

Iron Age Celtic Girl

My name is Heulwen, which means Sunshine and I belong to a tribe called the Ordivices. I live in a hillfort with my family. I was born when the very bad winter rains destroyed our stores of grain and flooded our fields.

My family

I live in a very big round house, which has a very large straw roof, with all of the other people who are in my father's family. There's my grandmother and grandfather, my father's sister and her two children, her husband died when a bull charged into him. There's also my grandmother's sister and her husband and son, my mother and father and my sister and brother.

Hunting

My family are farmers and we all have our chores and responsibilities. The people in our tribe like to hunt and always come back with all types of wild animals. My mother loves it when my father comes home having killed a bear or a wolf as their furs keep us warm at night. My grandfather hates the deer and enjoys hunting them because they'd eat all of our crops if we didn't keep an eye out for them. Best of all is when the hunters come back with a wild boar, which is a sort of very big wild pig. My grandmother says that the boar is her favourite because she says that it has everything we need. Not only do we have the meat to eat but also from the skin of the boar we have a type of leather to

make shoes and bags and when my grandmother rubs the boars fat onto our shoes the water doesn't get in so easily. Sometimes my father will take the boar's tusks to the man in the next roundhouse to make some beads from them. He also uses the bones to make needles and combs for us. I can see now why my grandmother loves the wild boar so much!

Farming

We don't hunt for all of our meat because we keep cattle, pigs, sheep and goats to eat. We also get wool from the sheep and milk and leather from the cattle. Our dogs help keep us safe and stop the sheep from running away. They also go on hunting trips because they can smell a boar or bear long before they can be seen. In the fields around our hillfort we grow oats and barley.

Dress

The women in my family are very beautiful. My mother and her friends take care to always keep their fingernails clean. I always go with my mother to collect berries, not only to eat but also to make pots of make up. My mother darkens her eyebrows with berry juice and uses a herb called *ruam* to redden her cheeks and lips. She also has very, very long hair that reaches her knees. She keeps her hair tidy and free from nits by carrying her comb with her wherever she goes and plaiting it into long braids.

The men in our tribe have long hair too, not just on their heads but on their faces too! My grandfather's

moustache is so long that when he drinks his beer, the froth on the top sticks to it and makes him look very funny. Lots of my tribe have tattoos on their bodies and when they go into battle they cover their bodies in paint from the *woad* plant, which is blue in colour.

Play and safety

My sister and brother are older than me and look after me all the time, except when I'm playing with my friends of course. We play lots of games like, cloth, stone, knife and practising throwing stones with our slingshots. It's important that everyone in the tribe is good with the slingshot and at throwing stones because sometimes we have very nasty people trying to steal our animals. Someone even once tried to steal some people from our village so that they could sell them as slaves. I'm glad I sleep in a big bed with my sister and cousins, and the rest of my family are close by under the same roof. My brother and father chop a lot of wood from the forest and during the summer festival of Samhain, when the time of farming is finished because the cold weather and short light days are on the way, my father gave my brother his own axe, which must have cost my father a lot, at least ten sheep!

The chieftan

There are many round houses in our village but the biggest of all belongs to our chief. He is very rich as he owns far more sheep and cattle than any one I know. Sometimes we go there to listen to stories from the warriors in our tribe when they tell of the brave

battles that they've won and how they defeated our enemies. Our chieftan is the bravest of all the men in our tribe. He owns a chariot that's pulled by a horse and all of the warriors have swords and shields, ready to use if they sense any danger. It is in the chieftan's round house that we hear stories of the gods and listen to music played on the harp. There was once a poet who called by and we enjoyed listening to the poems and stories he had to tell.

Laws and religion

If someone has broken the law, the druid (a very wise man) will listen to what has happened and then decide whether the person is guilty or not. The druid can even decide if a thief lives or dies.

The seasons are very important to us here in our village and we have many festivals and feasts to thank the gods of nature and the world for their kindness when our crops are good. The druid makes sacrifices to the gods to make sure that we have a good harvest.

Sometimes he'll sacrifice a goat but more often than not he'll tell us to throw metal things into the water if we want a favour from the gods. The year I was born my father took his knife to the river and, after breaking the blade, he threw it in with a wish that the family would survive the bad winter. Thankfully the gods listened.

Our community.

We all help each other in our village. We have many families living here, each with different skills such as blacksmiths, wood turners and weavers, warriors, farmers and cooking pot and plate makers. Even the cattle live with us during the winter. We all help each other as much as we can; even the cattle help us when we need help to pull the plough to break up the soil to plant the seeds.

We all live close by each other in our village on a hill that has a tall wooden fence all around and a big gate. There are many round houses, all different sizes depending on the size of the family. We also have huts on stilts to stop the rats and other little animals from getting at the grain we store in them for the winter months.

Food

Outside our house we have a garden where we grow herbs and vegetables to make soup and there's a pen to keep the pigs and goats. My grandmother's sister has just started to keep bees for us to have honey and beeswax but I wish that the hive was further away from the front door!

We cook all of our food inside the house on a very big fire that my mother makes sure never goes out. She hangs meat and herbs above the fire near the roof so that the smoke will help keep the meat fresh for a long time.

One of my jobs is to grind the wheat into flour using a quern and a hand stone. The hand stone lies on top of the quern stone and has a hole in the middle. I drop the wheat through the hole as I turn the hand stone that sits on top of the quern stone. The flour comes tumbling out of the sides. It's hard work believe me and I do this every day. I also help my sister to milk the goat and take the milk to my grandmother and her sister to make butter and cheese.

We eat a lot of porridge in our family but sometimes we have berries and nuts if they are in season. My brother and my cousins are very good at shooting birds with their slingshots and once my brother caught us a hare for supper.

Weaving and trade

My mother is a very good weaver and is teaching me the skill to make fine woollen cloth. After we have sheared the sheep, we spin the wool into long threads and dye them into bright reds, browns greens and blues. We then take these coloured yarns and weave them into striped or chequered patterns. My grandfather loved the green, blue and black trousers I made for him. My auntie made me a beautiful cape to keep me warm in the winter. It's in two layers and many of the people who travel by our village buy them from us. I have a bronze brooch to keep it in place.

The future

Many travellers come to our village and tell us news about what other tribes are doing far away. One man, who comes to our village with salt to trade, showed us some round, flat metal things that he called coins or money. We all laughed and said that they were of no use, I mean, who would swap a fur skin for a silly piece of metal!