

Skara Brae



Image from: Shutterstock editorial/MARIEPAULE

Name

Class



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Introduction



Think about Skara Brae. Think of the place, its location and the Neolithic people who lived there. Write a question about Skara Brae to which you would like to know the answer.

My question is:

Archaeologists and historians use different types of evidence to learn about the past. They use **primary sources**, which are things that were around at that time, such as jewellery and tools. They also use **secondary sources**, which are things that tell us about the past but are not from the past, such as text books and television programmes.

Work through the evidence about Skara Brae and try to find the answer to your question.



Evidence 1

Artefacts (primary source)

Artefacts are objects that have been made by people. They might be tools or jewellery. They can tell us about how people used to live.

Look at these three artefacts found at Skara Brae, then answer the questions about them.



necklace



pins



comb



1. What do you think the necklace is made from?

2. What clues does the necklace give us about Neolithic people?

3. Look at the comb. What does it tell us about what was important to the people who lived there?

4. What do you think the pins might have been used for?

5. Why might these artefacts have survived, while others have not?



Evidence 2

Plan (secondary source)

This plan of Skara Brae was drawn in 1950. It shows the excavated settlement.

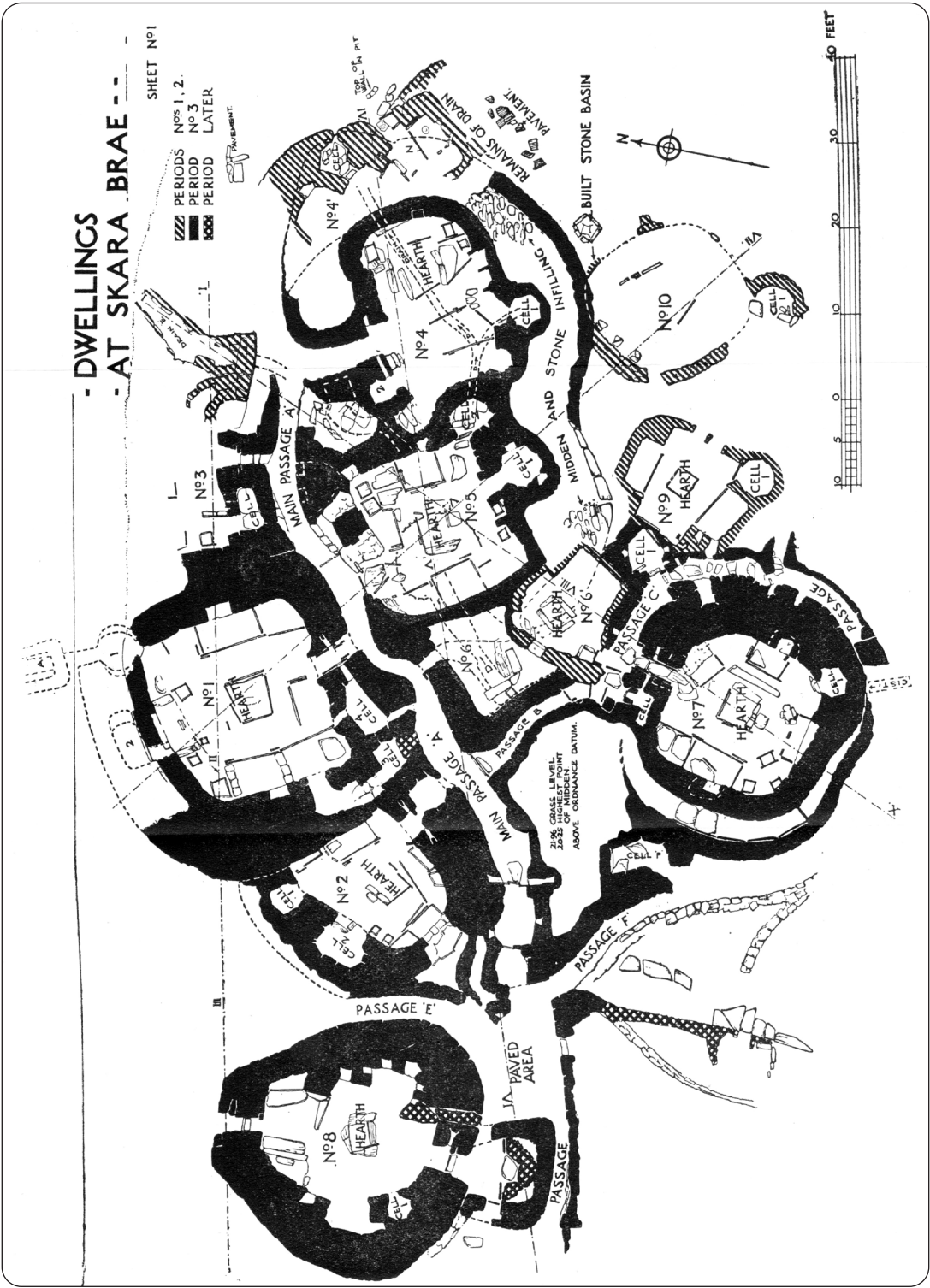


Image from: Wikimedia Commons/Public domain



1. Think about the weather at Skara Brae. Why do you think the walls of the houses are thick?

2. The houses are all similar sizes and had the same layout and furniture. Do you think one person ruled the whole village?

3. How many people do you think lived in this village?

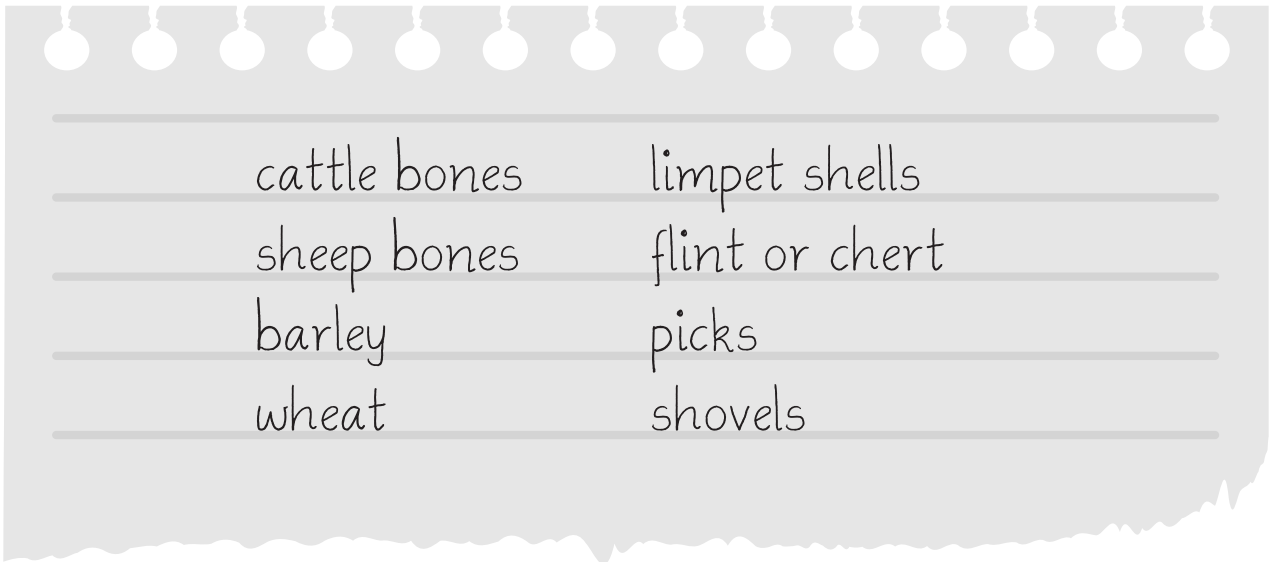
4. Look at the plan. How do you think people would have moved between the buildings?



Evidence 3

Archaeological finds (primary source)

Archaeologists found many things at Skara Brae that provided clues about how Neolithic people lived. These are some things that were found on the site.



1. What do the cattle and sheep bones tell us?

2. What does the presence of barley and wheat tell us?



3. What might the picks and shovels have been used for?

4. Flint and chert are similar rocks. Both are hard and sharp. Why might they be around a Neolithic village?

5. Limpets are snails that live in the sea. Why do you think limpet shells were found?

6. No weapons were found at Skara Brae. What might that tell us about how these people lived?



Evidence 4

House remains (primary source)

This photograph shows the remains of one of the houses at Skara Brae.



1. What material was used to build the house?

2. Why do you think this building material was used?



3. What do you think the square in the middle of the floor might have been and how was it used?

4. What furniture can you see in the house?



Evidence 5

Photographs (primary source)

This photograph shows some of the houses and passageways at Skara Brae.



1. Think about the weather and location of Skara Brae. Why do you think the houses and passageways were built under ground level?

2. The settlement was built near to the sea. Why might this have been important to the Neolithic people?



Evidence 6

Reconstruction (secondary source)

This is a reconstruction of what archaeologists think a house at Skara Brae might have looked like in Neolithic times.



Image from: Getty Images/ulstein bild Dtl.

1. What does the presence of animal furs tell us?

2. Archaeologists think that the roofs might have been made from driftwood and peat or animal skins. The houses found at Skara Brae did not have roofs. What do you think happened to the roofs of the houses at Skara Brae?



Drawing conclusions

Can you answer your question using the evidence about Skara Brae?

Yes No

☐ ☐

The answer to my question is:

If you couldn't answer your question, what further evidence do you think you would need? Use other sources, such as books and the internet to collect this evidence.

