

# PREHISTORIC WILTSHIRE

## PERIOD SUMMARIES:



### **Palaeolithic (First People): 500,000 years ago – 9500BC**

- First people arrive in Britain half a million years ago.
- They make tools of stone and wood for hunting animals.



### **Mesolithic (First Monuments): 9500BC – 4000BC**

- Hunter gatherers: people hunt animals and collect plants, fruit and nuts for food.
- They live in temporary camps along rivers.
- They start to mark the landscape with monuments.



### **Earlier Neolithic (First Farmers): 4000BC – 3000BC**

- First pottery is made. Bowls are used for cooking and storing food.
- Polished flint axes are new tools used for cutting down trees.
- People begin farming. They grow crops and keep animals like cattle, sheep and pigs.
- New monuments; causewayed enclosures (meeting places) and long barrows.



### **Later Neolithic (First Henges): 3000BC – 2500BC**

- First henges start to be built at Stonehenge, Avebury, Woodhenge and Marden Henge.
- Feasting and ceremonies take place in the henges.

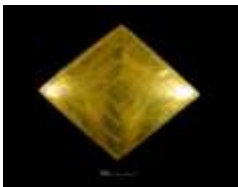
# PREHISTORIC WILTSHIRE

## PERIOD SUMMARIES CONTINUED:



### **Beaker (First Metals): 2500BC – 2200BC**

- Major stone structures erected at Stonehenge and Avebury.
- Newcomers arrive in Britain, bringing new beliefs and the first metals of gold and copper.
- New burial practices. People are buried in round barrows in beaker burials.



### **Earlier Bronze Age (Rich Burials): 2200BC – 1500BC**

- Priests and leaders are buried with remarkable objects (Bush Barrow / The Shaman).
- Powerful women are buried with exotic gold, amber, shale and jet jewellery.



### **Later Bronze Age (Hoards): 1500BC – 800BC**

- Farming settlements are now the focus of daily life.
- New beliefs are suggested by the practice of burying object hoards.
- People are cremated and buried in urns.



### **Iron Age (First Iron): 800BC – 43AD**

- Iron replaces bronze as the main source of metal.
- Tribal groups emerge across Britain.
- Hillforts are first built to defend land.

# Handaxes

**PERIOD: Palaeolithic**  
**(500,000 years ago to 9500 BC)**

**FROM: e.g. Knowle Farm,**  
**Little Bedwyn**



- The most commonly used material for making tools was flint.
- Handaxes were all-purpose tools held in the hand for butchery, cutting and scraping.
- Handaxes vary in size and shape.
- Tools were also made from wood and other types of stone.

# Mesolithic Tools

**PERIOD: Mesolithic  
(9500 BC – 4000BC)**

**FROM: e.g. Kington St. Michael &  
Aldbourne**



- Improving flint knapping skills meant that smaller, finer tools could be produced.
- Small arrowheads and fine blades (known as microliths) are produced for hunting with arrows and harpoons.
- Finer axes are also produced and are fixed to wooden handles for cutting wood.

# First Pottery

**PERIOD: Early Neolithic  
(4000 – 3000BC)**

**FROM: e.g. Windmill Hill  
nr Avebury**



- Pottery was first made in the Neolithic. They were handmade, then dried and fired on a bonfire.
- Pots were used to store and cook food.
- Pots had round bases for sitting in a fire.
- Food could be easily boiled for the first time.

# Jadeite Axe

**PERIOD: Early Neolithic  
(4000 – 3000BC)**

**FROM: Breamore, Hampshire  
(Jade from Italian Alps)**



- This axe was brought to Britain about 6,000 years ago.
- It is made of Jadeite stone, which came from the north Italian Alps.
- Jadeite is harder than steel, and the axe took over 1,000 hours to make.
- Polished axes were very desirable. They were often exchanged at causewayed enclosures (meeting places, like Windmill Hill).

# West Kennet Long Barrow

**PERIOD:** Early Neolithic  
(4000 – 3000BC)

**WHERE:** near Avebury



- People began to bury their dead in long barrows.
- West Kennet Long Barrow is 100 metres in length with a burial chamber at its eastern end.
- At least 45 people were buried inside the stone chambers.
- Ceremonies many have taken place outside.
- The tomb remained open for 1000 years, before being sealed with rubble and sarsen stones.

# Marden Henge

**PERIOD: Later Neolithic  
(3000 – 2500BC)**

**WHERE:** Marden, between Avebury and Stonehenge



- Henge monuments were built as special places by communities for ceremonies and feasting.

- Marden is the largest henge monument in Britain. An enormous bank and ditch enclosed two henges.

- Excavations in 2010 also revealed England's best preserved Neolithic building.

- Arrowheads found at Marden show remarkable flint-working skills.





# Grooved Ware Pottery

**PERIOD: Later Neolithic  
(3000 – 2500BC)**

**FROM: e.g. Marden Henge &  
Woodhenge**



- Named after the special grooved decoration and incised lines.
- This type of pottery is almost always found at ceremonial sites.
- It was used to cook pork for communal feasting.
- Some of these pots were enormous, capable of holding 100 litres of liquid.

# Stonehenge

**PERIOD: Later Neolithic  
(3000 – 2500BC)**

**Beaker (2500 – 2200 BC)**

**WHERE: nr Amesbury**



- Circular bank and ditch constructed c. 3000BC. Within the ditch was a ring of 56 timber or stone posts.
- Around 2500 BC construction of the central stone circle began, using large sarsen stone and smaller bluestones.
- Sarsen came from Wiltshire but the bluestones from Wales.
- Later during the early Bronze Age, the bluestones were rearranged and axes and daggers are carved into the sarsens.

# Avebury

**PERIOD: Later Neolithic  
(3000 – 2500BC)  
Beaker (2500 – 2200 BC)**

**WHERE: Avebury**



- Earthwork henge dates to Late Neolithic and stone circle started to be built c. 2500BC.
- Lots of monument building in Avebury landscape – timber and stone circles at the Sanctuary, stone avenues and Silbury Hill.
- Avebury was a thriving ceremonial centre for hundreds of years.

# Silbury Hill

**PERIOD:** Beaker (2500 – 2200 BC)

**FROM:** nr Avebury



- Last of the monuments built at Avebury.
- Started as a series of mounds that were enlarged by adding turf and chalk.
- Took 100 years to complete.
- When finished it was a gleaming chalk mound, 40m high, mostly surrounded by water.

# Beaker burials

**PERIOD:** Beaker (2500 – 2200 BC)

**FROM:** Roundway G8, Devizes



- Beakers are a special type of drinking vessel that originated in Europe.
- Newcomers to Britain introduced beakers, as well as metal-working technology and new religious beliefs.
- Beakers are often found in male burials under round barrows, along with copper daggers, arrowheads and wristguards.
- This example is from a burial on Roundway Down, Devizes.

# Round Barrows

**PERIOD:** Beaker (2500 – 2200 BC)  
Earlier Bronze Age (2200 – 1500 BC)

**WHERE:** Lots around Stonehenge  
and Avebury



- People buried their dead in single graves, and built earthen mounds or barrows above them.
- Barrows were mounds of turf and gleaming white chalk.
- Barrows were often in grouped as the burial place for a community or even a single family.
- Round barrows are often located near to other monuments.

# The Stonehenge Dagger

**PERIOD: Beaker (2500 – 2200 BC)**

**FROM: Amesbury (Barrow G54)**



- Phil Harding's favourite object.
- Fine flint dagger.
- Was made to imitate copper daggers that newcomers were making.
- Incredible workmanship.

# The Shaman

**PERIOD: Earlier Bronze Age  
(2200 – 1500 BC)**

**FROM: Upton Lovell  
(Barrow G2a)**



- The Shaman was a metal-worker and powerful religious leader.
- He was buried with a magnificent dark greenstone battle-axe and stones for smoothing and burnishing gold.
- He wore a ceremonial cloak decorated with animal bones.
- The Shaman may have had a tattooing kit – flint cups for pigment and a bronze awl for piercing skin.



# Women of Power

**PERIOD: Earlier Bronze Age  
(2200 – 1500 BC)**

**FROM: Upton Lovell, Wilsford  
& Manton**



- Women were also buried with objects that suggest they were important people.
- They were often buried with exotic jewellery made from gold, amber, jet and shale. These materials were thought to have magical properties.
- Some were buried with pendants in the shape of miniature weapons.
- These burials also contained incense cups.

# Bush Barrow Chieftain

**PERIOD:** Earlier Bronze Age  
(2200 – 1500 BC)

**FROM:** Wilsford  
nr Stonehenge



- Britain's richest Bronze Age burial.
- Buried with remarkable gold objects – lozenge worn on his chest and belt hook for carrying a dagger.
- Dagger was once decorated with thousands of tiny gold studs.
- The Chieftain also had a mace made from fossil sponge and decorated with bone mounts and a miniature gold lozenge.

# Manton Hoard

**PERIOD:** Later Bronze Age  
(1500 – 800 BC)

**FROM:** Manton  
Nr Marlborough



- Wiltshire's monuments were abandoned.
- A change in religious beliefs are suggested by new practices.
- Bronze tools and weapons were mass produced. Some were buried as hoards of objects – maybe as a gift to the gods.
- Manton Hoard - hoard of socketed and palstave axes buried in the ground.

# Farming Settlements

**PERIOD:** Later Bronze Age  
(1500 – 800 BC)

**WHERE:** e.g. Potterne &  
Bishops Cannings



- Daily life was focused around small farming settlements.
- The landscape was divided up into new fields for growing crops and open space for grazing cattle.
- People built and lived in roundhouses.
- They kept animals, produced textiles and worked bronze.

# The Stonehenge Urn

**PERIOD: Later Bronze Age  
(1500 – 800 BC)**

**FROM: Amesbury  
Nr Stonehenge**



- People were no longer buried under barrows, but cremated and buried in large pots called urns.
- The Stonehenge Urn is the largest to have been found in Britain. It contained cremated remains of perhaps more than one person.
- It was named the 'Stonehenge Urn' by William Cunnington as he discovered it in a barrow at the end of the Stonehenge Cursus.