

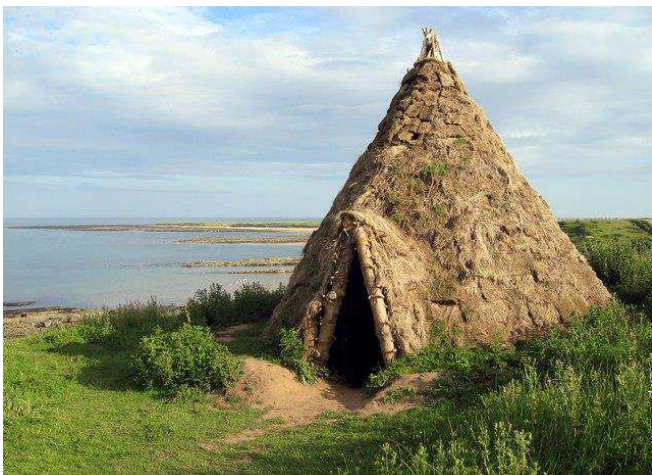
Imagine a land with no cities, no shopping centres, no T.V. or internet, not even schools, paper or pencils. Welcome to the Stone Age.

The Stone Age in Britain is divided into three eras:

Palaeolithic	Mesolithic	Neolithic
about 800 000 BC to 10 000 BC	about 10 000 BC to 4 000 BC	about 4 000 BC to 2 300 BC

Mesolithic is Greek for 'Middle Stone Age'. The climate warmed up and the sea levels rose during the Mesolithic era. By about 6 000 years BC, Doggerland (the wide land bridge connecting Britain with mainland Europe) was under the sea and Britain had become an island. Trees such as oak, hazel and birch began to grow and they created thick forests. Reindeer and wild horses, that preferred a more open landscape, left Britain to be replaced by other animals such as deer, elk, wild cattle and pigs. Humans changed their hunting techniques in order to catch these new animals. Dogs helped humans to hunt other animals and so humans started keeping the dogs as pets.

Humans at the beginning of the Mesolithic era were hunter-gatherers who moved around the country to find food. It is believed that they lived in round, hut like buildings made from wood and mud or straw (see picture below). By 4 500 years BC they had begun farming animals and crops such as wheat.



Replica of a Mesolithic round house at Howick

By Andrew Curtis, CC BY-SA 2.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=13804187>

In 1903 a complete human skeleton was excavated in Gough's Cave in Cheddar Gorge, Somerset. It is the oldest complete skeleton that has ever been excavated in Britain and is believed to date to about 7 150 years BC. The skeleton, known as 'Cheddar Man' is kept at the Natural History Museum in London, and a replica has been made to display in a museum in Cheddar.



Questions:

1. When was the Mesolithic era in Britain?
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2. What does Mesolithic mean?
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3. Why did Britain become an island?
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4. Which kind of trees would you have found in the newly formed forests?
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5. Why did animals such as reindeer and wild horses leave Britain?
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6. Which animals did humans choose to keep as pets and why?
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7. What materials did Mesolithic people use to build their homes?
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8. How was a hunter-gatherer different from being a farmer?
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9. Where was Britain's oldest complete skeleton discovered?
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10. What is the skeleton known as?
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11. Where is the skeleton kept now?
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12. Draw a picture of a Mesolithic round house.