

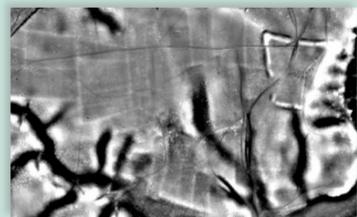
Evidence for all the buildings shown was found in the form of wall trenches, postholes and eaves-drip trenches. The buildings in the foreground were separately enclosed and might be the residence of a chief with the dwellings of his followers behind. The site is one of a group of this period established on level ground created next to the river Blackwater before that was reduced to a stream (which hence no longer floods the plain adjacent) when its headwaters were captured by the river Wey some 500,000 years ago. The viewpoint looks approximately south-west, with the Blackwater on the east side. (Drawing by Giles Patison © Surrey County Archaeological Unit)

**Tongham Nurseries  
c. 100 BC**

*A flat linear pit from Surrey  
© Surrey County Council*



Though the study of late prehistory in Britain has commonly focused on the introduction of metallurgy, many important developments also took place, including changes in the agricultural landscape and technological advances. Just as the transition from the Late Bronze Age is often an unclear boundary, many aspects of Late Iron Age culture also remained largely unchanged into the Roman period, particularly in the countryside. As more scientific techniques and advances are developed every day, local research can lead to new discoveries, without a single spade going into the ground. The application of LIDAR (Light Detection and Ranging) is a case in point, which uses lasers to create a topographic model of the landscape, allowing not only clarity of well-known earthworks – as at Hillbury, Puttenham – but more faint features, such as the adjacent field systems, to be detected. Even more traditional studies such as numismatics – the study of currency – can provide insight into other aspects of society, when not looked at in isolation. In addition to being useful dating tools when found in context, coins such as the Late Iron Age *potins* can tell much about tribal identity and settlement activity, making recording on databases such as the Portable Antiquities Scheme integral to distribution studies.



*LIDAR imagery (in Environment Agency data) of Hillbury hillfort, Puttenham*

**The Iron Age period c. 800 BC - AD 43**

**Where can I discover more?**

Perhaps the most visually impressive prehistoric remains in the Surrey landscape today – and certainly most prominent earthworks – are the massive ramparts of the hillforts which dominate the landscape. A particularly important and strategic line runs along the scarp of the Greensand – including Hascombe and Holmbury – with extensive views south



over the Weald, though other, smaller earthworks are dotted elsewhere around the county.

*Hillbury, Puttenham (top) and Caesar's Camp, Aldershot (left)*



“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*

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**Some learning sources on Iron Age Surrey**

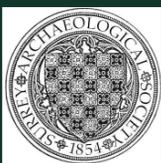
- Bird, J and D G Bird (1987) *The Archaeology of Surrey to 1540*
- Cotton, J et al (2004) *Aspects of Archaeology and History in Surrey*
- Hunt, R (2002) *Hidden Depths: an Archaeological Exploration of Surrey's Past*

**Other suggested resources**

- Iron Age Coins in Britain** ([iacb.arch.ox.ac.uk](http://iacb.arch.ox.ac.uk))
- University of Reading's **The Rural Settlement of Roman Britain: an online resource** ([archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archives/view/romangl/](http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archives/view/romangl/))
- Schools Prehistory & Archaeology** ([schoolsprehistory.co.uk](http://schoolsprehistory.co.uk))
- Ancient Craft Three Age Experience** ([ancientcraft.co.uk](http://ancientcraft.co.uk))
- Exploring Surrey's Past** ([exploringsurreypast.org.uk](http://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 Iron Age exhibits can be viewed at local museums including Chertsey, Guildford, Godalming, Farnham, Kingston and Woking, and several hillforts are well worth a visit, including impressive ones nearby at Cissbury Ring and Danebury, as well as the oppidum at Silchester.



**Iron Age Surrey**



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

c.1000-700BC Main phase of hillfort building begins (with many built in the Late Bronze Age)

c.800BC Iron working techniques reach Britain, being in common use until c.625 BC

c.625-450BC Hallstatt D period, where southern British weaponry follows continental fashion (daggers replacing swords and bow brooches being used over ring-headed pins)

c.450-225BC Early La Tène sees re-introduction of long swords and new art style

c.400-100BC Main period of hillfort building in the SE (some newly constructed and others modified)

c.300BC Good quality iron exchanged over considerable distance as standardized ingots

c.150BC Coins developed amongst elite of southeast England

c.100BC Introduction of potter's wheel

c.100BC Iron bars begin to be used as tokens of wealth

55-54BC Julius Caesar makes two expeditions to Britain as part of his Gaulish campaigns

50BC Large 'oppida' settlements such as Silchester and Colchester begin to emerge

AD1 Southeast Britain controlled by powerful leaders with close contact with Roman Empire

AD43 Britain invaded by Emperor Claudius

800 BC

EARLY IRON AGE

400 BC

MIDDLE IRON AGE

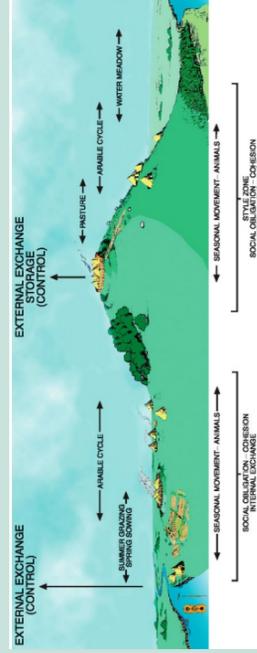
100 BC

LATE IRON AGE

AD 43

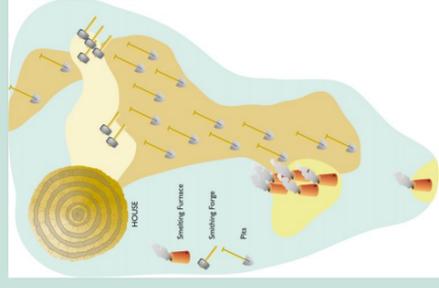
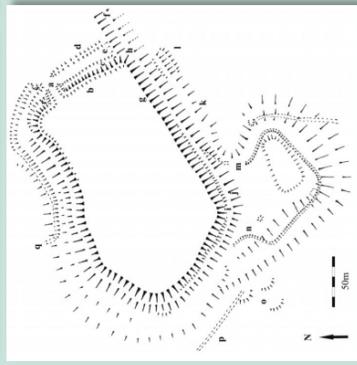
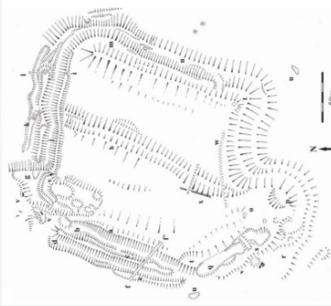


## Hillforts in the landscape



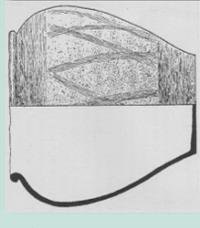
Before the end of the Bronze Age – around 800 BC – major developments were already taking place which would set the scene for the ensuing Iron Age. This included hillfort centres to which produce could be brought, where manufacturing could take place and where goods could be redistributed. These early forts – particularly those in the north of the county such as St Ann’s Hill, Chertsey – served an important function within a marketing and exchange model (*above*) which also relied on river transport and agricultural production from surrounding farmsteads. The ramparted sites along the Greensand were later in date however – Middle to Late Iron Age – strategically positioned to control access to seasonal grazing land in the Weald. Both Holmbury (*below top*) and Hascombe (*bottom*) made use of banks, ditches and palisades to form impressive defences, and despite the presence of sling-stones, this was more likely a statement of conspicuous consumption, rather than being purely military in nature.

(Illustration: Surrey County Archaeological Unit (SCAU); Plans: Judie English, Rose Hooker; Photos: Judie English, S E Winbolt, Guildford Heritage Services)

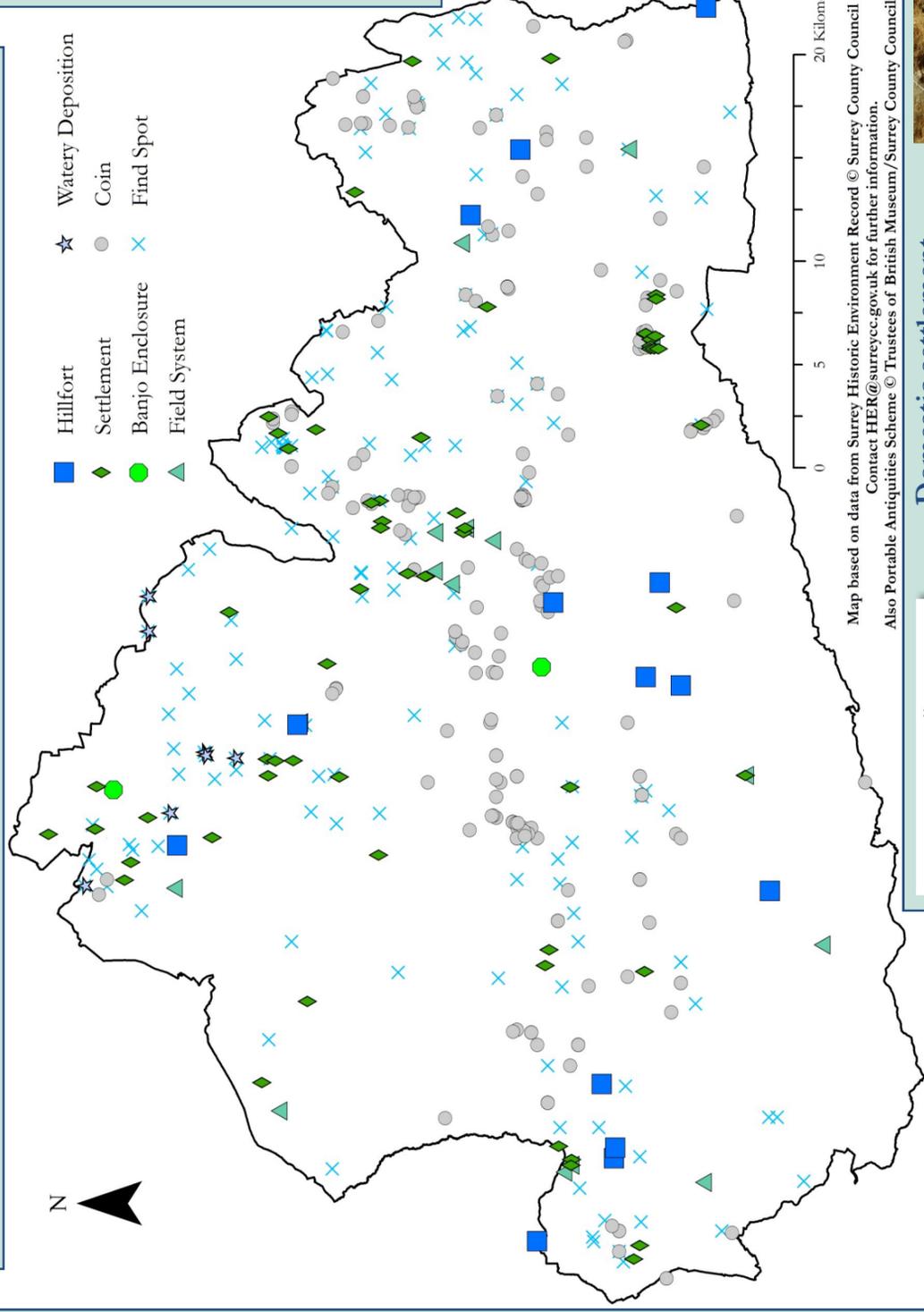


## New technologies

Iron-working was a technology which was present on the Continent long before arriving in Britain. In Surrey, low-grade iron ores were worked and processed to produce tools and weapons at sites like Brooklands (*left*) and Ewell, where smelting hearths and slag were found, though the main source of ore was to the far south, in the Weald. Other advances during the period included the introduction of lathes for turning wooden and shale objects, the potter’s wheel – which led to the curvaceous ‘Belgic’ forms, as at the Bourne Mill Spring site, Farnham (*right*) – and the development of the rotary quern. The quern industry also provided evidence of longer-distance trade, with querns found at both Ewell (*upper right*) and Holmbury (*cover*) sourced from non-local stone beds. (Illustration and Photo: SCAU; Drawing: AWG Lowther)



- ★ Hillfort
- ◆ Settlement
- Banjo Enclosure
- ▲ Field System
- ☆ Watery Deposition
- Coin
- × Find Spot



Map based on data from Surrey Historic Environment Record © Surrey County Council 2021  
Contact [HER@surreycc.gov.uk](mailto:HER@surreycc.gov.uk) for further information.  
Also Portable Antiquities Scheme © Trustees of British Museum/Surrey County Council 2021

## Watery deposits

Rivers were considered sacred places in this period, especially the Thames, where deliberate offerings were made of special deposits were made. These include both ‘parade ornament’ – so-called as it would not have been worn in battle – such as the Wandsworth shield boss (*bottom left*), Waterloo Bridge helmet (*top*) and Abbey Meads and Battersea shield (*below right*). The bronze Weybridge bucket (*right*) – a rare Alpine import and part of a wine-mixing set – was another watery deposit from the River Wey. (Photos: © The Trustees of the British Museum)



## Currency and tribal identity

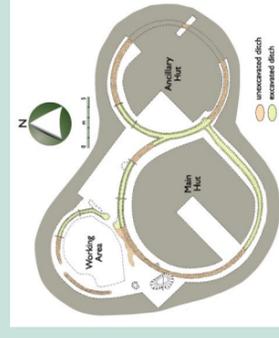


Coinage was first introduced to Britain around 150 BC, and the first coins made locally were copper-alloy ‘potins’, which were influenced by continental design, as with the one from Abinger (*above left*). These coins were not used as currency in the modern manner, but formed part of a system of trade and exchange. Many Iron Age coin hoards have been explained in terms of safe-keeping or ritual deposits, such as the potin hoard from Sunbury (*right*), found inside a pot, which may have been buried as a special offering. The introduction of coinage also provides the first clues of tribal territories, as they bear the names of rulers, such as Verica of the Atrebrates (inscribed on the silver unit from Wanborough *above right*), who was driven from Surrey and fled to Rome, prompting the Claudian invasion of AD 43. (Images: © Surrey County Council, © The Trustees of the British Museum, © Museum of London)



## Domestic settlement

Although domestic building evidence is less obvious – often limited to post-holes, gullies or hearths – roundhouses have been excavated, including at the small family settlement at Lower Mill Farm, Stanwell (*upper left*) and much larger one at Tongham (*left and upper right*, where a log ladder was preserved in a well). Once thought to be exclusively for stock, ‘banjo’ enclosures like Epsom Downs (*right*) would have contained houses as well, often with associated field systems. (Images: SCAU)



## Metal Detecting

If undertaken responsibly, detecting can make important contributions to archaeological knowledge. Detectonists are reminded that it is illegal to trespass – remember all land has an owner! – and to record finds with their local Finds Liaison Officer and the Portable Antiquities Scheme. For more on the Code of Practice, please see [www.finds.org.uk](http://www.finds.org.uk).

