

The Celts



In their time the Celts were the most powerful tribes in central and northern Europe. They spoke a vaguely common language. The people were called Celts after the eighteenth century. Before that,

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people living during the Iron Age were called Britons.

In the beginning the Celts lived in Austria, Switzerland, southern France and Spain. Over the years, they went to many places, taking over France, Belgium, and Britain.



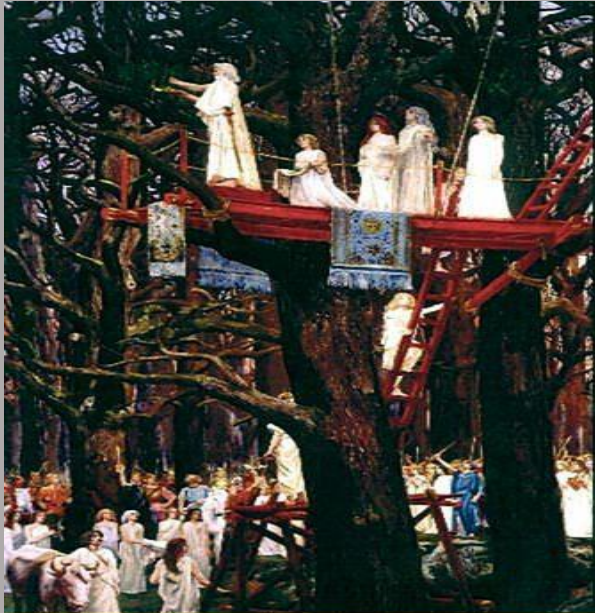
They lived in a circle at the top of a hill so it was easier to defend from attack. Celts would build wooden huts, with walls made of straw and mud. Each would light a fire in the middle of the roundhouse for cooking and eating. The whole tribe was one big family or clan and all lived together. The Celts loved stories and poems and would sit around the fire listening to heroic tales in the evening.



The Celts enjoyed colourful clothing. They would dye the cloth with berries and plants and would have stripes and check patterns. They would also paint themselves blue from a plant with different patterns over their body. The Celts were talented craftsmen too. They would work with iron, bronze and gold to make jewellery and the chief of a tribe would wear fancy jewellery to show how important he was. They would also use their metal-work skills to create armour for their many battles; shields, spears and heavy slashing swords would be made in the homes.

Farming

Celts were farmers and everyone worked on the land and with animals. The Celts invented the iron plough which made things easier in the fields. The land was everyone's. Women had a more equal role to men. They were free to choose who to marry. They could also be war-leaders as Boudicca later proved.



'Druids cutting mistletoe
on the sixth day of the moon',
Henri Paul Motte, c. 1895

Religion

They had many gods and goddesses and if the gods were angry with them, then they would send bad weather which would kill their crops, or their cattle would die in the cold. So the Celts would try to keep the Gods happy by giving them valuable objects.

They also believed the human head had significant spiritual importance which is why they used to cut off enemy heads and hang them.