

## Avalon Archaeologists – KS1 & KS2

### Overview –

<b>Description</b>	Being Young Archaeologists... A peat tray archaeological ‘dig’ provides pupils with the opportunity to investigate the rich heritage preserved within the peat of the Avalon Marshes.
<b>Time</b>	15 minutes for initial discussion with whole class 20-30 minutes for each small group to do the dig (do it in groups of 5 – 8 pupils and give the rest of the class one of our ‘Pick & Mix’ activities to do) 20-30 minutes for recording artefacts
<b>Equipment</b>	The Peat Dig Kit - tray, peat, trowels, gloves, hard hat, hi-vis vest, historic ‘artefacts’ (leatherwork anvil, prehistoric bones, iron age canoe, beaver, peat worker, peat digger, pot pieces). Rulers
<b>Curriculum</b>	KS1 History– Significant historical events, people and places in their locality KS2 History– Develop a chronologically secure knowledge and understanding of British and local history (links to Stone-Age, Iron-Age, Romans, Anglo-Saxons, and British history beyond 1066).
<b>Aims</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Talk about what archaeology is, and how archaeologists work.</li> <li>• Do a hands-on interactive dig in real peat, to discover archaeological artefacts.</li> <li>• Discuss what the artefacts teach us about the past in the Avalon Marshes.</li> </ul>
<b>Learning Outcomes</b>	At the end of this activity all pupils should be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explain what archaeology is.</li> <li>• Talk about what the past was like in the Avalon Marshes.</li> </ul>
<b>Linked resources</b>	<p>Introducing the Avalon Marshes</p> <p><b>Pick &amp; Mix:</b> Avalon Marshes Timeline; Getting to Know Peat; Life in the Iron-Age Marshes; Creative Response to Landscape – Poetry; Avalon Marshes Quiz</p> <p><b>Factsheets:</b> The Avalon Marshes; What is Peat</p> <p><b>Film</b> (YouTube channel) – Sights &amp; Sounds of the Prehistoric Marshes; Roman-ing in the Marshes; Black Gold – the peat industry; Farming in the Avalon Marshes.</p> <p><b>Audio</b> - Avalon Marshes, A Peatland Story</p>



# Avalon Marshes Peat Dig



## Teachers' notes -

### Preparation:

Set up the peat tray on a table that has space around for children to access. Bury the artefacts. Stick up the '4000 BC' and 'Present' at opposite ends of a table close to the tray – this will form the timeline where artefacts can be placed.

### Introduce the Avalon Marshes:

What and where are they? What are they like? The Avalon Marshes has been used by people for thousands of years. We know that people have lived there since hunter-gatherers were around in the Mesolithic period (middle Stone-Age). How do we know this? How do the pupils think that we have discovered things about the past of the Marshes?

### Discussion on archaeology:

What is an archaeologist? Ask students to give three words to explain what archaeology means to them. Write these on the flip chart or IWB – work together to come up with a final definition.

*Wessex Archaeology's definition: Archaeologists study people from the past – who they were, what they did, where and how they lived. They have to work from clues such as the things that people in the past have lost, thrown away or deliberately buried. It's a bit like being a detective.*

What tools would be used? What clothing should be worn? The prompt sheet can be used here. Introduce gloves, trowels, hard hat and hi-vis vests.

### Discussion – rot or not?:

In 400 years, your school will be 'discovered' by archaeologists – what will still remain and what will have decayed?

### Preserved in Peat:

The present day landscape of the Avalon Marshes has been formed over thousands of years by a long process of natural development and human alteration. The deep deposits of peat on the floodplain contain the archaeological information that tells the story of these changes over the last 10,000 years. This is due to the acidic, oxygen-poor conditions of peat, which preserve things wood, bone, metal and wool. The wet peat stops these things from decaying. This is explained in more detail in the *Getting to Know Peat* Pick & Mix activity. You can introduce some famous Avalon Marshes discoveries using the *Avalon Marshes Timeline*.

Peat preserves things so well that we can even tell what people used to eat. At the site of the Glastonbury Lake Village Archaeologists found evidence in people's homes of crops (barley, wheat, beans), farmed animals (sheep, cattle, pigs), fish (perch, trout, roach, tench), wild animals (frogs, deer, ducks, heron, pelicans, hedgehogs, plus milk and honey).

## The Dig



Pupils will take it in turns to 'dig' in the peat tray to retrieve an artefact preserved in the peat. As an item is discovered, follow up with discussion on what the artefact is and what period this may have come from.

With each artefact, discuss what it is, what period it could be from and whereabouts on Avalon Marshes it might have been found. Place it on the timeline following these discussions.

### Suggested questions to encourage children

#### What does it look and feel like?

What colour is it?

What do you think it is made of?

What shape is it?

Is it hard or soft, warm or cold?

Is it old or new?

#### How was it made?

Is it natural or did someone make it?

How do you think someone made it?

#### What about the design?

Is there a pattern? Can you describe it?

How do you think it was decorated?

#### What was it used for?

Would you put things in it?

Would you use it as a tool?

#### Who might have used it?

Do you think they were young or old?

Can you tell if it was a man or a woman?

#### What would you use today for the same thing?

Is it the same as anything that you use today?

#### Recording artefacts:

After all pupils have done the activity, share the 'artefacts' between their tables (you can add others to the collection too – fossils, stone, broken pottery, or any old items that you have access to).

Give pupils their own artefact recording sheet. This activity encourages pupils to look closely at their artefact, and record them in the way an archaeologist would. If you have cameras or iPads, encourage them to also photograph the artefacts and add a photo to their record sheet.

## The Artefacts

**Livestock** – people began keeping animals in the Marshes in the Stone-Age, and from the Iron-Age people had small farmsteads. Think about where animals would be kept in wetlands. Would there be any difference between summer and winter (winter flooding in the wetlands)? In the Iron-Age some people would have had their animals living in roundhouses with them!

**Beaver** – water mammal, pre 1600s (was hunted to extinction, for food). Discussion on whether we see any beavers today. Post discussion: beavers are back following the escape of captive European Beavers in Devon which have successfully bred in the wild. If successful breeding continues, we may be able to place them on this year on the timeline!



**Cobbler's Last** – a leatherworking anvil for shoemaking, used during the industrialisation of shoemaking in Street. Around 1840 (before factories), Clarks relied on outworkers to meet the growing demand. The workers collected the leather from the Morlands tannery in Glastonbury, along with a pattern, took the whole lot home and turned it into slippers. Production was often a family affair – everyone did their bit of cutting, sticking and sewing. Then, every Friday, all the finished footwear would be taken to Cyrus and James and swapped for wages. In the 1880s, the first Clarks factory was opened, using the new technology of the Singer sewing machine. Workers were provided with homes and the company spent money looking after their community. Many of these homes can still be seen in Street today. This industry relied great deal on Avalon Marshes as the main route from Street and Glastonbury to the coast for delivering produce.

**Shell** – in 5000 BC the marshes were under sea water, and as the sea levels went down salt marshes were formed, and small islands of clay, sand and gravel deposits were left behind (called 'burtles'). In these burtles shells and evidence of sea life have been found!

# Avalon Marshes Peat Dig



**Peat worker** – traditionally, peat was dug by hand to be burned as fuel. Peat digging was a big part of local life, and many people worked in the peat industry – cutting it by hand in the 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries. In the mid- late 20<sup>th</sup> Century the industry moved towards horticultural products, and mechanisation.

**Digger** – C20<sup>th</sup> Industrialisation of Peat extraction for compost. Large areas of land removed for peat, further changing the landscape of the Avalon Marshes, this is just one of the activities which has caused loss of species and habitats in the area.

**Pot pieces** – what items did these piece come from? Do they look old or modern? In the Iron-Age people made clay pots, bowls and beakers, and often decorated them with patterns using pointed tools. The Romans brought mass-production of pottery, and the use of glazes.



**Canoe** - In the past, the reed swamp, bogs and mires of the Avalon Marshes were difficult to cross! Neolithic man overcame this by constructing wooden track-ways. However, in the Iron-Age the marshes became far wetter and dugout canoes replaced these track-ways. They would literally have been dug out of the trunks of huge trees.

**Wood** – when really old pieces of wood are found preserved in the peat it is often called ‘bog oak’.

**Bones** – up for discussion! What sort of bones do you think they look like? Human? Animal? Have they been eaten – are there teeth marks? Bones found at the lake villages show that white tailed eagle, crane, puffin and pelican were all nearby.

# Avalon Marshes Peat Dig

## Archaeological tool prompt sheet



Which 10 objects would you find on an archaeological site?

# Avalon Marshes Peat Dig

## Artefact recording sheet

DESCRIBE YOUR ARTEFACT:

What is it?



What is it made of?

How old do you think it is?

Is it complete or is it just a part of something?

How tall is it?

How wide is it?

What do you think it may have been used for?

Can you describe what it looks like?

**Now draw your artefact on the other side of this page**