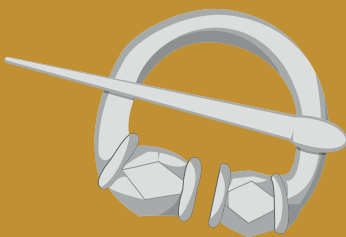


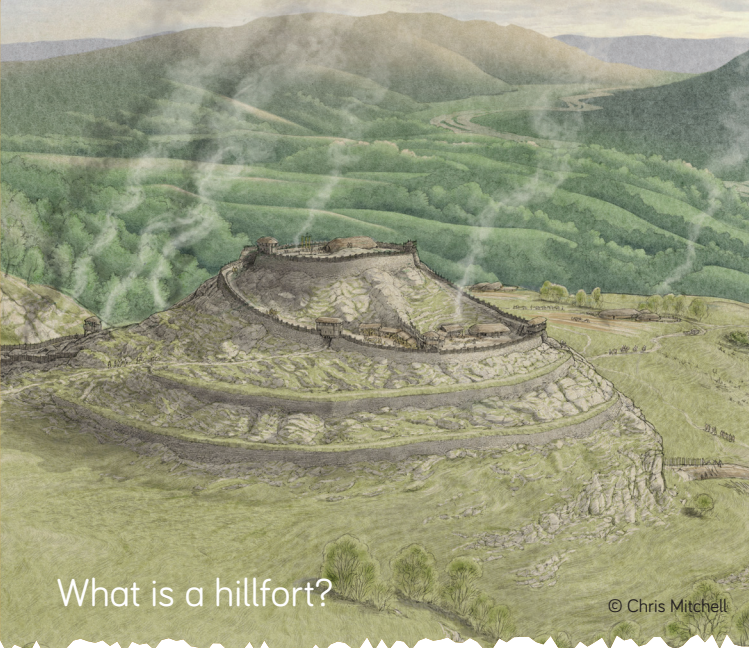
# THE KING'S SEAT



Discover Dunkeld's  
Pictish Hillfort



The hillfort at the King's Seat may have looked like this in the Pictish period



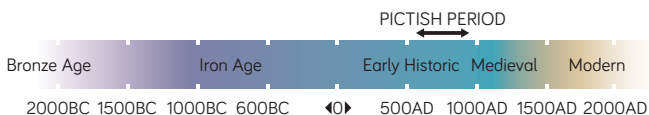
## What is a hillfort?

- Hillforts are defended settlements on hill tops.
- Banks of earth, ditches and stone walls were used to surround the top of a hill, often joined to smaller enclosures on the lower slopes.
- Buildings were constructed inside: homes and workshops for the community of the hillfort.
- The first hillforts in Scotland were built around 3000 years ago, in the late Bronze Age. Lots more were built in the Iron Age and into the Early Historic period, which came afterwards.
- The hillfort at the King's Seat was built in the Pictish period, perhaps around 1400 years ago.

Photographs of historical re-enactors by Bart Masiukiewicz © PKHT

# Who were the Picts?

- The Picts lived in northern and eastern Scotland over a thousand years ago, during the Early Historic period.
- They didn't call themselves Picts. They were called *Picti* – “painted people” – by the Romans. We think this is because they made marks on their bodies, either with paint or tattoos.
- The Pictish people were not new arrivals in Scotland. They were the same peoples as the earlier Iron Age population, but they organised their society in a different way, created new styles of art, and built rectangular buildings instead of round ones.
- They were creative and decorated large stones with artistic shapes and symbols.
- They were skilled craftspeople and made beautiful objects such as silver jewellery and decorated bone combs.



## Did you know?

The name ‘**Dunkeld**’ comes from two Gaelic words that have been joined together to mean ‘fort of the Caledonians’

**Dùn + Cailleann** hillfort + Caledonians

*Caledonii*, or Caledonians, comes from a Celtic word meaning ‘hard’ and was first written down by the Romans around 1800 years ago.



# The King's Seat

Over a thousand years ago, a fort was built on a rocky hilltop near the River Tay. It was home to a powerful community of Picts.

## River Tay

The River Tay provided essential resources: water and food (fish). The river could also be used for transport, whether in light boats made from wood and animal skins, or larger boats made from wooden planks or hollowed out logs.

## Imported Objects

A building with a big fireplace was found on the top of the hill with pieces of broken pottery and glass cups that had been made in Europe. Most people had ordinary cups and bowls that they made themselves or nearby, so these tell us that the people who lived here were very important.



A fragment of an imported glass beaker. Was it dropped by someone during a feast?

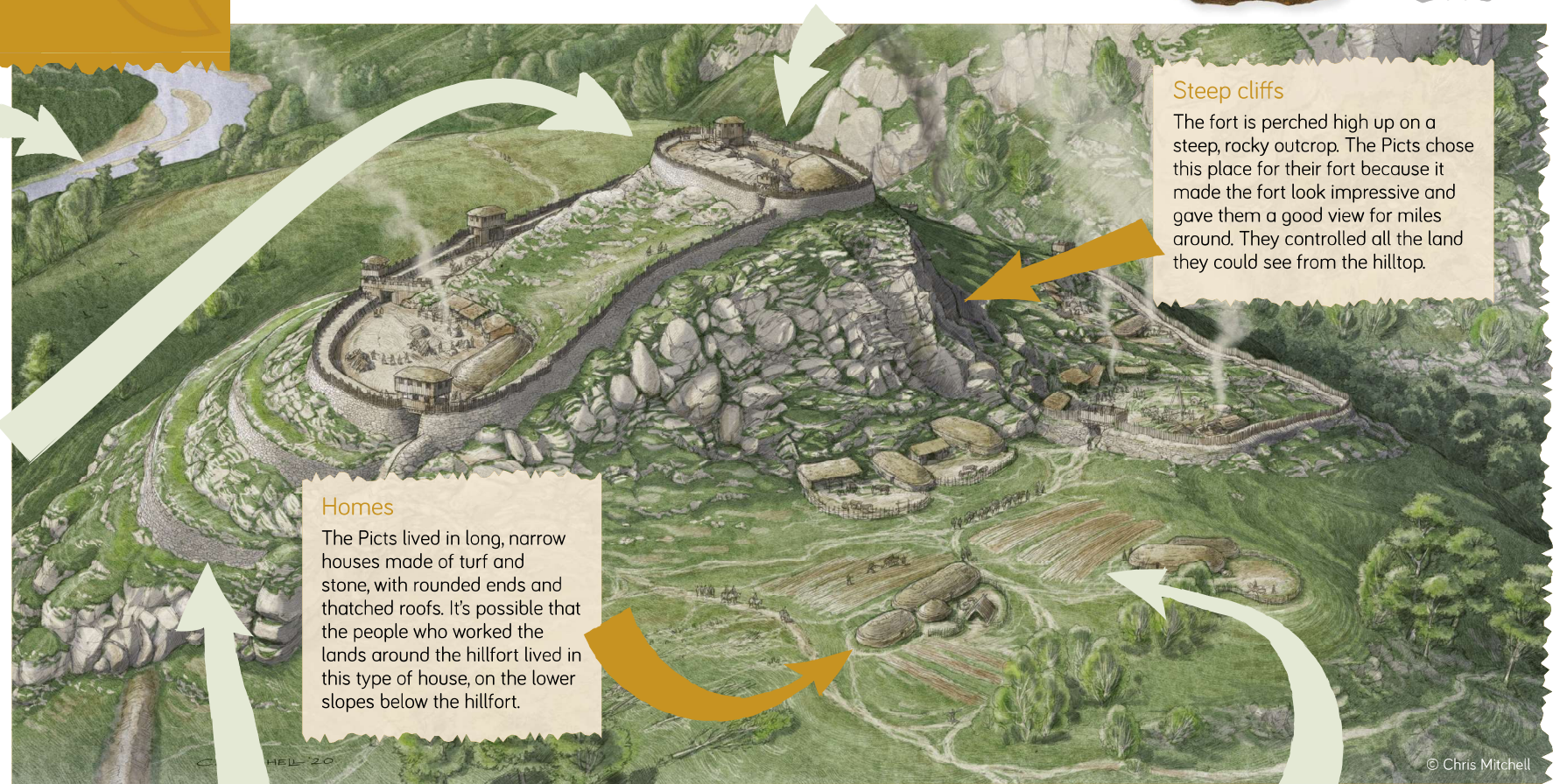
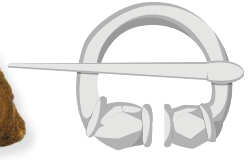


Archaeologists dug across one of the stone and earth ramparts to explore how it was built (left).

## Metalworking

Workshops were built on the very top of the hill and within the enclosures lower down, safe within the defences. Skilled craftspeople made rare and expensive objects like precious metal brooches by pouring hot, liquid metal into moulds and leaving it to cool. Red hot iron was hammered into shape to make everyday items – perhaps tools for use on the farms below.

This is a fragment of a mould which was used for making brooches that might have looked a bit like the one shown on the right



## Steep cliffs

The fort is perched high up on a steep, rocky outcrop. The Picts chose this place for their fort because it made the fort look impressive and gave them a good view for miles around. They controlled all the land they could see from the hilltop.

## Homes

The Picts lived in long, narrow houses made of turf and stone, with rounded ends and thatched roofs. It's possible that the people who worked the lands around the hillfort lived in this type of house, on the lower slopes below the hillfort.

## Ramparts

Large defences called ramparts were built of earth and stone. These kept intruders out, and made the people of the hillfort look powerful. Anyone who built a fort like this wanted to show how wealthy and important they were.

## Keeping Warm

Stones used for smoothing animal skins were found at the fort, showing us that the people who lived here were making leather. They may have also been spinning wool into yarn, which was woven to make fabric.

This spindle whorl was used to make yarn from sheepswool, as shown on the right



## Farming

The people of the hillfort would have farmed the land nearby, growing grain for bread and keeping cattle, sheep, pigs and goats for milk, meat, skins and wool. The hillfort is surrounded by dense forest now, but the landscape looked very different in the Pictish period, with more open space for farming.