

What is an Archaeologist?



Archaeologists study human history through exploring what is buried under ground and asking questions about what they find.

How objects become buried:

- People drop things on the ground or bury them.
- Plants grow in the soil, die and decay, creating more layers of soil.
- Rain or river water washes mud over the ground.
- People build houses. Years later, others build on top of the old house.
- History becomes buried deeper and deeper.
- Over hundreds of years layers of soil and stone build up, along with the artifacts buried there.



Archaeologists carefully uncover the ground layer by layer. The top layers have the most recent deposits. The deeper they go, the further back in time they are travelling.

This photograph was taken by site archaeologist Mary McMahon during excavations at St Audoen's Church. It shows that a lane ran along the wall of the church. They have preserved the stone lined lane in place for visitors to see today.

Archaeologists record exactly where they find each item on the site and how deeply it was buried. They photograph it before storing it carefully. At a later date, the object is analysed to determine how it might have been used and how old it is. The object is often compared to other similar objects recorded at other digs. Using their finds and information from historical documents, archaeologists can reconstruct what life was like in the past and how people lived.

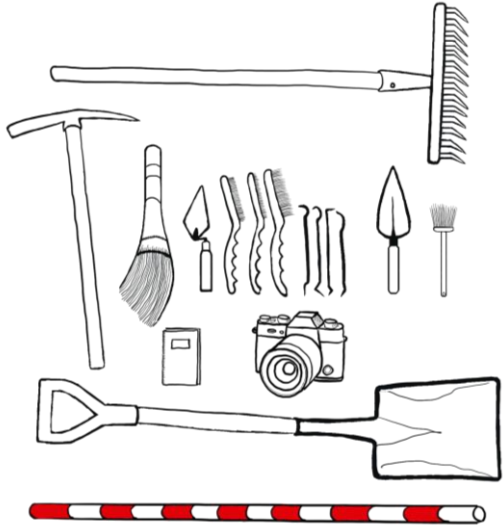
Word search

age	past
ancient	people
bones	pollen
date	ring
dig	ruins
excavate	site
find	stone
history	tools
legend	uncover
object	year

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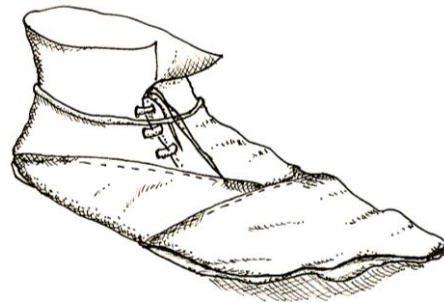
Tools of the Archaeologist

1. Firstly, archaeologists look at old documents or historical sources to decide where to dig. Then they will carry out a field survey to decide where is the best place to start.



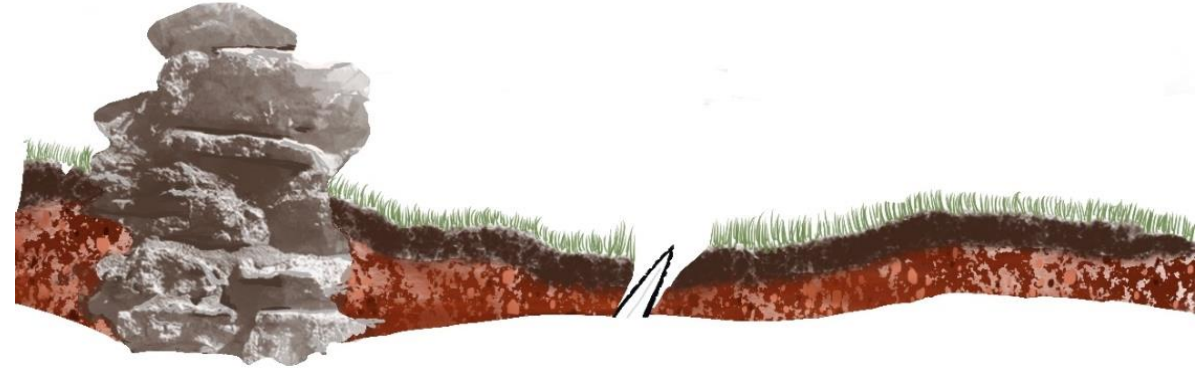
2. Once they start digging, Archaeologists use hand tools so that they will not miss something small in the soil. First they carefully peel back the top layer of soil using shovels. As they dig down, they use smaller trowels to remove soil and brushes to carefully clear soil from an object they are uncovering. This is slow work and every layer is carefully examined.

3. When archaeologists find an object buried in the soil, they take a photograph of the object first. If it is possible to lift the object, they will put into a bag or box. Larger objects such as walls will be photographed and measured. Each find is given a number and the location of where it was found is logged.



Leather Shoe,
probably worn by a Norman

What you think the archaeologist is about to uncover?
Draw the rest of the object that is buried below the soil.



What did archaeologists find at St Audoen's Church?

In the early 1990s, National Monuments Services planned to build a heritage centre at St Audoen's. Before the works started, they invited archaeologists to carry out a dig to the south of the church including an area within the south nave.

Buzz Bone



This Buzz-bone, is a medieval child's toy. An animal bone would be drilled in the middle and string inserted. The bone would be wound up and when the string was pulled, it would spin very fast and make a buzzing sound.



Medieval path

This is part of a 12th century **wooden path**. It is made of logs cut from Willow, Hazel, Alder, Birch and Ash. It is sagging in the middle after many years of feet tramping over it. This photo was taken by site archaeologist Mary McMahon during the excavations at St Audoen's Church.

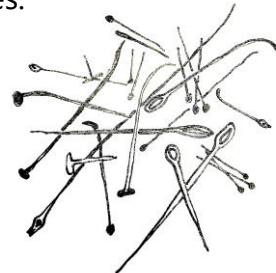
This is a few samples of what they found:

This **bone pin** is about 9.5cm long. The hole or eye in the top suggests that it was used as a tool in weaving. The weaving Industry was Important in Dublin. Cloth was usually woven by men with wool that had been spun by women.

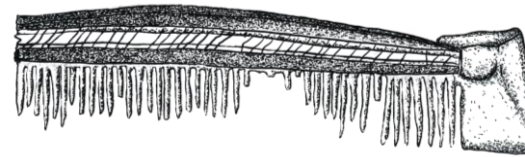


Copper-alloy Pins and Needles

In medieval times, people repaired clothes when they got damaged rather than buying new ones. Sewing needles and pins were important to maintain clothes.



Medieval comb



This well worn comb was made from animal bone. These were popular in Dublin from the 9th to 13th century. Some combs were engraved with the owners name.



Shoe

This **leather shoe** was dated to between the 12th – 13th century. It was made from one piece of leather. By that time, the Normans in Dublin were making shoes from two pieces of leather. This tells us that the shoe probably belonged to a native Gaelic person who was coming into the Norman city, possibly to trade, when he lost the shoe. There was evidence that the shoe was repaired by it's owner.

Gun Money



During the years 1689 to 1690, King James II of England was fighting for the throne against the protestant King William of Orange in Ireland. King James II began to run out of money to pay his soldiers, so he issued gun money to them. These coins were made from copper, brass or pewter and were designed to be swapped for silver coins once James won the war. Each coin was issued with a month and year, so that the soldiers could claim interest on their unpaid wages.

However after his defeat at the Battle of the Boyne in 1690, James II fled to France where he lived out the last 11 years of his life in exile.

The coins were never redeemed by him and his soldiers never received their wages. The coins were used over the following years at a greatly reduced value.

What can you find at this archaeological dig?

Join me on an archaeological dig

Can you find?



More recent layers

Older layers



3 old stone walls



2 copper alloy pins



a sewing needle



a coin



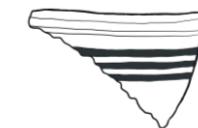
a comb



a glass bead



2 tiles



2 pottery shards