

PUPIL'S BOOKLET

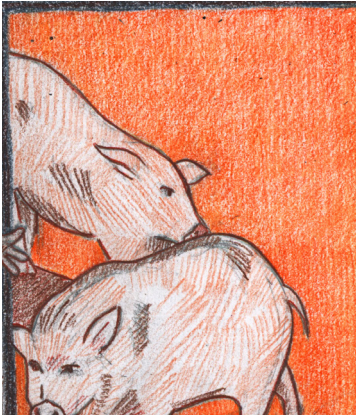
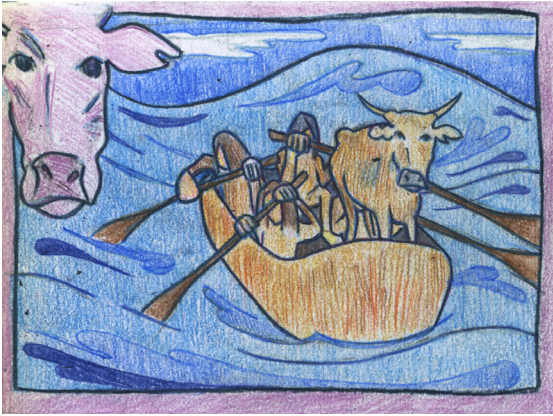


The University of Manchester

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



In the Neolithic, Britain was an island cut off from Europe by the sea. This meant that some Neolithic groups who moved to Britain from Europe had to cross the sea by boat! At the start of the Neolithic, Britain was covered by rich woodlands, but this was a problem for Neolithic people, because they were farmers, and not hunter gatherers like Mesolithic people. To solve this problem, Neolithic people chopped down areas of trees to create clearings, where they could grow crops and keep animals. Neolithic people also loved building monuments! In the Early Neolithic they built "causewayed enclosures", and in the Late Neolithic they built "henges" and "stone circles". These were permanent circular or oval enclosures, surrounded by a large ditch (and sometimes a bank of earth), and were made in impressive places, such as on the top of hills or by important rivers. At some sites, the huge stones standing in stone circles had come from a long way away!

MESOLITHIC

NEOLITHIC

SKARA BRAE, ORKNEY

Photograph: Julian Thomas



Neolithic people started building more permanent buildings. Larger timber halls built in the Early Neolithic, like the ones found at Dorstone Hill in Herefordshire, might have been important meeting places for the community, and people might have lived in them for part of the year. In the Later Neolithic, people built bigger villages, and more permanent houses. At Skara Brae in Orkney, the houses were made out of stone, and had things we have in our houses today, like beds and dressers!

BRONZE AGE

IRON AGE

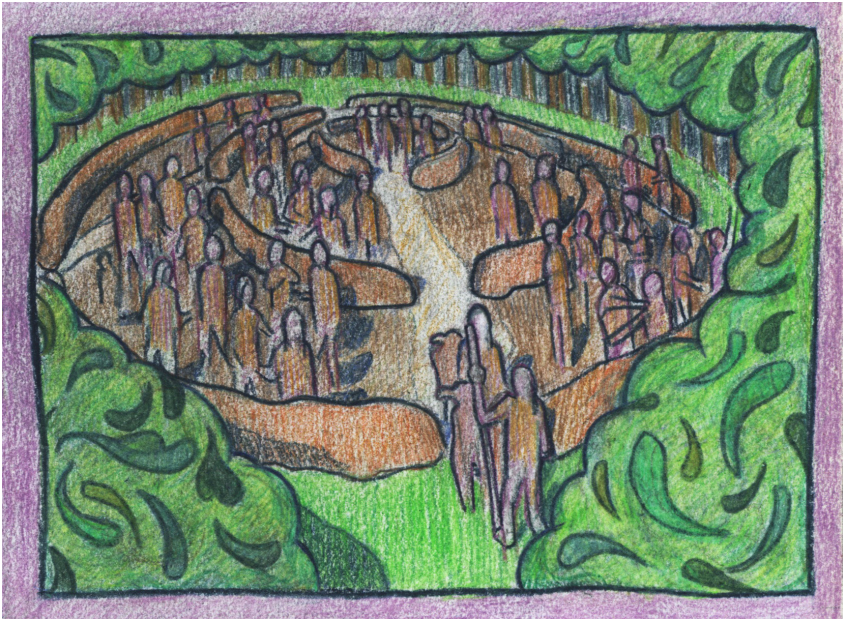
HOW NEOLITHIC PEOPLE LIVED



Neolithic people were the first ever farmers in Britain! They introduced domestic cows, sheep and pigs from farmers in Europe, and brought domestic plants and animals to grow, like wheat. However, this doesn't mean that they had big fields, like farms do today. Neolithic farms began as small garden plots and woodland clearings, alongside people who still carried on hunting and gathering wild food resources. Unlike farming today, life in the Neolithic would have been quite mobile; people would have to move around the landscape to make sure their animals got the water, food and shelter they needed.

MESOLITHIC

NEOLITHIC



Neolithic people probably lived in family groups with a "Head of Household" as their leader; their ancestors and family history were a very important part of their identity. Neolithic people were moving around a lot, so big meetings at certain times of the year would have been really important, giving everyone a chance to feast, trade and get to know each other! The large monuments Neolithic people made, such as causewayed enclosures, henges and stone circles, were important places for these meetings. At the Durrington Walls henge in the south of Britain, archaeologists have found evidence that Neolithic people were feasting on cows that had come all the way from the Lake District in the North West of Britain.

BRONZE AGE

IRON AGE

NEOLITHIC TECHNOLOGY



Like Mesolithic people before them, Neolithic people did not have any metal. Instead, they continued to use stone, bone and antler to make their tools. In the Neolithic people started to make leaf shaped stone arrowheads, which were very effective for hunting, and antler picks which were really useful for building big monuments. They also started to make polished stone axes. This meant knocking and shaping stone into an axe and then grinding it down and smoothing it by rubbing it with sand and other stones. Polished stone axes would have taken months to make, and were often made of stone from hard to reach places, so they were very valuable and powerful objects.

Photograph: Julian Thomas



MESOLITHIC

NEOLITHIC

Early Neolithic Pot made by Juan Rivero



Neolithic people were also the first people to use pottery in Britain: before this, any containers would have been made from animal skins and plant material (e.g. baskets). Pottery allowed Neolithic people to store the new foods that they were growing, like oats and wheat, and make new types of food, like bread and stews. Early Neolithic pots had flared necks and round bases, which allowed them to be carried by a rope around their neck, which was perfect for peoples' mobile lifestyles. Later pots were larger, and had flat bases, to stand on things like the dressers in the houses at Skara Brae!

BRONZE AGE

IRON AGE

NEOLITHIC BELIEFS



Many of the monuments that Neolithic people made were built to line up with where the sun rises or sets on certain days of the year. Stone circles, like Stonehenge, were built so the rising sun on either the longest day of the year (21st June) or shortest day of the year (21st December) would shine through certain stones or entrances. This suggests Neolithic people believed these days, and perhaps the changing of seasons, were very important to them.

MESOLITHIC

NEOLITHIC

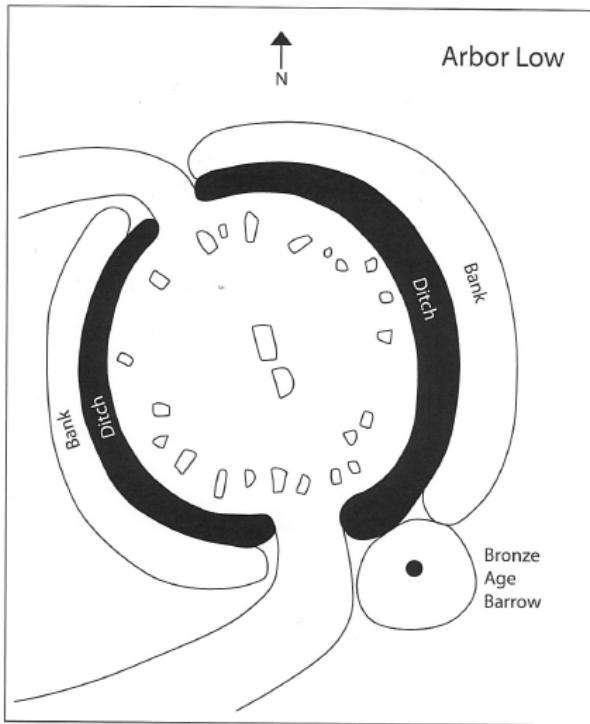


In the Early Neolithic, groups also built “long barrows”, which were long mounds of earth with timber or stone chambers. When people died, they were placed in these chambers, and over time more and more people were added. When the bodies had become skeletons, living people would come back and mix the bone up, sometimes sorting them into piles of different body parts. Archaeologists think that this was an important way the living kept connections with their ancestors. In the Later Neolithic, the dead were also cremated. These would have been spectacular events, where Neolithic groups would gather together to remember the dead and their ancestors.

BRONZE AGE

IRON AGE

NEOLITHIC SITES

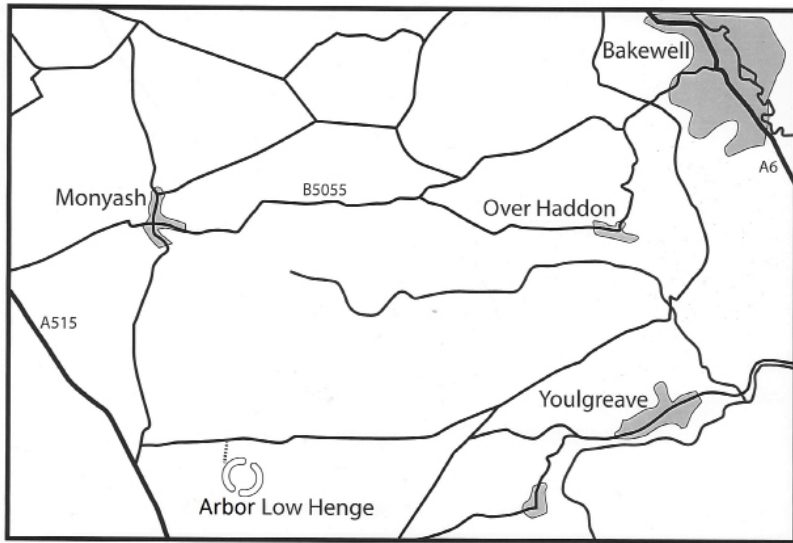


Arbor Low is a Neolithic Henge monument in the Peak District. It is open to the public and a donation of £1 is recommended. Arbor low is great for getting a feel for these monuments. When you visit think about the idea of henges as gathering places. How many people would it have taken to make the monument? 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



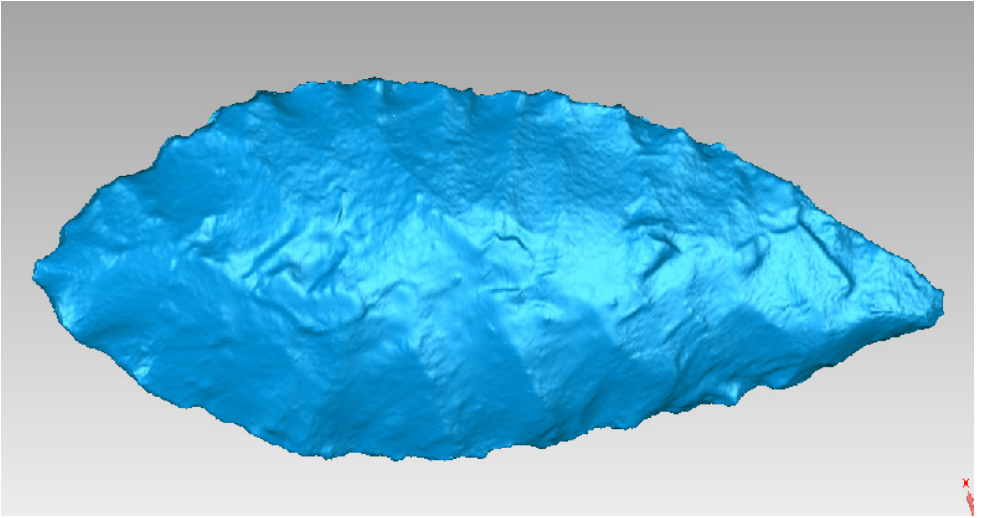
Arbor Low, Long Rake, Monyash, Bakewell,
Derbyshire, DE45 1JS

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?