

Stone Age to the Iron Age

15,000 - 10,000 BC
The Lascaux Cave in France are thought to contain some of the oldest cave paintings. The paintings (and engravings) mainly depict animals but no one is sure of the original purpose behind them. They may have been: part of religious rituals; representations of everyday life; used to mark or record the passing of time, or as some sort of calendar; part of superstitious behaviour relating to hoping for a good hunt.

15,000 - 10,000 BC
Animal hide is used to make tents. An example from this period has been found in France.

4,500 - 3,500 BC
People begin to make simple pottery and farming starts to spread.

3,750 BC
Woolly mammoths start to die out. Until their extinction woolly mammoths were hunted by early humans for their meat and warm pelts.

2,800 - 1,800 BC
'Bell Beaker Culture' arrives in Britain. Sometimes shortened to 'Beaker Culture' these were a group of immigrants named for their distinctive decorative pottery. The pottery had bands filled with impressions made from a comb or cord.

2,500 - 1,500 BC
Bronze axes are developed which leads to advances in woodworking techniques.

2,500 - 800 BC
Metalwork becomes increasingly sophisticated consisting mainly of axes, daggers and spearheads.

8,200 BC
The last 'land bridge' from Lincolnshire and East Anglia to Holland is taken over by salt marsh, eventually, by around 6,000BC it disappears altogether and is taken over by sea water. This water is a result of the great ice sheets from the last ice age thawing.

4,000 - 3,000 BC
People start to domesticate and ride horses. Before this, people could only travel by foot.

3,500 - 3,350 BC
The earliest well-dated image of a wheeled vehicle (a wagon) dates from this period. It was discovered on a clay pot found in Poland.

3,000 BC
Construction starts on Stone Henge in Wiltshire. It will take around 1,000 years for it to be finished. The purpose of the site is a mystery, however, evidence of cremations seem to indicate it was used as a burial ground from time to time. It is also thought to be a ceremonial site, where services marked the passing of time, seasons as well as cycles of life and death. The average weight per stone is 25 tonnes (that is around the weight of 25 elephants). The stones originated in the Preseli Hills in south-west Wales, but historians are yet to agree how they transported the stones to the site of Stone Henge.

1,800 BC
First large copper mines are dug. Two of the best know are at Mount Gabriel in County Cork and Great Orme, North Wales.

1,200-800 BC
Celtic culture and tribal kingdoms start to emerge. Use of metal work increases, major innovations were small axes and leaf-shaped blades.

700 - 500 BC
Iron working technology becomes widespread through England, Scotland and Wales. A wide range of tools and weapons have been found - many of the saws, chisels and other carpentry tools are very similar to the ones we use today!
Small farms and networks of fields start to develop. Evidence has been found of people farming cattle, sheep and pigs as well as the processing of wheat, barley and oats.

500 - 100 BC
Many parts of Britain are dominated by hill forts. Some were very large with complex changes to the landscape and entrances. One example of this is Maiden Castle, Dorset.

330 BC
First written record of the British Isles by a Greek merchant and explorer. He described the inhabitants as skilled wheat farmers, usually peaceable but formidable in war when they used horse-draw chariots.

100BC
Coins are made for the first time. By 20BC silver and bronze are being used in the south east of England.

AD 43
Emperor Claudius sends the Roman army to Britain, they land at Richborough, Kent.

800BC
First hill forts are constructed. Hill forts were defended settlements that made use of natural rises in the landscape for defensive advantage.

200 BC
Earliest known reference to Druids. A druid was a member of the priestly people amongst the Celts. Very little is known about them as they left no account of themselves. The only evidence is a few descriptions left by explorers, artists and authors.

54 BC
In 55BC Julius Caesar raids south east England on what is thought to be a reconnaissance trip. In 54BC he returns with 5 legions (about 25,000 men). War waged until a rebellion in Gaul (a region of Western Europe) forced him to withdraw, never to return. He reported that the Britons dyed their bodies with woad (this gave a bluish colour) and are shaved except for the upper lip.

Houses

Stone Age

Palaeolithic era

Mesolithic era

Neolithic era

Bronze Age

Iron Age

Stone Age Tools

Good tools were the difference between living and dying in the Stone Age. A good tool meant that you could hunt successfully. The meat and skin could clothe and feed your family. Weapons changed; spears, axes, bows and arrows were developed to make hunting quicker and better.

