

# Bronze Age Murder Mystery

## Family Activity Pack



This activity is based on school and family workshops we do at the museum.

**Warning:** Due to the nature of the topic this pack contains themes about death, skeletons and graves. Parents should use their judgment to decide whether these materials would be upsetting for their own children.

### COMPLETING ENROLMENT AND FEEDBACK FORMS

Our Family workshops are funded by a grant from the London Borough of Richmond Upon Thames Adult Community Learning (ACL) Fund. Due to the Covid 19 crisis we are unable to run our Easter Family workshops in the museum and so we have made activity packs available online for all to enjoy. To receive any of our ACL funding for our Easter Family Workshops we will need those who have downloaded and used our activity packs to complete online Enrolment and Feedback forms and send completed signed copies to [learning@museumofrichmond](mailto:learning@museumofrichmond) or post them to Museum of Richmond, Second Floor, Old Town Hall, Richmond, TW9 1TP. Please click [here](#) for enrolment and feedback forms. These completed forms are sent to LBRUT as evidence of participation and we will not receive any funding without them. We appreciate all your help and support during this difficult time and look forward to welcoming you back to the museum soon.

### How to use this pack:

The aim of this Family Activity Pack is for children aged 8 and over to learn with their families about:

- local history in Richmond.
- different roles of an archaeologist
- how to look at objects in detail
- use different sources to gain information about the Bronze Age

### Please print pages:

1,5,7,8 to 21 & 25 (page numbers at bottom right corner)

Children can write answers on the worksheets.

\*If printing is limited print the object pages: 7, 11 & 15. Or show on a screen.

Children can use paper to write notes and draw.

**Adults:** Information in the pack is aimed to be read out by the adults to the children with questions to help discussion. Writing in *italics* are instructions or tips. If you have any questions, please get in touch:

[learning@museumofrichmond.com](mailto:learning@museumofrichmond.com)

### Activities:

Mind Map – page 1

Make a Timeline – page 3

Skeleton Game – page 4

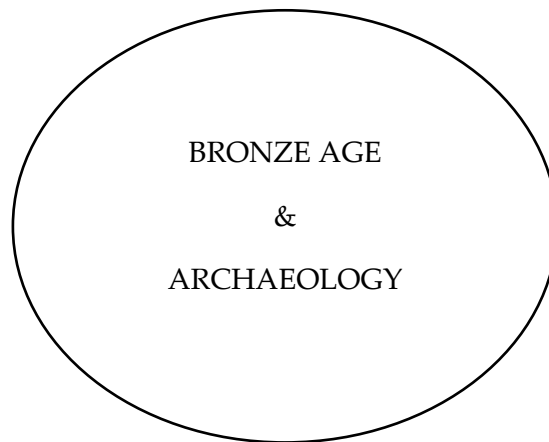
Objects in Focus – page 5

Bronze Age Murder Mystery – page 6 – 21

Design a careers poster to win a prize! - 25

Follow up activities – page 26

Use this mind map to write down everything you already know about the  
Bronze Age and/or Archaeology:



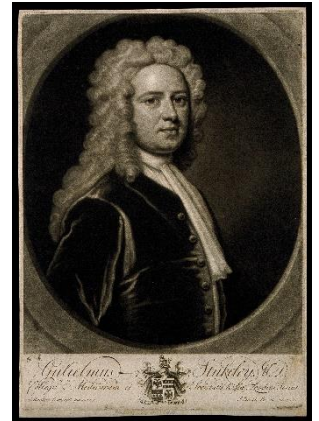
The Museum of Richmond currently has a temporary exhibition called 'Queen's Road, 500 years of History' it tells the story of the Queens Road which is close to the Richmond Park Gate and the people who lived there.

*(For more information and an exhibition slideshow follow link*

<https://bit.ly/QueensRoadExhibition> )



In the 1840's a man named Sir Thomas Newby Reeve designed and built the wonderful orange brick Dutch style houses. He had a very special ancestor named The Rev. Dr. William Stukeley, who was a great lover of history, and famously started the archaeological investigation of Stonehenge.



## What is Stonehenge?



Stonehenge is a very famous stone circle in the South of England that was started in the Stone Age and continued into the Bronze Age. They started by digging a circular ditch that was 100 metres across using picks made from antlers. There were two entrances to the circle. There were 56 pits dug around it, 1 metre deep, with flat bottoms. They could have held timber posts, or stones or might have been part of religious ceremonies.

Stonehenge was also used as a burial site! You can find out more here

<https://www.natgeokids.com/uk/discover/history/general-history/stonehenge-facts/>

# How long ago was the Bronze Age?

The Bronze Age was about 4500 years ago, which is a very long time. Let's make a timeline to work out how far back this was. Take 1 step back or every 100 years. (*You may need to do this in the garden or use the distance of your house/flat. Take small steps if needed. Get children to work out how many steps they need to take. Alternatively, if you can spare any precious toilet paper/kitchen roll use one sheet for each 100 years.*)

## Activity: Make a Timeline



**Today** – No steps



**Victorians** 200 years ago (*pretend you are a chimney sweeper climb up a narrow chimney and brush away the soot with your chimney sweep*) – 2 steps



**Tudors** 500 years ago (*pretend you are a large Henry VIII enjoying his dinner and drinking his wine*) – 5 steps



**Romans** 2000 years ago (*pretend you are a Roman enjoying a lovely Roman Bath*) – 20 steps



**Bronze Age** 4500 years ago (*pretend you are using an axe to chop down a tree*) – 45 steps

## What is an archaeologist?

An archaeologist is someone who studies the human past by looking at the things humans have left behind. They do this by excavating sites and studying what they find.

## What is excavating?

Fancy word for digging, but they do it with extreme care recording every detail. Everything an archaeologist finds is a piece of the puzzle that is the past.

## Activity: Skeleton Game

One person must find a small object that they really like.

This person lies on the floor as if they are dead and this is their burial site.

They can be buried with their favourite possession. Other children/adults find 4 more objects they think the person would like (*lucky stone, jewellery, shell, make up, pens, sweets, note pad, toy, iPad*) and place them in the burial site along with the person's favourite object.

**Now you must decide if you were an archaeologist, and you dug up this grave in 500 years time what object or parts of objects would remain?**

What if this grave was found in 4500 years time? Would less remain?



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Banana Peel	- 3-4 weeks	Leather shoes	- 25-40 years
Paper Bag	- 1 month	Tinned Steel Can	- 50 years
Newspaper	- 1.5 months	Foamed Plastic Cups	- 50 years
Apple Core	- 2 months	Rubber-Boot Sole	- 50-80 years
Cardboard	- 2 months	Plastic containers	- 50-80 years
Cotton Glove	- 3 months	Aluminum Can	- 200-500 yrs
Orange peels	- 6 months	Plastic Bottles	- 450 years
Plywood	- 1-3 years	Disposable Diapers	- 550 years
Wool Sock	- 1-5 years	Monofilament Fishing Line	- 600 years
Milk Cartons	- 5 years	Plastic Bags	- 200-1000 yrs

Well done! You have excellent archaeological skills!

We know lots of information about people from the past from their graves. People were often buried with their prized possessions, which tell us stories about them. However, many items decompose over time. Natural materials like clay, stone, bone and shell can last for thousands of years.

Much of the information we have about the Bronze Age comes from archaeologists discovering burial sites. Another very important part of an archaeologist's job is to record information about the objects they find. Let's try!

# Activity: Object in Focus

Pick one object from your skeleton game and imagine you have dug it up from a grave. Use the record card below to record all the important information that you can find. If you have a ruler, you can measure your objects as well. Make sure that you look really closely, drawing can often pick up details a camera may miss. *(If you have a garden you might like to bury an object there for children to excavate. If you have a magnifying glass, children can look at the object in more detail.)*

## Record Cards

Circle your answers and write down any important details about your find.



Where did you find the object? .....

Describe how the object feels: rough smooth shiny matt heavy light

What colour is the object? .....

Any other colours or patterns?

.....

What is it made of? Clay Metal Bone Fabric Glass

Any other materials?

.....

Measure the size of your object and record the results below:

Width: .....mm      Height: .....mm

Depth: .....mm

Is it a complete object, most of an object, or a small part of an object?

A complete object    Most of an object    A small part of an object

Any other observations or thoughts?

.....

What do you think the object tells you about the person?

.....

.....

Draw a picture of your object:



# Activity: Bronze Age Murder Mystery



We are going to imagine that local archaeologists have made a discovery in Richmond Park whilst excavating what they thought was a Roman Hillfort. The archaeologists uncovered a cemetery/burial ground and found the grave of an unknown person.



They managed to carefully excavate some of the bones from the site and some of the objects that lay next to the bones.

They took pictures but unfortunately, the park had to close, and they did not have time to use their record cards to solve the mystery of who this person could have been!

It is your job to use your archaeology skills and piece the clues together to solve the mystery. Use the photographs of the objects in the three trays to work out what the objects are, what they were used for and who they belonged to. Look carefully at the skeleton and the bones to see if you can work out where the objects were found in the grave.

*You may like to work on a few objects or all of them.*

*You could do a tray each and share your findings together afterwards.*





**Record Cards**

**Circle your answers and write down any important details about your find.**

**Where did you find the object? Red, Blue or Green Tray**

**Describe how you think the object would feel:**

**rough smooth shiny matt heavy light**

**What colour is the object?**

**Any other colours or patterns?**

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**What is it made of? Clay Metal Bone Fabric Glass**

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**Draw a picture of the object**



Draw or cut out the objects and place them in the grave next to the bones they were found with.










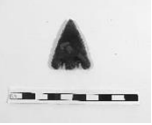


*This is tricky, so encourage children to feel their own bones (shoulders, arms, legs) and take a guess. Talk about joints and shapes. Bone Locations: Red Tray: Thinner bone on lower leg (fibula), Green Tray: Upper arm (humerus) and Blue Tray: Shoulder blade (scapula)*

**Share your ideas: What do the objects tell us about the person in this grave?**

**On the next page can you match the clues with the objects?**

Whether they are a man or woman	Brow ridge tends to be more defined in men than women – get the children to feel their own ridges. Men have narrow hips and wide shoulders, women wide hips and narrow shoulders (child birth). Most reliable way is to do a DNA test
That they would hunt animals	Arrow head – use complete arrow to show how archaeologists use research and best guesses to fill in the gaps
Where they were born, where they grew up and how old they were when they died	Teeth contain isotopes – chemicals from the food and water you drink, showing where you were born and grew up.  Teeth also made up of layers of dentine – if you cut a tooth in half will have rings you can count, one for each year – like a tree!
That they were clearing land for farming	Adze and axe – show complete ones to show how they would have worked
That they were alive in the Bronze Age	Beaker  Bronze axe
That they were sewing their own clothing	Bone needle – holes would have been made with flint tool first
That they had time and skill to make and decorate pots	Beaker  Pebble – smooth the clay  Shell – makes patterns  Bone comb – makes geometric dot patterns like other examples
That they buried their dead with great care	All of the objects
That they would fish for food as well as hunting	Bone harpoon – teeth stop the fish swimming away
They traded with other parts of the country, not just people who lived nearby	Beakers – shows how ideas spread  Welsh gold torcs

	Skull
	Pot
	Shell, pebble and bone comb
	Teeth
	Bone needle
	Bone fishing harpoon
	Welsh Gold Torc Bracelets
	Bronze Flanged Axe Head
	Flint Adze
	Flint arrow head

## Background information:



**Bronze Age Beaker** – influence of the Beaker people who brought new technology and farming from Eastern Europe (from the Middle East before then.) New way of making pots and decorating them but not used in day to day life – used in burials. Farming and pottery started in the Neolithic era (New Stone Age) but more evidence from Bronze Age as much closer. Pots were decorated using string to make the patterns or the bone tool. Some were decorated with shells. One example from Scotland contained traces of lime pollen, and this may have been used for flavouring a drink like mead. It is possible that alcohol, because it is a mind-altering drug, was viewed as magical, and was reserved for very special occasions.



**Pebbles** – used to smooth the surface of the pots once they had been made; coil pots not thumb pots, means they are taller and can be shaped.



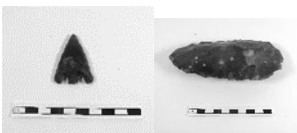
**Bone tool** – used to make the dot patterns in the beakers



**Shells** – also used as decorating tools and used as jewellery since the stone age



**Bronze Flanged Axe head** – new technology. Bronze made from copper and tin (an alloy – archaeologists call it a copper alloy as copper is the main ingredient) Bronze is cast (melted) into moulds of stone or clay and then taken out of the mould once it has cooled. Potential origin of the story of the Sword in the stone! People would keep their broken and damaged items made from bronze so they could be re-melted and reused. We find hordes of broken bronze objects so it may have been that people stored them whilst waiting for a travelling bronze smith to visit their village.



**Flints** – just because it is the Bronze Age doesn't mean they have stopped using flint. Flint has been used for generations so lots of people know how to make it and don't need special equipment to make them. Metal work is also difficult at this stage as it is difficult to get pure metal. If there are impurities in the ore dug out of the ground it means the metal is weak. Simply cannot get fires hot enough at this time to make very pure and strong metal – which is why metal work in this period is big and bulky. So flint is still better for things like arrow heads.



**Gold torcs** – gold is a very soft metal so much easier to work than Bronze. People would make jewellery called torcs - twisted and braided strands. They would often then destroy them on purpose and throw them in rivers or bury them (depending on where they lived) Archaeologists believe that this is a way of please the spirits or gods to ensure good harvests, rains etc.



**Bone tools** – again, people are still using bones as it is plentiful from when they slaughter livestock and/or go hunting. We are very wasteful today; throughout history people have been much better at recycling and reusing materials. In some periods people would also be buried with dead animals which hadn't been butchered (meat wasn't cut off the bones) so they had food for the afterlife.

## How do we work out if they were male or female?

- Brow ridge – adult males tend to have a bigger ridge on their forehead
- Proportions of shoulders and hips – men have wide shoulders and narrow hips; women have the opposite.
- However, they are not hard and fast rules and there is so much variation in how everyone looks!
- Objects give a clue – weapons tend to show men, domestic items show women as they are objects they use in this life, which they will need in the next
- Best, though expensive, way to tell – DNA testing
- From the skeleton and the objects, we can deduce this person was a man
  
- **Skeletons can also give us other clues –**
  - teeth can tell us their age thanks to the dentine (growth like tree rings tell us their age) and isotopes (chemical elements) found in teeth can tell us where a person was born, where they grew up and the places they have travelled as different isotopes can be found in different places.
  - Simple test for age – whether they have wisdom teeth or not and the growth/size of the bones. Children's skulls don't have fused plates so can help us guess an approximate age.

## When were they alive?

- Big clues are the beakers and bronze tools
- Beakers like these have been found in Ham – it is known people have been living in this area since the Stone Age



## Could they read or write?

- There are no writing tools to show they could
- Pre History is called prehistory because this was before (pre) history was written down. We think this as nothing has survived. However, they may have had some form of writing, but we haven't found any because it hasn't survived (missing jigsaw pieces)

## Were they rich or poor?

- Bronze Age people didn't use coins – first evidence of coins is from the Iron Age. They used barter
- So wealth is different in the Bronze Age – more about the status you had from the objects you owned and your place in the community. Bronze Age is when we start to see the development of an elite class – chiefs who would be in charge of their tribes. Best warriors who had the best stuff.

## Why are the objects here?

- Why do you think? Are they random or carefully placed?

## Was this person murdered?

- Difficult to tell!
- Because there are only bones left, difficult to figure out if there were any wounds.
- So how can we tell how they died? Look at the bones.
  - Any clear evidence of violence like damaged bones?
  - Or any evidence of old age and a hard life? Damaged joints, worn out by work
  - Evidence of illness – The diseases that leave marks tend to be conditions that have lasted months or years.
    - It is possible to observe the new bone formation (periostitis) caused by scurvy (lack of vitamin C),
    - Bending of children's leg and arm bones in rickets.
    - Loss of bone density and associated fractures in osteoporosis.
    - Tuberculosis is another disease that can cause characteristic bone destruction and abnormal bone formation – holes in your vertebrae (bones in your spine)
    - plaque-like layer of abnormal bone is often is caused by chronic infection

## So what can we tell?

- It was a man
- Wealthy: Welsh gold torc bracelets, bronze axe heads
- Lived somewhere with good trade connections: beaker and bracelets
- Skilled: axe, needle, fishing harpoon
- Was missed by his family once he died – buried with care and with their most important objects for the afterlife

## Activity: Design a careers poster to **win a prize!**

Design a careers poster advertising a career as an archaeologist.

Include details about excavations, record cards and objects that might be found. Find out what skills and qualifications you would need to do this job. What sort of person would it appeal to?

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Send your finished posters to [learning@museumofrichmond.com](mailto:learning@museumofrichmond.com) include the designers name, email and address. The Museum staff will judge the best poster and publish the winning poster design on our social media: Twitter, Instagram and Facebook. Closing date 30/06/20. Enrolment & Feedback Forms must be completed to enter (see cover page). The winner will also receive a very special prize: Your very own mini excavation kit!

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**Congratulations!**  
**You have completed the Museum of Richmond**  
**Bronze Age Murder Mystery!**

Now go back to your first page and using a different coloured pen, write down all the things you **now** know about the Bronze Age and Archaeology on your mind map.

Please do share your learning with the museum by sending your photographs to [learning@museumofrichmond.com](mailto:learning@museumofrichmond.com) or tagging us @museumofrichmond on Twitter, Facebook & Instagram.

**Follow up activities:**

- Find out more about archaeology <https://archaeology.mrdonn.org/>
- Build Stonehenge using rectangle biscuits or Jenga.
- Make a bronze age bracelet using bronze paint, string and pasta shapes.
- Make your own archaeological dig in the garden or using a tray and sand/soil
- Find out more about the Bronze Age and make a cartoon strip about a day in the life of a Bronze Age person <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize>
- Search for more of the Museum of Richmond's archaeological collections online <http://www.museumofrichmond.com/collections/search/>

