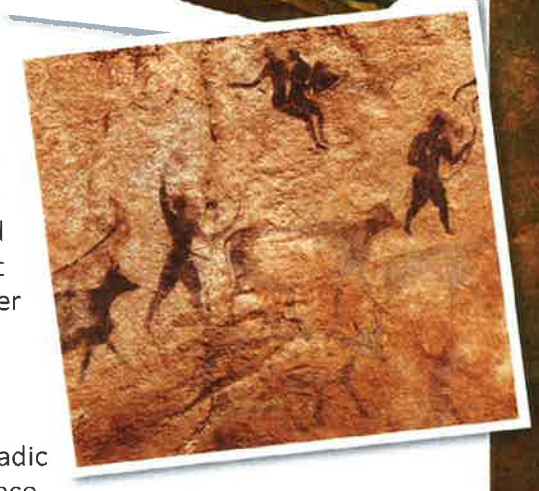
The Palaeolithic (Old Stone Age)
450,000–10,000 BC

The Palaeolithic, or Old Stone Age, was a period in history when humans began to use simple stone tools, produce artwork and take part in spiritual and religious activities. It was a time when many great mammals such as woolly mammoths, sabre-toothed cats and woolly rhinoceroses walked the Earth. A lot of the land was covered in ice during the Palaeolithic.





Tools

Palaeolithic humans often used tools made out of wood and bone, but they also started to use flaky stones, such as flint, to create tools. Harder stones were used to cut away at the flaky stones to form sharp tools such as tips for spears or hand axes. Thousands of these tools have been found in southern Britain, and many more have been found across the world. One historian has suggested that humans from this time used flint hand axes as 'killer frisbees' to stun animals.

Settlements

During the Palaeolithic, humans were mainly nomadic hunter-gatherers. This means they moved from place to place, hunting and gathering food along the way, rather than living in one location. Keeping moving meant they could avoid cold weather and follow herds of animals to hunt. People lived and worked in groups, often living in caves or makeshift wooden huts for a short time. Towards the end of the Palaeolithic, people finally began to settle down and live in one place.

Monuments and art

Humans first began to create artwork in the Palaeolithic. Patterns on elephant bones, jewellery, rock art, figurines and cave paintings were all popular, especially towards the end of the period. Bracelets, beads and rock art from this time have all been found at Blombos Cave, in South Africa. Some historians believe Palaeolithic humans created cave paintings as a kind of magic to make sure they would have a successful hunt.

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The Mesolithic (Middle Stone Age)

10,000–4500 BC

The Mesolithic, or Middle Stone Age, was a transitional period in history between the Palaeolithic and the Neolithic. During this age, ice that covered the land began to melt, and the climate became warmer. This meant that people had to adapt to hotter, damper environments, leaving them little time for development.



Tools

Mesolithic humans made some changes to the stone tools Palaeolithic humans used. They experimented with the size of the tools, creating very small points called microliths that could be used as arrow points. Such points have been found by archaeologists in the cave of La Tourasse, in France. Larger, flatter tools were also created such as harpoons. As nets, boats and canoes began to be constructed, fishing became easier.

Settlements

During the Mesolithic, humans started to live in one place for longer periods of time so they could experiment with farming the land, growing crops such as wild grains. Humans are also believed to have tamed dogs during this period. There were still nomadic hunter-gatherers, especially in areas where the land was less suited to farming. In 2000, archaeologists discovered a Mesolithic hut at Howick, Northumberland that had holes for wooden posts to fit into, suggesting the hut was built to last and to be lived in for a long time.

Monuments and art

Pottery was first created during the Mesolithic. A typical pot would have a point or knob at the base and a flared rim. Painted pebbles were common and cave walls continued to be painted. Some Nachikufan cave walls in Zambia were decorated with red and black 'pencils'.

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The Neolithic (New Stone Age)
4500–2300 BC

The Neolithic, or New Stone Age, was a period of change for humans across the world. Farming and keeping animals became a normal part of life, so people began to stay in one place even more than they had before. Australian archaeologist, Vere Gordon Childe, describes these changes as the 'Neolithic Revolution'.





Tools

Neolithic humans began to polish and grind hard rocks to make tools necessary for farming. They made blades to cut down crops and stones on which to grind grains. More food became available to share out as people became more skilled at farming and keeping animals. Tools for ploughing the land, cutting down trees and weaving were also created.

Settlements

During the Neolithic, more and more humans started to permanently live in one place so they could farm the land and keep animals. People lived in small tribes and families lived together in circular houses made of mudbrick coated in plaster. Mats and animal skins were put on the ground on which people slept. At Çatalhöyük, in Turkey, houses were plastered and painted with elaborate scenes of humans and animals. In Europe, longhouses built from wattle and daub were constructed.

Monuments and art

Neolithic people in the British Isles started to build long barrows for their dead and impressive ceremonial monuments such as henges and cursus. Stonehenge, near Salisbury, England, is made up of a ring of massive standing stones. It took 1500 years to build and involved a great deal of effort. It is believed to have been a place of worship, a burial ground and a giant clock! Pottery during the Neolithic was mostly painted in two or more colours with geometric and animal designs. Staying in one place meant there was more time for crafts like pottery and weaving.

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The Bronze Age

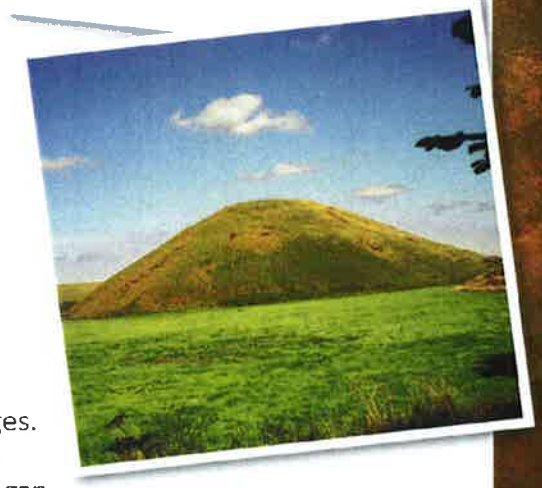
2300–700 BC

During the Bronze Age, people started to make tools and weapons from bronze. Writing systems, such as Egyptian hieroglyphs, were created. Governments were formed and medicine and religion advanced. In Britain, people from mainland Europe crossed the sea in long, wooden boats to settle and trade.



Tools

Bronze was a harder and more durable metal than had ever been created before, so better tools and weapons could be crafted. Bronze daggers, knives, swords, spearheads, axe heads and shields were created. Chariots and armour were provided for warriors. Oxen and horses pulled carts with wheels to transport goods. Fine jewellery and luxury items were made from gold. People also developed tools that allowed them to weave wool into cloth.



Settlements

Most Bronze Age people lived on farms or in villages. As bronze tools had made farming easier, farmers expanded their fields. This meant communities began to compete with each other for land, and fighting broke out. This led to some of the first defensive settlements as people built large fences around their villages to keep enemies out. Roundhouses were common in the Bronze Age. They had a central fireplace and a roof made out of animal skins, thatch or turf. In western Asia, settlements were very different; there were cities with tens of thousands of people living there!

Monuments and art

Advanced pottery making became possible when the potter's wheel was invented in western Asia. Around 2500 BC, the 'Beaker folk' sailed to Britain from mainland Europe. When they arrived, they shared their knowledge about pottery, metals and burials. Round barrows were often used for burials. The Beaker folk held religious ceremonies at stone circles, and they helped to develop Stonehenge. They also helped to create Silbury Hill, the largest artificial mound in Europe.

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The Iron Age

700 BC–AD 43

During the Iron Age, people began using iron to produce tools and weapons. It was a cheaper, stronger and lighter metal than bronze, and it could be shaped into finer and sharper objects. Trading between Britain and mainland Europe increased. Many Celtic people settled in Britain, and the Britons followed their way of life by feasting and creating music and poetry. However, Iron Age Britain was also a violent place. People lived in tribes and fought rival tribes for land and goods. The Roman conquest in AD 43 marked the end of the Iron Age.



Tools

Furnaces were created that were hot enough to melt iron ore to make iron. Blacksmiths could hammer iron to make tools and weapons. The iron-tipped ploughshare made it possible to plough heavy clay soils. Wooden bowls, dishes and plates were made using the pole lathe. The rotary quern was an Iron Age invention that was used to grind grain into flour.

Settlements

Most people worked and lived on farms in roundhouses, but by the end of the Iron Age, some larger fortified towns appeared. During times of war, many people lived in hill forts. Hill forts were built on a hill with one or more lines of earthworks, ditches and defensive walls. Warriors defended the people inside from enemy attacks. People in Scotland during the Iron Age lived in brochs (circular stone towers) and wheelhouses (stone roundhouses).

Monuments and art

Different regions in Britain developed different styles of pottery. The Celts produced fine metalwork with swirling patterns. Tribe chiefs would show their power by wearing gold and bronze accessories. Priests, known as druids, led open-air religious ceremonies. To make the gods happy, they sacrificed animals and humans, or made offerings of precious items such as swords.

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