

RELICS

Occasional musings from the Travelling History Company

Council for Learning Outside the Classroom

We are really chuffed to have been awarded the Quality Badge by the Council for Learning Outside the Classroom. This is all about the benefits to children and teachers of outdoor teaching, and how great at we are at The Travelling History Company!

There is ever increasing research pointing to the positive impact outdoor learning has and a very proactive attitude from Ofsted.

We are now members of the Council and are supporting and embracing their philosophies and initiatives. We are looking forward to plenty of outdoor education over the course of the summer.

Quality Badge awarded by



Welcome to our Spring edition of Relics, full of enthusiasm and inspiration for the forthcoming summer of history and archaeology. As the days draw out, in this issue we contemplate darkness.

Ancient Astronomy in Cumbria

We have been up at Castlerigg Stone Circle in Cumbria - amazingly popular during the day, deserted at night - apart from us. Continuing our astronomy from ancient sites theme we were there experimenting and comparing the night sky of the Orient and Occident. This involved a night time trek across the fields experience the use of a bi disc (of China) within a stone circle (of Cumbria!) both within an astronomical context.

This is part of a project we have been working on in comparing and contrasting two very distant Bronze Age cultures but with fascinating similarities.

More information on this exciting research will be presented in a paper due to be published later this year.



GDLP

GDLP becomes a historical fact on 26th May!

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In Search of John Carpenter

The local Holy Trinity Church was the centre of activity over Easter searching for clues of John Carpenter. Our favourite experiment took place in the crypt using ultra violet light to seek out traces of pigments on the wall, where once there was a fine depiction of the city of Worcester. Our results - inconclusive, we need more UV!



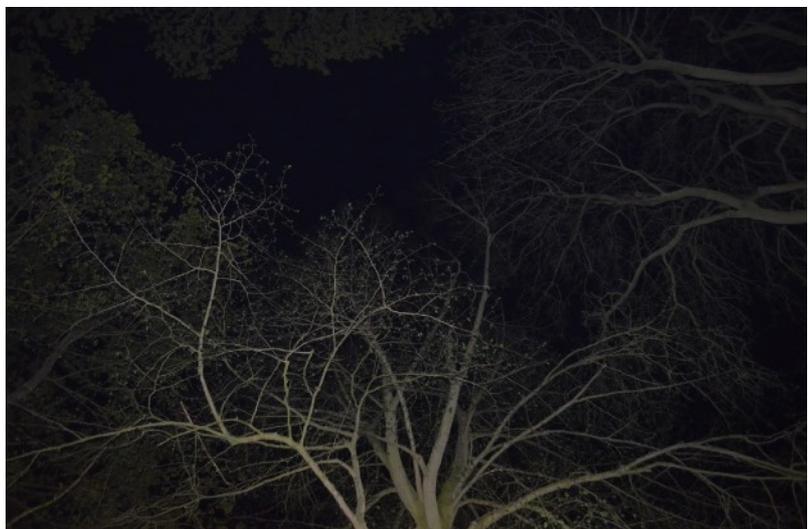
Darkness!

Continuing the night time theme, one thing we maybe to fail to appreciate is how dark darkness really is. Considering how much darkness crops up in archaeology surprisingly little has been written about it. We have however been reading a great book, *The Archaeology of Darkness* edited by Marion Dowd and Robert Hensey published in 2016.

Much of the book unsurprisingly focusses on caves and Neolithic tombs. An intriguing idea is presented whereby the examining of caves or tombs using bright light removes the very darkness that is an integral part of the experience. As with much archaeology, the act of investigation, in this case perhaps illuminative investigation, is destructive.

Much less is written about darkness from ancient open landscapes, including woodland. With this in mind we are busy planning "Skycamps" for the autumn in Cambridgeshire and the Cotswolds. Astronomers will be familiar with Astrocamps but our astronomy will be beautifully entwined with history, prehistory and thought provoking fireside philosophy.

We shall also be undertaking some rather counter intuitive woodland practical astronomy. The night sky takes on a rather different perspective when viewed from woodland, and presents some great challenges for the astrophotographer.





Society for the History of Astronomy

In April we set off for the Institute of Astronomy at Cambridge University to attend the Spring Conference of the Society for the History of Astronomy. There was some amazing material including long lost diaries of Caroline Herschel, some archaeoastronomy from Cornwall, re-evaluation of the inventors of the refracting telescope and the general opportunity to hang around the Institute and enjoy the surroundings.

Research

Back in Gloucester we have embarked on a research project exploring the history of the Horton family and Wotton House, in conjunction with our neighbours - Wotton House Hospital. This promises to be a tale of fortunes, lost fortunes, adventures and lunacy! The aim is to have it ready in time presentation during Gloucester History Week in September.

Coming up this summer

The diary is filling up, in particular we are looking forward to the annual conference of the Historical Association in Stratford on Avon on 18th and 19th May, some Mesolithic excavation on Exmoor in July and, the Festival of Archaeology at the Blaise Estate in Bristol on 28th July. We are planning some historical activities of our own throughout the summer holidays and as we head into autumn, our prehistoric Skycamps. We shall keep you posted.

After School History

We are delighted to have started after school history at the fabulous St. Ursula's E-Act Academy in Westbury on Trym this term. We have a fantastic group who recently gave our phrase "immersive history" literal meaning as they paddled in a bucket of poster paint in the pursuit of the creation Mesolithic footprints.

We are equally as delighted to be embarking on a second year at the amazing Westbury on Trym C of E Academy. Our students there have now enjoyed almost 50 history and astronomy sessions and they are still going strong.

Home Ed History

We have a great new initiative this summer term - Home Ed History. This is part of a broader project of International Village Education whereby we augment or complement home education. Once a week, home educated students are popping over to Wotton House in Gloucester to have a taste of our past the Travelling History way.

Our experiential and multi sensory approach is ideal for those who find the text books and dates by rote approach a little dry.