

PUPIL'S BOOKLET

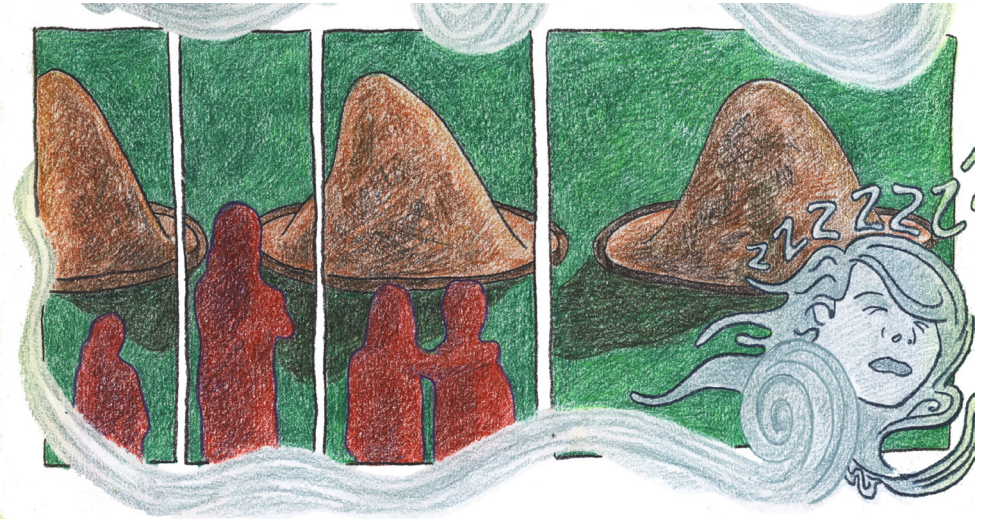
MANCHESTER
1824

The University of Manchester

FROM PREHISTORY TO
PRIMARY SCHOOLS

THE BRONZE AGE

METALWORKING ARRIVES IN BRITAIN



2400 - 800 CAL BC

For the first time **metals** and **metalworking** arrives in Britain and **round barrows** and **barrow cemeteries** are built for the dead.

WHERE PEOPLE LIVED



The Bronze Age can be divided into three phases: Early, Middle and Late. The Early phase was similar to the Late Neolithic with a patchwork of woodlands and clearances with settlements comprising a few small roundhouses. In the Middle Bronze Age climate got warmer and people began to spread to uplands (like the Pennines) and into low lying wetland areas (like the East Anglian Fens). People built bigger farmsteads, with bigger fields. But by the Late part of the Bronze Age the climate got worse - specifically, it got a lot rainier. This meant that communities were forced to abandon their upland and wetland homes. People gathered together in more fort-like hilltop enclosures, such as Mam Tor in the Peak District.

MESOLITHIC

NEOLITHIC



In the Early Bronze Age, people started to build a new type of monument called 'round barrows'. These were larger circular or oval mounds of earth that were built over a single grave. Over time, more people would be buried in the mound, and more barrows would be built, creating a group known as a 'barrow cemetery'. In the Middle Bronze Age, people living in wetland areas started building timber trackways that allowed them to move through the wetlands. One of the best preserved trackways is at Flag Fen in Cambridgeshire, and recent excavations at Must Farm, a site near Flag Fen, found amazing houses built over a river channel!

BRONZE AGE

IRON AGE

HOW PEOPLE LIVED

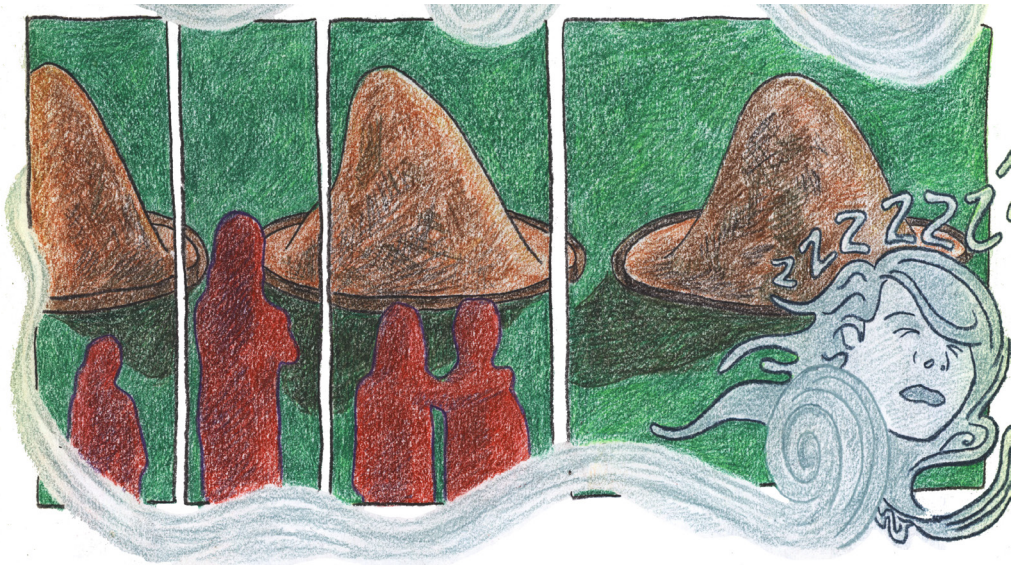


Bronze Age people farmed animals and crops, with people at the start of the period living in small farms and probably moving seasonally with their flocks of sheep and cows. As the climate got warmer in the Middle Bronze Age, conditions for farming improved and Bronze Age people built bigger farms, with field systems separated by walls and ditches. In this period the horse and plough were introduced to Britain helping communities to farm even larger areas of land. By the Late Bronze Age the worsening climate made living and farming conditions more difficult, and people might have started fighting for land and food. Settlements tended to be built on hilltops or enclosed by ditches, perhaps to provide protection from neighbouring communities.

MESOLITHIC

NEOLITHIC

During the Bronze Age, ancestors seem to have been very important to living communities. In the Early Bronze Age particular individuals were given rich burials within round barrows. Perhaps these people were leaders of their community? We know that groups would bury lots of their family in round barrows and barrow cemeteries over time, making them into a little monumental 'Family Tree'. In the Middle Bronze Age more people were cremated and buried within large cemeteries which suggests that the 'community' was now more important than Early Bronze Age 'leaders'.



BRONZE AGE

IRON AGE

BRONZE AGE TECHNOLOGY



Perhaps the most dramatic change in the Bronze Age is the arrival of metals into Britain for the first time. Metals, and the knowledge of how to make metal objects came from Europe. The first metal objects were made from copper, then bronze and gold following shortly afterwards. In the Early Bronze Age metal objects were probably used to show how powerful and important people were, rather than practical tools. Carrying a bronze axe, copper dagger or gold button would have shown how important you were! This new focus upon metalwork led to the creation of mines in areas rich in metal ores (such as the Great Orme in North Wales), and these were traded all across the country.

MESOLITHIC

NEOLITHIC

As well as using metal, people continued to use stone tools. The most famous stone tools from this period are the delicate but deadly barbed and tanged arrowheads. People also continued to use pottery, making new types including 'beakers' and 'collared urns'. Recent excavations at the site of Must Farm in Cambridgeshire have also found evidence of Bronze Age people using wood and plant materials to make things like fish traps; textiles; plates made and even a complete wooden wheel!

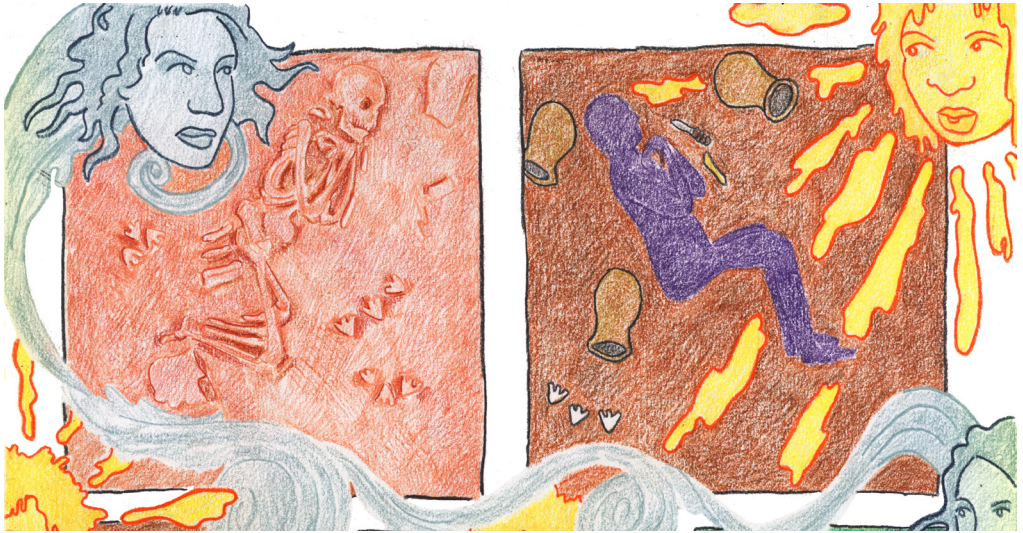


Bronze Age beakers and urn made by Juan Rivero

BRONZE AGE

IRON AGE

BRONZE AGE BELIEFS



In the Bronze Age people continued to believe the ancestors and family connections were very important, and they believed that some places were very important, perhaps because of their ancestral connections. In the Early Bronze Age people were buried under large round mounds of earth called round barrows, and later burials and cremations were added into the barrow mound over time. Barrows were built in groups showing a connection between all the people buried in the mounds - looking at a round barrow cemetery would be like looking at your family tree! Barrows were also usually placed in parts of the environment that would have made them very noticeable, like on hills and ridgelines, creating a visual link between communities, ancestors and the landscape.

MESOLITHIC

NEOLITHIC

In the Late Bronze Age people's beliefs focused on watery places as important. We know this because they often deliberately placed things that were important to them, like bronze spear heads and bent and broken swords, into watery sites. Archaeologists think that things like swords were bent and broken deliberately as a way of symbolically 'killing' or 'sacrificing' then before putting them into the water. This might have been a response to the worsening climate at the end of the Bronze Age. As the wetter conditions made it impossible to live and farm in some places, the materials deposited may have been gifts to gods, deities and spirits in an attempt to save their houses and lands.



BRONZE AGE

IRON AGE

GREAT ORME COPPER MINES

LLANDUDNO, NORTH WALES



Photograph: Copyright Alan Simkins / CC BY-SA 2.0

Uncovered in 1987, this is an internationally important site, and thought to be the largest prehistoric Bronze Age mine anywhere in the world. When you visit, have a look at how small some of the tunnels are, and think about how young some of these prehistoric miners (minors!) must have been.

Great Orme Copper Mines: 01492870447.

MESOLITHIC

NEOLITHIC

MAM TOR HILLTOP

ENCLOSURE

THE PEAK DISTRICT



Photograph: Copyright Rob Bendall (Highfields)

On the summit of Mam Tor sit the remains of a late Bronze Age fortified hilltop enclosure. During the Bronze Age, up to one hundred timber huts sat upon the site. Radiocarbon dating tells us that the huts were occupied in the later phase of the Bronze Age from around about 1200 cal BC. When you visit the site, think about what kind of circumstances would have made people choose to live in such a place, and don't forget to enjoy the fantastic views!

Mam Tor, Castleton, The Peak District, Derbyshire.

BRONZE AGE

IRON AGE

BRONZE AGE

3D PRINTED BARB AND TANG ARROWHEAD



Flint barbed and tanged arrowheads are a characteristic artefact from the Bronze Age. In your pack we have included a 3D printed example of one. If you look at the base of the arrowhead, you will see two notches. The section in the centre of the two notches is called the tang. The tang is designed to slot into the arrow shaft. The two sections on the outside of the notches are called the barbs. Barbs are designed to stop the arrow coming out once it has penetrated its target.