



Archaeology Detectives Project Guide

About Archaeology Detectives

Archaeology Detectives is a learning programme designed and published by Archaeology Scotland, Scotland's leading independent archaeological education charity working to inspire communities, amateurs and professionals to discover, explore and enjoy Scotland's past.

Archaeology Detectives has been written to help your group explore and learn about real archaeological sites using real archaeological skills. With Archaeology Detectives you can discover, investigate and learn about a site, monument or historic building of your choice using the same skills that archaeologists use in real life. The activities are suitable for both in the classroom and outside to encourage you to make use of the archaeology and history around about you as a suitable context for outdoor learning.

What is Archaeology?

Archaeologists study people and places in the past through the investigation of evidence which has survived to the present day. These can include:

- ◆ Buildings and other structures, both above ground and long buried.
- ◆ Artefacts and objects that people used in their everyday lives, and which may have been lost, discarded, buried or otherwise deposited in the ground.
- ◆ 'Ecofacts', or organic materials which have survived undecayed to the present day and which can tell us about the environmental conditions of the past and how people made use of the natural world and its resources. These might include pollen, wood and other plant material, bones and shells.
- ◆ Landscapes, which have been shaped by the actions of people in the past and the present and contain layer upon layer of sites from different times. These can be investigated to see how a place has been used in different ways over many thousands of years.

It's a common misconception that archaeology is mainly about excavation (digging in the soil to investigate the past). There are many different skills and methods which can be used to investigate the past and interpret an archaeological site. What they have in common is a way of thinking about evidence to draw conclusions about people in the past.

Key Ideas about Archaeological Thinking

- ◆ Interpreting evidence of the past can be tricky, particularly when investigating the archaeology of people who lived before there were any written records. Often archaeologists cannot be certain about what happened at an archaeological site and must make educated guesses from the evidence people left behind
- ◆ Just like a detective studies evidence to solve a crime, an archaeologist will analyse the evidence to form a picture of life in the past. They will look at the evidence and use their reasoning skills to deduce a scenario which explains what happened at a site

- ◆ Archaeologists use many different skills and different sorts of evidence to investigate a site and tell its story. This can include looking at historic maps, aerial photographs, historic photographs or site photographs, sketching plans, making accurate measured drawings and taking site photographs. It's not just about digging!
- ◆ By combining evidence from different types of investigation you can learn more than if you were to look at just one aspect of site analysis. For example, by looking at measured drawings and site photos in combination more detail can be uncovered than by looking at either type of evidence on its own. Comparing multiple sources of evidence can develop a more detailed picture of life in the past.
- ◆ It is only once all the evidence has been gathered and analysed from a variety of sources that an interpretation can be made to tell the story of a site. This interpretation can then be presented to the public through a publication or display of some sort. Any interpretation an archaeologist makes has to be supported by the evidence they uncover.

How can you use these Activity Plans and Learning Resources?

This is a guide describing how to use the Archaeology Detectives to undertake an investigation of a site, monument or building local to you. In the section below you will find details about how this fits in with the Curriculum for Excellence and how this resource can be used to gain a Heritage Hero Award.

Archaeology Detectives demonstrates the range of archaeological investigation skills by examining seven areas of evidence that archaeologists gather to find out about and interpret the past:

- A. Looking at maps
- B. Looking at aerial photographs
- C. Looking at historic photographs
- D. Surveying a site
- E. Photographing a site
- F. Sketching a site
- G. Interpreting a site for others

These activities encourage learners to use their thinking and reasoning skills much like an archaeologist would be required to do. Archaeologists constantly need to analyse and interpret evidence, making educated guesses and piecing together information from many different sources to solve the puzzles of the past.

The Learning Resources contain example materials about a selection of different archaeological sites and give suggestions for how these historical and archaeological sources can be used. You are free to use these however you may find it more valuable to source your own images of a site more local to you. There are thousands of archaeological and historical sites throughout Scotland, and a wealth of archaeological evidence and resources relating to them which you can use. The Activity Plans provide suggestions for places where you can source this evidence. Links to these sources and resources can be found on the [Links Page](#) of the Archaeology Scotland website. Once you have found

images relating to your own site the activities in the Learning Resources will help you to interpret the evidence.

The different Activity Plans and their corresponding Learning Resources can be used separately as standalone activities, or they can be used together to create a project / unit of work. By learning about a range of different archaeological skills your group can compare different methods of analysing and recording archaeological evidence. If you are investigating a site of your own these comparative methods can help you make discoveries that you may not uncover by using one archaeological skill alone. In sketching a site you might notice detail that is not obvious in an aerial photograph, for example.

Each of the Learning Resources follows a similar pattern:

- ◆ An introduction exercise
- ◆ The main activity
- ◆ A plenary

The Activity Plan associated with each Learning Resource lists the activities to be undertaken in each session, together with timings, preparation needed, where to locate resources, learning intentions, links to the curriculum and suggestions for further activities.

The Learning Resources for sketching, photographing and surveying also have suggested activities to carry out outdoors – within school grounds, or at a site you are investigating.

Curriculum for Excellence Links

Archaeology Detectives has been designed to be applicable to the Curriculum for Excellence, and promote Outdoor Learning opportunities. It has been written to be most suitable for Curriculum for Excellence Level 2, but can easily be adapted for learners at other levels.

As a multidisciplinary subject archaeology can be extremely useful as a context for learning which includes cross-curricular and thematic learning, the use of the local area and innovative approaches to teaching and learning. Archaeology makes effective links between different subject areas and calls upon a variety of skills; it is both practical and theoretical and offers students a hands-on way of exploring the past and the environment.

Archaeology can be used within Social Studies to deliver the four key capacities:

- ◆ **Successful learners** - through opportunities for non-classroom based learning and the development of a broader range of practical skills.
- ◆ **Confident individuals** - through experience of working with individuals outside school and acknowledgment of other learning styles and different ways of contributing.
- ◆ **Responsible citizens** - by understanding the past environment and exploring heritage in a tactile ‘hands-on’ way, people begin to care about their present environment and where they live. By learning about sustainable living in the past, students gain insight into how it is possible to live sustainably.
- ◆ **Effective contributors** - by engaging in teamwork for a range of practical archaeological tasks

Suggested curricular links are included on each of the Activity Plans, however these are not comprehensive and additional Curriculum for Excellence Outcomes and Experiences may also be applicable.

Heritage Hero Award

The Archaeology Detective resources can also be used to help you and your group undertake the Archaeology Scotland Heritage Hero Award. This is an award scheme for young people in Scotland encouraging them to connect with their past, and to reward their achievement.

The Heritage Hero Award aims:

- ◆ To improve young people's self-confidence and wellbeing through engagement with challenging heritage projects
- ◆ To inspire young people to develop a lifelong interest in Scotland's past
- ◆ To increase awareness of how to access Scotland's heritage in schools, youth groups and similar organisations
- ◆ To help foster links between heritage organisations, community groups and young people

The Archaeology Detectives resources can be used to investigate a wide range of different archaeological and historical sites. They offer activities that fulfil the Investigating, Engaging and Inspiring sections of the award.

The Heritage Hero Award can be undertaken at five different attainment levels, allowing for progression, and is suitable for young people and young adults from Early Years to Senior Level. Further details about the Heritage Hero Awards can be found [here](#).