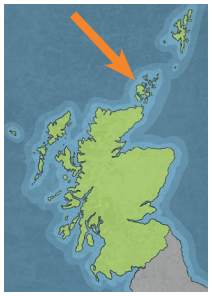
Skara Brae

Orkney and the Neoliths

Skara Brae is a Neolithic village site on Orkney. Orkney is the name given to a collection of islands, 10 miles off the coast of north-east Scotland.

Orkney is made up of over 70 islands but only 20 of them are occupied! The largest of these islands, where Skara Brae is located, is known as Mainland. Skara Brae is a UNESCO World Heritage Site: that means it is thought to be of great importance in history.



The Neolithic period was known as the 'New Stone Age' because it came along at the very end of the Stone Age. The Neolithic Era began in around 15,200BC in some Middle Eastern countries and between 4500BC and 2000BC in other parts of the world.

It was a time where people lived very simple lives. The Neoliths were the first ever humans to use farming to support themselves: they grew crops and kept animals. as metal tools had not been created yet!

Discovering Skara Brae

In 1850, Orkney was battered by an unusually fierce storm. The strong winds and the high tides pulled away the grass from a large hill, leaving the lines of some stone buildings that had never been noticed before. William Watt, the local laird (landowner), was interested and organised a study of the site. In spite of the remains of four ancient houses being discovered, in 1868, work at Skara Brae stopped.



The settlement was left alone until 1925, when another storm damaged some of the buildings that had been found. A sea-wall was built to preserve these remains, but while it was being built, even more ancient buildings were uncovered.

Neolithic Houses

At Skara Brae, we can see the remains of eight Neolithic houses, linked together by low, covered passages. For over 4000 years, the settlement was covered over with sand. The sand protected the houses from the weather so that the buildings and their contents have been incredibly well preserved.

visit twinkl.scot

The walls of the buildings are still standing, and passageways are still roofed with the stone slabs they were built with. Each house shares roughly the same design. There was a large square room, with a firepit in the middle. There was a bed on each side of the room and there was a shelved cupboard on the wall opposite the doorway.

Many artefacts (old objects) were found at Skara Brae, such as mace heads, axe heads and other weapon heads, figurines, jewellery and paintings. Skara Brae even had its own logo! These finds have been useful for archaeologists to learn about the Neolith people.

There was also evidence that the Neoliths burned dried seaweed to provide warmth. Fish bones and shells were found in Skara Brae's midden (a tip or dump for rubbish), which showed that the Neoliths supplemented their diet with seafood.

What Can We See There?



The village is in a well-preserved condition, so many people choose to visit it. You can walk around the houses and view the original features that people built thousands of years ago. You can even see early forms of the toilet! There is now a visitor centre where you can see some of the objects found during the excavations. You can visit a replica (model) house so that you can get a better idea of what Neolithic life was like.

The Future of Skara Brae

The very thing that allowed people to discover Skara Brae is the same thing that is a risk to it. The settlement is threatened by the sand and sea. It is much closer to the sea now than it was originally, as the sea has washed the land away. Steps are being taken to preserve the site and hopefully it will last thousands more years.

visit twinkl.scot

Skara Brae Questions

1. What is the Neolithic period known as?

2. Complete the table to show which event happened in each year.

Year	Event
1850	
1868	
1925	

3. Find and copy a phrase that shows you that the Skara Brae site is important.

4. What evidence is there in the text that the Neoliths lived 'simple lives'?

5. Why didn't Neoliths use metal tools?

6. Find and copy the word that means 'old objects'.

7. Why might people think that Skara Brae is so special?

8. What threatens Skara Brae today?

9. Do you think it is important to keep places like Skara Brae safe?