

Birmingham YAC

October 2004

Winter YAC

This year has been exciting for the YAC, we have seen the launch of the YAC website

(www.byac.org.uk)

We have also had our 1st Birthday! We have some great events this winter, starting with a

spooky look into the past for Halloween.

Next year we are planning to investigate some recently discovered earthworks, meet up with the Warwickshire branch, and try some more exper-

imental archaeology! Keep sending your ideas of visits and activities in either to the website or ..

BYAC

Sutton Park

Visitor Centre

Park Road

Sutton Coldfield

B74 2YT

0121 355 6370

N.A.D was F.A.B!

National Archaeology

Day was a huge success this July, and as this was also our first birthday as a club, it was a double celebration!

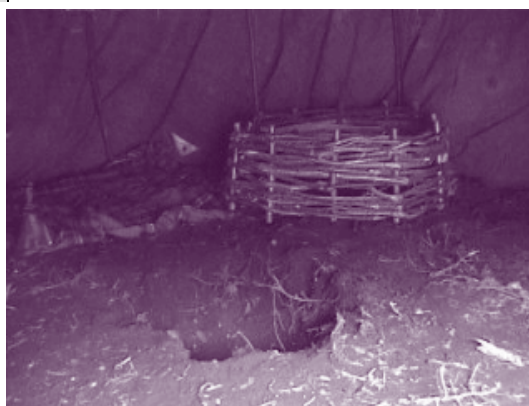
We spent the day exploring the bronze age, making pottery, dying cloth and weaving. The main event however was the construction of a SWEAT

LODGE. The mounds are piles of heat shattered stones. These lay undiscovered for thousands of years until a fire in the 1970's revealed them.

By talking to the North American Indians, archaeologists



The sweat lodge stones have very distinctive shatter markings. Experiments have shown these can only be formed by rapidly cooling hot stones with water. Either by emerging them in water, or pouring water on them.



A hole is dug in the middle of the sweat lodge, in which the hot stones are placed. We used this wicker barrier to cover the stones.

LODGE.

Sweat lodges are structures made out of willow and covered in skins. Hot stones are transported inside, and are doused in water to create steam. These are thought to have been used in the Bronze age as an ancient type of sauna.

'BURNT MOUNDS' have been found in Sutton Park, which are thought to be evi-

dence of these structures. The mounds are piles of heat shattered stones. These lay undiscovered for thousands of years until a fire in the 1970's revealed them. By talking to the North American Indians, archaeologists have shown that modern sweat lodges leave very similar remains to those found in the park. This has also enabled archaeologists to reconstruct what they looked like, and as we found out on NAD, what they feel like!

One of our members gives their thoughts on the day:

I am writing about the sweat lodge day. I really enjoyed it. The sweat lodge itself was fantastic; the day wouldn't have been complete without it. It's amazing how they ever thought of it! My mum really enjoyed it, so did I, but I did get rather hot!

I enjoyed making Bronze Age pottery too, I have just finished painting my plate. I

am really, really pleased with it. I tried some of the Bronze age bread too and it was really quite nice. I wouldn't mind eating bread like that every day!

I didn't actually do the weaving, but my dad and I found ourselves wondering how they managed to think out how to use things like wood and stone to make a lump of sheep hair into fine thread.

Altogether the whole family really enjoyed the day.

Thank you.

Megan Humphrey.

Roman Road Surveying

Archaeologists use a variety of techniques to record archaeological sites. It is very important to record in detail what is found on a site.

One of the survey methods we have been getting rather good at is 'Off set surveying'.

This is how we ended up spending a cold September morning in the rain near Streetly Gate in Sutton Park.

We set out to investigate Ryknield street, the Roman Road that runs through the park.

We ambled through the woods, and most of us walked straight over the Road without noticing it was there!

The road ran at right angles to the modern day path, by walking over the road, we could see that the surface was raised.

We also found huge pits near the road.

The Romans quarried huge pits all along the length of the Road. They used the materials from this to construct the Roads surface.

We split into groups and surveyed some of the quarry pits and a cross section of the Road.

We found that by taking readings of the high of the road along its width,

we could build up a picture

of the road in cross section.

We could see from this that the road surface was raised, into an 'AGGER' made from compacted stones. This was slightly CAMBERED (dome shaped) so the water could run off.

The ditches at either side helped to drain the road.

We walked further down the road to an exposed area.

It was easier to see the straight line of the road here, marching through the heathland, just like it would have done two thousand years ago.

We could also clearly see the quarry pits in the open

ble.

By looking at the Roman map we could see that the Roads ran in very straight lines between cities.

To get these straight lines the Roman surveyors would have used a 'GROMA'. A Roman surveying tool. This was used to line up markers along the length of the proposed road, so it would run as straight as possible.

After we surveyed the second section of the Road, we discovered that the section of road covered by the woods was better preserved than the exposed section on the heathland.

Quite often archaeological features are in danger of erosion, and people have to make a decision on what is better for the monument.

We saw this at wall, where the main bath chamber was back filled so the delicate pillae would be protected from damage from visitors.

Often balance has to be struck between celebrating our archaeology, by encouraging people to come and look, and protecting it for future generations.



Roman Road, Ryknield St Sutton Park

heathland.

We looked at a Roman map of Britain. we could find Letocetum(Wall) and Metchley (Edgbaston), so knew where we were between these places on the map. There was no Birmingham in Roman times, so this wasn't on the map!

The Romans wanted to get from A to B as fast as possi-



AQA the examining body that governs the GCSE Archaeology, is planning to withdraw the course in 2006. vealed some previously unknown earthworks. The BYAC is going to investigate them early next year, and be the first to discover what they are, and who made them!



Sutton park Halloween Walk

31st October

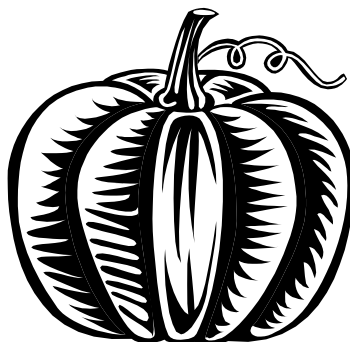
A spooky trail round the park at night, with a few surprises along the way FREE Visitor Centre, 5.30 - 7.30pm

YAC is campaigning for them to change their mind and is keen for you to let them know what you think about this.

We have already had lots of comments from you - Thank you! - which we have passed on so they can be sent to the AQA, and hopefully convince them to change their mind.

Many of you will not have the opportunity to take the exam if it is withdrawn in 2006, so let us know how you think, send your comments to Beth@byac.org.uk you can also petition your objections to yacpolls@britarch.ac.uk

Things to do this Halloween...



Living History Fayre:

29th, 30th, 31st October:

Warwickshire Exhibition Centre,
Fosse Way, near Leamington Spa, Warwickshire on the junction of the A425/B4455
11am - 5pm Friday
10am-5pm Saturday
10am - 4pm Sunday
Admission £3.00..

If you have any suggestions of places to visit or things to see, let us know and we will print it in the next edition.

Earthworks uncovered:

Strange earthworks have appeared near the Bracebridge area of the park. A large area of trees and scrub was recently cleared as part of the Heathland restoration project. This has re-



Email:
beth@byac.org



October
23rd



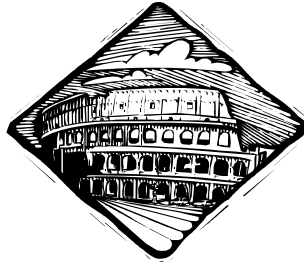
10.30 - 12.30
Visitor Centre
Sutton Park

Join us in a spooky look at the history behind folk lore, myths, legends and superstitions....

Please book if you would like to attend.

Cost £2.00

November
27th



10.30 - 12.30
Visitor Centre
Sutton Park

Experimental archaeology session. Plants have been used for dyeing materials for 1000's of years. We are going to create some material from scratch, from spinning wool, to dyeing and weaving.

Please book if you would like to attend.

Cost:£2.00

December
18th



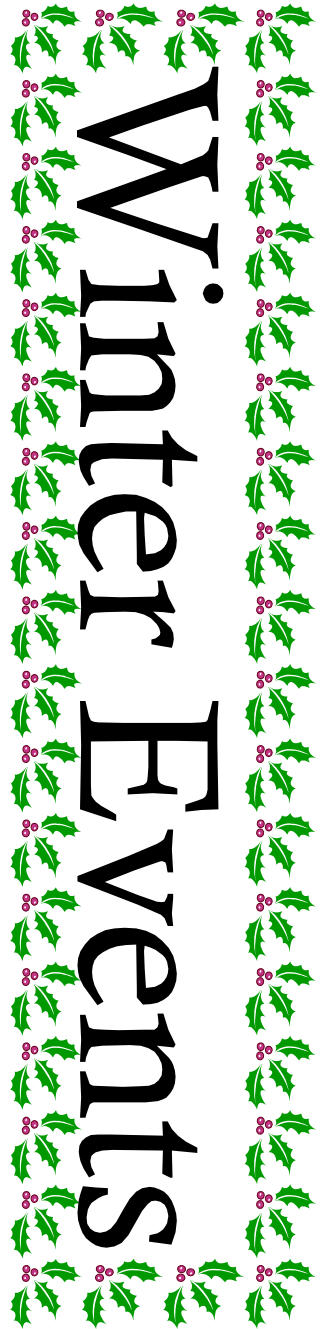
Christmas Party!!

10.30 - 12.30
Visitor Centre
Sutton Park

Prizes for best fancy dress...Use your imagination for this one, you could be anything from a Roman surveyor to a Benedictine monk! We will be having a mini party, with food, games and competitions!!

Cost: £2.00

Please book if you would like to attend.



Permission slip Winter 2004

Name: Please book me in for the following event(s)

23rd October: **Halloween event** YES / NO

27th November: **Textile workshop** YES / NO

18th December: **Christmas Party** YES / NO

Address: Email:

Contact Number:

Parent/Guardian signature: