



WHAT WAS LIFE LIKE IN ANGLO-SAXON BRISTOL?

Summary: Year 3/4 children discover how their local area could have been settled by the Anglo-Saxons and what archaeology can tell us about the past.



LOCATION: BRISTOL
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Where: Victoria Park Primary School, Bristol

Who: mixed Year 3 and 4 cohort of 150 children

Our enquiry began with a starter of an 'indoor excavation' created and led by the archaeologist Julian Richards. The children gradually uncovered layers of an artificial archaeological dig until an Anglo-Saxon house was revealed. The children discussed how artefacts from different time periods tell us about people's lives in the past.

Next the children undertook a settlement activity in a local park. This involved looking at maps and the local landscape and determining the best place for Anglo-Saxons to settle in the area, taking into account issues such as food, water, shelter, protection and trade routes.

The children then made model replicas of what Anglo-Saxon Bedminster may have looked like. These models were displayed at the local library over the summer holiday.

The enquiry also included an Anglo-Saxon day in which the children undertook a series of workshops exploring daily life in Anglo-Saxon times and an Anglo-Saxon food tasting.

The literacy text for the enquiry was Beowulf and the children made Anglo-Saxon mead and biscuits which were eaten around a campfire and Beowulf told for the first time.

Intended outcomes

- Understand what archaeology can tell us about the Anglo-Saxons
- Understand what an archaeologist does
- Learn about daily life and buildings in Anglo-Saxon times
- Know who the Anglo-Saxons were and when and where they lived
- Identify features on a local map that might influence the position of an Anglo-Saxon settlement



What we did

- Activity in local park to identify local features which would influence Anglo-Saxon settlement
- A model of Anglo-Saxon Bedminster for display at a local library over the summer holidays
- Creative writing using Beowulf as a stimulus
- Anglo-Saxon food and drink and dressing up day

Challenges

Arranging indoor excavation for five classes with an archaeologist

Arranging for a parent who is an archaeologist to be interviewed by children

Contacting residents of a C16th house close to the school on the site of an Anglo-Saxon farm and arranging to visit

Successes

"I found this enquiry really interesting because I didn't know anything about the Anglo-Saxons before. Now I would like to be an archaeologist when I'm older and find my own Sutton Hoo." Jack (year 4)

The school hall full of parents who were invited to view each child's model building which we arranged to demonstrate what Anglo-Saxon Bedminster may have looked like

Links made with local residents who live in oldest property in locality thought to date back to Anglo-Saxon times. Visits to the house for the children to assess whether the original part of the building could be an Anglo-Saxon hall.

Resources and web links

www.heritage-explorer.co.uk

http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/primaryhistory/anglo_saxons/

Video clips from BBC history programme: Meet the Ancestors

Next steps/extension activities

Explore the idea of children as curators in partnership with Bristol Museums Galleries and Archives.

An outcome for a future Anglo-Saxons enquiry might be to curate an exhibition at the MShed museum in central Bristol.

