



# The metalworker and his tools:

symbolism, function and technology

in the Bronze and Iron Ages

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## MeTools2016 – Conference – 24 & 25 June 2016 – Queen’s University Belfast

### The metalworker and his tools: symbolism, function and technology in the Bronze and Iron Ages

The presence of metalworking tools in burials, hoards and sanctuaries, from the Bell Beaker period until the Iron Age, invites the question what link there was between the artisan and his tools, but also between the artisan and society. In these specific find contexts, tools not only provide technological evidence, but also acquire a specific symbolic value, as they form part of certain rituals. For example, in the Late Iron Age of Continental Europe these ritual aspects of artisanship relate to the profound upheavals in society that lead to the emergence of oppida. But tools are also technological items that answer to a specific need, and therefore should not to be separated from their function and from the technical purpose to which they are employed.

The aim of this conference thus will be to gain a better understanding of the different roles of metalworking tools – in metal, stone, fired clay or organic material –, to comprehend their evolution from the beginning of metallurgy until the Iron Age, and to better understand the artisan’s place within society.

The conference will be structured around three themes:

- ⇒ The first theme entitled « tools and workshops » will analyse tools and site features related to metallurgical activities. The choices conditioning their formation, their evolution, their place within workshops, and their organisation will be examined.
- ⇒ The second theme « tools and technology » will focus on the link between tools and techniques and on the evolution of technology. Archaeometry and experimental archaeology may provide evidence for determining the position of tools within the respective *chaîne opératoire*.
- ⇒ The last theme « tools, rituals and society » will look at the presence of these tools in different types of context, with a particular focus on their occurrence in burials, hoards and sanctuaries. The presence of metalworking tools in hoards and funerary contexts takes a wide variety of forms; this theme thus will be dedicated to reflecting on the role of tools in the ritual sphere, and to examining the parameters of this variation. The aim will be to try and analyse the motives that may have led to the deposition of tools in specific places. An underlying problem with which such an analysis will have to grapple is the controversial notion of artisans as specialists, and thus ultimately the question of how societies were organised.

This conference is intended to provide a forum for developing a better understanding of the role metalworkers played in society, and of the evolution of that role during the period conventionally referred to as Metal Ages. While the geographic focus will be mainly on Western and Central Europe, contributions that synthesise information about tool kits, workshop organisation and the societal role of metalworkers in other geographic areas are warmly welcomed.

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### Practical details:

This conference will include full papers (20 minutes) and poster presentations. Debates will be organised as part of the program.

Researcher wishing to present a paper or a poster are invited to:

1. register by creating an account and using the online form available on the conference website
2. propose paper or poster titles by using the dedicated tag on the conference website  
<http://metools2016.sciencesconf.org/>

**before 29<sup>th</sup> February 2016**

Official conference languages are English and French.

### Registration:

Registration will be open from December 2015 via the relevant section of the conference website: <http://metools2016.sciencesconf.org/>

Please note :

1. an optional post-conference field trip to Navan Fort and the Beaghmore stone circles will be organised for Sunday 26 June.
2. with the exception of coffee breaks and a wine reception on Friday, 24 June, meals are not provided as part of the conference. A listing and a map with different restaurants and eateries close to the conference venue will be made available with the conference pack.
3. a listing of different accommodation options will be available on the conference website.

### For more information please see:

On the conference website <http://metools2016.sciencesconf.org/> (available from December)  
or contact Linda Boutoille at: [metools@qub.ac.uk](mailto:metools@qub.ac.uk)