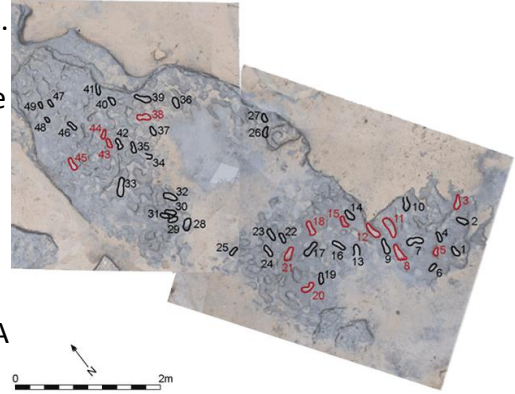


## Information about the Palaeolithic

The first humans came to Britain around 850,000 years ago. They walked here from what is now Belgium because the sea levels were much lower and Britain was attached to the continent. They left their footprints in the mud at Happisburgh. They were probably an early human species called *Homo antecessor*, not our modern human species.



About 500,000 years ago the climate of Britain was much warmer and animals like rhinos lived in southern England. A group of humans of a species that had evolved in Europe called *Homo heidelbergensis* hunted a rhino at a place that is now called Boxgrove in East Sussex.

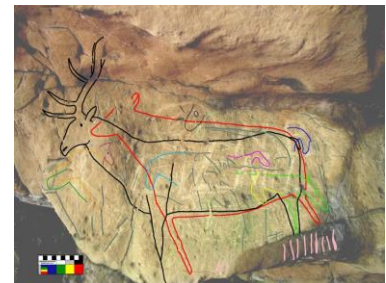
Neanderthals evolved from *Homo heidelbergensis*, and the remains of a woman were found in a pit at Swanscombe in Kent, along with the bones of elephants her people had hunted, dating to about 350,000 years ago. Neanderthals could make fires, a hearth has been found at Beeches Pit in Suffolk that dates to about the same time. This suggests that Neanderthals lived in the open air, possibly in tents. They also lived in caves, at Bontnewydd in Wales or Kents Cavern in Devon. Sadly, the Neanderthals died out soon after modern humans arrived.



Eventually, modern humans like us, called *Homo sapiens*, arrived in Britain. A young man was buried in a cave in Paviland in Wales about 33,000 BCE. He had a pouch full of periwinkle shells from the sea and bracelets and rods made of woolly mammoth ivory. Britain became very cold and so not many people came here, preferring to stay in France where it was warmer. It was still quite cold, though, so people could hunt reindeer as well as woolly mammoth, horse and bison.



People lived in rock shelters as well as in tents, and in some caves they painted amazing pictures of the animals they saw around them. About 12,000 BCE, nearly at the end of the Palaeolithic, people spent some time in Church Hole Cave at Creswell Crags in Nottinghamshire and scratched images of deer and goats on the cave walls, and left behind a bone with a scratched image of a horse on it.



The Ice Age finished about 10,000 BCE and that is seen as the end of the Palaeolithic and the start of the Mesolithic. Many of the large animals died out.

## Information about the Mesolithic

The Mesolithic starts around 10,000 BCE when the last Ice Age ended. As the huge glaciers started to melt and retreat back to the North Pole, people, animals and plants came back to Britain and spread northwards. Eventually the sea levels rose and large parts of land were flooded. Britain was cut off from the continent around 6000 BCE so people could no longer walk from what is now Britain to what is now France, as they could in the Palaeolithic.



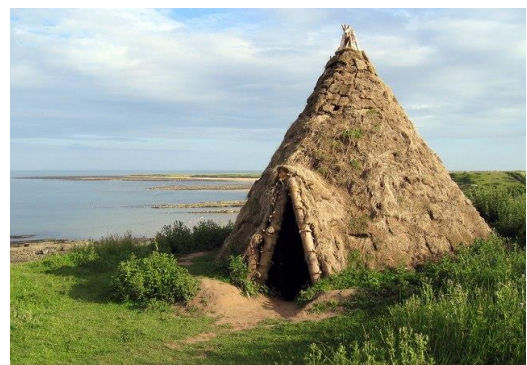
The people of the Mesolithic hunted their food in the same way as the hunters of the Palaeolithic, but now the animals they hunted had changed, as the big animals from the Ice Age had died out. No more mammoths and giant deer to hunt, so people hunted red deer, wild pigs, wild cows called aurochs and some smaller animals too. People also fished from rivers and the sea, and ate shellfish. Big dumps of seashells can be found around the coast, especially in Scotland, such as at a place called Morton Farm in Fife where they also hunted wild boar and sea birds. In a place called Sand in Scotland people lived in rock shelters and ate shellfish and crabs.



People also gathered food from plants, and so archaeologists often find campsites with remains of red deer bones and charred hazelnut shells from where they have been roasted in the fire, such as at Denham in Buckinghamshire or at Scapa Flow on the Orkney Islands. People still moved around from place to place, but sometimes they didn't have to move very far to get everything they needed. At a place called Star Carr in Yorkshire the houses there seem to have been used all year round for about 100 years.



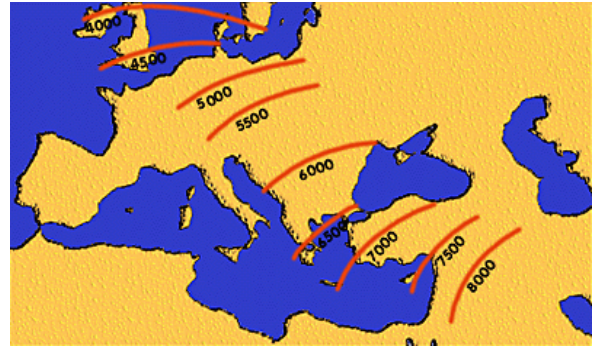
Houses seem to have been made by leaning wooden poles together to make a tipi style shape and then covering them over with turf, mud, leaves or branches. Archaeologists have rebuilt some Mesolithic houses the way they think they might have looked, like this one at Howick in Northumberland.



The Mesolithic ended when farmers came over in boats from the continent. Eventually, the Mesolithic people became farmers too.

## Information about the Neolithic

The Neolithic began around 4000 BCE in Britain when farmers from the continent came over in boats and brought domesticated sheep, cows, wheat and barley. Eventually, everyone in Britain took on farming, even domesticating pigs here from the native wild boar.



When people start farming they can't move around as much because they have to look after any crops they have planted, so people eventually settled down and lived in quite permanent villages. At Skara Brae in the Orkney Islands, from about 3000 BCE, people made houses out of stone after all the wood on the islands had been chopped down. Their houses had bed frames made of stone and a dresser made of stone for storing things in. The settlement lasted for 500 years until it was covered in sand by a massive storm.



In England most houses were made of wood and were rectangular or square in shape. They had thatched roofs and mud walls that were possibly painted white. Some were very long like the ones the farmers on the continent had lived in, but some were very small like ones at Durrington Walls at Stonehenge, which were laid out the same way as the houses at Skara Brae were, but just made out of wood, mud and thatch.



The big change in the Neolithic is not just the farming, but also that people started building massive religious monuments like Stonehenge, which was started around 3000 BCE. The stone circle was only added around 2500 BCE, close to the end of the Neolithic. Stonehenge and stone circles and rows all over Britain may have been places for people to gather and celebrate festivals at certain times of year.



Tombs where people were buried, like at Newgrange in Ireland, were also made out of stone and then covered in earth or more stone, and some mounds were made entirely of earth, especially in southern England where there is not much stone lying around to build with. Eventually the Neolithic ended when bronze was introduced around 2300 BCE.

