

Background

This workshop was delivered by DigVentures to school groups as part of the Pontefract Gatehouse Project in 2019. The resources provided in this pack have been lifted from the workshop DigVentures presented in 2019, for re-use these resources may need adapting.

The workshop

Duration: 1½ hours

Learning aims and outcomes

Sessions are aligned with the Key Stage 2 curriculum for Science, with learning outcomes such as understanding how to conduct a controlled experiment with variables, understanding and demonstrating they can make careful observations and recording and reporting on their findings.

- to learn facts about the history of Pontefract Castle
- to develop an understanding of what archaeology is and what it can reveal about the past
- to explore some of the links between science and archaeology
- to learn practical scientific and archaeological skills through observation and hands-on activities
- to work cooperatively to interpret evidence and draw conclusions

Workshop summary

The **DigVentures** and **Pontefract Castle** teams are excited to offer this very special Key Stage 2 workshop, which will give pupils the unique opportunity to observe an actual archaeological excavation at Pontefract Castle and to try their own hands at some real archaeological processes.

Pupils will watch the archaeologists in action as they excavate the remains of Pontefract Castle's medieval gatehouse and hear about what their work has uncovered so far. They will then move indoors to our 'field lab' where they will discover how soil can affect the preservation of different objects and materials from the past and learn how to test the PH levels of soil samples collected from the site. Pupils will prepare soil for sampling using pestles and mortars and they will take a close up look at some of the tiny inclusions found within the archaeological soil samples as they sort and quantify micro-artefacts.

This workshop will address not only the topic of history as it relates to Pontefract Castle but also the topic of science as it relates to archaeology. Pupils will gain experience and develop practical skills such as how to run a controlled experiment and how to interpret outcomes. They will also have lots

of opportunity throughout the workshop to develop and apply their communication and cooperative working skills.

Evaluation of session

We might ask you and your pupils to complete an evaluation form at the end of your workshop. Evaluation is a valuable tool which allows us to keep a continuous check on the services we and our partners provide at Pontefract Castle.

Additional resources

To deliver the workshop, some additional resources will be required:

- Pestle and mortar
- Sieve
- Beaker
- Pipette
- Test tube
- Distilled water
- Litmus paper
- Litmus paper chart (this usually comes with the paper, but can be sourced online)

Suggestions for further learning

Do a Dig Diary: Archaeologists often keep a 'dig diary' as a record of their excavations. Sometimes they keep traditional written diaries but more and more often now they are keeping digital diaries. Instruct your pupils to work either as individuals or in small teams to create their own dig diaries about what they did, saw, learned and discovered during the workshop at Pontefract Castle.

Soil Experiments: Following on from the soil analysis that the pupils did during their workshop, conduct a controlled experiment back at school where pupils bury different materials in different soil types, make predictions about how the materials might be affected by each soil and then keep a record of how the objects change (or don't change) over a set amount of time.

Do a Project About Pontefract Castle: Use the historical facts that the pupils learned about Pontefract Castle during their visit as a spring board to doing their own projects about the castle's past. They can either work independently or in small teams to conduct research and present their findings to the rest of the class. You might want to assign each pupil/team a specific time period (e.g. medieval times, Tudor times, Stuart Times, etc.) to focus on for their project.

Find Out About Another Archaeological Project: Use books and the Internet to discover places beyond Pontefract Castle where archaeological excavations have taken place and to learn what those excavations have

revealed about the past. You might want to instruct the pupils to look for information about archaeological digs in your own locality, on a national level or on an international level.

Write a Story Inspired by Archaeology: Archaeology can be a great inspiration for creative writing – the anticipation of what might be discovered, the mystery of what the old objects are and how they ended up in the ground, the excitement of discovering an artefact that links directly to a person, place or event from the past! Instruct your pupils to write their own creative stories based on the anticipation, mystery and excitement of archaeology.