

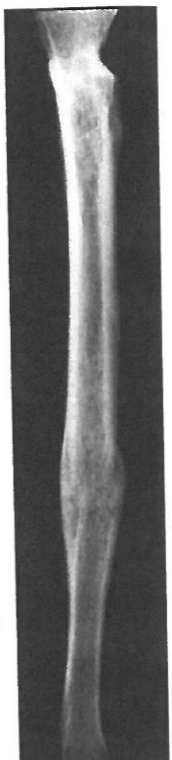
Play

The Skeleton Game



This is Rosamund McPherson. Let's imagine she has been buried for about 2,000 years. The class needs to think about what archaeologists might find after all that time.

There are two routes you can follow — take both if you have the time.



This X-ray of the left ulna (lower arm bone) shows a fracture about a third of the way from the lower end. The bone is from a late Saxon (10th-11th century AD) woman from Ipswich aged about 35-45.



Route 1
After some time in the ground most objects will begin to disintegrate. Organic material (i.e. things which were once living such as wood or leather) will tend to rot quicker than inorganic material (i.e. things which were never 'alive' but made-up such as bronze or plastic).
What will be left of Rosamund and what she is wearing and carrying?

Hair lasts longer than flesh but is generally discovered

Teeth are a good clue to her age

If only the buttons survive, can you work out what Rosie was wearing?

Plastic belt?

What's in her bag? Could they be clues to her identity?



X-rays of archaeological skeletons often provide interesting information.



A medieval man's skull, also from Ipswich, showing a healed wound from a weapon, perhaps a sword. The shape of the wound suggests a blow from above and to the person's right. The smooth edges of the wound suggest long-term healing; there is no sign of any infection — in other words he didn't die from this attack to his head!



▷ No wonder I can't dig the garden for too long! This X-ray shows some of my back bones have welded together.



Rings? Do they tell us how important a person was/is?

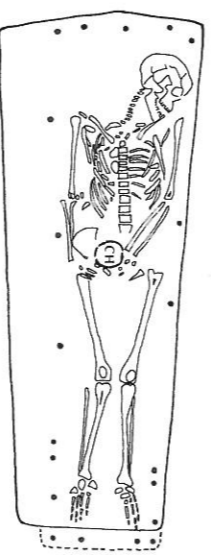
Are there hidden safety pins holding your clothes together? (good survival), Rosamund,

Flesh will go but bones will remain

Leather tops will probably rot but what about soles of rubber?

Tom
Rosamund Mary McPherson
I am Aged 8 yrs 3 months
I want to be buried with
pink ghetto blaster
Some teddies
Books
Bike
Roller boots
Baby Doll
Pencil case and felt tip pens
Drawing pad
Box of Beethoven's.

What does this list tell us about her? Compare this with what archaeologists sometimes find in graves of different periods, for example an Egyptian pharaoh, a Saxon warrior or a wealthy bronze age woman. Do people have things buried with them today? What is the custom in other countries? What does burial tell us about people's ideas of the 'afterlife'?



--- Extra cut for coffin end
— Edge of grave
• Iron coffin nails
CH Chalice

This is an archaeological drawing of the skeleton of a man about 30 years old buried inside a church in Essex in about AD 1200. Only his skeleton survives though the way it was laid out with the knees close together suggests that he was wrapped in a shroud. He was holding a chalice made of lead — this clue tells us that he was a priest. The coffin has long since rotted away though the nails tell us it must once have been there.

DID YOU KNOW!

... that in 1984 part of the body of a Celtic man (yes flesh, bones and beard) was found in Lindow Marsh in Cheshire. Nicknamed Peter Marsh by the archaeologists his survival was extraordinary — preserved in the wet and airless environment since about AD 300. ... that the frozen environment of the Altai Mountains helped tattooed skin survive from people buried in the 4th-3rd centuries BC.

To play **The Skeleton Game** you need: one willing volunteer in a class who will lie down and pretend to be dead.



Using photographs: exteriors

The article in the last issue of **Remnants** looked at some of the ways of using old photographs of the interior of buildings. This article deals with exterior shots.



Houghton House ruins before conservation.

Restored buildings

Archive pictures will sometimes show ruined buildings before they are restored. This photograph of Houghton House before it was taken into the care of the then Ministry of Public Buildings and Works shows the vegetation that had first to be removed. The next picture shows the building in its consolidated state.

These photographs throw up important issues of conservation. Do you prefer ruins

with ivy growing up them? Are they more romantic? Why do we choose to conserve such ruins? Why are they important? Do we destroy their character in the very act of conserving them? Should taxes be spent on this kind of work or is it only worthwhile saving furnished buildings? Working on questions such as these may also create a need in your pupils to find out what the building originally looked like and why some people regard it as special. Conservation issues can be tackled at a variety of different levels; primary children could start by looking at the signs of wear and tear around them whilst at sixth form level students might be interested to read extracts from **The Heritage Industry** by Robert Hewison.

Dealing with clues

Sometimes photographs will help explain what can be seen today. A steeply pitched roof with a very tall chimney stack might be the clue to an earlier thatched roof. Odd lines in the brickwork may be clues to previously demolished adjoining buildings and patches may indicate blocked doorways or windows. Hypotheses can be checked, if the changes have taken place within the last century or so, by reference to old photographs.

Street scenes

Street scenes like the one of Ware in the early part of this century are fairly easy to get hold of. Children could be asked to



Houghton House after consolidation in 1969.

study the detail of the building and this picture lends itself especially to looking at the fascia boards and trade signs and advertising. A magnifying glass might help. They could start to work out what each of the buildings was used for and then research the subject further in a local street directory. They could decide who the people were and which buildings they might have been associated with. Children could discuss the differences and similarities with life today. Using a Polaroid camera children could take a picture of the same scene today to aid comparison. What changes can they see and why might these changes have occurred? Are they due to changing technology or fashion? Do they reflect changing aspirations?

Sources of photographs of buildings

To obtain suitable archive photographs of buildings contact your local archive office or local studies library. They may well have published books or postcard collections of local sites in the past and will also have originals in their collections. Your museum may have a collection of material or you might be able to make your own collection of old postcards of local views. English Heritage has a photographic library that covers its own sites. It deals with postal and telephone enquiries as well as personal visits, for which an appointment should be made.

Contact:

The Photographic Section

Fortress House

23 Savile Row

London W1X 2HE.

Tel: 01-734 6010 ext 513

A collection you may be unaware of is the National Building Record also housed in Fortress House and run by the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England. It was started in 1941 to collect records of historic buildings threatened or already damaged by bombing. There is a large photograph collection covering the whole of England and arranged in box files by county and civil parish. It deals with postal and telephone enquiries and there is a public search room open Monday to Friday, 10 a.m. to 5.30 p.m., except public holidays.

Contact:

National Building Record

Fortress House

23 Savile Row

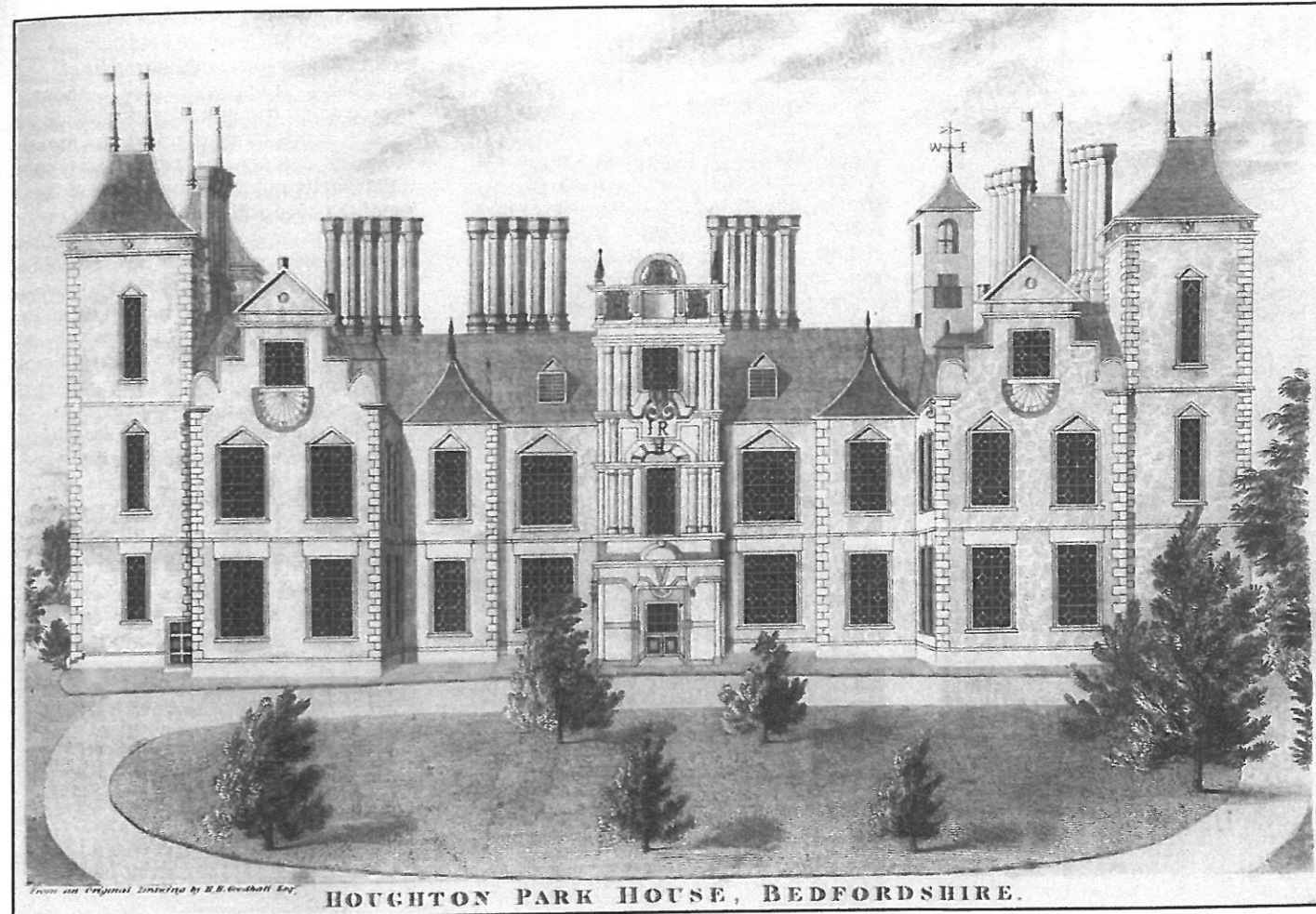
London W1X 2HE.

Tel: 01-734 6010 ext 328 or 329

Gail Durbin

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South East, English Heritage.*

Houghton House, Bedfordshire.
1m NE of Ampthill off A418, 8m S
of Bedford. OS Map 153; ref
TL 039394. Admission free at any
reasonable time.

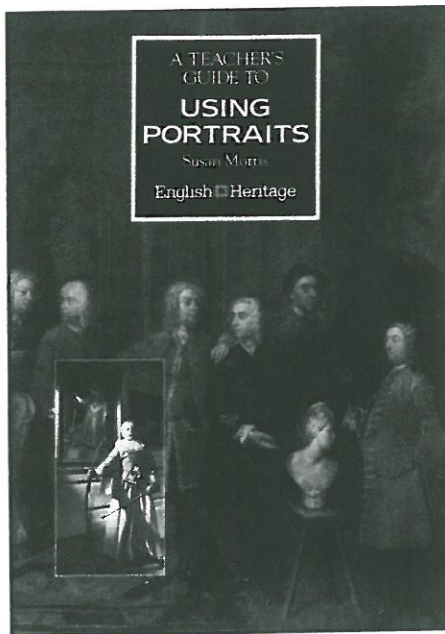


Houghton House before it fell into disrepair.



Ware early this century.

Using Portraits



A Teacher's Guide to Using Portraits by Susan Morris is the latest book in our series 'Education on Site'.

The following pieces are extracted from the book.

Portraits are the gossip columns, newflashes, party political broadcasts and family albums of the past. The purpose of **Using Portraits** is to help decode some of the messages to be found in portraits. The first chapters aim at helping general understanding, and then later there are suggestions for practical activities for groups.

Whoever the sitter in a portrait was, the decision to sit suggests that he or she was content to see something about himself/herself recorded. That something might have been becoming queen or being knighted, pride in a beautiful face or the birth of twins, or the desire for a picture for a lover to keep.

Based on these two principles — that there is generally a reason for the production of a portrait and that it will include information about the sitter and/or occasion — you can look at any portrait with the certainty that it is not a dumb, closed, meaningless item, but that it represents a set of choices: a statement is being made to you, and your reaction is required. Looking in turn at the decisions represented by the portrait's costume, facial expression, bodily pose or gesture, background and accessories, inscriptions, colours, size, medium and even the frame will all help the interpretation.

Expression and pose

Once dressed and with the artist, the sitter will try to adopt an appropriately meaningful pose. Even where speedy photography is used, even when a natural, relaxed look is desired, it is necessary to pose. Sitters rarely present a totally blank face and body to the artist (unless, of course, that is the point they wish to make to the viewer). This stage is crucial and it can take several sessions to achieve the satisfaction of both artist and sitter.

The facial expression is very important to compose, because people identify and assess each other most readily by the face. If the portrait is only going to show part of a person, it's the body that will be omitted, not the face. Often it is only the face which is shown, and the artist's whole representation of the character of the person must be assumed to be contained in it. In making portraits, artists nearly always begin with the face before they work on any other part, because if the face doesn't work there's no point in going on.

Faces are very mobile, but face muscles are not strong enough to hold any one expression for long without rather disfiguring consequences. Try it. About the most that can be achieved is a slight tension or relaxation of brows and mouth. However, eyes can be directed to one spot indefinitely, and the combination of the set of the head with the direction of the eyes can be varied immensely. Try it: find as many positions for your head to hold as you can. In each, try moving your glance around: down your nose haughtily, up to the left dreamily, chin up aggressively, and so on. Add to this tension or relaxation of the brows and mouth and a vast gallery of expressions is possible.

When studying a portrait to see what expression, what facial alignments, have been chosen, remember that you will usually need to look quite studiously to savour what the expression offers. The longer you look, the more you will tend to see.

The sitter's body is similarly arranged in a significant way, and again needs to be studied slowly because often the small details — fingers, shoulder alignment, weight distribution — are the most potent ones. Does the sitter lean towards you, or retreat? Are the legs sturdily set or elegantly composed? We almost instinctively recognise the poses of basic body language which suggest to us that sitters have certain physical qualities or mental states — grace, confidence, grief, pride and so on. Seventeenth and eighteenth century artists and intellectuals produced books and essays illustrating ideals of pose for use as reference works. Often these specified the poses of polite deportment for everyday life such as bowing, standing or walking. Bewigged eighteenth century gentlemen frequently adopt positions which to us look surprisingly silly, but were to them part of a system of graceful posture in both movement and repose. What rules of polite deportment affect your own movements today?

Exercise on pose

Study the pose of the sitters in these illustrations. What adjectives would you

select to describe each sitter? Can you analyse what, specifically, in each pose causes your response?

Suggested repose

The sitter (left) holds a very taut pose of some sternness; lips are pressed together, legs together, his hand presses rather than rests on the table as if about to rap on it. Because he is not relaxed, one senses impatience, as if this were a very temporary pose, not a long-drawn-out movement. The tightness of the pose recalls the military training corroborated by the medals; despite his years, this man remains confident in his physique and himself.

The lady (below) is in a pleasantly reflective mood, distracted in the middle of reading. She is lost in her own thoughts with a slight smile on her lips, but the angle of her head seems to suggest wistfulness. Her hand draws attention to her heart and her throat while it plays with the chin of the miniature. Her body is seated but in no sense languorous or relaxed; she is too upright to convey abandonment of a more sensual kind; she turns away from the sail of a distant ship.

In front of a mirror strike suitable poses

which would convey the following professions or interests: cleric, teacher, doctor, politician, athlete. Don't rush. Think about each bodily part and its orientation to the viewer. Will your portrait be full — or half-length?

Strike suitable poses which would convey the following states or qualities: parenthood, determination, grace, optimism, authority.

Suggest some other abstract qualities that you feel would be possible to convey by a pose for a portrait: what qualities, for example, would you wish to express about yourself?

Colour observation and description

To improve colour observation and description, take some paint manufacturers' colour charts for the pupils to use when you ask them to make a list of all the colours in a particular costume or portrait. This helps them to develop awareness of not only all the different tones of, say, green, but also of where artists use unexpected colours such as grey, olive green or purple on faces.

Improving observation skills

Observation of different profiles: in a darkened room, sit a person between a lamp and some papers pinned on the wall so that a shadow of their profile is accurately cast. Draw round the profile of the whole head with a thick black marker, or transfer it to black paper and cut out a silhouette being very careful to keep the exact lines. The identity of the sitter has to be carefully concealed, because the next step is to display the profiles and have pupils guess whose profile is whose. Members of staff make good subjects! (If you charge a fee for guessing and prizes, this makes an entertaining open-day type activity . . .)

Daily alteration of appearance: set up an environment including chair, backdrop and lighting which will remain as nearly constant as possible day after day. Take a Polaroid photograph once a day or once a week of the same face. Take as many as you can in this way — ten at least — and more than one face if possible. Display the results sequentially and observe differences in mood, skin condition, hair condition and so on. Which does the sitter think is the best/worst? Why does he/she choose that one out of so many nearly identical ones? Which do others think is the best or worst?

A Teacher's Guide to Using Portraits costs £3.50 inclusive of postage and is available from English Heritage Postal Sales, PO Box 43, Ruislip, Middlesex, HA4 0XW.



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