

## Armlet (replica)

**Period:** Iron Age

**Date:** 0 - 200 AD

**Material:** Bronze

**Use:** Jewellery

**Site:** Original found at West Grange of Conan in Angus



1. Iron Age people took great pride in their appearance, and just like people today, many of them wore necklaces and bracelets. This is a special bracelet, called an armlet. People in the late Iron Age often used animals to decorate their jewellery and other items. Can you see which animal has been used in this artefact?

2. Jewellery was often a very good indication of a person's social status in life and a symbol of their power and prestige. Do you think the person who owned this armlet would have been of low or high social status?

3. Many other types of jewellery were worn during the Iron Age. Torcs are neckbands, sometimes made by stretching metals like bronze into lengths of wire and twisting it around to make a necklace. These were very rare and the most famous example of them in Scotland is the "Stirling torcs" found by a metal detectorist in 2009.

### **Fantastic Fact!**

Jewellery was not only for women. Many men wore bronze and iron jewellery and occasionally gold.

### **Activity Idea!**

If you were to design your own armlet, which animal would you choose to decorate it? Why would you choose this animal? Draw a picture of your armlet and explain which animal you have chosen and why you have chosen it.

## Javelin Head (replica)

**Period:** Iron Age

**Date:** 0 - 400 AD

**Material:** Iron

**Use:** Defence, hunting



**Site:** Originally found at Traprain Law at East Lothian

1. The two main weapons used in the Iron Age were the sword and the javelin. Iron javelin heads, like this one, have been found on Iron Age sites.

2. We do not know exactly how Iron Age warriors fought, but many of the Roman historians suggested that they would throw spears and javelins at the beginning of a battle and then dismount from their chariots and fight on foot with swords. They also tell us that the Iron Age warriors did not seem to have any kind of organised fighting strategy, but simply charged at the enemy and fought in separate groups. Do you think this is true?

### **Fantastic Fact!**

Archaeologists have found javelins and other weapons buried by lakes and rivers, which many believe may have been a form of offering to the gods.

It is thought that there were special warriors who fought with weapons and that other people, when needed for fighting, would have simply used farm tools.

### **Activity Idea!**

We know from Roman writings and some surviving art, that an instrument called a carnyx was used in battle. The only carnyx found in Scotland, was in Deskford, Banffshire and has the head of a wild boar. See if you can find a picture of it and then design your own carnyx. Which fierce beast will you choose to be the mouth of your carnyx?

Before you begin, discuss what kinds of wild animals which might have been living in Northern Britain in the Iron Age and base your design on one of them.

## Pig Bone

**Period: Between  
500BC - AD 200**

**Material: Bone**

**Use: Farming, food**

**Site: Unknown**



1. People in the Iron Age lived on farms and kept livestock just like farmers today. From the bones we have found on Iron Age sites we know that people kept cattle, sheep, ponies, goats and pigs. They hunted animals such as red and roe deer. Pigs were a useful animal as they are omnivorous, they eat almost anything, including scraps from the kitchen and weeds from the fields and garden. They grow quickly, so convert the waste food they eat into delicious pork quite fast. Their teeth are able to grind down plants as well as being sharp enough to tear up meat.

2. There is evidence that Iron Age people kept their animals inside their houses. It is thought that they would have been kept on the ground floor and that the people would have lived on a raised platform above the ground form.

### **Fantastic Fact!**

Iron Age people also grew crops. A peculiar feature of some Iron Age houses are underground chambers called souterrains. Archaeologists are not sure exactly what these would have been used for, but one theory is that this is where grain would have stored, as it is nice and cool.

### **Activity Idea!**

Why don't you create your own Iron Age settlement? There is a Houses and Settlements pack to help you find out more about Iron Age houses and how they were built.

## Bridle Bit (replica)

**Period:** Iron Age

**Date:** 0 - 200 AD

**Material:** Bronze

**Use:** Transportation



**Site:** Original found at Middlebie in Dumfriesshire

1. This elaborate bronze bit is part of a harness that was probably used by a wealthier member of Iron Age society. A highly decorated bit was a status symbol as well as a functional piece. Horses were often fitted with elaborate ornaments and fittings, showing the owners' status in society.
2. Horses were a very important part of Iron Age life; they were used for transportation as well as in warfare. People of higher status used chariots or carts, usually pulled by two horses. These carried two people, the driver and the owner. Both chariots and horses were used in battle as well as for more peaceful purposes.

### **Fantastic Fact!**

People in the past were often buried with objects to help them in the afterlife. Some Iron Age people were buried with their chariots and one of the most complete of these was found near Edinburgh at Newbridge. Finding burials like these are very important to help archaeologists understand the past. As a result of this find, archaeologists have been able to reconstruct the chariot and understand far more about how it would have worked and what it might have been used for.

### **Activity Idea!**

Find out more about Iron Age chariots from books and websites. After you've finished your research, imagine what it might have been like to have been an Iron Age person, riding into battle on their chariot. Can you write a story describing the experience?

## Iron Slag

**Period:** Iron Age

**Date:** 500 BC – AD 200

**Material:** Iron

**Use:** Product of Iron  
Smelting



**Site:** Unknown

1. As the name suggests, the Iron Age was when people started using iron to make tools and weapons. Using iron to make farm tools helped people to farm much more efficiently and to grow more cereal crops. It was a huge revolution in technology.

2. Iron is taken from a type of rock called ore. In order to get the iron out of the ore it is necessary to heat it up to about 1500 degrees Celsius (Water boils at 100 degrees Celsius so they had to get the iron very hot!). This softens the iron and is called smelting. The iron then separates from the impurities in the ore and forms what is called a **bloom** in the furnace. Iron slag is a waste product and is what is left once as much of the iron as possible has been taken from the rock.

The bloom can then be further refined to take out the remaining impurities by hammering it out. Once this is done, the iron can be forged by a blacksmith into the tools or weapons.

### **Fantastic Fact!**

Although iron was very important in the Iron Age, in actual fact, archaeologists rarely find iron artefacts. The reason for this is that iron was very often melted down a number of times and reused. The more times iron is worked, the purer and stronger it becomes.

### **Activity Idea!**

We still use iron today to make many different things. How many can you think of? Make a list. Now make a list of all the things which were made out of iron in the Iron Age. How are the two lists different?

**ZY 150**

**Spindle Whorl**

**Period: Iron Age**

**Date: 500BC – AD 200**

**Material: Basalt**

**Use: Spinning**

**Site: Unknown**



1. Wool from sheep was turned into thread by spinning. Before the spinning wheel was invented, this was done with a drop spindle. A heavy whorl made of stone such as this one, was used to make the spindle spin and make the thread twist more easily. Once the wool was spun, it could be dyed using vegetable dyes and woven into cloth.
2. In the Iron Age, spinning and weaving wool was done by people working at home, using wool from their own sheep. Archaeologists have found spindle whorls everywhere across settlements. From this evidence, it is thought that people would spin thread whilst doing other tasks. Spinning thread took a lot of time, so it made sense to do while watching the cooking or watching animals.

**Fantastic fact!**

The earliest written accounts of Scottish clothing come from the Romans. According to Roman writers, Iron Age people in Northern Britain wore very colourful clothing, like chequered trousers!

**Activity idea!**

Why don't you have a go at making your own dye out of vegetables and plants? Plants and flowers will make different colours. See if you can find out which plants you should use, grind them down and then take a piece of white cloth and see what colour it makes!

## Bone Pins

**Period:** Iron Age

**Date:** 500BC – AD200

**Material:** Bone

**Use:** to pin clothes together or to pin hair



**Site:** Unknown

1. Pins like these were quite common in the Iron Age, and were made from animal bone, antler or metal. They may have been used for holding pieces of cloth together as dress pins, or even as hair pins.
2. Iron Age pins come in many shapes and forms, often with decorative carvings or patterns on the heads. These two examples are, however, quite simple as there is no evidence of decoration on them. They have been carved out of long bones from cattle or deer.
3. Bone was one of the most important materials in Iron Age society; it was used for many things other than pins, including dice, mirror handles, combs, jewellery and much more.

### **Fantastic Fact!**

These bone pins both started from bigger chunks of bone and were carved and polished and whittled until they became sharp enough to be pins. If you feel them now, they are very smooth, because they have been used so much. These bone pins show that people in the Iron Age used every available part of an animal and not just the meat to eat.

### **Activity Idea!**

Bone pins were used either to pin clothes together or to pin up hair. A modern equivalent of a bone pin would be a hair clip. Using just a hair clip, can you, as class, think of different ways you could put up your hair? Remember that men might have had long hair too!

## Pottery sherds (ZY 55)

**Period:** Iron Age

**Date:** 200 BC - AD200

**Material:** clay

**Use:** Storage

**Site:** Unknown



1. These pottery sherds come from the rim of a pot which was commonly used for storage. The vessel was originally barrel-shaped with a flat base and a small rim, and would probably have held food and drink. The pot was made by carefully shaping the clay by hand, and the black colour on each of the surfaces comes from the clay firing process.

2. Iron Age pots sometimes have complex and intricate decoration. These sherds are decorated with an applied cord-like clay band around the shoulder. This type of pottery is sometimes referred to as *Wheelhouse pottery* as many sherds of this kind have been found when excavating wheelhouses in the Hebrides. Wheelhouses were built from the last two centuries BC up to 200 AD, and the vessel sherds in front of you were therefore probably made in this period.

### **Fantastic Fact!**

During Iron Age excavations, some pots have been found with burnt food remains still in them. When analysing these food leftovers we can sometimes uncover important facts about what kind of food people would have eaten in the Iron Age.

### **Activity Idea!**

Why don't you make a model of what you think the whole pot would have looked like? You will need some air-drying clay and your imagination! What would it be used for in the Iron Age? What will people think about you if they discover your pot in 2000 years?

## Glass Bead, Cannel coal bead and cannel coal bracelet sherd

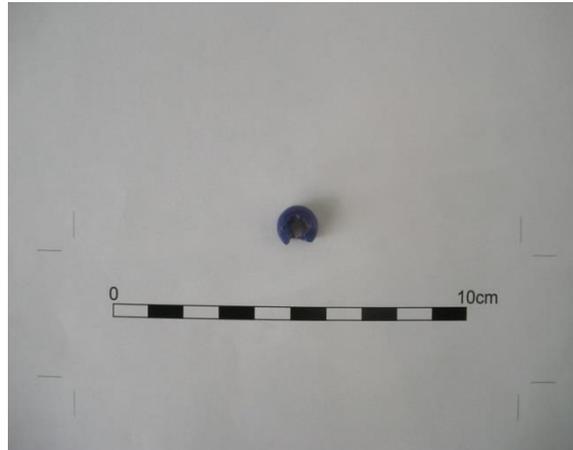
**Period:** Iron Age

**Date:** - c.400 BC – AD 1000

**Material:** Glass

**Use:** Jewellery

**Site:** Unknown



1. This blue bead is made of glass and is a good example of Iron Age jewellery. Typically lots of beads like this would be hung on a leather thong forming a necklace or a pendant, but they may also have been used as bracelets, hair decoration, or earrings. Glass beads were made by melting glass and coiling it around a rod to create a circular shape with a hole in the middle. Glass beads were not particularly high status objects in the Iron Age, and were actually quite common however they were only crafted in certain parts of Britain.

2. The other bead and the fragment of bracelet are both made from cannel coal. When they were in use, they would have been polished so that they were very shiny. For us, coal is an unusual choice to make jewellery from. However, it is easy to shape and can be carved into beautiful objects. There is a special type of cannel coal called jet, which was also highly prized for making jewellery.

### **Fantastic Fact!**

Sometimes beads have been found in graves and archaeologists think that people were buried with their jewellery, perhaps because they were important to their owner.

### **Activity Idea!**

Why don't you design your own piece of Iron Age jewellery? Many jewellery items were elaborately decorated and would have been worn by men and women.