

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.