A visit to Avebury
the wonderland of North Wiltshire

The chalk downs around Avebury is simply packed with educational potential. A short distance from the modern village, with its church, Great Barn, museum and study centre, lie the remains of six major neolithic monuments. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that thousands of schoolchildren visit every year, making this one of the busiest outdoor sites in Britain. The only real problem for teachers is to decide how best to use this abundance of resources.

We split into groups and viewed the house and sketched in the park. The tour of the house was on the lines of the children asking themselves what Henrietta Howard would have done in each room. Where would she have received guests, slept etc. etc. They soon began to visualise her daily routine and lifestyle. The comparison between back stairs and front stairs gave rise to a whole new field of study of servant and mistress.

In the garden they used a simple frame to isolate various views they found interesting. Choosing for themselves but concentrating on views which Henrietta Howard herself might have enjoyed. Preliminary sketches were done in situ and completed and developed back in school. Particularly rewarding was the way the children discriminated in their choice of media, using charcoal, pastels, pastels, charcoal, charcoal and pencil, and often chose to try their own work in contrasting mediums to achieve different effects.

Valerie Nett
Darell Primary School

Suffolk) the owner. Prior to the visit we looked at everyday life in the period — clothes, food, travel, pastimes etc. — until the children had built up a picture of the residents of the house. Such things as my life’s experiences of Henrietta and George in period costume, stories of highwaymen, and attempting some of the skills (copper and tanning) of an 18th century child helped the children build the picture into reality.

I next suggested to the children that Henrietta Howard had invited us to visit her newly completed house and sketch in her garden. They accepted the invitation with alacrity. On the day of our visit, we took a coach to Marble Hill House. On leaving the coach we took our ‘200 year walk’ when I asked the children to consciously put behind them the things of the 20th century — jets, traffic etc., so that by the time we arrived at the door of the house we had arrived back in the 18th century. So receptive were they that if Henrietta Howard had opened the door they would not have been the least surprised.

Skull found at Avebury in 1938 with a reconstruction of the ‘barber—surgeon’.

It is my job, as a seconded teacher from Wiltshire working at the Study Centre, to help with this. Ideally I would make prearrangements or follow up visits to all the schools that use Avebury as a resource. Unfortunately this is rarely possible and my contribution is restricted to a short talk or demonstration ‘on site’. I always try to adapt to the interests and abilities of each particular visiting group but most of my work revolves around the history of the area. Youngsters seem to be fascinated by bones and really enjoy making deductions from those found at West Kennet Long Barrow. As for the demonstration of the superb Handling Collection of Neolithic Tools — well, even the teachers slower learners. The intention is to make the three phases of the ‘henge’ — construction in the Neolithic period, destruction in the Middle Ages and Early Modern period, and reconstruction in recent times — accessible to youngsters.

Corsham School, a local comprehensive, has been testing this ‘pack’ as part of its 1st Year Humanities programme. They played the Board Game, which introduces the three phases of the Circle’s chequered history, before coming to Avebury. Then each tutor group in turn spent one day in December engaged in fieldwork — ‘on site’ — and then several weeks back in the classroom processing what they had seen. Some favoured individual written exercises while others worked in small groups, yet their main energies were directed towards two of the fundamental questions

Antler Pack


The ‘Rise’

The ‘Wall’

The ‘Rise Again’

Three cards from the Board Game
posed by the ‘henge’. The extracts that follow are a small sample of their efforts.

WY AVEREURY CIRCULE BUIL? This question just cannot be ignored, although there is, of course, no simple answer. The evidence that it exists, is of a negative nature and only makes sense when considered with other prehistoric sites or other ‘simple’ societies. The ‘pack’ contains five visual clues, maps and diagrams, drawings based on archaeological and anthropological evidence, that require interpretation by the pupil. After a period of discussion in small groups, they were encouraged to fill in a chart similar to the one below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AVEREURY WAS BUILT...</th>
<th>Probable</th>
<th>Possible</th>
<th>Unlikely</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. as a defensive fortress</td>
<td>1.</td>
<td>2.</td>
<td>3.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. as a village</td>
<td>2.</td>
<td>3.</td>
<td>4.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. as an enclosure for animals</td>
<td>3.</td>
<td>4.</td>
<td>5.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. as a cemetery</td>
<td>4.</td>
<td>5.</td>
<td>6.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. as a capital city</td>
<td>5.</td>
<td>6.</td>
<td>7.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. as a meeting place for tribes and families</td>
<td>6.</td>
<td>7.</td>
<td>8.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. as a place for trading animals and goods</td>
<td>7.</td>
<td>8.</td>
<td>9.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. as a calendar</td>
<td>8.</td>
<td>9.</td>
<td>10.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. as a place for finding wives and husbands</td>
<td>9.</td>
<td>10.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. as a place to make offerings to the gods</td>
<td>10.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tick the box which is most appropriate.

There is no ‘correct’ answer but some suggestions are more likely than others. Here is what one 11-year-old wrote later:

The people must have had a good reason for building this circle, but most of the evidence is incorrect. Maybe they were worshipping something through the stones, using them as a church, or perhaps the actual stones.

(Emma Carey)

WY AVEREURY CIRCULE DESTROYED? This question is far less problematic, in that the evidence is more complete. For teaching purposes at least, it was assumed that the Church destroyed the village, and that the stones were smashed and the pieces used for building walls and houses.

Some younger pupils realized that the majority of villagers would have been illiterate in the Middle Ages, drew a picture of a church with the message, “Others wrote ‘The Sermote that Chased Averbury’ such as the one that appears below:

‘My brothers, you know what is happening? This is the moment the devil is at work. Go out and destroy the stones in the name of God. Everyone must help. Don’t just stand there and watch or walk in Averbury, say the words of Averbury for the devil is in the very town of Northleach. Do you want to burn in the fires of Hell?’

(Emma Benallay)

For the 19th century, I found one of my imaginative dialogue between William Stukeley, the widely-travelled antiquary, and Tim Robinson, the local farmer who was clearing the stones from his land. The following exchange captures the spirit well:

Stukeley: ‘Ah, Bob! Have you got something to say to you.’
Robinson: ‘No, man! I’m busy.
Stukeley: ‘Put more stones down, eh?’ ‘Making more filthy money for yourself?’

A message to the villagers from their parish priest. (Ben Unchart)

(Thanks should be expressed to the children and staff of the Corsham School, Corsham, Wiltshire for their involvement in this project. No charge is normally made for the use of the Study Centre, the visit to the Alexander Keiller Museum or the services of the Education Officer. The Education Officer can be contacted at the Alexander Keiller Museum, Avebury, Marlborough, Wilt., SN8 1RF. Tel: 0675 232000).

North Leight: washing up after the meal.

Minster Lovell: the smith.

Where to begin?

First choose your planning team—although in some cases the first moves will undoubtedly have come from an individual inspired by a particular site. As the client, you will be school children, in our case the LEA, and you will present your sanction for the project. In essence the team should include any member of the advisory service who cares about special responsibility may be relevant: Humanities, Drama, Music, English, D.T., Primary/Middle School, anyone with responsibility for curriculum development. A representative of the school closest to the chosen site should also be included as a source of local knowledge. In the case of Minster Leight and North Leight the Oxfordshire Education Service placed a large role in both the planning and execution of the project. If you do not have a large museum service in your area the curator of the local museum should be approached and asked for his help. If the site is to be used in the care of English Heritage then its Regional Education Officer should also be invited to join the team. In Oxfordshire, having selected the schools who are to take part, we arrange a regular series of meetings at which teachers from these schools are kept informed of developments and can input any problems they may be experiencing in their preparation work. This group also proved a great help when it came to locating items such as eels, goats, leather officers and a variety of other items. Either or both of these groups—teachers and planners—must be capable of providing the transport and manpower which will be needed to prepare the site and clear up afterwards.

Where should you hold your activity?

At North Leight our activity took place amongst the partially exposed footings of a Roman villa, with a railway line adjoining one edge of the site. Minster Leight was able to provide us with some walls still standing to their original height, but no roofs. By contrast at Cogges we have a fully furnished ground floor of a late 18th-century house, together with stables, pigsties and barns. From these varied experiences I would recommend the use of a site where there are not too many obvious reminders of the 20th century. What there should be, if possible, disguised. If the remains are roofed, so much the better. If the site is in a secluded piece of woodland, it might make an ideal setting.

Having selected your site you must then obtain the necessary permission for its use. As is likely, it is a site protected by law, then all activities, whether, for example, have to be agreed in close consultation with English Heritage’s inspectors of archaeology. Church members over walls or a slate hammered into the ground in the wrong place can impair their keepable appearance of the site and its features based beneath it.

What about support services?

Is the site fully accessible? Facilities adequate to meet the needs of the participants, that is clear, with parking available nearby? Is there access parking for coaches?
numbers, at North Leigh we decided that 80-83 children each day was the maximum we could cope with.

Does everyone need to be in costume?

Yes. The wearing of costume is an essential element in a living history activity. For the Minster Lovell project I provided basic patterns for male and female costumes. Large quantities of a coarse woven cotton and_facery produced fabric cloth was purchased at £2.50 per metre (34" wide) with the assistance of a local market stallholder. The resultant costumes not only look appropriate, but are hardwearing and easily laundered. A mass measurement exercise on the part of the school’s taking part produced the quantities and range of sizes needed. Each school was then responsible for the production of 10-12 costumes. In addition each girl was to provide her own headgear, belt and appropriate footwear, and the boys belts and foot-wear — again suggestions were circulated. The material was paid for by English Heritage and thus a supply of costumes is now available for use by anyone considering mounting a living history project in the medieval period and using an English Heritage site.

For the event at North Leigh each school was responsible — again working from sketches supplied — for costing its own children and staff. No-one reported any difficulties in so doing. For both activities additional adult costumes were hired, at minimal cost, from the Country Drama Wardrobe.

Why are the children there?

They are slaves building a village or farmworkers and servants hoping to secure permanent employment at the end of the day, the children must have reason for being there and carrying out their allotted tasks.

The dramatic scenario should also provide the background against which the events of the day take place and may provide the reason for departure at the end of the day — as at Minster Lovell when news of the defeat of Richard at Bosworth the impending arrival of Henry’s troops cleared the site faster than any fire bell. Most of the drama will, however, be domestic taking the form of general conversation about what they and others are doing. Through this medium the children can also learn something about living conditions, differences in social structure between then and now, what sort of behaviour was and was not socially acceptable.

As many of the teachers with whom we have worked on our project have little or no experience of this type of improvised drama our in-service training course included a session by Barbara Roberts, a nationally recognised expert in this field. In many cases your Country Drama Advisor may be able to offer this sort of assistance.

What are the children to do when they get there?

The activities chosen have to be appropriate for the period, and also in a broad sense for the location. Some craftsmen are not difficult to obtain; many teachers possess the necessary skills which they can set in their historical context — spinners, weavers, dyers, potters, needlewomen, perhaps also carpenters, metalsmiths and cooks. Teachers capable of offering these skills may come from participating schools or be seconded from elsewhere for the duration of the project. Specialist craftsmen may prove more difficult to locate and costly to employ. They should not only possess skills appropriate to the period, but be able to work with children and participate fully in the drama of the day. In some areas museums or stately homes may employ such people for demonstration purposes.

We found the staff at Sudeley Castle very helpful in locating craftsmen for use at Minster Lovell. Sports centres, organisers of adult education courses, local higher and further education establishments may also be able to help in the location of more unusual craftsman and artists — archers, furniture makers, woodturners, silversmiths, calligraphers, even a juggler! Local craft guilds are another source of help, we found the Gloucestershire and Oxfordshire guilds to be very helpful.

How many activities do we need?

Experiences both in Oxfordshire and elsewhere suggest that the minimum number of work groups is 8 children. This ensures that all children are actively involved in the task and well supervised. We have found that it is better for each child to participate fully in activities of about 1/2 hours duration during the course of the day, than to dip into four or five and thus have little real appreciation of either.

What will it all cost?

This will obviously vary enormously depending largely upon what goods and services can be obtained for nothing or at discounted prices and upon how elaborate your final product is to be. Judicious begging and borrowing combined with access to English Heritage’s equipment store meant that the final cost of the North Leigh project was less than £2,000, although this figure does not include staff time and travelling expenses.

Some of the necessary finance will, of course, come from the participants who might reasonably be asked to pay a small contribution towards costs. For the activities at Cogges we charge £1.60 a head (our originating costs have now been covered and running costs are subsidised by the Country Music Service), whereas at North Leigh participants were charged £1.00 a head (cost of lunch included). The LEA might also be asked to make a contribution — in our case they also met the costs of in-service courses to prepare teachers for the activities. Grant-giving bodies such as the SADC and local Arts Associations might also be approached.

We found that although local firms may be reluctant to hand over cash they are prepared to give support in kind — raw clay from which to build a kiln, paving slabs for the hearth, sand and stone for the buildings are examples of some of the items we have been given.

English Heritage also has an ever-increasing stock of items which may be available for use in living history projects held on their sites — costumes, kitchen equipment, large quantities of replica medieval pottery from which participants may consume a midday meal, wooden bowls, buckets, baskets, barrets and the like.

Is it worth the effort?

Organising and running a living history project is time-consuming and can at times involve a lot of physical labour, but it is all worth it if in the end one is able to provide a group of children with a unique and lasting experience. I certainly felt all the hard work was well worthwhile when one child was heard to comment afterwards: ‘We knew it was now, but we thought it was then.’

Carol Anderson

Carol Anderson is Senior Assistant Museum Education Officer of the Oxfordshire Museum Service.
En route
APPULEDCOMBE—IN SONG AND TALE

DOMEDAY 1985 whetted our appetites for field study, and in the 1986 summer term, Mrs Young and I, who shared a class of 30 lovely 8-9 year olds, decided to do a multi-disciplinary study of Appuldurcombe House and Estate.

Originally a Benedictine monastery, for 300 years it was the ancestral home of the Worsley family, the greatest mansion on the Isle of Wight, home of its governors, and a gallery for a priceless collection of treasures. When the manor fell in 1805, the classical, pillared mansion became in turn a boarding school, a temporary home for French monks and a billet for troops in the 1914-18 war. Its decay was accelerated when, in the Second World War, a landmine landed close by.

The echoing ruin is now being glazed and roofed by English Heritage. It is a most beautiful setting, backed by the downs, the park laid out by Capability Brown. It boasts three lodge houses, Freemantle Gate, an ice house and is overlooked by the ruins of the Worsley Obeisk and Cooks Castle. It is certainly an splendid subject for a field study—particularly for the children at Godshill School, founded in 1615 by Lady Ann Worsley.

Our first visit, we approached the Park from the east. They had all studied the map of the park in school and on their field visit we were able to put in the River Yar as they passed over it. We then divided the children into three groups. The first group walked the perimeter of the park, looking at the different aspects of the house, the gates and ice house.

The second group had companies, a ground plan of the building and did some simple orienteering within the building shell. The ground floor was explored and detailed work done on the building stone and the fossil therein and comparisons drawn between the stone of their own School House.

The third group worked in the main lodge, which houses a small museum. The groups then rotated so that each child covered every aspect.

On the second visit, we approached the Park from the south, put in on their map another crossing of the River Yar, and found another Lodge House. The children were very excited about this—the lodge was deserted but they were able to see the Worsley Emblem (The Griffin) and other marks, and they found the remains of both old gate pillars. Approaching from this direction, we had a good view of the house (invisible from the house). We left the park by the Freemantle Gate—a superb Ionic triumphal arch.

The children were even more excited by discovering the ruins of yet another Lodge House with features similar to the previous ones. A steep climb to the Worsley Obeisk meant they could look down on all the parts they had seen, and see clearly their own Godshill Church where so many Worsleys have their spectacular tombs.

Returning through Bech Coppice, the children collected fallen leaves of trees, drew six specimens of wild flowers and made notes.

In school, the children had been studying the different phases of occupation of the house and had made a study of the Worsley family. A visit to Godshill Church, armed with different task sheets, meant that they were able to look with deeper understanding at the Worsley tomb and monuments which they have grown used to seeing all their school lives.

In Art and Craft lessons, they made life-size collage figures of a Benedictine Monk, Lady Ann Worsley and Sir Robert Worsley. They painted and varnished large flat beach stones with pictures of the flowers they had collected on the Appuldurcombe walk.

The culmination of the work was an end-of-term concert when they presented "Appuldurcombe in Song and Tale". The children told the story and interspersed each phase with an appropriate song, e.g.

Class 3 have been studying Appuldurcombe—where it is, the building and grounds, and the people who have lived there over the ages. At one time, there were deer in the Park. Children sang—"The Keeper"—"King Richard", O.U.P. Later on, the monks lived there and it was a great Benedictine monastery.

"Laudate Dominum."
Then followed a legend about a monk whose ghost is supposed to haunt the area at night, ringing a hand bell.


*Sir, a merry tale I'll tell If you chance to think it cheery It is sure to please you well If you do not find it dreey *"Tis a tale of Appuldurcombe A Benedictine Priory. Then came Ann and Sir James Worsley Started up a family tree Three hundred years they ruled the valley Built a fort called Worsley's Tower Richard worked for Sir King Henry Now lies near Godshill's church tower.

Brother John lived most in London But when dead was brought back home Also lies in Godshill church Succeeded by brother Tom. Richard Worsley, wise he was By King James was made a knight Loved his books and studied deep Captain of the island of Wight. Then came Henry, then came Robert Builder of the present house. Next came James and then came Thomas Then Sir Richard (and his spouse) This was the last of all the Worsleys To live in Appuldurcombe fine. The house and all its treasures sold The end of the ancient line. Then a school and now a ruin. Left to nature and the air Still a noble lovely relic Empty now but still so fair. Appuldurcombe as a school and Lady Ann founded our school "Inchworm"—L. Lesser (2 part singing). Appuldurcombe temporarily reverts to being an Abbey and so a repeat of "Laudate Dominum."

Finally, a child told how English Heritage have now taken over the mansion and are re-roofing and re-glazing part of it.

Roma Hames
"The girls became so fascinated by this item, they turned it into a very complicated clapping and singing playground game.

Roma Hames is the headteacher of Godshill County Primary School on the Isle of Wight.
Games for the classroom

3 Saxon Heafest
Evidence for Saxon Heafest comes from both archaeological and written sources. A fragment of a board game dating to about AD 400 was found in Denmark and bone jet or gaming pieces have been found in Oxfordshire and Near Buntingham. The game is mentioned in Icelandic sagas and a diagram of a board is found in an English manuscript written in the 13th century. From this we know the opening layout of the pieces but we do not know the exact rules.

Book Review

Sun Horse, Moon Horse by Rosemary Sutcliff
Knight Books 1982
ISBN 0304 268150 (first published by Bodley Head)

The Uffington White Horse is magical, full of power and mystery. No one knows for sure when and why it was carved into the downs, but it is usually thought to be iron age in date. Its design resembles those found on iron age coins.

Children (and some adults) do find difficulty in making that imaginative leap necessary to enter the past. A story about the past which captures interest and includes, effortlessly, a quantity of well researched information, is more likely to be welcomed, developing the capacity for historical imagination.

Sun Horse, Moon Horse. Rosemary Sutcliff's interpretation of how the White Horse may have been made, is such a story. The idea came to her through reading T. C. Lethbridge's book Witches which presents the theory that the Iceni who lived in East Anglia, also inhabited the Chilterns and the Down Country, north of the Upper Thames Valley until they were forced out by invaders from the south. In the story, Uffington Castle, the iron hillfort crowning the highest point of the chalk escarpment (and which today overlooks the White Horse) becomes the Iceni's dun or Strong Place.

With the introduction of chess into England in the eleventh century the game fell into disuse in all but the most remote areas. In the British Isles the last mention of the game being played was in Wales in 1587.

Board and Table Games from many Civilizations Volumes 1 & 2, by R.C. Bell, published by Oxford University Press is an excellent source for the teacher. It provides material for classroom use in both historical and mathematical studies. Volume 2 suggests the following rules for Saxon Heafest:

Rules
1. Red has 48 pieces. Black has 24 pieces and a king.
2. Each player has the board shown in the diagram.
The king takes the centre square.
3. Black has first move. Players move alternately.
4. Any piece can move any number of spaces vertically or horizontally (but not diagonally) to an adjacent vacant square.
5. A piece can be captured by tagging it between two enemy pieces vertically or horizontally (but not diagonally).
6. A piece may move on the square between two enemy pieces without being captured.
7. The king can only be captured by being surrounded on all four sides by enemy pieces.
8. Black wins if the king reaches any square on the edge of the board.
9. Red wins if the king is captured.

Gail Darbin

Footnotes

Courses for teachers

Roman Cotswold Festival 1987
The Corinium Museum's award winning display on the archaeology of Roman Britain will provide an excellent introduction to the subject throughout the year.
Full-scale reconstructions of Roman rooms (a dining room, a kitchen and a workshop) have been built for an extensive exhibition of fine and beautiful objects from the Roman town of Corinium (modern Cirencester).

Exhibition
The Corinium Museum — working in cooperation with the excellently preserved Roman villa at nearby Chedworth (National Trust) has been able to develop a range of educational facilities including: a lecture room, slide projector and handling objects from the museum collections. Educational groups are welcomed and booking details are available on request.

Visiting — The Roman Cotswolds
Friday evenings 5th, 12th, 19th & 26th June various venues in the Cotswolds


Food and Cooking in Roman Britain
Saturday June 6th 1987 (Rutland Castle 1.15-5.30)
A half-day course of lectures, discussion and recipe sampling in the presence of Margaret Woodman, an authority on the subject and author of the museum publication with the same title. Limited seating; early booking advised.

Details from:
David Viner, The Corinium Museum, Park Street, Cirencester. GL7 2BX. Tel: 0285-5611

New award for town walk or trail leaflets

Every year thousands of people find greater appreciation and enjoyment of their surroundings with the help of specially produced walks or trails leaflets.

The Civic Trust in association with Wimpy International, have launched a new competition to help encourage this very popular operation, has created The Wimpy Walks Awards. They are being offered for the best leaflets published in the last three years and the most likely to promote walks or trails in urban areas.

Every place, however small, has a wealth of interest for local people. An old slide — old and new buildings, historic sites, churches, graveyards, public houses, factories, landscapes and urban wildlife reserves — all are made more interesting through well designed walks or trails.

For further details contact: The Civic Trust, 17 Carlton House Terrace, London SW1 5AW.