

Housing in Wales before 1000 BCE

People have lived in Wales continuously for over 11,000 years, but today's houses are a recent innovation. This guide introduces the types of houses that were common until just a few thousand years ago.

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Stake-built shelters

9700 BCE -

Until around 1000 BC, most people probably lived in temporary shelters like this.

Perfect for the family on the move, they were simple to build from commonly available materials – branches, foliage and turf.

But the price of simplicity was fragility, and shelters like these would have often needed repair when the weather was bad.



Long houses

3750 – 3500 BCE

Some of Wales' first farmers lived in long houses. Built from large timbers and made to last a generation they were impressive architectural statements.

But the tradition of building long houses didn't last. Perhaps they didn't suit a lifestyle that still involved moving from place to place.

Nothing so grand was built again for 2,000 years.



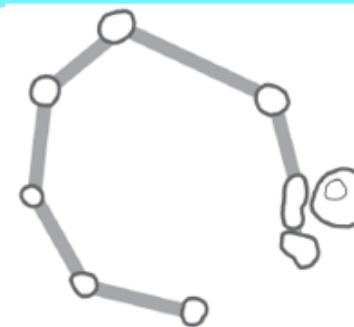
Stake-walled roundhouses

2500 – 2000 BCE

These were built around a square hearth, using thin upright poles with flexible branches woven between. They were light structures, but their circular shape made them strong enough to carry a heavy roof.

Similar houses have been found in southern England and even in Orkney.

The design was adopted again after 1000 BCE.



Post-ring roundhouses

1500 BCE –

Stronger houses could be built by placing large timbers upright in pits rather than by pushing stakes into the ground.

Branches were still woven in panels between these posts, but these could be replaced without taking down the whole building.

This design was the template for most Iron Age roundhouses found across Wales after 1000 BCE.



Clay-walled roundhouses

1500 BCE –

Thick strong walls can be made by mixing clay with straw and small stones.

These roundhouses were warm and well-insulated. Their walls could also support more weight which meant that the houses could be larger than stake or post-ring structures.

Clay continues to be a practical and eco-friendly building materials.