


Home: A Time Traveller's Tales from Britain's Prehistory

Francis Pryor

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In Home Francis Pryor, author of The Making of the British Landscape, archaeologist and broadcaster, takes us on his lifetime's quest: to discover the origins of family life in prehistoric Britain

Francis Pryor's search for the origins of our island story has been the quest of a lifetime. In Home, the Time Team expert explores the first nine thousand years of life in Britain, from the retreat of the glaciers to the Romans' departure. Tracing the settlement of domestic communities, he shows how archaeology enables us to reconstruct the evolution of habits, traditions and customs. But this, too, is Francis Pryor's own story: of his passion for unearthing our past, from Yorkshire to the west country, Lincolnshire to Wales, digging in freezing winters, arid summers, mud and hurricanes, through frustrated journeys and euphoric discoveries. Evocative and intimate, Home shows how, in going about their daily existence, our prehistoric ancestors created the institution that remains at the heart of the way we live now: the family.

'Under his gaze, the land starts to fill with tribes and clans wandering this way and that, leaving traces that can still be seen today . . . Pryor feels the land rather than simply knowing it' - Guardian

Former president of the Council for British Archaeology, Dr Francis Pryor has spent over thirty years studying our prehistory. He has excavated sites as diverse as Bronze Age farms, field systems and entire Iron Age villages. He appears frequently on TV's Time Team and is the author of The Making of the British Landscape, Seahenge, as well as Britain BC and Britain AD, both of which he adapted and presented as Channel 4 series.

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Author : Francis Pryor

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From Reader Review Home: A Time Traveller's Tales from Britain's Prehistory for online ebook

Richard Lee says

This book contains some interesting facts for those lay readers wanting to learn more about early British history. It's good that he is willing to speculate and offer his own opinion rather than simply sticking to proven facts.

But the book is a bit superficial and too folksy even for lay readers. It covers too much historical ground in my view - a lot on the Neolithic and Mesolithic and then only touches on Bronze Age and Iron Age. And Pryor's anecdotes and stories often only interrupt the historical narrative.

Jo says

A very readable work which covers the full sweep of prehistoric Britain and examines what we can learn of family life and its implications for the wider community. Pryor has an assured, conversational style which is very accessible.

Plus I have to give marks to someone who casually mentions the Isle of Man a few times, just because it's there. Maybe next time he could discuss some sites too...

Sam Worby says

A very engaging and interesting book which mixes personal anecdote with prehistory and archaeology. His argument about the importance of family (and against the existence of top down hierarchy) is circular and reliant on his own interpretations. But for this time period I figure that's fine as there doesn't seem to be much evidence to test it either way.

Melanie Cowpland says

Really interesting read!

Tom says

A really interesting read, Francis Pryor knows how to tell a story and does not get too technical so that the average reader can get a lot of useful insight without being blinded by science. It really opened my eyes to how people were living some 6000 years ago and has changed my perspective of how people lived during these times.

Well worth a read if you are interested in how family life looked before the Roman invasion of Britain and how sophisticated those people were.

4triplezed says

If I have one criticism of this book it is that Francis Pryor tends to lose a bit of focus at times and meanders off the subject at hand. Be that as it may I can feast on Pryor's books all day long. As usual, he is easy to read and one always learns.

Joe France says

On a whole very interesting, with a lot of interesting and new (to me at least) information, but it was in need of a serious editing. I know a lot more about My Pryor's morning routine than I have ever imagined knowing.

Sandrine says

The home, your home, our home ... it is so utterly essential and important. For some it is a minuscule cubicle, the streets, the road, the farm, the mountain, the city, ... the what ever you feel or call home it will be filled with you and your being.

If Francis Pryor decides to perform his books on audible, I would be his first listener, I love his voice and I used to resound it in my head while reading "Home".

Nikki says

Unlike the more focused Seahenge, Francis Pryor's Home tries to cover a lot of ground — no less than looking at the roots of family life in the Neolithic world, and its development through to recorded history. There's a lot of evidence to look at, but a lot of it doesn't deal directly with the home: in fact, Pryor discusses Seahenge and Stonehenge at reasonable length, as well as other potentially sacred places and practices that we don't now fully understand (or in some cases, understand at all). It somewhat ties in with what I've been reading recently about Celtic culture, and the development of infrastructure in Britain, though it covers a lot more centuries, so it was interesting to see where it dovetailed.

Unfortunately, I think the fact that there's sections about burial practices and the like detracts from the central theme, even though it does relate to how a home life might have been seen and how individuals were treated. Pryor's willingness to speculate about all these things makes the book seem a little overstuffed at times — reiterating ideas from Seahenge and from Mike Parker Pearson's Stonehenge, then discussing Pryor's own digging experiences, and then talking about a hoard found somewhere else... It lacks focus, I think, which is a shame.

It's still a fascinating book, and Pryor writes well and interestingly, but it feels like the material could equally constitute most of Britain BC, which I haven't yet read but intend to. It isn't just about the home; we don't have enough evidence for that, as much as we would wish it. Instead, questions about ritual and beliefs about death intrude at all times, partly because these are things we are more fascinated to know, and only partly for the way it reflects on the living of life.

Originally posted here.

Riversue says

Francis Pryor obviously loves what he does and the land and the people. If you have an interest in British prehistory and you haven't read Pryor - do so. You will be in for a treat.

Peter Dunn says

A fairly convincing view of the likely lifestyle and organisation of life in Mesolithic, Neolithic, and Iron Age in Britain (and he very occasionally touches on Ireland) that focuses on the family unit as being key as opposed to grander societal structures. This idea is compellingly put, but it is maybe pushed very slightly too far to the exclusion of all else.

What is equally compelling is not just the ideas expressed in the book, but the way Frances Pryor shows how those ideas evolved overthrowing not only what he had first been taught but also some of his own earlier theories as to the course of life in prehistoric and Iron Age Britain.

Emily says

I am a sucker for prehistory, but I thought there was a lot of interesting, useful material here.

Stephen Palmer says

A very enjoyable, erudite and all-round super book from a major figure of the field... and of course a regular on 'Time Team'.

Opening with life in the Continent-connected Britain of just after the end of the last Ice Age, the book covers a lot of ground in stages, ending with Celtic Britain and a bit about the time of the Romans. But the heart of this book - maybe I should say hearth - is the crucial role played in prehistoric cultural evolution by the family and family life. This is why the book is called "Home." Pryor is unusual amongst archaeologists in allowing his natural humanity to inform his scientific discoveries and understanding. It is this willingness to add human common sense to science that makes the book so appealing.

I'd recommend this book to pretty much anybody with a brain and the desire to use it. Although - especially

in the first half - the writing style is peppered with mental diversions, as if Pryor is attempting a little stream-of-consciousness, those distractions depart as the style settles down. But all the main stuff is there: wisdom, experience, insight, and the willingness to say what lesser men of archaeology are too stuffy to say.

Bravo!

Paul Gallear says

The only criticism I have of this book is the way in which Pryor keeps referring back to things he has already mentioned, or forward to things he is going to mention: "as I discussed in the previous chapter", "as I will mention later on".

apart from that minor stylistic niggle, I found the book engaging and interesting. I have gained insight into a period of history I knew nothing about.

Jane Walker says

To describe this book as interesting sounds like damning with faint praise; but it isn't. Pryor's book is genuinely interesting. He brings all his experience as an archaeologist to bear on looking at pre-Roman Britain from an angle which is unusual. He sees the development of home life and community as the driving force, rather than top-down organisation, and he interprets the evidence as showing a much higher level of sophistication than has been thought and taught.
