

Brushwood's big dig

A thematic week allowed children from the Brushwood Junior School to excavate and research a specially prepared 'Roman villa' site while practicing a wide range of skills.

■ Philippa HOLDEN
(UK)

In the summer of 2008, the staff of Brushwood Junior School, Chesham, Buckinghamshire, came up with an exciting and creative thematic way of teaching, in the form of an archaeological dig. After almost a year, and what seemed a life time of hours, the staff had planned their theme week. During the Easter holidays of 2009 the Brushwood Junior School staff gave up their valuable holiday to dig an area of 10m x 8m on the school playing field which in turn would house many fantastic archaeological finds for the children to excavate and learn from. This site would become the main focus for the theme week.

The dig site itself was one of the most crucial and demanding parts of the project. A site had to be created which would be large enough for 60 pupils to work on at any one time and creative enough to look like the real thing. The site was started by removing the grass and around a foot of soil. Then, using a genuine roman floor plan, a group of builders began constructing the ancient ruins. This consisted of stones representing both the foundations and room dividers of the Roman villa, as well as several pillars in the centre. The site was then split into different quadrants and 'artefacts' buried throughout. The artefacts were made up of objects created or brought in by staff which were then made to look ancient. For example; jewellery, broken pottery, mosaics, coins, tiles etc. The artefacts were strategically placed

in different areas of the villa so that they could represent the different uses the rooms may have had.

When the children arrived back at school after the Easter holidays they were told that some ancient remains had been found in the school grounds while some builders were doing work on site. The whole school was then shown a DVD of 'Professor Howard Smithson' (a local actor) who was the 'Curator' of a museum. The DVD was set out to represent a live feed from Egypt where the 'professor' was working. This was the visual aid which formed the way in to the whole project. It gave the children the exciting introduction to what they were going to be doing for the rest of the week. The professor told the children that they would be becoming archaeologists and would have to carefully excavate the area in order to establish what the remains were.

Archaeologists from University College London came in each day to work with the children on the dig site. They taught the children the skills of how to be an archaeologist and showed them the professional tools needed in order to excavate artefacts successfully. The children worked in groups to unearth artefacts from the different quadrants and then took these to the 'research centre'. This consisted of a classroom which had cleaning areas, tools, books and computers in order for the children to research their artefacts. The learning outcomes for this project were to encourage the children to use questioning skills to determine what the artefacts they found could have been and which era in history they may have belonged to. This important idea of moving away from the simple rote learning of historical facts and figures and

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HISTORY IN THE DIGGING

Written by: Reporter T. C. Davies

On April the 17th whilst digging tediously for new foundations, local builders at Brushwood Junior School unearthed a unique pattern of, presumably stone just 1 foot beneath the surface of the playing field.

After realising that it could be a genuine, they immediately called in the professionals; Professor Howard Smithson's most trusted team of 'desperate diggers'. Mr Bob the head of

the building team quoted breathlessly, "I couldn't believe that I'd found an artefact that top professors had to query!"

After the end of the Easter period, children at Brushwood began excitedly to set to work on this extraordinary discovery. Year 3 & 4 began work on the site uncovering countless artefacts; a brass pot, a bull skull and even remnants of an old gateway perhaps a door of some old fashion.

Meanwhile year 6 drew up precise, accurate plans of the location so the findings can be marked and located to give them a rough idea of the contents of the rooms.

Also year 5 eliminated efficiently the impossible eras the building could be.

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Friday 23rd April

END OF EXCAVATION!

www.dailynews.com

Written by: Anna Faconti

Since Tuesday the year 6's have visited the dig and found many precious artefacts, then washed them to examine. They found artefacts such as; smoking pipes, glass medicine bottles and a hook.

Professor Howard Smithson quoted, "We have made a thorough guess that it's from the Roman era." This is an extremely fascinating

discovery to the children and teachers at Brushwood Junior School, Chesham.

"Everybody thought it was a Roman house because the year 4's found Roman coins and other Roman artefacts!" quoted Mr Plimsaul, the head teacher.

All the children are truly disappointed that the dig is now finished, however,

are privileged to have had the experience. If you would like more information visit our website:

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■ Fig. 1 Examples of Year 6 newspaper articles about the dig

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towards a more profound way of learning in that the children are analysing, questioning and hypothesising about what things could have been was a key aim of this thematic week.

This thematic idea offered the children an exciting experience which they are unlikely to have again in their school career. The enthusiasm for the whole week by the children was tremendous and the work achieved from this was outstanding. Numeracy work included investigating area and perimeter of the dig site and Roman numerals etc. Literacy work was achieved in the form of writing newspaper articles about the find in the school, letters to explain what they had found and stories about how life could have

been in those times etc. ICT was used in many different forms throughout the week, including the use of Google Earth to determine aerial views of the dig site, internet as a research tool, digital photographs and green screen news presentations to name but a few. Other work included, mosaic making, drawings of finds, research around the chosen area, looking at different building structures throughout history etc. The areas for learning around this topic were endless and the work achieved in all areas was to an excellent standard.

The young archaeologists thoroughly enjoyed their theme week benefiting from being out of the confinements of the classroom, learning practically and experiencing



■ Fig. 2 Children unearthing an object with an expert archaeologist



■ Fig. 3 A 'genuine' Roman find

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Dramatic discovery!

Written by: Reporter Bull

<p>Since April 15th, life was changed forever for the pupils and staff at Brushwood Junior School, Chesham.</p>	<p>inspect the site, and declared it of possible archaeological importance. He requisitioned a team of experts to unearth the site.</p>	<p>expecting to dig today, have an initial theory that the site could be a roman house.</p> <p>Buy tomorrows issue for more information</p>
<p>During routine work on the pipes beneath the field, an unbelievable discovery was made. Workmen couldn't believe what they had found at first, and Mr.I.Dig, the foreman whose team discovered the site, excitedly quoted "At first, we thought we'd hit a pipe, but it soon became clear that this was not a plumbing system."The school decided to contact Professor Howard Smith, an eminent figure in the field of archaeology, who immediately drove down to</p>	<p>Through the ingenuity of the teachers at Brushwood School, the dig was turned into an exiting and educational project for the pupils of Brushwood school. The children will be given the chance to help the archaeologists excavate the site. First to dig where the year threes. Whilst meticulously scraping away at the soil, they unearthed many fascinating artefacts, including a brass jug, mosaic pieces, pottery, and a fragment of a bull's skull. Year six's, who are</p>	<p style="font-size: x-small;">Advertisement</p> <div style="background-color: black; color: white; padding: 2px; text-align: center;"> <p>SparkleBox</p> <p style="font-size: x-small;">Downloaded FREE from SparkleBox KS2 www.sparkleboxz.co.uk</p> </div>

■ Fig. 4 Example of Year 6 newspaper article about the dig

new situations. The whole project was a huge success and is an example to what extremes a project can be created and how it can help children to learn and gain valuable skills. It was a hard yet rewarding project that could not have been achieved without the whole staff at Brushwood Junior School committing so much time, energy and enthusiasm. The experiences that the children had during this week and the skills they developed will hopefully continue to be remembered throughout their lives.

Summary

La grande fouille de Brushwood

Pendant les vacances de Pâques 2009, l'équipe de l'école primaire de Brushwood a mis en place un site de fouilles pouvant accueillir simultanément 60 élèves. Le site reconstituait les fondations d'une "villa romaine" et ses "accessoires" pour offrir aux enfants une semaine de fouilles sous la directions

d'archéologues de l'université de Londres. Les recherches et interprétations de ce site (fictif) ont permis la mise en place de nombreuses activités répondant aux objectifs des programmes scolaires.

Brushwood's große Ausgrabung

Während der Osterferien 2009 erstellten die Mitarbeiter der Brushwood Junior School ein Grabungsgelände, das ausreichend groß war, um 60 Schüler dort zu beschäftigen. Es wies die Strukturen einer „Römischen Villa“ und selbst gefertigte „Artefakte“ auf. Auf diesem Gelände konnten die Schüler in einer Themenwoche unter der Anleitung von Archäologen des University College London die Arbeitsweisen einer Ausgrabung und ihrer Dokumentation in allen für die Ausbildung relevanten Bereichen kennen lernen.

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