

Star Carr is one of the most important archaeological sites in Northern Europe. It is dated to the Early Mesolithic (Middle Stone Age), a period just after the end of the last Ice Age when people were hunting, gathering and fishing: recent dating shows that the site dates from around 9300 BC and was occupied for many centuries. Star Carr was once on the shore of a lake (Lake Flixton), but during the Mesolithic period this became infilled with peat. The peat excludes oxygen and thus has allowed the preservation of a wide range of organic materials.

The site was discovered in 1948 by a local archaeologist named John Moore. He found flint and bone eroding out of the side of a drainage ditch and then excavated a trench. He reported his discoveries to the curator at Scarborough Museum and notified Grahame Clark, an archaeologist at the University of Cambridge who studied the Mesolithic.

Between 1949 and 1951 Grahame Clark excavated at Star Carr. His excavations yielded a rich and diverse array of artefacts, including antlers and bones from animals that had been hunted and killed by the people at the site. These included large game, aurochs, bear, red deer, roe deer, wild boar, elk, as well as smaller animals such as beaver, badger, fox, pine marten, wild cat and hare. In addition, birds were also discovered including crane, red-breasted merganser, red-throated diver, great crested grebe and brent goose. During his excavations he found brushwood in the shallow waters that he interpreted as being a platform that people had lived on. He was also able to reconstruct the environment by examining the plants and pollen at the site.

In addition to the animal bones, a range of artefacts were discovered. Perhaps the most spectacular of them all are the antler frontlets. These were made from red deer skulls and could have been worn as headdresses/masks. No other sites in Britain have produced them, and there are only three definite examples from

Northern Germany. It remains a mystery why the people at Star Carr would have worn them though one interpretation is that these were worn by shamans (spiritual people).

In addition, barbed points or harpoons made from red deer antler were found – over 200 which accounts for around 95% of all known examples in the UK. These would have been hafted (attached) to a piece of wood and used as either a spear or javelin, or attached to an arrow and used for hunting animals such as birds and fish.

In the 1980s Star Carr was re-excavated by the Vale of Pickering Research Trust. During these investigations, deliberately split and hewn timbers were discovered. These timbers represent the earliest evidence of carpentry in Europe, and had been made using flint and antler axes. From 2003–2015, further large-scale excavations have been carried out which have uncovered the remains of several wooden platforms on the edge of the lake, and remains of structures on the dryland. Two of these structures consisted of a large hollow that was surrounded by postholes.

### **Further Reading**

[www.starcarr.com](http://www.starcarr.com)

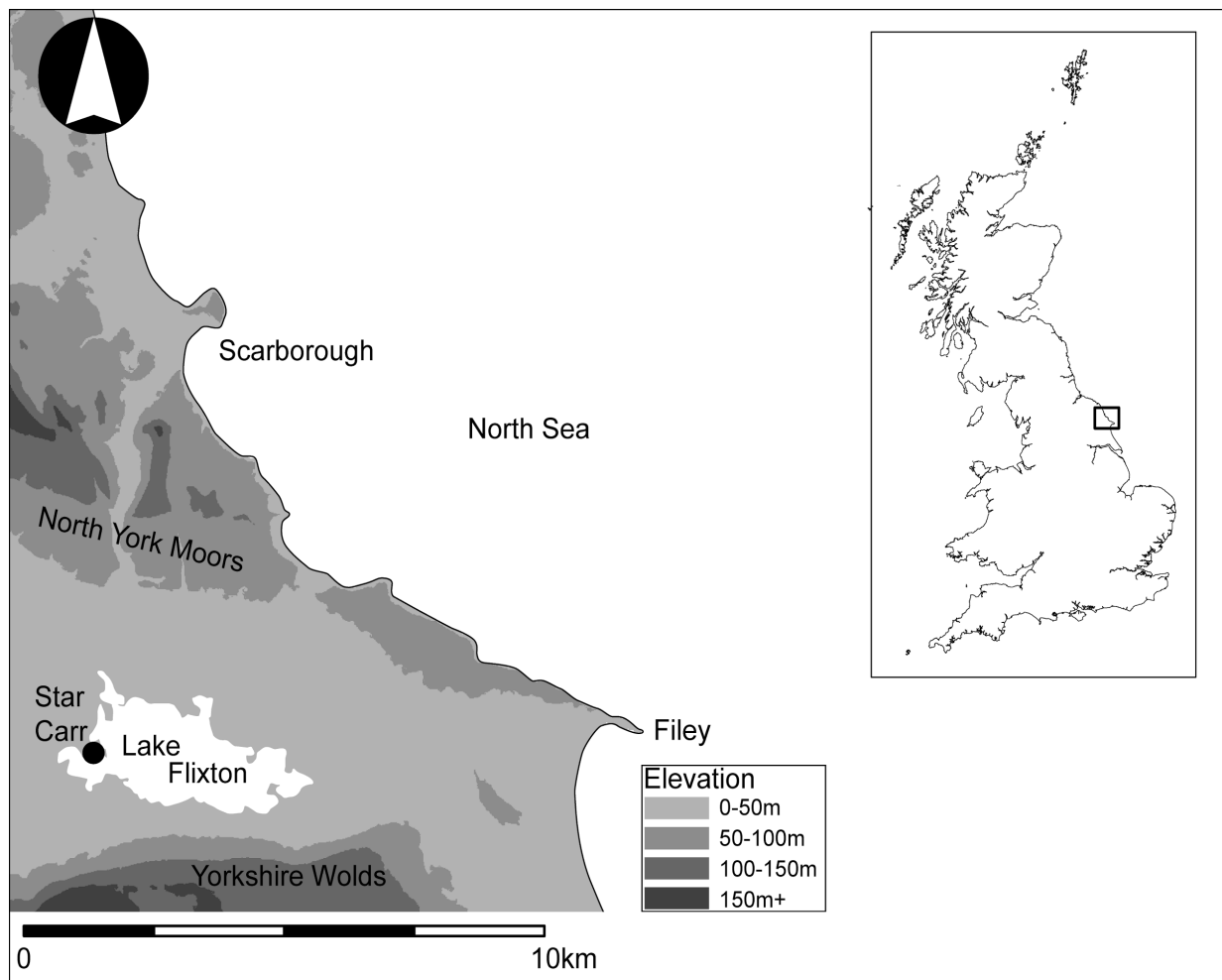
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**Milner, N.** 2007. Fading Star. *British Archaeology*, 96, 10–14

**Milner, N., Taylor, B., Conneller, C. & Schadla-Hall, T.** 2012. *The Story of Star Carr*. York: Council for British Archaeology

**Milner, N., Taylor, B., Conneller, C., & Schadla-Hall, R. T.** 2013. *Star Carr: Life in Britain after the Ice Age*. York: Council for British Archaeology

**Taylor, B., Conneller, C. & Milner, N.** 2010. Little house by the shore. *British Archaeology*, 115, 14–17



*The location of Star Carr in the north east of the UK.*



*The structure at Star Carr.*





*Investigations on the dryland in 2008.*



*One of the headdresses that was found in the excavations.*

*This factsheet was prepared for the Prehistoric Society by Harry K. Robson and Nicky Milner (University of York)*