

# Birmingham Young Archaeologists Club

## Annual Report 2007



### Saturday 21st April 2007 - Archaeological Techniques: Animal Bones.

We examined a selection of bones from the collection held by Birmingham Archaeology of both wild and domesticated species. We learned how to identify which animals they belonged to and also how the various bone structures were suited to the environment and diet of each animal.

We were then presented with a selection of unidentified bones and compared these with the specimen bones held by Birmingham Archaeology to try to find a match for identification. We also looked at human bones as well as those from other primates to compare these with the other animals we had seen.



### Saturday 26th May 2007 - Visit to the 13th Century Churchill Forge Mill

We undertook a walkover survey looking at different aspects of the mill complex such as different water channels: leats, feeders, mill races and mill tails.

## Saturday 30th June 2007 - The English Civil War

In our Civil War session at Selly Manor we met a Civil War soldier, learned pike drill and battle tactics, and designed and made BYAC banners to raise to the glory of archaeology in the West Midlands.



## Saturday 14th July 2007 - Warley Abbey Excavation

Our event for National Archaeology Week involved helping with the excavation of Warley Abbey which was built for the Galton Family in Warley Woods in the early 1800s.

In the 1790's Samuel Galton Junior purchased the site to build a new family home. Galton commissioned Humphry Repton, a landscape architect, to convert the existing field-systems into a fitting setting for the new house. Galton's son completed the house, known as the Abbey, in 1819 although much of Repton's planting and landscape features were probably in place before this date. Some are still visible in the Park today.

Our main aim of the day was to clean up the site so that it would look nice for the annual 'Picnic in the Park' event. It had rained so hard the night before that we had to bale the site before we could start! We cleaned off demolition material from walls that had been exposed, and cleared drain cuts. We also unearthed some interesting finds such as painted wall plaster, broken pottery and various materials used in the construction of the building.



### Sunday 9th September 2007 - Visit to New Hall Valley

We were given a guided tour of New Hall Mill and the valley that it is situated in. We were also able to examine a prehistoric burnt mound which had recently been discovered. We had a look at the Hall itself too which is now used as an exclusive Hotel, but was once a medieval manor house, and had a moat around it.

**Saturday 27th October 2007 - Mexican Day of the Dead.**

We learned about the festival's Aztec origins and recreated a Day of the Dead altar complete with bread and sugar skulls. We had great fun making masks and playing piñata.



**Saturday 17th November 2007 - Tour of Birmingham's Museum of the Jewellery Quarter**

We had a tour of the jewellery making workshops and watched demonstrations of welding and metal stamping. We also looked at the Shipwreck box which was full of artefacts, which we sketched, and we also had the opportunity to make bracelets.

## Saturday 15th December 2007 - Christmas in the Trenches at Cannock Chase.

For our Christmas 2007 event we all met up on Cannock Chase in Staffordshire to learn about what life was like for soldiers in the Great War who spent their first Christmas in the trenches in 1914. We met members of the Birmingham Pals Re-enactment Regiment and had an exclusive visit to a hutment that they are helping to restore next door to the Visitor Centre on the Chase.

During the Great War there were two divisional training camps on the Chase - that means that there could have been up to 60,000 men training there before being sent to the Front Line. We looked at what might have been sent to men on the front line as Christmas presents - marmalade and jam, as well as socks, biscuits and chocolate. There were also some rather smelly kippers - and we learned that people from the Black Country sent out Faggots and dried peas to soldiers at the Front.

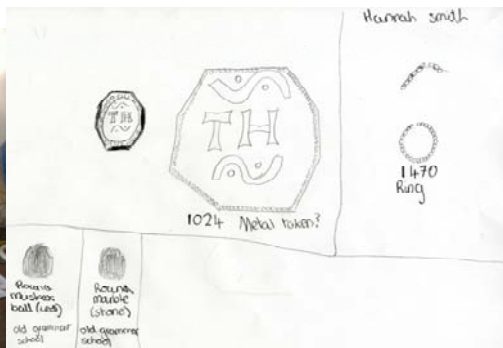
We also had the opportunity to look at some of the small finds from excavations that have taken place on the Chase and compared them with the kit that the Birmingham Pals were wearing. Kirsty showed us pictures of the same finds that she and Martin have excavated from Front Line trenches in France and Belgium. The Birmingham Pals Regiment also had a huge array of artefacts which included gas masks, soap, shaving kits and all sorts of things that the soldiers would have used.

We finished our session by having a game of footie just like they did up and down the Western Front during the Christmas Day Truce of 1914.



**Saturday 26th January 2008 - Visit to the 'Restoration Project' in Kings Norton.**

We visited the site of the winner of TV's Restoration Project known locally as the Saracen's Head, and Old Grammar School in Kings Norton. The restoration work on the Old Grammar School has recently been completed and it is due to be opened to the public very soon. We found out exactly what they have been doing - and just how much they have left to do! The Saracen's Head was built as the private home of a wealthy wool merchant originally before it became a public house. It was also laid siege to during the English Civil War, and we saw and sketched musket balls and other artefacts that had been excavated from the site during recent excavations by Birmingham Archaeology.



## 23rd February 2008 - Egyptians

We learned about how and why the Egyptians built the pyramids and what the tombs of the Pharaohs looked like inside. We were shown old photographs of the excavations that were undertaken to remove metres and metres of sand to reveal the Sphinx and Pyramids to how we see them today.

BYAC member Billy told us all about what he'd found out when he visited the King Tut exhibition in London, and showed us slides of all the gold and grave goods that accompanied the Pharaoh into the afterlife. We also created our own personalised hieroglyphs, made a cartouche which read BYAC in Ancient Egyptian, and decorated death masks so that we could dress up as Mummies!



## 15th March 2008 - Medieval Life, Castles and Textiles at Weoley Castle Ruins

We visited Weoley Castle Ruins which was a fortified Manor House built by the Earls of Dudley. We looked around the ruins and spotted lots of Mason's Marks in one of the garderobes. We learned about gongfermers, and how

people living in the castle would have hung their clothes near to the toilet so that the smell of urine would keep the moths away.



Martin told us all about dying cloth and we used madder, Brazil Wood, onion skins, and turmeric to see what colours we could get fabric and sheep's wool to go. We learned about how far natural dye materials travelled across the globe and who would have been able to afford Indigo, we also learned how natural dyes were fixed using mordents - salt, urine or alum - we used alum! The brightest colour we got from our natural dye ingredients was from the turmeric which went a spectacular yellow - which was one of the colours of the Earls of Dudley!



Next we looked at textiles and spinning using drop spindles - Bob told us about flax, wool and silk, carding with teasels, and how wearing silk could help keep fleas away! We then made our own human loom and small individual looms out of card to weave small mats and coasters.