

A woman with long, wavy red hair and white face paint is seated in a wooden chariot. She is holding a long spear. The chariot is pulled by a dark horse. In the background, a large group of people is visible on a grassy field under a cloudy sky.

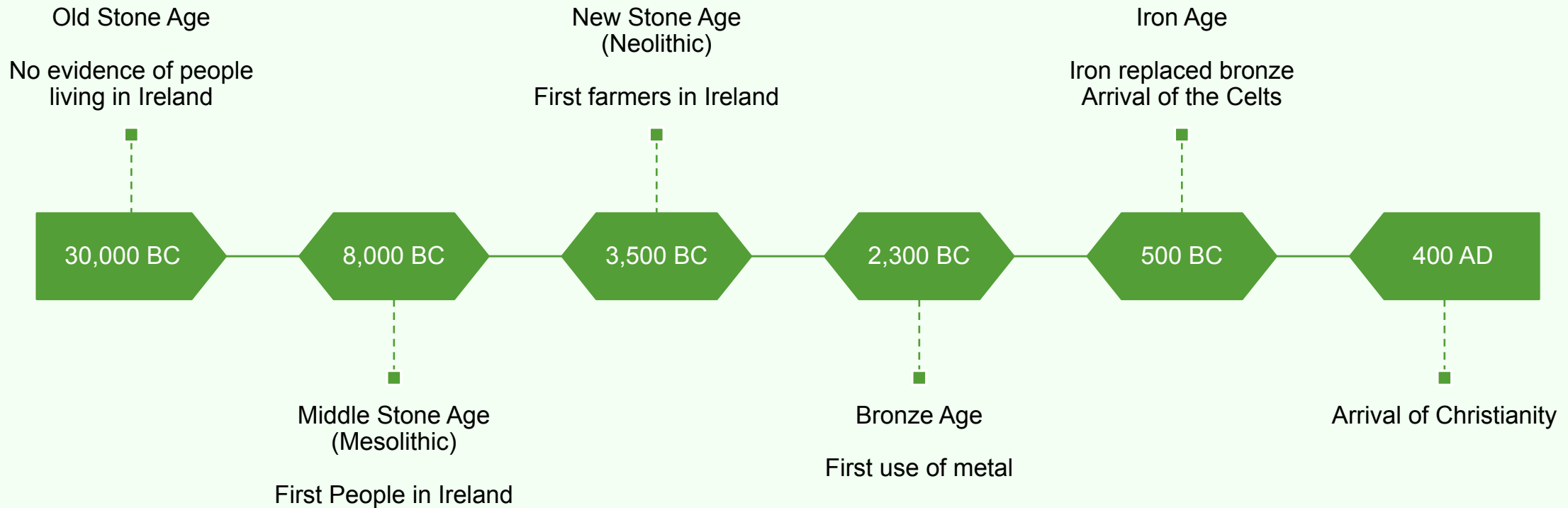
# Ch. 3 – Settlement in Ireland: Ancient Ireland

Chapter Three

# Learning Outcomes

- **2.1 RECOGNISE** how a pattern of settlement and plantation influenced identity on the island of Ireland, referring to one example of a pattern of settlement, such as the growth of towns, and one plantation
- **1.5 INVESTIGATE** the job of the historian, including how s/he finds and uses evidence to form historical judgements which may be revised and reinterpreted in the light of new evidence
- **1.6 DEBATE** the usefulness and limitations of different types of primary and secondary sources of historical evidence, such as written, visual, aural, oral and tactile evidence; and **APPRECIATE** the contribution of archaeology and new technology to historical enquiry

# Timeline – Ancient Ireland



# Recap

- In the last chapter, we learned about the work of a historian and an archaeologist.
- Now we are going to look at **Ancient Ireland**.
- This period covers the Stone and Bronze Ages, when people first arrived in Ireland and began to build communities.
- This was a time before writing was used in Ireland – the prehistoric era – so our knowledge depends completely on archaeology.
- Then came the Iron Age and with it the Celtic people, their more complex society, their ironworking skills and an early form of writing.

## 3.1 Mesolithic Ireland: The Hunter-Gatherers

# The Three Ages of Stone

- **Palaeolithic** – Early – 2,500,000 BC to 8,000 BC
- **Mesolithic** – Middle – 8,000 BC to 3,500 BC
- **Neolithic** – New – 3,500 BC to 2,000 BC

# The first settlers in Ireland

- The first people arrived in Ireland during the **Mesolithic (Middle Stone) Age (8,000 – 3,500 BC)**.
- They probably travelled across from **Scotland** in dugout canoes made from tree trunks.
- As we covered in the last chapter, **Mount Sandel in Co. Derry** is our most important source of information for this period in Ireland.

# Tools, weapons and work

- This period of history is known as the Stone Age because **all tools and weapons were made from stone**.
- People sharpened pieces of stone (mainly **flint**) and fixed them to wooden shafts to use as arrows, axes, spears and harpoons.
- Mesolithic people were **hunter-gatherers**; they got all their food by hunting, fishing and gathering fruit, nuts and berries.
- Food was cooked over a fire of a **spit**.
- People clothed themselves in **animal skins** and used bones to make needles for sewing.





needle made  
from antler



flint scraper



arrowhead  
with flint



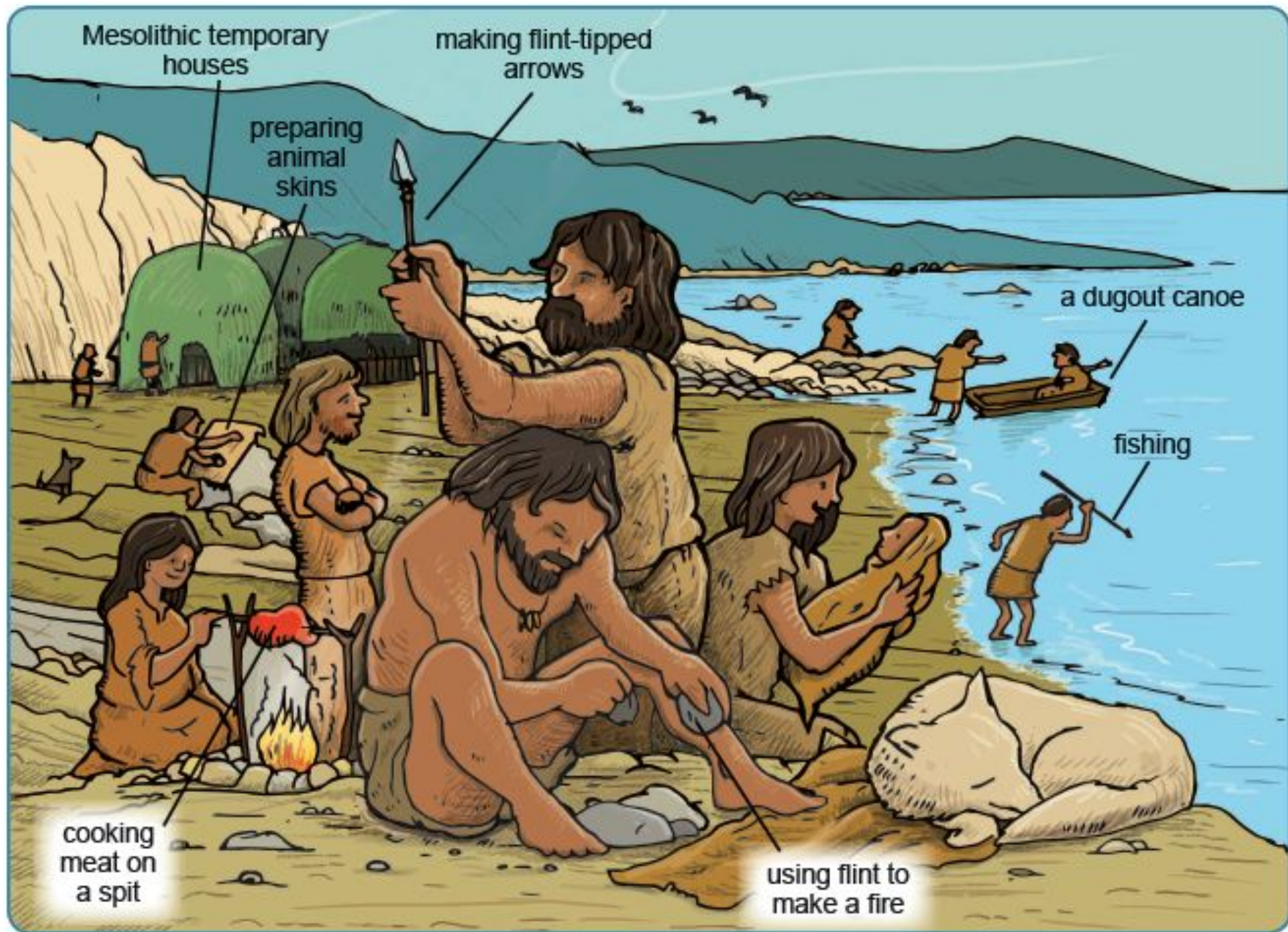
axe



arrowhead

# Houses

- The Mesolithic people were **nomadic**: they regularly moved from place to place.
- Archaeologists believe they lived in temporary dwellings such as tents - or basket-like houses made from saplings driven into **post holes** in a circle and tied at the top.
- The walls would have been covered with skins, reeds or sods of turf.



# Burials

- A burial site in **Hermitage, Co. Limerick** tells us that the Mesolithic people **cremated** (burned) the bodies of the dead and buried them with axes and other valuable items (**grave goods**).
  - They may have cremated their dead to **stop** animals from going after the decomposing bodies.
- These are very important for archaeologists as the objects are well preserved.
- It also suggests that the people believed in some form of afterlife.



# Questions Pg. 28 (Artefact Textbook)

1. Why is this period called the Stone Age?
2. Explain the terms: hunter-gatherer; nomadic; grave goods.
3. What weapons and tools did they use? What were these made from?
4. Describe a Mesolithic house.
5. Why might archaeologists think that the Mesolithic people believed in an afterlife?

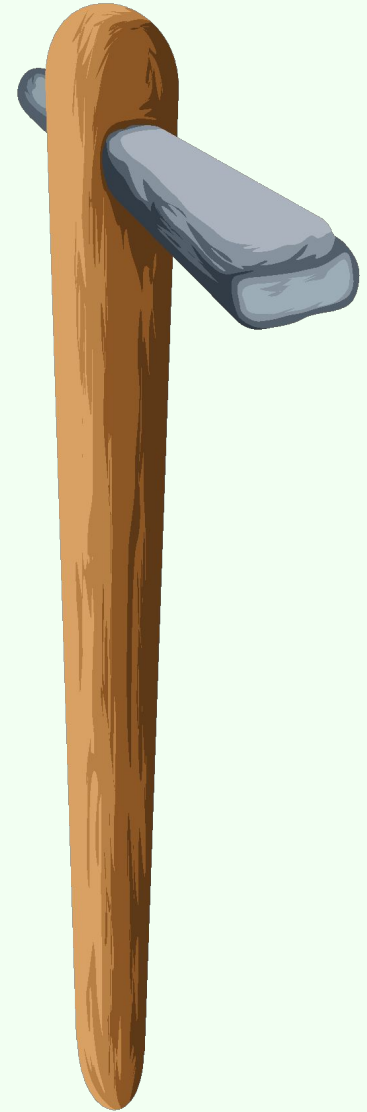
## **3.2 Neolithic Ireland: The First Farmers**

# The First Famers

- Between 4,000 and 3,500 BC, new settlers arrived in Ireland and brought new skills with them:
  - **Farming, bread-making, tomb-building** and **pottery-making**.
- Farming was the single most important change.
- They cut down trees and cleared land to plant crops and keep animals.
- There are several major Neolithic sites in Ireland:
  - **The Céide Fields** in Co. Mayo
  - **Lough Gur** in Co. Limerick
  - **The Boyne Valley** in Co. Meath

# Tools, weapons and work

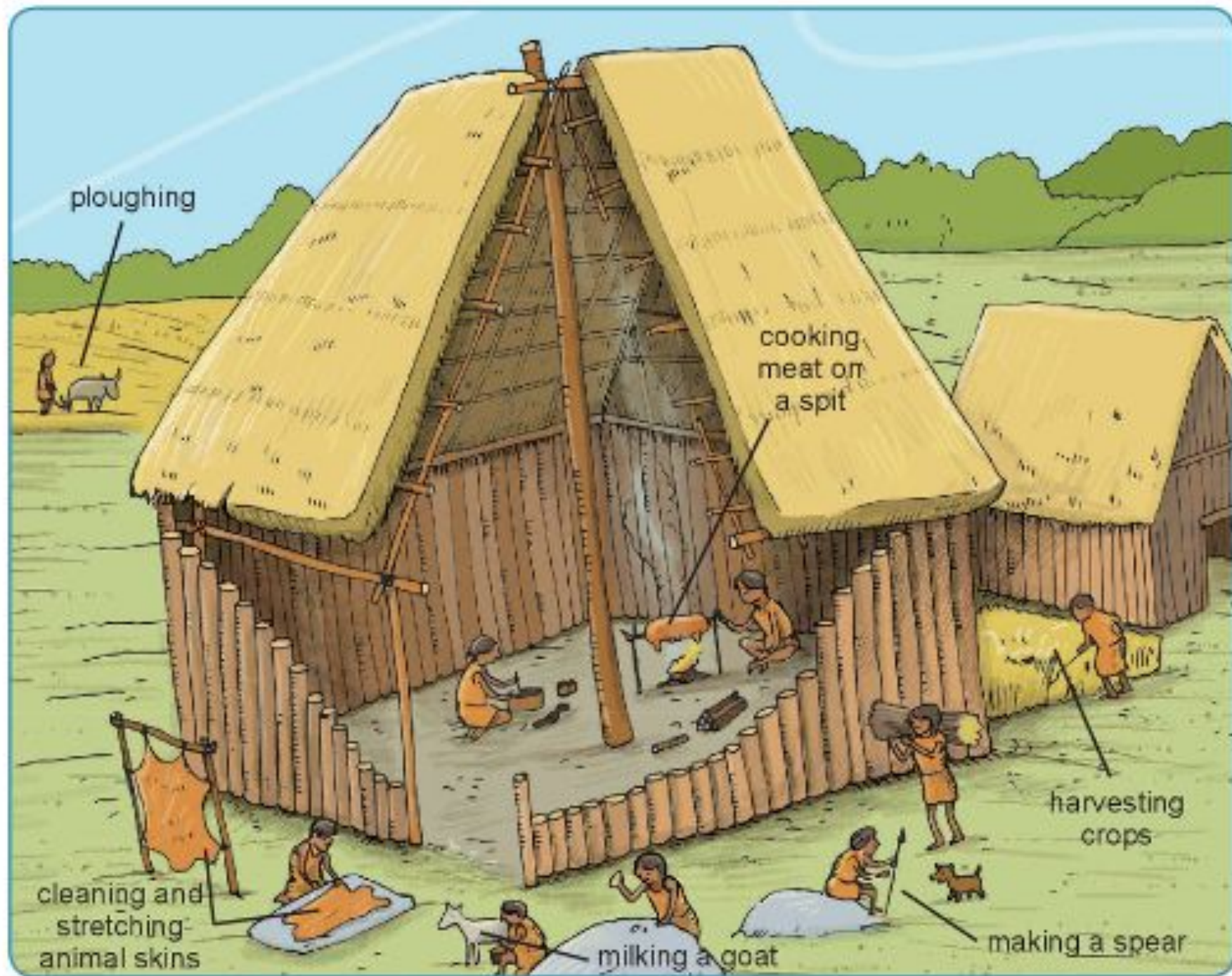
- The land was ploughed with stone **mattocks** and **ploughs**.
- The first farmers grew crops like **wheat** and **barley**.
- They domesticated animals like **sheep** and **pigs**.
- Like the Mesolithic people, they hunted and gathered but it was no longer their main source of food.
- To make **bread**, they ground wheat into flour on a **saddle stone**.
- The first **pots** were made from local clay and used to store food, tools or the ashes of the dead.





# Houses

- Farming meant that the Neolithic people could settle in one place.
- Their houses were therefore more **permanent** than those before.
- Their houses had poles driven into the ground (leaving **post holes**) or walls of **wattle and daub** (wooden sticks woven together like a basket (wattle) and covered with a mixture of mud, dung, sand and straw (daub)).
- The roof was thatched with straw or rushes.



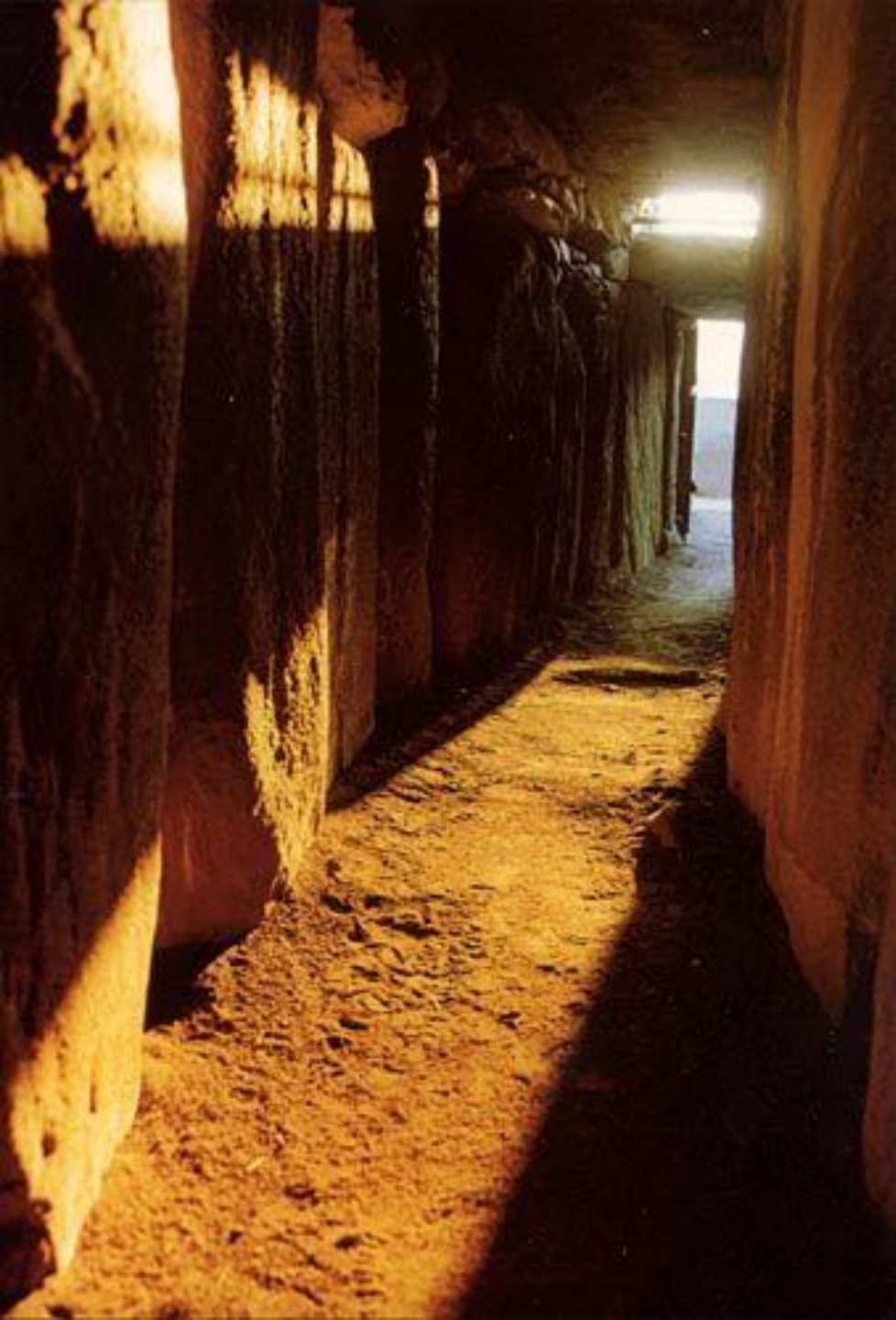
# Burials

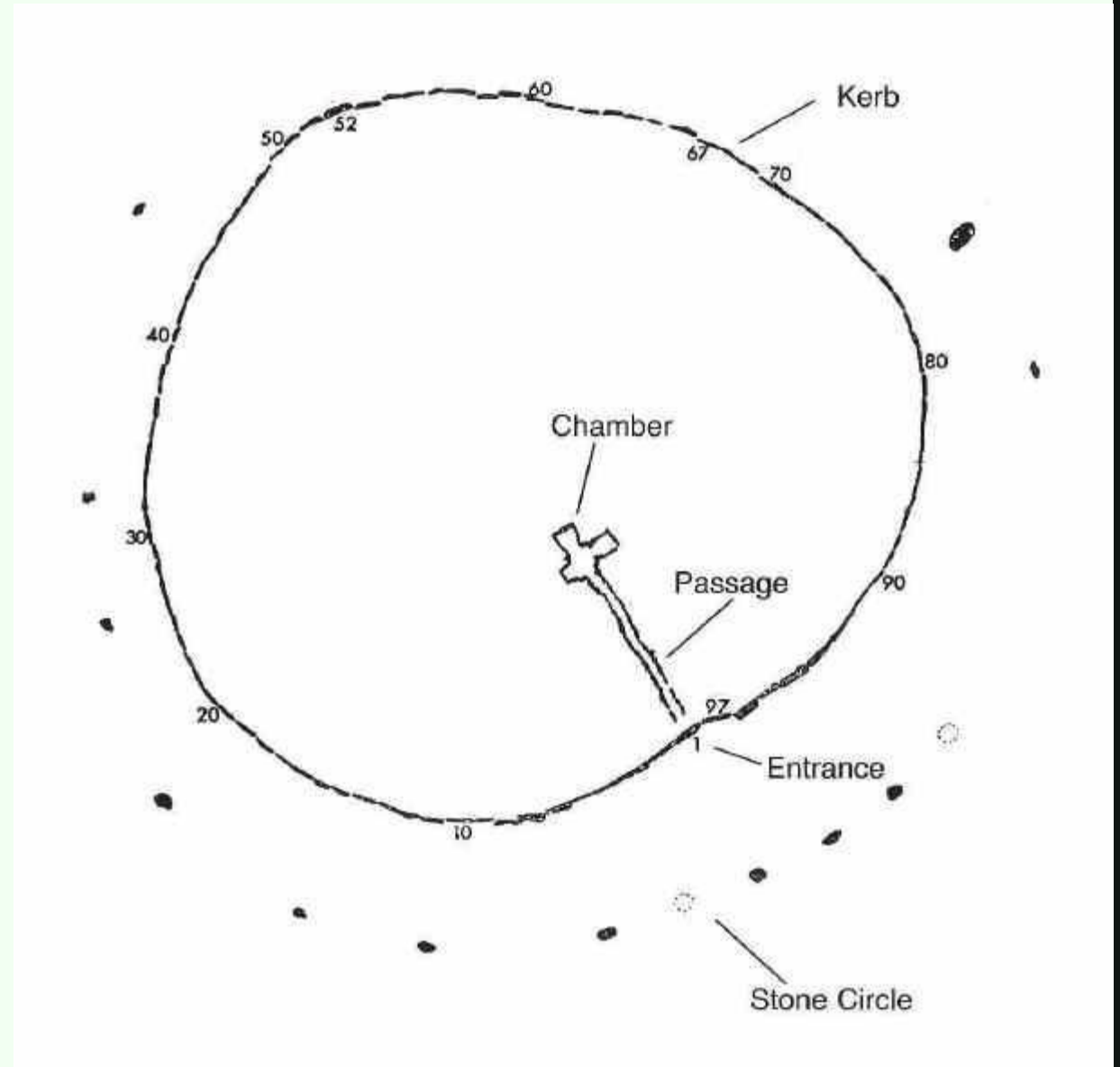
- A significant change in Neolithic Ireland was a new emphasis on building tombs for cremated remains and grave goods.
- There were three main types of **megalithic** (huge stone) tombs:
  - **Passage graves** – these were huge mounds built over a central passage which led to a chamber for the dead. (Newgrange)
  - **Court cairns** – these had an open **space** (**court**) at the front and a chamber originally covered by a mound of **stones** (**cairn**) for the dead behind. (Creevykeel, Co. Sligo)
  - **Portal dolmens** – Two or more standing stones and a huge capstone resting across the top with the remains placed inside. (Poulmabrone dolmen, the Burren, Co. Clare)

# Burials

- The megaliths for these tombs would have been **floated along rivers on rafts** or **rolled for miles on logs**.
- Building these tombs would have taken hundreds of people.
- The Neolithic people clearly had **knowledge of the stars** and were **skilled engineers**.











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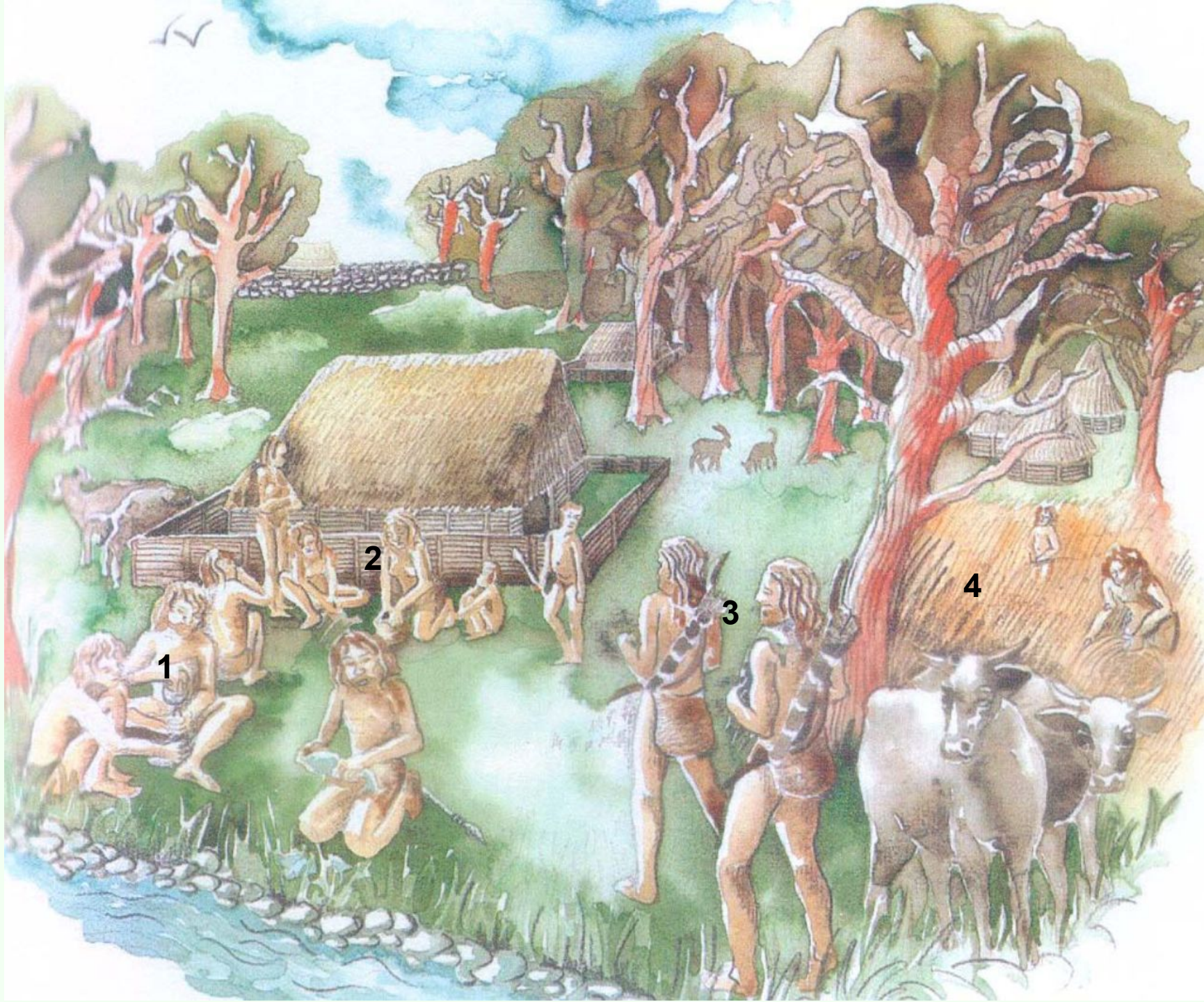






# Questions Pg. 30 (Artefact Textbook)

1. What important change took place in Ireland during the Neolithic period?
2. What foods were produced by Neolithic farmers?
3. Describe Neolithic houses and how these were different from Mesolithic houses.
4. Describe (a) a passage tomb; (b) a court cairn; (c) a portal dolmen.
5. Explain the following terms: wattle and daub; megaliths.



## 3.3 The Bronze Age



# Metal comes to Ireland

- Archaeologists believe the first use of metal in Ireland was around 2,000 BC; this was the Bronze Age.
- Bronze was **stronger** than stone but was also much **easier to shape** so people had greater control over the tools and weapons they could make.
- Bronze is an **alloy** (combination) of copper and tin.
- Copper was mined at Mount Gabriel in Co. Cork but tin had to be imported from the likes of Cornwall in Britain.
- Bronze was made by the process of **smelting** copper and tin – melting metal at a high temperature to separate it from the ore – combining them and pouring them into moulds to set.



# Tools, weapons and work

- **Metalworkers** (smiths) made tools such as **sickles** (to cut crops), **axes** and **ploughs** and weapons such as **knives**, **swords**, **shields** and **spears**.
- Farming remained the main source of food for Bronze Age people.
- They grew **wheat** and **barley**; kept animals such as **pigs**, **sheep** and **cattle**; and hunted animals such as **birds** and **fish**.
- Clothes were woven from sheep's wool, dyed with berries and stitched with bronze needles.

# Tools, weapons and work

- As skills developed, smiths made bronze pots and cauldrons for cooking, horns for music and **jewellery** in gold and bronze like bracelets, armlets, earrings, necklaces, **torcs and lunulae**.
- **Querns** were used to grind corn into flour for bread.
- Meat was cooked in a **fulacht fiadh**.
  - This was a stone-lined pit which was filled with water.
  - Stones were then heated in a fire and lowered into the water to make it boil.
  - The meat was wrapped in straw and left boiling until ready to eat.







# Houses

- While most houses in the Bronze Age were very similar to Neolithic houses (wattle and daub walls, thatched roofs), there were a couple of changes.
- Firstly, they were **bigger** (about 6 metres wide) and **circular**.
- Secondly, houses and other smaller buildings were **enclosed behind timber fences, earth embankments and ditches**.
- These may have been to defend the people from attacks, keep their animals safe at night, or both.

# Rath



- A **rath** was an earthen fort made by digging out a circular trench and piling up the earth in the centre.
- The houses were built on the rath so they could see enemies approach.
- Houses were made of **wattle and daub**, timber or stone, depending on available materials locally.
- Roofs were mostly **thatched** with reeds or straw.
- Animals were kept **in the rath** at night or when under attack.
- A **gateway** was the only way in.

# Crannóg

- A kind of fort built on the middle of a **lake**.
- Wooden posts were sunk into the lake. The centre was filled with stones, branches and earth until the base reached the surface of the water.
- A wooden **fence** surrounded the crannóg.
- Hidden **stepping stones** or dug out canoes were used to get out to the crannóg.
- Some had a **drawbridge** which could be pulled in when under attack.

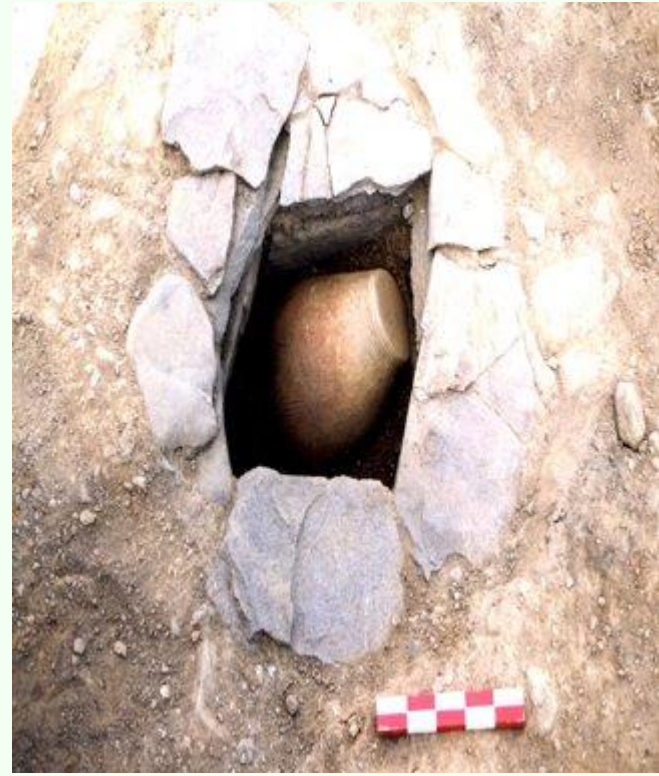


How many lines of defence can you spot in the picture?

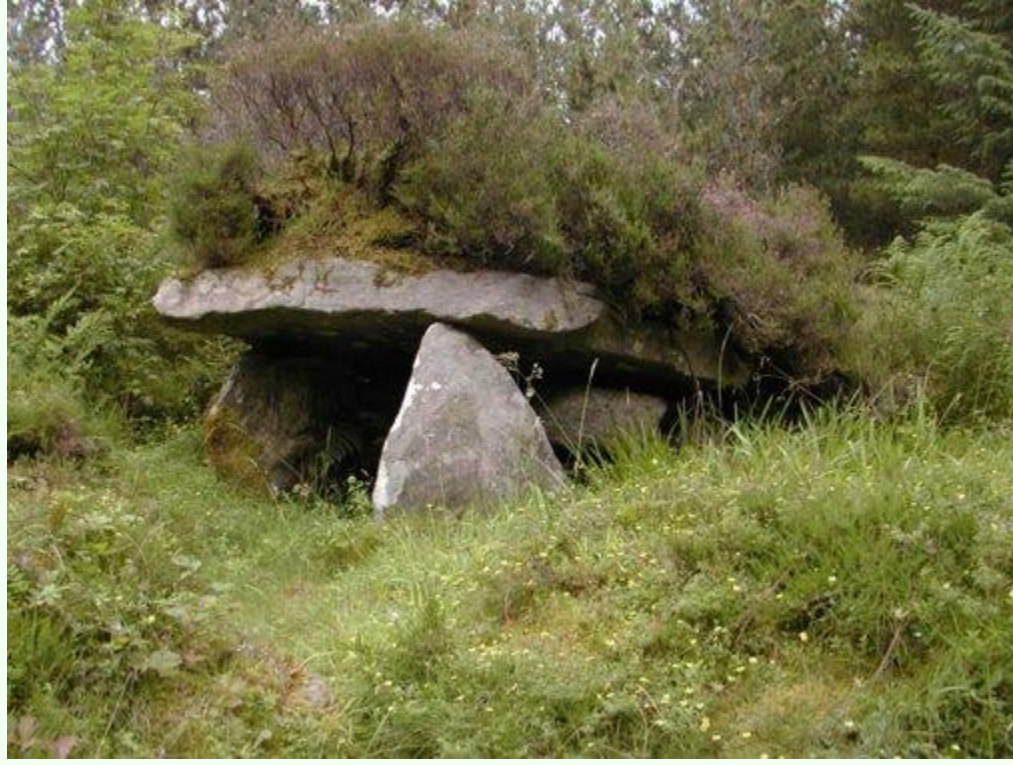
# Burials

- Some Bronze age burials were similar to those of Neolithic period.
- **Wedge tombs** were smaller versions of portal dolmens.
- As the population of the island grew during the Bronze Age, **cist graves** became more common.
- These were less difficult to build; just stone-lined graves in the ground.
- The body was buried in a **crouched** or **foetal position** with grave goods.









# Questions Pg. 32 (Artefact Textbook)

1. Which two metals were used to make bronze?
2. Why was the use of metal important?
3. What was a fulacht fiadh and how was it used?
4. What types of jewellery were made in the Bronze age?
5. How were houses in the Bronze Age (a) similar to and (b) different from those of the Neolithic period?
6. Describe a cist grave.



## 3.4 The Iron Age: Celtic Ireland

# The arrival of the Celts

- There is evidence that iron was in use in Ireland from as early as **500-300 BC**.
- The Celts are thought to have arrived in Ireland from **Central Europe** (around modern Austria and Switzerland).
- They brought with them their **culture, language, religion, horses** and the **knowledge of iron-working**.
- Iron was a far stronger metal than bronze and it became the main metal used for tools and weapon.
- Celtic culture would quickly become dominant in Ireland over the next thousand years.



# Celtic Society

- The Celts were a highly organised society – and the first such society in Ireland.
- The country was divided into many **tuaths** (kingdoms), each ruled by a **rí** (king).
- Under him were the **aos dána** – who were made up of the **warriors**, **nobles** and other **peoples with special skills**.
- Then came the **farmers** and **common people**, and at the bottom of society were the **labourers** and **slaves**.

# Celtic Society





# Aos Dána

- **Brehons** – judges who knew the complex, Brehon Law that the Celts followed.
- **Druids** – pagan priests.
- **Filí** – poets who preserved the history and stories in their poetry.
- **Healers** – pagan doctors.
- **Bards** – musicians.
- **Craftspeople** – metalworkers, masons and so forth.

# Women in Celtic Society

- Women in the Celtic society were given rights far ahead of their time, very similar to the rights seen in the Norse society (Vikings).
- It was not uncommon for women to achieve an influential status such as becoming **Druoidesses** who were respected throughout Celtic lands or ruling as **Queens**.
- Celtic women could own property and were represented in the law.
- Women could even become **Brigh Brigaid** (female judges) and for the most part, any other career path they saw fit.
- There are also many female goddesses prevalent in Celtic mythology.





# Celtic Houses

- The discovery of weapons and the remains of fortified homes show that conflict and warfare were common in Iron Age Ireland.
- The Celtic houses were similar to houses from the Bronze Age: wattle and daub walls with thatched roofs – if it ain't broke don't fix it.



# Crannógs

- Man-made islands
- Tree trunks were driven down into the bed of a lake and a platform was built on top.
- They were designed for defence and could only be reached by bridge, stepping stones or boat.
- Over 1,200 crannog sites have been found in Ireland.



# Ring-forts (Raths)

- Circular enclosures surrounded by a ditch, earth bank and wooden fence.
- Some also had an underground passage (souterrain) for food storage or an escape route during an attack.
- Aided by aerial photography, archaeologists have found over 40,000 raths.



# Promontory Forts

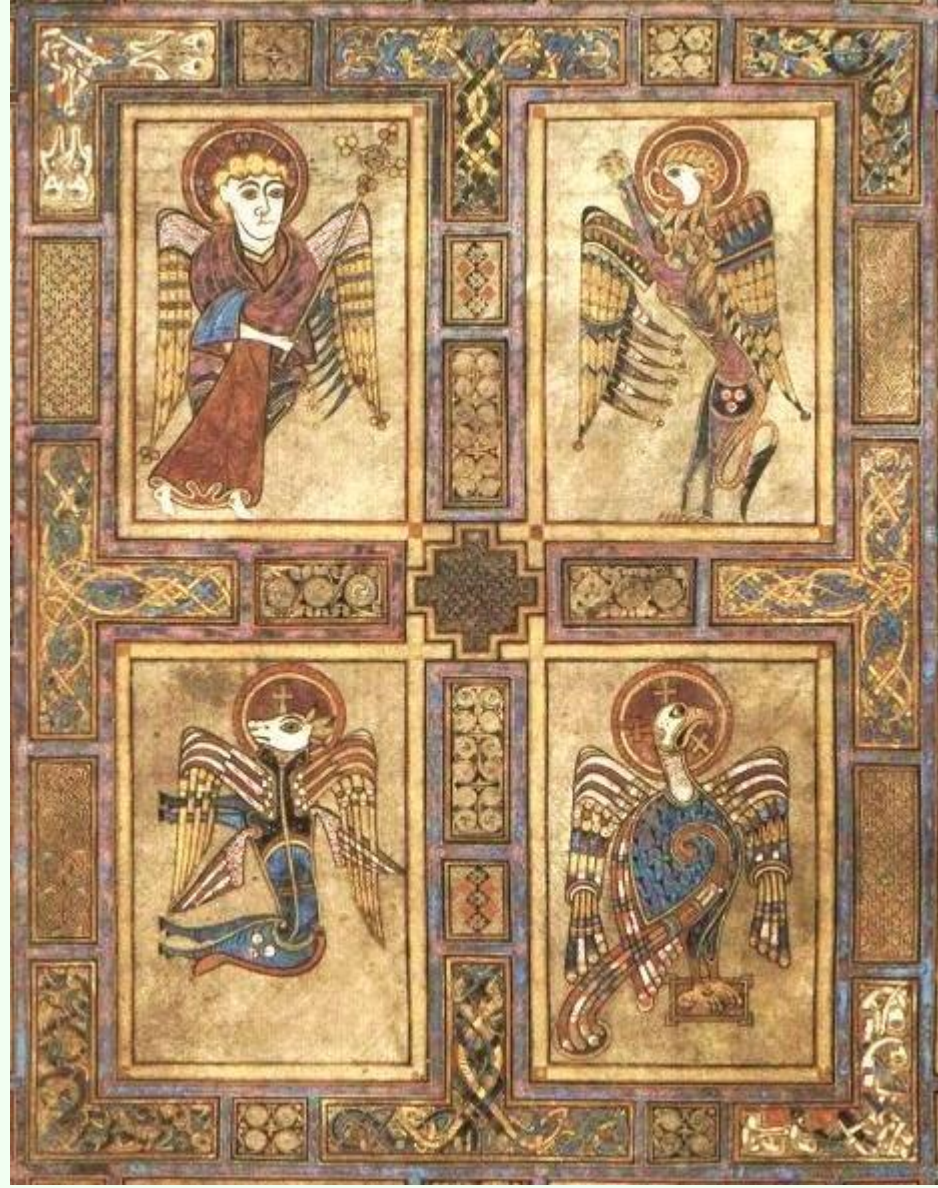
- At the coast, new forts were built.
- Built on a cliff to protect one side while stone walls protected the other.
- The area around the fort was covered with sharp stones called “cheveux de frises”
- The forts also had souterrain built underneath them.



# Celtic Art

- The Celts brought their unique style of art to Ireland.
- Known as the **La Tène style** (after the hoard found in La Tène, Switzerland).
- It featured spirals, florals, fantasy animals and curved lines.
- The Celts also crafted intricate golden jewellery.
- This style continued to evolve and has had a huge influence on later generations of Irish art.





# Celtic Burials

- Celtic burials were very similar to those of the Bronze Age.
- They cremated bodies and buried the remains in pits or cist graves, along with graves goods.
- One important difference was that the Celts often marked graves with **ogham stones**.
- These standing stones, which were also used to mark boundaries, feature the earliest form of writing in Ireland.
- **Ogham** was a series of horizontal and diagonal lines along a central vertical line.

# Celtic Religion

- The **DRUIDS** were the keepers of religion before Christianity.
- They were next to the King in importance.
- They were exempt from taxes and fighting.
- They conducted ceremonies and crowned the King.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rFMkBYx5v9U>

# Celtic Gods

- The Celts, as pagans, worshiped many gods.

Gods	Goddess
Dagda – King of the Gods, God of Death	Danu – Mother of the Celts, Goddess of Nature
Cú Chulainn – God of Heroes	The Morrigan – Goddess of War, Queen of Demons
Lugh – God of War, Harvest and Sun	Medb, Queen of Connacht – Goddess of Heroes
Cernunnos – God of nature, grain, wealth, and horned animals	Badb – Goddess of Death, Bringer of the end of the world
Aengus - God of youth and love	Brigid - Goddess of poetry, prophecy, healing, agriculture, and fire



# Celtic festivals

- **Imbolg** (February) – Brigid for lambing
- **Bealtaine** (May) – Bel for cattle and crops
- **Lughnasa** (August) – Lug for good harvest
- **Samhain** (November) – Dagda and new year



# Questions Pg. 34 (Artefact Textbook)

1. When did the Celts arrive in Ireland?
2. How was Celtic society organised?
3. Describe (a) a crannog, (b) a ring-fort and (c) a promontory fort.
4. What was the La Tène style?
5. What did the Celts do with their dead?
6. What was ogham? Why is it important?

## 3.5 Summary



# Summary

- The Stone (Mesolithic, Neolithic) and Bronze Ages are the prehistoric era in Ireland: no written records exist from these eras.
  - The Iron Age brought ogham, Ireland's earliest form of writing.
- The first people arrived in Ireland during the Mesolithic era.
  - They were hunter-gatherers who used stone weapons and tools, lived nomadic lives and cremated their dead.
- During the Neolithic period, farming was introduced to Ireland.
  - People now lived in permanent houses, farmed crops and reared animals for food.
  - They built large tombs to house their dead such as passage tombs, portal dolmens and court cairns.

# Summary

- In the Bronze Age, metal tools and weapons became common in Ireland.
  - The people continued to farm and lived in larger houses protected by wooden defences.
  - Graves became smaller.
- The Iron Age brought a new people to Ireland; the Celts.
  - They were a more organised society, and their culture and social structure dominated Ireland until the arrival of Christianity.

# Questions Pg. 35 (Artefact Textbook)

1. Describe the lives of people who lived in Mesolithic Ireland.
2. Why were these people nomadic?
3. How were the people's lives affected by the introduction of farming?
4. What evidence is there that the Neolithic people were (a) highly organised; (b) skilled engineers; (c) religious?
5. Is there any evidence of conflict in Bronze Age Ireland?
6. Why do you think graves became smaller in the Bronze Age?
7. Why was the arrival of the Celts so important for Irish history?
8. What evidence is there of conflict in Celtic Ireland?

# Project

- Recreate one of the following objects/buildings from the Stone Age to Iron Age:
  - Crannóg/Passage Grave/Portal Dolmen/Rath/Promontory Fort/Stone Circle/Lunula/Torc
- You can use any of the following methods to create this project:
  - Poster
  - Minecraft building, sculpture or invention
  - Lego building or invention
  - Painting/Drawing
  - Recycled materials – paper, card, wood, cardboard