

Stone Age to the Iron Age



About this period

This period of prehistory in Britain generally refers to the time before written records began. It begins when the earliest hunter-gatherers came to Britain from Europe around 450,000 BC and ends with the invasion of the Romans in AD 43.

With no written sources, what we know about this period comes mostly from artefacts and monuments that archaeologists have discovered. What we do know is that the period from the Stone Age to the Iron Age was one of immense change in human development, spanning from the early hunter-gatherers who roamed the countryside to the highly sophisticated and organised groups of the late Iron Age. We generally break this period into the following historical divisions: the Stone Age, the Bronze Age and the Iron Age.

Big Questions

What were the greatest achievements of the prehistoric people?

What does the stone age village Skara Brae tell us about life in the Neolithic period?

What challenges were faced by early humans compared to today?

Prominent Landmarks

Stonehenge

Stonehenge is a famous prehistoric monument in southern England, built at the end of the Stone Age and into the **Bronze** Age. Originally, it was just an **earthwork** and up to 150 people were buried there. The huge stones that we see were added in different stages. Some were brought from 240 miles away in Wales.



Skara Brae

Skara Brae was discovered after a storm in AD 1850 removed the earth that had been covering it. It is a village of eight houses, linked by covered passageways. Not all of the houses were built at the same time. The later ones are slightly bigger but they have very similar features, such as a central firepit and stone shelves. The village tells us a lot about life in the late Stone Age, including what people ate and what sort of tools they used.



Key Vocabulary



Archaeology - The science of studying things from the past and piecing parts of history together from the evidence found.

Bronze - a hard water-resistant alloy consisting of copper and smaller proportions of tin

Celt - A modern term for the people living in Europe during the Iron Age.

Extinction - When an entire species of animal or plant disappears or dies.

Henge - A circular monument made of wood or stone.

Hillfort - A large roundhouse that would have housed many people in the Bronze and Iron Age.

Hunter-gatherer - A person who survives by hunting wild animals and gathering food from plants.

Iron - a ductile, malleable, silver-white metallic element

Mesolithic - Refers to the middle part of the Stone Age, between the Paleolithic and Neolithic. It began around 12,000 years ago and farming began in this period.

Neolithic - Also known as 'the new stone age'. This period began about 10,000 years ago.

Palaeolithic - The Old Stone Age, this period began 2 million years ago when the first tools were made.

Prehistoric - Relating to the period before written records.

Tribe - A group of people that live together and live a common way of life. They also share the same language.

TIMELINE

STONE AGE

15000-10000BC
Animal hide used to make tents.
4000-3000 BC
People start to ride horses.
4500-3500BC
People begin to make simple pottery and farming begins to spread.
3000BC
constructions begins on Stone Henge.

BRONZE AGE

2500 – 1500BC
Bronze weapons are developed.
1800BC
The first large copper mines are dug.
1200-800BC
Celtic culture and tribal kingdoms begin to emerge.

IRON AGE

800-700BC
First hillforts are constructed.
700-500BC
Iron working technology becomes widespread.
330BC
The first written record of the British Isles.
100BC
Coins are made
AD43
Romans invade Britain.