

# The Iron Age

The Iron Age began at about 800 BC. It was a time when iron (a metal) was first used to make tools and weapons.

## Beliefs

Iron Age swords and jewellery have been found in lakes, bogs and pits where they were left as religious gifts. Animal and human bones have also been discovered, which means that people and animals must have been killed at religious meetings.

## Defence

Iron (metal) was important to making strong, powerful weapons. Iron armour, helmets and shields were much stronger than bronze ones, so soldiers wearing iron armour often won their battles.



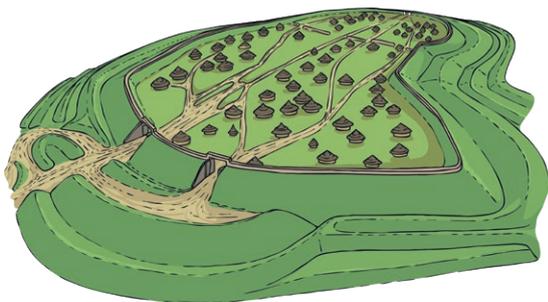
## Homes

This was a time when people usually lived in tribes (groups with a leader). These groups lived on farms, villages or bigger groups. Some people settled in big pieces of land called hillforts or places that were like towns, called oppida. Hillforts protected Iron Age groups, but they also kept their food safe, looked after their farms and were a place to buy and sell new objects. 'Oppida' was the name for places where clothes, food and weapons were made, stored and sold. They were places that had their own leaders and where important decisions were made.

Iron Age houses were made out of wood. They were circular, now called 'roundhouses'. The walls were plastered with a mixture of clay, cow dung (poo!), straw and water.

## Farming and Food

Iron Age people were farmers. Metal ploughs were used so that people could collect and grow more crops. This was a time when new crops started being farmed, like wheat, barley, peas, flax and beans. Iron Age people kept cattle, sheep and pigs. The meat from the animals was kept for a long time using salt, which dried it out.



# Questions

1. When did the Iron Age begin?

---

2. What job did most Iron Age people have?

---

---

3. What did Iron Age people eat?

---

---

4. What did Iron Age people use to dry out their meat?

---

5. If you were an Iron Age child and you could choose to live on a farm, in a village, in a hillfort or in an oppida, which would you like to live in the most and why?

---

---

---

---

6. What were Iron Age people's swords made from?

---

7. Why did Iron Age soldiers usually win a battle?

---

---

---

---

# Answers

1. When did the Iron Age begin?

**The Iron Age began at about 800 BC.**

2. What job did most Iron Age people have?

**Most Iron Age people were farmers.**

3. What did Iron Age people eat?

**Iron Age people ate crops, such as wheat, barley, peas, flax and beans. They also ate the meat from animals they kept, such as cattle, sheep and pigs.**

4. What did Iron Age people use to dry out their meat?

**Iron Age people used salt to dry out the meat.**

5. If you were an Iron Age child and you could choose to live on a farm, in a village, in a hillfort or in an oppida, which would you like to live in the most and why?

**Pupils' answers will vary; accept any reasonable answer and explanation of one of the places to live.**

6. What were Iron Age people's swords made from?

**Iron Age people's swords were made from iron.**

7. Why did Iron Age soldiers usually win a battle?

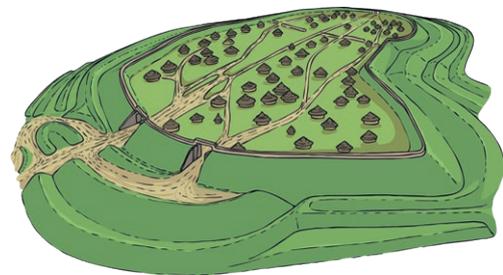
**Iron armour, helmets and shields were much stronger than bronze ones, so soldiers wearing iron armour often won their battles.**

# The Iron Age

The Iron Age is the period of history beginning around 800 BC and lasting until the Romans arrived in Britain. It was a time when iron was first used to make tools and weapons, rather than bronze or stone ones. The Iron Age people were called Celts and were made up of many different tribes.

## Farming and Food

Iron Age people were farmers. Evidence suggests that technology was used by lots of people during this time. For example, the new metal plough meant that people could work the land quicker and grow more crops. This was a time when new crops started being farmed due to technology being invented. Archaeologists know that wheat, barley, peas, flax and beans were grown and that Iron Age people kept cattle, sheep and pigs. The meat from the animals was preserved (kept for a long time) using salt, which dried it out.



## Homes

This was a time when people usually lived in tribes (groups with a leader). These groups lived on farms, in villages or in bigger groups. Some people settled in hillforts or oppida.

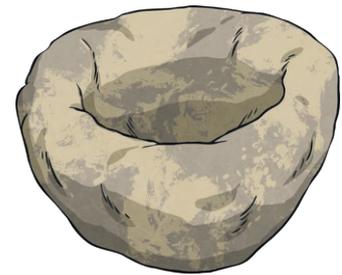
Hillforts were areas of land surrounded by mile long ditches, leading to one entrance. In the past, historians described these as a type of early castle. However, although some hillforts were designed for defence against enemies, most were intended to protect areas of farming, so that people or animals would not disturb them. It also appears that some forts were made for storing food or buying and selling goods.

'Oppida' was the name for places where goods (clothes, food, weapons...) were made, stored and sold. Oppida seem like a type of tribal town or kingdom. Sometimes Roman soldiers stayed in these Iron Age 'towns', using them as places to buy more supplies. They were places that had their own councils or governments, where important decisions were made.

Iron Age houses were made out of natural materials. They were circular, now called 'roundhouses', with a central pole and roof rafters to hold the weight of the roof. The walls were plastered with a mixture of clay, cow dung, straw and water.

## New Technology

- Potter's wheel - spinning pots
- Lathe - woodwork
- Rotary quern - grinding grain
- Metal plough - ploughed even through heavy clay soils.



## Beliefs

Evidence of religious rituals or ceremonies has been found in places such as lakes, bogs and pits in known Iron Age areas. Weaponry and jewellery have also been found. In addition to this, animal and human bones have been discovered, suggesting that sacrifices (humans or animals killed as a religious gift) were used in the Iron Age.



## Defence

Iron was important for making strong, powerful weapons. Iron armour, helmets and shields were far stronger than bronze ones, so soldiers wearing iron armour often won their battles.



# Questions

1. When did the Iron Age begin?

---

---

2. Why is it called the Iron Age?

---

---

3. Who were the Celts?

---

---

4. Why were Iron Age people better at farming than other people before them?

---

---

---

5. What did Iron Age people eat?

---

---

6. People usually lived in groups during the Iron Age. Why is this a better way to live?

---

---

---

7. What were hillforts?

---

---

8. There is no evidence that Iron Age people made their homes out of iron. Why do you think this is?

---

---

---

9. What religious sacrifices did the people make?

---

---

10. What effect did iron have on the Iron Age soldiers?

---

---

11. What do you think were the advantages of living in the Iron Age?

---

---

---

---

# Answers

1. When did the Iron Age begin?  
**The Iron Age began at about 800 BC.**
2. Why is it called the Iron Age?  
**It is called the Iron Age because it was a time when iron was first used to make tools and weapons, rather than bronze or stone.**
3. Who were the Celts?  
**The Celts were Iron Age people, made up of many different tribes.**
4. Why were Iron Age people better at farming than other people before them?  
**Iron Age people were better at farming than other people before them because they had new technology, such as the metal plough, which could work the land quicker and grow more crops.**
5. What did Iron Age people eat?  
**Iron Age people ate crops, such as wheat, barley, peas, flax and beans. They also ate the meat from animals they kept, such as cattle, sheep and pigs.**
6. People usually lived in groups during the Iron Age. Why is this a better way to live?  
**Pupils' own responses, such as: It was better to live in groups during the Iron Age because the people could work together to grow crops and farm the land, as well as protect and defend their land from attack together.**
7. What were hillforts?  
**Hillforts were areas of land surrounded by mile long ditches, leading to one entrance. They have been described as a type of early castle.**
8. There is no evidence that Iron Age people made their homes out of iron. Why do you think this is?  
**Pupils' own responses, such as: A large amount of iron would have been needed to make a house from and it was a very heavy material. Instead, natural materials were used, which were lighter and kept the warmth in. The iron was important for making strong, powerful weapons.**
9. What religious sacrifices did the people make?  
**Both animal and human bones have been discovered in places which were used for religious rituals and ceremonies, suggesting that they were killed as sacrifices.**
10. What effect did iron have on the Iron Age soldiers?  
**Pupils' own responses, such as: Iron positively impacted Iron Age soldiers because it made stronger and more powerful weapons, as well as stronger helmets and shields (compared to the bronze ones) so soldiers wearing iron armour often won their battles.**

11. What do you think were the advantages of living in the Iron Age?

**Pupils' own responses, such as: There were many advantages of living in the Iron Age, including:**

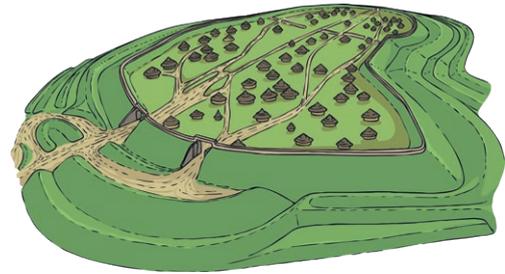
- **The new technology, such as the metal plough, which made farming more successful than before, meaning people could work the ground quicker and grow more crops.**
- **Living together on hillforts which were built for defence against enemies; this meant that people could work in groups to protect their land as well as to farm and grow crops.**
- **Using the iron to make stronger and more powerful weapons and armour, which mean that soldiers often won their battles.**

# The Iron Age

The Iron Age is the period of history that begins around 800BC until the Romans arrived in Britain (in 55BC the Romans first arrived, but it took them until 43AD to agree occupation with the local tribes). It was a time when iron was first used to make tools and weapons, rather than bronze or stone. The Iron Age people were called Celts, consisting of many different tribes, such as Britons and Picts.

## Farming and Food

Iron Age people were farmers. Evidence suggests that technology was widespread during this time, making farming more successful. For example, the metal plough which was developed during this time made life much easier. This meant that people could work the land quicker and grow more crops. This was a time when new crops started being farmed due to technology progressing. Archaeologists know that wheat, barley, peas, flax and beans were grown and that the Iron Age people kept cattle, sheep and pigs. The meat from the livestock was preserved using salt - a valuable commodity during this period.



## Homes

This was a time when people usually lived in tribes (groups with a leader). These groups lived on farms, in villages or sometimes in larger communities. Some people settled in hillforts or oppida.

Hillforts were areas of land surrounded by mile-long ditches, leading to one entrance. In the past, historians described these as a form of early castle. However, more recent information suggests that although some hillforts were constructed for defence against enemies, most were intended to protect areas of specialised farming, to make it more productive. It also appears that some forts were created with the intention of storing food or buying and selling goods.

Oppida were slightly different. Roman invaders described Iron Age oppida as important places for making, storing and trading goods, like tribal towns or kingdoms. Sometimes, Romans settled in these Iron Age 'towns', using them as places to buy more supplies. They were places that had their own councils or governments, where important decisions were made.

Ordinary houses were made out of natural materials. They were circular, now called 'roundhouses', with a central pole and roof rafters to hold the weight of the roof. The walls were plastered with a mixture of clay, cow dung, straw and water.

## New Technology

- Potter's wheel - spinning pots
- Lathe - woodwork
- Rotary quern - grinding grain
- Metal plough - ploughed even through heavy clay soils.



## Beliefs

Iron Age settlements provide archaeological evidence of religious rituals or ceremonies. Weaponry and jewellery have been found in lakes or bogs at Iron Age sites. Mainly animal, but sometimes human remains, have also been discovered in prehistoric pits, suggesting that sacrifices were performed.



## Defence

Iron was crucial to developing weaponry. Iron armour, helmets and shields were far stronger than bronze equivalents, so groups that fought soldiers wearing iron were often defeated.



# Questions

1. When did the Iron Age begin?

---

---

2. Why is it called the Iron Age?

---

---

3. Who were the Celts?

---

---

4. Why were Iron Age people better at farming than other people before them?

---

---

---

5. How do you think archaeologists know what people ate in the Iron Age times?

---

---

6. Is a hillfort a type of castle?

---

---

---

7. How did the Iron Age people help the Romans?

---

---

8. How do we know that Iron Age people had religious events?

---

---

---

9. How did technology make Iron Age people strong in battle?

---

---

10. What does the phrase 'even through heavy clay soils' imply about the metal plough?

---

---

11. What can we say about what life was like in the Iron Age?

---

---

---

---

12. In what ways is life in the Iron Age like life today?

---

---

---

---

# Answers

1. When did the Iron Age begin?  
**The Iron Age began at about 800 BC.**
2. Why is it called the Iron Age?  
**It was called the Iron Age because it was a time when iron was first used to make tools and weapons, rather than bronze or stone.**
3. Who were the Celts?  
**The Celts were Iron Age people, made up of many different tribes, such as Britons and Picts.**
4. Why were Iron Age people better at farming than other people before them?  
**Iron Age people were better at farming than other people before them because they had new technology, such as the metal plough, which could work the land quicker and grow more crops.**
5. How do you think archaeologists know what people ate in the Iron Age times?  
**Pupils' own responses, such as: I think that archaeologists know what people ate in the Iron Age times by digging up Iron Age sites and finding remains of animal bones and crops.**
6. Is a hillfort a type of castle?  
**A hillfort has been described by historians as a form of early castle. However, most were intended to protect areas of specialised farming.**
7. How did the Iron Age people help the Romans?  
**Roman invaders sometimes settled in the oppida (Iron Age 'towns'), using them as places to buy more supplies.**
8. How do we know that Iron Age people had religious events?  
**We know that Iron Age people had religious events because there is archaeological evidence of religious rituals and ceremonies. Weaponry and jewellery have been found in lakes or bogs at Iron Age sites and animal and human remains have also been discovered in prehistoric pits, suggesting that sacrifices were performed.**
9. How did technology make Iron Age people strong in battle?  
**Technology made Iron Age people strong in battle because the iron armour, helmets and shields were stronger than the bronze equivalents. Groups that fought soldiers wearing iron were often defeated in battle.**
10. What does the phrase 'even through heavy clay soils' imply about the metal plough?  
**Pupils' own responses, such as: The phrase 'even through heavy clay soils' implies that the metal plough was a stronger and more durable tool than people had previously used as it was able to plough through the difficult ground conditions.**

11. What can we say about what life was like in the Iron Age?

**Pupils' own responses, such as: We can say that there were many improvements made during the Iron Age which made life easier and better for people. These include the new technologies that made farming more successful (such as the metal plough which meant people could work the ground quicker and grow more crops); living together on hillforts (which were built for defence against enemies and meant that people could work in groups to protect their land as well as farm and grow crops); using the iron to make stronger and more powerful weapons and armour (which mean that soldiers often won their battles).**

12. In what ways is life in the Iron Age like life today?

**Pupils' own responses, such as: The Iron Age is like life today because it was a time of great technological advancement with new technologies being invented to help make aspects of life, such as farming, more successful. This is similar to life today, with new technology being invented at a great speed, such as computing and the Internet, making life much easier to live.**