



For centuries, the sounds and sweat and smoke of iron working was part of life in the Blackdown Hills. Today you can find traces of this ancient industry all over the landscape.

Explore the places on the map overleaf and step back to a time when people here made metal from what nature provided.

Societies in the past depended on iron. To make it, they needed three things:

- iron ore
- clay
- wood

All three occur close together in the Blackdown Hills, making it an ideal place for the industry to grow. People used the clay to build furnaces, heated with charcoal that they made from local wood. The iron ore was roasted then heated in the furnaces, a

process called 'smelting'. When it got to the right temperature it formed 'blooms' of iron that could be beaten and worked into weapons, tools, cooking pots and any number of useful items.

People worked iron in the Blackdown Hills from the Iron Age to Medieval times. Today, farmers often find glassy black rocks, the 'slag' or waste product from iron smelting, and archaeologists are starting to piece together a picture of just how important the industry was to local people.

You can find out more on the Blackdowns Metal Makers website.

TALL TALES

On our website you will meet lots of colourful characters with tales of making metal. There are Roman traders, Iron Age cooks, Medieval shopkeepers and Noni, a little girl on a big adventure!



The view from Dumpdon Iron Age hill fort
by Linda Findlay

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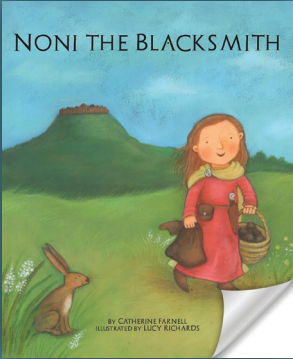
FOR HISTORY LOVERS

Visit our website to find out about recent archaeology on iron working sites in the Blackdown Hills. You can delve deeper into the subject through links to research and evidence discovered in recent years.



FOR SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES

Travel through time with a series of mini-movies that take you from the Iron Age to the Medieval period. Learn how people in the past made, traded and used iron in the Blackdown Hills with these four fun films made by local children. They come complete with lesson ideas and teachers' notes.



FOR LITTLE ONES

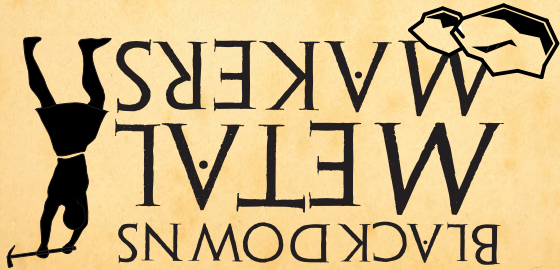
Step into the Iron Age with Noni the Blacksmith, a charming story of one little girl's quest to be just like her daddy. This gorgeously illustrated tale for young children is available as a free online book complete with sounds and songs.



PLACES TO VISIT
FASCINATING FACTS
TALL TALES
LEARNING MORE



DISCOVER THE ANCIENT
IRON WORKING
INDUSTRY OF THE
BLACKDOWN HILLS
AREA OF OUTSTANDING
NATURAL BEAUTY



ABOUT BLACKDOWN'S METAL MAKERS

Blackdowns Metal Makers aims to increase understanding of the area's rich iron working heritage.

The project involved staff and children at Hemyock Primary School and Preschool and All Saints Primary School near Axminster.

Our activities included archaeological excavation, creative play sessions, film making, and public events.

The project was run by The Carousel Project, The Blackdown Hills AONB Partnership and the South West Heritage Trust. It was funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Blackdown Hills AONB Partnership. Tiverton Museum of Mid Devon Life and Oxford University provided invaluable support.




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The National Lottery
through the Heritage Lottery Fund



Blackdown Hills
Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty



BLACKDOWNS METAL MAKERS



HEMYOCK CASTLE

Hemyock has strong links to the iron working industry, with evidence of extensive Medieval iron smelting.

Hemyock Castle has slag, the waste produce from iron smelting, built into the walls. The castle is in the village centre and is usually open to the public on Bank Holiday Mondays (please check online in advance).

There are shops, a pub and a car park in the village.

OS map ref: ST 133 134

DUNKESWELL ABBEY

This Cistercian monastery probably controlled much of the local industry in the Medieval period. There is even a record of a murderous quarrel between two Welsh ironworkers here.

Today you can see fragments of the Abbey on the site of the present Victorian church.

There is a small parking area and pleasant footpaths nearby. There are village shops and a pub in Hemyock.

OS map ref: ST 146 105

CULM DAVY DRAGON PITS

Follow the woodland walk through the Forestry Commission's Culm Davy site. At the top you can see an extensive range of quarry pits in the woods, probably where iron ore was dug out. The local name for them is Dragon Pits!

There are pubs and shops in Hemyock and Culmstock, and you can also visit the Elizabethan Culmstock Beacon at nearby Blackdown Common.

OS map ref: ST 123 157

HEMBURY HILL FORT

One of the most significant Iron Age hill forts in Devon, thought to have been used from Neolithic to Roman times.

There are footpaths open to the public, but no car park. There is a pub and a shop in Broadhembury and a range of facilities in Honiton.

OS map ref: ST 113 030

DUMPDON HILL FORT

Evidence of smelting has been found around several Iron Age hill forts in the Blackdown Hills. If iron working took place here in the Iron Age, these forts could have provided a centre of trade and control for the industry.

The site is owned by the National Trust and is open to the public. There is a small car park, a hilly walk to the top of the fort, and wonderful views over East Devon. Nearby Honiton has a range of shops, cafes and facilities.

OS map ref: ST 177 042



CASTLE NEROCHE

The parishes around Neroche were known to pay taxes in the form of blooms of iron during the time of Domesday. Perhaps the Norman motte and bailey castle exerted some control over this industry. It was built on the site of an Iron Age hill fort with impressive earthworks. Today the site is owned by the Forestry Commission and is open to the public.

There is a car park, family-friendly woodland walks and lovely views. There are pubs in Staple Fitzpaine and Bishopswood.

OS map ref: ST 276 157

This map gives approximate locations only.

Always take an Ordnance Survey map with you when exploring the Blackdown Hills AONB.

The area is covered by the Explorer series 115, 116 and 128, and by the Landranger series 193 and 192.