# Hembury Hillfort
# Lesson Resources

## For Key Stage Two

**Resource 1**

## Email 1

## ARCHAEOLOGISTS NEEDED

Dear Class,

I recently moved to Payhembury and I have been having fun exploring the beautiful Blackdown Hills. I went for a walk at Hembury and I enjoyed scrambling up the steep sides of the hill. I found trees at the top and at certain places I got a great view of the surrounding countryside and the Otter River valley below. Surprisingly, I found several trees had fallen over (I think they must have been blown down by strong winds) and where the trees had fallen, there were large holes in the ground where the roots would have been. In these large holes, I found several interesting objects. They look like they are very old but I am not sure what they are.

Can you help me find out what they are and why they were at Hembury?

I have included photographs of all the different objects I have found.

Yours sincerely,

*Alex*

## Email 2

Dear Class,

Thank you for helping me find out more about the objects I found at Hembury. After your suggestion of taking the pictures and a location map to a museum, I took them to the Royal Albert Memorial Museum in Exeter and the staff were very excited to see them. They told me lots about each find and explained that they were used by people at Hembury thousands of years ago. I have attached a table explaining what the museum staff said about each object and how old they are.

The museum staff explained that Hembury was an important place in the past and it is now protected as a Scheduled Monument. Archaeologists have found evidence to show that people have used Hembury for thousands of years during the Mesolithic (Middle Stone Age), Neolithic (New Stone Age), Iron Age and Roman period.

Hembury must have been a special place in the landscape. Why do you think people chose to use Hembury during prehistoric and Roman periods? I have attached some maps and an aerial photograph which may help you work out why it was a special place in the past. Please let me know what you find out.

Yours sincerely,

*Alex*

## Email 3

Dear Class,

It was great to hear your ideas about why Hembury was a special place for people in the past and why they chose to make settlements there.

I have been looking at the Royal Albert Memorial Museum and Art Gallery website and have seen lots of interesting finds that were excavated from Hembury in the 1930s by a lady called Dorothy Liddell. The museum lists them as dating from the Neolithic, 5,700 years ago. They are very old and were used by people in the Neolithic. The excavation also showed that Hembury looked very different in the Neolithic. Instead of having large ditches and high ramparts, it had long ditches with gaps between, called a causewayed enclosure.

By looking at the finds, I think the life of people in the Neolithic was very different compared with ours today. What do you think? Can you help me by looking at the finds and trying to find out what life was like in the Neolithic?

Yours sincerely,

*Alex*

## Email 4

Dear Class,

Thank you for sending me a photo of the picture you made showing what life was like in the Neolithic. It has really helped me to understand what was taking place at Hembury 5700 years ago.

I have read more about Hembury and found out that during the Iron Age, people built the large ditches and high ramparts that we can see today and transformed it into a hillfort. I have been thinking about why they did this and come up with a few ideas.

1. The hillfort was built as a place to live.

2. The hillfort was used as a safe place to go when people were under attack.

3. The hillfort was used as a gathering place for markets and celebrations.

4. The hillfort was built to show how strong and powerful the people were.

Can you help me work out which idea has the most evidence from Hembury to support it? Which idea do you think is most likely to be true? Or do you think it is a mixture of the statements? Do you have any of your own ideas?

I have found a range of sources that might provide you with evidence and attached them to this email.

Yours sincerely,

*Alex*

**Resource 2**

**Photograph 1**

**Photograph 2**

**Photograph 3**

**Photograph 4**

**Photograph 5**

**Photograph 6**

**Photograph 7**

**Resource 3**

| | **Object description** |
|---|---|
| Photo 1 | A broken piece of pottery dating from the Iron Age. It would have been part of a large bowl probably used for storage. There is a distinctive zig-zag decoration at the top and the smooth 'burnished' surface would have been made by rubbing it with a stone. The hole that is visible was drilled after the pot had been fired and may have been used to hang the bowl. |
| Photo 2 | A fragment of animal bone from an unknown date. Its large size and long shape suggest it is from the leg of a large animal (similar in size to a large pig or cow). It has been broken at both ends in the past. This could be a sign of butchery. The bone could be examined for further butchery marks such as cuts on the surface, and compared to a reference collection for species identification. |
| Photo 3 | A flint scraper dating from the Neolithic. It would have been made from a large piece of flint which flakes were struck from. The edge of the scraper has had small flakes removed from it to make it suitable for cleaning or working leather, wood and bone. |
| Photo 4 | The edge of the Neolithic scraper showing were small flakes have been removed creating the scraping edge. |
| Photo 5 | Three iron hobnails of Roman date. They have rusted overtime and an x-ray could be used to show their original shape more clearly. They (and lots more like them) would be fixed to the sole of a Roman soldier's shoe to provide grip. |
| Photo 6 | Part of a flint blade of probable Neolithic date. The regular shape of the blade shows that the flint nodule it was made from was carefully prepared by the planned removal of flakes before the blade itself was struck from it. It would be used as a knife for cutting meat, leather or wood amongst other things. Many flint blades (and other tools) have tiny flakes removed along the cutting edge called retouch. This is where the blade has been effectively re-sharpened and creates an almost serrated effect. |
| Photo 7 | A fragment (or sherd) of pottery from the Neolithic. It is a large sherd with the top edge of the pot surviving. The size of the pot can be estimated by looking closely at the curve of the rim. Analysing the fabric (type of clay and any additives such as grog, stone or organic temper) can help identify where and when the pottery was made. |

Please note, the objects photographed above were not found at Hembury. They are being used for illustrative purposes for the lesson and are examples of the types of artefacts you would expect to find at Hembury based on previous archaeological excavations.

**Resource 4**

## The Role of an Archaeologist

The role of an archaeologist is very varied. Archaeologists are normally associated with digging items out of the ground, but excavation is only one aspect of archaeology. Archaeologists also, for example, look at aerial photographs and maps to find clues about past landscapes, they carefully analyse excavated finds, they investigate old buildings, they use a range of dating techniques to find out how old things are and they use remote sensing to help them investigate what is underneath the ground without having to dig it up. They use all these techniques and others to gather evidence together to build up a picture of the past.

Below is a list of a few simple activities that begin to give an insight into how archaeologists find out about the past. Depending on the time available, you may just want to describe the role of an archaeologist or use some of the activities below to provide more concrete examples.

## Activity ideas

**Mini excavation**
Fill a tray with a layer of sand and place some small items (coin, ring, dice, shell, small toy etc) in the sand for the children to excavate. Cover the layer of sand with soil and place more items in the soil layer. Keep a list of the items you put in each layer. Explain to the children that archaeologists excavate carefully, taking one layer of soil away at a time keeping all the finds from each layer separate.

Ask the children to carefully remove the soil layer, ensuring they do not remove any of the sand. Archaeologists normally use trowels but spoons make a good alternative for excavation in the classroom. Explain that the children need to keep any of the finds from the soil in one place. They then need to carefully excavate the sand layer keeping the finds from the sand separate.

When then have finished, the children can then compare the finds with the list of where the finds were put. If the children have excavated carefully, then all the finds from the soil layer should match the soil finds list and similarly the finds from the sand should match those on the sand layer list.

Explain to the children that if they were excavating a real site, the finds from the bottom sand layer would be older than the finds from the top layers as they must have been dropped/ placed in sand before the soil built up on top.

**Exploring aerial photographs**
Aerial photographs allow archaeologists to look at wide areas of the landscape and place archaeological sites within their wider context. They are also used to identify new sites that can be difficult to see on the ground. Unusual shapes and features such as crop marks and earthworks often provide clues about what the landscape looked like in the past.

Look at your school using google earth (or equivalent) and ask the children to identify key features of the school. Can they see their classroom, field, school gates? Is there anything that they do not recognise? Are there any marks on the ground that they cannot identify?

Zoom out from looking at the school and see what else is in the surrounding landscape. Ask the children to think about why their school is where it is? Is it in the middle of a village? Is it on the edge of a town? Is it close to where lots of houses are and therefore where lots of people live? How far away is it from another school?

By looking at buildings across a landscape, we can begin to work out why they have been built in different locations. Similarly, by looking at archaeological sites in the landscape, we might begin to understand why they have been located in certain places.

**What survives in the ground?**

Gather together a selection of items made from a variety of materials such stone, clay, metal, bone, glass, leather, wood, and some food items. Ask the class to separate them into two groups: items that they think would survive in the ground and items that would rot away
.

Explain that archaeologists mainly find stone, clay, metal, glass and bone as these are items that do not decompose in the ground. The other items are only preserved in special conditions such as waterlogged, frozen, very dry or charred in a fire and turned to carbon.

As a result, archaeologists are only working with a partial record and have to piece together clues to make an interpretation of the past. Much like trying to work out what a jigsaw looks like when over half the pieces are missing.

Ask the children to think about what they are wearing at the moment. If we were buried with everything that we are wearing at the moment, what would survive if archaeologists excavated us 1000s of years later? (Metal buckles, zips and studs, metal jewellery such as rings, earrings and necklaces, parts of our mobile phones, our bones, teeth, metal fillings etc.)

Would archaeologists be able to draw an exact picture of what you are wearing based on what they excavated?

**Piecing evidence together**

As mentioned above, archaeological evidence can be like a big jigsaw. Archaeologists have to put clues together and make their best interpretation of the past. There can be a range of interpretations and they can then change when new evidence is available.

To demonstrate this process, cut up a picture or a piece of writing into several pieces and mix them up. Give the children one or two pieces and ask them to guess what the picture is or what the writing says. There will probably be a range of guesses, much like there is a range of interpretations of the past. Give the children a few more pieces and see if their guesses have changed. Carry on doing this until the picture or writing is complete and the children can see what was really there.

**Resource 5**

## Aerial Photograph of Hembury

Aerial Photograph of Hembury Hillfort taken in 1984 showing a small part of the large defensive ramparts and deep ditches. The rest are covered by trees.



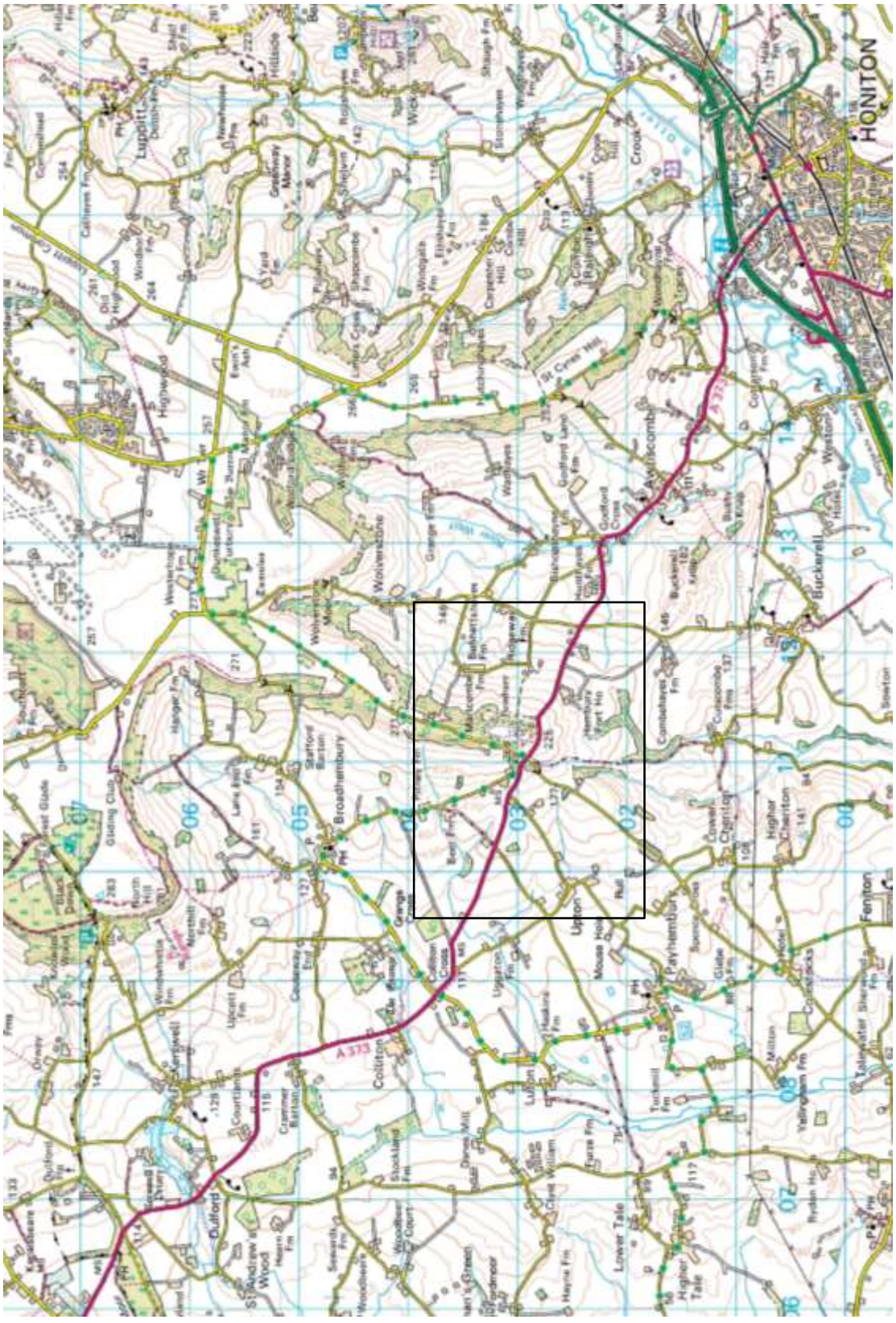
Look carefully at the aerial photograph, circle or highlight all the features that would not have been there in prehistoric times.

Why did people choose to use Hembury during prehistoric and Roman periods?

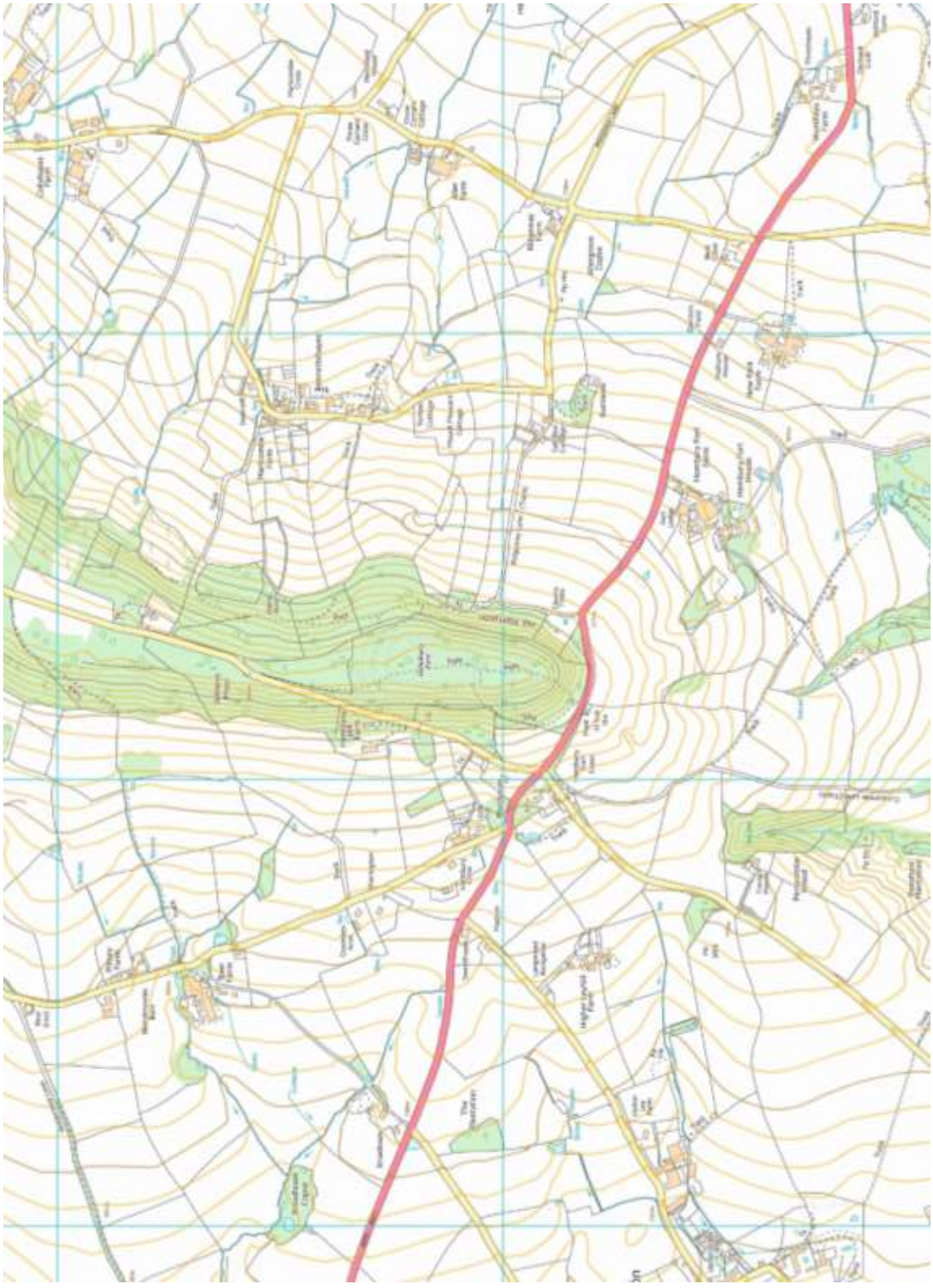
What do we use it for now?

**Resource 6**

## Map of Hembury and Surrounding Area



## Map of Hembury



**Resource 7**

# Neolithic Finds from Hembury

## Bead

3,400 – 3,750 BC

The bead is made from Kimmeridge shale. The rock is from south Dorset and is a soft rock that is easily shaped. The bead has two holes drilled through it to allow it be strung and used as jewellery. Beads are common in the Neolithic and could be made from stone, bones or even teeth.



http://rammcollections.org.uk/content/catalogs/ramm/antiquities/devon-archaeology/bead-129-1933-b3.ashx

## Polished flint axehead

3,400 – 3,750 BC

This axehead was made from a large piece of flint. It would have been held in a wooden handle and taken many hours to make. It probably would have been used to clear forests (due to the introduction of farming in the Neolithic) but they may also have been seen as high status symbols and used to show the importance of its owner.



http://rammcollections.org.uk/content/catalogs/ramm/antiquities/devon-archaeology/axehead-119-1931-407.ashx

## Flint blade

3,400 – 3,750 BC

Flint knappers during the Neolithic were able to make many blades like this relatively quickly from one large piece of flint. The blade has a sharp cutting edge and could be held in wood and used to make a range of cutting tools.



http://rammcollections.org.uk/content/catalogs/ramm/antiquities/devon-archaeology/blade-139-1935-1675-6.ashx

## Grinding stone

3,400 – 3,750 BC

The stone was used for grinding cereal grains into flour. The grains were placed in a bowl-shaped stone and then ground by moving this stone backwards and forwards over the top of them. This would have been an important daily activity in the Neolithic.



http://rammcollections.org.uk/content/catalogs/ramm/antiquities/devon-archaeology/quern-139-1935-1566.ashx

## Cereal Grains

3,400 – 3,750 BC

These are charred spelt grains, an ancient form of wheat. They were found in pits in the ground at Hembury and were grown by the first farmers in Devon. It is unusual for grains to survive in the ground but burning during the Neolithic transformed the grains into carbon and preserved them.



http://rammcollections.org.uk/content/catalogs/ramm/antiquities/devon-archaeology/plant-macro-remains-423-2005.ashx

## Sickle

3,400 – 3,750 BC

This flint sickle blade would have been set into a curved wooden handle and used to cut cereal crops. The carefully worked flint blade has been broken and only part of it remains. The wooden handle has not been preserved.



http://rammcollections.org.uk/content/catalogs/ramm/antiquities/devon-archaeology/lithic-implement-129-1933-936.ashx

## Leaf-shaped arrowhead

3,400 – 3,750 BC

Leaf-shaped arrowheads were used for hunting animals and warfare. The arrowhead was attached to a shaft and fired from a bow. Many arrowheads were found around the main gate to the enclosure at Hembury which had been burnt. They may represent the earliest evidence for warfare in Devon.



http://rammcollections.org.uk/content/catalogs/ramm/antiquities/devon-archaeology/arrowhead-119-1931-356.ashx

## Pottery

3,400 – 3,750 BC

These are fragments of Neolithic pottery. They show a variety of handles and lug shapes. The holes may have been made to hold rope handles. Pottery was a new invention in the Neolithic. It was particularly important as it enabled people to store and cook food and materials.



http://rammcollections.org.uk/content/catalogs/ramm/antiquities/devon-archaeology/vessel-sherd-139-1935-p429.ashx

## Pottery

3,400 – 3,750 BC

This bowl was made from clay from the Lizard area of Cornwall. It is unclear whether the clay or the finished pot was transported to Hembury but it does show links with Cornwall.



http://rammcollections.org.uk/content/collections/ramm/antiquities/devon-archaeology/bowl-119-1931-p133.ashx

## Hazelnuts

3,400 – 3,750 BC

These hazelnuts were found at Hembury and show that people relied on gathering wild foods from the surrounding countryside as well as farming. The hazelnuts were burnt during the Neolithic which turned them to carbon and preserved them.

**Resource 8**

## Evidence from the Iron Age on Hembury Hillfort

Photographs of finds from Hembury Hillfort displayed in the Iron Age cabinet at the Royal Albert Museum and Art Gallery (RAMM)


**Sling Stones**
From Hembury Hillfort

"Many caches of river pebbles have been found at Devon hillforts, probably used as sling stones."

Text taken from display at the RAMM

**Bowl**
From Hembury Hillfort

"The shape and decoration of this bowl seems to be inspired by metal bowls. To achieve the surface sheen, the pot is burnished with a bone or stick."

Text taken from display at the RAMM


**Glass Bead**
From Hembury Hillfort

"This type of bead could have belonged to the last prehistoric occupiers [Iron Age] of Hembury Hillfort or to the Roman invaders."

Text taken from display at the RAMM

The quotes below have been taken from reports written by archaeologists about Hembury Hillfort. Some of the quotes contain technical language so you may need a dictionary to find the meaning for some of the words.

The quotes below have been taken from reports written by archaeologists about Hembury Hillfort. Some of the quotes contain technical language so you may need a dictionary to find the meaning for some of the words.

"Part of a probable roundhouse was identified to the rear of the rampart and part of a smaller circular building lay to the west…"

Todd, M., 1984, *Excavations at Hembury (Devon) 1980-3; A Summary Report, 251-268* (Article in Serial). SDV135872.

"…quantities of iron slag and ironstone suggest that this part of the site was used for metalworking."

Todd, M., 1984, *Excavations at Hembury (Devon) 1980-3; A Summary Report, 251-268* (Article in Serial). SDV135872.

"[There was a wide] rampart and two large ditches with three ditches across the neck of the promontory. There were entrances on the east and west sides with large timber gateways."

Griffith, F. M., 1988, *Devon's Past. An Aerial View, 24* (Monograph). SDV64198

"Little is known, however, of the interior occupation of the hillfort. Part of a roundhouse was excavated close to the eastern rampart but no other Iron Age buildings were found in this area. No storage pits have been found. Finds of pottery and other artefacts has not been abundant suggesting that perhaps occupation was not prolonged."

Griffith, F. M., 1988, *Devon's Past. An Aerial View, 24* (Monograph). SDV64198

"The location of the hillfort [has] extensive views over the Otter River valley and the surrounding countryside."

Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 1998, *Hembury Fort* (Schedule Document). SDV340163.

"The relatively flat interior of the hillfort is known to have supported at least one round house of 7 metres in diameter which was located near the eastern rampart."

Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 1998, *Hembury Fort* (Schedule Document). SDV340163.

"Excavations have revealed the presence of post holes representing the positions of timber revetments and palisades indicating that the entrances were well defended."

Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 1998, *Hembury Fort* (Schedule Document). SDV340163.

"Pottery forms recovered in excavation, including upright jars and bowls decorated with curvilinear and geometric designs (Glastonbury Ware), confirmed the Iron Age occupation of the site."

Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 1998, *Hembury Fort* (Schedule Document). SDV340163.

"A small multivallate Iron Age hillfort on a narrow south facing promontory at the end of a 240 metre high ridge protruding from the Blackdown Hills chosen for its natural defensive qualities."

Salvatore, J. P., 1998, *Hembury Fort* (Un-published). SDV135890.

"At the north end an additional rampart and a 5 meter wide ditch extending for some 80 metres were added although they were never completed across the entire exposed neck of ground."

Salvatore, J. P., 1998, *Hembury Fort* (Un-published). SDV135890.

The above extracts are from the Historic Environment Record (HER) monument description for Hembury and can be found at the Heritage Gateway
http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/Gateway/Results_Single.aspx?resourceID=104&uid=MDV1853

"The entrances were also 'inturned' – curving inwards to enable the trapping and attack of unwanted visitors?"
https://new.devon.gov.uk/historicenvironment/schools-resources/hembury-iron-age-hillfort/

Aerial photograph of Hembury Hillfort taken in 1984 showing a small part of the large defensive ramparts and deep ditches. The rest are covered by trees.

A reconstruction drawing of what the Iron Age roundhouse found at Hembury Hillfort may have looked like.

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