

Basildon Borough

From Stone Age to
Iron Age

How do we know people were in this area in the past?

Archaeology is the study of things that people made, used, and left behind. The goal of archaeology is to understand what people of the past were like and how they lived.

Some archaeological sites, such as ancient cities, are visible on the surface. Other sites are buried deep beneath the ground

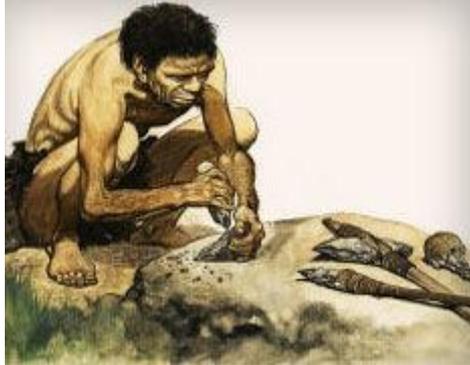




After finding a site, an archaeologist digs slowly and carefully. This work is called excavation, or a “dig.”

Archaeologists use spoons, knives, picks, brushes, and other tools in their work. They try to uncover buildings, tools, weapons, art, and anything else that people made. These items are called artefacts.

The Stone Age



A long, long time ago, there was a time called the Stone Age. It lasted for about 3.5 million years!

The Early Stone Age, also known as the Palaeolithic Era, marks the beginning of when people began to make tools. It started around 2.6 million years ago until around 10,000 BCE.

The middle part of the Stone Age, called the Mesolithic era, lasted from around 8000 BCE to 5000 BCE. They were hunter-gatherers, which means they hunted animals and gathered plants to eat. Back then, Britain was connected to Europe by a land bridge.

The last part of the Stone Age is called the Neolithic period, or New Stone Age. This was when people stopped relying on hunting and gathering and started farming. In Great Britain, this time lasted from about 4000 BCE to 2500 BCE.

Norsey Wood



Many of the artefacts from this period are stone tools, such as axe heads. These were made by chipping pieces off of the stone until you had the right shape. This is called knapping.



A boy visited Norsey Wood in 1994. A stranger to the area, he became lost. Whilst trying to find his way back to his family he noticed a stone beside the path that he thought was something more than just a stone or rock. He decided that it should be handed in to the police, where it was logged as lost property.



A member of the Billericay Archaeological Society realised what had been found, a Mesolithic flaked-flint axe head, similar to the one in the picture. Unfortunately, the boy was unable to identify the exact spot he found it.

Nevendon



During an archaeological dig in 2009 evidence of Neolithic Houses was found in an area along Nevendon Road. Workers also found a pre-Christian monument and wooden posts in circular shapes. Small flint tools, an axe and pottery were also found.



Neolithic Houses



Neolithic house (4000BC – 2000BC)

Neolithic houses were usually one long room with a central hearth for heat and cooking.

They were made from whatever materials were locally available.

A frame was built from wooden posts.

Walls were constructed from stone, straw, mud and sometimes animal dung!

A thatched roof was placed on top with a hole to let the smoke out.

The Bronze Age

The Bronze Age followed the Stone Age and is thought to have lasted from around 2,500bce until 700bce.



The arrival of the Beaker people into Britain brought the pottery they were named after as well as a skill of refining and smelting copper and then bronze. Bronze was a harder metal made of copper and tin.



This bronze age axe was found at Merricks Marsh near Marsh Farm , Vange.

During this time important members of the community such as elders and leaders were buried in a barrow or tumulus

Norsey Wood once contained two such tumuli. An excavation of one of these was carried out during 1865. The dig discovered some Roman pottery, a bronze coin and three large urns containing cremated human remains. This tumulus still exists.



An archaeological dig on the second tumulus found seven more urns, one of which contained cremated remains. This tumulus was flattened in the 1950's and the site now has a house and garage built on it.

The Iron Age

The Iron Age in Britain is thought to have started around 800BCE and ended with the Roman invasion of the British Isles. The Late Iron Age is dated from 100BCE until 50BCE.

Much of Essex was part of the territory of the Trinovantes, a Celtic tribe which had its capital in Camulodunon, now known as Colchester.



An iron Age family home

Sites of more permanent Iron Age settlements have been excavated at Wickford, Billericay, Langdon Hills and Basildon New Town. Large settlements have also been identified at Ramsden and Downham which were continually occupied from 550-150 BC.

In 1887 a small yellow and blue glass bead was found in **Norsey Wood**. The bead is of continental design and likely to have been traded with Celtic tribes from Europe. It has been suggested that the bead may have been left as a votive offering in the woods as they were treated as sacred places by the Celts. The bead can now be seen in The Chelmsford Museum.



Late Iron Age pedestal jar uncovered in Billericay.
By the end of the Iron Age people had started to use
a pottery wheel to help them make vessels.



In 2011 archaeologists found evidence of settlement in Billerica 2,000 years ago.



While digging in the garden of Mill Cottage, Southend Road, Billerica, they excavated 10 cremation urns, similar to the one in the picture, as well as a mirror and some cosmetic items.



It was common at this time for personal belongings to be buried with remains.

Although they had found a burial ground, they were unable to find evidence of a settlement but thought it was most likely around Sun Street.

