Teacher for Geography/History would put on an activities day for children at St. Ives School to demonstrate how Early Technology and Life would deliver National Curriculum requirements. It was encouraging to see what enthusiasm the children and teachers tackled, among other things, soil paintings, planting flowers and grasses and moving an enormous piece of granite from the top of the St. Ives School to another. They now have a brand new monolith! (Actually, being slightly sensible the monoliths are normally reckoned to be, they refer to it as a “monolith”!)

All of these events took place as scheduled and were very useful and very successful as backdrops to the project. A mainstay of the project was Brian Johnson, Advisory Teacher of Technology. In fact, the more Brian became involved in the project, the more he felt he was in danger of remaining in the Roman-British period for ever! Over to Brian for an account of some of his work:

"My first involvement with the Early Technology Project was at a planning meeting, at Country Hall, in the summer of 1992. A lot of ideas were discussed, but the one which stayed with me was that of re-roofing one of the dwellings at Chysauster. My next hopes for Chysauster I decided to start collecting the materials needed.

Cutting reeds for the roof
A visit to the Wood’s settlement, in February, gave me my first real idea of what I had let myself in for. By this time, I had made contact with Dave Plummer, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds warden at Marazion marsh, and had been given permission to cut reed to thatch the thatch. The bad news was that the cutting had to be completed before the birds started to nest, estimated to be no more than a month away.

Arrangements were made for as many helpers as possible, from the schools involved in the project, to cut the reed during the days outside of the half term holiday, in two weeks time. Over the weekend we cleared about two acres of the marsh, under the guidance of Dave Plummer. The pile of reed looked monstrous, and I was glad to know that our effort would benefit the marsh as part of the management programme of the St. Ives Country Park.

This was not until we began sorting and tying the reed into bundles for transporting that we realised that we had a problem. The area we had cleared has not been cut for some time so much of that pile was old and broken reed, too short or rotten to be of use, only about a quarter of the reed would be good enough for tying.

thatching
We had planned to re-roof the larger oval enclosure in the house complex at Chysauster, that was about 9m x 7m, but we would not have enough reed, so we decided to tackle the more modest round house just under 6m in diameter.

Constructing the roof
Timber was donated by the South West Electricity Board, who regularly coppice to keep their power lines clear. Their contractor, Nick Berryman, selected, cut and delivered to site the poles and wattle needed, and work was begun even before the frame for the roof at the end of May. Once again the teachers and parents from the primary schools gave up countless hours during weekends and the half term holidays, and with help and advice from John and Jacqui Wood, with their children Imogen and Dominic, a roof began to transform the skyline at Chysauster.

Pupils of the primary schools sorted and tied bundles of reed into mats in order to speed the thatching, but it soon became obvious that we did not have enough reed to make a waterproof roof.

Thatching started as soon as the timber frame was complete, and out second concession to the twentieth century was employed. The first was the use of large banana twines with the timbers and reed bundles. A bonnet chair was rigged, using pulleys, from the apex of the roof. The pulleys enabled me to haul my ample self upward so that I could swing out and hook onto the framework. Here I was able to work with someone on the outside, using a rafter pole and ladder, drawing the reed mats into place.

Suddenly it was June and children arrived from the four Primary Schools to the camp which had been erected by parents, teachers and pupils during the previous weekend. The site was very kindly loaned to us by Roger Matthews, a local farmer and a governor of Culmval Primary School.

Children, in wonderful costumes, worked with Jilli Hellerman, a drama specialist, to perfect a chant and ritual for passing through the ‘Time Tunnel’ in the magic blackthorn hedge. Having done so, they began work around the hut. The changeover from primary to secondary on Wednesday afternoon was almost unnoticed and the slightly older pupils were soon just as engrossed in the activities as the primaries had been.

Despite our wish for authenticity, we had to use the modern equivalent of tools. Thus it was permissible to use knives, chisels, and so on and we made considerable use of natural string and twine. We had to cheat a bit, of course. We were only on site for a week, after all! The only thing which would not bend was the possibility of children having tried everything by luncheon and becoming disinterested! What would I do?

Activities on site
John Wood had set up a pole lathe and a workbench for spokeshaving. Children made rakes, hoes, brooms etc. which they sold on the project stalls.

Jacqui organized morning groups of children to collect Hawthorn flowers, pine cone of Oak and herbs for the wild salad lunch. Groups of children helped with fire-making, the techniques which consisted of fanning saw dust or, wild salid, (complete with salad dressings, traded with the

Cooking over an open fire
Romans' various types of oat and wheat cakes, biscuits which were cooked on the fire in the hut and elderflower cordial. Not all was made on site; the elderflower cordial, for example, was made earlier and brought along. The children had made cups and bowls of clay back in school.

John and Jacqui’s daughter Imogen worked with many of the children on spokeshaving, plaiting, weaving, cooking and lots of other activities. Imogen already wants to be a medical doctor, so I think she will make an excellent teacher!

Two groups a day visited the neighbouring farm to milk the goats. The milk was used to make butter, cheese and cream. Brian Johnson was ‘Brian the Smith’ with bellows and a charcoal fire. He demonstrated simple forging techniques, using a granite anvil and crude hammer. The same fire was used to melt pewter and cast simple jewellery based on Celtic patterns. Pupils made brooch pins, pendants and cuffs by pressing and scratching their designs into the surface of the soft cuttlefish bones which were used as moulds. Brian also doubled as ‘Brian the Thatcher’, working with a small group to make the cap to finish the hut.

A fish smoker visited and demonstrated the smoking of mackerel and herring, which was utilised in the lunch. He left us fish to smoke for the fire in the hut but somehow, I don’t think we quite got that right! Peter Pearson, a fisherman whose hobby was fish knitting, spent a long time with the children making knifes, hide scraper and whetstones. He also demonstrated the making of arrowheads and made a first saw which proved to be highly efficient.

Brazier the pig
Carole Page, a local artist, taught the children how to make piggies from various plants and vegetables. They worked on hessian sacking and made sitting for it before painting. They even made their own brushes by chewing the ends of yellow twigs! As well as each group making a banner based on designs taken from the local environment, they also made a wonderful sculpture of a pig, subsequently christened ‘Rasher!’ The St Ives children also made a lifelike sculpture of a Roman soldier.

Storytelling, music and drama were an integral part of the week. Alison Dures, Advisory Teacher for Drama, and Jilli Hellerman, worked with the children on story and legend, Alison arriving one morning as a wise seer-woman, Keith Havercroft, Advisory Teacher for Music, spent a morning with groups of children devising and playing rhythms from locally found objects. On two evenings came Kelvin Jones, a teacher from a local secondary school. He was resplendent in cloak and costume and strode out into circle, Italia, the Roman god of love, walking, stirring Celtic tales in the lights of a flickering campfire.

We had two queens, one a saddle quinn, both kindly loaned by the Royal Cornwall Museum, Truro. The children soon found that a hollow stone in the hot circle, previously designated a post-hole, actually served as a third queen and possibly the best of the three. Much eating and drinking took place around the fire and small cakes and loaves cooked. Place mats from which the food was eaten were all plaited from yellow flag and similar broom straw.

Some children collected sheep’s wool and were able to make thread using drop spindles. John and Jacqui had brought a loom which they had made and set up earlier and children were able to have a go at weaving.

Evaluation
I don’t think we worried! The atmosphere of the whole week was one of relaxation. Occasionally, one or two children were seen strolling around the site for a few minutes or sitting on a bench, staring at a painting of a hut, resting. On the whole, however, they all worked like slaves, moving in waves from one activity to another. It seemed no sooner had we begun each day by ringing the clock and time to go and milk the goats and eat our evening meal. I suppose the weather helped a little. My own personal worst moment was when I walked, staff in hand, towards the site to find the Sun shining and Alison about what they were going to do that day. I was aware of visitors being there, I was unprepared for a group suddenly to say, ‘we wanted New World Accent, ‘would you mind looking this way, please?’ I turned around to be faced with a half-circle of about twenty Canadians, each of whom had about three cameras, Jilly and Alison being well into the dramatic bit, immediately fell into Roman-British role leaving me standing stiffly as the local granitic, desperately wishing they’d go away. Because all of you to dress up in costumes but are full of inhibitions!

I don’t really know how close we came to being Roman-British people in the short time we were at Chysauster but I know that the dozens of visitors who came whilst we were there were fascinated with what we were doing and many joined in. The children were totally involved with their various talks and I am confident that they learned something about what it must have been like two thousand years ago. At the very least, just living, working and playing together is a very precious value in their development and, anyway, which of those children will ever forget the atmosphere as we all silently watched a brilliant red sun descend behind the stage on a cold roofless day, as it did two thousand years ago? I certainly won’t.

Rob Rush
Advisory Teacher for Outdoor Education, Camborne

Working at the spokeslump
Reviews

'Augustus has been going off on his own every day this fortnight'. The project work, such as how to make a medieval floor tile or shoe, made me want to do it myself.

Philippe Planal
Ex-teacher, writer on archaeology and education

Footnotes

International Directory Youth & Heritage
Jeunesse et Patrimoine International and UNESCO have recently published a directory of organisations concerned with the heritage and education in ninety-two countries worldwide. Each listing includes address, activities, publications and contact people. It will be invaluable for anyone wanting to make contact in other countries. For more information contact: Jeunesse & Patrimoine International 9 avenue Franklin Roosevelt 75008 Paris FRANCE

Courses for Teachers at the V&A
The Education Department at the V&A Museum have a programme of INSET courses running through to the Spring Term 1994 for both primary and secondary teachers. A free booklet is available giving full details. Among forthcoming courses are these three covering the Victorians at Key Stage 2.

Teaching the Victorians at the V&A
Tuesday 2 November 1993 10.15-16.00
Includes lectures on the Great Exhibition, the founding of the V&A, and Victorian furniture and dress as well as sessions on the collections and planning a visit. Fee £20 including lunch.

Studying the Victorians through drawing
Friday 12 November 1993 10.15-16.00
The course will focus on Victorian buildings. Practical activities include making sketch books and methods for encouraging close observation through drawing. Fee £30.

Not the Guided Tour - an alternative approach to studying the Victorians
Friday 13 December 1993 10.15-16.00
This will concentrate on ways of using the V&A's Victorian collections but avoid the guided tour and the worksheet and look instead at problem solving and debating issues. Fee £30.

For further information or to book a place on any of these courses, please contact the Department of Learning at the V&A, tel. 0171-930 9000.

Using the Historic Environment
This new free booklet is packed with practical ideas and activities for making use of the resource of the historic environment. It contains sections on:

- what is the historic environment?
- the conservation of the historic environment and how to get pupils involved in the issues it raises.
- four pages of National Curriculum ideas covering every subject and cross-curricular themes.
- ideas for preparation, on-site and follow-up work.
- resources

Your Past, Our Future
In Reminiscence 20 we featured some of the winning entries from this unique competition organised by the Accademia Italiana and as promised we are pleased to announce details now of a nationwide competition for 1994, supported by the Halifax Building Society. Your Past, Our Future is an art, design and technology challenge for 5-18 year olds to express their concern for the future of our artistic and architectural inheritance in poster or video form.

40 posters and 20 videos will be selected by the judges to be included in a nationwide tour which will open at the Accademia Italiana, London in May 1994 and tour to Cardiff, Glasgow and Belfast throughout the summer months.

As a result of class discussion, pupils should design a poster or produce a short video which uses images and words to draw attention to what they consider worth preserving for future generations. This may be approached from a local, national or international angle. A slogan or message should be incorporated into the design of the poster.

The competition is open to all schools in the UK and will be judged in three age categories: Ages 5-11, 11-14 and 14-18. Generous prizes will be awarded in each category and will include school and video equipment, art materials supplied by Philip and Tacey, some cash prizes and a tour of tandems Television Studios, to see a programme in the making. All entries must reach the Accademia Italiana by 30 March 1994. A free Teacher's Pack giving guidance on how to approach the competition has been specially produced in partnership with English Heritage. It suggests starting points to discuss current issues in conservation as well as exploring the themes of the competition and how they may develop. For further information on the competition and a copy of the Teacher's Pack please contact:
Sarah Burke
Education Officer
Accademia Italiana
24 Russell Gate
London SW7 4BH

A Teacher's Guide to Using School Buildings
Sallie Burbanks

We are pleased to announce the publication of this new book in our Education on Site series. Every school nationally and internationally research the history of their school. This book will help teachers make the best use of the variety of sources, from documents to the buildings themselves. It contains case studies from schools that have completed their investigations and each section focuses on a particular line of enquiry. The book also shows how your own school can form the starting point for a wider project investigating the material culture of nineteenth and twentieth century Britain and will be a useful resource for relevant Study Units in the National Curriculum. The book costs £5.95 including postage and packing and can be ordered from English Heritage, PO Box 29, Northampton, NN6 9RY. Please quote product code XP 11510.

Footnotes

For a free copy of Using the Historic Environment, our latest Resources catalogue and the Free Educational Visits booklet just complete the slip below and return it to English Heritage Education Service, Keysign House, 429 Oxford Street, London, W1R 2HD.

Please send me a free copy of Using the Historic Environment □ Resources □ Free Educational Visits □ (Please tick as applicable)

Name: ________________________________

Address: ________________________________