

THE PREHISTORY OF BRITAIN AND IRELAND

Sited at the furthest limits of the Neolithic revolution and standing at the confluence of the two great sea routes of prehistory, Britain and Ireland are distinct from Continental Europe for much of the prehistoric sequence. In this landmark study, Richard Bradley offers an interpretation of the unique archaeological record of these islands. Highlighting the achievements of its inhabitants, Bradley surveys the entire archaeological sequence over a 5,000-year period, from the last hunter gatherers and the adoption of agriculture in the Neolithic period, to the discovery of Britain and Ireland by travellers from the Mediterranean during the later pre-Roman Iron Age. His study places special emphasis on landscapes, settlements, monuments, and ritual practices.

This edition has been thoroughly revised and updated. The text takes account of recent developments in archaeological science, such as isotopic analyses of human and animal bone, recovery of ancient DNA, and more subtle and precise methods of radiocarbon dating.

Richard Bradley is Emeritus Professor in the Department of Archaeology, University of Reading. A Fellow of the British Academy and Honorary Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, he is the author of *The Use and Reuse of Stone Circles* and *The Idea of Order*, among many other publications.

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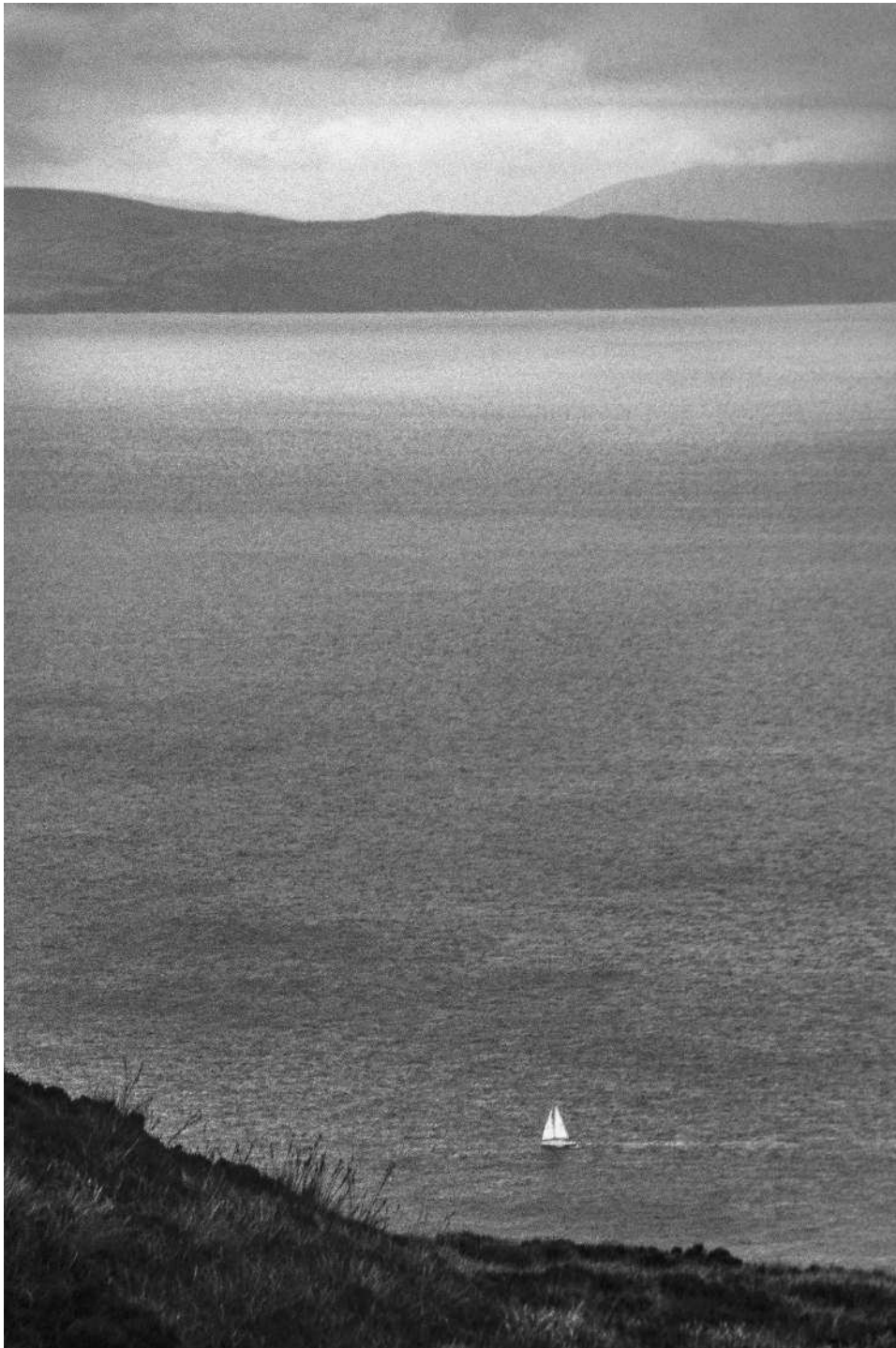
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View of Ireland from the coast of south-west Scotland, emphasising the short sea crossing between them.
Photograph: Aaron Watson.

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PREFACE TO THE REVISED EDITION

This book takes the place of a volume published a decade or so ago. Why was a revision needed, and how does it differ from its predecessor? The first question is perhaps the easier one to answer. The last few years have seen a massive increase in the number of field projects undertaken in Britain and Ireland, and significant developments in the dissemination of the results. During the same period work in archaeological science has shed new light on questions that had exercised prehistorians for years. The clearest indication of the increasing pace of research is provided by the bibliography. Rather to my surprise, I find that 50 per cent of the references are to sources that became available after the first edition appeared. Not surprisingly, that account is no longer accurate or up to date.

The new book has a different structure from that first edition and to some extent it draws on different sources of information. The version published in 2007 was unusual in emphasising the results of development-led archaeology. Its preparation involved visits to numerous fieldworkers and regional archives, as it was the only way of discovering what information was available. Over ten years later many significant projects have achieved final publication and information is widely disseminated through the internet. Like the original version, this book has a substantial bibliography, but it is still the case that more information is available from some regions than from others.

In 2007 I evoked the timescale of insular prehistory by scaling the accounts of different periods to the number of years involved; I devoted approximately 2,000 words to each century of the overall sequence. This was not a good idea, as it meant that my account of the later Bronze Age and Iron Age was unduly compressed. In the revised edition I have abandoned that scheme, dividing the main part of the text between five main chapters of approximately equal lengths. In this version the Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age periods are discussed separately from the Late Neolithic. The narrative ends with Caesar's invasions of southern England in 55 and 54 BC, and the brief coda that discussed the Late Iron Age in the original version has been omitted. One feature that

has been retained is the format of the maps, which divide the study area into twenty-six separate regions. Within each of these areas individual places are listed in the captions.

This revision has been more radical than I envisaged when I offered to write a new edition, although some of the original drawings and photographs have been retained or revised. As before, they are by Aaron Watson. I am very grateful to him for the skill with which he undertook the work and for his extraordinary visual flair. I must also thank Courtney Nimura for her help in preparing the final text.

Since this is really a new book it requires its own dedication. And there can be only one candidate. Alison Sheridan read and commented in detail on the first edition; she has contributed to most of my projects in Scotland; and her research features in many parts of this text. In its new guise this study is for her.