

End of the Stone Age

The end of the Neolithic was an important time for human development. Humans had started to settle in permanent homes and change their ways of life.

Housing

Some Neolithic humans began to live in permanent settlements. These settlements were made up of several stone houses, buried mostly underground to protect them from the weather and animals.

Humans who lived in settlements began farming wheat and barley, which were easy to harvest. They kept domesticated animals, such as pigs, goats, cows and sheep. The animals provided them with lots of useful products. These people still hunted nearby animals and gathered berries and fruit for extra food.

Despite these changes, many humans were still nomadic and travelled the land, living in tents and never staying in one place for long. The nomadic people still got food and resources from hunting and gathering. They may have kept a few animals to carry their belongings, but did not begin farming or building settlements.



Knap of Howar, a Stone Age settlement in Scotland



Artist's impression of farmers working near Stonehenge, c2500 BC

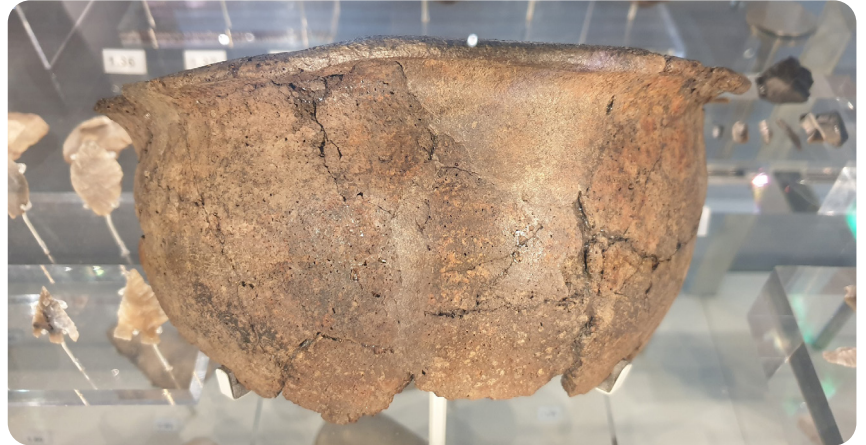


Inventions

Pottery was invented towards the end of the Neolithic. Known as Grooved Ware pottery, it was a type of pot with a flat bottom, straight sides and a grooved pattern carved around the top. This invention would have had a big impact on the lives of Neolithic people, making it easier to cook food, boil water and store objects. These pots may also have been used in religious or spiritual rituals.



Grooved Ware pottery piece



Lismore pot, a Stone Age bowl found in Buxton, England

At the end of the Neolithic, humans started to build monuments and stone circles, such as Stonehenge and the Avebury stone circle. Historians believe that these monuments may have been used as landmarks to help nomadic tribes to find their way around, or as sites for burials, religious or spiritual rituals.



Stonehenge



Jobs

People who lived in permanent settlements in the Neolithic had more time to practise one task and become skilled. This led to people having specific jobs. In earlier periods, people did everything they could to help the tribe.

Building was an important job. People needed homes to live in and these homes would need to be repaired if they got damaged, or made bigger if more people needed to move in or the family grew.

Farmers were responsible for growing crops to feed the people in the settlement. Some farmers tended to the animals owned by the settlement.

People who lived in settlements still needed to hunt animals for meat, skins and furs. These hunters provided food and resources for the tribe.

Some of the people at the settlement were responsible for crafting tools, baskets and pottery. These people were important because everybody in the settlement would use these items in their work and daily lives.

Arrival of bronze

The Neolithic ended when the Beaker folk arrived in Britain from Europe, c2500 BC. They brought new metalworking skills and made tools from a metal called bronze. Bronze was a stronger and lighter material than stone. Bronze tools and weapons were much sharper and more durable than stone tools. The introduction of bronze was a significant event and changed life in Britain forever.



Building at Skara Brae



stone hammer



bronze axe head

