

A GUIDE TO...

SKARA BRAE

WHAT IS SKARA BRAE?

SKARA BRAE IS AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE IN ORKNEY THAT SHOWS THE REMAINS OF A NEOLITHIC VILLAGE. IT WAS PROBABLY INHABITED BETWEEN 3200 BC AND 2200 BC. THERE ARE EIGHT HOUSES THAT ARE LINKED TOGETHER BY A SERIES OF LOW PASSAGEWAYS. THE HOUSES ARE MADE OF STONE AND EACH ONE IS JUST ONE SINGLE ROOM WITH FURNITURE SUCH AS BEDS AND DRESSERS. THE EVIDENCE HAS REVEALED THAT THE SETTLEMENT WAS INHABITED FOR ABOUT 600 YEARS BEFORE THE LAST PEOPLE MOVED AWAY FROM SKARA BRAE AT THE BEGINNING OF THE BRONZE AGE.

WHEN WAS SKARA BRAE REDISCOVERED?

THE NEOLITHIC SETTLEMENT OF SKARA BRAE WAS DISCOVERED ALMOST BY ACCIDENT DURING A POWERFUL STORM IN 1850. THE WIND WAS SO STRONG THAT THE SAND, EARTH AND PLANTS THAT HAD BEEN COVERING THE HOUSES FOR HUNDREDS OF YEARS WERE BLOWN AWAY TO REVEAL THE OUTLINES OF A SET OF ANCIENT DWELLINGS. AFTER FURTHER DIGGING, ARCHAEOLOGISTS WERE ABLE TO UNCOVER THE REMAINS OF A STONE AGE SETTLEMENT.

WHY IS SKARA BRAE IMPORTANT?

THE DISCOVERY OF SKARA BRAE BECAME ONE OF THE BRITAIN'S MOST IMPORTANT ARCHAEOLOGICAL FINDINGS. SKARA BRAE IS THE BEST-PRESERVED NEOLITHIC VILLAGE IN NORTHERN EUROPE AND THE EXCELLENT CONDITION OF THE SETTLEMENT GIVES US AN IMPORTANT INSIGHT INTO WHAT COMMUNITIES IN THE NEOLITHIC PERIOD MIGHT HAVE BEEN LIKE. THE SETTLEMENT IS SO WELL PRESERVED THAT THERE IS EVEN FURNITURE INSIDE THE HOUSES. ARCHAEOLOGISTS WERE ALSO ABLE TO UNCOVER A WEALTH OF STONE AGE ARTEFACTS THAT GIVE US IMPORTANT CLUES ABOUT THIS PERIOD OF HISTORY.

WHAT WOULD IT HAVE BEEN LIKE AT SKARA BRAE DURING THE STONE AGE?

THE MANY PIECES OF EVIDENCE DISCOVERED AT SKARA BRAE GIVE US IMPORTANT INSIGHTS ABOUT WHAT LIFE MIGHT HAVE BEEN LIKE THERE. CROP REMAINS AND BONES FOUND THERE SHOW US THAT PEOPLE WOULD HAVE BEEN FARMERS, CULTIVATING CROPS LIKE BARLEY AND REARING SHEEP AND CATTLE FOR FOOD. THE KIND OF TOOLS THAT HAVE BEEN DISCOVERED SHOW US THAT PEOPLE WOULD ALSO HAVE HAD TO HUNT FOR ADDITIONAL MEAT AND FISH. WE ALSO KNOW THAT THE INHABITANTS WERE SKILLED CRAFTSPEOPLE BECAUSE JEWELLERY AND HANDMADE BOWLS HAVE ALSO BEEN DISCOVERED. THE LACK OF WEAPONS FOUND DEMONSTRATES THAT PEOPLE WERE NOT LIKELY TO HAVE BEEN WARRIORS AND PROBABLY LIVED PEACEFUL LIVES.

