

Worcester in the Stone Age

Over 70 people turned up to hear Paul Harding talk about the Stone Age, which he told us is his favourite period of history, or pre-history, that he talks about. 33,000 years ago, a glacier covered much of Europe during the Ice Age and a massive glacier reached down as far as the Midlands, seen in white in this image. In Worcester we were at the edge of habitable land. The Stone Age is actually 3 separate periods, called Palaeolithic, Mesolithic and Neolithic, lasting from millions of years ago to about 3,300 BC.



Back then Woolly Mammoths, Reindeer and Woolly Rhinos would have roamed our local area along with boar and Aurochs. There would have been lions roaming around, including cave lions, evidence of the remains of which have been found near Bredon. At

that time UK was attached to Europe so the animals were able to freely walk great distances in search of food. As the ice age receded the water flooded the low-lying areas, and the English Channel and the North Sea were formed.



In the Stone Age flint was the most common type of stone used as it was very hard and adaptable, but there is none available in Worcestershire. However, there are many



examples of flint objects and tools found in our area, so they had to be brought to the area, either as the Stone Age people moved about or they traded goods with other people. They would hit the flint with gravel rocks or reindeer horns made into hammers. The gravel rocks were smooth and round so easier to hit things with. The shards that were created had very sharp edges, which they could use to cut things to make better tools or cut meat. They also made large sharp stones that they

then made into spears to kill animals with when they went hunting, seen here in this image.

Stone Age people made 'hand axes', but these were not used to chop trees down but for butchery of the animals. Stone Age hand axes have been found in Worcester, a Reginald Smith found one in Henwick in a pit, and it is held in Worcester Museum, seen in this image. Flint tools were found by a William Brunton in 1915 in St Johns, at the old Pitmarston Garden Nursey and the Sewage works. He was a tailor in St Johns with an interest in history and he found these items and saw that they had marks made by humans on them.



During the Stone Age there were very cold winters as it was coming out of the Ice Age. The stone age people had to evolve to live. They moved into caves to keep warmer and drier, but this had its drawbacks as we have already heard about Cave Lions and there were bears who also liked to live in these caves. Simple tools were developed initially to help them feed themselves and as they evolved, they used the simple tools to make other more complex ones. Similar to the migration of animals, already mentioned, the Stone Age people were hunter/gatherers and they had to follow the animals to eat so there was not a permanent population in Worcester.

They would have to eat the food quite quickly as it rapidly goes off and larger animals maybe interested in also eating the food they had caught. Everything would be used, they would drink the blood, as some tribes in Africa still do. The skins would be taken off and small flint tools, scrapers, would be used to take off all the meat from the skin to clean it. Evidence has been found of bone needles, from the animal bones, that would have been used to sew the skins together. The evidence for this is



that the needles have eyes which means they would have something to put through the eye of the needle, either sinews of the animals or basic threads created from plants.

As we move towards the Neolithic period simple structures have been found to show that they made basic 'houses' for protection from the elements and animals. Initially it is believed that these

were made from old Mammoth leg bones with skins placed over them. However, as they evolved, they started to use wood and create more permanent structures. Evidence has been found in Worcester of these early Neolithic structures. Wood found driven into the ground near the River Severn when dated was found to be from this period. It is thought that structures would have looked like this image.



As usual the ladies of the church provided a wonderful array of cakes for the audience during the break, and they soon disappeared with the cups of tea and coffee.