

THE PEOPLE

LIFE IN A CELTIC VILLAGE

The Celts were individual tribes who shared a common culture and language. The early Celts believed that when people died they simply moved on to another world where life went on exactly as before. Because of this Celts buried their dead with everything that would be useful to them in the next life. Much of our knowledge of early Celtic culture is based on the artifacts found in early burials.

A Celtic **family** included the husband, wife and children, grandparents, and single aunts and uncles. Although the man was usually the head of the family, many women were treated as equals. Women warriors were not uncommon and in some noble families women became rulers. A family would all support each other by working together on the farm. The Celts were very successful farmers and even traded excess grain with European nations. After harvesting, crops would be taken back to the farm buildings to be threshed. The grain would be stored in large pits. Most of it would be ground into flour for bread or meal for porridge and stews, but some of it was used to brew beer. The Celts also kept farm animals. These included pigs, which were kept for their meat; cattle, which provided meat, milk, and leather; and sheep, which provided milk and wool. Hens and geese were kept for their eggs and feathers, but it was against the law to eat their flesh. They kept swarms of bees in wicker hives to provide honey—the only sweetener available in ancient times. The Celts enjoyed hunting the animals that roamed the woods and forests surrounding their farms. Their favorite was the wild boar, which they liked to eat.

Celtic women prepared all the food for their families. This included making butter and cheese, as well as cooking. They also had to grind grain into flour and make bread every day. Another task that kept them busy was making woolen cloth. After the sheep had been clipped, the knots were combed out of the fleece. It was spun into yarn on a spindle and then woven into cloth. Not much is known about Celtic children. Since there were no schools, they probably all helped with the household chores and worked on the farm as soon as they were able to be useful. Little models of dogs have been found in archaeological excavations throughout the Celtic world. They were likely kept as family pets as well as being working dogs.

Many **houses** were round in shape, but some were oval, oblong or square. The walls were built of stone or timber depending on the available materials. Spaces between the stones or timbers were filled in with mud (wattle and daub). The roofs were thatched with straw or reeds. Sometimes the houses were partially underground and connected to each other with narrow passages. The house had just one big room with an open fire pit in the middle that provided heat and light and was also used for cooking. The floor was hard packed mud. There is not much evidence of Celtic furniture. At night people slept on the floor wrapped in animal skins. They did all their cooking over the open fire in round-bottomed cauldrons. The Celts sat on the floor to eat their meals. Food was served in dishes made of wood or earthenware. There were knives but no forks. Beer was drunk from wooden tankards and mead, which was fermented from honey, from drinking horns. The wealthy drank wine from small silver goblets. As the number of Celts grew, some of them settled in communities called oppida or hill forts. These were like small villages and were built on the tops of hills. A series of concentric ditches were built around the hill forts to protect the people from their enemies. In times of danger, the farm animals would be brought into this area to graze. Many hill forts were also trading and craft centers.

Celtic **clothes** were practical, rather than fashionable. Men wore long woolen trousers, called bracae, and a sleeveless shirt fastened with brooches. In cold weather they would also wear a cloak fastened with a brooch on the shoulder. Women wore a long-skirted gown gathered at the waist with a belt of bronze, cloth or leather and fastened with a decorated buckle. They also wore a shawl or cloak in cold weather. They liked bright colors which they obtained from vegetable dyes and material patterned with squares and stripes. Brooches, called fibulae, were like a safety pin.

Everyday ones were made from bronze, but some were made from gold and decorated with brightly colored enamel or pieces of coral. Many Celtic women wore strings of beads made of glass. Finger rings, toe rings and bracelets of bronze, gold or glass were also worn. Shoes were made of leather.

Although most Celts worked for themselves on their own farms, there were **craftsmen** and specialty workers. The most important were the smiths and metalworkers that made tools, weapons, jewelry and items such as cups, bowls and vases. The Celts were known for their ironwork. The wheels of their chariots had iron rings. Their iron weapons and ring armor gave them superiority in battle. Other craftsmen were potters, woodworkers, traders and miners. Some goods were bartered, but most were exchanged for bars of iron and later for gold coins. The Celts traded with each other and with their neighbors. Rich Celts imported luxury goods to enhance their status in the community.

Aristocratic warriors played an important part in Celtic **society**. They were usually wealthier than everyone else and were often chosen to rule tribes. Celtic warriors were known for their height, fair skin and hair, and blue eyes. Most warriors left their abundant hair uncut. Some plaited their hair, others smeared it with a thick lime wash that made it stick up like the flying white mane of a horse. Drooping moustaches were popular. Chieftains and many warriors wore neck rings, known as torques. Horses were very important to the Celts as well as being a status symbol. They were not only a means of transportation, but were also ridden for pleasure. One of the best known early Celtic gods was the goddess Epona—the horse goddess. The chariot was the Celt's favorite vehicle. It was lighter and more mobile than a wagon. It was used for hunting and in battle. Images on their gold coins show how proud the Celts were of their horses and chariots.

In their spare time the Celts enjoyed themselves with sports, games, and feasts. The Celts loved to eat and drink. The feasting hall in a great "round house" could measure 50 feet in diameter. They welcomed guests to their feasts where they could tell stories and boast about their glories and prowess. The Celts divided their year into four parts, and a festival marked the beginning of each part. Samhain was the festival of the New Year. It was celebrated on November 1, when the animals were brought in from grazing. It was thought to be a time of magic when people and spirits could mingle in each other's worlds. In Christian times, Samhain was replaced by All Saints' Day, or All Hallows' Day (The day before it became known as Halloween). Beltane was celebrated at the beginning of May, the time when the cattle were sent out to graze in the open again. Imbolc, on February 1, was celebrated as the start of the lambing season and when milk was plentiful again. Lughnasad, on August 1, was celebrated as the time when the crops began to ripen giving the promise of a good harvest. The Celts in Britain became Christians in late Roman times but they incorporated and continued many of their early traditions.

RESOURCES:

"In Search of History: The Celts" (Video)

www.butser.org.uk (Reconstructed Celtic village)

LIFE IN ANGLO-SAXON BRITAIN

There are excellent Living History, cultural resources, and lessons on the web relating to life in Anglo-Saxon Britain. The following will help recreate life during that period.

- Lessons, worksheets, activities. www.bbc.co.uk/education/anglosaxons/index.shtml
- Visit the Anglo-Saxon village of Wichamstow. www.regia.org/index.html
- The Anglo-Saxon village of West Stow. www.stedmundsbury.gov.uk/weststow.htm
- “Old English Pages”, Anglo-Saxon England. www.georgetown.edu/cball/oe/old_english.html
- Anglo-Saxon and Viking living history. www.angelcynn.org.uk/
- Anglo-Saxon Britain, Viking raids and the Norman invasion. www.great-britain.co.uk/history/ang-sax.htm

LIFE IN TUDOR TIMES

There were about four million people living in Tudor England. Most of the towns were small—London was the largest. About 25% of London households were regarded as poor during the 16th century. The rest of the general population can be divided into categories including gentry, professionals, merchants, handicraft men, and laborers. During epidemics or food shortages many more would slip below the poverty line and have to seek alms from their parish authorities. The life expectancy of Londoners was on the average thirty-five to forty years—better in richer areas, worse in poor ones. Tudor Londoners faced an increasing number of contagious diseases: syphilis, smallpox, tuberculosis, and bubonic plague. Infected food and water also spread typhus, cholera and dysentery.

The Tudors built thousands of buildings and **homes**. Brick or stone were used for large country houses and palaces, but most buildings were small and constructed with wooden frames. The frames were pinned together with wooden pegs and the spaces between the beams were filled with clay or brick. Houses in towns were built upwards with their floors jutting out over the street. The streets were narrow, crowded and dark—making it easy for thieves to operate. Garbage was thrown from the windows above the street making them even more unpleasant. Tudor shops were actually open market stalls with hanging picture signs to tell shoppers what was being sold (a great many people could not read).

In the homes everything was done by hand—the housewife was a busy person. Washing was done only once a month. Wash was often taken to a nearby stream and scrubbed with homemade soap made from fat and ashes. Furniture was made from wood. Large four poster beds with curtains that could be drawn to keep out drafts were a prized possession only affordable by the rich. Important people had chairs but most sat on stools or benches. Inside walls were covered with wood paneling—again to keep out drafts.

In wealthy homes, meat would be a part of every meal. There was beef, lamb, pork, rabbit, deer, goat, fish and wildfowl. **Food** was cooked over an open fire. Dishes were made of a rough earthenware pottery and drinking cups were made from animal horns. A large bowl or platter would be set in the middle of an oak table and people would help themselves. Forks were not used—only spoons and knives. In large houses feasts and banquets would be held in the great hall. Ordinary people cooked, ate and slept in the same room. The “national dish” for most was a stew or “pottage” made from root vegetables, cereals and possibly some meat.

The wealthy in Elizabethan England were very fashion conscious. Styles were set by the court and usually copied by everyone else. Elizabeth I loved jeweled **clothes** and left over 2,000 decorated dresses in her wardrobe when she died. Most ordinary people wore clothes similar to those of the rich and fashionable people but they were simpler and made from cheaper materials. Children were usually dressed in smaller versions of their parents' clothes. Rich Tudor women wore a thick petticoat under a bodice and skirt. The skirt was held up by hoops and padded at the hips. An outer bodice and skirt went over all this and on top of that there was a gown that went down to the floor. Wealthy men wore a linen shirt and a tight-fitting jacket called a doublet. Over it was another jacket that fell out over the hips. They wore stockings and padded breeches and a velvet or fur hat. Farmers wore coarse homespun woolen garments of reddish brown with knitted hose and heavy hobnailed shoes. Their work clothes were tunics, loose breeches, canvas leggings tied in place with strips of cloth, and a shaggy hat.

Schools were mainly for rich children. Most pupils were boys. Very few girls were educated, though some were taught at home by a tutor. The most elementary level of schooling was called petty school where students learned to read and write in English and do sums. Next was grammar school where the primary study was Latin, which prepared students for the university. They went to school every day except Sundays and had only a one-week vacation at Christmas and one week at

Easter. The school day started at 6:00 AM, lunch was at 11:00 AM and afternoon lessons were from 1:00 until 5:00 PM. After grammar school, boys—but not girls—might attend one of England's two universities, Oxford or Cambridge. (See Activities: "Going to School in Tudor Times")

Travel was not easy during the Tudor period. Roads were poor with deep ruts that would fill with water after a rain. Most people traveled on horseback or on foot—coaches were for the rich. For short distances you could pay to be carried in a chair. Travel by road could also be very dangerous. Robbers would lie in wait along the roads and attack travelers taking all their money and valuables. Travel by water was probably the easiest method of transport. The wherry, or rowing boat, was the usual vessel for traveling short distances. Licensed watermen made their living by rowing passengers on the river.

The traditional sporting activities in the countryside were archery, football, hunting, fishing and falconry. In addition Londoners enjoyed an increasing variety of urban **entertainment** such as tennis, bowling and going to the theater. Eager playgoers, both the elite and the illiterate, packed into the Rose, Swan, Globe and Hope theaters. Most of Shakespeare's plays were put on at the Globe. Free public entertainment such as religious pageants and royal pageants and processions were enjoyed by all. Those who could afford a seat in the stands might attend the royal tournaments and jousts at Westminster. These spectacular events combined both entertainment and powerful propaganda. The tournaments and jousts were designed to show the monarch as leader and to cultivate loyalty and allegiance to the Tudor dynasty. Horse racing became popular in England under Henry VIII and continued under Elizabeth I. During Elizabeth's reign, books on horse breeding and training were published. Both the nobles and the gentry raced horses. Many towns built tracks and organized series of races to which owners brought their horses. Although owning and racing horses were only for the wealthy, people of the towns flocked to see and bet on the races.

Punishment was swift and harsh. High treason and all felonies, except petty larceny, were punishable by public execution. Beheading was regarded as a more honorable death for the nobility—others were hanged. People who committed minor crimes would be put in the stocks in the town square. Passersby would throw rotten food and other objects at them. Beggars were a problem in the streets and would sometimes be whipped. Most towns had a ducking chair to punish people—especially women. A chair was hung on a seesaw and swung over a stream or pond. A person would be tied to the chair, dipped into and held under water and then pulled out. If a woman were accused of being a witch she would be tied up in a sack and thrown into the water. If she floated it meant she was not guilty. Other people were burned at the stake.

RESOURCES:

"Elizabeth I: The Virgin Queen" (Video)

www.renaissance.dm.net (Elizabethan Life)

www.shakespeare.org.uk (Visit Stratford-upon-Avon)

www.armouries.org.uk/leeds/education/info.html (Tudor Era, armor, teacher resources)

VICTORIAN LIFE

Family was very important to British Victorians. In 1870 the average family had five or six children. Most upper and middle class families lived in big, comfortable **houses**. Each member of the family had their own place and children were taught to “know their place”. The father was the head of the household. The children were taught to respect their father and always spoke politely to him calling him “Sir”. Very few children would dare to be disrespectful. The mother of the family would spend her time planning dinner parties, visiting her dressmaker or calling on friends. She did not do jobs such as washing, cooking or cleaning—these were left to servants.

Both parents saw the upbringing of their children as an important responsibility. They believed a child must be taught the difference between right and wrong. If a child did something wrong he would be punished for his own good. “Spare the rod and spoil the child” was a saying Victorians firmly believed in. Middle class children saw very little of their parents. They would spend most of their time in the nursery with their nanny. In the evening the children were allowed to see their parents for an hour before they went to bed. Only boys were expected to work, the daughters stayed at home with their mother. They were expected to marry as soon as possible.

All households except the very poorest had servants to do the day to day work. People would come from the country to work as servants in the town houses. These jobs were popular because they earned a wage and were given a place to live and clothes or uniforms. For the poorer families their greatest fear was ending up in the workhouse, where thousands of homeless and penniless families were forced to live. If your family was taken into the workhouse you would be separated from them, dressed in a uniform and your hair would be cut short. This could happen to a family if the father were taken ill and was unable to work. Lots of children in poor families died of diseases like scarlet fever, measles, polio and TB that are curable today. These were spread by foul drinking water, open drains and lack of proper toilets.

Many children in early Victorian England never went to **school** and more than half of them grew up unable even to read or write. Children from rich families would have a governess to teach them at home and the boys would sometimes be sent away to private schools. By the end of the Victorian age all children from five to thirteen had to attend school. Churches and charities organized schools for poorer children. The school could be quite a grim building. A single stove or open fire warmed the rooms. Curtains were used to divide the schoolhouse into classrooms. There was little fresh air because the windows were built high to keep students from looking outside. Teachers were very strict. In schools before 1850 a single teacher might instruct a class of over 100 children with the help of pupil “monitors”. Salaries were low and many taught only because they were too ill to do other jobs. Some parents felt school was a waste of time and that their children should be out earning money. Angry parents sometimes attacked teachers.

School was from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM with a two-hour lunch break. Because classes were so large, pupils all had to do the same thing at the same time. Victorian lessons concentrated on the “three Rs”—Reading, wRitng and aRithmetic. Children learned by copying and reciting—it was not very exciting. The school’s “punishment book” recorded the regular canings or beatings that were handed out for rude conduct, sulkiness, answering back and being late. The unfortunate slower learners in the class would end up standing at the back of the class wearing an armband with DUNCE written on it and a cone-shaped hat decorated with a large “D”. At recess or playtime children would play games of blind man buff, snakes and ladders, hide-and-seek and hopscotch. Football and spinning tops were also popular among the boys.

During the 1800s the **Industrial Revolution** spread throughout Britain. As the number of factories grew, people from the countryside moved to towns looking for better paying jobs. Thousands of new workers were needed to run the machines in mills and foundries. Cities filled to overflowing—London was particularly bad. By 1851 half the population of the country lived in

London. Like most cities, London was not prepared for the great increase in people. Rooms were rented to whole families or even several families. Some factory owners built small cheap houses for workers. These were usually cramped with no running water or toilets. Built back to back in double rows, there were no windows in the back, and no backyards. Sewers ran down the middle of the streets—breeding grounds for disease. Smoke stacks belched out black smoke that blocked out the sun and covered the streets with soot. Over time, slums were knocked down and new houses built. But changes took time.

Many factory workers were children. They worked long hours and were often treated badly. Many worked hazardous jobs in mills, brick works, match factories and in the mines. Sometimes the children started work as young as four or five years old. It did eventually become illegal for women, girls, and boys under 12 to work down a mine. Although an 1832 law forbade the use of boys for sweeping chimneys, boys continued to be forced through the narrow winding passages of chimneys in large houses. Hordes of dirty, ragged children roamed the streets with no regular money and no home. The street children were often orphans. They stole or picked pockets to buy food and slept in outhouses or doorways. Some did odd jobs to earn money. They swept streets of mud and horse dung or sold goods on street corners. It took time for the government to protect working children. Many people did not see anything wrong with children earning their keep. They also believed that people should be left alone to help themselves and not expect others to protect or keep them.

By the second half of the Victorian Age, most people earned more money and worked shorter hours than ever before. Ordinary people had time for **sports and holidays**. Along with the traditional sports of football, cricket and boxing, the new sports of croquet, lawn tennis and cycling became very popular. Girls played with dolls and elaborate dollhouses. Boys spent hours with tin or lead soldiers and toy trains. Some pastimes were open to those from every class. Thousands enjoyed public entertainment such as Astley's Amphitheater, with its clowns, acrobats, and orchestras; Vauxhall Gardens, famous for their fountains and fireworks; and the spectacular Crystal Palace. Called the "galaxy of splendour," the huge glass building, built in 1851, was designed to hold over nineteen thousand exhibits.