

Become a Mesolithic footprint detective

Mesolithic Fact file

- Mesolithic people were 'hunter-gatherers'. This means they did not grow crops or keep animals; instead, they got all of their food from the plants, animals, birds and fish that lived in the wild.
- To hunt animals like red deer, wild boar, elk or aurochs (giant wild cows), hunters would need to be able to track them by following their footprints.
- At Formby Beach, archaeologists have found Mesolithic human and animal footprints in the muds!

Your task

In your resource pack, you will find three 3D printed feet. These are made from laser scans of the Mesolithic footprints at Formby Beach, so they are perfect copies of human and animal feet that walked there thousands of years ago!



Step 1

Take each of the feet, and insert a pencil into the hole in the back.



Step 2

You will need a sandpit, or a container with sand in it. Hold the footprints by the pencil, and push them firmly into the sand to make a footprint, just like humans and animals did in the Mesolithic.

Step 3

Time to become a detective! To be able to know what made your footprint you will need a footprint identification sheet-use this one made by the National Trust.


(<https://nt.global.ssl.fastly.net/formby/documents/a-guide-for-the-footprint-detective.pdf>)



Guide for the footprint detective
Visitors can spot the muddy beds where the footprints appear from the top of the dunes and the highest band is located about 50 metres out. This band is divided into separate beds, many of which are only occasionally visible, and stretches along the whole of Formby point.


The different types of footprints that are most commonly found are as follows:

Humans




Print Size
Adult Males: 22-31cm, UK shoe size 4-13, Estimated Height 5'6"-6'-2"
Adult Female and adolescent: 18-25cm, UK shoe size 1-7, Estimated Height 4'8"-5'9"
Toddlers and children: 5-16cm, Estimated Height 1'2"-3'8"

Aurochs



Print Size
Prehistoric range 22-28cm
A very large type of wild ox, now extinct, the aurochs was approximately 6 feet high and 11 feet long with large horns. A fearsome sight for our hunter ancestors but a huge result if brought down successfully in terms of meat, bone and hide.

Red Deer



Print Size
Prehistoric Range: 10-15cm
Modern Average: 9cm
There are more red deer prints on the beach than of any other animal and they are much larger than the breed living today.

Step 4

Use a ruler to measure your footprints, and compare it with the shapes and sizes in the identification guide. What do you think made these footprints over 6000 years ago at Formby Beach?

