

Life in an Iron Age Hillfort

Learning objective: To understand the daily life and social structure of people living in Britain during the Iron Age.

Read the passage carefully, then answer the questions below using full sentences.

Ellie the elephant loves exploring the history of Britain. Long ago, during the Iron Age, people lived in groups called clans. They built impressive homes known as roundhouses, which were circular buildings made from wood, wattle, and daub, with cosy thatched roofs. To keep their families and livestock safe, they often built their settlements on top of high hills, creating what we call a hillfort. These forts had steep earth walls and deep ditches to act as defensive barriers against intruders.

Life was busy in the Iron Age. Farmers grew wheat and barley, while blacksmiths worked hard at their forges. Because they had discovered how to smelt iron, they could create stronger tools for farming and sharper weapons for protection than people in the Bronze Age. Ellie notices that they did not have coins like we do today; instead, they traded goods like grain, wool, and cattle to get what they needed. It was a time of hard work, but also a time of community, where everyone had a role to play in keeping the clan strong and safe.

Word bank: Hillfort · Roundhouse · Iron · Clan · Defensive · Settlement

1. What materials were used to construct the walls of an Iron Age roundhouse? (2 marks)

2. Why did Iron Age people choose to build their settlements on top of hills? (2 marks)

3. Why was the discovery of iron such an important advancement for the people living at that time? (2 marks)

4. Based on the text, how do we know that Iron Age people had a different economic system than we have today? (2 marks)

5. Do you think living in an Iron Age hillfort would have been a difficult life? Give one reason for your answer. (2 marks)

Draw: Draw a cross-section of an Iron Age roundhouse, showing the wattle and daub walls and the thatched roof.



Extension challenge: Research what 'wattle and daub' is. Create a list of three natural materials you think people would have found in the local forest to build their homes.