Digging deeper into history... with trowel and computer

Archaeologists do not live in the past even if they study it. Modern technology has given them new tools. Once they shared the trowel with the bricklayer, now they use the laser and the computer of the secondary school. As computers become more commonplace in the classroom, so they are found more and more in areas of the curriculum which are traditionally the "humanities". Archaeology, one of the studies of man which bridges the gap between the phoney poles of arts and science, is an ideal vehicle for exploring the broadest uses of the computer in secondary schools.

This year English Heritage and MESU (Microelectronics Education Support Unit), an organisation promoting imaginative use of computers on behalf of the DES, are producing a project aimed at the lower secondary age range. The idea is this.

A gas pipeline is to be laid from the North Sea gas fields across East Yorkshire to join the national grid. Three alternative routes have been proposed by "The North Sea Gas Company plc". Each route will have an impact on the landscape through which it will pass. Most of the effects will be temporary, but important archaeological sites along each route will be damaged or destroyed. Pupils have to choose between the routes to recover the maximum information within the budget provided. At the end of the simulation they must present a synthesis of the information, both as a written report and as an exhibition for members of the public.

The pack will contain teachers' notes, with a step-by-step guide to the simulation, hints on managing the project work in the classroom and detailed instructions for using the computer. An information booklet gives an up-to-date account of the prehistory and early history of the region involved. Whilst the Pickering area provides the model, the whole country can use the material. Then there are the worksheets and resource cards, everything the pupils will need to take on the different roles in the simulation. All the site details are authentic; the computer program contains over 400 records taken from North Yorkshire County Council's database.

The project scores on so many fronts. It enhances children's uses of the computer without making them wear blinkers and being glued to the screen. It tells them a lot about prehistory and early history, as well as landscape archaeology. And it puts them through the processes of decision-making which professional
EDUCATION ROOMS
We have equipped and opened several new rooms over the summer for schools to use on site visits:

**Kenilworth Castle** — two large workrooms and a small room with sink facilities for artwork are available for school parties. The rooms have 200 costumes for role-play work, a full costume of Queen Elizabeth I to investigate, three suits of 17th century armour (child-size) to try on and a range of models of parts of the castle during Elizabeth's time to handle.

**Boscobel House** — one of the farm buildings has been converted for schools to use when they visit this famous stopping place of Charles II (he hid in the oak tree here). The room has the usual audio visual facilities as well as three suits of child-size 17th century armour to try on.

New rooms are also open at Furness Abbey, Cumbria and Rievaulx Abbey, North Yorks. A room at Pickering Castle will be available early in the autumn term. A joint enterprise with the National Trust has resulted in a shelter for schools visiting Housesteads Fort.

If you want to make use of these or any of our other education rooms simply arrange it with our area office when prebooking your free visit. If you are planning a visit to Dover Castle please check whether our new Education Centre is open for use, by contacting the Monument Manager, Mr. Ken Scott. Tel. 0504 206291.

VIDEOS: Rescuing Our Past — our latest release is about rescue archaeology work. It is based on the Anglo-Saxon site at West Heslerton in North Yorkshire. The film has been made for primary and middle school children to use in the classroom. It is available on VHS or Betamax for free loan from our usual Ruislip outlet (see below).

Video loans — please note that due to our limited library stock we have had to place a limit of four on the number of copies you may borrow at any one time. You may keep tapes for one week after receipt, so we advise you to nominate a date during the term when you will need them.

ERRATUM
Our article, "Museums and the world of work" in issue no. 5 mistakenly referred to the Smithsonian Institute. This should, of course, have been the Smithsonian Institution.

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English Heritage has over 350 monuments open to the public. Schools can make a free educational visit to any of our sites provided this is pre-booked through the relevant area office at least two weeks in advance. Teachers can also arrange a free exploratory visit beforehand to prepare ideas for the main visit later. We have a free information pack (containing a map of all our monuments) available along with information sheets for many of the individual sites. If you would like a copy of any of these free visit-forms please write to our new address.

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