

The Iron Age



Quick summary

- The Iron Age in Britain was from approximately 800 BCE until the Roman Conquest of 43 CE.
- Iron, a much stronger metal than bronze, was being used across Europe to make weapons and farming tools.
- The use of iron is significant because of the huge changes that it brought to farming and conflict.
- One of the most dominant features of the Iron Age countryside was the hill fort.
- Large hill forts, like the ones at Maiden Castle in Dorset and Old Oswestry in Shropshire, became important centres of trade.
- At this time, farming was made easier by the use of iron tools, like ards (iron ploughs).
- More food production meant the surplus could be stored or sold.
- The landowners became wealthy and powerful.



Settlements

- Iron weapons made fighting between tribes more common.
- Iron Age hill forts provided protection to villagers and local farmers and to keep enemies out.
- They were as large as small towns.
- To make the forts safe, people built heavily defended wooden walls along the edges of big hills.
- Lines of soil banks and ditches were made to add extra protection, making the hill forts hard to attack.
- The buildings inside were called roundhouses, they were made from wood and mud with thatched roofs.
- Roundhouses were homes, gathering places and markets.
- Farmers and villagers outside the fort could also use it as a safe place if they were being attacked.



Food and farming

- People in the Iron Age were mostly farmers, and the land was countryside.
- They depended on certain weather so they could grow crops.
- The Celts were excellent farmers and, by increasing the land that they could farm, were able to produce more food than they needed.
- Any extra grains (wheat, barley, oats, millet and rye) they grew were stored in granaries to be used in times of drought and famine or to be traded.
- Iron Age people, such as the Celts, also kept farm animals. (goats, sheep, pigs and cows)
- They developed techniques like smoking and salting to make food last longer.



Conflict

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



Vocabulary

- Dominant:** powerful or with influence
- Fortifications:** Buildings, walls and ditches built to protect a place
- Inhabited:** lived in
- Surplus:** more than you need
- 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

