

Iron Age: status and wealth



The Holcombe Mirror

Made about AD 30-70 and found at Uplyme, East Devon in 1970.

In 1967 Devon Archaeological Society heard that a Roman mosaic pavement had been found by a farmer near Uplyme in East Devon. In 1969 they began archaeological excavations and discovered a Roman villa. In 1970 a pit was found under the floor of one of the rooms. There had been a farm or

settlement there before the villa was built. In the bottom of the pit this Iron Age bronze mirror was found.

The mirror was badly corroded after being buried for 2000 years and one side should have been highly polished so the owner could see their face whilst the back may have been decorated with engraving. However, no decoration could be seen. After careful cleaning by conservators at the British Museum, the beautiful and intricate scrolling design appeared. The handle is also made of circular scrolls and where the handle joins the mirror, it could be the face of a smiling cat.

This mirror would have been owned by a wealthy person of very high status.

On the Iron Age activity sheet, you will see the wonderful design on the back of the mirror and you can have a go at designing your own.