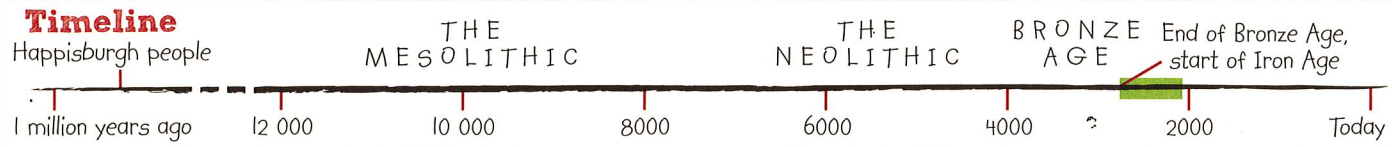


The Celtic Age of Iron



Around 2700 years ago, a new age started in Britain — the **Iron Age**.

Why do you think this period of time was called the Iron Age?

Not just an age of iron

Some of the oldest objects made of iron that have been found in Britain were buried in **Llyn Fawr**, in **Wales**. Archaeologists found an iron sickle and an iron sword there that are about 2700 years old. The sickle and sword were found with some items made of bronze, including a giant bronze cauldron. This shows that around this time people used objects made of bronze as well as things made from iron.

Look at the Iron Age tools in this picture.



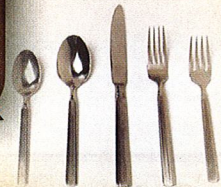
*What do you think each tool is?
What do you think each tool is made from?**

Better than bronze?

No-one is quite sure why people started making tools and weapons out of iron, rather than bronze. It could be that there was a shortage of bronze, so people started using iron instead and then found ways of making better, cheaper, stronger items from iron.

Iron on its own isn't any stronger than bronze. But if iron is mixed with a material called carbon, it makes a new material called steel. Steel is much stronger than bronze, so people could make better tools and weapons from it.

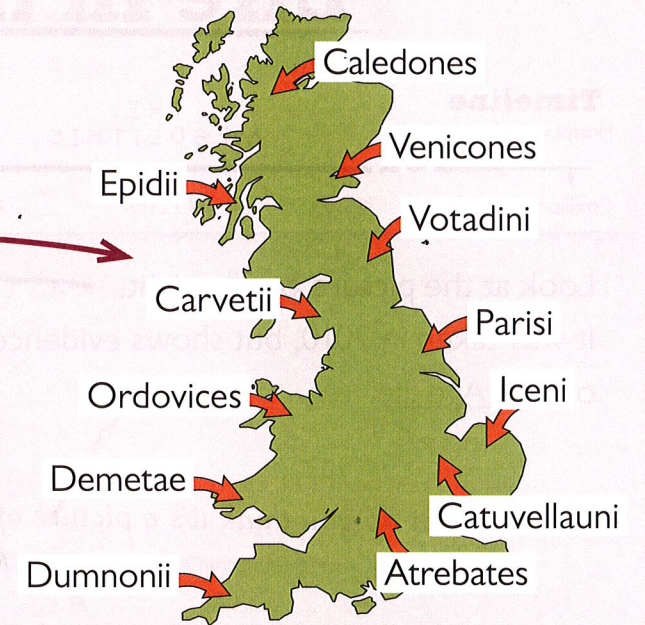
We still use steel to make lots of things today...



*The greenish tool is a bronze axe head. The next tool along is an iron axe head. Then there's a knife with a bone handle, a bone needle and awl, and a pair of iron shears.

The Celtic tribes

Iron Age people are often called **Celts**. The Celts were made up of a number of different tribes — they weren't just one group of people. This map shows the areas where some of the Celtic tribes lived.



There were also Celtic tribes in mainland Europe. The Gauls were Celts who lived in an area that included what we now call France.

A Celtic home

Look at this picture showing family life in the Iron Age.

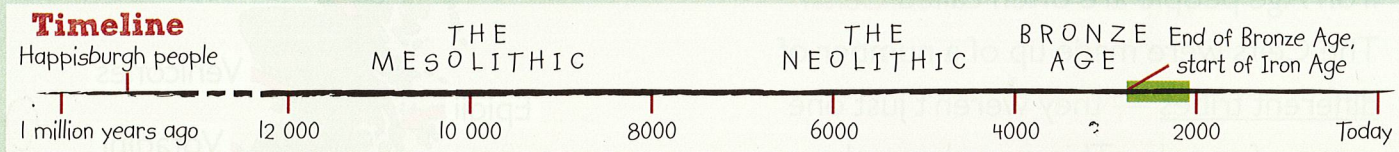
*What can you see people doing in the picture?
What things did this Celtic family own?*



Here today, gone tomorrow...

We've found evidence of iron in Britain from about 2700 years ago. Iron gradually rusts away when it comes into contact with air and water, so there could have been iron in Britain earlier than this — either we haven't found it yet, or it's rusted away.

Life in the Iron Age



Look at the picture on the right. It was taken in 2010, but shows evidence of Iron Age life.

What do you think it's a picture of?



Evidence in the hills

The picture above shows the site of an Iron Age **hillfort**. It's the remains of **Danebury Hillfort**, in Hampshire. The picture was taken from the air, so you're looking down on the fort from above. Danebury Hillfort has given archaeologists lots of information about life in the Iron Age — they've spent decades studying it.

This picture shows what life might have been like inside Danebury Hillfort in the Iron Age.

What do you think life was like inside the fort?

How do you think people spent their time?

Disturbing the peace

These skulls were found at Danebury. They are all damaged. Archaeologists also found burial pits, where many bodies had been thrown in at once.

What do you think this evidence shows?

Archaeologists think that the skulls were damaged during fighting. The injuries could have been caused by spears, or other weapons.

Burial pits are sometimes used when lots of people die at the same time, like after fighting or during war. There's often no time or space to bury them separately.

So the damaged skulls and the burial pits could be evidence that there was fighting at the hillfort. Archaeologists think that life in the Iron Age was quite unsettled, and that fighting was common.

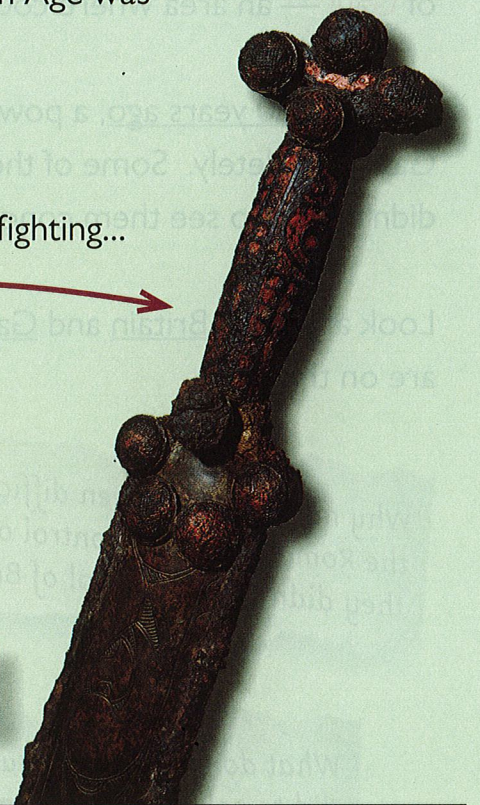
Artists and craftsmen?

Let's see what Iron Age people were like when they weren't fighting...

Look at this sword handle found from the Iron Age. The handle is made of 37 different pieces of bronze, iron, horn and glass.

What can you tell about the skills Iron Age people had by looking at this sword handle?

How do you think they would have made a sword like this?



Danebury Hillfort – a treasure trove of evidence

Lots of Iron Age hillforts have been found in Britain, but Danebury has given us some of the best evidence of life in the Iron Age. It was sometimes peaceful, sometimes violent, travel and trade continued, and people carried on learning new skills and making new things. But something was about to happen that would change life in Britain forever...

