

Where can I discover more?

As a hunter-gatherer society who would have lived in temporary dwellings, the Mesolithic differs from later periods by having no substantial monuments and little surviving today to gives an insight into what the landscape may have looked like at the time. In Surrey however, a small museum – under private ownership and available by appointment for group visits or on the occasional open day – was erected in Abinger over the site where Mesolithic dwellings were excavated in 1950 by L.S.B. Leakey.



Abinger Pit Dwelling Museum



Some learning sources on Mesolithic Surrey

Bird, J and D G Bird (1987) *The Archaeology of Surrey to 1540*
Cotton, J et al (2004) *Aspects of Archaeology and History in Surrey*
Hunt, R (2002) *Hidden Depths: an Archaeological Exploration of Surrey's Past*

Other suggested resources

Canterbury Christ Church University's **Stone Age teaching resource for Key Stage 2** (canterbury.ac.uk/arts-and-humanities/school-of-humanities/docs/Stone-Age-for-Key-Stage-2-Teaching-resource.pdf)

Schools Prehistory & Archaeology (schoolsprehistory.co.uk)

Ancient Craft Three Age Experience (ancientcraft.co.uk)

Portable Antiquities Scheme (finds.org.uk)

Exploring Surrey's Past (exploringsurreyspast.org.uk)

In addition to the Society's own handling collections and teaching resources, local loans boxes are available from many of the county's museums, as well as Surrey History Centre.

Local prehistoric exhibits can be viewed at museums including Chertsey, Guildford, Bourne Hall and East Surrey. Other sites worth a visit include Butser Ancient Farm, where there are reconstructions of Mesolithic dwellings on display.



“Promoting the study of archaeology and antiquities...and any other matters or things relating to the pre-history and history of the County.”

*- Articles of Association
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Mesolithic Surrey



Explore your local heritage and discover more about the origins of Surrey's earliest settlements



9300 BC

~9000BC Earliest post-glacial settlement in England established at the lakeside settlement at Star Carr, Yorkshire

EARLY MESOLITHIC

~8400-8200BC Largest Mesolithic cemetery in Britain at Aveline's Hole cave in Somerset

~8000BC Farming developed in the Near East (though would not reach Britain until the Neolithic period)

7000 BC

~7800BC Coastal site at Howick, Northumberland, which included evidence for a 'tepee'-like house and seafood-based diet

~6500BC Britain separated from the Continent and finally becomes an island

LATE MESOLITHIC

~5500BC Doggerland finally disappears, having gradually flooded as a result of sea level rise

~5000BC Earliest copper objects begin to be made in Europe

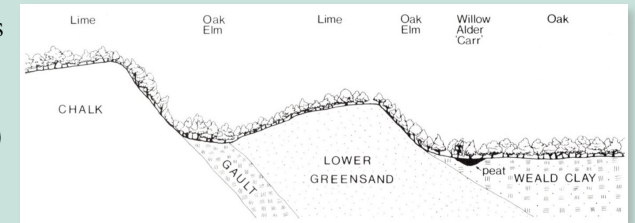
~4800BC Possible experimentation with cereal cultivation suggested from Cothill Fen, Oxfordshire

4300 BC

The Mesolithic period c. 9300 - 4300 BC

The vast period of the 'Stone Age' is often broadly generalised in terms of the key developments which took place, though many concepts have since evolved over the years. The Meso- ('Middle') era is one which is most commonly characterised as the period of nomadic groups living off of what they could hunt or gather seasonally, during a period which shifted to covered woodland as a result of rising sea levels and climatic warming.

As scientific techniques develop over the years, new advances are able to be applied towards the study of the Mesolithic, even when not directly archaeological sciences. One such example is the role that geomorphology (or landform studies) and pedology (soil science) can play in informing prehistoric environments. In the case of the Late Mesolithic, southern England is known from pollen data to have been mixed deciduous woodland where tree types varied with different soils.



Distribution diagram of tree types in the mixed deciduous forest of the Later Mesolithic (R I Macphail and R G Scaife)



Tranchet axe recovered from fieldwalking © Surrey County Council

Although not found in context, flints identified through fieldwalking and surface collection can indicate areas of activity and supplement the better stratified evidence uncovered in excavations. When found *in situ* in features such as pits, flint assemblages can even be dated if charcoal or botanical remains such as charred hazelnuts are radiocarbon-dated, and occasionally use-wear analysis is carried out on the lithics, closely examining the edges and working surfaces to determine their original function.

**North Park Farm, Bletchingley
c. 4500 BC**

The site was identified from the recovery of characteristic flintwork in a sand quarry which indicated that it was visited repeatedly over several millennia, but most regularly during the Late Mesolithic. It lies on slightly elevated ground at the watershed of major rivers and migrating deer herds are likely to have been an important factor in its usage. The viewpoint looks north across the open grassland or heath of the Lower Greensand to the wooded North Downs. (Drawing by Giles Pattison © Surrey County Archaeological Unit)

