

SKARA BRAE



Skara Brae is found on the Orkney Islands off of the north of Scotland. It is one of Britain's most fascinating prehistoric villages. Archaeologists estimate it was built and occupied between 3000BC and 2500BC, during what's called the 'Neolithic era' or 'New Stone Age'. The village is older than the Great Pyramids of Egypt and Stonehenge.

SKARA BRAE HOUSES

If you visit Skara Brae today, you'll see a collection of prehistoric, circular houses which are built from slabs of stone. Supported by 2.4m walls, the houses consist of one single room, and are connected together by covered passageways.

Today, the homes are open to the air but historians think they would once have had roofs made from turf, thatched seaweed or straw. Even the furniture has stood the test of time! Made from sturdy stone, the homes' beds, dressers, shelves and hearths (base of the fireplace) remain to this day.



THE PEOPLE OF SKARA BRAE

Tools, crop remains and bones found at Skara Brae show the villagers weren't only skilled hunters and fishermen, they were expert farmers, too! They grew crops (such as wheat and barley) and reared sheep, cattle and pigs. They were some of Britain's first ever farmers, in fact. Before the Neolithic period, people only hunted wild animals, and gathered wild fruit and vegetables to eat.

Since no weapons have been found at Skara Brae, historians believe it was home to a peaceful community.

Archaeologists have discovered jewellery, needles, buttons, ornaments, well-crafted pottery and dice. This suggests they were creative people who appreciated beauty and enjoyed playing games.



WHEN WAS SKARA BRAE REDISCOVERED?

For centuries, Skara Brae was covered by a huge sand dune on the shore of the Bay of Skail on the Orkney Islands. It remained hidden there until a huge storm hit the island in 1850, blowing away the sand, earth and plants and exposing the village to the outside world once again. Then, in the 1860s, a team of archaeologists - led by a man



called William Watt - began digging and uncovered four buildings. Years later in 1926, another storm hit the island, leading to further excavations which revealed more of the village's houses and artefacts.

The settlement of Skara Brae was abandoned around 2500BC – but the reason why still remains a mystery! One theory is that a huge sandstorm hit the village, forcing the inhabitants to flee quickly and leave their belongings behind. But more recent research suggests that the process may well have been more gradual. It's likely that people decided to relocate to more productive lands, and live on their own independent farms rather than in a communal settlement.

FIND OUT MORE...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=de4kOrOaNyl>

EXAMPLE QUESTIONS: USE HEADING 3 FOR THIS THERE NEEDS TO BE 5 QUESTIONS

1. Where is Skara Brae?
2. During which time period do archaeologists believe Skara Brae was built and occupied?
3. Which year did the first storm hit Skara Brae?
4. What materials do historians think the people of Skara Brae made their homes out of?
5. What is the name of the man who led the team of archaeologists to help rediscover Skara Brae?