

Invention and ingenuity in the Iron Age



Invention and ingenuity were thriving in the Iron Age

An **invention** is a new creation that has never been made before.

Ingenuity is working out how to achieve something in a way that has never been thought of before.

Invention and ingenuity in the Iron Age changed the ways that people lived their daily lives.



Ard



Image from: Getty Images/Heritage Images

One of the greatest inventions in the Iron Age was the ard. This iron tipped plough cut through hard soil, meaning that farmers could plant crops throughout the year. This made food production more efficient, allowing people to enjoy free time. The Celts used this free time to practise crafts and develop their skills.



Celtic pattern



The Celts created patterns of swirling lines to decorate their precious objects. They also inlaid them with enamel. The Battersea shield is a good example of this fine craftsmanship.

Image from: Wikimedia Commons/Public domain



Everyday objects



Everyday objects were well made and highly decorated. For example, the handles on this decorated bucket are attached with metal fasteners called rivets.

Image from: Wikimedia Commons/public domain



Mirrors



The Celts made polished, metal mirrors and decorated them with beautiful, swirling patterns. Historians don't know how these mirrors were used. Some think that they were used for personal grooming or communicating over long distances by reflecting the Sun's rays. Others think that the Celts believed that they were portals to another world.



Potter's wheel



The invention of the potter's wheel meant that clay pottery could be produced more quickly, with even walls, symmetrical shapes and a smooth surface for decoration.

Image from: Shutterstock editorial/alexeyart1



Pole lathe



The invention of the pole lathe meant that wooden products could be made quickly and the turned shapes were smooth and even. The string spun the wood using tension and momentum. The carpenter shaped the wood by holding tools against it as it turned.



Colourful cloth



The Celts used shears to cut the fleeces of sheep, spindles to spin the wool into yarn and looms to weave the yarn into cloth. The skill of weaving and the use of natural dyes meant that Iron Age clothing was colourful and patterned with checks or stripes.

Image from: Wikimedia Commons/Public domain



Brooches



Rectangles of fabric were sewn together to make tunics, which were fastened at the shoulder with a brooch and gathered at the waist with a leather belt. The brooches were usually made from iron and were often intricately designed.



Carnyx



The carnyx was a long bronze trumpet. It was vertical in the middle with turned ends, making an S shape. The bell had the appearance of a boar, dragon or serpent. It was blown to announce that warriors were ready to charge into battle.



Poetry



Poets and storytellers called bards wrote stories about people and often turned them into songs. Bards became very powerful because people believed that their stories were true.

Image from: Getty Images/Culture Club



Games



Celtic gaming pieces

The Celts invented the game of hurling, where special sticks were used to manoeuvre a ball into a goal. The sticks could catch, throw or strike the ball, in the air or on the ground. Families also invented board games to play around the hearth in the evening. Slabs with grid lines, dice and gaming pieces have been found by archaeologists.



Rotary quern



The invention of the rotary quern had a great impact on Celtic life. A rotary quern was made of two round stones placed on top of each other. The top stone was called a handstone and the bottom stone was called a quern. The grain was put in between the stones then the handstone was turned. Barley and wheat were quickly ground up into flour to make bread and porridge.



Preserving food



The Celts preserved meat and fish for the winter by smoking them. Roundhouses had a hearth in the centre and a cone shaped roof. Meat and fish were hung from the roof where the smoke gathered. The Celts also preserved meat using salt. They did this by collecting sea water, then boiling it until all the water evaporated, leaving the salt behind.



Firedog



Firedogs were invented so that meat could be roasted on a spit over the fire. Iron Age firedogs were often intricately made and decorated with animal heads.

