

Who were the people who built this fort?

Around 800BC people in Britain learned how to use iron. This meant that they could make tools for farming, utensils and also deadly iron weapons. We call this the beginning of the Iron Age and people lived in tribes led by warrior kings. The tribe who lived and built forts in this area was called the Durotriges and they built hill forts to keep safe from attacks and as trading points along the river Stour. They followed a Celtic way of life trading in hunting dogs, metal work, furs and lead. They celebrated with feasts, music and poetry.



Look down over the ramparts at the valley below and imagine trade and rival tribes coming to attack. Imagine someone of your own age standing here, what might they be feeling?

In 1920 archaeologist and artist Heywood Sumner drew the valley and described the scene: 'Dudsbury will be memorable for its spacious view across the lower reaches of the Stour Valley, seen over woodland growth that covers the precipitous foreground, below which the river

winds through meads dotted with feeding cattle. Herons stand motionless in the river shallows; kingfishers dart along the back-waters; sea gulls hover..

How is the scene different now, how does it make you feel today?

What might this valley look like in the future? What would you be pleased to see and what do you hope doesn't happen?

What did the fort look like?

Take a walk around the ramparts as far as you are able. You can see that it is quite a lot higher in places and it would have been much higher when it was built. It probably had a wooden palisade around the top and the entrance up from the river is where we go down to our woodland campfire circle. There has been quite a lot of erosion so you cannot get down to the river here any more.



Inside the fort people lived in round houses, they kept geese, goats and pigs and brought herds of cows and sheep inside the fort to keep them from danger. They grew crops and vegetables, ground corn, made things from wood and clay, smelt metal, spun and weaved fabrics, trained as warriors, traded up and down the river with people from other tribes and from far away lands such as modern day Italy and held religious ceremonies. From foot prints on other sites there is evidence that children were expected to watch, learn and train to take

responsibility for all these things from the moment they could walk.

Keeping heritage alive

Stop and use your senses to listen to echoes from the past tell you what they can see, what the sounds of everyday living were, the smell of the animals and what you might have been doing with your day 2000 years ago. Life changes fast, people didn't have televisions until the 1960s, there were no computer games at home and mobile phones didn't arrive until the 1990s. Social media didn't start until this century. It can be difficult to understand how people from previous generations used their time. Perhaps your parents have got a bit to say about the time young people spend looking at screens. How do you spend your day now? What might you be saying to your children when cracked phone screens, learning how to drive and problems with the wifi will be a thing of your generation and not theirs?

What did Iron Age people do?



Try some of the day to day skills people of your age would have learnt; use your own creativity just as others have done here in long lost years. Perhaps if you enjoy them you may go on to master them in the future and share and teach this heritage to others.

What were round houses?

Celts and previous generations lived together in family groups in these one roomed round houses.



Archaeologists know much of what they looked like from the evidence left by post holes and drainage marks left by water running off the roof.

Roundhouses are traditionally built with the doorway facing the south-west. This is believed to be something to do with the path the sun takes, to allow the inhabitants to know it is morning, but also so that the front of the house would receive the most warmth from the sun, when the women would often be outside working – weaving, dyeing wools etc. Ours isn't quite accurate as we would

have been facing in to buildings.

The Roundhouse door would have more than likely been an animal skin, but in later Roundhouses, it may have been wooden. Wooden Roundhouse doors would have definitely been decorated with special carvings and paintings to keep evil spirits from entering.

Every Roundhouse would have its own quern outside . A quern was made of two heavy round stones that would be used to grind corn and wheat into flour so that they could make bread.

If you are now standing in the door way you will see how much light you block out, people would never have stood here, move on in to your left, here was the food preparation area. You will see a clay fire pit in front of you with a cauldron hanging over it that would have been boiling water, making drinks, soups and stews. You will notice that there are no chimneys yet; by building replicas like ours Experimental Archaeologists can see that the smoke from the central fireplaces absorbs in to the reed thatch above killing bugs. Next to the fire place there is a bread oven facing away from the door so that you can easily see a fire lit inside; it works in a similar way to our pizza ovens today. You can also see some herbs hanging from the rafters drying out and for cooking, making medicines and also making the roundhouse smell pleasant.

Meat and fish would often be hung from the rafters so that it could be smoked by the ongoing fire, which would help to preserve it. If not they would have barrels which they would store the meat in – once it had been salted.

Iron Age folk ate pork, beef, game, fish, cheese, curds, milk, butter and porridge. They gathered nuts and seeds and grew their own vegetables and grains. Food would be gathered from the farm land and the forests around them in willow baskets. They could be made by weaving the Willow reeds, not too dissimilar to the wattling of the Roundhouse, into quite intricate shapes.

Have a go at weaving a basket, gather and hang up some herbs to see what the smell is like, use the cauldrons and bread oven to experiment with your own recipes, try some different things to see what you like.



Moving on round the roundhouse sit down on the benches. As the time period progressed, the farmers and workers became talented craftsmen who would have created tools from flints and eventually bronze and iron. They would have used these skills, to create furniture – benches that would double up as beds, stools, low tables, chests made out of wood and leather.

They would create many soft furnishings, such as mattresses from hay and feathers, floor coverings from animal skins and blankets also made from animal furs. Other fabric items would have been made from the women using huge looms to weave the wool they had dyed into beautiful cloths.

Try out spinning and weaving or dyeing the wool using natural dyes.



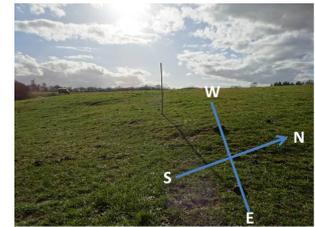
When the light is gone gather round and tell stories round the fire. Story telling and poetry is available for you to practice the art of holding peoples attention but perhaps you can tune in to our distant past and create your own stories and poems about our ancestors here? We would love to hear them!

Faiths and beliefs

People in the Iron Age very likely met here to worship the powerful spirits that they believed would protect and help them. Evidence shows that they conducted ceremonies often burying or throwing in to the rivers precious gifts and offerings. We don't know too much about their beliefs but there seem to be pits where animals have been buried that have been curiously mixed up; for example the top half of a sheep joined to the bottom half of a cow buried together. When the Romans arrived they brought scribes who wrote about four main festivals celebrated by the Celts:

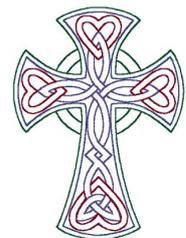
- Imbolic was held in February to welcome the birth of the first lambs.
- Beltane was celebrated in May when the cattle were moved to their summer fields.
- Lughnassad was held in August to celebrate ripening of the crops.
- Samhain took place in November and marked the end of the year.

Celebrating events and seasons helped people mark the passage of time before there were calendars. Coming together to celebrate may have helped people feel part of their tribe increasing a sense of belonging and shared values. The sun throughout the day and the seasons was very important to them and it was the Romans who came up with the idea of physically marking its position using a sun dial and Roman numerals.



Have a go at making a sundial and shadow stick navigation to see how they lived in tune with nature rather than the technology we have today. Think about how you mark the passage of time during the year, how important celebrations and other sorts of events are to you. Do you think they help people and increase a sense of belonging, should we celebrate together more or do you prefer quieter personal times? Many people choose not to get married, mark the birth of children or have firm beliefs about how they would like their death to be marked. Others celebrate lots of events and like to attend community events. Take a moment to think and talk about celebrations and life events and what you think is important.

It may have been the Romans who brought Christianity to the Celts after our fort was no longer in use. Churches were built on top of earlier pagan ceremonial sites. The beautiful patterns that the Celts designed were soon incorporated into religious symbols and jewellery.



Try using our resources to copy and design your own Celtic patterns.