

Dig-ital Resource pack

The Artefacts of Archaeology (KS3 - KS4/ Secondary) (History / Art)

LESSON INFO :

A Key Stage 3 & 4 workshop on material investigation. Addressing how archaeological materials are found, recorded and dated. It is designed to encourage critical thinking and promote creativity of thought. It includes exercise in the illustration of archaeological finds.

The lesson focuses on the archaeological remains of St Mary's church found near to the village of Stoke Mandeville in Buckinghamshire. The ruins of the former parish church, and the area immediately surrounding it, are currently undergoing archaeological investigation as part of the HS2 project. The lesson encourages thinking about changes made over time to the land and lives of people who lived here.

Objectives -

- To address how materials are archaeologically investigated
- To ask questions about the archaeological process
- To evaluate materials in order to suggest their original use or shape
- Learn the basis of finds recording and illustration

Teacher objectives -

To encourage discussion about the process of archaeology and explore questions regarding the transfer of historic materials from field to archive and museum. Enable understanding about the concepts of finds recognition and recording and introduce students to the Portable Antiquities Scheme.

Students Will:

Consider their local historical environment and what remains of past populations who inhabited it. Make observations regarding the value of excavated materials to archaeological investigations and learn the basis of finds recording.

Provided resources:

Pottery identification exercise
Scaled images for illustration
Artefact recording sheet

You will need :

Printer, pencils, pens (preferably fine-line) rulers, calculator, tracing paper, internet access for research

Estimated time : 40 min

This lesson would significantly benefit from a virtual call from an archaeologist following its delivery.

Introduction

Archaeologists are currently working on behalf of HS2 to excavate the ruins of St Mary's Church in Stoke Mandeville. They are uncovering a wealth of archaeology that will tell us more about the history and past communities of Stoke Mandeville. The church and churchyard of St. Mary's is one of the most important historical sites being investigated along the route, and we hope that the archaeological work will answer many questions about the building and its surrounding landscape.

The church of St Mary the Virgin was built in the late 11th century, shortly after the Norman Conquest in 1066. Unlike the modern church, also called St Mary's, the old church was not located in the centre of the village. Instead it stood in the middle of an agricultural landscape, on land owned by the bishop of Lincoln. Near to the church there were a number of other buildings, like barns and a mill. The mill is mentioned in the Domesday Book, which lists information about who owned land in England after the Norman Conquest.

The church was built in the bottom of a shallow valley, which was naturally very wet. People working the land in the medieval period took advantage of this, creating a number of artificial streams and ponds. These provided water to the nearby mill and were later used for growing watercress.

When the new church in the centre of Stoke Mandeville was opened in the late 1800s, St. Mary's fell into disrepair, although the churchyard continued to be used for burials until 1908. The ruins became dangerous and unstable, and the church was eventually demolished in 1966. In total the church and churchyard were used for over 800 years. The landscape around the church has evidence for even longer habitation. Excavations have also been taking place at the site of a Roman settlement to the east of the church, where buildings were arranged on either side of a central trackway. This settlement appears to have earlier Iron Age origins. High status Roman finds, such as a coin and decorated pottery, suggest that a Roman villa may have stood nearby.

As well as these packs for schools, we have a Field Museum on site, over a number of weekends over the summer. Inside the museum is a viewing platform giving a view of the ongoing excavations, as well as displays, films and interactives enabling you to explore the history of St. Mary's church and find out about archaeological discoveries in the area. Come and see the excavations, meet the archaeologists and find out more!

Background :

*(Ask the class these questions - open it up for discussion for about 5 minutes each.
Draw a mind map or list of ideas on the classroom board from their answers)*

What is archaeology and what do archaeologists do?

Archaeology is the scientific study of the material remains of past **human** life and activities. *(Note - archaeology is very different to paleontology which is the study of fossilised animal remains i.e. dinosaurs!)*

It is often considered to be both a social science and a humanity. It draws skills from a range of subjects such as history, geography, biology, chemistry, maths and computer science, to name a few. It is a multidisciplinary subject that incorporates a broad range of skills, ideas and methods. It is also divided into sub-disciplines such as; osteo (bones), environmental, experimental, forensic, maritime, landscape, battlefield and digital archaeology.

Archaeology developed from 'antiquarianism' in Europe during the 19th century. The term 'antiquarian' derives from latin and means enthusiast or student of antiquities / things from the ancient past. Since the 1800's the discipline has developed into a subject of both the sciences and humanities. It still focuses on the material remains of the past but treats and studies them very differently to Victorian collectors.

Archaeologists today study the remains of past human life from the development of the first hand-tools c.3.3 Million years ago until the modern day - even things such as a memory stick has been added to a museum having been found as part of an archaeological excavation! The goal for archaeologists is to understand the cultural history of past people and be able to explain change or continuity in the use of an area over time.

Archaeologists survey, excavate (dig up) and analyse data collected to learn more about the past. The artefacts recovered by archaeology are intrinsically important to understanding the past. However, excavation in archaeology is not done just to find artefacts though they are very important to understanding people living in the past.

In this workshop you will be asked to think like an archaeologist and study some of the artefacts found in archaeological excavations.

What are artefacts ?

Artefacts are the material remains of past or current human life. They are the tangible (touchable) remains of cultures but they are not necessarily found through archaeological excavation! Artefacts are anything that was made or altered by humans and can be made of synthetic (man-made) or natural materials. Most of the things we use today can be described as artefacts.

(Ask the class for examples of artefacts. Perhaps draw a list of suggestions from students on the classroom board or use the table below as a 'bingo card' going around the class and letting each student offer a suggestion. There aren't really wrong answers, anything made or altered by humans in some way can be considered an artefact.)

Coins	Pottery	Jewellery	Pens / stationery	Paper /papyrus
leather	Machines/ computers	Swords / weapons	Butchered bone	Boats / ships
Carved bone	Clothing / woven fabric	Cut /shaped wood	Glass	Human remains
Statues / reliefs	Cutlery	Flint tools	Bricks/ building	Plastic

Why do archaeologists look for artefacts?

Artefacts found through excavation are usually referred to as 'archaeological finds'. They help to inform archaeologists on the age and use of remains within the area that they are investigating. Objects such as coins and pottery are especially useful for dating the occupation of an area in the past.

The type and frequency of certain artefacts being found by archaeologists in an excavation can also be very important. For example a large amount of butchered bones (bones with knife marks or cuts from where the meat was taken off of them) can suggest it was a domestic area where people were living and regularly eating animals that were probably farmed nearby. On the other hand, a large amount of weapons or ammunition scattered across an area suggests that area may once have been a battlefield.

It is important to record and analyse all finds of archaeological interest, this includes where they were found during excavation but also post-excavation. 'Find Officers' are specialists in cultural materials and are important members of an archaeological team. They are responsible for identifying all archaeological finds from commercial or academic excavations, checking against databases and academic work to understand what type, age and origin an archaeological find is from. Their observations and research gets entered into forms and reports that, when compared to other sources of data collected from excavation, enable suggestions and hypotheses about past populations to be developed or proven.

Learning Exercise 1 : Pottery identification

In the first exercise students are asked to think like a finds specialist and investigate a collection of pottery recovered from archaeological excavations undertaken in the area around the ruins of St Mary's church in Stoke Mandeville, Buckinghamshire. This should take about 10 minutes.

Pottery is one of the most common archaeological finds, people have used it for thousands of years in a number of ways. It is usually very well preserved as, unlike materials like metal, it doesn't corrode. If broken, a shard of still pottery contains a lot of useful information to archaeologists.

The collection of information for pottery found in the UK and across the world has been entered into databases that lets archaeologists identify the possible age and origin of any pottery fragment they may find. Find officers use these collections and databases to compare and identify the type of ceramics found by the team of archaeologists working out in the field. Finds are sent from the muddy field or excavation site to be cleaned, photographed, described, identified and catalogued in a more controlled, indoor environment.

Your task is to complete the catalogue entries for these pieces of pottery. Match the description to the piece of pottery photographed. Think about where they were made and how long ago; who might have made, brought and used them.

Questions for the class -

- All of these pottery fragments were found within the same area of an excavation - what does this suggest about when that area of land was used and who might have lived there?
- What type of pottery vessels were these where might they have been used? Some might be more practical kitchen tools, others more decorative for the dining perhaps?
- Looking at where they might have come from, what does it tell us about trade in the Roman period in Buckinghamshire?

Alternatively you can get pottery to handle and analyse from ...

<http://www.trustforthanetarchaeology.org.uk/community-outreach/learning-resources/ceramic-thanet-pottery-learning-pack/>

A.





C.



E.



F.



1	<p>Shard of samian pottery - a distinct orange / red coloured pottery typical of the Roman period.</p> <p>Form 18/31 - a shallow bowl with a clear rim</p> <p>Date - 1st century AD, Roman</p> <p>Probably produced in southern or central Gaul (Modern day Western Europe e.g. France, Switzerland or North Italy). They are often stamped with the name of their maker.</p>
2	<p>Shard of a large wheel-made bowl</p> <p>Greyware - a grey/blue 'smoked surface' with decoration made by painting on the surface with lines making a diamond pattern near the rim of the vessel. This is described as a 'Romanised' design.</p> <p>Date - 2nd - 3rd century AD, Romano-British</p> <p>Possibly made in Cambridgeshire</p>
3	<p>Piece of a decorated small rounded bowl.</p> <p>Greyware - a dark grey / blackened surface with incised (cut) decoration showing the light-coloured fabric of the ceramic's interior.</p> <p>Date - 2nd Century AD, Romano-British</p> <p>Possibly from Hertfordshire or the North London area</p>
4	<p>Broken off neck of a flagon / small rounded jug with a single handle and flared rim.</p> <p>Common white ware / oxidised (where ceramic fabric turns from orange to white in the hot kiln)</p> <p>Date - 2nd century AD , Romano-British</p> <p>Possibly made in Oxfordshire</p>

5	<p>Shard of a ceramic cheese strainer. Perforated pottery that would have acted like a colander.</p> <p>A light yellow / white colour. Oxidised (where ceramic fabric turns a lighter color when heated in a kiln).</p> <p>Date - 2nd century AD, Romano-British</p> <p>Probably produced in Buckinghamshire or Hertfordshire</p>
6	<p>Shard of decorated pottery</p> <p>Rounded shape, probably from a drinking cup</p> <p>Colour coated ware - the pottery is coated in a light orange colour with white applied decoration.</p> <p>Date - 2nd - 3rd century, Romano-British</p> <p>Produced in the lower Nene valley (along the border between Cambridgeshire and Norfolk). This area was well known for its pottery manufacturing during the Roman period.</p>

Answers :

A = 6

B = 3

C = 5

D = 2

E = 1

F = 4

Learning Exercise 2 : Artefact Illustration

(Tracing paper and pre-printed copies of these artefacts are needed for this exercise as well as pencils or/and fine-line pens. If tracing paper is not available using plain paper against a lit background like a window or computer screen will also work. Students may also research their chosen object using the links provided. This can also be conducted as a homework exercise if time runs short. This should take about 15 minutes.)

As well as recording artefacts through written descriptions and photographs, archaeological illustrators play a key role in understanding cultural material remains. Illustration enables key parts of an object to be brought out in more detail after they are cleaned and analysed by finds officers. For example, with coins and tokens the lettering and decoration can be made clearer and more legible by the illustrator. Not all finds are illustrated, only those of significance or interest. When they are drawn by hand they are drawn to scale, meaning that they are accurate to the measurements of the original item; this is often done by using a scaled photograph and tracing around the object or by using gridded paper to help guide the illustrator.

In this exercise you are asked to illustrate one of the coins or tokens pictured. To do so trace around the scaled image of your choice using tracing paper using a pencil. Use sharp pencils to highlight the lettering and decoration used on its surface. You can use shading to show where areas of damage are or if there are areas that change in colour slightly. If you choose to do so, draw over the pencil drawing with a pen (preferably fine line) to make it clear and neat. Make sure to also include the scale bar so we know how big your artefact is. Though there is a degree of artist licence in archaeological illustration, it is very important to create an accurate drawing of the artefact.







The Portable Antiquities Scheme:

The Portable Antiquities Scheme is run by the British Museum and the National Museum of Wales to ensure the recording of archaeological objects found by members of the public. Though a great deal of archaeological artefacts are found by professionals during commercially organised excavations there are many many finds made by people whilst walking, gardening or by metal detectorists. When found, any member of the public can send photographs, descriptions and details of where their artefact was found to their local finds liaison officer (a finds specialist). There is one officer for each county. This is done online and the details are entered into a digital archive. Finds recorded with the scheme help advance knowledge of the history and archaeology of England and Wales and the online database provides a valuable resource to researchers.

For example, the Portable Antiquities Scheme provides reference and information about a large number of archaeological discoveries made by the public, including coins. If you happen across an old coin there is sure to be information or other examples of it available on the website to help you work out what it is!

After you have illustrated your coin or token, make a record of your 'find' as if to enter it into the online record of the Portable Antiquities Scheme. Complete the table using the Portable Antiquities Scheme website to help you. To measure the dimension of the coin or token (diameter) use your scaled illustration! Be careful as the scale may have changed - you will need to work out, using the scale bar as a guide, the actual measurements of the object. You can also make a comment on the letters that you can see in a 'notes' column of your table; this is an especially tricky task!

Do some quick research on the artefact that you have illustrated. Write a brief description of your findings; for example from what and where and when they might have been made. See if any information helps you to work out the letters on the metal coins/tokens and what/ who is depicted on them!

The artefacts in this exercise include :

- Medieval Jetton / token (head and tail side) - *A Nuremberg Jetton of Hans Schultes / 1553-1584*
<https://finds.org.uk/counties/findsrecordingguides/jettons/>
<https://finds.org.uk/database/search/results/q/Hans+Schultes+I+%281553-1584%29/page/1>
- Roman Coin (head side) - Possibly a *denarii* of Severus Alexander 222-235 AD
<https://finds.org.uk/romancoins>
<https://finds.org.uk/romancoins/emperors/emperor/id/36>

Artefact Recording Sheet:

Object Type	
Broad Period From / Age	
Dimensions (diameter)	
Material	
Description / Observations	
Notes / Research	

Conclusion:

Ask your students to reflect on the work they have done during this workshop. If there was anything surprising or interesting they found out. How many had heard of the Portable Antiquities Scheme before?

Think about the meaning of an artefact and what you might leave behind? How much information about you can be found out through your rubbish on any given day.

Though we think of artefacts as lovely things to put in museum displays and look at for research, the majority found through archaeological excavation are actually just peoples old rubbish left behind! Usually pieces are broken, disused and thrown away. The pottery examined today for example was found in a single pit full of broken pottery and butchered animal bones - a Roman rubbish pit as proven by the age of the pottery remains!

Homework ideas -

- Look up an artefact found in Buckinghamshire that has been recorded on the Portable Antiquities scheme. Produce an illustration of your own based on the photograph of the item as well as write your own description and do some research on it (c. 500 words).
- Research Samian Ware Roman Pottery; find a complete example within the Portable Antiquities Scheme or British Museum Archive and make a 500 word case study as if it was going onto special display within a museum.
- Make an archaeological record of a 21st century artefact. Find something at home to draw to scale (take a photo with a ruler next to it and illustrate it from the image), write a description of it and where it was from, how it was used and its dimensions.