

Birmingham YAC

Birmingham's Young Archaeologists Club Newsletter

Winter 2005

Tudoriffic Christmas Party

On the 10th December we are going to Selly Manor to have our Tudor Christmas Party! Dress up as a Tudor, act like a Tudor and be a Tudor at the YAC Christmas Party!!!

Here are some Tudor facts:

- Henry VIII really wanted a son, he had six but only one survived, Edward Tudor!
- Henry had 4 daughters and 2 survived
- Henry had 11 children altogether 3 survived
- Henry's 9th child is of unknown sex and like most of the others are unnamed or their names are unknown

If you would like to come dressed in Tudor fancy dress you may find some ideas at the following web sites. However, don't go to any great expense as we hope to have one or two Tudor costumes for you to try on at the party.

<http://costume.dm.net/headwear/>

http://www.historyonthenet.com/Tudors/tudor_costume.htm

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/games/costumes/costume1.html>

SEE YOU ON 10TH DECEMBER 2005

2006 Meetings

Dates are provisional and details may change (so check the web site for updates) but here's a taste of what's in store next year:

January 28th

Processing archaeological finds

February 25th

Rangers' survival techniques

March 25th

Canal trip

April 22nd

Soho House

May 20th

Ice Age event

June 24th

Walkover survey - Trifford

July 22nd

National Archaeology Day - Vikings

September 30th

Medieval warfare - Tamworth Castle

October 28th

Family History - St James Church

November 25th

Restoration of the Saracen's Head & Kings Norton Old Grammar School

December 16th

Victorian Christmas Party

A Victorian Christmas

By Jane Kingscott

The way we celebrate Christmas today owes a lot to the Victorians. They revived age-old traditions like carolling and also invented new ones such as Christmas cards.

Other essential parts of the Victorian festive season were going to church, giving gifts and charity to the poor. They also transformed the folk figures of Father Christmas and Santa Claus into symbols of generosity and increased the popularity of Germany's traditional Christmas tree.



The most important aspect of Christmas that the Victorians encouraged was the fact that they made it a family celebration, focussing on Jesus and children. A Victorian Christmas included exchanging presents between parents and children, going to church together, a several course family dinner and visiting friends and relatives. Sound familiar?

The tradition of Christmas trees had come to Britain originally with George I who was German but it did not become popular until a picture of Queen

Victoria, Prince Albert and their children gathered around a decorated tree was printed in the Illustrated London News in 1848.

Children often used to help make the tree decorations, making paper chains, gingerbread or small homemade gifts such as mittens or cloth dolls. Real candles were used to light the tree (really dangerous!!)

Christmas dinner was eaten after going to church. The food given at Christmas was more important than the presents because what food you offered was a feast, showing your generosity. The actual meal would vary depending on where you lived. When Victoria came to the throne in the North of the country people mostly had roast beef while goose was traditional in the South.

Serving the pudding was a great ritual. The plum pudding was made of suet, breadcrumbs, raisins and spices. At the beginning of Advent each family member stirred the pudding (clockwise for good luck) and made a wish. Coins, rings or thimbles were mixed in, and it was then left until Christmas Day when it was boiled, then set alight to serve it. If you got the piece with the ring it meant marriage, the coin it meant wealth and the thimble a happy life.

Make Your Own Christmas decorations

Use this recipe to make some yummy fancy biscuits that double as Christmas decorations (ask an adult to help).

¼ lb plain flour
1 packet of custard powder (enough to make a pint)
4oz hard margarine or butter
2oz sugar
1 egg

Mix the dry ingredients together and then rub in the fat.

Mix with sufficient egg to make a stiff dough (add little by little).

Roll out the dough and use pastry cutters to make your shapes such Christmas trees.

Make hole at the top of each biscuit big enough to put ribbon or cotton through (to hang your decorations!)

Bake in a moderate oven for 10 minutes or until cooked through (gas 4, 180C, 350F).

Wait until cool then decorate with coloured icing and silver balls.



Egypt and the blessing of the mummy!

By Juliet Porter

Do you remember - while we were at the Birmingham University activity last Month we saw the mummy case for Ahmose and Martin told us that the canopic jars the University had were on show at the BBC in the Mailbox.

Alice, Jane, Amy and myself decided to go on an expedition to the Town Centre

to find the lost canopic jars one Sunday! When we got there we saw the display about the Egypt programme which is on Telly at the moment and found the canopic jars with the Liver of the mummy in it upstairs with other artefacts from Egypt.

Just at that moment Carl Chinn appeared - I was excited to meet him and told him all about BYAC. He was very friendly and told us that he has a monthly news magazine called Brummagem all about historic Brum. He autographed a copy for Alice (and gave me a kiss on the cheek) and said he would like to run an article about BYAC in his magazine. I said he should look up our fantastic website and he said that he would. Perhaps he could show BYAC around some historic parts of Brummagem sometime...!

Bones

by Alice Porter

On Saturday 29th October the YAC gang went to Birmingham University to check out some bones. Martin gave us lots of information about how to tell how old something is or how old they were when they died, we also learnt a lot of the names of bones and where they all went. Martin also showed us a real mummy case as well!



Flag Fen

By Hannah & Steve Smith

During the summer holidays we visited Flag Fen, a Bronze Age site near Peterborough. It's a very interesting archaeological site and was lovely in the Summer as there is plenty of open space to wander around and in which to enjoy a picnic.

Flag Fen was discovered in 1982 when a mechanical digger working on one of the Fen drainage ditches pulled up some timber that appeared to have been split in a very distinctive manner. Radio carbon dating indicated that the timber dated back to about 1000 BC.

Most of the wood dates roughly to the period 1350-950 BC, and has been left in its original position. These timbers are part of a post alignment that runs between Fengate and Northey Island. The entire width of the post alignment has been excavated, but the exhibit reveals only 10 metres of its entire length which stretches for a kilometre.



Channel 4's Time Team undertook further excavations at Flag Fen in February 2000 and you can read about their findings at:

<http://www.channel4.com/history/time/team/archive/2000flag.html>

Flag Fen now includes many other archaeological exhibits including reconstruction of Iron Age and Bronze Age round houses; an excavated Roman road; ancient animal breeds; a Roman herb garden and displays of a wide variety of ancient artefacts.

Note the differences between the Iron Age round house (top) and the Bronze Age round house (bottom).



For more information about Flag Fen check their web site at:

<http://www.flagfen.com>

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<http://www.ironjohn.com>

YAC Holidays



YAC runs archaeological children's holidays every year. Using experienced

leaders and carefully researched locations they aim to give children a unique archaeological experience. Some of our members may be interested in the 2006 YAC holidays.

Roman Britain Birdoswald, Cumbria

Monday 17th April - Friday 21st April

Hadrian's Wall is set in beautiful countryside. The holiday will be based at Birdoswald Roman fort which has been converted by English Heritage into a residential study centre for schools and youth groups. It was known to the Romans as 'Banna' and is one of 16 forts along Hadrian's Wall which is designated a World Heritage Site. This is a unique experience to stay within the walls of an actual Roman fort!

Bronze Age Life, Cornwall

Sunday 28th May - Saturday 3rd June

Trewortha Farm lies high up on Bodmin Moor in an ancient Bronze Age landscape. The holiday gives YAC members an opportunity to try experimental archaeology and visit some of the fascinating sites of prehistoric Britain. The farm is a residential centre and hosts many schools and adult groups throughout the year. It uses pumped water and generator-produced electricity and is a working farm with both cattle and sheep.

Archaeological Timeline Norfolk

Sunday 6th - Thursday 10th August

The National Trust's Brancaster Millennium Activity Centre is based in the 17th Century Dial House. Recently refurbished for the millennium, the

centre gives excellent views over salt marshes and sand dunes. This popular YAC holiday runs over five days and includes a fantastic opportunity for YAC members to take part in a real archaeological excavation.

Vicious Vikings - York

Friday 20th - Sunday 22nd October

Huntingdon House is close to the city centre and provides a fantastic base for the York weekend. The city is so rich in archaeology that it is impossible to squeeze everything into one weekend! YAC has therefore decided to theme its York holidays around a different period each year; in 2006 the focus will be the Vikings.

If you would like more information on the YAC 2006 holidays an information sheet can be downloaded from http://www.byac.org.uk/news/yac_holidays_2006.pdf

Birmingham YAC Web Site

Check your website for:

- Latest news on visits including any last minute changes
- Parental permission slips
- Reports of previous visits
- Members' photos and articles

If you would like to add your own archaeology photo's, drawings or articles to the web site, visit the members' section of the website.

www.byac.org.uk

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Send any items for publication in the next newsletter to news@byac.org.uk