The Prehistoric Period:
The Iron Age

The Iron Age in Britain began around 1200 BC and lasted until the Romans invaded in 43 AD. The Iron Age came after the Stone Age and the Bronze Age and marked the end of prehistory. During this time, iron became the preferred choice of metal for making tools.

The warrior people who lived in Europe during the Iron Age were known as the Celts. They were skilled metal workers and used iron to make tools, weapons and other useful items, such as cooking pots and nails. They used iron because it was tougher than other metals, such as bronze. It could also be shaped into finer and sharper objects and it was easier to make. The rocks that contained iron could be found much more easily than those needed to make bronze. This meant that iron was also more affordable.

Farming

Farmers started to use an iron plough known as an ard. Iron was stronger than bronze or wood which meant that farmers could plough larger areas of land. As farms became more productive, the population began to rise. There was plenty of food to go around. Harvested crops were often stored in underground pits. This helped them to last throughout the year. If people produced more than they could use, they could trade this surplus supply.

The Rotary Quern

The rotary quern was a very important Iron Age tool that was used to turn grain into flour. It was made up of two flat stones. The grain was poured into a hole in the top stone which was then turned using a handle. The grain was crushed

between the stones and turned into flour. They used the flour to make bread which was an important part of the Stone Age diet. The bread would have been baked in a simple oven made from clay.

Hill Forts

Battles between Celtic tribes were common and, due to the iron weaponry that they had, they could be very bloody. To protect themselves, the tribes settled in hill forts. These forts were surrounded by walls and ditches. Warriors would be on the lookout and always ready to defend the tribe from enemy attacks.

Inside the hill forts, families lived in round houses. These were simple one-roomed homes with a pointed thatched roof. The walls were made out of wattle and daub (a mixture of mud and twigs).

The End of the Iron Age

Despite being good fighters, the Celts were no match for the Romans. In 43 AD, the Roman Emperor Claudius sent 50,000 Roman soldiers to conquer Britain. The battle was brutal and many Celts died. The fighting went on for many years, but over time Celtic tribes were forced to pay taxes to Rome and follow Roman laws. This marked the end of the Iron Age and the start of Roman times.
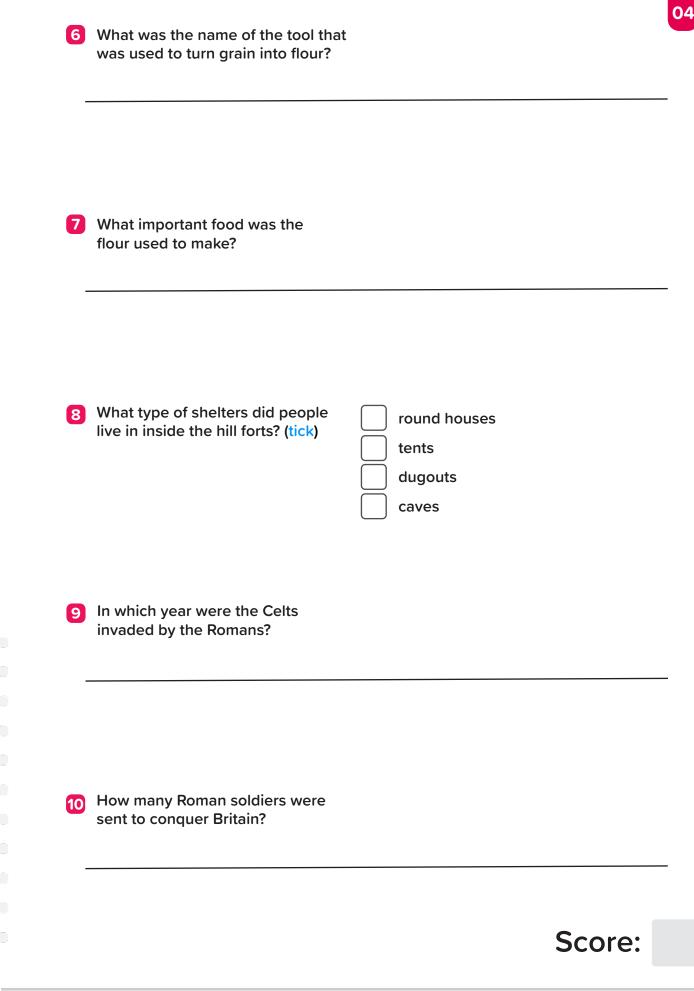
Questions

1 During the Iron Age, what material were tools made out of? (tick)

☐ bronze
☐ stone
☐ iron
☐ steel

2 Which fact is true about iron compared with bronze? (tick)

☐ It was more expensive.
☐ It was harder to make.
☐ It is stronger.
☐ It was harder to find the rocks that contained iron.

3 What was the name of the plough that farmers used?

_____

4 What were the farmers' surplus supplies? (tick)

☐ the harvested crops that were bad
☐ the harvested crops that they had left over
☐ the very best crops
☐ the seeds that they used to grow the crops

5 What was stored in underground pits? (tick)

☐ seeds
☐ iron
☐ bread
☐ harvested crops

6 What was the name of the tool that was used to turn grain into flour?

_____

7 What important food was the flour used to make?

_____

8 What type of shelters did people live in inside the hill forts? (**tick**)

- [ ] round houses
- [ ] tents
- [ ] dugouts
- [ ] caves

9 In which year were the Celts invaded by the Romans?

_____

10 How many Roman soldiers were sent to conquer Britain?

_____

Score:

Answers

1 During the Iron Age, what material were tools made out of?   ☑ iron

2 Which fact is true about iron compared with bronze?   ☑ It is stronger.

3 What was the name of the plough that farmers used?   an ard

4 What were the farmers' surplus supplies?   ☑ the harvested crops that they had left over

5 What was stored in underground pits?   ☑ harvested crops

6 What was the name of the tool that was used to turn grain into flour?   the rotary quern

7 What important food was the flour used to make?   bread

8 What type of shelters did people live in inside the hill forts?   ☑ round houses

9 In which year were the Celts invaded by the Romans?   43 AD

10 How many Roman soldiers were sent to conquer Britain?   50,000