

# Prehistory at a glance

LONDON  
MUSEUM

	What was life like? How did people live?	What evidence do we have?	What was happening around the world?
<b>Palaeolithic</b> (Old Stone Age) 1 million years ago – 10,000 BCE	<b>Key theme: Adapting to changing climates</b> This period is characterised by climate change – gradual, but continual cycles of warming then cooling, with periods when Britain was too cold to be occupied. During warmer times nomadic hunter-gatherers moved in and out of Britain via a land bridge, following herds of animals. People would have eaten big game like mammoth and reindeer and caught fish along with foraged foods such as nuts, fruit and roots.	Flint tools inclu- ding hand axes and spears. This woolly mammoth jaw was found in Ilford, east London.	<b>15,000 BCE</b> Cave paintings of wild horses Lascaux, south west France.
<b>Mesolithic</b> (Middle Stone Age) 10,000 – 4,000 BCE	<b>Key theme: Hunter-gatherers</b> As the climate warmed, the landscape changed from tundra to woodland. Hunter- gatherers continued to move in and out of Britain until it became cut off permanently from Europe around 7,000 BCE. People began to manage the land to lure smaller prey such as red deer and wild boar into forest clearings. Tools changed and smaller microliths (small stone tools) were used to form the tips of arrows, which were fired using a bow.	A different range of flint tools inclu- ding arrow heads. Other materials used included bone and antlers from red deer.	<b>5,300 BCE</b> Farming and pottery in central Europe.



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<b>Neolithic</b> (New Stone Age) 4,000 – 2,200 BCE	<b>Key theme: Early farmers</b> At the beginning of the Neolithic period people migrated to Britain from Europe. They introduced farming here and brought with them domesticated cows, pigs, sheep and goats as well as seeds for crops such as spelt wheat. They also brought clay pots with them. During the Neolithic we see the first evidence of monuments and large earthworks built by communities.	Flint continued to be used to make tools like axes. Flint survives well so many of these tools are found. First evidence of pottery, though this becomes more prevalent in the Bronze Age.	<b>3,200 BCE</b> Indus people develop their own writing system. <b>2,560 BCE</b> The Great Pyramid of Giza is completed. <b>1,323 BCE</b> Tutankhamun dies.
<b>Bronze Age</b> 2,600 – 700 BCE	<b>Key theme: Settlements</b> Farming became the main way of producing food. Many people lived in settlements consisting of round-houses with nearby fields. There were specialised roles within society, for example, metal workers. This was a highly skilled role that was also connected to large scale trade networks. Copper, used to make bronze tools and weapons, was traded across Europe.	Lots of evidence from this period is recovered from the River Thames. Some of the artefacts were unused which leads us to the question: What significance did the River Thames have for early Britons?	<b>1,600 – 1,046 BCE</b> Shang dynasty rule China. <b>776 BCE</b> The first Olympic Games take place in Greece. <b>753 BCE</b> Rome is founded.



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<b>Iron Age</b> 800 BCE – 43 CE	<b>Key theme: Trade and the Romans</b> The Iron Age is named after the first use of iron to make tools and weapons. The raw materials to make iron were found in Britain. Bronze continued to be used. Skilled craftspeople made beautiful, high-status objects. Iron Age communities traded with the Romans before they invaded Britain. The Romans wrote about the Britons and the country.	This bronze coin of the British ruler Cunobelin was found in the River Thames.	<b>563 – 483 BCE</b> Gautama Buddha born.  <b>196 BCE</b> The Rosetta stone is created.



**Note on dates:** You might be more familiar with dates being written as 10,000 BC and 43 AD. This means Before Christ and Anno Domini (Year of the Lord). Today, archaeologists and historians don't use this system any more, but say BCE (Before Common Era) and CE (Common Era) instead.