

Irish Elk – *Megaloceros*



Height (including antlers): 3.1 metres

Length: 3.2 metres

Weight: 540-600 kg

Occupied around Kents Cavern: 400,00 -11,000 years ago

Cave art from early humans depicts Irish Elk as having a dark coat of fur with a white underside quite similar to other deer today. The art also shows them to have had a small hump above their shoulders which could have been used for storing body fat for survival in lean times. Deer antlers are not permanent structures and after the breeding season the males always shed them so that they are left with two bloody stumps on the top of their head. After this a set of new antlers is grown, but they have to grow fast and large in time for the next breeding season.

At Kents Cavern, you can see the jaw of an Irish Elk on display in the waiting room before the tour starts.