due to the influence of calcareous groundwater but certain local rock formations can produce acidic fen peats (Godwin [1981] 2009: 5). As they grow, such hollows can become completely filled with plant remains. If the centre of this fen peat becomes completely cut off from the surrounding groundwater, it can be transformed into a 'raised bog', creating a lenticular appearance.

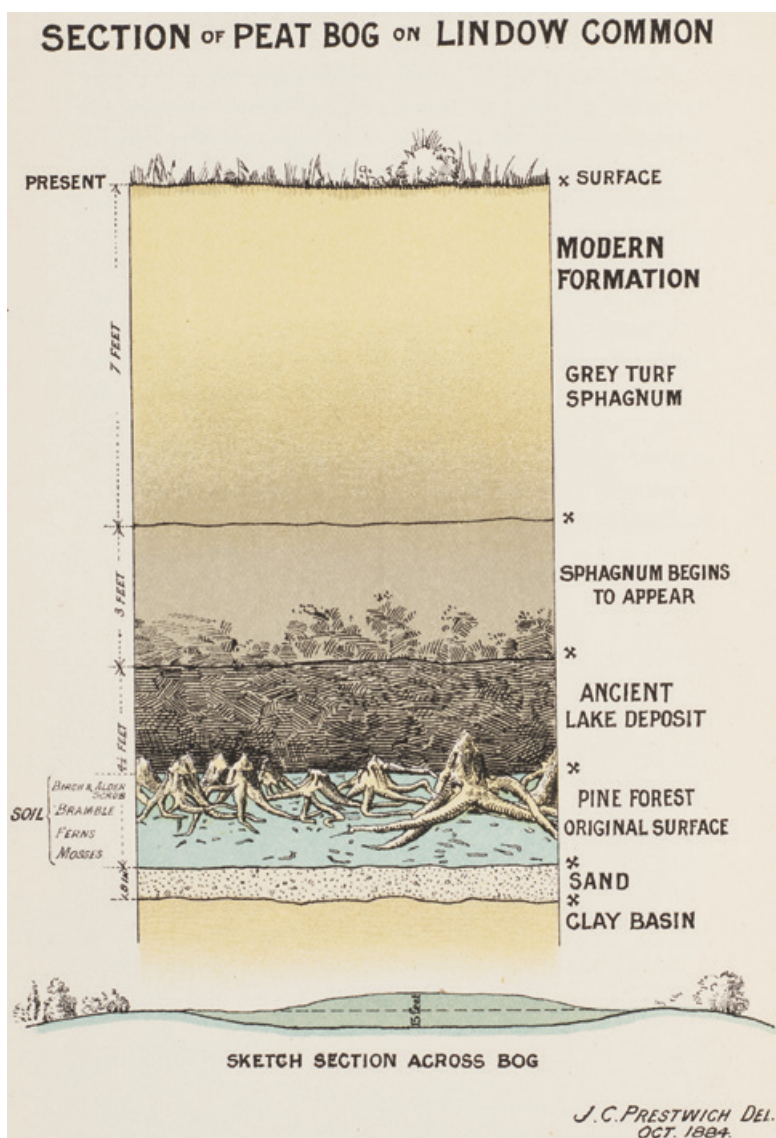
Bog peat meanwhile is more climate dependent: it only forms in areas of high rainfall and is sustained by rain or snowfall with low mineral content (Godwin [1981] 2009: 6). They are thus known as 'oligotrophic' (Godwin [1981] 2009: 6) or 'ombrotrophic' bogs (van der Sanden 1996: 22) and since they lack the ameliorating effect of any carbonate-rich groundwater are exclusively acidic. Only certain types of plants can tolerate the nutrient-poor environment, principally bog mosses (*Sphagnum*). These plants are formed of a main stem with smaller branches and a tightly formed head (a capitulum, see Laine *et al.* 2018). Their large, empty porous cells are designed to act as a sponge: conveying water to the chlorophyllous cells that initiate photosynthetic activity, enabling the plant to grow autonomously (Godwin [1981] 2009: 69). Such plants can retain up to twenty times their own weight in water, meaning that bogs can be composed of 95 per cent water (Aldhouse-Green 2016). Long slender leaf forms tend to favour very wet conditions, living at the edge or just under the water, whereas broader leaf species form the denser masses known as 'moss lawns'. Those with very small leaves often rise

above the water table to form hummocks. Dying moss matter sinks below this independent water level, allowing the moss to grow higher than the surrounding terrain, swelling to encroach over land at its edge. At this stage, the raised bog is like a huge blister of partially decomposed plant matter and fluid, held tentatively together by living moss (van der Sanden 1996: 22) and performing, in Robinson's (2007: 29–30) memorable words a 'slow self-inhumation and self-resurrection'. Edgeworth (2011) has used the notion of water as the unseen 'dark matter' of the landscape, but here it assumes a new meaning in relation to the bog, whose watery nature is hidden by being infused in moss and peat. Godwin ([1981] 2009: 8) cautions against describing its epicentre as a cupola or dome since it is almost flat – van der Sanden (1996) prefers the word 'lens', a landscape feature we will return to (Figures 4.1a and 4.1b). At its margins, small steep slopes (known as 'rands') may be cut by drainage streams, while in its midst, open, dark-brown pools form within the moss (van der Sanden 1996: 22). These pools are bare of vegetation and framed by hummock-building colonisers such as the 'crimson' mosses of *Sphagnum magellanicum*, *S. rubellum* and *S. Plumulosum* that gave rise to the local name of the 'red bog' (van der Sanden 1996: 22). The hummocks themselves can span several metres, rising 10–20 cm above wetter hollows and spanning 1–10 m (van der Sanden 1996: 25). This is the classic landscape of the Atlantic raised bog found in Ireland, Britain, the Netherlands, Germany and some of Norway (van der Sanden 1996: 25). Van der Sanden (1996) compares this with the Baltic or concentric raised bogs more characteristic of Denmark, Poland, southern Sweden and south-west Finland.

The raised bog (Figures 4.1a and 4.1b) can also be contrasted with the 'blanket bog' (both of mountainous and lowland type) found in Ireland and Britain, where there are more extreme oceanic conditions and higher rainfall. Blanket bog can accumulate on slopes of up to 25° as well as flat surfaces, in such wet climates to create an almost continuous 'mantle of mire' (Godwin [1981] 2009: 11). Within these blankets of peat, there can exist many localised features, such as perched or dammed lakes and pools – Robinson (2007: 24) counts more than a hundred in the 25–30 square mile radius of Roundstone bog, many of which have their own names and stories attached to them. Since drainage on these slopes is impeded by the peat, it is only slightly eutrophic, and can lead to the creation of 'acid fens' (which may help to explain the discovery of many well-preserved bog bodies from the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, for example). Further types of bogland are found in fenland-type 'aapa' bogs of central Norway and Sweden, Finland and some areas of Russia; the 'palsa' bogs lying north of the Arctic circle, forming over permafrost; and the Continental or woodland bogs of north-east Poland and central-European Russia (Robinson 2007: 25). However, most of the archaeological remains discussed in this volume, following van der Sanden (1996), come from the Atlantic raised and blanket bogs.



4.1a The formation of a raised bog.



4.1b 1884 section through Lindow Moss bog. All rights reserved and permission to use the figure must be obtained from the copyright holder.

The later prehistoric landscape of the bog

It is worth now situating ourselves more firmly within the environmental history of these bogs during the key period in question: the first millennium BC

to early first millennium AD. Godwin ([1981] 2009) famously described these deep accumulations as ‘archives of the peat’, containing records not just of climate and vegetational change, but as we shall see in [Chapter 7](#), fuel exploitation, mineral extraction and chemical exploitation histories (e.g. Le Roux *et al.* 2004; Rotherham 2009). Across northern Europe, a general climatic downturn towards the end of the Bronze Age brought wetter and cooler conditions that enhanced the growth of upland blanket bog, raised bog and lowland mire alike (Godwin 1975; Houghton *et al.* 1996; Mauquoy *et al.* 2002, 2004; Barber 2006). The reasons for this are complex but probably involve a mix of what is called ‘solar forcing’ coupled with shifts in ocean circulation west of the UK (Brown 2008). Integrated environmental analysis, using pollen records, testate amoeba (as indicators of bog surface wetness – henceforth BSW), records of peat humification and macrofossil analysis (especially of *Sphagnum spp.*) provide a rich insight into the scale and chronology of its impact (e.g. Barber *et al.* 2000; Tipping 2015). In Britain, a general pulse of wetter conditions is noted from around 1500 BC for around two hundred to four hundred years before slightly drier conditions take hold (Brown 2008). A key threshold appears to be the late Bronze Age to early Iron Age transition, c.800–750 cal BC, when BSW increases across Europe in what was ‘probably the most profound climatic shift in the Holocene prior to the Little Ice Age’ (Brown 2008: 8; see also Mayewski *et al.* 2004). In Tipping’s (2015: 103 and 110) words, the rapidity of such changes could be ‘abrupt, perhaps complete in decades and certainly noticeable to human populations and of sufficient scale to impact on societies’, but he also cautions against seeing its effects as a ‘pell-mell’ retreat from the uplands and socio-economic panic. More rational reappraisals of what grew best and where seems to better characterise some areas of continuity and other examples of shifting settlement and new emphasis on crops or stock as appropriate, but he notes the most intense experience of these changes would have been felt in the lowlands (Tipping 2015). Another increase in this surface wetness of bogs occurs around 400 BC before drier and warmer climates that characterised the early Roman period in the UK/late Iron Age in those countries not invaded by Rome. Using dendrochronological evidence and ice-core records, Baillie and Brown (2013: 64, tab. 3) have argued that we can also see particular stress on the environment precipitated by volcanic activity, reflected in poor tree-ring growth in Ireland and England around 207 BC, with further low seasons of growth around 52–48 BC and a severe volcanic event commencing c.44 BC. In southern England, this decade was marked by the rippling impact of Caesar’s success in Gaul and attempt to conquer Britain. Environmental and historical events must have collided to make this a stressful time of change in many domains of life – a point to which we will return in [Chapter 7](#).

Each region and country had its own particular experience of these changes. However, the impact upon later prehistoric communities living close to or within wetlands would have been disproportionate compared with more dryland zones. The Iron Age gallery in Moesgaard Museum, Denmark, introduces visitors to this in a novel way: delicate steel rods suspended from the ceiling glitter with a play

of light that makes it seem as if persistent rain is falling. The gallery floor under the visitor's feet is suddenly soft and wobbles slightly – disconcerting the visitor, using a clever medium of rubberised flooring to mimic the infirm surface of the bog. A written panel makes the simple point that during the early Iron Age, 20 per cent of the land was peat bog; its growth swallowed large volumes of cultivatable land (Asingh and Lynnerup 2007: 276). Settlement retreated and drew up on to higher lands and exposed knolls. Arable cultivation may have disappeared from some areas – many of the Irish bogs show little evidence of cultivation in the near vicinity for instance (McDermott *et al.* 2009). In other areas, farming may have intensified on surviving soils, depleting fertility and requiring innovation and expansion into new areas. Clearance of previously wooded or regenerated areas can be seen in some locales, while others placed a renewed emphasis upon pastoralism.

At Toar bog in Ireland, where a magnificent large alder tub known as the 'Pallasboy vessel' was deposited, the surrounding landscape shows little evidence of nearby inhabitation (McDermott *et al.* 2009: 60), yet not far away, in the Cloneal bog where Old Croghan Man was found, a multi-proxy study showed that the clearance of regenerated woodland had begun again around the time of his death, c.300–200 BC, associated with the development of bog pools (Plunkett *et al.* 2009: 275). In England, the same encroachment of the peat over field systems and rising of the waters can be seen in the late Bronze Age/early Iron Age Flag Fen landscape (Pryor 2005). In the wetlands of Cheshire, Lancashire and Greater Manchester the expansion of the upland blanket peat as well as lowland bogs is seen from c.1700–1400 BC onwards, with the establishment of a complex mire system by the Iron Age (Middleton *et al.* 1995; Middleton *et al.* 2013; Leah *et al.* 1997). Woodland clearance is seen in the pollen records for Lindow Moss in the early Iron Age (Branch and Scaife cited in Stead *et al.* 1986), probably to support pastoral-based agriculture, but regeneration of the woodland cover then characterises the next few centuries, fitting in with evidence from Ashton Moss of a much wetter period of peat development c.600 BC and little by way of human activity nearby (Nevell 1999). On Lindow, clearance starts again c.340 cal BC, with slight traces of cereal cultivation (wheat, barley, oats, hemp or hops), some evidence for burning activity yet 'little settlement and agriculture in and around the mosslands' themselves (Timberlake and Prag 2005: 16–17). Indeed, by the time of Lindow Man's death (the remains otherwise known as Lindow II, see Joy 2009), increased surface wetness on the bog itself was evidenced by peat macrofossils and insect evidence, suggesting it had been transformed from a wet 'spongy' surface into one on 'widespread pools full of aquatic moss ... very difficult to walk upon ... without getting wet and ... sinking in to knee-depth' (Barber cited in Stead *et al.* 1986: 89).

Why does a micro-environmental study of the location of bog body deposition matter? As Chapman (2015) as argued, whether this was a vast expanse of moss, the carpet like-covering of a quaking bog, a discrete, small 'cauldron' bog, an area of open lake within a moss or the black pupil of a seemingly bottomless pool, these provided very different kinds of places in which to inter a body.

Haraldskaer Woman, for example, was positioned over a spring erupting from the bog (Aldhouse-Green 2016: 33). From a lack of cadaverous insect species and flies, we know that the Lindow II body was swiftly covered by immersion in a bog pool (Buckland 1995: 50). Barber (1995: 51) considers this to have been a wide but essentially shallow feature, where 'felted pool peat' might have been cut and rolled back to insert the body, literally 'covering up' the evidence and leaving no trace in the overlying stratigraphy. Yet water beetles and plant-eating species suggesting it was fringed with reeds and sedges, forming a notable, if rather stagnant, pool (Girling cited in Stead *et al.* 1986: 90). Integrating later borehole data from the North-West Wetlands Survey (NWS) with digital terrain modelling, however, Chapman (2015: 117) was able to show that all of the Lindow remains but most particularly Lindow II were deposited in the deeper parts of the bog: 'as far from contemporaneous dryland as was possible'. This might help explain the discrepancy in radiocarbon dates noted for Lindow II that led some to question whether bog bodies could be dated at all (Briggs 1995). The peat in which Lindow Man lay yielded an early to mid-Iron Age date (c.700–200 BC), but the human remains themselves seem to indicate death and deposition centred on the first century AD (Gowlett *et al.* cited in Stead *et al.* 1986; Housley *et al.* 1995). This discrepancy in dates was also the case with Zweeloo Woman from the Netherlands, and in her case, it was assumed that she lay in a dug grave or pit that left no trace in the bog stratigraphy (van der Sanden 1996: 97). Such pits had clearly been dug into the bog where both Windeby Man and Windeby Boy (once thought to be a young girl) were also deposited and 'staked' down (van der Sanden 1996: 98). There is still much to resolve with radiocarbon dates from the bog. Godwin ([1981] 2009: 161) and van der Plicht *et al.* (2004) acknowledge the danger of absorption of carbon atoms from the peat water, which might produce a date that is 'too old' for the body, or obversely, contamination from 'new peat' as younger materials invade human remains as rootlets or humic material in solution, effectively giving a younger date than that of the original deposition. However, the extensive dating programme by van der Plicht *et al.* (2004) provides good evidence that with correct sampling and pretreatment, unconserved remains can yield reliable dates.

The current agreement then is that sometime during the early occupation of Roman Britain, Lindow Man himself or his remains were brought across a 'potentially treacherous, waterlogged land surface' (Chapman 2015: 117). The bog pool into which he was lowered was a black pit, like the open lens of an eye: still, reflective but unblinking. It may have been a natural feature or even an old, water-filled peat cutting, but either way, it meant that he sank on to a layer of peat laid down centuries earlier. From the stratigraphic section of the bog (Stead *et al.* 1986: fig. 4.2) the pool itself may not have been very deep despite overlying the furthest and presumably the highest point of the mire (see Norbury 1885: 62). The jeopardy involved in this crossing may have been part of the performative challenge of the event, making this less of a bogside public spectacle and more of a restricted act, undertaken with some risk to the perpetrators in the depths of the moss, where its hummocks intersected with deep pools. The small party may have

been visible in silhouette, magnified against the horizon as they made their tricky journey across the bog.

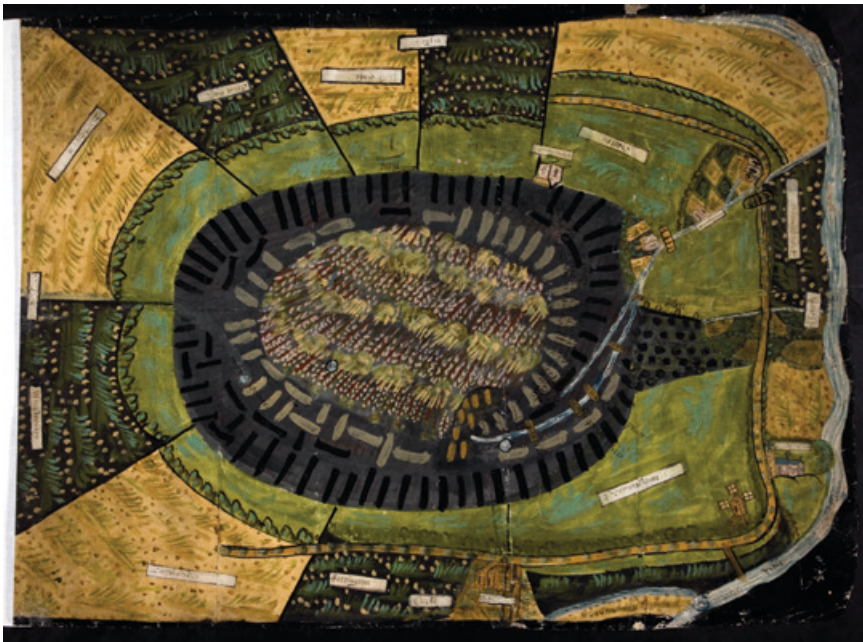
Such risk may have been necessary if total immersion in an almost inaccessible locale was part of a thanatological solution, disposing of either the ‘dangerous dead’ (achieving a proper and fitting end to this life, see Giles 2016) or to make offerings in a place where the supernatural realm could be met with (van der Sanden 1996: 174). Eliade (1963, cited in Bradley 2017: 188) described such places as *heirophanies* – ‘places where the sacred showed itself’. The bog pool was palpably different to other kinds of water bodies: here there was no flow, no generative fluidity of river, spring or stream, just the black hole of the peat pool itself (see Edgeworth 2011). These performative dimensions and exact locales matter, as Fredengren (2015) has argued. They are part of the ‘water politics’ through which people negotiated their relationship with fluid media such as rivers and lakes, yet the bog combined all the power of such water worlds with a place that was feared to be literally fathomless. Bogs were particularly troublesome in the first millennium BC – in flux and capable of intervening in the human world in violent ways. This might explain why some bogs attracted repeat depositions – such as Tolland Man and Elling Woman, found a mere 60–70 m apart; the three individuals from Borremose; two from Windeby; three from Damendorf; and four from Bourtangermoor (van der Sanden 1996: 103). Lindow itself has at least two if not three interments (Joy 2009). As well as multiple human remains, some bogs attracted human depositions alongside concentrations of other objects – Rappendam for example, where a female bog body was found close to both animal remains and wheel, wagon and agricultural tool fragments (see Chapter 5). In sum, this history of environmental change and hydrological dynamics is the background against which more individual landscape stories of bog bodies must unfold (Chapman 2015). Next, we turn to the evidence for how this access to the bog itself might have been managed and experienced.

Trying to cross the ‘roulling moss’: bog trackways

That the bog *grew* was widely known – landmarks that might once have been visible across a bog could disappear within a generation, as in the case of Crowle Church, which was gradually obscured from view in Thorne as this mire in South Yorkshire expanded (Parson 1877). Bog growth also had a seasonal dimension to it, as Higson (1859: 119) warned in relation to the Droylsden Moss (Lancashire): ‘the peat in wet seasons swells out, like a sponge, diminishing the prospect until the moisture gradually subsides’. Yet he also noted that on the Lancashire bogs, as they were increasingly drained and cut for fuel, ‘objects concealed from certain stand-points ... are constantly becoming more and more visible’ (Higson 1859: 119). The waxing and waning of the bog warned local inhabitants of their mercurial animacy, captured in a British folkloric ‘typology’: the most fluid underfoot were ‘quaking’ (King 1685: 949) or ‘shaking’ bogs (Butterworth 1842: 120), difficult

to traverse. When someone steps upon such a ‘quag’ moss, Walker (1772: 124) warned, ‘it bends in waves under his feet; and if the surface breaks, he is danger of sinking to the bottom.’ Yet on Ashton Moss, Butterworth (1823: 87) commented that the local people were so ‘tenacious’ they ‘venture[d] to cross it in any season’.

This was not an easy task and each community and era dealt with its challenges in different ways. The tussle between turf cutting and drainage in post-medieval Lancashire and Cheshire created a new problem of larger-scale drains, in addition to the natural undulations of bog pool and hummock. Their response was the installation of ‘plattings’ (small bridges made of logs, and sometimes, stones) laid down to enable people to cross the ditches and cut their turf (Bowman 1960: 46). These features can be seen on a remarkable map of Wyatt Moss in Lancashire, dated 1571 (Figure 4.2), and discussed by Shannon (2015) in relation to turbarry (peat-cutting) rights. The illustration shows the bog at the cusp of change: eaten away at its edges by improved land under cultivation and fringed with a rim of course pasture, successfully drained. Then, towards the centre of the bog, the hard boundaries stop: there is a ring of small, parallel plots known colloquially as ‘moss rooms’, laid in rows, where the bog was now being allotted by the manorial lord to certain tenants. These surround a central area of untouched mire. Back in Ashton, Bowman (1960: 46) records that access to such moss rooms was further



4.2 Wyatt Moss 1571, showing the small ‘platts’ (bridges’) and to the east, the deep pits known as the ‘hell holes’. All rights reserved and permission to use the figure must be obtained from the copyright holder.

controlled by narrow lanes (called ‘gates’) and hinged gates (confusingly known as ‘yates’), while the otherwise featureless parish boundary with Droylsden was marked ‘by long oaken poles, fixed upright at distances from twenty to thirty yards apart’ (Higson 1859: 10–11). By the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, rights to cut peat were controlled by either rent or costs-in-kind to the local manorial lord, such as ‘ten cartloads of turves to Asheton’ (the manor house) by *every* tenant (Bowman 1960: 46). Understandably, this required an infrastructure that allowed hand- or horse-drawn carts to cross in and out of the moss. On the Wyatt map, these little bridges or ‘plattings’ are faithfully recorded crossing the wet ditches and a stream that fed a water mill. Wet weather further exacerbated these crossings: special ‘winter-ways’ or ‘winter-gates’ allowed the residents of Ashton to pass over private fields to get to the moss, if their customary lanes were flooded or snowed in (Bowman 1960: 345).

These crossings have their counterparts in prehistory, ranging from small brushwood bundles used to stabilise a land surface, to raised walkways, laid tracks and more massive pieces of construction known as ‘corduroy’ roads. Antiquarian records have been swelled by the ‘rescue’ and developer-funded archaeology that accompanied mass peat extraction in the later twentieth century (such as the work of the Irish Archaeological Wetland Unit) and research-led surveys across the northern European wetlands. A few examples will help conjure the character of these paths, which can seldom be directly related to the deposition of bog bodies, but provide wider evidence for activity within such bogs.

In Ireland, laid roundwood or brushwood bundles form ‘toghers’ (tóchairs), which would support ‘pedestrians or animals’, while more ‘finely woven hurdle panels were used to create narrow later Bronze Age and Iron Age trackways (Moore *et al.* 2003). At Edercloon, a remarkable complex of tracks was associated with fragments of everyday objects: bowls, an alder tub, an un-used mallet, wheel fragments and two yew-spear shafts (McDermott *et al.* 2009: 56–7). In Derryville bog, trackway Killoran 18 (a brushwood and stone causeway) has been dated to the middle Bronze Age, whereas a hurdle track crossing a very wet area of bog pools dates to 280 cal BC (Caseldine and Gearey 2005: 598). The Derraghan More track (investigated by Rynne in the 1950s) and the magnificent Corlea trackway excavated by Raftery in the 1980s (Raftery 1996; McDermott *et al.* 2009) are at the most impressive end of the scale. Both were constructed in the middle Iron Age, focused on felling dates of 159 +/-9 BC for Derraghan and 148–7 BC for Corlea (McDermott and Moore 2010: 3; see Figure 4.3). In the former bog, large oak planks were laid over a foundation of brushwood and lengths of roundwood; this construction method was paralleled at Corlea, where in a single season of massive labour over four hundred mature oak trees were felled along 25 ha of mixed woodland (McDermott and Moore 2010: 3). Over six thousand oak planks laid on longitudinal runners were pegged in place, with additional brushwood used to soak up especially boggy areas (Raftery 1996). These two larger tracks traverse the bog to connect dryland islands. From pollen records, the tracks appear to have been built towards the end of a four hundred-year period of woodland clearance,



4.3 The Corlea trackway, excavated by Professor Barry Raftery, University College Dublin. All rights reserved and permission to use the figure must be obtained from the copyright holder.

although evidence for farming in the area is slight (McDermott *et al.* 2009: 57). Yet Corlea may have only lasted a decade above the bog surface: repairs and areas of burning and dismantlement suggest a short-lived, 'eventful life' before it was subsumed by rising peat (McDermott and Moore 2010: 4). This track could have supported wheeled vehicles, as cart or chariot fragments were found among the trackway deposits, alongside a wooden mallet, bucket staves, handles and an apparent 'tent peg' (Coles and Coles 1989: 159). Raftery (1994) himself famously called this 'the road to nowhere', forcing archaeologists to rethink the purpose of these tracks. As McDermott and Moore (2010: 5) point out in the example of Edercloon bog, some trackways skirt the dryland edges, as if teetering on the brink of the wet, while others change tack to intersect with neighbouring paths and platform areas, creating intersections, meeting or gathering points for communities coming from different directions. They suggest a crossing over and *into* the bog and its small networks of raised islands: an investment of labour, skill and prowess, which tells us the moss was an important place of interaction, to be visited and engaged with.

Trackways in Denmark and Germany help us understand why this might have been needed. The construction at Bjældskovdal bog consisted of rows of vertical oak posts, possibly supporting a slightly raised track, dated to the early Iron Age (700–600 BC) (Fischer 2012: 98). It fitted into a network of similar tracks crossing and circuiting nearby bogs, such as the Speghøge Mose trackway (Fischer 2012: 98). These tracks are of interest due to their proximity to Tollund Man and Elling Woman, and Fischer (2012: 99) interpreted them as a network enabling access into the bog to cut peat, the old hollows of which had been selected as the appropriate place in which to inter these hanged individuals. In contrast to these timber trackways, a more monumental stone surface was laid across the Tiburke bog around 200 BC, creating a 3 m paved road (Coles and Coles 1989: 162).

Woven-hurdle, raft-like paths and more substantial plank-built trackways dating to the Bronze Age and Iron Age have been found at Bourtangemoor in Germany, which did not cross from ridge to ridge but seem to focus on entering the bog, perhaps to obtain iron ore (Coles and Coles 1989: 163). An iron punch was found on one of the tracks, and an associated nearby settlement at Angelsoo was the site for household-based ironworking (Coles and Coles 1989: 163). These contrast with a suite of paths on the Grosse Moor am Dümmer, where multiple oak trackways criss-cross the narrowest passage between drylands, spanning a 2 km wide stretch of bog. Wooden shovels, mallets and vehicle components were found on the Whittemoor Bohlenweg III track among this Iron Age complex, dating to 640 BC, with intriguing decorated planks (marked by their makers?) found on a nearby track dating to 713 BC (Coles and Coles 1989: 166). Next to the tracks were an intriguing series of figures, which we will return to in [Chapter 5](#).

In Britain, over 182 wetland wooden prehistoric trackways are known (Brunning 2007), though many of these are located in the Somerset levels (Coles and Coles 1989), estuarine/inter-tidal locations (Bell *et al.* 2000) or river edges (such as Flag Fen, see Pryor 2005; and Fiskerton, see Field and Parker Pearson

2003). The Cambridgeshire Fens have also revealed some astonishing river-edge activity, such as late Bronze Age middens and a shrine complex at the Over Narrows, involving the deposition of human bone/body part offerings and bird sacrifice (Evans *et al.* 2016). A middle to late Bronze Age trackway was found across a stretch of Thorne Moors on the Hatfield levels, consisting of up to seven split and laid timbers (some charred, lacking their bark) spanning 3 m across (Buckland 1979: 14; Chapman and Gearey 2013: fig. 2.16). Another trackway was reported on Hatfield Moor by a farmer, while a late Neolithic trackway and structure was sampled north of Lindholme Island (Chapman and Gearey 2013: 28). Through environmental analysis and landscape modelling, Chapman and Gearey (2013: 35) have shown that during the later Bronze Age to early Iron Age, surface wetness made the Thorne and Hatfield Moors increasingly treacherous and difficult to cross. Meanwhile, in the Humberhead levels, a late Bronze Age feature at West Furze (originally interpreted as a lake dwelling or crannog) has been reinterpreted by van der Noort (1995: 332–3) as a two-phase trackway or crossing point at the narrowest neck of the Low Mere. The early brushwood platform was overlain by a more monumental series of horizontal tree trunks, further overlain by a layer of sand and lighter-weight twigs, bark and branches. Small piles or stakes pegged the major timbers in place, but a row of further uprights suggests that overall this was a refurbished or temporarily occupied part of an older causeway, with a ‘wicket-’ style entrance gate that may have formed not just a practical but symbolic entrance to a network of fen carr (van der Noort 1995: 326, 334). Flint, perforated stone, pottery, at least three human skulls and an apparently articulated human hand were found at West Furze, along with a bronze spearhead (van der Noort 1995: 326). In Lancashire, the system of small tracks known as Kate’s Pad, crossing Pilling Moss, seem to consist of at least three different trackways, dating to the early/mid Bronze Age (Innes *et al.* 2010). On the Mobberley side of Lindow Moss a wooden trackway was found in the nineteenth century: ‘a roadway made of logs of timber placed end to end, with sleepers across laid close together, and this I am told continued for some length up the Moss, and I think it was at the bottom of the bog’ (Norbury 1885: 65). The construction and stratigraphic location support a prehistoric date and the nearby remains of a ‘decomposed skeleton of a wild boar’ on the Lower Moss at Mobberley indicates the wealth of local game, tempted or driven on to the moss (Norbury 1885: 65). Within the north-west wetlands at least, our trackway evidence for the Iron Age is still slight; perhaps these bogs saw less activity than their Irish, German or Danish counterparts, epitomising the resource-poor ‘wet desert’ envisaged by Hall *et al.* (1995: 199). Yet the building of these tracks brought communities together, just as turf cutting would have done. A project like Corlea may have taken a local ‘king’ to command its construction, but this was on a huge scale. To get at the character of cooperative work for many of the other tracks, we can look to Henry Glassie’s (1995) ethnography of peat cutting at Ballymenone. Like track building, the demands of cutting and carting turf made it an arena in which help was exchanged (‘swappin’, as his interviewees put it): families and neighbours got together in what was a sociable time, where meals

were taken in the bog and gossip and storytelling was had. Work in the bog had its own time and rhythm: it was hard but it had 'great value' (Glassie 1995: 485), especially where there was illness or misfortune in the house. Then, neighbours would pull together in groups ('methals') to get the work done – knowing 'if things go awry, you will not have to meet them alone' (Glassie 1995: 484–5). Even the rescuing of a cow from the bog became a moment of liveliness and humour: 'and often, maybe the rope broke, and maybe four or five men would fall on top of other. It was a bit of *sport*, do ye know' (Glassie 1995: 484). The rope may have broken but neighbourhood bonds were pulled tighter.

The fatal burden: death and disaster in the bog

When people with a good knowledge of the bog were around it was a less fearful place, but any crossing, on a trackway or not, had to navigate the bog's surface, an experience that could be both unsettling and dangerous. As King (1685: 952) noted: 'I have gone on Bogs that would rise before and behind, and sink where I stood to a considerable depth; under was clear water, as some of us experienced by falling in with one leg up to the middle ... breaking the surface of the earth where we stood'. The Earl of Cromertie was even less fortunate: visiting the bog at Lochbrun in 1651, he was warned 'none could pass over it, for the scurf of the bog would not support them', yet 'I would needs try it; and accordingly fell in to the armpits but was immediately pulled out by them' (cited in Christison 1881: 166). Local knowledge was invaluable. Navigating the channels between hummocks in Connemara's Roundstone bog, Robinson (2007: 16) comments on the streams that seemed 'impossible to jump unless you know the right spot to aim for'. As a result, great bog walkers from Roundstone, who knew the land and could travel it at speed, were famed for their almost supernatural navigation (Robinson 2007: 18). The peat expert, Harry Godwin, recalled touring the Bog of Allen during 1935. With his botanist's eye, he quickly learned how to discern the difference between supportive tussocks of ling, heather, cotton and deer grass, to avoid the shallow bands of drainage channels or bog 'soaks': here, the open mat of floating *Sphagna* would indeed, as he put it, propel the 'jay-walking botanist' into deep water! Poor weather such as fog could easily disorientate. In Lewis, people relied upon the 'innis' and 'aster' of the cattle, or in the north of Britain, the 'heafing' of sheep, following the 'natural instinct of an animal to return to the area of the bog where they spent their first summer' and the route back home to the farms (Crawford 2018: 60). Human navigation was more precarious: a couple trying to collect a marriage certificate in Belgium in 1871 died in a snowstorm in the Hautes Fagnes, having become disorientated; their passing was marked in the bog by a 'lovers' cross' (van der Sanden 1996: 23). For moors and marshes were, as the early traveller Daniel Defoe noted ([1738] 1971: 516, letter 9), 'difficult, and sometimes dangerous, especially for strangers'. 'Accidents, as is natural to suppose, are not unfrequent among cows and sheep, which, ranging for food, sometimes slip into

the Moss Pits and Trenches' (cited in Worthington Barlow 1853: vol. 1: 45). These are the words of Samuel Finney, writing about Lindow Common in 1785, but they apply to any of these bogs (e.g. Glassie 1995: 484).

The loss of stock is a common theme. On her 1698 tour *Through England on a Side Saddle*, Celia Fiennes (1888: 171) made a point of avoiding Martinmere in Cheshire, for 'as ye proverb says, [it] has parted many a man from his mare'. King (1685: 952) too lamented this danger: 'They keep People at a distance from one another ... a great hindrance in passing from place to place ... a great destruction to Cattle ... the edges of the Bog have commonly grass; and the Cattle, venturing in to get it, fall into pits and soughs; & are either drown'd [sic] or ... spoilt in the pulling out'. The danger to herds and flocks was exacerbated in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries by their close cropping on nearby improved pasture and deeper drains at its edges (indeed, dedicated 'Pinner for the Mosses' were employed in Ashton to retrieve straying cattle, see Bowman 1960: 46), but it was not just stock that were lost. In the Outer Hebrides, on Lewis, a gravestone poignantly recalls the death of 'Ealasaid (Elizabeth), 6, drowned on the moor' (Crawford 2018: 42), while in 1867 four-year-old Alasdair MacDonald tried to follow his mother who had gone out cutting peat with her creel on her back, but he too became lost and was also drowned (Crawford 2018: 62). On Roundstone bog in Ireland, an elderly man returning from the local workhouse was caught in a 'terrible storm ... went astray and died' (Robinson 2007: 19). By the time he was discovered 'in a little hollow' it was too late. Robinson (2007: 19) recalls the account that the old man 'had wrapped himself in heather to keep warm' but his body 'was very decayed; they had to bury him at the spot' – a bog body in the making. Finney's account of Lindow Common mentions a now notorious pair of deaths that bring to mind the supposed fate of 'Red Christian' in Denmark: 'Men also have found their last home upon this dreary place too, in my memory. Nat Bell, and Radcliffe, returning home, loaded with ale, fell under the fatal burden, and died before the morning' (cited in Worthington Barlow 1853: vol. 1: 45). One of the interpretations of the medieval body from Tumbleagh – found mere metres from a bog trackway – is that she strayed accidentally from the path at a time when the bog's surface wetness had become particularly treacherous and was quickly subsumed in a bog pool, being unable to regain firm footing (Bermingham and Delaney 2004). Coles and Coles (1989: 178) also recall the discovery of a body from Vehne bog (north Germany) who was found with 'tufts of heather in his hands, and lay on his front with arms outstretched', suggestive of someone trying to claw their way out of the morass. Historic examples of fatalities associated with the bog are known from Germany, the Netherlands and Denmark (van der Sanden 1996). In a more recent survey of Scottish bog bodies, Cowie *et al.* (2011) attribute a number of the historic remains to accidents on the bog, perhaps during bad weather (such as Gunnister and Clayton Hill) or foul play (Quintfall and Arnish) – examples that will be further discussed in Chapter 6.

Prolonged wet weather brought yet another risk: that of the bog burst. This occurs when the *Sphagnum* moss becomes saturated beyond carrying capacity and

its delicate ‘acrotelm’ (described by van der Sanden (1996: 23) as like the ‘skin’ on porridge) is punctured. This phenomenon can happen with either a blanket mire or a raised bog (Fischer 2012: 65). Though normally weather-driven, anthropogenic activity exacerbated this risk – altering patterns of natural drainage and splitting this fragile surface. Occasionally this has been recorded in the field: Godwin describes the burst at Glencullin, Co. Mayo, in 1935, where excessive rain resulted in a rupturing ‘porridge’ of peat that covered the lower part of the valley to a depth of 5 m, draining a bog lake and leaving behind huge crescentic crevasses of rotated blocks of upper peat (Godwin [1981] 2009: fig. 22 and pl. 22). Other events are well attested in the historic literature (Feehan and O’Donovan 1996). One of the most famous accounts relates to Chat Moss in Lancashire, recorded by Leland in volume V of his *Itinerary in England and Wales* in 1533, only seven years after the event:

Chateley More a vj miles in length sum [way] brast up within a mile of Morley Haul, and [de]stroied much grounde with mosse therabout and destroid much fresch water fische therabout, first corrupting with stinking water Glasbroke, and so Glasebrook carr[ied] stinking water and mosses into Mersey Water, and Mersey corrupted carried the roulling moss part to the shores of Wales, part to the Isle of Man, and sum into Ireland. In the very toppe of Chate moo[se] there the mosse was hiest and brake, is now a faire plaine valley, as was in tymes paste, and a rille runnith in hit, and peaces of smaull trees be found in the bottom. (Cited in Toulmin Smith 1964: 42–3)

The damage wrought in this event is clear – even if its supposed geographic reach might raise an eyebrow. Crofton published a more visceral account of this event in the papers of the Gray family, Earls of Stafford, transcribed from a single sheaf of closely written ink, on paper that bears the watermark of a hand and a star, dated 29 January 1526. The document (possibly copied from a contemporary broadsheet) is entitled ‘How Chatmos brake out &c’ and its tone and spelling conjure the fear associated with such a phenomenon:

As yt is thought by grett abndance of Watr & mude co’gelet [congealed] to geythur wyhtin the said mosse apon ye west end brake owtt ... and there came so grett abndance off mosse downe, by reason off the sayd watr & muddyd, yt fylled a reu [river] called Glasebrock ... In grett jopde [jeopardy] & stand in the watr some to ye easing [eaves] and abowe yt, in so meche ye in habitors had myche payne and sorowe to save theyr & theyr children vndrowned, & yet, thanket be to god, no cystyn body was pished, butt yt they lost ther godes in ther howss, wt ther corne & hey in theyr barnes, & some swynne & dogs drowyd ... they sey yt by yeyre trwyth, all they thought yt had bene domesday, by cause ye watr & mosse wt growing trees yron dyd mete wt so grett vyloenc & came tomlyng to ward yey, & they dyd cry apon theyre neghboris to saue yeyre selffs. (John Rylands CLD/133, in Crofton 1902: 142–4)

No wonder they thought it was Domesday – the bog destroyed housing, property, livestock and stores and polluted the watercourses downstream: they were ‘so corruppyd that nether beasts more Cattelllez wyche [will] dryncke ye off [thereof]’

(Crofton 1902: 144). Famous bog bursts are recorded at Solway Moss in 1771 (Walker 1772), Pilling Moss in 1744 (van der Sanden 1996: 23) and Hough Moss (Higson 1859). Upland blanket bogs could also behave in this way: Patrick Brontë (1824) (father to the literary family) gave a sermon on the apparent earthquake and ‘extraordinary eruption of mud and water’ from Crow Hill in 1824. He saw it as a divine portent to repent, reporting that it sounded like thunder and shook the house, forcing his children to shelter in a nearby farm porch. A storm seems to have precipitated this event but winter was always a risky time: Higson (1859: 158) describes the Ashton Moss as becoming ‘swollen out with rains’ that overflowed the fields ‘at the back end of the year’. Some of these bursts were fatal: in 1897, Praeger (1897: 143) was sent by the Irish Royal Society to describe the effects of the Knocknageeha (Killarney) bog burst of 27 December 1896. This time the ‘roaring flood of black fluid’ completely destroyed the first cottage it met and the whole Donnelly family – husband, wife, six children and stock – perished. One of their bedsteads was later found fourteen miles away (Praeger 1897: 142) and witnesses recalled the subsequent pulses of peat water as sounding like ‘big guns or the rumbling of thunder’ (Praeger 1897: 144). Praeger (1897) reports on eighteen other bog bursts known to him from Ireland (further discussed by Feehan and O’Donovan 1996), including Woodfield bog burst (illustrated in van der Sanden 1996: fig. 18), several with fatal consequences. He was particularly affected by seeing first-hand the effect of the Knocknageeha burst, which included not just the ‘porridge’ of peat but the ancient basal tree vegetation: ‘The appearance of this extensive sea of black peat, with its protruding stumps of blackened trees, overlying fertile fields, was a sight melancholy in the extreme ... Many farmers have suffered serious loss by the tearing up of their potato pits ... The tenants being all smallholders, the loss of their best grazing has ruined them’ (Praeger 1897: 149–51). Portents of the burst were reported as sounding like a ‘banshee’; the local parish priest had apparently been summoned to pray with several families, prior to the burst (Praeger 1897: 152).

Supernatural intervention was also suspected back in northern England, on the White Moss of Theylemoor. Earl Cowper (of Melborne Hall, Derbyshire) began his account of this burst by saying: ‘We have forewarning signs of God’s judgement ... by the violence of the wind and the water it [the moss] removed itself ... and it went violently ... it so putrified the water that our water [at Manchester] was as black as a moss pit, and at the Hunt’s Bank it left I think near a hundred load of moss earth’ (cited in Crofton 1902: 141). The same event was also mentioned by Hollinworth in his *Mancuniensis*, who reported that on New Year’s Day in 1633, ‘the [white] moss ... rose up out of his place and travelled towards the house of James Knowles and environed it about, carried a large stone trough before it and boar down trees that stood in its way’ (cited in Crofton 1902: 141). Hollinworth goes on: ‘It filled the brookes and rivers, slew the fish, blackened the waters, [and] made some fruitful land barren’ (cited in Crofton 1902: 141). Many of these bursts went unrecorded: a note on Lindow Common dating to 1847 by a witness named Comberbirch (1847) stated that the bog had been ‘laid dry about fifty years ago

soon after the time of the great flood' and given the time frame, this probably refers to a localised bog burst rather than the apocryphal biblical event. We know that these bursts were also occurring in prehistory, recorded, for example, on Bourtangemoor in the Netherlands c.500 BC (Casparie 1986: 180), possibly related to bog ore extraction, and on Derryville bog (Ireland), where a section of trackway known as Killoran 18 was heavily disrupted by redeposited peat from such an event (Gearey and Caseldine 2006, fig. 4). Using testate amoeba to investigate bog surface wetness integrated with prior work (Casparie 2001), Caseldine and Gearey (2006) posit five bog burst events at Derryville, of which three more fall in our period of interest: 88 BC, 600 BC and AD 200–250. Indeed, the event of c.600 BC is attributed to the injudicious placement of a major large roundwood trackway (known as 'Cooleeny 31') across the main discharge channel in the south of the bog – 'ponding back' a large volume that then drained catastrophically out of the bog (Casparie 2001; Caseldine and Gearey 2006: 599).

Bog bursts were often a mix of local weather, environment and human factors. They would have been part of later prehistoric communities' lives but lower population densities and radically different attitudes to land probably meant that fewer households encroached so closely upon its fringes, resulting in less damage to settlement and stock. What the historic accounts do give us, however, is an insight into how this behaviour may have shaped understandings of the moss itself. The bog 'brast up' for Leland or 'removed itself' for Cowper; it was a 'roulling moss' according to the anonymous transcript from 1526, translated by Crofton (1902: 140) and a 'wandering mosse' in Leland's account (Toulmin Smith 1964: 3). This motif of the 'travelling bog', as Higson later put it (1859: 159), gave the bogs a sense of animacy and destructive agency, which would have been palpable in the ancient as well as recent past.

Complementing this quality was the still and deep power of a bog pool or 'pit', often a natural feature caused by a deeper basin within the bog (as was posited by Buckland (1995) for Lindow Man), but sometimes the result of ancient diggings for peat. The Drumkeerah bog body, whose textiles so fascinated the Countess of Moira (1783), was deposited in a 'small turbary' or 'cauldron bog', and Yde Girl was similarly placed in a bog pool formed in a fossil pingo (Chapman 2015). Both Tollund Man and Grauballe Man are now thought to have been placed in old 'peat cuttings'. The intense lens-like power of such a feature should not surprise us: a fabled 'mighty deep hole' within the 'black bog' at Gipwell on Thornholme Moor was reputedly the place where local robbers hid their black deeds: 'If they put their victims in,' commented de la Pryme (1870: 65), 'I have no doubt they would soon sink into this bog and never be heard of again'. Similar tales of unwary travellers seeking shelter for the night and being murdered for their meagre possessions then dumped in bog pools or lakes were recorded by Robinson (2007: 45) from Roundstone bog. In Moston ('moss town', Manchester), Roeder (1907: 70) recalled that 'one of the pits harboured an uncanny evil spirit ... and was called the Devil's pit'. Stovin (1745, cited in Buckland 1995: 50) notes that such features were 'always full to the Top ... the water Black'. Hatfield (1866, cited in Buckland 1995: 50)

goes on to say that the Thorne Moor pits were thought by the 'superstitious' to be bottomless, but that they were certainly the most deceptive and treacherous features on the moor due to the way *Sphagnum* grew over the margins, sometimes covering the pool entirely.

These deep pools also attracted another kind of victim. In October 1655, Mary Daniell, 'servant to Anne Heywood', is recorded in the parish registers of Ashton-under-Lyne as having 'drowned her selfe in a pitt upon Dukinfield Moore the 9th day att evening, when she had milked' (Brierley 1927: 396). Her care for her cattle, before her own demise, seems especially poignant. Whether 'William, son of Gervais Walker' did indeed drown 'by accident' in another such pit on 14 April 1664 (Brierley 1927: 410) is unknown; suicide in this region carried its stigma of exile from consecrated ground, as the crossroad burials discussed in Chapter 2 reveal. Cowie *et al.* (2011) also add at least one known suicide buried near Berrybrush in Scotland to this picture, while the Tumbleagh bog body mentioned above might just as easily have walked 'off the track', surrendering herself to the bog (or been buried there by concerned relatives), rather than slipping in by accident (see discussion in Bermingham and Delaney 2004). In landscapes devoid of seashores, lakes or large rivers, the bog lured those in despair. This was not unique to Britain: Kama (2016) records twenty-eight 'place-lore' records of drownings in bogs in Estonia, of which ten were known suicides, all women. One common motif is of voluntary self-sacrifice by a group of women who drowned themselves rather than risk rape or murder during wartime (Kama 2016: 7), whereas a folkloric bog body character named 'Triinu' is variously described as a single pregnant woman, a hard-working servant captured by the devil, a witch, haughty woman or serf/slave deliberately killed by her masters (interestingly, conveyed in 'wheelbarrow' or cart, from which birches grew to mark the spot, see Kama 2016: 8). Other tales of femicide (murder by a spouse or known male) were narrated by recent inhabitants to interpret discoveries of 'bog bodies' from the Estonian peat (Kama 2016: 12).

We do know that in Britain these deeper pools and pits on the moss gathered a malign reputation. The Tudor Wyatt Moss map, for example (Figure 4.2), shows a patch of small, black dots to the west of the moss, referred to in associated documents as the 'hell holes': the one enduring and mappable feature used to locate turbary rights across a century of disputes (Shannon 2015: 67). The name is similar to the 'Hell's Kettles' recorded by William Harrison (a Tudor chronicler) near Darlington, in which it was thought souls would be 'seethed for their sins': a literal place of purgatory (cited in Watkins 2013: 70). As on Hatfield, the locals thought them to be bottomless, but their depths were plumbed by one Jabez Kay in the 1690s, apparently in 'a bid to banish the belief' (cited in Watkins 2013: 70). The term seems to stem from early Christian readings of hell on to a novel 'pagan' landscape (Semple 2003). Citing the eleventh-century need to physically substantiate what damnation might look like, Semple (2003) notes that the Harley 603 Psalter (an English copy of the Utrecht Psalter) is pock-marked with dark circles meant to represent hell 'mouths' or 'pits'. Semple (2003) convincingly relates this to tumuli (prehistoric burial mounds), noting the link between one image and

Psalm CXLIII.3, which states that ‘he hath made me to dwell in darkness as those that have been dead of old’, but encounters with human remains from the bog would also fit the psalm’s motif. Certainly, the notion that hell was a hole that might literally open under one’s feet (Semple 2003: 236) clearly had resonance with locals living near the moss, or those who tried to cross the bog. That they might be portals to hell was believable; indeed, as Chapter 2 has shown, such locales were used to handle the ‘dangerous dead’. Alongside Abbot Brihtwold and the revenant priest John Tankerley, the Vita of St Kenelm records that Princess Cwoenthryth ‘could not be kept’ in the church nor the cemetery nor the field, and was finally ‘thrown into some remote, deep place’, while a sherrif who had violated St Edmund’s sanctuary and apparently also ‘walked after death’, was exhumed from his grave, sewn up in calf skin and immersed in a pool – both descriptions interpreted by Blair (2009) to mean mosses or bogs.

It is understandable that the reputation of the moss and the bog as an ‘other-worldly’ place gathered force in the post-medieval period, once enclosure tightened the formal boundaries of the parish and demarcated the improved and cultivated land from the ‘waste’ of the moss. Whinney Moor, for example, in North Yorkshire, was seen as the physical embodiment of the journey the soul had to undertake – a walking purgatory – as recorded by the antiquarian John Aubrey in a seventeenth-century funeral dirge (Watkins 2013: 69). Formally ‘waked’ by its family, the deceased had to leave the comfort of ‘fire and fleet and candlelight’ to cross the tussocky moss, eased or troubled by the person’s good works, to enter heaven or hell as their fate dictated. Watkins (2013: 69) describes this as ‘a medieval world in miniature’, lived out through the local moorscape.

Through these historic sources we gain a glimpse of the character of the bog, its animacy and its potential to take life. Bog pools and hummocks shaped different kinds of interaction, possibilities and fates. We appreciate better the risks people took in crossing the moss to win turf or ore, and how they tried to navigate its dangers through formal trackways, yet also how its features and apparent behaviour gave rise to associations with the supernatural. It could be a place where the living passed into death, both accidental and deliberate; where worlds might touch and where encounters might be had with beings that moved between those realms. These latter qualities owed much to strange phenomenon produced by the decaying environment of the peat itself.

Wandering fires, boggarts and the walking dead

In book IX of *Paradise Lost*, the British poet Milton ([1667] 2014: 274) writes of the ‘the wandering fire / Compact of unctuous vapour, which the night / Condenses, and the cold environs round, / Kindled through agitation to a flame, / Which oft, they say, some evil spirit attends, / Hovering and blazing with delusive light / Misleads the amazed night-wanderer from this way / To bogs and mires, and oft through pond or pool; / There swallowed up and lost, from succor far’.

The phenomenon that he evoked was the ‘ignis fatuus’: witnessed across northern Europe as a dancing, flickering flame above bogs, featured in British and Irish folklore as a malign spirit, tempting travellers to their doom. Once thought to be the result of self-igniting bog or marsh gases (Crum 1988; Mills 2000), they have most recently been discussed as a possible example of an extremophile: a biochemical reaction indicative of a biogeologically stressed environment (Edwards 2014). Few modern sightings of this phenomenon exist, supporting the notion that the very environments that once produced it have been irrevocably altered (Edwards 2014). Nonetheless, they were once often observed as a bluish flame with yellow centre, wavering up to 2 m above the marsh or bog surface. Where they were physically interacted with, they were found to be affected by moving air currents (hence their ‘dancing’ appearance when approached), cool to the touch and apparently readily extinguished (Edwards 2014: 3). In British folklore from the 1300s onwards, they were variously known as ‘will-o’-the-wisps’, ‘ghosts’ or ‘corpse candles’, linking them with death and an other-worldly presence. One of these was reported by Abraham de la Pryme (1870: 63), as told to him by a father and son who had encountered the lights above Hatfield moss together in the late 1600s/early 1700s: ‘[It] went dancing and leaping before him ... when he went, it went, and when he stood still, it stood still; he lights and tys his hors [*sic*] to the hedge, and falls at it manfully, making the piece fly one way and another ... attesting seriously and robustly that he had kill’d the divel’. Another report in de la Pryme’s diary recounts that ‘a gentleman in the country say that he once got an ignis fatuus, and affirm’d that it was nothing but a shineing [*sic*] froth’ (de la Pryme 1870: 64). Yet the notion that they were wayward forces was used by Methodist preacher Nash’s sermon: a tirade against a fellow cleric, entitled *The Ignis Fatuus or Will-o’-the-Wisp at Providence Chapel, Detected and Exposed* (1798). He used the analogy of this phenomenon to describe the lure of this excommunicated priest over his ‘admirers’ who were led astray into the ‘bog’ of his beliefs! This metaphor would have been readily understood by the inhabitants of Ashton and Droylsden Moss, where Higson (1859: 67) notes a particular association of the lights with autumn, when ‘the lambent flickering flame (carburetted hydrogen, spontaneously ignited) of the “Corpse Candle”, “Will-o’-the-Wisp” or “Jack” or “Peg-a-lantern”... performed his or her fantastic and impossible jumps, in the plashy-meadows near Edge-Lane, to the terror of many’. In *The Owl Service* author Alan Garner (1967) conjures a haunting encounter with this ‘marsh gas’, at the edge of a wooded moss, as a precursor to the unfolding of an eternal love triangle. These lights continue to be reported into the twentieth century, but perhaps more as folkloric remembrances: on Chorlton bog they have been attributed to ‘one of the several people who drowned on these marshes, possibly a suicide’ (Hough and Randles 1993: 30). The notion that the bog was a place where the dead might be seen is echoed in Robinson’s story from Roundstone. At the end house on the Bog Road below Ardagh, a girl of seven years old swore she saw her father ‘a long way off in the bog, carrying a sack or a net of fish’ after a day out on the boat (Robinson 2007: 17). Soon after, his body was washed up on the shore, drowned.

In addition to these lights and apparitions, each wetland has its supernatural ‘bog’ folk. In her study of the ‘hazards of the bog (real and imagined)’, Meredith (2002) lists Seamus Heaney’s ‘mankeepers’ and ‘mosscheapers’: ‘creatures uncatalogued by any naturalist but none the less real for that’ (Heaney 2002: 4). The very words, Heaney (2002: 4) wrote, contained an onomatopoeic resonance: ‘the soft, malicious sound’ of ‘collapsing sibilants coaxing you out towards bog pools lidded with innocent grass, quicksands and quagmires’. The water sheeries and bog sprights also haunted its pools, while in Denmark, bog witches, kings and elves are preserved in Hans Christian Andersen’s tales (Meredith 2002). These figures ooze malevolence, taking their due by pulling naive or selfish humans into the bog, like the proud Inger who used her mother’s bread as a stepping stone to avoid getting her shoes dirty (Meredith 2002). Wright (1913) lists the Lancashire character of ‘Jenny Greenteeth’ and the Yorkshire ‘Grindylow’ as a kind of water demon who inhabited deep, stagnant pools to drag children to their doom. Such entertaining tales were garnished with a landscape moral: warning adventurous youngsters of how she ‘lurked at the bottom of pits, and with long sinewy arms dragged in and drowned children venturing too near’ (Higson 1859: 67).

Yet there was a very particular form of northern British bog dweller that turns up repeatedly in its folklore. The *ignis fatuus* of Ashton Moss appeared close to a property named on the 1848 six-inch Ordnance Survey map as ‘Boggart House’ (Figure 4.4). Writing around the 1820s–1830s, Joseph Lawson recalled his parent’s firm belief in three forms of supernatural entities: ‘ghosts, boggarts and spirits’ (Watkins 2013: 191). The etymology of the ‘boggart’ was mired in the world of the moss but by the time it was being recorded in folklore (e.g. Roby 1829; Keightley 1850; Henderson 1879), the boggart had become somewhat domesticised, with



4.4 ‘Boggart House’ on the edge of Ashton Moss, showing Little Moss to the north – the ‘far-end-of-th’-world’.

motifs borrowed from Irish and Scottish folktales to explain local place names such as ‘Boggart Hole Clough’ (Houlbrook 2011). In such stories, this local supernatural entity was reduced to an impish resident of farms, who liked pushing over children and spilling their milk, like the ‘Clayton Hall boggart’ from Ashton-under-Lyne: a noisy poltergeist, notorious for causing domestic misery (Higson 1859: 69). The apocryphal tale of the family forced to ‘flit’ their farm ends with the boggart himself calling out from the milk churn in the back of the wagon that he too is ‘flitting’; the family reluctantly return to their house, resigned to his mischief (Briggs 1979: 28). Higson (1859: 67) mentions such a boggart alongside a pantheon of bog denizens: ‘Many domiciles, also, had their presiding boggart, and feerin’ swarmed at every turn of the dark old lanes, and arch boggarts held revel at every three-road end’.

This account introduces us to the more local form of ‘country’ boggart, altogether more malign (Young 2013). Four-footed boggarts (taking the form of ‘great big dogs’) would apparently ‘issue from a pit at [the] East End’ of Ashton Moss (Young 2013). These presences were a reality to bog inhabitants: in 1785, Finney wrights scathingly of the Lindow Commoners who were ‘so exceeding credulous and superstitious that ... Fearings and Boggarts lurk in every dark hole and gloomy hollow-way’ (cited in Worthington Barlow, 1853 vol. 11: 122). Interestingly, Roeder (1907) described this as a ‘peopling of brooks, pits, lanes and cloughs’ with spirits. It is easy to romanticise this superstitious belief. The Victorians were radically transforming this land and in so doing altered the very ‘landscape they carried round in their heads’ (Watkins 2013: 130), turning these phenomena into the stuff of entertainment, instead of the fabric of life. These stories of boggarts told people how to live well but respectfully with the moss (see Basso 1996); it *was* a dangerous place, and so among them the stories and the fears endured. Such a land required specialists who could deal with this supernatural realm. One, Jem Hill, styled as ‘th’king of Dregihlsden’ [Droylsden] claimed the nearby Green Lane ‘swarmt wi’fairies, witches un boggarts, which nob’dy could mester bur hissel’, while a certain ‘J. W.’ is cited as the last of ‘an ancient race of boggart seers ... [who] used to combat with feorin’ (cited in Higson 1859: 68, 69). Other measures might need to be taken: Eyre (1974: 34) reports that the large sandstone block that gave ‘Written Stone Lane’ its name in Longridge was supposedly used to entrap a boggart, carved with the perpetual warning that ‘RAVFFE RACLIFFE LAID THIS STONE TO LYE FOR EVER AD 1655’. Whether or not this was its original purpose, attempts to remove or reuse it have not ended well, so it lies there still.

Finally, among the other-worldly presences on the Lancashire bogs, Higson (1859: 68) also mentions ‘the terrific exploits of headless trunks or men ’bout heads’ – such tales may well have been fuelled by the discovery of bog body parts, such as the prehistoric Ashton crania. The *Ashton Weekly Reporter* (Anon. 1860: 2), for example, reports on the superstitious cottagers of ‘Back Openshaw’ who ‘were much disturbed by boggarts [and] feorin’, and told that the red staining on floorboards in one of their dwellings came from a murder long past. In 1733,

the levelling of the Ashton road disturbed the remains of ‘some mouldering bones and a human skull’ in a copse or hedge bank, which was attributed to this violent incident (Anon. 1860: 2). The remains were handed over to the local sexton who gave them a shallow grave in Gorton Chapel, but their discoverer (a ‘notorious toper’ [*sic*]) could not resist periodic exhumation of the skull to take it to the George and Dragon pub nearby, apparently to ‘drink ale from it if anyone would pay the shot!’ (Anon. 1860: 2) It is a step too far to link this to an actual bog body, but it warns us that attitudes towards human remains – whatever date was ascribed to them – were a little peculiar in Lancashire.

Such mosses and marshes harboured other strange phenomena. On Thorne Moor in the early 1700s, Abraham de la Pryme (1870: 11) reported ‘a great circumnavigation of whirling which made a noise somewhat like the motion of a milstone [*sic*], heralding the appearance of a water spout: ‘ever and anon it danced down out of itself a long spout’. Meanwhile, Camden attributed a bog burst to lightning strikes (cited in Feehan and O’Donovan 1996: 409). Micro-meteorological and physical effects of the bog still mystify – Meredith cites a field visit to a quaking bog in Vermont by a pair of naturalists, during which:

We heard the sound of something slicing quickly through the shrubbery. As the sound intensified, we noticed a small black spruce tree being whipped back and forth by a forceful, swirling wind ... After making a few passes ... it simply vanished. Where did it come from, and how did it happen on such a calm day? (Rezednes and Roy 1996, cited in Meredith 2002: 319)

In the end, the naturalists attribute this mysterious movement to the isostatic dynamics of the quaking bog itself: their very footfall has created a rippling dynamic through the liquidity of the peat, which disturbed the distant vegetation. Yet even for these scientists, as Meredith (2002: 319) notes, this sense of an animate, invisible presence was altogether real and unsettling.

At the end of his account of folk tales about Roundstone bog in Ireland, Robinson (2007: 45) urges caution: ‘It may be all a dark absurdity, words put together to conjure up all the shudderings and black treachery of the bog and condense them into a tale’. Yet the historical sources drawn upon here suggest otherwise: physical dangers, bog behaviour and luminescent phenomena further enhanced the ‘other-worldly’ reputation of the bog as a place where past and present met or where one might cross between this world and the next. As the bog grew in later prehistory, its perceived animacy must have swelled too, and for the rational, scientific mind of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, this was a folkloric horror to be physically and culturally drained.

‘Frightful to think of’: pejorative associations of the bog

In his survey of Lancashire, Defoe ([1738] 1971: iii: 170, letter 10) described ‘Chatmos’ as looking ‘black and dirty, and is indeed frightful to think of, for it

will bear neither horse nor man.' As land, it was to his eyes 'waste', its water the colour of 'stale beer' (Defoe ([1738] 1971: iii: 171). In the Lancashire chapter of *Britannia*, Camden (1722: 962) also commented on these 'moist and unwholsome places, call'd Mosses' of Lancashire, referring also to the Fens as 'filthy bogs ... and unpassable marshes' to which Gibson added a personal note that 'these are now much altered by draining' (Camden 1722: 962). In Ireland, William King's essay 'Of the Bogs, and Loughs of Ireland' (1685: 948) set out to 'consider the Origine; their conveniencys, and inconveniencys; how they may be remedied, or made usefull'. King (1685: 948–9) believed 'the real cause of them is wont of Industry', going on to note, 'no wonder that a Country famous for laziness, as Ireland is, abound with them!' He worried that they were a shelter to 'Torys and Thieves', and mentions the 'smell and vapours' from bogs as 'putrid and stinking' (King 1685: 953), setting out a series of ideas for their compulsory drainage and drying out. After viewing the damage of the Knocknageeha bog burst, Praeger (1897: 162) dolefully wrote that 'a few organised attempts have been made from time-to-time to turn some of our bogs to better use, but the want of success ... seems to have discouraged further effort ... a possible source of vast national wealth has been left to undeserved neglect'. In Scotland, Steele's *The Natural and Agricultural History of Peat-Moss or Turf-Bog* (1826) drew on his own experience of transforming Cobbinshaw bog. It was 'considered as worth nothing' upon purchase, but Steele (1826: 394) reported how he had turned it into an 'excellent pasture ... diversified with thriving plantations', finding in the process a hoard of Roman silver 'medals' – one coin aptly stamped with an image of Ceres bearing stalks of corn (Crawford 2018: 155). This vision of the bog as an unproductive morass, rather than an integral part of the natural environment and hydrological system, was shaped initially by the classical authors, whose texts formed the basis of elite education. The *paladimus fieda* of Tacitus (the 'foul bog') was the site of ritual sacrifice, offerings to the gods as well as a means of execution for various crimes (Aldhouse-Green 2002). Vitruvius's treatise *On Architecture* warned against living anywhere near a marsh, since 'the vapours of the fens ... the poisoned breath of marsh animals' made the site 'pestilential', while Columella's *De Re Rustica* complained of the 'baleful stench' of marshland and the 'plagues of swimming and crawling things ... infected with poison by the mud and decaying filth, from which are often contracted mysterious diseases' (cited in Aldhouse-Green 2016: 51). This pejorative vision was shaped by the Roman invader of an alien landscape, and as these texts were read and absorbed by the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century upper- and middle-class improvers they found sympathy with its views. They mined these texts to support the radical changes they believed necessary to improve both land and people. From her side saddle, Celia Fiennes (1888: 171) opined: 'If Gentlemen would set about it, Most of ye Waste Ground that is now a ffenny Moor and Mostly water might be rendered usefull'. Finney's 1785 notes on Lindow Common recall it as a 'wild moss, which was very extensive before the Turves were got out' (cited in Worthington Barlow 1853: 42), but, he went on: 'In its present wild uncultivated state it only yields a scanty nourishment to a few small cows, scabbed tits, lean sheep, and geese. But I am of opinion

that even the wild Moss itself might at a small charge be drained and converted into meadow and rich grass land' (cited in Worthington Barlow 1853: 43). These arguments were being played out across northern Europe, particularly by the Dutch for whom large-scale drainage and land reclamation was pioneered as a matter of necessity. However, in the British Isles, they were also used to secure the final seizure of marginal lands that had survived in common use, placing it instead under the control of the landed classes: allotting land only to those who could afford to pay for it. In England, such improvement went hand in hand with the enclosure movement (Hoskins [1955] 2013), and in Highland Scotland and Ireland with the notorious clearances that saw landowners shift from clan-based, croft tenantry (managed on the ground by the 'tacksmen') to large-scale sheep pasture systems (Devine 2018). A photograph of a 'labourer's hut' at Gweedore, Co. Donegal dated to 1880, shows a family of four standing outside a hut made of turf cut from the bog, with longer strips used to cover the roof and one small glass-paned window inserted into the wall: a temporary home 'following eviction' (National Library of Ireland n.d.: Lawrence collection no. 1, 508). In Scotland, on the estate of Blairdrummond, the philanthropically minded Henry Home, Lord Kames, sought to both ease the plight of the dispossessed Highlanders and improve the Blairdrummond Moss by offering each family thirty-eight acres of moss, rent free for eighteen years (Crawford 2018: 145). They too built their homes out of the turf, cutting and draining it around themselves, until they had reduced the morass of peat to the basal alluvial clay, from which these Gaelic-speaking 'moss lairds' (as the locals jeeringly called them) made a productive farmland (Crawford 2018: 146).

The bogs matched a contemporary sociopolitical geography that favoured the south, and they were used as a metonym for the north and its peoples, perceived as culturally backward and politically marginalised. It was all too easy to translate the perceived properties of these places on to the people associated with them, most notoriously in Ireland, where 'colonial stereotypes of the Irish as bog men or bogtrotters abound in eighteenth and nineteenth century texts' (Kavanagh 2019: 68). The moss was a metaphor for laziness, intractability and superstitious belief, creating a Celtic, Catholic caricature that was the butt of both loathing in literary works (such as the 'noisome bog' in Swift's *A Tale of a Tub*) and political satire (where the word 'bog' was often used in a knowing double entendre, as in popular prints by Hogarth, see Pittock 1999: 32). Bram Stoker's 1890 story *The Snake's Pass* personifies the evil character of the bog as a consuming and cruel entity, embodied in the treacherous snake as a merciless harbinger of death. These tropes spawned twentieth-century literature that widened the associations of the bog with the ungoverned psyche (as Freud saw it, see Chapter 2) – lack of physical control, uncouth and uncultured habits; sterility, weakness and femininity (Sanders 2009, Kavanagh 2019); or political treachery and nationalism (Pittock 1999). As Heaney (1999: 3) points out, the bogs were also a way of underpinning 'urbs against the rus, the stand-off between the urbane citizen and the *rusticus*'. Thus, Aldhouse-Green sees the bog as a suitably liminal place for Iron Age and

Roman sacrifice, citing Borca's view of the bog and marsh as 'wild, uncultivable places ... "other", beyond the reach of human control' (cited in Aldhouse-Green 2002: 113). The concept of 'draining the bog' still stands for a clearing away of undesirables and the transformation of the moss was a metaphor for colonial rule and the rational 'improvement' not merely of agriculture but of a social and religious kind. The cutting of the turf, it was hoped, could literally and metaphorically remove the 'burden' of history to create a new, mutually wrought political and cultural reality (Kavanagh 2019: 70–1).

In Ireland, this discourse had a nationalist tone, but its moral tenets can also be seen playing out in miniature on Ashton Moss and Lindow Common. The far north of Ashton bog was already known colloquially as the 'far-end-o-th' world' (Higson 1859: 10; see also Figure 4.4), and the moss itself was a 'a quagmire' that Butterworth (1823: 87) hoped could, through 'judicious draining, be converted into arable land'. Its people were likewise intractable, ridiculed by Higson (1859: 33) as 'Little Moss gawbies' who were insular and tightly knit: '[They] refuse to associate in their recreations, and seldom if ever intermarry. There is a sort of clanship amongst them; they court the friendship of few outsiders, and if you offend one, you offend all.' Gossip and antagonism fuelled their everyday lives: 'the feats of renowned mowers and reapers, the death of a cow by murrain or milk-fever ... political and religious animosities – furnished themes for a converse or motives for a fight' (Higson 1859: 56). By the mid to late nineteenth century, the *Ashton Weekly Reporter* mentions Ashton Moss mostly in relation to brawls, muggings and boxing matches, illicit liaisons and even the occasional murder. Its reputation worsened.

On Lindow, a piece of 'local' anthropology was undertaken by Norbury in 1885, motivated by the scale of cutting on Chat Moss and cultivation on the common: 'in a few years all that can be said will be – "This was once Lindow!"' (Norbury 1885: 61). It was a prescient fear, given our knowledge of the vital role these wetlands served; in his lifetime, Norbury (1885: 62) witnessed the shrinking of Lindow by half, and this, he estimated, was a mere quarter of its original extent. The watercolour section that precedes his article shows a depth of fourteen and a half feet of bog left in 1885 (Figure 4.1b). Norbury's article covers its origins and topography, but his opinion of its inhabitants speaks volumes: the bog was, he reckoned, the place where 'the aborigines in our colonies were pressed back to [the] worst parts of the land – the commons and the bogs' upon the arrival of successive conquering peoples (Norbury 1885: 68). Norbury (1885: 70) suggested he could 'point out not a few cases' of 'intermarriages ... between Commoners' where the characteristics of this aboriginal folk were even now, 'strongly marked'! While their self-sufficiency and ingenuity in use of bog resources impressed him, their physical and cultural character did not:

They are of a very ancient race, totally different from surrounding people ... They have the long head (*Dolicho-cephalic*), projecting eyebrows, high cheek bones, strong and coarse limbs, leaden aspect, slow motions, and ... the Moorish skin ... They were often buck-stealers, poachers, and fishers ... They were sly and very

suspicious, as aboriginal race always are; apparently very harmless, but not so safe as they appeared to be. When exasperated they fight with anything that lay next them ... I may add that they in a general way shunned society, and appeared almost destitute of religious instincts. (Norbury 1885: 71–2)

Norbury might as well have been writing about the Ashton skull – his language is that of the craniologists writing about the Celtic populations of Britain (Morse 2005) and his study comparable in intent to that undertaken by Duckworth and Shore using the Ashton and Droylsden remains in 1911 – looking for a common racial type among the ‘bog heads’ they had procured. Norbury (1885: 73) was right about one thing: these people were no doubt ‘driven to the bog,’ but not in prehistory – this physical and cultural marginalisation had everything to do with the disenfranchisement of the poor by enclosure, the rippling effect of the industrial revolution and the overdevelopment of rural settlements, creating suburbs for the city (such as Alderley Edge, by then in commutable distance for Manchester’s ‘cottontots,’ see Prag 2016). Norbury (1885: 74) assumed these ancient peoples had stayed put on their ancestral lands, tied to their own parish by the Poor Law. Yet as Hyde and Pemberton (2002) have shown, the moss community was remarkably permeable, taking in displaced families who believed they could claim a piece of the commons for their own; cast-out soldiers returning from the Crimean War and the First World War, joined later on by sand diggers and turf cutters (many of whom were Irish) employed on the bog as more commercial forms of exploitation took hold. Collectively known as the ‘bog warriors,’ they erected small dwellings and bothies: fringe communities (like Blairdrummond’s moss lairds) settled on land of little value, hoping to scrape by.

‘Improvement’ did not end with enclosure: the demands of making a living turned the bogs into commercial enterprises that saw hand cutting supplemented by light bog ‘railways’ before large-scale cutting machinery took over on Lindow. Though it never achieved the scale of Irish bog cutting by Bord na Móna, it was during such work that the Lindow bodies were found. Now, the desire to rewet the bog as a pressing environmental solution and thus cease peat cutting (e.g. Keddy *et al.* 2009) is being balanced in the planning process against the growing demand for housing at its edge. Compromises have to be made (Transition Wilmslow 2019) and these landscapes are in flux (Andersen *et al.* 2017). Recent applications to extend cutting at Chat Moss were sensibly refused on environmental grounds, but Askham bog on the edge of York is still under threat. The market-garden landscape of well-drained moss on Ashton-under-Lyne depicted in the Preface would have been unrecognisable to its prehistoric and later medieval inhabitants, but even that vista has now gone. Denaturation, drainage and reclamation on an unprecedented scale have turned the moss into an obdurate area of wet, rough pasture, bisected by the concrete sweep of the M60 and fringed by Ashton’s sprawl of pubs, outlets and warehouses. It is we who have made it, once again, marginal.

In conclusion, the bog *was* uncanny and dangerous (Asingh and Lynnerup 2007: 274): not just a liminal place but also a substance and medium for which

(unlike the ‘littoral’ zone of the shore) we have no distinct term. What distinguishes the bog is that it is a zone where the character of land and water changes, and is in transition (Bradley 2017): rather than being one kind of landscape it is many – always in flux, shading into different micro-locales of bog edge and depth, hummocks, pools, still points and flows (see Fontijn 2020; see also Chapter 7). McLean (2007: 62) thus sees the bog as a creative place: a setting where traditional contours dissolve and new configurations of matter might emerge. It fits well with Anderson’s (2009) notion that ‘affective atmospheres’ are most powerfully generated where there is a tension of presence and absence, and of the insubstantial and the material, which generates turbulence – a charged atmosphere. We move closer here to an understanding of why these were such culturally meaningful places in prehistory. Yet as the above review reveals, our view of the bog is shaped in the main by the pejorative vision of non-bog dwellers, grounded in the Mediterranean eye of the classical authors – distastefully viewing a wet, intractable land they could not map or tame, witnessing interactions with the bog they could not fathom. It is further shaped by the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries during which the bog stood metonymically and metaphorically for wider ideas about race, religion, ethnicity and nationalism. These mosses would not feature so strongly in a narrative of improvement if there were no contest over them. And so it is to the value of peat as a fuel and the ‘turf wars’ of enclosure, allotment and drainage that we must turn, to begin to see the bog differently and recognise the wealth it held for prehistoric peoples.

Turf wars

Turf burns more slowly than timber, with an aromatic smoulder. The top surface of poorly humified peat must be discarded for it burns wet and smoky (Godwin [1981] 2009). Known as ‘scraw’ or ‘fum’, it is cut off and laid at the foot of the peat bank to encourage regrowth (Glassie 1995: 475; Robinson 2007: 59; Crawford 2018: 64–5). It is the denser, purplish-brown peat that is sought for fuel, described by Godwin ([1981] 2009) as having the consistency of cheese! In Scandinavia, a layer of reddish, very fibrous *Sphagnum* peat is often found towards the base of the bog: known colloquially as ‘dog flesh’, it is also too poor to burn, but it was in such a layer that Tolland Man was found (Fischer 2012: 39). The cutting of the turf had its place in the year, usually during May and early June (Fischer 2012: 13) and Glassie’s (1995: 474) peat-cutting ethnography records that it takes at least three people to cut the bog – ‘one cutting, one liftin, one wheelin’. It thus brought together not just family but neighbours: forming close bonds between households in the cycles of cutting, drying, turning and clamping or stacking on the bog, before could it be carried in the creel, cart or wheelbarrow to bring home. Early depictions of this work, such as Turner’s 1808 *Peat Bog, Scotland* and Van Gogh’s 1883 *Women Working on the Peat Moor* (the sketch for which is produced in Figure 4.5), capture the back-breaking labour of this work. Yet there was pride to be had in the



4.5 Excerpt from letter from Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh with sketch of *Women Working on the Peat Moor*, Nieuw Amsterdam, c.7 October 1883, pencil, pen and ink on paper b0354V1962r, Vincent van Gogh. All rights reserved and permission to use the figure must be obtained from the copyright holder.

rhythm and skill of this labour (Glassie 1995): Heaney (1999: 3) was not the only one to love ‘the textures of the bog banks after the spade had done its work in the turf-face’. Finally, there was the building of the home stack: an outward symbol of good household provision and the labour it could muster. On Lewis, the ‘her-ringbone’ patterns of alternating sods mimic the weave of a tweed (Crawford 2018: pl. 17), as both echo the delicate chevrons formed by a herring’s ribs: a fitting reminder that fish and fuel were part of the very fabric of life.

When did cutting peat for fuel begin? A few days before the discovery of Tolland Man, the Højgaard family who found him quite literally ‘turfed up’ something else: a wooden implement resembling a ‘short sword with a transverse handle’ (Fischer 2012: 15). It was photographed by press at the time (Fischer 2012: 37) but the finders did not realise its significance and it disappeared. The Højgaards later stated that two of these objects had been found within 3–4 m of the body: one very close, at the same basal layer of ‘dog flesh’ peat that Tolland Man had lain in, one a little further away. These observations supported a palaeo-ecological assessment that the body had been deposited in an old peat cutting (Fischer 2012: 22, 36). Another nearby bog body – Elling Woman – had been found with what had been described by their neighbours as a ‘wooden paddle’ (Fischer 2012: 37). This double-bladed implement somewhat resembles a boat paddle, but both ethnographic analogy and experimental archaeology (at Lejre Historical Archaeological Experimental Centre) has proved they are well suited to the task of peat cutting (Fischer 2012: 38). Similar paddles and t-shape spades have been firmly radiocarbon dated to the early Iron Age, such as those from Nørre Smedeby bog, which were discovered alongside small turves ‘kneaded and formed by hand’ (Figure 4.6). (This way of making ‘mud turves’ from very waterlogged peat was observed by Boate in eighteenth-century Co. Sligo, Ireland, see Rotherham 2009: 14). Palaeoecologist Treols-Smith, who later visited the location of Tolland Man’s discovery, recorded two intrusive peat cuttings deep in the bog (one clearly illustrated in section in Fischer 2012: 60–1), ‘filled up with later *Sphagnum* peat’.



4.6 Peat spades and hand-formed curves from Nr. Smedeby, Southern Jutland, Denmark. All rights reserved and permission to use the figure must be obtained from the copyright holder.

In Denmark, cutting for peat thus began in the Bronze Age but intensified in the Iron Age (Christiansen and Fiedal 2003). In the Nebelgaard Mose bog where Grauballe Man was found, peat cutting measuring 2 m deep by 4 m across were recorded – these basins had filled up with water (Jørgenssen 1956, cited in Asingh and Lynnerup 2007: 282) mimicking the still, deep, bog pools evoked above. Borremose Woman and Huldremose Woman are also thought to have been placed in old peat cuttings (Asingh and Lynnerup 2007: 331 n. 12), while van der Sanden (1996: 35) notes that 240 of the t-shaped spades had been found in Denmark alone. Iron Age houses in the settlement of Bjerre were heated by peat fires (Asingh 2009: 176). The cutting of peat for turf is alluded to in Pliny's first-century AD account of the Teutonic tribes of the Netherlands/north Germany who 'dig up the mud which they dry more with wind than with sun, and using earth as fuel they warm their bodies, frozen stiff by the north wind' (cited in Mayhoff 1906: Bk 16: 1). The area referred to includes that of the man-made terp region, where settlements were artificially built up in wet coastal and salt-marsh zones, through a mixture of 'clay, dung and organic waste [which] was highly fertile and could be used to improve the fertility of sandy and peaty soils' (Nieuwhof 2015: 19). The southern edge of this region fronted on to the bogs of the Netherlands, around Drenthe, where peat was probably cut for fuel (Nieuwhof 2015: 39), and we will return to the extraordinary range of artefacts found there

in the following chapter. A remarkable example of where these two themes come together is the Iron Age site of Fuglsøgaard Mose (Denmark) where a relatively small bog (200 x 100 m) was punctured by two ‘bathtub-shaped peat cuttings’ (Asingh and Lynnerup 2007: 282–3, fig. 7). Into the empty hollow (from which the fuel had been removed) were placed a series of ‘votive’ offerings – pots containing food, butchered remains of animals (including horses) and the tethering posts and clubs perhaps used in this sacrificial act of thanksgiving. A further thirty-eight cuttings have been identified by further survey (Bradley *et al.* 2015: 312). At Nørre Smedeby too, some turves were left in the base of the cutting, with pots, wooden dishes, peat spades and a plough left in the void where fuel had been cut (Bradley *et al.* 2015: 282). When something was taken from the bog, something had to be given back.

Evidence for prehistoric peat cutting in the British Isles is well attested in the northern Isles. A fossilised pyramidal peat stack (known in Gaelic as a ‘cruach’) dating to the Bronze Age was found at Balnabodach on the Isle of Barra (1690–1490 cal BC, see Branigan *et al.* 2002: 849). Fourteen turves, most bearing pinched finger-and-thumb impressions, had been loosely stacked, with evidence for a second abandoned stack nearby. The peat had been cut horizontally ‘into’ an open face rather than down from above (a mode of cutting shallow peat still recorded in Caithness in 1812, see Rotherham 2009: 38). Tool marks from the rounded end of a blunt instrument 3.8 cm in width could be clearly seen in section. Peat-cutting tools are known from other Bronze Age sites in the Hebrides (Jarlshof and Clickimin, Branigan *et al.* 2002: 854), while good evidence for Iron Age activity was found at the stone-built wheelhouse of Kilphede (South Uist), where a small stone cell had been used for stacking peat fuel that also bore cut marks and a ‘peat spade’ made of a deer shoulder blade was propped nearby (Branigan *et al.* 2002: 854). From the undated crannog at Lochlea (Ayrshire, probably falling into the late first/second century AD) comes not only a double-bladed ‘paddle’ almost identical to those from Denmark (Munro *et al.* 1879: fig. 86, related by the excavator to later finds of a dug-out canoe) but an extraordinary, long wrought iron implement (beautifully twisted, hinged, with three long prongs and ring attachments) interpreted as a ‘moss rake’. Other Iron Age evidence for the cutting of deep peat has been reported at the broch of Upper Scalloway (Shetland) with peat ash preserved at the Ness of Gruting (Shetland), Dun Bharabhat (Lewis) and Dun Vulan (South Uist, Branigan *et al.* 2002: 854). At Cnip, an iron ‘spade shoe’ (for turning over turves) was discovered, while the ongoing excavations at the Cairns (a complex broch site in Orkney) are revealing a rich range of peaty associations including turf fuel ash around hearths, while collections of iron bog ore have been gathered and used in ritual ‘closure’ deposits at the end of the broch’s life (Carruthers pers. comm.). To these finds from the Highlands and Islands we can add the evidence of peat as a possible fuel, preserved in burnt and unburnt fragments (‘possibly from turves’) in the later fill of an Iron Age roundhouse gully at Carberry Hall Farm (East Riding, see Jaques *et al.* 2002: 6). Macrobotanical remains of bog species, pinewood and insects suggest the cutting and use of peat

for fuel in both hearths and ovens, possibly from the first century AD but at least from the late third to early fourth at the late Iron Age/Roman settlement at Thwing (Ferraby *et al.* 2017: 186–7). This material must have been brought quite a way on to the chalk Wolds, from the vales of Pickering or Holderness, perhaps holding a special value above the local timber (Ferraby *et al.* 2017: 186–7). Tantalising hints as to peat working in Lancashire and Cheshire exist: Charles Roeder (1901) records that a perforated limestone hammer, oak ‘paddle’ (reminiscent of the Danish peat tools) and clay net-sinker were found on Danes Moss, near Macclesfield. Even though we cannot trace the association between British and Irish bog bodies and peat cutting as closely as in Denmark, the need for peat as *fuel* clearly drew many Iron Age communities into the bog.

The peat was a source of curiosity to some of the earliest traveller-diarists from the south; sometime between 1539 and 1543, Leland recalled seeing ‘pooles ... where greate plen[ty of turves] and petes hath bene diggid’ (Toulmin Smith 1964: 2) and how his own host at Morley Hall (Cheshire) ‘brennit [bringeth] al turfes and petes for the commodite of mooses and mores at [hand]’ (Toulmin Smith 1964: 3). The cutting of turf grew in popularity during the medieval period when the land itself was more rigorously charted, described and owned. ‘Common rights’ to the bog now fell under manorial control, defined as either ‘appendant’ (related to land ownership) or ‘appurtenant’ (related to ancient cottages, see Rotherham 2009: 43). ‘Turbary-rights’ (turvery) over village ‘waste’ completed those of pasture, piscary, estover and firebot rights to gather fuel, extract minerals or mine stone. All were jealously guarded, fuelling dispute. For example, around 1400, Sir John Assheton and Sir John Byron quarrelled over the exact boundary in the ‘meres’ between their lands and rights of both pasturage and peat grounds. The *Black Book of Clayton* (cited by Bowman 1960: 45 as manuscript 73 of the Towneley collection) reveals that many ‘offensive sallies into Aston Manor, and spasmodic fights’ took place (cited in Bowman 1960: 45). Finally, the Manorial Court summonsed them to ‘meet upon the Moss’ around 1425 (cited in Bowman 1960: 43–5). The Inquest reported that ‘ther fell such words betweene the two knights’ that no agreement could be made – the courts looked to memory to solve the dispute: ‘old men weren sworne upon a booke’ before describing the supposed boundary, which both parties then walked: ‘fro osell birch to a black stake that stood in the Mosse, and fro that stake to a lach that rennes out of the mosse to a clough’ (cited in Bowman 1960: 44). The inquest ‘examynet Wilkyn of the Birches, a man of three score and sixteen years old’ who reported where the tenants had customarily ‘dolfen their turfes’ and to which manor and church ‘the foles, calves and lombur that have been folet, calvet and eyvet upon the more’ belonged (cited in Bowman 1960: 44). Other marks featured in the dispute: the ‘queche pitte’ that ‘lyes next to the mere-hede as the water shedes upon the more ... the black gate there’ and the ‘Crocket birch’. I have quoted from this dispute at length because it tells us of the kind of features that helped negotiate rights at the edge of these mosslands, surrogates for which might be detectable in the bog figures raised by Iron Age trackways (Chapter 5). Sir John Stanley was tasked to resolve it ‘as far as his witte stretched’; fines and

recompenses were made (including the ‘tersill of a goshawk’ and ‘a Hoggeshead of wine’, cited in Bowman 1960: 45). New ditches were dug, and other ‘markes more redy upon the ground’ but Sir Stanley ensured that the ‘Drye hill lye open for evermore, nought to be *enprovet ne encloset*; that the parties etc. may have ways ... to carry turves’ (cited in Bowman 1960: 45, my emphasis).

Not to be improved or enclosed. This phrase was telling for as both processes took effect, traditional turbarry plots were taken in, managed or sold, and others given in recompense as commuted rights (Rotherham 2009: 43). Others sought to sequester land to their own benefit: one Edward Walker ‘had taken in a Large piece of Moss Ground’ at Little Moss near Ashton in 1686. He was ordered by Moss-Reeve that he ‘must hinder noe person’ in their laying out of peat and carrying it from the moss ... indeed, he was ordered to make ‘a good sufficient platting and Yate’ (bridge and gate) to improve their egress from the bog. Improvement of drainage, however, created good rough pasture and in 1622, ‘manie reprochfull words and mad affray’ arose over ‘Catell in Trespassinge upon linden mosse in treading of their neighbors’ turves’ (Bowman 1960: 47). Disputes related to enclosure affected many of the bogs: at Theolemosse (White Moss) in 1575 it led to mass trespass and violence and the rioters ‘pull[ed] up’ the great gates that had been erected and made a gallows out of it (Crofton 1907: 49), perhaps intending to intimidate the would-be enclosers! On Lindow Common (east of Lindow Moss), after what was probably a bog burst in the late 1700s, those with ‘moss rooms’ had laid them dry through drainage and the peat was no longer being cut. By 1844, a lengthy dispute arose over illegal ‘encroachments’ on the common who were not paying their rents: one complainant, John Comberbirch was later named as a key offender in this localised land grab (Comberbirch 1847; see Merrill-Glover, forthcoming). Other disputes related to the private selling of turf (depriving the lord of his due) and in 1686, on Ashton, a twenty shilling fine was set after ‘severall persons ... set the Moss on fire ... either by taking tobacco or otherwise’ (Crofton 1907: 49): an incident all too familiar to the contemporary residents of Stockport and Manchester, as in the Pennine Moor fires of 2018. These stories remind us of the wealth of the bog as seen by those who used it, but by the nineteenth century, Butterworth (1823: 87–8) noted that only ‘the surrounding poor cut turf ... [it] supplies them with fuel, during the inclement season of winter’. In 1867 the *Ashton Weekly Reporter, and Stalybridge and Dukinfield Chronicle* still advertised ‘Patent Fire Lighting Peat’ to be had from ginger-beer seller George Bowker on Mill Street: ‘far cheaper and better than firewood’. But in most parts of northern England at least, as improvements were made to fire grates and chimneys and shipping by sea or canal, neither peat nor wood was needed for anything but kindling – coal had come.

The historic period thus witnessed a mapping of turbarry rights and contests that have been reviewed above to help us understand how our image of the bog has been formed and to remind us that people fought over its fuel. This friction could be rightly considered anachronistic for later prehistory. However, Kelly (2006) has recently proposed that the find-spot of many Irish bog bodies falls uncannily upon

early medieval ‘barony boundaries.’ It may be coincidence; the bogs of course provided the perfect watery threshold along which to mark a junction between territories and estates, just as rivers, ridges or roads might be used elsewhere. The notion of these as survivals of Iron Age boundaries must be treated with caution but we should not rule out the idea that there may have been contest over the bog. More lay in it than peat.

Bog wealth

In their study of the people of the wetlands, Coles and Coles (1989: 152) note that the ‘bogs were more obstacle than a benefit, and yet they were entered, utilised ... a vital part of the life of societies living near’. What drew them there? Peat bogs tend to be characterised by less diverse vegetation than fens with their carr woodland (Godwin [1981] 2009: fig. 2), but on the blanket bogs of the British Isles and Ireland can be found heathers and ling, useful for bedding, flooring, roofing and fuel for the hearth (as demonstrated in Roman phases at Thwing, see Ferraby *et al.* 2017: 191). The absorbent and antiseptic properties of *Sphagnum* moss have long made it a favoured litter for animal bedding, which was thereby enriched to become valuable fertiliser; peat was extracted at a commercial scale for this use by the British cavalry during the First World War (Rotherham 2009: 47). Heather also provides tender young shoots that attracted grouse and ptarmigan, as do the fruiting plants of crowberry, cloudberry and bilberry (Godwin [1981] 2009: 7). The latter two berry-bearing plants are edible by humans. Bog cranberries, high in nutrients, are traditionally considered useful for treating cardiovascular and urinary complaints and have been used for dyeing but also as a poultice to treat wounds (Neto and Vinson 2011), perhaps due to their bright-red association with blood. Bog myrtle or ‘sweet gale’ has been used as a bitter flavouring in beer since the early medieval period at least, with other uses as a fragrant bedding agent for repelling insects and also a food preservative (Godwin [1981] 2009: 101), though some nineteenth-century herbalists warned of its ‘abortive’ danger for pregnant women – that too, had its place, in the herbalists’ lore.

The protective power of bog substances has already been mentioned in the use of *Sphagnum* moss as an absorbent and antiseptic wound dressing, still in demand in the First World War (Chapter 3). It was also extensively used for sanitary ‘napkins’ as they were euphemistically called. It is possible this material was also gathered in prehistory for a similar purpose: Godwin ([1981] 2009: 70) cites the discovery of a mass of *Sphagnum palustre* on the chest of a Bronze Age inhumation at Ashgrove, Fife suggesting it might have been used to staunch a wound. In his 1657 Herbalist’s tract *Natures Paradise*, Coles described the many different properties of moss, ranging from its cooling and binding qualities (particularly for staunching or curing bleeding from any organ or orifice), pain relief, cough cure, sleep aide and general restorative. ‘Hot peat’ or ‘moor baths’ were advertised across England and Germany between the mid-nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as

both a healing and therapeutic skin treatment (Rotherham 2009: 47). Moss was used to treat burns and scalds, mixed with butter (Jephson 1671), or as a remedy for sleep, infused in white wine and sugar (Anon. 1675). Moss 'powder' (made from an infusion with rosewater, dried in a 'chafing dish' of glowing coals, see Anon, n.d.) provided an alluring perfume for the skin. The bog also supported many other plants used in traditional herbal medicine, pioneered in Lancashire by individuals such as Joseph Evans, the 'Boothstown Botanist' and 'herb doctor' from Worsley (Secord 1994), who were themselves drawing on centuries of medicinal tracts and recipe books (S. Handley pers. comm.). Cotton grass, purple moor grass and deer grass colonise higher hummocks, while sedges, bog asphodel, butterworts and sundews occupy the wetter and more marginal zones. Cotton grass was used to treat a range of throat and fever-related illnesses, whereas the bog violet also known as butterwort (the 'fat' plant or 'lard herb' in German) was thought to have magical properties, particularly related to protecting milk and butter from evil. It is in fact a good curdling agent, used in Scandinavia and among the Sami to make fermented milk products. Butterworts and sundews occupy the wetter and more marginal zones of bogs. These latter two plants are carnivorous, closing up their sticky leaves upon insect life that happens to light upon them, while the bladderwort uses its bristles to attract and trap insect life from the surface of the water, sucking it into the tiny vacuums formed on its leaves (Robinson 2007: 28). These seemingly merciless plants, greedy for flesh, have been used by many authors as a metonym for the moss: a microcosm of how the bog swallows land, stock and people. Yet to botanists, these are small, adaptive marvels, able to thrive in mineral-poor environments.

They need to be seen with a different eye – the educated eye perhaps, of Edward Hobson, who strode the bogs around Ashton-under-Lyne, at the turn of the nineteenth century, hunting for examples to populate his *A Collection of Specimens of British Mosses and Hepaticae Collected in the Vicinity of Manchester and Systematically Arranged with Reference to Muscologia Britannica, English Botany &c., &c., &c.* (1818–23). This three-volume work, of which only eighteen copies were reputedly made and 'printed' in Manchester, is part flower press, part collection and part reference manual. A self-taught man, working as weaver and grocer, Hobson set out to materially evidence the full range of mosses and liverworts found on north-western bogs, progressing from the well-known (vol. 1) to the rarer examples (vol. 3). The sheets of each volume are not bound: being arranged loose-leaf by genus and species, indicated by small labels printed in Latin. He clearly gathered samples not just of each characteristic stem or frond but the capsules that release the spores of these plants. One page catches the eye (Figure 4.7): a particularly tall set of stems, some of them ending in a small russet 'purse'. This is *Polytrichum commune*: known colloquially as 'common haircap', 'golden maidenhair', 'great goldilocks' or 'hair moss'. By the medieval period, an infusion of this moss was believed to strengthen or beautify the hair, perhaps through a form of sympathetic magic, for its luxurious stems grow up to 30 cm in height (and, rarely, up to 70 cm) topped by the vivid golden-amber capsules when



4.7 *Polytrichum commune* from *A Collection of Specimens of British Mosses and Hepaticae Collected in the Vicinity of Manchester*, vol. I. All rights reserved and permission to use the figure must be obtained from the copyright holder.

in spore (described also by Coles (1657: 34) as an effective tonic when ingested for all manner of stomach ills). Apart from this beautifying or medicinal property, it has another use. In one of the glass cases at the Roman fort of Vindolanda, perched on a stand, is a remarkable head covering woven from hair moss, described as a 'cap' (Figure 4.8a). Blackened by the peat in which it was buried, its detailed analysis by the textile expert John Peter Wild (1994), revealed that it was woven using basketry skills: a hollow 'top knot', under which projects a cap of dense and skilfully woven 'rands', ending in a projecting fringe of c.28 cm, which would have come down to the nape. It does not appear to be a wig, although a helmet crest was recovered from the same site (Figure 4.8b). It dates to the early phases of the fort's occupation – only twenty years or so after the conquest of northern



4.8a The Vindolanda 'cap', made from *Polytrichum commune*, from Vindolanda Roman fort. All rights reserved and permission to use the figure must be obtained from the copyright holder.



4.8b The Vindolanda helmet 'crest', made from *Polytrichum commune*, from Vindolanda Roman fort. All rights reserved and permission to use the figure must be obtained from the copyright holder.

Britain – and there is a near parallel from Newstead, suggesting this was not a unique object nor a Roman one, but that it should be situated within a wider late Iron Age tradition of organic head coverings (Wild 1994: 64). Several worked 'fringes' or 'pig tails' made from the same species *Polytrichum commune*, as well as a folded bundle of semi-worked, plaited stems were found at Lochlea crannog

(Munro 1879: fig. 109). Humorously, but perhaps insightfully, Wild suggests that this fringed and waterproof cap would certainly have proved effective against the most insidious of Scottish enemies: the midge.

Moving on to animal life, at the edge of Ashton Moss, 'Snipe Tavern' still evokes the drumming warble of this common wetland bird, while Higson (1859: 80) lamented the killing of the last booming bittern (once 'an esteemed delicacy') as part of the final enclosure of the bog. The rich insect life (purple-bordered gold moths, heath butterflies, bog bush crickets, mire pill beetles, black bog ants, large marsh grasshoppers) found on the north-west wetland bogs once fed a variety of larger animals such as the common frog (English Nature 2002). A recent survey of Astley Moss reported up to ten species of dragonfly haunting and hunting the hummocks of the bog, alongside short-eared owls, water voles and merlins in winter (Lancashire Wildlife Trust 2019). Badgers, foxes, stoats and otters can also be tempted on to the bog to hunt or to cross between habitats. The role of the bog as a 'trap', either for the unfortunate Mobberley boar, other large game or domesticated stock, has been well discussed. Norbury (1885: 71) notes that the Lindow folk were notorious 'poachers and fishers', though fish cannot survive in the acidic, oxygen-excluding environment of the peat bog itself, in contrast to the richness of the fens (renowned for its eels), meres and marshes. Leigh (1700: 19) boasted that 'great Quantities of Fish, as Roach, Eels, Pikes, Pearch, Breams' could be had in Martinmeer, for example. Bird life enlivens the apparently sterile bog: flycatchers, marsh tits, linnets, reed buntings and willow tits are among the smaller birds that would have been seen, heard and perhaps netted, while nesting species included the golden plover, the dunlin and the red-throated diver. Birds of prey such as hen harriers are also attracted by the smaller bird life on the bog, and seasonal migrants might alight there, en route to more permanent wetlands, encouraging seasonal fowling. Domestic peat cutting, especially the creation of small in-filled pools, created its own micro-environment, attracting large red damselflies and other species (Robinson 2007: 65). One of the other infamous inhabitants of the peat bog in Britain was the adder, the island's only poisonous snake, which perhaps attracted more 'venom' than was fair, given its rarity. On Lindow Common, Finney recalls that a 'Viper Catcher' was paid once a year to rid the moss of these snakes, which 'sometimes occasion Mischief' (cited in Worthington Barlow 1853: 45). A boy 'had been bit by one while he was ranging after Cranberrys, of which there is great plenty, with naked feet', and Finney's own dog – a Pointer – died after such a bite to his head (cited in Worthington Barlow 1853: 45).

Both bog and bogside created a narrow but useful array of organics that lent themselves to the making of containers and traps, revealed in the otherwise pejorative ethnography of Lindow Moss by Norbury (1885). Its nearby inhabitants were 'expert in using twigs or osiers, in making besoms from birch and broom, also in making straw-work, beehives, &c. from split briars' (Worthington Barlow 1853: 45). They were also 'very expert in making primitive traps and snares from withes and bands' (Worthington Barlow 1853: 45), a point we will return to in [Chapter 6](#) in relation to the devices used to dispatch, bind or disable bog victims.

Around the same era, Higson (1859: 156) wrote of Ashton Moss that its ‘upper portion gains firmness and solidity ... growing rushes, ferns and heather’. The rushes did not only furnish floor coverings and basketry; in Ashton they were woven into ‘rush carts’ – impressive artistic constructions, done up with ribbons and flowers, which formed the centrepiece of late summer festivals. Yet it was not so much the bog as nearby woodland that would have facilitated the making of what Hurcombe (2014) calls ‘the missing majority’ of organic containers, vessels, utensils, implements, clothing, boats, vehicle components, personal ornaments, figures, building materials, even weapons, which are revealed in rare, late Bronze Age and Iron Age waterlogged sites in England and Scotland. Sites such as Glastonbury and Meare Lake Villages, Flag Fen, Fiskerton, Cults Loch, Black Loch or Must Farm give an insight into the mundane ‘wealth’ of agricultural *and* cultural life. Hurdles, baskets, pole-lathe turned bowls, spoons and ladles, buckets, tubs, chariot and cart components, ards for ploughing, spear shafts, balls of plant fibre, boxed-up hand-shears: wetland archaeology provides the richest and most engaging insight into the full realm of prehistoric craftwork (Coles and Coles 1989). In the following chapter, we will discuss what ended up in the bog, but most of these materials and objects speak of manufacturing well away from the bog environment. Stakes, withies and sprang bands, for example, often woven from flexible hazel wood, feature in a number of bog body finds (see Chapter 6), but they must have been made some distance from the violent events in which they were implicated. There were only a few direct organic craft materials culled from the bog itself. For example, Pliny notes that the inhabitants of the Netherlands ‘terp’ made use of some bog plants: ‘with the sedge and the rushes of the marsh they make cords, and with these they weave their nets’ (cited in Mayhoff 1906: Bk 16: 1).

One of the most common ‘finds’ from the bog listed by later authors were the preserved remains of trees, representing the submerged vegetation from the earliest phase of its transformation into a bog. Some thought these were relics of the biblical flood (cited in Leigh 1700: 89; de la Pryme 1870: 983) or else evidence of ‘ye burning and chopping of ye same [trees in the moss] by the Romans’ (de la Pryme 1870: 314). Norbury (1885: 63) comments on the rare ‘charred stocks’ found under the peat on the original land surface at Lindow. This ‘bog oak’ was extraordinarily durable: de la Pryme (1870: 249, letter dated 2 Feb. 1701–2) sent a sample of it to Dr Sloan, noting: ‘I have put in to the box a piece of the black oak that is digged up in this country, observable for its colour and hardness’. The geologist Charles Lyell (1838: 22) also recorded that on Hatfield Moss, ‘fir-trees have been found ninety feet long, and sold for masts and keels of ships’. In the hamlet of Alt (neighbouring Ashton) a farm named ‘Turf Pits’ was built with bog oak found resting on the underlying clays (Butterworth 1823: 6), while an oak-bog ‘stock’ measuring nine foot in circumference was found at the ‘far-end-o-th’-world’ (Higson 1859: 158). Bog oak became more popular as peat cutting expanded in the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries, being reused for construction in houses and trackways, as well as for ornamental veneers, furniture and keepsakes or souvenirs (such as the ‘bog oak pendant cross’ held in the National Museum in NI, Ulster, combining

Celtic shamrock and harp with Christian symbolism). Paper made from peat was made in Ireland, and although generally uneconomical to produce, it enjoyed brief popularity as postcards or greetings cards sent to Irish emigrés (Rotherham 2009). Bog fir, meanwhile, was also renowned for its flammability, used ‘by the poor in lieu of candles’ (Rotherham 2009: 159). As Butterworth (1823: 88) also notes: ‘Red fir trees have frequently been found in it, which being full of their once nourishing and resinous gum, when split, serve the purpose of striking a light ... besides which large oaks as black as ebony and perfectly sound, have been dug therefrom.’ While we have little evidence of the use of bog wood in the Iron Age or Roman period, this might be hard to identify unless multiple radiocarbon dates yielded material ‘out of time’ compared with its depositional context.

Finally, the bog ‘grew’ iron. Bacterial action in swampy conditions led to the oxidation of iron-rich groundwater, creating a precipitate known as bog ore or ‘limonite’ – a poor, porous iron ore that can be either rich or low in phosphorus (Crew 2013). The ubiquity of this substance and its lower melting point than purer forms of ore rendered it a favourite choice for Iron Age smelting though it brought its own challenges (McDonnell 1995; Crew 2013; Dungworth 2015). Through experimentation, it has been estimated that 8 kg ore can yield c.5 kg of slag and 2kg of bloom (Crew and Charlton 2007: 222). High raw material volume to product rates and variable qualities of finished bar iron were notable (Crew 2013), though residual silicates in bog iron could have helped make finished objects more resistant to rusting (Heimann *et al.* 2002). Bog iron was self-renewing – it is estimated that a bog ore can regenerate at a rate of 5–10 cm a year (Tylecote 1986: 125) and thus could be ‘harvested’ at least once a generation. Halkon and Starley (2011: 138) also report on field drains that had become blocked by bog ore in less than a decade. Yet a direct link between a bog ore source and evidence for local working is difficult to prove, given the array of chemical signatures this material can produce and the fact that ‘bog ore’ is often used to refer to any alluvially deposited iron ore (McDonnell pers. comm.). Fischer (2012: 157) notes that Tolland Man and Elling Woman were buried in area renowned for bog ore and in sight of Klode Mølle (‘iron ingot’ mill) – one of Central Jutland’s main exports by the Middle Ages. One of the most extensively investigated examples is from the later Iron Age site of Yderick in Denmark, where over fifty buried slags dating between the second and seventh centuries AD represent single-use shaft furnace smelting of the local bog ore (Peters *et al.* 2008). A positive identification was made between slags deposited in an Iron Age pit at the Lower Lusatian Wolkenberg-26 smelting site (Peters *et al.* 2008: 230) and samples of bog ore from potential sources nearby. Meanwhile, on Bourtangermoor in Holland, Casparie (1986) has argued that two middle Iron Age features – a footpath and a wattle-work trackway – were designed to move ore from the bog to dryland. A worked oak plank dating to the earlier Iron Age (680–550 cal BC) was found in association with one of the main patches of ore itself, and Casparie (1986: 180) makes a tentative association between this early phase of ore working and a major bog burst event of c.500 BC.

In Wales, Crew (2013: 26) identified the presence of bog ore at the Iron Age sites of Bryn y Castell (with high phosphorous content) and Cracwellt (with low phosphorous content), both in Wales, alongside smelting debris, smithing tools and iron-working structures. His groundbreaking smelting experiments involving ore from both sites, along with other sources, proved (among other things) that the lower-phosphorous ore was easier to smelt and though difficult to forge both kinds of ore gave good cutting edges to blades. Actual production sites are even rarer, such as the lower Foulness Valley in East Yorkshire, where Halkon (1997, 2003; Halkon and Millett 1999) has shown how the careful management of woodland fuelled an iron-smelting industry. In Halkon's landscape study, nineteen iron-smelting sites were found in an 8 x 8 km landscape block, suggesting a multi-period use of the local bog ore, including a major early to middle Iron Age slag heap at Moore's Farm, Welham Bridge, estimated as representing over 9,120 kg of original bog ore (Halkon 2012: 105–6, pl. 17) and an undated but presumably middle to late Iron Age slag heap at North Cave, just across from Welham (Halkon 1996). This bog ore (known locally as 'nossman') is vividly illustrated in Halkon and Starley (2011: fig. 3) and was also successfully experimentally smelted by Crew (2013), although the ore was sandy and needed careful preparation to produce a relatively low-grade bloom. Crew (2013: 36) suggests re-smelting of such blooms may have been required, while even a good bog-iron bloom requires twenty to forty reheating episodes to work it into a serviceable currency bar or billet form, ready for smithing. The proximity of these smelting sites to the local Iron Age square barrow cemeteries (renowned for their iron chariot gear, weaponry and mirrors) suggests that smiths were carrying out primary production on the sandy, raised ridges close to this ore, with woodland nearby to supply their charcoal-fuelled bowl or shaft furnaces. Yet as King (1685: 953–4) notes, peat not only produced 'a tolerable sweet fire', but the 'turf char'd [charcoaled] serves to work iron ... in a bloomery or iron-work'. While Halkon (2003) has convincingly identified the use of wood charcoal at Welham and wood charcoal was used throughout Crew's experimental campaign, it is possible we underestimate the use of peat-charcoal as a smelting fuel, given its convenient co-location with the ore and greater capacity for heat production (Asingh 2009: 190; Fischer 2012: 157). Diligent research into bog ore deposits on Iron Age and early Roman settlement sites in South Yorkshire reveal glimpses of bog ore use: an 'iron concretion' at Carr Lodge Farm and a curated and deposited lump of bog ore at Deepwell Mews (Chadwick 2019).

In Ireland, one of the brushwood, hurdle and plank tracks on Lemanaghan bog dated to 348–57 BC ran not from dry spot to dry, but out into the wet, close to a substantial ore deposit (O'Carroll 2001: 15). The insightful work of Dolan (2016: 35) reveals strong correspondences between sources of bog ore and shaft-furnace smelting dating to the Iron Age in the midlands, though exact sourcing is problematic. At Derrinsalagh, the clustered remains of over thirty furnaces suggests repeated, episodic small-scale working at a site renowned for its proximity to ore sources at Derryville Bog (Dolan 2016: 35). Dolan (2016: 43) points

out the general rarity of ironworking and reminds us that it was deployed on a restricted repertoire of important objects: knives, sword blades and spears, horse gear and pendants, as well as decorative fittings of the Ballydavis composite 'box' where its tin-rich bronze lid was finished with iron roundels set with red glass. He urges us to consider the ways in which both smelter and smith were seen in contemporary society, suggesting that at least in Ireland, this was a restricted craft, with sociopolitical and magico-religious overtones. Finally, iron deposits were not only useful for smithing – in Roundstone bog, Robinson (2007: 106) mentions the importance of what is known colloquially as the 'black stuff': 'the intensely black, iron-rich sediment collected from the bottom of bog-holes, widely used for dyeing wool until a couple of generations ago ... it gives a dull black colour, or, with the addition of oak chips, a glossy jet black'. Iron was also a good mordant (a fixative, for other dyes), which from the bog might include the cloudberry, crowberry and sundew (yielding purple dyes) and bog asphodel and bog myrtle (yellow). It is salutary to appreciate the ways in which such different substances were mutually implicated in a range of crafts, and how the bog could feed larder, medicine cabinet and dyer's vat, supply bedding and roofing and fuel the smith's workshop and hearth.

Conclusion: deep places, thin places ...

This chapter has examined the bog, seeing through the pejorative discourse of the improvers to a rich and productive if distinctive and dangerous landscape. From prehistory onwards, people made ad hoc inroads into the mire, laid trackways and small platforms and constructed stony ways around its most treacherous pools. They came for fuel, ore, culinary and medicinal plants, bird and animal life. Accounts of turf cutting have shown how friction might arise over these resources but also how work in and around the bog helped reaffirm relations between neighbours and communities. They also came *into* the bog to engage in other kinds of activities: rituals involving the dead but also other kinds of offerings and performances, as the next chapter will discuss. People's dealing with the bog were part of what Fredengren (2015: 161) calls the 'geopolitics', or more specifically, 'waterpolitics' of their worlds. Like other bodies of water, it was 'socially and politically constituted' (Edgeworth 2011: 157). Yet the behaviour of the bog and phenomena witnessed there lent it an animacy that may well have amounted to what Strang (2014) has called an 'agential power'. As Fredengren (2015: 175) puts it, the bogs were a somewhat 'volatile' partner in human affairs.

I want to end this chapter with the notion that as well as being 'deep places' these were also, in contemporary theological language, 'thin places' – one of Eliade's (1963) *hierophanies* – where the sacred might be touched and the supernatural realm made manifest. It was a place that loomed large not just in the imagination, but the very psychogeography of its inhabitants.

In *The Beauty Things*, the renowned author Alan Garner discusses with archaeologist Mark Edmonds a range of objects that he has found, or that have come to him, which have inspired ideas in his many novels and essays. He recalls how a peat digger cutting turf on Lindow Moss in the 1950s came across a curious object in the bog: 'a stone, a black stone, flecked with red, part bubbled as a brain, part rough as frost, and all stuck about with clear crystals that winked in the light' (Edmonds and Garner 2016: n.p.). Intrigued, he took it to the Manchester Museum's geology department, but they sampled it for identification purposes, much to the man's ire. They looked upon it, Garner suggests, merely 'as geology ... a lump of haematite with quartz crystals' (Edmonds and Garner 2016: n.p.). Outraged, the turf cutter passed the object on to Alan, knowing that 'he'll look after it better'. He did. In his hands this object becomes the 'swaddledidaff' of Strandloper (Garner 1996): the lucky stone that the Marton labourer, William Buckley, takes with him when he is transported to Australia (Figure 4.9). He escapes incarceration and finds himself among an aboriginal community who see a very different suite of qualities in the stone to the blunt mineralogical description above.



4.9 The 'swaddledidaff' – a haematite nodule with quartz crystals, found on Lindow Moss. All rights reserved and permission to use the figure must be obtained from the copyright holder.

It does not take a man like Alan Garner to see the power of such an odd object: the turf cutter himself knew it to be something special, for this was nothing like the iron ore found in the bog. It *was* iron but it did not belong – not here at least. But it does take someone like Alan Garner to find the right words to conjure how this stone ‘resonates’ in his words, with ideas of craft, light and power, and to pose the very simple point that the museum missed – the question of how it came to be in a bog wasn’t asked. Things given up, given over or given back – it is to these themes that the next chapter turns.

Exquisite things and everyday treasures: interpreting deposition in the bog

Introduction: things in bogs

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

The first half of the title of this chapter is inspired by David Fontijn's (2020: 123) recent study of Bronze Age deposition, in which (against a background of weapons, tools and jewellery) he singles out a particular category of artefact characterised by their exaggerated appearance. Their shape, design or material may reference more mundane examples, but there will be something about these objects – their spectacular size or weight, complexity or virtuoso crafting or use of exotic materials – that 'aggrandise' them above their everyday counterparts. There are also objects that are completely without parallel in the daily world. Some make explicit cosmological reference to solar or lunar bodies or utilise decoration or symbolism

that is beyond our ability to ‘read’ but can be appreciated for the *affect* their appearance has upon us (see Giles 2008). They may either ‘exceed the human scale’, as Fontijn (2020: 124) puts it, or expand normal material categories: being ‘too large’ or ‘too precious’, they can be thought of as transgressive, and by embodying skills or substances that appear to come from beyond the known world they can be used to help substantiate, perform or presence the ‘other-worldly’ or the ‘divine’. Here, I will adopt the concept of the ‘exquisite’ object (conjuring the notion of exceptional beauty or intensity) to describe artefacts that might fulfill these qualities, but as we shall see, there are many more mundane objects and substances that Iron Age people thought worthy of bringing to the bog. Most of them were drawn from agricultural life and they were often old, sometimes damaged yet apparently valued; to Fontijn’s concept of aggrandised or transgressive objects then I will add the notion of ‘everyday treasures’.

Agricultural tools and vehicles

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

Alongside the plough tip from Corlea, a wooden mallet, notched pegs and knife handle could arguably be workers’ tools, but these would not have been discarded or abandoned by accident. A bog pool to the side of this immensely impressive trackway not only contained the ‘clearing up’ of worked wood, shavings, brushwood and unused branches, but also old elements of vehicles. One has

transverse slots and slanted boards, as part of the side of a low cart box, while another was made with decorative flourishes: simple chamfering, mortice-and-tenon joints, fine transverse dowelling and out-turned finials, suggesting that they might come from the chassis of a more prestigious vehicle – a carriage or chariot (Raftery 1994: 102–3, figs 52 and 53). In contrast, block wheels made of alder have been found at Doogarymore and Timahoe (Raftery 1994: 104, 117) dating to the early Iron Age (*c.* fourth to third centuries BC), and these robust objects are likely to come from farm carts or wagons. A worked straight bar made of yew wood, perforated at each end (that may also relate to a vehicle), was found not far from the Doogarymore block wheel (Raftery 1994: 106). At Rappendam fen in Denmark, assemblage C, dating to 160 BC–AD 120 contained parts of block wheels, axles and sections of a heavy-duty wagon undercarriage (Figures 5.1a and 5.1b) (van der Sanden 1996: 169). (These were found mere metres away from a young female bog body which survived as skeletonised remains).

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



5.1a The Toberdaly Iron Age yoke (01E0663:3) *in situ*. All rights reserved and permission to use the figure must be obtained from the copyright holder.



5.1b The Toberdaly Iron Age yoke (01E0663:3) once excavated. All rights reserved and permission to use the figure must be obtained from the copyright holder.

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

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

We must avoid reading the immanence of the divine too literally on to all the examples of broken wheels and fragmentary horse gear, as the many meanings of these objects will escape us, but we can interrogate *how* it achieved these affects (Giles 2008: 74). The harnessed horse or pony team was a means of exaggerating, embellishing and adorning rider and driver, in an impressive and noisy amalgam of people, animals and things (Giles 2012: 249). They magnified the human, raising them up above the bodies of others and holding out the promise of compressing

time and space. Yet they were also visually enchanting and terrifying weapons of speed and intimidation that could be put to ceremonial, martial and ritual use, platforms for oration as much as springboards for equine display, human daring and dexterity (Pare 1989).

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

The vehicles that best embody such power come from Denmark. The Bronze Age Trondholm sun-chariot falls out of the main scope of our study but it is a bog find that suggests a deeper cosmological resonance for the wheeled vehicle. Randsborg and Christiensen (2006) argue that it represents a model of the cosmos in which the wagon or chariot was a vehicle of celestial movement, drawing the sun across the sky. It certainly displays a symbolic correspondence between the wheel and solar imagery that seems to endure well into the Roman era (Green 1984). The disassembled remains of at least two ceremonial, four-wheeled wagons at Dejbjerg in Jutland date to the last centuries BC (Schovsbo 2010: 179). These vehicle components were hemmed in with branches and wattle work, analogous to the treatment of some bog bodies. Together, they make a high-sided and elegant type of vehicle, with light, large wheels and spacious, low-sided sheet-bronze decorated box, set above an undercarriage. In contrast to some of the fragments of chariots or elements of farm wagons and carts discussed above, the Dejbjerg wagons were stately platforms for procession and display. Its components represent an impressive constellation of the local and the exotic: the iron ore did not derive from the bog – it was of Continental origin (Schovsbo 2010: 80). Like the ‘swaddledidaff’ from Lindow, it could be that this large volume of consigned ironwork had to be taken to a place that was recognised as somewhere famed for its ferrous affinity – where iron originated. Yet one of the iron wheel rims had been repaired during its use with bog iron (Schovsbo 2010: 80). At least some of the bronze work in the carriage components were probably made in central Europe, depicting characterful, hirsute male faces with combed hair scraped back, rising as if in a tall headdress to form a hand-hold on the side of the cart (Schovsbo 2010: pl. 21). Like some of the cauldrons from Denmark that had French, German and Etruscan origins, they gave Iron Age people a glimpse of faces that were not theirs, fierce

creatures they had never seen, and representations of the floral, vegetal, avian and mammalian world that blurred, melded and flowed into a very different way of 'seeing'. Perhaps such rare and exquisite vehicles were indeed thought of as hosting and conveying other-worldly beings on many journeys around the Danish countryside before finally bringing them to the bog – their fragmentary and disassembled state suggests that their sojourns, whether sacred or secular, had long passed.

Animal offerings

Not all of the discoveries in the bog derived from deliberate deposition: some animals fell into the bog by accident (as described in [Chapter 4](#)). Others were placed there as 'jointed' portions of meat (as found in the pots at Fuglsøgaard Moss, Denmark, see [Asingh and Lynnerup 2007: 283](#)). Yet the skulls of horses were also found at this site, along with whole animals sacrificed *in situ*, bound to tethering posts, with clubs lying nearby ([Bradley et al. 2015: 312](#)). Many of these deposits had been placed in old peat cuttings, but only after some regeneration of the turf. This type of deposit was also found at Bukkerup Langmose, where again animal bones (including bundles of cattle bones 'tied' to pots) and posts with rope hobbles were discovered ([Asingh 2009: 202](#); [Pauli Jensen 2009](#)). The main carcass of the cow was missing, with just the fore and hind limbs deposited, possibly articulated to the hide. At Foerlev Nymølle, butchered remains of cattle, horse, dog, sheep and hare were discovered along with pots and more white quartz stones, and an enigmatic slender 'bog figure' interpreted (from the skilful use of a split branch with cut marks) as a female deity ([Asingh and Lynnerup 2007: 286](#)). 'Bog dogs' are also known from Denmark, as at Hedelisker, where thirteen dogs were killed and deposited, two of which lay bound to large stones ([Asingh and Lynnerup 2007: 286](#)). A dachshund type dog with short brown hair was found in the Dreichsmoor, Germany ([Coles and Coles 1989: 177](#)).

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

Ten dogs along with potsherds were laid in Barsbeker bog in Germany, whereas cow horns (deposited both as singles and in pairs) were found at Wees: a symbol of the herd perhaps, but also a valuable raw material in its own right ([Coles and](#)

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

Containers and cauldrons

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

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

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

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

hoard from Lamberton Moor or Moss also fits this pattern: an extraordinary assembly of vessels that were contained in some kind of wrapping that decayed upon exposure (Anderson 1905: 367). Four Roman paterae, four bronze bowls, a beaded neck torc, two spiral rings, a dragonsque brooch and two fibulae comprise a mix of both impressive serving and body-ornament pieces that evoke a new era of diacritical display and hospitality, drawn in part from the very empire that haunted its borders.

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

In Denmark, the Rynkeby cauldron, with its plastic-style bull’s head (possibly a local ornament attached to a Gaulish vessel) and the Mosbæk cauldron (with third-century BC Etruscan affinities) both came from bog contexts (Kaul 2007). Yet of all the cauldrons and vessels found in a bog, the Gundestrup cauldron from Rævemosen (Denmark) is the nonpareil (Figure 5.2): thirteen plates, made from 9 kg of beaten and repoussé gilded silver, manufactured in the Black Sea area but apparently saturated with ‘Celtic’ mythology. An antler-headed figure sits cross-legged, grasping a torc, surrounded by stags, boar and snakes. In some



5.2 The Gundestrup cauldron. All rights reserved and permission to use the figure must be obtained from the copyright holder.

panels, animals meld and merge: a double-headed boar-snake seems to sever a human torso from its limbs in one panel, while a flat-mouthed, be-torced figure grasps dragonsque-like creatures by the throat overhead. Another scene depicts carnyx players following a line of warriors gripping shields and spears, heading towards an oversized figure who dips one warrior, head down, into a tub or vat. While Aldhouse-Green (2002: 113) suggests this is a ritualised drowning scene, reminiscent of the supposed rites to the god Teutates, she alternatively suggests it may represent the ‘cauldron of rebirth’ mentioned in the later medieval text, the *Mabinogion*. Yet this could also be an initiation ceremony that was a violent mix of immersion and waterboarding – away from the hapless figure march a row of helmeted horse riders; perhaps this celebrated their transition from boy warrior (envisaged memorably by Rosemary Sutcliff (1958) in *Warrior Scarlet* as the ‘new spears’), to fully fledged and armed cavalry. In another scene, elephants flank a female figure whose plaits of hair are tended by others. Scenes of apparent animal sacrifice, interestingly using short swords or daggers, are complemented by the basal scene of a prone boar and spent dog, flanked by a two-dimensional figure grasping a blade: another sacrifice appears to be in motion. The presence of these strangely depicted giants of the land, alongside winged and beaked beasts, speak of

both Mediterranean and Indian mythology, suggesting a fusion of ideas and belief that cannot be confined to later Celtic motifs (Taylor 2002). Much has been made of the origins, meaning and indeed purpose of this vessel. Fashioned sometime in the second to first century BC, by the time it was deposited, it was old, damaged and dismantled: one of the outer plates was missing, little of the rim survives and the base had itself been transformed from a horse-bridle disc or fitting (known as a phalera) to repair a hole. Botanical evidence from the soils around the cauldron suggest it had originally lain on drier land and had then been subsumed by the peat, placed on the bog edge or a well-raised hummock, standing proud of the mire – brimful with rain that dripped into, and raised, the bog around it.

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

Food and other substances

Other types of vessels were also placed in the bog. A hollowed-out beech trunk with several openings from Edewechterdamm in Germany has been interpreted as a beehive, containing twig ring-frames for the honeycombs and a lid to protect its industrious inhabitants (Coles and Coles 1989: fig. 142) – an extraordinary ‘sweet offering’ to the bog. Honey was not just a flavouring for food or useful for making mead: it had antiseptic and preservative properties that may have been seen as analogous to the power of the peat. It was also a source of beeswax, which was essential for the making of fine bronze moulds in the Iron Age and Roman era. Indeed, a ‘cake’ of beeswax dating to c.715 BC was found close to a trackway on Ipweger Moor (Figure 5.3a) (Brockner and Mitchell 1994).



5.3a The Ipweger Moor wax 'cake'. All rights reserved and permission to use the figure must be obtained from the copyright holder.

It was originally interpreted as a skeuomorph 'loaf' due to cereal impressions in the wax but once correctly identified it assumed a new importance (Bergen *et al.* 2002: 92). This raw substance was far more valuable than bread, not just for bronze casting; Cosack (2011: 516, fig. 10) argues its main function could have been to aid 'smooth running': an 'axle grease' to lubricate joints, suppress noise and diminish the risk of combustion and friction burning on wagon and chariot-wheel axles, as seen on one example from Bohlenweg. Robert Hurford (pers. comm.), the master craftsman who made the replicas of both the Wetwang and Newbridge chariots, keeps such a block close to hand in his workshop for precisely this purpose (Figure 5.3b).

The other substance found buried in the peat particularly in Ireland and Scotland is 'bog butter', found in a variety of bowls, kegs, wicker baskets, stave-built tubs, buckets, methers and churns, as well as wrapped in bark and bladders (Earwood 1997; Synnott 2010). A recent comprehensive study (Smyth *et al.* 2019) of the Irish examples has demonstrated that they span the early Bronze Age to the



5.3b Reconstruction of the Ipweger Moor wax 'cake' used as a chariot-axle lubricant. All rights reserved and permission to use the figure must be obtained from the copyright holder.

1800s, with a strong cluster in the Iron Age. In Smyth *et al.*'s (2019) study, both Keg/Tub 1 and 2 types (Earwood 1997) were demonstrated to be early to middle Iron Age in date alongside the decorated barrel jar or upright bowl from Killeenan More (once thought to be medieval) (Smyth *et al.* 2019: 5). The Rosberry keg, for example, is a handsome upright two-piece container, hollowed out from an alder tree with groove-set and dowelled base (Earwood 1997: 27; see Figure 5.4). It has projecting pierced tabs originally associated with a five-strand alder cord (now lost), and dates to 360–200 BC (Smyth *et al.* 2019). This vessel is similar in design to the Rosmoylan keg, which also has a lid with raised central moulding to act as a grip (Earwood 1997: 28, fig. 3). Later Iron Age kegs were distinguished by side handles and the Roman Iron Age era keg from Kyleakin on the Scottish islands of Skye resembles a barrel jar with everted rim and small side holes, cut through the belly of the vessel (Earwood 1997: 28, fig. 5). Several bog-butter finds come from this moss, as well as a bronze cauldron that had patches where up to three repairs overlapped each other (Joy 2014b: 348; Goldberg 2015: 217). While the majority of the Irish butter has been proved to be of ruminant dairy extraction (Goldberg 2015: 6–7), a study of Scottish bog butter also revealed Iron Age examples of



5.4 The Rosberry keg and bog butter, dating to 360–200 BC. All rights reserved and permission to use the figure must be obtained from the copyright holder.

ruminant carcass fat (tallow, see Berstan *et al.* 2004), attested in written accounts from the Faroe Islands as tasting ‘like ripe cheese’ (Evans 1947: 60; Debes 1676 cited in Smyth *et al.* 2019: 6).

Were people aware of the bog’s ability to keep, store and secure organic produce? As they dug through the peat for fuel or ore, Iron Age people must have re-encountered objects from earlier times, witnessing well-preserved animal bodies, wet but recognisable trackways and even the untarnished bronze of earlier hoards. Perhaps this led them to see the bog’s potential as a cold store, realising that temporary immersion could halt or inhibit the effects of decay. In Norway and Sweden, the bog was traditionally used as a larder for butter, cheese and meat (Asingh 2009: 280). Post-medieval texts from Ireland also suggest that some of this bog butter was being deliberately ‘cold stored’ for later consumption (protecting against scarcity) or during the summer ‘booleying’ months, for sale later in the year (Synnott 2010). The same preservative properties that produced the bog bodies extended the use life of perishables and consumables placed in the bog. Analysis has suggested butter reaches its ‘bog constituency’ within a couple of years (Cronin *et al.* 2007). In the UK, the Iron Age marks a considerable period of underground experimentation with cold storage: the fogoues of Cornwall and the souterrains of Ireland and Scotland, for example (Christie *et al.* 1978; Armit

1999; Mudie *et al.* 2007). The subterranean storage pit, such as those of Wessex (Sharples 2010) or Yorkshire (Dent 2010) show similar experimentation, principally for long-term grain storage. Yet many of these structures show evidence of what could be regarded as special care in their design and interesting back-fill or closure deposits, which speak of the rituals that enfolded these utilitarian facilities, saturated in agricultural and fertility symbolism (Cunliffe 1992; Hill 1995; Armit 1999; Giles 2007). The Iron Age also marks the beginning of salt production, represented by briquetage, and its use for curing foodstuffs, culinary and medicinal purposes (Kinory 2012). We can thus see an era of concern with long-term storage and safekeeping of perishable produce, in which the bogs played their part. (Indeed, Painter, the scientist who proposed the sphagnum reaction theory, also experimented with moss as a suitable non-refrigerant for fish export, showing that *Sphagnum* successfully inhibited decay for a month and conferred about a week of inhibited bacterial decay, see Jones 2001).

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

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

Personal ornamentation, jewellery and tresses

In Denmark, cast, spiral neck rings made in bronze are commonly found in later Bronze Age and early Iron Age deposits (Asingh and Lynnerup 2007). At Smederup ‘a good way out on to the bog’, a late Bronze Age ‘well’ was sunk through the peat to tap a spring that had been lined in its base with broken pottery (possibly from early dipping cups) before an elm wood bucket was sunk into the shaft (Asingh 2009: 197). This was followed, around 600 BC, with an oak plank well shaft, into which had been placed 360 bronze rings: twisted rings, spiral rings, neck, arm and ankle rings, as well as small ‘eyelet’ wheels with subsidiary ringlets that would have ‘jingled’ with movement (Asingh 2009: 200). A few kilometres away, at Falling, a total of 270 eyelet rings were found in the bog, and at the nearby Sattrup bog, 148 objects – all made of bronze – were found (Asingh 2009: 200). This suggests a localised ‘micro-tradition’ of customs, which we will see in other bog deposits. In Germany, neck rings are a common deposit in not just bogs but rivers and dryland hoards (Bradley *et al.* 2015: 243). A rare late Iron Age cruciform pin set with three large amber beads and one blue glass and yellow dot miniature bead, was found in a bog at Holzhausen. Fibulae become a more common bog find in the Roman period, such as the hoard of twenty-eight near-identical bronze with silver wire brooches from Strückhausener Moor, apparently arranged in a crescent shape on a woollen cloak (Bergen *et al.* 2002: 90). Deposits of Roman and late Antique coins, often customised into amulets or necklaces, also appear in Germany by the fourth century AD, evidencing a late bog deposit

tradition that emerges from a fusion of cultural ideas and objects (Bergen *et al.* 2002: 88).

A bronze arm ring from Almosen was part of a complex set of deposits including human and animal bones, potsherds, flint tools, a bronze dress pin, granite quernstone and worked wood (Bloch Jørgensen *et al.* 1999: 121), dating to c.600–44 BC. The remains of over fifteen people, including children, were found in disturbed contexts, but a nearby trackway or ford may suggest a focus for this mixed and protracted series of offerings (humans, animals and pots with food) also seen at the nearby bogs of Valmosen and Tybjerg (Bloch Jørgensen *et al.* 1999: 123). An armband from Ballymahon bog in Ireland suggests small and personal offerings of jewellery were sometimes made in the Irish bogs (Kelly 2006: 4). A mirror handle fragment was found at the aptly named Ballybogy bog, along with a cauldron and bridle bit. Its clever lentoid lip mouldings seem to represent the head and spoon-like beak of a waterbird, perhaps evoking a seasonal denizen of these waterlands and playing upon the analogy with the reflective surface of the bog pool (Raftery 1994: pl. 46; Kelly 2006: 2). In fact, there are only two instances of mirrors in bogs: the early Roman era Balmaclellan mirror from Scotland is the only other example recorded from Britain and Ireland. Despite the fact that bog pools provided the same kind of effect as the mirror plate, most of these objects were interred as dryland deposits or in burials, suggesting indissoluble bonds with those that wielded them (Joy 2010; Giles 2012).

Yet one of the most common finds from here and Scotland is the monumentalised Celtic art necklet – the torc. A now lost torc was reported as an antiquarian find from Low Burnham on the Hatfield Chase (Buckland 1979). In Scotland, the Lochar bronze beaded torc with its mix of globular segmented ‘beads’ and flat incised plaque appear to be part of a vigorous fluorescence of insular design fusing with new and more robust aesthetics in the early Roman period (Hunter 2010). In contrast, the Stirling hoard of four golden torcs (Figure 5.5) is more securely Iron Age in date and was found within a round structure best interpreted as a shrine, in a boggy area of ground near Blair Drummond, close to the great expanse of Flanders Moss (Hunter 2010; also discussed in Chapter 4, in terms of the historic ‘moss lairds’). The mix of indigenous design (the twisted spiral torcs with flat terminals) and Mediterranean techniques (heavy granulation and complex wirework) make this an extraordinary gathering of local and exotic, buried in a wet locale close to an expanding moss. The Broighter hoard in Ireland was not found in a bog but a waterlogged shoreline, yet the two Mediterranean chain necklaces, two south-eastern British twisted torcs and sumptuous globular collar torc (possibly an Irish model of a British or Continental object, see Kelly 2002) are similar to the composition of the Blair Drummond hoard. At Lisnacrogher, a ribbon torc adds to the range of objects found in this complex series of bog (and/or crannog) deposits, alongside two ring-headed pins, a bronze necklet, two bronze bracelets, two spiral rings, four penannular rings and a stone bead. They suggest a significant quantity of personal decorative equipment was deposited alongside weaponry and feasting objects. Eleven ‘rings’ of various types were also discovered,



5.5 The Stirling hoard. All rights reserved and permission to use the figure must be obtained from the copyright holder.

including the riveted hollow-piece type found both on the Continent (Raftery 1986) and in East Yorkshire (Giles 2012: 120), which may have been an amulet associated with fertility, vigour and protection. The Ardnaglug bog yielded an extraordinary array of torcs: a gold buffer torc of Continental manufacture and an Irish ribbon torc composed of even twists and curls, ending in acorn terminals (Raftery 1994: fig. 45). Torc hoards may thus have been meant to embody those qualities of the *mappa mundi* assemblages envisaged by Fontijn (2020), making present an alluring and beguiling distant realm alongside objects meant to evoke those places in locally made things decorated with Celtic art. The model cauldron and miniaturised seagoing vessel (with mast, benches and suite of oars) also included in the Broighter hoard touch upon other themes in this chapter, of feasting largesse and the voyaging that brought such untarnishable treasures to these shores.

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

The final type of body ‘ornament’ I want to discuss here is of a quite different order: the phenomenon of human braids found particularly in Danish bogs, dating to c.350–250 BC (Ebbesen 2008; Kaul 2015: 98, fig. 5.18). For example, seven near-identical plaits were found at Sterbygård (Figure 5.6) and four at Vindumhede (tied together here in a knotted bundle), whereas only one was found at Vingmose in the form of an elaborate plaited coiffure (Ebbesen 2008: fig. 7). Most are assumed to be taken from women – plaited strands that would have hung to waist level, cut off above the braid (Randsborg 2015: 11). They would have left the woman noticeably shorn of a substance that may have embodied many attributes of personhood: age, femininity, fertility and vitality (Aldhouse-Green 2004b). Was this an act of humiliation, akin to the shaving of other bog heads shortly before their death (Aldhouse-Green 2016)? A kind of trophyism that fell short of the taking of a ‘scalp’ but had the same effect of shaming not just individuals but a community? Seizure of an enemy by their hair is a common visual trope of domination, seen particularly in Roman sculpture (Aldhouse-Green 2004b, 2004c). The triumphal glut of braids at some of these sites suggests this might be the case. Notably, in Seamus Heaney’s poem ‘Bog Queen’, the ‘plait of my hair’ becomes ‘a slimy birth-cord of the bog’ (Heaney 1975: 27), and this analogy between hair and other kinds of cords is insightful: the 90 cm long hair of Elling Woman had been plaited from seven strands that were then plied together and wound around her neck (van der Sanden 1996: 145) as if in symbolic strangulation. Yet ethnographically, the cutting



5.6 Human braids from Sterbygård dating to the Iron Age. All rights reserved and permission to use the figure must be obtained from the copyright holder.

of hair can be used to mark initiation or signal transition, sometimes to denote the shift into the realm of the sacred (Giles 2016a). It can also denote loss, bereavement and mourning periods (Giles 2016a). Were these self-offerings, at key rites of passage, events or crisis in a woman's life? In Moesgaard Museum, the fictional narrative for the cut plait on display evokes a woman in a very small-scale, intimate act of offering, hoping for the successful delivery of a child following a previous loss. Where numerous strands or whole, elaborate 'hairdo' arrangements are found, this might equally be the voluminous, beautifully prepared embodiment of female virility, given, or forcibly taken, when the need arose.

Clothing

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

The woollen tunic and trousers from Thorsberg in Denmark (an alkaline bog) show extraordinary details. The tunic, once red in hue, has a special kind of 'seam', an edged hole that looks like a button opening located on the back of the tunic (perhaps for a baldric?) and the use of blue stitching thread (Möller-Wiering 2011: 47–8). It has several large 'cuts' penetrating front to back, which were considered to have been made once the garment was off the body, and one 'stab' gesture



5.7 The Orkney hood. All rights reserved and permission to use the figure must be obtained from the copyright holder.

while the garment was folded in a pile (Möller-Wiering 2011: 47–8). The two pairs of trousers consist of leg coverings or stockings with integral ‘feet’ and projecting straps to be held up by a belt (Möller-Wiering 2011: 540). Two cloaks were also found: one was described soon after discovery as ‘green in colour with a yellow and dark green border with fringes’ (Engelhardt 1863, cited in Möller-Wiering 2011: 54). Numerous other fragments of textile clothing (mostly made from sheep wool) and leather were also deposited, some ‘rolled up into a lump’ and others ‘very much torn’, close to both ‘larger heaps’ and smaller ‘knots’ of ropes, cords and twisted bast (Möller-Wiering 2011: 67). This extraordinary array suggests that clothing – often damaged – accompanied the weapons deposits that have not survived as well in this bog. The Vehnemoor bog deposit from Germany consisted of a bronze and enamel dish, wrapped in a similar glorious woollen cloak, with tablet woven borders and decorative fringe. The cloaks from both sites are considered prestigious pieces of early Roman weaving known as a *Prachmanteln*: a show cloak (van der Sanden 1996: 132). Studies of bog cloth by Berghe *et al.* (2009) reveal the once-remarkable palette of dyes, mostly used to colour the completed cloth (blues, reds and yellows), which might be patterned through checks or stripes, but occasionally used to dye yarns that produced multicoloured clothing.

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



5.8 The shoe of Amcotts Woman from the ‘Prints and Drawings Collected Before 1750’ of the Society of Antiquaries, linked to Minute Book entry October 1747: 33–4. All rights reserved and permission to use the figure must be obtained from the copyright holder.

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

Weaponry and vessels

In an account from 1701, Abraham de la Pryme records how an acquaintance discovered – and recycled – a weapon from the Hatfield bogs. It was an ‘old Shaped Knife, with a Haft of a very hard black sort of Wood, which had a cap of Copper or Brass on the one end, and a Hoop of the same Metal on the other end, where the Blade went into it. Which Blade soon Mouldering away, the said Mr Canby, valuing his Haft exceedingly, got a new Blade put in it’ (de la Pryme 1701: 983). De la Pryme does not tell us what the blade was made of, making it difficult to date this weapon, but it is a warning that the most enduring part of a bog object may be its organic components. This chapter will not deal with bog deposits of weapons from the mid to late Bronze Age, but the site of Beith in Ayrshire, where up to six

or seven middle Bronze Age shields were reputedly found standing upright in a circle in the bog, is worth a brief mention (the only surviving bronze shield of which is curated by the Society of Antiquaries at Burlington House, object. no. LDSAL 80). In Ireland, spears and swords were being deposited in the bog during the Iron Age: at the site of Lisnacroggher discussed above, four decorated scabbards or sheaths were found with three chapes (and two other possible chape fragments) and four iron swords (Raftery 1983). Two spearheads (one with a fascinating ‘rocked graver’ ornament executed on the iron stem), nineteen spear butts (decorative but robust end pieces often shaped like doorknobs – a distinctive Irish and also Scottish phenomenon, occasionally found in northern Britain), seventeen spear-shaft fragments and four ferrules/mounts as well as a wooden knife were found (Kelly 2006; Fredengren 2007). Isolated weapons in bogs, such as a sword from Ballinderry and a spear butt from Clonalee, are also known alongside surrogate, symbolic or training swords made completely of wood, such as Ballykilmurry and Cappagh (Raftery 1994: pl. 53; Kelly 2006: 2), but one of the most dramatic weapon depositions is the leather shield from Clonoura. This shield is sub-rectangular, made from calf hide covering an alder wood base and held in shape by stitched shield bindings running around its rim, with oak bar-grip and central raised wooden boss protected by a stitched hide cover (Figure 5.9). There are slits in the hide, possibly for a carrying thong (Raftery 1994: 146, fig. 89). Stabbing and slashing marks puncture the front cover, including several identifiable spear ‘wounds’; it had seen action, but may have also been decommissioned before being placed in the bog, as the lower binding is missing and the interior right corner is badly damaged as if smashed on its edge.

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



5.9 The Clonoura shield, Co. Tipperary. All rights reserved and permission to use the figure must be obtained from the copyright holder.

sword belt fittings, close to other hoards containing a gold tubular torc, one brass and three gold ingots, fragments of a copper alloy bowl and a hoard of coins (Stead 2006: 51).

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

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

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

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

Meanwhile, at Alken Enge (effectively an inland bog lake: its mouth framed by a narrow neck of land with projecting spurs, see Sørensen *et al.* 2017) a complex deposit appears to represent the gathering up of arms and body parts from a battlefield dating to the first century AD, approximately six months after the event (Holst *et al.* 2018). Skeletonised remains of around eighty-five individuals show sharp and blunt-force violence that has not healed, as well as some evidence of animal scavenging. When the time came for this ‘cleansing’ of the land, it involved the gathering up of remains and weapons: the deliberate damaging of some blades and the respectful wrapping of selected human remains (honoured fallen warriors?), sometimes associated with carefully chosen bundles of exotic stones. In contrast, the sight of four ‘os coxae’ (pelvic girdle arches) on an alder branch, stacked left/right/left/right, smacks instead of the deliberate humiliation of an enemy’s corpse (Holst *et al.* 2018: 5922). This differential treatment suggests subtle discrimination of the dead by those scarred by this event: needing to make an end to it through this final act of deposition.

At Vimose, meanwhile, weapons deposition in the bog spans the first to the sixth centuries AD, but Pauli Jensen (2009: 57) draws a strong distinction between the earliest deposits (small assemblages of undamaged weaponry: a handful of spears and a sword) and those from the later eras of larger-scale weaponry deposition. Even here, 'clusters' of wrapped or tied blades and utensils could be identified as separate deposits: some smaller items 'nestled' in the dome of the boss (Möller-Wiering 2011: 38). Some spears and swords had been deliberately bent before deposition (Bergen *et al.* 2002: 100) and spearheads ripped from their shafts and wrapped individually, before being bundled up in larger pieces of cloth (Möller-Wiering 2011: 35). As at Illerup and Nydam, the mix of weaponry from different classes of warriors was complemented by personal 'kit': belt buckles, decorated bone combs, horse gear, spoked wheels, tubs and bowls, boxes and tools. This range of the martial and personal suggests they were being stripped from enemies – whether living or dead – or taken from abandoned camps of a mercenary army. Their deposition in the bog may have involved deliberate destruction to prevent rearming, celebrate victory and humiliate the enemy, or they may even have marked the cessation of hostilities; but this was a palpably different scale of gesture to the earlier deposits. The custom of deliberate damage to weaponry before deposition, practised by many of the 'barbarian' tribes, puzzled Roman authors, as in Orosius's account of the Cimbri's victory over Roman forces:

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

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

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

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

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

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

Instruments

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

most common on Roman coins and triumphal sculpture (Hunter 2019a) where it is used as a symbolic shorthand for the conquering of barbarian tribes and seizing of their honour, wealth and martial virtuosity.

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

The site was overlooked by a ridge upon which successive episodic inhabitation and funerary events had left their trace from the Neolithic period onwards. This site was here, Hunter (2019b: 321) argues, because the bog was here – and

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

Mixed ‘bog deposits’

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

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

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



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

gear: eight copper alloy and four iron bridle bits, three terrets and six rein rings, one copper alloy and one iron ring and one iron and one copper alloy linchpin (the latter modelled into a horse hoof, complete with hairy ‘fetlock’ appearance, Farley pers. comm.). Other chariot fittings might include a cylindrical pole mount and an enigmatic ‘horn cap’ heavily hacked by a sword around its rim. There are three fragments of globular or hemispherical cauldrons and a repaired curved horn or trumpet mouth and body, lacking its terminal. Two iron ‘slave’ or ‘gang’ chains give us an insight into a cruel and humiliating means of holding captives in subjugation, perhaps for their fateful journey to this peat-black water, given that human remains also appear to have been found – and then perhaps conveniently lost (Macdonald 2007: 173) – the war era discovery was not conducive to a narrative of British barbarity. Violence done to things is a distinguishing characteristic of this assemblage, with stripping, ripping, slashing, deforming, bending and breaking represented across all the categories of finds (Macdonald 2007: 172). Weaponry is represented by eight iron swords, two bronze scabbard mounts and two iron scabbards, one iron dagger, eight spearheads and the bronze pommel of a dagger or sword, a shield boss mount with elegant spines and two ‘bean-shaped plaques’ that might be shield fittings for either side of a boss. Three sheet fragments of bronze and one curved plate were decorative additions for some organic object, as well nine coiled strips of bronze (mostly unwound) whose profile would fit a spear shaft

or staff. The famous crescentic plaque, decorated with La Tène repousée, art might be a more personal item of bodily adornment. Five iron currency bars yet to be worked, two pairs of blacksmith's tongs, an iron sickle and reaping hook, spatulate tool and six other iron fragments (bars, strips and fittings) were also found. Finally, there are a series of one 'tri-disc', three square and two rectangular plaques, which look like box or casket fittings from the latest phase of the deposit, characteristic of a late florescence of bold and robust peri-Conquest artwork (see Hunter 2012; Joy 2014a). Macdonald (2007: 156) points out that the deposit includes bronze work from a wide variety of sources, some from southern Britain, and the possibility of the odd piece of northern horse gear or south-eastern devices for incarceration, as well as an Irish horse bit, yet most were probably made locally.

Llyn Cerrig Bach embodies in one locale the sheer diversity of depositions found in bogs during this period in northern Europe. It has also been linked to Tacitus's description of the Isle of Mona (Anglesey), as a centre of religious learning and refuge for fugitives at the time of Conquest (Jackson 1937: XIV, 29–30). Tacitus tells us of an apparent battle in which the Druids flanked armed men, accompanied also by 'women dressed as Furies in funeral black with streaming hair'. The forces of Paulinus Suetonius were initially daunted by this intimidating display before they rallied and slaughtered or burnt this gathering of resistance figures. They apparently went on to 'cut down' the groves dedicated to their 'savage rites' for 'it was part of their religion to drench their altars with the blood of their enemies and consult their gods by means of human entrails' (Tacitus in Jackson 1937: XIV, 29–30). Yet MacDonald (2007: 186) notes that the description bears an uncanny resemblance to 'stock clichés' used by other Roman authors, and both his diligent object analysis and landscape survey means that we can tell a rather different story of a site that saw protracted and repeat visits for depositions that shifted in character over time, focused on the distinctive island within the bog as a likely sanctuary site. The sheer scale of the deposit and the violence of unmaking that marks it out has the feel of millennial despondency: an extraordinary act at a time of crises. Macdonald (2007: 187) accepts the notion of these as votive offerings but avoids associating this explicitly with 'Druidic' power. He also tempers the notion that these are distinctively masculine offerings that helped to reproduce elite male authority embodied in portable equine and martial wealth, by pointing to the frequent association in other Roman texts of women as religious specialists, with particular responsibility for rituals at island sanctuaries (Macdonald 2007: 188). Macdonald (2007: 174–82) thus situates the assemblage within wider deposits interpreted as votive offerings, which did not simply cease with Roman occupation or their pressing influence on the borders of Ireland, Scotland, Denmark and Germany.

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

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

Interpreting votive deposition

Large and spectacular, small and mundane. The exquisite and the everyday. Vessels and vehicles, cauldrons, weaponry, agricultural tools, decorative fittings, animals, instruments and craft objects, food and drink. The range of offerings mark a distinct change away from the Bronze Age focus on metal – 'democratising' deposition to some extent (Kaul 2015). Yet it is hard to discern any clear or dominant patterns from the above review – the idea of deposition might be shared but how and what was offered was done 'locally'. We can note some national contrasts: bog pots and massive weapons and ship burials in Denmark; compared with Irish and Scottish instruments, cauldrons and bog butter; German jewellery, clothing and ornamentation; and Swedish and Danish animal deposits. We can also sometimes see regional customs or micro-traditions in adjacent areas. Many of these bogs continue to receive offerings well into the Roman era (whether under the rule of conquerors or not). Indeed, in many areas, this marks a vigorous period of deposition (Macdonald 2007: 185). The bogs of northern Britain may seem spartan in comparison to other areas; this could be the result of an early exploitation of the turf and a lack of antiquarian recovery, but it probably does represent a real absence, giving the bog bodies from this area an additional weight. In mainland Britain, it is the more open or turbulent bodies of water – springs, streams, rivers and estuaries, as well as larger fens and lakes – that attract most of the artefact deposition, along with enclosure pits and ditches (Bradley 2017). What is notable is the change in depositional character in bogs compared with the Bronze Age, which (excluding the Danish 'war booty' finds) is small-scale or accretive, taking many visits, *many* moments of offering up things to the bog. It suggests that they were seldom prompted by a single event or crisis – deposition was a pattern woven into the fabric of life, a habitual custom.

The categories of objects discussed above have an emphasis on the agricultural realm, its produce, stock and craftwork. Many of them support the notion of an inescapable ‘ideological concern with agricultural fertility and the daily round’, as Bradley *et al.* (2015: 244) put it (see also Barrett 1989). This would have been particularly pressing in the boglands, most of which were growing and consuming productive land during a millennium of wetter, harsher climates and shorter growing seasons (see Chapter 4). As Asingh and Lynnerup (2007: 286) state: ‘Human, animal and soil fertility were all crucial for the survival of the agricultural society. Offerings in bogs were perhaps both supplication to the gods for fertility and expressions of thanks. Great powers were at work. Yet this was also an era of expansion, agricultural experimentation and noticeable woodland clearance in many regions. The land was changing and being changed in a constant dialectic between people, clearance, cultivation and hydrology. During the first millennium BC many people developed a more enduring bond with a particular place, increasingly marked by enclosure: with monumental longhouses (typical of Scandinavia and the near Continent, see Webley 2008; Asingh 2009) or roundhouses (characteristic of Ireland and the British Isles) often repeatedly built on similar foundations or ‘shifting’ slightly within the landscape, between generations (Sharples 2010; Giles 2012). When Tacitus talks of the making of such households among the Germanic tribes, he lists the things perceived to be fitting marital gifts: ‘yoked oxen, a horse with its bridle, or a shield, spear and sword’, ‘a present of arms’ that becomes the ‘bond of union’, ‘sacred mysteries’ between husband and wife. Such objects were living reminders that woman and man were conjoined in both the ‘aspiration and perils’, the ‘toil and danger’ of farming and warfare (cited in Mattingley 1970: XVIII). They richly embody for us today something of the character of those lives and landscapes, which across northern Europe were still structured by some seasonal movement to utilise lush wetland pasture or upland grazing in the high months of summer and early autumn, often allied to the gathering of foodstuffs, hunting, craftwork or even salt production (Bradley *et al.* 2015: 284). There were thus many different types of ‘hydraulic communities’ as Evans (1997) describes them, moving between wetlands and drylands on a routine basis – it should not surprise us that these wet locales were increasingly drawn into their ritual lives (Kaul 2015). Those rhythms had to be negotiated with neighbouring communities and not all of these journeys would have been peaceable. Seen in another way, there were seasonal opportunities for friction, bellicosity and outright raiding, by which one might not only win spoils but fame or – when ill judged – risk revenge, blood debts or humiliation. The other side of these bog deposits tell us then of the intense experiences that punctuated pastoral life: feasting, horse riding and chariotry, martial display and violence – the celebration of moments that shaped renown, prowess and honour, and bound successful partnerships, households and communities together. Whether some of those deposits represent the literal offering up of old ‘wedding gifts’ perhaps upon bereavement, or merely echo the values captured in Tacitus’s text, these are the worlds into which our deposits must also be situated.

Stepping back now from their symbolic resonances, how can bog deposits be interpreted? What unites them is the puzzling practice of giving things up, which lies outside of our own economic logic and notions of what we should do with 'wealth' (Fontijn 2020). We curate, we keep, we bequeath. As Fontijn (2020) points out, this is because we have a notion of possession related to the individual rather than a notion of value invested in the community. In contrast to our own accumulative economies, the logic that drives a 'sacrificial economy' is one where the surrender of apparently valuable things (which could otherwise be reused or recycled) makes sense only if prehistoric people believed this was the necessary or 'right way to act' as part of the making of their world (Fontijn 2020: 26). It charges us with rethinking our attitude towards materials, not as abstract resources to be exploited to individual gain but as 'made things' immersed in relations defined by exchange and reciprocity. Things might be earned but something had to be returned. Offerings were necessary if you were to receive again: they were 'personal expressions of grace and gratitude' (Pauli Jensen 2009: 55). Importantly, this also differs from the early to middle Bronze Age where the fragmentation and recycling of substances suggests an ontology of transformation and reincorporation (Brück 2004, 2016). We have seen that there may have been an intent to only temporarily store some things (bog butter, for example, or worked wood to keep joints swollen and prevent cracking) but for most finds, their boggy deposition rendered them irretrievable. Taken out of these short-term exchanges, the object was 'removed from the human grip' preventing it from being remade or reassigned with someone, exiling it from the 'social domain' (Fontijn 2020: 58). This actually amounts, Fontijn argues, to a kind of destruction – 'giving for keeping' (after Godelier, Fontijn 2020: 59). Consigning such things not into human hands but to the bog moved them into a higher realm of long-term exchange, concerned with 'sustaining the overarching human order of sociality, culture, ideals and morality' (Fontijn 2020: 14).

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

Yet Fontijn urges caution in how we describe such offerings, encouraging us not to see them as mere 'gifts to the gods' instead of one's Iron Age neighbour. The reciprocity looked for here was of a completely different order because it involved

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

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

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

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

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

won. This is a notion we will return to, in the context of human remains. Yet there is one last category of bog artefact to consider that arguably blurs the very boundaries of flesh and other matter. These are the bog figures.

The bog figures

The hewn stem of oak that once stood on a raised gravel beach close to Ballachulish ferry appears to have marked or overlooked the safe crossing point from shore to shore, poised between the great gorges of Glencoe and Loch Levan. It was found 'prostrate' on gravel and had once been covered by ten to twelve feet of black peat, but by then the moss was being heavily cut and drained away (Steuart 1880: 3). The original report in the *Inverness Courier* describes how 'under the figure, above her and around her, were many twigs and branches, woven and interlaced' (Steuart 1880: 3). This sounds like wickerwork or wattle and the fact that this material was well preserved suggests she did indeed have her feet in the peat bog, before she was laid face down and pinned in a bog pool by a hurdle, along with some 'longer and stouter sticks' (Steuart 1880: 3). Her fate thus mimics some of the bog bodies in the [next chapter](#). Indeed, Aldhouse-Green (2004c: 91) suggests she may have been a material surrogate for a human sacrifice. Her now-warped figure was once 'crudely but boldly carved' from a single block of oak and time has shrivelled her mouth but it is clear it was once open, as if in utterance ([Figure 5.11](#)). This would have enhanced the sense of presence and animacy in the figure, as would the 'two almost milk-white' quartz pebble eyes (Steuart 1880: 3). Small, round breasts and a carved vulva identify her sex quite clearly, and the original newspaper records that her hair was 'gathered upwards all around, and tied in a button-like knot on the head' (Steuart 1880: 3), a detail that was already lost (probably through handling or transportation damage) by the following year, when Christison (1881) examined it. A band or strap seems to cross over her right shoulder and she seems to be clutching a handful of carved stems or wands. The base of the block contains a socket – thought by the finders to have held some additional votive object – but this may equally have been used for a tenon to secure her to laid timber. The finders dubbed her 'Our Lady of the Ferry' and the notion of this as a protective figure, both guiding and guarding safe crossings of the loch, endures. The same newspaper article recalls other finds from the 'same level' in this bog – particularly of note here are mentions of 'ox and deer horns of large size', 'casks of bog butter' and 'wooden basins, platters and bowls', hinting at a much wider suite of bog offerings now lost to us (Steuart 1880: 3). It chimes with other sites on the Continent, such as Forlev Nymølle, in Denmark, where a stack of stones covered a simple bifurcated bog figure, associated with middle Iron Age pottery sherds, animal – and human – bones, worked wood (including ski-shaped slats) as well as two bundles of flax (van der Sanden and Cappelle 2001: 63). Once, these figures may have marked places of offering, but their end had finally come.



5.11 The Ballachulish figure. All rights reserved and permission to use the figure must be obtained from the copyright holder.

The late Bronze Age/early Iron Age to Roman era bog figures are one of the most eye-catching and engaging of bog finds, with good reason. Their anthropomorphic features command our attention, even where they are slightly done by the smallest carved gesture. There are ‘paper’ bog figures, just as there are ‘paper’ bog bodies (van der Sanden and Capelle 2001: ch. 3), and one of these was found in Oakhanger moss in Cheshire around in the mid-1700s, when a young man, Daniel Stringer, was digging deep into the peat. He found ‘a wooden figure, rude and grotesque, but complete with eyes, nose and mouth, concluding it to be an idol’ (Hinchcliffe 1856: 116–17): though reputedly sent to the British Museum, it has not survived. With many examples, there is a sense that a characterful knothole or suggestive forking of a branch led to the ‘recognition’ of a figure in the wood, realised with the minimum of effort. The Ejsbøl figure from Denmark is an inverted forked branch, as are the Thuringia figure and Braak ‘couple’ (all from Germany) but the latter are modified with the delineation of heads, necks and genitals (van der Sanden and Capelle 2001). The tri-forked structure of Broddenbjerg Man has lent itself to a particularly impressive priapic appearance (van der Sanden and Capelle 2001: 18, fig. 13). Others are more stake-like, formed of a single robust branch, such as a second figure from Ejsbøl and one from Grimstad: both cut back to delineate a neck and hair or hat and torsos (van der Sanden and Capelle 2001: 20, figs 16 and 17). Some are two-dimensional, plank-like figures, such as at Backemoor (van der Sanden and Capelle 2001: 21, fig. 19) or the geometric Oss-Ussen figure from the Netherlands, where a circular ‘head’ and ‘belly’ are separated by projecting tabs that could be representations of arms, breasts or ribs (van der Sanden and Capelle 2001: 21, fig 36). Recent discoveries from Ireland, such as the Kilbeg figure, are tall, twisted pieces of alder roundwood, where the main modification seems to emphasise a head, the rib cage and navel (Stanley 2006). A suite of seven similar anthropomorphic figures from adjacent bogs in Co. Offaly all seem to date to the earlier Bronze Age and interestingly all but one were found near trackways or platforms, many of them ‘subsumed’ or buried under the structure (Stanley 2006). The Iron Age ‘bog figure’, found under a major rail of the Corlea trackway, is a characterful short stump, crudely fashioned into a head with snout or unturned nose (Raftery 1996), similar in its simplicity to the Birnenkopf figure (van der Sanden and Cappelle 2001: fig. 46). Yet others are heavily hewn into form, such as the Kingsteignton oak figure from the UK (Iron Age in date but technically a river-edge find), or the Lagore figure (found close to a crannog, see Coles 1990). The Ralaghan figure, dating from the late Bronze Age, is an armless block of heavily worked yew, with a clearly carved face, legs and pubic region with a hole for a separate phallus, in which were found traces of a white, crystalline substance, possibly quartz (Coles 1990: 322).

Yet there are smaller and more finely worked examples. The Roos Carr boat and crew of eight figures (with detachable arms and each with a separate penis, fitting into a socket) are accompanied by implements such as shields as well as clubs/paddles cleverly crafted from yew with menacing quartzite eyes (Coles 1990). They were supposedly found in a box in the peaty, estuarine deposits of Holderness, and

although miniaturised, they compress an intimidating masculinity into their long necks and defined calf muscles. The Strata Florida figure from Wales probably came from the nearby Cors Caron or Tregaron bog, which also yielded a well-preserved bog head (Turner and Briggs 1986: 187): it appears too dense, too polished and too well-made to be indigenous, yet this shiny boxwood figure has been dated to the late Iron Age/early Roman period (van der Sanden and Turner 2013: 89). While boxwood may have been a Roman reintroduction, small traces of it have been found in prehistoric contexts (van der Sanden and Turner 2013: 92) and its form certainly suggests a Celtic craft sensibility. The figure has a well-rounded head, clearly defined nose and ears, lentoid eyes and projecting knees, with a series of perforations on the sides for arms perhaps, but also in the pubic region and in the back.

The use of the wood in all of the figures is interesting (Coles 1990). There are no bog figures made of stone, bronze or even iron, yet figures and figurative art in *all* of these media are known from across northern Europe in the Iron Age from other non-bog contexts (see Aldhouse-Green 2004c). Oak and alder dominate (Coles 1990). Wood may have been chosen because it was organic and mimicked the properties of flesh: it grew, its bark was skin-like, when cut it often ‘bled’ (as Gearey *et al.* (2019) discovered and Stanley (2006) notes, in relation to alder trees that in Ireland are often referred to as the ‘red man’). Some trees ‘oozed’ sap during the most vigorous periods of spring growth in a process that might have been thought analogous to genital or vaginal fluids. (Many of the figures have a notch or niche where the addition of quartzite or other white, fatty or luminescent substances would have emphasised this suggestion). Trees and branches provided a vivid natural canvas for the Iron Age imagination, which may have encouraged realisation into a figural form – in the knots, stumps and stems, projecting branches or grain, it was possible to ‘see’ faces, arms, ribs, hips and genitals. They twisted and split, developing cracks, folds and wrinkles as they aged, gnarled and decayed. In short, wood was right for the bog and right for each figure: capturing ‘a life-force and an energy that endowed it with an effective voice in its community’s desire to contact the spirit world’ (Aldhouse-Green 2004c: 102). Interestingly, the Roman triumphs discussed above sometimes treated foreign trees as living things, exhibiting and parading exotics such as ebony and balsam in a manner reminiscent of foreign captives and animals, now bound to serve the empire (Östenberg 2009: 47). Some wood species conjured the very power the figures might have been meant to evoke: the raiding party of the Roos Carr figures, the phallic Viborg and Ralaghan figure and the multiply perforated Strata Florida manikin were made of yew and boxwood, whose leaves and fruit seeds were not just toxic but fatal. Even the wood of the yew can be an irritant. When the tree appears to be dying it can self-root and re-erupt, it is also dense yet elastic, embodying many of the properties of strength yet resistance sought in a warrior’s own body. Such evergreens never lost their leaves, and may have appeared timeless, like the bog. These properties give such intimidating figures an additional, enduring nuance.

The figures may not have simply been representations, or idols, of people, gods or deities – they *were* beings in their own right. Note the ability to literally animate many of the figures: whether it was to turn the claw-like grip of the Possendorf figure upwards or downwards (van der Sanden and Capelle 2001: 33), animate the removable arms that are indeed missing from many figures (perhaps because they have been deliberately ‘disarmed’?) or to decide whether to turn the socketed phalli of the Roos Carr, Strat Florida or Ralaghan figures ‘up’ or ‘down’ – the possibility existed for human intercedents to change or shift the gesture and posture of these figures. The open mouths of many of these figures suggest oration, proclamation or more disturbing noise making: crying, shrieking, screaming. It is a ritualised representation that might have been meant to bless, scare, invoke or intimidate, depending on one’s right to be in the bog. These animative features might have made them suddenly present, rather than absent, or excited and potent, rather than silent and inert. In its most extreme form, this could involve the removal of male genital appendages altogether, rendering such figures female rather than male (Coles 1990; Aldhouse-Green 2004c). This gave them not just a mutability, but a fluidity of personhood that was unusual and thus doubly potent at a time when gendered identities were being increasingly patrolled and ossified through body objects, roles and burials (Jordan 2016; Robb and Harris 2018). At other sites there were explicit pairings of male and female: in Braak (Germany), a pair of larger-than-life-size figures carved from ‘single, bifurcating branches’ to form legs, were found in a *kleine Kesselmoor* – a small bog, as if ‘standing guard’ over the flat expanse (Aldhouse-Green 2004c: 59). Dating to the third to second century BC, the wood has been carved to produce pronounced genitalia, breasts and hairstyle (a short fringe or combed-back hair for the male, a bun topknot for the woman) (van der Sanden and Capelle 2001: 16). Like the Ballachulish figure, both are open mouthed, as if in the act of speech. Nearby was ample evidence of repeated fire building (Aldhouse-Green 2004c: 59) and the idea of these figures lit by a flickering fire that was also dancing off the black bog water is both entrancing and intimidating. It would have further exaggerated their features and their animacy, creating a luminescent spectacle that mimicked the *ignis fatuus*. The Oldenburg figures (also from Germany) were more stylised but once more seem to be a gendered pair, carved into semi-geometric figures in two dimensions, with sub-rounded heads and projections mimicking shoulders and ribs, breasts, hips and genitals. Dating to the late second century BC, they flanked either side of a bog trackway at a particularly dangerous and wet point (Hayen 1987). Like the Ballachulish figure, they were at some point taken down and laid flat at around the same time that the trackway seems to go out of use.

Why were they carved, raised and visited in the bog, or else made and then deposited? The bog trackway at Wittemoor was flanked by a series of five figures, all of which were ‘removed from their bases and laid down next to the rack when it became unfit for further use’ (van der Sanden and Capelle 2001: 18). One of the experimental carvers working on the Pallasboy Project (Gearey *et al.* 2019) commented that perhaps this was simply ‘part of the job’: the figure was integral

to the trackway or platform, just as, in England, a thatcher might add a personal motif to a rooftop, or a medieval builder might make a foundational deposit under a hearthstone or in the roof space. Both are unspoken, apotropaic gestures that helped ‘charm’ the place while adding a distinctive mark, to give its inhabitants ‘good luck’ and protection. Some are highly visible, others are hidden. Their ‘being there’ during acts of construction, crossing or deposition had an effect on those that saw or passed by them. They hailed and assailed people. Their quartzite eyes appeared to watch, their mouths were open in utterance – if only we could catch their words above the hum of insects and plashing of the mire. As [Chapter 4](#) made clear, we are dealing with a dangerous yet rich landscape: the inclusion of figures that overtly referenced fertility might have magnified the auspicious power of this place but also mediated it. What happened when this power failed? Even if they were guardians of safe passage, these bog figures could not hold back the rising water or encroaching peat that eventually smothered them. Perhaps, having lost their efficacy, they were consigned to the waters in fitting ways: appropriate ends to these wooden denizens that bridged the domains of the animate and inanimate.

Conclusion: crafting an end

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

Most of the Iron Age deposits are old and worn – what should be done with them when their usefulness ended? Even a ploughshare was saturated with the symbolism of the soil and its crops. Perhaps that potentiality had to be returned somewhere, not through the recycling or hoarding of the Bronze Age, but the giving up of things into the bog from whence its power had come – an exchange

not necessarily between humans and gods but between life forces, vitalities. Once deposited, their 'being there' further magnified the power of this place, through the memories of the people who had witnessed this repeatedly. The most complex and exquisite finds, as well as the anthropomorphic figures, were certainly treated in ways that suggest they were perceived as having an identity – a history that often outlived the company of humans. Yet eventually, they too had to 'die'. Perhaps then, the bog was one particularly potent place where the end of things was crafted. It is to the 'ends' of the humans found among these finds that the [next chapter](#) turns.

6 Violent ends

Introduction: a biographical approach to life, death and deposition

The lives of the people who were buried or interred in the bog used to be defined by how they died. While that is of interest here, developments in archaeological techniques now enable us to examine much more about the lives they lived before that point, encompassing both fleshed and skeletal remains (e.g. Pestka *et al.* 2010). In particular, light stable isotope analysis has enabled us to examine their origin and mobility or (as we shall see) the distance that some of their clothing or accoutrements might have travelled. Casting the net of bog bodies wider to include skeletonised remains from places such as Sweden has allowed specialists to examine aspects of welfare and disease, which sheds a rather different light on those who ended up in the bog. Non-invasive computed tomography (CT) scanning can refine the litany of ante- and peri-mortem trauma, while forensic knowledge has enabled us to both observe subtle injuries we once missed and to write off some of the apparent 'overkill' we see as the result of compression in the bog or post-mortem damage during discovery. Enhanced scanning electron microscopy (SEM) has revealed details of hairstyles and the preparation of the body before death, while archaeobotanical analysis has given us further evidence of 'last meals', as well as the depositional environment in which they were found. Refined accelerator mass spectrometry (AMS) dating has helped pinpoint a tighter window of death and deposition, despite concerns over its validity (discussed in [Chapter 4](#)). Despite the illusion of corporeal stasis, no bog body has so far yielded enough preserved ancient DNA to yield a positive result. While this data would of course be of intrinsic interest, the grand narratives it tends to produce will not necessarily illuminate the character of the life lived by that individual and the death experienced by them, and it is this biographical lens that I will adopt here to understand the circumstances behind their fate and deposition in the bog.

Inevitably the pattern of research is uneven; some bodies have attracted significant research funding and attention (Nordström 2016), yet the most iconic remains are ironically limited in terms of the invasive or destructive sampling that might be permitted due to both ethical and aesthetic restrictions: no one is

going to prise a tooth out of Tolland Man's mouth (Nielsen pers. comm.)! It is in some of the newest and fragmentary, desiccated, archival or poorly preserved examples that such research techniques are being strategically deployed. Many bog body publications offer specialist reports on a narrow avenue of research, inevitably divorcing details of disease or injury from origin, last meals or clothing, or the exact locale and character of deposit. Yet these contextual associations help us build up a picture of how a life was lived and thus how it may have related to the death that was experienced. Here, using this guiding framework of the biography, the chapter will critically reflect on contrastive case studies to consider the possibility of accidental death, interpersonal violence, murder or manslaughter, suicide, formal burial and so-called 'bad deaths' that might require non-normative treatment or furtive interment. It will then move to the examples that suggest planned, premeditated violence that often has a highly performative, 'ritualised' character, appearing socially sanctioned and publically executed. The chapter will then evaluate the competing explanations of bog bodies, favouring a multiplicity of interpretations (see Hutton 2004b; Giles 2009; Joy 2009) argued on a case-by-case basis, setting these in context with wider evidence for violence in the Iron Age and early Roman era.

The many different ways to die

Accidental death, suicide and murder

The bog undoubtedly wrought its mercurial and merciless power over a number of victims who appear to have died accidentally. The skeleton and skin of an 'upright man' from Asby Moor in Lincolnshire found in 1724 (Briggs 1995: 211) and a man found with a 'hazel walking stick' on Seascale Moss in Cumbria (Briggs 1995: 209) both sound like accidents, where walkers came to their death while trying to cross a treacherous area (recalling the end of the villainous Stapleton in Conan Doyle's *The Hound of the Baskervilles*). We know this to be the fate of Nat Bell and Radcliffe, sodden with drink and drowning or dying of exposure on Lindow Moss; Red Christian, who went missing in similar circumstances in Denmark but was never found; the couples from Hautes Fagnes in Belgium and Hope in the Peak District; the children from Lewis and the elderly man from Roundstone bog in Ireland (see Chapters 2 and 4). At Gunnister on Shetland, a bog body was found fully clothed (coat, jacket, breeches, gloves, cap and stockings) with an extraordinary array of objects: wooden pail, knife, horn spoon, quill, horn 'ink pot' and purse full of coins (Cowie *et al.* 2011) – there is no sense of foul play or robbery and it is likely he died while crossing to complete some scribal task in a remote area (see Figure 6.1a). Among the archaeological bog bodies, the Vehne bog body from Germany, splayed out, clutching a tussock of peat in his hand, and also the Tumbeagh bog body, have been seen as unfortunate individuals who strayed from the trackway or failed to make the crossing over the firmer tussocks of the bog (see Chapter 4). To



6.1a The Gunnister bog body clothing. All rights reserved and permission to use the figure must be obtained from the copyright holder.

of infanticide that he proposes in 1986 actually seems more likely: there are many reasons why a mother might despair and take her infant's life, not least during periods of conflict or dearth. Whether she then drowned herself or was punished by her community is unclear. Sometimes the boundary between accident and suicide might be deliberately obfuscated, to preserve hope for the soul of the dead, as was suggested for William Walker on Ashton Moss (see [Chapter 4](#)). Tumbleagh has also been posited as the burial of a suicide victim, excised from sanctified ground due to dying at her own hand.

We know that some people fled on to the moss trying to escape certain death: the Solway Moss 'armed figure' on horseback (Lyell 1838), and the Summersdale, Slamannon, Alford and Kilsyth bog bodies from Scotland (Cowie *et al.* 2011) are likely to all represent post-medieval conflict victims, fleeing a pursuer. In Ireland and the British Isles, bog bodies were readily attributed to Anglo-Scots or Anglo-Irish conflict as well as clan violence and religious persecution (such as the execution of Covenanters, see Cowie *et al.* 2011). Yet where tartan cloth, saddlery and arms were found in association with such remains (e.g. Torr na Cabar, see Cowie *et al.* 2011: 28), this seems a reasonable interpretation. The downed Luftwaffe airman from South Zealand (Lynnerup 2015) merely represents the last in such war-related victims who may have sought to escape, find refuge, or vainly hope for a soft-landing in the bog.

A certain number of bog bodies, particularly those from the post-medieval era, can be attributed through rumour, report or evidence to murder. The female bog body from Evie, Orkney was found in 1864 covered in two petticoats: one wrapped around the lower part of the body and the other wrapped and stitched in place around the trunk and head with trimming (Cowie *et al.* 2011: 21–2). The original report recorded that the posterior part of the brain seemed much 'redder' than the rest and the preserved brain tissue appeared to be mixed with 'a considerable quantity of blood' (Cowie *et al.* 2011: 21–2), but if this was a blow from behind, the body had been afforded the equivalent of a laying out and improvised shrouding for interment. The woman herself seems to date to the 1600s, and as noted in [Chapter 4](#), she was anecdotally related to the apparent murder of one Mary Linklater in 1600 by the 'Two Rendall witches'. Whether the Evie bog body was their victim or not, the notion that femicide might be instigated by women from their own community is one we should bear in mind.

The young man from Arnish Moor (Lewis) found in 1965, was fully clothed with scholar's bag and quills, spoon, comb and much-patched clothing ([Figure 6.1b](#)). His distinctive gait and blunt-trauma head wound has plausibly been linked to a manslaughter carried out in the early eighteenth century, according to the *Scottish Daily Mail* (Cowie pers. comm.). Two school friends from Stornoway had been on a bird-nesting expedition when they quarrelled and one young man fatally hit his friend over the head with a stone, burying him hastily in the bog. After running away to sea for a few years, the murderer was recognised upon his return to Stornoway; he was arrested, confessed and hanged for the crime but the body took two hundred years to re-emerge. Meanwhile, a corpse from Quintfall

bog found in 1920 was also found fully dressed in clothes that placed him in the late seventeenth century. Again, a blow to the head seems to be the cause of his demise but this was no simple mugging: a purse filled with nineteen ‘bawbees’ dating to the 1690s showed that he had not been robbed. The apparently naked male bog body with fulsome moustache buried at Walls on Hoy had his wrists firmly bound with what was described as ‘straw’, yet this was tight enough to have firmly indented itself into the flesh of the wrists (cited in Cowie *et al.* 2011: 24). No trace of wound was observed, yet it sounds as if he had been stripped, bound and dispatched in a deliberate manner: possibly drowned. The rough justice that may be exhibited here was certainly meted out to the licentious tacksman from Lewis, whether or not it was his body that was recovered at Garynahine in Lewis (Cowie *et al.* 2011: 25). In Sweden, the medieval case of Bocksten Man found ‘driven through’ by wooden stakes was interpreted as a murder, though the ‘pinning’ of the body might have been post-mortem and related to the concept of the *Weerdinger* or restless corpse (van der Sanden 1996: 85). As discussed in [Chapter 2](#), the fear that the Rørbæk body was the work of notorious local murderer Ni-Kristian shows that by the historic period, the increased marginalisation of this landscape made it the perfect place to hide such remains (as with the notorious ‘Moors Murders’ in Britain). Whether it was an example of premeditated murder or a ‘crime of passion’, the Little Moss ‘fruit knife’ victim from Ashton proves that by the late 1800s, the semi-drained bog or mire was a secluded place where people might be lured for liaison but also hidden from view. We certainly know that Maria Reyn-Bardt was – by her husband’s own admission – murdered, burned and buried in the bog in the 1960s, and the hope that ‘Moora’ (the female bog body from Uchter Moor) was the still-missing Elke Kerl, lost on her way back from a dance hall in 1969 (see [Chapter 2](#)), as well as the remaining ‘Disappeared’ from Ireland, warn us that recent murders still await discovery.

What is notable in the above examples is that most of them are interred fully clothed, often with personal possessions. Rarely does this seem to be an anonymous mugging on the moor; their demise is often the result of a single if savage blow, or death by drowning or hanging. Do we have prehistoric examples of murder? In the report on the Hooghalen bog body from the Netherlands, it was noted that the ‘back of his head had been smashed’ (cited in van der Sanden 1996: 64). The injury from behind and deposition of the body on its face – prone in the bog – sound more like a murder or manslaughter, yet the ‘Suebian’ knot hairstyle and composite skin cape confirms this ‘paper’ bog body was late Iron Age or early Roman in date, analogous to Osterby Man from Germany. From the Fenlands, a female bog skeleton from Southery nicknamed ‘Nancy’ was found face downwards again, with one hand in front of the face, the other stretched out; she was found with jet beads and a bronze awl (van der Sanden 1996: 75 and 95). Torresta Man, a bog skeleton from Sweden dating to the Roman Iron Age, had led a hard life, recovering from some blunt-force trauma to the skull and healed ‘butterfly’ fracture of his right fibula, with some deformation of the metatarsals suggesting he would have walked thereafter with a limp (Fredengren and Löfqvist 2015). While these injuries might

have been sustained in working life, he had certainly died violently: a thin sharp-force cut to the right collarbone may have caused haemorrhaging from the throat while a sharp-force wound just above the right knee and several cuts behind the left knee may have been designed to immobilise him, causing him to fall upon his front. He had peri-mortem sharp-force cuts to both the right temporal and left occipital bone, suggesting four short, savage blows to the back of the skull when he lay prone. Finally, there was a deep cut to the lower stomach (biting into the ilium) with a follow-up deeper stabbing that sliced off the top of the coxae (Fredengren and Löfqvist 2015), suggesting deep penetrating wounds to his lower torso from behind. Additionally, he was found close to a rope, suggesting possible restraint or even attempted hanging that was then ‘finished off’ with bloodshed. Multiple assailants may have been involved in what might have been a more staged execution or orchestrated killing – what Fredengren and Löfqvist (2015: 140) call ‘networked violence’, meted out to an individual already caught up in previous incidents of conflict. The evidence for old trauma and decreased mobility suggests to them a pathway of neglect, stigmatisation and eventual emasculation, though of course this could also be a matter of revenge.

In the era defined by the massive weapons deposits in Denmark, we have a number of multiple bog burials that might suggest the massacre of a family group: two men and five children (including two infants) at Hundstrup Mose, dating to the second half of the first millennium BC (van der Sanden 1996: 104), and Rislev, where two women and a child were buried in a mixed deposit of animal bones, covered by branches (van der Sanden 1996: 104), dating to the fourth or fifth century AD. Such rare multiple burials probably represent larger-scale killings, but in the absence of sharp-force wounds we should also be open to the possibility of death from disease – perhaps the bog’s renowned medicinal power was being drawn upon to contain and curtail an epidemic.

The Weerdinge ‘couple’ (c.160 BC–AD 220) from the Netherlands have been positively identified as male, found together on Bourtangermoor, one lying on the arm of the other; this was the moss noted in Chapter 4 for the evidence of trackways running out into the bog, where cutting not just for peat but iron ore may have precipitated a bog burst (Casparie 1986). One of the men met a violent end, with a severe wound to the left hand side of his chest, through which his intestines had spilled out, prior to burial in the bog (van der Sanden 1996). This has been linked by some authors to texts by both Diodorus Siculus and Strabo on Gaul and Britain, which suggest that that some tribes practised divination by ritualised execution: reading a man’s entrails (Oldfather 1933: V.31.3–4) or his death struggles (Strabo *Geographia* IV, 4.5 and VII, 2.3 cited in Aldhouse-Green 2002: 83). Given their gender, there is the ugly possibility that this was the deliberate killing of a same-sex couple, visually fulfilling the prejudicial reading of Tacitus by the Nazis (Taylor 2008). Yet it is just as likely that that these men were comrades who died either in a violent altercation or were taken as high-status prisoners: ‘spilling your guts’ can be a metaphor for betrayal – perhaps this was the chosen fate for an enemy captive.

At the opposite end of this spectrum of violence lie the rare examples of total destruction that speak not just of a need to remove any trace of personhood but something more pathologically inclined. The Lyngby bog skeleton from Everöd, Sweden, for example, dating to the late Bronze Age, has recently been interpreted by Bergerbrant and Molnar (2019) as a piece of murderous obliteration. Three circular fractures to the head (perhaps caused by a spear shaft?) and a massive blow to the skull, stab wounds to the abdomen and hip (from a dagger or knife), deep ‘chopping’ blows to the mandible (possibly caused by an axe) and over seven hundred smaller cut marks across all skeletal elements (including the interior of the cranium) suggest multiple fatal wounds followed by dismemberment and complete defleshing of the body. Bergerbrant and Molnar (2019) consider this not to be ritualised killing but rather, the obsessive and pathological ‘work’ of a late Bronze Age murderer.

Burial and mortuary rites: curating the dead?

In contrast, a number of bog bodies – both complete and fragmentary remains – probably represent normative mortuary rites for the time. For example, Turner (1995b) records a number of both fragmentary skulls, mandibles and body parts that appear to date mainly from the Bronze Age to Iron Age fenlands (Burwell Fen, Fengate Power Station, Isleham Fen). These remains may once have been formal burials or excarnated remains but unfortunately it is their crania that were selectively curated for the Sedgewick Museum at Cambridge. Some of these may have been interred in ground that was only seasonally wet, akin to the Eton Rowing lake burials dating from c.1300–200 BC, buried on sand-bank islands and deliberately ‘weighted’ down due to the increased flooding (Dennison 2000). Formal log coffin burials dating from early Bronze Age Scotland are discussed in Cowie *et al.* (2011: 6–7). At Methwold, no less than ten ‘bog bodies’ were found either with bronze awls or flint scrapers, representing formal burials from the Neolithic to the early Bronze Age (Briggs 1995: 212–14). Balgone 1 and 2, found with animal bones and a jet belt slider (Cowie *et al.* 2011: 29), and Soham Fen from the Cambridgeshire fens, interred with early Bronze Age jet beads and spacer plates from a necklace (Briggs 1995: 207), both appear to be plausible burials with grave goods. At West Tofts in Britain, the discovery of thirty blue glass or faience beads, a ‘gold funnel’ and ‘face carved in Lancashire black coal’ with human remains contained in a coffin, best resemble an early Bronze Age coffin or log boat burial (van der Sanden 1996: 95). The Prestatyn infant from Wales, buried in the later Iron Age/early Roman era, seems to have been interred at the edge of a tree growing right on the fringe of a bog, the burial further marked by a small fenced, oval enclosure (van der Sanden 1996: fig. 33). It is the context and association between mother and child that makes the Derrymaquirk bog body from Ireland (a woman of c. twenty-five years of age, found with the remains of a c. two-year-old) appear a formal interment. An oval grave, filled with branches and twigs also contained

a large block of wood like a headboard at one end and an oval, flat stone placed over the pelvic area at the other (van der Sanden 1996: 96). She was buried with an antler tine (hollowed out for a handle or haft?) and faunal remains (sheep/goat and dog), dating to the early Iron Age (593–346 cal BC at 66.3 per cent probability). While there are no obvious causes of death, the association of mother and child might suggest a mysterious double death from infection or disease. The symbolic weighting down of the pelvic area could indicate some concern with her unfinished life and procreative power.

In Denmark too, we see a number of plausible burials: the Korselitse remains from Denmark were found with seven glass beads (four circular, three petal shaped) and a bronze brooch, which led Ravn (2011) to conclude this was a burial in keeping with contemporary funerary traditions. Borromose Woman, found in 1947, was wrapped around the legs with two woollen blankets, a shawl and around her neck a leather thong in which were strung a bronze disc and an amber bead (Asingh and Lynnerup 2007: 298). She was associated with bones from an infant but it is unclear if this was effectively a double burial or if they were token bones, 'kept relics' from a dead child (Fischer (2012: 128) interprets this as a male burial). Damendorf Girl was associated with a leather container made from two types of hide, decorated with horsehair (Fischer 2012: 95), whereas another body from the same bog but a different locale, Damendorf Man, had a pair of shoes and a leather belt laid alongside him (Asingh and Lynnerup 2007: 304). The Hunteberg Men – another double male burial – seem respectfully buried, wrapped up in their cloaks that were tucked around their feet (van der Sanden 1996: 123). These remains may suggest a period when the bog was used for formal burial, though again a sudden or multiple death might occasion the choice of this odd locale. One of the very rare child bog bodies comes from Röst, in Germany, where a young girl was laid gently in a pit, in the 'pea on a fork' posture that every parent would recognise as one of relaxed sleep. Aged only two to three years, she was covered with a blanket and then overlaid by turves (van der Sanden 1996: 82), in what seems to be a formal burial – perhaps after an unexplained 'cot' death or illness. Dröbnitz Girl from Poland, dating to the early Iron Age (eighth to fifth century BC), was found with a decorated wooden comb, which had been tied to her skin cape with a woollen thread (van der Sanden 1996: 95). Finally, the timber arrangement at Bunsöh in Germany suggests a formal mortuary structure, in which further twigs and stakes were used to cover and possibly pin down the corpse (van der Sanden 1996: 100). Though rare, the bog was clearly the place chosen to inter some individuals.

Writing about Huldremose Woman, Liversage (1984) presciently proposed that interment in the bog was done deliberately in contemporary bog pits or pools, cognisant of its preservative properties. Briggs (1995: 170) scoffs at the suggestion, arguing that 'this almost assumes the body to have been buried by people who anticipated body preservation'. The communities who interred their bog butter in Scottish and Irish bogs certainly did! So too, thought Gibson, who wrote of the well-preserved coffin burial at Mownog found in 1684: 'they who placed this coffin here might have regard to the perpetual preservation of it, seeing we find, by

daily examples of threes found in turbaries, that such bituminous earth preserves beyond all others' (cited in Camden 1722: 775). One suite of burials from the late Bronze Age demonstrates that the bog might be used temporarily and strategically within wider mortuary rites that are much more complex than we suppose. At Cladh Hallan on South Uist, the burial of a skeletonised male individual seems to have been laid down in the machair around 1440–1260 BC, some time before a female burial, and after a century or two, both were overlain by three sunken-floored roundhouses (Parker Pearson *et al.* 2005; Parker Pearson *et al.* 2007). The male 'burial' was, however, revealed to be a composite of three mummified individuals: the post-cranial skeleton of one male, the cranium and cervical vertebrae of another (an older man, showing articulation of the remains, osteoarthritis and lack of dentition in the maxilla), and the mandible of a well-dentured final individual (Parker Pearson 2016: 8) (see Figure 6.2). Analysis from the aDNA from the 'female' skeleton also revealed that it too was a composite: with the mandible, right arm and femur all derived from separate individuals – mainly a male skull and female torso, with the male fragments pre-dating the female components by around 70–205 years (Parker Pearson *et al.* 2013: 11). Fascinatingly, 'his' two upper lateral incisors had been removed from his jaw sometime after death and placed in 'her' hands. Even her skeleton showed manipulation and selective removal: she lacked the distal end of her left femur, patella and proximal ends of her left fibula and tibia; in other words, much of her left knee appeared to have been broken off. There was no sign of disturbance from above and the fractures were identified as 'dry': this had happened post-mortem, but while the collagen was still flexible but prior to interment. The distal end of her right radius was also missing post-mortem. The missing body parts were found interred within a pit *outside* of the same roundhouse, mixed with red peat ash (note the use of local peat for fuel) and domestic debris. The snapped-off 'knee' may have been kept as a relic for some time before deposition close to rest of the corpse.

The excavators considered that the large articulated body parts had been kept above ground, tightly wrapped and in a protective environment: warm and dry enough to inhibit soft tissue decay – a 'mummy house' in effect – before the breaking and taking of an articulated 'joint' from an already desiccated corpse (Parker Pearson *et al.* 2007; Hanna *et al.* 2012). The quote regarding the food-preservation technique of Hebridean 'skewing' mentioned by Anderson in 1879 (see Chapter 3) would seem to fit the bill well, or else suspension in the rafters of a later prehistoric roundhouse. The analysts proposed that what might be at work in such osteological bricolage was the making of a composite ancestral 'body' that spanned time (Hanna *et al.* 2012: 2779). Yet all of the remains also showed the loss of calcium mineral content in the outermost layers of the bone; interpreted by the team as the result of temporary immersion in an acidic environment before this skewing process, most likely the acid peat bogs found nearby (Parker Pearson *et al.* 2005: 542). The remains were also stained a distinctive peat-brown colour indicative of the 'tanning' effect of the bog on both tissue and bone (Parker Pearson 2016). Once recognised, and with a new methodological toolkit to recognise this phenomenon,



6.2 The Cladh Hallan male bog bod(ies) (a composite, made from three individuals, at least one of whom may have been interred temporarily in a local bog). All rights reserved and permission to use the figure must be obtained from the copyright holder.

the notion of curated and manipulated bodies has been identified in both further Bronze Age (Booth *et al.* 2015; Smith *et al.* 2016) and Iron Age examples (Tollefsen 2016) within the UK. This internationally important discovery reveals that the same knowledge of how to store and cure bog butter was here being used to store and mature a human body: preventing its decay but ageing it in a very particular way that enhanced its potential to merge and make a powerful new body. While so far unique, the Cladh Hallan mummies suggest that the peat bogs of Uist, as well as other environments that inhibited decay, played a significant part in ‘holding fast’ not just butter but bodies, enabling what we commonly call ‘secondary’ or delayed mortuary practices. The Iron Age, as Chapter 5 has argued, marks the beginning of experimentation with subterranean storage, bogs, souterrains and pits, salting and smoking. Cladh Hallan is the clue that the preserving properties of the bog were known and manipulated. This was indeed an era where people may have believed they were successfully experimenting with and intervening in time, at least in terms of its effect upon organic matter: giving the living a seemingly supernatural power that enhanced the post-mortem agency of the dead.

What about later periods? An early medieval burial at Jubilee Tower in Lancashire (dating to the seventh century AD) seems to follow contemporary burial rites: interred in a woollen shroud with three ‘white feathers’, the symbolism of which escapes us (Edwards 1973; Briggs 1995: 210). Six fully clothed burials from Culrain (Briggs 1995: 218) may represent a small cemetery, like the coffined burials at Bressay (Hunt 1866a; see also Chapter 2). A touching burial of an infant wrapped in a ‘Scotch’ bonnet and woollen cloth at Hunstgarth in Harry, dating to the late eighteenth century, is probably also a formal burial; perhaps the child died suddenly or mysteriously – the equivalent of a ‘cot death’ but s/he may also not have been baptised. Like so many small souls, they may have been excluded from consecrated ground. There was also the issue of cost: for the poorest members of society, a shroud, a coffin or a mass might have been beyond reach, especially at times of dearth, disease or crisis. An ‘extraordinary large skeleton’ was found in a coffin in the turbarry of Mownog, Maes-y-Pandy (Wales, Gibson cited in Camden 1722). Isolated communities (particularly in severe weather) might turn to the bog to control a noisome corpse, or one for whom no one accepted financial or social responsibility. Strangers or foreigners, especially those dying of infection or sudden illness and whose kin and origin were unknown, might also find themselves buried in the bog, as in the rumour of ‘Dutchmen’ who died of a fever and were supposedly buried in West Liog (Cowie *et al.* 2011: 10). In addition to these examples, Chapter 2 has shown that by the post-medieval era, mysterious or strange deaths were often treated in non-normative ways due to fears around the post-mortem agency of the deceased (Watkins 2013). Bad priests and restless clerics seem particularly prone to a fate in the mire, at least from the documentary sources – perhaps linked to their medieval/post-medieval reputation as portals to hell. By this time if not before, the bog was a realm in which to exile, control or negate potential revenants.

Unknown or mysterious death

For every identifiable cause of death there are multiple examples where this leaves no trace (van der Sanden 1996). Haraldskær Woman (once thought to be the betrayed Queen Gunhilde, described in Asingh and Lynnerup (2007: 300) as the Gutskær Mose bog body) died around the age of forty, in c.490 BC. Her remains have recently been subject to stable isotope analysis that suggests she was brought up in the region where she died, but travelled some distance south into Europe in the last few years of her life (Frei *et al.* 2015). Sticks were found over each knee and elbow, pinning her into the bog (not driven through the kneecap, cf. Aldhouse-Green 2002: 117) but there is no obvious cause of death. She was buried with a skin cape, three woollen garments, several woollen cords and a sprang-technique cap with cords covering her hair, which was around 50 cm in length, representing around four to five years of growth (Frei *et al.* 2015). Two of these textiles were locally made, but a beautiful chequered garment was non-local (Frei *et al.* 2015: 99). This led the most recent investigators to note she was obviously well connected and well travelled; perhaps her mobility distinguished her for a different place of burial compared with the majority of her community and the bog was a portal for her last voyage into the afterlife. Alternatively, she may have returned transformed or changed from the journey in a manner that disconcerted her community; bearing new ideas, bad news or illness against which she had no resistance, leading to her 'exile' in death (Frei *et al.* 2015: 100).

Other bog bodies for whom no obvious cause of death could be found include Auning Girl from Denmark (Fischer 2012: 119), Daugbjerg Man (Fischer 2012: 120) and Søgard Man (Fischer 2012: 124). The bog body from Baronstown West in Ireland, dating to AD 200–400 was found 'dressed' in textile and hide clothing, but like Haraldskær Woman, he was weighted down by at least four large branches (van der Sanden 1996: 92, 99). The iconic Windeby 'Girl' (the front cover for Aldhouse-Green's 2016 monograph) has recently been reidentified as a 'boy' (Gill-Robinson 2007; Fischer 2012: 137), aged around fourteen at the time of death. He suffered from episodic malnutrition and illness during his life, which left their mark in pronounced Harris lines of nutritional stress on the tibia (van der Sanden 1996: 112). His hair had been unevenly cut in two different stages, close-cropped. There is no obvious cause of death, but following his demise, he was laid in the bog on his right-hand side, with a skin cape still wrapped around his neck. A 'sprang band' was reputedly found across the eyes like a blindfold, yet this is an openwork, decorative piece, whose crafting method produced a weave with natural elasticity and decorative end tassels. This may well have originally been a hair covering, which had slipped across the forehead or face. Indeed both Asingh and Lynnerup (2007: 305) and Fischer (2012: 136) report that a conservator 'admitted' to placing it over his eyes while preparing him for exhibition, although it originally lay across the middle of his face, inflating the perception of shaming done to this 'little adulteress', as he was once envisioned. If *in situ*, its original intent might have

been to stifle or silence the victim, rather than blindfold them from their fate. Thin rods were laid across his right arm, as if in symbolic staking, and four pots were laid close by, suggestive of food or drink offerings. While this is an unusual and disturbing bog body, no obvious cause of death can be seen.

In a similar vein, the appearance of Borremose Woman appals at first sight: her right knee is drawn up and her arms protectively cover her torso, still wrapped in a blanket with leather cord and holes that suggest a 'skirt-like' garment. One hand appears to touch the ruin of her face. Placed prone in the bog, she has now been turned over, where her face appears to have been smashed to a pulp, disguising chin, cheeks and nose. A fragment of facial tissue and hair, supposedly found under the body, suggests she may even have been scalped. Yet concern has been expressed that this damage is due to the pressure and movement of delicate facial tissue from compression by the peat (Asingh and Lynnerup 2007: 299; Fischer 2012: 129). Van der Sanden (1996: 162) also argues this is likely to be a post-mortem disfigurement, from the lack of vital reaction in the tissue. The cause of her actual death then, is unknown. However, she lay in an old peat cutting dating to the early Iron Age close to the 1946 male bog body who was hanged (Asingh and Lynnerup 2007: 299; Fischer 2012: 129): we cannot rule out a violent end for her too.

Zweeloo Woman (111 cal BC–AD 240 cal at 95.4 per cent probability, van der Sanden 1996: 191) was most likely laid on her back, as the front of this woman (impaired by a condition such as Léri-Weill dyschondrosteosis or mesomelia, causing foreshortening or selective dwarfism of the limbs, see Bianucci *et al.* 2012) was badly damaged by the peat diggers and more poorly preserved. She too was placed in a pit or bog pool whose peat was earlier than the interment of this thirty-five to fifty-year-old woman. This might suggest a more formal burial – she had recently eaten a millet-based porridge flavoured with blackberries, which places her death in the early autumn (van der Sanden 1996: 91, 11). Yet like Windeby Boy, her hair had been recently cut to a short length of 2.5–3.5 cm (van der Sanden 1996: 164). Twenty-one sharp-force cut marks have recently been identified on the skeletal remains, clustered around the left shoulder, right elbow, left hand and upper and lower legs (particularly on the right-hand side), with a large cut mark observed above the left orbit on her forehead (Bianucci *et al.* 2012: 54, figs 9 and 11). None of them showed bony reaction or healing, meaning they are peri- or post-mortem cuts that would have been intensely painful but not fatal. Yet the focus upon the joints is odd: there is curiously no evidence of 'equivalent injuries on the body surface' (i.e. corresponding cuts *through* the skin and tissue), apart from a possible open wound on the posterior of the left shoulder. What looks like multiple wounding could all be post-mortem 'damage' (Bianucci *et al.* 2012: 54–5). Given the separation of skeletal elements from her exterior flesh and viscera, it is highly likely that this is the result of quite coarse post-mortem style preparation of the body parts, for analysis and museological display during the 1950s (Bianucci *et al.* 2012: 54–5).

Huldremose Woman from Denmark, dating to c.350 BC, was dressed in a linen or nettle-fibre undergarment (probably not made locally, see Frei *et al.* 2009), a long blue woollen skirt and a red check-pattern scarf (running from neck to under her arm and fastened with a pin made from bird bone). The stable isotope signature of the wool suggests one locally made source but an exotic origin for the other two wool types (possibly in Norway or Sweden, see Frei *et al.* 2009). She may therefore have moved into the region, possibly through a marriage alliance, or else was wearing the powerful evidence of her distant connections. In addition, she wore two skin capes: an inner lambskin cape turned fleece inwards and an outer brown sheep hide turned fleece outwards, which would have helped shed water (National Museum of Denmark 2019; see Figure 6.3a). The lambskin inner cape contained a sewn-up 'secret pocket' in which were placed a beautiful horn comb and a thin blue 'hairband' leather cord, wrapped in a bladder, interpreted as an amulet cache, integral to this old, patched cape (Frei *et al.* 2009; see Figure 6.3b). On her chest lay a single willow stick. A mark around her finger suggests she habitually wore a ring that also went into the bog, but this was never reported and may have been pocketed on discovery. Another cord necklet was strung with two amber beads, which also went missing (van der Sanden 1996: 93). Like Zweeloo and Windeby, her hair had recently been cut to within a few millimetres and the hank laid next to her in the bog (van der Sanden 1996: 164; Asingh and Lynnerup 2007: 296). A single lock of hair was tied up with a woollen cord and wrapped, several times, around her neck. Yet there was no sign that this was a strangulation. A severe cut or fracture of her left upper arm, severing it above the elbow, has for many years been interpreted as a violent amputation, resulting in the laying down of this limb next to her (van der Sanden 1996: 162). Yet recent re-evaluation suggests it could again be post-mortem damage during peat cutting, discovery or even transportation off-site (Fischer 2012: 117; National Museum of Denmark 2019). An apparent cut wound on her right foot, shown in X-ray in van der Sanden (1996: fig. 228), is more difficult to explain away; it could be a classic 'disabling' wound to prevent a victim fleeing. Other authors disagree as to whether there were further cuts (Asingh and Lynnerup 2007: 296) or a healed fracture to the right lower leg (Fischer 2012: 117). She had recently eaten a soup or casserole, made from coarsely ground rye mixed with spurry and evidence of some meat (van der Sanden 1996: 110). The relative lack of weed species suggests a reasonably well-cleaned cache of grain (apart from the spurry crop, seen as a poor man's substitute: probably used to eke out the rye, see van der Sanden 1996: 110). Although she was not accorded the local Iron Age rite of cremation, there is no reason therefore to believe she did not die of natural causes; perhaps (like Haraldskær Woman) her powerful reputation or exotic status required a distinctively different place of burial (National Museum of Denmark 2019) or perhaps the hidden cache suggests she was perceived as a seer or witch-like figure who needed to be controlled or appeased by burial in the bog (Lund 2002).



6.3a The Huldremose textiles. All rights reserved and permission to use the figure must be obtained from the copyright holder.



6.3b The Huldremose hidden possessions. All rights reserved and permission to use the figure must be obtained from the copyright holder.

Sharp- and blunt-force trauma

Against these other categories we can now place bog bodies where there seems to have been a greater degree of trauma that needs careful consideration as to whether this is the result of accident or a more orchestrated and premeditated ‘ferocious, controlled violence’, both ante-mortem (before death) and peri-mortem (around the time of death, see Taylor 2008: 145). Rendswühren Man from Germany (95 cal BC–AD 140 cal, at 95.4 per cent probability, see van der Sanden 1996: 193) appeared to have sustained a major blow to his face, affecting his nasal bone, right orbit and through into the temporal and parietal bone (Asingh and Lynnerup 2007: 308; Gill-Frerking 2014: 68). While there is a possibility this is peat bog compression damage, the covering of his head by a woollen blanket and fur cloak might have been designed to cover and wrap the disfiguring trauma. Leather ‘anklets’ might be remnants of clothing but they might equally be modes of hobbling or restraining him in life or indeed, in death.

The other infamous example of apparent ‘restraint’ is the Kayhausen boy from Germany, aged somewhere between eight and fourteen years of age, who died between 363 and 88 cal BC (at 92.4 per cent probability, see van der Sanden 1996: 192). He may have had a severe infection to his right hip: the X-ray shows an abnormal change in the ‘neck’ of the femur (van der Sanden 1996: 141). If it is the case, he would have had impaired mobility at the time of his death. All we know

about the rest of his life is that he had eaten a wild apple shortly before his death, as two pips were found in his stomach contents. A stab wound to his left upper arm and three 3–4 cm slits in the throat area were probably the cause of death. He was then bound up: strips of woollen fabric were used to tie his arms behind his back and another strip was wound around his neck, passing front and back, through his legs, while his ankles were also bound by a repurposed cape (van der Sanden 1996: 93, fig. 117). The fabric shows no sign of tearing or slashing meaning that this binding *followed* the stabbing and may simply have been a means of carrying a ‘packaged’ body to the bog. Yet the binding seems very similar to the ‘hog tie’ position used to torture or even strangle a prisoner. The hastening of his death could have been brought about by linking the ankle binding to his hands, forcing him to maintain an arched back for as long as possible until he self-strangled. Such a fate for a young man seems immeasurably cruel. Yet child sacrifice to appease the gods and ensure fertility is not only well attested in the Andean child mummies but also in the contemporary cult of Nigerian ‘muti’ (Taylor 2008: 8). (The death and mutilation of a Nigerian boy known only as ‘Adam’, found in the River Thames in 2001, has been attributed to this cultic activity, designed to create potent medicines from its young victims’ remains, see Cowan 2004). In *Things Fall Apart*, the author Chinua Achebe (2006) tells a fictional story of a young boy, Ikemefuna, given to a powerful chief as part of a peace settlement. Despite his admiration for the captive (who spends several years with this family and forms strong bonds with them), a prophecy from a village oracle determines that the child must die, and although the chief is warned to have no personal part in this killing, his desire to show his masculinity at the moment of murder overrides his relationship with the child. Once his own machete is wielded against the sacrifice, it heralds his own descent into misfortune and eventual suicide (Achebe 2006). Lest we think this is merely the stuff of fiction, in early Iron Age Lewis at Hornish Point, four pits under a roundhouse contained the quartered remains of a boy of about the age of twelve, interred with the remains of two young cattle and sheep: a foundation deposit that reeks of a fertility offering (Barber *et al.* 1989; James and McCullagh 2003).

So-called ‘cult’ sites, where multiple human remains were deposited (often in a fragmentary state) include the bog of Oberdorla (Germany), where the remains of over forty individuals were found in among anthropomorphic posts, bundles of flax, wheels and agricultural implements, pottery sherd clusters, animal bone, worked wood and charcoal spreads. The context was a lake infilling with peat, used from the early Iron Age into the Middle Ages (van der Sanden 1996: 104). Such a site, with protracted deposition of fragmentary human remains often showing evidence of violence, has more in common with the prehistoric causeway and platform sites of the UK such as Flag Fen (Pryor 2005), Fiskerton (Field and Parker Pearson 2003) or Over (Evans *et al.* 2016). At all of these sites a mix of artefactual, faunal, avian and human remains in relation to platforms, raised timber structures and causeways suggest repeated wetland deposition at riverine sites that were growing in both fluvial activity and ritual intensity during the Iron Age. Evidence

for violence and/or dismemberment is sometimes clear but discerning between peri- and post-mortem cut marks can be difficult, partly because bone remains more 'plastic' in these wet environments for longer. The excarnation of a revered ancestral body that needed to dissipate back into the world through the action of wind, weather, corvids and scavengers, cannot necessarily be discerned from the triumphal display of an enemy's corpse. As on many Iron Age and early Roman dryland sites, a mix of trophyism, sacrifice, ancestral veneration and mortuary disposal complicates our understanding of apparently violent or messy treatments of the corpse.

Hanging and strangulation

However, there are remains where the manner and circumstances of death are clearer. Gallagher Man from Ireland, found in 1821, was discovered interred in a skin cape and stakes pinning either side of the body down into the bog. Dating to 400–200 BC, he was found with a 'band of sally (willow) rods' around his neck, assumed to have been used to asphyxiate him (van der Sanden 1996: 73; Kelly 2013). Windeby Man (an early Iron Age bog body, c.400–300 BC) also appears to have been strangled by a hazel branch the thickness of a finger, wound around his neck (van der Sanden 1996: 157). His arms were folded across his chest, perhaps composed after death, and he was 'anchored' in the bog by no less than eight hefty wooden stems and stakes (van der Sanden 1996: fig. 130; Asingh and Lynnerup 2007: 306). The 1946 discovery of Borremose Man from Denmark reveals he dated to the earlier Iron Age, around the eighth century BC (Asingh and Lynnerup 2007: 297). His last meal was a poor gruel, consisting mainly of weed species, with a little animal hair (possibly a contaminant or the residue of animal tissue) and bog moss leaves (van der Sanden 1996: 108). He appeared to have died from major trauma to the back of the head (van der Sanden 1996: 108), but this has recently been reinterpreted as post-mortem damage from the pressure of the peat (Fischer 2012: 125). Instead, a halter made of three-ply bast or hemp rope suggests he was strangled: the cord measured a total length of 94 cm, its ends reinforced with a knot and leather terminal to prevent fraying, with a sliding knot to tighten the noose (van der Sanden 1996: 156). This was an object that had been made with some care. He was interred with two sheepskin capes placed in a bundle at his feet. The undated bog body of Kreepan Man from Germany was also found face down in the peat, with a 'cord of entwined oak and birch twigs around his neck and arms' as well as small 'clamps' above the feet, which might suggest his ankles too had been bound together (van der Sanden 1996: 89). Three large stones (weighing 20–25 lbs) were found in association with two oak sticks and twigs, suggesting he may have been weighted down in the bog – perhaps asphyxiated by both strangulation and suffocation in the mire. Other 'hanged' bodies probably include Krogens Møllemose, dating to 300 BC, found with a leather ring analogous to a large dog collar but thought to be a noose (Fischer 2012: 116). He was

associated with at least one skin cap and textile fragments that might have represented a bag. Lykkegårds Mose Man was also found with a 'two-ply cord' around his neck (Fischer 2012: 124).

It is not just men who met with such a fate. Elling Woman from Denmark, aged around twenty-five years when she died in around 205 BC (Asingh and Lynnerup 2007: 297), was found close to Tolland Man. She was wrapped in both a sheepskin cape and a cape made from cowhide, with a further cowhide cloak wrapped around her legs. She had a hair braid running to 90 cm in length, fastened in a complex knot. A 40 cm length of woven sheep wool, possibly a belt, was found nearby, which van der Sanden (1996: 155) argues was probably used to strangle her, leaving a deep 'V-shape' furrow embedded in the flesh of her neck and throat. This most domestic of clothing items has historically, of course, often been turned into a weapon of punishment: the belt used here had a sliding knot to facilitate tightening to the required degree, traditionally placed at the back of someone's neck (van der Sanden 1996: fig. 223). Yde Girl from the Netherlands was around sixteen years of age when she died, already warped by the severe scoliosis that had twisted her spine (van der Sanden 1996: 83 and 161). The original position in which she lay is impossible to discern but given that the face is better preserved, she may also have been placed prone in the bog. The left-hand side of her head was completely shaved shortly before death but the right-hand side was up to 20 cm in length, with the cut-off hank of hair apparently laid alongside her in the bog (Asingh and Lynnerup 2007: 302), suggesting an ante or peri-mortem radical alteration in her appearance. She was covered by a woollen cloak, concealing a stab wound near the left clavicle (van der Sanden 1996: 161). A twisted woollen sprang band 220 cm in length (perhaps a waistband or hair covering, woven for elasticity) was found wound around her neck three times, its sliding knot indented below her left ear, suggesting strangulation like Elling Woman (van der Sanden 1996: 161).

The iconic bog body of Tolland Man himself (Figure 6.4) was around thirty years old when he died, c.405–380 cal BC (Nielsen *et al.* 2018). He was not particularly tall, measuring c.1.61 m (5 foot 2 inches) in height (though the bog has probably shrunk the remains a little), with damage to the sole of his right foot, which showed scars from some kind of penetrative injury (van der Sanden 1996: 135). He had eaten a last meal made from barley, oats and the mix of wild weed species to be expected from prehistoric harvesting, oily flax and gold of pleasure seeds, fat hen, sandy grit (probably from the rub of the quern stone used to mill it) and bog moss leaves, possibly from cooking with or drinking bog pool water (van der Sanden 1996: 108). There were fungal smut spores suggesting some contamination of the cereals (van der Sanden 1996: 11). The episode of *Buried Treasure* discussed in Chapter 2 ended with Sir Mortimer Wheeler and Glyn Daniel 'tasting' a version of this last meal, which they found abhorrent: 'No wonder the poor chap committed suicide if that was the sort of cooking he got at home!' Sir Mortimer Wheeler wittily added. (It is all a matter of taste: prehistoric people had very different expectations from their diet – a version of this

meal that I tasted during a visit to Silkeborg Museum was in fact delicious and sustaining – much clearly lay in the preparation.) He was apparently naked apart from a beautifully made sheepskin leather cap, stitched from eight pieces of hide and fastened tight around his head, its small bow tucked neatly under the right temple (Fischer 2012: 43). An unevenly cut belt with a loop knot was fastened around his waist, which may suggest an inner garment that has not survived, yet no textile impressions of linen or plant fibre were observed on the skin (Fischer 2012: 43–4). The method of his death seems clear: a plaited leather thong, 1.25 m in length, was found around his neck, and had left clear impressions in the flesh, under the chin and at the sides, suggesting the knot was at the back (van der Sanden 1996: 155). The length of this rope might suggest suspension from a gallow or a tree: hanging rather than strangulation, as reconstructed by Niels Bach for Silkeborg Museum. The end of the rope was severed where it had apparently been ‘cut down’. Hanging and strangling literally took the breath away from the body, perhaps a vital moment of curtailing the *animus* of a human being (Taylor 2008). Hanging suggests a more public spectacle, raised for others to see, while strangulation was at the hands of another, depriving the victim of their life. While suicide or murder is a possibility in some of these cases, execution for punishment or sacrifice (of men and women, young and middle-aged) seems more plausible given the prepared nature of the materials used and the force required.



6.4 Tolland Man. All rights reserved and permission to use the figure must be obtained from the copyright holder.

Bloodshed

In contrast to the cessation of breath, Aldhouse-Green (2002) has suggested that the spilling of blood in a dramatic and vivid performance may have been key to sacrificial rituals. One of the other iconic Danish bog bodies, Grauballe Man, was in his late twenties to early thirties when he died, sometime between 400–200 BC. He was of average but not impressive stature and he had hair of around 15 cm in length, neatly cut across (probably with small shears) and both a beard and a moustache around 1 cm in length (Asingh and Lynnerup 2007: 196, 230, 231). Stable isotope data from the hair suggest a terrestrial-based diet in the last few months of his life, based more on animal than plant matter (Asingh and Lynnerup 2007: 195). His teeth not only showed wear but infection from periodontitis, with loss of one of his front incisors ante-mortem (Asingh and Lynnerup 2007: 32 and 146) as well as enamel hypoplastic defects on his permanent dentition indicative of stress or malnutrition around two to four years of age (Asingh and Lynnerup 2007: 150), possibly coinciding with weaning. His last meal was very similar to Tolland Man: quite a large quantity of a gruel or thin soup, unfortunately a little burned, made from a mix of c.20 per cent cereal grains (wheat and barley) along with 80 per cent weed species (including persicaria and corn spurry). The latest analysis of this material (by Harild, Robinson and Hudlebusch cited in Asingh and Lynnerup 2007) suggests that this was largely a by-product, the threshing floor gleanings of a few grains and weed contaminants from the field, as well as sandy grit from unwashed plant matter or the quernstone and bog moss leaves from drinking water or soup mix (Asingh and Lynnerup 2007: 160): no carefully prepared ritual meal, this dish was ‘poor and unpalatable’ yet nonetheless of some nutritional value (Asingh and Lynnerup 2007: 174). Splintered bone, fine animal hair and carbonised matter suggest that meat – possibly pork – had been added to his dish, perhaps in an attempt to add some flavour (van der Sanden 1996: 108), making up for the thin fare and in keeping with the meat-rich diet he seemed used to, as indicated by the stable isotope analysis of his hair (Asingh and Lynnerup 2007: 195). Alongside the smut spores of slightly contaminated cereals, traces of ergot were found, probably derived from infected ‘Yorkshire fog’ grass mixed in with harvested crops (Harild, Robinson and Hudlebusch cited in Asingh and Lynnerup 2007: 176). Much has been made of this discovery. The likely mistranslation of the original Danish report seems to have inflated ‘some’ to ‘many’ sclerotia, leading to claims that Grauballe Man might have suffered from symptoms known colloquially as St Anthony’s Fire – hallucinations, convulsions and burning sensations in the mouth – which could eventually lead to ‘dry withering ... the limbs rot in their joints, [and] turn the colour of lead’, as one eighteenth-century text puts it (Asingh and Lynnerup 2007: 118). This was the medical condition of gangrene, from which there would have been no release. Yet the most recent estimates suggest the amount falls into current European Union (EU) permitted limits for commercial grain. While this re-evaluation was necessarily based on a sample, we have no way of knowing if it had any effect upon Grauballe Man. It is tempting to think

so: such symptoms would have shocked and horrified his community, leading to abnormal behaviour and suffering they could not alleviate. If they knew the end of this disease, they also knew it was not a good way to die, rotting from the inside out – turning his death into something of a mercy killing.

Yet we must accept this is now unlikely to be the case and look to other reasons to explain the manner of his actual demise. This was brought about by a gaping blade wound to his throat, cut practically from ‘ear to ear’ (Fischer 2012: 133), probably running from left to right (delivered from behind, with the head inclined backwards), with a noticeable ‘notch’ midway that suggests the jagged or jerking pull of the blade, repositioning and deepening its cut (Asingh and Lynnerup 2007: 254). This was a thorough and professional job that was designed to be fatal within a few minutes, cutting through the oesophagus and severing the two carotid arteries and jugular vein, but leaving the lower throat area of larynx and hyoid bone intact (Asingh and Lynnerup 2007: 128 and 252). Severe haemorrhaging and the flooding of blood into the respiratory system would have quickly affected oxygen levels, bringing on unconsciousness. The ‘skull fracture’ once thought to indicate a head wound has recently been dismissed as post-mortem damage to the body during its discovery by someone who admitted ‘treading’ on the skull (Asingh and Lynnerup 2007: 17 and 117; Fischer 2012: 132)! However, an oblique fracture of the tibia, leading to a sharp-force splintering of this bone and blunt exterior trauma, appears to have been inflicted around the time of death, about 10 cm below the knee, causing some rotation of the distal part of the leg. This was confirmed in the new CT scanning and radiological investigation (Asingh and Lynnerup 2007: 120 and 258). Post-mortem damage that affected one and not both leg bones seems unlikely; he may have been brought to his knees with a savage blow from a blunt object that fractured his shin bone and took his legs out from under him. The bold cutting of his throat seems to fit the requirements of a ‘blood sacrifice’ in all of its brutality (Aldhouse-Green 2002: 87), yet it was also a swift and impressively gory end to a life. He was laid prone in the bog but slightly raised, as if sunk on to a slightly convex surface, the obverse of contemporary supine burial (Asingh and Lynnerup 2007: 240). Fascinatingly, the latest analysis has demonstrated that the plant roots that penetrated the body were a couple of hundred years younger than the corpse (Asingh and Lynnerup 2007: 214) – confirming Godwin’s theory on one of the reasons why radiocarbon dates of such bog plant matter may not match the body (see [Chapter 4](#)).

Dismemberment and decapitation

The deliberate ‘cutting up’ and separation of body parts is well attested from bogs across northern Europe. In Britain, Lindow I (thought to be a female head) and Lindow III (the majority of an adult male body) are currently believed to represent two complementary body-part deposits (Joy 2009), telling us of the violent separation of torso or trunk from crania. Two decapitated heads were found in Wales,

from Melmyd Avenue (Clwyd) and Giffon (Powys): the latter found ‘with full complement of hair’ (cited in Turner’s 1995b: cat. nos 61/2 and 66/1 respectively). The head of Stidsholt Woman (dating to around 300 BC) had a full head of hair wound up into a beehive setting and held in place by a woven hair band. She was found wrapped in a skin cape, decapitated from back to front between the third and fourth cervical vertebrae (Fischer 2012: 115). The Roum head, also believed to be female (from the lack of facial hair) and dating to around AD 1, was wrapped in a sheepskin cape (van der Sanden 1996: 159; Fischer 2012: 120). The Pilling Moss head from the UK, again thought to be female, was interred with two strings of cylindrical jet beads, one amber bead and abundant plaited hair, head, neck and necklaces wrapped in a woollen cloth (Fischer 2012: 210). Along with Lindow I, Roum and Stidsholt, she is further evidence that decapitation was not just a fate suffered by men, and spanned the Bronze Age to the Roman era.

The male Osterby head from Germany was also wrapped in a cape or sack made from roe-deer skin (Asingh and Lynnerup 2007: 241) and was clearly fleshed at the time as both cranium and mandible are present. This individual is famous for his distinctive hair colour, stained by the bog to a brilliant amber, and his hairstyle, known as a ‘Suebian knot’ (van der Sanden 1996: 91; see Figure 6.5). This design was mentioned by Tacitus in *Germania* (Mattingley 1970: 38) as a distinctively masculine arrangement for long hair among the Suebi: partly to distinguish status, both freeman from slave, but also youth from age, and the most elaborate hair arrangements were reserved for their chiefs. Tacitus is at pains to argue this is not the result of vanity but rather ‘to appear tall in stature and to inspire fear’ – adorning themselves ‘for their foe’ (cited in van der Sanden 1996: 145). A sharp-force blow had left its mark just above the right orbit and he had been decapitated at the second cervical vertebra (Asingh and Lynnerup 2007: 246 and 309). This wrapping of a decapitated head suggests not only the disguising of the face and its fate from view but perhaps also a parcelling up to transport the head to the bog. Such isolated heads need not necessarily imply ‘aggressive, predatory headhunting’, as Armit (2015b: 591) points out, for the taking of heads is a ‘malleable phenomenon, varying in its nature, intent, and intensity over time’. Yet as Armit (2015b: 591) goes on to acknowledge, the metaphysical and symbolic power of decapitation almost always concerns ‘the creation and maintenance of social power’, especially among ‘emergent elites’.

The most recent Iron Age Irish discoveries show a similar tale of violence and dismemberment. Clonycavan Man died around 392–201 BC. He was not a tall man, but had both a beard and impressive hair: selectively shaved at the front and cut short at the back, with lengths of up to 20 cm of hair scraped into a ‘topknot’ (Kelly 2013: 234), although the original reports of the use of a Mediterranean ‘pine resin’ hair wax have now been discounted (Mulhall pers. comm.). Given the cutting of other bog body hair, we must consider whether this was a self-preparation (part of how he made himself intimidating to his enemies as in the Suebi) or if this was part of the ritual preparation – even humiliation – prior to his death. He had consumed quite a high plant-based diet in the last few months before his death, suggesting this may have occurred in the summer months (Mulhall pers. comm.).



6.5 The decapitated head from Osterby, displaying both the sharp-force trauma above the right orbit and the impressive Suebian knot hairstyle. All rights reserved and permission to use the figure must be obtained from the copyright holder.

A large, sharp-force and crushing blow to his head coupled with several to his chest suggests the use of an axe to kill him, probably delivered from the front, while he knelt before them (Mulhall pers. comm.). The 40 cm long sharp-edged wound in the stomach suggests that disembowelling followed soon after and the body was separated from the rest of the pelvic girdle and legs (Figure 6.6).



6.6 Clonycavan Man. All rights reserved and permission to use the figure must be obtained from the copyright holder.

In contrast, only the torso and arms of Old Croghan Man were found deposited in a bog pool somewhere between 362 and 175 BC (Kelly 2013). He appears to be of impressive stature at around 5 foot 11.5 inches (Kelly 2013: 234; Mulhall pers. comm.), wearing a small, slit-braided hide armband: decorated with impressed 'dot and circle' style copper alloy clamps, positioned on his upper left arm. Stable isotope analysis suggests quite a high meat-based diet in the last four months preceding his death (indicative perhaps of a winter demise), yet his last meal consisted of buttermilk and ground rye cereal (Kelly 2013). His fingernails appear well cut and manicured with little evidence of scarring that might be expected of rough agricultural labour (Mulhall pers. comm.). Despite this apparently advantageous life, he may have been tortured before his demise: both nipples appear cut by clean, clear incisions that show no signs of tearing and are not fully detached (Mulhall pers. comm.). It has been suggested that this too is the result of post-mortem damage in the bog – similar 'cuts' were also noted on Clonycavan Man – but if so, this very selective and clean tearing has not been reported so far from any other bog body. A deep, fatal stab wound to the left-hand side of the chest appears to have been the cause of death and an incision on the left arm appears to be a classic 'parry' wound, attempting to ward off an armed adversary. A final deep tear or graze on the left elbow might have been sustained during the manhandling of the victim or his corpse around the time of death (Kelly 2013). Together, the injuries suggest a frontal attack by a right-handed assailant, before he was decapitated: his thorax was severed from his chest and he was then disembowelled (Kelly 2013: 236). Deep slits were then made in both upper arms, through which were pushed woven withies made from two-year-old hazel wands: Kelly (2013: 236–7) interprets these as 'spancel bands' – the small hobbles used to tether animals from straying or keep them still while milking, which in Irish folklore led to symbolic associations with fertility and the notion that these objects could protect boundaries (Figure 6.7). His dismembered remains were thus quite literally 'tethered' to the bog, perhaps speaking of the fear that he might rise again or harnessing the power of his life and drama of his death to the fecundity of the place.

Other bog bodies found in this recent spate of Irish discoveries include one of the earliest known: the contorted body of Cashel Man, dating to the early Bronze Age; the late Iron Age/Roman era remains of Derryvarroge Man and the early medieval Cloonshannagh body. Full dating and interpretation of these internationally significant interments, and the circumstances behind them, is eagerly awaited. Meanwhile, the only other late Bronze Age/early Iron Age bog body (753–409 BC), Moydrum Man, was so mangled by the peat extraction process that no obvious cause of death can be identified. Nonetheless, he tells a fascinating tale of a last meal of over two to three hundred sloe stones (*Prunus spinosa*), ingested shortly before his death, which made for a most dramatic X-ray. The cyanide content of the sloe stones is probably negligible given that the pips appear intact but the symbolic importance of the blackthorn in Irish Celtic mythology led Kelly (2013) to suggest this was a symbolically loaded but unpleasant last meal, forcibly ingested as a humiliation to a 'failed king'. Using evidence of inauguration rites



6.7 Old Croghan Man's armlet. All rights reserved and permission to use the figure must be obtained from the copyright holder.

from early medieval texts, Kelly (2006) argues that these prestigious bodies represented leaders who had presided at a time of crises. Their symbolic 'marriage' to the land was perceived to have failed, perhaps due to famine, poor weather, disease or conflict. In order to usher in a new leader and a new era, the relationship between sovereign and land had to be violently severed and the remains deposited at significant boundaries of these small kingdoms (later fossilised as medieval 'barony boundaries'). This novel interpretation has merit, not least because it alters our vision of the bog bodies not just as lowly scapegoats or rather wretched sacrifices, but powerful, even sacred or semi-divine sovereign beings. It also features the bog as a place of sacred communion with supernatural forces, a role strongly supported by the extensive deposition record from Ireland discussed in Chapter 5. Yet in relation to the sloes we must again question our own palette. Once the frost has begun to break down the outer skin of this fruit, and especially in dried form, it can be more palatable: it was used as an important source of vitamins at a time of dearth or on the move and a key homeopathic medicine in many ethnopharmacological texts (Hunt 2019). Ötzi (the 'Iceman') carried a small stash of them, with several in his stomach and one found by his body – they were probably the last thing he ate. Sloes have been interpreted as a kind of prehistoric superfood or medical panacea (Heiss and Oeggl 2009; Hunt 2019) and their thorns have an antiseptic property that rendered them useful as wound stitches in

the past. As a stored treasure, the eating of a basketful of the blue-black berries may have been more of an honour than a humiliation, to face the trial ahead, reminiscent of the handful of blackberries eaten by Zweeloo Woman or the apple for Kayhausen Boy. As Heaney (1984) puts it in his poem 'Sloe Gin', such fruits were both 'bitter and dependable'.

The undated body of Dätgen Man from Germany (who had eaten a mix of millet and wheat gruel, possibly enriched by venison, shortly before his death) was found 3 m away from a head (assumed to belong to the same corpse, Gill-Frerking 2014), with its handsome wave of hair also tied in a Suebian knot, suggesting a late Iron Age date (van der Sanden 1996: 113–14). He had been stabbed several times, once in the area of the chest, which penetrated far enough to damage the fifth rib, most likely penetrating the heart. It initially appeared as if multiple assailants were involved, as there was also a wound on his temple and two blows from behind that damaged his third and fourth lumbar vertebrae, as well as damage to his hip and the major limb bones on the right-hand side of the body (van der Sanden 1996: 162). Yet Gill-Frerking (2014: 69) has recently questioned these fractures, suggesting many of them are the result of post-mortem peat compression. What is undisputed is that he was then decapitated: cut marks on the thoracic vertebrae indicate the first blows had happened from the front but the final blow probably came from behind. His genitals also appear to be missing – given the date of discovery (in the mid 1950s) and otherwise good preservation – it suggests that he had been literally emasculated before burial in the peat (Gill-Frerking 2014: 69), around the time of death (Chapman and Gearey 2019: 217). The corpse was staked down with heavy timbers in a hollow in the bog (probably an old peat cutting, see Asingh and Lynnerup 2007: 307) in a rite that once more speaks of concerns about his post-mortem animacy. The excessive violence shown here, the multiple stabbing and the likely targeting of his manhood, remind us of the rumoured fate of the licentious tacksman from Lewis (a 'middleman' who arranged the setting and collection of rents for his laird but clearly abused his position by molesting local women, reputedly put to death by a local mob, see Cowie *et al.* 2011: 25). It is an uncomfortable thought that some of our treasured museum exhibits may be rapists, murderers or criminals, but this was a world without law enforcement, prisons, rehabilitation systems or (for much of the period) even locks. At least some of these bog bodies represent the fatal justice thought fitting to a crime.

Apart from heads, other body parts are known: a leg and foot (showing amputation cut marks) with shoe and woollen 'sock', from Lengener Moor (van der Sanden 1996: 91) and a foot found in a Roman-style shoe at Südmentzhausen (van der Sanden 1996: 79). The nineteenth-century poem 'Die Hand im Moore' commemorates the discovery of an isolated appendage in Germany, well away from any other remains (van der Sanden 1996: 92). Amputation by accident, punishment, conflict or even quasi-medical intervention would all have happened in the past, as would the post-mortem taking of relics: at Cladh Hallan it was the whole 'knee' joint that was sought out and curated. What should one do with such limbs? Detached body parts would have had symbolic meanings lost to us but

also a disquieting and uncanny force that might have required their individualised 'burial' in a pit (seen extensively in the Wessex storage pit tradition, see Cunliffe 1992; Aldhouse-Green 2002) or as here, in the bog.

The case of Lindow Man

Lindow Man represents the remains identified as Lindow II, and possibly Lindow IV from Cheshire in the UK. He was reasonably healthy when he died, sometime between the first and second centuries AD (Gowlett 1989; Housley *et al.* 1995). He had mild osteoarthritis of the thoracic and lower vertebrae, which suggests he played his part in weight-bearing activities and load carrying, leading to the normal wear and tear we would expect of a farming life. His teeth were in excellent condition, perhaps suggesting some privilege certainly in later life (as identified in a number of significant Iron Age chariot burials just to the east of this region, among the so-called 'Arras' culture, see Giles *et al.* 2020). His nails too were in neat condition, with no heavy scarring or surface damage seen in the comparative analysis of the nails of an agricultural labourer (Stead *et al.* 1986: 70). Yet he also suffered from a high level of parasitical worm infestation (maw-worm and whipworm), which would have caused abdominal pain, distention, weight loss and potentially some unpleasant complications (Stead *et al.* 1986). Nonetheless, he had eaten a last barley-based meal, probably a griddle cake (heated to *c.*200°, ruling out a gruel or soup), with some spelt and emmer wheat and a few weed species; barley smut again indicated this was a slightly infected stored crop (van der Sanden 1996: 117). The cereal remains were very finely ground, leaving a sandy trace in the blend, and a number of fragments of the outer layers of hazelnuts were also found. Carbonised fragments, animal hair and tissue suggest the addition of some meat, as well as moss leaves perhaps from local drinking water. This was a man who had enjoyed a diverse and tasty last meal of meat, griddle cake and nuts (Stead *et al.* 1986: 122–3). Among the gut contents were also found pollen grains of mistletoe that may have been ingested from the surface of a berry or breathed in (Stead *et al.* 1986: 131). Magilton (1995) and Aldhouse-Green (2002: 124) tentatively link this to classical references of Druidic use of mistletoe. Meanwhile, Ross (1986) has drawn an analogy between the charred griddle cake and a Scottish piece of folklore regarding the selection of a symbolic midwinter 'sacrifice', also linking the pollen to Druidic practice, to argue Lindow Man was a ritual prince: 'devoted' to the gods through death (Ross and Robins 1989). (They even bestowed upon him an invented name: 'Lovernius', based on his fox-fur armband still tied around his upper left arm – the same position as Old Croghan Man's armband). It is unlikely, however, that this small amount of pollen was significant (Stead *et al.* 1986: 132), merely suggesting he had travelled through woodland on his way to the bog, or ingested water or food upon which the pollen had settled, giving a season of death around late spring/early summer. Alternatively, the low pollen count might suggest he died later in the year, ingesting berries with a low pollen count residing

in the stigma (Stead *et al.* 1986: 132): at this level of contamination, it is unlikely to have been used as a hallucinogen or poison, but it may have been used as a medicine for his intestinal cramps. It has been proposed that he was covered in some form of clay-based iron and copper-rich pigment, as was the Lindow III male bog body (Pyatt *et al.* 1991; Pyatt *et al.* 1995). There were certainly elevated levels of these minerals in the torso and hands of Lindow III compared with the heel and background peat, which have yet to be adequately explained (Cowell and Craddock 1995: tab. 13). However, Smith (1993) attributes the 'green fluorescence' observed in the body's hair and nails (as well as the fox-fur armband) to the reaction of keratin with the deoxygenated acidic environment of the bog.

Whether Lindow Man was a 'painted' body or not, the blow to the back fractured a left rib and may have brought him to his knees (Stead *et al.* 1986: 77), where he was hit on the crown and probably rear-occipital region of his head from behind. This consisted of at least one or two massive blows from something like a narrow-bladed and fairly blunt axe, which caused a transverse depressed fracture of the skull and skin wound of c.35 mm in length, driving a wedge of bone into the cranial matter (Bourke cited in Stead *et al.* 1986: 46). A second fracture of the skull was revealed in the occipital bone in the X-ray, which might have been caused by something less sharp, like a cudgel, since it did not cause a penetrating exterior wound (Stead *et al.* 1986: 78). The force of these blows had led to a clean break of one molar tooth (Stead *et al.* 1986: 60), stunning him, if not rendering him unconscious. The damage to the brain and internal haemorrhaging mean that these blows alone would have been fatal but not immediate – the slightly swollen wound margins suggest he was still alive at this point (Stead *et al.* 1986: 77–8). A high cervical spine peri-mortem fracture between C3/C4 was also observed (Stead *et al.* 1986: 46, 65, figs 31 and 77), corresponding to the exterior position of a short, fine length of animal sinew, found around the neck. It was interpreted by the team as a ligature, tied with a central knot and two 'stopper knots', which would have needed a small bar or piece of wood to be progressively tightened like a modern tourniquet (West cited in Stead *et al.* 1986: 78; see Figure 6.8). This is not a classic strangulation; indeed, its purpose may have been to exacerbate the flow of blood as much as progressively cut off circulation or fracture the neck (Budworth *et al.* cited in Stead *et al.* 1986: 38–9). (A 'rilled' iron object found close to the head of Lindow I might have fulfilled this function rather well but it came from peat over 200 m away, see Stead *et al.* 1986: 39, fig. 13.) That blood flow was initiated, rather like Grauballe Man, when his throat was then cut just above the ligature as the knot was tightened, leaving a 6 cm long wound – possibly from a stabbing rather than a slashing or cutting gesture (Stead *et al.* 1986: 79 and fig. 40). In addition to this focus on the head and neck, there is also a suggestion of a stab wound to his right upper chest, which could not be fully confirmed by the analysis due to decomposition in this area (Stead *et al.* 1986: 80). Severe head wounds, asphyxiation and exsanguination, finished off by a breaking of the neck using the garotte, brought about a 'multiple' death but not the neat three-fold or triple death favoured by those who wanted to see a Celtic ritual exercised upon this bog body (cf. Magilton 1995).



6.8 The ligature and wound to the throat on Lindow Man
 (© The Trustees of the British Museum)

In 2004, Ron Hutton (2004b) questioned the circular logic that he felt had fitted Lindow Man too ‘neatly’ into the pantheon of northern European bog body sacrifices, as promoted by Glob’s seminal 1969 volume. He queried the forensic analysis of Iain West (the lead pathologist) in the original monograph, preferring the scepticism of Robert Connolly (the physical anthropologist), who published his own brief assessment of the violence (Connolly 1985) prior to the British Museum volume (Stead *et al.* 1986). Connolly did not dismiss the skull fractures, but attributed the breaking of the neck not to a garotte but to a final blow on the back of the head/upper neck. He saw the ‘ligature’ as a ‘decorative’ necklet for some trinket, failing to find any evidence of stress or trauma on the throat’s cartilage; yet at 1.5 mm diameter and 315 mm in length, compared with a minimal neck circumference of 255 mm, this must have been a tight fit. As we have seen above, plant tissue or a strip of hide is a more routine fabric for such thongs than the two-ply, S-spun animal tissue used here. The rest of the forensic team disagreed with Connolly, pointing out the well-defined abrasive marks on the front and sides of the throat, identical to the position of those on Tolland Man. They did not believe the tightness of the sinew and these indents were the result of putrefactive decomposition, otherwise the area of the beard should have shown a similar signature. Nor was there enough infestation to suggest putrefaction had set in: the body showed every sign of rapid immersion and cessation of decay, and the micro-environment

of the bog often results in differential preservation between parts of the same body (Stead *et al.* 1986: 48, 79–80 and fig. 79). Finally, Connolly attributed the neck wound to post-mortem tearing – an important argument given the reassessments of many fractures and flesh tissue discussed above, but none of those reassessments relate to the kind of cut or split seen here. The edge of the wound margin is extraordinarily sharp and neat (Figure 6.8), and there are no other such tears anywhere else on the neck or upper body. In addition, Stead *et al.* (1986: 79) reported that the thyroid cartilage had been cut, which probably means that the jugular vein itself would have been severed. Connolly did not address this other evidence for violence, as Hutton admits, and both authors gloss over the additional forensic expertise provided by the renowned osteoarchaeologist Don Brothwell (who consulted on many well-preserved human remains) and surgeon Jim Bourke, who mutually authored the final report. Hutton's (2004b) scepticism is also built on the early Roman date for this event, arguing that by this stage 'such [ritual] killings were socially unacceptable and illegal'. Given that we have now have a minimum of three individuals from Lindow Moss (Turner 1995a) and its proximity to the Roman forts of *Mamucium* (Manchester) and *Melandria* (Glossop), this again seems a little naive. Both were garrisoned by auxiliaries drawn from Germany and the Netherlands – colonisers for whom violent death and deposition in the local bog was not an unthinkable crime but a well-established cultural practice that (as we have seen) did not cease with their entry into the Roman world. For example, stable isotope analysis of a crania displayed or at least deposited by the south ditch of the Roman fort of Vindolanda reveals this was a local inhabitant from the north-west of Britain, presumably executed and displayed by the military (Buck 2018). A second, Severan era skull – both of which show sharp-force cut marks – was found in 2018 near the base of the north ditch (Buck 2018). We will revisit the likelihood of such colonially spurred sacrifice, violence or punitive revenge, in the following chapter. Nonetheless, Hutton (2004a) had a point: the fondness for the trope of ritual sacrifice (Stead *et al.* 1986: 80) had overridden alternative hypotheses. Lindow Man *might* have been 'a willing or reluctant human sacrifice, a member of or a stranger to the people who put him in the bog', but he could also be 'a victim of violent crime or an individual executed (justly or not) for an offence' (Stead *et al.* 1986: 80).

Connolly's (1985: 17) preferred interpretation was that this represented a 'chance wayside killing' of 'a man wearing a necklace'; to underline his point he (or the magazine) commissioned what strikes us as now as a repellent homophobic cartoon of an Iron Age thug confronting an effeminate man who is adorned with 'necklet', handbag and limp hand gesture. The image and its inference would now be regarded as irresponsible scholarship, but it does have much in common with the Nazi use of bog bodies discussed in Chapter 2. To remind ourselves, in 1937 Himmler gave a talk to the SS Luftwaffen in which he claimed: 'This was not a punishment, but simply the termination of an abnormal life' (cited in Taylor 2008: 146). This is not to pretend that persecution did not exist in the past; the Bronze and Iron Age may well have marked the moment when (as discussed

earlier) quite 'stable, cross-contextual gender patterns snap into clear focus,' as Robb and Harris (2018: 141–2) put it. Violence of course still exists in many cultures against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer (or questioning) and other (LGBTQ+) individuals. Yet some Iron Age case studies suggest that those who did embody gender fluidity or multiplicity may not have been vilified, but accorded special status (Jordan 2016). We certainly need to think carefully about the risk of mobilising the past in this way, naturalising such a brutal death on the basis of sexual orientation – and this is not something Hutton comments upon.

Briggs (one of the original compilers of the bog body catalogue published in Stead *et al.* 1986 and revised in Turner and Scaife 1995) became similarly sceptical of the 'sacrifice' theory. He reinterpreted the damage to the Lindow body as the result of someone trying to rescue a struggling or drowned corpse, reducing this to an accidental death (Briggs 1995). He suggested that some of the head trauma and swollen cranial wound margin might have been caused by 'the head protruding from a *Sphagnum* pool ... and being prodded ... by someone wielding a sharp pointed stock' (Briggs 1995: 174). The differential decay of the hands and presence of some parasitic beetles might be explained, he thought, by such protrusion or exposure on the bog surface (Briggs 1995: 175). He goes on to query many other bog bodies, where the damage to the neck may (along with supposed hanging ropes or strangulation cords and the presence of stakes and hurdles) be the result of using 'hasty makeshifts for rescuing victims of accident', resulting in some unfortunate friction 'burn marks' from trying to drag the body by the head (Briggs 1995: 177). He suggests so-called decapitated heads and other body parts could arise through natural separation, peat compression and convection if not botched rescue and rather than being stripped, the apparent nakedness of many remains might be explained through struggle and loss of garments in the water. Briggs (1995: 178 and 181) questions the published 'execution' methods, seeing them as anachronistic for the Iron Age (perhaps forgetting or ignorant of the revised early Roman date) and muses that no self-respecting executioner would put himself at such jeopardy by dragging a body (dead or alive) out into such a dangerous locale. Many bog bodies, he contends, 'quite definitely fell, some appear to have been mugged and were therefore probably pushed' (Briggs 1995: 182), returning his own 'open verdict' on Lindow Man's demise.

In direct response to Hutton, but also addressing Connolly and Briggs's concerns, the British Museum curator of the Iron Age at the time, J. D. Hill (2004a, 2004b), patiently reiterated contextual and forensic details for a premeditated stripping, preparation and sustained attack upon the individual. He pointed to the fact that whether Lindow Man lived in a pre- or post-conflict generation, relations between the Roman forces and the local communities were probably not peaceable. Hill (2004a, 2004b) thus argued that the notion of planned and in performance terms *ritualised* killing (rather than pure sacrifice, an important distinction) should be seriously borne in mind. What we can say with certainty, building on the landscape work of Chapman (2015; see also Chapter 4) is that Lindow Man was brought to the furthest locale from the shore, at the deepest area of the bog,

around the time of his brutal death. From the vital reaction to his wounds, the lack of *sustained* insect infestation and risk of carrying a 'dead weight' out into the bog, we can propose that he walked out on to the bog. Given the sequence of injuries, it is unlikely that this was a protracted affair: we seem to be looking at a small cohort tasked with taking his life, using multiple methods to 'finish it' swiftly but messily – a bit of a bloody frenzy. This does not help us discern the difference between ritual killing for sacrifice, the swift 'assisted' death of a self-sacrifice or killing for punishment or revenge, but the evidence does point to an aspect of preparation, choice of locale and multiple participants. Essentially, what Hutton called for was an honest plurality of interpretations – this book finds no disagreement with that exhortation. Ritualised killing (as proposed by Hill) – whatever the motive – is an apposite concept to describe this event.

Violence in the Iron Age and early Roman world

The scepticism of Briggs, Connolly and Hutton is understandable given the infamy of the 'bog body', the spurious 'Celtic' mythology woven around these remains and the notoriety, contention and debate surrounding their display (Giles 2009; Sanders 2009). Yet their apparent reluctance to accept shocking levels of interpersonal violence in later prehistory is misplaced if not surprising (see James 2007; Redfern 2016; Smith 2017). In this section, I want to put the bog bodies in context by using evidence from Iron Age sites within the UK and the near Continent, moving from a few dryland examples to wetter case studies. Like the bog bodies, these tend to be non-normative mortuary rites and some, but not all, show evidence of violence.

In the hillfort of Danebury, a variety of complete, partial and fragmentary human remains were found in disused grain storage pits (Cunliffe 1995; Booth and Madgwick 2016). They show a disproportionate degree of violence compared with a normal population (Sharples 2010; Cunliffe *et al.* 2015), largely meted out to adult males, including sharp-force wounds (from picks, axes and swords), knife wounds, spear-blade and spear-shaft injuries and blunt-force trauma. Deposition 11, for example, had a peri-mortem spear-blade puncture wound straight through the frontal bone and a depressed fracture (possibly the spear shaft) in the top of the cranium, as well as a grazing, glancing blow that caused a hairline fracture (Cunliffe 1984: 471, fig. 8.11). Some individuals had survived this inter- or intra-group violence (deposition 50, with a sword cut to the head and a fractured rib that may or may not be accidental) but most did not (including deposition 11, see Cunliffe and Poole 1991: 428). Severed yet fleshed heads (usually adult male) were sometimes curated, perhaps displayed, so that mandibles became detached from the crania (such as in pit 448 and 639, see Craig *et al.* 2005). A 'nest' of such skulls was found in pit 2509 (Cunliffe and Poole 1991: fig. 8.2) while two adult male crania, both bearing massive sword injuries, were found together in deposition 196a/b (Cunliffe and Poole 1991: fig. 8.4). When fleshed, the skulls

would have borne an uncanny resemblance to the Osterby or Stidsholt heads, while their post-cranial remains would have resembled the torso of Old Croghan Man. Butchered pelvic fragments were also found, such as deposition 47 in pit 1020 (a young male, hacked from the legs by chopping through the heads of the femurs and the sacral vertebrae with a sword) and deposition 94, pit 900 (another young male consisting of a pelvic girdle with five lumbar vertebrae still in articulation). Decapitated and armless skeletons were also found (depositions 3 and 10: the latter an adult female from whose spinal column and sacrum had been removed and placed at her legs, see Cunliffe and Poole 1991). Yet although perimortem violence was high, the apparent ‘butchery’ of this dismemberment was carried out after death, as with Old Croghan Man and Clonycavan Man (Booth and Madgwick 2016). Adult men and women dying in their prime may still represent ‘normal’ deaths from diseases or infections that left no skeletal trace and were excarnated to allow partial decay before selective retrieval and post-mortem manipulation, followed by deposition of some body parts (Booth and Madgwick 2016). The focus on the head (which will be further discussed in the following chapter) and elements such as pelvic girdles are interpreted by Cunliffe (1992) as part of a range of highly symbolic, propitiatory offerings (human, animal and material) to the gods for the safe storage of grain. Sharples (2010) does not dismiss this idea completely but points to the relatively high proportion of violent death relating to adults, especially but not exclusively males. He argues that these were socially marginal figures, cut out from a close-knit community or ripped from a rival group: selected for violent death as part of small-scale conflicts (such as the five individuals from a range of contexts who may have died in a specific event around the late fourth or early second century BC, see Cunliffe *et al.* 2015) or more individualised sacrifices or killings that bound the hillfort together (Sharples 2010). In such a tightly knit yet pressurised community, he argues that domestic and neighbourly violence may have been elevated, stoked by fears of malign, supernatural activity: what we might loosely describe as witchcraft. The movement of stock around an increasingly patrolled landscape (indicated in stable isotope analysis by Hamilton *et al.* 2019) no doubt created other moments of inter-group friction and violence. Like the staked bog bodies, some pit ‘burials’ were tied up (deposition 22 in pit 497: an adult woman with her hands ‘crossed’ as if tied), ‘stoned’ or covered over by slingshots (pit 935), and weighted down with flint or chalk blocks (see Cunliffe 1993: 12–13). Some were prone: interred face down (e.g. deposition 24) or thrust head first into the pit (deposition 16, pit 383, see Cunliffe and Poole 1991). Like the Cladh Hallan composite bodies, others were apparently curated in a protected decay environment or ‘sheltered exposure’: covered over from vermin, scavengers and weather while they rotted to a point where post-mortem manipulation or tight rewrapping (as at the nearby Suddern Farm) could take place (Booth and Madgwick 2016). The use of cold, subterranean storage repositories to create a ‘useful’ corpse or facilitate and control their post-mortem career (as ancestor, enemy, witch or revenant) seems uncannily similar to the powers attributed to the bog.

In the ditch of Sutton Common, a so-called ‘marsh fort’ set in the fen carr of South Yorkshire (not far from Hatfield Moss and Thorne Moor) a pair of ‘defended’ enclosures dating to c.372–350 cal BC were constructed in a landscape of change where grazing was opened up and local woodland felled. The site was primarily used for large-scale grain storage and the eastern entranceway had at some point been heavily burned, perhaps in a raid (van der Noort *et al.* 2007). In its northern terminal, two sets of human remains were found: both male, aged between twenty-five and thirty-five years. One (A) was a cranium with mandible fragments, suggesting that this had been a fleshed head. The other (B) consisted of the cranial fragments and the atlas (but no other cervical vertebrae and no mandible) suggesting that the cranium and some attached fleshy neck tissue were deposited into the watery ditch (van der Noort *et al.* 2007: 139). They could have been ‘severed’ heads taken as trophies or merely partially decayed remains from mortuary sites; either way, their deposition created a morbid yet hidden presence, watching over the mire of Shirley Pool. ‘Fleshed heads’ were more prominently on display at the site of the Glastonbury Lake Village (Somerset), with one showing peri-mortem sword cuts and damage to the *foramen magnum* suggesting it had been paraded on a stake or spear shaft (Coles and Minnit 1995: 170–4). At Heslington East near York, the head of a male aged between twenty-six and forty-five was deposited in a pit near a spring site that would have been essential to both seasonal and diurnal movements of stock on and off the dryland ridge and wetter pasture (O’Connor *et al.* 2011: 1643). The cranium and mandible appear to have been fleshed at the time, deposited ‘face down’ in the waterlogged pit sometime between 673 and 482 cal BC, preserving a shrunken mass of brain tissue in the process. The head had been traumatically decapitated, peri-mortem, between cervical vertebrae (CV) two and three, with a sharp-bladed weapon. This was followed soon after by nine ‘sawing’ cut marks from a knife used from the front of the corpse, indicative of ‘almost surgical’, ‘careful and deliberate dismemberment’ of head from torso (O’Connor *et al.* 2011: 1645 and 1648). Putrefaction was halted, suggesting the head had effectively been curated in a cold, slightly acidic, fine-grained, wet sediment. Was this a revered ‘cowey’ or ‘bullocky’ (as stockmen were later known in this region) protecting his own even after his death, or put to death and used to pollute the spring? The severing of the head, humiliatingly placed face down in the wet mud, suggests it could equally be a rival or enemy, an executed cattle raider or water thief.

At the site of Stanwick in northern Britain, another severed, fleshed head was found in the wet ditch of the north-west entranceway. The victim received three blows from a sword or sharp axe, before final decapitation (Wheeler 1954: 54). Wheeler (1954) considered the head to have been a trophy on the oppida’s gateway, later ‘cut down’ and thrown in the watery ditch by Roman forces. Yet Haselgrove (2016: 440) notes that it was found metres away from an impressive Iron Age sword and a length of rope that might mutually represent a deliberate watery deposit, potentially a ‘multiple’ death involving hanging if not binding. They caution that ‘violent death does not necessarily make the man a stranger’ (Haselgrove

2016: 442): this ‘royal’ locale, related to the figure of Queen Cartimandua, was the site of more than one betrayal and broken alliance, stoked by the rewards and dangers of working with the Romans. Meanwhile, the secluded but dramatic site of Sculptor’s Cave, Covesea in Scotland (used for mortuary deposits in the Bronze Age), seems to have been repurposed as an execution site in the late Iron Age/Roman era (Armit *et al.* 2011). A mix of sexes and ages represented here in the human remains, coupled with evidence for an orchestrated bodily performance – with victims forced to kneel and yield to decapitation from behind – suggests the sanctioned dispatch of hostages: perhaps a noble family or lineage, wiped out during turbulent political times (Armit *et al.* 2011: 275; Giles 2015).

Keepsakes, apotropaic amulets and curios were made out of other human remains. At Ham Hill (Cunliffe 1984: 455) and Hunsbury hillforts (Lally 2008), the wetland votive deposition site of Fiskerton (Field and Parker Pearson 2003) and Cnip wheelhouse (Armit and Tucker 2010) cranial fragments were drilled or pierced post-mortem for hanging and display. Some like Cnip were clearly ‘found ancestors’ dating to a few hundred years before their interment; others may have more been recent figures, whose remains served as mnemonics for personal relations. Yet some were ‘fresher’ victims cleaned and kept as polished, portable trophies. At the hillfort of South Cadbury in Somerset, *in situ* killing and destruction is complemented by episodes of selective collection, processing and ‘display’ of the dead (and their weaponry, see Barret *et al.* 2000: 115). Two separate phases of conflagration at the entranceways were linked with a number of bodies who had died violently, yet some beheaded and burned skulls seem to be the result of more purposeful curation and cleaning for display. Damaged weapons and martial kit in the west guard chamber suggests the collection of material trophies, complementing the human remains. At Gussage All Saints (Dorset) a fragment of adult femur was ‘decorated’ with two rough dotted circles composed of small, adjacent pits (Redfern 2008: fig. 7), while a young adult cranial fragment from Maiden Castle was pierced or drilled with a hole (Redfern 2008: fig. 9). Meanwhile, at Billingborough in Lincolnshire, an Iron Age settlement contained fragments of cut and polished cranial fragments, especially vaults, sometimes pierced to aid suspension or to make cranial ‘bowls’ (Chowne *et al.* 2001: 77). For example, no. 5 was sawn, polished and pierced (Chowne *et al.* 2001: 77).

The above sites differ in scale to the Continental complexes of La Tène, Cornaux-les-Sauges and Marin-Epagnier in Switzerland, or Ribemont-sur-Ancre and Entremont in France (see discussion in Aldhouse-Green 2002), or indeed the later weapons deposits of Denmark (Hjortspring, Vimose, Alken Enge and Illerup). Yet the notion of the gathering of deliberately ruined weaponry and body parts for public display and deposition (often in or near watery contexts) is a theme found across mid to late Iron Age northern Europe. At a large or small scale, they tell us that human remains were part of the material embodiment of lethal power that was increasingly used in display, performance or deposition: exercising humiliation, celebrating victory, collecting, cleansing and offering up ruined bodies as well as blades.

I want to end this brief survey with a study of the terp region of the Netherlands by Annet Nieuwhof (2015). On this artificially reclaimed and built-up landscape, located near to both the coast and peaty wetlands, she demonstrates an extraordinary array of Iron Age mortuary practices. There are the titular 'eight human skulls in a dung heap', argued to be the end-point curation of valuable, excarnated skulls, kept in a material redolent of the hearth, warmth, fertility and thus 'good fortune' (Nieuwhof 2015: 140). To this phenomenon she is able to add formal inhumations, isolated excarnated bones (gnawed and weathered, some defleshed), rare cremations and a suite of human remains modified to make cranial bowls, pierced roundels and a handle. Not far from the settlements and burials on the terp itself, the peat has yielded what we would classify as 'bog bodies'. Violence at the point of death and post-mortem processing is represented across these remains, such that with the highly modified and curated body parts it is impossible to distinguish between 'trophy heads' and the 'curated skulls of venerated forebears' (Armit 2012b): the reviled and the revered. Nieuwhof's approach is not to judge their identity and relationship to the living, but to observe the diversity of rites and contrastive locales of deposition within close proximity.

This selective review from a range of sites from Iron Age Britain and the near Continent situates the British bog bodies and heads – the individuals from Lindow, Ashton Man, the women from Pilling Moss and Red Moss – into a world of endemic conflict. Their injuries and fate differ little from Stanwick Man, the Heslington head or the Covesea victims. The wounds on such skeletonised remains are a pale shadow of the full suite of trauma suffered by some of these people as they died and we are largely missing the hangings, strangulations, pierced major organs and flesh wounds that the bog bodies allow us to 'see'. Perhaps this is why we are so perturbed by the apparent 'overkill' meted out to the bog victims, when its visibility is merely an accident of preservation. At one level, the purpose of this section is to debunk the 'specialness' of the bog bodies, and propose that the moss and the mire are merely the appropriate place to dispose of such remains for those living in its shadow: in Wessex it is a storage pit, in Yorkshire a wet ditch or hollow and in Scotland it could be a cave. Whatever the circumstance or motivation, the bloody matter of a killing needed careful handling: it was the very stuff of life. We therefore need to see the bogs within a wider suite of powerful locales where subterranean forces (particularly those linked to water) could help mediate practices that spilled life over into death (Bradley 2017). It is to the performative dimension of those actions that the next section turns.

How we die: performing death in the Iron Age

Much of the violence done to bog bodies, whether it was carried out upon a living being or their remains, was highly performative. For example, we can interpret the 'stripping' of clothing as an ante-mortem act of humiliation, rendering them vulnerable, shamed. Yet nakedness on the cusp of death might alternatively

embody heroic nudity, as in the Archaic period in Greece. In *Histories*, Polybius (cited in Shuckburgh 1962: 2: 28) tells us that the several Celtic barbarian mercenaries fought naked in the battle of Telamon 225 BC, a custom also reported among the Gauls by Diodorus Siculus in *Bibliotheca Historia* (Oldfather 1933: V, 29: 2 and 30: 3) as the embodiment of boldness and bravery. We should also remember folkloric attitudes to the apotropaic power of cloth associated with sudden death or mysterious preservation – the taking of textile scraps from Lady Moira’s Drumkeeragh bog body and the Berrybrush ‘suicide’ victim. If some of the bog people were sanctified towards death, about to enter the divine, then perhaps through spiritual contagion their clothes now had a new value, a protective power. These textiles may have been deliberately taken (still warm, from the living body poised on the cusp of death) to enter a new life used perhaps in acts of memory, apotropaism, medicinal cures or even new inaugurations.

Beyond the symbolic violence of stripping or declodging, rarely do we see the use of a single fatal wound and more often, multiple methods and implements were used. Much of this is palpably different to the techniques used to dispatch and butcher animals in the Iron Age; maiming, torture and violent humiliation such as the stripping of clothes or cutting of hair, suffocation, garrotting, hanging or stabbing are all *peculiarly* human ways to die. We can tentatively note a difference between the opportunistic, random and pragmatic frenzy of conflict (doing whatever was needed to finish someone off, often ending with humiliating disfigurement or trophy taking), and the more controlled, highly performative spectacle of an execution or a sacrifice that may target symbolically loaded areas of the body. The latter two are often indiscernible, and execution need not involve criminality – it can be the sanctioned means of making a sacrifice (Bo Jensen pers. comm.) The staging of these planned modes of death constructed a ritualised trajectory, a parabola of staggered violence. They required setting, timing and sequence: the ‘hitting’ of pre-planned marks punctuated by moments of devastating rupture, then stillness (see Pearson and Shanks 2001). Such violence was necessarily improvised: a struggle between perpetrator and victim. As Larson (2014: 83) puts it: ‘everyone, even the victim, must play their part’. Their mutual demeanour was an unknown quantity: how much humiliation or pain was inflicted, how and by whom, and whether this was meant to be endured or end swiftly. We do not know the size of the audience – the use of the bog suggests that something that began publicly on dry land might end more privately on the moss at the hands of a small group. It involved a journey: a temporal rhythm fraught with extreme stress and fear. The scale and character of most of the deaths in the bog fit well with the notion of ‘participatory violence’ discussed by Aldhouse-Green (2002). This concept can apply to small mob killings, ‘rough’ justice or sanctioned judicial acts, like the ‘firing squad’ whose bullets mutually penetrate the captive or gang violence where no one hand deals the final blow. Yet it has most often been related in bog body studies to Girard’s concept of the cathartic power of a communal act of ‘scapegoating’ (Sitch 2009): a sacrifice serving to protect the wider community from its own violent tendencies by exteriorising and freighting the victim with

its fears, urges or ills (Aldhouse-Green 2016: 175). Girard (1977) argued that this phenomenon was most often seen at times of crisis where its effectiveness was magnified by collective action. Aldhouse-Green (2002) argues that such sacrifices also depended on visceral performance, the shedding of blood, seizing of breath or tearing destructive frenzy, which people believed put them in touch with the divine. The 'taking' of such *anima* (as the Classical world defined it) is similar to Bloch's concept of the release and capturing of 'transcendental vitality' (Bloch 1982). Bloch suggests that this is managed through moments of violence that sever the victim from the everyday (perhaps embodied in the bog bodies through stripping, cutting of hair, binding or hobbling and taking out on to the bog) before a second more dramatic violence that harnesses a new, creative vitality: allowing the participants to 'return' to everyday life but leaving them tainted or glowing with this transcendental aura (Bloch 1992, discussed in Ralph 2013: 7–8). This is not just sanctioned but 'sanctified violence' (Ralph 2013). In contrast to Fontijn's work on deposition, sacrifice here is seen as 'a means to an end rather than an end in itself' (Aldhouse-Green 2002: 20): an exchange designed to reap benefits, rooted in commensal, violent action. One of the outcomes of this then, is the renewing of the forces of life and fertility that Glob ([1969] 1971) argued lay at the heart of the deaths of both Tollund Man and Grauballe Man. Even if it does not explain all bog bodies, it is an important corollary to the anti-ritual and anti-sacrificial stances of Briggs and Hutton.

Whether we believe Lindow Man was a sacrifice or an execution, we can helpfully focus – like Fontijn (2020) – on the dramaturgy of death and deposition. Such dramas were designed to terrify, appal, demean and sometimes, obliterate – the performance of killing is, after all, one of the most powerful psychological weapons of conflict (Hughes 2011). Importantly, the fact that the bog bodies sank from view puts them in a different category from those remains manipulated through display or curation (such as the gathered up remains from Alken Enge). Following deposition, they were *materially intangible* – their force lay in the imagined, threatened and remembered fears of witnesses and participants (James 2013: 103).

Violence here is conceptualised not as purely destructive but constructive (Ralph 2013: 7): in the Iron Age it patrolled boundaries, reinforced cultural rules, punished transgressions and offered revenge. Bellicosity was a trope of power (Harrell 2012) and violence worked because of its 'eruptive possibility' (Whitehead 2004: 18). In the Iron Age and Roman period, it was not an aberration: James (2013) encourages us to rethink of 'the calculated use of injurious force' as a kind of 'instrumental violence' not an impulsive or pathological one. It was part of how people 'became' as well as how they were 'undone'. Violence revived, motivated and inflamed just as it also, at times, made an end of things. This is not to negate the damage wrought by violence but rather, to recognise that it was a productive tool with which to order the world; a strategy of legitimation that categorised some as inhuman, relegating their deaths to unmournable, 'ungrievable' lives (as Butler (2010) has recently put it). If at least some of the bog bodies do indeed represent sacrifices, it presumably

also offered hope to the perpetrators that their gesture would in some way be reciprocated. Intervention, assistance, restitution or good fortune might follow. What was required then was a ‘good’ performance that was fitting and just: evaluated not merely by other people (die he/she ‘die well’ or ‘suffer enough?’) but judged by the spiritual world to have intervened appropriately with the forces of life and death (see Giles 2015). Such a performance and the affects it wrought embody the ambiguity that Heaney (1999: 4) captures in poetry, where these deaths lie somewhere ‘between beauty and atrocity’. Those that managed this feat earned renown for a prowess that was not simply martial but supernatural (Aldhouse-Green 2002: 197). As unpleasant as it is to contemplate, the ‘poetics’ as much as the politics are crucial to understanding the particular purpose of violence (Whitehead 2004).

What were such deaths like then, both for the victim and perpetrator? Chapman and Geary (2019) have recently contemplated this from the perspective of an ‘archaeology of pain’ based on the intensity and duration of the victim’s suffering. In contrast, this chapter has sought to understand the full biography of the individual before such events unfolded, and my approach draws instead upon the extraordinary study entitled *How We Die* by medical expert Sherwin Nuland (1993). Drowning, whether by accident, suicide or deliberate force amounts to a form of asphyxia where water fills the airways and passes down into the lungs. It is not a particularly quick death – taking perhaps two to three minutes before decreasing oxygen levels in the blood relax the spasms of the larynx, leading to a ‘terminal gasp phase’ (Nuland 1993: 161). Hanging is also neither a swift nor a pleasant death, relying on the victim’s own body weight (or bystander’s assistance) to hasten the obstruction of the airway to cause death through asphyxia. According to van der Sanden (1996: 155), this can take up to twenty minutes though unconsciousness may be immediate. The transfigurative effect of such a slow death upon the face, seen also in strangulation, can be appalling (Nuland 1993: 160). Given the serenity of Tolland Man’s expression, his death was probably precipitated by the skilfully positioned knot that fractured and dislocated the spinal column at the base of his skull, causing immediate shock, paralysis of respiration and a swifter death (Nuland 1993: 160). Decapitation, meanwhile, has the illusion of ‘a brutal but effective’ death, intensely painful but short-lived. As Larson (2014: 13–14) notes, for the onlookers it ‘draws its cultural power from its sheer velocity ... death is presented as instantaneous.’ Fatal haemorrhaging from blunt- or sharp-force trauma, known as exsanguination, often begins with hyperventilation: the body’s fight to compensate for the loss of oxygen in the blood. Eventually the brain will cease to function; unconsciousness follows but the ‘lower’ part of the brain will try to continue respiration, before fibrillation (cardiac arrest) precipitates the agonal breathing that heralds clinical death (Nuland 1993: 124–9). Yet Nuland (1993: 129) reports that in such cases of very rapid bleeding out, victims often appear not to register terror or shock as much as surprise, even release, which he attributes to the release of endorphins that create a kind of stupor or insulating aura (Nuland 1993: 133–4). I have summarised ‘ways of dying’ that relate most closely to the bog bodies not to dwell on their horror but to think about the temporal

sequence, visceral effect and spectacle created through these modes of killing. The experience *was* designed to be theatrical, morbidly thrilling, coruscating even in the squeezing, wringing, wounding bloodshed it wrought. Yet Nuland's insights suggest that for many it was fast, with unconsciousness marking the beginning of their demise. Perhaps this helped render them pliant during the rest of their ideal but there is certainly a sense of the hastening of death in many cases. This is not, however, to diminish the minutes, hours, days even, during which a victim may have been intimidated, abused, humiliated or tortured. The rare 'slave' chains, anklets and manacles from sites like Llyn Cerrig Bach or Bigbury hillfort (made of solid forged iron – a precious commodity) suggests that some of these people may have been important hostages kept for a time, mindful of their final fate. Diodorus Siculus (cited in Oldfather 1933: V, 32.5–6) reports upon this 'outlandish impiety ... with respect to their sacrifices, for their criminals they keep prisoner for five years and then impale them in honour of the gods, dedicating them together with many other offerings of first fruits'. Randsborg (2015: 19) contextualises this growth in hostage taking (for surety) and killing (for revenge) in the political cauldron of tribal rivalry, wavering imperial alliances and indigenous betrayals that characterised Rome's move into northern Europe.

Precarious lives or honourable ends: the identity of the victims

As the previous section implies, there were good ways to die in the Iron Age (sudden, unexpected, preferably in one's sleep) and bad ways to die (protracted, painful, enervating, humiliating, robbing people of their personality and dignity). So who were these 'victims' and does this alter how we see their deaths? Using both textual and archaeological sources, Aldhouse-Green (2002: 139–60) describes the different categories typically selected for sacrifice or ritual killing: prisoners, enemy captives, liminal or outsider figures and slaves (often selected as acceptable 'scapegoats'), youths and children (thought to be particularly rich or abundant in purity or fertility), as well as the 'afflicted', 'marked out' by deformity, debilitating injury or disease. Van der Sanden (1996: 178) cites the classical texts on both prisoners of war, offenders/criminals and children, mentioning an instance of intended child sacrifice, chosen merely 'by lot' in early medieval Frisia, which an early Bishop, Wulfrin, averts through a miracle. Lottery too, of a kind, is mentioned by Strabo in relation to female priestesses from the Loire island sanctuary (in Iron Age France) from whose midst a sacrifice had to be found (cited in Aldhouse-Green 2016: 146–7). She was identified by the 'dropping' of a bundle of reeds intended to reroof the sanctuary: a 'drawing of the short straw' that actually seems more strategically designed – 'it always happens that someone pushes against the woman who is destined to suffer this fate', Strabo notes (*Geography* 4: 4.5–6 cited in Aldhouse-Green 2016: 147). Taylor (2002), like Aldhouse-Green, suggests that many bog bodies fit the concepts of the 'other', which allowed them to be sanctioned or licensed for death when it was required. More recent scholars

have further probed this uncomfortable issue of necropolitics: who was chosen to die and why (Fredengren and Löfqvist 2015; Fredengren 2018). They have investigated the detailed osteobiography of bog bodies to show that aspects of disadvantage, misfortune or stigmatisation are common. Many of the Swedish bog skeletons at the heart of their study show evidence of repeated infection, malnourishment, wounding or disability, suggesting they may have been perceived as unable to fulfil what was expected of a 'good' and useful life (especially, perhaps, for men). In other words, Fredengren (2018) argues, they were already living precarious lives before their demise. She draws here on Braidotti's (2013) work on people who qualify for protection and are allowed to thrive, versus those that are left out and consigned to different fates. To cite Judith Butler (2010) again, we thus need to ask which lives were not just 'grievable' but also expendable? Importantly, this thesis notes these were not simply 'natural victims'. It was the ongoing marginalisation and vilification shown to some people that precipitated a slide or gradual descent; a longitudinal cultural 'othering' through which such bodies could then satisfy the 'sacrificial logic' of their communities, consigning their life to death.

How generalisable is this model? Outside of Sweden, we do have examples of bog bodies who seem to have had particularly challenging and stressful lives. Windeby Boy and Aschbroeken Man had both experienced periods of nutritional stress in their lives, leaving their trace in Harris lines on the bones and enamel hypoplastics on dentition (van der Sanden 1996: 112). Aschbroeken Man had incipient lipping of his lumbar vertebrae from aging, as well as a healed fracture to his right humerus that had set out of place (van der Sanden 1996: 138). Elling Woman suffered from osteoporosis at the fairly young age of thirty (van der Sanden 1996: 141) and a disadvantaged diet would have exacerbated this condition. Bellevue Skov Woman had a small osteoma – a benign but uncomfortable tumour – on the right tibia (Ravn 2011: 85). Yet all of these conditions might be expected in an average Iron Age farming community. Rarer conditions and evidence for medical intervention are more telling. One of the two bog skeletons from Døringe in Denmark had a severely foreshortened right humerus and a split in his thoracic vertebrae indicative of spina bifida; his skull showed evidence of at least one trepanning from which he had recovered (van der Sanden 1996: 142). He was found close to another man who also had a suspicious cavity in the skull but this had not penetrated completely and had healed; a foreshortening of his right humerus and deformation at the femoral head was probably caused by a fracture or dislocation during infancy that never healed properly (van der Sanden 1996: 142). Here we have two males, surviving into their adult years but clearly unable to perform the kind of active life perhaps expected or hoped of them. We have to consider whether their parallel treatment amounts to a stigmatisation of people with a disability, with potentially fatal consequences. The Gadevang bog body had been subject to a trepanation, perhaps suggesting concern with cranial pressure, pain or behavioural change (Ravn 2011: 85). As discussed above, Zweeloo Woman had an irregular gait, with shorted limbs attributed to dyschondrosteosis (van der Sanden 1996: 141; Bianucci *et al.* 2012).

It is surely not controversial to point to the higher risks of illness and violence faced by those on the bottom rungs of society, nor to suggest that weakness or impairment might have become prey to prejudice and persecution. Yet we generally lack the large-scale Iron Age population data to evaluate how common such infections, disease and injuries were. Where it does exist, as for the Arras culture of East Yorkshire, it shows that a considerable number of people suffered from childhood malnutrition, minor fractures, infections and small disabilities – a limp, repeated infections, a withered limb or abscess were not uncommon (Giles 2012: ch. 5). Only a few of the bog bodies (Yde Girl's scoliosis, Lindow III's vestigial thumb, Zweeloo's foreshortened limbs) exhibit the kinds of extraordinary physical difference that occupy the pages of more popular monographs on the topic. Psychological abnormalities were probably of equal if not more pressing concern, though we can only infer this archaeologically where there was a physical cause or intervention such as the above trepanning that can be observed. In conclusion, while some bog body victims fulfil the notion of the 'precarious' or 'stigmatised' body, others bearing these symptoms survived without being hounded into the bog or set up as scapegoats (Ravn 2010). Indeed, these marginal figures are complemented by individuals drawn from the opposite end of society: physically impressive, well-fed, well-dressed people who appear to have avoided an arduous agricultural life. For example, Hall described Old Croghan Man as 'the golden boy of his tribe ... even in death, he oozes confidence, status, presence' (cited in Grice 2006: 20). Apart from the common curse of intestinal parasites, they seem to represent the very best a community could offer. Some were well travelled, skilled and presumably, well connected. They still ended up in the bog. These figures must also be counted.

Perhaps we need to approach the bog body phenomenon from a slightly different angle, suggested from Chapter 5's study of what else went into the moss and the mire: how Iron Age communities managed the 'end' of things. During later pre-history, particular kinds of people might have sought a certain kind – or time – of death. Treherne (1995: 61) argues that Bronze Age warrior figures not only strove for a 'beautiful' way of life but a particular 'death style – a socially prescribed way of expiring', preferably at the height of their prowess and in conflict: meeting death well. While the notion of a pan-northern European 'warrior identity' can and should be deconstructed (Brück in Frieman *et al.* 2016), we should not demean the distinctive practices, mundane as well as spectacular, through which armed figures shaped their force while alive and renown in death (see Giles in Frieman *et al.* 2016). Among the Dinka of Southern Sudan, for example, the 'Spearmaster' must not let Death take him; he must craft his own end, 'leaping' into death to seize a final victory (Lienhardt 1961). Above, the case of the Huron captive was used to make some sense of the suffering meted out to robust male bog bodies. Gaulish captives like Vercingetorix had to 'die well' in the Roman world, at the end of a tortuous imprisonment of six years, waiting for the auspicious moment of the Gallic triumph in 46 BC (Östenberg 2009). This was to be borne, as part of one's mortal fate, even in defeat – and if there was an afterlife or supernatural realm, then this

was merely a painful but assured and honourable entry into it. Self-sacrifice offers another explanation then, for some of the bog bodies (see Giles 2009): giving themselves up perhaps not just as a gift but as an emissary during a time of crisis or to be transformed into a powerful supernatural agent to advise and intervene from beyond the grave (Williams 2003). This transformation then, may have held out the promise not just of post-mortem renown but possibly of conjoining with the divine. The exchange of life force achieved through this voluntary violent death may have been believed to be essential to renew the power or fortunes of their own community. In the Yoruba play *Death and the King's Horseman*, Wole Soyinka (1975) conjures how British colonial authorities sought to prevent what they saw as a 'suicide': intervening in the duty of the king's right-hand man to offer himself, his horse and dog to guide their master into the afterlife. The dawn comes and the auspicious moment passes without sacrifice, irretrievably disrupting the circle of honour, potent vitality and procreative force that his death should have wrought.

In a community with a defined concept of human offering (whether we use the word sacrifice or not) someone needed to die. This creates a completely different ontology to our own. One of the keynote addresses to the 'Alken Enge' conference in 2016 was given by Rane Willerslev in the atmospheric hall of Moesgaard Museum, close to where Grauballe Man lay. Willerslev, a renowned anthropologist of the Chukchi hunter-gatherer communities in Siberia, challenged the audience to think critically about what made a sacrifice. Talking movingly of the people he had studied, who faced the kinds of arduous environment and challenging seasonal movement we can only imagine, he surveyed the audience and said simply: 'no one there needs to die of old age'. He went on to explain the Chukchi's strong tradition of human (and other) sacrifice, and how elderly people reaching the end of their endurance, facing great pain or terminal illness, begin to commune with their forebears in such a way that it 'licensed' their kin to take this as a sign to end their lives. Such a 'voluntary death' as Willerslev put it, appeased and pleased the gods with an offering of a life well lived. In an Iron Age world devoid of sedatives and painkillers, a sudden yet excruciating demise might have been preferable to lingering suffering, while 'assisted suicide', 'mercy killing' or 'euthanasia' may all have been used as strategies to hasten a life that was no longer liveable or a death that was believed to be inevitable. We are suddenly, uncomfortably close to Heaney's (1972) 'old man-killing parishes'. Willerslev's lesson (I think) was to warn us that some bog bodies may have been caught up in a sacrificial ideology that (whether deliberately or not) helped deal with the one certain end of human existence, often cruel: snatching from it a swift end and a regenerative, commensal power.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored the lives and deaths of numerous bog bodies, critically evaluating different interpretations of this phenomenon. As Glob ([1969] 1971: 105) sensibly suggests in his original monograph: 'We cannot view as one

uniform phenomenon the many bog people from this long span of time'. Both Burmeister (2007, 2013) and Joy (2009) reinforce this point, arguing we should be proposing a plurality of explanations and dealing with examples on a case-by-case basis. Standing back from the overview provided by van der Sanden, enriched here by a synthesis of new studies, we can see some general historical patterns emerge from the data. Earlier prehistoric bog bodies show few signs of violence and the bogs do not seem to attract large-scale depositions. As Stevans and Chapman (2020: 19) argue from a summary of the UK examples, most of the Neolithic and early to middle Bronze Age bog bodies, concentrated in the fenlands, seem to be formal burials. It is in the later Bronze Age and Iron Age that human interactions with the bog (construction, extraction and deposition) begin to alter that relationship. The many trackways, platforms, artefactual, animal and human deposits that form the focus of this book need to be contextualised in that shifting relationship with the mosses of northern Europe. At this stage, violent death and dismemberment increases but in line with cultural activity in other wetland (and some dryland) examples (a pattern also observed by Stevans and Chapman 2020: 19–20). Whether these communities were conquered or not, the violence seen in these barbarian tribes was further stoked and inflamed by the ruptures of conquest and resistance, rippling out from the Roman world. In areas such as Denmark and Germany this begins to take on a more massive, martial character, while in Britain, Scotland and Ireland the last few centuries BC and first few centuries AD mark some of the most intense periods of bog offerings and ritual killings, smaller in scale but rich in value, whatever their motivation. We cannot escape the sense of a time of crises that prompted extraordinary gestures, turning the classical authors' texts on their heads. These were not necessarily the innate bloodthirsty rites of a savage people but the responses of communities undergoing the rupturing dissolution of their own social systems and influenced by new concepts of violence wrought by armies on the move, if not actual conquest. Formal Roman era burials or interments in bogs are also known, particularly in the UK (Stevans and Chapman 2020).

We then see a period of quiet in the bogs, in depositional terms at least, before a resurgence of interest in both their metaphysical and practical usefulness. In medieval Christian psychogeography, the landscape of the bog, the moss and the mire begin to be reshaped to embody purgatory or portals to hell. The bodies found in this era may well be members of the 'dangerous dead' who were exiled from consecrated ground but had to be placed somewhere: revenants and restless priests, executed criminals, drownings, suicides, murders and the unbaptised. Most of these remains are clothed and often confined, representing a formal interment (Stevans and Chapman 2020: 20), even if this is a non-normative locale. These pejorative associations heralded their demise; bogs became seen as an unproductive waste, justifying drainage, clearance and cultivation. By the seventeenth to the nineteenth century, this was not only technically possible but morally necessary. The dead from this era look marginal: accidents wrought upon those unfamiliar with its mercurial territory (hawkers and traders), risky crossings, unwise and illegal

endeavours (particularly poaching), murders and suicides, in what had become a desolate and liminal spot. In Scotland and Ireland in particular, this era is marked also with victims of conflict and religious persecution (Cowie *et al.* 2011). Those that still lived in some harmony with the bog often found themselves vilified, castigated and cleared, to the profit of private landowners or more recently state bodies. The relative desertion of the boglands attracted nefarious and sometimes violent incidents but by this time, most raised bogs or mires had been under the spade or the machine for generations. They were disappearing (we now know) to our future jeopardy, but giving up their dead in the process.

Against this sketch of changing rhythms of inhabitation and deposition, we can situate our historiography of bog body interpretations. As those remains came back to light, the earliest records we have (see [Chapter 2](#)) convey a sense of both concern and awe at the ‘marvel’ of preservation: they were either saints or sinners. These post-medieval accounts are blended with more pragmatic folk history: lost local characters, executed criminals, persecuted non-conformists, murder or conflict victims. Archaeology played its part here in ‘evidencing’ the major thresholds or events that shaped national identity. The antiquarian Enlightenment ‘reporting’ of this phenomenon and scientific or forensic enquiry ran hand in hand with burgeoning Romanticism (such as Countess Moira’s famine victim who was later interpretively transformed into part of a Druidic ritual). As classical education was increasingly mobilised in antiquarian histories, it was Arends (1824) in Germany who revitalised the use of Tacitus to portray bog bodies as a ragbag of cowards, deserters and degenerates, a model that was further mobilised in the Nazi period to very particular, prejudicial ends. Johanna Mestorf (1900), who first named the phenomenon, saw them as ‘punishment’ victims yet could not quite accommodate the evidence for women or children within this judicial theory. The number of staked or weighted down bog bodies led Martin (1924) to mobilise the ‘Wiedergänger’ theory of the restless or dangerous dead, an idea that Struve (1967) supported and that both von Haugwitz (1993) and Watkins (2013) have demonstrated has merit and relevance certainly to the post-medieval bog dead. The vast numbers of bog bodies for whom no discernible cause of death can be seen prompt us to ask how, in the past, did communities deal with a mysterious or troubling death? As Fontijn (2020) evokes in relation to objects, the bog, with all of its properties and powers, may simply have been thought of as the ‘right place’ to deal with difficult and dangerous things.

Van der Sanden (1996: 169; 2006) argues that Continental scholarship then began to pluralise interpretations, most notably in Dieck’s thoughtful yet flawed and inflated scholarship. Jankuhn (1977) linked the notion of execution to religious practice – punishment had a sacred significance, for transgression could offend the gods – the *Strafopferthese*. It was in Denmark that this notion of sacrality and sacrifice was then popularised by Thorvildsen (1952), before Glob’s ([1969] 1971) thesis on the bog bodies as fertility offerings to supernatural powers. We can see the legacy of this in much of the work on ritual killing by Stead *et al.* (1986), sacrificial theory by Taylor (2008) and Aldhouse-Green (2002, 2016), as votive offerings (in Bradley

2017) or depositions (Fontijn 2020). Ravn (2010) reminds us that some were normal burials, Lund (2002) sees the bog bodies as outcasts and witches, while Fredengren and Löfqvist (2015) find evidence for marginal lives. In Ireland, Kelly (2013) sees the ruined bodies of failed kings in his bog bodies. Some of these remains can now tell us very specific stories of their lives that help narrow these possibilities but others remain a relative mystery; as Glyn Daniel asked back in 1952, stood over the body of Tolland Man: ‘Is this the face of a criminal, is this face of a prisoner of war, or is the victim of some prehistoric murder?’ (BBC 1954). It is a question we still find hard to answer, but building on van der Sanden’s (1996) still masterly work, Fischer (2012), Asingh and Lynnerup (2007), Burmeister (2007, 2013), Joy (2009), Fredengren (2015, 2018) and Chapman (2015) have brought richer, contextual approaches to the study that integrate osteobiography with wider landscape context and depositional practice; that is the methodological approach followed here.

A neo-pragmatic and anti-ritual resurgence is represented in the UK at least, by Connolly (1985), Briggs (1995) and Hutton (2004a, 2004b) who resented what they saw as an unfounded ‘sanctification’ of accidental death or murder through the trope of sacrifice. The archival work presented here, building on the catalogues of Briggs, Turner and van der Sanden certainly provides further *historic* evidence for accident, murder and suicide on the bog, but as noted above, this tends to leave a particular forensic trace (fully clothed, with possessions) that fails to fit most of the Iron Age and Roman bog bodies. The chapter has shown that these clearer-cut cases can be vividly contrasted with the staging and execution of violence that has a more ritualised and performative dimension. It has resituated the scale and character of this violence within analogous evidence for Iron Age conflict and depositional practice to show that the bog bodies form part of a much wider cultural phenomenon of bellicosity and violence as an important trope of power. The *next chapter* will consider how this may have been transformed by the Roman world.

The following list summarises the multiple theories relating to bog bodies across all periods:

- (1) *Accidental death*:
 - (a) during everyday tasks or crossing of the bog;
 - (b) misadventure (e.g. drowning while inebriated or inadvisable travel);
 - (c) bog bursts;
 - (d) escaping/fleeing conflict.
- (2) *Suicide*:
 - (a) individual, lone suicide;
 - (b) assisted suicide, mercy killing or euthanasia.
- (3) *Murder*:
 - (a) pathological killing;
 - (b) gendercide (including targeting of marginal or vulnerable groups) and infanticide;
 - (c) manslaughter (violent mugging or crime of passion/heat of the moment).

- (4) *Execution*:
- (a) of criminals;
 - (b) of enemies (inter-/intra-tribal, ethnic or colonial);
 - (c) of captives (high- and low-status hostages);
 - (d) of those suspected of supernatural malignancy ('witches');
 - (e) of those feared due to 'contamination' (disease, infection, etc.);
 - (f) of 'failed leaders/kings';
 - (g) of those persecuted for faith, ethnicity, sexual orientation, etc.
- (5) *Dealing with the dead*:
- (a) formal burial (perpetual and/or expedient);
 - (b) formal burial (temporary, creating a useful corpse or corporeal elements, as ancestral mnemonic or enemy trophy);
 - (c) use of the bog for mysterious, troubling deaths (excised from normative rites or places of burial);
 - (d) use of the bog to control death of a powerful figure (e.g. witch, king) or suspected revenant.
- (6) *Sacrifice*:
- (a) scapegoating (symbolic excision of violence, guilt or crimes);
 - (b) augury and divination;
 - (c) appeal, exchange or repayment of supernatural debt;
 - (d) harnessing of transcendent vitality/fertility rites.
- (7) *Self-sacrifice/self-offering* (possibly as a 'good' way to die?):
- (a) gift of life;
 - (b) emissary;
 - (c) becoming sacred (ancestor, supernatural agent or entering the divine).

These categories are not mutually exclusive: for example, accidental death may shade into suicide; suicide itself may not be 'voluntary' but brought about through terror or social exile; a feared enemy captive may be used for violent divination; persecution on the grounds of sexual orientation could be counted as gendercide; and self-sacrifice might be classed as a kind of assisted suicide or euthanasia. Nonetheless, we can see at a glance that Glob himself was right to warn us – no one explanation will suffice.

Where does this leave us in relation to the Iron Age dead? Van der Sanden (1996: 174) supports the idea that 'many of the isolated bog bodies are to be interpreted as human sacrifices ... [in] watery environments [where] ... people sought contact with the supernatural world'. This interpretation is upheld in both Williams (2003) and Giles (2009) with the proviso that this could include the self-offering of an individual, sometimes out of duty or skill but also perhaps a desire to bring life to a close, altering both the balance of power, intent and post-mortem fate of such a sacrifice. This may have been a strategy to become a powerful supernatural being, mediating with the sacred or entering the divine. Reflecting on the phenomenon of his composite Hebridean 'mummies', Parker Pearson (2016: 15)

thus encourages us to rethink this era as a time when the world was populated by 'a complex constellation of beings, both alive and dead'. It was the medium of the bog itself that allowed people to manipulate time, or at least the effects of time, and as we know this quality has awed or intimidated every community that has seen its effects. Yet this slowing of time causes Taylor (2008: 145) concern: he rejects the notion that the bog was a threshold or portal, arguing instead that its cold cessation of decay was meant to 'vex the ghost and prevent the progress of the soul'. The notion of the bog as a kind of purgatory might be eschatologically anachronistic for the Iron Age, given the temporary immersion of both butter and bodies which re-emerged, changed into something 'rich and strange' (to paraphrase Shakespeare's account of the transformative effect of the sea upon a body, *The Tempest* Act 1, Scene 2). It also sees the physical world as one of divided realms with hard-drawn boundaries that were simultaneously material and supernatural, instead of a world where the spiritual resided and was immanent *in* such places. The bog was one (but only one) of the powerful places where Iron Age people could deal with the 'end' of things redolent with life force and reproductive power; I believe this included those marked by or for death (for many *different* reasons) who required particular care. As we have seen, this was a violent world in which lives were taken for many reasons. The boundary we may draw here between a 'pragmatic' and a 'ritual' killing may not be relevant: in someone's eyes, these were necessary deaths. Such life forces, such vitalities, were potentially dangerous and destabilising, yet potent. It was here in the bog that the cycle of becoming and dying could be manipulated, violently where required, and the final value of the bog bodies could be achieved, by entering this 'thin' place ... a place of hierophany.

Worsley Man: Manchester's bog head

Discovery

On 18 August 1958, the remains of a partially fleshed skull were discovered by John Connolly as he was 'walling peat bricks' along trench eight of flat six on Astley Moss (a telling local analogy to the moss 'rooms' of Lindow). An employee of the *Lancashire Moss and Litter Company*, he had noticed 'a black ball-shaped patch' with 'matter inside' and another bit of 'neck', making a 'rough search' that turned up a piece of bone 'with teeth attached' (Anon. 1958). These are the remains now accessioned by the Manchester Museum of a bog head that has become known as 'Worsley Man' (Garland 1995; see Figure 7.1). The police were informed, and a 'vigil' was kept over the site for three days, while an extensive search of 252 surrounding acres was made by the police. During this time, 'wild rumours involving skeletons, murder and a horde of gold' [*sic*] apparently flew around Astley village (Anon. 2002). Yet nothing further was discovered.

The remains were examined the following day by Dr A. St Hill of Liverpool University who assessed them as male, between twenty-four and forty years, of 'possible oriental' [*sic*] origin (apparently due to the breadth of the nasal bones) – what we might less pejoratively describe today as 'Asian'. He thought they had lain in the bog for 'less than a year' (cited in Garland 1995: 104). They were then viewed by Bolton Home Office pathologist Dr G. Manning on Sunday 24 August at laboratories in Preston. He reported his findings to the coroner's inquest on 17 October 1958, noting that they consisted of 'a portion of skull, an upper and a lower jaw, the first two and a half cervical vertebrae, some skin above the right ear, a two-inch section below the right ear, a one-inch strip of skin on the right side of the neck and a separate tooth', noting that the bone was almost completely decalcified and stained dark brown (cited in Garland 1995: 104). He noted that the jaw was particularly wide and bore a fracture, and that the hair 'in front of the right ear was grey and light brown', whereas that on the back of the head was 'of a reddish colour' (cited in Garland 1995: 104). The 'coloured matter' inside the head was tested microscopically and chemically, and identified as preserved



7.1 The bog head of Worsley Man (from Astley Moss, © Manchester Museum, University of Manchester)

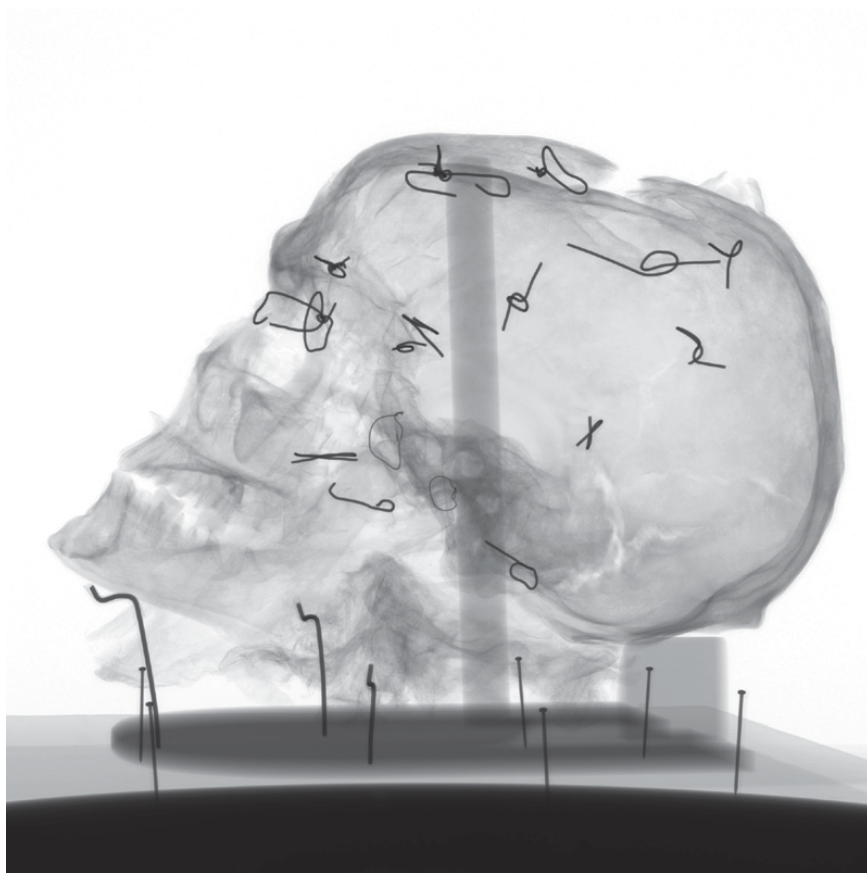
brain matter; no trace of this now remains and the interior of the cranium appears to have been cleaned. Manning reported to the coroner and the jury that 'peat was an extraordinary good preserver' and that 'some bodies which were 2,000 years old, yet in a good state of preservation, had been found in peat bogs on the Continent' (cited in Garland 1995: 104). As Garland (1995: 104) notes, this is a remarkable insight given that Glob's groundbreaking monograph would not be translated into English until 1969. In all likelihood, Manning had seen

the 1954 episode of *The Peat Bog Murder Mystery* (see [Chapter 1](#)), but despite this, he personally thought Worsley Man was probably somewhere between one hundred and five hundred years old. The coroner, J. J. Rothwell, reported that ‘in law the remains counted as a body’ but given the absence of an obvious cause of death he returned an ‘open verdict’ and the newspaper noted that the remains were likely to be retained ‘as an historical relic’ (cited in Garland 1995: 104). We owe the knowledge of this groundbreaking discovery both to the painstaking work of the police force, particularly DC B. Lyons (police photographer) and DC A. E. Parr (chief investigator, both of Stretford Police Station) as well as the assiduous but unnamed journalist who made such a detailed record of the coroner’s inquest. The police records are now unobtainable, having rightly been dismissed as an archaeological case. Moreover, I owe my knowledge of this stage of the discovery to the expertise of Duncan McCormick, local history librarian of the Salford Local History Library. No one else would have known where to look and no official paper archive accompanied the head on its next stage of investigation.

The afterlife of Worsley Man: historiography of conservation and analysis

The remains were given back into the possession of Dr Manning, who donated them to the Pathology Museum at the Manchester Medical School ‘where they were mounted and placed in a Perspex box’ (Garland 1995: 104). At some point, the post-mortem damage to the skull (partly from peat compression and partly from the mode of recovery followed by forensic examination) took its toll: the skull has been literally re-pieced using wire ‘staples’ to hold bone elements together – requiring penetrative and invasive work on the cranial bone. A still from the 2019 CT scan shows the extent of this ‘robust’ conservation treatment ([Figure 7.2](#)). Fifteen thick wire loops, often simply twisted over at the end, have been used alongside two finer twists of wire. Fragments of delicate white cotton thread, observed in the latest analysis, seem to have been used to hold surface tissue together. (A small, loose strand of ‘peat-brown’ coloured thread found within the neck tissue was erroneously identified as a very fine ligature; this has now been dismissed as a modern intrusion, possibly from a remedial conservation measure). Apart from supportive packing, no other conservation method was used on the skull and it has thus been allowed to ‘air-dry’ with no chemical interventions known. The transfer into the Manchester Museum collections occurred in 1992 after the first study programme outlined below, but it arrived with no associated paper, photographic or conservation archive – hence the importance of these early, detailed newspaper reports.

To date, there have been four programmes of investigation. The first, focused on the forensic investigation of the remains, began in 1987 led by John Denton (a specialist in histology) and A. N. Garland (a forensic pathologist) who recognised



7.2 CT scan showing evidence of conservation 'wiring' (2019). All rights reserved and permission to use the figure must be obtained from the copyright holder.

the archaeological potential of this skull. Garland (1995) concluded that the skull was that of a young to middle-aged adult male, with a partial metopic suture running from the nasion. He possessed complete dentition at the time of death but only two teeth appear to have been recovered (the upper right second molar and lower right first molar). A fracture extended downwards through the right-hand side of the mandible into the empty socket of the lower right canine tooth; the CT scan undertaken at the time could not determine if this was ante-, peri- or post-mortem. There was survival of the right ear with surrounding tissue, with brown/red hair 'not neatly trimmed' (Garland 1995: 105) and a laceration *c.*28 mm in length extended upwards behind the ear. When examined microscopically, irregular wound edges and displacement of hair follicles into the wound could be clearly seen. Numerous fracture lines were noted through the frontal and parietal

bones but the most notable wound was a depressed fracture in the bregma region: skin and bone fragments were displaced under inner table of the skull (indicative of a fracture to the top of the head). Garland noted the survival of CV1 and half of CV2, showing evidence of sharp-force transection to the latter indicative of decapitation. Finally, a twisted cord appeared to be embedded in the neck tissue, extending upwards between the soft tissue and the right-hand side of the face (Garland 1995: 106).

Samples of 'skin, hair and cord' as well as bone were taken for biochemical analysis; the skin showed peaks for 'chlorine, calcium and lead' whereas the 'cord' indicated chlorine, sodium, silicon and sulphur (but not iron or copper (Garland 1995: 107), in contrast to the skin 'pigments' proposed for Lindow Man II/IV and III, see [Chapter 6](#)). Significant microbial damage was noted in the skin. Histology on the projecting piece of sinewy material interpreted as a cord, at its 'cut' end revealed 'thick collagen bands' seen in animal and human tendon (Denton *et al.* 2003: 49). It was concluded that it was of 'animal' rather than plant' origin (Garland 1995: 107). In addition, a sample of bone was sliced from the cervical vertebrae for histological analysis; this may have made sense as it was a 'cut' surface but unfortunately this has marred our understanding of the decapitation wound. It revealed normal lameller collagen orientation indicating that this was a healthy adult individual at the time of his death: the thin section presented in this article (Denton 2003: fig. 2) also suggests an almost immediate cessation of decay, suggesting the head entered the bog soon after decapitation. A C¹⁴ sample from the right-hand side of the facial tissue yielded a date of 1800 +/- 70 years BP (Ox-A-1430), which placed him firmly within the Romano-British era (*not* the Iron Age).

The second programme was led by John Prag and Richard Neave between 2000 and 2001 (see Prag and Neave 1999; Denton *et al.* 2003). Its main purpose was to create a facial reconstruction for re-display in a new 'corridor' gallery of the Manchester Museum, based around the pioneering use of this technique to bring people 'face to face' with the past, which opened in 2002 ([Figure 7.3](#)). The display was widely and positively reported in local newspapers (e.g. Anon. 2002). Importantly, as Denton *et al.* (2003) went on to report, the interpretation of this CT scan suggested that in addition to the head trauma, the wound behind the ear and decapitation identified by Garland, there was evidence of an ante-mortem injury to the face comprising a major 'step fault' at the tooth line and a misplaced but healed piece of bone in the nasal septum with a fracture line defect in the left orbit (Denton *et al.* 2003: 49, fig. 5). They proposed that this was due to a facial blow striking from the bottom right-hand side of the jaw up through the nose and eye socket: an injury that had healed but had led to chronic sinusitis visible in the deformation of the right front nasal bone. The notion that this was an individual who had experienced facial trauma during his life is important, given Fredengren's (2018) arguments regarding marginalised characters, Redfern's (2016) study of different forms of violence or the notion that this might be an individual already caught up in inter-/intra-group violent episodes.



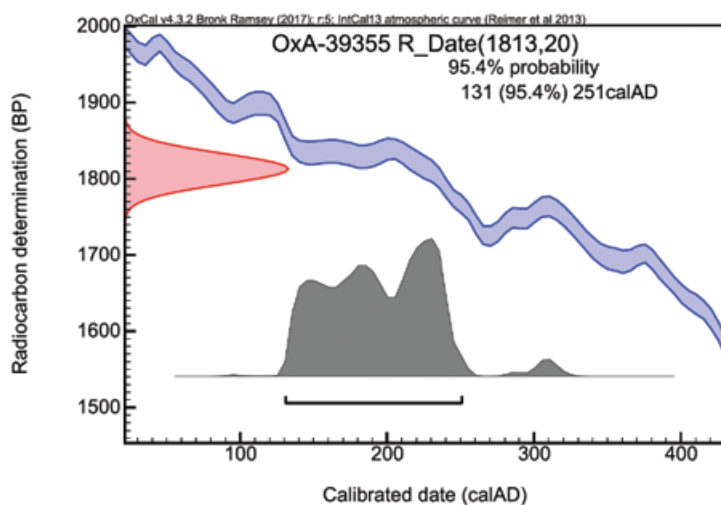
7.3 The Worsley Man facial reconstruction undertaken by the Unit of Art in Medicine, University of Manchester, with J. Prag. All rights reserved and permission to use the figure must be obtained from the copyright holder.

A third programme of investigation was begun in 2010, led by Jim Bourke (who sadly passed away in 2018), Brian Pyatt and Pat Bradley (University of Nottingham) with John Denton and Judith Adams (University of Manchester, the latter now also sadly deceased). It was coordinated by Manchester curator, Bryan Sitch. The aim of this stage of research (once the bog head had come ‘off’ display during the controversies of the 2008–9 human remains debate: see later in the chapter) was to use the very latest in X-ray and CT scanning to give additional insights into the circumstances of Worsley Man’s death (reported in *UniLife* 2012). The results of those two new non-invasive methods threw a slight spanner in the works, giving a ‘high’ X-radiograph response in one of the tooth sockets. However, given that one ‘loose’ tooth was recorded at the site of discovery, we believe this response is the result of the use of an unrecorded conservation intervention, using adhesive to reconsolidate the tooth and socket. The new CT scan, featured as part of a 2014 Channel 5 documentary entitled *Murdered: The Bodies in the Bog*, threw up another unexpected observation: a loose, sharp fragment of bone embedded in the neck tissue. Initially, the team considered whether this was a unique discovery of the tip of a bone spearhead, analogous to those found at Hjortspring (see [Chapter 5](#)). However, its irregular profile means that this can now also be dismissed as the fractured end of the temporal styloid process from the right-hand side of the head (suggested by S. Mays pers. comm.), which sheared off during decapitation. One of the finer pieces of wire has been used to reattach the end of this to the main skull, consolidating the articulation of head and mandible.

Worsley Man: new analysis

The current programme of research, begun in 2018, comprised the Manchester University and Museum research team (M. Giles, B. Sitch, S. Sportun, I. Narkiss, E. Tollefsen and C. Jones with M. Buckley (proteomics) and T. Lowe of the Henry Moseley X-ray Imaging Facility). The forensic expertise of M. Smith (University of Bournemouth) and hair isotope specialist A. Wilson (University of Bradford) complete the project team. The results presented here distil some of the results of that joint research, which will be published in full scientific detail elsewhere. Most importantly, a new radiocarbon date has established that the Worsley head now belongs to the early to mid-Roman period: AD 131–251 at 95.4 per cent probability (OxA-39355: 1813 +/-20 BP; see [Figure 7.4](#)).

This new forensic examination confirms he was an adult male, based on the defined brow ridges, robust and square chin and large nuchal crest (though this was not particularly prognathic ([Figure 7.1](#)): supporting the broad but flattish nose reconstructed by Richard Neave). His overall appearance is Caucasian; there is no reason to believe we are looking at the remains of anything other than a northern European skull though whether he came from an indigenous population or arrived as a Roman auxiliary or immigrant, we cannot yet tell. The partially retained



7.4 Radiocarbon calibration curve for Worsley Man (OxCal).

metopic suture on his forehead, noted by Garland, was confirmed. On the basis of dentition and sagittal suture, he was aged between twenty-six and forty-five years, and was certainly not greatly advanced in years (though Denton (pers. comm.) has recently re-evaluated the bone histology results, suggesting he suffered from some notable osteoarthritis even at this stage of life).

Having confirmed we are looking at an early Roman head, roughly contemporary to Lindow II/IV, we can now compare the character of violence meted out to both men. The most significant damage consists of a sharp-force wound to the top of the skull, in the vicinity of the left parietal and bregma, c.6 cm in length (Figure 7.5a). The ‘clenching’ of the jaw and shock of this cranial trauma seems to have caused the breakage of the tooth surface of the lower right first molar. There is also a linear fracture in the occipital, radiating out from the foramen magnum bilaterally and a third fracture extending anteriorly from the foramen magnum to the sphenoid (Figure 7.5b). These appear to be subsidiary fractures caused by the force of the blow to the top of the head, likely to be the result of a heavy and wide-bladed weapon such as an axe, wielded either from in front of the individual, perhaps when they were kneeling down. However, the fractures to the left-hand nasal cavity and cheek, as well as one extending through the right-hand jawline (seen by Denton *et al.* (2003) as ante-mortem healed trauma) have a softer, more ragged and irregular appearance and we interpret these here as post-depositional compression and fracture caused by the bog.

The second major wound is the sharp-force trauma to the anterior of the surviving right ear; on the exterior flesh, this can be seen as a 28 mm long cut (as recorded by Garland 1995) evident in the sharp wound margin and displaced



7.5a Cranial wounds to the top of the skull.



7.5b Radiating fractures on the foramen magnum.

hair follicles, though a wider 'split' along this wound margin was measured at 5.75 cm by the current team (again perhaps exacerbated by post-mortem tearing in the bog or during the recovery and handling process). Underneath this exterior wound we were able to record the resulting sharp-force cut to the right mastoid process, which is extremely fine in profile and measured 14 mm in length: a damage ratio of 2:1, external (flesh/tissue) and internal (underlying bone). This is important, as James (forthcoming) has recently argued that we significantly underestimate the scale and character of violence based solely on skeletal evidence; as far as we know, this may be the first time that the forensic examination of an external/internal wound site has been possible for a bog body, permissible here only by the fact that the surviving facial tissue can be 'taken off' the underlying bone (Figures 7.6a and 7.6b). This wound suggests the use of a sword rather than a heavier bladed weapon, wielded from behind, to the right-hand side of the head while he was standing – this may have been the first major blow.

The final suite of wounds relates to the decapitation of this individual. A small 'nick' in the left-hand mandible, 5 mm wide by 10.5 mm deep, has so far not been



7.6a Exterior sword wound.



7.6b Interior sharp-force wound to mastoid process.

recorded by any other analyst (Figure 7.7). The discolouration of the bone and sharp edge to this wide blade wound suggests this is a peri-mortem injury, located in a classic position where an attempted decapitation blow has ‘caught’ on the left-hand edge of the mandible. It suggests the use of either a wide-bladed sword or more probably an axe. A second blow has ‘shaved’ off the surface of the right-hand bone surface of the mandible at the chin. These attempts have also severed the thyroid bone and right-hand styloid process (which in this individual is noticeably long), resulting in its embedding in the neck tissue. The CT scan revealed that the original forensic assessment in the 1950s was correct: decapitation has happened at CV3, slicing this vertebrae in two. (However the ‘stepped’ appearance of this sharp-force wound, originally seen by this team as a two-fold attempt to sever the head, can now be interpreted as the result of an invasive sample for bone histology in the primary phase of investigation). The decapitation clearly did take two attempts, probably with a wider-bladed weapon such as an axe, both from behind: the first biased slightly towards the left-hand side (with the head bowed too far forward on the chest, thus clipping the jaw) and the second successful attempt focused more to the right achieving final, clean removal of the skull in one severing blow.

Having no post-cranial body nor surviving neck tissue to examine, we do not know if there were other wounds such as a cut throat, parry or defence wounds, stabbing to the torso or ‘kicking’ of his legs out from under the body as observed in



7.7 'Nick' in mandible caused by decapitation attempt.

other premeditated killings discussed in [Chapter 6](#). The 'ligature' noted by earlier teams has now been evaluated using proteomic analysis by M. Buckley; unfortunately, it has proved to be human (Buckley pers. comm.) – a mere piece of his own neck tissue, torn from the wider flesh of the neck, which is why it appears to pass high up into the anterior flesh below the right ear.

We can thus reconstruct a minimum of three ‘moments’ of violence: a bloody but non-fatal sword blow behind the right ear, a splitting and devastating axe wound to the top of the skull and final decapitation of the head. All of this was blade trauma. It suggests, in keeping with several other bog bodies, the involvement of at least two to three armed figures (and possibly other assistants) participating in the termination of this life. At present, we cannot thus distinguish between a formal execution or sacrifice but the taking of this head and its burial in the bog prompts us to think critically about Iron Age attitudes towards this particular body part.

Remains from the mosses of Lancashire and Cheshire

Bog heads, as we have seen, have been found on other Lancashire and Cheshire mosses; one of the two examples curated in the Duckworth collection from Ashton is that of an adult male, dated to the late Bronze Age: 1315–980 cal BC (Robinson and Shinwell 1996). From the same moss came a late Bronze Age socketed axe with wooden handle ‘preserved by the antiseptic properties of the peat’ and a coin hoard dating to the second century AD, once contained in an earthenware vessel (from close to Castle Farm, see Higson 1859: 29–30), which suggest sporadic consignments of valuables to the bog (Nevell 1992: 71). Meanwhile, the decapitated head wrapped in yellow woollen cloth from Pilling Moss (see Chapter 2) appears to be earlier Bronze Age in date, ‘with an abundance of plaited auburn hair’ and two strings of cylindrical jet beads and one amber bead (Edwards 1969). It was from this moss that the Iron Age short sword or dagger sheath was also found (see Chapter 5). Another late Bronze Age cranium was recovered from the basal sediments of a relict peat-filled basin mire at Poulton-le-Fylde, dating to c.1250–840 cal BC: known as the Briarfield skull (Wells and Hodgkinson 2001: 163). Two worked pieces of wood, possible stakes, were found close to the skull that came from an adult male, approximately twenty-five to thirty-five years old with a partially retained metopic suture (like Worsley Man) and a pronounced occipital bone, creating a notable ‘bun’ protuberance on the rear of the skull known as bathocrany. The lack of mandible and absence of cut marks as well as gnawing marks led Mays to suggest the skull had been temporarily buried or exposed through protected excarnation, to avoid scavenging and weathering marks (Mays cited in Wells and Hodgkinson 2001: 167). A bronze looped palstave was found on the site previously. In the early Iron Age, beaver-worked wood suggests that their dam activity may have encouraged localised flooding of the site (Mays cited in Wells and Hodgkinson 2001: 172). At Red Moss near Horwich, a skull with ‘red hair’ was found in 1942 near to the Blackrod boundary, by a peat cutter called Krikken (Smith 1988: 4). It was thought to be female and presumed to be Bronze Age – Smith (1988: 4) notes a date of 1058 BC though the source of this is unclear. The head was initially given to the Midlands Forensic Science Laboratory who may have dated it but the remains were subsequently curated by Alderman C. Williams of Queens Road (Chorley), founder member of the Chorley Archaeological Society (Turner and Briggs 1986;

Smith 1988: 4), and no current trace of the head has been found. An early Roman rotary quern stone was also found on this moss (Smith 1988: 5).

More complete 'bog bodies' are represented in the 'entire and uncorrupted' body from Meols (Leigh 1700), also lost. The wider landscape context for this body is now recognised as a coastal node in late Iron Age/early Roman trading networks, associated with significant amounts of copper alloy small finds, both native and Roman. An eroding set of roundhouses (first seen in 1893) were associated with middle Iron Age pins and brooches, with later Iron Age Celtic and American coinage, brooches, spiral finger rings, a looped stud and foot of a Roman patera suggesting intermittent trade along this coastline. Whether Meols was an actual port or not is less certain; it was probably more of a hub or trans-shipment site, conveniently sited between mid-Cheshire salt exchange networks (from Northwich and Middlewich) and north-east Welsh and Cheshire (Alderley) copper and lead-silver networks (Griffiths *et al.* 2007: 384). Its role expanded in the Roman period, perhaps initially associated with early military activity occupying the north-west (Griffiths *et al.* 2007: 389) and then as a nexus for products from the Wilderspool and Wigan areas, producing metalwork, ceramics, glass and salt (Griffiths *et al.* 2007: 393). The Roman Leasowe Man (as we saw in [Chapter 2](#)) was found just 'upshore' from the Meols in the intertidal peats. Although Meols and Leasowe appear to be rare, formal burials, we thus have a range of prehistoric and Roman bog heads and interments, which complement the Lindow deposits. Isserlin (1997: 93) includes here the bodies from Scaleby, Seascale, Austwick, Grewelthorpe, Amcotts and Wymondham as well as Worsley (misspelled as 'Worsely'). This has led Nevell (1992: 71) to propose that a Roman 'cult of the head' existed in the Mersey basin during the Romano-British period, including the Lindow I remains. Both Nevell (1992) and Prag (*pers. comm.*) argue that at least some of the many stone heads found in this region (including one from Bramble Cottage on Lumb Lane by Ashton Moss) may be further evidence of an obsession with the head, though these sculptures are notoriously hard to date on stylistic grounds. Is this feasible? What were Roman attitudes towards the head?

Roman attitudes towards the head and headhunting

One of the founding myths of Rome fascinatingly concerns a well-preserved head. In Livy's Book 1 of the History of Rome (Foster 1919: 1.55), we learn that in preparing a temple to Jupiter on what would become known as the Capitaline, 'heaven itself was moved to give a sign of the future greatness of Rome's dominion'. The birds indicated that the temple should be sited over the shrine of Terminus, and then:

Hard upon this happy augery came another strange event, which seemed to fore-tell the future grandeur of our Empire: *a man's head with the features intact* was discovered by the workmen who were digging the foundations of the temple. This

meant that without any doubt that on this spot would stand the imperial citadel of the capital city of the world. (Livy in Foster 1919: 1.55–3.6, my emphasis)

For the early founders of Rome, this well-preserved head was both a powerful prediction of future rule and material metaphor of divine favour. Sculpted heads of gods, goddesses and worldly leaders came to adorn settings ranging from temples and shrines to private housing. In contrast, Richlin (1999: 197) argues that a fleshy severed head later embodied the obverse: a kind of ‘counter statue’ expressive of humiliation and disgrace – this made decapitation a rare but powerful punishment. For example, following his criticism of Mark Anthony, Cicero became the target of a proscription (literally the placing of a price upon his head) and was duly decapitated (nobly and bravely ‘offering’ his head out of his litter) with his hands also severed (Richlin 1999: 197). This was, Richlin (1999) argues, not just a physical but a metaphorical assassination: literally the ‘last word’ in verbal duelling with authority, in which his grisly body parts were publicly displayed to deter both spoken and written dissent.

For Romans in general, decapitation was thus a rare and troubling outward symbol of turmoil when the normal rule of law was suspended. Swift decapitation could be a discrete form of execution for citizens of status but in the arena or amphitheatre it was meant to shock, used alongside hanging, crucifixion, burning or death by wild animals (Fields 2006: 58). The display of such remains and their deposition outside of the walled city (often within a watery setting) might be part of such punishment (Kyle 2001). For writers such as Posidonius, decapitation was thus a rare and abhorrent sight, more typical of barbarians. His views were recorded by Diodorus Siculus (Oldfather 1933: 5.2) in his critical commentary on Gaulish headhunting, noting their fascination for the post-mortem decapitation and display of cranial trophies, hung from the necks of their ponies or nailed up on their houses. He also reported that they embalmed them in ‘cedar oil’ and displayed them proudly in chests and boxes, prizing them above gold: a habit that has recently been scientifically attested at the site of Le Cailar, southern France. Here, a study of cranial and cervical vertebrae fragments from the third-century site in Transalpine Gaul has revealed evidence not just of decapitation but the cutting, scraping and cleansing of cranial vault and mouth cavity (Ciesielski *et al.* 2011). Biochemical analysis revealed a cocktail of applied substances amounting to a surficial application of conifer resins mixed with plant oils, probably used to produce an antibacterial and anti-odour effect on the facial tissue (Ghezal *et al.* 2019: 187). The results maintained facial features to maximise recognition, humiliation (for the deceased enemy) and honour (for his vanquisher, see Armit 2012a). Yet as in the case of the Huron, the effect of seeing a powerful warrior gripped by a glorious death also ensured some kind of personal post-mortem renown: their own ferocity having been magnified through the tale-telling of their victor (see Giles 2017). Such ‘ancestral treasures’ created an intimidating material memory store that served to acquaint strangers with the martial renown of their hosts (Fields 2006: 10). Romans were thus horrified by Livy’s account of the Transalpine Gaulish

tribe of the Boii, who in 216 BC made the head of the Roman commander, Lucius Posthumius, into a silver-gilded sanctuary vessel or cup (Fields 2006: 11)! As cranial niches, skulls and sculpture at Entremont, Roquepertuse and Gournay-sur-Aronde illustrate, or the decapitated warrior corpses from Ribemont-sur-Ancre, the head had powerful meanings for the Gauls but we should not see this as a cross-cultural Celtic obsession (Armit 2012a). Subtle differences in representation, use of body parts and modification illustrate a range of ideas relating to ancestry, mortality and power that were far from universal. These heads shrines (as well as other votive sites) blurred the boundaries between martial and sacred power. The means and ends of taking life were brought into a sanctified setting where this life force could be presented and ceremonially consumed. The *tête coupée* was thus, Armit (2012a; cf. Harrison 2012) argues, not just a way of humiliating an enemy by defaming or abusing their corpse; it was a means of controlling, channelling and violently ‘harvesting’ the fertility and regenerative power of a feared and revered enemy. This echoes Bloch’s (1982) notion of the predation through which the ‘transcendental vitality’ of a being could be taken over by a violent perpetrator.

Strabo (*Geographia* 4.4.5, cited in Aldhouse-Green 2016) may have claimed that Roman rule put an end to ‘headhunting’ in its conquered territories but the reality is that in Gallia Transalpina at least, there was a resurgence of headhunting during early Roman rule (Armit 2012b). Armit (2012b: 597) explains that ‘attempts to enforce stability were hampered by a series of revolts and destabilizing conflicts which persisted long after the annexation in the 120s [BC]’, causing internal power struggles and social fragmentation that inflamed violence. In addition, indigenous customs no doubt ran deep in the northern tribes who later served as mercenaries and conscripts further north (Fields 2005; Redfern and Bonney 2014). Romanised Gaulish forces, alongside later Spanish and Germanic troops, shaped the distinctive and intimidating force of the main army but they brought a few cultural habits with them as auxiliaries (Redfern and Bonney 2014: 242). The taking and keeping of such ‘dark trophies’ might not have been officially sanctioned but it was probably tolerated (Fields 2005): like those from the Vietnam war (see Harrison 2012), this was a ‘private’ matter (A. Fear pers. comm.) with improvised cleaning, preparation or modification of the skull according to personal or cultural tastes. Indeed, the decapitated head was used as a symbolic shorthand for the hyper-martiality of some ethnicities – a cultural *topos*, such as on Trajan’s column scene LXXII, where auxiliaries are shown ‘presenting’ the emperor with Dacian enemy heads (Fields 2006: 11, figs 1–3), a scene repeated on the ‘Great Trajanic Frieze’ (Fields 2005: 63). An altar dedicated to Mars at Apt, Vaucluse in France (raised by individuals with distinctively Celtic names) was underpinned by at least eight human skulls (Isserlin 1997: 97). The notion that such ‘barbarian’ attitudes had seeped into Roman culture is also suggested by the younger Seneca who laments: ‘would that the barbarities (*barberi*) of punishments and anger had not crossed over on to Roman mores’ (*De Ira* 3.18.1 cited in Basore 1989). In another scene of Roman road-building on Trajan’s column, scene LVI, decapitated heads are shown impaled on poles outside a fortified settlement; this might be a scene

of Dacian barbarity being ‘civilised’ by Roman construction or an indication that the legionary troops had adopted an indigenous visual trope to terrify local insurgents. Indeed, the Roman consul C. Flaminius apparently adorned his helmet with a Germanic Suebian scalp (perhaps with its distinctive hairdo in place?) following a battle against the Boii in 223 BC (Fields 2005: 55). In Britain, a piece of epigraphy from the Antonine Wall, inscribed by the Legio II Augusta, shows an auxiliary soldier riding roughshod over four native soldiers, having decapitated one of them (Holder 1982). Closer to home, evidence for Roman decapitation and ‘head taking’ are suggested in the ‘Rieter’ or ‘Rider’ type tombstone dedicated to Insus, originally of the Treveri tribe, serving in the *ala Augusta*: a curator from an auxiliary cavalry unit, of western Germanic origin (Figure 7.8). The normal iconography of this ‘triumphant rider’ sculpture consists of a successful cavalry officer wielding a spear, trampling over defeated barbarians. Insus, however, who soldiered across the north-west and probably died in service, is depicted brandishing a *gladius*-style sword and the decapitated head of an enemy whose corpse lies under his horse’s hooves, the rider’s own foot resting imperiously upon the small of the man’s back (Bull 2007). In a fragment of tombstone for the cavalry officer Aurelius Lucianus from Chester meanwhile (RIB 522), a banqueting scene includes the deceased in feasting repose yet fully dressed in armour and riding trousers (Fields 2006: 63). On the wall behind him hang his martial credentials, helmet and sheathed sword, while his groom wields the ultimate war trophy: the severed head of an enemy (Fields 2006: 63). This adoption of both the local character of violence and psychologically intimidating trope of decapitation should not surprise us. The Roman soldiers were – like their native counterparts – involved in a moment of cultural flux where weaponry and martial art, fighting styles and tropes of bellicosity, were in a process of apparently strict opposition yet some cultural exchange and fusion was inevitable. To be violently *affective* both sides had to understand and manipulate or exploit the martial customs of their enemy (both in terms of arms and combat styles) while keeping enough ‘exotic’ traits to be disconcertingly different and psychologically disturbing.

We can see this in the South Cave hoard from East Yorkshire (UK), where indigenous weaponry (swords and spears) crossed the martial boundaries of spear/pilum and northern short sword/*gladius* (rather than long sword/*spatha*): weapons that were collectively ‘hidden’ or offered up in martial supplication on the eve of Conquest (Evans *et al.*, in prep.). Meanwhile, Haynes (2013: 240) discusses this cultural borrowing from an auxiliary point of view (in terms of arms, dress, combat and particularly cavalry styles), seeing it as a form of powerful ‘martial bricolage’, viewed positively by Roman authors such as Arrian. This fusion of the very best, most frightening, most *affective* forms of violence worked both ways. Armed bands beyond the *limes* aped and adopted the accoutrements, organisation and appearance of the Roman Army in places such as Denmark (Pauli Jensen 2017). The foregrounding of connections to, and influential relations with, Germanic Roman martial identity was, Pauli Jensen (2017: 72) argues, part of a ‘calculating need for the best equipment available’ coupled with ‘the visualisation of different aspects of



7.8 Reconstruction of the original appearance of the Insus rider figure from Lancaster. All rights reserved and permission to use the figure must be obtained from the copyright holder.

power – both political and military’. It fused these influences into a particular, peculiar Scandinavian effect that produced the phenomenon of ‘war-booty’ sacrifices discussed in [Chapter 5](#) (Pauli Jensen 2017: 73).

Just as this skirmishing across martial traditions began to forge something new in arms, appearance and combat, it also engendered different attitudes towards the enemy corpse. The decapitated head from Osterby with its Suebian knot is very similar in date to Worsley Man (1895 +/- 30 BP, see van der Sanden 1996: 193). This particular type of death and post-mortem fate was something that the Germanic and the Lancastrian tribes mutually understood even though they might have found themselves on opposite sides. The fate of the Lancastrian Insus tombstone itself suggests it was a controversial and inflammatory piece of memorial art. Soon after it was raised (probably in the late first to early second century AD) with its decorative pigments proclaiming Roman triumph over the natives, the monument itself seems to have been toppled over and the upper part of the scene including the 'head' of the rider was broken or severed from the main body (Bull 2007: 16), in what may have been a vengeful act of symbolic decapitation.

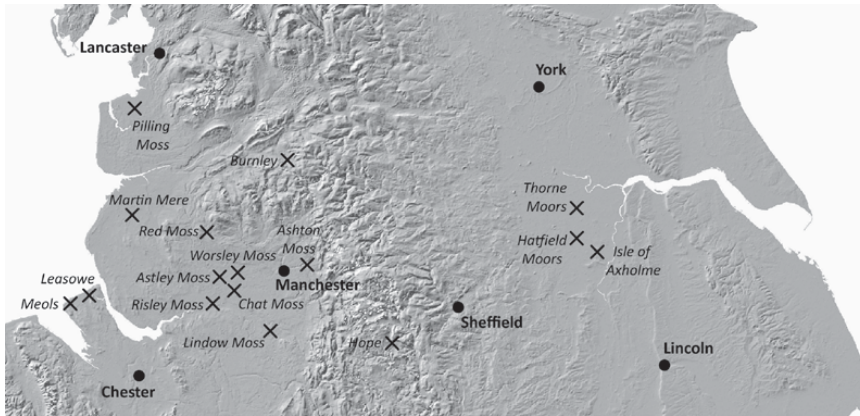
The importance of the head and its display is seen at other Roman sites (Smith 2017). At the long-lived funerary and ritual complex of Folly Lane, the defleshed skull of a fifteen- to eighteen-year-old (showing four perforations to the cranial vault, concentrated on the left-hand side), was placed upright at base of a pit. Dating to the second to third century AD, damage to the foramen magnum suggested it might once have been on display – possibly outside the nearby, contemporary temple, as part of a cult of the skull (Niblett 1999: 318). At Silchester oppidum, it has been argued that a number of crania may represent 'heads ... exposed to public view' both at/on the gates (Fulford *et al.* 1997: 131) and perhaps in the forum (Creighton 2016). Within the earlier Iron Age defensive ditch a water-logged skull has recently been found on a triangular arrangement of hurdles, amid leather offcuts and dog skulls (reported by Pitts 2020: 7). Other 'displays' of heads and body parts are attested at Colchester (Isserlin 1997), where six skulls in the legionary fortress suggest the decapitation of Trinovantian Britons, beheaded by the *legio XX Valeria* (Fields 2006: 60). Redfern and Bonney (2014) make a similar argument in relation to a suite of Roman era heads from the London Wall site within the Walbrook Valley most of which show a mix of healed and peri-mortem violence (both blunt and sharp force) as well as some decapitation. They propose these could either be men who have been serially involved in violence (such as mercenaries or gladiators) or were victims of execution in the arena. Yet the presence of body parts especially within military settings may also suggest some trophyism or cultic activity involving crania: Isserlin (1997) makes an explicit link between the watery contexts of the Walbrook Valley and those of the bogs where human remains continue to be deposited in this era, as in Germany, the Netherlands and Denmark. She also cites a Roman curse tablet from Brandon that mentions 'sacrifice' to Neptune with 'hazel', suggesting this is an echo of the indigenous, Iron Age staking of bog bodies under hurdles (Isserlin 1997: 93). Interestingly, many of the Walbrook heads seem to have been deposited in pits cut into still water, some of which also contained leather offcuts. The similarity here with Silchester is fascinating. Is this simply a coincidence, associating decaying, partially fleshed heads with the by-products of the leather trade, or was there a deliberate use of this

material to try to cure, ‘tan’ and conserve a head, analogous to the bog? Was the creation of a hated, heroic or founder’s head the goal here? Livy records that consul Claudius Nero instructed his followers to decapitate and *preserve* the head of the Carthaginian enemy, Hasdrubal Barca, so that he could later throw the trophy in front his brother Hannibal’s outpost guards (Livy 27.51.11, cited in Field 2005: 61). Pompey was also decapitated and his head ‘mummified’ as a ‘perpetual trophy’ (Lucan 8.663–91, cited in Varner 2006: 69). One of the skulls from Colchester’s ‘Head Gate’ deposits apparently had ‘a plaster-like deposit adhering to it’ (Benfield and Garrod 1992: 35): was this indicative of insertion into a wall as a kind of foundation deposit as Isserlin (1997: 95) suggests or something more animated – the attempt to model, to recreate the features of a foe? Preservation aided the drawing out of intimidation and humiliation across the boundary of death and it also created a material mnemonic that could be deployed to underpin conquest and successful rule. Back in Rome, the Capitoline Hill became the preferred location for the display of such mutilated body parts (Isserlin 1997: 69). Posthumous decapitation (for ‘failed wives’ of the emperor, brief rulers and political rivals) as well as the symbolic decapitation of statuary effigies, were carried out in order to disgrace someone’s public reputation and memory, becoming more common in the late second and third centuries AD (Varner 2006: 70). Real or symbolic decapitation deprived such figures of their honour and repudiated their rule. Does this reflection on the martial and sociopolitical purpose of decapitation help us think differently about the head from Worsley Moss? In order to evaluate whether this was a martial trophy or cult activity, we need to set such violence back into the context of the Roman occupation of northern Britain.

North: the historical context of Worsley Man

During the late Iron Age, the region was under the supra-regional polity of the Brigantes tribe (Figure 7.9). Smaller sub-tribal entities have been proposed through close reading of Ptolemy’s second century AD *Geographia* (including the Carvetii and Latenses to the north and Setantii to the north-west), but we have little epigraphy or coinage belonging to smaller tribal septs apart from a milestone for the Corvetii from Brougham (Philpott 2006: 62). Cheshire was the terrain of the Cornovii, with the Coritani to the south-east and the Deceangli to the west, edging into north-west Wales (Nevell 1992 fig. 5.14).

The late Iron Age and early Roman landscape in the north-west would have largely been characterised by pasture, with seasonal use of wetter grazing areas and exploitation of the bogs in the ways evoked in Chapter 4. An amelioration of climate is suggested for the early Roman period, affecting the bogs: at Over Wyre, *Sphagnum imbricatum* is replaced by the drier hummock species *S. acutifolia* (Philpott 2006: 61). In the later Iron Age there seems to have been increased tree clearance and a higher prevalence of grass pollen, with a small but notable increase in cereal cultivation (Philpott 2006: tab. 5.3). Moreover, as Matthews



7.9 The north-west landscape showing sites of importance in the late Iron Age and early Roman period. All rights reserved and permission to use the figure must be obtained from the copyright holder.

(2002) cautions, agricultural marginality need not equate with cultural marginality; these communities had their own concepts of wealth that elude the material record: land, food and drink, stock, horseflesh and prowess at riding, with only rare, portable artefacts.

Evidence for settled inhabitation is scarce: an open settlement at Tatton Park consisted of a track with stony ‘metalled’ surface linked to a cobbled yard (a possible ‘hardstanding’ for livestock) and small timber-built roundhouse, with a firepit dating to *c.*390 +/- 120 BC (HAR 5147, Nevell 1992: 51). A first-century Roman era palisaded enclosure was built over these foundations (Higham and Cane 1997). Closer to Worsley itself, a series of two large roundhouses and two smaller circular structures dating to the first century BC were discovered in a bivallate enclosure at Great Woollen Hall on the very edge of Chat Moss (south of Astley Moss but part of the same mire complex, see Nevell 1989, 1992: 51). Finds include an oven feature associated with Iron Age coarsewares and VCP ‘briquetage’ (from the salt industry), showing continuity into the early Roman period with Roman coarsewares, black burnished ware, a fragment of mortarium and small Samian rim sherd alongside further VCP deposits, indicating shifts in diet and culinary preparation methods. Another enclosed late Iron Age/Romano-British site may be represented by the Hangingbank enclosure at Werneth Low (Nevell 1989, 1992). Mixed farming on lowland areas (such as Woolly Lane) was complemented by pasture on upland and marginal zones (possibly represented in a square enclosure at Hopfold Farm, Ashton, see Nevell 1992: 69). A further Romano-British settlement at Barton is sited on a sandy promontory at the edge of Chat Moss, along the original course of the River Irwell. Ditched enclosures, small roundhouses and gullies and sparse finds of a glass bead, shale knife handle, rotary

quern fragment, black burnished ware, grey wares and mortaria fragments suggest domestic occupation (Thompson *et al.* 2014).

These indigenous communities were certainly wise to the riches of their local landscape. Alongside the Lancashire and Cheshire coast, estuarine, marsh areas and brine springs enabled salt production that expanded in the Roman period (Nevell 2005), while 'a progressive and unambiguous' increase in lead pollution is noted in the climate record of Lindow Moss from *c.*900 BC (the late Bronze Age), clearly pre-dating the Roman invasion (Le Roux *et al.* 2004: 506). At around 200 BC, there was a further 'dramatic increase' with a particular spike 'around AD 0 and another around AD 140' (Le Roux *et al.* 2004: 506), suggesting both an indigenous surge in metalworking probably at the nearby Alderley Edge mines and a post-Conquest appropriation and maximisation of production in north-east Wales and the Peak District. This industrialisation fuelled both urban development and the northern campaigns: the beginning of our 'window' in which Worsley Man died. At Engine Vein, Alderley Edge (overlooking Lindow Moss) a 12 m deep, square-cut Roman mining shaft (named 'Pot Shaft'), dating to the mid to late first century AD, contained timbers dating to the Iron Age (250 BC–AD 15 cal), felled no doubt from impressive trees growing around the Edge (Timberlake and Prag 2005: 82). Close to the top of this abandoned, partially infilled shaft, was a vessel containing 564 coins dating to the early fourth century AD (*c.* AD 340). Weathered blocks of galena, earlier Bronze Age hammerstones and sandy deposits on the surface of this dramatic outcrop would have indicated the potential of Alderley Edge for lead mining and a second cut nearby revealed both lead and copper veins outcropping close to the surface. Iron hammer-pick marks indicate the intense working of this narrow shaft. Lead pigs from Derbyshire refer almost exclusively to the emperorship of Hadrian (AD 117–138) chiming with the second 'spike' in lead pollution noted in the moss. The recorded working here at Alderley was small, short-lived and possibly undertaken under military control (Timberlake and Prag 2005: 97); it is possible other Roman works were destroyed by later medieval and historic mining, recorded now only in the pollution trace in the bog. Tantalising hints of bronze offerings back to the bog are hinted at in the supposedly Roman representation of an ox and bronze cauldron found in the peats of the Rixton/Risley Moss areas, within the parish of Croft (Leah *et al.* 1997: 20), yet both could feasibly be late Iron Age. Seventeen Roman coin hoards, some of which were directly deposited in the peat or close to the bog (such as Denton and Boothstown, see Hall *et al.* 1995: 119) are also known. These local bogs may thus have been used as a source of iron ore but no obvious workings have been found (Hall *et al.* 1995). However, a number of Roman roads cross close to or forge across the wetlands, as at Stretford, where brushwood and wattle work were used to consolidate the wet peat (Hall *et al.* 1995: 199).

Changes in land-use and industry are rarely isolated from wider sociopolitical change. The flux in political allegiances that occupied both the Brigantes and the Roman military in the mid-first century AD in support of Cartimandua (Nevell 1992: 56; Haselgrove 2016), and the campaigns of Roman governors Cerialis and

Agricola (Philpott 2006), certainly made this a turbulent time. Roman incursion probably consisted of a two-pronged foray from the western seaboard, following major river systems such as the Dee, and from the western side of the Pennines (Philpott 2006). Forts began to be established from the AD 70s onwards, first perhaps at Chester (Deva) and then, through the AD 70s, at Lancaster and Ribchester, Mamucium (Manchester, c. AD 78), Slack (in the Peak District), Melandria (Glossop), Rigodunum (possibly Castleshaw, c. AD 78–79), linking this region to Eboracum (York) to the north-east and Carlisle to the far north. Several of these were staffed by auxiliary forces, such as the Cohors I Frisiavonum at Mamucium (with a Germanic origin), and later, the Ollototae (from Gaul) and the Cohors III Breucorum at Castleshaw and Slack (largely drawn from Pannonia, with service in Germany, see Holder 1982). Consolidation of the military occupation of the north was achieved under Agricola (AD 78–84) with the establishment of the northern *limes*. *Vicus* settlements sprang up around some of these forts, creating economic and social bonds between native inhabitants and occupying forces. Some forts such as Castleshaw dramatically reduced in size by AD 90 but then show a surge of activity around AD 105, becoming a centre for grain collection and storage, with final abandonment AD 120, when localised grazing decreases and rough pasture re-established itself. The period between AD 120 and AD 140 was a disruptive time of further rebellion that led to the appointment of a new governor, Lollius Urbicus, to the region (Nevell 1992: 70). Troops on the ground then became thinner as the Romans pushed north to establish Hadrian's Wall (c. AD 122) and the Antonine Wall (c. AD 138) but the abandonment of the latter in c. AD 163 led to some reoccupation of the north-western forts such as Mamucium. In sum, the late first to second century AD was undoubtedly a time of political flux with major contrasts in military presence and absence between generations: a situation ripe for local political machinations and increased violence. As Armit (2012b: 603) puts it:

Where new relations of dominance were being established, [the] control and manipulation of the human body seems to have provided an attractive means by which aspirant elites could stake their claims to social power. Severed heads of enemies could be displayed and curated, materialising power relationships that may often have been insecure or transient.

The Pax Romana supposedly brought about by Roman rule and law (including forbidding civilians to carry weaponry and, as Hutton (2004b) reminds us, supposedly outlawing human sacrifice) may have been more difficult to implement in this region of dispersed inhabitation and bog landscapes. Indeed, quite apart from the army, military occupation would also have brought new types of violence to the region: increased slavery, incarceration and prostitution, as well as violent gaming pleasures (see Redfern and Fibiger 2019: 64). It is not surprising then that the early to mid-Roman period saw at least some continuity in forms of corporeal humiliation that had been sporadically practised for over a millennium by northern tribes, stoked now by the ambitions and punishments brought

down upon them by Roman forces. We are thus no clearer in our understanding of who carried out Worsley Man's killing, but we can say that he was caught up in the sociopolitical ferment and cultural crises of the invasion and occupation of the north. It is still not unthinkable that this was a Romano-British sacrifice at a time of crises; while normally such offerings were non-human, those designated as 'other', demeaned by slavery, captivity, defeat or even cowardice, might count as inhuman or, in Butler's (2010) words, 'ungrievable' lives. Such exceptional sacrifices are recorded in the heart of Rome itself when the world was perceived to be 'out of kilter', as Isserlin (1997: 92) puts it (see also Aldhouse-Green 2016: 32). They were part of how civilised life was, ironically, restored. If we are unable to resolve the motivation of his death, what about its means: why does decapitation wield such terrifying power?

Severed identities

In her cultural study of the head, Larson (2014: 7) argues that the force of decapitation derives from both the illusion of instantaneous death and the brute vigour and velocity of the act, as well as the 'sheer audacity' of the perpetrator. Larson does not shy away from the uncomfortable truth that a beheading is a spectacle that has been 'enjoyed' by many audiences (see also Hughes 2011): we are fascinated by its captivating force to transform the living into the dead, and from subject to object, in mere moments – it is both 'compelling and horrific' (Larson 2014: 9). She goes on to argue that the severed head tends to preserve a sense of animacy, especially when still fleshed, connecting us to its remnant humanity by that 'most expressive configuration of skin and muscles' (Larson 2014: 9). Aldhouse-Green (2016) draws on the common motif of the talking head in later Celtic mythology, such as the head of Bran, to illustrate this. We come back here to some of the ideas raised in [Chapter 6](#), that while this violence is destructive it is also creative 'because for all its cruelty, it produces an extraordinarily potent artefact' (Aldhouse-Green 2016: 14). However, like Armit (2012a) in his study of headhunting, Larson (2014: 23) points to the common belief that it is not the head per se that is powerful, but what resided in it, which had been harvested in the taking. Among the Shuar, for instance, the shrunken head was *not* a trophy but the residue that materialised a transfer of power and fertility to the headhunter.

Those facing decapitation and the foreknowledge that their remains would be displayed anticipated a post-mortem infamy that might have been tortuous (Watkins 2013). Strenuous efforts might be made by their families to retrieve their head, particularly in the case of a political execution (Larson 2014). Yet what was meant to shame and shock could also be read as treachery to be avenged or martyrdom: self-sacrifice for a cause. Some knew their remains would become more potent in death as relics than they had been in life. The decapitated head can thus assume a transformed identity as it moves between contexts: even the disconcerting war trophy can be turned into an ironic 'mascot', re-personified and

caught up in a new set of relations (Larson 2014: 51). The effort to which soldiers went to clean, prepare and customise their trophies evidences the unsettling closeness they themselves have with death, as well as the complex relationship with those they have killed. Larson (2014: 74) writes of this as both a kind of warped respect for the enemy and an ongoing effort to assert control, to 'quieten', 'domesticise' and 'sterilise' their killings. In a veteran's hands, among his comrades who have experienced what he has experienced, the head may be seen as a 'just reward' of valour, but the ease with which it slips into 'an aberrant and abhorrent' piece of corpse abuse is attested in the difficult relationship with legacy remains from the Vietnam War, for example (see Harrison 2012).

In addition to decapitation, the use of ropes, belts, sprang bands, sinewy ligatures and even perhaps sally rods to strangle, throttle or garotte bog bodies still focused violent attention upon the head. The prestige object used to adorn and frame this part of the body in life within the Iron Age and early Roman world was of course the torc: the illustrious, heavy necklet found across north-western and central Europe. Used to signify power (Joy 2016) it can be thought of as a kind of 'chain' of sociopolitical office or sacred authority, cumbersome to wear, which reminded the bearer of that weight of responsibility. Many were made in a manner analogous to the twisting of yarn to form two- or three-ply strands, suggesting a borrowing of skills between crafts (Farley pers. comm.). This is certainly the case with the Burnley torc (also known as the Holme or Cliviger torc), held by the Manchester Museum (Figure 7.10). It was found in 1802 in the furrow of a field by a reaper, who presented it to the owner of the field, Dr Whitaker (1818), the author of a study of the local area of Whalley. Made of two simple gold wires twisted together and ending in looped terminals, the gold is unusually pure in composition (Northover 1993). Such torcs continued to be made in the early Roman period, transformed from simple or complex twists of gold, silver or bronze wire with varying types of terminal into more massive combinations of design, such as the south-western 'Wraxall' torcs or the northern 'beaded' copper alloy torcs (as at Dinnington, see Beswick *et al.* 1990) with or without inscribed or cast plaques (as in the Lochar Moss torc, see Megaw and Megaw 2015). A beaded torc was apparently found at Handle Hill, Rochdale (Garstang 1966). Whether we see such objects as conspicuous expressions of indigenous identity (Hunter 2009) or reinvented objects that came to represent the new fusion of Roman and local ideas (Hunter 2012), the torc had an iconic status. This may be in part, because the taking of a torc as a trophy became a renowned military feat, as recorded by Gellius in the first century BC. Titus Manlius decapitated his Gaulish foe and then placed the bloodied torc around his own neck (preferring this to the trophy of a head!); assuming the *cognomen* of 'Torquatus' (*Noctes Atticae* 9.13.18, cited in Fields 2006: 57). This notion of a trophy morphed into a Romanised form of this object, the torque, given as a military award specifically to auxiliaries and foreigners (Pliny, *Natural History* 33.10, cited in Crummy *et al.* 2016: 9; see also Haynes 2013: 243). Perhaps the plaited ropes and ligatures were humiliating skeuomorphs of the torc: a shameful object meant to end the life of a high-status



7.10 The Burnley or Cliviger torc, Manchester Museum. All rights reserved and permission to use the figure must be obtained from the copyright holder.

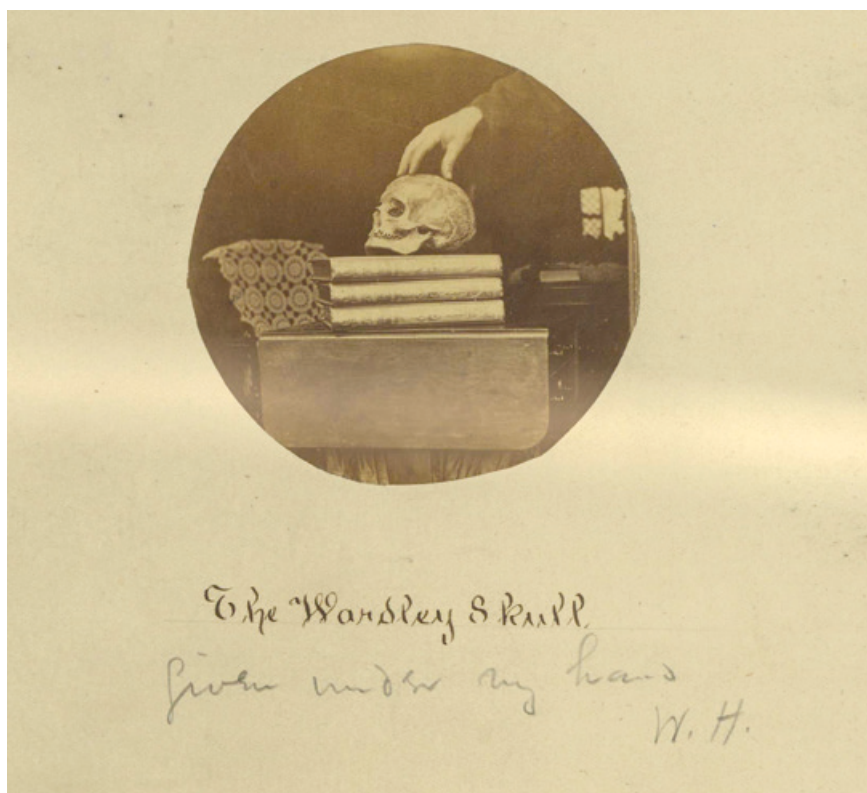
prisoner (as Aldhouse-Green (2016) suggests) or the apt symbolic means of killing a humiliated martial captive or unsuccessful leader (as Kelly (2013) suggests – Vercengeterix was himself strangled after Caesar’s triumph, see Cassius Dio, 43.19 in Kilvert 1987). Such ligatures may thus have had special sanction as the mode of death for a sacrificial emissary into the other world.

‘Wilful pieces of mortality’: caring for heads

Having considered Roman attitudes to heads, we can now move on to a critical consideration of the continuing cultural power of the head in this region. A number of skulls that have resurfaced across north-west Britain over the last few hundred years tell us of a rather different relationship with the curated or ‘found’ head: some ancient and some more recent. At Wardley Hall, a skull kept in a boxed alcove at the top of the stairs was reputed to be the libertine son of the Downes

family, an ‘abandoned courtier’ of Charles II who died in a duel with a watchman on London Bridge in 1676 (Harland and Wilkinson 1873: 66). His torso was reputedly tossed in the Thames and the head boxed up and sent to his sisters. Their attempts to bury or destroy it were in vain: ‘The skull was removed ... but it invariably returned to the Hall and no human power could drive it thence. It hath been riven to pieces, burnt and otherwise destroyed; but on the subsequent day it was seen filling the wanted place ... If removed, drowned in the neighbouring pond ... or buried it was sure to return’ (Harland and Wilkinson 1873: 67–9). Harland and Wilkinson refer to the skull as one of Britain’s few ‘screaming skulls’, citing Roby’s (1829) description of it as a ‘wilful piece of mortality’ that ‘will not allow the little aperture in which it rests to be walled up’ (Harland and Wilkinson 1873: 67). Its apparent revenancy as a ‘screaming skull’ was first described by antiquarian Barritt in 1782, while a local rhyme suggested it could transform itself into a hare (Thurston-Hopkins 1953). The head and its niche can be seen in a set of pen-and-ink sketches and early photographs from the late nineteenth century in the Mullineux collection (Chetham’s Library: 1369). There is also a remarkable photo-essay album dating to 1867 held by the Manchester Central Library, by William Hindshaw, in which the end plate is a photograph of the Wardley skull labelled in careful calligraphic hand, under which had been added ‘given under my hand. W.H.’ (Figure 7.11) – a curious legal phrase that suggests both the power of his witnessing and the respectful placing of his hand upon these remains. This may be due to the fact that Hindshaw knew he was actually in the presence of Catholic relics: the remains of St Ambrose Barlow, priest to the Downes family and one of the ‘Forty Martyrs of England and Wales’ (Butler and Bangley 2005). Barlow was executed on 10 September 1641, after a period of incarceration, having been dragged through the streets on a hurdle, hanged, drawn and quartered at Lancaster (Historic England 2019) and then ‘boiled in oil ... his head was afterwards exposed on a pike’ (Tyllesley 2008). Beatified in 1929, this might explain why only a cranium now survives, the mandible (intact in Hindshaw’s image) is now installed as a sacred relic at the church of St Ambrose at Barlow Moor and other remnants are at Stanbrook Abbey (North Yorkshire) and Mount Angel Abbey (Oregon, USA). Similar stories of victims of violent death (variously linked to the Pilgrimage of Grace, the Reformation or Civil War) are associated with Lancashire skulls from Browsholme Hall, Chaigley and Mawdsley (Clarke 1999: 392–3).

Not all such skulls were treated respectfully. In Chapter 4, the case of the ‘Back Openshaw’ cranium, used as a drinking vessel by John Burgess, was recounted, sounding very like the Iron Age sites of Billingborough in Lincolnshire or Ezinge and Englum on the terps of the Netherlands. Yet at Turton near Bolton two skulls were apparently ‘fished’ out of the ‘Bradshaw Brook’ in 1750, one badly decayed and the other showing evidence of sharp-force wounds, one supposedly male and one female (Harland and Wilkinson 1873). They were kept on the mantelpiece of a farm at Timberbottom for ‘tradition says these skulls must be kept in the house’ (Eyre 1974: 68). Attempts to throw them back into the river or rebury them in the churchyard (as in 1840) did not end well and even temporary



7.11 The Wardley Hall skull. All rights reserved and permission to use the figure must be obtained from the copyright holder.

separation of the two skulls often brought noisy disturbances to the dwelling (Eyre 1974: 68). Following the demolition of the farm, the heads left for Bradshaw Hall (where the woman's skull was mounted on a silver stand and both were stood on a large bible) and finally, the skulls were passed on to Turton Tower in 1949. In the 1990s, PhD scholar David Clarke (1999: 398) was refused access to them but was reassured that they were still kept 'on a bible': just in case! Another 'deeply discoloured' head, 'almost mahogany in hue' (Clarke 1999: 390) was kept in a case behind the bar of the Pack Horse Inn, Affetside in Lancashire, and may be a third skull from the Bradshaw Brook (Clarke 1999: 391).

Meanwhile, a discoloured skull from Appley Bridge north of Wigan (located close to areas of moss and moor), was 'kept on a beam in the living room of a house near Skull Lane'. The cottage itself became known as 'Skull House', giving it the most archaeological address in the country! These remains have also been attributed to those of a monk or priest who had hidden in the chimney breast during the Civil War and was 'smoked' out by Roundhead forces (Clarke 1999: 392) perhaps

in direct analogy to the Wardley Hall skull as this interpretation seems to date to a specific historian's research c.1937 (Clarke 1999: 392). Again, its revenancy is made clear, for 'it is reputed to bring down ill luck and unwelcome attention if it is disturbed or taken away' (Eyre 1974: 69). Yet the staining or discolouring of this head is more probably explained by burial in the peat.

Finally, in an example from a Derbyshire farmhouse in Tunstead, near Hazel Grove, a 'singular relic' was displayed 'on a plate in a window' for travellers to view (H. 1867: 2). One such walker was the 'Derbyshire Tramp' (named only as 'H.')

who described seeing the 'four strips of bone said to have formed part of the skull of Dicky' while on a train and walking sojourn with friends in 1867 (although the earliest account by John Hutchinson in his *A Tour Through the High Peak* dates to 1809). Local folklore held that this was either a murdered 'co-heiress' who had vowed in her last moments that 'her bones should remain here' (H. 1867: 2) or a murdered soldier returning from war, cheated of his rightful inheritance and property (Clarke 1999: 373–4). Whether male or female, the skull was believed

to insure good luck to the inhabitants of the farm and moreover it is asserted that all the efforts to get without it have hitherto proved abortive. Old Dicky's skull was once lent to a schoolmaster at Sheffield to illustrate some anatomical lectures, but the folks at home were glad to have it back in order to restore peace and quietude. It has been thrown in the river, but returned of itself. It was buried in the parish churchyard (of Chapel-en-le-Frith) but the inmates of the farm-house were plagued till they were fain to fetch it home. (H. 1867: 2)

Indeed, during an auction sale of its stock some years before, 'all the men and youths in the country side had to be assembled in order to drive away the cattle towards the homes of their new purchasers, so potent was the spell that Dicky had laid on them' (H. 1867: 2). The author goes on to tell the anecdote of the boggart ('for of course, there was one in connection with the skull'), which had disturbed the tenant farmer's sleep one night by rounding up 'all the things' (i.e. the cattle) but shouting out that it had had trouble 'with the little one' – when the farmer went to inspect this supernatural corralling of the herd, he found a hare, bound tight, instead of a calf (H. 1867: 2)! In this strange tale we have the explicit relating of physical remains (the head/skull) to a supernatural being related to the moss (the boggart as helper) associated with a wild mammal often attributed some folkloric powers of its own (an association also noted with the Wardley skull). Clarke details the many oral histories of tenants and villagers relating to the skull, which included an apparent association with a black dog (similar to the manifestation of the Ashton boggarts but here a protective apparition). Hutchinson's (1809 : 9) account professed to have traced these cranial remains back over two hundred years at least, noting that the current curators of the skull felt it to be 'more of a guardian spirit than a terror to the family'. Yet 'Tunstead Dickey' was also concerned very much with the issues of the day: it had apparently caused no end of mischief when the local railway had been built across the farmland, blamed for the repeated 'slipping' of the embankment since it objected to 'the modern system

of travelling and traffic' (H. 1867: 2)! The reporter sagely noted that of course, in reality, this was attributable to the local geology. Yet a few years previous, the *Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser* noted on 6 June 1863 that the restless ghost would 'every night ... undo the work ... which had occupied many men during the day' and 'Dickie was only propitiated at last by an interview with the chief engineer, at which he was promised a free pass over the line for ever' (H. 1867: 9)! Poems, songs and plays were written in Dickie's honour, though by the 1970s the skull had vanished, perhaps buried in the grounds of the farm (Clarke 1999: 379). Clarke (1999: 369) goes on to note that Tunstead Dickie's legend appears to have spawned many similar stories of 'guardian' skulls in farms and country houses across the north-west, partly due to its popularisation in early ghost story collections.

Some of these Lancashire and Derbyshire 'screaming skulls' or heads could thus be viable new bog finds or at least watery deposits of prehistoric date. Dickie himself was described as 'a rich shade of olive green shaded at the edges with brown and white spots' (Le Blanc Smith 1905: 9), suggesting he may have been discoloured by peat or even stained green through contact with copper alloy from a nearby Bronze Age burial mound. Yet what concerns us here is not their archaeological veracity but the pattern of their reception. Most had reputedly suffered a violent death, apparently giving them a vigorous post-mortem agency. They were partible and portable but could not be returned to the soil, water or given Christian burial. Their supernatural revenancy deterred any further disturbance, securing a new place of residence and demanding care and curation. As Larsen (2014) argues, these heads were now enmeshed in a new suite of relationships that transformed their original meaning into something potent in the present. The 'Keep Lindow Man in the North' campaign, led by Barbara O'Brien of Altrincham, may have been a symptom in part of 1980s Thatcherite Britain and the north-south divide (Turner 1995b: 202), but clearly it should also be contextualised within a much longer indigenous tradition of caring for ancient heads in the north. This attitude is not specific to the north-west, as Clarke's (1999: vol. 2) gazetteer reveals, yet there are notable concentrations in Lancashire, Derbyshire, Yorkshire and Cumbria. Wider surveys would no doubt reveal other patterns; recently, two bog 'feet' were found in an attic in Terenure, south Dublin, one belonging to a child (dating to 60 BC-AD 53) and another to an adult woman with part of the leg still attached (dating to AD 52-250). Their distinctive peat-black appearance suggested the curated remains of bog bodies, kept perhaps by someone with antiquarian interests or medical expertise who had acquired them for study but could not – or dare not – part with the remains (Tarleton 2009). Another alternative is that they too were kept bodies, who had travelled with their 'curators' to new homes. Meanwhile, in Denmark, when the Daugbjerg body was sent from Søgards Mose to the National Museum in Copenhagen in 1942, the custodian from the local Skive Museum attached a small, compelling note – 'Hope you will take good care of the girl' (Fischer 2012: 121). Some archaeologists and curators find the public naming of these bog remains not just distasteful but disrespectful, indicative

of their ‘partial grasp of the full facts’ (Turner 1995b: 202 and fig. 94: a table of Lindow Man’s ‘common names’) or suggesting an imposition of identity, appropriation or cheapening of their deaths. Yet once named, a bond has been made with the dead; they cannot be discarded, cast out or forgotten. The historicity of this folkloric practice shows us that this is not just a late-twentieth-century quirk, concerning the cultural capital or tourist power of ‘dark heritage’ (see Chapter 9). It has been a way in which early modern and historic communities dealt with the consequences of archaeological discovery, with a sense of both obligation and humanity. In turn, even where they were reputed to have died unexpectedly or violently, most of these remains seemed to have cared about their new residence and its land, bringing their ‘carers’ luck and protection.

Failures of display

The museological care and archaeological analysis of Worsley Man discussed in this chapter has brought to light the contemporary assemblage in which he now has iconic status as a Roman ‘bog head’ from northern Britain. Yet you will not find him on display in the Manchester Museum. Why not? This institution has a long history of displaying human remains. Before it became part of the university collections, its forerunner, the Natural History Society Museum, made a feature of this as early as 1834, where antiquarian George Head described a contrastive display:

Two contrasted specimens of the ancient and modern art of embalming were placed in singular juxta-position ... the mummy of a female, supposed to have been young, from Thebes ... the other, the corpse of an old maiden lady of Manchester, preserved by a late Dr. White ... stood upright in a glass case ... enveloped from head to foot in a dress of blue striped ticking. (Head 1836: 77)

This rather surprising inclusion of a near-contemporary corpse would shock us today, but the purpose here was to elide time: ‘a difference even of three thousand years certainly was not perceptible’ (Head 1836: 77), in order to showcase the ancient art of embalming. Following Prag and Neave’s groundbreaking facial reconstruction work, Worsley Man had featured in a small, corridor-length display on the art of this technique, in which a panel evoked the particular power of the bog, and the waxwork model was displayed alongside the preserved remains. Yet in 2007, as preparations were being made to host a return visit of Lindow Man, there began to emerge a growing discomfort in the display of human remains by a small number of the public but also professional curators. Worsley Man – the real head – disappeared, to be replaced by one of the supposed Roman stone heads and a label informed visitors that: ‘We have removed the head from display because we now feel, along with some of our visitors, that it should be displayed in a more sensitive and respectful manner. We realised that this part of the gallery had become a busy corridor ... there was little space to explain the cultural context of the Worsley

discovery' (2007 Museum case label: Manchester Museum). In a strange quirk of fate then, when the 'Lindow Man: A Bog Body Mystery' exhibition opened in 2008, neither public nor professional could directly compare the story nor remains of this body with those of his near neighbour from Astley Moss. Worsley Man has never been returned to display and is unlikely to do so in the near future. It can be argued that this was because the expectations for the display of the dead – whether to do it, and if so, how to do it well – had shifted. It is to that final part of the afterlife of the bog body that the [next chapter](#) turns.

Conclusion

Like Robinson's (2007: 20) study of Roundstone bog, this chapter has followed Worsley's Man afterlife, tracing just one of 'a network of precarious traverses, of lives swallowed up and forgotten'. From his re-emergence in Astley Moss in 1958, we can now present the most fulsome understanding of when he died and how he died but not *why*. His head may have been a sacred offering: the potent remains of an emissary sent to commune with the gods or appeal for intercession at a time of cultural crises. Yet he is more likely to be the victim of turbulent sociopolitical times when his own star rose and fell swiftly. He may have been a murderer or thief, who found himself on the wrong side of a swiftly changing and merciless judicial system, but he could equally be a courageous and outspoken individual who met the same fate as Cicero. The swiftness with which his head was interred suggests he did not achieve infamy as an auxiliary's trophy. His remains were brought to an unusual and special place, suggesting that the bog was still sought out as a powerful locale in which to deal with events that had ended violently and continued to trouble the community. It is this context that speaks of a continuing local rite, perhaps relating to fears around his revenancy or hopes that his power could be harvested and controlled using the particular powers and properties of the bog. The head had power beyond death that needed the mediation of the mire. Finally, the chapter has raised the issue relating to our contemporary care of the dead and if and how we display them. It is to those thorny issues that we now turn, mindful of this protracted relationship between ourselves and the ancient dead, why they continue to concern us and why this matters. As Laqueuer insightfully argues: 'It matters because the living need the dead more than the dead need the living. It matters because the dead make social worlds. It matters because we cannot bear to live at the borders of our mortality' (Laqueuer 2015: 1).

Disquieting exhibits: displaying the dead

Introduction: 'exposed for a sight'

The first attested 'exhibiting' of bog bodies appears to be the Hope couple, who died in a snowstorm in the Peak District of northern Britain in 1674 (see [Chapter 2](#)). Following their burial on the spot when the snow had melted, they lay undisturbed in the 'peat moss' for 'twenty-eight years and nine months' when the curiosity of the locals got the better of them. Dr Charles Balguy, the medic from Peterborough who had grown up in Hope, attributes this interest to the parishioners' knowledge of peat's preservative properties. Once the marvel of their flesh and clothing had been seen, their fame spread, and as Balguy (1735: 413–14) puts it, 'They were afterwards exposed for a Sight 20 Years, though they were much changed in that time'. The vicar Wormald, who would later inter them in Hope's churchyard (once the grazier's appalled grandson had coughed up the fee) told the antiquarian Samuel Pegge that 'they were expos'd to ye view of people who came every summer to see them for the space of 20 years longer' (Wormald's affidavit of 1758: see [Figure 2.2](#), Derbyshire Record Office manuscript ref. D1828/P1 449/3). As with the Drumkeeragh bog body seventy years later, visitors took curios or souvenirs, particularly 'relics' of clothing, and their disproportionate interest in the corpse of the young woman exacerbated her decay. One of those visitors was Dr Bourn of Chesterfield, who in 1716, as we have learned, pocketed one of the woman's teeth as well as sending his account to Balguy (1735: 414)! Wormald himself attended their final exhumation in 1722 ('I had the Curiosity myself to go to the place & see 'em taken up' (Wormald's affidavit of 1758: see [Figure 2.2](#), Derbyshire Record Office manuscript ref. D1828/P1 449/3), yet even when they had been buried in consecrated ground, they were not safe from prying eyes. The local clerics could not resist a final look: Balguy (1735: 414) ends his account by adding 'where upon looking into the Grave some time afterwards, it was found that they were entirely consumed'.

The Hope couple were not the only bog bodies to be exhumed and reburied only to be de-interred. Gallagh Man from Ireland, found in 1821, was also repeatedly lifted back out of the peat to be 'gawped at' (Raftery 1994: 188), while the

Korselitse bog body from Denmark who had been given Christian burial after his discovery in 1843, was re-exhumed at the behest of the crown prince, and sent for analysis to the National Museum (van der Sanden 1996: 41). There is thus a long history of fascinated viewing of the bog body phenomenon. As we have seen, Glob's strategic display of Grauballe Man in 1952 transformed not just public awareness of this phenomenon but normalised the display of human remains in Danish museums (Asingh and Lynnerup 2007). Yet in the UK at least, we have passed through a generation of critique about where bog bodies should 'live' after discovery (as we have seen in the last chapter) and whether they should even be on open display (Giles 2009; Jenkins 2011). Most bog body books end where the last chapter finished, with a mix of pragmatic and philosophical musings on who they were and why they died. Yet this book sets out to chart their 'afterlife' from the moment of discovery, the peeling back of the peat, through conservation, analysis and archaeological interpretation, to the creative legacy they have indelibly imprinted upon our cultural imagination. The missing stage is *how* we encounter them and so this chapter addresses the environment in which that one-to-one experience usually first occurs: the museum gallery.

Instead of a historiography of different displays (which are unfortunately often poorly archived) this chapter focuses on the difficult questions relating to their exhibition. Are there some things that are best not seen, not just for aesthetic reasons but due to the nature of the brutal death these individuals suffered? Do we run the risk of 'instilling apathy' or inuring the public to prehistoric practices that should still shock, appal and move us, as Sontag (2003) worries? Or perhaps worse, exoticising and othering these practices: legitimising the image that the classical authors constructed of the northern tribes as innately violent, hyper-martial barbarians? Redfern and Fibiger (2019) exhort archaeologists to think carefully about the popularity of remains that exhibit evidence for violence and how this can sometimes lead to misuse in the media. If we are to display bog bodies – and this chapter robustly defends that practice – then we must do it well and think critically about how we orchestrate encounters, evoke both trauma and humanity and provide context to this violence.

Corporeal aesthetics and affect: should bog bodies be on display?

On the opening night of 'Lindow Man: A Bog Mystery' in 2008, I spoke quietly with one of the contributors, Emma Restell Orr, a modern pagan and founder of 'HAD: Honouring the Ancient Dead' (Restell Orr 2004). Lindow Man was on his third northern tour (having previously visited in 1987 and 1991), in what had become a bit of an archaeological pilgrimage between the British Museum and the Manchester Museum. This act of cultural reciprocity was designed to address the deep feelings of ownership or responsibility for his remains felt by Cheshire and Lancashire inhabitants (see Chapter 7; see also Joy 2014b). In a controversial step, the exhibition had chosen not to foreground the story of Lindow Man himself,

although forensic detail, landscape context and the phenomenon of watery deposition were conveyed through loaned metalwork, expert interviews, peat spades and a stuffed bittern. Instead, its motif was to ask: ‘What does Lindow Man mean to you?’ (Sitch 2010). The testimonies from forensic scientists, field archaeologists and curators were set against those of a child who had sung in the ‘Lindow Man We Want You Back Again!’ campaign (Susan Chadwick: now an adult still living in the region) and the insights from contemporary pagan advocacy groups, for whom Lindow Man was seen as a spiritual ancestor (Restell Orr 2008). The exhibition was judged a technical success (Burch 2008): it won two major awards and attracted over 160,000 visitors but aspects of the aesthetics and layout, as well as the decision to platform this particular pagan perspective so prominently in the exhibition, were controversial (see Merriman *et al.* 2008; Schofield 2008; Sitch 2009). In terms of design, the MDF shelving units were apparently influenced by the Landesmuseum Natur und Mensch in Oldenburg, who display their bog bodies (Neu England Man, Bockhornerfeld Man and Husbäke Man) almost *in situ*. Their glass ‘coffins’ (a ‘sleeping beauty’ effect?) are set within wall-high, earth-art bog strata, moving down through the scraw of top turf, to the black peat of well-rotted *Sphagnum*. As Sanders (2009: 172) comments, these are installations that are thresholds, where the archaeological specimen and landscape art meld, such that the remains almost disappear back into the bog (Joy 2014b). Yet the raw, unfinished shelving of Manchester did not (for me at least) conjure bog stratigraphy but rather museum store or archive. Perhaps that too is fitting, but a sense of landscape was arguably lost here. Meanwhile, the body was presented quite suddenly, without warning, in direct juxtaposition to the pagan perspective: a relationship that must have been deliberate. Jenkins (2011) has written critically about letting what she sees as a marginal voice dominate such museum practice, arguing that this marks a failure of ‘curatorial confidence’. Conversely, Exell (2016) criticises the failure of the public consultation, arguing that the views of one or two dominant and powerful voices within the museum held sway at the expense of more consensual views. The paradigm of museum practice has arguably shifted since then; co-production of exhibitions is now a standard method for incorporating a plurality of views but the risk is that voices that think they have been heard – public *and* professional – get lost in the process. In the midst of the opening night hubbub, Restell Orr’s feelings were clear: ‘He should not be here’, she said, ‘he should be back in the bog’ (see Restell Orr 2008; Restell Orr and Bienkowski 2006a, 2006b).

As we have seen in [Chapter 4](#), mosses like Lindow were being cut for peat from at least the Iron Age, and it is only now that active extraction is ceasing, under a modern planning compromise that has seen the granting of housing applications on its fringe in exchange for the re-wetting and long-term restoration of the bog (Transition Wilmslow 2019). Lindow Man could go ‘back’ into this new bog but he will never be able to return to the locale in which he was originally interred. This call for the ‘repatriation and reburial’ of prehistoric remains in the UK has been spurred by the laudable empowerment of indigenous communities

to request the return of cultural remains (and some artefacts) acquired through questionable colonial collecting practices (Fforde 1997; Moshenska 2009). One of the key tenets here is that such communities must be able to demonstrate proven ancestral connections and living concerns to this heritage. British archaeologists have thus questioned the ‘authenticity’ of the British neo-pagan claim to pre-historic remains compared with these indigenous and First Nations rights (e.g. Thackray and Payne 2008; Jenkins 2011; Moshenska *et al.* 2011). The neo-pagan community point to the cultural and religious bias in the treatment of human remains in the UK: at present, Christians of all eras are not just entitled but legally required to be reburied after they have been appropriately recorded (unless special sanction is given, see Tatham 2016), while ‘pagan’ burials or body parts are usually licensed to remain above ground in museums and archival stores (Randerson 2007; see also Sayer 2010; Giles and Williams 2016). Most archaeologists see these assemblages as vital to the understanding of ancient populations, enabling researchers to undertake longitudinal studies of origin, mobility, disease and well-being, gender relations, religious beliefs and (particularly important for bog bodies) cultural studies of violence (e.g. Mays 2008; see also papers in Lohman and Goodnow 2006).

Yet do we have the right to *display* them? Alberti *et al.* (2009: 140) cite the Vermillion Accord (Clause 2), which states that the wishes of the dead (ancient or modern) should be respected where they can be ‘known or reasonably inferred’ – unfortunately the pressures of the contemporary planning and extraction industries often tear the dead out of the place they probably intended to lie in for perpetuity. We have little option but to receive their remains. They are also concerned by the absence of consent, so fundamental to the retention of recent human remains but awkwardly unobtainable for the past. Yet as Sontag (2003: 113) puts it, at the end of *Regarding the Pain of Others*:

The dead are supremely uninterested in the living: in those who took away their lives; in witnesses – and in us. Why should they seek our gaze? What would they have to say to us? ‘We’ – this ‘we’ is everyone who has never experienced anything like what they went through – don’t understand. We don’t get it. We truly can’t imagine what it was like.

We must accept that displaying the dead is not ultimately ‘for the dead’: it is for ourselves, to learn more about humanity (and indeed, inhumanity). Most pressingly then, we need to answer the question posed by J. D. Hill (the curator who engaged with Hutton’s critique of Lindow Man, see Chapter 7): ‘What is it that you can say about the past ... which you can only say by having human remains on display?’ (cited in Alberti *et al.* 2009: 139). For most people in Britain, the museum is the first context in which we will encounter human remains and confront mortality (Giles 2009: 95). Visiting such a museum hopefully creates an experience where we emerge more grateful for the power of antibiotics, mindful of diverse beliefs, impressed by ancient skills (the beauty of grave goods for instance, the impressiveness of a funeral), yet more aware of the human capacity for violence and

self-reflective about our own privilege (Schofield 2008). Some would argue that a copy, a simulacrum, a reproduction will suffice, avoiding the perturbing effect of actually seeing a 'corpse'. Yet if we never show human remains we perpetuate the notion that they should *not* be seen, and we reproduce yet another generation distanced from dying and loss (Sayer 2010; Croucher *et al.* 2019). We lock away, we archive, death. In the UK at least, most of the public *expect* to see the 'real thing', revelling in the 'magical' or 'spiritually enchanting' aura of something that thwarts time: of being in the presence of the past (Jones 2010; Fredengren 2016; Nordström 2016). Of course, we need to foreground the methods through which we come to tell the stories of human remains; the dead do not speak for themselves, despite appearing to have a self-evidential power (Crossland 2009). We also need to acknowledge the limits of interpretation and the failures of science, as Chapter 6 has sought to expose (an important point made by Hutton 2004b). Yet that mortal evidence – of disenfranchisement and disease or of privilege and power over another human being – should be kept, cared for and shown, even where those stories are partial, tentative or uncomfortable. Apart from the biological instruction imparted by a skeleton, it can strip back the veneer of difference to remind us of our common humanity: 'an uncritical, unvarnished truth of what lies beneath all of the things that seem so important in life – skin colour, fat, scars, beauty, ugliness, difference. The skeleton represents life at its most universal, stripped of the differences that can divide the living' (from the 'Yes, We Should Display Human Remains' section of Alberti *et al.* 2009: 133). Fleshed and well-preserved remains are somewhat different, as Chapter 3 has discussed, confronting the visitor with the disconcerting, disruptive 'uncanny' or 'abject' (Sanders 2009; Giles 2013), threatening both the temporal distance and the sanitising containment that a gallery case normally promises (Goodnow 2006). For Restell Orr (2008) this made her final encounter with Lindow Man shocking, seeing 'his mutilated body, deep brown, his foot at an angle, his blank expression ... like that of a man utterly broken ... I felt as if I had just witnessed an assault'. Similar ambiguity arose in the international touring exhibition entitled 'The Mysterious Bog People' (a collaboration between one German, one Dutch and two Canadian museums, see Bergen *et al.* 2002), which received positive reviews across northern Europe but encountered difficulties on its Canadian leg, where (despite consultation with First Nations groups) public opinion was split (Gill-Robinson 2004). Vocal critics saw this as an abhorrent exhibition of 'rotting corpses', 'despicable' and 'disrespectful' not just in its displays but its merchandising of the ancient dead (cited in Gessel 2002). This brings us back to ideas regarding the unnerving encounters generated by bog bodies: their 'fleshiness and overt corporeality' (Sanders 2009: 50), their unsettling similitude yet difference from both the living and the dead (Wallace 2004). Even Freud seemed keen to repress this 'black tide' of visceral and violated dead. The British pagan community is by no means united on this front: many support the sensitive display of human remains (Vaswani 2001; Rathouse 2016) even if the notion of what is and is not 'respectful' is culturally contextual (Tarlow 2006). These problems take us into the territory of what has recently been

conceptualised as ‘dark’ or ‘difficult’ heritage (see Sather-Wagstaff 2011; Stone *et al.* 2018). The exhumation and display of bog bodies has always been caught up in the visiting (personally or conceptually) of the ‘dark’ side of prehistoric death, brutality and dehumanisation. It is evident in the earliest accounts of this ‘thanatourism’ (Seaton 2009), such as the Hope couple, but what this fairly recent movement perhaps forgets is its origins in the sacredly morbid pilgrimages of the Middle Ages. As a result, modern museum curators of apparently secular collections often express conflicted emotions: ‘There is no relationship between us and these displayed dead and that lack of relationship makes it futile: in fact, it emphasises the dead as objects, as nothing to do with us’ (from the ‘No, We Should Not Display Human Remains’ section of Alberti *et al.* 2009: 138). This is a stinging point. In Chapter 3, I argued that it is not so much the material authenticity of archaeological remains that can generate the ineffable, enchanting and haunting encounter that connects people in the present with people from the past, but the ‘experiences and relationships that they have been a part of’ (Jones 2010: 137; see also Fredengren 2016). Is it really true that by placing them in a museum case the bog bodies are severed from those relationships? Perhaps not. Remember the Højgaard family, brought in to view the hybrid simulacrum of Tollund Man, affirming this was ‘him’. Or Valerie Hall, Don Brothwell and Rolly Reed, moved by Old Croghan Man to take his hand yet haunted by their nightmares. Bruce Mould, brother to the peat digger who found Lindow Man, connected with the fact he came from the moss and endured a hard, working life in that landscape: ‘It’s nice to know summat like you, from thousands of years ago, and [that] they lived pretty similar like us, you know’ (Bruce Mould cited in Hector 2008). Would skeletal remains have inspired this same bond? Possibly, but there is another peculiar power that the bog bodies possess that helps here: they ‘interrupt time. They thwart death. They appear to offer the potent possibility of some kind of immortality, whether in this world or the next’ (Giles 2013: 490), taking us beyond the bounds of our own mortality (Laqueur 2015). It is this very aura of defiant and recognisable humanity, I believe, which forges such close connections with the dead from the bog, evoking feelings of identification, awe and even concern at their fate. In their afterlife then, these Iron Age and Roman remains have become wrapped in new networks of care. The people whose lives they have burst into, erupting from the peat, have been moved by their encounter, whether in the midst of the bog itself, the conservation lab or the spotlight of the gallery, to *attend* to this life from the past. I am guided here by John Berger (1984: 21), who argued (in a thesis on poetry) that we should hold out the promise that ‘what has been experienced cannot disappear as if it has never been’. The dead may no longer ‘care’ if they were a sacrifice or execution at the time of Roman conquest but we should because it tells us about the experience of colonialism here on the ground. Exhibitions of the dead need this poetic tenet. If one of the purposes of a museum is not merely to collect, curate and conserve for some endlessly deferred future, but to challenge, inspire curiosity and connect people across time in the here and now, then arguably these displays of bog bodies can do such work.

Encountering bog bodies

The chapter now turns to the material, spatial and narrative methods through which bog bodies are currently displayed, drawing on specific examples from across northern Europe. We will begin with Lindow Man's permanent home in the British Museum. As discussed in [Chapter 3](#), the centrepiece display for this internationally significant find within an upper-floor atrium promoted his fame but took its toll. In 1997 he was resituated in Room 50, which spans the later pre-history of Britain. Lindow Man is now appropriately positioned at the threshold of transition into the Roman gallery, offering a last glance at the people conquered by Rome, before we are immersed in the weaponry, religious icons, dining sets and mosaics of that extraordinary empire. He is juxtaposed (across the throughfare) with another peri-Conquest body: the cremated remains from the Welwyn burial. Both men saw the coming of Rome's government and army, one in the south (an elite figure, benefitting from trade and sociopolitical contacts with this super power) and one from the north (violently killed around the time of the military occupation of the north). Hutton ([2004a](#), [2004b](#)) may be appalled at the way in which Lindow Man appears both sequestered out of public sight and forced into the trope of ritual sacrifice, easily overlooked by the visitor who spends an average of four minutes in the whole of this room (Cecilia and Wilkin [2018](#)). Yet this is partly a practical necessity: the 'canopy' over his two-sided boxed case helps control light levels but also affords a greater sense of privacy; he is now 'gently shielded in a dark bower', as Jones ([2007](#): 24) puts it, also meeting the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) guidelines on human remains in museums (DCMS [2005](#): 20) that the public should not come across them 'unawares' (Joy [2014b](#)). Given the ambiguity over his violent death, the hip-level captioning now reflects a plurality of interpretations, as well as providing detail on both the preservative power of the bog and the active conservation methods used to continue its work. It also brings the visitor into closer proximity with the remains, placing him not at their feet but in more of a level meeting: face to face. The backdrop is an atmospheric photograph of the warped and despoiled landscape of Lindow Moss by Stephen Vaughan ([Figure 8.1](#)). In this image, the wracked roots of the trees now erupting from the lowest levels of the moss stand as metaphor for the torn body; the incisive cut through the liquid black peat seems to thrust him anew into our midst, capturing his eruptive possibilities in the present. He lies on a bed of inert bark chippings meant to conjure the peat's embrace of the corpse but although Lindow Man was placed prone in the bog, he has been turned over, to face the visitor (Joy [2014b](#): 17): inverting an act that may have been meant to shame, hide or contain this powerful body. This seems an apposite gesture that restores dignity to the corpse and encourages a new generation of connections to this man's life and death.

More could be done, as Joy ([2014b](#): 17) acknowledges, but what the British Museum achieves in microcosm, the National Museum of Ireland achieves on a grander scale. The driving narrative for its exhibition 'Kingship and Sacrifice'



8.1 Stephen Vaughan's landscape of Lindow Moss. All rights reserved and permission to use the figure must be obtained from the copyright holder.

is that of Kelly's (2006) hypothesis that these remains represent the offering up of a failed leader to the land to which they were symbolically 'wedded', in order to inaugurate a new reign. While this is a rather specific interpretation, it is contextualised in one of the fullest displays of offerings to the bog found in any museum: showcasing shields, bog figures and bog butter, jewellery, vessels, skin capes and personal ornaments. There is a rich aesthetic of bog wood (with sculpted pillars echoing the warped figures from Corlea or Kilbeg), peat-brown floors and white walls, evoking the stark contrast of bog and sky. Its spatial design was driven by the decision that visitors should be able to choose whether they see the bog bodies or not (Mulhall and Briggs 2007: 75). Funerary rituals in Ireland, as well as the longevity of Catholic relations with 'sacred' human remains, means that there is a bolder and more visceral bond with the dead in this country, yet the museum shows an awareness that not everyone will want to see the corpses of those who died such a violent death. For such individuals, a simple black-and-white line drawing of part of the body, and a fulsome osteobiography panel on the exterior of the curved white pods, allows them to learn about the lives of these people without having to enter into their presence. The curved ammonite shell does, however, encourage entry for the curious, drawing the visitor with a slight

ramp effect into a wood-panelled alcove, where an inbuilt bench allows them to sit, examine and contemplate (Figure 8.2; see Giles 2009: 92). No further information is offered within these small coves, and they only permit a handful of visitors at any one time, enhancing the sense of a personal encounter (Mulhall and Briggs 2007). That wider context is not missing: multimedia screens, interviews and wall panels provide great detail on the bog, peat preservation, conservation and forensic analysis, which ‘wrap’ the exterior walls of the exhibition hall. Dublin thus produces a ‘nested’ experience of encounter, from the archaeological frame to the deeply personal. The only slightly disconcerting effect is the case in which each body rests: backlit on a light turquoise panel that throws the remains into sharp light. This can seem a little forensic, like a mortuary slab. Nonetheless, being able to draw your own hand close to the curled fingers of Old Croghan Man himself, with only a sheet of glass between your fingertips is a moving experience (Figure 8.3).

This choice of whether or not to see the remains is also managed with Tolland Man at Silkeborg Museum in Denmark. Before you reach him, the gallery conjures daily life, settlement, dress, clothing, food, craftwork and weaponry in the Iron Age. This is later prehistoric life at its fullest and richest, drawing on evidence from the bog bodies but deploying them to conjure a sense of the vivid, impressive and skilful communities of the time. A replica of a wagon, a chainmail shirt, colourful reproductions of cloth and contrastive hairstyles use experimental archaeology to re-present the world that is preserved only through the power of



8.2 The ‘Kingship and Sacrifice’ exhibition at the National Museum of Ireland. All rights reserved and permission to use the figure must be obtained from the copyright holder.



8.3 Old Croghan Man's hand – close enough to touch? All rights reserved and permission to use the figure must be obtained from the copyright holder.

the peat. Elling Woman is here, lying under the capes and garments that covered her remains. However, new interactive displays allow the visitor to interrogate the archaeological evidence without having to see Tolland Man himself. There is a three-dimensional reproduction of the head with its hat and an oversized 'tablet' table and screen, allowing multiple levels of investigation into different areas of analysis, layered to allow superficial and deeper levels of research. From schoolchild to adult learner this medium is perfectly tailored to meet the current generation's familiarity with this enquiry method. Yet this screen has a wonderful aesthetic: in quiet mode, small motes float across it – dust or pollen, tufts of bog cotton, midges or miniature *ignis fatuus*, the viewer is not sure, but it creates an ethereal and other-worldly sense of time both passing and standing still. The final encounter with Tolland Man happens in an apsidal end space, subconsciously evoking the religious setting for a relic. Yet here, the wall once more conjures the landscape of the bog through almost life-size black-and-white images, with stark birch trees and upright bog posts seeming to hide faces in their patterns, while the tussocks and bog pools reflect the winter sky (Figure 8.4). The case, which can be walked around completely, once more lifts Tolland Man up into an equal relationship with the viewer. The back wall provides a summary of his life and death, the programme of analysis and conservation history, but as we have seen in Chapter 3,



8.4 Tollund Man at Silkeborg Museum. All rights reserved and permission to use the figure must be obtained from the copyright holder.

the visitor's attention is not overtly drawn to the hybrid simulacrum represented here; an encounter with the art of the bog and the art of the museum reconstruction team is presented as one. Although hanged, the narrative here is one of respect for the dead with a strong sense of ritual sacrifice.

The Moesgaard Museum at Aarhus, meanwhile, places that narrative of the necessary offering of things to the bog front and foremost (see [Chapter 4](#)). The dripping rain rods from the roof, the dark canopy of a night sky and the trembling floor unsettle the visitor, creating an unease meant to mimic the environmental crisis faced by these farming communities. Art is used evocatively here to create a sense of landscape with cut-out metal tree silhouettes and light art conjuring rippling pools opening and closing over a deposit. Hip-level cases present the range of mundane and spectacular things given up to the bog – a braid of hair, a bog dog, jewellery and weapons – while moving graphics on the wall offer speculative, interpretive stories that explain these 'gifts'. A woman cuts off her own hair to lower it in thanksgiving, the dog is dressed in a garland of flowers while a gang of men plan and carry out a violent raid and offer up a humiliated captive. Human life and death are drawn here as a set of necessary balances and exchanges, while the galleries that follow (on Alken Enge and Illerup) leave the visitor in no doubt about the prevalence of conflict in these communities and the importance of the

'aftermath' of gathering, displaying and depositing weaponry and remains. The visitor first meets Grauballe Man by being drawn to the centre of the main Iron Age gallery: a rail encourages them to stand and gaze down, as if perched on the edge of the bog, looking into the peat cutting. It establishes a relationship of power over the body that evokes both the curiosity yet detachment of the peat cutters and the archaeologist, drawn to the site (also perhaps, the authority of those executing this man and lowering him into the bog pool). That relationship is then undercut once the visitor makes their way down into an oval room, dimly lit, set with benches to sit and be with the body (Figures 8.5a and 8.5b). As in Ireland, there is an encouragement to attend to the corpse, as if undertaking a watch over a deceased preceding a wake or attending a funeral parlour to pay respects. As with Lindow Man, he is turned to face you and show you his wound. As with Silkeborg, you can walk around him, examine him from every angle. Time can be spent here not just talking of the dead but also, in a way, with them. Here, the context of the bog pool is evoked through a peaty bed and rough-textured concrete floor. The whole museum is subterranean, enhancing the feel of submergence and stillness: a 'meditative nucleus', as Sanders (2009: 179) describes it. Yet just outside of this space is the richest exposition of the discovery and conservation of a bog body seen in any museum and the history of his reception; rewrapping Grauballe Man in the archaeological and public network of relationships through which his corpse survived in its entirety, paving the way for a new approach to bog bodies.



8.5a Grauballe Man from above. All rights reserved and permission to use the figure must be obtained from the copyright holder.



8.5b Grauballe Man from below. All rights reserved and permission to use the figure must be obtained from the copyright holder.

Between these exhibits, we can see different approaches to the narrative, spatial design and encounter that is crafted with such remains. A distinction can be drawn between those institutions where the bog body might be one exhibit among many (for example, Huldremose Woman in the National Museum of Denmark, covered over by her cloaks and capes) or those where they are promoted as the main exhibit that dominates design (as in Silkeborg and Dublin). Some propose a dominant interpretive narrative (as in Dublin and Moesgaard) while other present their bodies alongside space for comment and debate; this is best exemplified in the Archäologisches Landesmuseum (Gottorf Castle) in Germany where bulletin boards encourage visitors to leave comments over whether Windeby Boy, the Rednswühren Men, Damendorf and Osterby should be on display at all (Sanders 2009: 184). Manchester Museum manufactured this in miniature in the 2008 Lindow Man display, using a small 'comment card' board as well as a box for contemporary 'votive' offerings. Most galleries use darkness, quietude, peat palettes and rough textures to instill reverence and contemplation in the visitor. We know we are in the presence of the dead. These exhibitions provide detailed forensic evidence that the audience needs to 're-personify and re-socialise mummies' (Nystrom 2019: 257): recognising that they are not just biological but *social* beings. Yet what none of the them do particularly well is evoke the violence behind those deaths; in Schofield's (2008) terms, they are 'devoid of drama', neutralising or suppressing the damage done to a human being. Given that these are public spaces

we can appreciate why this might be. Yet it is an issue common not just to exhibits but images of pain and suffering more generally (Sontag 2003). Does this matter, and if so, what could be done to subtly change those displays?

Regarding the pain of others

In *About Looking*, the art critic and author John Berger (1980: 38) contemplates the risk posed by ‘photographs of agony’: that in viewing pain, we may be arrested or seized by the image but return to our lives feeling ‘hopelessly inadequate’. His real concern is the lack of historical context and specificity: that such images become ‘depoliticised ... evidence of the human condition. It accuses nobody and everybody’ (Berger 1980: 40). These ideas were developed by Susan Sontag (2003), who attacks those images that fail to identify the victim where they are clearly known, or reduce mass violence to an othering of the body, decontextualising and devaluing not just their pain but their lives. Captions matter. Using images from conflict environments she shows how they were often used to glorify torture or massacre. They *were* trophies in themselves, legitimating the infliction of suffering, and were part of the means through which some lives (as in Butler’s (2010) argument) were made inhuman, ungrivable. The early Romano-British rope-bound amuletic figure from Brough-under-Stainmore (Aldhouse-Green 2002: fig. 20), the skull bowl from Stiens-Kramer on the terp of the Netherlands (Nieuwhof 2015: 266) and the Insus sculpture from Lancaster (Bull 2007) were all designed to the same end: not just modes of categorising humanity but of destroying it, negating its worth. Both subject and audience for such an image need careful identification then, as Sontag (2003: 6) insists: ‘No “we” should be taken for granted when the subject is looking at other people’s pain’. Her work builds on that of Scarry (1995) who has explored those aspects of extreme materiality that resist representation, particularly pain but also labour (and I would argue, death itself, Giles 2016b). Scarry (1995: 11) identifies the crux of the problem: it is the very unintelligibility of pain, of representing a deeply interiorised experience whose effect is to rob us of voice – to render us speechless – that is at work here. To imagine pain, she argues, we must ‘see the wound’. The imagery, text or poetry that best does this, she suggests, is that which blurs the boundary between the body and the context of that pain: the materials that cause or render suffering, or those that supplicate and tend to its effects. Bodily matter, blade edge, rope, peat, water, stakes, cape and cloak. There is no museum display that currently manages a raw and visceral evocation of the violence done to a bog body and perhaps there never will be. Yet we must try to avoid replacing ‘trauma with nostalgia’ (Sanders 2009: 34). Some details, Tarlow (2006) argues, are necessarily too painful to show, too intimate to make public. The boundary between suffering and sexual objectification is often uncomfortably blurred with bog bodies, such as the near-naked, sprawled body of what was thought to be Windeby ‘Girl’, her eyes blindfolded both to her persecutor and fate (Sanders 2009: 101; Aldhouse-Green’s 2016: front cover). The shifting of what was probably a headband to become a ‘gag’ during ‘her’ death, was then transformed

by the curator to become a 'blindfold', supposedly to make her 'more alluring' (Gill-Frerking 2014: 70). This heterosexual eroticisation of the bog body is challenged by the realisation that this is, in fact, the body of a young boy. In a similar vein, van der Sanden (2005) reflects thoughtfully on the souvenirs sold to promote bog body exhibitions, appealing against the overt commercialisation of vulnerable individuals such as Yde Girl. Our relationship with bog bodies can be depicted differently. The early photograph of the Rendswühren bog body from 1873 (which Mestorf studied and interpreted as a murder victim) was probably commissioned by Handelsmann and Pansch for their revision of her catalogue (van der Sanden 1996: fig. 55). The figure is posed upright, respectfully framed by a lengthy sweep of cloth (positioned like a worn cloak): a fictional repositioning of a now balletic figure that is inclined slightly, as if in thoughtful conversation with the viewer.

An additional problem, Sontag (2003) argues, is that conflict imagery may strive for the shock of immediate suffering (the striking of a bullet, the moment of death), but this is often achieved via an aesthetic that appears to undercut its reality. Such images appear to gloss pain, risking the 'inauthenticity of the beautiful', as she puts it (Sontag 2003: 69). What is expected is the 'the weight of witnessing without the taint of artistry' (Sontag 2003: 23). What museological tropes have, or could be used, to achieve this 'witnessing'? The notion of their distance in time from us creates a buffer, argues Sanders (2009: 37). Galleries that bring you close to the wound make it difficult to look away. Grauballe Man's 'elderberry gash' is at eye level, once you take the bench in Moesgaard Museum. I may have criticised the forensic-style slab upon which Old Croghan Man lay and yet by bringing the mortuary to mind, and backlighting the body, attention is focused upon the withies pushed through his arms, the slight cut across his nipples. We do not need blood or viscera to find these excoriating fleshy tears excruciating to witness. The twist of hemp around Borremose Man's neck, or the snaking leather rope plaited around Tolland Man convulse us: we feel urged to loosen the knot, to let breath back in. 'Let the atrocious images haunt us ... they still perform a vital function', as Sontag (2003: 102) exhorts. Meanwhile, the 'ineffable' or 'enchanted' affect of bog bodies lies in the intimate traces of humanity still visible. The fragility of nails and hair – the stubble of Lindow Man's beard, Elling Woman's neat plait. Worn and repaired clothing – the darning of the Hunteberg cloaks, the crudely stitched seam on Dröbnitz Girl's skin cape. The small items of intrigue – Huldremose Woman's comb, Old Croghan Man's slit-braided armband. We can subvert the dehumanising effect of violence by foregrounding the traces of a recognisable life, lived and cared for. The apple pips, hazelnut shells and dried sloes of a last meal, the bodies that are barely visible under the drape of a cape, the cloaks tucked around their feet.

Humanising techniques: face to face with the past

The notion of coming face to face with people from the past has been a common motif in bog body studies at least since the discovery of Tolland Man. It is, Sanders (2009: 197) reports, by far the most commonly used phrase that surfaces in the

study of bog bodies. It forms both the subtitle and the subject for this book, since it captures well the urge to come to 'know' an individual when this is an ontological impossibility; the world he comes from is strikingly and uncomfortably different. We are attracted not just to the physiognomy but the 'intimate corporeal geographies' of these faces (Sanders 2009: 197). We come close, performing a 'double take' that initially repels, then connects (Sanders 2009: 37), but there is still a gulf. Strange then, that a phenomenon so renowned for the preservation of the flesh should spur so many facial reconstructions over the years, as if we are consistently seeking an ever-more realistic, scientifically accurate *and* visually arresting image that approaches the very affect these faces already conjure – of collapsing time to allow us to meet this 'other'. Sanders (2009: 194) locates this within a general thirst for authenticity and the peculiar problem that well-preserved remains pose in relation to this quality (see [Chapter 3](#)).

Such images of the dead are needed, we feel, partly to bridge the rift between the static body and the objective of its display – to re-humanise the deceased and bring their story 'to life'. These visualisations have an arresting and enduring power that offers a thrill (Sanders 2009: 201), yet at their most moving can even 'sacralise' the past (Swain 2002). Initially, bog body reconstructions were paper-based (often depicting the whole individual as if dressed), then crafted in plaster or bronze (van der Sanden 1996: 147–8): mimicking the media of classical and historical statuary, as if to lend authority and dignity to these works. Many museums could not afford these expensive conceptualisations and opted instead for what Howard Williams (2009: 172) has dubbed the 'living dead': a generic stock figure, a dressed mannikin, evoking the individual in the prime of life, utilising details of artefacts and textiles to clothe and re-animate the remains (see examples in van der Sanden 1996: 147–8). The first attempt to give these depictions the specificity of personal appearance was in the early 1980s, focused on the remains of Windeby 'Girl' (Boy), crafted by Richard P. Helmer in Germany (van der Sanden 1996: 147). However, Helmer could not access this fragile skull – he could only use a modern cranium that was 'similar' to the girl's, to act as the basis for his forensic modelling of muscle and tissue. This gap between the real remains and the reconstruction created ambiguity over the verisimilitude of the final image. Later that decade, a collaboration between medical illustrator Richard Neave and Manchester Museum curator Professor John Prag resulted in the first use of X-radiographs as a basis for facial reconstructions, modelled first in clay then cast in plaster, adding soft tissues in wax. It was based on Neave's contemporary forensic techniques (which had solved several 'Jane' and 'John Doe' crimes in the UK), completing the reconstruction with artificial eyes and hair (Prag and Neave 1999). During the late 1980s/early 1990s, Lindow Man was completed for the British Museum and Worsley Man for the Manchester Museum (Joy 2009: 28). Neave also produced a reconstructed head of Yde Girl, using CT scans this time, which permitted digital manipulation of the peat compression damage to her skull. It is this evocative, slightly mournful looking young girl's face that found its way on to posters and T-shirts in the international travelling exhibition 'The Mysterious Bog People'.

Why the face? Sanders (2009: 1) begins her study of the cultural effect of bog bodies by evoking the connective power of Tolland Man's features: the 'emotive power of his countenance, the ease with which we identify with it, the delicate minutiae of his wrinkles, the traces of time so present in his day-old beard'. As van der Sanden (1996: 147) puts it, the face is 'the most individual part of the body', which most of us are hard-wired to seek out, to 'read' in terms of personality, temperament and emotion. Initially, such reconstructions were left in the white or brown clay or plaster to avoid reading on to the face *too much* specific detail. As the techniques developed, it was realised that in order to 'cross' that uncanny boundary between bog body and living being, the natural colours of tinted skin, hair and iris were required, yet of course, this more speculative specificity began to dramatically diminish their accuracy, ironically narrowing the connections that people can make with these past figures. Prag and Neave (1999: 170) describe being 'ruled' by the skull. Yet like all archaeological visualisations, they are 'amalgams of artistic and scientific interpretation' (Sanders 2009: 201). The bog head reconstructions quite literally 'date' from the time of their making: freighting these faces with assumptions about appearance (hair length and cut), state of health and lifestyle (gaunt and hungered, weather-beaten or worn out), as well as their 'look' moments before their imagined death (haunted, resigned, defiant, engaged). Whether they seem to gaze down to the fate that awaits them, or out across time to the viewer, makes a great difference in the impact of the reconstruction. This design process can be a very mutual one or a more isolated endeavour but it is seldom written down or published, leaving ambiguity over who decided what the head should finally 'look like' or what it should emote (see Giles 2016b).

An initial cast of Lindow Man's head was finished in 'bronzed resin' with sightless eyes: 'interposing a material that makes no claim to represent the flesh and the features realistically' (Prag and Neave 1999: 164), while also aping the effect of a timeless material that evoked 'a work of art as well as a reconstruction' (Prag and Neave 1999: 165). Yet they admitted that in adding the details of hair and eye colour, 'Lindow Man comes to life' (Prag and Neave 1999: 165). In fact, the reconstructed heads of Lindow Man and Worsley Man bear an uncanny resemblance to each other apart from their nose shapes (one fine and pointed, the other broad and flat), but much of this comes down to the fact that they are both depicted with fairly short dark hair, short but full-face beards and moustache. Worsley Man's eyes may be a more brilliant blue but the two could pass as relatives – which might not be unfair given their spatial proximity and presumably common regional ideals of hirsute appearance. Yet today they look vaguely like a late 1980s field archaeologist or museum curator; add a stripy jumper and they might step out of *Time Team*. Visualisations are a product of their time, they age (Giles 2016b: 413) and both are now consigned to the archive shelf. There is another reason why other facial reconstructions find themselves quickly marginalised. Some curators, Sanders (2009: 217) notes, can fear the way these new faces 'claim superiority and exercise authority over their original albeit ruined remains'.

Should we cease these attempts and accept that the bog bodies themselves are doing the work of connecting us yet preserving a gulf in time that can never be closed? Van der Sanden (1996: 151) thinks not: so many of the bog remains are not 'brought back to life so easily ... [and are] doomed to remain anonymous skeletons and leather envelopes'. Sanders (2009: 214, 216) too applauds this 'poetological' and 'ekphrastic' project, citing Taussig's notion that in the endeavour, something new emerges, producing a 'strange property' not of closing down the possibilities of being human but of 'opening out'. If one of the central problems in two- or three-dimensional reconstructions is that 'the illusion of *life-giving* can only be created by making *lifelessness* manifest' (Sanders 2009: 214, original emphasis), then we are entering a realm where that threshold too, is trembling. The very latest in CT scanning and 3D visualisation techniques used to create a new 'face' for Tolland Man by Visual Forensic (2019) for Silkeborg Museum introduce animacy to a bog head (Figure 8.6). The result of this 're-facement' (not replacement), as



8.6 Visual Forensic's facial reconstruction of Tolland Man. All rights reserved and permission to use the figure must be obtained from the copyright holder.

Sanders 2009: 218) exhorts us to call it, is in every sense of the word uncanny. When presented by Ole Nielsen in 2018 to the Bog Body network in a quiet gallery room in Manchester, the three-dimensional computer-generated image brought not only the pores of his skin and the textures of his skin cap to life, but allowed him to breathe, to suddenly settle his gaze upon us ... and blink. There was an audible murmur around the room. In this peculiar field of bringing us to face to face with the most famous bog body face from northern Europe, this new vision quite literally *moved*.

Conclusion: re-suturing bog bodies

This chapter has reviewed the work of the museum and gallery in gathering the evidence from archaeological analysis to imagine, visualise and realise how to tell that tale. When faced with violent or mysterious death, and the uncanny properties of a bog body, this is no mean feat. Sanders (2009: 19) lauds Glob's own endeavour here, arguing that he 'sutures the dissected body through poetic and photographic glossing', achieving 'almost a re-embalming'. As with [Chapter 3](#), this chapter has sought to reveal the labour of that work, its ethical dilemmas and some creative solutions. In keeping with the examples of good practice discussed here, the front cover of this book also seeks to bring the reader 'face to face' with these dead, inverting the relationship of interrogative power normally bestowed by gazing down upon them in the bog. We may flinch in the face of the violence they have endured – we should do – but they need to prompt us to wonder, to question, to interrogate further and to *imagine*. This is their 'riddling power', as Heaney (1999: 4) puts it, for it moves us to consider not just their mortality and fate, but ours.

9

Conclusion: creative legacies

Stripping the earth

It gets you every time ... they were there, so close, just below the surface, as if beneath the membrane of life ... present and invisible, like the strange world of layers and walls interspersed with cavities, canals and tendons that live beneath our skin. And in fact, within a few hours, just as a wound might, the stripped earth will have lost colour and dried out, or else darkened and filled with water. (Olivier 2015: 39)

In his study of *The Dark Abyss of Time* Laurent Olivier conjures the emergent power of the past as it resurfaces into our lives. His point is that archaeology is not some neat, systematic endeavour uncovering history in a sequential manner. It is messy, confusing and disconcerting. It comes at us in the midst of our own lives where we must make sense of it; thus the past is always in dialogue with the issues and concerns of the present. This book has taken that moment of irruption as its starting point, following the afterlife of the bog body: how it was reburied or revived, investigated and interpreted. It has followed how the meanings of these remains have changed through time, relating them to the fears, beliefs, aims and ambitions of those who handled these corpses. Saints and sinners, cowards and priests, muggers and murderers, victims or heroines: we have written into those lives a set of stories that tell us as much about ourselves as they do about the past. They have been a lens through which we can examine our own prejudices and desires. While the most thorough studies discussed here are rooted in exemplary analysis, employing the very latest in scientific techniques, the best remain interpretively open; we may never be able to resolve whether some of the most iconic bog bodies were accidents, executions, sacrifices or self-offerings. We should not be too concerned: Charles Sanders Peirce himself used the bog to evoke the ever-provisional nature of scientific enquiry that is not 'standing on the bedrock of fact. It is walking upon a bog, and can only say, this ground seems to hold for the present. Here I will stay till it begins to give way' (in Hartshorne and Weiss 1994: V: 589).

What we can do, however, is contextualise our bog bodies, in place and in time. Throughout, the book has sought to examine not just the landscape of the moss

itself but the wider environment and its consequences for contemporary human inhabitation. It has brought to light the other objects and animal remains found alongside these remains, to consider how we conceptualise deposition, tempering the notion that these were offerings to the gods with a new emphasis upon deposition itself as a way of creating value (after Fontijn 2020), as well as a way of dealing with the end of things that were often complex pieces of crafting, well used and redolent with life. Taking that idea back into the study of the death of people has enabled this book to posit a rather different approach to sacrifice and fertility, emphasising the dramaturgy of violence as both a trope of power and a way of capturing those vitalities that fuelled the regeneration of these prehistoric worlds. By setting the bog bodies back in wider archaeological evidence for Iron Age remains, we need to acknowledge that what appears to be a common phenomenon is of our making: *we* have created the concept of the *Moorleiche* as a distinct being, deciding on its boundaries, ruling bodies in or out, fumbling around the edge of moss, mire, bog and fen, when these bodies and the violence done to them need to be seen within wider cultures of both conflict and deposition in a suite of watery places.

In offering up a new ‘cold case’ examination of Worsley Man, the study has been able to follow what happens to these practices as Rome enters the scene. It suggests a longevity of indigenous rites in the north that were not simply outlawed by these conquerors but co-opted to ‘speak back’ to the colonised, in an idiom of injurious humiliation they understood. After exposing the particular power of decapitation in this study of violence, it has sought to explain the peculiar and ongoing fondness for the skull (and ancient human remains in general) in this area of the north. This has led to a deeper understanding of the sense of ownership and responsibility for bog bodies that leads us into the curatorial stage of their after-life. Through an examination of exhibiting practices, the book culminates with a critical consideration of whether bog bodies should be on display, and if so, how we might do this well. In this [final chapter](#) I want to briefly explore the creative aftermath of bog bodies. This has been perceptively and authoritatively scrutinised across literature, art and material culture in the work of Sanders (2009) and I will not attempt to re-cross that territory. Instead, I want to return to one example: the work of Seamus Heaney and how he used bog bodies to speak to the present.

Digging: poetry and conflict

Seamus Heaney’s bog body poems span two key collections: *Wintering Out* (1972) and *North* (1975). The very first of these studies, ‘Bog Oak’, captures the ambivalent provision of the moss, as he imagines other-worldly beings seeking out its ‘water-cress and carrion’. From the start, the bog is both cleansing and fetid, life-giving and life-taking (Finn 2006). ‘The Tollund Man’ continues to evoke this ambiguous power: winter seeds and germination, set against hanging and the necessary demand of sacrifice. ‘Nerthus’ conjures an ash bog figure and its enduring presence, but even within this short poem a subtle sexuality is felt, in the ‘long grains

gathered to a split'; an eroticisation of archaeological remains that became a fecund evocation of damaged matter in 'The Bog Queen', 'Strange Fruit' and 'Punishment' (Finn 2004). In 'The Grauballe Man' the bog man's own cut throat is echoed in the 'hooded victim, slashed and dumped' of young men taken for extra-judicial execution. The last line of 'Tollund Man' troubles the reader with an apparent understanding, if not exact sympathy, for the 'old man-killing parishes' where he feels 'lost, unhappy and at home'. This is prehistoric territory he feels he knows.

Heaney's work would eventually win him a Nobel Prize but critics were divided, arguing this 'mythical method' of mobilising the past had two consequences: it failed to write explicitly about the present ('Whatever you say, say nothing'), amounting to a 'dither' and a 'blather' ('Viking Dublin: "Trial Pieces"'), opting for the 'more private ardors of poetry' than direct action (Hart 1989: 389). Through the bog body poems, he revealed his own ambiguous disposition: 'conniving' in 'civilised outrage' at the public shaming and tarring of women yet admitting he would understand this 'exact, and tribal, intimate revenge'. His stance would be read by others as covert support for Irish resistance to British rule: a historicist relativising of conflict (Hufstader 1996: 61) that risked an elision of Iron Age and nationalist 'sacrifice' (Lloyd 1985). Yet as Heaney (1999: 3–4) himself argued, by the late 1970s–1980s 'both sides were ready to die, in a more or less religious self-sacrificing way for the preservation of their land'. Some saw this as mere apologist verse, 'a symbolic partaking of bloodshed through "silence"' (Sanders 2009: 89)? Heaney (1980: 56–7) refuted this, arguing that he instead sought 'to grant the religious intensity of the violence its deplorable authenticity and intensity'. The bog bodies gave him every example of violence he was seeing around him or had heard of through folk memory: execution on the basis of religious and ethnic difference; for sexual liaison with that which was banned – fraternisation bound up with betrayal and thus due a death; for sheer bloody-mindedness or youthful rule-breaking; disruptive behaviour or rivalry that needed suppression by both (para)military and martial law. Heaney's work does not provide 'solidarity', Sanders (2009: 85) suggests, nor answers, recognising how even small-scale violence has the capacity to render us mute, to enfeeble us. At times, we sense a guilt in his voyeurism of violence, similar to Sontag's (2003) torment, attending to the ethical and aesthetical complexities of images of suffering. Heaney (1999: 3) uses his language to capture this ambiguity of feeling, of how 'the atrocious and the beautiful often partake of one another's reality', just as he captures the paradoxical quality of the bogs: 'they kill and they preserve' (Sanders 2009: 85). Hart (1989: 393, 395) ultimately defends the cycle, arguing that Heaney was experimenting with *how* to 'approach and mourn atrocities' through art, garnering 'sobering lessons for his own bellicose culture'.

Archaeologists and curators have embraced Heaney's ambiguous exposition of violence in the bog bodies, hopeful that the past has this capacity to 'suture' – the 'drawing or joining together of two worlds', as Moshenska (2009: 92) puts it. What we seek is not an elision between past and present but a conversation. Time has moved on (we hope), yet some of the violent traces of the Troubles have yet to be recovered. As I write, Britain stands on the edge of redefining its relationship

with Europe in ways that may yet have profound consequences for both Northern Ireland and the Republic. It is a timely moment to reread Heaney's work and open up that discourse again. We also need to talk more of the dead (see [Chapter 6](#)), of mortality, of ways of dying, of loss and remembrance (Croucher *et al.* 2019). The final conversation we need is one that re-enchants us with the bog. Prehistory gives us a story of an extractive relationship with these locales (the taking of fuel and ore) balanced by the giving up of things. The bog bodies have an irruptive potential to lead us back to these places and rethink our relations with them. As the introduction has made clear, never before have we needed the moss and the mire so pressingly: our own future lies entangled with the bog.

'Stay, awaken the dead ...'

In 1921, Walter Benjamin bought a small painting by the Swiss artist, Paul Klee: an oil transfer drawing entitled *Angelus Novus*. What did he see in this brown-and-gold stained figure, with feathered fingers lifted as if in blessing or appeal? It was, he said, 'how one imagines the Angel of History', an image that allowed him an insight into a 'humanity which proves itself through destruction' (cited in Jeffries 2016). He was a German and a Jew, forced to flee his homeland in 1933, without this painting and without his library. He committed suicide in 1940, before he could be handed over to the Gestapo. In no. IX of his *Theses on the Philosophy of History* he explained his vision of the Angel:

His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing ... [it] irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. The storm is what we call progress. (Benjamin 1969: 249)

Benjamin believed that although we could not change the past, we could be appalled by suffering that we witness in it. We could, through action in the present (of research, analysis, writing, artistic production) change not the *fate* but the *meaning* of their lives: 'making a difference to their stories', as Eagleton (2009) puts it, 'rewriting their narratives' and thus ultimately being 'impelled to move forward'. We should not feel shame or guilt for being interested in those who died violently in the past; this book has arisen out of the urge to attend to these lives over others and to tell their stories well – they *matter*. Yet as this conclusion has proposed, its wider aim is to use this archaeology to speak back to issues that will not disappear: the current fate of our environment, the way in which we categorise humanity and what other people think can be done to it, as well as the way we fail to talk of the dead, past and present.

[Figure 9.1](#) is another image from David Farrell's *Innocent Landscapes* sequence (no. 18). It shows an exposed bed of peat, cracked with heat, drying out. In its



9.1 *Innocent Landscapes* sequence entitled 'Bragan', David Farrell, 2000. All rights reserved and permission to use the figure must be obtained from the copyright holder.

midst a figure seems to emerge, with the rounded shape of a scalp, an eye, lips even, square shouldered and seemingly pinioned in the bog. Is it one of the more recent 'disappeared' that Farrell was tracing, a new bog body perhaps or even the peat's own conjuring of a mortal presence: an emissary sent back to haunt or enchant? This very ambiguity makes it a fitting image with which to end. My mother might have found inspiration *on* the moss: a quiet space of growth at the city's edge. I find inspiration *under* it, in the archaeopoetical and political power that these emergent remains have to both appal and impel.

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