



Illustration by Kelsey Boast

CONFESSIONS OF AN ARCHAEOLOGIST WHO DUG IN SCHOOL: OR,  
IS ARCHAEOLOGY IN SCHOOLS A GOOD OR DESIRABLE THING?

J.D. Hill

Introduction

The relationship between archaeology and education is a current 'flavour-of-the-month' with archaeologists (as this ARC volume testifies). Much has been written about this subject in the last few years, giving the impression that it is only a recent marriage, though in fact archaeology has played a part in education for many years through museums and textbooks. Yet, despite the recent hype, little critical assessment of why and how it should be done has been offered. This paper takes this topic as its theme and questions whether a relationship based on use and abuse of either marriage partner is at all hopeful. In particular it discusses the question of what sort of archaeology should be taught in schools, and who should attempt to teach it.

This paper has its roots in two and half years spent working as part of Southampton University's 'Archaeology and Education' project and a recent conference entitled 'Archaeology meets Education' held in Southampton in September 1987. Here archaeologists and teachers met to discuss common aims and give each group an understanding of the other. Despite attention paid at the conference to issues such as multicultural education, it is hard to see how the uncritical and conventional forms of archaeology suggested by both archaeologists and teachers could be in any way effective in addressing this and other issues.

Use and Abuse

A history of the relationship between archaeology and the public is yet to be written, but it is important to see the current concern with archaeology and education in the context of the rise of the 'Heritage Industry'. Through visits to historic houses, museums and ancient monuments, 'the past' has become increasingly popular -- almost a middle class bingo. Hence, the ideology of 'Heritage' is the inescapable background through which teachers, children and archaeologists produce and consume the past. A full critique of the 'Heritage Industry' is yet to be undertaken (but see Wright 1985; Hewison 1987) but the view of the past presented by this industry is passive, and its perspective does not allow for a creative past. It is a replacement industry for a Britain whose traditional industries have declined, one that is incapable of changing the future. The past is packaged, priced and consumed, not something to be learnt from or experienced. We now talk about selling archaeology to the public, and, in this respect, children offer an attractive and captive market of school parties with sales of souvenirs

and entrance fees and opportunities to mould fresh young minds during the week. Then there are the parents and other family members, often dragged back by their offspring, who provide more income at the weekend.

Archaeology sees education as a commodity. Archaeologists feel a need, as part of an industry, to justify their work, show value for money and ensure future funding. Education offers an immediate and highly visible way to show archaeology doing something 'in' and 'for' the community. This is an essential requirement for funding by the Manpower Services Commission's Community Programme (a Government-sponsored 'job creation' body heavily relied on by archaeologists in Britain as a source of funding and labour). Because education is being used in this way the results are far from satisfactory. Archaeologists have little understanding of the aims and methods of modern education, often resulting in badly executed worksheets and site tours. Where education personnel are employed, they are ascribed a low status, since education or selling the past is not the chief aim of the excavation, but is often more of an inconvenience. The result is not just bad education, but bad archaeology, in the sense that it gives a distorted and perhaps harmful view of the past and the discipline.

Teachers see archaeology as a commodity. The joint issues of what subjects to teach and how to teach them have considerably changed in recent years. There has been a shift towards teaching skills and attitudes and away from simply learning facts. This approach is crystallised in the new national examination for 16 year-olds, the General Certificate of Secondary Education. By this age, children and teachers are using written sources with great skill and caution, deliberately looking for bias and interpretation (Her Majesty's Inspectors of Education 1985). Such approaches are rare, however, when the same teachers use the evidence of material culture. With changes in teaching methods has come a need to justify the existence of many parts of the humanities curriculum. One reason for recent concern about archaeology's role in education is undoubtedly the fears that it might disappear as a discipline entirely. The distant past has been replaced in curricula with a concentration on recent periods, with archaeology being seen as irrelevant to modern history. These recent periods are regarded as easier to grasp and more relevant to contemporary society. The change in emphasis from facts to skills and attitudes has produced a need to justify archaeology in such terms, resulting in several recent articles (eg. Cracknell and Corbishley 1986). Unfortunately, the overwhelming majority of teachers have little understanding of modern archaeology so the result of their use of the discipline is largely misrepresentative, perpetuating dubious stereotypes of what archaeology is and what it can do. The stress placed on teaching the right methods is often at the cost of fact. Several teachers have suggested to the author that it does not matter if the facts are completely wrong, so long as children learn to use their historical skills correctly! It might be good education, but it is often bad archaeology. Does this matter?

### Normative Archaeology as Education

Archaeology is presented to school children largely through class work: visits to, or by, archaeologists are still exceptional. Approaches in school are of two kinds. The first concentrates on the work of the archaeologist. This presents a view of the archaeologist as discoverer of the past, as a scientist. Emphasis is placed on the techniques of site detection and excavation (and occasionally conservation and dating). Technology and recording are stressed and computers add to the final legitimisation of 'hard' science. But such work is often out of context: it matters not to what period the site being excavated belongs or, indeed, why it is being excavated. What is important in this approach is children learning the skills of finding out about the past. As a hard science, the past is revealed, not interpreted -- the past is out there waiting to be uncovered. The archaeologist is often seen as a detective solving a crime. A crime can only have one perpetrator, so there is a single past to be found, pieced together. Crime solving leads to an emphasis on topics such as "Who was buried at Sutton Hoo?" or "Who was Pete Marsh?"<sup>1</sup>. Frequently used booklets on these topics have been produced by the Schools Council History Project: the British Museum and the Greater Manchester Archaeological Unit also produce material along these lines. Through such examples archaeology becomes traditional history: it is shown to be about individuals and specific events, not long-term changes or whole societies.

The second, more traditional, approach focuses on everyday life in the past, not on the techniques required to learn about it. Here the concern is with how people lived and naturally involves much material culture. It might even be called archaeology, or archaeology might be brought in, if the project is looking at the distant past (that is, 'the Romans'), though rarely do such projects study prehistory. Despite the frequent use of museums or even the introduction of artefacts into the classroom, such projects rely on written sources. Archaeology simply illustrates the history book: it is essentially silent and passive and is unable to describe what the past was like on its own. Thus, textbooks cover thousands of years of prehistory in a few short chapters, but cover the Iron Age in comparative detail because written sources about the Celts are at last available to say what 'really happened'.

This singular past, known through documentary history, is most clearly seen where drama or re-enactment are used. Here education and the Heritage Industry come together in presenting a vision of the past (Fairclough and Redsell 1985). The latter actively encourages 'living in the past' days. Dramas and 'living in the past' experiences offer considerable opportunities for distorting the past, creating it in the image of the present. Several scholars have written critiques along these lines dealing with American outdoor 'living' museums (Leone 1981; Handsman 1981), although little such criticism has yet been attempted in this country of such museums or the 'living in the past' approach to history in schools. The relationships and attitudes portrayed, dressed-up in historical costume -- gender stereotypes, religion, morality,

class and race — are, it is argued here, those of today. Through such activities the past is safe, legitimising and, above all, fun. But this is entertainment, not education, nor archaeology. Archaeologists should be doing something more exciting, critical and dangerous, more like the concerns and interests of archaeologists witnessed in seminars, journals and World Congresses, instead of cooking a Roman Recipe or pretending that we are detectives.

#### Archaeology as Education

Archaeology and education both see each other as commodities to be used for each other's purposes. The result is bad archaeology and bad education when attempted by many archaeologists. Fortunately, it is just bad archaeology when done by most schools — some educational benefit is derived by the children involved. One common antidote proposed to solve the mutual misunderstanding is to give each a fuller understanding of the other, through conferences and publications. The problems and distortions will still continue, however, so long as each discipline has different aims, and the result will simply be to provide the groups with better ways to use and abuse one another. Certainly greater understanding of each other's aims and attitudes is to be welcomed if we are to teach archaeology at all in schools. But few people ask why we should bother to teach archaeology, or whether not having archaeology in school would change the current perception or funding of archaeology, or seriously harm the education of our children.

If archaeology is to have a role in education it must be because the subject has something unique to offer, not because it fits into current educational usage, because in some vague way it assures archaeology's funding, or appeases the social consciences of archaeologists. Archaeology does offer both an emphasis on using evidence critically in ways which are in many respects clearer than in other disciplines, as well as the very different way of seeing the world through material culture. These are themes which have hardly been touched on in recent uses of archaeology in education. Archaeology as education would be an approach embracing the whole discipline, resulting in a change in how we perceive the relationship between archaeologists and society. It would not be a new sub-branch of the discipline. Nor simply would it be another justification for the subject by manipulating it into the form teachers want. An archaeology as education, a critical archaeology, is not about apologetics: it has far more to do with subversion.

— A critical archaeology builds upon the enquiry approach currently favoured in schools. A critical archaeology is education, sharing the same aims and objectives of enabling people to critically perceive and assess the past and the present (Shanks and Tilley 1987; Leone *et al.* 1987; Wylie 1986; Johnson and Holman 1986). A critical archaeology is one of practice: too much time and hot air has been wasted saying, not enough doing. A criticising, questioning archaeology is concerned primarily with the use and interpretation of evidence, and in this can build upon the 'work of the archaeologist' approach. Archaeology can

be used to show how the past is arrived at, created in the present. Because of the perceived immediacy of its subject matter over the written word, children can more readily appreciate points of interpretation.

To do this means taking archaeology much further than is done in schools at present. Attention should be paid to the problems of collecting and evaluating evidence, preferably with practical experience. Stress should be put on the themes of how we interpret material evidence in various ways to tell stories about the past and how material culture offers different routes to the past from those offered by written texts. Inoculating children against accepting as true the contents of textbooks, museum displays and, more generally, the pronouncements of 'experts' is vital. Interpretation becomes the key concept, showing that there is not necessarily a single conclusion to be drawn from a particular set of evidence. As a natural consequence, archaeology should be used to challenge accepted views about the past, and the present, by encouraging the question: "what evidence is there for such and such?". Its unparalleled insights (especially when combined with anthropology) into a wide range of different cultures, past and present, give it the perspective to show that there is not one way of doing things or of organising society. It can directly challenge stereotypes about the past (gender roles, for example) and so undermine the foundations of such stereotypes in the present.

A central part of such archaeology is its basis in material culture. Little current archaeology in schools, even that done by museums and units, really stresses how material culture on its own can tell us about the past. After all, archaeology in schools is very much subservient to history: the written word triumphs. Archaeological evidence is not exploited to its full extent, and, even when archaeologists work in schools, it is alarming to see that they will not use material evidence in the same way as they would in their 'professional' work. If archaeology is to be used to say what the past was like, it should emphasise the different range of evidence open to archaeology and should say what the past was like in different ways from the traditional 'everyday life of ordinary people'-type of history often taught in classrooms. In addition, it should not state interpretations of the past, but build on a critical approach stressing different possible pasts, or an incomplete past. Indeed, in the study of historic periods, the different views of the past given by material culture and written sources can be compared and contrasted without privileging either. In essence, an archaeology as education is putting the concerns of academic archaeology in the classroom, not pretending it to be history or, worse still, heritage.

Taking such archaeology into schools, whether it is talking to classes or teachers, preparing exhibits or writing study materials, forces archaeologists to think deeply about the nature of the subject and how we actually perceive the past. Do most archaeologists when excavating or analysing data have a well defined view of the period they study, or do they in fact share, uncritically, the stereotypical images



with the rest of the population? We rarely actually discuss what the past was like amongst ourselves; rather we discuss postholes, pottery typologies, social systems. It is only when forced to transfer this knowledge to the general public, to convert the intellectual abstractions we hide behind to stories intelligible to 'non-specialists', that we are confronted with having to actually say what the past was like, and too often we ourselves fall into the pitfalls of seeing the past as a mirror of the present. Doubts, or possibilities of alternative interpretations, are rarely mentioned, as the 'experts' have uttered 'the truth'. If archaeology as a critical exercise is to be practised, we must first start to criticise ourselves.

Communicating with children presents great problems. How do you describe to children the complex ideas used by archaeologists in comprehensible ways and without talking down to them? Even trying to explain what a "posthole" is can be problematic! It is important to remember that words have powerful connotations and what might seem innocuous to an archaeologist can give a very distorted image to others. An example of a problem word is 'primitive'. It is all too easy to use this word, even when you are aware of its dangers. 'Tribe' and 'chief' conjure up very definite images in the popular mind of 'Red Indians' or 'black cannibals'. Even calling structures 'huts', as opposed to 'houses', may be dangerous. The word 'hut' conjures up for many people images of garden sheds, or ramshackle poorly-built structures, thus implying simplicity and primitiveness on the part of their builders. The word 'house' offers an image of permanence, strength, solidity and a three-up-three-down semi-detached (and mortgage?). Another problem is that it implies that each structure served as the 'home' (another value-laden word) of a nuclear family.

#### Analogy and Metaphor

The use of analogy and metaphor lies at the heart of most attempts to present archaeology to the public. In order to communicate with a 'non-specialist' audience we need points of shared experience, we have to explain the processes by which we understand the archaeological record and how we interpret, through this record, the past itself. To say that something is the same as, or similar to, something else naturally opens up problems of inappropriateness, inaccuracy and the possibility of being understood in unintended ways. Yet it is impossible to avoid using analogies and metaphors in educational work; indeed, they can be extremely productive, becoming the roots of whole visits or school projects. As a consequence, we should think carefully about those analogies regularly invoked to explain the work of archaeologists. Is describing archaeology as being like the work of detectives useful or accurate? Do archaeologists want to be thought of as Sherlock Holmes of Baker Street or Captain Furillo of the Hill Street Precinct?

Another common analogy for archaeology is the completion of a jigsaw puzzle. This metaphor is often invoked by academics and field archaeologists when they describe their work to the public. Archaeologists are viewed as merely having to find all the pieces, stick them

back together and produce the past. The past is a 'given' and does not need to be interpreted. This is an easy metaphor to understand, but it is very misleading about the nature of the past and archaeological inquiry. More apposite metaphors have to be as easy to understand, but at the same time more accurate in their description of archaeology.

An alternative metaphor, which places greater stress on interpretation, would be to compare archaeology with looking at an unknown painting. Archaeologists have to tell a story about the picture, to say what is happening in the picture. A range of possible stories can probably be suggested. But which is the right one? You can tell any story, as long as it has to fit the facts in the picture, but which story you choose may be influenced by a wide range of factors. Metaphors based around the problems of reading pictures help to bring out the problems of interpreting the past. How do we decide which is the right story? This can also be an active exercise in the class or possibly part of a museum display.

This emphasis placed on metaphors and analogies might seem trivial, but a good metaphor can act as the root for a whole project, leading to practical activities, as well as a pivot to return to at later stages. Other examples tried by the 'Archaeology and Education' team at Southampton have been 'Archaeology as Rubbish', emphasising the nature of the archaeological record, and more recently 'Archaeologists Search for Patterns', a root which helps get beyond site discovery and excavation, and provides ample opportunities for classwork.

#### Studying Material Culture

Emphasising archaeology as the study of material culture is an important part of a critical archaeology as education. Demonstrating that objects can tell stories, and can be more than illustrations of history, is straightforward. It means going beyond saying "this is a Roman pot", or making gross simplifications about how a handful of bones can tell us about diet. Rather, it means actually showing, using and doing those methods and procedures archaeologists use to study their data. All the basic statistical and spatial methods used to study a site, or groups of sites, can be simplified and attempted by children, especially with the help of computer data bases. For example, as part of a larger school project on the archaeology of death, children were given a hypothetical part of Southern England and asked to investigate Neolithic and Bronze Age burial practice. After being assigned a limited budget (most of which the class tried to divert to their own pockets!) they had to develop a sampling strategy. The results from these hypothetical excavations of Neolithic communal burials and single inhumations with rich grave goods in Bronze Age round barrows were then analysed by the class from the perspectives used in academic archaeology. Thus, graphs showed differences over time, differences in the treatment of male and female, distributions of wealth, the construction of Thiessen polygons to construct possible territories around communal tombs, and so on. All these activities are accessible to children aged 10 and they can themselves arrive at reasonable interpretations of the

data. Indeed the interpretations and the social implications for the contemporary world of the development of a society apparently headed by males buried with rich grave goods in the Early Bronze Age created considerable discussion.

Showing that objects are not simply passive, that they had meaning to their makers and users, that the particular form of a building or the shape of a pot were not arbitrary, is an important aim. Here modern material culture studies have a large role to play, encouraging children to think about how we use, create, and are 'created' by our material culture. Analysing the contents of a dustbin to assess trading links, diet, occupation and social status is a common class activity. The full potential of this type of approach has not yet been tapped. Discussion of symbolic archaeology can begin through looking at modern dress-uniforms: football colours are one example. Most British children will also know what it means to have a 'Mohican' haircut, or drive a Citroen 2CV. The Barbour jacket is a particularly good tool, as children recognise the 'class' implications of this garment and also realise that how they understand its implications depends on the context. A Barbour and green wellington boots worn by a person in the country has a different meaning to those worn in the city.<sup>2</sup> The next step is to make similar analyses on material culture from archaeological and other contemporary contexts.

#### Archaeology and History

Many of the projects developed by the 'Archaeology and Education' team have attempted to develop such critical approaches. An area of particular concern is the relationship of archaeology and history. Several projects have emphasised that material culture does not become mute once history takes over, or that material culture is unbiased and straightforward to interpret (Planel 1985; Wise and Planel 1987; Wilson and Planel 1987; Hill with Mays 1987; Norman, forthcoming). Many teachers, aware of problems of bias and interpretation of written records, fail to apply the same attitudes to the study of material culture.

A common way to use archaeology in school studies is to visit historic monuments. It is important to get away from approaches which simply visit historic monuments but which do not look at them as active material culture. Such visits may concentrate on the building's historical associations, and may use the building by looking for blocked windows, beginning to unravel architectural sequences and so forth. The descriptive tradition found in much historical and industrial archaeology fails to use this evidence critically or fully. Buildings can be looked at for their meaning. Why was the building built in the way it was? Why are workhouses and prisons built on hills? Why do workhouses have ornate facades? Why do they have peculiar plans that work for maximum control, for minimum effort (Norman, forthcoming)?

Historical archaeology of the kind practiced by Deetz (1977) in the USA needs to be transferred to this country. His work provides an excellent way of showing the relationship between history and archaeo-

logy to teachers and suggests many opportunities for significant fieldwork which can be carried out by children. It is here that an archaeology as education would be a co-operation. Schools can survey buildings and record graveyards (Hill with Mays 1987), for instance, and can thus provide data for archaeologists. In return the archaeologists can provide skills, enthusiasm and information that teachers need to run such projects. Nor is there any reason why children, suitably supervised, cannot conduct excavations of historical sites (as work by archaeologists employed by the Toronto Schools Board has shown).

#### Criticism and Celts

Prehistory probably offers the best opportunities to show the nature of archaeology and to attack the anachronisms and stereotypes which characterise visions of the past. This is because the distant past is usually seen as so different from the present, and the absence of written sources makes archaeology the only way to understand this large part of our past. Approaches need to get away from saying 'what happened', and from experimental activities, to considering how archaeologists make up the past.

One project that has been successfully tried in several schools has focussed on Iron Age hillforts (Hill, forthcoming), posing the questions: why were they built and on what evidence do we base our conclusions? The overall project concentrates on the concepts of interpretation and analogy. An early worksheet gives a range of possible reconstructions, from the available archaeological evidence, for the common pattern of four postholes set in a square pattern which are found in large numbers on Iron Age hillforts. Children are forced to make their own interpretation, no answer being given, in the knowledge that their interpretation of four-post structures could change their interpretation of hillforts. Seeing four-post structures as chicken hutches makes hillforts into chicken farms, as granaries make hillforts storage centres, as lavatories (a common interpretation by 10 year-olds) make them into fortified public conveniences! The point is: how we interpret a single feature or find can radically alter our picture of the past.

An important aspect of the project is to suggest that the common use of written sources, such as Julius Caesar's *De Bello Gallico*, in describing the 'Celts' in textbooks on the Iron Age is invalid. Such written sources are not directly usable for most of the Iron Age and deny the central role of archaeology in interpreting the Early and Middle Iron Age. The result of this part of the project may be a little too extreme, as it caused one 11 year old to write: "Julia Seezher (sic) was a rotten liar!!" The common need to invoke the 'Celts' in popular and academic accounts of the Iron Age is discussed with teachers. This begins to show them some of the ways in which the past is used and moulded by contemporary political and ethnic concerns.

No attempt is made to say what everyday life was like. Instead, course-units concentrate on getting children to interpret evidence for themselves. For instance, who, and why, were a few people buried in

pits? What exactly was a particular tool used for? An attempt is also made to challenge popular perceptions of societies without money or writing. It is suggested that the popular notion that such societies can only be organised in 'feudal' ways is wrong, and that barter is not the only way to exchange items without money. These assumptions on the part of teachers, like others, stem from the lack of exposure to societies beyond those of the modern capitalist world or medieval Europe.

Visits to Danebury and its new museum, the Museum of the Iron Age in Andover, are important parts of the project, raising problems over interpretation in museums. Teachers and children will accept what is written in books as truth and believe what is presented in museums because of the presence of the real evidence! Traditional museum worksheets do not encourage a critical evaluation of evidence or displays. A different worksheet was developed containing statements about life in the Iron Age. Children are required to go round the museum asking if these are true, probable, probably false, false or if they don't know, and what the evidence is on which they have based their decisions. A good example of such a statement on the different worksheet is "Only women wove in the Iron Age". The museum contains a model showing this, as do most textbooks, yet of course there is no evidence in the objects from which this can be inferred. Again it is worrying to see that teachers use museums uncritically, and rarely to their full potential, even if they use critical approaches in class. Part of this is a basic lack of training for teachers in how to use museums and sites effectively and critically, which does little to shatter the reverential attitude most of us have to 'the real thing'. Getting teachers and children to realise that museums are dangerous places is an important aim of a critical archaeology.

Finally, the project considers the nature of hillforts, asking whether they were the homes of chiefs, or communal storage centres for egalitarian farmers. The same evidence is provided, but no definite answer offered. Teaching this aspect of the project has raised the interesting problem of the archaeologist as 'expert'. Teachers and children might become more sceptical about books and museums, but accept the archaeologist's word as truth. To get over this problem, two archaeologists were used to present the different arguments. The children needed little encouragement to join in the debate. These arguments are related to the archaeological record through exercises in designing hillforts either for chiefs or collectives. Do children design hillforts with different layouts for these different commissioners? Later some designs are cut in half and, without indicating what social structure it was designed for, they are given to children in another class. Can they decide from the layout of a half excavated hillfort who this hillfort was designed for and, more importantly, why?

### Conclusions

These examples are not offered as perfect examples of a critical archaeology in schools, as an archaeology as education. Rather, they show some of the approaches available to archaeologists if they adopt

the premises on which this article is based. Junior school children will readily accept that the past is subjective, that it involves interpretation and that what textbooks, museums or archaeologists say or show is not the truth -- that they are (just) interpretations. Children can even begin to appreciate the problems of imposing our wishes (romantic images of a warrior-filled past) and attitudes (gender stereotypes) on the past. Although changing these ingrained attitudes is much harder, children can at least begin to appreciate that an understanding of the past requires interpretation.

It is possible to do this sort of archaeology with great success. However, if this type of approach to archaeology in education is to be tried more widely, many changes need to be brought about. It is often thought that in order to improve the standard of archaeology in schools more up to date materials need to be made available to teachers. Certainly there is a massive need for textbooks with more recent interpretations of the past. (These need to present the past in a critical way, to suggest that what they say is not fact, but interpretation.) But textbooks and museums are only as good as the way in which they are used, and it is just as necessary to change the attitudes of teachers and those responsible for interpreting the past. It is saddening that even when teachers are given up to date, critical materials and have trained archaeologists to help them run a project, the same old attitudes remain manifest in their teaching. It is easy to teach a critical archaeology to children: it is much harder to teach it to their teachers! These teachers, and most archaeologists, carry with them into teaching archaeology all the popular misconceptions and prejudices about the discipline as its subject matter. Training courses as well as good materials are necessary to change these attitudes amongst teachers, and probably also amongst some unit- and museum-based staff involved in education.

To produce these materials, run such courses, and above all teach in schools, trained archaeologists are vital. Such archaeologists must be permanent, full-time and respected employees of units and university departments. Education must not be seen as something tacked on at the end of a project, it must become central to its rationale. To provide the full scope and range of archaeology as education, such personnel should not be restricted to simply interpreting current excavations. To realise the full potential of critical archaeology in education, wide-ranging and unorthodox projects need to be tried and tested. In this sense such teams should perhaps be based within universities, and not necessarily units whose focus is naturally on the local scene and primarily on excavation and other fieldwork.

What is required is a shift in the perception we as archaeologists have about our work and our discipline. Education and interpretation are traditionally seen as epiphenomena, by-products of serious research or rescue excavation tacked on merely because they improve public image, help get money, or because individuals have considered them 'a Good Thing'. Archaeology as education means a different approach: one in which passing on knowledge and attitudes to a wider public are central



concern. Archaeology as education would be fully aware of its responsibilities to itself and the wider world. It would not be an archaeology intent on using education, badly, or be content to see archaeology used badly by teachers. It would be an archaeology intent on transforming itself and the present through a critical approach to the past.

#### Acknowledgements

The ideas in this paper were formed while working with the 'Archaeology and Education' project at Southampton University. In particular I would like to thank P. Stone (Manager), B. Norman, S. Mays and F. Bassett. The views expressed here should not be taken to represent the official policy of 'Archaeology and Education'.

#### Notes

1. Pete Marsh was the name given to a preserved 'bog body' found recently and whose display in the British Museum and around the country has aroused widespread interest.
2. A barbour is a green waxed waterproof jacket, designed for heavy duty work in the country, but now also much worn by British 'Yuppies' and 'Sloanes'.

#### References

- Cracknell, S. and Corbishley, M. (eds) 1986. Presenting Archaeology to Young People. C.B.A. Research Report 64. London, Council for British Archaeology.
- Deetz, J. 1977. In Small Things Forgotten. New York, Anchor Press.
- Fairclough, J. and Redsell, P. 1985. Living History: Reconstructing the Past with Children. London, Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission.
- Handsman, R.G. 1981. Early capitalism and the centre village of Canaan, Connecticut: a study of transformations and separations. Artifacts 9, 2-7.
- Her Majesty's Inspectors of Education. 1985. History in the Primary and Secondary Years. London, Her Majesty's Stationary Office.
- Hewison, R. 1987. The Heritage Industry. London, Methuen.
- Hill, J.D. n.d. The Iron Age Project. Archaeology and Education. Southampton, University of Southampton. Forthcoming.
- Hill, J.D. with Mays, S. 1987. Deadmen Don't Tell Tales: A Graveyard Project for Schools. Archaeology and Education Project 5. Southampton, University of Southampton.
- Johnson, M.H. and Holman, N. 1986. Interpretation and criticism: a justification for archaeology. Archaeological Review from Cambridge 5:1, 106-108.
- Leone, M.P. 1981. Archaeology's material relationship to the present and the past. In Gould, R. and Schiffer, M. (eds) Modern Material Culture: the Archaeology of Us. New York, Academic Press, 5-14.
- Leone, M.P., Potter, P.B. and Shackel, P. 1987. Towards a critical archaeology. Current Anthropology 28:3, 283-302.

- Norman, B. n.d. The Andover Warehouse. Archaeology and Education Project 6. Southampton, University of Southampton. Forthcoming.
- Planel, P. 1987. Southampton City Walls. Archaeology and Education Project 1. Southampton, University of Southampton.
- Shanks, M. and Tilley, C. 1987. Reconstructing Archaeology: Theory and Practice. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Wilson, V. and Planel, P. 1987. Porchester Castle. Archaeology and Education Project 3. Southampton, University of Southampton.
- Wise, A. and Planel, P. 1987. The Shirley Park Project. Archaeology and Education Project 2. Southampton, University of Southampton.
- Wright, P. 1985. On Living in an Old Country. London, Verso.
- Wylie, A. 1985. Putting Shakertown back together: critical theory in archaeology. Journal of Anthropological Archaeology 4, 133-47.



Illustration by Kathryn Senior

## "MAN THE HUNTER": BIAS IN CHILDREN'S ARCHAEOLOGY BOOKS

Fiona Burt

### Introduction

Children are interested in history because they are interested in stories (Plowden Report 1967, quoted in Steedman 1984, 105).

Archaeology and prehistory, partly by virtue of the fact that they represent the most distant past, attract an aura of enigma and excitement which encourages children to want to find out. What they discover, in many cases, is the information outlined in books. Children are told that "archaeologists are really detectives, hunting out the clues which help them find out what happened in the past" (Corbishley 1986, 2), and once all the clues are found the archaeologist will be able to deduce the 'truth', in the style of Sherlock Holmes. This serves to reinforce children's basic faith in the past which is presented to them as 'fact'. Book titles such as Living in Prehistoric Times (Chisholm 1982), Prehistoric Life (Gale 1973) and The Prehistoric World (Mitchell 1984) boldly and unequivocally impress upon children that their contents will be telling the true and undisputed story of life as it was, not as it possibly was, or has been interpreted as being. A text entitled The Usborne Book of Prehistoric Facts (Craig 1986), moreover, leaves no doubt that after reading it the young reader will have effectively come face to face with prehistoric times and people. In reality, however:

There is no direct route to the past and we must remember that archaeology is something done in the present....We shall find that the past 'as it was' is not what comes at the end of the trip; we are on a return ticket (Shanks and Tilley 1987, 15).

Children are more likely to come face to face with contemporary values and attitudes: the books will engender in children rigid ideas of society's norms, by presenting a past which reaffirms the present, and protecting them from anything which deviates from, or contradicts, these norms. In recent years, children's literature has been focused upon as a potent source of messages about norms concerning gender, race and social status. Certain areas of children's literature have attracted interest and criticism, resulting in the withdrawal from schools and libraries of books such as the infamous Janet and John series and Little Black Sambo, in the belief that they contain sexist and racist images which will adversely affect the formative cognitive systems of young children. Although little critical attention has been paid to books