

# Archaeology Research Seminar

## Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> December 12.30 – 14.00

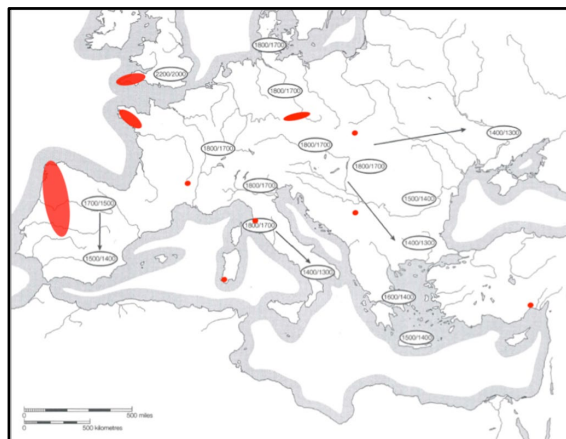
### Online

## Project Ancient Tin: Did British tin sources and trade make Bronze Age Europe

**Guest speakers Dr Ben Roberts and Dr Alan Williams, Durham University**



Tin and copper ingots from probable Bronze Age shipwreck off Salcombe, Devon.



Pare's (2000) Chronological map of the spread of full tin-bronze across Europe with European tin deposits added in red.

A remarkable change occurred in c. 2200 BC when Britain and Ireland were the first regions in Europe to completely switch over from copper to harder and more gold-coloured bronze for their tools and weapons, typically with around 10% tin. This change (bronzization) spread across the rest of Bronze Age Europe and the Mediterranean over the following centuries, reaching southern Spain and Greece only by c. 1500/1400 BC.

The tin required to make the bronze was much scarcer than copper, with the main potential sources being in South-West England (Cornwall/Devon), the Germany-Czech border (Erzgebirge), the Iberian tin belt and smaller deposits in France (Brittany and Massif Central). Even at 10% of the bronze, large amounts of tin were required for the copper production from the 50+ confirmed Bronze Age copper mines across Europe, with two of the largest probably requiring around 10,000 tons of tin. As South-West England possessed probably the richest and most accessible tin deposits in Europe and close to the coast, there has long been speculation that this region traded tin across the continent and even supplied Bronze Age civilizations in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Identifying a major role in this vast production and trade network for the dispersed and small farming/mining communities of Bronze Age Britain would radically change the perception of the island's relationship with the rest of Europe and beyond.

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