

Iron Age Skeleton: Tarrant Man

KS4 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.

Tarrant Man - Stimulus for creative inspiration and discussion

KS4 (ages 14-16)

Create

When you look at the bones of Tarrant Man, which three words come to mind? Be spontaneous, try not to think too hard. Can you use these three words as the basis of a poem, story, a piece of art or exploratory discussion in a group? You could do this as individuals or work in a group, you might even like to try storytelling in a group by sitting in a circle and taking turns to tell the next part of the story with each person integrating their three words into the tale. Agree on a time, say one minute, for each person to tell their part. You could use an object such as a stone to pass around the circle as each person tells their section of the tale.

Explore

Tuberculosis a respiratory disease, which means that it is transmitted when a person takes the *tuberculosis* bacteria into their lungs. In the Iron Age, people did not have access to powerful antibiotics like we do today, which are used successfully to treat cases of *tuberculosis* today.

However, prehistoric peoples did have natural plants and other substances which have antibacterial properties, such as fungus and honey. People who were healers may have held similar roles in society as doctors and alternative healers do in Britain today, or they may have held sacred roles such as Druids or Wise-Women/Men. While the way these antibacterials functioned may not have been understood in the way we understand them today in Western medicine, we know that prehistoric peoples in Europe had a sophisticated understanding of using herbs and possibly acupuncture for the treatment of illness, as the 5300 year old 'Ice Man', Ötzi, discovered in the Italian Alps shows. Ötzi carried herbs including birch polypore fungus which reduces inflammation and is an antibiotic, and he had eaten bracken which may have been used to treat the tapeworm he was suffering from at the time of his death.

Do some research to discover the types of plants, minerals and other substances which can be found in the UK which Tarrant Man might have used to help treat his disease or alleviate his symptoms such as breathing problems, coughing, temperature, chest and back pain.



Ivy and groundsel collected at Tarrant Hinton

Contemplate

We know an increasing amount of information about Tarrant Man because of the decision to display his remains at the Museum of East Dorset. Before it was decided to display them, Tarrant Man's bones were kept in a box in the Museum's store for human remains, in compliance with the UK Government's guidance on the storage of ancient Human Remains. The bones were occasionally brought out for educational purposes such as sessions run by archaeologists or for research, but because of their fragile nature, they could only be handled very rarely.

In many countries around the world there is a strong debate around the repatriation of ancient human remains (returning remains from museum collections to the modern communities which have an ancestral connection to them). In the UK, it is very rare for repatriation claims to be made for human bone, however the display of human remains can still bring about strong feelings among groups and communities. The Museum of East Dorset has given great care and consideration to the display of Tarrant Man, we offer him a great deal of respect as caretakers of one of our Dorset and European ancestors. The Museum is always happy to discuss any questions or respectfully facilitate genuine sacred requests made for access to the bones.

In small groups, discuss some of the issues that displaying human remains might raise. Depending on the group, this can be a challenging topic, and emotions can run high. Remember to keep discussions respectful to others in the group as there may be very different perspectives and agree some boundaries before beginning.

Experience

Osteoarchaeologists are archaeologists who have a particular specialism in human bone. While the training is very scientific, osteoarchaeologists often also have a deep sense of the humanity of the material they work with. They are interested in both the life and the death of the individuals and populations they are researching, and these topics can be both very practical and very philosophical as well as sacred and spiritual.



Laying out the vertebrae of Tarrant Man

Handling human bone has many different aspects to it that you might not expect. Bone preservation varies; the bone may be very strong and stable, or it might be crumbly and fragile, especially if it has disease pathology like the lumbar (lower spine) vertebrae of Tarrant Man. Some bones also still have a greasy feeling to them, and often there is a distinctive smell to bone. These are things that we don't experience when looking at human bone in a display. When working for a long time with human bone, many osteoarchaeologists will dream about bones. This isn't a surprise, as our dreams often reflect the people we meet and what we do in our daily life.

Try sitting down near the display of Tarrant Man, or imagining him in your mind, and feeling a sense of peacefulness. If you come from the Dorset region, you already have a connection to the community that Tarrant Man was a part of. Peacefully experiencing being with this ancestor's bones is a way that his life can be remembered and thanked for all of the information, learning and insights he has brought in the present, to our knowledge and understanding of the past. You can experience this in a very practical way, or in a deeper, more spiritual way, depending on how you feel.

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Tarrant Man Creativity Sheet/Notes:

