The Beaker Phenomenon and the Genomic Transformation of Northwest Europe

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Bell Beaker pottery spread across western and central Europe beginning around 2750 BCE before disappearing between 2200–1800 BCE. The forces propelling its expansion are a matter of long-standing debate, with support for both cultural diffusion and migration. We present new genome-wide data from 400 Neolithic, Copper Age and Bronze Age Europeans, including 234 Beaker-associated individuals. We detected limited genetic affinity between Iberian and central European Beaker-associated individuals, and thus exclude migration as a significant mechanism of spread between these two regions. However, migration played a key role in the further dissemination of the Beaker Complex, a phenomenon we document most clearly in Britain where we report 155 individuals who lived from 4000-800 BCE. British Neolithic farmers were genetically similar to contemporary populations in continental Europe and especially to Neolithic Iberians, indicating that a portion of their ancestry came from the Mediterranean rather than the Danubian route of farming expansion. Beginning with the Beaker period, all British individuals in our time transect harboured high proportions of Steppe-related ancestry and were most closely related to Beaker-associated individuals from the Lower Rhine area. The impact of the migration from the continent was profound, as we show that the spread of the Beaker Complex to Britain was associated with a replacement of ~90% of Britain's gene pool within a few hundred years, continuing the east-to-west expansion that had brought Steppe-related ancestry into central and northern Europe 400 years earlier.

During the third millennium Before the Common Era (BCE), two new archaeological pottery styles expanded across Europe, replacing many of the more localized styles that preceded them. 1 In north-central and northeastern Europe there was the 'Corded Ware Complex' associated with people who derived most of their ancestry from Yamnaya pastoralists from the Eurasian steppe²⁻⁴ (henceforth referred to as Steppe). In western Europe there was the equally expansive 'Bell Beaker Complex,' defined by assemblages of grave goods including stylised bell-shaped pots, copper daggers, arrowheads, stone wristguards and V-perforated buttons⁵ (Extended Data Fig. 1). The oldest radiocarbon dates associated with Beaker pottery are around 2750 BCE in Atlantic Iberia⁶, which has been interpreted as evidence that the Beaker Complex originated there. However, the geographic origin is still debated⁷ and other scenarios including an origin in the Lower Rhine or even multiple independent origins are plausible (Supplementary Information section 1). Regardless of the geographic origin, by 2500 BCE the Beaker Complex had spread throughout western Europe (and northwest Africa), and reached southern and Atlantic France, Italy and central Europe⁵, where it overlapped geographically with the Corded Ware Complex. Within another hundred years, it had expanded to Britain and Ireland⁸. A major debate in archaeology has revolved around the question of whether the spread of the Beaker Complex was mediated by the movement of people, culture, or a combination⁹. Genome-wide

data have revealed high proportions of Steppe-related ancestry in Beaker Complex-associated individuals from Germany and the Czech Republic²⁻⁴, showing that they derived from mixtures of populations from the Steppe and the preceding farmers of Europe. However, a deeper understanding of the ancestry of people associated with the Beaker Complex requires genomic characterization of individuals across the geographic range and temporal duration of this archaeological phenomenon.

Ancient DNA data

To understand the genetic structure of ancient people associated with the Beaker Complex and their relationship to preceding, subsequent and contemporary peoples, we enriched ancient DNA libraries for sequences overlapping 1,233,013 single nucleotide polymorphisms (SNPs) by hybridization DNA capture^{4,10}, and generated new sequence data from 400 ancient Europeans dated to ~4700–800 BCE and excavated from 137 different sites (Extended Data Table 1; Supplementary Table 1; Supplementary Information, section 2). This dataset includes Beakerassociated individuals from Iberia (n=45), southern France (n=4), northern Italy (n=3), Sicily $(n=3)$, central Europe $(n=133)$, The Netherlands $(n=9)$ and Britain $(n=37)$, and 166 individuals from other ancient populations including 118 individuals from Britain who lived both before $(n=51)$ and after $(n=67)$ the arrival of the Beaker Complex (Fig. 1a-b). For genome-wide analyses, we filtered out first-degree relatives and individuals with low coverage (<10,000 SNPs) or evidence of contamination (Methods) and combined our data with previously published ancient DNA data (Extended Data Fig. 2) to form a dataset of 683 ancient samples (Supplementary Table 1). We further merged these data with 2,572 present-day individuals genotyped on the Affymetrix Human Origins array^{11,12} and 300 high coverage genomes¹³. To facilitate the interpretation of our genetic results, we also generated 106 new direct radiocarbon dates (Extended Data Table 2; Supplementary Information, section 3).

Y-chromosome analysis

The Y-chromosome composition of Beaker associated males was dominated by R1b-M269 (Supplementary Table 3), a lineage associated with the arrival of Steppe migrants in central Europe during the Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age^{2,3}. Outside Iberia, this lineage was present in 84 out of 90 analysed males. For individuals in whom we could determine the R1b-M269 subtype (n=60), we found that all but two had the derived allele for the R1b-S116/P312 polymorphism, which defines the dominant subtype in western Europe today¹⁴. In contrast, Beaker-associated individuals from the Iberian Peninsula carried a higher proportion of Y haplogroups known to be common across Europe during the earlier Neolithic period^{2,4,15,16}, such as I ($n=7$) and G2 ($n=2$), while R1b-M269 was found in four individuals (the two with higher coverage could be further classified as R1b-S116/P312). Finding this widespread presence of the R1b-S116/P312 polymorphism in ancient individuals from central and western Europe suggests that people associated with the Beaker Complex may have had an important role in the dissemination of this lineage throughout most of its present-day distribution.

Genomic insights into the spread of people associated with the Beaker Complex

We performed Principal Component Analysis (PCA) by projecting ancient samples onto a set of present-day populations from West Eurasia and replicate previous findings¹¹ of two parallel clines, with present-day Europeans on one side and present-day Near Easterners on the other (Extended Data Fig. 3a). Individuals associated with the Beaker Complex are strikingly heterogeneous within the European cline—splayed out along the axis of variation defined by Early Bronze Age Yamnaya Steppe pastoralists at one extreme and Middle Neolithic/Copper Age European farmers at the other extreme (Fig. 1c; Extended Data Fig. 3a)—suggesting that the genetic differentiation may be related to variable amounts of Steppe-related ancestry. We obtained qualitatively consistent inferences using ADMIXTURE model-based clustering¹⁷. Beaker Complex-associated individuals harboured three main genetic components: one characteristic of European hunter-gatherers, one maximized in Neolithic farmers from the Levant and Anatolia, and one maximized in Neolithic farmers of Iran and present in admixed form in Bronze Age Steppe populations (Extended Data Fig. 3b).

Both PCA and ADMIXTURE are powerful tools for visualizing genetic structure but they do not provide formal tests of admixture between populations. We grouped Beaker Complex individuals based on geographic proximity and genetic similarity (Supplementary Information, section 6), and used *qpAdm*² to directly test admixture models and estimate mixture proportions. We modelled their ancestry as a mixture of Mesolithic western European hunter-gatherers (WHG), northwestern Anatolian Neolithic farmers, and Bronze Age Steppe pastoralists (the first two of which contributed to earlier Neolithic Europeans; Supplementary Information, section 8). We find that the great majority of sampled Beaker Complex individuals in areas outside of Iberia (with the exception of Sicily) derive a large portion of their ancestry from populations related to Bronze Age Steppe pastoralists (Fig. 2a), whereas in Iberia, such ancestry is present in only eight of the 39 analysed individuals who represent the earliest detection of Steppe-related genomic affinities in this region. We observe striking differences in ancestry not only at a pan-European scale, but also within regions and even within sites. Unlike other individuals from the Upper Alsace region of France $(n=2)$, an individual from Hégenheim resembles the previous Neolithic populations and can be modelled as a mixture of Anatolian Neolithic and western hunter-gatherers without any Steppe-related ancestry. Given that the radiocarbon date of the Hégenheim individual is older (2832–2476 cal BCE (quoting 95.4% confidence intervals for this and other dates) (Supplementary Information, section 2) than other samples from the same

region (2566–2133 cal BCE), the pattern could reflect temporal differentiation. At Szigetszentmiklós in Hungary, we find Beaker-associated individuals with very different proportions (from 0% to 75%) of Steppe-related ancestry and overlapping dates. This genetic heterogeneity is consistent with early stages of mixture between previously established European Neolithic populations and migrants with Steppe-related ancestry. An implication is that, even at a local scale, the Beaker Complex was associated with people of diverse ancestries.

While the Steppe-related ancestry in Beaker-associated individuals had a recent origin in the East^{2,3}, the other ancestry component (from previously established European farmers) could potentially be derived from several parts of Europe, as genetically closely related groups were widely distributed during the Neolithic and Copper Ages^{2,4,11,16,18–23}. To obtain insight into the origin of this ancestry in Beaker Complex-associated individuals, we began by looking for regional patterns of genetic differentiation within Europe during the Neolithic and Copper Age periods. We examined whether Neolithic and Copper Age test populations predating the emergence of the Beaker Complex shared more alleles with Iberian (*Iberia_EN*) or central European Linearbandkeramik (LBK_EN) Early Neolithic populations. As previously described², there is genetic affinity to Iberian Early Neolithic farmers in Iberian Middle Neolithic/Copper Age populations, but not in central and northern European Neolithic populations (Fig. 2b), which could be explained by differential affinities to hunter-gatherer individuals from different regions²² (Extended Data Fig. 4). Neolithic farmers from southern France and Britain are also significantly closer to Iberian Early Neolithic farmers than to central European Early Neolithic farmers (Fig. 2b), consistent with the analysis of a Neolithic farmer genome from Ireland.²³ We ruled out the possibility that these results are driven by similarities in the proportion of huntergatherer admixture by modelling Neolithic populations and WHG in an admixture graph framework (Extended Data Fig. 5; Supplementary Information, section 7), and finding that all working models require that a portion of the ancestry of the Neolithic farmers of Britain is derived from groups related to early farmers from Iberia. Megalithic tombs document substantial interaction along the Atlantic façade of Europe, and our results are consistent with such interactions reflecting south-to-north movements of people. More data from southern Britain and Ireland (where currently data are sparse) and nearby regions in continental Europe will be needed to fully understand the complex interactions human movements between Britain, Ireland, and the continent during the Neolithic²⁴.

The distinctive genetic signatures of pre-Beaker Complex populations in Iberia compared to central Europe allow us to test formally for the origin of the Neolithic farmer-related ancestry in Beaker Complex-associated individuals in our dataset (Supplementary Information, section 8). We grouped individuals from Iberia ($n=39$) and from outside Iberia ($n=172$) to increase power, and evaluated the fit of different Neolithic/Copper Age groups with *qpAdm* under the model:

Yamnaya + Neolithic/Copper Age. For Beaker Complex-associated individuals from Iberia, the best fit was obtained when Middle Neolithic and Copper Age populations from the same region were used as a source for their Neolithic farmer-related ancestry, and we could exclude central and northern European populations $(P < 0.0028)$ (Fig. 2c). Conversely, the Neolithic farmerrelated ancestry in Beaker Complex individuals outside Iberia was most closely related to central and northern European Neolithic populations with relatively high hunter-gatherer admixture (e.g. *Poland LN*, $P = 0.18$; *Sweden MN*, $P = 0.25$), and we could significantly exclude Iberian sources ($P < 0.0104$) (Fig. 2c). These results support largely different origins for Beaker Complex-associated individuals, with no discernible Iberia-related ancestry outside Iberia.

Nearly complete turnover of ancestry in Britain

British Beaker Complex-associated individuals (n=19) show strong similarities to central European Beaker Complex-associated individuals in their genetic profile (Extended Data Fig. 3), an observation that is not just restricted to British individuals associated with the 'All Over Corded' Beaker pottery style that is shared between Britain and Central Europe, but also in 3 British individuals associated with the 'Maritime' Beaker pottery style that was the predominant early style in Iberia. The presence of large amounts of Steppe-related ancestry in British Beaker Complex-associated individuals (Fig. 2a) contrasts sharply with Neolithic individuals from Britain (n=51), who have no evidence of Steppe genetic affinities and cluster instead with Middle Neolithic and Copper-Age populations from mainland Europe (Extended Data Fig. 3). Thus, the arrival of Steppe-related ancestry in Britain was mediated by a migration that began with the Beaker Complex. A previous study showed that Steppe-related ancestry arrived in Ireland by the Bronze Age²³, and here we show that – at least in Britain – it arrived earlier in the Copper Age/Beaker period.

Among the different continental Beaker Complex groups analysed in our dataset, individuals from Oostwoud (Province of Noord-Holland, The Netherlands) are the most closely related to the great majority of the Beaker Complex individuals from southern Britain (n=27). They had almost identical Steppe-related ancestry proportions (Fig. 2a), the highest shared genetic drift (Extended Data Fig. 6b) and were symmetrically related to most ancient populations (Extended Data Fig. 6a), showing that they are consistent with being derived from the same ancestral population with limited mixture into either group. This does not necessarily imply that the Oostwoud individuals are direct ancestors of the British individuals, but a genetically closelyrelated group to the one (perhaps yet to be sampled) that moved into Britain from continental Europe.

We investigated the magnitude of population replacement in Britain with *qpAdm,* ² modelling the genome-wide ancestry of Copper and Bronze Age individuals (including Beaker Complexassociated individuals) as a mixture of continental Beaker Complex-associated samples (using the Oostwoud individuals as a surrogate) and the British Neolithic population (Supplementary Information, section 8). Fig. 3a shows the results, ordering individuals by date and showing excess Neolithic farmer-related ancestry compared to continental Beaker Complex-associated individuals as a baseline. For the earliest individuals (between ~2400–2000 BCE), the Neolithic ancestry excess is highly variable, consistent with migrant communities that were just beginning to mix with the previously established Neolithic population of Britain. During the subsequent Bronze Age we observe less variation and a modest increase in Neolithic farmer-related ancestry (Fig. 3a), which could represent admixture with persisting British populations with high levels of Neolithic farmer-related ancestry (or alternatively incoming continental populations with higher proportions of Neolithic farmer-related ancestry). In either case, our results imply a minimum of $90\pm2\%$ local population turnover by the Middle Bronze Age, with no further decrease observed in 5 samples from the Late Bronze Age (Supplementary Information, section 8). While the exact turnover rate and its geographic pattern will be refined with more ancient samples, our results imply that for individuals from Britain during and after the Beaker period, a very high fraction of their DNA derives from ancestors who lived in continental Europe prior to 2400 BCE. An independent line of evidence for population turnover comes from Y-chromosome haplogroup composition. While R1b haplogroups were completely absent in the Neolithic samples (n=33), they represent more than 90% of the Y-chromosomes during Copper and Bronze Age Britain (Fig. 3b; Supplementary Table 3).

Our genetic time transect in Britain also allowed us to track the frequencies of alleles with known phenotypic effects. Derived alleles at rs16891982 (SLC45A2) and rs12913832 (HERC2/OCA2), which contribute to reduced skin and eye pigmentation in Europeans, dramatically increased in frequency between the Neolithic period to the Beaker and Bronze Age periods (Extended Data Fig. 7). Thus, the arrival of migrants associated with the Beaker Complex significantly altered the pigmentation phenotypes of British populations. However, the lactase persistence allele at SNP rs4988235 remained at very low frequencies in our dataset both in Britain and continental Europe, showing that the major increase in its frequency in Britain, as in mainland Europe^{3,4,25}, occurred in the last 3,500 years.

Discussion

The term 'Bell Beaker' was introduced by late $19th$ -century and early $20th$ -century archaeologists to refer to the distinctive pottery style found across western and central Europe at the end of the Neolithic, initially hypothesized to have been spread by a genetically

homogeneous group of people. This idea of a 'Beaker Folk' became unpopular after the 1960s as scepticism about the role of migration in mediating change in archaeological cultures grew²⁶, although J.G.D. Clark speculated that the Beaker Complex expansion into Britain was an exception 27 , a prediction that has now been borne out by ancient genomic data.

Our results prove that the expansion of the Beaker Complex cannot be described by a simple one-to-one mapping of an archaeologically defined material culture to a genetically homogeneous population. This stands in contrast to other archaeological complexes analysed to date, notably the *Linearbandkeramik* first farmers of central Europe², the Early Bronze Age Yamnaya of the Steppe^{2,3}, and to some extent the Corded Ware Complex of central and eastern Europe^{2,3}. Instead, our results support a model in which cultural transmission and human migration both played important roles, with the relative balance of these two processes depending on the region. In Iberia, the majority of Beaker-associated individuals lacked Steppe affinities and were genetically most similar to preceding Iberian populations. In central Europe, Steppe-related ancestry was widespread and we can exclude a substantial contribution from Iberian Beaker associated individuals, contradicting initial suggestions of gene flow into central Europe based on analysis of mtDNA²⁸ and dental morphology²⁹. The presence of Steppe-related ancestry in some Iberian individuals demonstrates that gene-flow into Iberia was, however, not uncommon during this period.

Other parts of the Beaker Complex expansion were driven to a substantial extent by migration. This genomic transformation is clearest in Britain due to our dense time transect. The earliest Beaker pots found in Britain show influences from both the lower Rhine region and the Atlantic façade of western Europe³⁰. However, such dual influence is not mirrored in the genetic data, as the British Beaker Complex individuals were genetically most similar to lower Rhine individuals from the Netherlands. The arrival of people associated with the Beaker Complex precipitated a profound demographic transformation in Britain, exemplified by the absence of individuals in our dataset without large amounts of Steppe-related ancestry after 2400 BCE. It is possible that the uneven geographic distribution of our samples, coupled with different burial practises between local and incoming populations (cremation versus burial) during the early stages of interaction could result in a sampling bias against local individuals. However, the signal observed during the Copper Age/Beaker period persisted, without any evidence of genetically Neolithic-like individuals among the 67 Bronze Age individuals we newly report. These results are notable in light of strontium and oxygen isotope analyses of British skeletons from the Beaker and Bronze Age periods³¹, which have provided no evidence of substantial mobility over individuals' lifetimes from locations with cooler climates or from places with geologies atypical of Britain. However, the isotope data are only sensitive to first-generation migrants, and do not rule out movements from regions such as the lower Rhine, which is

consistent with the genetic data, or from other geologically similar regions for which DNA sampling is still sparse. Further sampling of regions on the European continent may reveal additional candidate sources.

By analysing DNA data from ancient individuals we have been able to provide constraints on the processes underlying cultural and social changes in Europe during the third millennium BCE. Our results motivate further archaeological research to identify the changes in social organization, technology, subsistence, climate, population sizes³² or pathogen exposure^{33,34} that could have precipitated the demographic changes uncovered in this study.

Figure 1. Spatial, temporal, and genetic structure of individuals in this study. a, Geographic distribution of samples with new genome-wide data. For clarity, random jitter was added for sites with multiple individuals. **b**, Time ranges for samples with new genome-wide data. Sample sizes are given next to each bar. **c**, Principal component analysis of 990 presentday West Eurasian individuals (grey dots), with previously published (pale yellow) and new ancient samples projected onto the first two principal components. This figure is a zoom of Extended Data Fig 3a. E, Early; M, Middle; L, Late; N, Neolithic; CA, Copper Age; BA, Bronze Age.

Figure 2. Investigating the genetic makeup of Beaker Complex individuals. a, Proportion of Steppe-related ancestry (shown in black) in Beaker Complex-associated groups, computed with *qpAdm* under the model Steppe_EBA + Anatolia_N *+* WHG. The area of the pie is proportional to the number of individuals (shown inside the pie if more than one). See Supplementary Information, section 8 for mixture proportions and standard errors. **b**, *f-*statistics of the form *f*4(Mbuti, *Test*; Iberia_EN, LBK_EN) computed for European populations before the emergence of the Beaker Complex. The statistic takes negative values if the *Test* shares more alleles with Iberia EN (positive values in the case of excess affinity with LBK EN). Error bars represent ± 1 standard errors. **c**, Testing different populations as a source for the Neolithic ancestry component in Beaker Complex individuals. The table shows the P-values (highlighted if >0.05) for the model: Steppe_EBA + Neolithic/Copper Age source population. BC, Beaker complex; E, Early; M, Middle; L, Late; N, Neolithic; CA, Copper Age; BA, Bronze Age; N_Iberia, Northern Iberia; C_Iberia, Central Iberia; SE_Iberia, Southeast Iberia; SW_Iberia, Southwest Iberia.

Figure 3. Population transformation in Britain associated with the arrival of the Beaker Complex. **a,** Modelling Copper and Bronze Age (including Beaker Complex) individuals from Britain as a mixture of continental Beaker Complex-associated individuals (red, represented by Beaker Complex samples from Oostwoud) and the Neolithic population from Britain (blue). Individuals are ordered chronologically (oldest on the left) and included in the plot if represented by more than 100,000 SNPs. See Supplementary Information, section 8 for mixture proportions and standard errors. **b**, Y-chromosome haplogroup composition in males from Britain. CA, Copper Age; EBA, Early Bronze Age; MBA, Middle Bronze Age; LBA, Late Bronze Age. BC, Beaker complex**.**

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Methods

Ancient DNA analysis

We screened skeletal samples for DNA preservation in dedicated clean rooms. We extracted $DNA^{35–37}$ and prepared barcoded next generation sequencing libraries, the majority of which were treated with uracil-DNA glycosylase to greatly reduce the damage (except at the terminal nucleotide) that is characteristic of ancient DNA^{38,39} (Supplementary Information, section 4). We initially enriched libraries for sequences overlapping the mitochondrial genome⁴⁰ and \sim 3000 nuclear SNPs using synthesized baits (CustomArray Inc.) that we PCR amplified. We sequenced the enriched material on an Illumina NextSeq instrument with 2x76 cycles, and 2x7 cycles to read out the two indices⁴¹. We merged read pairs with the expected barcodes that overlapped by at least 15 bases, mapped the merged sequences to hg19 and to the reconstructed mitochondrial DNA consensus sequence⁴² using the *samse* command in bwa $(v0.6.1)^{43}$, and removed duplicated sequences. We evaluated DNA authenticity by estimating the rate of mismatching to the consensus mitochondrial sequence⁴⁴, and also requiring that the rate of damage at the terminal nucleotide was at least 3% for UDG-treated libraries⁴⁴ and 10% for non-UDG-treated libraries⁴⁵.

For libraries that were promising after screening, we enriched in two consecutive rounds for sequences overlapping 1,233,013 SNPs ('1240k SNP capture')^{2,10} and sequenced 2x76 cycles and 2x7 cycles on an Illumina NextSeq500 instrument. We processed the data bioinformatically as for the mitochondrial capture data, this time mapping only to the human reference genome *hg19* and merging the data from different libraries of the same individual. We further evaluated authenticity by studying the ratio of X-to-Y chromosome reads and estimating X-chromosome contamination in males based on the rate of heterozygosity⁴⁶. Samples with evidence of contamination were either filtered out or restricted to sequences with terminal cytosine deamination to remove sequences that derived from modern contaminants. Finally, we filtered out from our genome-wide analysis dataset samples with fewer than 10,000 targeted SNPs covered at least once and samples that were first-degree relatives of others in the dataset (keeping the sample with the larger number of covered SNPs) (Supplementary Table 1).

Mitochondrial haplogroup determination

We used the mitochondrial capture bam files to determine the mitochondrial haplogroup of each sample with new data, restricting to sequences with MAPQ \geq 30 and base quality \geq 30. First, we constructed a consensus sequence with samtools and beftools⁴⁷, using a majority rule and requiring a minimum coverage of 2. We called haplogroups with HaploGrep2⁴⁸ based on

phylotree⁴⁹ (mtDNA tree Build 17 (18 Feb 2016)). Mutational differences compared to the rCRS and corresponding haplogroups can be viewed in Supplementary Table 2.

Y-chromosome analysis

We determined Y-chromosome haplogroups for both new and published samples (Supplementary Information, section 5). We made use of the sequences mapping to 1240k Ychromosome targets, restricting to sequences with mapping quality \geq 30 and bases with quality \geq 30. We called haplogroups by determining the most derived mutation for each sample, using the nomenclature of the International Society of Genetic Genealogy (http://www.isogg.org) version 11.110 (21 April 2016). Haplogroups and their supporting derived mutations can be viewed in Supplementary Table 3.

Merging newly generated data with published data

We assembled two datasets for genome-wide analyses:

- *HO* includes 2,572 present-day individuals from worldwide populations genotyped on the Human Origins Array^{11,12,50} and 683 ancient individuals. The ancient set includes 211 Beaker Complex individuals (195 newly reported, 7 with shotgun data³ for which we generated 1240 k capture data and 9 previously published^{3,4}), 68 newly reported individuals from relevant ancient populations and 298 previously published^{12,18,19,21–23,51–58} individuals (Supplementary Table 1). We kept 591,642 autosomal SNPs after intersecting autosomal SNPs in the 1240k capture with the analysis set of 594,924 SNPs from Lazaridis et al.¹¹.

-*HOIll* includes the same set of ancient samples and 300 present-day individuals from 142 populations sequenced to high coverage as part of the Simons Genome Diversity Project¹³. For this dataset, we used 1,054,671 autosomal SNPs, excluding SNPs of the 1240k array located on sex chromosomes or with known functional effects.

For each individual, we represented the allele at each SNP by randomly sampling one sequence, discarding the first and the last two nucleotides of each sequence.

Principal component analysis

We carried out principal component analysis (PCA) on the *HO* dataset using the *smartpca* program in EIGENSOFT⁵⁹. We computed principal components on 990 present-day West Eurasians and projected ancient individuals using lsqproject: YES and shrinkmode: YES.

ADMIXTURE analysis

We performed model-based clustering analysis using ADMIXTURE¹⁷ on the *HO* reference dataset, including 2,572 present-day individuals from worldwide populations and the ancient individuals. First, we carried out LD-pruning on the dataset using $PLINK^{60}$ with the flag -indep-pairwise 200 25 0.4, leaving 306,393 SNPs. We ran ADMIXTURE with the cross validation $(-cv)$ flag specifying from K=2 to K=20 clusters, with 20 replicates for each value of K and keeping for each value of K the replicate with highest log likelihood. In Extended Data Fig. 3b we show the cluster assignments at K=8 of newly reported individuals and other relevant ancient samples for comparison. We chose this value of K as it was the lowest one for which components of ancestry related both to Iranian farmers and European hunter-gatherers were maximized.

*f***-statistics**

We computed *f*-statistics on the *HOIll* dataset using ADMIXTOOLS⁵⁰ with default parameters (Supplementary Information, section 6). We used *qpDstat* with f4mode:Yes for *f*4-statistics and *qp3Pop* for outgroup *f*3-statistics. We computed standard errors using a weighted block jackknife⁶¹ over 5 Mb blocks.

Inference of mixture proportions

We estimated ancestry proportions on the *HOIll* dataset using *qpAdm*² and a basic set of 9 *Outgroups*: Mota, Ust_Ishim, MA1, Villabruna, Mbuti, Papuan, Onge, Han, Karitiana. For some analyses (Supplementary Information, section 8) we added additional outgroups to this basic set.

Admixture graph modelling

We modelled the relationships between populations in an Admixture Graph framework with the software *qpGraph* in ADMIXTOOLS⁵⁰, using the *HOIll* dataset and Mbuti as an outgroup (Supplementary Information, section 7).

Allele frequency estimation from read counts

We used allele counts at each SNP to perform maximum likelihood estimation of allele frequencies in ancient populations as in ref.⁴. In Extended Data Fig. 7, we show derived allele frequency estimates at three SNPs of functional importance for different ancient populations.

Data availability

All 1240k and mitochondrial capture sequencing data are available from the European Nucleotide Archive, accession number XXXXXXXX [to be made available on publication]. The genotype dataset we analysed is available from the Reich Lab website at [to be made available on publication].

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Author Contributions

S.B., M.E.A, N.R., A.S.-N., A.M., N.B., M.F., E.H., M.M., J.O., K.S., O.C., F.C., R.P., J.K., W.H., I.B. and D.R. performed or supervised wet laboratory work. G.T.C. and D.J.K. undertook the radiocarbon dating of a large fraction of the British samples. I.A., K.K., A.B., K.W.A.,

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Supplementary Tables

Supplementary Table 1. Ancient individuals included in this study.

Supplementary Table 2. Mitochondrial haplogroup calls for individuals with newly reported data.

Supplementary Table 3. Y-chromosome calls for males with newly reported data.

Supplementary Table 4. Radiocarbon database.

Extended Data Figure 1. **Beaker complex artefacts**. **a**, Beaker and flint implements excavated at Newmill, Perth and Kinross District, Tayside Region, Scotland. **b**, Beaker Complex grave goods from La Sima III barrow, Soria, Spain⁶². Photo: Alejandro Plaza, Museo Numantino.

Extended Data Figure 2. **Ancient individuals with previously published genome-wide data used in this study**. **a,** Sampling locations. **b**, Time ranges. W/E/S/CHG, Western/Eastern/Scandinavian/Caucasus hunter-gatherers; E, Early; M, Middle; L, Late; N, Neolithic; CA, Copper Age; BA, Bronze Age.

Extended Data Figure 3. Population structure. a, Principal component analysis of 990 present-day West Eurasian individuals (grey dots), with previously published (pale yellow) and new ancient samples projected onto the first two principal components. **b**, ADMIXTURE clustering analysis with k=8 showing ancient individuals. W/E/S/CHG, Western/Eastern/Scandinavian/Caucasus hunter-gatherers; E, Early; M, Middle; L, Late; N, Neolithic; CA, Copper Age; BA, Bronze Age.

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Extended Data Figure 4. **Hunter-gatherer affinities in Neolithic/Copper Age Europe**. Differential affinity to hunter-gatherer individuals (LaBraña1⁵⁷ from Spain and KO1⁶³ from Hungary) in European populations before the emergence of the Beaker Complex. See Supplementary Information, section 8 for mixture proportions and standard errors computed with *qpAdm*. E, Early; M, Middle; L, Late; N, Neolithic; CA, Copper Age; BA, Bronze Age; N_Iberia, Northern Iberia; C_Iberia, Central Iberia.

Extended Data Figure 5. **Modelling the relationships between Neolithic populations**. **a,** Admixture graph fitting a *Test* population as a mixture of sources related to both Iberia_EN and Hungary_EN. **b,** Likelihood distribution for models with different proportions of the source related to Iberia_EN (green admixture edge in (a)) when *Test* is England_N, Scotland_N or France_MLN.

Extended Data Figure 6. **Genetic affinity between Beaker Complex-associated individuals from southern England and the Netherlands**. **a**, *f-*statistics of the form *f*4(Mbuti, Test; BK_Netherlands_Tui, BK_England_SOU). Negative values indicate that Test is closer to BK_Netherlands_Tui than to BK_England_SOU, and the opposite for positive values. Error bars represent ±3 standard errors. **b**, Outgroup-*f*³ statistics of the form *f*3(Mbuti; BK_England_SOU, X) measuring shared genetic drift between BK_England_SOU and other Beaker Complex groups. Error bars represent ± 1 standard errors.

Extended Data Figure 7. Derived allele frequencies at three SNPs of functional importance. Error bars represent 1.9-log-likelihood support interval. The red dashed lines show allele frequencies in the 1000 Genomes GBR population (present-day people from Great Britain). BC, Beaker Complex; CA, Copper Age; BA, Bronze Age.

Extended Data Table 1. Sites with new genome-wide data reported in this study.

Extended Data Table 2. 106 newly reported radiocarbon dates

