The British Museum

# Prehistoric Britain

Bronze boars from the Hounslow Hoard
1st century BC-1st century AD
Hounslow, Middlesex, England

## Visit resource for teachers
## Key Stage 2

# Contents

# Before your visit

# Background information

## Prehistoric Britain

Archaeologists and historians use the term ‘Prehistory’ to refer to a time in a people’s history before they used a written language. In Britain the term Prehistory refers to the period before Britain became part of the Roman empire in AD 43. The prehistoric period in Britain lasted for hundreds of thousands of years and this long period of time is usually divided into: Palaeolithic, Mesolithic, Neolithic (sometimes these three periods are combined and called the Stone Age), Bronze Age and Iron Age. Each of these periods might also be sub-divided into early, middle and late. The Palaeolithic is often divided into lower, middle and upper.

## Early Britain

British Isles: Humans probably first arrived in Britain around 800,000 BC. These early inhabitants had to cope with extreme environmental changes and they left Britain at least seven times when conditions became too bad. Continual human occupation probably began about 10,000 BC as humans returned to Britain following a very cold period.

Scotland: During the Ice Ages Scotland was almost permanently covered by a thick layer of ice making it uninhabitable for early humans. When the climate cooled and glaciers covered the whole of Scotland the region became uninhabitable. When the ice melted and the climate improved, Mesolithic hunter-gatherers moved into southern Scotland around 14,000 BC and an early settlement near Edinburgh dates from around 8500 BC.

Wales: The earliest known human remains in Wales date from a mild spell around 220,000 BC. However, settlement in Wales was intermittent. Changing temperatures led to ice advancing and retreating and humans appear to have abandoned Wales for long periods until the start of continuous settlement from about 10,000 BC.

Ireland: Around 37000 BC Ireland was separated from Britain by rising sea levels. Human settlement in Ireland began around 8000 BC as the climate warmed following the last Ice Age. Inhabitants arrived from Britain and continental Europe. Few traces of these early hunter-gatherers remain. During the Neolithic the population increased and stone monuments such as Newgrange were built.

## Palaeolithic Britain

Around 800,000 years ago Britain was joined to continental Europe by a wide land bridge allowing humans to move around the whole region. Animal bones and flint tools found in East Anglia show that humans (*Homo antecessor*) were present in Britain at this time alongside animals such as the mammoth. A human leg bone and flint tools from Boxgrove in Sussex show the arrival of a new human species called *Homo heidelbergensis* around 500,000 years ago. These early people made flint tools called handaxes and hunted large animals such as rhinoceros.

The extreme cold of the Ice Ages in Britain probably forced humans to leave when living conditions became impossible, but they returned during warmer periods. A final Ice Age covered Britain around 70,000 to 12,000 BC. The landscape during the Ice Ages was treeless tundra with glaciers covering northern and sometimes southern Britain. During warmer spells there would be an expansion of birch trees, shrub and grasses and eventually oak woodland.

There is evidence of Neanderthal humans living in Britain from around 60,000 BC. By 40,000 BC modern humans (*Homo sapiens*) were spreading across Europe soon reaching Britain. It is not known exactly when Neanderthals died out but there may have been a period when Neanderthals and modern humans both lived in Britain. The cave burial of the ‘Red Lady of Paviland’ (Wales) is a modern human and dates from about 30,000 BC. ‘She’ is actually a man and is one of the first burials to have grave goods.

Modern humans in Britain produced flint tools and used bone, antler, shell, amber, animal teeth and mammoth ivory for tools and jewellery. Flint tools are found in areas of limited flint resources, suggesting that people moved over wide areas carrying flint tools with them and it is possible that groups travelled to meet and exchange goods. The main food species were wild horse and red deer. Artistic expression occurred through engraved bone and cave art such as that found at Creswell Crags. By 10,500 BC as the ice retreated for the last time the climate got warmer and dryer, and woodlands expanded. Tools involved smaller flints. Known sites from this period include open air sites such as Hengistbury Head which was first occupied around 10,000 BC.

## Mesolithic Britain

As the Ice Age finally ended around 10,500 BC temperatures rose. Rising sea levels, caused by the melting ice, cut Britain off from continental Europe for the last time around 6500 BC. The warmer climate encouraged pine, birch, and alder forests to grow. As the large herds of reindeer and wild horses declined, they were replaced in people's diets by red deer, roe deer and wild boar while the wetland created by the warmer weather provided fish and wild birds. These food sources required different hunting tools which now began to include barbs while tiny microliths were developed for fixing onto harpoons and spears. Woodworking tools such as adzes appear. This period is usually referred to as the Mesolithic and the term hunter-gather is often used to describe the human life-style.

Mesolithic people followed a complex pattern of seasonal occupation, or in some cases permanent occupation, with associated land and food source management where conditions allowed it. At Howick, in Northumberland, evidence of a large circular building dating to around 7600 BC suggests a permanent dwelling whilst Star Carr in Yorkshire seems to have been only seasonally occupied. Star Carr was occupied from around 8700 BC, for over 300 years. The main feature is a brushwood platform which stood on the edge of a lake. Nearby are a number of hearths. The site was visited by Mesolithic hunters chasing deer, elk and boars. Animal bones indicate that the site was occupied between spring and autumn. Tools such as flint scrapers for cleaning animal skins and worked bone and antler have been found, including 91 barbed points. A fragment of a wooden oar implies that the people built simple boats. Beads made from stone and amber suggest personal adornment. The top part of a stag skull, complete with antlers, has been found. The skull had two holes cut in it and may have been used as a hunting disguise or during a ritual activity. Human success in exploiting the natural environment led to the exhaustion of some natural resources.

Farming was introduced to Britain around 4,500 BC. Hunter-gather ways of life continued but the increasing range of material culture, such as pottery, leaf-shaped arrowheads and polished stone axes, and the control of local resources by individual groups would have caused it to be replaced by distinct territories occupied by different groups. A few Neolithic monuments overlie Mesolithic sites but little direct continuity can be seen. The climate, which had been warming since the later Mesolithic, continued to improve and the earlier pine forests were replaced with deciduous woodland.

## Neolithic Britain

Farming began in the Middle East, China, India and South East Asia about 10,000 years ago. As farming gradually spread, settled communities dependent on agriculture supplanted the hunter-gatherer lifestyle in many, but not all areas, and introduced new lifestyles referred to as Neolithic. Archaeologists think that farming arrived in Britain as the knowledge and resources needed to farm were introduced by Neolithic people migrating from continental Europe. Farming lead to a more settled way of life and forests were cleared to provide space for crops and animal herds. Native pigs were reared whilst sheep, goats and domesticated cattle were introduced to Britain as were wheat and barley.

The construction of the earliest earthwork sites began during the Early Neolithic (c. 4000 - 3300 BC) in the form of long barrows used for communal burial and the first causewayed enclosures. Evidence of growing human control of the environment is shown by the Sweet Track, a wooden track way built to cross the marshes of the Somerset Levels and dated to 3800 BC. Leaf-shaped arrowheads, round-based pottery types and large-scale polished axe production are common indicators of the period.

The Middle Neolithic (c. 3300 - 2900 BC) saw the development of cursus monuments close to earlier barrows, the building of impressive chamber tombs such as the Maeshowe types and the growth and abandonment of causewayed enclosures. The earliest stone circles and individual burials also appear.

Different pottery types such as Grooved Ware appear during the Late Neolithic (c. 2900 - 2200 BC) whilst new enclosures, called henges were built, along with stone rows. Stonehenge and Silbury Hill reached their peak. Flint mining at sites such as Cissbury and Grimes Graves began during the Neolithic period. The stone-built houses at Skara Brae on Orkney indicate the development of small settlements in Britain. The stone houses at Skara Brae in the Orkneys date to the Late Neolithic and are associated with users of Grooved Ware.

## Bronze Age Britain

Around 2400 BC a new set of beliefs and practices, known as the Beaker 'package', arrived in Britain via cross-channel connections with mainland Europe bringing new burial rites, people, objects and technology including the skill of copper and gold metal working. Initially items were made from copper, then from around 2200 BC bronze (which is harder than copper) was made by mixing copper with tin. Bronze gradually replaced stone as the main material for tools and by 2200 BC the period known as the Early Bronze Age had begun in the Britain. Tin was mined in south-west England and copper and gold were being sourced from Ireland and Wales. This changed after 1600 BC when metal from mainland Europe became increasingly important.

Early Bronze Age people buried their dead beneath earth mounds known as barrows, often with a beaker alongside the body. These barrows became more elaborate in size and shape up to about 1600 BC. The barrows were usually built near older stone, earth and timber monuments such as Stonehenge and Avebury to form ceremonial landscapes. Later in the period, cremation was adopted as a burial practice with cemeteries of urns containing cremated individuals. From about 1100 BC little evidence has been found to explain how the dead were buried though cremation appears to have continued.

From about 1500 BC round houses were built in Britain and their use continued into the Iron Age. Most round houses were built from local materials: wooden walls and a roof thatched with reeds or straw. Round houses usually contained one room, although some may have been partitioned internally. In larger houses, the roof space may have been floored over to be used as a loft. Most round houses had a fireplace at the centre for cooking, warmth and light. There were no windows and the doorway often pointed towards the east or southeast to let in the morning sun.

Large livestock holdings developed in the lowlands which lead to increasing forest clearance. From 1800 BC, field systems developed becoming more common by 1500BC. Settlements grew to include a greater variety of building types, sometimes enclosed by a ditch or fence. There is evidence for the emergence of social elites. A greater density of finds and settlements in some parts of Britain, which may relate to increased population. The appearance of swords and other weaponry (many of them deposited in rivers and other watery places) suggests a rise in conflict and war. Some of these objects may have been worn and deposited for show by social elites.

# Iron Age Britain

Around 800 BC iron working techniques reached Britain from mainland Europe. While bronze was still used for objects such as jewellery, iron was used for tools. In England and Wales, the Iron Age ended with the arrival of the Romans in AD 43. In Scotland and Ireland, Iron Age ways of life continued after this date, and for some people in other parts of Britain aspects of Iron Age ways of living may have carried on for a long time after the Roman conquest.

Iron Age Britain was essentially rural. Most people lived in small villages and farmsteads with communities run by an individual or small group. Most people lived in thatched roundhouses with wooden or wattle and daub walls, and a central fire. Iron axes and iron tipped ploughs made farming more efficient and agricultural production increased. Wheat, barley, beans and brassicas were grown in small fields. Timber was used for fuel and for building houses, carts, furniture and tools. Cattle provided milk and leather and were used to pull ploughs. Sheep provided milk, meat and wool. Chickens were introduced at the end of the Iron Age. Pigs were also kept, and sometimes eaten as part of special feasts.

Another form of community space was the hill fort. These began to be built in the late Bronze Age, around 1000 BC, but became much larger and more elaborate in the Iron Age. Hillforts can still be seen in the modern landscape, for example at Maiden Castle in Dorset. These may have been defensive or used for social and trading gatherings. Individual communities had contacts with each other and peoples in Western Europe. Internal trade and trade with continental Europe flourished during this period based on Britain's mineral resources. About 100 BC, iron bars began to be used as tokens of wealth and around 150 BC the use of coins developed within the elite of south-east Britain.

Religious belief and offerings to gods, spirits and ancestors were an important part of life. People did not build temples and few statues of Iron Age deities are preserved. Instead, gods were seen as being everywhere and religious offerings were made in the home, around farms and in the countryside, especially in watery places. Many decorated Iron Age weapons and other objects have been found in rivers, lakes and bogs including the Witham shield found near Lincoln and the Battersea shield found in the River Thames.

In most of Britain, funerals did not involve grave burial. Instead, human bones have been found on farms, hillforts and villages. Sometimes bones are found placed in pits or ditches, suggesting that when people died their body was laid out to rot away, leaving just the

bones. Some bones, probably those of special people, were then buried around settlements. However, in some parts of Iron Age Britain, people were buried in graves. In Cornwall, the dead were buried in stone lined graves and in East Yorkshire (c. 400-100 BC) the dead were buried in graves arranged in long cemeteries. Most people were buried with no or only a few objects, such as a simple pot or brooch, but in a small number of the Yorkshire graves, people were even buried with chariots. In south-east England (c. 100 BC until after AD 43) the dead were cremated.

By AD 1, south-east Britain was controlled by powerful rulers who had close contacts with the Roman Empire. Rulers such as Tincomarus (Tincommius), Tasciovanus and Cunobelinus are known from coins. They controlled areas of land from centres such as St Albans, Colchester, Chichester and Silchester.

## Early Roman Britain

Migration and trade between Britain and continental Europe was already well established by the time the Roman general Julius Caesar made two expeditions to Britain in 55 and 54 BC, as part of larger campaigns in Gaul (modern France). During these expeditions, the Romans did not conquer any territory, but instead invited the British people to pay tribute in return for peace, established client rulers and brought Britain more fully into Rome's sphere of influence. This might have included the construction of Roman style buildings, such as rectangular dwellings at Silchester in Hampshire.

In AD 43, a Roman invasion force landed in Britain and quickly took control of the south-east before heading north and west. Then in AD 61, while the Roman army was in Wales, Boudica, ruler of the Iceni people, provoked by Roman seizure of land and the brutal treatment of her family raised an army to fight the Romans. The Iceni, joined by the Trinovantes, destroyed the Roman settlements at Camulodunum (Colchester) Verulamium (St Albans) and London before the Roman army finally defeated the rebels in the Midlands.

Roman control of England and Wales was consolidated over a number of decades following this rebellion and Britain remained a province in the Roman empire until around AD 411.

# Prehistoric Britain time line

| | |
|---|---|
| c. 800,000 BC – 10,500 BC | **Palaeolithic**<br>This is the longest period in prehistory and is often divided up by archaeologists into the Lower, Middle and Upper Palaeolithic. It is also known as the Stone Age due to the fact that the majority of tools used by humans in this period were made from stone (often flint). During this period the climate in Britain changed radically several times with large areas of land covered with thick ice during the coldest periods known as the Ice Ages. There were warm periods in between and humans came and went depending on the climate. |
| c. 10,500 BC – 4000 BC | **Mesolithic**<br>This period of prehistory marked the end of the last Ice Age. Humans returned to Britain as the climate got warmer and followed a hunter-gatherer life style moving around the landscape to find the best sources of seasonal food. Stone continued to be the main material for making tools. Small pieces of flint (microliths) were set into wood to make spears and harpoons. |
| c. 4000 BC – 2400 BC | **Neolithic**<br>This is the period when farming was introduced to Britain. People moved from a hunter-gather lifestyle to a life-style based on farming domesticated animals and growing crops. Hunting and gathering continued – as it does today – with fishing and berry/fruit collecting. Stone continued to be the main material used to make tools though pottery began to appear especially pots for storing, cooking and eating food. |
| c. 2400 BC - 800 BC | **Bronze Age**<br>At the start of the Bronze Age copper started to be used as a material for making tools. This was quickly followed by bronze (an alloy of copper and tin) which is harder and better for making tools and household objects. Roundhouses began to be built and there is evidence for the emergence of social elites and armed conflict. |
| c.800 BC - AD 43 | **Iron Age**<br>During this period iron emerged as a key material for making tools. Farming productivity increased and the population grew. Regional groups of people – often known as tribes – emerged. In the late Iron Age, there was growing contact with the Roman empire which had extended to include Gaul (modern France). |
| AD 43 - c. AD 411 | **Roman Britain**<br>In AD 43 England and Wales became part of the Roman province of Britannia. Roman rule continued for the next 400 years after which the Anglo-Saxon period began in England. |

# Resources

## British Museum websites

## Teaching History in 100 Objects

Look for prehistoric objects among the 100 objects from museums across the UK chosen to support history teaching. All objects are supported with resources, information and teaching ideas.
http://teachinghistory100.org/

## Explore

Explore is an online database of over 5000 objects from the Museum's collections. To investigate prehistoric objects use the Explore option on the homepage
www.britishmuseum.org
Explore tours are available on the following prehistory topics: Daily life in Iron age Britain, People in Iron Age Britain, Religion and ritual in Iron Age Britain, War and art in Iron Age Britain, The Wetwang chariot burial.

## Portable Antiquities Scheme www.finds.org.uk

Find out about prehistoric finds from your local area using the PAS database.

## Books for adults

Cunliffe, B. *Britain Begins*, Oxford University Press, 2012.

## Books for children

Corbishley, M. *An Ancient Land: Prehistory-Vikings*, Young Oxford History, 2001.

# Gallery information

Rooms 51 and 50 display material from prehistoric Britain including the Palaeolithic, Mesolithic, Neolithic, Bronze Age and Iron Age periods.
Further information on these galleries can be found on the British Museum website at www.britishmuseum.org/explore/galleries/europe/room_51_europe_10,000-800_bc.aspx and
www.britishmuseum.org/explore/galleries/europe/room_50_britain_and_europe.aspx

## What is it like to visit this gallery?

Room 51 is a medium sized gallery. It contains material from the Palaeolithic, Mesolithic, Neolithic and Bronze Age periods of British prehistory. The gallery space forms part of a continuous run of upper floor galleries and gives access to Room 52 (Ancient Persia) and Room 50 (Britain and Europe). This means that there can be quite a high level of through traffic particularly in the centre of the gallery. The gallery contains freestanding cases. The gallery contains human remains.

Room 50 is a medium-sized gallery. It contains material from the Iron Age period of British prehistory. The gallery space forms part of a continuous run of upper floor galleries and gives access to Room 51 (Ancient Europe) and Room 49 (Roman Britain). This means that there can be quite a high level of through traffic particularly in the centre of the gallery. The gallery contains wall cases and free-standing cases. The gallery contains human remains.

Information on how the Museum holds and cares for human remains can be found at www.britishmuseum.org/about_us/management/human_remains.aspx

## Case numbers

Please note that case numbers are usually small, white and marked in the corner of the glass.

# Preliminary activities

You may find some of the following classroom activities useful in helping to prepare the students for their visit to the British prehistory galleries.

## General introductory activities

- Locate key geographical places associated with this period such as Happisburgh, Stonehenge, Grimes Graves and Skara Brae, Barclodiad y Gawres and Newgrange.

- Discuss sources of evidence for British prehistory. What evidence do we have from the archaeological record? What types of objects might survive and what types of things might not survive burial in the ground? Bury some different materials in soil and see what condition they are in after a week, a month, half a term.

- Look at prehistoric objects from Britain on Explore and follow the Explore online tours about Iron Age Britain.

## Activities to support gallery activities

- Discuss the role of personal adornment – functional, decorative, display of wealth/status. Confirm jewellery vocabulary – e.g. necklace, pendant, brooch, finger ring. Look at examples (real and in catalogues) of modern jewellery. What are they made from and what motifs (images, writing, patterns) are used to decorate them?

- Make a collection of unusual objects in the classroom and ask the students to say what they think they are and why. Emphasize that there may not be a wrong or right answer so it is important to explain how they decided what they thought the object was.

- Experiment with mark marking on a small slab of clay. What marks can be made in the clay using natural materials such as twigs, a feather, fingers, a piece of twine or a stone.

- Create abstract drawings using straight, curved, swirling and dotted lines. Experiment with different markers – pencil, charcoal, felt pen, chalk – to mark out the patterns.

- Discuss how people make collections of objects and why. For example, all your pens in a pencil case, all the plates in a cupboard, PE kit in a bag. Talk about how this keeps objects together so you know where they are, they are kept safe, new objects can be added etc. Introduce the term ‘hoard’.

# During your visit

# Gallery activities: introduction for teachers

The gallery activities are a set of activity sheets which can be used by students working in Rooms 51 and 50. The sheets can be used as stand-alone activities or you may wish to develop work around particular sheets as suggested in the before and after sections of this resource.

- Where case numbers are indicated on a sheet, these are usually to be found marked in white numbers on the glass at the corner of that particular case.

- You are welcome to select the activities which are most appropriate for the focus of your visit and adapt sheets to meet the needs of your students.

- Each activity is designed to support the students in looking at, and thinking about, objects on display in the gallery.

- Individual activity sheets may be undertaken by single students, in pairs or as a small group.

- Where space is provided for recording this may be undertaken by the student or an adult helper as is most appropriate for the students involved.

- Familiarise the students and accompanying adults with the chosen activity sheets at school before the day of the visit. Make sure students and adults know what they are to do and are familiar with the vocabulary used on the sheets or which they may encounter in the gallery.

# Gallery activities: briefing for adult helpers

## Gallery activity: Neolithic mystery objects (Room 51, Case 6)

- Archaeologists are not always sure exactly what some ancient objects were used for.
- This activity asks the students to suggest what an object was used for and explain their answer based on what it looks like, where it was found or what it is made from.

## Gallery activity: Looking good in the Neolithic (Room 51, Case 9)

- Neolithic people adorned different parts of their body with crafted jewellery.
- This activity asks the students to identify different types of jewellery (many of which are very similar to modern pieces) and think about the materials they are made from.

## Gallery activity: Neolithic farmers (Room 51, Case 10)

- Early farmers used tools to plant, harvest, process and store the cereal crops they grew.
- This activity asks students to find tools used by early farmers and think about how they were used e.g. a sickle helps the farmer to cut the crop when it is ready to harvest.

## Gallery activity: Bronze Age pot (Room 51, Case 11)

- Bronze Age pottery was decorated by inscribing patterns onto the clay before it was fired. Tools such as fingers, sticks and rope were pressed into the clay to leave a mark.
- This activity encourages the students to look at how pottery was decorated in the Bronze Age and use these to ‘decorate’ their own pot.

## Gallery activity: Iron Age design (Room 50)

- Design in Britain was influenced by ideas coming over from mainland Europe. Designs were mainly abstract using lines, shapes and inlay (e.g. glass, enamel or cut stones).
- This activity encourages the students to look at the ways in which lines and shapes were used to create decorative designs.

## Gallery activity: An Iron Age hoard (Room 50, Case 19)

- A hoard is a group of objects buried all together. This may be a way to keep the objects safe or may be a way for people to give the objects to the gods.
- This activity asks the students to look at the famous Snettisham hoard and identify the different types of metal objects which make up the hoard.

# Neolithic mystery objects

- Archaeologists do not always know exactly what some ancient objects were used for in the past.

- Go to Case 6 and look for the objects shown below. Nobody knows exactly how Neolithic people used these objects. Write what you think each object was used for and why in the box next to the picture of the object.

| Object | What do I think it was used for and why? |
|---|---|
|  | |
|  | |
|  | |

- When you have finished, choose another object in this case and read the label to see what archaeologists think it was used for. What do you think?

# Looking good in the Neolithic Room 51

- Neolithic people adorned different parts of their body with jewellery.
- Look at the jewellery in Case 9. Find an example of each of these types of jewellery. Tick the box as you find them and fill in what they are made from.

| | |
|---|---|
| ☐ | A bracelet made from ……..….. |
| ☐ | A necklace made from …….…….. |
| ☐ | A cloak pin made from……. |
| ☐ | A brooch made from……. |
| ☐ | An armlet made from…… |

- Now, choose one of the pieces of jewellery which you would like to wear. Draw it in the box below.

I have drawn a ……

- When you have finished, ask the others in the group to show you which object they choose. Ask them why this was their favourite piece.

# Neolithic farmers Room 51

- Early farms used tools to help them grow, harvest and use their crops.
- Look at the objects in Case 10 and find these tools. Draw them below in the correct box.

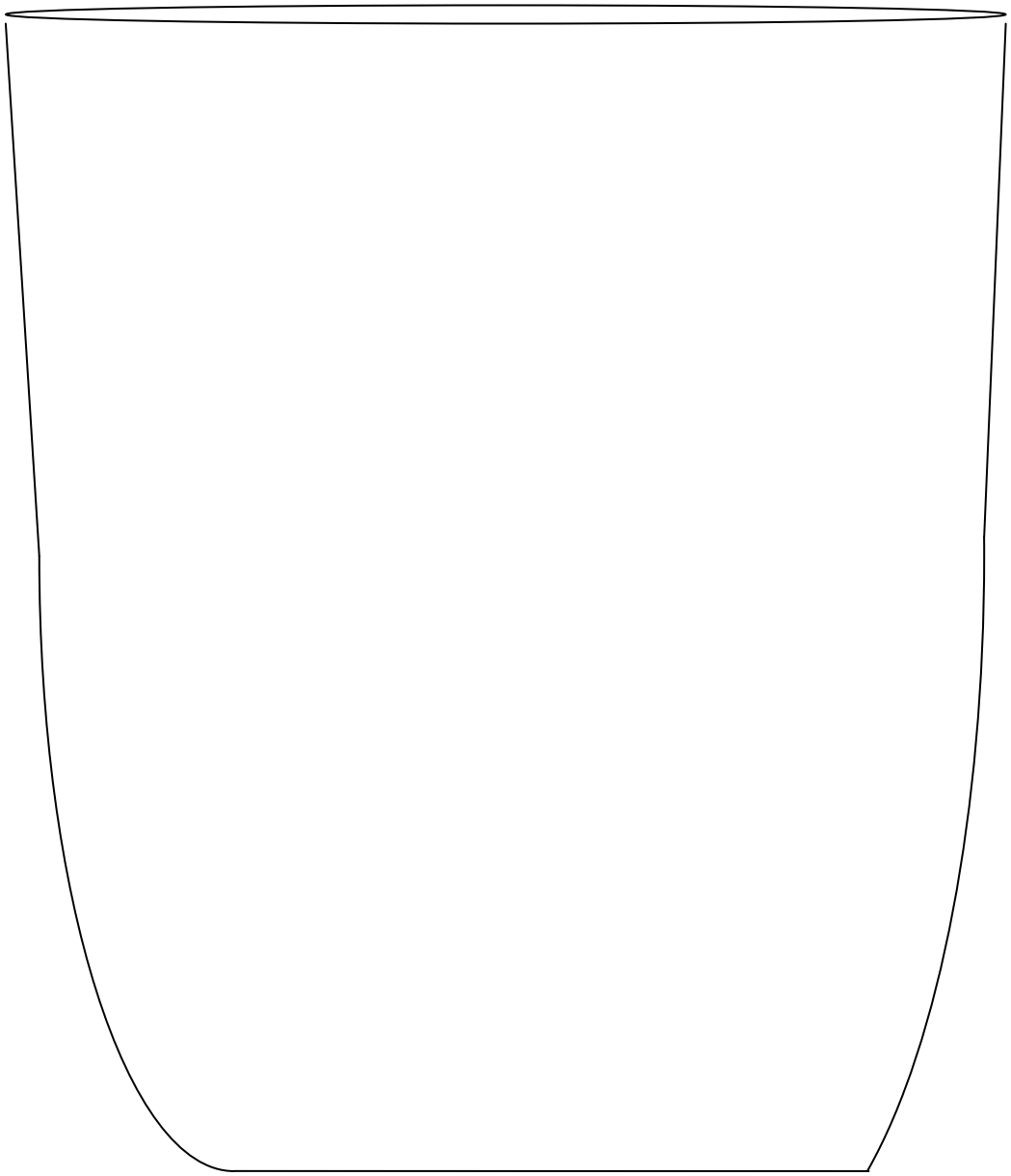
| | |
|---|---|
| animals | |
| yoke | |
| sickle | |
| rubbing stones | |
| storage jars | |

- When you have finished, discuss with your group what you think each of these items was used for by early farmers. What other tools does your group think early farmers might have needed to grow their crops?

# Bronze Age pot Room 51

- Bronze Age pottery was decorated by inscribing patterns onto the clay before it was fired. Tools such as fingers, sticks and rope were pressed into the clay to leave a mark.

- Look in at the pots in Case 11. Choose some of the patterns you can see to decorate your pot below.



- When you have finished, see if your group can suggest how the different patterns were made – with a finger nail, with a stick, with some rope, with something else?

# Iron Age design Room 50

- Iron Age objects were often decorated with patterns that used different types of lines and shapes.

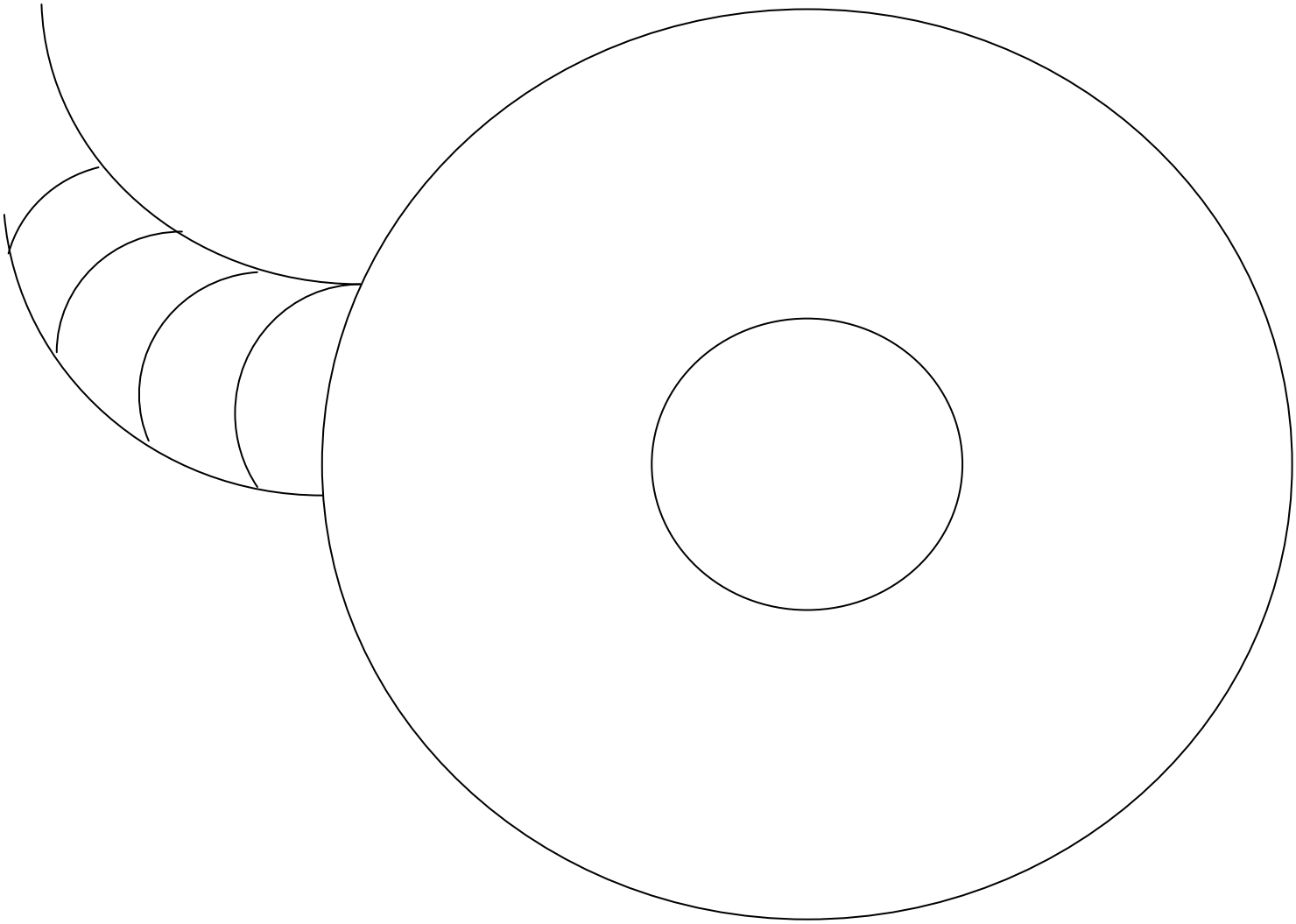
- Look at the objects in the gallery. Look at how the objects are decorated and draw examples of different designs in the boxes below.

| | |
|---|---|
| A pattern that uses straight lines. | A pattern that uses curved lines. |
| A pattern that uses dots. | A pattern that uses geometric shapes. |

- When you have finished, as a group, choose your favourite Iron Age object and discuss what patterns have been used to decorate it.

# An Iron Age hoard — Room 50

- A group of objects all buried together are called a ‘hoard’.
- Look for the hoard on display in Case 19.
- Find a: coin ☐ neck torc ☐ bracelet ☐
  finger ring ☐ ingot (lump of metal) ☐
- Now look at the terminals (ends) of the neck torcs. There are some more torcs in Case 20. Use these terminals to decorate your own terminal below.



- When you have finished, ask each person in your group which torc they would like to wear. How comfortable to you think it would be to wear?

# After your visit

# Follow up activities: introduction

These activities aim to encourage students to reflect on the work undertaken in Rooms 51 and 50 during their Museum visit.

- Some of the activities draw directly on the information gathered at the Museum while others encourage the students to draw on personal experience or undertake additional research in the classroom.

- Each activity includes a suggestion for classroom work and also an outcome which may be in the form of a written piece, drama presentation or artwork.

- You may also wish to look at some of the classroom activities available on the British Museum learning pages which relate to your visit.

## Follow up activity: Neolithic mystery objects

Curriculum links: history

- Create an ideas bank for each of the Neolithic objects using all the suggestions made by the students in the gallery about what they thought each object was and why. Are there common themes to the suggestions? What reasons have students given to support their thoughts?

- Organize the class into small groups and allocate each group a mystery object. Ask the group to decide what the object is and why. Each group then presents their thoughts to the rest of the class at a ‘mystery object classroom conference’. The other students can ask them questions and the class can decide how convinced they are by the arguments put forward by each group.

## Follow up activity: Looking good in the Neolithic

Curriculum links: history

- Using the drawings made by the students in the gallery, and examples from Explore on the British Museum website, create a chart comparing Neolithic and modern jewellery. What is the same and what is different?

- Ask the students what materials are used to make personal adornment nowadays. Encourage them to think about materials which might not survive in the archaeological record such as daisy chains or thread bracelets. Find examples of modern jewellery made from organic materials. What does this tell us about the evidence which has survived from the Neolithic period?

## Follow up activity: Neolithic farmers

Curriculum links: history, food technology

- Research the journey of wheat from field to food. Ask students to record each stage of the process such as the seeds being planted, harvesting and milling and the tools need at each stage. Students could compare Neolithic tools such as a handheld sickle with the combine-harvesters used on modern farms.

- Bring in some pestles and mortars and some wheat, barley or oat grains. Students can have a go grinding the grains and see how much flour they can make. How hard is it to grind grain by hand?

- Early bread was made in a similar fashion to modern flatbreads such as pitta and tortillas. Use a simple flatbread recipe to make bread. Students could create a Neolithic bread recipe card (free examples of recipe cards can be collected from supermarkets) or present a Neolithic ‘Ready, Steady, Bread’.

# Follow up activity: Bronze Age pot

Curriculum links: history, art and design, design technology

- Bronze Age clay pots were made by hand (the potter's wheel was not introduced to Britain until 1st century BC). Review the drawings made by the students in the gallery and discuss how they think the different decorations on the pot might have been made.

- Ask the students to investigate different ways of making marks in clay using sticks, string, small stones, fingernails and other tools. Each student could work on a small slab of air drying clay to create a 'trial-piece' showing the possible marks which can be achieved on the surface of damp clay with natural objects and the human hand.

- Students could each make a hand crafted Bronze Age pot and decorate their pot using some of these techniques. Small pots can be created as thumb pots while large pots can be created using the coil technique.

# Follow up activity: Iron Age design

Curriculum links: history, art and design

- Review the different designs collected by the students in the gallery. Look at some images of Iron Age objects on the whiteboard and ask students to explain how the object is decorated using descriptive vocabulary such as straight, curved, swirling, dot, circular.

- Ask students to experiment with a ruler and a drawing compass to create abstract geometric designs.

- Divide the class into small groups and provide each group with a large sheet of paper on which they need to draw the outline of an Iron Age object (based on examples found on Explore). Ask each group to decorate their object with a design inspired by the designs they found in the gallery. This can also be done as an individual exercise.

# Follow up activity: An Iron Age hoard

Curriculum links: history, RE

- Archaeologists believe that hoards (a group of precious objects) were hidden for different reasons. Look at some other examples of hoards from prehistory on Explore. Good examples include the Salisbury Hoard, Winchester Hoard, Polden Hill Hoard and Milton Keynes Hoard. Since hoards occur in later British history the students could also look at the Ribchester Hoard, Hoxne Hoard, Cuerdale Hoard, Vale of York Hoard and the Fishpool Hoard.

- Review the range of objects found as part of the Snettisham Hoard. Ask the students why they think these objects were buried in the ground during the Iron Age.

- Explain that the Snettisham Hoard is most probably a gift for the Iron Age gods and goddesses. This type of hoard is known to archaeologists as a ‘votive offering’. Ask students why people would want to give a gift to the gods and what sort of gift would be most appropriate? Think about how people communicate with, and give gifts to their god, in modern religious practice.