

Welcome to Hadleigh Country Park's Iron Age Roundhouse

This is a reconstruction of a chieftain's house from the late Iron Age. The Iron Age followed the Stone and Bronze Ages, starting around 750 BC in Britain, when iron working was introduced, and ending after the Romans invaded in AD 43 as Britain became an extension of the Roman Empire.

Roundhouses first appeared in the Bronze Age, and were used throughout the Iron Age. The circular shape makes them very strong - they can withstand severe weather and, with maintenance, could last 100 years or more.



Our house was built in stages: first the main pillars were erected, and the horizontal beams attached with wooden pegs. The outer walls were constructed from hazel wattle fencing which was then covered on both sides with 23 tonnes of daub, a mix of clay, sand and straw. The rafters and roof battens were added, with 2 miles of rope used to lash it all, and the roof was then professionally thatched with water reed. Materials such as the clay and hazel came from the local countryside.

Modern roundhouse reconstructions are based on remains of post holes and fragments of daub wall from excavated sites. There are no known remains of Iron Age settlements on this site, so our house is based the floor plan of one excavated at Little Waltham.

We can only make an informed guess as to the appearance of the roof and internal details of the house such as furniture, wall decoration and division of the house into rooms. It is now thought that Iron Age houses would not have had a smoke hole in the roof – the smoke would form a layer above head height and escape gradually through the thatch.

Being a chieftain's house, this roundhouse is larger than average. The chieftain would hold feasts and entertain his followers here, which would be important for maintaining his status. The chieftain's family and servants would all have lived in the house, but much of people's lives would have been spent out of doors. Most people were farmers, but the ruling classes were warriors, and would have trained in the use of weapons from childhood.

Ancient Britons had no overall ruler but lived in individual tribes. South Essex was part of the territory of the Trinovantes tribe. Their neighbours to the north were the Icenii, the tribe from which Boudica came.

The ancient Britons left no written records, so our knowledge of them comes from archaeological remains and accounts by Roman writers, who were often prejudiced and considered the British to be barbarians. In fact the British had a sophisticated society and beliefs, highly developed craft skills and considerable material wealth.

Looking around the house, you will notice some items made of iron – producing good quality iron from ore was not easy, so the amount of iron a chieftain could display indicated his wealth and status.

Some crafts, e.g. metalwork, were carried out by specialists, but families would also produce many items for themselves such as weaving their own clothing. The Britons traded with Europe and Rome, exporting animal skins, grain and slaves in exchange for luxury goods such as Roman wine.

Our website: www.hadleighcountrypark.co.uk has information and pictures of the house and its construction as well as details of forthcoming events in the park and roundhouse open days.

As well as the open days and various events based around the roundhouse, we also offer:

- School and youth group visits to the house to learn about the Iron Age and take part in an archaeological dig
- Iron Age/Roman themed birthday parties
- Talks for adult groups in the Roundhouse
- The possibility of hiring the Roundhouse for your own event

If you have any enquires regarding the Roundhouse, please use the contacts below.



Hadleigh Country Park
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Hadleigh
Essex
SS7 2PP

Phone: 01702 551072
E-mail: hadleigh.cp@essex.gov.uk

How To Find Us:

By road: The main car park can be accessed from Chapel Lane, off the A13 in Hadleigh. Just follow the brown road signs marked country park. Please note there is a £2 pay and display charge at all times.

By bus: Essex Bus Line: 08457 000333. The nearest bus stop is at the junction of Chapel Lane and London Road, near to Morrisons supermarket. This is a short walk away from Chapel Lane car park. There is also a bus stop at Benfleet Station if you would prefer to visit the park from the Benfleet end.

By rail: Closest station is Benfleet on the London (c2c) to Southend Line

Timetable enquiries: www.nationalrail.co.uk or 08457 484950.

Benfleet Station is located in the south western corner of the park and allows quick and easy access to the park and the sea wall.

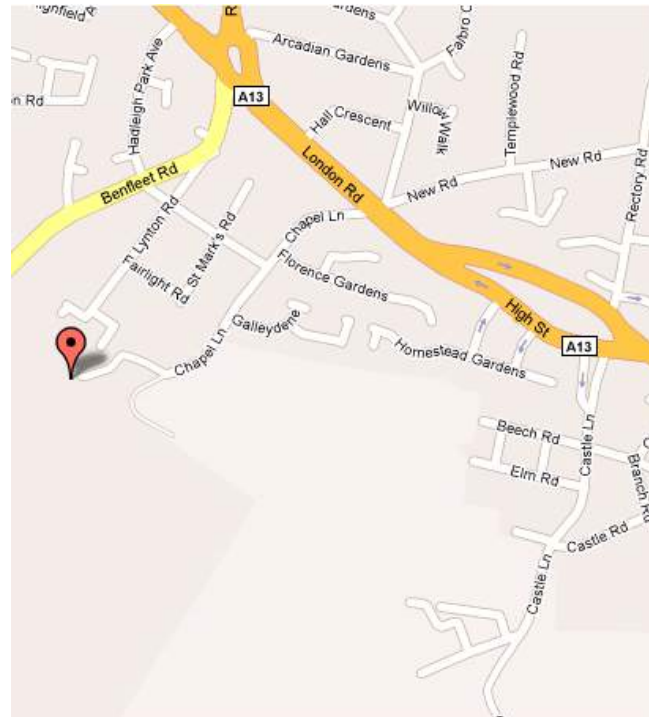
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Web: www.hadleighcountrypark.co.uk

Please use this map to help find us; our signed entrance is on the right hand side of Chapel Lane as you come down from the London Road.



Essex County Council



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***Iron Age
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