

The History of Wyndham Hill

Bronze Age



Introduction

Start this pack with the Bronze Age Power Point Activities in class
Then follow up with activities in Yeovil Country Park

Activities include:

For these activities you will need to arrange to borrow the education kit from Yeovil Country Park containing the reproduction axe head and skeleton poster and other helpful resources. You will also need raffia, string and clay for the other activities.

Science



The human body and its bones, tree identification, compass points and navigation.

History



Past uses for trees, human burial, cordage, historical pots.

Art



Make your own natural string, make and decorate your own clay pot.

Trees in Bronze Age Britain

ACTIVITY 1 PART 1

A You are going to collect some sticks for a later activity. To start you will need a ruler per person (or pair) and 7 lengths of string per group. You will need to collect per group;

Length of stick	Thickness of stick	Number of sticks
60cm	Thick - as a broom handle or bicycle handlebars	1
50cm	Thick - as a broom handle or bicycle handlebars	2
30cm	Medium - like a sausage	6
30cm	Thin - like a pencil	12
20cm	Medium thin - like a chipolata	4
10cm	Thin - like a pencil, or smaller	20
Different sizes up to 30cm	Thin/medium	15

You will also need a handful of small stones.

How are you going to make sure you don't muddle up your collection measured sticks?
The 15 mixed sticks can be in one bundle.

How are you going to label your bundles of sticks using natural materials?



A Why not scratch the number into the bark of one of the sticks in each bundle?

You could thread one leaf onto a stick for 10cm then two leaves threaded for 20cm and so on.

Trees that were growing in Bronze Age Britain

ACTIVITY 2

Not all the trees we see now were around in the Bronze Age. The Sweet Chestnut tree was brought over by the Romans (along with rabbits), there were no Sycamore trees until Tudor times and the Horse Chestnut was introduced from Turkey during the reign of Elizabeth I.

A Find these trees using the spotter sheets and identification books.

Ash

Ash is one of the toughest hardwoods and absorbs shocks without splintering. What would it be good for making? Think about the bronze axe head. (Good for making handles for tools and shafts for spears)

Beech

Beech wood does rot quite easily and is at risk of insect attack. What would it not be good for? (Not good for building houses).

Holly

Holly is a strong, heavy wood and very good for fuel. It's an evergreen and the leaves could be fed to livestock.



Trees that were growing in Bronze Age Britain

Oak

Oak doesn't rot easily, and it lasts well if wet, in water. It's easy to carve when new and very strong.

- A** Oak can be used for making large things – like what?
(Buildings and boats)

Hazel

The new shoots (rods) of Hazel are very bendy and can be easily split and twisted.

- A** What might you want flexible wood for? Think about keeping animals. Hazelnuts were eaten in large numbers in the Bronze Age. (Making fences and enclosures for animals, good for making wattle walls)

Birch

Birch has strong, water resistant cardboard like bark, which is easily cut, bent and sewn.

- A** What might birch bark be used to make? (It can be cut into strips and woven or sewn to make baskets, boxes and storage containers. Also very good tinder when lighting fires. A Bronze Age burial in Sweden was found to have birch bark as a covering over the body and a dagger wrapped in birch bark. Birch resin was used as glue).



Looking up at Wyndham Hill

ACTIVITY 3

Stand at the bottom of Wyndham Hill.

The site of the Bronze Age burial is at the top of the hill.

A Why do you think they might have chosen the top of the hill for the burial?

Wyndham Hill is a highly visible point; it would have been seen from some distance away.

Many Bronze Age burial sites appear to look over the community that was associated with them, not away in a wild desolate spot but close to the land of the living.

Many of the burial sites were on land that had been used for pasture for livestock.

The Barrow at South Street, Avebury was sited on land that had been ploughed. This was discovered when archaeologists excavated down to the soil below the burial.



On the top of Wyndham Hill

ACTIVITY
3
CONTINUED

Go to top of hill, don't go straight to the burial site, but stand so that you can look over towards Ninesprings

A The burial is on the south side of the hill. How do you know where south is without a map or compass?

On a sunny day you can look for the sun, at mid day the sun is in the south.



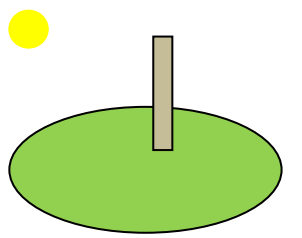
What if you are visiting the site at a different time?



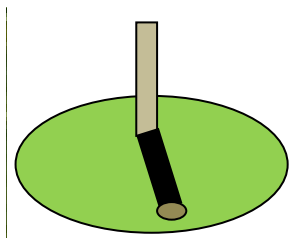
The sun rises in the east and sets in the west. If you can find east and west then you can find south.

When the sun is shining you can use a stick and two stones to find east and west.

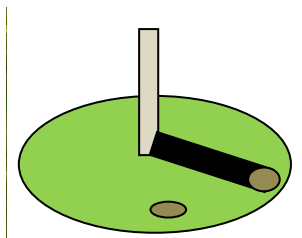
Put a straight stick upright in the ground; make sure it is in full sun and not under a tree.



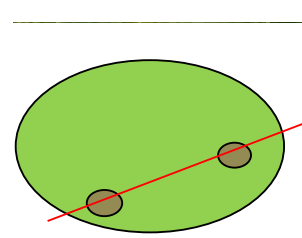
See where the shadow of the stick falls – put a stone at the end of the shadow, furthest away from the stick.



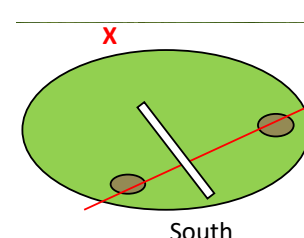
Wait long enough for the shadow to have moved at least 3 centimetres (10 – 15mins) and then put a stone at the end of the new shadow.



The shadow will have moved from east to west and the two stones are lying on the east – west line. Mark the line with string.



Put a stick across the line at right angles. Look at the line with the west on your left. The end of the stick furthest away from you is pointing south.



On the top of Wyndham Hill

ACTIVITY
3
CONTINUED

In cloudy weather can you find south using the lime trees on Wyndham Hill?

A In northern parts of the world, like the UK, the sun spends most of its time in the southern part of the sky.

Which side of the tree gets the most sun?

The sun encourages more growth on the southern side of the tree so it will be denser and appear 'heavier' on that side compared to the north side.

Why might there be less leaves on the north side?

What if there are no leaves, what part of the tree could you look at instead to see if there was more growth on one side.

In the winter you might see there are more branches on the southern side or that they grow more horizontal than those on the north, which will grow more vertical.

Look at the lime trees on top of Wyndham Hill – can you see which side might face south?

See if there are more branches and leaves on one side than the other.

Look for moss and lichen; they often grow on the north (less sunny) side of trees.

If there is moss and lichen all round, is there one side with more?

Look for spider's webs. There may be more on the south side of the tree

Can you see any possible problems with using this way of finding south?

What might make it difficult if there were more trees, like in a wood?



The Bronze Age burial

ACTIVITY 4

Now you have found the site of the burial, it is little more than a scrape in the soil. This is partly as a result of cattle damage.



The bones were found in a bit of a jumble in the soil and not all the bones were there. This might also be cattle damage.

Can you think of some other reasons to explain why the bones are muddled up?



How many bones are there in the human body?

A Lay a volunteer flat out on their back and another volunteer curled up on their side – see how the position of the bones would look very different when uncovered or dug up (excavated).



What might happen to the very small bones after they have been in the ground for a long time?

Build a skeleton

ACTIVITY
1
PART 2

**Lay out the Bag of Bones – put the skeleton together as a single group activity.
How many bones can they name?**

Children to get into their stick collecting groups.

T Explain that they are to use the sticks collected to make a skeleton, using the 'Bones in a Bag' as a guide.

Download the image of completed, named skeleton from the following pages if needed.

They should try and use the right thickness and length of stick to reflect the size of the bones.

Print copies of the table on the next page if needed

They might want to use small stones for the toe and finger bones

How are they going to mark out the skull and the pelvis (hips)?

Remember bones being put together, not organs like heart, lungs or stomach.

When you have made, and photographed, your skeleton re arrange it to make a crouched burial.

Leave the skeletons laid out ready for burial.



Build a skeleton

ACTIVITY 1 CONTINUED

Table showing which sticks could represent bones for building skeletons.

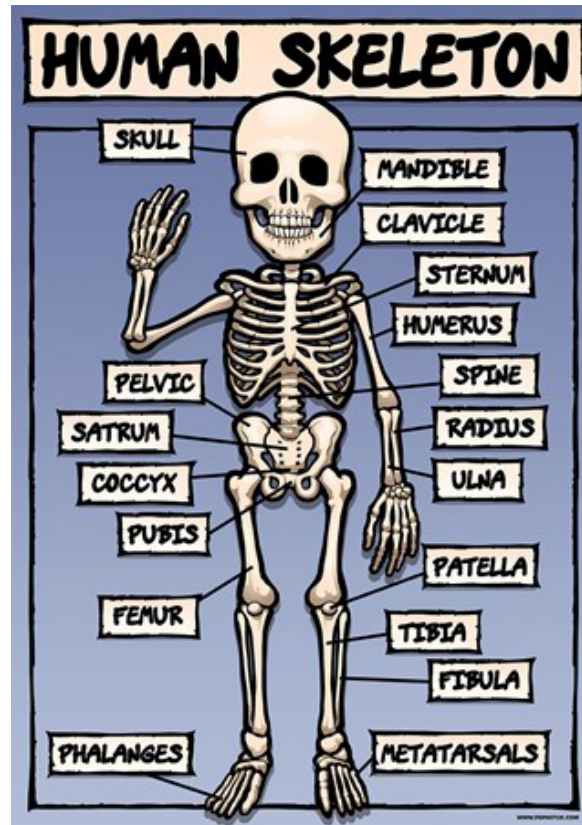
Length of stick	Thickness of stick	Number of sticks
60cm	Thick - as a broom handle or bicycle handlebars	1 x spine
50cm	Thick - as a broom handle or bicycle handlebars	2 x femur
30cm	Medium - like a sausage	2 x humerus, 2 x tibia, 2 x fibula
30cm	Thin - like a pencil	12 x ribs
20cm	Medium thin - like a chipolata	2 x Radius, 2 x ulna
10cm	Thin - like a pencil, or smaller	10 x fingers 10 x toes
Different sizes up to 30cm	Thin/medium	15 to outline skull, pelvis etc



Bag of Bones

ACTIVITY
1
CONTINUED

Diagram showing key bones in the human body.



String is a Very Important Thing

ACTIVITY 5

The trees at the top of Wyndham Hill are lime trees. Do you think these particular trees have been here since the Bronze Age?

One of the best uses of the lime tree is to make cordage – string and rope. It is very likely that the Bronze Age people were using lime bark to make string and rope.

“**String is a very important thing,
Rope is thicker,
But string is quicker.**”
Spike Milligan

The inner bark fibres are taken from the tree and left to soak in water for 2 weeks. Bacteria break down the inner bark so it changes from being like stiff cardboard to a flexible ribbon like structure.

The bark ribbons are twisted together in a variety of ways making very strong, flexible string and rope. This can be used to make everything from fishing lines, animal halters, strings for bow drills and rope to use in building.

A

How to make string

There are many ways to make string; the way demonstrated overleaf is the most straightforward. The children are to work in pairs and make 2 pieces of string between them so they have one each.

What could you use a lime tree for? The inner wood is good for carving because it holds its shape and does not warp, the outer bark good as tinder for lighting fires, the young leaves can be added to salad and blossoms made into tea.



String is a Very Important Thing

ACTIVITY
5
CONTINUED

Instructions to make string using raffia

A You are using a plant material to make string. Raffia is made from palm leaves. It works in a similar way to lime tree bark, or nettles and brambles both of which were also used to make string in the past.

STEP 1

Take two equal strands of raffia, or one thick one split down the middle, and two sticks

STEP 2

Tie a knot at both ends

STEP 3

At each end take a stick and slip it in between some of the strands in front of the knot

STEP 4

One person holds their stick horizontally. They hold their stick still, pulling gently to keep the strands taut

STEP 5

The other person starts twisting their stick, in the same direction all the time, putting a twist in the strands.

STEP 6

One person holds the middle of the string and folds it in half, passing their knotted end to their partner, who holds it tight with their own.

STEP 7

Do not let go of the two knotted ends. Let go of the middle of the string and it will twist back on itself. Tie the two knotted ends together.



Using the string to tie things

ACTIVITY 6

Show the replica of the axe head found on Wyndham Hill

Discuss ways this axe head could be fixed to a wooden handle

How will you tie the axe head to the handle?

[Small group activity]

A Take it in turns, in pairs, to tie the axe head on to the handle using the string you have made. Make sure you don't pull your knots too tight, you will need to use the string again later. If you need more string ask another pair to join you.

Whilst the axe head is being tied by small groups/pairs of children the others can be discovering further uses for their string to make useful things with sticks

In pairs

A pair of tongs to move sticks on to a fire

In threes

A small stand to hold a small cooking pot off the ground

In fours

Make a tripod that could be used to hang a cauldron over the fire. It doesn't have to be full size

Longer task

Design and build a tool rack that will keep your axes safe and off the ground.



Using string to decorate a pot

ACTIVITY 7

Pots in the Bronze Age were made by hand and most pots were made as “thumb pots”. People used pots for storing food and drink. Other pots contained gifts of food and drink for the dead person to take to the afterlife. Would you use a cooking pot as a burial pot? Do you think people made special burial pots, or just used any old pot they could find for a funeral?

Why decorate a pot?

Patterns can make a pot easier to hold. They can be used to show who you are, with different people and settlements using different patterns.

Bronze Age potters used lots of natural things to make patterns on their pots.

Look around you, what could you use to make patterns in clay?

Sticks, sharp stones and ends of feathers to make a groove or lines

Stones, nuts and small bones pressed in to make an impression

Fingers and fingernails to pinch and scratch into the clay

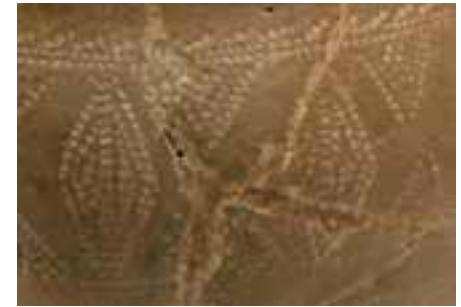
A

Using string

A common decorative technique used in the Bronze Age, and found on a Bronze Age pot discovered at Barwick near Yeovil, was to use string in different ways. The twists in string show up clearly when it is pressed into the clay. Sometimes the string is wrapped around a small stick and this, when pressed into the clay, makes a different pattern. Use your string to make impressions in the clay. Collect natural items to make other patterns in your clay.



Examples of Bronze Age Pottery Decoration



Bringing it all together

ACTIVITY
7
CONTINUED

Place your decorated clay pieces around your skeleton.

A Perhaps the axe could be given to one 'burial' – which one should it be?

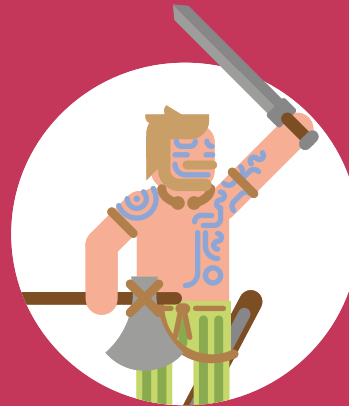
Many Bronze Age burial sites appear to look over the community that was associated with them, not away in a wild desolate spot but close to the land of the living

Many of the burial sites were on land that had been used for pasture for livestock.

Think about the things that might have important to the Bronze Age people.

Together, decide on some words might have been said as part of the burial.





LOTTERY FUNDED

W: www.yeovilcountrypark.co.uk

E: Parks@yeovil.gov.uk

T: 01935 382424

A: Ninesprings Café,
Brunswick Street,
Yeovil, Somerset BA20 1QZ

A: Yeovil Town Council, The Town House,
19 Union Street, Yeovil, Somerset
BA20 1PQ