

Educational Officer Update

**An overview of
the HLF funded
BACAS
Educational
Project**

2 010 was another busy and successful year for the Archaeology for All at Upper Row Farm Educational Project.

The focus of this year's work moved away from the already successful and over subscribed primary school sessions and looked more towards developing site visits and tours for a wide scope of interest groups of varying ages.

Tavis Walker

Work continued on the infrastructure at the farm, particularly with many hours put into enlarging and improving the Roman Garden, which has been such a useful resource to the project since its beginning, under the direction of Les Hayes. Many hours of hard volunteer labour have been put into making the area an extremely attractive, accessible, interactive educational area. Over the year, Claire Ryley has done several excellent talks about Roman Gardens for various visiting groups.

The previous year's hard work improving the barn continued to reap its rewards, providing an excellent venue for visiting groups to browse the displays, quench their thirst and rest their feet. We have continued to build on the success of the Open Days with more and more ambitious events which consistently deliver a strong informative, inclusive educational ethos.

The standard sessions on the Romans delivered to schools were modified to fulfil requests to cover periods including the Tudors and the Ancient Greeks, and have proven a success with both the teachers and pupils.

The highlight of the year personally was working with all the children in Newbridge Primary School (420 pupils) to build an Iron Age roundhouse within the school grounds (*see Figure 1*). The Head Teacher was keen for all the school to experience hands-on archaeology after I conducted an in-school session for a Year 4 Tudors Day.

The Head was particularly interested in Iron Age roundhouse construction and so, since the logistics of transporting all pupils and staff to the farm was too difficult and costly, the roundhouse was brought to them, albeit in a kind of early flat pack form, minus the instruction manual. Several Year 5 and 6 pupils formed the planning and construction committee. They were given the task of



**Figure 1
The Newbridge
Primary School
roundhouse
designed and built
by the pupils**

choosing the site, orientation and dimensions. This was then presented back to the whole school in assembly, with the team justifying why they had come up with what they had.

The construction of the roundhouse in the school's conservation area took place over the course of one week. All twelve classes from Reception through to Year 6 took part in the building and the progress was incredible. At times the daub was going on faster than it could be excavated and mixed. Within the week, the superstructure had gone up and all the walls had been wattle and daubed. The structure continues to play a role in the school's Forest Schools group's activities and rather than being authentically thatched, climbing plants and branches of apple trees will be encouraged to grow through the roof beams and batons, making a living green roof.

Various groups have visited Upper Row Farm throughout the year. The Peasedown St. John Youth Group were given an area of land to turn into a community farm and were also interested in exploring any archaeological aspects of the site. BACAS carried out a geophysical survey on their site. A group of youngsters also came to visit Upper Row Farm to get some ideas for what they might want to undertake on their own site.

On one sunny evening in June, the Bath Wednesday Night Mountain Bike Group went on tour to the farm to look at the experimental archaeological projects (see Figure 2). A passing Ramblers Association group was also treated to an impromptu tour of the site.

Work with the West Wilts Young Archaeologists Club continued, with further experimental archaeology activities carried out at Upper Row Farm, including creating and firing pots. This was followed up with a return visit to their base in Dilton Marsh to present prizes for the best pots and to deliver a session about archaeologists and the importance of the work they do. The final visit of the year to Upper Row Farm was by a U3A group. This involved a well attended tour of the farm and its archaeology. As always, none of the above visits and sessions could have been carried out without the ceaseless help and expertise of BACAS volunteers and the support of the Hendy family.

Although as of yet no further funding has been forthcoming for the project, work will continue. It has been a useful time to take stock of the achievements and successes of the project over the last three years, and to consider how best to use what we have learned and created to continue the good work and valuable community resource that the project has become. I look forward to continuing to work with BACAS to help this happen.



Figure 2
The Bath
Wednesday Night
Mountain Bike
Group outside the
roundhouse at
Blacklands