

TEACHER'S BOOKLET

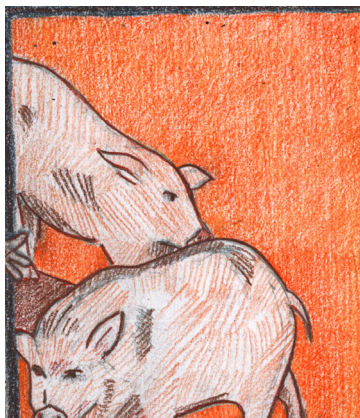
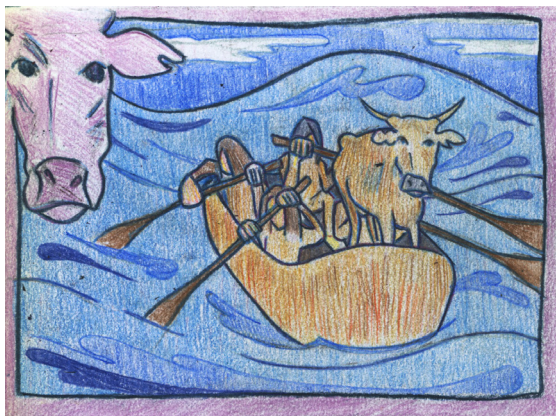
MANCHESTER
1824

The University of Manchester

FROM PREHISTORY TO
PRIMARY SCHOOLS

THE NEOLITHIC

FARMING ARRIVES IN BRITAIN



4000 - 2400 CAL BC

The **first farmers** used polished stone tools and introduced domesticated crops and animals into Britain. Societies were **semi-mobile** and they loved building **monuments**.

WHERE PEOPLE LIVED



By the start of the Neolithic, Britain had been an island for over 1000 years. Some Neolithic groups probably came from continental Europe, and these people used polished stone axes to clear areas of forest. With the arrival of domesticated animals and plants these clearances made important spaces where farming activities could begin to take place. Neolithic people also loved building monuments. In the first half of the Neolithic they built 'causewayed enclosures' made up of a segmented or interrupted ditch, often encircling the top of a hill. 'Long barrows' were built to house some of the Neolithic dead. In the later Neolithic they built 'henges', like Stonehenge made up of a bank and ditch enclosure, and stone circles made up of mighty standing stones.

MESOLITHIC

NEOLITHIC

SKARA BRAE, ORKNEY

Photograph: Julian Thomas

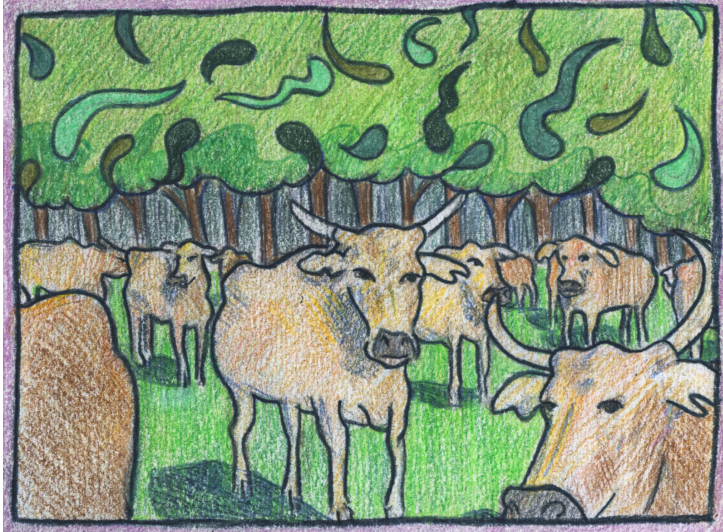


Neolithic people also started to make bigger and more permanent buildings. From the earliest Neolithic people were constructing large timber halls such as those at Dorstone Hill in Herefordshire. People would have used these halls as key meeting places, and may have been living in them for at least parts of the year. As the Neolithic period progressed, people began to live in larger groups. This is shown by the substantial settlements at Durrington Walls in Wiltshire, the Ness of Brodgar and Skara Brae in Orkney. Skara Brae is famous for its stone built structures including dressers and tables!

BRONZE AGE

IRON AGE

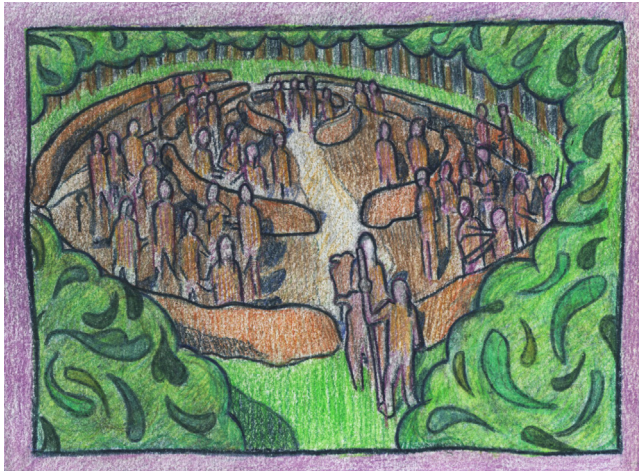
HOW NEOLITHIC PEOPLE LIVED



The Neolithic brought with it big changes. Although people continued to hunt wild animals and use wild plants, farming began. Domestic cows, pigs and sheep were all introduced into Britain from established farmers on the European continent. In the early part of the Neolithic cattle were especially important, and then in the latter half pigs became more common. Perhaps this was because their rapid rates of reproduction made them an ideal species to be raised for feasts and other important social gatherings. The Neolithic also saw the start of crop farming, focusing upon cereal species grown in small garden plots.

MESOLITHIC

NEOLITHIC



Life in the Neolithic was greatly shaped by their pastoral lifestyle. Groups were still quite mobile, moving around the landscape seasonally to ensure they got access to the pasture, water and shelter that they and their cattle required. These were probably family groups or clans bound together by ideas of ancestral lineage and with a particular 'head of household' as leader. Because people were still mobile opportunities for people to all come together in larger groups became important. The large causewayed enclosures, stone circles and henge monuments were important meeting places for groups to congregate with their cattle herds. People could feast and trade valuable artefacts, and in doing so strengthen social relationships. Analysis of animal bones have shown that some of these gatherings drew people from large distances. At Durrington Walls in Wiltshire people were bringing pigs from across southern Britain, and cattle from the Lake District.

BRONZE AGE

IRON AGE

NEOLITHIC TECHNOLOGY



Neolithic communities in Britain continued to use flint, bone and antler as Mesolithic groups had before them. However these materials were used to make new types of tools and artefacts, including 'leaf shaped' arrowheads, and antler picks that were used in the construction of large Neolithic monuments. At the same time, we also see new materials and techniques being used such as polished stone axes made from very hard types of rock. These axes were knapped, ground and polished into their final form. This process would have taken hundreds of hours. A few polished stone axes have been found on Mesolithic sites, but they become far more common in the Neolithic, and were traded over large distances.

Photograph: Julian Thomas



MESOLITHIC

NEOLITHIC

Early Neolithic Pot made by Juan Rivero



Before the Neolithic any containers would have been made from organic materials such as tree bark or animal hides, however the Neolithic saw the introduction of the first pottery. In the early Neolithic carinated bowls were used, with their flared necks and round bases. This design allowed them to be hung by a rope around their neck when being carried, and then placed upon uneven ground. These were the requirements of pastoral people who moved their kitchen regularly. In the later Neolithic 'grooved ware' pottery became prominent. These were barrel shaped vessels covered in distinctive decoration and with flat bases. These were perfect to place on the dressers and tables in the more permanent structures of the later Neolithic.

BRONZE AGE

IRON AGE

NEOLITHIC BELIEFS



Many Neolithic monuments have significant relationships with astronomical features: Stonehenge and others are aligned with the midwinter sunrise. This indicates a deep understanding of astronomical changes which seem to have been a significant part of how Neolithic people understood their world. Peoples' lives and beliefs in the Neolithic also seem to have been closely tied to the idea of ancestors. In the early Neolithic, groups built long barrows which were used to bury the remains of their dead. Some of the most spectacular barrows had large stone chambers into which the dead were placed. At West Kennet long barrow in

MESOLITHIC

NEOLITHIC

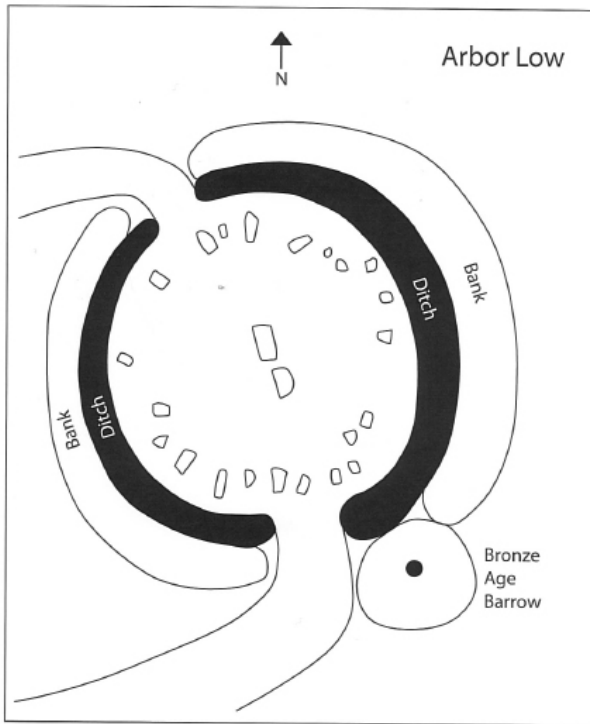


Wiltshire five chambers contained the remains of at least 36 individuals, who were collected over a period of at least 30 years. Bones from long barrows show that once the bodies became skeletons, living Neolithic people would come back and arrange the bones. They would collect specific body parts and deposit them in groups. As the Neolithic continued, some people were buried in single graves. These people were probably understood as important members of lineages, sharing family ties with living Neolithic populations. The dead were also cremated and deposited in pits. These cremations, where the body was placed upon a large pyre, would have been spectacular events, gathering Neolithic groups together to remember their family and ancestral ties to the dead. These tombs and cremation sites seem to have created significant places in the landscape where people could gather and interact with their ancestors.

BRONZE AGE

IRON AGE

NEOLITHIC SITES

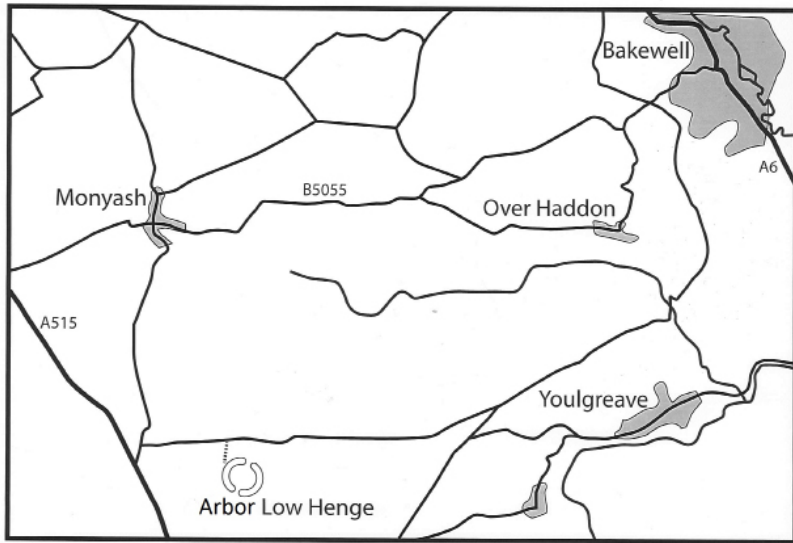


Arbor Low is a Neolithic Henge monument in the Peak District. It is open to the public and a donation of £1 is recommended. Arbor low is great for getting a feel for these monuments. When you visit think about the idea of henges as gathering places. How many people would it have taken to make the monument? How many of those people do you think would have been able to fit into the monument at any one time? If it was a gathering place are there any clues as to the times of year people may have gathered together?

MESOLITHIC

NEOLITHIC

ARBOR LOW



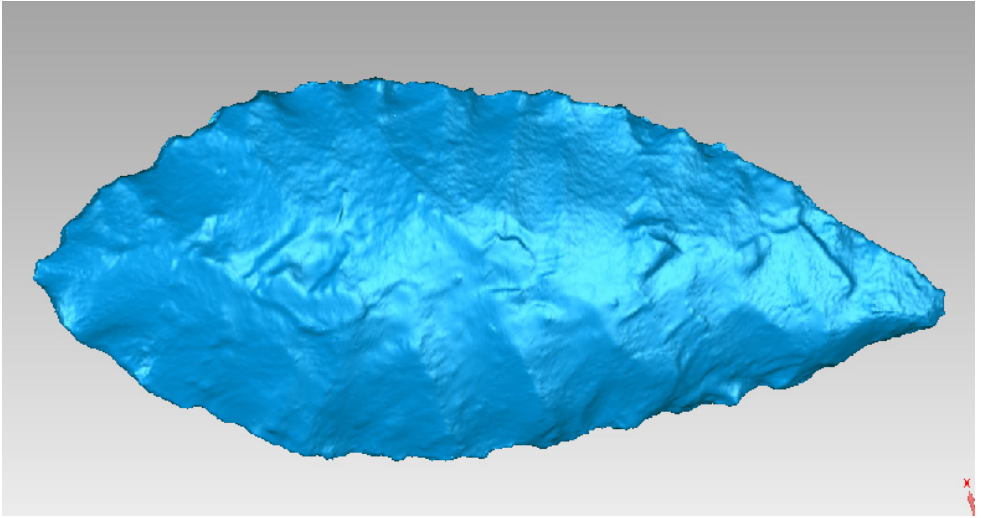
Arbor Low, Long Rake, Monyash, Bakewell,
Derbyshire, DE45 1JS

It is also interesting to think about how the henge monument controls the movement of a person moving through it. As you enter from the northern path, all views of the surrounding landscape are obliterated. However, turn around and a vista opens up. So during the Neolithic which entrance was the front, and which the rear? In relation to sound, do you think people on the outside could hear what was happening on the inside, and vice versa? Finally, why do you think there is a ditch on the inside of the monument? A visit to Arbor Low certainly gives us lots to think about.

BRONZE AGE

IRON AGE

NEOLITHIC LEAF SHAPED ARROWHEAD



Arrowheads such as this one are characteristic of the Neolithic period. They were produced by a method called 'pressure flaking', which leaves a series of small scars on the surface of the arrowhead after each removal has been taken. Included in the pack is a 3D printed Neolithic leaf shaped arrowhead for your teaching collection. Can you identify the scars on the surface that archaeologists use to recognise how it was made?