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Forty years of 'Archaeology for children'

Sergio MORENO TORRES

Serveis Educatius de les Pitiuses S. Coop.

Nicholas MÁRQUEZ-GRANT

*Institute of Human Sciences, School of Anthropology and Museum
Ethnography, University of Oxford*

Abstract

The last 40 years have seen an increase in outreach activities, many primarily targeted to children, in archaeology. This outreach has benefited both the discipline of archaeology as well as public education. Several projects have pioneered the development of 'archaeology for children' in recent decades and have narrowed the gap between heritage and the public.

An overview of these developments is presented in this paper. Particular reference is made to the work undertaken in schools and museums, by associations and archaeological companies, as well as the promotion of archaeology through the media. Examples are drawn especially from the United Kingdom and Spain.

Key words

Education, Public Outreach, Archaeology, United Kingdom, Spain

Introduction

There is an ever increasing trend for museums, public institutions, private companies and even research centres to promote archaeology to children. Not only does archaeology present a number of advantages for child development (Dyer 1983; Durbin et al. 1990; Stone and Molyneaux 1994; Henson 1997; Owen and Steele 2001; Steele and Owen 2003) and providing an awareness of time and sense of chronology, learning about everyday lives and other times and cultures, developing an interest to know more, expanding vocabulary and developing skills including recognition, handling, observation, discussion, comparing;

but it also brings an awareness of the local heritage which can only be of benefit to the community. In addition, archaeology can be used to meet the targets of the national curriculum, partly due to its multi- and cross-disciplinary nature, covering a number of other areas including geography, biology, science, mathematics, technology, history, art and religion.

Today, the development and creation of new teaching resources for children attempts to find a perfect balance between scientific rigor, content and motivation. This is attempted in a number of formats: talks to children by archaeologists, exhibitions, books, interactive CDs, workshops, reenactments, guided tours around museums and archaeological sites, and archaeological summer schools amongst others. All of these resources have their own advantages and disadvantages. For example, the experience of 'traveling back in time' (e.g. 'living' as a Viking for a day) provides great motivation for children and sparks their interest. However, it may be that what is presented to the children are facts that may not come with any hypotheses, discussions or excluding a number of other interpretations. The way in which interpretations are constructed may be revealed by offering workshops such as 'being an archaeologist for a day', where children can use the methods employed by archaeologists, collect data and formulate their own interpretations to be later discussed in front of a group. The downside, however, is that these workshops primarily require a lot of organization, time, a number of facilities and space. By contrast, a book can be read at any time and anywhere, although it doesn't provide the 3-D 'live experience' of other activities. It is not the objective of this paper, however, to review these resources critically, but to provide a brief overview of 'archaeology for children' in its educational context during the last 40 years. With this regard, a few examples of the different resources available are provided, with special focus on Spain and the United Kingdom due to the authors' familiarity with these two countries.

For a large number of local museums, school trips comprise the bulk of the annual visits. These museum visits, organized to complement the school curricula, in addition to visiting archaeological excavations and the influence of television and other media, have raised an interest in the past and in exploring the past through. This has opened new education-related vacancies in museums, universities and other institutions; has raised the number of students studying the subject and has promoted government investment in heritage. Most centres today

have dedicated staff that deal with children's education and outreach. Researchers have also benefited from public involvement and this has also provided financial support and sponsorship for research.

In the 1970s and 1980s, projects such as the Butser Ancient Farm or the Jorvik Viking Centre, both in England, can be recognized as pioneering the way in which archaeology reached the community. They have both served as role models for a number of projects in relation to promoting archaeology to the general public, and especially children. The former, began as a proposal put forward in 1970 for a working prehistoric Iron Age farm. On its adoption, the project was run by archaeologist Peter Reynolds and opened to the public in 1974. Butser Ancient Farm now provides hands-on experience in ancient crafts and Iron Age farming in particular, and is also a research centre in experimental archaeology. The Jorvik Viking Centre, which opened its doors to the public in 1984 in the city of York, is a visitor centre built on the original site of the excavations that were undertaken of Viking Age structures (*e.g.* houses, workshops). The visitor centre reconstructs Viking York and takes the visitor in a journey back in time. There are also displays on how the archaeological excavation and post-excavation analysis were carried out and the type of information that was retrieved. The Jorvik Viking Centre also offers DIG, which is a centre that provides activities for both children and adults with a real-live ongoing archaeological excavation in York itself. Another inspirational centre is the Sagnlandet Lejre in Denmark, which opened in the 1960s as an experimental research centre and currently also boasts a whole range of educational activities.

As a result, a number of projects, which have transformed the relationship between heritage and the public, have arisen and developed in the last twenty years: historical reenactments, reconstruction of archaeological sites, archaeology workshops or summer schools, multimedia resources, and publications (*e.g.* workbooks for children) are some of the resources on offer. It is certainly extremely rare today to find a museum that will not have an education and outreach department. This runs in parallel with local and national governmental bodies that continue to maintain sites of historical interest so that they can be visited by tourists and the general public. In the USA, for example, archaeology has expanded greatly in its outreach to primary and secondary schools even to the point that outreach is part of the fourth principal in the archaeological code of ethics established by the Society for American Archaeology (Levy 2006: 57).

Today, the opportunities and resources for teaching archaeology to the public are diverse. The objective of this paper is thus to provide a general overview of the main activities or resources employed to teach archaeology to children. These include publications, site visits and museums, archaeological parks, archaeology in schools, media and multi-media amongst other resources.

Publications

The amount of children's books or published literature with an archaeological and historical focus is vast. For instance, the bibliographical list published by the Archaeological Institute of America includes around 300 publications in the English language for children. The volume, published by a number of museums such as the British Museum and bodies such as the Council for British Archaeology, amounts to over 100 dedicated to history and archaeology for children. This includes not only books specifically for children, but also books for teachers of archaeology and history primary and secondary education (e.g. see Henson 1996, 1997). English Heritage produces a range of publications with regard to teaching about the historic environment and it offers a free copy of *Heritage Learning* to schools.

In addition, there are a number of associations for children which publish their own magazines that are also available to the general public. In the UK, the Young Archaeologists' Club (YAC) has a magazine subscription (*Young Archaeologist*) aimed at 8 to 16 year-olds primarily. In France, the magazine *Arkéo Junior* provides archaeological news to children aged primarily between 7 and 14 years. Both magazines aim at promoting the human past, as well as the techniques used to learn about the past with a number of articles, photographs, drawings and updates on museum exhibitions and events. Other countries have also magazines, such as DIG in the USA. Comics have also been created such as *Descubriendo Nuestro Pasado* ('*Discovering our Past*') from Chile.

Site visits, Museums and Exhibitions

Museums continue to be one of the main promoters of archaeology to children. The types of museum activities for children on offer range from displays, handouts and drawing resources, to workshops, hands-on activities, specific thematic educational tours, multimedia resources, reenactments and archaeological excavations. Museums such as Le Musée National de Préhistoire (Les Eyzies, France), Le Musée de Carnac (France), or the LVR-LandesMuseum (Bonn, Germany), provide guided

tours not only around the museum's facilities but also to archaeological sites in the region; and they offer workshops adapted to the different curricula and age groups on different aspects of prehistoric life. Sites such as that at Grand-Pressigny (Indret-et-Loire, France) also welcome school visits and provide excavation experience to children (Marquet and Cohen 2006). In Spain, the Museu Arqueològic de Catalunya (Barcelona) manages a number of museums and monuments that fall under the same educational project, through which schools can take up to ten hours of their curriculum load to going to the museum. In other museums, display cabinets are also helpful in promoting archaeological techniques and interpretation to the public (e.g. Museo Arqueológico de Alicante, Alicante, Spain; Museo y Parque Arqueológico Cueva Pintada, Gran Canaria, Spain (see this issue); Museo Arqueológico Regional, Alcalá de Henares, Spain). Some museums (e.g. National Museums of Scotland, Edinburgh, UK) have had original artefacts that are hundreds of years old for children to touch, handle and observe.

One of the museums that have pioneered the educational offer is without doubt the British Museum in London. This museum is one of the most visited in the world, and offers all sorts of activities and workshops for children of different ages. The number of activities and resources for example for Ancient Egypt or Classical Greece is comparable probably to a few if any other museums. It also includes activities for families, adult continuing education and is also well equipped for special educational needs.





Figures 1-2. Archaeology one week summer school at the World Heritage necropolis of Puig des Molins in Ibiza (Spain).

The authors have participated, coordinated and run summer schools for children at Spanish museums. For example, at the museum of Puig des Molins (Ibiza, Spain), one week workshops were run throughout the summer for children aged between 8 and 12 years (Mezquida *et al.* 2003; Márquez *et al.* 2003; Figures 1 and 2). The workshop consisted of the excavation of graves and plastic skeletons and artefacts with the objective of presenting archaeology (and especially its techniques) to children and also raising their interest in the past and the historical heritage. It was an opportunity to allow children to learn about their local history and in a way that learning was multidisciplinary by using a number of skills used in mathematics (measuring), biology (human anatomy), geology (soils), drawing, etc.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that archaeological companies, such as Wessex Archaeology or Canterbury Archaeological Trust (UK), Arqueolític and JAS Arqueología S.L.U. (Spain), or Archeosistemi (Italy), offer a number of outreach programmes to schools and the general public.

Archaeological Theme Parks

Archaeological parks have resulted in one of the most successful formulae in relation to promoting archaeology to the public. There are a number of very interesting projects throughout Europe, some of which have been in existence for 30 years. This is the case of *Archéosite* in Aubechies (Belgium), inspired by the Gallic-Roman sites in the region; or the fortification of *Eketorp*, in Öland (Sweden), which is an Iron Age fort that was completely excavated between 1964 and 1974 and subsequently reconstructed. Both archaeological parks use historical recreation or reconstruction as their teaching tool with the opportunity for visitors to dress as they did in the past and therefore submerging themselves in history. Not only are *Archéosite* and *Eketorp* visitor centres, but they are also centres for research in experimental archaeology.

Another concept is that found at the city of York, with a heritage that is one of the better managed in Europe. The York Archaeological Trust has had considerable involvement in a number of nationally recognized projects aiming at involving the public in heritage and archaeology. The Trust offers a great quantity of teaching resources, from books, to photographs, to online resources. The *Jorvik Viking Centre* is a reconstruction of what life was like in Viking York, based on the excavations at Coppergate and allows visitors to 'travel back in time'. It also displays how archaeologists and scientists have reconstructed Viking life in York from the archaeological evidence found. DIG, from the same owners who created the *Jorvik Viking Centre*, is an on-going excavation for children and is based around the concept of 'live archaeology'.

Slightly different are the parks at Sanglandet in Lejre (Denmark) and *Butser Ancient Farm* in Chalton (UK), both of which are primarily research centres. Pioneer centres in experimental archaeology, both were born from a scientific and educational vocation. The park at *Sanglandet*, founded in 1964, is the oldest in Europe and one of the better managed. Regarding its educational offer, it is also based on the

concept of 'travelling back in time'. Its educational programme includes a summer school that offers children the possibility to live during three days as a Viking. The *Butser Ancient Farm*, which opened its doors to the public in 1974 as previously mentioned above, is based on a similar idea for the Iron Age and Roman periods. It originally started as an experimental farm and now offers an educational package for different levels of the English National Curriculum.

English Heritage has a Regional Education Officer in different regions of England. This officer provides advice to teachers on using the different historic buildings, monuments or archaeological sites as an educational resource.

In Spain, there is a number of projects inspired by some of the above examples. This is the case of *Arqueopinto, Parque Arqueológico Gonzalo Arteaga*, in Madrid, which opened its doors in 1994, or *Alorda Park*, an Iron Age settlement in Calafell (Tarragona), built in 1992 following the model of Eketorp Castle in Sweden. Both sites offer themed visits and a considerable number of activities for children. Other research centres have also opted to offer educational resources, inspired by the work of archaeological parks. This is the case of the Centre d'Estudis del Patrimoni Arqueològic de la Prehistòria at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona in Barcelona, which is a centre comprised of researchers and school teachers. It has a small archaeological park dedicated exclusively to educational activities and has developed projects in collaboration with other secondary educational centres in Europe.

In spite of what has been stated above, historical reconstruction is still a resource that is seldom used. More frequently one opts for the traditional ways of delivering information like display cabinets, a course around a site or guided tours. A special case is that of the prehistoric caves of Lascaux in Dordogne (France) and that of *Altamira* in Santillana de Mar (Spain). Due to the fragility in the conservation of the paintings, the access to the interior of the caves is extremely restricted. The importance of these two sites justified the construction of exact replicas destined for the general public. The *NeoCueva*, which is part of the Museo de Altamira in Santander, and Lascaux II, located about 200 m from the original cave, offer the visitor the possibility of contemplating exact replicas of the images without degrading the original. The Museo de Altamira has a wide array of educational opportunities directed to the public and, in the case of *Lascaux*, it is also possible to take a virtual visit on the internet.

Archaeology in Schools

Much has been written about archaeology in schools (e.g. Dyer 1983; Henson 2000; see also Márquez-Grant 1997). Schools are great channels for promoting archaeology, sometimes by running lunchtime archaeology clubs, field visits, visiting museums, designing 'time capsules', running an excavation in the school grounds, by asking an archaeologist to visit the school and give a talk, or simply by using visual aids and artefacts in the classroom.

A wide range of resources can be used in the classroom, including artefacts, old archives and aerial photographs amongst a number of examples (see Henson 1996, 1997), all of which help develop skills such as measuring, developing attention to detail, drawing, interpreting, etc. (e.g. see Márquez-Grant 1997).

Other ways of promoting Archaeology

Young Archaeologists' Club

In the UK there is the Young Archaeologists' Club (YAC) which falls under the umbrella of the Council for British Archaeology (CBA). The Young Archaeologists' Club began in 1972 (it was then called 'Young Rescue') and now has over 70 local branches across the United Kingdom and over 3,000 members. It offers activities and a magazine (*Young Archaeologist*) to its members, who are primarily aged between 8 and 16 years-old.

National Archaeology Days

Once a year in the UK there is the Festival of British Archaeology (once known as the National Archaeology Week). During this week, primarily run by volunteers and museums, the public has the opportunity to experience over 100 events relating to archaeology with many hands-on activities (both for children and parents), guided tours, exhibitions, and visits to a number of heritage, archaeological and historical sites.

Media and Multi-Media resources

Television has raised a lot of awareness and has increased public interest in archaeology, especially in the case of Britain with the series 'Time Team' (Channel 4). Other series have followed, such as 'Meet the Ancestors' (BBC) or 'Coast' (BBC).

Another type of resource has been a number of multi-media packages; for example, 'Desenterrando el Pasado' ('Uncovering the

Past'), developed by the Institute of New Technologies of the Spanish Ministry of Education. Another example is a resource designed by one of the authors (SM) in Catalan and covers the archaeology of the island of Ibiza (Spain), with two CD's (*'Descobreix Puig des Molins'* and *'Eivissa un viatge en el temps'*), which are used in local schools (Figure 3).



Figure 3. Interactive CD "Eivissa, un viatge en el temps", edited by the Ajuntament d'Eivissa (Ibiza, Spain).

Conclusion

In conclusion, and returning to the title of this article, the scientific community has increasingly been more conscious of the role that education plays to bridge the gap between science and society. Archaeology in the last forty years has certainly developed an important role in child education. The experiences that have been carried out in recent decades have attempted to bring archaeology closer to children, and to further promote archaeology to the general public. Examples of some of the resources indicated above are proof of this. These outreach programmes, as well as the inclusion of archaeology in the school curriculum have both been of great benefit to research and the conservation of our heritage.

Today, more than before, there is an 'Archaeology for Children'. There has been a change in the concept relating to the way archaeological findings are presented to the public, be this at museums or at the sites themselves, and it has been primary school children that, on many occasions, have been the primary target. It is of course evident that there is still a lot of work to be undertaken in order to improve resources, and also to bring archaeology closer to the public by providing access to everybody, no matter the age. Nevertheless, certainly 40 years later, there is a strong base set for future developments in promoting archaeology to children.

Although modern technology, such as DVDs or CD-ROMS, is fun, interactive and can be made available at home, traditional resources in the classroom will always play a major role in promoting archaeology to children and making it accessible to everybody regardless of social and economic background.

Future work should focus on including more archaeological input in the national curriculum either as part of History or as a separate subject.

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Useful web sites/resources

Publications:

Publications list of the Archaeological Institute of America:

http://www.archaeological.org/pdfs/education/biblios/AIAkids_books.pdf

Children's books of the British Museum:

http://www.britishmuseumshoponline.org/icat/childrens_books/

DIG magazine (<http://www.digonsite.com/>)

Descubriendo Nuestro Pasado comic (<http://www.arqueologos.cl/?q=comic>)

Educational resources/offers at museums

British Museum:

<http://www.britishmuseum.org/learning.aspx>

English Heritage:

<http://www.imagesofengland.org.uk/learningzone/lz/curriclinks.aspx>

Musée de Carnac:

http://www.museedecarnac.com/public_scolaire.htm

Museu Arqueològic de Catalunya:

<http://www.mac.cat/cat/Oferta-educativa>

Archaeology and educational companies

Wessex Archaeology:

<http://www.wessexarch.co.uk/>

Arqueolític:

<http://www.arqueolitic.com/>

JAS Arqueología S.L.U.:

<http://www.jasarqueologia.es/>

Archeosistemi:

<http://www.archeosistemi.it/>

Archaeological Parks

Archéosite:

<http://www.archeosite.be/>

Eketorp Castel:

<http://www.kalmarlansmuseum.se/1/1.0.1.0/274/1/>

York Archaeological Trust:

<http://www.yorkarchaeology.co.uk/>

<http://www.yorkarchaeology.co.uk/resources/resources.htm>

Sagnlandet:

<http://www.sagnlandet.dk/>

Butser Ancient Farm:

<http://www.butserancientfarm.co.uk/>

Centre d'Estudis del Patrimoni Arqueològic de la Prehistòria de la UAB:

<http://cepap.uab.cat/>

Museo de las cuevas de Altamira:

<http://museodealtamira.mcu.es/>

Lascaux:

<http://www.lascaux.culture.fr/>

[also accessible at <http://www.grands-sites-archeologiques.culture.fr/>, from which we can see the archaeological survey for

France and visit on-line some of the most important sites in the country]

Clubs and societies

Young Archaeologists' Club:

<http://www.britarch.ac.uk/yac/>

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Editor:

Jaime Almansa Sánchez

Email: almansasanchez@gmail.com

Assistant editor:

Elena Papagiannopoulou

Edited by:

JAS Arqueología S.L.U.

Website: www.jasarqueologia.es

Email: jasarqueologia@gmail.com

Address: Plaza de Arteijo 8, T-2, 28029 - Madrid (Spain)

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