The THREAD *of* LIFE

a teachers' resource pack for the Sodbury Camp Discovery Project *on the Cotswold Way*

A RESOURCE PACK FOR

THE THREAD OF LIFE

PROJECT

A project involving four schools and a team of artists focussing on the hillfort at Old Sodbury. The project was initiated by the Countryside Commission working with Northavon District Council (latterly South Gloucestershire Council) and is managed by Travelling Light Theatre Company in collaboration with Changing Places Environmental Arts Group.

The schools involved are:

Hawkesbury Primary
Horton Primary
Marshfield Primary
Old Sodbury Primary

The artists are:

Jo Bousfield - Drama/performance
Winnie Love - Drama/performance
Phil Porter - Design/costume
Pete Rosser - Music
Steve Rowley - Sculpture, music and dance

Jude Merrill - Project Management
Liz Milner - Resource Pack research, writing and design
Peter Milner - Resource Pack activities section and project advisor

With thanks and acknowledgements for help with the project to Lesley Greene, Diana Hatton and Graham Webbfor support and funding. Also to Charles Copp for information on Geology, Natural History and Landscape History, John Edgar for local history information and Alan Tanner for information on the Celts, and Karen Turvey from BRERC for help with environmental records.

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The Thread of Life

A project to strengthen the links between the population of South Gloucestershire with those who previously inhabited the Cotswold scarp.

The project will culminate in **Lughnasa** - a Celtic summer celebration. A meeting of the tribes for sports, games and the exchange of greetings and stories.

TOPICS

Maze - gateways - spirals
Tokens - gifts - trading
Bards - oral history - language - stories - music - songs - dances
Transformation - clothing - costumes - the Otherworld
Technology - agriculture - iron - horses
Social structure - tribes - families - warriors - Druids - fostering
Change - integration with Romans - Christianity

The Thread of Life is the ancient Celtic concept of continuity. We can also use it to read/tell the story of the landscape from the Jurassic and earlier through the Iron Age to today, and even into the future. The 'Thread' can be interpreted as:-

Geologic time
Evolution/DNA
History
Oral history/traditions
A guide through a maze

THE COTSWOLD WAY PROJECT - THE THREAD OF LIFE

South-west England and South Wales

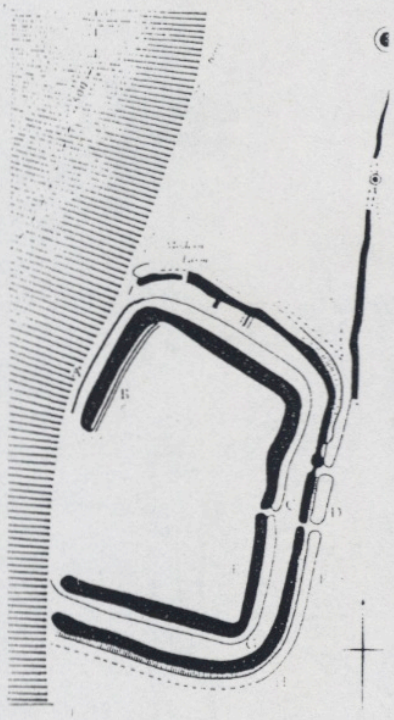
INTRODUCTION

This project has been devised to give four schools in the area the chance to produce a wide variety of cross-curricular work for an event which is to celebrate the re-inauguration of the Cotswold Way in July 1996. The site of Little Sodbury Camp has been chosen as a venue for this celebration. It is an Iron Age Hillfort, one of many in this region, and they have a strong presence in the landscape, and often, especially here, they give a broad view of the surrounding countryside.

These hillforts are the work of the the Celts, the people of the Iron Age, and although we don't have a complete understanding of what the hillforts were used for, it does seem that they were a centre for activities within a local area. They were used for defence in warfare, a central storage area for food surpluses, a place to herd cattle during times of local conflict, possibly as a centre for trading and exchange, and also as a meeting place for religious ceremonies, festivals and fairs.

In the same way that the Celts may have used Little Sodbury 'Camp' in the past, we too have chosen to focus this project on the hillfort and are using it as the central theme to explore a number of subjects and ideas. We can pull some threads from the landscape, the past and from the natural world and follow their meanderings to weave our own pictures for today.

We will be looking at how the landscape in this location was made originally, why it looks as it does, what types of plants and wildlife inhabit the area and why . We'll be finding out how humans have made use of and altered the landscape from their earliest appearance, as well as exploring the past through discovering the Celts and their ancestors.



Plan of Sodbury Camp Hillfort

Why should we learn about the landscape? . . .

Here and now, in the late twentieth century, many people spend a great deal of their time in front of computers, or televisions, or in cars, schools and offices. Sometimes it's easy to forget the world that's out there, underneath us, so it's good to go and take a look at it, to see where we fit in, to put our lives in context. When we look at landscapes, we often think of them as having been that way for ever, and feel shocked when a woodland is blown down in gales, or a hedgerow is grubbed up by a farmer wanting to make his fields easier to manage. To our eyes these events often seem to make an irrevocable change in a scene which, without thinking, we assume has looked like this always.

But if we *do* stop to think, we must realise that this is not true, and ever since humans began to farm, they have altered the surface of the earth. But the results of their actions are not always negative - some of the features of our much loved countryside only exist because of human intervention, eg 'old fashioned' hay meadows. There is probably not even a square kilometre of Great Britain's countryside which has not been affected by people over the last 6000 years.

But just as human activities have affected the landscape, so too has the landscape affected their actions and choices, for example, access to drinkable water would have determined where to start a settlement, and likewise, soil types and land forms would have decided the early farmer on

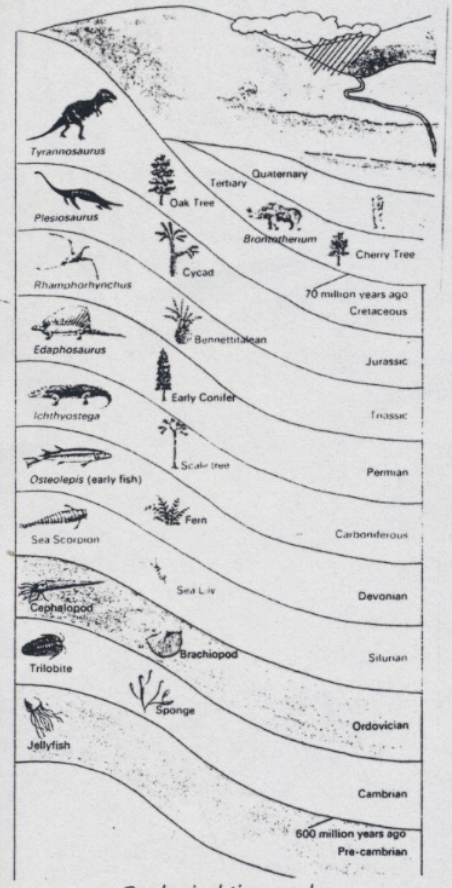
where to clear land and farm. Now, in the same way, the anticipated effects of global warming (largely a consequence of human action on the environment) will dictate where new buildings are sited in lower lying areas.

We may now have technology which allows us to make bigger changes more quickly to our environment, but, by around 500 BC, when Little Sodbury hillfort was being constructed, possibly half of the original wildwood covering England had gone as a result of clearing and grazing. Although this took place over a period of 4000 years, it is still an enormous impact to make on the land. But, if left alone, cleared areas will regenerate very quickly as tree seedlings take root, firstly it will become scrubland, in ten years it will be difficult to reclaim. In forty years it will have become mature woodland again - approximately a hundredth of the time it took to clear!

Through making choices of what we do to the land, we have some power of control, , but the natural world is also a powerful force. We are not outside or against 'nature', humans and nature interact with each other constantly to create change through energy; we are just part of that dynamic process.

Neolithic flint axe

Over the last 300 million years, the land that Little Sodbury Hillfort stands on has been, amongst other things, hot desert, ice cold tundra, the bottom of a coral sea, a coal swamp and a delta. These different environments and the massive climatic changes that have occurred as well during this time, don't just make a lot of different types of rocks with difficult names. The processes affect people who lived here 30,000 years ago, 2000 years ago, when the Celts were here, and today, because the way the landscape is made dictates what people do in it and where they can live.



Geological time scale

Here is an outline history of the landscape of this area, which shows some of the enormous changes made by natural forces, followed by changes made after the appearance of humans.

History of the Landscape (dates are approximate)

450 - 500 million years ago - The oldest rocks in this area (around Charfield) were laid down when this was a large, wide muddy sea, which separated us from America. This sea disappeared when continents collided and formed mountains including the Scottish Highlands. We then split away from America again, the divide started in the North Sea, but later shifted to the Atlantic. We could have been part of the American continent!

400 million years ago - Britain was part of a large continent with mountains in Scotland, Wales and Greenland, and big rivers draining into a coral sea in South Devon. The cliffs of Torquay are made of coral limestone from this time, and the rocks around Minehead were laid down at the mouth of this big river which flowed past here and formed a delta. The Bristol area was on a wide, desert floodplain with a seasonal river which would flood occasionally.

360 million years ago, the whole area was flooded with tropical sea, which eventually produced the Carboniferous limestone of the Avon Gorge (also seen in Chipping Sodbury quarry)

320 - 300 million years ago - huge deltas filled in the sea and on these coal-producing swamps grew over a huge area, from here westwards to Pennsylvania, and eastwards to Siberia. This would have had huge tree ferns, and cyclads, and dragonflies with 60cm wing spans, and huge amphibians like salamanders. Layers of peat were built up, like the Mississippi delta today or the mangrove swamps in tropical areas.

300 - 280 million years ago - The continents collided again and squashed and folded the swamps. The parts which were folded up eroded away, but the parts which were folded down under turned into the coalfields, which we have under Bristol, Avonmouth and near Chipping Sodbury. This process also produced iron bearing rocks which are found in the Forest of Dean - both the coal and the iron deposits were used by humans later, another way that humans made use of and affect the landscape.

Plesiosaurus

250 million years ago - the continents don't stand still, and by this time we would have been where the Sahara desert is today, so this area was desert-like - a little like Californian desert, or the area around the Dead Sea today.

220 million years ago - the hill with Sodbury Camp on it was not here, but the limestone hills of Bristol and Tytherington were, and there were also low lying valleys. Huge fault movements had created the Severn valley which would have looked like Death Valley in California. When it was hot, salt deposits were formed, but when it was wet, it was very wet and large boulders tumbled down the sides of the hills making scree slopes. Here also were dinosaurs (some of the first ever discovered came from Durdham Down in Bristol - similar ones have been found in Tytherington Quarry).

Ichthyosaurus (above) *and skeleton* (below)

200 million years ago - the sea moved in from both Germany and Spain, flooding the area and creating a shallow sea with islands. Evidence of the first ever mammals (shrew like creatures) are found on the Mendips, they lived alongside the dinosaurs, but developed much more slowly.

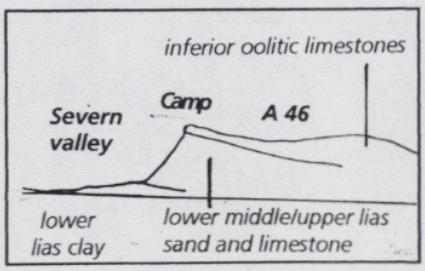
170 -150 million years ago - over the next few million years, the sea level went up and down, but gradually upwards when vast layers of different deposits were built up. In this shallow muddy sea lived amonites, plesiosaurs and icthyosaurs. In the vale of Berkeley deposits of lower lias clay were laid down at this time, and as the seas became shallower, sand and later, oolitic shellbanks were formed. This would have been a little like the soft limey seafloor of the lagoons in the Bahamas of today. Living in this sea were all sorts of animals which became fossilised, and whose remains are washed out of their surrounding rocks by erosion. These can be picked up from the ground at Sodbury camp. (See section on Suggestions for activities with children for details of one particular type of fossil found here, the belemnite)

Amonite

Belemnite

Sediments continued to be deposited for the next 100 million years, but because of erosion they are no longer preserved here.

60 - 30 million years ago - Africa and India pushed against Europe and much sediment from the sea bed was pushed up out of the sea forming the Himalayas and the Alps. A whole ocean - the Tethys - was crushed out of existence. Tilting also occurred and the part of the land mass which the British Isles was on was at the edge of this activity, the Western side of the land being pushed higher than the Eastern side, and some folding occurred, e.g. The South Downs were formed at this time.



Cross section through the Cotswold scarp slope

The rocks which had been pushed higher were more exposed and so began to erode. Originally, the rocks which are found here in the Cotswolds and as far back as the chalk in Wiltshire would once have stretched as far west as Ireland, but when the land tilted, erosion began to wear away the top

surface of the limestone, revealing the rocks and clays beneath, like peeling back a carpet. Where Little Sodbury Camp is today, on the edge of this long escarpment of the Cotswold Hills, is the present edge of that erosion, and the rock will continue to be pushed back, exposing more of the older rocks beneath. The removing of this cover actually exposes the ancient landscape of 200 million years ago e.g. the rocks around Chipping Sodbury, Tytherington and Bristol.

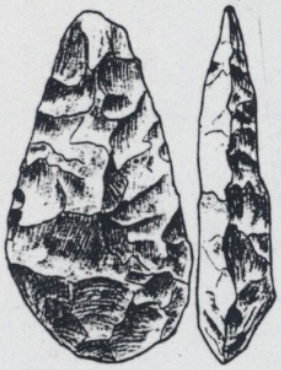
Australopithecus
2 million years ago

3 million years ago - the first *hominids* (early human-like creatures) began to appear in Africa.

2 million years ago - a series of ice ages began, covering, at some times, most of this area in ice sheets. Between the ice ages - the inter-glacial periods - it was sometimes warmer than it is today and the ice sheets receded and England was colonised by animals which today only occur in hot countries such as lions and elephants. Other inter-glacial periods remained cold, and the land would have been windswept, barren and treeless - this is called tundra. In many places the rock was even scraped clean of soil by the ice and the landscape would have looked like the Burren in Western Ireland today.

The land mass and edges of the ice sheets during the Pleistocene period between 2 million - 8000 years ago

Homo Sapiens



250,000 year old flint hand axe

500,000 years ago - recognisably human people (Homo sapiens) had moved into every continent.

30,000 years ago - evidence of human beings like ourselves, in this country periodically throughout the ice age, possibly as migratory hunters following the reindeer herds which would have followed the receding ice sheets, as they are animals adapted to cold climates.

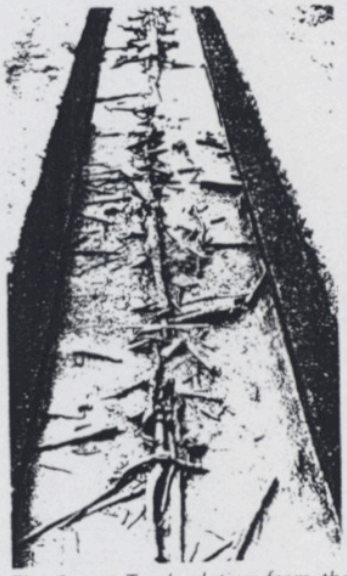
12,000 years ago - the climate began to warm up. Britain began to be separated from Europe by rising sea levels after the ice sheets melt. Evidence of people of the middle and upper paleolithic period, stone tool makers, appear all over British Isles.

7000 years ago - trees and woodlands had become re-established after ice age, firstly birch,aspen and sallow, then poplar, and finally oak and ash or lime and beech, depending on soil types and location. The natural habitat of this latitude in the current climate, is woodland, made up of the last group of trees mentioned above. For this region, ash and oak woodland is typical.Without disturbance or intervention from outside sources, plant communities will aspire to this type of 'climax vegetation' - woodland with smaller plants on the forest floor and shrubs in between.

Oak and Ash

5500 years ago - Neolithic early farmers settled in many places. Trackways made of hurdles, laid on the boggy ground of the Somerset levels, woven from coppiced hazel have been found under layers of peat and dated to this time. They show that people already knew about coppicing, a simple but effective way of managing woodland.

Coppicing means cutting trees back to ground level so they send out new growth from the base, or stool. This is allowed to grow for only a few years and is then cut, providing long straight pliable sticks, useful for many purposes. Areas of trees would have been coppiced in rotation so there would always be a supply, like a harvest. Old coppice stools dating back hundreds of years can still be found in many woodlands, for example the Tortworth Chestnut was once a single tree, but through years of coppicing has become a small copse. It is a form of woodland management which is still being used.



The Sweet Track, dating from the Neolithic period and found in Somerset

Once farming techniques had been developed, large areas of woodland were cleared, mostly using stone axes. Grazing animals in woodland would also have kept down regeneration, but the practice of burning woodland was probably not used often in this country as the climate is too damp and the tree species are not as flammable as, say the trees cleared by this method in North America by similar people. Most of the wood on the top of the scarp would have been cleared by neolithic people but they probably left the trees in the valley because the heavier clay soils would have been too hard to plough with the available tools of the time.

2500 years ago - the Celtic people would have been in this area, and by this time, it is possible that half the woodland which had existed in England had been cleared. Celtic farmers invented the iron plough so they could have tackled the clays in the valleys. Britain became quite an affluent place at this time.

A carved Celtic head from Czechoslavakia

1953 years ago - (from 1996) The Romans invaded Britain in AD 43. They kept written records and so we often see this point as the time when 'history' begins, and 'pre-history' ends, but although the Romans brought changes wherever they went, many of the things that people had done for centuries to alter the landscape continued in much the same way - new fields being made, woodlands cleared, settlements and villages being developed, boundaries constructed - all making their gradual marks on the land. These marks tell their own story of the countryside and the people who live in it, regardless of the writing down of history in books.

A Roman Centurion

What made people settle in this area?

The Power of Water

Water is an essential resource for people. If they want to settle, they need a good supply of it, as well as areas that can be grazed by their animals, and land suitable for growing crops. Access to materials for building shelters is important and it would also be useful to be near dry routes which could be used for trading, The steep scarp slope at the western edge of the Cotswolds is made up of a sandwich of limestones and clays (see above 60 - 30 million years ago). The limestone is permeable (allows water to percolate through it) but the clays are not, so, when it rains, the water seeps through the top surface of limestone until it reaches the clays, where it emerges out the side of the escarpment as a line of springs, providing the water needed for settlement.

The Wealth of Wool

Villages have grown up along these spring lines and in some places further north, around Stroud, the shape of the scarp slope allowed water to erode the rock into steep valleys. The rivers in these valleys, millions of years later, provided the source of power, through water wheels and later steam, for the mills which were used to weave the wool, and later, carpets made from the wool which came from the sheep who grazed on the fine grass on the tops of these same hills! The wool from the Cotswolds was the finest available, and so demand for it was great. This created an industry which during the Middle Ages, through its exports to Europe, made Britain one of the wealthiest countries in the world.

Sheep shearing inthe Middle Ages

An ancient pathway

Trackways and Routes

The fact that water trickles through the top layer of limestone, means that the ground on this rock remains drier in wet weather than the muddy clays in the valley below. If you were travelling on foot or in a wagon on dirt roads, the importance of this would become clear quite quickly! This ridge, then, could provide a place for a route between the settlements which was drier than the clays in the vale of Berkeley below.

The Cotswold Way Path, which goes round the hillfort, is a very ancient route going back to neolithic times, or earlier, and was used for, amongst other things, cattle droving (to take cattle to new grazing areas, or to fairs for selling), and transporting salt - essential for food preservation (see Food) - which came from Droitwich near Worcester.

The area around Little Sodbury is at a crossroads of major north/south and east/west routes of great age, which are still in use because of the geography. The hillfort is strategically placed here to control these routes.

Clay soils

The clay soils of the Vale of Berkeley, the flood plain of the Severn, may well have had trackways in them used in dry weather, and although the lighter

soils on top of the limestone would have been easier to clear of trees, the soils in the floodplain would have been rich and worth the extra work to turn into fields for growing crops. But because they have been regularly ploughed since mediaeval times and not grazed, we have less evidence of their history. However, recent air photograph surveys show many 'crop marks' indicating settlement and land use which cannot be seen from the ground.

Later changes to the landscape
Our focus for this project is the the hillfort at Little Sodbury, and those who made it, the Celts. There is a huge amount of information in the landscape which reflects the changes happening in the world for the two thousand years since then, like the effects of the enclosures of the C18th, the industrial revolution, and modern farming techniques, but we simply can't fit them in! More information could be found in the books listed at the end of this pack.

Man-made natural habitats!
The short grasses and distinctive flowers of hilltop pasture and the flowery hay meadows we so enjoy today, which are disappearing as a result of changed agricultural practices, are not natural habitats. They are entirely the result of human intervention. The hay meadow would be cleared woodland, and plants which lived in places such as natural woodland clearings, (created by lightning striking and destroying trees, or the natural collapse of old trees), or cliff tops, found this new similar environment suitable and so, by various means, colonised them. Everthing in them is natural, but the extent of the association is due to artificially stopping natural vegetation succession by grazing or mowing.

Making yourself at home
It can take hundreds of years for some plants to establish themselves in new habitats, and you can tell an old and undisturbed (but not unmanaged) woodland or an old meadow by the occurrence of such plants as dog's mercury, ramsoms -wild garlic - and toothwort in the former, and for example clustered bellflower and orchids in the latter. (There are some fine examples of both habitats in this area).

Toothwort

Plant communities
Once the meadow had been established, the grass would then be cut, after the plants had seeded, and dried for hay, and the meadow would then be used for pasture. This process allows the growth of different groups or communities of plants to those which grow on the higher permanently grazed grassland. These success of some groups of plants is also partly due to their ability to withstand trampling from the grazing animals, and their tolerance to different levels of nutrient (animal droppings, and more recently, fertilizers).

Early purple orchid

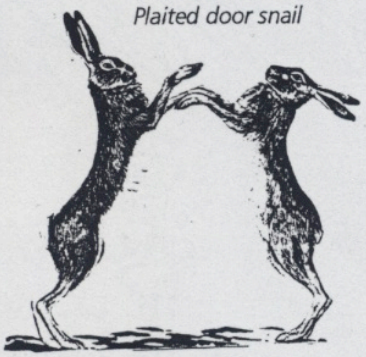
Soil types
It is possible to tell the type of soil under the grass from some of the plants and creatures which grow there. For example, we can see from the embankment slopes of the hillfort, where it is too steep for the cattle to graze easily, that this is a limestone soil, as there are rock-roses, thyme and marjoram growing there, all plants which thrive on limey soil. Most of the flatter areas of grass around the hillfort have been 'improved' with fertilizers, which encourage certain grasses, but are like poison to many of the other plants which might normally be found in grazed limestone grassland like fairy flax, salad burnet and eyebright.

Salad burnet

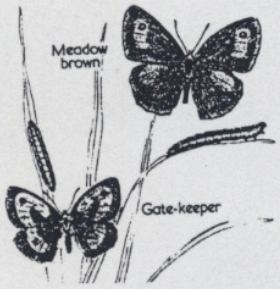
Indicators
Plants and animals or other living creatures which will only live in a very specific habitat, such as the dog's mercury and ramsons of old woodland

Grove snail

Plaited door snail



Hares



Gatekeeper and meadow brown butterflies

Green Woodpecker

mentioned above, are called 'indicator species' and can tell us a great deal about a place, and its history.

Around the Little Sodbury site there are several varieties of snail, some on the grassland, some on the woodbanks, and some in the wood itself. They are each different to look at, and only live in that habitat as they have adapted to fit in with that type of environment. Many snails only have Latin names, which unless you are used to them, are not always easy to remember, but one attractive snail found here with a lovely sounding name is the lapidiary snail, which indicates limestone. Also look for the many different colour and banding variations of the Grove snail which lives along the edges of the wood, and look on the trees for the Plaited door snail.

Wildlife to look for at Little Sodbury

We know that rabbit, fox and badger live in the woods and fields around the hillfort. There may also possibly be hares, hedgehogs and moles, several types of small rodents, like short tailed field voles; bats, maybe even the endangered greater horseshoe bat; tawny owls, and possibly barn owls, buzzards, kestrels, sparrowhawks, green woodpeckers and skylarks. In the woods we are likely to see greater spotted woodpeckers, long tailed tits, nuthatches, various finches, like the chaffinch, and in the whole area there will be insects, spiders and 'mini-beasts' like woodlice and centipedes.

There may be several species of moths and the hillfort is on the Invertebrate site register because of its local interest for butterflies - meadow brown, speckled wood, comma, gatekeeper and common blue are amongst the 16 or so species which may well be seen on a sunny day.

By the summer, there should be many flowering plants to see in the hedgerows and on the woodbanks as well as the those mentioned above in the grassland and the woods - honeysuckle, dog rose, vetches, foxgloves, red campion are a small selection of common plants to look out for.

The Landscape Book

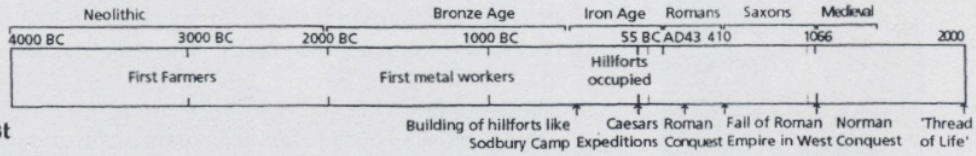
If you find out how the land and the countryside are formed, you begin to see that the landscape is like a book in a new language which you can decipher and learn so that you can read and understand it. Some of this 'language' is made up from the facts about the geology, history and natural history that we have included here, and by looking carefully, you will find that there is an endless source of information all around you which shows both the changes and the continuity within the landscape, and you will be able to see *why* a field, wood or path is there, *what* that group of plants tells us, *when* people have settled in a particular place. This 'living book' is a treasure trove of richness and variety which we can help maintain.

The landscape is a constantly shifting balance between change and continuity, we are part of that process. Once you begin to read this 'living book', it is hard not to become more aware of your surroundings, whether in the town or the country, and difficult not to be interested and absorbed.

Why should we study the past?

Finding out about how others live, whether in our own time or in the past, can be a fascinating and enriching experience, but more importantly we can learn how other societies have succeeded, failed or adapted to the changes brought about by invasion and integration, conflict and peace, climate changes and agriculture, discovery and management of resources, development of trade and economics, art and recreation, culture and beliefs, and how those changes would have made life different. All these are elements of our own lives today too. By learning to understand difference and change within the context of past societies, we can begin to see our own societies, both locally and globally, from a number of varying perspectives and can then be better equipped to deal with and accommodate those changes and differences which inevitably enter our lives, and perhaps also be sufficiently well informed through this understanding, to take an active role in helping to shape the future of the society we live in.

A 'Timeline', from the Neolithic to now



How we learn about the past

Evidence

When people of the past leave no written evidence of their own lives and how they lived them, we have to learn about them in different ways. One way is to read what others may have written about them at the time. This can only apply once writing had been developed in a civilization of course, and it may give a biased or exaggerated view, as can be seen in some of the writings of the Romans (including Julius Caesar) who wrote about their non-literate contemporaries and long-term enemies, the Celts. Later writers, right up to the present day, are often fascinated by the Celts, but sometimes present an over-romanticized view of the past.

Julius Caesar, who wrote about the Celts

Another way is to study what people have left behind, for example the remains of the buildings, or through objects which were lost, or broken and discarded, or from how they buried their dead. We can often learn a great deal from these burials since groups of people from different times and places choose to bury their dead in different ways, depending on the current religious beliefs. Sometimes a person would be buried in a simple grave, others were buried together under large mounds or barrows, and sometimes they were left with things which it was believed they would be able to use or display in an 'afterlife', so they may be buried with flowers or food, jewellery, games, weapons, animals, sculptures or models and whole carts, chariots or boats. Other peoples cremated the remains of their dead and stored the ashes in jars or urns and placed these in cemeteries.

Archaeological dig through the ramparts of an Iron Age hillfort

Building a picture of the past

Information from all these sources - building remains, objects and burials, is studied by archaeologists, who can begin to build a picture, not only of the type of objects that were used in that time, and how people may have lived their daily lives, but it can also begin to throw some light on how the ideas of groups of people changed, developed and travelled over time.

However, this 'picture' will not necessarily give clues to the way of life of all the members of a society, as it would probably only be the richer people who would have owned the kind of objects which have lasted through the centuries, or who would have had such grand burials. Nevertheless, by piecing together the information provided by these clues we can come to some understanding about how that community of people was organised, and can begin to deduce or imagine what kind of lives the ordinary members of that society would have lived.

Paleolithic hunters

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

From 'Stone Age' Hunters to the Roman Empire in Europe

(the familiar titles of 'Stone Age', 'Bronze Age' etc have been used here, but it is for the convenience of dividing up this long period of time into units which can be imagined more readily, one 'age' obviously, did not come to an abrupt end as another began, there was much overlapping and continuous use of 'old' materials into the new 'age'. Neither did one group of people necessarily displace or replace another, they would often, willingly or unwillingly, have integrated and learnt from one another.)

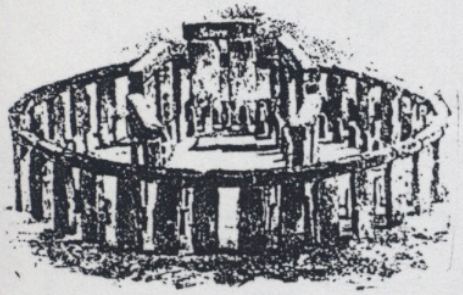
The Ice Ages and Paleolithic hunters

It seems that the first inhabitants of what we know today as the British Isles were here from about 350,000 BC onwards. It was not not until a little after 7500 BC that Britain became an island as the ice sheets which had covered much of Northern and Central Europe during the ice ages finally melted raising the sea level and isolating the British Isles from the rest of Europe. People came here to hunt the animals which had favoured colder climates and which followed the receding ice sheets as the climate became warmer.

Cultivated Emmer wheat

Neolithic farmers

After hundreds of thousands of years of surviving by hunting, humans began to develop the skills of herding animals and so had greater control over the supply of their food. By 3700 BC there is evidence to show that crops were being cultivated in areas where the native forests had been cleared with flint axes and ploughed. The Wiltshire Downs were cleared at this time and have been since then constantly grazed by sheep (and earlier by goats as well) which has never allowed the woodland to regenerate, the same would be true for many of todays areas of open grassland.This early agriculture led to settled communities being created.



A Reconstruction of Stonehenge

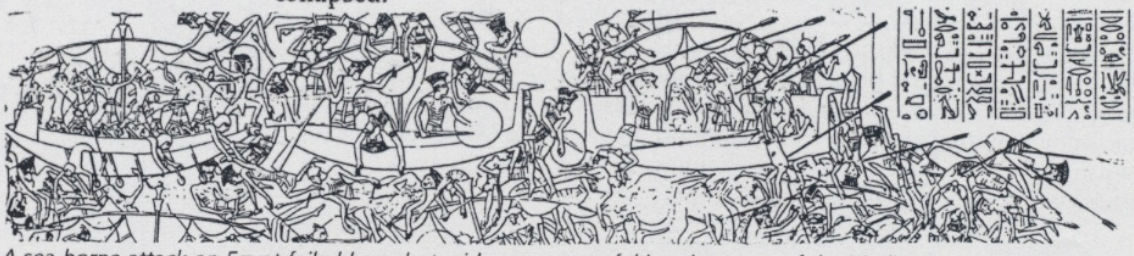
Beginnings of metal working - The Bronze Age

By around 3000 BC the skill of metal working had been introduced by settlers from Europe (originating in Eastern/Central Europe) both in gold and bronze, (a combination of copper and tin) and trade routes with Europe and the Mediterranean had been established through which, amongst other things, bronze items from the Mediterranean would be exchanged for the highly prized amber from our shores, either in the form of jewellery or carved vessels. By 2000 BC the inhabitants had largely completed Stonehenge along with many other standing stone monuments all over the western and Northern parts of the British Isles, and buried their dead under large mounds of stone and earth known as barrows, which were either long and almost rectangular or later round.

Gold death mask from Mycenae c 1550 BC

Disruption

Up until about 1200 BC it would appear that society in Europe and the Mediterranean was fairly settled and static. There was a flourishing civilization in the Mediterranean centred around Mycenae which created a huge demand for high quality metal work ranging from cups, bowls, jewellery and elaborate pins for clothing, to tools and weapons. However, at about 1200 BC there seems to have been a series of major upheavals - tribes from the sea attacked and destroyed the Mycenaean civilization, the long established civilization of Egypt was for a while taken over by barbarian forces, and the great Hittite Empire based in Anatolia (now Turkey), collapsed.



A sea-borne attack on Egypt failed here, but raids were succesful in other parts of the Mediterranean

Iron Age

Although these events took place far from Britain, they ultimately caused changes to technology and the structure of societies which eventually found their way to this country. The decline of the Mycenaean empire released much of the bronze which had been in such demand, and new techniques for working it developed and spread throughout Europe, which opened up further trading possibilities. The increased contact with Mediterranean lands also brought the taste of wine to the lips of the Northern European, a factor which was to have increasing importance in trading between Britain and Southern Europe.

A New Metal

The importance of the collapse of the Hittite empire in Anatolia is that the secrets of iron working, known then only in a few places within this region, were finally released to the outside world. This metal, although more difficult to work than bronze, is more readily available than copper and tin, and is stronger and can provide a sharper cutting edge than is possible on bronze implements. The development of weapons and tools crafted from this material eventually made considerable changes to the way of life of many people throughout Europe.

Early Iron Age warriors and chief - figures made of bronze

Nomads and horses - travelling skills

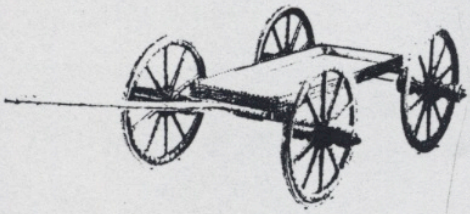
The skills of working this metal were carried by nomadic tribes spreading out from central and eastern Europe, perhaps as a result of the events outlined above, and who then encountered more settled societies who learnt from these travelling people not only the techniques of ironworking but also, very importantly, horsemanship. Riding horses would increase the speed and distance that humans on foot could cover and would made a greater impression in battle. Horses could also be used for pulling carts and chariots.

Salt, industry and trade

One of the initial points of contact between theses two differing ways of life happened in an area where salt occurs naturally in the earth, at Hallstatt in Austria, and an industry of salt mining, production of blocks of salt, and the preservation of food (the *only*, and therefore very important means of preserving food then) had grown up and trade in these products had developed.

The skills of metalworking and horsemanship combined with the successful salt industry and related trading, as well as improved agricultural methods, (resulting from the use of the more efficient iron tools) led not only to an increase in population and the subsequent need to acquire more farmland, but also to an increase in aggression.

Decoration for a horse's bridle from Thrace. Made from silver-gilt in the 4th century BC



Funeral vehicle from Germany, 5th century BC

Bronze trumpet from Denmark

Warrior from Gaul

The Early Celts

Over the next 600 - 700 years these groups of people began to gain characteristic qualities which we can start to recognize as Celtic. For example, it is thought that, by 700 BC they spoke the same language, one which has its roots in what is know as an Indo-European language (because of its origin in Northern India and subsequent spread with migrations to Europe).

Burial rites

After the earlier societies who had buried their dead in the long- or round-barrows, these peoples changed the customs from cremation (around 1200 BC) to burial (for the ruling families) with wagons, weapons, armour and food (600 - 500 BC) and by 450 BC the wagon was being replaced with the chariot. This tells us quite a lot about how their society was structured, since the wagon is very much the vehicle of a farming community, but the chariot shows that a new class of people had emerged, a warrior class.

Agriculture and Warriors

This class would have been supported by agriculture which had become successful enough to allow surpluses of food which would provide for the needs of specially skilled groups of people who would not have to spend all their time farming to survive. This allowed also for the development of members of that society to become metalworkers and artists, and priests as well as warriors, but also relied on much of the rest of the population still working on the land, and it seems that slavery was also a feature of this hierarchy. This society is what we have come to know as the Celts.

With their improved agriculture and aggressive warrior class, they infiltrated new territories in their search of land to farm, bringing with them the new metal, horses, a different type of society, and a new form of art, which decorates their weapons and armour, as well as objects for both day to day and special or ritual use.

Art

Their art is lively and dynamic, creating images of stylised animal and human forms, and making much use of elaborate pattern. It is a style which seems to reflect the characteristics of the Celtic people from what we can read of their way of life described by the writers of the Roman world who wrote about them over a period of 300 years or so up to the end of the first century AD. (There are further examples throughout the rest of the pack)

The Celts and the Classical world -

Greece

While the Celts were evolving in central Europe, the Greek world was re-emerging and by 600 BC Greek colonies had been established in much of the Mediterranean and trade between the Celts and Greeks was taking place, wine from the south exchanged for salt, iron and possibly slaves. But as well as spreading westwards, the Celts also travelled Eastwards, and some settled after battles with the Greeks in Galatia (now Turkey).

Rome and the beginnings of the Roman Empire

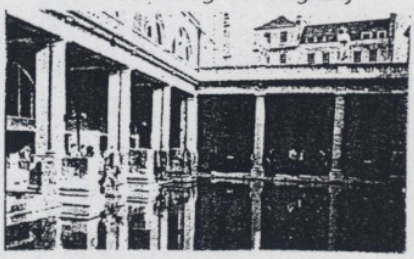
By 450 BC the rulers of Rome began to extend their control further than the city itself - the start of what was to become the vast Roman Empire. The Greek world fell into decline and the Romans took control of power. They did meet fierce opposition for many years and were actually defeated in Rome by the Celts in 387 BC. But by 48 BC they had finally conquered most of the lands around the Mediterranean, as well as many parts of central and northern Europe south and west of the Rhine, and what we now know as France and Belgium.

The Romans were keen to include Britain in their Empire, as it had rich natural resources like tin, iron and lead (in much demand by the Romans since their development of plumbing); it was agriculturally rich and had a wealth of skilled craftsmen, which implied that there had been a relatively settled period prior to this, as these are activities which can only flourish in times of social stability. In AD 43 Britain was invaded under the instructions of the Emperor Claudius, although this did not mean that the Celtic way of life had come to an end.

The Romans fought strategically

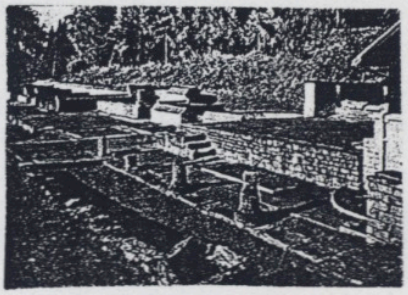
Conflict and Integration

Many of the Celtic tribes were willing to accept the benefits of the Roman lifestyle and integrated and cooperated with the invading leaders, and the Romans made use of the existing structure of Celtic society and its tribal chieftains to reinforce their own armies, who fought both against the tribes who did offer resistance, and later against the new threat from the east in the form of the non-Celtic Germanic tribes



The Roman Baths at Bath

The ultimate success of the Romans in conquering the Celts seems to have been a result of the Roman use of tactics and strategy in warfare, governed from a central source and driven by the ambition to create an empire. The Celts, although reputedly fierce and brave fighters, did not seem to plan their battles and failed to take control of the power needed to overcome the efficient Roman legions. After the initial turmoil of the invasion, many parts of Britain enjoyed a quiet life, and before long many Romans had married locally and by the second century AD, many inhabitants of Britain were a hybrid race - Romano British. Although some changes were obviously made by the Roman occupation, in the long term, for a large part of the population, the impact of Romanization was minimal.

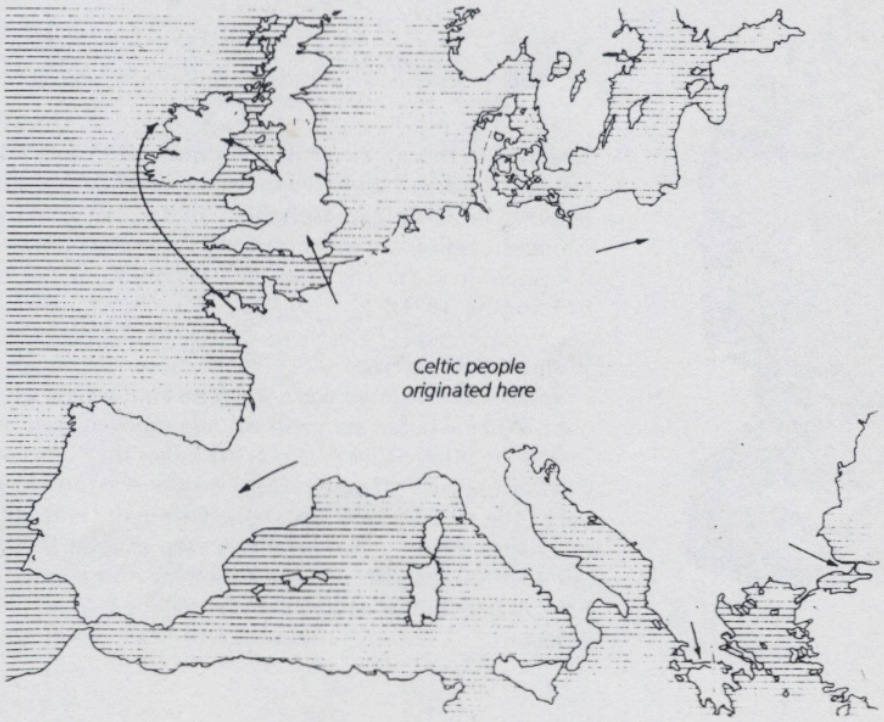


The remains of a Roman Villa at Chedworth, Gloucester

THE CELTS

Who were the Celts?

The Celtic people were never part of a state or nation, as we may think of ourselves today being British or European. By the time the Romans invaded Britain in AD 43 the Celtic people had settled all over Europe and further eastwards. Some of them were tall and fair with ruddy complexions, some were large limbed and red-haired, and others swarthy and curly haired.



Where the Celts came from

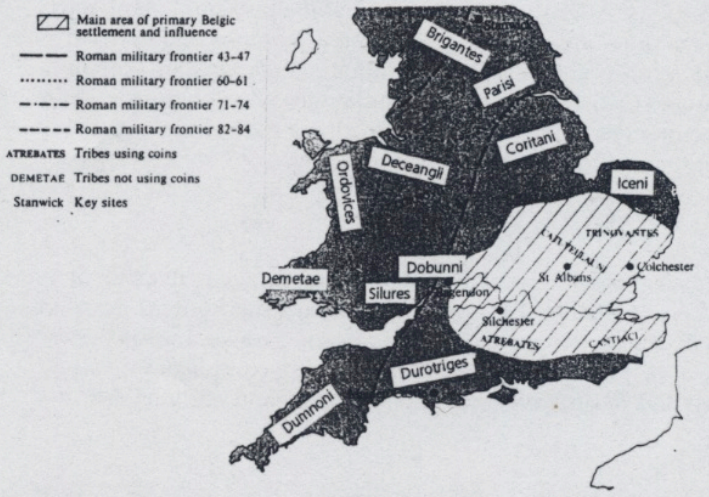
What makes it possible for us to see the Celts as a recognizable group of people, despite such visible differences as these, is that across this vast area, there were certain things which their widely spread tribes had in common. For example, as mentioned earlier, they shared a similar language, one form of which is still spoken today in Brittany and Wales (the language of Cornwall was very close) and another form, Gaelic from Ireland and Scotland.

They all had similar ways of organising their society; their religion, although there were many local gods, seems to have been conducted through the priests we know of as druids; their style of art is identifiable across Europe although there are local variations, and they seemed to share certain characteristics - a warlike tendency coupled with reckless bravery and huge energy; a flamboyant, boastful and vain nature, a love of wine, and a fierce pride in the importance of the family and tribe name.

Celtic Society

Tribal Society

In most places Celtic society was made up of tribes, each tribe composed of groups of extended families, ruled over by a king or chief. Beneath the chief were the nobles or warriors who counted their wealth in cattle.



The Celtic tribes of England and Wales, just before the Roman Conquest

The tribe in this area was the Dobunni, centred around Cirencester. 'In the last two decades before the invasion, the territory appears to have been split between two ruling households. Comux, followed by Bodvoc controlled the Gloucestershire, Oxfordshire and Worcestershire area, while Corio remained dominant in northern Somerset.' (Barry Cunliffe - Iron Age Communities in Britain RKP 1974)

Women and marriage.

In some tribes women were warriors and leaders on a equal basis with the men. When a noble man and woman married they were each expected to match the other's dowry, the wealth that they brought to the marriage. Caesar reported that men had several wives, and in some places women had very little equality and few rights within the marriage or society. Trial marriages seem to have been practised in some tribes too, and divorce was not uncommon. This varying pattern would seem to change with place and time so that all these observations may be true at a certain point and location in history.

Womean's head in Bronze, from France

Children

Very little is known about how children were treated, except that both girls and boys of noble families, and in Ireland after the first century AD children of lesser families would have been sent to foster parents of equal or higher status at an early age and not returned to their own parents until their teens. Nobles' children would learn to hunt and fight, swim, play games, sew and embroider, those from lesser families would have learnt the daily tasks of farm work. Very close bonds were made with the foster families which were as important in Celtic law as the natural family. In later life, the children would be expected to look after their foster parents in their old age. There is a sad story of how Cuchulainn had to fight his foster brother in one of the Irish sagas.

Some specially selected older children of both sexes, from the noble families, would have entered into the very long and arduous training of the druids (see below, Religion), but the majority of non-noble children would have begun helping with animals and crops as soon as they were old enough to do so if they were from farming families, and they may have started some sort of apprenticeship if there were craftsmen in the family.

Romano British bronze portrait of a girl

False Names for Protection

We do know of the concern parents had for the safety of their children from the possibly evil influences of the creatures of the Otherworld (see below) who may want to take them for some form of slavery. Children, and the sick and very old, were thought to be especially vulnerable to these influences, so in order to protect children they were given a false name until they were adult, when they would be told their true names. This indicates that the Celts believed that there was great power in a name which, if learnt by the wrong person, could be taken away or misused. If the child innocently gave their 'fair folk' captors a false name they would have no power over the child.

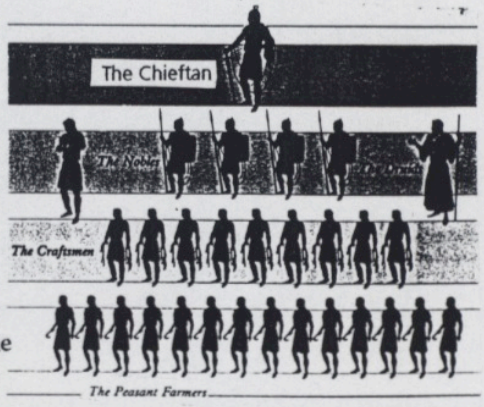
In some of the Irish tales, we hear remarkable deeds of the heroes as children, showing their remarkable qualities at an early age. Cuchulainn set off from home, on his own, at the age of seven to become a warrior in the court of the king, and when he arrived, one hundred and fifty boys, who were the trainee warriors he wished to join, were playing hurley, a hockey-like game, but when they jeered at him, he knocked out every one single handed!

Care of the sick

In later Celtic society in Ireland there were laws about the way that sick and injured people should be looked after and who should pay for the care of a wounded patient. Much of the healing would have been done by the druid priests, although simple herbal-based remedies would have been known by many of the farming people.

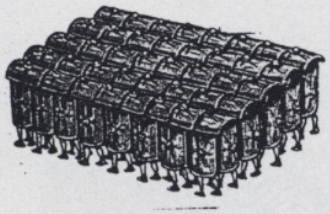
The Class system

On a similar level of status to the nobles were a class of people - some women as well as men, who included the priests or druids, doctors and lawyers, musicians, poets or bards and craftworkers, almost a 'professional' class. Some people had more than one role, and combined being a warrior with being a poet, craftsman or doctor. Below this were the farmers who would pay rent to the chief, in the form of food for land they farmed, and who would be expected to fight for him in times of war. At the bottom of this society were people who had no land of their own and would have done simple tasks and physically hard work in the community. Slaves, who were sometimes taken in raids, or had been the losers in a battle, may also have done some of this labouring work, but by the first century BC they were



How Celtic society was organised

mainly used as a means of trading with the Romans in exchange for various luxury goods, but especially wine; six amphorae of wine could be obtained for one slave.



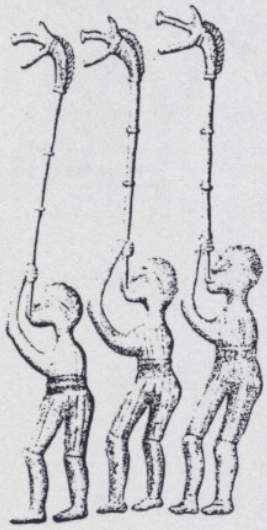
Roman tactics like this 'tortoise' formation eventually won against the frenzied but less strategic approaches of the Celts

Warlovers

Some tribal chiefs were, or perhaps felt themselves to be, of higher status than their neighbours, and this combined with the importance of, and pride taken in the family and the tribe led to frequent inter-tribal arguments and skirmishes. It seems that the pride and bravery of the Celts meant that warfare was constantly under the surface of daily life, and even seems to have been a desirable state of affairs since winning battles, or gaining a handsome herd of cattle, meant that greater honour could be won.

Boudicca

Their fighting often relied on impressing and frightening their enemies with noise, a wild appearance, sheer numbers, fury and energy, rather than planned strategies and order, which is how they finally succumbed to the Romans military superiority. This pattern is illustrated well by one of the last major battles between the Celts (known as Britons by this time) and the Romans. According to Tacitus, a Roman writer who recorded the events of this uprising, Boudicca, Queen of the Iceni gathered an army of 100,000 soldiers to fight the Romans in AD 60 as she and her daughters had not been allowed to inherit the 'kingdom' of her husband after his death, as would have been the case before Roman control.

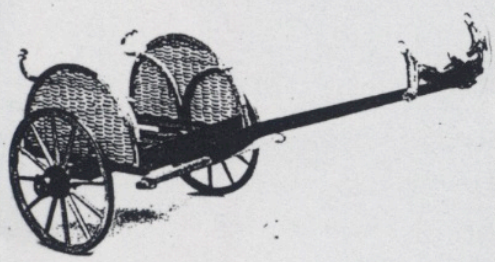


War trumpets or carnyxe

A very violent and bloody battle followed after she and her troops had burned the Roman cities of Colchester, St.Albans and London, and destroyed an entire Roman legion (5000 soldiers). The battle itself took place somewhere in the Midlands, and most of the Celts were killed, some 80,000 people. Boudicca herself, a formidable woman by all accounts, survived the battle, but took her own life rather than become a slave to the Romans she hated.

Chariots

The fame of the chariot in Celtic warfare is partly due, perhaps to the Roman reports of this episode in which we learn that a chariot was used by Boudicca. These would have been drawn by two ponies, and driven by a skilled charioteer, the warrior standing behind him. He or she would have been delivered to the scene of battle, probably with much shouting and threatening behaviour, and then leapt out and engaged in single combat with the enemy, probably with swords. The charioteer would then return to collect the warrior and perhaps repeat the process. There is no evidence to suggest that there were scythes or knives on the wheels, although it is quite probable that they did decorate their chariots, (and the doorways of their homes) with the heads of their victims!



Celtic chariot

Warfare in legend

There are some very fine descriptions of the use of chariots in battlesin the Irish stories of the hero Cuchulainn. Although they are legends, and were not written down until the Christian era, they are thought to have some basis of fact in the sequence of invasions and conquests of Ireland by the Celts. The energy, bravery and recklessness of the warriors depicted in those stories, along with their constant willingness to quarrel and fight, often inflamed by large amounts of alcohol, seems to be a typical feature of the Celtic way of life, and bears out what the classical authors wrote about their childish vanity in victory amd inconsolable dejection when they lost.

Hillforts

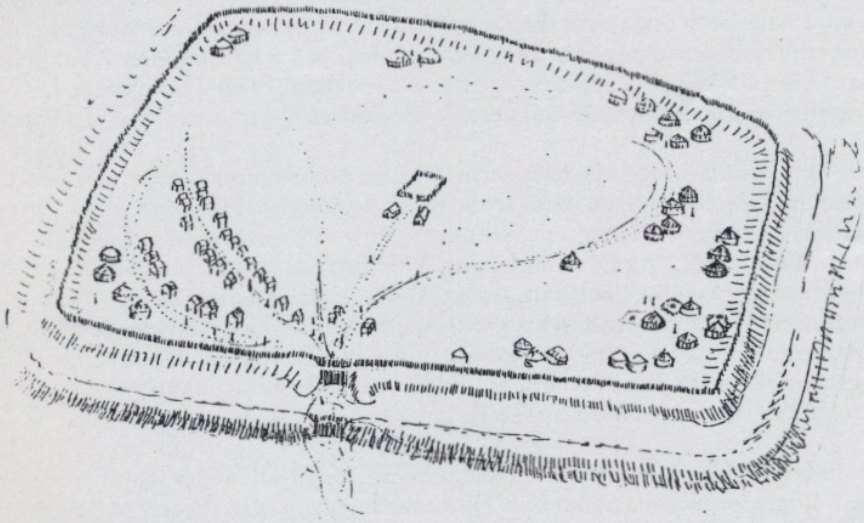
A characteristic feature of the Celts, particularly in Western Britain, were the fortified hilltops. It is thought that some of the first Celts came to Britain in seventh century BC, and although similar sites had been defended fairly simply in some places as early as 3500 BC, it was not until the sixth century BC that hilltops were being seriously fortified for the first time suggesting the need to combine, in an increasingly warlike society, defence with agriculture.

Maiden Castle Iron Age Hillfort, Dorset

There was a growth in the building of hillforts during the fifth century BC, the defences becoming more complex in some places than others. Some sites had only a single ditch and built-up ramparts - univallate - made of rubble and earth, others had two or more ramparts and ditches - bi- or multivallate - and very elaborately defended entrances. Some of the earlier sites seem to have been abandoned while defences at others were reinforced. This process went on over several centuries though and reflects the changing patterns of a relatively peaceful existence and increasing hostility, either from existing neighbours, or from hostile invaders from further afield. Despite their long life, the hillforts were taken by the Romans after their invasion in AD 43 within a few years. They had been designed to withstand the guerrilla style warfare of the Celts, not the organised fighting machine presented by the Romans' tactics.

Refuges or small towns?

It is possible that these hillforts were used in times of conflict, when the scattered population of farmers from the surrounding area would gather with their livestock within the flat-topped defended interior. This area would have been divided into grazing areas, and living accommodation of round wooden or stone huts, depending on available materials. 300 to 500 people may have lived inside the fortified area at the peak of its use.



What a hillfort may have looked like

In Irish Celtic stories, there was a large area set aside for the warriors and 'trainees' to practice their fighting skills and play games. They may also have been used as meeting places for religious festivals, or fairs, and could well have been a point at which trading or exchange and redistribution of essential goods took place. Excavation in some hillforts has shown that some of them were more like small towns, with houses, streets, storage for grain and areas for specialised craft activities, such as pottery and metalworking, although the Celts, unlike the later Romans did not have shops. It is only by excavating these sites that we can learn what they were used for. (The site

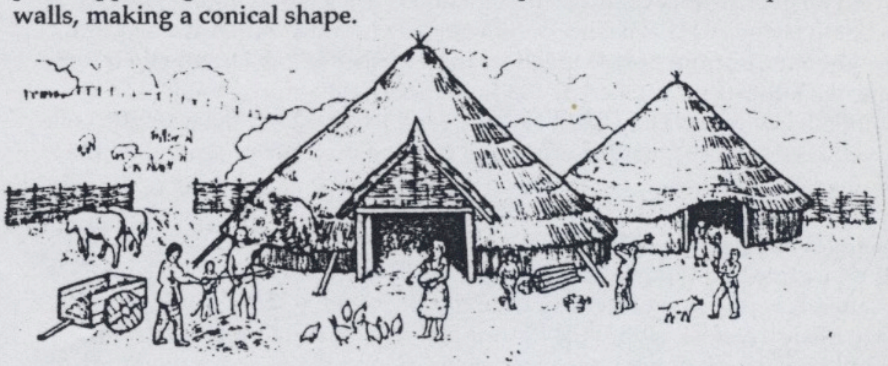
here at Little Sodbury has not been excavated, although an iron age saddle quern was found within the ditch area in 1958)

In order to build and maintain these hillforts, as well as to feed the warriors, craftspeople and the other 'professional' classes, there must have been a considerable number of people available to work on both the building of the forts and in the surrounding farmsteads producing food. Whether this was achieved willingly for the good of the tribe, or possibly under coercion or orders from the chief is something we can only speculate about.

Reconstruction of an Iron Age hut on a hiifort site in West Wales

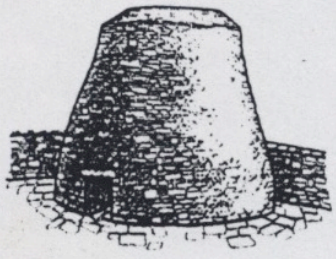
Houses

Although remains of houses found in Europe are often of a rectangular plan, in Britain, generally, they are circular in plan, from 3.7 - 4.6 ms across, with outside walls of 1.5 - 1.8 ms high, built of stone or timber, and wattle and daub, and a thatched roof depending on available materials, with a central pole supporting the roof, which would sweep down to meet the tops of the walls, making a conical shape.



Inside they were probably roughly divided by screens made from large hurdles, and life would revolve around a central hearth with a smoke hole in the centre of the roof and sleeping places around the circumference. Cooking would have been done over the central fire in a large cauldron suspended from the roof on chains, or larger pieces of meat and whole animals would have been cooked on a spit over the fire. Ovens made of clay have been found on some sites, inside and outside the houses.

The floor would have been bare earth, levelled and stamped flat by use, and possibly covered with rushes or wooden tiles - shingles. Furniture was probably minimal, chairs do not seem to have been in evidence, people sat on the floor to eat, on rushes and skins, with the food laid on low tables. They also slept on the floor with animal skins. Although dark inside with a single entrance doorway and no windows, they could have been made quite comfortable, and the richly decorated cauldrons, fire dogs for supporting logs, and the wine jugs and cups would have enriched the quality of the interiors of the noble families at least.



A Scottish broch

In some parts of the country such as Cornwall there is evidence that there were single farmsteads about mile apart, with a few larger clusters of houses grouped around central courtyards.

A large hut of the type described above may have held two or three related families, and there were often groups of houses together along with accommodation for livestock and in some places evidence of garden areas next to the houses, all surrounded by a wall.

In the Scotland, some homes were built of stone, which protected them against attack.These buildings are called 'brochs.

Farming

At this time, the ability of a tribe to survive relied largely on what food and clothing they were able to produce themselves, either in the form of crops or livestock and related products such as milk. This could have been supplemented by hunting and in some places near rivers or the sea, fishing made an important contribution to the diet.

The use of metal tools for cultivating land, from forest clearance with axes to the use of horses and heavy iron ploughs (possibly introduced by the Belgic tribes in the last century BC), meant increased productivity and a resultant increase in population, which in turn increased the demand for food production. The horses used by the Celts were probably more like Exmoor ponies than full sized horses.

The type of farming practised would depend on the location and climate. In the rocky and mountainous parts of the British Isles the grazing of animals and production of milk would have been more appropriate than cultivating the soil for crops, which would happen in lowland areas where the soil would be easier to work.

Ox heads from a silver torc from Germany

Kerry shorthorn dairy cow from Ireland

Livestock

Cattle, sheep and pigs were kept, but although hares, fowl and geese were also found on farms, it was 'for pleasure and amusement' as 'they think it unlawful to eat' them. This was noted by Julius Caesar in the first century BC. The cattle would have been of the 'Celtic Shorthorn' variety, about the same size as the small Dexter cattle of today, and the sheep not unlike the small present-day Soay sheep. Some of the livestock would have been slaughtered before the winter as there may have been insufficient food to keep them alive.

Tamworth pigs crossed with wild boar produce an 'Iron Age' type pig

Salt

The use of salt as a preservative (the only preservative known at the time) was widely used and extremely important as it meant that meat could be consumed throughout the winter months. Salt in Britain came either from natural inland deposits (for example in Cheshire), which were being extracted long before the Iron Age, or from salt pans on the sea shore, where sea water would be trapped in artificially-created shallow pools or pans, and the water would be allowed to evaporate leaving the crystalline salt behind.

The Soay sheep, probably similar to Celtic sheep

Other animals

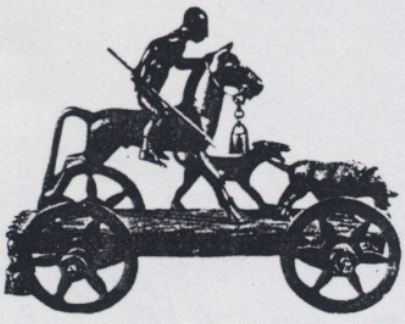
Dogs feature in many Celtic stories and not only played an important role in hunting and possibly in herding as well, but were also kept as pets. Cats were not introduced into Britain until Roman times. Other creatures who shared the British Isles at that time who would not have been so welcome, since they would attack the livestock, were the wolf, brown bear, lynx and wildcat. There is only a little evidence for the existence of beehives, but it is generally felt that beekeeping would have been an practised widely.

Animal Products

Milk may have been turned into butter and cheese or curds, (the solids left after milk has 'turned' , the first step in cheesemaking, but a food in its own right), although there is no evidence for any of these products. and the wool from the sheep would have been sheared, spun and woven. Hides from the slaughtered animals would also have to be made usable by tanning. All these continuously re-occurring activities of the farming year would have been marked as they came round again by festivals, which we will look at later.

This late Celtic coin from Colchester shows an ear of barley while Roman coins often had vine leaves on them

The small fields cleared from woodland with scattered settlements, are not unlike the landscape of Celtic times



This hunting scene with a dog and a boar, is made of bronze and came from Spain

Crops and Storage

At the end of the Bronze Age a new form of hardy wheat had developed called 'spelt' which meant that it could be grown in colder climates than previously. A new type of barley was also being used which could be sown in the autumn and be ready before spring-sown varieties which allowed two harvests in a year, a considerable improvement to production. Rye was also grown and Celtic Beans - not unlike broad beans.

Evidence of field patterns shows that a large area near each settlement was under cultivation for growing arable crops. This would have required fertilising with animal manure in large quantities, so the keeping of livestock was not just for the purpose of meat, wool and milk production, but also to maintain the production of grain. Hay and straw would have been used to feed the animals over the winter months, when they may have been brought closer to the farmsteads for ease of feeding and safekeeping. In the spring the animals would have been taken to pastures further away, possibly in upland areas, for grazing; a practice known as transhumance which is still carried out in many parts of the world today.

The crops, after harvesting with iron and bronze reaping knives and sickles, would have been taken back to the farmsteads on wagons drawn by oxen where winnowing (to loosen the grain from the stalks and remove the husk, or chaff), would have been done. The grain would then be stored, (see below) or turned into flour. This was done for thousands of years on a saddle quern which is a slow and laborious process, but by the third century BC the more efficient rotary quern had been introduced.

In some places, large storage pits were dug and lined with wicker, filled with grain and then sealed with clay to eliminate vermin and fungus growth. Pits like these have been found at Worlebury Iron Age Camp near Weston-super-Mare. In other places grain was stored in granaries raised off the ground.

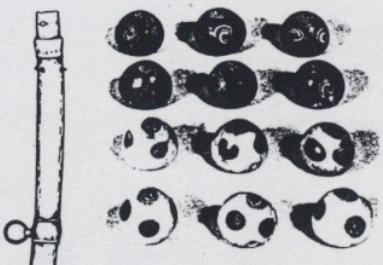
The arrangement of living settlements was closely linked to farming life and access to water as well being affected by a number of other things, for example, the wealth of the tribal chief, the available building materials, and the quality of the land and type of farming. If you had been able to see the landscape from the air at this time, you would have seen 'a patchwork of small fields and scattered round huts separated by areas of still dense forest. Here and there on hilltops would be the ramparts of forts enclosing rows of buildings. It would have looked like this in Caesar's time, and would have looked little different a thousand years earlier, though the hilltop settlements would have had a slightly less defensive air, the forest would have been that denser, and the climate too would have been less wet and cold.' Lloyd Laing - Celtic Britain.

Hunting

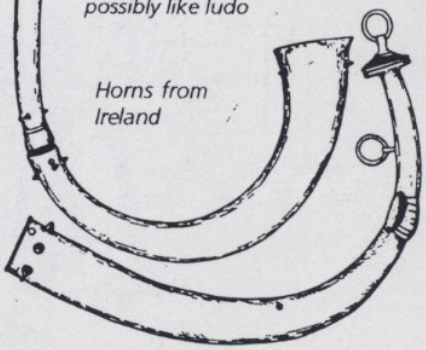
This was an enormously popular activity, not just for the procuring of food, but as a pastime. It presumably also helped to keep the warriors alert and sharp-eyed when they were not engaged in fighting. The boar was the most highly prized wild beast, both as a trophy of the hunt and for the table. Fallow dear, roe dear and red dear was also hunted, these larger animals probably being killed with spears and knives, although the bow and arrow may have been used for hunting, but there is little evidence of their use in Celtic life. They probably went hunting on horseback. Birds were also hunted and would have been brought down using stones from slings - a popular Celtic weapon. There are many Celtic stories associated with hunting, sometimes the beast pursued is magical and takes the hunter into the 'Otherworld' which we shall look at later.

Recreation, games and music
As well as fighting hard and eating and drinking with enthusiasm, the Celts also enjoyed games. Board games were popular, games like ludo and chess were played, and physical games, like hurley, (similar to hockey), were popular. Some form of football was probably played with an inflated animal bladder, and combat sports were probably practised like wrestling and spear throwing. Horse or pony racing was a very popular pastime.

Many of these activities would be seen at the fairs and festivals, along with music and probably dancing although there are few records of dancing from stories or the Classical writers. Music could have been provided by the harp or some kind of bagpipes. Singing and music is often mentioned in stories about the Otherworld where it is beautiful and ever present. Less lovely to the ear perhaps would have been the sounds produced by the trumpets used in war, with their animal heads and wooden clappers!



Glass counters from a game possibly like ludo



Horns from Ireland

Food and Drink
The Celts took great pleasure in their food, if we read the Roman writers and the descriptions of feasts which come to us from the Irish and Welsh stories. We have looked at most of the sources of their food under the headings above of farming and hunting, but they also ate fish and there are mentions of salmon being baked with honey and herbs, and fish cooked with vinegar, salt and cummin. We can also read in stories of the legendary heroes of Ireland, that they ate watercress and seaweed and water-parsnip. Porridge and bread were also part of the daily diet, but meat was eaten in large quantities. Oils from plants like flax, may have been added to food to enrich it. It would appear that food, if not as abundant to all classes as it was to the ruling families, was probably quite sufficient.

Salmon

Milk was drunk in large quantities, and ale, a drink brewed and drunk by most families, which would have been made mostly from barley, but also from rye, oats or wheat. The grain is allowed to sprout in water, then dried (this process is called malting) until hard, ground and mixed with water when it would ferment. Mead, another intoxicating fermented drink made from honey, was popular, but the favourite drink amongst those who could afford it was wine imported from the warmer Mediterranean countries. The Celts drank it in huge quantities and there are many descriptions in the Classical and Irish writings about the drunkenness at feasts causing arguments, and even inciting combat to the death.

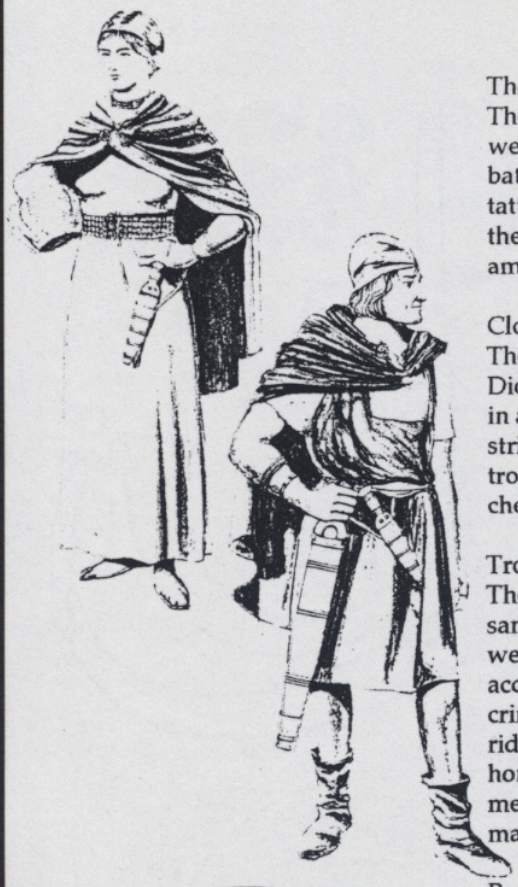
Wine amphora

We begin to get a picture of the Celts as people who didn't do things by halves, always indulging in abundance and living life to the full regardless of the consequences, a trait borne out by their behaviour in battle, and their concern with their appearance and love of personal adornment.

Appearance, Clothing and Personal Adornment.
As mentioned earlier, the Celtic people of Britain were not all the same in build, or hair and skin colouring. Some, as observed by Tacitus in around AD 60, were large- limbed and red haired (the Caledonians of Scotland) while the Silures of Wales resembled the Iberians (from Spain) with their dark, curly hair and swarthy appearance, others were tall and fair or sandy haired with ruddy complexions.

From the 'Dying Gaul' sculpture 1st century AD

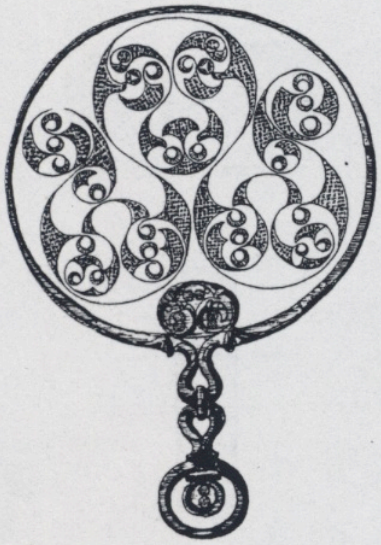
Hair
Hair was considered a very important feature, preferably long thick and golden, its styles and dressing were often mentioned in the Irish tales, and the men would cover their hair with lime-wash to change the colour and make it stiff. It was often worn plaited by men and women. The men shaved or had short beards but often sported a large moustache.



The ideal figure
The men were also very figure conscious and could be fined if they had to wear a girdle (belt) of larger than standard size! The warriors would go into battle naked (both men and women by all accounts) with their skin dyed or tattooed in patterns of blue with woad (a native and fairly common plant of the cabbage family). However, both men and women had a reputation amongst the Roman writers for their cleanliness.

Clothes
Those wearing clothes still created a strong impression on ancient writers - Diodorus Siculus wrote in the second century BC that they '. . . are terrifying in appearance, with deep sounding and very harsh voices . . . they wear a striking kind of clothing - tunics dyed and stained in various colours, and trousers . . . they wear striped cloaks picked out with a variegated small check pattern.'

Trousers, tunics and cloaks
The cloaks of the Celts in Britain were renowned, and were made in the same manner and exported throughout Europe until mediaeval times. They were made of wool and were worn in various lengths and dyed in accordance with the status of the wearer. Colours mentioned are purple, crimson and green. The habit of wearing trousers may have come with horse riding - it is a style of clothing also worn in the middle eastern area where horsemanship originated. Their tunics, also worn at various lengths by both men and women - the women wearing them long - were made of linen, a material made from the fibres of the flax plant.

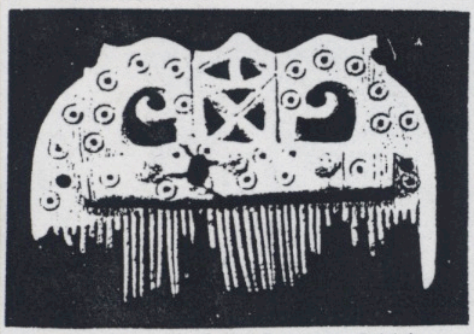


Back of bronze mirror found at Birdlip, Gloucestershire

Personal adornment
We know both from the many objects found in graves, or sometimes in lakes and rivers (thrown in possibly as an offering to the local gods), and from the descriptions of the Classical writers, that the Celts were very proud of their personal appearance and both men and women wore many forms of jewellery, elaborate clothes fasteners and hair-dressing ornaments, and some beautiful mirrors have been found made of polished bronze.

The skill of the metalworkers is evident in some of the jewellery, with gold 'torques' - a solid ornament worn around the neck - being amongst the most memorable pieces of Celtic craftwork that we have. Bracelets of gold and bronze were worn in quantity. A type of stone called shale was also turned on a lathe (introduced in the first century AD) into bracelets. There are also many lovely cloak pins, an elegant variation on the safety pin, made of finely decorated bronze. Rings of gold and bronze were worn on both fingers and toes. Jewellery was also important for giving as gifts or exchanging as a sign of goodwill or respect, and it would also be used to display your status or wealth. It would have been made by craftsmen and traded for other goods

By the first century AD, as a result of contact with the Classical world, enamelling and decorative glass were also brought into use for decoration on both jewellery and shields. Necklaces of beads made from amber (usually only occurring in Northern Europe), jet, gold, bronze, and a particular type of glass known as frit or faience which came from the Mediterranean, imply that trading between many places was very well established. Women also wore beads and combs made from bone in their hair, and from Roman and later Irish writers there is a suggestion that they may have painted their fingernails worn some forms of make-up.



Bone comb from Romano British period

All these ornaments, combined with the bright clothing and elaborate hair styles, suggests the very striking appearance that the noble Celts must have had, both during battle, and during more peaceful times, at feasts and celebrations.

Crafts and other work activities

The possibility of a separate group of people existing within Celtic society who were highly skilled and gifted craftspeople is supported by the large number of very well made and beautifully decorated objects found from this period, as well as by descriptions of Celtic Society from Greece and the Roman empire. As outlined above, their society must have been well enough structured to provide for these people who would not have worked on the land.

Specialised and regular tasks

Metalworking perhaps represents the peak of Celtic achievement, but in order to reach the level of skill and output which is found in their work means that a number of other activities were carried out to supply them not just with food and clothing, but also to support the needs of such a craft, for example, charcoal burning, woodland management, and the collection of ore-bearing rocks. Metalworkers also must have worked with woodworkers in the production of such items as iron-clad wheels and buckets.

But, there were also the regular tasks such as building, thatching, hurdlemaking, basket weaving, leatherworking, dyeing, stonecarving and pottery. Some of these tasks may have been done by other specialised craftsmen or by farmers who had to have the range of skills necessary to be as self-sufficient and productive as the Celts seemed to have been. We will look at some of these activities before moving on to metalworking.

Woodworking

Many everyday utensils were made of wood, such as bowls and cups, but these were probably not made by craftsmen. The Celtic chariots were renowned for their lightness, strength and manoeuvrability, and were made from wood, and sometimes wicker, with iron clad wheels, a skill which surpassed that of the Roman craftsmen. Some of the wagons placed in burials demonstrated fine workmanship too. The Celts also may have been the first to make barrels, strips of closely fitting wood bound with bands of metal. These watertight containers would have been more practical for transporting liquids than the pottery amphorae of the Romans. With the same technique, they also made many elaborately decorated buckets, which were thought to be for gift exchange, and are found all over Europe.

Pottery

Pottery for everyday use would have been made by the farmers, but there are examples of very finely made pots which would have been produced by craftsmen. The potters wheel is also thought to be a Celtic innovation. Fine ceramic tableware was imported from Gaul and Spain.

Basket weaving

Basket weaving would have been done by the farm workers, possibly the women, but wicker is a versatile material, and as we have seen it was used to line the grain storage pits, as well as providing the sides for chariots.

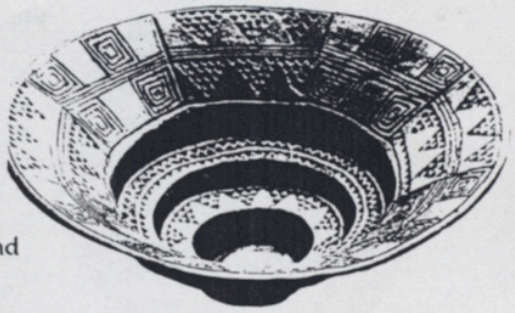
Leather

Producing leather is an important process but not neccesarily one which would have been done by craftsmen. There are several stages to making leather. The first is skinning and scraping the hide. The hide was then immersed in vats full of a liquid containing oak bark and oak galls, which provide the tannic acid needed to stop it smelling and to keep it supple; this part of the process is called tanning. Finally, the leather would have been made into a finished product such as shoes, horse harnessing, bags and bellows.

Bronze wine flagon from France, with inlaid coral and enamel, with a stylised animal handle

Traditional hurdle-making, a craft with a 5000 year history

Wooden bucket from Aylesford .Kent



Pottery dish from Germany

Woad (l) is used to make a blue dye, for cloth, and the Celts also used it for tattooing their bodies. The stems of Flax (r) were used to make linen. The seeds are rich in oil and were used in food too

Limestone head from Gloucester

Coppiced hazel in a Gloucestershire wood

Beaten bronze decoration for chariot, from Wales

Spinning, weaving and dyeing

Cloth was spun and woven from sheep's wool as mentioned above. Dyeing was also important to the Celts, and the bright colours they are reputed to have worn show that their knowledge of dye plants was extensive. The woad they used to dye their bodies was also used on cloth. Linen was also made from the flax plant, which would have required another type of skill to weaving wool, as the stems of the plant had to be beaten to produce the fibres for weaving. These tasks were not done by specialists, and were probably part of the work carried out by the women in farm life.

Stone carving

There are many examples of worked stone, some practical items, such as stone prepared for buildings, walls or grindstones, others of a more decorative or perhaps ritual or religious significance which are in the form of heads, or animals, or geometric shapes with patterns on them. After the coming of Christianity many wonderful stone crosses were carved throughout the British Isles, some of which can still be seen in churchyards and by the roadside in Wales, Ireland, Scotland and Cornwall. These 'non practical' objects may well have been the creations of craftsmen, while the practical pieces would have been worked, once again, by the versatile members of the farming community.

Charcoal burning and woodland management.

The working of iron requires the use of much higher temperatures than are needed for bronze, and to achieve these temperatures, charcoal would be needed as it becomes much hotter than wood when burnt in a furnace. Bellows would have been used to raise the the temperature. The production of charcoal (which is wood heated to a very high temperature in an airless, enclosed fire so that it does not burn) would have meant access to trees, probably managed woodland, where coppicing to produce young shoots from the base of the tree would provide suitably sized wood for charcoal making. This managed woodland would also provide wood for making hurdles or fences. The production of charcoal, coppicing the woodland, and hurdle making would probably have been done by members of the farming community. Simple tools may well have been made by them as well, but weapons and decorative objects were made by the specialist metalworker.

Metalworking

There were some highly specialised and skilled workers of the metals, bronze iron, gold and silver, some of whom may have been travelling craftsmen, carrying with them their tools and some raw materials and setting up a forge to work the metal where their skills were needed. Others may have been highly valued and permanently sited craftsmen staying in one place under the patronage of the chief. This meant that the chief would provide him with all his needs, perhaps generously if he were a very fine craftsman, in exchange for specially made pieces of metalwork which he would give as gifts to enhance his status as a powerful chief.

Smelting and forging

Smelting is the melting of the rock-bearing ore to extract the metal. Copper and tin ores, for the production of the alloy, bronze, were less common than iron ore which is distributed quite well throughout the British Isles. The Forest of Dean has been a rich source of iron ore for thousands of years. Bellows would have been used to heat charcoal to a high temperature in a sequence of heatings until the metal became separated from the rock. The metal could then be worked by forging - heating and hammering and shaping - to produce the finished object. Blades and spear heads would have been made in this way. Sheet metal (bronze and gold) was also worked with great skill to produce amongst other things some of the magnificent shields and shoulder guards which we associate with the Celts.

Casting - the lost-wax method

As well as forging the metalworkers also knew the process of casting. One method for doing this was to model exactly the required finished shape, for example a cloak pin, or part of a horse's bit, out of beeswax. The model would then be covered and sealed very carefully in clay leaving a small vent above and a drain hole below. This mould was then dried and baked, allowing the wax to flow out of the drain hole which was then plugged and molten metal would then be poured down the vent, filling the space left by the melted wax with metal.

After cooling the clay shell would be broken off and the object cleaned and polished for use. This is the lost wax process and had been known since the Bronze Age, but the process must still have appeared as a magical transformation.

Casting moulds for bronze axe heads

Artistry

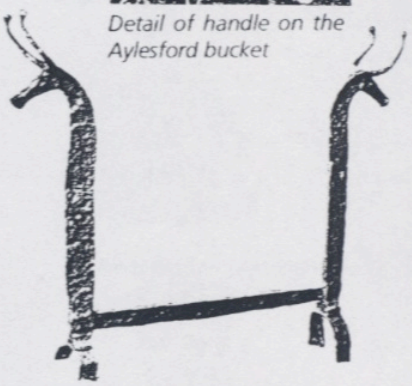
The metal workers' skill at producing not just technically high quality products, but beautifully designed and decorated pieces, whether a flagon, sword, fire dogs, harness piece or a war trumpet, is one of the major features and legacies of our Iron Age ancestors. The resulting products have in some way become a kind of 'trade mark' or signature of these people (who left us no written history), since the pieces left to us often reflect, through their use of form, pattern, decoration, and stylised representation of animals and humans, the energetic, excitable and intense approach to living that seems to have characterised the Celts.

Detail of handle on the Aylesford bucket

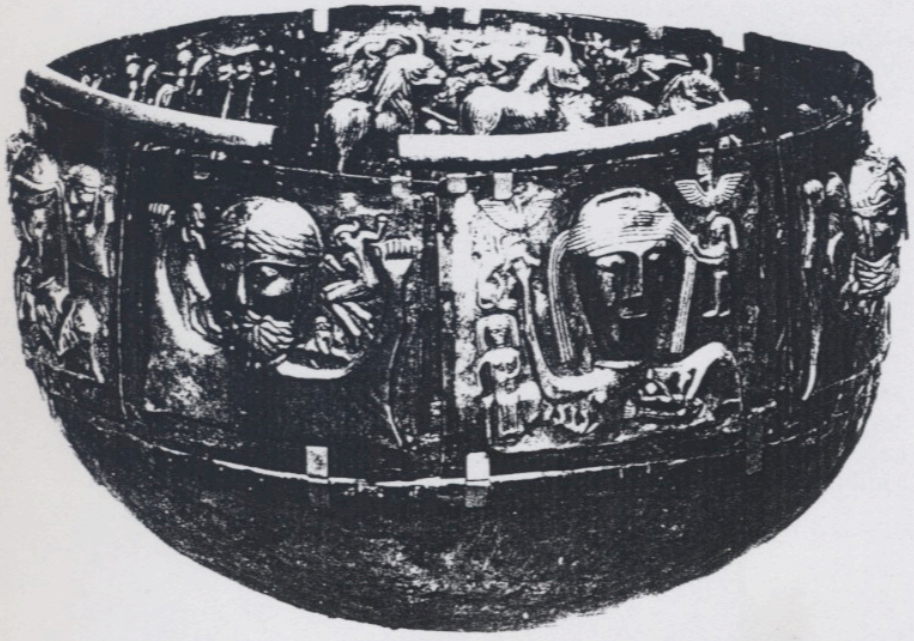
Mythical power

These workers of metal, the blacksmiths, were often held in awe by others, both in Celtic and other societies, probably because they had the power to change the basic material of iron-bearing rocks, which were extracted, perhaps mysteriously, from the earth, into finely made weapons, vessels or ornaments, by having a knowledge and understanding of their materials, and most importantly, control over one of the basic elements of human survival, fire.

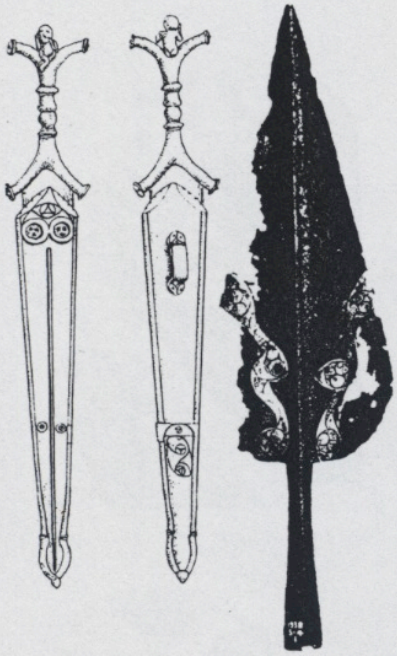
They may have been very strong too from their use of hammers and other tools of their trade, and in myths from several cultures we find gods as blacksmiths. In many fairy stories, too, which often have their roots in very ancient times, iron keeps away fairies and witches as they are unable to touch it. The survival of this 'motif' demonstrates the powerful influence which this versatile and effective metal must have had on the people of this time.



Iron Fire-dog from Cambridgeshire



Silver cauldron found in a bog at Gunderstrup, Denmark



Bronze dagger with scabbard, and an iron spear head inlaid with bronze

Warriors helmet from Romania

Bronze shield found in the River Thames

Weapons

The weapons the Celts used are fine examples of the smith's craft and would have been owned and used with great pride. The edge that it is possible to achieve on an iron blade is sharper than that of a bronze, a softer metal, so once iron had been introduced to make fighting weapons on a large scale, wounding and injury presumably became more widespread and serious. Bronze swords and axes were still being made alongside the iron ones, but would probably have been for ceremonial purposes.

The warrior in his chariot (see above - 'Warlover') would have hurled spears at his enemy before being dropped in the fighting area where a sword would then be used for an initial thrust in single combat and a dagger for closer fighting. Both would have had handles and decoration of high quality with cast figures turned into hand grips. These weapons would have been carried in scabbards as well made and decorated as the weapons themselves. The ponies drawing the chariots would also have had handsome harnesses and trappings, such as a type of helmet known as a pony cap. By the first century AD the chariot was being superseded by individual warriors on horseback, and some of the finest cavalrymen of the Roman Empire were apparently Celts. The skill of horsemanship had been continued through several centuries.

War Trumpets

Reports from the Roman writers state that one feature of Celtic warfare was the huge amount of noise made to confuse and threaten the enemy, created by shouting and screaming, banging on shields and chariot sides, and war trumpets - carnyx. These were long instruments, some made into animal shapes and containing wooden clappers to further increase the noise level and add to the confusion!

Shields and Helmets

The beautiful shields made of beaten bronze found in several parts of Europe, including the Thames in London, were probably for display or ritual while sturdier 'working' shields would have been made of wood, leather and sometimes wicker. The wooden shields may have been rimmed with metal, and there seems to have been a variety of shapes - round, oval and oblong. There are several examples of very fine decorated helmets made of bronze and iron, although some of the Celts preferred to go into battle bareheaded.

Slings but not arrows

For defence from within hillforts, the simple sling with stone shot was a very widely spread and relatively effective weapon, until the Romans came with their protective shield formations. Archery seems to feature very little in Celtic warfare although some arrowheads have been found and there are one or two mentions in classical writing about possible ritual killing with bows and arrows. They may have been used more in hunting.

Transport

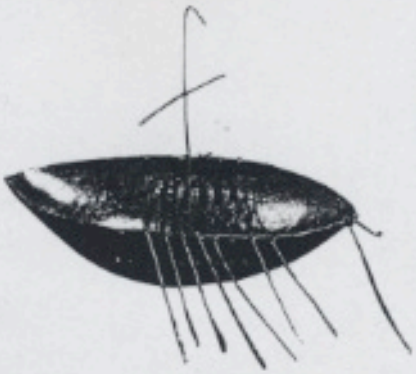
Chariots and wagons

We have already covered the Celts' most famous vehicle, the two wheeled war chariot (see above - Warlovers) Their two- or four-wheeled carts and wagons would have been used on the farm and also for transporting goods to and from centres of exchange, or to ports.

Ships and boats

The Celtic tribes were well known for their skill as seamen - trade would have relied on transporting goods for exchange to and from the more southerly lands of the Mediterranean. Many ships were made of oak, with

leather sails, and oars. Smaller craft for use inshore or on rivers were similar to the corracles which can still be seen in west Wales today. They are just big enough for one person, oval and deep in shape like a bowl; the frame would be made from wicker and covered with animal hides and they were propelled by a short single oar or scull.



Gold model of a boat found in Ireland

A barge for transpoerting wine barrels. Carved stone from France

Roads and Paths

Although the Romans are famed for their road building, it is quite probable that many of the roadways existed long before they 'upgraded' them. There is sufficient evidence of trading over long distances to suggest that a good network of routeways must have existed for the movement of wagons and probably pack horses. There are some routes, such as the Ridgeway over the Wiltshire Downs, which probably date back to Neolithic times when flint traders would have trodden that path, and it would have stayed in use until quite recent times. It is still in use but as along distance footpath, and in many places is quite wide but unsurfaced giving some idea of what roads were like before the invention of tarmac.

Another ancient set of trackways are those used for transporting salt from the areas where it was produced (see above - Trackways, and Farming). The Cotswold Way, in some places is on the route of one of these salt ways.

These tracks would also have been used by individuals on horseback as they often provided a direct link between hillforts.

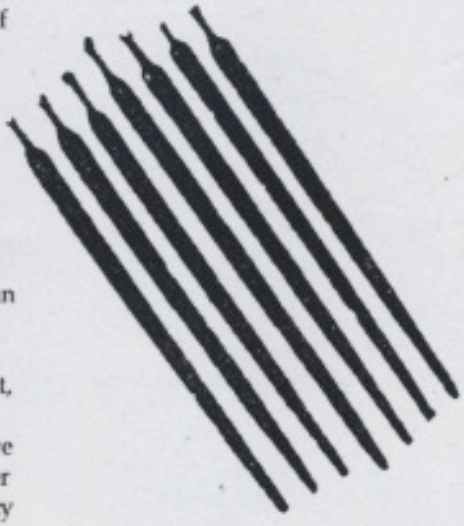
Coin showing horse and rider

Trading

The need for exchanging goods arises when one community has a surplus of some essential goods or resources, but a shortage of others, or they may wish for different items which may help improve their lives, like the iron axes introduced by the early Celts to Bronze Age Britain. They may also, once there are enough essential items in their society, develop a desire for luxury goods, but trading in these inessential goods can only be achieved if there is a sufficient surplus of raw materials or products which are in demand by suppliers of the luxury items.

From Bartering to Currency Bars

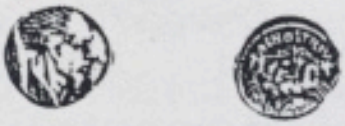
The development of simple exchanges or bartering, to more complicated dealings which may involve a middle party, leads into the beginning of the sort of complicated economic systems we have now in much of the world, but it was not until the Celts had become absorbed by the Roman Empire that money was used. Gift exchange, both within and between tribes, was an important form of exchange for the nobles. Goods were also exchanged for other goods, the unit of value being based for a long time on cattle. Later units of value were based on ingots or blocks of iron of standardised weight, known as currency bars. These would have been exchanged, perhaps, with foreign traders for their goods, who may not have been willing to accept live animals, or sacks of grain because of the difficulty of transporting them over long distances. This idea eventually led on to the development of a currency based on coinage and a more recognizable 'market economy'.



Iron currency bars

Iron slave chains from Anglesey

Gold coins minted by the Catti and Bodvoc clans of the Dobunni tribe, who were based in south Gloucestershire



Head of a warriors and chariot

A pair of carnyx - war trumpets, a shield and a chariot wheel

Slaves

Although wrong in our eyes, slaves were considered as goods for exchange just like pottery, weapons, salt or wine, and a female slave was at one point thought to be equivalent to six heifers or three milk cows. We know about the existence of slaves from Roman writers and from the discovery of very strong slave chains.

The Celts' passion for wine must have created increased trading between Britain and the Mediterranean, where slaves were exchanged for wine. Many other types of goods went from these shores too, such as wool, grain, hunting dogs, tin, bronze items, hides and weapons, which found their way to all parts of Europe, while the goods arriving here from far afield included pottery, salt, jewellery, silverware, olive oil and fish sauce.

Coins and money

Coins were a late introduction in the Celtic World, and after their initial arrival from the Continent, through the Belgic tribes who begun to infiltrate this country in the last century BC, the individual Celtic tribes each began to produce their own coins, which may not have been part of a system of money, but simply tokens for exchange as gifts. The Romans had been using coins in the way we do today for some years before the Celts, and when Britain eventually became part of the Roman Empire after the invasion in AD 43, a money system was established and coins were used in exchange for goods.

Designs

The designs on the coins were often influenced by those on Roman coins, or were copies of them, with heads of Emperors or gods for example, but there were also many which show such things as horses, with or without riders, chariots, ears of barley and ships. These have the distinctive stylised quality of Celtic design, and the later ones also have inscriptions or names on them. We can learn about the design of chariots and horse trappings from these coins and we can see once again how important horses were to these people.

Making coins

We can also learn from where the coins bearing tribal names have been found, what the pattern of trading and exchange between tribes was like. The coins were made by casting in clay moulds, (see Metalworking above). The design on the faces would either be made in the casting process, or by casting a blank coin shape which would have been struck with a 'die' which was engraved to produce the pattern. This would then be transferred to the coin. Coins were made of a number of different types of metals, copper and silver alloys as well as gold, silver and bronze.

New ways of thinking

The making of coins, although it used some of the skills well known to the Celts, such as casting and design, also meant taking on new ideas. The use of money as part of a system of trading also meant that accurate records would have to be kept which led to the need to learn reading and writing - the inscriptions on these coins show that writing was by this time being adopted by the Celts. The engraving of the dies was also a new skilled technique, and the need to weigh exact amounts of metal to make coins of the same value would have been quite a new idea to the Celts too. All these new ideas tell us that the appearance of coins in Celtic life was not just an interesting new invention, but represents a certain change in thinking and attitude as well.

Beliefs and Religion.
The Celts did not have an organised religion in the way that Christianity or the Roman religion was. Because they were largely an agricultural people, their beliefs were based on the idea of encouraging growth for fruitful harvests. The did not believe in one main god, but many separate gods, of varying importance, some were very local, others seem to have been known across a wider area.

The Romans, in writing about the gods of the Celts, seemed to find it easier to understand them if the tried to fit them into the roles played by their own gods. There were not always equivalents, so we have a slightly muddled picture from them, although they did leave some interesting, but possibly exagerrated accounts of religious practices.

Agriculture and belief
As we have discovered, the Celts seemed to have been full of energy and passion, perhaps partly as a result of the strong awareness they would have had through their agriculture of the changing of the seasons, of planting, growth and harvesting their crops, birth and death of the animals, and the return of growth in the spring, everything nurtured by the essence of life, water. The pattern continues in an endless cycle, and their beliefs were part of their everyday life, qualities which is reflected by some of the figures and decorative spiral designs found on many objects made by the the Celts.

Stone tablet depicting a water goddess, from Hadrian's Wall

The Otherworld
Alongside their concern with the seasons and hopes of good harvests, went a belief in the 'Otherworld', not a heaven or hell, or life after death, but a world which exists all the time, perhaps a 'parallel universe', not unlike our own world, but full of gods and magical beings, the *Tylwyth Teg* (fair folk) of the Welsh and the *Tuatha de Danann* of Irish legend. It was both an enticing and a dangerous place, if you found your way there you could be trapped for hundreds of years without realising, and return to find your family and friends gone even though you thought you'd only been gone a day. This is what happened to Oissin. (see 'Activities' for full story)

The white horse of Uffington, Berkshire, (with hillfort in top tight) this figure cut into the chalky soil could represent Epona a horse deity

The Otherworld may be approached over the sea, or through the sidhe or burial mounds of even older peoples, or across a lake (Arthur's sword Excalibur which rose from a lake may have been a gift from the Otherworld). It is a land of truth and plenty and beauty,where there was no hate or jealousy or sadness. It is *Mag Mell*, 'the Delightful Plain', *Tir na n-Og*, 'the Land of the Young', and *Tir Tairngire*, 'the Land of Promise'

Gods in the Landscape
The landscapes where Celtic people are known to have settled often have features in them such as hills, or woods, springs, rivers or strange rocks which are part of these stories and are sometimes named after people or gods. Many events of this kind can be read in Celtic stories and fairy tales.

Festivals
The importance of both the seasons and the Otherworld can be seen in the festivals celebrated by the Celts, which are turning points of the year in the agricultural calendar, marked out by the passage of the sun and the moon. They measured their days from nightfall to nightfall, so festivals began at dusk and ended the following dusk, giving us the term 'Eve'. For example, the festival of Samhain was celebrated at the end of our October, and we still see evidence of this now in what we call Halloween, (31st October) or All Hallows eve - the evening before All Hallows, (November 1st). In the Middle Ages, The Christian Church, rather than trying to stop the ancient festivals altogether, decided to adapt them and bring them into the Church calendar.

The Celtic cycle of Festivals

From a 17th century English 'chap book'. Fairies dancing near a burial mound, a 'green man' can also be seen in the tree

Samhain

For the Celts, this was the most important festival and was at the end of the old year and at the beginning of the new, but it was between the two, which meant it was a dangerous time as the boundaries between this world and the Otherworld disappeared and magical forces were at their most potent, spirits from the Otherworld could enter this one and mortals might pass into the Otherworld. Each of the festivals was at an 'in-between time' and was therefore a time when magical powers were closer than usual.

It would be the time when the livestock would be gathered in, and those not being kept over winter for breeding would be slaughtered. Human sacrifices were also carried out at this festival, both as offerings to the gods, and for the druids to make divinations (predicting the future) from the way that people died, or from how their blood and entrails spilt. The victims would have been criminals, or captives. This custom horrified the Roman writers, although they later sent Christians to the lions! Hearth fires would be extinguished and new ones would be kindled; huge bonfires were also lit outside, a custom reflected by our Guy Fawkes celebration on November 5th, borrowed from this much older festival.

Imbolc

This next festival in the calendar was at the beginning of February and was related to the time that the ewes began to produce milk for their lambs. Women celebrated the change in aspect of the goddess Bridget from the winter hag to the spring maiden at this time (see below - Triple Aspects of Gods) It later became St. Bridget's day, a saint of the Irish church based on this much older Celtic goddess.

3 figures from a well at Hadrian's Wall

Beltane

On the first of May, this was the second most important festival of the year, and marked the time when the cattle could be put out to pasture again after the winter. Bonfires were lit in honour of the sun god and the cattle made to pass between them to protect them from disease and evil spirits.

Lughnasa

This festival which took place at the height of summer, 1st August, included fairs, games, and the arrangement of marriages, and is named after a Celtic god, Lug, or Lugh, who appears in both Welsh and Irish stories, whose own marriage occurred at this time. The fairs possibly took place in the area inside the hillforts, and may have included competitions between craftsmen, recitals by the poets and bards, horseracing, acrobats and jugglers, music and dancing.

By this date, the crops would be ripening, and this festival was thought to be related to ensuring that this would happen successfully. Most of the Celtic festivals were about ensuring an abundant harvest, or healthy livestock by performing the correct rituals. Although in Christian times the festival became Lammas, the feast of first fruits, the idea of giving thanks, such as in the Christian harvest festival, does not come into this form of religion - as long as the correct rituals had taken place initially, the rest would follow as a matter of course.

Gods, Mythology and Supernatural Themes

The name of the god **Lugh** mentioned above, is also found in several place and river names in Herefordshire on the Welsh borders, for example, the river Lug and the town of Lugwardine. Gods often had a particular object associated with them and a description of their attributes attached to their names - an epithet, in the case of Lugh it was 'Lugh of the Long Arm', possibly referring to his superb use of the throwing spear and sling. Lugh is one of the gods who seems to have been recognised over quite a wide area, from Ireland to at least eastern France, (the city of Lyon is named after him), and he is often portrayed as a young man.

From the Gunderstrup Cauldron

Manannan mac Lir in Irish mythology (or **Manawydan, son of Lyr** from the Welsh Mabinogion), was one of the Tuatha de Dannan, or fair folk, and was a deity of the sea and king of Mag Mell, the Land of Promise. He is thought to have fostered Lug, and given him a helmet of invisibility. He also possessed a magical Crane-skin bag, in which he kept 'his own knife and magic shirt, an anvil and leather apron that. . . a smith had owned, the King of Scotland's sheers, and the King of Norway's horned helmet, as well as a belt made of a strip of whaleskin. When the sea is at full tide you can see the treasures in the bag. When the tide turns and ebbs away the crane bag seems empty.' (From Over Nine Waves - Marie Heaney)

Manannan himself was able to appear in many forms - a shape shifter - a power believed to be possessed by many magicians, and some druids (see below) who were also sorcerers. This ability comes into many mythologies. Zeus in Greek mythology was renowned for becoming many types of animal, and it is also an attribute of the shaman, or medicine man or women of many cultures. Manannan gave his name to the Isle of Man.

A panel from the Gunderstrup Cauldron

A grotesque and enormously strong god who is found in Ireland and Wales is known as **the Dagda**, and his attribute is a huge club. The chalk figure of the Cerne Abbas giant may be a representation of him. He is also one of several gods who owned a magic **cauldron** of plenty and renewal (later to appear as the Holy Grail of Arthurian legend) which was never emptied, and from which anyone who ate of its contents would never leave the table unsatisfied. It was also used to heal the wounded after battles, their damaged bodies being placed in the cauldron, and later they would emerge healed, and ready to fight again. There is a wonderful example of a very magical looking container known as the Gundestrap Cauldron, found in a peat bog in Denmark which is made of silver and is covered in figures from mythology, including a wounded person being placed into a cauldron.

Bronze plaque from Wales

A similar cauldron was also owned by **Bran the Blessed** - god of the ravens, who also appears in Ireland, Wales and England. His cauldron restores life to the dead, but his head ended up keeping watch over Britain, guarded by ravens in the place where the White Tower of the Tower of London stands today, and where ravens still live.

The Severed Head

The Celts believed that the head was where the soul resided, the essence of being, so it could be seen to represent the whole of a person and their power (perhaps why we have only the head of a monarch on our coins, a custom reaching back to Celtic times?). It could also bring luck and ward off evil, so to remove the head of an opponent in battle, was not simply a sign of your bravery and honour, it was also a sign of respect to the owner of the head. Severed heads were displayed with pride in homes and sometimes at the table during a feast. The story of Gawain and the Green Knight from Arthurian legend is an interesting example of the power of the severed head.

Another connection with ravens was through the goddess Badb - 'The Battle Raven', who could influence the course of a fighting. She was one of either three goddesses, or one of three aspects of a goddess known as the Morrigan, a fearsome being who often appeared at the battlefield and, who eventually developed into one personality - Morgan la Fe of the Arthurian Stories. The Morrigan could also have been the model for Shakespeare's Weird sisters in Macbeth.

The Triple Aspect

This is a theme which recurs endlessly in Celtic mythology, and once again is often found in their artwork as the triskele, or three spirals. Three was a sacred number and there are several gods who have this three sided quality. Sometimes, a goddess is represented as a young maiden, a mother, and an old woman often witch-like, the hag. Carved stone heads with three faces have been found in many parts of Europe.

Cernunnos, from the Gundestrup cauldron

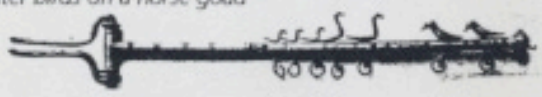
Cernunnos was a god found all over Europe, and is a horned creature, bearing stag antlers. He is a lord of the animals and seems to have been very important to the Celts. His reappearance in Christian times as the horned devil, perhaps shows us how powerful he was, and how the early Church was keen to discredit him and remove his power by making him a force of evil, which he does not seem to have been to the Celts. There are many images of him, a particularly interesting one is on the Gundestrap Cauldron, mentioned above.

The importance which **Birds and Animals** played in Celtic life and mythology can be seen from the numerous and often wonderful carvings and castings of them found decorating many surfaces and on many objects. Superstitions about birds and animals still exist today and may be based on the Celtic view of them. Certain animals are, as we have seen, often associated with particular gods, but were also feared or respected in their own right.

Cow and calf on bronze bowl

Water birds of every kind were sacred and have often been related to Mother Goddess figures. Boar, rams, stags, bulls, bear, dogs, hares and horses all feature in images or stories. The warrior queen, Boudicca, invoked the name of Andraste, goddess of the Iceni, and released a hare before going into battle. Certain salmon were thought to carry the wisdom and knowledge of the Otherworld. The Irish hero Finn Mac Cumhaill Cool was, as a young man, put in charge of cooking the Salmon of Knowledge, by a bard Finnegas, who had been trying to catch it for years and had finally succeeded just as the young Finn turned up, eager to learn the skills of a poet so that he could become a good leader of warriors.

Water birds on a horse goad



He was instructed not to taste it under any circumstances, as he would then receive the wisdom rightfully belonging to the bard. However, Finn burnt his thumb in the broth the fish was being cooked in, and instinctively put it in his mouth, thus receiving the wisdom. The bard was angry when he saw what had happened until he asked Finn's name. He had been known as Demne until that point (his false name of childhood perhaps?). When he said this name, the Bard told him that it was prophesied that a fair haired man would come and eat the salmon of Wisdom, so he must be Finn, because of his fair hair (Finn means fair). From that point on, whenever he was in danger or needed guidance, he only had to put his thumb in his mouth to receive knowledge!

This salmon was said to have fed on the magic nuts that fell from the hazel tree, (or the berries of the magic rowan tree), which overhung the pool where it swam. Trees played an important part in Celtic magic and mythology as they have done in other cultures, and trees still regarded as special, if not actually sacred, are often found next to ancient wells in Cornwall.

Stone from Scotland 5th century AD

The importance of horses to the Celts is undoubted, as we have seen already. The goddess Epona was the horse goddess, Rhiannon is another name associated with her in the Welsh stories of The Mabinogion where she rides a magical white horse. The white horse cut into the chalk hillside at Uffington in Berkshire is possibly Celtic in origin and may have been dedicated to Epona (The word pony comes from the name Epona).

Rhiannon, from an Edwardian story book

Local gods were abundant, and were often the deities or gods of just one particular well or sacred tree, and we only know of them perhaps through local folklore, as they would not have been noted by the Roman writers as there were so many of them. However, one local goddess whose spring was much appreciated by the Romans was Sulis who gave her name to the Roman city of Bath - Aquae Sulis. The spring which gushes abundant quantities of hot, healing water out of the earth was well known before the arrival of the Romans who turned it into the major spa city of Europe. They even adopted the Celtic goddess's name, although equated her with their own goddess of wisdom and healing - Minerva.

Many springs, wells and rivers were associated with female gods, and although there did not appear to be a single Mother Earth deity, the powers of birth and regeneration, so readily seen in the continuous cycle of growth of plants in the earth, and the flowing of water from springs, were both honoured and feared through these separate goddesses.

The Druids

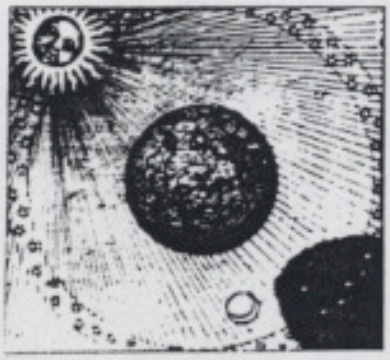
These were the priests, the only people who could perform the correct rituals at the festivals and at sacrifices, they were the intermediaries between humans and the gods. It is possible that the druidic religion had its roots in Neolithic times as a sun worshipping cult, and that later monuments of the Bronze Age like Stonehenge may have been used in their rituals, but there is no firm evidence for this. Caesar implies that Druidism came from the British Isles and that the Gauls sent their young men here for training.

Oak and mistletoe

Sacred Groves and Trees

There are a few remains of temples or built enclosures where some form of worship may have occurred, and some rites may have been performed within the hillfort areas at the festivals too, but most of their rituals seem to have taken place in sacred groves of trees. Tree lore was an important study of the Druids, and there were certain trees which were particularly magical - oak trees were such, especially the rare phenomenon of an oak tree bearing

Stone with Ogham script from Ireland



mistletoe, also a sacred plant, which could only be cut with a golden sickle at the correct phase of the moon. The berries of mistletoe could make barren animals fertile, amongst many other magical properties. (The curious Ogham script - sequences of marks - found carved into stones in some parts of Britain, is thought to be related to a language of trees, each mark standing for the initial letter of a different type of tree. This was not necessarily related to Druidic practice. See Themes and activities for 'translation'.

Healing and Training

The knowledge of the healing properties of plants and other forms of medical treatment may well have been the domain of the Druids. They had very lengthy training, twenty years or so, as all the knowledge they had to learn was passed on orally, a very important and strong tradition amongst Celtic people until recent times - to write things down can remove their power. They were said to study the movements of the heavens, the constitution of the world, and the properties of the gods.

Calendars

The Druids combined the solar and lunar calendar to measure time and calculate the dates for festivals. This was done without the aid of writing or written mathematics. However, one of the few pieces of writing to come from the Celts are fragments of a bronze tablet, found a hundred years ago in Coligny, France and dating to the first century AD, which appears to be a complicated table of dates like a calendar for calculating lucky and unlucky days. The letters and numerals are roman, but the language is Gaulish and very obscure A modern author Caitlin Matthews has interpreted some of the month names to mean the following;

October/November	Seed-fall
November/December	The Darkest Depths
December/January	Cold-time
January/February	Stat-home time
February/March/	Time of Ice
March/April	Time of Winds
April/May	Shoots-show
May/June	Time of Brightness
June/July	Horse-time
July/August	Claim-time
August/September	Arbitration-time
September/October	Song-time

Grave goods for a chieftan, from Hertfordshire

Judges

They also acted as judges in disputes, and had the power to stop battles, and to banish anyone from a tribe guilty of a misdeed. This was a serious punishment, almost worse than a death penalty because of the importance of the idea of the honour attached to the family and the tribe.

Death and Burial

The Celts believed in the transmigration of souls,that is, when a person dies, their soul hovers around their dead body for a while, and then moves into a new body. This could account for the Celts fearlessness in battle. The practice of excarnation may have been as a result of this belief. The dead body would be placed on a platform outside, perhaps in a sacred place, and allowed to decay, the bones being collected later, perhaps for some other ritual purposes, although in some places burials with grave goods were the more usual practice.

Sorcerers
Some Druids seem to have had magical powers as well, and were capable of the shape-shifting transformations so popular in Celtic stories. The Druid Mog Ruith had a shamanic 'bird dress' in which he 'rose up with the fire, into the air and the heavens'; he also caused a tempest with a single breath.

Power and Decline
Whatever their role, they must have had enormous power and influence, as the Romans were very keen to dispose of them, and did so largely on the Isle of Anglesey, which was possibly the centre of Druidic worship at that time, in AD 61. The Romans, Caesar and Tacitus in particular, wrote quite a lot about the Druids, but much of it may have been in the form of anti-druid propaganda, so we cannot take all their information as a true picture of Druidic practices. For example, the idea that the Druids placed people in huge wicker effigies of humans, and set fire to them at their festivals, is questionable.

Shaman figure with feather cloak

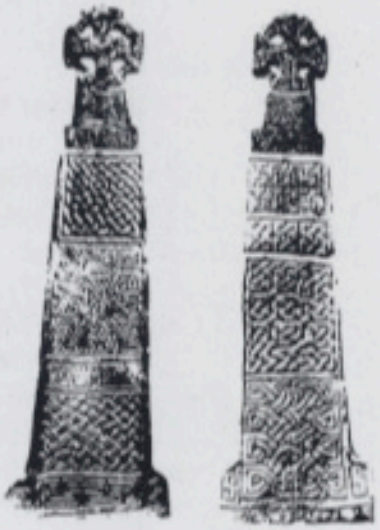
Bards
These were the official poets and storytellers of Celtic society, perhaps hard for us to understand this idea now, but in a society which did not, (or perhaps chose not to) use writing, the spoken word was the way information was passed on, and so the ability to learn and memorise information was both very important and highly respected.

Bards also underwent a rigorous training of at least twelve years, sometimes apparently spending several days on end in darkened rooms, learning and memorizing information, and composing verses. They were paid handsomely by the chief to praise him and the tribe and the deeds of the warriors, and would also travel to other courts to do the same thing. However, they also satirised people occasionally for some misdeed, and their reputation for doing this was much feared. To be made fun of in Celtic society, where pride and vanity were such a strong feature, was a fearful punishment. The power they seemed to have could be likened to that of the newspapers and television now, as they were in some respects commentators on society just as the media are today.

18th century depiction of sacrificial wicker effigy

The art of storytelling continues up to the present day, and has become increasingly popular in recent years, allowing us to experience a tradition enjoyed by the Celts.

Christianity
This was probably brought to Britain by the Roman army, and by the fourth century AD when it had been adopted by the inhabitants, it became altered to suit the Celtic way of life. Small groups of hermits lived in isolated places, sometimes led by a saint. Theirs was probably a simple form of Christianity, but it was through these early monks, often on the westerly shores of Britain and in many parts of Ireland, that learning was kept alive during the Dark Ages. The traditions of Celtic art continued to grow and flourish through them, resulting in the beautifully illuminated gospels, like the book of Durrow and the book of Kells. They also wrote, not just about matters of the Church, but also about life in general at that time, as well as writing down many of the stories of the past from which we have learnt much about Celtic life, and been able to enjoy the rich and wonderful stories of Ireland and Wales.



Carved stone cross from west Wales

Books and other resources

For Children (All illustrated)

What do we know about the Celts? Hazell Mary Martell.
Simon & Schuster Young Books 1993

The Celts. Activity Book. Mike Corbishley
British Museum. 1989. (OK for 6 - 8 year olds)

Tales from the Mabinogion. Gwyn Thomas & Kevin Crossley Holland.
Gollancz. 1989 (Welsh Legends)

Tales for the Telling. Edna O'Brien
Puffin 1986. (Irish Folk and Fairy stories)

Island of the Mighty - Stories of Old Britain, Haydn Middleton.
Oxford 1987.

The Woolpack. Cynthia Harnett.
Puffin? (Adventure story of Mediaeval Wool merchants in the Cotswolds)

Exploring the Countryside. Michael Chinery.
Kingfisher, 1985.

Further reading for adults. (These are well informed but not over academic books!)

Prehistory. Derek Roe
Paladin 1970

The Oxford Illustrated Prehistory of Europe. Ed Barry Cunliffe.
Oxford 1994.

Celtic Britain. Lloyd Laing. (one of a series - Britain before the Conquest)
Paladin Granada. 1978

Iron Age Britain. Barry Cunliffe,
Batsford/English Heritage 1995 (well illustrated with painted reconstructions of Celtic life and settlements, useful for showing children)

Everyday Life of the Pagan Celts. Anne Ross
Batsford. 1970.

The Penguin Atlas of Ancient History. Colin McEvedy
Penguin 1967

Celtic Lore. Ward Rutherford.
Aquarian/Thorsons. 1993. (How Celtic myths & Legends have lived on and had much influence)

Over Nine Waves. A Book of Irish Legends. Marie Heaney.
Faber & Faber. 1994 (A very readable re-telling)

The Mabinogion. Gwyn Jones and Thomas Jones.
Dent. 1977.

A Celtic Miscellany.
Penguin Classics.1971.

The Celtic Tradition. Caitlin Mathews
Element. 1989

The making of the English Landscape. W.G.Hoskins
Penguin.1955.

History of the British Countryside. Oliver Rackham.
Dent. 1986 (Long and dense, but fascinating to dip into)

Trees & Woodland in the British Landscape. Oliver Rackham
Dent. 1990. (ditto)

Bibliography for Schools Pack.
(Includes the above)
Iron Age Communities in Britain. Barry Cunliffe.
RKP. 1978
The Celtic Realms. Myles Dillon and Nora Chadwick
Weidenfeld & Nicholson. 1967.
The Celts. T.G.E.Powell.
Thames & Hudson.1967
The Druids. Stuart Piggott.
Thames & Hudson.1968.
Prehistoric Societies. Graham Clarke and Stuart Piggott.
Penguin. 1990
Celtic Warriors. Tim Newark.
Blandford.1993.
Occidental Mythology.Joseph Campbell.
Penguin.1987.
Women in Celtic Myth. Moyra Caldecott.
Arrow. 1988
Feminist Companion to Mythology. Ed Carolyn Larrington.
Pandora.1992.

Older books in these lists may no longer be in print, but would probably be available from a library.

Many thanks also to Charles Copp for his information on geology, natural history and landscape history, and Al Tanner, for his information about The Celts - their history and culture.

Other Sources of Information

- Bristol Regional Environmental Record Centre at Ashton Court Visitor Centre have records of plants and butterflies of the hillfort and surrounding area. Contact - Karen Turvey 0117 953 2140 (any records of of unusual species of plants, insects or animal life found in this area would be welcomed by BRERC, most of their recoders are volunteers)
- The Records Office in Gloucester has old parish records of this area. 01452 425295
- There is a Museum of the Iron Age in Andover, Hants which can provide information. 01264 366283
- At the Wetlands Visitor Centre in the Somerset Levels, there is a reconstruction of an Iron Age settlement, where they otfen hold demonstrations of crafts from that period.

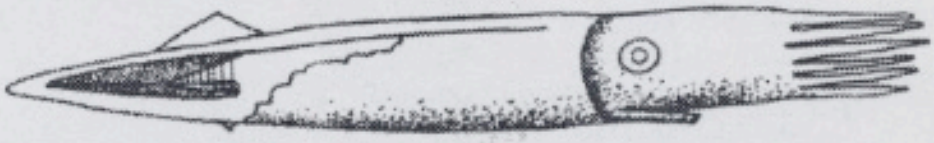
Amonites may be found in the "Camp" area

Suggestion for themes and activities to work on with children

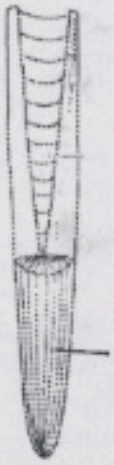
Fossils

Amongst the fossils you might find here are brachiopods - shelled creatures which largely became extinct with the dinosaurs, bi-valves - which are like cockles, and fossilised shells covered in the fossilised tubes of the serpulid worm are also common, and look exactly like the ones that can be found on beaches today.

Finding fossils of animals of animals which have changed little over millions of years gives us an interesting insight into evolution. Creatures such as the serpulid worm found a role in the natural world which it has not had to develop or adapt and change very much at all, it did little more than suck! On the other hand, the huge dinosaurs were very specialised in life style and diet and needed a very particular environment which, inevitably caused their extinction when the habitat changed.



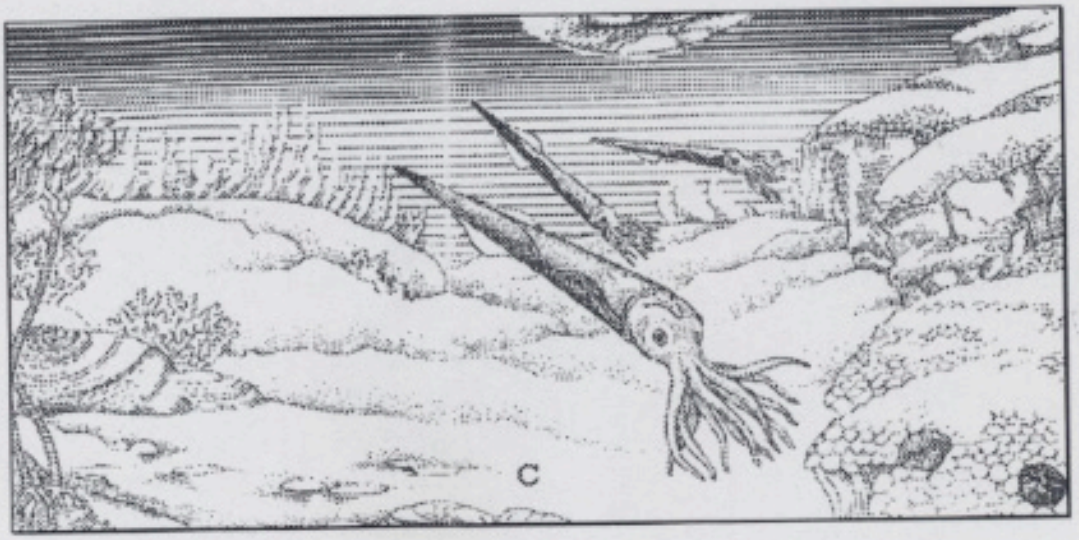
One of the most intriguing fossils which can be found quite easily on Sodbury camp is called a belemnite. Belemnites were related to octopus and squid and look a little like squid but are no longer in existence. They had ink sacs like their modern counterparts and tentacles (with which they caught their food) and a head at the same end. They swam by jet propulsion, sucking water into their bodies through flaps of skin, and forcing it out through a funnel. They could bend this funnel to make themselves travel in different directions.



It is this guard part which is found fossilised in great numbers at Sodbury Camp

They were naturally buoyant, but because of the weight of the tentacles and the head at the front of the body, their heads would hang downwards - not useful if you are trying to catch dinner floating above you or for swimming control! It needed to be counterbalanced and so it had a 'guard' or weight in its tail, which was shaped like a bullet, pointed at one end and open at the other, which kept it balanced in the water. These also contained chambers which could be filled or emptied of water to allow the belemnite to alter its buoancy and the depth at which it floated in the water.

It is these fossilised guards which are all that is left of the belemnites, and they are quite common and easy to identify. They were thought in the past to be bullets, or the remains of thunderbolts, which must have given rise to many stories.



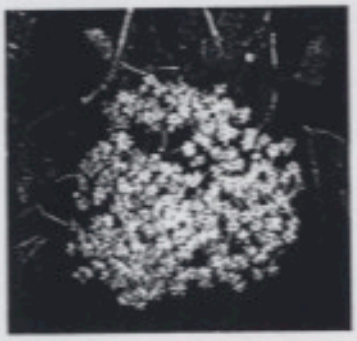
Telling History - Touching the Past

When you pass an old hedge, you can sometimes see in the bent trunk of an old tree, for example, an ash, hawthorn or lime, the ghost of the work once done and now neglected, by a man 'plashing' or laying the hedge, or pollarding, maybe a hundred, maybe three hundred years ago. The curve of the trunk shows where the wood has re-grown after management had been abandoned.

You can touch that bend in the tree trunk, and if it was a hundred years ago that this man was busy working, you can imagine him, in Victorian clothes, cutting the shoots with his billhook - making his mark on that tree, as people have done for thousands of years. He may tell stories to his children about the old names of the trees, and the folklore surrounding them, stories which his father told him. He might have known your great, great grandfather, five generations ago.

A ten year old girl of the Dobunni tribe, living in a farmstead near here, may have heard a story from her farming mother about why the magical elder tree is called the Lady's tree. It was because the great white clusters of flowers were like the moon, and the Lady was the moon goddess.

If she told the same story to her children, and they to theirs, it would only have to be told 50 times before it reached the ears of our Victorian hedger when he was a boy, and only another five times to reach you. Remembering and telling stories and facts was how the Celts passed on their information without writing. The thread of a remembered story stretches right back from the Celts to here and now. The Celts weren't just a group of people in history, for some of us they were our ancestors, and thinking in this way can bring them quite close.



Elder flowers (right) and berries (below) have their culinary uses, but the tree itself has long been credited with supernatural powers. Invaders from northern Europe who settled here after the Roman occupation are said to have planted elders among the rotting bodies of executed criminals, hoping the plant would absorb their badness and so bring peace to their souls.

Horse mask, and bridle bits with detail

B	birch
L	rowan
F	alder
S	willow
N	ash
H	hawthorn
D	oak
T	holly
C	hazel
Q	apple
M	vine
G	ivy
NG	broom/fern
STR	blackthorn
R	elder
A	fir/pine
O	gorse
U	heather
E	aspen
I	yew
EA	aspen
OI	spindle
UI	honeysuckle
IO	gooseberry
(AE)	beech

Ogham Script alphabet

The story of Oissin - a Celtic story from Ireland

Oissin was a huge and powerful man, the son of the hero warrior Finn Mac Cumhaill, leader of the war tribe the Fianna. They had fought many battles, and after the battle of Gowra they sensed that their time was coming to an end. They decided to revive their spirits by hunting near the sea, but were stopped in their tracks by the sight of a beautiful young woman riding towards them on an equally lovely white horse.

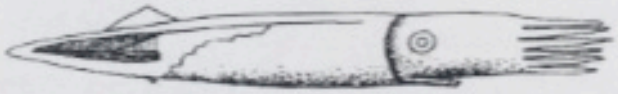
She stopped and told them that her name was Niamh of the Golden Hair, and that her father was the King of Tir na n'Og. She had come to find Oissin, as tales of his fine deeds, his sweet nature and good looks had even reached Tir na n'Og. She wanted him to come with her and be her husband. He thought her the most beautiful woman he had ever seen and agreed to go with her, even though he could see the sad faces of his father and comrades. He climbed up on the horse behind her, and it galloped into the sea on a magical journey to Tir na n'Og, where Oissin lived in great happiness with Niamh of the Golden Hair, and they had three children, but Oissin never got any older.

But even in Tir na n'Og, a mortal man can get homesick, and Oissin wished to see his old home and family and friends once more, Niamh did not want him to go, as she said he would never return , and she would be so sad without him. But he longed so much to return, that eventually she agreed, and told him to take the white horse as it knew the way, but warning him three times, that if ever he got down from the horse and touched the earth of Ireland, he would never be able to return to Tir na n'Og. He promised, and said farewell to the lovely Niamh and their children, but she still begged him no to go.

But Oissin was in high spirits, and the horse took him swiftly back to Ireland. He was still a young and powerful warrior, but could see no sign of his friends in the familiar lands of his home. He stopped to ask a crowd of people if they knew where he could find Finn Mac Cumhaill, and they stared at him in astonishment because of his huge stature, and his odd clothes, and they told him that although they had heard of this man, he had died long ago.

Oissin was overcome with sadness, but rode on to try to find some traces of his friends and family. As he rode, he saw a huge gathering of people, who shouted to him to come and help. They were trying to lift an enormous stone which was so heavy, it was crushing the men beneath it. The mighty Oissin leaned out of his saddle and helped to save the trapped men by lifting the stone. But it was so heavy that the strain on the horses saddle caused the golden girth to snap and Oissin was pulled to the ground. The crowd stared in horror as the handsome young warriors face aged hundreds of years before their eyes and crumbled to dust. They tried to catch the horse but it galloped back to Niamh, who knew with heart breaking sadness that her husband would never return.

Activities



Time

In the text we have heard a little about the geological changes that have occurred to create the present day Cotswold landscape.

We can tell the children that at one time this area of land has been hot desert, swamp and at the bottom of a tropical ocean. We know these things by studying the rocks of the area

But perhaps the most tangible link to a distant geological era is through some of the fossils that can be readily found in the loose soils around the hill fort.

There are fossilised sea shells, worm casts and belemnites (see page 7 and 42) from the Jurassic Period (150 - 170 million years ago) and these creatures shared their world with the Jurassic dinosaurs which include the sea going ichthyosaurs and pleisosaur, on land there were the largest land animals ever the Brachiosaurus up to 24 metres long and weighing 51 tonnes, the ferocious flesh eating dinosaurs not unlike the Tyranosaurus Rex (which comes from a later period) - look these creatures up in your dinosaur reference books.

To get an idea of just how long ago this might be take a piece of string over 3 metres long and allow 1 millimetre for every year. A ten year old child on this scale will take up 1 centimetre, a forty year old adult 4 centimetres and so on - 1 metre will take us back 1000 years. Let the children calculate how much string would take us back to the coming of the Romans in AD 43 or the arrival of the first Celts in Britain around 600 BC- (if you have been studying other historical periods or eras you might tie a label as precisely as you can where they occur on the time line to get other perspectives).

How much string do we need to get us back to the time of the belemnite and the Brachiosaurus (150,000,000 years would equal 150 kilometres of string or as far from Old Sodbury as Central London or the centre of Birmingham.

So the time of the Celts is not so distant - another way of thinking about this is in human generations - most children will have surviving grandparents and possibly great grandparents. They can calculate where their oldest forebears were born and place that on the time line. Each generation of human beings is a living link in the chain of human life stretching back to the time of the Celts and beyond. Many of us will have some Celtic blood running in our veins.

Each generation is reckoned to span, on average, about 30 years before it succeeds to the next, in our human chain just how many generations will take us back to the hey day of the Celts, say 100 years BC - or approximately 2100 years ago - this works out at only 70 generations of which each child will know (including him or herself) 3 or 4 links on this chain - so not very long ago.

Allow each child in your class or group to be a human generation - by holding hands see just how far back can you get.

Groups and Tribes
Quite a lot of the work that the artists attached to this project will be doing will be connected to the themes of tribes and tribalism. But if you want to explore ideas and concepts connected to these themes the following might be useful ways into this area....

Human beings can achieve very little if they do not act as a part of a group or groups. From the family unit to the vastnesses of empires or present day international corporations people work and live as part of groups. We probably all know the pleasure and satisfaction of being received into a group and the pain and bewilderment of being rejected.

We are going to be exploring the ideas and mechanisms of what it might have been like to be a part of a tribe - where you were born into a group to which you would then have had a life-long membership and allegiance.

We are going to treat each school as if it is a tribe, exploring its way of life and be developing its identity. Here are a couple of games/exercises that you might try with the children as a 'way-in' to this subject area.

Making a Greeting
Imagine that you are living in your hill-fort village. You would be used to seeing members of your own tribe coming and going, to and from the outlying farms or other destinations. But every now and then you would see another traveller in the distance coming towards you. This person might be a trader or merchant, who might be bringing goods (and news) from far off places. Or it might be a poet and storyteller (a bard) or perhaps a craftsperson who brings with them skills and the knowledge of making things which you admire and want to share.

Can you create a suitable greeting which welcomes that person, which makes them feel as though you are pleased accept their presence. You can flatter them, tell them how good they look and that you are honoured to have them there. You may ask after news and offer hospitality such as refreshments etc.

You may wish to impress them with your own dignity, or ability to make poetry etc. This is a ceremonial meeting. It would be good to have worked up this greeting to use for when the artists arrive to work with the children.

A rejection game which is also fun
Break the children up into groups of fours. Three of the children link hands into a 'circle', one of the children is left out.

One of the children in the circle is the marked person or person X. The person outside the circle wants to join the circle but the only way s/he can do this is to touch X.

X and the other children of the circle are determined that s/he shall not do this and must continually manoeuvre their circle so that X is out of reach.

This game is fast and furious and enough room is needed for the boisterous activity. When the person outside the circle manages to touch X then s/he can change places with one of the people in the circle.

Cooperation game

This game has to be tried to be appreciated. It is about cooperation and to some extent patience.

All the children should sit around in a circle. The aim of the game is to get all the children standing up - but no two children can move at the same time, if they do then everybody has to sit down again. This has to be done in silence, the children have to control their impatience, the teacher or facilitator must control recrimination.
Sooner or later the children discover a way to do this - and when it finally works out it is like magic!. *It might also be said that for tempermental reasons it is unlikely that the Celts themselves would have been much good at this game*

The memory game

Accomplished as they were in many areas we do know that the pre Roman Celts did not have a written language instead they comitted great volumes of information to their memories - the druids and bards in particular had the function of sustaining the Celtic religions and culture across the generations.

We can only play at this kind of developed faculty but this might be also a good way of fixing some of the material explored in this pack in the minds of the children.

This is a variation on a well known game 'I packed my bag and in it I put ....' in this case it is 'I packed my crane-skin bag and in it I put.....' On page 49 you will find a check list with page reference numbers of things to be found in the preceding text.

Further ideas and suggestions

Technology / history

Look at new technologies in different parts of history like the iron of the Celts, to see what affect they have made on the landscape as well as on peoples lives and the course of history; the felling of trees for charcoal for iron smelting - the printing press, coal power and the 'second iron age' of the industrial revolution, development of accurate clocks on sea navigation and what affect that had on trade.

Technology and storytelling

Look at todays technological change of computing and the 'digital revolution', what effects that has on jobs, leisure, communication. Think about the possibilities of storytelling on the Internet - 35 millio people all over the whole world could have access to one story simultaneously, in Celtic times, the number of people who could hear the story at one time, would be determined by the number of people who could physically hear the storyteller.

Make up some stories in groups and tell them to each others groups. you could use animals in the story that you have learnt may be on Little Sodbury, , and borrow some of the Celts ideas of shape-shifting

Games and performance

Re-create a day in the life of different classes of children or adults from Celtic times. Invent some tribes, divide yourselves amongst the tribes, think of things you may want to trade with each other. This could happen between schools at the final event too.

Make up some games and invent some dances that reflect the knot patterns which could be performed at a festival.

Artwork
Make some simple Celtic patterns, e.g.groups of spirals, make potato cuts, and print them on paper. Older children might be able to make and print lino cuts onto paper or fabric, or patterns cut into erasers and with non permanent dyes 'tattoo' your friends. (Needs to be done under supervision!)

Design a coin for your tribe. One of the artists working in the schools on this project may be able to do some simple casting to make coins)

Make some 'jewellery', or ornaments out of baked dough, or cardboard and lumps of thick glue and paint them gold. Design some Celtic knot and animal patterns out of the initials of your name and colour them.

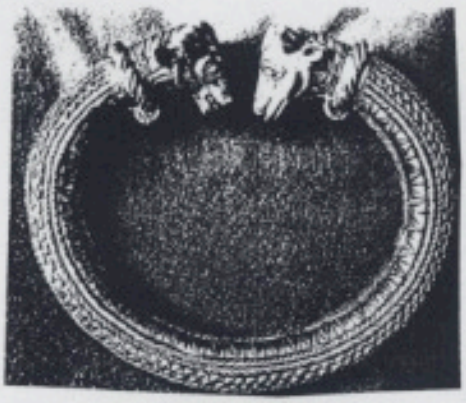
Make a maze pathway on the ground with ropes. (This might be a project to be done one of the artists) .

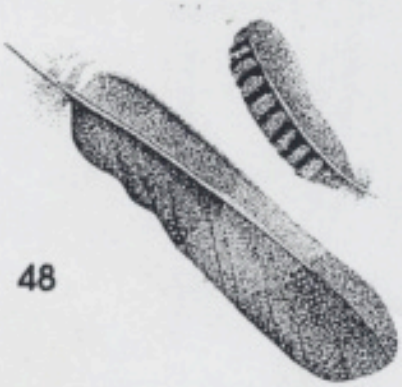
Geography and the Natural World
Find a field nearby which looks as though it may have several sorts of flowers in it, see if it has a name, see if you can find who it has belonged to, are there details of the boundaries in the parish records, see how far back do the records go.

What are the flowers and grasses which grow in it, do they tell us anything about what the field was/is used for. Are there any plants which may have been used for heeling?

On and around the hillfort, see if you can find evidence of animal footprints, fur/hair on fences, holes in ground, holes in nut shells.
Grow some Celtic beans and woad **(one set of seeds included with pack for each school)**

Stand on the west side of the hillfort on a clear day and see what rivers and distinctively shaped hills you can see far away - find a map and try to name them from it; closer to you, can you see any churches, can you find them on a map, can you give a grid reference for them? Can you find footpaths on the map, do they join up with villages, or farms, your house? Can you find your school on the map?





Checklist of things which might go into the 'Memory Bag' see memory on page 47