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Knowledge organiser

# Tribal Tales

## Prehistoric life

Millions of years before the first humans appeared, dinosaurs walked the Earth. Humans first arrived in Britain at least 900,000 years ago, a long time after the dinosaurs had died. Prehistoric time, or prehistory, is the time before there were written records. Human prehistory begins with humans appearing and ends when written records were first kept at the time of the Roman invasion in AD 43. As there are no records from before that time, people use artefacts and cave art, as well as buildings and burial sites, to discover more about how prehistoric people lived. Prehistory is divided into three main periods: the Stone, Bronze and Iron Ages, which are named after the main materials used at each time.



## Stone Age (450,000–2300 BC)

**The Palaeolithic 450,000–10,000 BC**

Early humans living in the Palaeolithic time used tools made from wood and bone. They also started using flaky stones, such as flint, to make sharp tools and spear tips. They lived a nomadic lifestyle, meaning they moved from place to place, hunting and gathering food. Many great mammals, such as woolly mammoths and sabre-toothed cats, walked the Earth at this time. People lived in caves or makeshift wooden huts for a short time. Towards the end of this time, people started to live in one place. A lot of the land was covered in ice at this time.



**The Mesolithic 10,000–4500 BC**

During the Mesolithic time, the ice began to melt, and the weather became warmer. Larger, flatter tools were made, such as harpoons. People also started making small arrow points called microliths. Fishing became easier as nets, boats, and canoes were constructed. People began to live in one place for longer periods.



**The Neolithic 4500–2300 BC**

In the Neolithic period, farming and keeping animals became part of life, so people stayed in one place for much of the time. They began to polish and grind hard rocks to make blades for farming. They lived in small tribes or family groups in round, mud-brick houses, sleeping on animal furs or mats on the ground. People started to build burial mounds for their dead and other ceremonial monuments.



## Bronze Age (2300–700 BC)

People started to make tools and weapons from bronze. Bronze was a harder and more durable metal than had been created before. It was used to make daggers, swords and spearheads, as well as chariots and armour. Gold was also used to create jewellery and luxury items. Most people lived in villages or on farms. As farms expanded, communities began to compete for space, leading to fights. Bronze Age villagers lived in roundhouses with a central fireplace and a roof of animal skins or thatch. They started to build fences around their villages to keep out enemies.



## Iron Age (700 BC–AD 43)

People began using iron to make weapons and tools. Iron was cheaper, stronger and lighter than bronze. During this time, many Celtic people from Europe settled in Britain. People now lived in tribes and fought against each other for land and goods. Hill forts were built for defence. People lived inside the forts and warriors defended them against enemy attack. Towards the end of the Iron Age, some larger fortified towns appeared. The Iron Age ended in AD 43 when the Romans invaded and settled in Britain.



Iron Age hill fort discovered by archaeologists

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## Lindow Man

Lindow Man is the preserved body of an Iron Age man discovered in a peat bog at Lindow Moss in Cheshire, England in 1984. It is thought that Lindow Man was a healthy male in his mid-20s. He may have been of high status as his body showed little sign of having done heavy or rough work. Historians do not know how he died, but he may have been killed. Several other prehistoric bodies have been found preserved in peat. Lindow Woman was found nearby the year before. She is believed to have lived about 2000 years ago.



## Prehistoric burial

In the Neolithic period, dead people were buried in graves, or burial mounds called long barrows. These were made of earth, with wood or stone. Bronze Age burials used small, round mounds of earth called round barrows. Sometimes, treasures such as beads, weapons or jewellery were buried with the dead, showing their position in society. Later in the Bronze Age, people stopped burying their dead and cremated bodies instead, putting the ashes in special pots called urns, which were then placed in burial mounds.



West Kennet Long Barrow, Wiltshire

## Stonehenge

Stonehenge is a prehistoric monument in Wiltshire, England, which was built about 3500 years ago. It is made up of standing stones and huge, stone arches. A circular ditch and bank around the stones were built about 5000 years ago.

Nobody knows how or why Stonehenge was built. The stones came from different locations and would have been very difficult to move. Some historians think it was an ancient burial ground or memorial to remember the dead. Many historians now believe it was a prehistoric temple that might have been used to track how the Sun appeared to move across the sky. Stonehenge is now one of the best-known prehistoric monuments in Europe and is visited by over one million people every year. Many people gather at Stonehenge to celebrate the yearly summer and winter solstice, the longest and shortest days of the year in the United Kingdom.



## Archaeology

Archaeology is the study of human history and prehistory. Over time, objects left behind by ancient people become buried. These objects are studied by carefully digging them up and using clues to find out about how people lived a long time ago. Historical sites are often identified from above, using aerial photographs. Ruins of buildings may also be visible or shown on old maps. Archaeologists record exactly where each object was found and how deep it was buried. Then, they try to identify what they are made from and how they would have been used.

## Glossary

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| **archaeologist** | A person who studies human history and prehistory through the excavation of sites and analysis of artefacts. |
| **archaeology** | The study of buildings, graves, tools and other artefacts from the past to learn about the people who lived at that time. |
| **artefact** | An object, such as a tool or decoration, which is of historical interest. |
| **barrow** | An ancient burial mound. |
| **cremate** | To burn a dead person's body, usually as part of a funeral ceremony. |
| **flint** | A hard, grey rock that was used in prehistoric times to make tools or weapons. |
| **fortified** | A town that has strong walls and can be defended against enemies. |
| **harpoon** | A spear that is attached to a long rope and thrown at large fish or whales to kill them. |
| **monument** | A statue, building or other structure that is built to help people remember a special person or event. |
| **peat** | A dark brown, soil-like substance that forms from dead and decaying plant material. |
| **prehistory** | The time before written records. |
| **tribe** | A group of people, often made up of many families who live together. |

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