



How did life change in Britain during the Bronze and Iron Age?

Very Important Vocabulary

Bronze Age: A historical period from around 2300 BC to 800 BC when people used bronze to make tools and weapons.

Iron Age: A historical period from around 800 BC to AD 43, people used iron to make stronger, more effective tools and weapons.

Bronze: A metal made from copper and tin, used to create tools and weapons during the Bronze Age.

Iron: A stronger metal used to make tools and weapons during the Iron Age.

Tools: An object used to help perform a task, such as plows for farming or swords for defense.

Plough: A farming tool used to turn over soil to prepare it for planting crops.

Crops: Plants grown and harvested for food, such as wheat, barley, and oats.

Settlement: A community where people live, like a village or town.

Hillfort: A type of fortified settlement with strong defenses, built on a hill, common in the Iron Age.

Trade: The exchange of goods and services between people or communities.

The Bronze Age

This time period is called the Bronze Age because people started using bronze to make things like: tools, weapons and jewellery. People lived in small villages with roundhouses made from wood, mud, and thatch (straw roofs). They began to farm more, growing crops like wheat and barley, and raising animals like cows, sheep, and pigs. Communities started to make more things by hand, like pottery (clay pots) and woven clothes. They also traded with other groups, exchanging bronze tools, food, and other goods.

The Iron Age

This time period is called the Iron Age because people learned how to make tools and weapons from iron. Iron is stronger than bronze, allowing it to make better tools and weapons. People still lived in roundhouses but their villages became bigger and some were built on hilltops called hillforts. These hillforts had strong walls to protect against enemies. Farming improved even more with new iron tools like ploughs, which made it easier to grow crops. Iron Age people were skilled at making things. They made jewellery, weapons, and tools from iron and other materials. Trade continued, and they often traded goods like iron tools, pottery, and food with other groups, sometimes from far away.

Bronze Age Settlements

During the Bronze Age, people mostly lived in small villages near the land they farmed. As the climate became wetter, they moved their homes from hills into valleys. They lived in roundhouses with thatched or turf roofs, supported by wooden poles, and with walls made from woven branches covered in mud, called wattle and daub. The central hearth, or fireplace, was crucial for heat, light, and cooking. An example of a Bronze Age site is Must Farm, where these roundhouses have been discovered.

Iron Age Settlements

During the Iron Age, people who are sometimes called Celts built strong roundhouses to live in. These houses had timber frames, thatched roofs, and walls made from woven branches and mud, just like Bronze Age houses. Many of these homes were located in hillforts, which helped protect them from attacks. The central fire in the home was always burning, with smoke escaping through the roof. Some Iron Age houses had small clay ovens for baking bread, and there were also special houses called crannogs, built on stilts over water, making them hard for enemies to reach.

Bronze Age Roles: Farmers, metal workers (bronze smiths), potters, traders, warriors, religious leaders/shamans

Iron Age Roles: Farmers, blacksmiths, hillfort builders, warriors, traders, artisans, community leaders/chiefdoms.

Why was trade important?

People could get things they do not have, they were able to share ideas and they were able to make friends and form alliances.

What goods were traded?

In the Bronze Age: Metals, bronze artefacts, amber, pottery, textiles, salt

In the Iron Age: weapons, ingots, grain and agricultural produce, livestock, pottery, luxury items, textiles, salt, ceramics

What was the impact of trade?

Facilitated economic exchanges, helped spread ideas, technology and practices across regions, gold and amber ornaments were symbols of status and power, influencing social hierarchies.

