ARCHAEOLOGY SKILLS LOG

A set of activities designed to deliver key skills for history and other subjects at key stage 2

It is designed to be printed out and used by each pupil as a personal log of their archaeological investigation of the Mesolithic and the site of Star Carr. It is best printed as an A5 booklet.

This resource can be used to support aspects of various curriculum subjects.

History

Aims

- understand historical concepts such as continuity and change, cause and consequence, similarity, difference and significance, and use them to make connections, draw contrasts, analyse trends, frame historically-valid questions and create their own structured accounts, including written narratives and analyses
- understand the methods of historical enquiry, including how evidence is used rigorously to make historical claims, and discern how and why contrasting arguments and interpretations of the past have been constructed
- gain historical perspective by placing their growing knowledge into different contexts, understanding the connections between local, regional, national and international history; between cultural, economic, military, political, religious and social history; and between short- and long-term timescales.

Subject content

They should note connections, contrasts and trends over time and develop the appropriate use of historical terms. They should regularly address and sometimes devise historically valid questions about change, cause, similarity and difference, and significance. They should construct informed responses that involve thoughtful selection and organisation of relevant historical information. They should understand how our knowledge of the past is constructed from a range of sources.

Be an Archaeologist.

Discover the Mesolithic.

You love the past and think history is really cool. You too want to find objects like those you've seen in the museum. You've decided you want to become an archaeologist. Here is one way of doing that.

The five steps to being an archaeologist

You are 16. You are studying A Level Archaeology, or reading about archaeology for fun while studying subjects like history or geography. You decide you want to be an archaeologist. When you finish your A Levels, you apply to university.

You are 19. You are at university, studying for a BA degree in archaeology. Once you have your degree, you could go and get a job as an archaeologist. But you decide to stay on in university.

You are 22. You are now studying for a higher degree, an MA in archaeology. At the end you choose whether to get a job excavating or in a museum, or stay at university to do research.

You are 25. Yes, you are are still at university. You are doing research for a doctorate degree, a PhD. You can now apply to be a lecturer working at the university.

You are 30, and a university lecturer. You are running your own research project and excavations, and are publishing books about your research.

At each step you will learn new things and greater archaeological skills. When you finally get to be an archaeologist you will be able to:

- know things about the past;
- identify the remains past people left behind;
- accurately record and measure the remains;
- analyse the remains to find out how people lived;
- create your own account of what life was like in the past.

YOUR ARCHAEOLOGICAL SKILLS LOG

Name	
School	
Class	

In this log, you will set down the skills you have learnt on the way to becoming an archaeologist.

Finding out
You will find out
- when was the Mesolithic?
- which plants grew then?
- which animals lived then?
- which sites belong to the Mesolithic?

Identifying objects
You will learn to identify
- flint tools
- animals and their tracks
- plants and trees, which are good and which to avoid

Recording objects
You will learn to do
- drawing
- measuring
- describing

Analyse how people lived
You will think about
- which plants were used for food
- what does an animal carcass provide
- what structures were used for?
- what evidence in missing?
- which reconstruction is most accurate

Write your report
You will
- describe the Mesolithic in your own words
- make your own drawing of a Mesolithic site

FIRST OF ALL – HERE ARE SOME THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW

The Mesolithic
The Mesolithic began when people adapted themselves to living in the new woodlands that grew in Britain after the Ice Age. The earliest carbon date is from a piece of worked antler at Thatcham in Berkshire at 11100 BP.

The Mesolithic ended when farming was brought to Britain from the continent. This began in the south east around 6050 BP and then took a few hundred years to spread elsewhere. The latest carbon date is from a seashell at the Scottish site of Cnoc Sligeach at 5800 BP.

Star Carr dates: worked antler 11030 BP, birch resin 10560 BP

Key archaeologists
Some of the archaeologists who have studied the Mesolithic are:

Sir Grahame Clark	began the scientific study of the Mesolithic in Britain and the main early excavator of Star Carr
Marek Zvelebil	studied how advanced Mesolithic people were
Sir Paul Mellars	excavated important sites on Oronsay in Scotland
Roger Jacobi	revised how we understand Mesolithic tools and social groups
Tim Schadla-Hall	excavated new remains in the Vale of Pickering
Nicky Milner	part of the group bringing new ideas to study the Mesolithic and modern excavator of Star Carr

Dating the past
Important note about how archaeologists date the past

We describe the date of the past in two ways. AD and BC when we talk about history. But for early prehistory we often us BP instead. BP stands for 'before present' and is a simple way of saying 'years ago'.

One of the most important ways that archaeologists use to date the past is called radio-carbon dating. Every living thing – animals and plants – breathes in carbon dioxide gas from the air. They take the carbon to build their bodies. Some of the carbon they take is unstable. It breaks down over time to become a different element, nitrogen, but keeps getting topped up every time the animal or plant breathes. When the animal or plant dies it stops taking in carbon and the amount then gets less and less as it breaks down. If we measure how much of this special type of carbon (we call it carbon 14) is left, we can measure how long ago the animal or plant died and so give a date to the archaeological remains such as wood or bone that come from the plant or animal.

FINDING OUT

Do your own research using books or the Internet.

What do we know about the Mesolithic?

What does *Mesolithic* mean?	
When was the Mesolithic?	
Which plants grew then?	
Which animals lived then?	
What are *microliths*?	
What was *Doggerland*?	

Which of these sites belong to the Mesolithic?

Site	Yes	No
Amesbury archer		
Aveline's Hole		
Bouldnor Cliff		
Boxgrove		
Garton Slack		
Goldcliff		
Grimes Graves		
Howick		
Maiden Castle		
Morton		
Oronsay		
Paviland Cave		
Star Carr		
Stonehenge		
Warren Field		
West Kennet		
Windmill Hill		

Can you name any other Mesolithic sites?

FACT CHECK 1

Environment
The Mesolithic period began after the end of the last Ice Age. The climate changed and became warmer over time. Much of Britain was forest and the kinds of trees that grew changed over time. Average temperatures today are 4º C in mid-winter and 16º C in mid-summer. Going back in time, the Mesolithic covered three phases of climate.

8300-6300 BP	warm winters (5º C), hot summers (17.5º C), oak, elm, hazel, alder, lime
10550-8300 BP	cold winters (-3º C), warmer summers (14º C), hazel, pine, birch, elm
11600-10500 BP	cold winters (-5º C), warm summers (12.5º C), birch, pine, willow, juniper

Geography
Britain was still joined to the rest of Europe at the end of the Ice Age. The link was to Germany and Denmark across the North Sea which was a low lying plain crossed by large rivers and lakes. It would have been a rich home for people with lots of plants and animals. We call this lost land Doggerland.

As the Arctic ice continued to melt, sea level kept on rising. Ireland was separated from Britain very early on. Doggerland was swamped by the sea by around 8400 BP, and Britain was then an island. 11,600 years ago you could walk across land from Yorkshire to Denmark. 8,000 years ago you had to go there by a small boat; not so easy!

Tsunami
Around 8100 BP, a large part of the continental shelf off the coast of Norway slumped down to the bottom of the Atlantic. This pushed a wall of water south and west, causing a massive tsunami or tidal wave to hit the north east coast of Britain. This was at least 4 metres high and travelled up to 50 miles inland.

Stone tools
Mesolithic people made very characteristic types of stone tools. They used small, shaped blades of flint called microliths to insert into wooden, bone or antler handles. They could do this in different ways to make arrowheads, knives, awls etc. Only Mesolithic people made microliths.

Key sites
Some of the key sites for studying the Mesolithic are:

Aveline's Hole, Somerset (10250 BP): a cemetery of at least 70 Mesolithic burials in a cave. The bodies and records of their excavation were mostly destroyed when Bristol Museum was bombed in 1940 in the 2nd World War.

Bouldnor Cliff, Isle of Wight (8000 BP): submerged by rising sea levels in prehistory and excavated by underwater archaeologists after flint tools were found in 1998 by a lobster cleaning out its burrow. What they found a site where log boats were being made, and the oldest string in Britain.

Goldcliff, Monmouthshire (7600-6800 BP): a set of Mesolithic footprints preserved in the mud of the River Severn estuary where people fished for eels as well as hunted woodland animals. The footprints include those of children as young as 5.

Morton, Fife: excavated (9000-5900 BP): a series of repeated seasonal camps for finding and working flint, as well as sea fishing for cod, and collecting shellfish.

Nab Head, Pembrokeshire (10350 BP): a cliff top site where a lot of shale beads were being made, nearly 700 of them were found at the site.

Oronsay, Hebrides (6500-5800 BP): a series of shell middens on an island, possibly visited at specific times of the year from the mainland. The shellfish may have been eaten, or may have been used as bait for sea fishing.

Staosnaig, Hebrides (9100-7900 BP): a site with pits for baking hazelnuts, so many being collected that they may have reduced the number of hazel trees growing locally.

Star Carr, Yorkshire (11000-10500 BP): the first major Mesolithic site excavated in Britain, with organic remains preserved in the peat filling in an old lake. One of the earliest Mesolithic sites in Britain, with a timber platform along the lake edge and houses on the dry land. Where hundreds of antler harpoons were made, and red deer antler headdresses were made, used and discarded.

Warren Field, Aberdeenshire (9750 BP): an alignment of holes that once contained wooden posts. Thought to be Neolithic when excavated, now dated to the Mesolithic. Analysis using computers has shown this may be a sophisticated device for measuring the phases of the moon and how these change, which enabled accurate dating of months during the year.

DEBATING POINTS 1

When the Mesolithic began
Archaeologists have always said that the Mesolithic began at the end of the last Ice Age. But, the earliest Mesolithic sites seem to date slightly after this. We think that it took a few hundred years for the forests to grow again and for people to adapt to this by becoming Mesolithic. The earliest Mesolithic sites so for dated are around 11200 BP.

How the Mesolithic ended
The Mesolithic was replaced by the Neolithic. Neolithic people were farmers, keeping domestic animals and growing crops. We now know the Neolithic began at 6000 BP in the south east of Britain and then spread to the far north by 5800 BP. Archaeologists argue about whether the Neolithic was brought to Britain by new settlers from the continent, or whether the native inhabitants copied the new lifestyle.

Britain became an island
We are not certain exactly when Doggerland disappeared under the sea. One recent study suggests that the land connection still existed at 9000 BP but that a sea channel had split Doggerland in two by 8500 BP and that it had mostly disappeared by 8000 BP. Others suggest that it was finally washed away in a giant tsunami that we know struck the North Sea at 8100 BP. To make it more complicated, there was a huge flood of meltwater from North America at 8300 which suddenly increased sea levels across Britain and north-west Europe.

What microliths were used for
Microliths are very small. Late Mesolithic ones are smaller than Early Mesolithic ones. They were made in a wide variety of shapes like triangles, crescents, rods etc. Only a few have been found still attached to their handles, as at Loshult in Denmark. This was an arrowhead with one microlith at the tip and others along one side, very efficient for piercing and then slicing into an animal's hide. We can look at the edges of the microliths under a microscope and see how they were worn down by different uses. In this way, we know that not all of them were used in arrowheads. They could also be used in knives, or awls for boring into hard materials.

IDENTIFYING OBJECTS

Flint tools
The commonest finds on prehistoric archaeological sites are the stone tools that people leave behind. Stone tools are essential for a range of tasks. They can be used as arrowheads, knives, axeheads and awls for making holes. They can be made into scrapers for scraping animals skins or smoothing arrowshafts. A tool called a graver was used for engraving and cutting hard wood or antler. The shapes of tools and types used change over time. Some types only occur in one period and can be used to dates sites they are found on. Flints.png

Take the two sheets of mixed flints, print on card and cut out each flint in its rectangular box. These can then be given to pupils to sort by period or you can ask them "which of these flint artefacts are Mesolithic?". Flints mixed 01.pdf and Flints mixed 02.pdf

Animal bones
Animals were very important for people in the past. They gave them meat, leather from their hides and their bones could be used to make tools. The bones of the animals are often left behind for archaeologists to find.

Deer-bones.pdf is a sheet of bones as they might be placed on a tray in laboratory after excavation for the bone specialist to identify.

Using Red-deer.pdf, can the pupils identify which bone belongs where on the skeleton of the red deer?

Two of the bones are broken. Can you still find which part of the bone on the skeleton they are? Red_deer.pdf and Deer-bones.pdf

Trees and leaves
Wood from trees is one of the most important materials used by people in the past. Different trees yield different kinds of wood which can be used for different purposes. Archaeologists should get to know how to recognise the different trees used in the past.

The first trees to grow in Britain early after the last ice age, 11,000 years ago, were birch, pine, willow, aspen, rowan, hawthorn and juniper. By 8,000 years ago, other trees had taken over and become commoner: oak, alder, elm, hazel and lime.

Can you identify these leaves? Leaves_pupils.pdf, Leaves_answers.pdf

FACT CHECK 2

Hunting and gathering
Mesolithic people lived by hunting wild animals and gathering wild plants to give them all the food and materials they needed for their food, clothing and shelter. They did not keep farm animals, nor did they sow farm crops. They had no sheep, no wheat, barley, beans, peas or potatoes. They would hunt using bows and arrows or spears. They would trap small animals and fish. They would collect shellfish, nuts, berries and leaves, and dig up the roots of plants.

Stone tools
The most important tools they used were made out of stone. The best stone to use was flint, collected from the surface of the ground on the chalk on the Yorkshire Wolds, or from the beach along the coast where the ice sheets had scraped up flint and dumped it on the ground when it had melted at the end of the Ice Age. Making tools out of flint is known as 'knapping'. They made axeheads and smaller tools for cutting, scraping, engraving and for fitting into wooden shafts as the tips of arrows. They could use the flint to cut and shape wood, bone and antler to make more tools such as antler spearheads.

Survival of evidence
Not everything they used and made survives for archaeologists to find. Some materials like stone are hard and last a long time. Flint is one of these and survives very well. Other materials come from plants and animals, such as bone, antler, wood or the fibres and string made from the stems of plants. We call these 'organic' materials. Over time, they will rot away and disappear. They will only survive in Britain if they are kept underwater or in very wet soil.

Examples of organic objects made in the Mesolithic would be the people's clothes and shoes, their canoes or coracles and paddles, bags, boxes and buckets, hand tools, fish traps, fences and the walls, roofs and floor coverings of their houses.

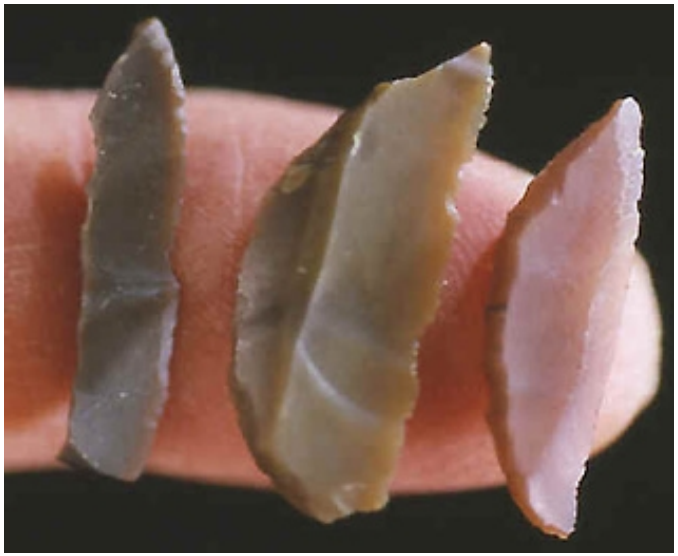
What survived at Star Carr was the artefacts deposited in the lake or those in the lake-edge swamp that were later covered with peat. The finds included animal bones, barbed antler points, other bone or antler tools, some rolls of birch bark and a unique wooden platform made of carefully cut planks laid along the lake edge.

RECORDING OBJECTS

When archaeologists draw their finds, they try to be as accurate as possible. They will draw at least the top and side views of an object. They will measure the length, width and thickness. They will describe the shape, colour, texture and any markings or features they can see on the surface of the object.

Look at the photographs and take one object to draw, measure and describe.

Hint: the photograph is 1.4 times smaller than real life.



Hint: measure the finger in the photo, then your teacher's finger to see how much bigger the photo is. If 3 times, measure the flint and divide by 3 for the real size.

Recording sheet

Site	**Object**
Describe	**Measure** Length Width
Draw	

ANALYSE HOW PEOPLE LIVED

You have excavated the site of Star Carr. Can you answer the following questions? Do your own research to find out the answers.

Plants and people
Which plants could have been used for food, which for medicine and which for coverings or making objects? Also, which were poisonous?

There are three Plants_and_people.pdf files.

- Plants_and_people_pupils.pdf is the blank worksheet for the pupils.
- Plants_and_people_teachers.pdf contains the names of the plants.
- Plants_and_people_answers.pdf has some answers to check against the pupils' work.

Use Star_Carr_plants.pdf as a source of information for the pupils to research from.

House and home
How does a Mesolithic house differ from modern houses?

Most Mesolithic houses that have been excavated are roughly circular or oval and on average measure 5 or 6 metres across by 4 metres wide. Large wooden branches or small tree trunks were dug into the ground and the tops either bent over or slanted inwards and tied at the top. Wooden branches would be woven through to create a frame on which a covering would be added of rushes, leafy branches, birch bark or animal skins.

House_plans.pdf shows some Mesolithic house plans as excavated by archaeologists. When the archaeologists excavate a house like this, all they find is the dark holes in the earth where the wooden posts were set that made the walls of the house, and sometimes a burnt area in the middle where the hearth was. The floor would be a dip in the ground where people had walked to and fro to wear away the earth. The inside may be dark with the decayed remains of a floor or birch bark or rush mats.

Archaeologists experiment by building houses based on the excavated plans to see what they could look like and how big they are inside. They differ in how to build the top of the house. This could go up to a point or be rounded off as a dome.

Compare your house with the Mesolithic. Answer the following questions about your house.

What is your house like?

What shape are the walls?	straight sloping round or other -
What shape is the roof?	flat sloping or other -
What is the roof covered with?	
How many storeys are there?	
What shape are the windows?	
How many outside doors are there?	
How many rooms are there?	
What are the rooms called?	
What heating does the house have?	

What makes your house into a home?

Who lives in the house?	just you your family strangers
What furniture is there?	beds sofas chairs tables shelves Anything else?
What gadgets are there?	lights cooker washing machine TV radio Anything else?
What do you do at home? (Think of everything you do)	
Do you have a garden? What is in it?	

Look at the images of Mesolithic houses (House_reconstructions.pdf).

Now answer the same questions about the Mesolithic house and home. See how different it is from yours.

Where do you think you would do all the things you now do in your own house?

Would you like to live in a Mesolithic house?

How might it be better than your home?

How might it be worse than your home?

The Star Carr antler headdress

What was it used for? How did Mesolithic people think about animals?

The worksheet Headdress_pupils.pdf is based on one very important (and famous) type of object from Star Carr: the headdresses made from deer skulls. You can use this worksheet to imagine yourself in the Mesolithic, when people had very different relationships with animals than we do today. It also encourages you to think about how archaeologists sometimes do not know for sure what an object was used for.

There are two documents:

- Headdress_pupils.pdf – the worksheet for pupils to fill in;
- Headdress_teachers.pdf – the same but with answers and suggested answers filled in.

There are many other possible ways in which the headdresses may have been used. Some of these are unlikely but make a good story. In the novel *The Gathering Night* by Margaret Elphinstone (2009) they are worn by a criminal to make him the object of a chase. He is hunted by the tribe as though he were a deer. If he escapes, he goes free. If not, he is killed. Pupils could be encouraged to come up with their own stories about the headdresses.

The Star Carr pendant

One of the exciting finds made in the 2015 excavation at Star Carr was of a decorated shale pendant. Finding art on objects from the Mesolithic is vary rare.

The worksheets Pendant_teacher.pdf and Pendant_pupils.pdf are based on the find. You can use this worksheet to teach pupils how archaeologists might analyse the decoration on the pendant. They can also begin to learn about how we use symbols at the present day, as well as making a pendant for themselves.

There are two documents:

- Pendant_teacher.doc;
- Pendant_pupils.doc.

Being in the Mesolithic

This is a painting by artist Dominic Andrews of what a Mesolithic hunters' camp might have looked like.

Which of these do you think would survive over 11,000 years for archaeologists to find?

People	
Animal skins	
Clothing	
Shoes	
House	
Fire	
Arrows	
Quiver for the arrows	
Poles for hanging meat and skins	
Stone tools used as arrowheads, knives and for scraping the skins	

Refer to the list of what was found by archaeologists at Star Carr, What_Clark_found.pdf. What evidence of people's lives do you think is missing from the excavation?

Think of the solid objects and the people:

- structures: houses, house furniture like beds, mats, roof covering, hearths;
- tools and equipment: wooden tools, baskets, leather bags, boats;
- people: clothing, shoes, the people themselves as burials, their food.

Think of things that are not solid objects, things we see, hear and experience.

- sounds: people's speech, wind in the trees, birds calling;
- smells: the woody smoke of the fire, the leather clothes;
- touch: the feel of leather clothing;
- sights: the colours of the natural world and decoration on clothes, the sun glinting on the lake, birds flying overhead:
- tastes: smoked and dried meats, dried fish, herbs.

Write a short story or account of what you might see, hear and do if you were at the hunters' camp.

FACT CHECK 3

The Star Carr excavation
The site was found in 1948 by John Moore, a local Scarborough archaeologist. Sir Grahame Clark excavated Star Carr from 1949 to 1951. He dug trenches that covered an area of around 17 metres long by 15 metres wide. In these, he found 17,000 flint artefacts of types only made in the Mesolithic.

What made Star Carr special was that the site was preserved under waterlogged peat, which preserves organic materials like wood, bone and antler. Clark was also special since he was careful to note the plant and animal remains in order to understand the environment in which people were living.

Among the tools that Clark found were beads and pendants, a possible wooden paddle, 21 antler headdresses, 191 barbed antler or bone spear-points and other tools made of bone or antler.

More modern excavations have taken place since. The most recent being published in 2017.

Plants and animals found at Star Carr
Plants found at Star Carr include:

Lake water plants
mare's tail, pondweed, stonewort, water lily (white), water lily (yellow);

Lake-side swamp plants & trees
bittersweet, bog bean, club rush, cowbane, deergrass, gipsywort, grey willow, horsetail, marsh willowherb, meadow rue, meadowsweet, reed, sedge, spearwort, spike rush, water dock;

Open ground plants
bistort, black nightshade, chickweed, crowberry, goosefoot, hemp nettle, knotgrass, nettle, ragwort, redshank, sorrel, St. John's wort;

Woodland plants & trees
aspen, birch, hawthorn, hedge woundwort, moss, pine, red campion, rowan.

Animals found at Star Carr include:

Mammals
badger, beavers, elk, fox, hare, hedgehog, pine marten, red deer, roe deer, wild boar, wild cattle, wolf.

There was also the earliest domestic dog yet to be found in Britain.

Birds
buzzard, crane, great crested grebe, lapwing, little grebe, pintail duck, red-breasted merganser, red-throated diver, white stork.

The Mesolithic way of life
Mesolithic people depended on their environment for everything. That environment was the early post-glacial landscape of open birch forest. Their food came from its wild plants and animals. Their drinking water came from lakes and rivers. They made their houses out of wooden posts and natural coverings like animal hides, rushes or birch bark. Their clothes would mostly be made out of animal skins, carefully cut and sewn. For containers, they could used sew birch or weave vegetable fibres or branches.

Shamans and the spirit world
A shaman is a kind of 'priest' who can speak with the spirit world on behalf of people to help in hunting, keep nature kind towards humans or to cure illnesses.

Some hunter-gatherers in more modern times would believe that the animals and humans were one in a mythical past, united as as special kind of human-animal. Only later did humans and animals split apart to become different.

Shamans would go into a trance and have visions, and return to the original state of human-animal to talk to the spirits of nature. Some would have a favourite animal spirit they became or talked to. Sometimes when children became adults, they would get an animal spirit helper who would guide them in their life.

Antler frontlets
Around 30 headdresses made from the tops of deer skulls have so far been found at Star Carr. This is more than anywhere else in the world. Only 6?? others have been found anywhere else, all in Germany.

We know that some hunters in Siberia had shamans who dressed as animals, including wearing antler headddresses, to go and visit the spirit world. The animals are afraid of people so people need to pretend to be animals to get to talk to them.

We also know that some hunters wore animal skins to hide their smell and to get close to the animals they were hunting. The antlers would then be a disguise to fool the deer seeing the antlers among the trees instead of the hunters.

There are other possible explanations for the headdresses. For example:

- they were worn by chiefs to show their status;
- children wore them in a ceremony to make the adults;
- warriors wore them to look fierce to their enemies.

DEBATING POINTS 2

Mobile hunter-gatherers
Most archaeologists have assumed that Mesolithic groups would have moved around the landscape in search of food and other resources from season to season, without any permanent settlements. There have been many disagreements about whether particular excavated sites were occupied at certain seasons of the year. However, a few modern hunter-gatherers do live in one place all year round. Some archaeologists therefore wonder whether the woodlands and coasts of northern Europe and Britain might have been rich enough in food and resources to support permanent settlements.

Gender roles
There are many assumptions made about the roles of men and women in the Mesolithic. Men are commonly shown as the hunters and tool-makers. Women are shown gathering plant foods, scraping hides, cooking food and looking after children. Ethnographies of hunter-gathers show that men do most of the big-game hunting but that women will hunt and trap a lot of the smaller game. Men will help gather plant foods and cook food. While women nurse babies for long periods, on average around 3 years, men will often look after the children after weaning. There is no reason why women could not make tools as much as men.

Peaceful or violent?
There are very few Mesolithic burials in Britain. These are commoner on the continent. Some of the burials show that some people were shot with arrows, that others were hit on the head (presumably by wooden clubs or axes). There is little evidence for warfare between groups, but there was some violence between individuals. The major exception is the site at Ofnet in Germany where 34 decapitated skulls were placed in a cave. These were mostly women and children with a few men. This is often claimed as evidence of a massacre, but one modern study showed only up to 8 skulls with evidence of violence. Others disagree and say more skulls have evidence. The only complete surviving Mesolithic burial from Britain is Cheddar Man, who was hit on the side of the head. Whether this caused his death is not certain.

Rousseau or Hobbes?
Two famous philosophers had very different views of human nature and the prehistoric past. Jean-Jacques Rousseau thought people were naturally kind and cooperative and living close to nature in a king of Garden of Eden. Thomas Hobbes thought that people were naturally vicious and selfish and would have lived like brutish animals. Archaeologists often saw the Mesolithic as either one or the other.

The man who first described the Mesolithic, Hodder Westropp in 1872, saw Mesolithic people as “scarcely less savage than the beasts of the forest”, “living in a wild and uncultivated state” p 8, being “stationary and unprogressive”, and that “his intellect was dormant”.

On the other hand, Chris Tilley wrote in 1996:

“I am politically old-fashioned enough even to want to describe it as a kind of Garden of Eden before the fall. These were a series of communities in which ownership of land and resources was common or collective, sharing was generalized and no one is likely to have gone hungry.”

More recent archaeologists have been more balanced. Bill Finlayson in 1998 wrote that we should “not be fooled by ideas of a people living in a hazy dream time at one with nature”, and that though their way of life was a great success, it could not support the levels of population or social complexities of our own civilisation.

Caroline Wickham-Jones wrote in 2010 that is was a dangerous trap to assume hunter-gatherers lived in a Garden of Eden. There was evidence of violence (both neighbourly and domestic). Mesolithic people were “not happy hippies living in harmony with their environment”. But she also wrote that we can learn lessons from from the period about the intertwining of people and the world they live in, using knowledge of the past the think in different ways and open up new possibilities in the present about our relationship with nature.

TELLING OTHERS ABOUT STAR CARR

Excavation is only the beginning of archaeology. You now have to tell everyone what you have found and what the site might have looked like.

Here are some tasks you can do to make yourself a complete archaeologist.

1. Imagine you are the archaeologist who excavated Star Carr. Write your own report on what was found during your excavations. You can write this using the following questions:

- what is the name of the site?
- who found it?
- where is the site, when did you dig it, how much of it did you dig? (draw a map to show where the site is)
- what did you find? (draw some of the finds)
- what do the finds tell us about how people lived?

2. Imagine you are a museum curator, create a classroom wall display about the Mesolithic.

- Write your own description of what life during the Mesolithic might have been like for the visitors to the museum.

- Find images or make your own drawings of Mesolithic objects and sites.

- Do your own drawing of what Star Carr might have looked like. You can do this on a separate sheet or as part of the display.

- It is OK to come up with more than one idea of what it might have been like. Display alternative descriptions or drawings of Mesolithic life and ask people to say which they like best.

Congratulations! You have become a young archaeologist. What do you do next? If you are still interested in archaeology, you could ask your parents about joining the Young Archaeologists' Club – http://www.yac-uk.org/.

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