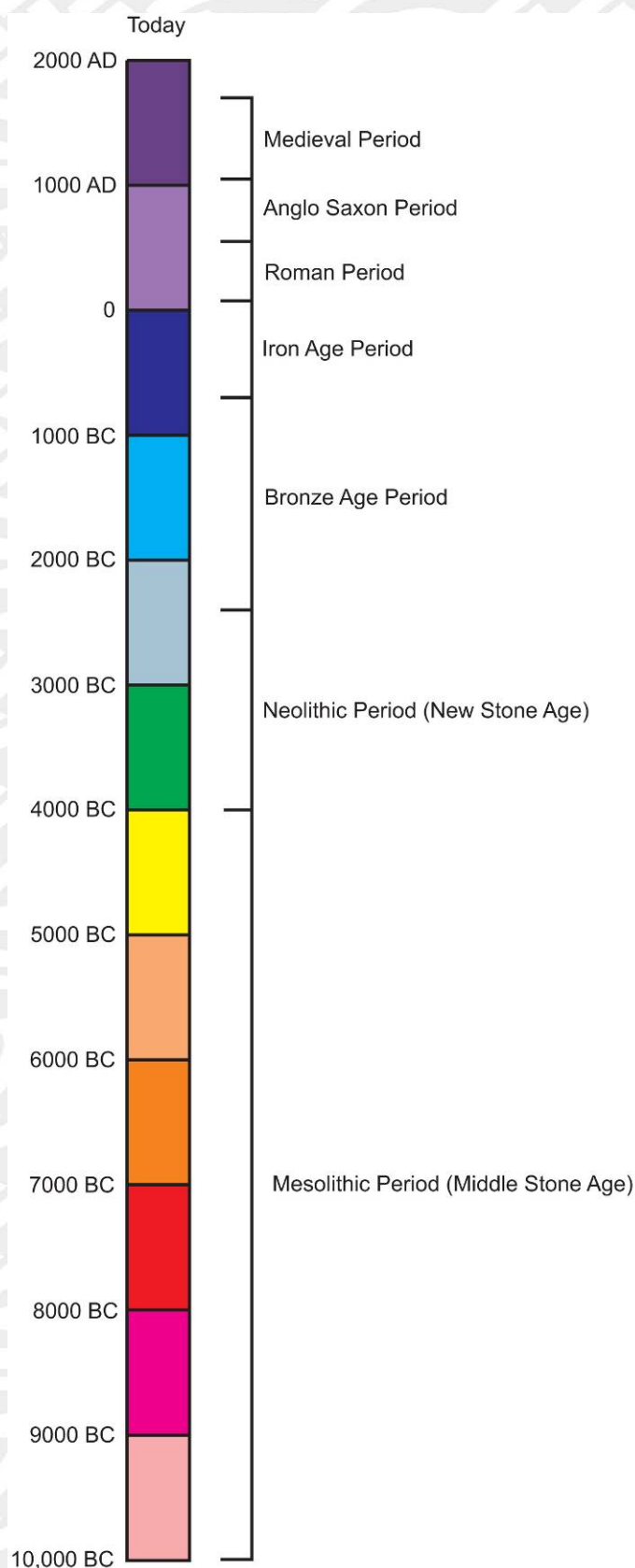




Factsheet: The Iron Age period (700- 70AD)

Death and Burial- Who was the woman in the grave?



- The Iron Age is the name given to the period when iron was discovered and used.
- It lasted from 700 BC until 550 AD in Northumberland. The Romans came to Britain from 43 AD to 410 AD but rarely advanced north into Northumberland.
- Ordinary people in the Iron Age were not usually given special burials. Bodies were often just thrown into rubbish pits.
- Sometimes, bodies were left out until all their flesh had rotted away and then some of their bones were buried.
- Sometimes bodies were burned before they were buried. This is called cremation. This means that they were burnt and then their ashes were scattered in the wind or put into pots or leather bags and placed in pits in the ground or in stone cairns.
- In some places, very important people were buried with whole chariots and even their horses! They were put into their graves with their armour, weapons and food.

Evidence from Lanton Quarry

- At Lanton Quarry archaeologists found a **grave** where a woman had been **buried**.
- The grave was made by building a **stone box** in the ground that was covered by capping stones before having earth piled back over it.
- Not all of the woman's **skeleton** was there. Archaeologists found her **skull** (head) and some of her leg bones.
- Her skull was resting on a **flat stone** so we know that a lot of care was taken when she was buried in order that she appeared to be resting on a stone pillow.
- After examining her bones, we know that the woman would have been about **70 years old** when she died.
- The woman's bones have been dated, by the radiocarbon technique, to the 1st Century BC.
- She didn't have any **diseases** and we can tell from her bones that she didn't do very much hard work when she was alive, so she was probably an important person.
- The woman was buried close to the large **Iron Age hillfort** on the top of **Yeavinger Bell**. She might even have lived there.
- What do you think her life would have been like on a **normal day**? Do you think people would have been **sad** when she died? What do you think her **funeral** would have been like? What is different about how this woman was buried to how people are buried in **graveyards** today?
- What do you think they did with her other bones? (Clue: What were the bones of saints used for in medieval times?)



This picture shows how the woman had been laid in her grave.



In this picture you can clearly see the stone that the woman's head had been laid on.