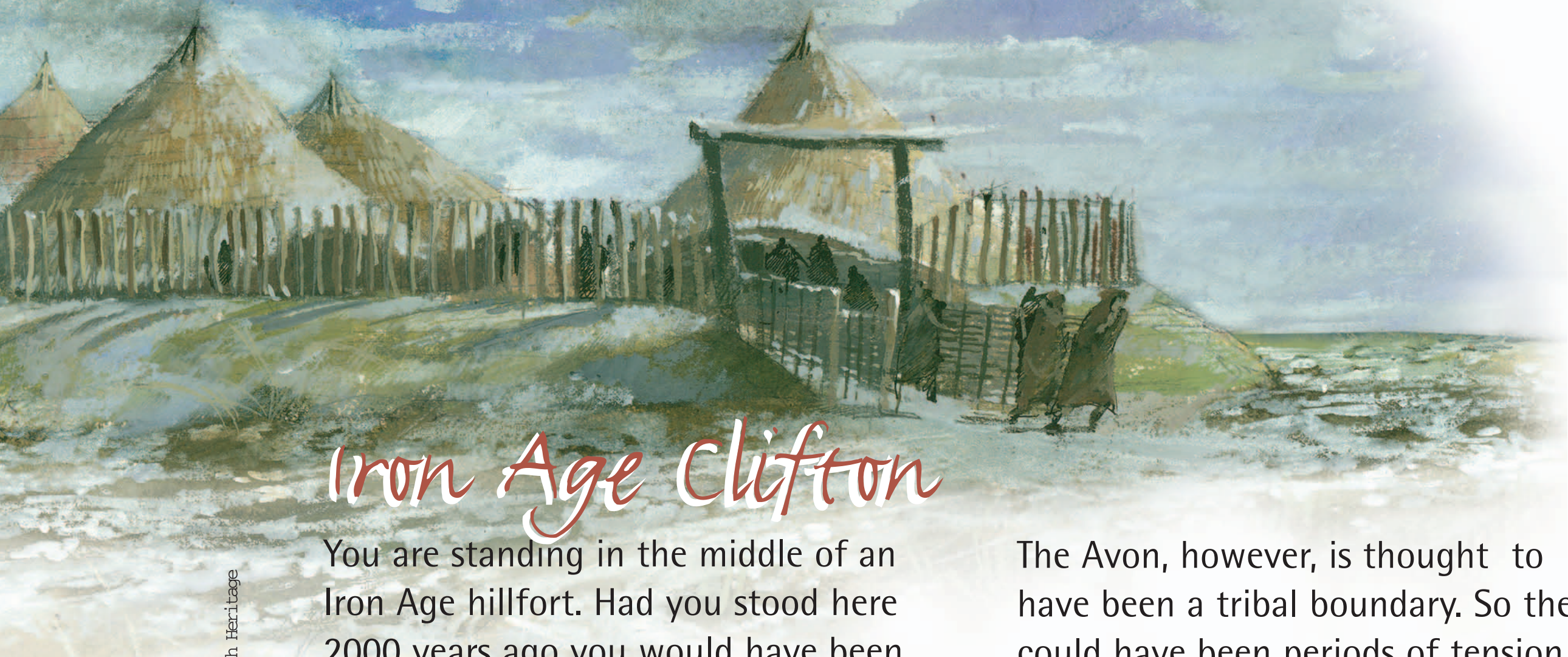


Clifton Camp

living here 2000 years ago



Iron Age Clifton

You are standing in the middle of an Iron Age hillfort. Had you stood here 2000 years ago you would have been surrounded on three sides by a wooden stockade on top of an earth rampart.

Those ramparts still exist and can be found under the trees at the wooded edges of this open area.

This hillfort looked across the Gorge at two others now known as Stokeleigh Camp and Burwalls. Stokeleigh Camp can still easily be found in Leigh Woods.

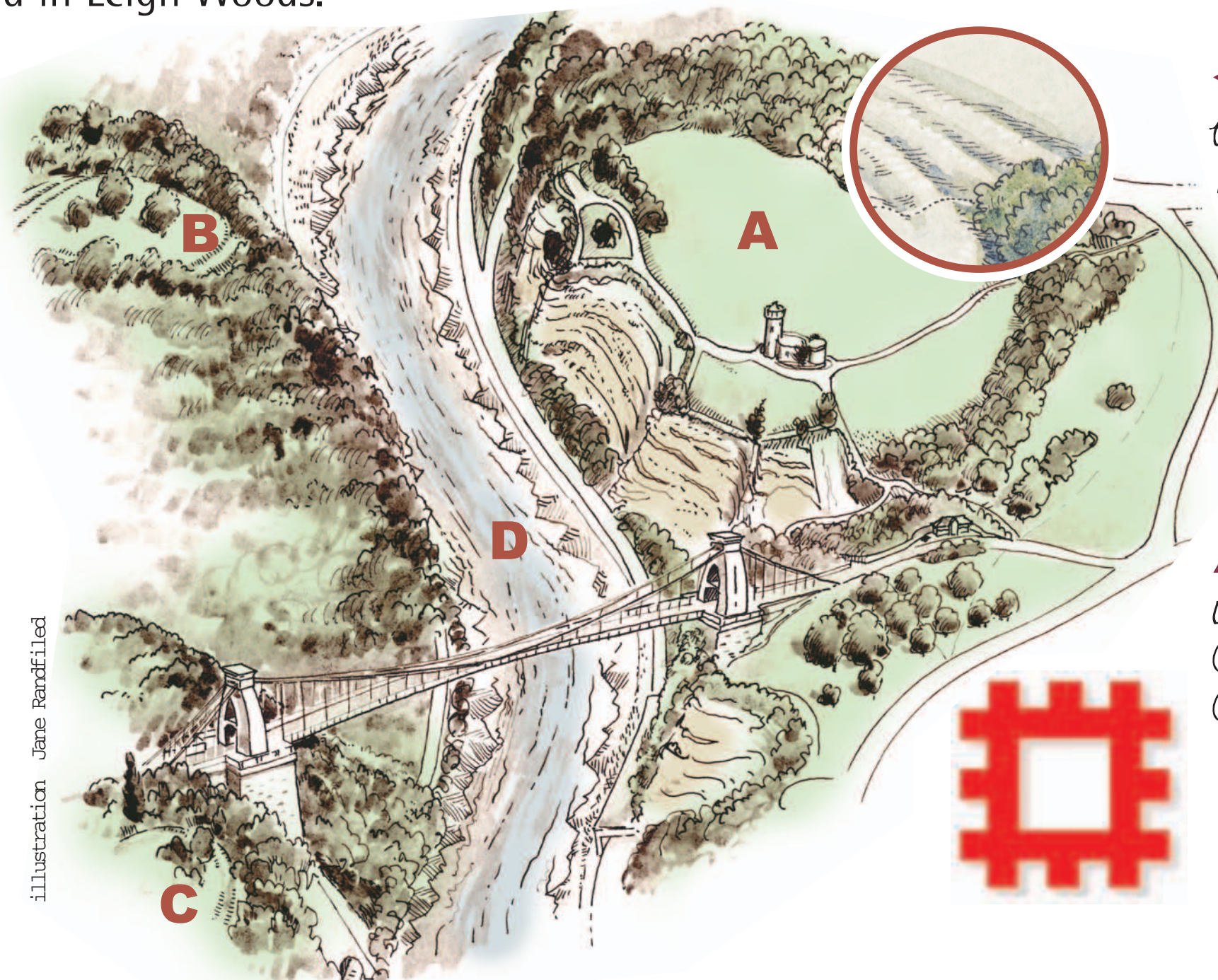
Although there was no bridge, a natural ridge of rock (until its destruction in the 19th century) created a ford across the River Avon at low tide, connecting the two sides.

▶ Three hillforts on the Clifton Gorge

- A** CLIFTON CAMP
- B** STOKELEIGH CAMP
- C** BURWALLS
- D** POSITION OF FORD

The Avon, however, is thought to have been a tribal boundary. So there could have been periods of tension between the populations of the hillforts on either side of the Gorge.

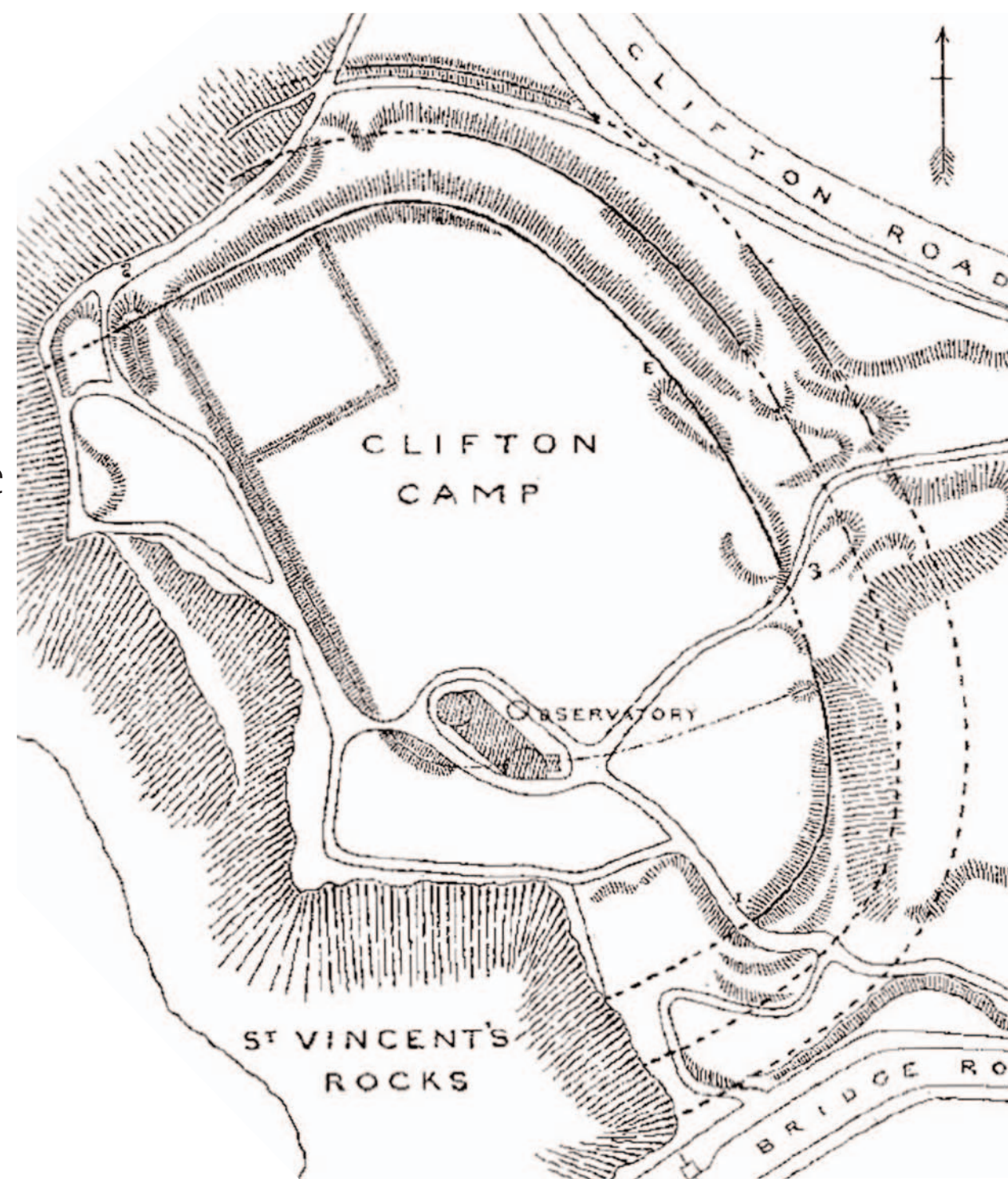
But they would have all shared a common culture. They were able farmers and sophisticated metal workers, who traded widely and in the later Iron Age period minted their own money.



◀ A view towards an Iron Age hillfort. The smoke from domestic fires permeates the thatched roofs of the round houses into the open air. Clifton Camp had three earth ramparts guarding its circumference.



Bristol Museums, Galleries & Archives



▶ Artist Hieronymus Grimm recorded this view of Clifton Camp in 1785. Although the earth ramparts are not evident his drawing makes clear what a superbly defensible position is occupied by the hillfort – the Gorge one side and low cliffs on the other.

The lack of trees is the result of grazing – a practice that continued unbroken back to the Iron Age and beyond, until the mid 19thc.

Photos: Liz Milner – by kind permission of Bristol Museums, Galleries & Archives

◀ Underneath the trees you will find the earth ramparts of the ancient hillfort.

In 1480 pioneering antiquarian William Worcestre described these defences as 'a large circle of great stones piled up, and small ones scattered around, most remarkable to see'.

▶ The above drawing of the hillfort is from a Victorian survey by the Clifton Antiquarian Club.

researched, written and designed by C&M associates



Iron Age culture

The south west of mainland Britain was a flourishing corner of a culture spread across the European temperate zone, often referred to as the Celtic Iron Age.

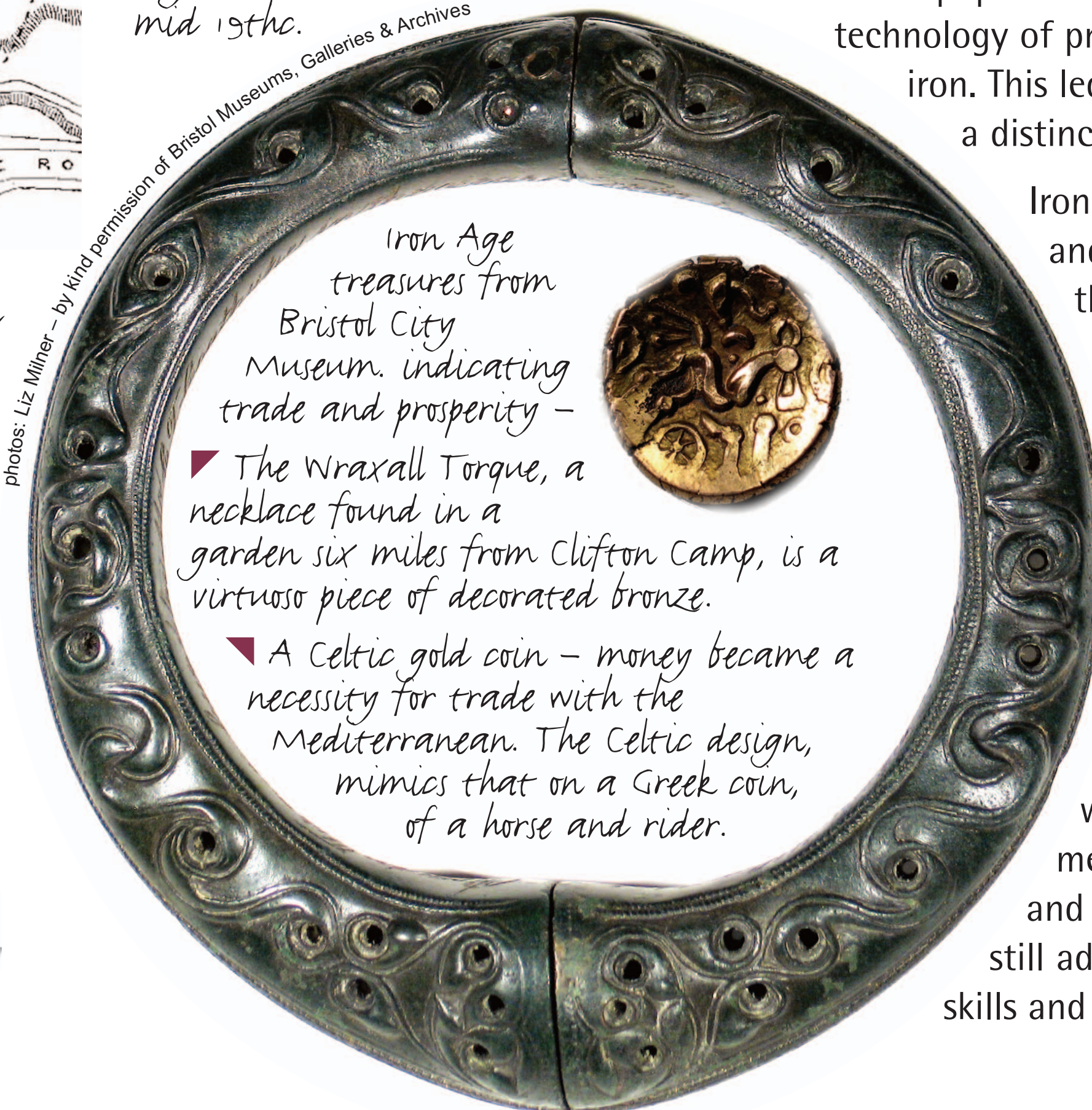


extent of the Celtic iron Age AD 10

But the spread of Celtic culture was not the expansion of a single race of people but rather the adoption by various populations of a new technology of producing and using iron. This led to new abilities and a distinctive style of living.

Iron was harder, stronger and more plentiful than the metals that had been used previously for weapons and tools.

But iron rusts so that virtually no Celtic ironwork has survived in good condition. Luckily Iron Age Celts also worked in other metals, such as gold and bronze, so we can still admire their fantastic skills and sense of design.



Iron Age treasures from Bristol City Museum, indicating trade and prosperity –

▶ The Wraxall Torque, a necklace found in a garden six miles from Clifton Camp, is a virtuoso piece of decorated bronze.

▶ A Celtic gold coin – money became a necessity for trade with the Mediterranean. The Celtic design, mimics that on a Greek coin, of a horse and rider.