

# The Bronze Age



Quick summary



**The Bronze Age**, the period immediately after the Stone Age, is the time when metals like bronze (made by heating a mix of tin and copper in a furnace) started to be commonly used. Metalworking was not the only significant change during the Bronze Age; methods of writing, the invention of the wheel and systems of irrigation are other developments that took place in this period. This very significant era in history began at different times throughout the world, starting in Britain in approximately 2100 BCE. Well preserved metal artefacts have also provided us with lots of evidence of how connected societies were in these ancient times.



Travel and exploration

Bronze Age people began to travel great distances to trade with other settlements. Copper and tin (the metals need to make bronze) were very valuable and were exchanged across Britain and Europe. People used large wooden boats to carry metal, pots, jewellery, food and animals across the English Channel and the North Sea. As people traded, they also settled in new places, bringing their customs and beliefs with them.



Settlements

The famous prehistoric stone circle, Stonehenge, was built over many hundreds of years. Work began in the late Stone Age, around 3000 BC. People made many changes to the monument over the centuries. The last changes were made in the early Bronze Age, around 1500 BCE. The size and scale of the monument suggests it was very important to the people who built it. No one is exactly sure of its purpose, but it could have been used as a place of worship. Other suggestions are that it was a form of solar calendar or even a communal burial ground.



Beliefs

The Bronze Age first saw the custom of burying people in single graves, instead of the communal ones common in Stone Age times. By the end of the Bronze Age, people had begun cremating the dead, saving their ashes in small pots called urns.



Artefacts

Many hoards of bronze and gold artefacts dating back to the Bronze Age have been found in Britain. Axes, swords, buttons, brooches and more have given us clues as to what life was like for these ancient people.



Vocabulary

**societies:** people living together in organised groups

**ancient:** from a long time ago

**trade:** buy, sell or exchange goods

**custom:** a traditional way of doing something

**hoard:** a secret store of valuable items



Settlements



Beliefs



Culture and pastimes



Location



Main events



Food and farming



Travel and exploration



Conflict



Society



Artefacts



# The Iron Age



Quick summary



**The Iron Age** in Britain was from approximately 800 BCE until the Roman **Conquest** of 43 CE. In this period, iron, a much stronger metal than bronze, was being used across Europe to make weapons and farming tools. As people travelled, this new technology spread with them. The use of iron is **significant** because of the huge changes that it brought to farming and conflict. Iron continued to be the most **influential** metal used until the 1800s when steel became the most widely used metal.



Travel and exploration

During the Iron Age, a group of people called the Celts travelled across Europe. They moved around to trade but many settled in Britain. The Celts were part of different tribes or clans that lived together. These communities shared a similar language, set of beliefs and culture. Celtic language and culture is still present today, particularly in parts of Ireland, Wales and Scotland. This is the Celts' **legacy**.



Settlements

Iron weapons made fighting between tribes more common. A **consequence** of this was the need to build much safer, **fortified** settlements. Tribes built well defended hill forts that were often as large as small towns. The buildings inside, called roundhouses, were made of mud and wood with thatched roofs. Roundhouses were used as homes, gathering places and markets. Villagers who lived and farmed in areas outside the forts could also take shelter there if they were being attacked.



Beliefs

The Iron Age Celts believed in many different gods. The druids (priests) believed in immortality (life after death) and so Celts were buried with ornaments, weapons and food to take with them to the afterlife.



Conflict

The Iron Age brought new farming technology but also new weapons like swords and spears. As a consequence, fighting between tribes became more common. Farmers and villagers were often attacked, and their crops and animals stolen. Hill forts became a place of shelter during times of threat.



Vocabulary

**conquest:** conquering (taking control of) a country or group of people  
**significant:** important  
**influential:** makes people take notice  
**legacy:** something left behind after death  
**consequence:** result or effect  
**fortified:** protected against attack



Settlements



Beliefs



Culture and pastimes



Location



Main events



Food and farming



Travel and exploration



Conflict



Society



Artefacts



