

# Topic Knowledge Organiser: Prehistoric Britain

## Key Questions:

How long ago did prehistoric man live?

What does Skara Brae tell us about life in the Stone Age?

Who was this Bronze Age man?

What was the impact of bronze in prehistoric Britain?

How did trade change lives in Iron Age Britain?

What changed between the Stone Age and the Iron Age?



## Key Time Periods in Britain

Palaeolithic Stone Age	The early Stone Age: 900,000 years ago - 10,000 BC
Mesolithic Stone Age	The middle Stone Age: 10,000 - 4,500 BC
Neolithic Stone age	The new Stone Age: 4,500 - 2,400 BC
Bronze Age	Bronze is discovered: 2,400-800 BC
Iron Age	Iron is discovered: 800 BC - 43 AD

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## Key Vocabulary

AD (Anno Domini)	The Latin for 'in the Year of the Lord,' a term used to date the years after Jesus was born.
age	A long period characterised by significant events, including the development of tools and weapons.
BC	A term used to date the years before Jesus was born.
barter	To exchange goods without using money.
date	The day, month or year.
evidence	Information selected to support a belief or argument.
export	Bartering with or selling goods to people in another country.
historian	Someone who studies or writes about history.
import	Bartering with or buying goods from people to another country.
prehistory	The period of time before written records.
primary source	An object or record created at the time of an event or period.
reconstruction	A secondary source that recreates how a place or object might have looked.
secondary source	An object or record created after an event or period.
settlement	A place where people live together as a community.
trade	The buying selling and exchanging of objects and work.



# Stone Age to the Iron Age

## 15000 - 10000 BC

The Lascaux Caves 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, some sort of calendar or part of superstitious behaviour relating to hoping for a good hunt.

## 15000 - 10000 BC

Animal hide is used to make tents. An example from this period has been found in France.



## 4500 - 3500 BC

People begin to make simple pottery and farming begins to spread.

## 3000 BC

Construction starts on Stonehenge in Wiltshire. It will take around 1000 years for it to be finished. The purpose of the site is a mystery, however, evidence of cremations seem to indicate that 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 and cycles of life and death. The average weight per stone is 25 tonnes (that is around the weight of 25 elephants!). The stones originated from the Preseli Hills in South West Wales, but historians are yet to agree on how they transported the stones to the site of Stonehenge.



## 8200 BC

The last 'land bridge' from Lincolnshire and East Anglia to Holland is taken over by salt marsh and eventually, by 6000 BC, 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.

## 4000 - 3000 BC

People start to domesticate and ride horses. Before this, people could only travel by foot.

## 3500 - 3350 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.

## 2500 - 1500 BC

Bronze axes are developed which leads to advances in woodworking techniques.

## 2800 - 1800 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.



## AD 43

Emperor Claudius sends the Roman army to Britain. They land at Richborough, Kent.

## 100 BC

Coins are made for the first time. By 20 BC, silver and bronze are being used in the South East of England.



## 330 BC

The 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 where they used horse-drawn chariots.

## 800 BC

The first hillforts are constructed. Hillforts were defended settlements that made use of natural rises in the landscape for defensive advantages.



## 54 BC

In 55 BC, Julius Caesar raids South East England on what is thought to be a reconnaissance trip. In 54 BC, 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 wood (this gave a bluish colour) and are shaved everywhere except for the upper lip.



## 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.



## 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 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.

## 1200 - 800 BC

Celtic culture and tribal kingdoms start to emerge and the use of metal work increases. Major innovations were small axes and leaf-shaped blades.



## 1800 BC

The first large copper mines are dug. Two of the best known are at Mount Gabriel in County Cork and Great Orme, North Wales.



## Useful Links:

- <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/topics/z82hsbk>
- <https://apps.museumoflondon.org.uk/interactives/Stone-Age-to-Iron-Age-Explorer/>