

International comparisons

The public presentation of the Mesolithic in Europe

The Mesolithic is presented and received very differently in different areas of Europe. Broadly this varies on a national level but there are also more nuanced regional variations.

As in Britain, information about the Mesolithic gets from specialists (archaeologists) to the public through a variety of [interfaces](#) such as [museums](#), [traditional media](#) (television, radio, newspapers), [schools](#), [popular books](#) - (fiction and non-fiction), [artistic work](#) (performances, fine arts), [direct outreach](#) (public lectures, site tours, experimental archaeology), [archaeological/historical societies](#) and specifically [web-based dissemination](#).

These are not all easy to examine for non-natives but it is important to recognise that each are likely to be present in some form.

Rationale for comparisons

It is important for the [aims of this project](#) to understand the presentation of the Mesolithic in Britain as best as possible in a holistic manner. The reasons for understanding the presentation in Europe is more oriented to developing an understanding of some of the most exemplary methods for presenting the Mesolithic. Therefore, this investigation will be more weighted to using [Mesolithic presentation sites](#) ([Museums](#), [Archaeoparks](#), [Excavation-based centres](#)) that are identified as being particularly engaging as case studies. If these use other ways of engaging the public (i.e. [school visits](#), [experimental archaeology](#), [books](#)) it is assumed that their staff will be best placed to give formal information on such interfaces in the particular country.

Contexts

Historical factors

There are clearly historical patterns that have influenced the variability in the presentation of the Mesolithic across Europe. Major factors in these patterns include the local presence of other major archaeological periods and national histories since the Renaissance. [Denmark](#) for example has no Palaeolithic archaeology due to glaciation and no Roman occupation - this makes the Mesolithic far more prominent in the discoveries and consequently in the national consciousness.

Interfaces

The most direct presentation of archaeological material to the public tends to be in heritage attractions. By visiting a number of these around Europe and analysing their presentations it should be possible to build an understanding of what may be transferable to the presentation of the Mesolithic in Britain.

The sorts of heritage attractions that present Mesolithic material can be broadly divided into three types: [museums](#), [archaeoparks](#) and [Excavation-based centres](#).

Methods

It is important to assess the presentation of the Mesolithic at each site (or in each country as a whole) within a balanced framework that is evenly applied but is sufficiently sensitive to pick up local reasons for differences.

Initial assessments

The initial phase of the desk-based assessment of the sites is designed to locate sites for visiting. An [interactive map](#) is being developed that summarises sites across Europe that present the Mesolithic. This can be publicised through colleagues and [Mesolithic Miscellany](#) in order to get comments and recommendations about which sites may be most fruitful for investigation.