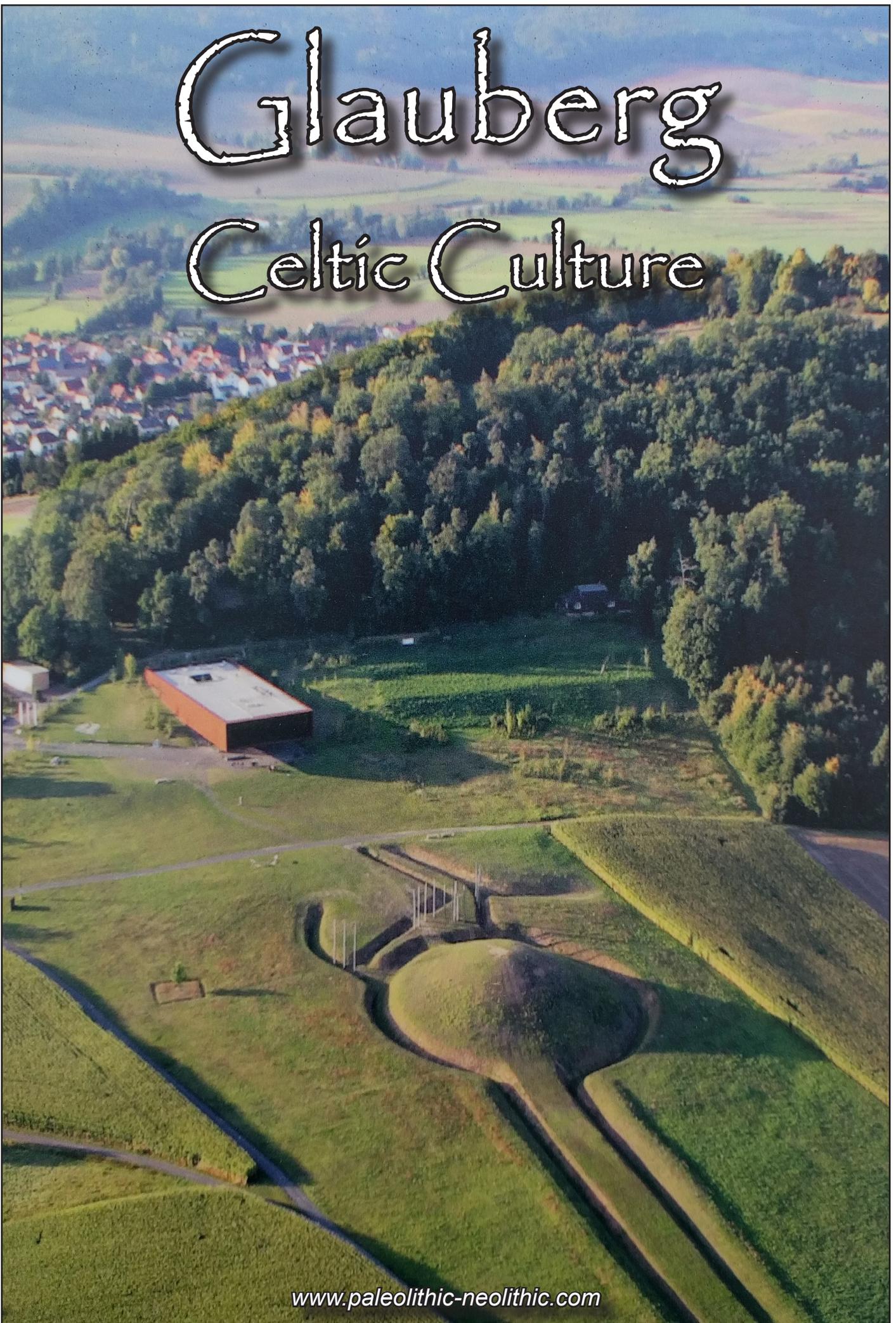


# Glauberg

## Celtic Culture





This is an interesting subject to focus on especially if we remember that a tribe with such name did not exist. The name was created later by experts to describe a rather specific common cultural area spanning from south-east Britain, Germany, France, northern Spain, Portugal, Hungary, Slovenia, northern Italy, Croatia and even parts of Anatolia.

Just imagine how many different ethnic groups lived in this huge region and shared common cultural beliefs. The mining based Hallstatt Culture in Austria starting 2,750 BP belonged to it, as did the Latene Culture at Neuenburger Lake in Switzerland about 2,500 years ago. The oldest is possibly the Urnfield Culture dated 3,000 BP.

#### *Celtic Culture*

If we look at the Celtic Culture we encounter strong religious beliefs with various gods like Teutates, Cernunnos, Grannus and Lenus. The existence of holy sites plus selected holy days does not surprise neither performed rituals like sacrifice, worship, prophecy, skull cult, death and remembrance.

These ceremonies and religious rituals needed various actors such as druids, prophets and bards. Celtic druids were highly educated and were second in importance to clan leaders. They also acted as teachers for the youth, medical practitioners and even judges. This important position was not only reserved to men, as we know that female druids existed and they played an important role in social life.

#### *Economy*

Next to farming long distance trade was well established since long. So trade played an important role and the following items were produced for income purposes: iron, tin, salt, timber, weapons, tools, luxury horse carriages, textiles, wool, flax and leather shoes. They even sold huge amounts of swords to the Roman army. And they were innovative artisans to. Celts invented rotary axis and suspension for horse carts for example.

#### *Celtic Settlements*

If we focus on Germany archeologists confirmed important settlements in Dünsberg, Heidenmauer, Altburg, Altkönig, Heidetränk, Ipf, Manching, Martberg, Finsterlohr, Wallendorf, Heiligenberg, Steinsburg, Staffelberg, Ehrenbürg, Heuneburg, Altenburg, Kehlheim, Dornburg, Eintürnen, Heidengraben, Otzenhausen, Tarodunum, Milseburg and Hochdorf for example.

In addition, three Celtic settlements were found in Austria, Czech Republic two, Switzerland eleven and France four just to give you an idea of the spread of this common cultural area.

Now we want to look at a specific site to show you the cultural sophistication and social development of the Celts in Germany. And the Glauberg site northeast of Frankfurt is one of the most interesting because of its outstanding excavation finds. These included the first complete life size statue of a leader, his weap-

ons and many beautiful and richly decorated jewelry items.

#### *Important Glauberg Site*

This hill tomb site was dated 2,430 to 2,380 BP during the Early Latene Period. Glauberg must have been an important over regional center with a unique calendar structure. The site consists of a holy area, huge tomb cairn and a settlement on the adjacent hill.

In total there are three tombs with rich funeral gifts. But the realistic looking life size sandstone statue of a clan leader was a sensation. So were the golden jewelry which raw material was coming from Mediterranean mines. Therefore, a new museum was built on site 2011.

#### *Local Landscape*

Glauberg is situated on the northern border of the Celtic cultural area. In modern times the area was called Ronneburger hill landscape. The small table mountain like hill has a heights of 270 meters and is flat on north-east were the leader's hill tomb was erected. All other sides have a steep slope.

A walled settlement was built on top of the flat hill top which housed about 5.000 inhabitants. It was occupied for a rather long period from Neolithic to medieval times. As water source for this large settlement served the Samen Creek about two kilometers away. Later a well was dug and for daily supplies.

*Significant Cairn Tomb*

The Celts practiced in their fast cultural area an important ancestor cult same at Glauberg. The major cairn has a 48 diameter and a long procession alley measuring 350 meters with ditches on both sides leading up the hill slope to it.

#### *Important Excavation Finds*

Archeologists were really surprised to find three untouched and richly equipped funerals with gold jewelry, weapons and finally these sensational life-sized statues. The burials were dated between 2,430 to 2,380 years old. Unfortunately, two cairns were flattened for farming purposes approximately hundred years ago.

#### *Hill Tomb*

The still existing hill tomb was first excavated in 1994 and the second a year later. But the sensational statue was found buried close to the ring ditch another year later. A few years later it was fully reconstructed including the 16 wooden poles erected at the time around it.

These poles possibly served as Celtic calendar for specific holy days. This assumption is not certain as archologists found out that these poles were not erected together but over time. The smaller cairn measures 24 in diameter and was excavated in 1999.

#### *Tribal Leader's Funeral*

Now let's look at the first burial in the large hill tomb. It's funeral chamber two by one meter and was made out of oak tree. Unfortunately, the wooden structure later collapsed possibly





due to humidity and the enormous weight of the earth piled up on top of it. Archeologist established it was a male funeral aged between 21 to 28 years and was 1,7 meters tall. The cause of death is unknown. Experts established that the deceased was rather healthy, had no caries and must have consumed a lot of meat. All facts which differentiated a leader from common members of his tribe.

#### *Sensational Statue*

Never before an intact life size Celtic sandstone statue was found. During extended excavation it was unearthed in 1996 at depth of two meters next to the ditch of the major hill tomb. But its feet were missing. Was the settlement raided by other tribes and the statue ripped off his base as a sign of victory? A base or the feet were so far not found.

#### *Statue Details*

The statue is unique in the Celtic Culture and was the first such find in Europe. We can assume that it was an image of the engraved leader. The engraved jewelry and weapons are identical to the funeral gifts found in the main tomb.

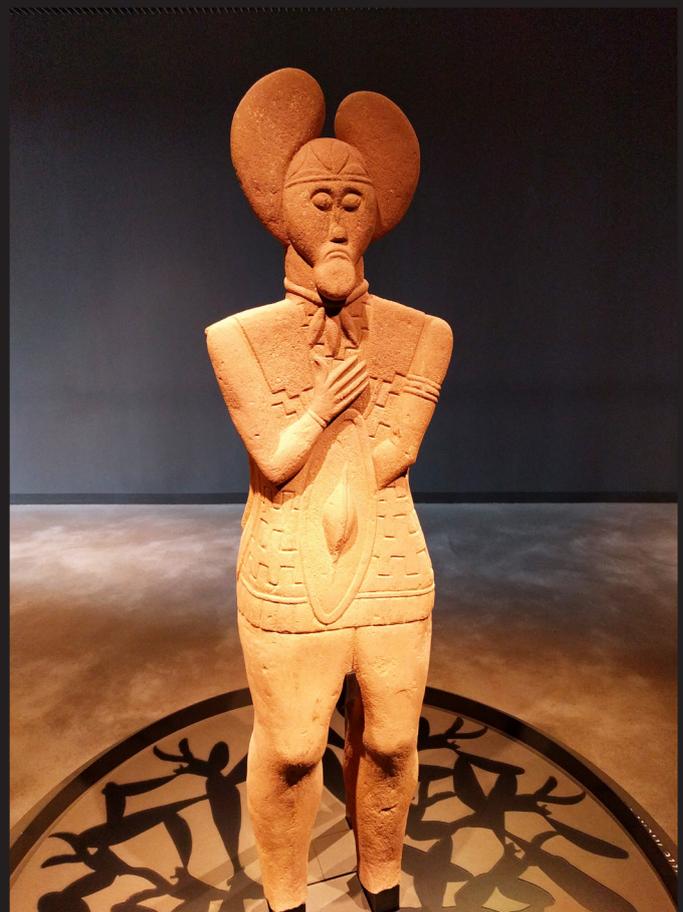
The sandstone figure is skillfully decorated with geometric signs and floral decorations. But most intriguing is the unique helmet like cap with ears. Was this a sign of status and a headdress only worn by leaders?

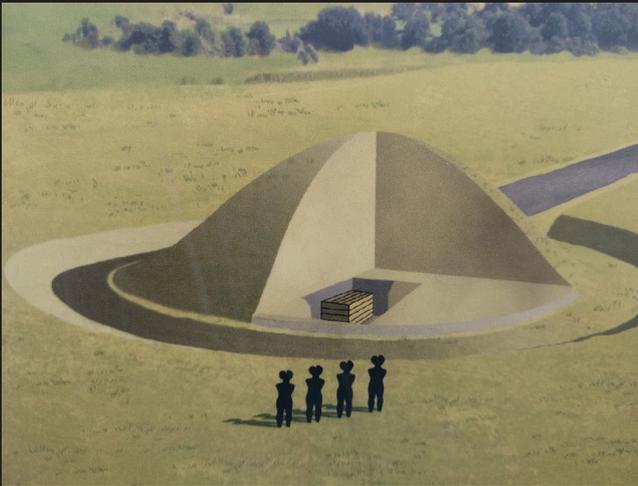
Excavations revealed that the cap base was made of mistletoe twigs. Therefore, it is assumed that the tribal leader position also incorporated that of religious leader as well. Experts believe assume the cap had cultural importance and was status symbol of clan leader or priest or both.

#### *Further Excavations*

Archeologist were surprised to find 120 fragments of three further close to identical statues. They were stunned to find fragments of another statue only half a meter underneath the first intact statue. What does this tell us? Had a special meaning? Possibly these statues were broken intentionally. But this is not yet clear and still under research.

Further fragments found might belong to a fourth statue. And the story does not end here, because the heads of a third or fourth statue was found by ploughing farmers recently. The





exact position of erection of these statues is not known yet. Were they standing next to each other possibly in a circle holy site? Or were they tomb markers for annual ritual feasts?

#### *Funeral Gifts*

The list of found funeral gifts in the main tomb is long. It marks the importance of the leader buried here. We already know that Glauberg is a rather important Celtic site. The unique statues are the best prove thereof. The beautiful jewelry items include a gold necklace with rich decorations, two small gold rings possibly ear rings, a gold arm ring plus a gold finger ring. Below we describe these items in more detail.

Cloths are always an indication of social status. The bunny like leather cap with ears was enforced by mistletoe twigs pointing to a druid status. The cloths also comprised of a leather belt and skillfully crafted leather shoes with bronze decorations. The cloth



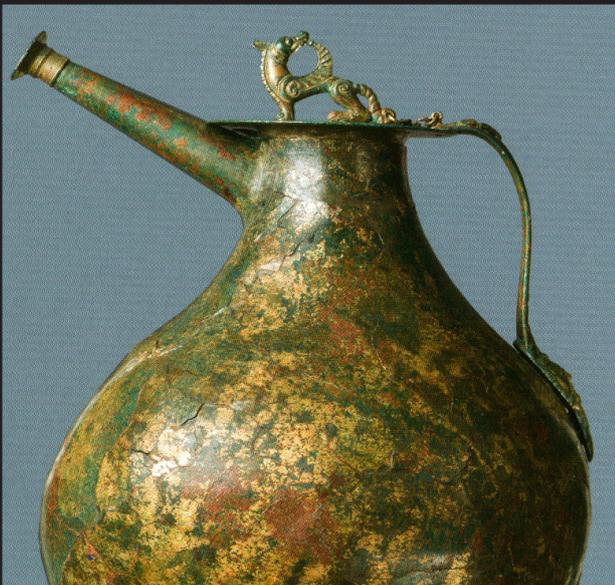
decorations included a gold brochure with figures, another two gold brochures with bird heads and three bronze arm rings.

#### *Most Important Weapons*

What makes out a leader? Naturally his decorated weapons. His fine arsenal included a sword, shield, bow, three lance heads, three arrow heads and a leather quiver. Please see the pictures to get an impression about the artisan skill of the Celts at the time.

#### *Extraordinary Drinking Jug*

Another outstanding item found in the tomb is a unique bronze jug with bent spout used for met drinks. What makes it so special is the fact that this richly decorated jug was pro-



duced here and was not imported. The artisans used an Etruscan example for its design. And it seems to have been the leaders personal drinking item. Image a feast at a long table and this jug with an empty weight over a kilo was filled with four liters of met, so you had to stem a more than five kilo item to be able to drink from it. We can assume the leader passed it around for his warrior to drink from it as an honor. Four similar jugs were found at Celtic sites elsewhere.

#### *Jug Details*

If you look at the details you become aware how skillful these Celtic artisans were. The jug was made of three different metals including mainly bronze plus iron band to fix bottom to vessel and an attached decorated copper piece. As you can see from the picture it has a rather special form with eight vertical ribs. The three figures on top include a seated man plus two sphinx figures.

#### *Necklace Details*

The already mentioned gold necklace has a unique form and is richly decorated. Archeologists were surprised by the high gold content of 93%. This is proof of highly developed gold smelting skills, because it is not easy to achieve such a high content by extracting impurities such as silver, tin or zinc.

This beautiful necklace is made of two pieces to be put on easily with a clever closing mechanism. The front piece was made of 34 small exquisite decoration pieces including ten faces, two human figurines and three blank cones with two small decoration platelets in between.

The necklace is in perfect condition. It shows very little wear and tear and was certainly not used daily. It might have been produced for funerary purposes or possibly only worn on special occasions.

#### *Small Rings*

Two gold rings were found near to the



leader's head. Therefore, they are believed to be earrings or hair rings. Because earrings were also used by Celtic men as jewelry. The gold content of both differs with 91 and 98%.

#### *Arm Ring Details*

This item was worn on the right wrist. It has no decorations, was hollow and possibly filled with sand. The gold content was about 90% and its weight 33 grams. Next to the gold Ring three bronze rings with simple decorations were found. These pieces with five to six centimeters are too small for men. Therefore, these



possibly were funeral gifts by his wife or daughters.

#### *Finger Ring Details*

Worn again on the right hand with a snake like ornamentation on its oval top. It measured 1,8 centimeters about equal to today's ring size 57. The gold content was 96%.

#### *Unique Crown Cap*

Of this cap only few pieces were found, as organic material decomposed over time. But exact form can be seen on stone statue. This crown like leather cap with two ears was possibly druid symbol for mistletoe leaves, which was most holy plant for Celts. Similar caps on statues found at Bergheim and Pfalzfeld. Either leaders exercised a dual role or it was supposed to give ruler spiritual power.

#### *Skillful Brochure*

In total three bronze pieces were unearthed. These jewelry pieces were designed to hold cloths. The biggest measures seven centimeters decorated with a horse like figure and human head, plus two more figurines. It is a most skillful work with a beautiful dog or wolf figure. The smaller one is half the size featuring two water bird heads.

#### *Fine Leather Belt*

The leaders leather belt has an extraordinary richly decorated buckle. The buckle is





crowned with an impressive animal head. The decorations also include various animal engravings on the leather belt itself. The belt has a different width in front five and in the back ten centimeters. Unfortunately, very little is left of the organic leather material.

### *Impressive Sword*

This item is the most important weapon and always a significant status symbol. Therefore, it is richly decorated and skillfully engraved. It was positioned next to his right arm. With 78 centimeters in length, it is quite a long iron sword.

The sheath was made of two materials the front out of bronze and the back from iron. Both sides were engraved with animals possibly two horses, bird heads and floral elements.



ments. The handle was produced of six pieces of poplar wood fit together. It simply is an impressive weapon and clear sign of power.

### *Warrior Shield*

The shield has an interesting oval form with edges pointing outwards. Decorated with geometric motives running along the edges and around the plates on shield it looks perfect. It was made of linden wood with leather plus the middle iron cap and enforcements to successfully defend sword hits.

### *Lance Heads*

The funeral gifts also included three iron lance heads and an ash wood lance around two meters in length. It was used mainly as a throwing weapon not a hit weapon but possibly both.

### *Arrows and Bow*

The quiver was made of wood, leather and cloth plus metal rings for leather wearing string. Three iron arrow heads all with different forms plus various arrows were added as funeral gifts. The double winged bow was decorated with red ornaments. This concluded the armament of this important Celtic leader.

### *Second Tomb*

A second tomb was discovered in the same funerary hill. It was positioned close to the cairn wall towards the procession alley leading up the hill. The burial consisted of a simple wooden box without lid. It was partly a cremation burial. Experts established that the deceased man was 1,7 meters tall and aged between 30 to 40 years.



Here as well they found rich funeral gifts such as sword, large drinking can, brochure, but no gold jewelry, but also belt, lance head and iron arrow heads were part of the burial. These items indicate that he was an elite clan member and warrior.

### *Defined Met Can*

The met drinking vessel was larger in volume as in the first tomb. With the same belly form it took nine liters and was 50 centimeter high, 25 centimeter wide. It was made of two bronze parts fit together in the middle





with an iron band and wooden base. The decorations included geometric ornaments in bands plus a lion's head with ram horns and a man's face on the handle. The lid was adorned with a Pegasus type animal figure created as horse head on a lion's body with wings. The sword of this warrior was ten centimeters longer than that of the leader. It was also made of iron and bronze with rich but lesser decorations.

#### *Cairn Two Excavations*

The burial here was placed in a dugout tree trunk close to two and a half meters long. The deceased was a rather young man and his estimated age was between 16 to 20 years. He was about ten centimeters taller than the other two.

His funeral gifts were lesser in numbers and contained only some simple gold items. But a surprisingly fine brochure decorated with red corals was found here. His sword was simply made but a rather large iron lance head was part of his small selection of weapons.

#### *Cairn Tombs*

In the fast Celtic cultural area cairn tombs and funerary gifts differed a lot. In the western area tribal chiefs were buried with sword and dagger and often even on horse charts. In the eastern area they were buried in full armour including war ax and shield.

In Germany various Celtic cairn tombs were found and excavated such as in Hochdorf with a male burial, Reinheim with a female burial and also Magdalenberg, Waldalgesheim, Schwarzenbach, Epfendorf, Berghheim, Pfalzfeld, as well as the warrior of Hirschlanden close to Ditzingen.

#### *Summary*

Glauberg is one of the most important Celtic sites because of the undisturbed and richly furnished leader's tomb. But the life size sandstone statues of the deceased were the real sensation. These all together shed a new interesting light on the sophistication of Celtic culture and artistic craftsmanship. The reconstructed site and new museum right next to it is definitely worth a visit. I became aware of it when visiting an impressive Celts exposition in London. So Glauberg near Frankfurt became a must see place for me immediately.

*We thank Keltenwelt Glauberg Daniela Euler and their photographers for using some of their pictures and sketches.*

