

THE CELTS

A Around 1300 B.C., a new and extraordinary people entered the story of the western world. Something made these obscure farmers—living on the banks of the Danube in the heart of south western Europe—restless. In tiny numbers they began to wander over the continent, from the Swiss Alps to the gentle valleys of Champagne, or the plains of Germany.

B The destiny of these strange folks was to be remarkable: they were to dominate much of northern Europe, to create a great culture, to be subjugated by Rome in body but never in spirit, to flee the Saxons but also to evade them and to survive intact to the present day. The Celtic language has never been destroyed and exists today in the two variants of Welsh and Irish Gaelic. It was the Greeks who gave these people the name that has remained unchanged to the present times: Keltoi.

C Fierce and warlike, as they were, however, the Celts were not destroyers. When they settled in a new land they would build their modest thatched farmhouses; if they found natives in the area, they usually left them alone, or used them as labourers. And it was in this manner that, between about 900 and 500 B.C. the Celts crossed the narrow English Channel and settled in peace in many parts of Britain.

D They made chariots, they made elaborate jewellery of gold, silver and bronze, they made pottery and figures of animals in clay and metal which seem to possess a life of their own. They made verses, endless verses, in their lyrical, mystical language, sung by bards to celebrate their ancient heroes and their gods. The Celtic world was full of gods: full of marvels, superstitions, magical birds and beasts.

Abridged and adapted from E. Rutherford, *Sarum*, Arrow books, 1988

COMPREHENSION CHECK

1. Give each paragraph the appropriate title.

- ☐ Conqueror but not destroyers
- ☐ Handicraft, literature and religion
- ☐ Farmers and wanderers
- ☐ Genius and culture all in a name.

2. Vocabulary. Find synonyms of the words below in the text:

small _____ move _____
integral _____ ferocious _____
workers _____ very old _____

3. Report

1. Where did the Celts come from?
2. Where did they move in Europe?
3. When did they settle in Britain?
4. What kind of people were they?
5. What were the most significant cultural traits of the Celts?