

Where can I discover more?

Although one of the most characteristic prehistoric monuments in the landscape today, the numerous Bronze Age round barrows in Surrey are not



always easy to spot on the ground, having undergone much erosion over the centuries. The best surviving barrows – which are usually

scheduled sites – are particularly concentrated in areas of heathland and often paired or in a small grouping, including at Frensham, Thursley, Horsell and Reigate.



*Thursley (above) and
Frensham (right) barrows*



“Promoting the study of archaeology and antiquities...and any other matters or things relating to the pre-history and history of the County.”

*- Articles of Association
Surrey Archaeological Society*

Some learning sources on Bronze Age Surrey

Bird, J and D G Bird (1987) *The Archaeology of Surrey to 1540*

Cotton, J et al (2004) *Aspects of Archaeology and History in Surrey*

Hunt, R (2002) *Hidden Depths: an Archaeological Exploration of Surrey's Past*

Other suggested resources

University of Reading's **Grave Goods: Objects and Death in Later Prehistoric Britain** (archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archives/view/grave_ahrc_2020)

Schools Prehistory & Archaeology (schoolsprehistory.co.uk)

Ancient Craft Three Age Experience (ancientcraft.co.uk)

Portable Antiquities Scheme (finds.org.uk)

Exploring Surrey's Past (exploringsurreypast.org.uk)

In addition to the Society's own handling collections and teaching resources, local loans boxes are available from many of the county's museums, as well as Surrey History Centre.

Prehistoric and Bronze Age exhibits can be viewed at local museums including Chertsey, Guildford, Godalming, London and Kingston. Several barrows are well worth a visit, both in Surrey and elsewhere, and impressive reconstructions of domestic structures can be visited at Butser Ancient Farm.

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Bronze Age Surrey



Explore your local heritage and discover more about the origins of Surrey's earliest settlements



2500 BC

EARLY BRONZE AGE

- c.2500BC Metalworking technology develops with the use of small furnaces, allowing higher temperatures and the production of jewellery and weapons from copper and gold
- c.2400BC Elements of the Beaker culture arrive from the continent, including new burial rites and objects
- c.2400-2200BC Presence of 'specialists' indicated by appearance of metalwork and highly decorated 'beaker' vessels
- c.2300BC 'Amesbury Archer' dies near Stonehenge
- c.2200BC Bronze is first made by mixing copper and tin and gradually replaces stone as the main material for tools
- c.2200-1600BC Wessex Culture and period of ceremonial landscapes and elaborate barrows, often with elite leaders buried underneath with grave goods and special funerary objects
- c.1800BC First industrial-scale copper mines are dug in Ireland and Wales

1600 BC

MIDDLE BRONZE AGE

- c.1500-1200BC More sophisticated metal weapons with ornamentation appear, including palstave axes
- c.1500BC Emergence of flat-grave cremation, alongside open settlements, the laying out of fields and round-houses
- c.1500-800BC New ceremonial and religious practices develop, such as cremation in cemeteries and hoards as votive offerings

1200 BC

LATE BRONZE AGE

- c.1200-800BC Roundhouses become typical domestic structure
- c.1200-800BC Both the forms and quantities of metalwork increase, including leaf-shaped sword blades for slashing

800 BC

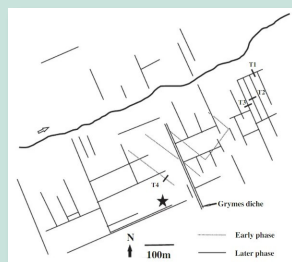
The Bronze Age period c. 2500 - 800 BC

Although it is common to generalise late prehistory – and the Bronze Age in particular – as the period which saw the introduction of metallurgy, other important developments took place, including open settlement and field system patterns. At the same time, many practices continued from the Late Neolithic which preceded it, making it a complex period with cultural change very gradual over time.

With more scientific techniques being developed every day, new advances are able to be applied towards analysis of Bronze Age material in Surrey. One such technique is palynological (pollen) analysis, where sediment monoliths are extracted from excavated sites such as barrows, which can provide a reconstruction of the landscape of the time, including the woodland species. At Thursley (*cover image*), study of the turf stacks indicated that the local heathland was in early development. A similar study at Frensham showed that hazel and oak woodland dominated in the Middle Bronze Age, with the mounds possibly set within a small glade.



End section of barrows at Thursley (left) and Frensham (right) Commons



Probable Bronze Age field system, Whitmoor Common (Judie English)

Many Bronze Age monuments have also been known about since antiquarian times, whether barrows – often labelled on early mapping as 'tumuli' – or field systems. However, aerial photography or more recent advances such as LiDAR (**L**ight **D**etection and **R**anging) have allowed for more features to be detected. Some of these field systems – such as Whitmoor Common – have even had small excavations which have confirmed their dating.

Petters Sports Field, Egham
c. 850 BC

The principal roundhouse, with its imposing porch, was identified from postholes, and these also indicated the presence of fencing and other structures, mostly of uncertain form but including the four-posted raised granaries. The site is also notable for the bronze hoard discovered in a ditch which lay just behind the fence shown here. The viewpoint looks approximately west towards the wooded Coopers Hill in the distance. (Drawing by Giles Pattison © Surrey County Archaeological Unit)

