

# Kids dig the past

Bedfordshire school children have been digging around in the past in more ways than one thanks to Albion Archaeology, the County Council's archaeology team.

Albion was awarded funding through Defra's Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund, administered by English Heritage, to bring archaeology into schools.

The aggregates industry set up this fund to bring the archaeological information excavated on quarry sites to a wider audience. This includes a variety of outreach and community projects, one of which is Albion's 'Archaeology in Schools'.



School children from Edith Cavell Lower School dig around in the past

The biggest and archaeologically most productive quarry site in the county is Willington, near Bedford. A number of Iron Age and Roman sites have been excavated here before sand and gravel was dug and this has given us an unprecedented opportunity to find out about the rich archaeology of this area.

Albion archaeologists have visited 12 lower and middle schools in Bedfordshire so far this year, to talk to over 1000 children about what archaeologists do. The talk includes slides of archaeologists at work, examples of some of the sites recently excavated in the county, like Willington, and a selection of the artefacts found by the archaeologists.

The children become archaeologists for the morning, sorting and recording the finds from a genuine Roman rubbish pit. The finds are real and it is a once in a lifetime opportunity for the children to handle objects 2,000 years old, and to use real archaeological evidence to find out how the Romans lived.

Project Manager, Anna Slowikowcki said: "The excitement in the classroom is palpable and the looks on the children's faces, when they see what's in their finds-trays, is a sight to behold!"

The finds from the Roman rubbish pit are the broken fragments that are the bread and butter of archaeological excavation. However, the archaeologists also bring in examples of more complete objects,

including some replicas, so the children get an idea of what the pieces in their rubbish pit might have come from.

There is no better way of bringing alive the way of life of the Romans than enabling the children to really get their hands dirty and make these discoveries for themselves!

"They can raise a complete drinking cup to their lips; rub their hands on the rough surface of a grinding bowl; sniff the bees wax in a writing tablet, and cry out 'ugh!' when the sponge on a stick, the Roman equivalent of toilet paper, is passed round!", said Anna.

For more details please contact Anna Slowikowski at: [anna.slowikowski@bedscc.gov.uk](mailto:anna.slowikowski@bedscc.gov.uk) or on 01234 294005.



EXCEL

An innovative teaching idea is bringing archaeology right into local classrooms