

## **Teachers' Notes: Stone Age to Iron**

Here is a simplified chronological history of the developments which occurred from the Palaeolithic through to the Iron Age and the arrival of the Romans in AD 43. It is important to emphasise that change was often slow and the shift from one period to the next gradual.

### **Palaeolithic (Old Stone Age) 800 000 BC to 10 000 BC**

During this period of dramatic climate change the landmass that would eventually become Britain was connected to Europe. Palaeolithic hunters moved freely, when the weather permitted, following herds of mammoth and reindeer and collecting nuts, fruit and berries along the way. They lived in portable shelters and caves, at times creating impressive painted images on the cave walls of France and Spain. These hunter gatherers made large flint hand axes and wooden spears.

### **Mesolithic (Middle Stone Age) 10 000 BC to 4000 BC**

Following the Ice Age, the climate began to warm and tundra was slowly replaced by forest and woodland. Mammoths and reindeer gave way to smaller prey animals more suited to a woodland environment. Until around 6,500 BC Hunter-gatherers could still move freely between Britain and mainland Europe hunting deer and wild boar, catching fish and waterfowl and gathering berries and nuts. They lived in portable tents made from wooden poles and animal skins occasionally, like at Star Carr in Yorkshire, spending longer periods of time in one place. They made a range of tools that were smaller and easier to carry than those made during the Palaeolithic. Tiny flint blades known as microliths were often attached to wooden spears for hunting game while Red Deer antlers were fashioned into spears for fishing. Some hunters cleared small areas within the forest to make catching their prey easier.

### **Neolithic (New Stone Age) 4000 BC to 2300 BC**

The Neolithic was a period of great change when people began to adopt new ways of living. Around this time farming and domesticated animals arrived in Britain which gradually led to communities settling down in one place to grow crops and raise animals. Pottery is made for the first time along with wooden long houses and chambered tombs used for communal burials. Communities also came together to build large ceremonial monuments like Stone Henge (the large stones were added later during the Early Bronze Age). Flint and stone were still used to make tools and weapons, though many axes were now being polished smooth using sand and water.

### **Bronze Age 2300 BC to 700 BC**

Farming continues during the Bronze Age as does the use of stone and flint to make tools and arrowheads. Knowledge of how to make bronze arrives with settlers from Europe and items made of this metal gradually become widespread. Families now live in round houses

and the dead are buried in earthen round barrows. Elite groups emerge and weapons become more widespread.

### **Iron Age 700 BC to AD 43**

Farming intensifies and populations increase. Some communities form large tribal groups and build hillforts as a sign of power and status and, in some cases, for protection. Iron gradually replaces bronze and is used, alongside other precious metals, to create elaborate metal work and jewellery. Trade with communities in Europe and the Roman Empire also increases and coins are made and used for the first time.

### **AD 43 – The Roman Invasion of Britain**