

Fact Sheet

Aimed at KS2 students

What is the job of an archaeologist?

Archaeologists are a bit like detectives. They excavate objects buried in the ground, like pottery, bones, shoes, in order to find out about the buildings these objects were buried in. They do so to learn about how people lived long ago. Some archaeologists study the soil on an archaeological site to find tiny clues like seeds and pollen, which tell us even more about the past- was there any forests around? Was it warm enough for certain bugs to survive?

What does oxygen do to the archaeology?

Climate change is affecting objects buried underground. Bacteria in the soil feed on organic materials like leather, wood, and bone. These materials make up many archaeological finds, such as shoes and writing tablets, which tell us about everyday life 2,000 years ago, from birthday invitations to requests for more socks on Hadrian's Wall. If more oxygen gets deeper into the ground, the bacteria living in it more active, so they break down these ancient objects faster.



What artefacts will we lose if we do not act now?

Some artefacts do not survive well in the ground. Materials like textiles and leather are beginning to decay as a result of climate change, so they may be missing from what archaeologists find. For example, Roman leather shoes discovered at military forts show that about 45% of the people living there were women and children, not just soldiers as people once believed. If we lose these shoes, our picture of who lived here in the past becomes incomplete.

Oxidising



Microbes very busy
BAD for organic artefacts



Reducing

Microbes are slow
GOOD for organic artefacts



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