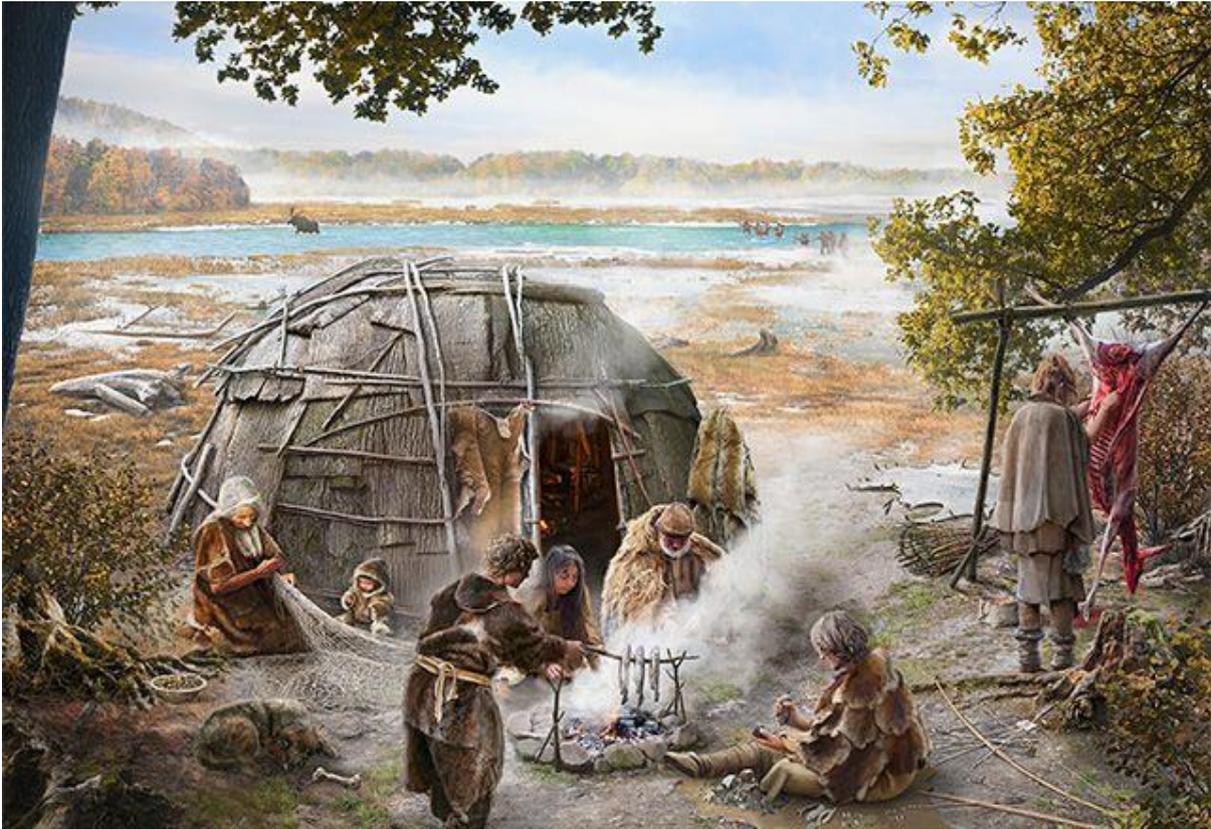


How did Stone Age hunter-gatherers live?



Stone Age hunter-gatherers had to **catch** or **find** everything they ate. They moved from place to place in search of food.

Early Stone Age people hunted with **sharpened sticks**. Later, they used **bows and arrows** and **spears** tipped with flint or bone. People gathered nuts and fruits and dug up roots. They went fishing using **nets** and **harpoons**.

Stone Age people cut up their food with sharpened stones and **cooked it on a fire**. They used **animal skins** to make clothes and shelters. After a good day's hunting people could feast on meat. But the next day they had to start finding food again!

In the early Stone Age, people made simple hand-axes out of stones. They made hammers from bones or antlers and they sharpened sticks to use as hunting spears.

What animals lived in prehistoric Britain?

Climate change during the Stone Age caused animal life in Britain to go through several changes.

During the **Ice Ages**, Britain was covered by ice and snow. Herds of mammoths, reindeer and woolly rhinoceroses roamed across the snow and brown bears sheltered in caves.

In the warm periods between the Ice Ages, Britain became as hot as Africa is today! Elephants, hippos, rhinos and hyenas all moved north through Europe to live in Britain.

The last Ice Age ended around 15,000 years ago and the British climate became very similar to how it is today. The forests were full of foxes and red squirrels. Wolves and bears lived in the hills.

Britain was home to most of the species of birds, fish and shellfish we have today, so people had a wide range of food to eat.



What kind of art did hunter-gatherers make?

Stone Age Britons made necklaces and bracelets from tusks, bones and shells. They also drew patterns on their bodies, using a kind of paint made from **ochre** (a type of red clay).

People living in caves decorated their walls with **pictures of animals**. Carvings found on cave walls show giant bulls, stags, horses, bison and birds.

No cave paintings have been found in Britain, but Stone Age Britons probably painted scenes like the ones found at Lascaux in France. The Lascaux cave paintings were created around 14,000 years ago. They show animals as well as some human hunters.

Some historians believe that Stone Age paintings had a **religious meaning**. They think the painted animals were meant to represent powerful spirits.



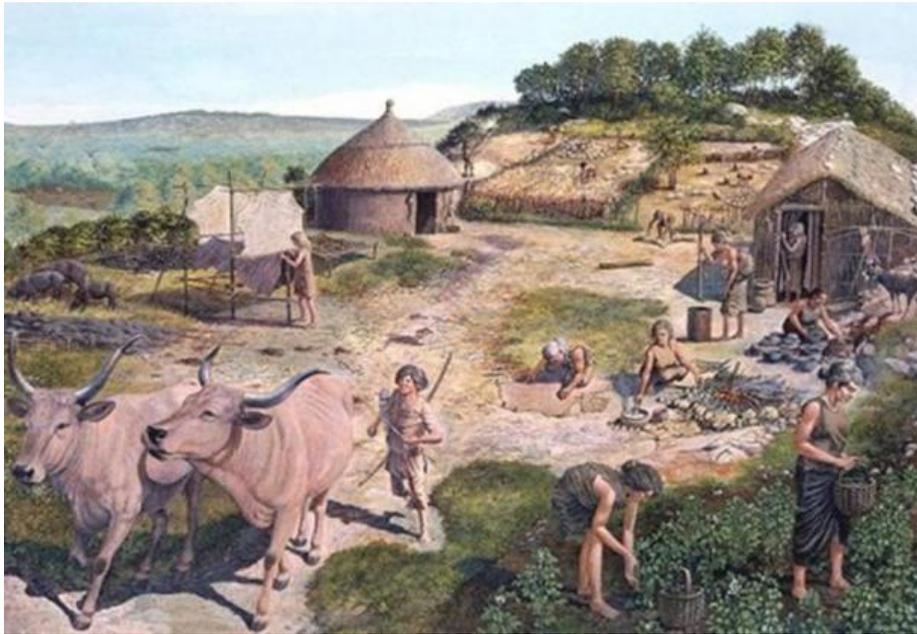
Who were the first farmers?

Around 4,000 years ago, people in Britain started living in a new way. Instead of spending all their time hunting and gathering, they began to set up farms.

The early farmers chopped down trees so they could grow crops and vegetables. They kept cattle, sheep and pigs. People began to settle down in one place and build permanent homes.

The farms marked the start of a new age in Britain - the **Neolithic period (or new Stone Age)**. As well as setting up farms and permanent homes, they also built massive tombs and giant stone circles. Some of the monuments and homes they built can still be seen today.

What were the first farms like?



By 3500BC people in many parts of Britain had set up farms. They made clearings in the forest and built groups of houses, surrounded by fields.

The early farmers grew **wheat and barley**, which they ground into flour. Some farmers grew **beans and peas**. Others grew a plant called flax, which they made into **linen** for clothes.

Neolithic farmers kept lots of animals. They had herds of wild cows that had been **domesticated (tamed)**. The cattle provided beef, as well as milk and cheese. Sheep and goats provided wool, milk and meat. Wild pigs were domesticated and kept in the woods nearby.

Dogs helped on the farms too. They herded sheep and cattle and worked as watchdogs. Dogs were probably treated as family pets, like they are today.

The early farmers still went hunting and gathered nuts and berries to eat, but they spent most of their time working on their farms.

Clearings were made to create farmland and the wood was used to build fires to keep warm at night

Who lived at Skara Brae?



Most Neolithic people built houses with wooden frames. But there were some places where wood was hard to find...

On the **Orkney Islands**, off the coast of Scotland, there are no trees. Neolithic people on the islands built their houses from stone.

The Skara Brae settlement on the Orkney Isles dates from between 3200 and 2700BC. It is made up of a group of **one-roomed circular homes**.

These houses have built-in furniture made completely from stone. There are stone seats and beds and even stone shelves where precious objects were kept!

Today, the homes at Skara Brae are open to the air, but they were probably covered with roofs of turf and bracken. Each home would have been linked by a set of covered passageways, so people could visit whilst keeping warm and dry.



Video Transcript

What was inside a Neolithic home?

The dresser would have been the first thing you would see when you came through the door. It was clearly important. What kind of things would they have placed on it?

Well, think of what people display today in their homes - things important to them, things that make statements about them.

Though 5,000 years ago, there weren't any clocks or picture frames. These beautiful objects are the kind of things that would have been displayed there.

As you sat on the large stone seat directly in front of the dresser, you'd have a clear view of the door and be able to see whoever crawled in.

As they entered, they'd have to look up at you. The door itself is only lockable from the inside. So when you came in here, you'd be able to shut the outside world out, have privacy.

We think a bone, or a piece of wood, could have been used to hold the door in place. But today all that remains are the holes in the stone which held the bar.

Once your guest had arrived and the door was closed, you could offer fresh fish and meat cooked on the fire. And in winter, smoked meat stored in the smoky roof space would be available.

Huge storage jars, too big to be brought in through the door, were buried in the corner of the house. The top of these pots were beautifully decorated and the area where they sat was surrounded by stone to protect them from being bumped and broken.

What monuments did Neolithic people build?

Neolithic people built **grave mounds** and **stone circles**. They also met for religious ceremonies on large, circular platforms that are known as **causewayed enclosures**.

People stored the bones of the dead in large graves known as **long barrows**. These graves were built from stone and covered with a mound of earth.

The graves had a central passage, with several side-chambers containing sets of bones. There were also smaller graves, with a single burial chamber.

During the Neolithic period, people started to build stone circles. This practice continued in the early **Bronze Age**.