

Design your own Enderby Iron Age Shield

Iron Age warriors used shields to protect themselves in battle. These came in many shapes and sizes - oval, oblong, 'hide-shaped', 'hourglass-shaped' - and were made from wood, sometimes covered in a protective layer of metal or leather.

Bark from alder and willow trees was also used to make particularly light but strong shields. We know this because in 2015 archaeologists from the University of Leicester found a unique 2,300 year old bark shield near the town of Enderby in Leicestershire. It is the only one of its kind ever found in Europe.

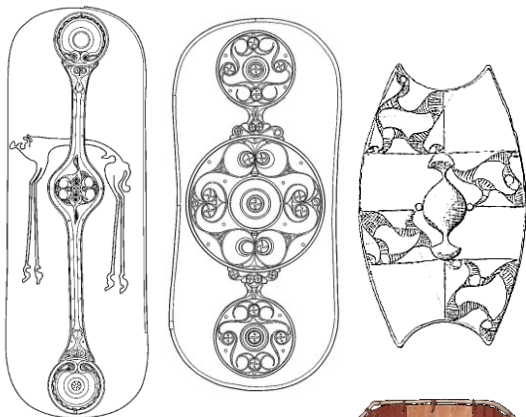
The shield was carefully constructed with wooden laths to stiffen the bark, a wooden edging rim, and a beautiful woven boss to protect the wooden handle. The outside of the shield was painted and scored in red chequerboard decoration.

Other Iron Age shields were also elaborately decorated with abstract or scrolling geometric designs incorporating spirals, knots, foliage and stylized images of birds, animals, people and mythological creatures. One popular design is called a **triskelion**; it is a triple spiral with rotational symmetry.



Why not have a go creating your own Iron Age shield design?

Below are some famous British Iron Age shields to inspire you.



Above (l-r): Designs on the Witham Shield, the Battersea Shield and a shield miniature from the Salisbury Hoard (not to scale). All three can be seen at the British Museum where the Enderby Shield will also eventually be displayed.

Right: A reconstruction of a bark shield reveals what the Enderby Shield might have looked like.

