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Don Henson*

Archaeology's place in education: under threat or an opportunity?

While archaeology is a popular subject with the public, it is seldom accepted as having any purpose other than curiosity of entertainment. As a result, it is somewhat marginalised within formal education. This paper will explore some of the tensions between acceptance and dismissal of archaeology in the education system in the UK, and how this has changed over time. The focus will be on changes since the 1980s and will include school, university and adult education. It will also reflect on how we might position ourselves for the future. An example of how to devise educational resources for schools will be given based on the Mesolithic site of Star Carr.
Keywords: archaeology, education, schools, universities, resources, teaching, relevance

Nonostante l'archeologia sia un argomento popolare per il pubblico, raramente si accetta che abbia un'utilità al di fuori della pura curiosità o intrattenimento. Viene dunque in un certo modo marginalizzata nel percorso scolastico. Questo articolo si soffermerà su alcune delle tensioni tra accettazione e rifiuto dell'archeologia nel sistema educativo britannico e su come questo sia cambiato nel corso del tempo dagli anni Ottanta nella scuola, nell'università e nella formazione per adulti. L'articolo rifletterà inoltre sulla posizione degli archeologi in futuro. Verrà infine fornito un esempio, il sito mesolitico di Star Carr, su come ideare risorse educative.
Parole chiave: *archeologia, educazione, scuola, università, risorse, insegnamento, rilevanza*

Archaeology is a remarkably successful subject. More people than ever before are employed as archaeologists; nearly 7,000 across commercial archaeology, curatorial archaeology, academia, museums, NGOs and government agencies (Aitchison 2019). A search on the Higher Education Statistics Agency website reveals that there were almost 4,600 students at university studying archaeology at undergraduate and postgraduate level in 2017-18 (https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/students/what-study). The long-running television series *Time Team* (1994-2014) may have ended but there are still many other series that focus on archaeology, e.g. *Digging for Britain*, or *Digging Up Britain's*

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Past, with high profile presenters such as Alice Roberts, Neil Oliver, Mary Beard, Bethany Hughes etc.

Yet, there is a feeling that archaeology is not really valued by society. It often seems to be accepted as a form of entertainment than a serious attempt to understand humanity and its development. This is especially true of prehistory (Stone, MacKenzie 1990, p. 3). The popularity of archaeology on television often feeds this idea of it as entertainment, with a focus on star presenters and interesting finds (Henson 2006; Henson *et al.* 2009). The underlying fragility of archaeology is revealed by how it is treated with the education system below university, in schools and the school curriculum (Henson 2017a). This paper will explore some of the tensions between acceptance and dismissal of archaeology in the education system in the UK, and how this has changed over time. It will also reflect on how we might position ourselves for the future. Much of it based on the author's experience as Head of Education at the Council for British Archaeology (CBA) from 1994 to 2011. For a wider consideration of archaeology and education over longer time periods and international contexts the wide-ranging book by Mike Corbishley, a pioneer of archaeological education is recommended (Corbishley 2011).

1. The educational frameworks

The United Kingdom has an education system that is set by the UK government for England, but is devolved to local administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Therefore, there are four separate school systems and curricula. Until 1988, schools were free to teach whatever subject content they liked as there was no centrally set curriculum. The first national curriculum was created by the Education Reform Act 1988, which covered England and Wales. The details of its content still had to be worked out, and the statutory orders and guidelines for history (with separate guidelines for Wales) were taught from 1991 onwards. Various reforms to the curriculum have taken place since then in England: in 1995, 2000 and 2014. Reforms in Wales took place in 2000, 2008 and a new curriculum is to come into force in 2022. A curriculum was created for Northern Ireland in 1992, revised in 1996 and a new curriculum was introduced in 2007. Non-statutory curriculum guidelines were published for Scotland in 1993 and a revised set of guidelines for the new Curriculum for Excellence were offered for teaching from 2010.

The school systems in each also country differ slightly in the ages taught at each stage. Most schools are divided by age of the children.

England	Wales	N. Ireland	Scotland
Primary	Primary	Primary	Primary
key stage 1 - 5-7	key stage 1 - 5-7	key stage 1 - 4-8	P1-P7 - 4-12
key stage 2 - 7-11	key stage 2 - 7-11	key stage 2 - 8-11	
Secondary	Secondary	Secondary	Secondary
key stage 3 - 11-14	key stage 3 - 11-14	key stage 3 - 11-14	S1-S4 - 12-16
key stage 4 - 14-16	key stage 4 - 14-16	key stage 4 - 14-16	Senior
key stage 5 - 16-18	key stage 5 - 16-18	key stage 5 - 16-18	S5-S6 - 16-18

Table 1. Curriculum phases across the United Kingdom.

Primary schools cover children aged 5-11 in England and Wales, 4-11 in Northern Ireland and 4-12 in Scotland. Secondary schools covers ages 11-18 in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and 12-18 in Scotland. The educational phases of the curriculum also vary between the four countries (table 1).

The importance of vocational and technical education, which prepares people for specific employment roles, alongside traditional academic education has long been recognised. It was a cornerstone of the Education Act 1944 which created twin track schooling between more academic grammar schools and more technical secondary modern schools. A perceived elitism of academic over vocational education led to the secondary modern schools unfairly being seen as second class. A result was the creation of comprehensive schools which merged the two types of school. These became the commonest form of school from the 1960s.

The modern system of education at 14+ was created in 1951 with the General Certificate of Education (GCE). Students would study for two years and take exams in specific subjects at the age of 16 for the Ordinary Level (O Level) and take exams after a further two years at the age of 18 for the Advanced Level (A Level). Students who were not capable of taking the GCE could take the Certificate of Secondary Education (CSE) instead after 1963. From 1988, the GCE O Levels and CSEs were merged into a common General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE), still taken in specific subjects. GCE A Levels remained but, from 1987, divided into Advanced Supplementary Level (the Advanced Subsidiary Level since 2001, AS Level) taken at 17, and the full A Level taken at 18. The attempt to create a common set of qualifications that all children take has always been undermined by the academic nature of traditional education. As a result, calls for renewed pathways for vocational education keep resurfacing. The latest version of this was the cre-

ation of National Vocational Qualifications in 1986, available at five levels equivalent to the GCSEs, A Levels and degrees. A wide range of other vocational qualifications are now recognised by government.

The higher education systems in the UK are based on the universities. These have changed in nature over time, and the system in Scotland differs from the rest of the UK. Most of the UK has three-year undergraduate degrees in specific subjects with students entering at the age of 18, while Scotland has four year degrees with specialisation in the main subject in the last 2 years and students able to enter at 17. The ancient universities of Oxford, Cambridge, St Andrews, Glasgow, Aberdeen, Edinburgh were joined in the 19th century by universities in the new industrial cities, and by a large number of new universities in the 1960s. This growth of newer universities ran in parallel with the creation of polytechnics: designed to teach vocational degrees useful in professional life. The distinction between polytechnics and universities was abolished in 1992. One important development was the development of part-time courses for adults outside of a degree. Adult education has a long history. One of its mainstays, the Workers Educational Association, was founded in 1903. University-based courses were originally called extra-mural classes, later continuing education and now often termed lifelong learning.

2. The place of archaeology in education

Before the 1980s, archaeology had acquired a place in education that could be summarised under four headings:

1. prehistory and classical archaeology being taught in primary schools;
2. archaeology qualifications taken at the ages of 16 and 18;
3. adult continuing education classes;
4. university undergraduate and postgraduate degrees.

For much of the 20th century, archaeology was most visible as part of the teaching of the Stone Age in primary schools. One of the pioneers of early learning theory, John Dewey in the USA, was clear about the value of studying prehistory as allowing the complexities of life to be studied in their simplest form: subsistence, shelter and protection, technology and social life (Dewey 1926, p. 252). He even began to teach it in his own school in the 1890s (Corbishley, Stone 1994, pp. 385-386). Teaching of prehistory in Britain was evident in some schools by the 1910s (Archer *et al.* 1916, pp. 108-109) and resources were being published to introduce children to prehistory (e.g. Dopp 1904; Boyle 1921; Quennell, Quennell 1921; Rutley 1924). Such teaching guides

continued to be published into the 1980s (Corbishley 1989). Teachers did therefore have the resources and opportunities to introduce at least prehistoric archaeology to primary school children. This was supported and extended to secondary school teaching by the formation of the Schools Council History Project in 1972 (still existing as the Schools History Project, http://www.schoolshistoryproject.co.uk/about-shp/). From the beginning, they advocated the teaching of historical skills, using primary evidence, and were sympathetic towards the use of archaeology (Planel 1990, pp. 272-273).

At 14+, Cambridge University created an O Level in archaeology in 1952, the first specific qualification in the subject below a university degree. A Certificate of Secondary Education was created for archaeology by the 1970s. The O Level and the CSE were merged into the General Certificate of Secondary Education in 1988 and a new AS Level in archaeology was also created. By 1988, there were two GCSEs and one AS and one A Level in archaeology. This had changed to be one GCSE, one AS Level and two A Levels by 1994. Take up of these qualifications was limited, but by 2005, there were 2,222 students taking GCSE, AS or A Level archaeology.

Adult continuing education classes in archaeology have been offered since 1934. These had been pioneered by W.G. Hoskins, with a focus on understanding the development of historical landscapes (Speight 2003, p. 57). By 2000, there were around 1,300 courses that covered some aspect of archaeology being offered. These courses could be of a very high quality with long term research embedded in them. One of the early field schools (training excavations) of this kind was that run by Maurice Beresford at Wharram Percy as early as 1949. Such courses were ideal for meeting the needs of local volunteer groups wishing to enhance their archaeological skills, and did a great deal to support local archaeology (Webster 1959; Speight 2002, 2003). It is important to note that anyone in England, Scotland and Wales can carry out archaeological fieldwork, depending only on the permission of the landowner or official permission from the state in case of excavation a legally protected site.

The early development of archaeology was reflected in the universities with the appointment in 1851 of the first Disney Professor of Archaeology at Cambridge. Professorships in archaeology followed in 1880 at University College London, in 1884 at Liverpool, in 1887 at Oxford. However, the growth of archaeology as a degree subject was slow, with only five universities teaching single a subject archaeology undergraduate degree by 1961 (Kenyon 1961). However, there was a major expansion in archaeology over the next 10. A survey in 1983 revealed 35 univer-

sities were offering undergraduate degree covering archaeology (Austin *et al.* 1984). By 2012, the subject was offered more widely as a component of various qualifications in 51 different universities. Between 1996 and 2001, there was an average of 956 students entering a degree in archaeology each year. This is a good increase on the 357 students who began a BA or BSc in archaeology in 1975.

The main professional body for archaeology in the UK is the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA). This sets standards for professional practice in the discipline. It created a set of National Occupational Standards for archaeology in 2003. These can be used as the basis for NVQs in the subject as well as professional training. Universities are now also seeking to have their degree courses accredited by CIfA as meeting the needs of the profession. So far, 23 degrees in seven universities have been accredited (https://www.archaeologists.net/Accredited_Degrees). Graduates on these programmes can then meet the requirements for Practitioner grade of CIfA membership.

3. Changes to education since the 1980s

Changes to education since the 1980s have produced mixed results for archaeology. The introduction of the National Curriculum in England, Wales and Northern Ireland in the 1990s brought about a major change in the presence of archaeology in teaching in schools. Prehistory was excluded from the history curriculum in England, which now began with ancient Greece and Roman Britain. The curriculum did say that artefacts and sites could be used as evidence for the past, but there were no specific references to archaeology or prehistory. There was a slight improvement in 1995 when the Neolithic revolution was given as an example of a topic that could be taught at key stage 3, although there is little evidence for teachers using this example. In primary schools from 1995, teachers did have to teach about an ancient non-European society (ancient Egypt, Mesopotamia, Indus Valley, Maya, Benin or Aztecs). What remained excluded was any teaching of British prehistory. Generations of teaching experience in this were being lost with the retirement of those teachers who had taught it before 1991. The situation in Wales was slightly different in that the Welsh identity makes explicit connection with the prehistoric Iron Age as its Celtic forebears and so this was included in the curriculum from the beginning. Irish identities are also strongly linked with deep time, and their history curriculum included specific reference to the Middle and New Stone Ages, Bronze Age and Iron Age. In Scotland, there were no stipu-

lated periods as the curriculum was not mandatory. Schools could decide their own topics, and these could include ancient Egypt or well-known Scottish archaeological sites like Neolithic Skara Brae (Hillis 2010). Broadly speaking, the main changes in history teaching since 1991 have been to the detriment of archaeology in England with a far less obvious presence in the curriculum than before. This led to some identifying prehistory as part of an 'excluded past' (Stone, MacKenzie 1990, p. 2).

The place of archaeology in 14-18 education was precarious. Although there were GCSE and AS/A Level qualifications, the number of students taking any one of them was small. At its height in 1999, the GCSE in archaeology attracted 621 students across the UK. Likewise, the greatest number ever to take the A Level was 628 in 2000. The AS Level (taken at age 17) was the most popular with 1,359 students taking it in 2006. The exam boards that offered these qualifications were not state run, but were private companies that were expected to operate at a profit. Archaeology was expensive to administer and losing money. The decision to end the GCSE was therefore taken in 2004, with the last students sitting the exam in 2006. The Council for British Archaeology campaigned hard against this decision, being interviewed on national BBC radio, getting questions asked in Parliament and meeting with a government minister: all to no avail. Government saw no reason to intervene on behalf of a minority subject that was deemed of no worth to the nation's economy. AS and A Level survived, but eventually these too were abolished in 2019.

Government attempts to make the GCSE and A Level system more fit for the 21st century included the development of applied or vocational qualifications, and later in the development of a diploma framework that might replace the existing qualification structure. The CBA was instrumental in getting archaeology accepted as an option in the new GCSE in Applied History in 2006, but this was discontinued by its exam board in 2017. A diploma in humanities and social sciences was in development from 2008, that would have included archaeology. However, the change of government in 2010 brought this to an end, with a Conservative education minister firmly wedded to more traditionally academic qualifications at 14 to 18.

Archaeological field schools in adult continuing education were in decline from the 1960s onwards. Factors causing this included the growth of professional archaeological field units and the development of more complex, scientific and more expensive field methods (Speight 2002, p. 80). Within adult education, archaeology stood out, as field schools provided both vocational training and were primary research projects, both of which were against the perceived spirit of much adult education at the

time (Speight 2002, p. 81). Wider threats to archaeology's place in adult education came from increases in living standards which led to changes in consumption patterns for archaeology. People could now travel more and visit archaeological sites, and could gain knowledge of the subject from watching television (Speight 2002, p. 81). They could also join local societies which had seen a big expansion in the 1950s onwards and would organise their own events outside the adult education framework.

However, adult education provided more than field schools. There were also large numbers of leisure courses, usually lectures, which provided people with a more passive understanding of archaeology. These continued to thrive. Surveys for the Council for British Archaeology showed an expansion in such courses from around 200 in the early 1960s to around 700 in the late 1970s. Later surveys showed a continued increase to around 900 courses by the early 1990s. A fundamental change to adult education took place under the Labour government after 1997 (Taylor 2009; Bynner 2017). While what was rebadged as 'lifelong learning' was seen as allowing better life chances for all, the emphasis for government funding was diverted to obviously vocational courses. The problem for archaeology, was that it was seen as a humanities subject, without clear vocational links. Funding for archaeology courses became harder and the number of courses declined in the early 2000s.

Higher education has seen an expansion over the last 20 years, but not necessarily to the benefit of archaeology. The first major change was the imposition of tuition fees in 1998. The second major change was the government's declaration in 1999 that it wanted to see 50% of young people enter higher education in the future. The imposition of fees in had an immediate effect on the numbers of young people applying to do archaeology at university. An average of 837 applicants for BA Archaeology in the two years before fees were imposed fell to 679 in the two years after the imposition and a further fall to 498 in the years 2002-2012. Archaeology is usually successful in attracting students who originally applied for other subjects, such as history, and the number actually enrolling for BA Archaeology averaged 570 between 1998 and 2011. The trebling of fees to £9,000 in 2012 however has seen those enrolling on BA Archaeology fall to 420 in 2016. Although fees are no longer paid at the beginning of course, but claimed back through tax after graduation, many prospective students are now more aware of the need to complete degrees in subjects that have high earning potential and obvious vocational relevance, which, in their eyes, excludes archaeology. Again, the lack of obvious societal or vocational relevance makes archaeology less attractive to many.

4. Opportunities for archaeology

So, archaeology has a place in primary school education, and can be used by enterprising teachers who follow the Schools History Project in secondary schools. However, it no longer features as a subject in 14-18 education. Its place in adult continuing education is now less than it was. While archaeology departments are still recruiting students, the number applying to study the subject have been declining. Archaeology seems to suffer from being seen as a less interesting handmaiden of history with little to offer in the way of vocationally useful skills or relevance to modern life.

So, why bother? Archaeology is not only an antiquarian hobby. It is the one subject that helps us to understand what it is to be human: the whole development of humanity as a species and its varied cultures, our mistakes and our successes, our place in nature (affected and being influenced by it). For some, it was the 2nd World War that triggered this understanding of the wider purpose of archaeology, as something that could help create a better world after the sufferings of the early 20th century (Frere, Frere 1942; Clark 1943). Archaeology offers both intellectual challenge and emotional connection. For some, archaeology offers us a connection with our common humanity, a chance to learn from the past and parallels with the present (Clark 1979; Daniel 1962; Deetz 1968; Ford 1973; Fritz 1973; Fritz, Plog 1970; Lipe 1984; Shanks, Tilley 1992; Trigger 1984). More recently, Little (2002, p. 7) noted that archaeologists need to be more aware of the political and social role played by archaeology. Wood (2002, pp. 190-191) suggested that archaeologists need to move away from being advocates critiquing the human condition to being activists pursuing a better society. Likewise, it was Sabloff (2008, p. 16) who suggested that the key purpose of archaeology is to look forwards rather back in time, and to be of practical use in the present.

Archaeology's relevance for the modern world will change over time, as the issues affecting us change. Currently, we may identify some major clusters of issues, all of which are interconnected:

- responses to climate change affecting patterns of disease and access to resources;
- sustainability of our interactions with the environment;
- inequalities in access to wealth and basic human needs;
- changes and challenges to the nature of ethnic identities;
- the fraught relations between indigenous peoples and incoming migrants;
- the complex nature of nationalism in modern politics.

Fortunately, archaeologists are now more aware than ever of the need to work in the public interest (e.g. Rychlo 2013; Skeates *et al.* 2012). The Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) recognises the wider social benefits of archaeology in its guidance (CIfA n.d.). These include conferred values (people's perceptions of the beauty of heritage, its associations with significant events and meaning for the community) and instrumental values (including economic, educational, academic, recreational and social benefits people derive from heritage). Historic England (formerly English Heritage) recognise various public values for heritage in society, such as communal value which derives from the meanings of a place for the people who relate to it, or for whom it figures in their collective experience or memory (English Heritage 2008). The economic benefits of heritage are underpinned by archaeology and are seldom considered as an output of the subject. Davies (2010) pointed out that tourism is the UK's 5th largest industry and 3rd largest export earner, much of which depends on heritage. Heritage related tourism was worth £4,300 million, employing 113,000 people and the wider economic impact of heritage tourism was worth £11,900 million, employing 270,000 jobs.

There are many organisations which offer young people the chance to engage with archaeology through work at heritage sites or museums. National heritage organisations, such as English Heritage, Historic Environment Scotland or the National Trust, have in their charge many heritage sites open to the public and schools. Likewise, museums have flourishing education services, although resources for education have traditionally been more forthcoming in the national and regional museums than in the smaller, local or independent museums. The work of the Group for Education in Museums (GEM) is vital in supporting these services through its annual conference, its journal (*Journal of Education in Museums*), email discussion list and its regional workshops. As noted in Henson (2017), the Council for British Archaeology did a lot to support individual archaeologists working with schools, to publish guidance on archaeology in education, beginning under its first education officer, Mike Corbishley (e.g. Cracknell, Corbishley 1986; Henson 1997; Howell 1994; Pearson 2001). Its publications are still of value.

The new curriculum for history in England, introduced in 2014, at last makes specific reference to prehistory. It says in the curriculum for key stage 2 that the periods pupils should be taught about must include "changes in Britain from the Stone Age to the Iron Age". Various resources have been produced for teachers to help them deliver this. Many are available online resource websites such as TES Connect or PlanBee.

The presence of such online sites means we can now reach out more widely to teachers than ever before. Some of the resources are created by teachers themselves, but many are created by museums and archaeologists. Good examples are:

- *Stone Age to Iron Age teachers' resource pack* (KS2History 2015) https://www.tes.co.uk/teaching-resource/journey-through-the-stone-age-class-assembly-6452533
- *Archaeology activity pack* (Museum of London 2014) http://www.museumoflondon.org.uk/files/1314/2747/2982/Prehistory_archaeology_activity_pack.pdf
- *Prehistoric Britain: Mesolithic* (PlanBee 2014) https://www.planbee.com/stone-age-to-iron-age-ks2
- *Wolf Brother's wildwoods* (Forestry Commission Scotland 2013) https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/research/wolf-brothers-wildwoods/

Wolf Brother's wildwoods links with a serious of novels set in the Mesolithic, and the presence of young people's fiction set in the past offers us another opportunity to engage children with archaeology. Following on from this is *Into the wildwoods* (Biddulph *et al.* 2020) which develops the resource in more detail and is a good example of how to make prehistory interesting and educationally meaningful.

Fortunately, there are many adventurous, high quality teachers with a real interest in what archaeology can provide in schools. Equally fortunately, archaeology is ideally placed to support approaches to teaching that are informed by constructivist education theory (Henson 2004, 2017): the intellectual, the physical, the rational and the emotive. Also, there are now many professional archaeologists with an interest in working in public engagement and education. Many are graduating from the Masters courses which cover this area of archaeological practice.

There have also been various national initiatives in education that seek to support the curriculum through engagement with learning outside the schoolroom. One sought to enable schools to use the built environment: Engaging Places, now run by Open City Architecture (https://www.lotc.org.uk/engaging-places-website/). Another supported school trips and outdoor learning experiences: Learning Outside the Classroom, now run as an independent charity (https://www.lotc.org.uk/). Both of these would allow archaeological approaches to have a place in education.

There are still opportunities to teach some archaeology at 14-18. The OCR awarding body offers Classical Civilisation at GCSE, AS and A Level. In Scotland, there are optional units at Higher level (Investigating Archaeology) and Advanced Higher level (History and Archaeology: an Introduction).

Adult part-time learning is till supported by a wide range of organisations: the University of the Third Age (U3A), the Workers' Educational Association (WEA), university continuing education departments and the multitude of local archaeological and historical societies whose work is now supported financially by the Heritage Lottery Fund. In higher education, there is an increasing number of courses in heritage studies, especially as Masters degrees which attract students who want to engage the public with heritage and archaeology.

5. How to sell the subject

Archaeology is not the simple accumulation of artefacts and sites from the past. It is the study of human life and behaviour as reflected in those artefacts and sites. Archaeologists study people not things. All aspects of human existence are reflected in archaeology. More than this, those who study it are often highly motivated. They are attracted by its critical thinking, intellectual challenge and a deep emotional engagement with the past. More importantly, archaeology has important things to say about the human condition. We must learn to move beyond our own disciplinary boundaries, as others have pointed out:

> "At a time when culture, fundamentalism, climate change, and economic inequality are convulsing the world, archaeology promises profundity but delivers only mountains of (mostly unpublished) facts"
>
> (Silberman 2008, p. 175)

Taking practical steps to do this for the author has meant creating a set of online resources for teachers to use based on the Mesolithic site of Star Carr, the most recent excavation of which ended in 2015 (Milner *et al.* 2018). These resources were created as one outcome of PhD research project (Henson 2017b) and are available online for free download (http://www.starcarr.com/schools.html). Teachers of the primary curriculum want not only resources that deliver knowledge of the Stone Age but also activities that help teach topics such as literacy and numeracy, creative writing, art, respect for different cultures and lifestyles and environmental sustainability. As archaeologists, we want to deliver both a knowledge of the past and of archaeology itself as a discipline.

The resource is divided into three sets of activities:

a) an *Archaeology Skills Log*;
b) a set of stories set in the Mesolithic: *11,000 years ago in the Middle Stone Age*;
c) *Lessons from the Middle Stone Age*.

The Archaeology Skills Log engages pupils with archaeological processes through five separate lessons: *finding out information, identifying things, recording objects, analysing how people lived* and *telling others about Star Carr* (and therefore meets the requirements of Maddison 2014 for good primary history teaching).

11,000 years ago in the Middle Stone Age is based on a set of fictional short stories about the daily lives and experiences of a Mesolithic family centred around Neska (a girl, 9 years old) and Mutil (a boy, 6 years old). These allow the exploration of various aspects of Mesolithic life and are backed up by short sections on what archaeologists know about these. Classroom activities are suggested for each story, based on guided questioning, discussion, quizzes or creative activities. The short stories are: *moving home, making things, food, friends and strangers, a hint of winter, coming of age, a new life, the bad old days, boy or girl – animals or plants?*

Lessons from the Middle Stone Age explores the resonances between the Mesolithic and the present, as well as the debates and uncertainties about our understandings of the past. There are seven sections: *the origins of ourselves, change is inevitable, the living environment, human diversity, healthy eating, what makes us happy* and *the great debate* (that contrasts the ideas of prehistoric people as either noble savages or nasty and brutish). These show that we can learn useful lessons to help us both live better lives today and understand the world we live in and support personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) and the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSC) strands of the curriculum.

These are all supported by a set of background information about the Mesolithic and Star Carr. The whole resource is designed to be used in the classroom and as stand-alone resources without access to artefacts or museum displays. Its elements could though be easily adapted to be used with both. Overall, these resources are designed to show that stereotypes of the Stone Age are wrong, that people were skilled and sophisticated in using their environment. Although the resources form a coherent package, teachers in practice have only limited time available for teaching what is a small part of the Stone Age to Iron Age topic in the history curriculum. They are likely to pick individual elements of the resources rather than use the whole.

An important aspect of these resources is that they should engage with what children are interested in. What children are interested in can be easily found by listening to the questions they ask in class. During one visit to a school, a girl in a class asked how women in the Mesolithic had babies. Therefore, there is a story in the resource about one of the characters giving birth to her first baby. Another important aspect is that they should be bold in tackling modern day subjects such as gender roles in society. Another story has as its focus a boy who wants to help with gathering plant foods and a girl who is happier helping her father in hunting. Likewise, one of the lessons sections introduces children to notions of healthy eating by looking Mesolithic diet. these all ultimately link to Clark's plea for using prehistory to make a better world (Clark 1943).

To sum up: archaeology has a great deal of relevance and importance for today's world. This is not always recognised within the education system. Nevertheless, the opportunities are there to introduce children and adults to archaeology, what it reveals about our past, to enlighten and challenge them to rethink the present and the future. All we need is archaeologists able to see the opportunities and willing to accept the challenge.

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