

## **ARCHAEOLOGICAL FINDS AND THE CLASSROOM:**

### **GARDEN SURVEYS FOR SCHOOLS**

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#### **Introduction**

Using archaeological finds is a stimulating way to engage children with the past. Here we explain one way in which schools can carry out their own archaeological fieldwork and generate their own finds.

#### **National Curriculum Links**

This activity provides a focus for cross-curricular work on several aspects of the National Curriculum programmes of study. These include.

#### **History**

- H4** Historical Enquiry
- H5** Organisation and communication

#### **English**

**En 1/2** Group discussion and interaction

Work on finds generated by the process could be extended to include art, written work and data handling.

#### **Aims**

- To provide children with an opportunity to work with sources of evidence other than books
- To provide a practical way of investigating the history/archaeology of the local community

#### **Equipment**

- In the field
  - Plastic bags for collecting finds
- In the classroom
  - Magnifying glasses
  - Pens ,paper, pencils

## Introduction

Archaeological garden surveys are what we call a non-intrusive method of looking at the past. This means that it is a way of gathering information without having to excavate. Excavation is a destructive activity which should only be undertaken with good reason and with professional advice.

Archaeological garden survey is exactly what it says it is - looking at your own gardens to see what may be turned up when digging the flower beds. This could provide a clue to any archaeology which still lies buried under the ground. We cannot guarantee that anything will be found this way, but there are occasional surprises too. In one garden survey I helped organize some years ago, a child found an American silver dollar! Usually it is only potsherds and pieces of broken clay tobacco pipe.

## Method

### Preparation

- Write letters to parents explaining what you are asking the children to do.

### In the classroom

- Explain to the children how archaeologists use artefacts to study the past. For some activities which help develop children's descriptive skills in our accompanying download '*A Beginner's Guide to Identifying Your Finds*'.
- Explain that you will be carrying out an archaeological survey to make finds of your own. This will involve:
  - Looking in the flower beds and other areas which have been dug over in your garden
  - Picking up finds from the surface of the garden. Children are NOT being asked to dig. There should be no risk of damage to plants and garden features.
  - Finds should be put into a sealable bag or container along with a note giving the address where they were found.
  - Bringing the finds back to school to discuss.
- Stress that you are only interested in objects which people made and used. You do not want them to pick up rocks, sticks and other natural items.
- Remind children to be careful about things with sharp edges and points. Parents might pick those up for them.
- Children can look at more than one garden, if they wish. However, finds from each garden need to be kept separate each with a note of the place where the finds were made inside.

## **Carrying out the survey**

Children will have to carry out the survey at home on an evening or weekend. From a Health and Safety point of view it is advisable that for very young children this is done with the assistance of the parents/guardians. Bags of finds should be brought into school at the first available opportunity.

## **Back in the Classroom**

- Clean the mud off the finds so that they can be seen properly. Metal finds should just be brushed lightly. All the others can be washed. Archaeologists use a toothbrush and warm water for this purpose.
- Stress the need to be careful: *We don't want to damage our precious finds.*
- Lay the finds out on a sheet of newspaper in a warm place to dry out. Each group of finds needs to be kept separate and each should have a label saying which garden it was from. When dry they can be repacked in to resealable plastic bags and the information about the contents written on the outside.

Your finds should be placed into plastic bags or containers, each of which should have its own label to show where it came from. Archaeologists call this the context. Finds from each context should be kept separate to enable you to make comparisons between different areas.

## **Working with finds**

The finds you have gathered can be used in a variety of ways to develop working in English, Art and Maths as well as History. Some suggestions are given in our accompanying download '*Interpretation and Using Finds in the Classroom*'.

## **Alternative methods of generating finds**

If your school is in a rural area, you can also undertake **molehill surveys** or **field walking activities**. Please see our other downloads for more information about these activities.