

The passage below is about the early history of the New Forest in Hampshire, southern England. *Read it carefully*, discuss the questions with a friend and write in full sentences to answer each one.

## THE EARLY HISTORY OF THE NEW FOREST

**T**he New Forest, in Hampshire, is one of the oldest areas of forest in Britain. Its broadleaved woodland gives a great deal of pleasure to forest visitors. The oak and beech trees attract many types of wildlife and provide an ideal environment for plants such as mosses, lichens and fungi. Visitors will also see large areas of conifer plantations which do not attract as many species of plants and animals. These trees are planted as a sustainable supply of commercial timber. The forest managers are careful to look after the broadleaved woodland as well as to plant and harvest conifer trees.

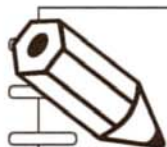


Modern technology has meant that scientists have been able to trace the forest's history as far back as 10 000 years ago. Pollen grains which fall on muddy ground can be preserved for thousands of years. Scientists study the fossilised pollen under a microscope and it gives clues about which trees were growing in the forest at different times of its history. About 10 000 years ago there were mainly birch and pine trees but these were gradually replaced by oak, elm, lime, alder and hazel.

Visitors to the forest will also see areas of heath and grass which date back to a period of time called the Bronze Age, between 2000 and 500 BC. The people of that time were farmers and they cleared areas of woodland for farming settlements. Once the land had been farmed it was abandoned and new areas were cleared for crops.

Over 2000 years ago the Iron Age brought further change to the forest with the demand for iron tools such as sickles and hammers. Woodland was destroyed as earthworks were dug and wood was used for fuel to smelt iron.

Written records of the New Forest have existed since 1079 when William the Conqueror decided to use the forest for Royal Hunting Grounds. From that day to this the forest's history is much easier to trace!



1. Write a sentence giving a general description of what the information is about.
2. What do you think is meant by the phrase 'broadleaved woodland'?
3. How are conifer plantations different from broadleaved woodland?
4. Why do you think forest managers take care to look after the woodland as well as the plantations?
5. Use a dictionary to help you write a sentence about what you think is meant by 'fossilised pollen'?
6. How have scientists used fossilised pollen to trace the forest's early history?
7. Which trees grew in the forest about 10 000 years ago?
8. How did Bronze Age farmers change the forest?
9. Why is the forest's history easier to trace since 1079?
10. Think of a suitable title for each of the five paragraphs.



**A.** Work with a friend and design a time-line which would span the dates given below. If you continue the line to the year 2000 and make two trees of your own you could imagine what the future might hold for the forest.



**B.** When you have finished your time-line discuss each piece of information with a friend or in a group and suggest how each one would have changed the forest.