

Iron Age Skeleton: Tarrant Man

KS5 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

KS5 (ages 16-18)

Create

Symbols have always been an important part of human communication, and this was even more apparent in prehistoric societies. Archaeologists have always been interested in and debated how symbols may have been used to express activities and objects, including in the Late Iron Age in Britain. They are also interested in more abstract concepts such as social/political power, land boundaries, and sacred aspects of life.

In ancient societies, disease and illness is unlikely to have been considered in the same way that we think about it in modern, medicalised societies today. Based on anthropological work, it is more likely that ancient societies will have understood disease, illness and disability as interconnected with sacred aspects, in particular the work of those who did healing. There are many sites with a sacred aspect to them in Dorset, we can play with the idea that Tarrant Man may have come to this ancient landscape for healing.

However, we might also ask the less obvious question of whether he himself was a healer/medicine/sacred/wisdom person? These social roles are understood to have importance in ancient societies across the world, not just in ancient Britain, and there is some anthropological evidence that those who were in some way 'different' to the majority of the population may sometimes have held these roles. Surviving in spite of having *tuberculosis* may have seemed almost miraculous to Tarrant Man's community, where survival rates were not so great, even for those who were in good health!

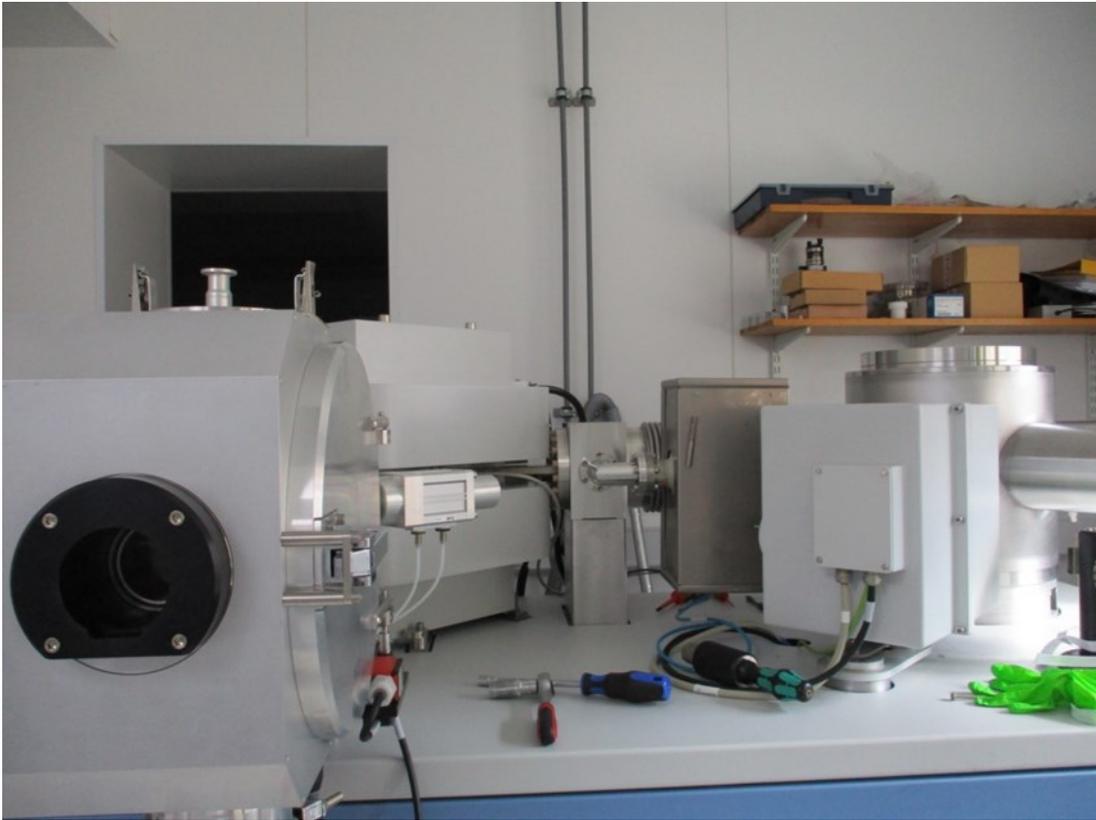
Reflecting on these aspects, create a Late Iron Age symbol which communicates the significance of Tarrant Man's position in society:

- Think about some of the symbols of nature, power, body, medicine/healing that an Iron Age person would have understood in the context of their lives.
- Perhaps your symbol might have been carved on a stone or the wooden post outside Tarrant Man's House? Maybe he wore some kind of belt buckle, jewellery or head-gear which had the symbol on it? Or maybe he was tattooed with a symbol that people would have seen and understood the meaning of, that literally 'marked him' out as someone with a special significance? Play with as many ideas as you like.

Explore

When we think about Tarrant Man and his suffering, perhaps we feel compassion for him, sorry for him, empathy, or even distaste or revulsion. The evidence suggests that Tarrant Man was cared for in his lifetime, as he was able to live for a long time even with his debilitating disease. This suggests that his life was considered as valuable and worthy of care. This raises some questions we can explore through discussion/research:

- What kind of health care/treatment would Tarrant Man have received in Late Iron Age Britain? Medicinal herbs, minerals, healing natural sound, chanting, song or music, physical supports, sacred/spiritual support?
- Who was doing the caring? His direct family, the community, people or someone with a healer or sacred role in society? Is it possible that he survived living on his own?
- Would his care have changed over time and how?
- Does Tarrant Man's life suggest that all people with serious illness or disease in his Late Iron Age community would have received the same care?
- What sort of methods might archaeologists use to investigate these questions? Be open-minded and explore both within and outside of our current approaches if you can! Plant some seeds of ideas for the next generation of archaeologists and scientists and share them through discussion at school or by speaking with someone already in the profession. If you come up with something interesting as a group with your teacher, use social media or the old-fashioned way of writing a letter or email to a museum, university academic or field archaeologist. It's amazing what some fresh inspiration can do to generate new avenues to explore.



Laboratory where Tarrant Man's teeth were analysed

Contemplate

Tuberculosis is a type of respiratory disease caused by a bacterial infection, it affects the lungs and causes problems with breathing. However, when the disease is very advanced, it can transfer from the lungs to other parts of the body. This is what happened to Tarrant Man; the infection spread to the bones of his spine, causing them to deteriorate and become compacted as well as affecting his spinal cord. This form of *tuberculosis* is known as Pott's Disease, and it would have been very debilitating, causing limited mobility and also pain. How might the evidence of early cases of *tuberculosis* such as Tarrant Man help us to:

- Understand the way people experienced illness and disease in Britain/Europe in the Iron Age?
- Understand disease transmission in prehistoric times and how this might inform modern models of transmission?
- Explore new medical or non-medical approaches to the treatment of respiratory disease and its treatment?

Experience

Now that you have seen the skeletal remains of Tarrant Man, let's investigate them from some different perspectives. Depending on the amount of time you have, you could do one, two or all three of the experiential exercises below. Be aware of yourself, if you have experienced a bereavement that you are still finding hard, keep it light and have some fun with the second exercise rather than doing the direct contemplation.

- ⇒ Look closely to see the bone in more detail and in different angles, sections and elements. Texture, shape and form, colour...if you listen very carefully you may even get a sense of some kind of sound which comes into your mind as you look at them...or perhaps a sound, word or phrase comes to mind?
- ⇒ If you are in the museum, take a few steps back away from the skeleton and look at the whole. You might also like to take in what surrounds him...the display, the information boards, the room in the museum. Now, closing your eyes and using your imagination, take a birds-eye view and see him in the landscape of Wimborne, the small river which runs past the Museum, the village. As your bird rises higher, see Wimborne as part of the wider East-Dorset landscape, including Tarrant Hinton, out to Cranborne Chase. Perhaps you might hover high, or begin to travel to take in the whole of the ancient Wessex sacred landscape and see well known sites...Badbury Rings Iron Age Hill Fort, Stonehenge, Silbury Hill, the Rivers which move through the land... then gradually return to your present location and open your eyes. Rest a moment where you are and take in your surroundings to allow yourself to return to the current moment.
- ⇒ Sit quietly and look at the skeleton, let any thoughts you have just come and then pass on as if on a river. Keep looking at the skeleton with focus. This is an exercise in direct contemplation, which is a way of investigation which has been used over thousands of years in many cultures, and is still used today. Keep looking for about 5 minutes or more, and if your focus wavers, just bring it back. Try to relax if you get tense, and close your eyes a moment or two. If you get bored or sleepy, open your eyes very wide.
- How do you experience Tarrant Man now? How do you see, feel or understand his current resting place? Has it changed from when you arrived, is it the same, or has your understanding deepened? Perhaps it has raised questions in your mind which you can go on to investigate?
- Share some of what you have experienced with your group and Teacher. Has it inspired you to develop other aspects of your creative, exploratory or methodological approaches?

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The landscape of Tarrant Hinton

Tarrant Man Creativity Sheet/Notes: