

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'.