

**BEDFORDSHIRE AGGREGATES
ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE COMMUNITY**

Archaeology in Schools: Bedfordshire

FINAL PROJECT REPORT

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1. INTRODUCTION

This project sought to bring the archaeology uncovered as a result of aggregates extraction to the people of Bedfordshire (County of Bedfordshire and its districts, and Luton unitary). The main focus was children and young people, in the first instance, and was delivered primarily, but not exclusively, through the schools.

Among the many aggregates extraction sites in Bedfordshire, two sites, Willington Quarry and Grove Priory, were the main focus of this project. Both are in different parts of Bedfordshire. Willington Quarry in north Beds, near Bedford, provided material covering the Roman period, and Grove Priory, in south Bedfordshire, near Leighton Buzzard, provided material covering the Anglo-Saxon and medieval periods. Ultimately, the delivery of this project was county-wide, so that the archaeological results of aggregate extraction could be seen to benefit all Bedfordshire and Luton people, not just those who live in close proximity to a quarry.

The project was originally programmed to run for 9 months, from mid-July to the end of the financial year 2007-08. The project did not begin until September 2007, with an end date in mid-February 2008, a total of just 6 months. It was only because this project was well grounded within an already established programme, with established contacts, that it could be developed and delivered within the shortened timescale. Despite the curtailment of the programme length, the project has been extremely successful, meeting all of its aims, and even surpassing some.

The main areas where this curtailment prevented full delivery were in advertising and further development of contacts, particularly in the Luton area. This has only taken off in the last two months of the project and it looks as though the demand is likely to be high. This in turn has its drawbacks in that funding to satisfy this demand will cease from March 2008. Albion, as part of its commitment to outreach and education and in its commitment to act as a partner in this project, will undertake to satisfy the demand of those schools and community bodies that have already shown an interest. Albion's commitment in the future cannot be guaranteed.

Bookings for school visits already run into the next financial year and these will be honoured by Albion. However, it is hoped that, should further ALSF funding be available in the financial year 2008-09, development of this project to deliver these outcomes, particularly in the Luton area, would be a priority for funding.



2. PROJECT OUTCOMES

This final report follows the project design, reporting on each of the project outcomes in detail below.

2.1 A. Presentations

The two themes most in demand by schools are ‘Romans’ (at Key Stage 2) and ‘Medieval Realms’ (at Key Stage 3). The presentations on the ‘Celts’ and the Anglo-Saxons and Vikings have not gone ahead; demand for these has not been as great as had been expected. The Roman and Medieval presentations have been prepared on Powerpoint and comprise new images, including a detailed colour reconstruction of Willington Quarry as it would have been in the Roman period.

The presentations comprise the following:

- Introduction to aggregates archaeology
- The archaeological process from discovery to dissemination
- Daily life including housing, clothing and ornament, cooking and eating, agriculture and industry
- Death, ritual and religion

The above themes match the display boards produced in 2000-2005 by Albion Archaeology for Bedfordshire County Council Heritage and Environment Service for a series of travelling exhibitions. These displays have been made available to schools. They are advertised separately from the ALSF project as part of the outreach carried out by the Heritage and Environment Service. Although the displays and the school visits complement each other, they can stand alone. It seems, however, that, because they are advertised by a different body, the visits and the displays are rarely booked together.

Each of the prepared presentations comprises the same set of images to illustrate the first part of the presentation, the work of the archaeologist. Part of this is the question of how archaeologists know where to dig and this is where the archaeology of aggregates extraction sites, particularly Willington Quarry, is used as a key example (Fig 2). The second part of each talk is geared specifically towards the National Curriculum, at Key Stages 2 and 3.

2.2 B. Handling and sorting collections

Ceramic and non-ceramic replicas have been produced, covering the Roman, Saxon and Medieval/Tudor periods, to supplement the small number already in existence. Where possible these are accurate representations of actual finds made on aggregates extraction sites (Fig 3–4). Most, however, are accurate replicas of similar classes of object found on a number of archaeological sites in the county, both extraction sites and other. The extraction sites which provided the raw materials for replicas are Willington Quarry, Kempston and Warren Villas/Sandy for the Roman period; Grove Priory/Leighton Buzzard and Harrold for the Anglo-Saxon and medieval periods (Fig 5).



There are now 15 sorting trays of unstratified but genuine Roman finds and “mock” environmental samples for sorting, recording and interpretation. There is little demand for the latter except by one group of Archaeology A-level students. The finds sorting activity, in contrast, is core to the school visit.

The existing ‘Finds recording Sheet’ has been edited and a copy is provided for every child (Fig 6-7). They record their own discoveries and answer questions based on the evidence gleaned from sorting the contents of their own pit.

Despite advertising their availability, there has been no demand for loans of either sorting trays or replicas, although one school requested retention of the replicas for a short time after the visit. The preparation of labels and information sheets has therefore not gone ahead.

2.3 C. Activity packs

The limited resource materials which had been in use for school visits by Albion Archaeology over the years, on an *ad hoc* basis, were redesigned and the content revised. They were produced as two hard copy activity packs: the Roman ‘Time Games’ and the medieval ‘Feudal Fun’ (Fig 8–11). They were produced in the form of single reproducible sheets with additional Teachers’ Notes. A copy of each has been made freely available to all schools who have requested either the packs or a visit.

There was some initial consultation with educational professionals, particularly two teachers who had used the packs on previous occasions, as well as Bedford and Luton museums educational departments. However, most feedback came from using the packs in the classroom and amendments were made as a result of this feedback from the teachers and pupils using them.

Most schools use them as an activity supplementary to the school visit, usually after the visit; therefore they are rarely seen in use. At least one school has requested copies of both packs but when also offered the school visit, declined. However, communication was through the school administrator rather than directly with the relevant teacher.

These activity packs were generally welcomed by the schools, especially the ‘Time Games’ by Key Stage 2 teachers.

2.4 D. School visits

Advertising of the school visits was carried out primarily by producing a leaflet and a hand out describing the activities available. All lower and middle schools in Bedfordshire County were circulated. This was successfully carried out because there is an internal mailing system enabling quick and efficient circulation of material to every school. This system is lacking in Luton and each Luton school had to be emailed on an individual basis, and leaflets sent through the post. The take up of the school visits was therefore initially in the Bedfordshire County area, but as soon as the information began filtering



through to the Luton schools, bookings began coming in from them and they are still doing so.

At the start of the project an article was placed in the ‘*Schools Ist*’ magazine. This is the internal magazine produced by Bedfordshire County Council specifically for schools, to replace individual emails, letters and leaflets to school heads. A number of bookings were made as a result of this. In addition, a short article was printed in ‘*Transforming Bedfordshire*’, the magazine for Bedfordshire County Council employees (Fig 12). It was hoped that this would be seen by heads and teachers in schools but not many schools appear to have received it. Even the school which featured in the magazine did not have a copy sent to them directly; they received one from Albion. Therefore it is not clear how successful this was.

Albion Archaeology did not produce an annual review for 2006-07. A new web-based format is being planned and this ALSF project will automatically be highlighted, if/when it goes ahead.

So far 39 school visits have been booked, almost double the number that had been programmed in the project design (Table 1). Sometimes more than one visit was made to a school, to cover several classes. This has not necessitated any requests for a variation in the costs of the project because savings have been made elsewhere, eg the ‘Celts’ and the ‘Anglo-Saxon and Vikings’ presentations have been omitted. Bookings now run till the end of April 2008.

A specific aim of this project was to target disadvantaged areas of the county, particularly schools in the unitary authority of Luton but including Houghton Regis and Dunstable (Fig 13). Although disposable household income is higher than the regional average, four wards in Bedford (Cauldwell, Castle, Kingsbrook and Harpur) and three in Luton (Northwell, Dallow and Biscot) are in the top 10% of the most deprived nationally. Twenty-one wards in Bedfordshire (18 in Bedford Borough and 3 in South Bedfordshire) and 39 in Luton are amongst the 10% most deprived in the region (Bedfordshire County Council 2007).

A total of 2466 school children took part in the activities, 37% from schools in Luton, Houghton Regis or Dunstable (Table 1).

Feedback, both from teachers and pupils, has been very encouraging. There has been a good return of feedback forms from teachers – only one school has failed to return their forms. None have been negative and many have made helpful suggestions for improvement or variation. Pupil feedback forms were only introduced at a late stage in the project and a total of 657 were distributed with 517 returned (one school did not return their forms) (Figs 14-21). Both teachers’ and pupils’ comments have been summarised (Appendices 1-2).



No Fig 13	School	No of pupils visited
1	John Gibbard Lower School, Sharnbrook	30
2	Beauchamp Middle School, Bedford	150
3	Dame Alice Harpur School for Girls, Bedford (public school)	96
4	Shackleton Lower School, Bedford	60
5	St John Rigby Lower School, Bedford	60
6	University of Bedford, Polehill Campus, Bedford	60
7	Edith Cavell Lower School, Bedford	78
8	Springfield Lower School, Kempston	54
9	Queens Park Lower School, Bedford	150
10	St James, Lower Sxhool, Biddenham	32
11	Laburnum Lower School, Sandy	48
12	Burgoyne Middle School, Potton	90
13	Dunton Lower School, Dunton, Biggleswade	22
14	Etonbury Middle School, Arlsey	240
15	Templeford Lower School, Flitwick	60
17	Linslade Lower School, Leighton Linslade	90
19	Houghton Regis Lower School, Houghton Regis	90
20	Becroft Lower School, Dunstable	90
21	Lancott Lower School, Dunstable	60
22	Chantry Priory Junior School, Luton	60
23	Denbigh Junior School, Luton	90
24	Farley Junior School, Luton	60
25	Hillborough Junior School, Luton	150
26	Lea Manor (Adult Education), Luton	6
27	Pirton Hill Junior School, Luton	70
28	Sacred Heart Junior School, Luton	60
29	Surrey Street Primary School, Luton	60
30	Tennyson Road Junior School, Luton	60
31	Wigmore Primary School, Luton	60
Not on map	Helena Romanes Secondary School, Gt Dunmow, Essex	230
	TOTAL	2466

Table 1. Schools visited as part of the ALSF project (see Fig 13)

In addition to schools visited, a number of other groups have also been involved. A talk and handling session was held in Luton with a small group of adult learners, pitched at a higher level than that for schools, but using the same material.

A handling session was held with the Biddenham Cub Scouts Pack, who also visited the excavations at Bedford Castle and helped with some of the finds processing.

The same talk and handling session was conducted with 3rd and 4th year teacher-training students, specialising in History, at the University of Bedford (Polehill Campus). This session was felt to be most successful as it is reaching future teachers who will hopefully build on these ideas in their future teaching careers. It was strongly suggested to them that, wherever in the country they end up teaching, they make contact with the local archaeologists, whether in the museum, planning departments or contracting units. One student has



already done this and invited Albion in to the school where he was carrying out his teaching practice.

Another group which has been approached are Bedfordshire County Council social workers working with adults with learning difficulties. A talk and handling session is planned for the summer 2008. Contacts were set up with this group as part of the ALSF project but the set up meetings and the archaeology session itself will run beyond the end of the project. Rather than cancel these for lack of funding, Albion Archaeology has agreed to continue with this session as part of its outreach commitment.

Another activity in which the ALSF project has had an involvement is the planned setting up of a Young Archaeologists' Club based at Bedford Museum and led by the museum's education staff. At present this takes the form of Saturday morning archaeology workshops. A group of Albion Archaeology staff are helping with this and, although the ALSF is not contributing directly towards this, use has and will be made of the handling and replica collection which ALSF has funded.

Preliminary contacts have been made through Luton Museum with the Gifted and Talented programme for school pupils. Unfortunately this cannot be taken further, because of the uncertainty of funding beyond the project end. Renewed contacts were also made with the Bedfordshire Pupil Referral Unit but this has not been developed for the same reasons.

2.5 E. Resource CD

The material prepared for the presentations was to have been made available on CD and through the Albion Archaeology website, to enable the widest possible distribution and accessibility. This has not gone ahead because of the time it has taken to finalise the activity packs. However, the Powerpoint presentations are copied to the teachers' laptops after each school visit.

2.6 F. Web-based materials

See Section 2.5 above.



3. HAVE THE AIMS AND OBJECTIVES BEEN MET?

3.1 **Aim 1. To present the archaeology of aggregates extraction areas in Bedfordshire to young people, principally school children, but through them, to their parents and the wider community**

Objective 1.1: to address Aim 1 principally through school visits; including the preparation of resource materials and handling collections, tied closely to the National Curriculum requirement of Key Stage 2 (ages 8-11) and Key Stage 3 (12-15).

Objective 1.2: to include other groups of young people i.e. those who may have already had some engagement with archaeology, but for whom it would be beneficial to enhance and broaden their experience of the subject, such as the Scouting movement (scouts, guides, cubs and brownies) possibly as a part of their badge programme; the Gifted and Talented, and extra-curricular school archaeology clubs.

Have these objectives been met?

Objective 1.1 has been met totally. Resource materials have been prepared and are in use on a regular basis.

Objective 1.2 has been met partially in that sessions have been held with one Cub Scout pack. Preliminary contacts have been made with the Gifted and Talented programme, the Pupil Referral Units and Special Schools in Bedfordshire. These contacts could not be developed further due to uncertainty of funding.

3.2 **Aim 2. To involve new audiences who have no awareness of archaeology**

Objective 2.1: to target specific schools in the most deprived wards. It is clear from the distribution of school visits undertaken over the years by Albion Archaeology, that there are areas of the county where these are not taken up. These areas appear to coincide with areas of most deprivation. Major areas of deprivation lie in south Bedfordshire, especially areas of Houghton Regis, and Luton. This objective is to target the schools in these areas to bring an awareness of archaeology to both pupil and teacher, to give them an opportunity to engage in something which would normally lie outside their day to day experience.

Objective 2.2: to include the deprived pockets within the generally affluent population of Bedford, usually but not always, including minority ethnic communities and recent immigrant populations.

Have these objectives been met?

Objective 2.1 has been met partially. Direct contact with Luton schools has been difficult (see Section 2.4) but there has been a late take up of offered sessions by primary and junior schools, many of which are in deprived areas of the town (see Fig 13). Unfortunately, momentum will be lost unless further



funding is secured to build on this new interest on the part of the Luton teaching community.

Objective 2.2 has been met partially. A number of visits have been made to schools in deprived areas of Bedford, such as Queen's Park and also to schools in the better-off areas of the town, which nevertheless have a large intake of recent immigrants, particularly from Poland. One school in particular had large numbers of children who could not speak English and who were being helped by other bi-lingual pupils, because no specialist teaching assistants were available. There were at least no language difficulties during the archaeology session!

3.3 Aim 3. To engage with hitherto hard to reach groups

There are many groups who do not engage with archaeology, yet for whom archaeology could stimulate an interest in their physical surroundings and the general environment, past and present. Among these groups are people with physical and mental disabilities, adults as well as children, and pupils temporarily excluded from school.

Initial contacts have already been made in two Special Schools and with one Pupil Referral Unit, and because both these groups work to the National Curriculum, the material produced for other schools could be easily adapted to make it suitable. Limiting the initial audience will ensure the project can be completed within the timescale. Other groups can be identified and included at a later stage, as part of Albion Archaeology's outreach commitment.

Objective 3.1: to target the Special Schools

Objective 3.2: to target the Pupil Referral Units for excluded children.

Have these objectives been met?

Objective 3.1 has been met partially. Although the same leaflet as went out to the schools was circulated to the Special Schools, there has been no follow-up. The larger than expected demand from lower and middle schools has meant that time and funding was lacking for this.

Objective 3.2 has not been met, although names and contact details have been gathered and this could be followed up in the future if funding allows.

3.4 Aim 4. To build up the capacity to enable the outreach activities to continue beyond the life of the project

Objective 4.1: to establish this as a 'seed-corn' project, enabling the development of resource materials which can be used both as part of the Stage 2 project implementation and subsequently rolled out as part of the Stage 3 sustainable project delivery, to cover the wider county as an integral part of an already well-established and successful outreach programme.



Has this objective been met?

Objective 4.1 has been met totally. The resource materials developed as part of this ALSF project are available for use in the future and will be available for displays, exhibitions and other outreach activities, some of which, like Bedford Museum's archaeology workshops are already active and have made good use of them. They will continue to be used during school visits made in the next financial year, supported by Albion Archaeology.

3.5 ALSF and other aims and objectives

These four aims address ALSF Objective 3, in particular 'local education [*Aim 1*], interpretation, outreach and community involvement [*Aims 1, 2 and 3*] and capacity building [*Aim 4*]'.

The project thereby sought to 'raise awareness of conservation issues' (*Aim 2 and 3*) and 'communicate the knowledge gained through the extraction process' (*Aim 1*), in particular to children and young people.

In addition, this project has met, and even exceeded, Exploring our Past Primary goal D – promoting public appreciation and enjoyment of archaeology, in particular goal 10.2 'Innovative dissemination of archaeological information for schools' (English Heritage 1998).

This project ties in with the County Council's strategic objectives as outlined in 'Making Bedfordshire Thrive Strategic Objectives 2006-2009'. In particular, contributing to the following priorities:

- Build strong, prosperous and sustainable communities' – by creating a 'strong sense of place' and 'pride in our communities' (2007, 5)
- Help children and young people achieve their full potential' – by widening the opportunities for children and young people, especially 'children at the margins of society, those with special needs, in care and at risk of offending' (2007, 9)

Key County Council objectives particularly relevant to this and other outreach projects undertaken by Albion Archaeology include raising the aspirations of children and young people, and building strong and sustainable communities where people have a shared identity, values and sense of belonging. This project has successfully contributed towards achieving these objectives.

Reducing the numbers of excluded children, and improving the performance of Looked-After children, have been identified as priorities. Bedfordshire County Council's draft Sustainable Community Strategy 2003-13 (2007) lists Community participation (ensuring everyone can participate effectively in the County's economic, social, environmental and cultural life) and equality of access (ensuring no one is disadvantaged by where they live in accessing services, including leisure and cultural services) as key challenges.

The outcomes of this project have helped meet these key County Council objectives, giving the future continuation of Albion Archaeology's schools



outreach programme beyond the initial implementation stage covered by this project, an enhanced strategic importance.



4. THE FUTURE

The success of this project has initiated a momentum which it would be foolish to ignore.

Creating a demand was an integral part of the project but once expectations have been raised, they have to be satisfied. Albion Archaeology can go a long way to continue the momentum started by this project but without further funding the outreach activities will have to be scaled down to what is affordable from year to year. It is almost inevitable that there will be a return to the limited level of outreach that was being carried out prior to the start of this project.

Luton was one of the target areas for this project and there is clearly an interest in the local archaeology, including the archaeology of aggregates extraction sites. Teachers who previously knew nothing about archaeology or how it can contribute towards their own work in the curriculum can now see its benefits.

Luton should continue to be a target area and, if further funding through ALSF is available in the next financial year, bringing archaeology into Luton schools, especially those in deprived areas of the town should be a priority. In that way, the benefits of this project will not be lost.



5. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Bedfordshire County Council, 2007, *Sustainable Community Strategy 2003-13* (draft)

English Heritage, 1998, *Exploring Our Past Implementation Plan*



6. APPENDIX 1 TEACHERS' FEEDBACK

6.1 **Summary of teachers' feedback forms.**

Feedback forms were distributed to every school visited, 27 in total (4 have been booked but not yet visited). Only one did not return the form.

All schools answered 'yes' to the question whether they found the session stimulating, relevant and interesting. All bar one agreed that it fitted into the work they were doing as part of the curriculum (3 said 'perfectly'). The one not in agreement had taught the subject in the previous year and was taking advantage of the sessions offered even though the children were not studying the Romans.

The question about the activity packs is not relevant as most were used after the session as follow-up work, and therefore feedback specifically on them was not received.

All general comments were positive – the least positive were one comment about the length of question time after the talk (too long) and another about the amount of time allowed for the handling activity (too short).

6.2 **Selection of teachers' comments:**

- Linked in well with topics covered in science and DT (Design and Technology)
- Good opportunity for speaking and listening
- All children were fascinated and enjoyed the experience. All children could be challenged at the appropriate level (thinking skills)
- Everyone focussed 100% of the time – what more can I say?
- Excellent – all seemed to really enjoy it – including (*'especially' crossed out!*) the naughtiest children
- The best yet from Anna. Her authoritative and enthusiastic talk was well supported by the slide show – some pupils are even thinking ahead to their careers (*Year 5!*). The whole experience is invaluable for pupils and there can be no doubt that such sessions must continue as part of a child's education

6.3 **Selection of teachers' suggestions for improvement:**

- Some demonstration of how artefacts are buried and archaeologists peel back the layers – plastic fish tank, perhaps?
- Short video film of an actual dig



7. APPENDIX 2 PUPILS' FEEDBACK

7.1 *Summary of pupils' feedback forms.*

Feedback forms were distributed only to 12 schools, towards the end of the project. The idea was only taken up after seeing a teacher at one of the schools distributing her own forms. A total of 517 were returned, of which 160 (30%) were examined in detail.

Responses in the positive were elicited for the following questions;

Did you enjoy the session?	98.75%
Did you learn something new?	97.47%
Did you understand what you did?	93.67%

Three further questions were asked, with the following responses:

What was the best bit?

Sorting	31.65%
Touching the objects (handling session)	28.48%
Bones	11.39%
Pots	9.49%
Talk about 'argiologes'	5.69%
Skeleton (image of)	4.43%
Coins	2.53%
Drawing	2.53%
Houses (image of)	1.27%
Bracelets	1.27%

What would you change?

'nuffinck'	61.20%
More time	7.75%
The talk	6.03%
Writing/counting	5.17%
Skeletons (?image of)	4.31%
Sitting on the floor	3.40%
Bones (want less)	2.58%
Bones (want more)	2.58%
Real objects (not replicas)	1.72%
Pots	1.72%
More swords	0.86%
Drawing (want less)	0.86%
Drawing (want more)	0.86%



What would you like to learn more about?

The Romans	19.71%
Skeletons/dead bodies/death	11.97%
The first archaeologist/how archaeologists know this/how to get a job as an archaeologist	9.15%
Saxons/Vikings/Ancient Greece/Egypt	7.04%
How Romans fight/armour	5.63%
Roman artefacts/objects	5.63%
Pottery	4.93%
Dinosaurs (!)	4.22%
Bones	4.22%
Treasure/jewellery	3.52%
Clothes	3.52%
Fish sauce/feasts/food	3.52%
Houses	2.81%
Keeping clean/bath houses/make up	2.11%
Children/toys	2.11%
Pompeii	1.40%
Roads	1.40%
Wax tablets	0.70%
Stones	0.70%
Boudicca	0.70%
Other (football/Spanish/Islam/‘you’)	4.93%

7.2 Analysis and lessons learnt

One thing that stands out from all the pupils’ feedback forms is the difference between the lower/junior schools (Years 3, 4 and 5) and the middle/secondary schools (Years 7 and 8). Only five visits were made to Year 7 or 8 children, but they clearly did not appreciate the same things as the younger children.

All the children of whatever age, and including the teaching students, enjoyed the hands-on activity and handling real and replica objects. It is, perhaps, surprising that so many of the younger children enjoyed the talk with 5.69% saying it was the best bit. The talk, which lasts anything from 20-40 minutes, depending on timetables, questions and concentration levels, is conducted with the younger children sitting on the hard floor – and yet they still love it. None of the younger children said they would change the talk, while, of the older children, 20% did not enjoy the talk and said they would shorten it, add video clips and more jokes. This might, however, say more about modern adolescents than the quality of the talk, but does mean that the talk will have to be adjusted for this age group. Of those who positively enjoyed the talk or would not change it, 27% were in the older age group and 21% in the younger. Those who did not mention the talk number 47% and 79% respectively.

Another difference between the age groups is the attitude towards the animal bones. Some children, particularly in the older age group, do not want to touch the bones or get upset at the thought of ‘dead animals’. The handling of animal bones also has cultural implications and sensitivities such as



vegetarianism or the touching of certain types of animals has to be borne in mind.

One advantage of direct feedback from the pupils is the measurement of how much they have understood. Children who replied that they did not understand what they had been doing numbered 6.33% (a total of 10), even though only 1.25% of children (a total of 2) claimed they did not enjoy the session.

The question ‘what do you want to learn next?’ elicited some interesting replies, including football, Islam and Spanish! This led to a change in wording to ‘what do you want to learn more about’. And dinosaurs still remain uppermost in some children’s minds despite careful explanation of the difference between archaeology and palaeontology.