

The principal building was identified from a series of postholes and stakeholes, but the other structures are conjectural, reflecting the wider distribution of pottery and flintwork from the excavation of almost 20Ha on these sites. The rectangular building is the only one of this period known from the Surrey area, and they are very rare nationally. Their exact purpose is uncertain. Agriculture was not yet based around permanent farms and fields, and it is possible that the landscape of this Thames terrace was less open than the image suggests. The viewpoint looks approximately west. (Drawing by Giles Pattison © Surrey County Archaeological Unit)

**Ashford Prison/Hengrove Farm, Staines  
c. 3500 BC**



Neolithic pit, Betchworth  
Grooved Ware pits at base of

Although the 'New Stone Age' is traditionally seen as the period when farming was introduced to Britain, the vast timeframe of early prehistory can make it easy to generalise on the many – often complex – developments which took place. Rather than too much focus on 'settling down' however, emphasis has shifted to the real change being a new world view comprising notions of time, descent, origin, ancestry, community, nature, etc. With more scientific advances being developed every day, special techniques can be applied to local research, leading to new insights and discoveries. One such technique is organic residue analysis, in which lipids – fats, waxes and resins – that survive in the porous walls of ceramics can give an indication of the use of the vessels and animal products consumed. At Betchworth, a small number of Grooved Ware pot sherds were assessed, suggesting they contained dairy products. Sometimes the interpretation of sites changes over time, after evidence is re-examined. The supposed Neolithic flint mines at East Horsley, excavated in 1949, are a case in point, as despite tools and pottery of this period – indicating surface extraction – the shafts were determined to be medieval, as the steps cut into the chalk matched those of a metal pick. Commander Todd at East Horsley



Commander Todd metal pick.

**The Neolithic period c. 4000 - 2200 BC**

**Where can I discover more?**

Very little survives on the ground today of the monuments which would have comprised the landscape of Neolithic Surrey, with many having been levelled and quarried away over the years, such as the Badshot Lea long barrow. However, part of the Stanwell cursus, Heathrow can still be seen as cropmarks, and potential sarsen – prehistoric standing stones – have been identified, including around Wisley and Camberley.



Sarsen block near Pyrford church (left) and cursus cropmarks at Stanwell (above, © Google Earth)



**Some learning sources on Neolithic 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](http://canterbury.ac.uk/arts-and-humanities/school-of-humanities/docs/Stone-Age-for-Key-Stage-2-Teaching-resource.pdf))  
 English Heritage's **Interactive Map of the Stonehenge Landscape** ([english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/stonehenge/history-and-stories/](http://english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/stonehenge/history-and-stories/))  
**Exploring Surrey's Past** ([exploringsurreypast.org.uk](http://exploringsurreypast.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 the Coldrum long barrow and Medway megaliths, as well as the impressive monuments of the Stonehenge and Avebury landscape.

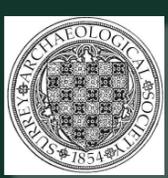


“Promoting the study of archaeology and antiquities...and any other matters or things relating to the pre-history and history of the County.”

- *Articles of Association*  
 Surrey Archaeological Society

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# Neolithic Surrey





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

2200 BC	LATE NEOLITHIC	c.2300BC Burial of Amesbury Archer c.2400BC Tools and weapons made from copper c.2400BC Great mound of Silbury Hill is built c.2600-2400BC Main period of flint mining, including at Grimes Graves Badshot Lea long barrow 2650-2530BC Carbon dates from primary silts at
2600 BC		c.2800-2500BC Period of Grooved Ware monuments at their peak 2900-2200BC Staines/Heathrow complex of bluestones from the Preselis, South Wales) Stonehenge, followed by sarsen stones (including c.3000-2500BC Bank and ditch first constructed at Ware
3800 BC	EARLY NEOLITHIC	c.3300-2900BC Main period when cursus monuments, chamber tombs and stone circles c.3400-2500BC Local distribution of Peterborough Ware c.3600-3000BC Main period of cursus monument construction c.3600BC Burials in West Kennet long barrow enclosure in the south c.3700-3500BC Main period of causewayed Sweet Track) constructed in Somerset 3807BC Oldest wooden trackway in Britain (the Valley as identified in pollen diagrams along Thames
4000 BC	MIDDLE NEOLITHIC	c.3900-3500BC Construction of monuments accelerates clearance horizons and elm decline, including early enclosures and burial chambers, 4000-3300BC Construction of earliest earthworks, Britain c.4000BC Farming and pottery introduced to



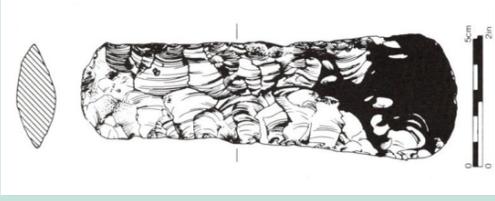
# Neolithic Surrey

4000-2200 BC



## Flint axe trade

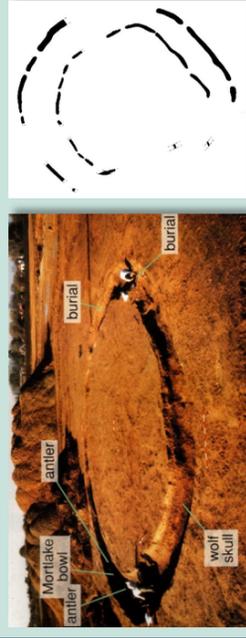
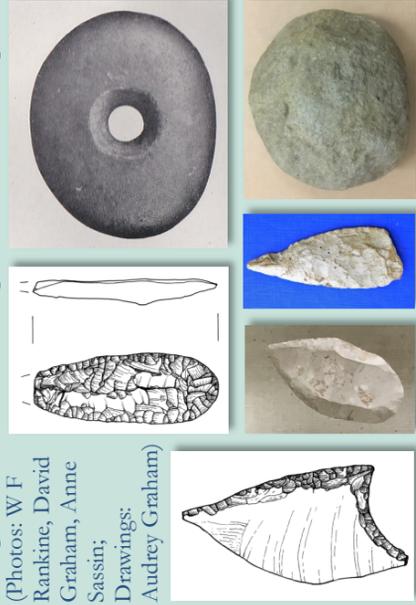
The need to look after crops and livestock in the Neolithic meant both more permanent settlement and larger areas of forest being cleared, for which new types of stone tools were needed. This included polished axes, though they were considered more ceremonial than functional and clearly held a special significance, whether as personal or group identifiers or the ability to exchange gifts. More than half of the axes in the county were concentrated around the Thames (as that from Hampton, *left*), and the majority reflected a range of imported exotic stone, with some assemblages as from Badshot Lea (*below*) comprising both local and imported sources. (Photo: David Graham; Drawing: David Williams)



## Material culture

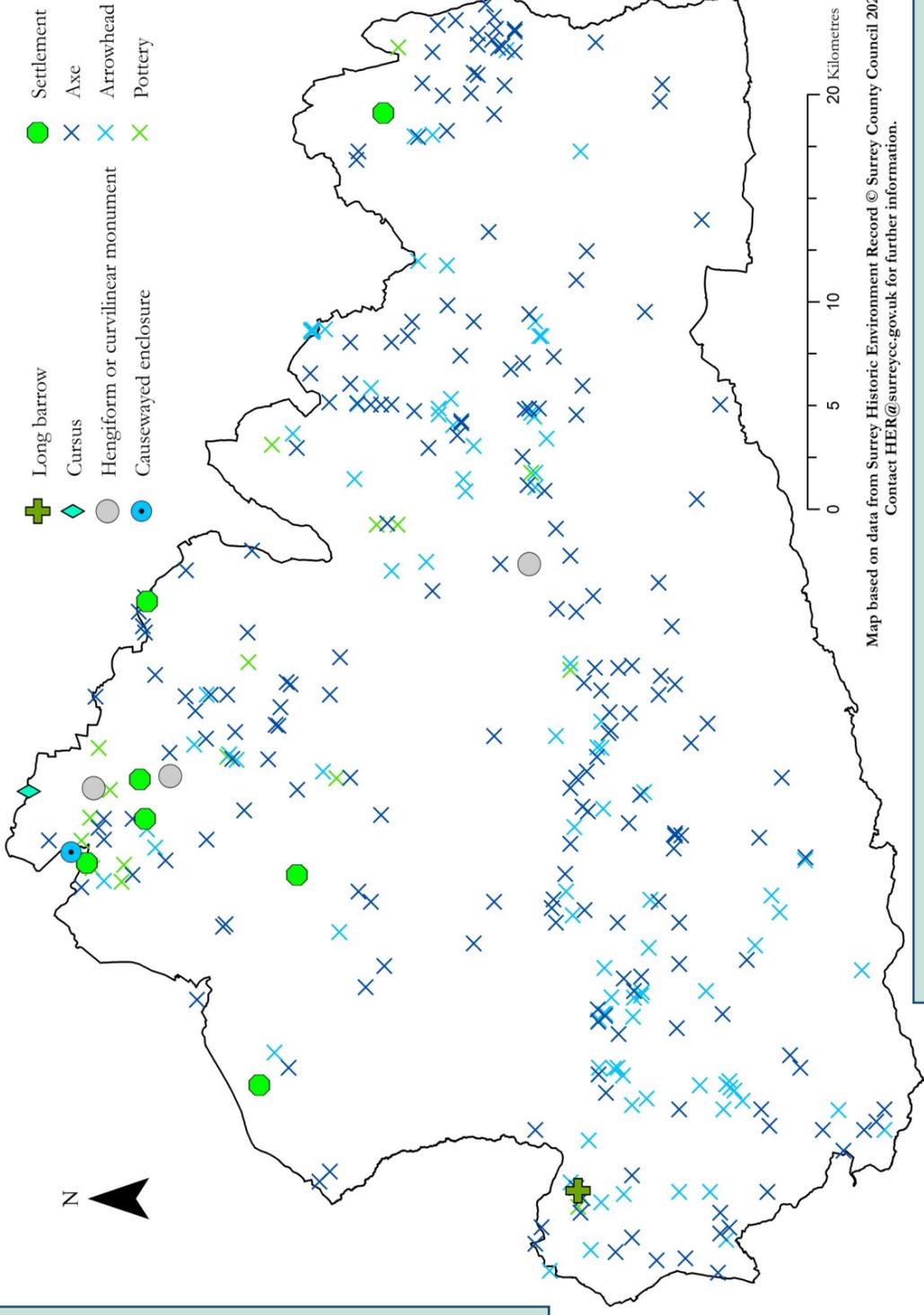
Overall flint and stone artefacts make up the vast majority of Surrey's Neolithic material culture, with most of the flint either imported or gathered from the surface in areas of clay-with-flints, as along the North Downs. The weapons and tools were varied and included types such as the maul and mace head (*below right*), knife (*centre*) and arrowheads from the Farnham area, which at this period were either leaf-shaped (as in the *below centre* images) or asymmetric forms (*bottom left*). Worked bone was less frequent, though evidence includes signs of antler-working.

(Photos: W F Rankine, David Graham, Anne Sassin; Drawings: Audrey Graham)



### Monumental construction and ceremonial landscapes

The first evidence of ritual practice and monumental activity also dates to the Neolithic. In Surrey, these monuments centred around the gravel terraces of the Thames, both a vital means of transport and object of worship, and their position within the landscape would have served as points of reference. At Shepperton, a henge enclosure, whose entrance was aligned for the summer solstice and was 'guarded' by a female burial (*over*), had various objects placed within its ditch (*far left*). A causewayed camp with a similarly symbolic layout was excavated at Yeoveney Lodge, Staines (*upper left*), while the cursus at Stanwell – 21 metres wide and over 2.5 miles long (*right*) – would have provided a ceremonial procession-way to the river. Although largely quarried away when first discovered, Badshot Lea (*left*) is the only known long barrow in the county and would have likely contained a chambered tomb. (Images: Surrey County Archaeological Unit, Framework Archaeology, A Keller and Piggott; Drawings: David Williams)

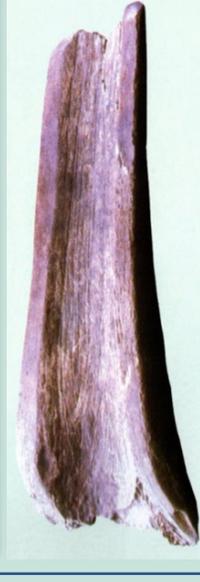


Map based on data from Surrey Historic Environment Record © Surrey County Council 2021  
Contact [HER@surreycc.gov.uk](mailto:HER@surreycc.gov.uk) for further information.

## Settlement and domestication

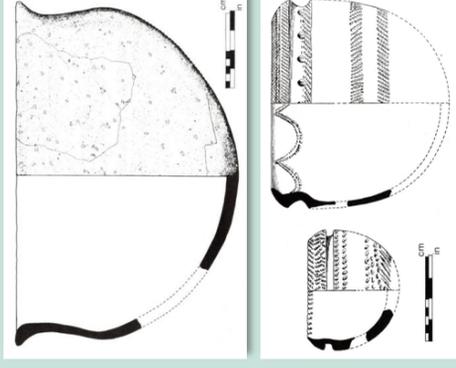
The landscape around the Thames basin suggests a successful farming community with an overall well-organized hierarchy. Due to the limited resources of the wild and growing population by the end of the Mesolithic, the hunter-gatherer lifestyle had become increasingly difficult, and with the arrival of continental farming practices, the Neolithic saw experimentation in cultivation, herding and domestication of animals. Once areas of woodland were cleared, static settlements were established which focused on a subsistence economy. Evidence for this includes ards and sickles for the cultivation of crops, as well as saddle querns (such as the one from Staines, *below right*) and possible pestles for grinding barley and emmer into flour (as in the example from Abbey Meads, Chertsey, *middle*). Bones from midden deposits also revealed a great deal about diet at the time, and while cattle and pig were the main animals consumed, bones of red deer, beaver and aurochs (such as the aurochs bone re-worked into a scoop, *bottom*) from Lower Mill Farm, Stanwell suggest a varied diet, with some foods such as hazelnuts still seasonally gathered.

(Images: © The Trustees of the British Museum, Surrey County Archaeological Unit).



## Pottery production

The Neolithic also saw the introduction of pottery as containers for serving and drinking, including for pottages, dairy products and other beverages. The earliest pots were round-bottomed carinated bowls, usually with plain undecorated rims (as with the pot from Kingston, *left*), but later forms had incised decoration and impressions (as in the Badshot Lea vessels, *far left*). By the later period, a geometric, flat-bottomed style known as 'grooved ware' appeared (Betchworth examples, *left*), which possibly served a ritual purpose, as well as functional one. (Drawings: Dave Field, David Williams)



## Metal Detecting

If undertaken responsibly, detecting can make important contributions to archaeological knowledge. Detectivists are reminded that it is illegal to trespass – remember all land has an owner! – and to record finds with their local Finds Liaison Officer and the Portable Antiquities Scheme. For more on the Code of Practice, please see [www.finds.org.uk](http://www.finds.org.uk).

