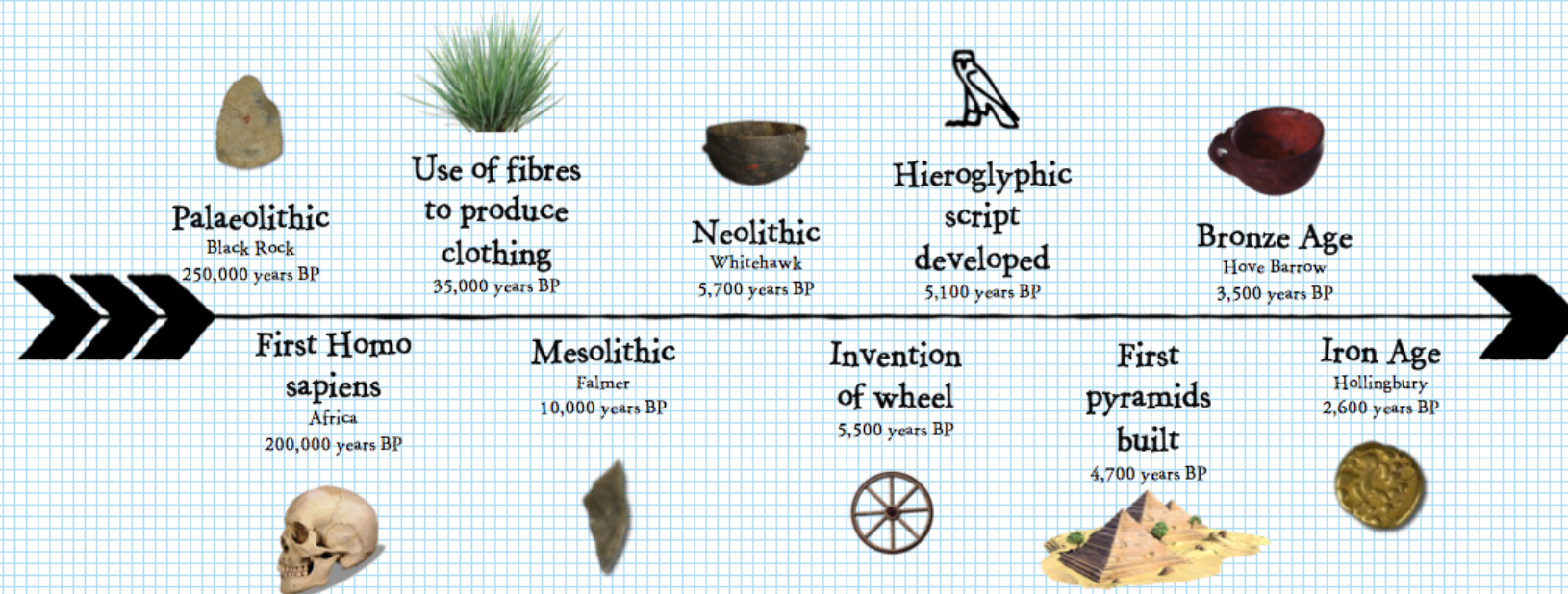


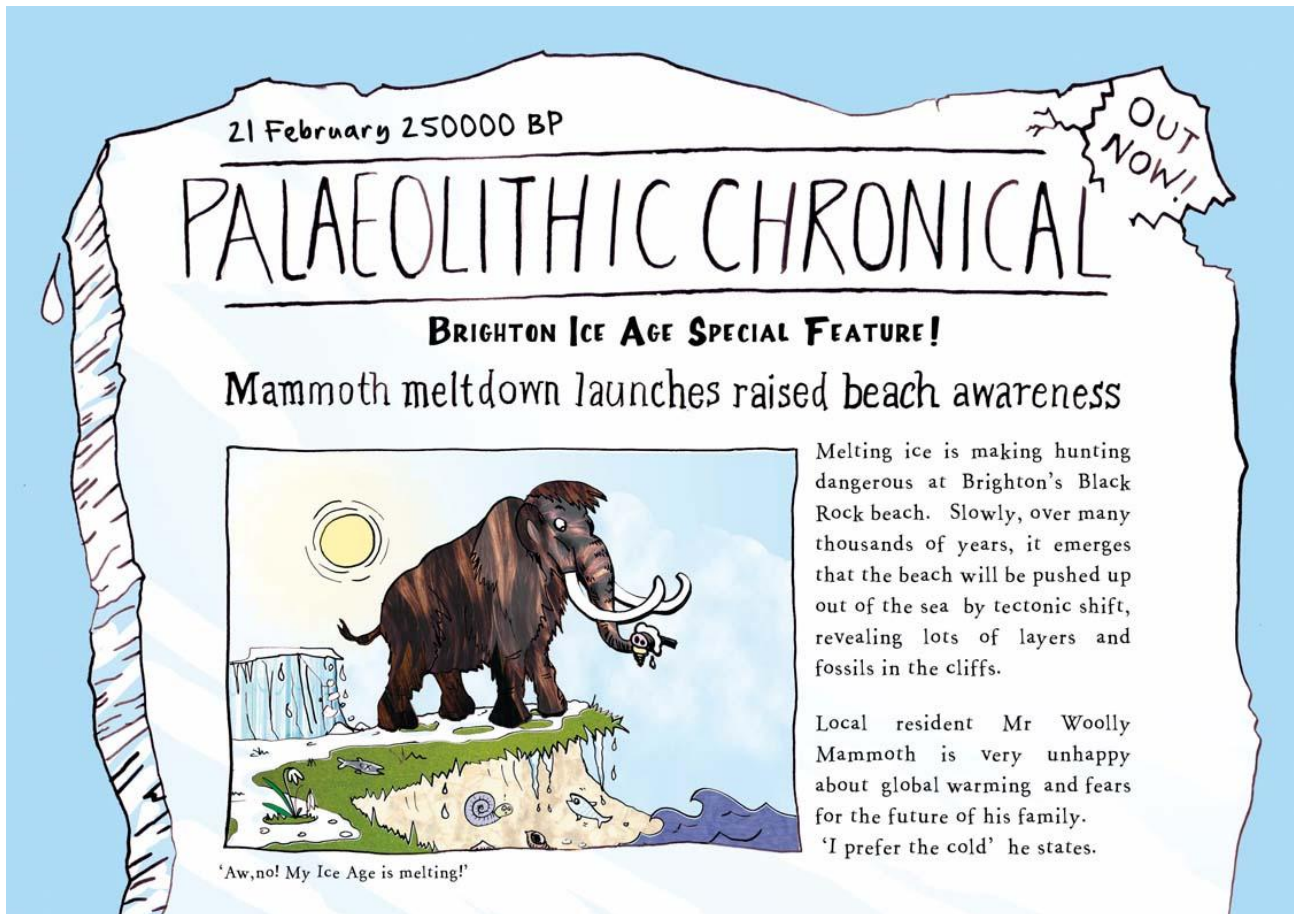
Brighton & Hove Prehistory - Notes for Teachers



World Prehistory Timeline



The Palaeolithic, or Old Stone Age



When was the Palaeolithic?

1.8 million to 10,000 years ago

What is 'the Palaeolithic'?

Known as the Ice Age, this period of time is characterised by large changes in global climate, alternating between relatively warm global temperatures (interglacials) and prolonged periods of intense global cooling (glacials). It is an important period in the story of human evolution as these periods of extreme global warming and cooling directly shaped the development of the human species (in the process of learning to deal with extremes of climate the species learned to walk upright, to make tools and develop complex mental and social behaviour).

Who lived then?

Early man (*Homo antecessor*) could have arrived in Britain as early as 850,000 to one million years ago. *Homo antecessor* was between five and a half and six feet tall, and males weighed up to 200 pounds. They had smaller cranial capacities than modern man.

By 500,000 years ago, another species (*Homo heidelbergensis*) was in existence. An important discovery of the remains of one such species, known as Boxgrove Man, were found just outside Chichester. Although smaller in weight and stature, *Homo heidelbergensis* had a larger cranial capacity than *Homo antecessor*. We know that Boxgrove Man was hunting large, African-type game in warm stage Sussex.

In Europe around 350,000 years ago, *Homo heidelbergensis* had evolved into Neanderthals (*Homo neanderthalensis*), their physique having adapted to become better suited to living in a cold environment (shorter, stockier build). They had larger cranial capacities than modern man.

About 40,000 years ago, modern humans (*Homo sapiens*) had arrived. New evidence suggests that *Homo neanderthalensis* and *Homo sapiens* probably coexisted in Europe for around 5,000 years, before the former died out. There are several hypotheses on the fate of the Neanderthals, including a failure to adapt to climate change, competition with *Homo sapiens* and interbreeding with *Homo sapiens*.

By today, we are the only species left, although with up to 4% of our DNA being Neanderthal, the Neanderthals still seem to have left their mark.

What were their lives like?

Early human species were hunter-gatherers, which meant they would follow herds of wild animals around rather than settle in one place.

Homo sapiens seem to have undertaken a greater range of activities than their ancestors, and developed the tools to carry them out. We start seeing art (cave paintings, carvings), possible signs of religious or ritual behaviour and more complex

tools made out of a variety of materials – spear throwers, barbed bone harpoons and bone needles.

What do we have in the museum?

The museum holds a comprehensive selection of Palaeolithic stone tools. They include the hand axe, the main butchery tool for at least 1.8m years, and different tool types that developed with Neanderthal and Modern Man. We have casts of two Upper Palaeolithic Venuses (statuettes) and casts of horn and bone inscribed with animals. There is also a fantastic fossil collection at the Booth Museum that includes the bones of animals that co-existed with man in Britain during the Ice Age – mammoth, woolly rhino, hyena, bison, lion, giant ox etc.

Which local site can we look at to tell us more about Palaeolithic life in Brighton & Hove?

Behind ASDA at the Marina you can still see evidence of a 250,000 year old raised shingle beach – known as Black Rock Raised Beach. At the time that the beach was being formed, Brighton was in an environmental warm stage when sea levels were high and it is possible that Neanderthals were hunting big game in the area, tracking horse, red deer, and even bison and mammoth.

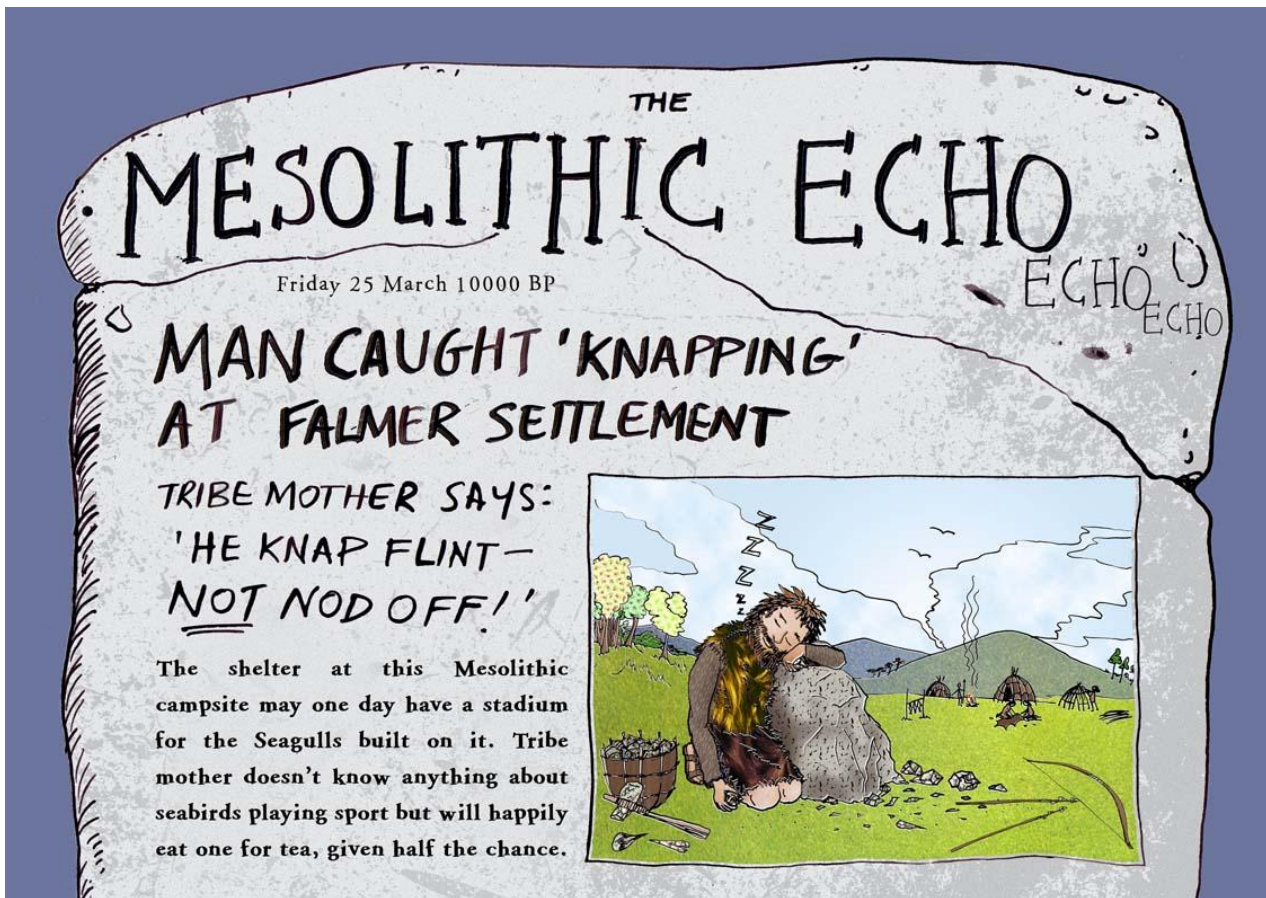
As the climate cooled, the sea retreated and shifts in the earth's surface pushed the stranded beach further up and inland. Slowly, as the chalk cliff started to crumble (due to freeze/thaw), the beach was covered by a layer of chalk sludge (Coombe Rock) and other windblown claylike deposits (Loess). Gideon Mantell, the famous 19th century geologist and fossil collector, named these Coombe Rock deposits the 'Elephant Beds' because they were so rich in fossilised 'elephant' bones.

Signs of the activity of ancient man around the ancient Raised Beach are pretty rare. Only one hand axe has been found at Black Rock. It probably dates from the Lower Palaeolithic, perhaps hundreds of thousands of years early than the formation of the Raised Beach.

Brighton & Hove, as part of the South Downs, must have provided good hunting grounds, not only because of the availability of big game, but also because of the easy availability of flint to make the hand axes used to butcher these animals.

Next time you wander along the Undercliff Walk behind ASDA in Brighton Marina, look up and you will see the shingle beach suspended in the cliff line, covered with chalk and layers of orangey/brown silt, blown in during later cold stages. You might even see a mammoth tusk poking out!

The Mesolithic, or Middle Stone Age



When was the Mesolithic?

10,000 to 6,000 years ago

What was 'the Mesolithic'?

After the last really cold period the climate warmed very quickly and what was previously open grassland inhabited by large herbivores (reindeer, mammoth) became heavily forested, temperate woodland with smaller, faster game (red deer, wild boar and wild ox). As sea levels continued to rise, the former hunting grounds that connected Britain to northern Europe (Doggerland) were covered by the North Sea. About 8,000 years ago the remaining land bridge with France disappeared and Britain finally became an island.

Who lived then?

Britain continued to be populated by small bands of hunter-gatherers similar to those that hunted mammoth in the Palaeolithic.

What were their lives like?

The movement of man was now restricted by water and by thick woodland. New weapons, for example bow and arrows, were adopted to help when hunting animals through forest and undergrowth. More use was made of fish and shellfish (due to the increase in open water), and new trees and shrubs provided an increase in the variety of fruit and nuts in what was a comparatively healthy diet. The need for small arrowheads and spearheads, and for sickles and knives to harvest wild seeds and fruits, led to the Mesolithic peoples developing 'microlith' technologies. These were finely made, tiny flint flakes or blades, probably mounted on wood to create the required tools such as knives, saws and sickles.

The Mesolithic hunters lived in small temporary structures, moving within the landscape to make best use of the resources available during the different seasons. As time progressed, it is likely that these hunter-gatherers moved less and started to control the landscape around them (e.g. using slash and burn).

What do we have in the museum?

The museum collection from this period consists almost exclusively of stone tools. In particular it includes a large collection of microliths from local sites (including Peacehaven and Hassocks) and large stone picks, possibly used for land clearance or when grubbing for roots.

Which local site can we look at to tell us more about Mesolithic life in Brighton & Hove?

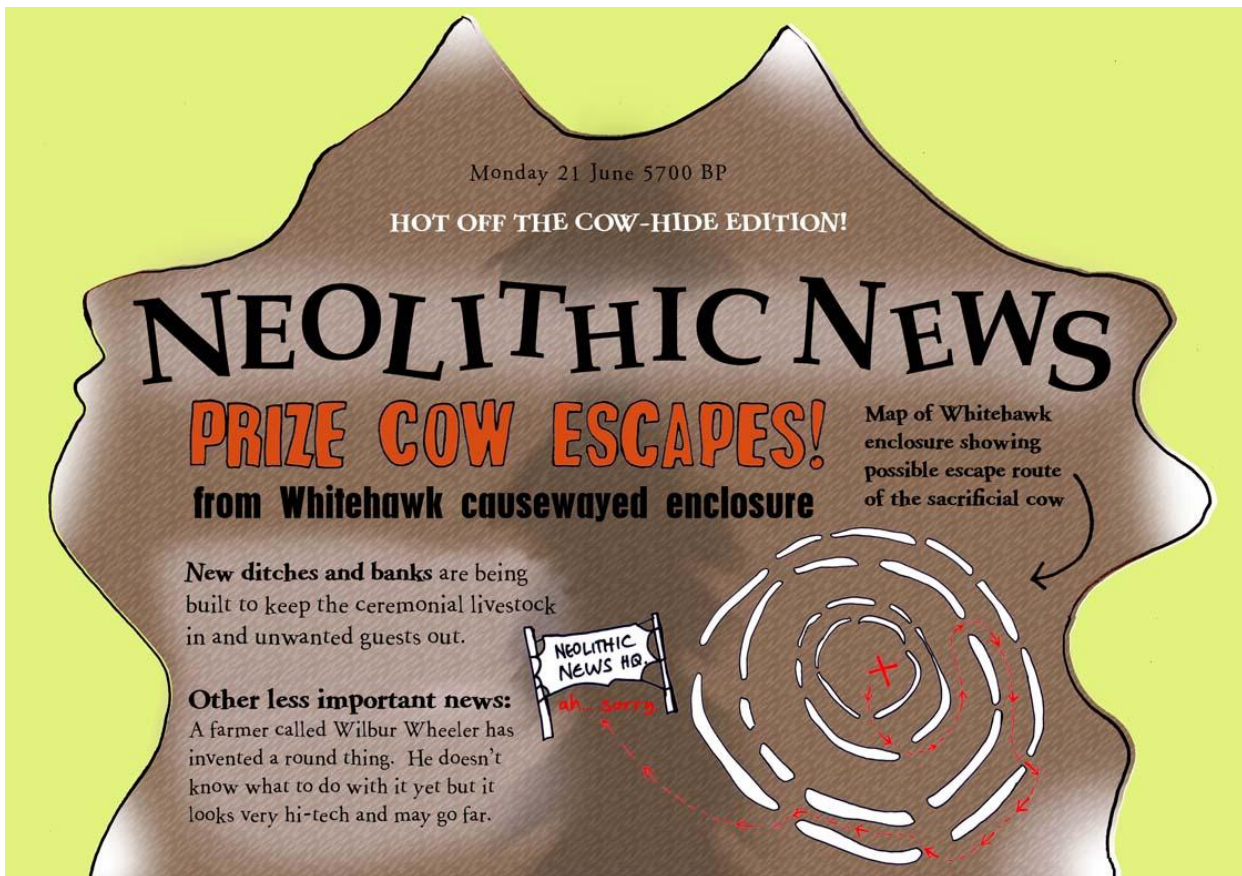
About 10,000 years ago a small tribe set up their camp in the shadow of what is now the AMEX football stadium at Falmer. They camped in a clearing in what was then a densely wooded area. The tribe would have visited the site at the same season every year to hunt and gather food.

The group would not have been big and may have consisted of a few families. They lived in structures made from wooden poles planted in the ground to create a frame and then covered with brush, or possibly skins, to create a watertight shelter or tent. These structures could be carried easily and set up quickly.

At the Falmer camp they would have hunted small woodland animals (deer, boar) and harvested nuts and fruit. Once the season was over they moved on to a different area where other food was available, possibly to the coast to catch fish and gather shellfish.

It is difficult for us to find much evidence of how they used to live. An archaeologist digging a Mesolithic site might find marks in the earth where their tent poles were stuck in the ground, filled-in pits where they buried their rubbish, or possibly small flint tools and arrowheads (called microliths). Very little else remains. At Falmer, 15 pits were found containing microliths and, in some, the remains of charred hazelnut shells.

The Neolithic, or New Stone Age



When was the Neolithic?

6000 to 4500 years ago

What was the Neolithic?

The Neolithic period in Britain started with a steady change in lifestyle influenced by ideas coming from the East via the Continent. These included: growing crops, keeping domestic animals, the construction and use of monuments, occasional formal burial, pottery and stone tool making, and the development of long-distance trade networks. Towards the end of the Neolithic age copper and bronze came into use, settlements and fields became increasingly larger and more complex, and society became more structured and hierarchical.

What were people's lives like?

The Neolithic tool kit became progressively more varied to cover the range of work undertaken by settled farmers. Various specialist tools were made from flint (scrapers, awls, fabricators). Quern stones and grain rubbers were made out of sandstone (for processing wheat), and a smaller, thinner hafted axe became a symbol of land clearance. These axes were often ground smooth and polished. Neolithic peoples were known to travel long distances and dig deep mines to find the best quality stone. The resulting axes were then traded widely over the length and breadth of the British Isles.

Picks made out of antler and shovels made from oxen shoulder blades were used to create the large monuments for which Neolithic peoples are known. Large causewayed enclosures were created with circular ditches and banks. They seem to have been used as centres for feasting and sometimes burial. Long barrows (burial chambers) were built to house the bones of the dead. As time proceeded, progressively larger circular monuments (hengese) with ditches and banks were constructed within the British Isles, often incorporating stone or timber circles.

The Neolithic also heralds the arrival of pottery in Britain. Handmade (pinch and coil), round bottomed, undecorated pots (which sit safely in a fire and have lugs for easy removal) slowly became more profusely decorated. This developed into Impressed Ware (pottery decorated by use of fingertip, twisted cord and bird bone) and, in the later Neolithic, flat bottomed, more angular Grooved Ware.

What do we have in the museum?

The museum holds a very large Neolithic collection, mostly from local sites (particularly Whitehawk and the Sussex flint mines). This includes human remains, butchered animal bone, pottery (entire restored pots and lots of sherds showing decorative types), stone tools, including polished axes and mollusc shell (land and marine).

Which local site can we look at to tell us more about Neolithic life in Brighton & Hove?

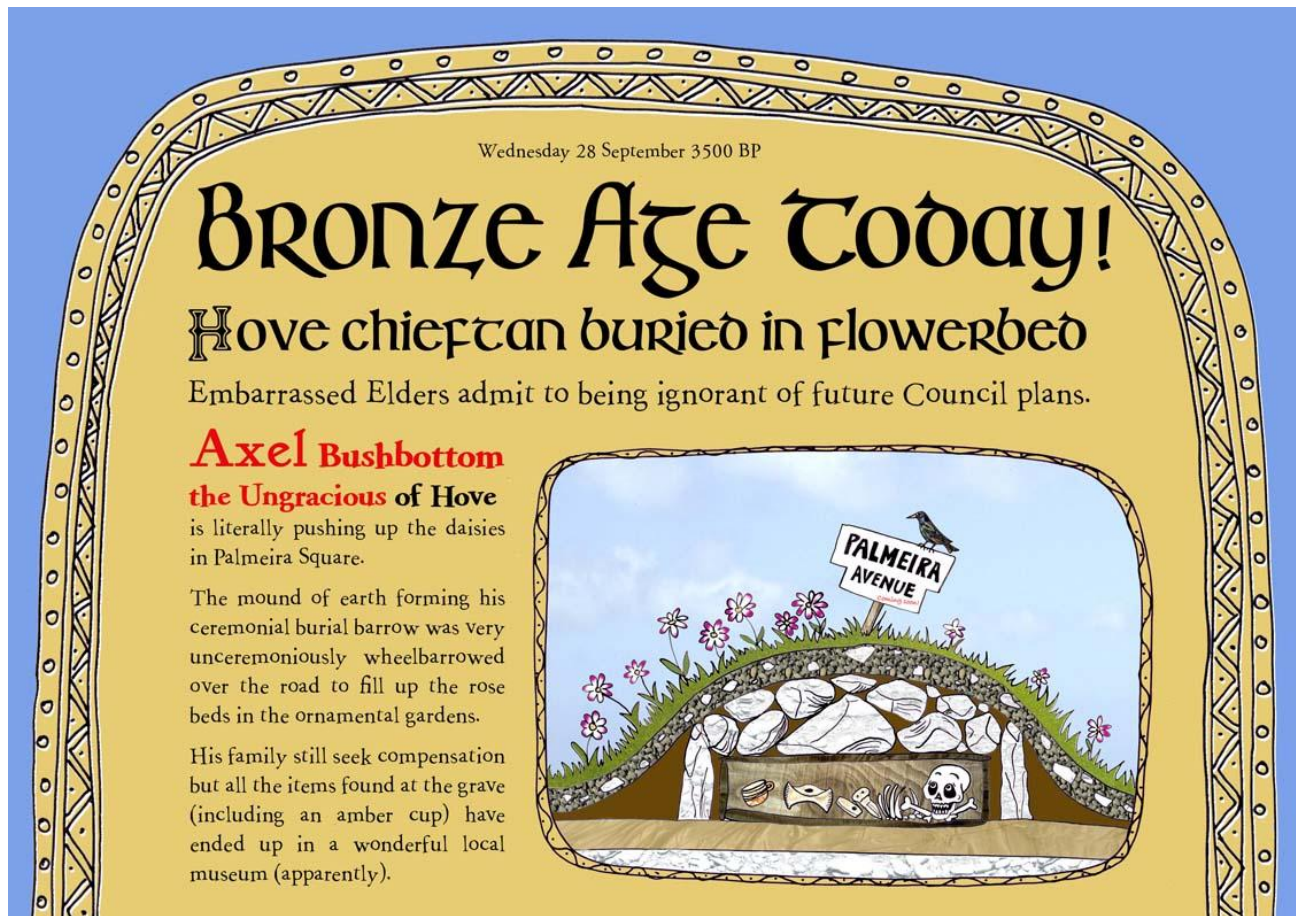
Whitehawk Causewayed Enclosure was constructed around 5,600 years ago, up to 1,000 years before the construction of the major stone circles at Stonehenge. It

appears to have been completed within one or two generations. It consists of a series of at least four concentric rings of ditches and banks which cover a total area of around six hectares. The Whitehawk Enclosure must have been a major monument in the landscape, with the white chalk banks clearly visible from afar. The gaps in the banks and ditches would have allowed ceremonial access by the local prehistoric peoples to the inner circle.

Causewayed enclosures became very popular in southern England about 5,700 years ago. Many were constructed rapidly at around the same time but may have remained in use for only a few decades (although Whitehawk Enclosure may have been in use for up to 250 years). They appear to have served as large arenas where communities gathered, celebrated and possibly worshipped. The large quantities of animal bone that have been excavated in the ditches testify to the amount of feasting that must have taken place there. Whitehawk was also chosen as the final resting place for some of these prehistoric peoples. The remains of four complete burials have been found in the ditches amongst the animal bone, and huge numbers of Stone Age flint tools. They include the bodies of an eight-year-old child and a young woman buried alongside the remains of her newborn child.

It would seem that these causewayed enclosures were created when societies were becoming more settled. The huge amount of labour and resources involved in their construction may indicate that they were visible symbols of local communities with their own leaders and their own identities. The fact that these enclosures went out of use so quickly show how fast society was changing at this time.

The Bronze Age



When was the Bronze Age?

4300 to 2500 years ago

What was the Bronze Age?

Just as the final stone circles were being erected at Stonehenge 4400 years ago, a new culture arrived in Britain. This has become known as the Beaker culture, after the beaker-like shape of the pottery vessels used by many of the people. The Beaker culture introduced metalwork to the British Isles and started a major change in British life.

What were people's lives like?

The small agricultural communities of the Neolithic remained but many people started to live in roundhouses and concentrated more on herding domestic livestock. It appears that a form of class system evolved and, as evidenced by burial goods, people started to gather wealth and became more materialistic.

In the Middle Bronze Age (c1500BC) things changed substantially. More substantial villages or hamlets were established, and ditches and banks were used to define settlement areas and to delineate regular field systems – perhaps a hint at the idea of property ownership.

A severe change in climate (colder and wetter) at about 1000BC seems to have forced an exodus from some of the upland settlements (e.g. Dartmoor) and may have led to conflict between communities as people moved into more favourable but already settled areas. Hierarchies within settlements were evident for the first time, with farmsteads and elite defended residences, as well as, increasingly, hill forts.

In addition, towards the Middle/End of the Bronze Age (possibly triggered by climate change and rising water levels) there was a trend to deposit objects and bronze hoards in areas where land meets water, such as fens and bogs. The reason for this is unclear.

What technology did they use?

Flint: Flint was still used throughout the Bronze Age but many of the tools became a lot more crudely made with less care or time spent on their preparation and production.

Metal: The discovery in Britain of copper and tin – together making bronze alloy which is much tougher than pure copper – encouraged trade with peoples as far away as the Eastern Mediterranean. It resulted in skilled, local metalworkers, who even fashioned high status objects out of gold. Many bronze weapons and tools, of varying styles and designs, were produced during the period.

Pottery: At first the new Beaker pottery co-existed with the continuation of the local pottery in the late Neolithic style. As the Bronze Age continued, large Collared (and Cordoned) Urns appeared, often in a burial context, along with smaller, flat-bottomed food vessels decorated with linear combed impressions or applied clay. Towards the end of the Bronze Age, large Bucket and Barrel Urns appeared with less decoration, along with more globular forms.

Cloth: The technology to weave cloth from wool also arrived from the East. No cloth has survived in Britain from this period, but loom weights have been found at Bronze Age sites and, occasionally, the imprint of cloth is left in fired clay.

What were burial practices like during the Bronze Age?

The spread of the use of copper and bronze tools in Britain coincided with the use of single, often crouched, burials in round barrows. The burials were accompanied by a wide range of burial goods, often including a pottery vessel – a beaker in the early graves or a small food vessel. After 1900BC, people started to use cremations placed in pots and buried with a wider range of artefacts, including new types of dagger, small pottery food vessels and stone battleaxes. The Middle Bronze Age (1500BC) saw a switch to flat cremation cemeteries. Towards the end of the Bronze Age formal burial seems to have become less popular and it may have been that ashes were scattered rather than buried.

What do we have in the museum?

The museum has an extensive Bronze Age collection. It includes: axes of all types, some swords and daggers, pottery (entire pots) of various styles, Bronze Age hoards (including jewellery), human remains and high status burial goods (from local barrow burials, including the Hove Barrow).

Which local site can we look at to tell us more about Bronze Age life in Brighton & Hove?

In 1856 a large barrow mound was crudely excavated during the construction of Palmeira Square in Hove. When the barrow was removed to make way for building operations an oak coffin was discovered, about nine feet below the surface of the barrow. It was apparently carved from a single tree trunk. Within the coffin, fragments of human skeletal remains were found, along an amber cup, a perforated whetstone, a bronze dagger and an axe hammer. This group of grave finds is exceptional within south-east England.

The most important item found inside the mound was the Hove Amber Cup, which is about nine centimetres in diameter and slightly less in height. It is made from a single

piece of amber from northern Europe.



Hove Amber Cup

The Amber Cup itself is one of only two such Bronze Age vessels surviving in Britain and is by far the best preserved. The stone battle axe and perforated whetstone are also rare objects. This suggests that the Hove Barrow was a very important burial monument at the centre of an

elite Bronze Age group in Sussex, part of a complex society with trading links that stretched as far as the Baltic.

Another important Bronze Age hoard was uncovered at Black Rock in East Brighton, in late 1913 or early 1914. Three Sussex, or Brighton, Loops were found in the hoard. These are finely crafted bracelets made from a thick bronze rod which was bent double, forming a loop at one end, and then bent round into an 'O' shape with the ends of the rod fitting back into the loop.



Sussex Loop from Black Rock Hoard

So far a total of 38 loops have been found, all within the South Downs/Weald area, and all but two within 16 miles of Brighton. As none have been discovered outside this area, they would appear to be the work of a local craftsman or workshop and must have had some sort of local significance – perhaps a badge of honour for a Bronze Age tribe

living in or around Brighton. What seems strange is that they are generally found buried in pairs or threes and, in a number of cases, had been buried with other items of Bronze Age jewellery and weaponry, some of which appear to have been made on the Continent.

The Iron Age



When was the Iron Age?

800 BC to 43 AD

What was the Iron Age?

Some of the changes to society and technology introduced in the Bronze Age continued into the Iron Age. However, it is thought that, during the Iron Age, there was no great invasion from the East that triggered changes in technology and culture – more a transfer of ideas and fashions through increasingly wide trade networks. Certainly, 150 years before the successful Roman invasion, many of the local tribes were benefitting from trade with Rome: wine being traded for slaves, grain and minerals. It was these good relations that gave the Romans a foothold in the south when they invaded in 43AD.

What were people's lives like?

Farmsteads and small farming villages of roundhouses continued into the Iron Age, with sheep and wool probably being the focus of production within the local Sussex economy. Barley and wheat were becoming important staple crops, and ploughs were being used in organised field systems.

At the beginning of the Iron Age settlements seem to have been based upon local chiefdoms centred on local hill forts. These hill forts developed in design from the late Bronze Age examples, with systems of ditches and banks (or ramparts, retained by wooden posts) topped by substantial palisades. As the Iron Age progressed the number of hill forts reduced, but those left in use tended to become bigger and more complex in their defensive arrangements. This coincides with local chiefdoms being superseded by tribal chiefs or 'kings' living within large semi-urban communities in settlements big enough to call towns.

An improvement in the climate towards the end of the Iron Age, coupled with better land management and more effective agricultural iron tools (including the plough), seems to have led to a big increase in population which added to the growth of these urban communities.

What technology did they use?

Metal: Iron technology arrived from the East, introduced by more aggressive, warlike Celtic tribes who used horses and chariots in warfare and introduced long, slashing iron swords. However Bronze objects continued to be made or imported into Britain until roughly the third to fourth centuries BC when large-scale use of ironwork prevailed. It is also about this time that weapons and jewellery began to be adorned with the decorative spirals, curves and scrolls for which the Celts are known (the La Tène culture).

Pottery: New forms and fabrics developed during the Iron Age although there are a lot of different regional styles. More angular, shouldered jars and urns with light, impressed decoration evolved into finer, more rounded, bulbous jars and bowls along with straight-sided tubs and saucepans decorated with stamps and incised zigzags, and ring and dot. The major change to pottery came with the arrival of the Belgae

peoples who raided and settled in Britain. They introduced the potter's wheel which produced much more sculpted pottery with thinner bodies, such as pedestal urns, and jars in increased numbers. Closer trade with Rome also brought more exotic styles from the Mediterranean.

Coinage: Right at the end of the Iron Age, probably encouraged by widespread European trade, coinage arrived in Britain. Although the designs on coins can be traced back to the East, local 'kings' in Britain started to produce coins with their name and tribal designs imprinted upon them. As in the Bronze Age, it seems that coins and other valuables were buried in hoards, although the exact reason for this is unclear.

What were burial practices like during the Iron Age?

As a general rule it seems that there was no consistent funereal practice during the Iron Age and evidence of actual burial is pretty rare. It seems that the dead were probably left in the open to be de-fleshed and then some bones buried in pits around the settlement as part of some other ritual. There are however regional exceptions, for example cremation burials in south east England, and people being buried inside their chariots in Yorkshire.

One new development was the occasional burial of bodies in bogs. These bodies have been very well preserved in the bog conditions. From evidence of injuries inflicted prior to death, it may be that they were part of some sort of sacrifice ritual, or perhaps were being punished for committing a crime.

What do we have in the museum?

The Iron Age collection is quite small. There are three nice complete pots, lots of decorated pottery sherds, some bronze and gold jewellery from small hoards, and some settlement deposits from local sites (eg broken loom weights, animal bone).

Which local site can we look at to tell us more about Iron Age life in Brighton & Hove?

About 2,600 years ago, in the Early Iron Age, a hill fort was constructed at Hollingbury on the site of a small collection of earlier Bronze Age burial barrows.



Hollingbury Hill Fort Site from the air

A single ring ditch about 2-3 metres deep was dug, enclosing an area of about 300x400 metres. The chalk rubble from the ditch was then deposited between a double row of parallel posts, creating a box rampart behind the ditch.

These posts and their chalk infilling would have supported a formidable palisade and walkway, with a large timber gateway built into the eastern rampart. Within the fort, traces of at least five roundhouses have been uncovered, which implies that local Iron Age people lived there.

However, it appears that occupation of the site was fairly short-lived because, by the late Iron Age a few hundred years later, the site was unoccupied and local communities appear to have been building bigger, more complicated fortifications elsewhere. Known as 'developed hill forts', these have more impressive ramparts and elaborate entrances (for example at The Trundle and Mount Caburn).

The purpose of these hill forts is not always clear. Although the ditches and ramparts could be substantial, they were often not built in the most suitable defensive positions. In addition, although in a number of cases the hill forts appear to have been used for storage and social gatherings, there does not seem to be much evidence of full-time occupation of these sites.

What seems clear however is that the local populations were making statements of their status and identity in the landscape and that, as communities became more centralised and tribal, inter-community competition and conflict probably became more common. Certainly, by the time of the Claudian Roman invasion, Britain had clear and often competing tribal territories. It was the rivalries between these tribes that the Romans were able to exploit to make their second invasion a success.