

Birmingham YAC

Issue 3

March 2004

Looking forward to the rest of 2004

So we had a fabulous time during the first few meetings of the Birmingham YAC learning about the archaeology on our doorstep and in far-away places!

This year will be just as exciting! We have some excellent visits and activities lined up for you...

Look forward to building a Bronze Age sweat lodge, visiting local archaeological sites, and looking into folklore and legends of the past.

We hope to link up with the Worcestershire YAC group for a joint meeting and also visit Newhall Mill with the S. Coldfield Civic Society. Also the Time Capsule will be added to for future archaeologists to find! We would really like you all to contribute ideas for activities or visits too, so send them in to us c/o the Visitor's centre.

Juliet Porter
Branch Leader.

Christmas Party!

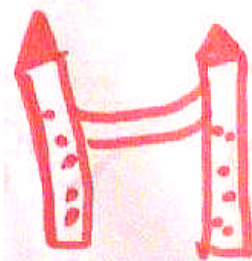
We spent our Christmas Party at **Blakesley Hall** Visitors Centre. Those of you who wanted a closer look, never fear, we will be returning in April to do a spot of building recording.

The party was great fun, we got to see your artistic sides with a game of '**History Pictionary**'

Here are some of your drawings from the day, can you tell what they are? - (Answers on the back page.)



a



b



c



d

How to play history Pictionary:

Write down names of famous buildings, people and events throughout history, then put them in a bag, and get people to pull them out in turn and try and draw them in 2 minutes.

The person with the most correct guesses wins!

Tutenkahmun would have been proud!

Armed with toilet rolls and a stop watch, we played the 'mummy game' We had great fun with this game, luckily we had a camera to catch your efforts on film.

If you want to play at home



The mummy's emerge!



It's a wrap!

Tudor Facts we discovered at Blakesley Hall...

- Turkeys originally came from America. Before the 1520's we had goose for Christmas dinner!
- Before the 19th Century we didn't have Christmas trees in England. In Tudor times they would have had a 'kissing bough' a decoration made from winter plants.
- Mince pies were originally made of real Mince!



Traditional recipe for a Tudor

Christmas mince pie:

The minced meat of 1 pheasant, 1 hare, 1 capon, 2 pigeons and 2 rabbits, 2 sheep's kidneys, beef meat-balls, eggs, pickled mushrooms, salt and pepper, vinegar and spices!

(MMMMMMM...but would you eat one with brandy sauce or custard?)

Send your ideas in for this years party...we could have a medieval banquet...or Victorian tea party?? What do you think?



Food for thought...

Throughout the medieval period, people ate more or less the same foods, mainly vegetables and meat. By the Tudor period, more things were being imported into Britain, including things like...**Citrus fruits, apricots, pomegranates, turkey, tomatoes and potatoes.**

One of these imported foods was SUGAR. Imported from plantations in Portugal and Spain, it had a drastic effect on the diets of the time. The Tudors loved it! They give it as tokens of love... had whole banquets made of sugar..... created sugar statues at dinner parties..... and even decorated sugar puddings with real gold!

Unfortunately, eating all this sugar led to a lot of tooth decay. Even Queen Elizabeth was reported to have black teeth!

To get whiter teeth, they used mouth powders made from rosemary and rose water and more drastically -nitric acid!!

I know I won't complain about brushing my teeth again!



Would you beagle it?

Marine archaeologists' think they have found the remains of the **HMS Beagle**, the ship that transported Darwin on his world tour in the 1830's.

Charles Darwin wrote the famous book **The origin of the species** describing his theories on evolution.

This famous ship is thought to be located under marshes in Essex.



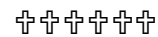
Emperor myth proved wrong

There has always been debate over whether the British born Roman Emperor, Domitianus, existed. Archaeologists'

thought there was so little evidence that he existed then he must have been made up. However, recently a batch of coins was found by an amateur metal detectorist, all stamped with his portrait! It is thought that he ruled over Britain, France and parts of Germany 2000years ago. Not bad for a man who wasn't thought to exist!



It's a monk's life



When Sandwell Priory was in use, 800 years ago, it was occupied by Benedictine monks, here is how they would have spent a typical day;

The day started at MIDNIGHT with the first service.

They would have to get up again at 6am for another SERVICE, followed by breakfast of BREAD and MEAD. *

Then on to work, anything from working in the fields to copying texts....then Yet another SERVICE....

9am the monks would gather and discuss the matters of the monastery followed by another SERVICE. At midday the monks would gather in the refectory for their main meal, where they ate in silence while the scriptures were read to them.

After a short rest and another service.... they returned to work, followed by another service. At 4pm they had their supper followed by the last service of the day, then BED! Phew!

St Benedict, the founder of the Benedictine monks thought that monks should practice **humility, prayer, obedience, silence, and solitude**. The monasteries were self-contained, allowing the monks to live their lives away from everyone else and therefore be better able to practice the above qualities.

Because the monks lived most of their life in silence, they had over **100 different hand signs** so they could communicate with each other.

In a time when there were no libraries, or schools, monasteries were the centres of learning. The monks would spend part of their day transcribing texts, some of these were **illuminated**, often with the first letter on the page was enlarged and decorated with wonderful pictures.

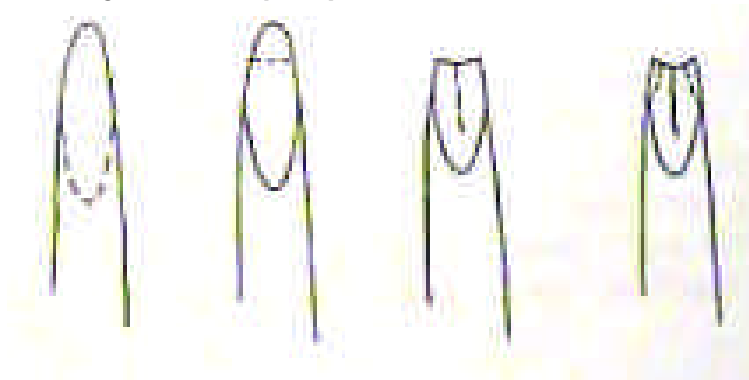


The Latin for feather is pen - special knives were used to create quill pens out of feathers....which is where we get 'pen knife' from !

* Beer for breakfast! it wasn't just the monks were partial to a tippie in the morning. Up until very recently, it was unsafe to drink water due to things such as cholera. Water either had to be boiled or brewed, to make it safe. So it was common practice to drink beer or wine instead of water.

Here are some of your autographs written with a quill pen and ink:

Make your own quill pen:



Cut a feather nib as above to make a quill pen. You can make ink out of charcoal and water.



Our first attempt at using a quill



Apprentice monks gather in the monastery!



Nice time for a nap!

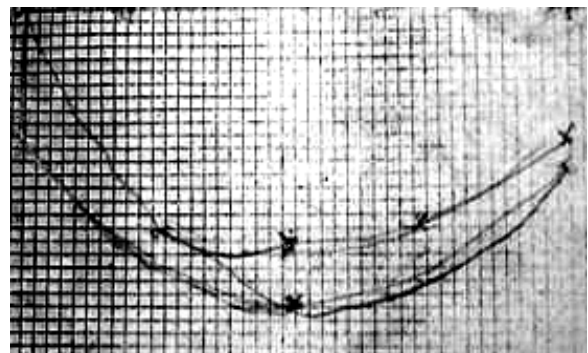
Local nobles who lived near the monasteries, often donated money, and in return, would

be reserved a space inside the monastery for after their demise. Some of the outlines of these tombs still remain, here a yac member tries one for size. We can see that people of the 21st Century are a lot taller - This grave was for a full-grown man!

Earthworks in Sutton Park

Sutton Park has a number of earthworks, ranging from banks and ditches, to a Roman Road.

We investigated some of these when we visited the park in January. We came across some circles in the ground near Banners Gate. To start the survey, we first found North, and the grid reference. We then measured the widest part of the circle. From this 'base line' we measured the distance at regular intervals to the inner and outer edges of the ditch. Below you can see the results of this plotted on graph paper.



These circle ditches were made when an army camp was stationed in the park in the 1890's. These were dug as drainage ditches round the tents!

We also looked at one of the many banks and ditches found in the park. The 18th Century bank and ditch running alongside Westwood coppice was created to keep cattle and rabbits out of the wood. Originally these earth walls would have been topped with a wooden fence for extra defence.

Banks and ditches are found all over the park, some dating from the **12th Century**

when 'Deer Parks' were the height of fashion.

Others include enclosures and park boundaries from the 17th and 18th century. See if you can spot them next time you visit the park.

Other archaeology in the park...

Roman Road

(50AD) Served as a road between Wall -a big roman fort- and Metchley (Edgbaston Excavation of the road has uncovered that the landscape when the road was built was similar to today, heathland. Does this mean the landscape itself is an archaeological feature?

Evidence for Bronze Age sweat lodges

Heat shattered stones, thought to be evidence of an ancient sauna! We will be making one of these ourselves on National Archaeology Day(17th July)

Targets - 1881

Concrete dug out where targets were set up for shooting practice.

The rifle range was closed when man walking his dog felt a bullet whistle past his ear!



You can also find in the park, other archaeological sites of interest....old mill sites, pools, tracks, enclosures among others.

The park has been used by the army on many occasions, here are a few examples....

1914 – Sutton park used for a camp site for **50'000 soldiers** nicknamed the 'Birmingham pals' because they all came from the same area and many already knew each other.

The park also housed wounded soldiers from **New Zealand** and **Australia**.

During **WWII** the park was used as a training ground for the **home guard**.(Dads Army)

The park was also used for **trench digging** practice, **tank testing**, and a **prisoner of war camp!**

Archaeology fieldwork bursaries:

Roman research trust / roman society has archaeological bursaries available to cover costs of up to £150 per week to enable applicants to participate on an archaeological project with links to Roman studies.

Applicants must be 16-18years old

If you are interested, be prepared to do a lot of the enquires yourself, you will have to write to the organiser of whichever project you want to take part in, yourself.

If you are interested, you could get a few ideas from the following web sites -

Information on fieldwork opportunities may be found at www.britarch.ac.uk/cba/ (see 'fieldwork opportunities')
www.archaeology.co.uk/directory/index.asp?cat=1

Please contact me individually if you want more information on this.

Places to go and things to see...

- **Sarehole mill:** Cole bank road, hall green, a water powered corn grinding mill, thought to have inspired Tolkien in his writings of 'LOTR' Look out for the Tolkien weekend in May.
- **Kenilworth Castle:** There are special events on here in April about the Normans, look on the English Heritage website for more details.

- If you want something a bit closer to home, why not come along to **Sutton Park**. pick up a leaflet from the visitors centre and try one of the 3 archaeological walks we have marked out round the park.

www.english-heritage.org.uk/events

www.nationaltrust.org.uk

www.birmingham.gov.uk

Please let us know if you have visited somewhere you can recommend...or come across any interesting books, programmes or websites, that might interest the YAC members.

Saving Sutton Park



Heathland Management: Important for archaeology!

The humps and bumps of Sutton Park are clear for all to see....or are they?

We know what is there because we can see it. What about what we cannot see? Does this mean that there are no more?

My job is to restore part of one of the rarest habitats in the world - heathland. There is a lot of it in Sutton Park. A lot of this cannot be seen. It is covered by trees, but it is still there!

We are going to fell trees and restore parts of the open heathland and protect it for future generations. The historic landscape is being recreated. Heathland has been a part of Sutton Park since at least Roman times. Excavations on the Roman

Road show this. There is a link between heathland and archaeology! Clearing trees helps restore this historic landscape which the Romans would have known.

'Saving Sutton Park'? More like 'shaving Sutton Park'!

Heathlands need our help. Changes have occurred as the use of the park has changed. Trees have been able to grow where before there was only ankle high heather. Clearance work is not only important in preserving the historic landscape, but also in preserving the archaeology. Trees can damage these features. The weight of a tree can cause an earthwork to collapse. Roots disturb the ground and can damage or destroy precious features or artefacts. Tree clearance can preserve these as we know them. This is better than not preserving them at all!

We may also find more archaeology. Heathland work close to Longmoor pool revealed a ditch and bank previously unknown to archaeologists. a success for both heathland restoration and archaeology! I'm here to help you understand archaeology by managing heathland, clearing trees from features. We all play a part in the future history of Sutton Park. By understanding it you will pass on your knowledge to others. I will fell trees for the benefit of the heathland and archaeology. This is a unique place, which we all know, use and love. Fun for you and fun for me! All in a good cause!

Mark Betson

Heathland Project Officer - Sutton Park

Next Quarters Events:

Please note some of the dates of meetings have changed from previous provisional dates!

Please fill in the permission slips for the next few events, if you have any questions about directions, etc, please contact me on the details below.

We will be having an extra meeting this month in May, we will be sending details about this at a later date.

All these visits will cost the usual £2.

April 24th - Blakesley Hall

We will be taking another trip out to the Tudor mansion to do a spot of building recording, and surveying.

Meet outside Blakesley Hall visitor's centre at 10.15am

We will be finished by 12.30.

Sunday May 9th Newhall Mill

The open day of the mill, we will have a guided tour round the working mill followed by a look at the archaeology of the landscape surrounding it.

Meet at the mill at 10.15am.

We will be finished by 12.30.

Saturday 29th May- Sutton Park

Activity to Be Announced.

Meet at the Visitors Centre at 10.15am

We will be finished by 12.30

If you have any questions about the meetings, or suggestions of places you want to visit, or things you would like to do at the meetings, please get in touch.

History Pictionary Answers

a, Coliseum

b, London Bridge

c, Roman Solider

d, William Shakespeare