

# Iron Age Skeleton: Tarrant Man

## KS2 Learning Pack



### Stimulus for creative inspiration and discussion

Following are sheets with stimulus for creative inspiration and discussion for different Key Stages within the National Curriculum, as well as for adults and those in Higher Education. There are four different areas in each stage/age group, **CREATE, EXPLORE, CONTEMPLATE** and **EXPERIENCE**, to encourage everyone to consider Tarrant Man from a range of different perspectives, and through a variety of mediums. The Museum of East Dorset recognises that the way that human remains have traditionally been presented by museums is changing. This Learning Pack aims to celebrate and respect the life and death of the individual 'Tarrant Man' whose remains we are the care-takers of by ensuring that his bones continue to have meaning and significance as a local Dorset ancestor, a guide into the past, and a benefactor of creative, scientific and medical exploration and discovery in the present.

Any of the groups using this Learning Pack can draw on these **INSPIRATIONAL WORDS** below to help stimulate creativity and discussion about Tarrant Man and his life and death from different perspectives. **Why not get the group to think up some more of their own?**

#### Inspiration Words:

Healing sound

Compassion

Dorset sacred landscape

Pilgrimage

Caring for the ill

Healing

Gathering herbal medicines

Inner strength

Living with a serious disease

Physical experience

Will to live

Medical investigation

Bone Pathology

Causes of disease

Touch

Respiration

Burial position

The senses

Lived experience of illness

Valuing longevity

Social inclusion/isolation

Journey

Emotions

Community

## Information for learning from Tarrant Man

It is easy to forget that Tarrant Man was a living human being, just like we are, with thoughts, feelings, family, happiness and sadness, dreams and daily tasks to do for himself and for others. When we see him now he appears as just some old bones that show signs of disease, but if we investigate a little more we can learn from him and bring this Iron Age man to life through using science or our creativity, or both together! We can also use our feeling for the sacred or spiritual to investigate and learn from Tarrant Man.



### Focus point : *Tuberculosis*

*Tuberculosis* is an infection caused by bacteria which mainly affects the lungs and breathing, but can also affect other parts of the body. It is spread by coughs and sneezes from somebody who already has the infection.

Having this *tuberculosis* for a long time without treatment, means that bones can also begin to show signs of decay from the disease.

*Tuberculosis* was quite common in Britain in the past, however it is now very rare and can be treated with antibiotics.

In daily life, we use our own skeleton all the time, without it we wouldn't be able to move about! But we don't actually see them unless we accidentally break a bone or have a serious accident, and even then we only might see a little part. X-rays show us an image of what our skeleton looks like, but we are still not encountering an actual skeleton. Of course some of us who work as doctors, pathologists or archaeologists may see more skeletons than people generally do, but usually a display in a museum may be the only time in most peoples' lives that they will come across a real human skeleton. It is always interesting, and can be a powerful experience, which can bring about many different responses, thoughts and feelings for different people.

In some cultures, and in some time periods, encountering human skeletons is or was less unusual than it is today in Britain.

**Can you think of some examples of this?**

### **Who was Tarrant Man?**

The skeleton of Tarrant Man was excavated by archaeologists close to Tarrant Hinton, a village to the north of Wimborne. We can tell from the vertebrae (the bones which make up his spine) that he had a disease called *tuberculosis* which had then caused Pott's Disease. What makes Tarrant Man particularly interesting to archaeologists and medical historians is that he is the earliest known prehistoric case of *tuberculosis* in Britain.

In Britain, the Iron Age was between 800 B.C. – A.D. 43 and Tarrant Man lived towards the end of this period. Families were larger during the Iron Age as food resources were more available than in earlier periods so people had more to eat. This is because areas for growing and producing food increased as iron tools made clearing the land of its native woodland and forest easier. Iron is much stronger than the bronze or stone tools which were made by people in the Palaeolithic, Mesolithic, Neolithic (Early, Middle and Later Stone Ages) and Bronze Age.

Tarrant Man was in his 30-40s when he died, which would have been considered a reasonably long life in the Iron Age. From scientific analysis on his teeth and bones, archaeologists have been able to discover that he lived most of his life in the region, but that he was not born here. The evidence suggests that when he was a child of about 8 years old, Tarrant Man had moved to Southern England, possibly from Ireland, the SW of France or Northern Spain.





## How do we know?

Archaeologists from the University of Southampton recently did scientific analysis of the teeth from Tarrant Man which was able to show what type of diet he had eaten. His teeth show phases of:

- breastfeeding as a baby
- early childhood (up to age 8) of eating foods and drinking water rich in the minerals which are more common in Ireland and the Atlantic Coast (SW France; Northern Spain)
- later childhood (ages 8-14) of having food and water sources with mineral levels common in Southern England

His teeth also show that his diet included more cattle (cow) and sheep protein and less pig and fish protein than other Late Iron Age people known from Dorset.

## Investigate:

Consider why his diet might have been different? Thinking about healthy diets, might it have been a cause or an effect of his health problems...what do you think and why?

## Discovery:

You might like to do a short written or verbal exercise with your group to find out the different responses upon first seeing the Tarrant Man skeleton in the museum or looking at the image on the screen.

Approach the skeleton in silence and take a minute to notice what thoughts and feelings appear then write them down for later discussion or use as creative stimulus, or discuss them there and then.

These only need to be a snapshot, for example you might ask the group to just write down a couple of phrases, thoughts, questions or feelings that come to them.

It might be surprising the range of different responses to be discussed, and how these can link to a range of subjects in the curriculum, from science, religion, pastoral, arts or history.

## Creative inspiration, investigation and discussion

### KS2 (ages 7-11)

#### Create

From recent scientific analysis of his teeth, we now know that Tarrant Man travelled to Britain possibly from Ireland, SW France or Northern Spain. Create a map of the journey that Tarrant Man might have made when he was an 8 year old boy, mark in some of the kinds of places or sites he may have travelled through as well as the different landscapes. Would he have had to cross the sea, rivers, mountains or valleys?

The Iron Age people of Britain had a strong culture of worshipping water, and many swords and other objects have been found in waterways that have been ritually deposited. You could draw some of these watery places, like streams and sacred springs, and monuments he might have seen, like Stonehenge.

You can use different media to do this, either using art materials, or a computer, or natural found objects outside as a large group. You could walk your map and talk with your groups about the different parts of the journey: as a young boy, Tarrant Man wouldn't have made this long journey alone! Perhaps you could add him into your map along with his travelling companions...or turn the journey into a board game with people for the counters?

## Explore

When you think about Tarrant man from the perspective of his body before he died, we know that he was unlikely to have been able to move about very easily because of the debilitating disease he suffered from. But as we now know, this was not the case through his whole life. He made what was an epic journey for a child in the Late Iron Age, probably on foot, but maybe by horse or on chariot, or riding on someone's back! For archaeologists, sometimes there is no physical evidence to suggest what happened in the past, but the way new discoveries are made is by playing with ideas and exploring different angles, including looking at what happened on other sites, or what happens today or historically in communities that live in traditional ways in cultures around the world. This is why archaeologists and anthropologists can share their ideas and theories to build up a bigger picture and open up discussion to explore evidence. You can think like this too by exploring the questions below. You could work as individuals or in pairs and interview each other, asking questions to explore your partner's answers to these pointer questions below:

- Why might the boy have been travelling to England and come to Dorset in particular?
- How could sound/voice have been used to help care for Tarrant Man? Can you think of any other cultures in the world that use sound/voice for healing?
- How would Tarrant Man's body have been treated after he died? What does the position of his body when he was buried, and the fact that the top part of his skull is missing, suggest?

## Contemplate

When you look at Tarrant Man, what do you notice about him? It's not what is there, but rather what is not! Tarrant Man's skeleton is missing his cranium, the upper part of his skull...his lower jaw bone is there, but the main part of his skull is missing. Why do you think that is?

Have a think of a range of different reasons why someone might be buried without their skull. Can you think about the question from different angles:

- geography/location
- animals
- burial environment
- the sacred/ancestors/ritual
- magic, and mystery
- healing/medicine

You can discuss your ideas with your group and see how many perspectives appear, and contemplate which you consider are most likely, and why.



Tarrant Man's skeleton in his new resting place at the Museum of East Dorset

## Experience

In archaeology, the term 'ritual' is sometimes used, and sometimes avoided! There is a joke that archaeologists often make, that if they can't explain something about the evidence, that it 'must be ritual'! But rituals are an important part of communities throughout prehistory, history and the present day, so considering ritual is important.

Rituals have a practical and physical aspect, where an action is taken or special object/s used in a symbolic way. This means that the action or object/s have meaning that is not directly related to what the action or object actually does or is. For example, a bowl of water might be symbolic of the ocean, or a piece of cord might be symbolic of connection.

Rituals are often used in cultures for healing, and also at important points in people's life, such as baptism in Christianity when someone is born, or in Maasai culture in Africa, being given a birth-right calf. Rituals are also associated with death and burial, which is how much information about ritual in the past is explored by archaeologists.

After you have spent some time looking at and investigating Tarrant Man, go outside into the garden at the Museum, your own garden or your school's grounds, and gather some different natural objects.





Stones collected at Tarrant Hinton

You can use these 'found items' as ritual objects. Make sure you have also gathered two stones, two short sticks, or one of each. Now:

- Imagine you are a community from the Late Iron Age. Sit in a circle with your group or your friends and family (either outside if the weather is good, or inside if it's raining or cold).
- Elect someone to be the person who leads the ritual, and place the objects you have collected in front of them. Whoever is sat opposite the ritual leader should be given the set of objects (stones/sticks)
- The ritual leader and the whole group can close their eyes and think about Tarrant Man as an ancestor. Ancestors are the people who came before us, but the title ancestor also means that someone is respected.
- If you are outside at the museum, you might be able to see or hear the river which passes at the end of the museum garden; if you are inside, you can just imagine it and know that it is near-by. Iron Age people in Britain considered water-ways as sacred.
- The person with the stones/sticks should begin to tap them together and after a short time, the ritual leader should ask everyone to open their eyes, the leader can then hold up any one or two of the objects from the collection they have, and show them to the group.
- Imagine a long rowing boat on the river at the end of the garden. Now in the boat, imagine the body of Tarrant Man as he was when he died, as a whole man, not a skeleton.
- Everyone in the group can imagine the ritual leader placing the two objects they have held up into the boat with Tarrant Man, and setting the boat off down the river. The boat sails off until it is out of sight.
- Everyone can sit for a moment and thank Tarrant Man in their minds, for being an Ancestor and Teacher.
- The person who is sitting opposite the ritual leader can now tap the sticks/stones again to end this part of the ritual, as a signal for everyone to bring their minds back to the room.
- If you are at the museum, after you have finished, the ritual leader should take the two objects which they held up, and along with the person sitting opposite them, lead the group down to the end of the garden/the bridge over the river/the little steps down to the river on the opposite side to the Museum. The objects can then be thrown into the river as a blessing to be carried by the water.



The River Tarrant

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## Tarrant Man Creativity Sheet/Notes: