



The History of Refugees in Gloucestershire

'Pupils need to know that events in the past are connected to related events at the time and have a legacy, often lasting until today.'

Mary Myatt (The Curriculum—Gallimaufry to coherence)

'The more you know about the past, the better prepared you are for the future.'

Theodore Roosevelt



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In 2013, a 1,000 year old female skeleton was found in Fairford. This pack delves into what we know about the woman, and encourages students to explore more about reasons for migration.

The skeleton that dates back 1000 years - activity ideas

Activity 1 (Information sheets and worksheet):

The discovery of the skeleton woman in Fairford gives a great opportunity to develop student's enquiry and to think about their history skills.

Give the students the sheet showing the picture of the skeleton woman and the statements: 'what I can see', 'what I can work out' and 'what I still need to find out'

Once they have done this talk about how artefacts and archaeological evidence helps us to find out about the past. Explain that this is primary evidence.

Look at the things the children have said that they need to still find out about and talk about how they can find the answers to these questions.

Provide them with the information sheets and if these answer any of the things they still wanted to find out, get them to write these in a different colour onto the sheet.

Discuss whether any of the information they have is not historical information (e.g statement by the child saying what he thought must have happened to the lady before she died). Ask them if we should use this information when gathering evidence.

Activity 2 - Let's investigate (Information sheets and worksheet):

Show the students the 'skeleton that dates back to 1000 years' information sheet. Explain that we need to be detectives and try to find out about this skeleton.

Tell them that the remains have been studied and that the skeleton comes from the Anglo-Saxon period.

Show them the 'let's investigate worksheet' and allow them time to think about what they already know and then to answer the questions of who they think she may have been, how she died and whether they have any evidence.

Discuss as a class the answers the children came up with. The discussion should show that the students used their knowledge of the Anglo-Saxons to make assumptions about who the skeleton was and how they died.

Reveal that the skeleton is actually of a woman, aged between 18 and 24, from Sub-Saharan Africa. Explain that this was found out through the study of the skeleton.

Ask if anyone guessed right (very unlikely they did unless they have read about the story in the newspaper). Ask whether now that they know this would they want to change how they think she died.

Show them the information from historians giving their opinion about her and ask if they had been given this in advance would they have answered the questions differently.

Talk about how we need to use historical evidence to help us accurately find out about the past. Explain that we do not have all of the answers about this lady and we need to make sure we distinguish between the facts and opinions about her.

The skeleton that dates back 1000 years!



Police officers were called to an area of the River Coln in Fairford on Sunday, July 7 2013 after Farmor's School pupils Christian Thompson and Robbie Cribley made the eerie discovery of a human skull.

The boys found themselves at the centre of international media attention and it was as they were being filmed by a crew from the BBC that they stumbled upon the rest of the woman's remains.

Since then, nearly the entire skeleton has been recovered, except for the small bones of the hands and feet which are likely to have disintegrated.

Information discovered about the remains:

A field/forensic archaeologist called out by the Police to recover the full skullie. Excavation was done without a public presence. They then sent the bones for examination by the forensic anthropologist.

- No grave was cut. Bank soil built up over her. She wasn't buried, leading to the supposition that she either fell in or was pushed and was held by vegetation and sediment build up.
- No signs of manual labour and they appeared to be well nourished.
- Although some local residents have suggested she may be a slave this is unlikely to be the case. Many slaves of this period were blue eyed/fair haired, although anyone could become a slave. Up until the early C19th the Barbary Pirates were still dealing with abducting and selling white slaves from Europe back to North Africa.
- There are tests that can be done to determine area of birth. This is an analysis of teeth. There is a distinct difference between birth evidence and subsequent life in another area. So she may have travelled from London, but that does not mean it is her birthplace.
- It has been confirmed that the remains are that of a woman, aged between 18 and 24, from Sub-Saharan Africa. Tests suggested she died sometime between 896AD and 1025AD during the Anglo-Saxon period.

Christian (aged 13) who discovered the remains was asked how he thought the woman may have died. He said: "I don't know how she could have ended up in a Fairford river but I reckon she must have died of a disease or been murdered".

Fairford 1,000 years ago?

England was beginning to take shape as Anglo-Saxon Wessex but faced the threat of constant invasion from Danish controlled Mercia and Viking raiders. Fairford and the surrounding area was embroiled in conflict.

The House of Wessex became dominant during the 9th century and in the following century, united neighbouring kingdoms including Mercia and Northumberland to form The Kingdom of England.

Members of Fairford History Society say they are puzzled that the remains were those of an African woman living in Fairford between 896AD and 1025AD.

"It's intriguing to imagine how a Sub-Saharan African woman came to be found 1,000 years later in the River Col," said chairman of Fairford History Society Geoff Hawkes.

"It really seems extraordinary. There is scattered evidence of, in early times, people travelling considerable distances but Africa to Fairford is a long journey."

Syd Flatman, from West End Gardens in Fairford, is a member of Fairford History Society. He suspects the woman came to Fairford from London rather than all the way from Africa.

"All port cities were very cosmopolitan back then," he said. "The lady in question would have had some command of the local dialect to survive so I would imagine she probably came to Fairford from London." Travel at the time, 1,000 years ago, was mainly via the River Thames at Lechlade and with no locks to contend with, residents had swift access to London.

He also doubts any suggestion that the young woman drowned in the river, but instead was buried close to it and became uncovered due to erosion in the following 1,000 years.

"My parents lay in the Roman Catholic cemetery a few yards from where the African woman was found and their grave was dug into gravel, barely five-foot deep," Syd continued. "Their coffins, when lowered, were submerged in water even at that depth so I would assume the river bank has eroded over the millennia and exposed the body."

The forensic anthropologist reported no signs of violence or trauma to the bones, which Mr Moaby said suggested that the woman's death was not violent but had been because of disease or accident.

<https://www.wiltsglosstandard.co.uk/news/10703029.historians-give-theories-on-how-an-1000-year-old-african-skeleton-appeared-in-the-river-coln-fairford/>

What I can work out

What I can see



What I still need to find out

Let's investigate!

What we know:

- The remains date back to the Anglo-Saxon period.
- The remains are of a skeleton.
- The remains were found in Fairford.
- At the time this person died England was beginning to take shape from Anglo-Saxon Wessex but faced the threat of constant invasion from Danish controlled Mercia and Viking raiders. Fairford and the surrounding area was embroiled in conflict.

Who do you think this person was?

How do you think they died?

Do you have any historical evidence?

Having been told the key facts have you changed your answers?

Having been shown the historians opinions have you change your answers?

Use the table below to write a summary of your ideas about your chosen refugee or event. On the left write facts only. On the right write your own ideas. Remember that the things you write on the right are your own personal opinion not facts!

What FACTS do you know for sure?	What can you guess about the refugee or event?

In your opinion what is the most important things you think you have learnt?

Biography planning sheet

	Introduction:
	Early life:
	Work:
	Later life and achievements:
	Legacy:
	Conclusion:

Biography planning sheet

FACT FILE

Name:

Background information

Key facts and dates

Other interesting facts

Picture

Link to Gloucester

FACT FILE

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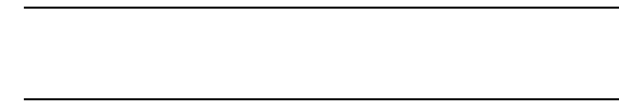
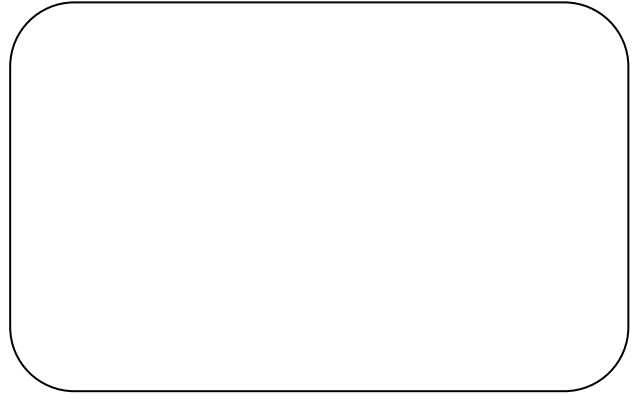
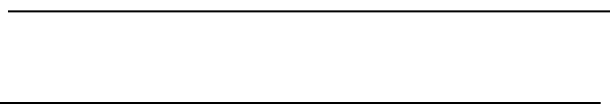
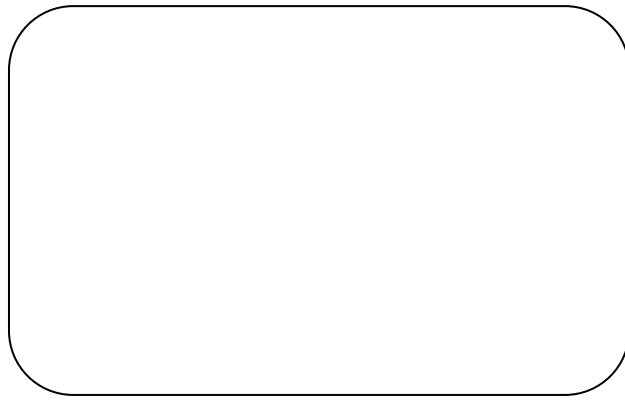
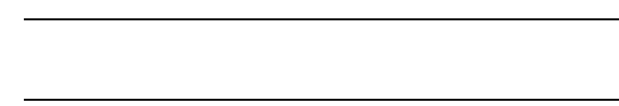
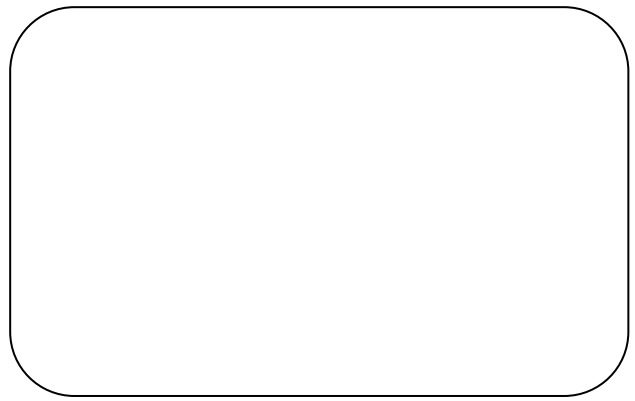
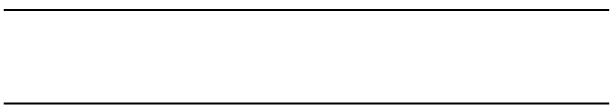
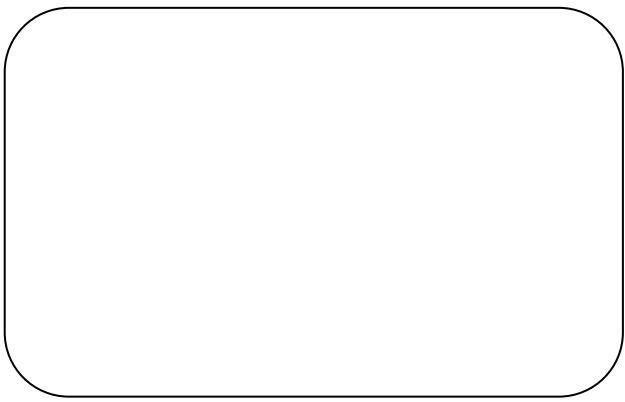
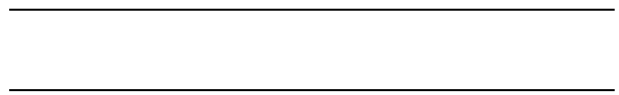
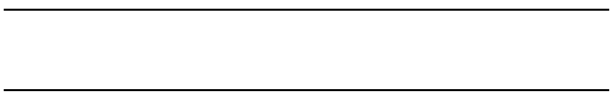
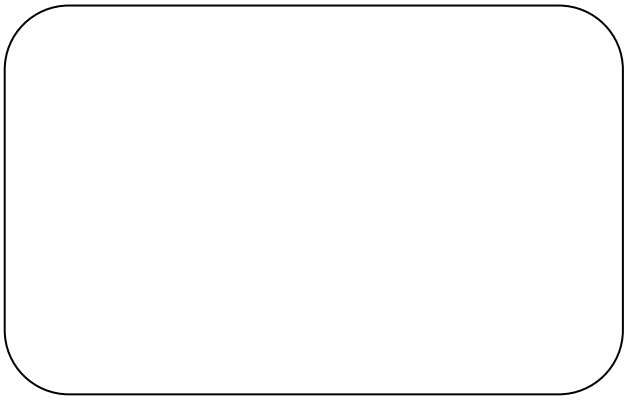
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Fact file about _____

Key facts:	
	Other interesting facts:
Links to Gloucester:	



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Further information/Useful websites:

The following links provide additional information, lessons plans, images, documents etc. Please be aware it is the responsibility of the person using these links to check that the content is appropriate for their students and GARAS will not be held responsible for any content that is deemed unsuitable.

- Historic England - Case studies, lesson plans, teaching resources, images, documents etc.: <https://historicengland.org.uk/services-skills/education/heritage-schools/>
- A History of the County of Gloucester: Volume 4, the City of Gloucester (detailed information, images, maps):
<https://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/glos/vol4>
- Gloucester Archives – Case studies, lesson plans, teaching resources, images, documents etc.:
<https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/archives/>
- Gloucester Civic Trust – information, videos etc.
<https://www.gloucestercivictrust.org/>
- BBC – Slavery in Gloucester:
http://www.bbc.co.uk/gloucestershire/content/articles/2007/02/19/slavery_gloucs_feature.shtml
- BBC – Slavery in Gloucester:
http://www.bbc.co.uk/gloucestershire/untold_stories/african/slavery.shtml
- Gloucestershire Live: Slavery in Gloucester:
<https://www.gloucestershirelive.co.uk/news/cheltenham-news/hundreds-people-gloucestershire-benefited-slave-4211358>
- Cotswold Archaeology – Excavating Roman Gloucester
<https://cotswoldarchaeology.co.uk/community/discover-the-past/archaeology-in-your-area/gloscat/>
- Gloucestershire Archaeology – Information, research, projects:
<https://www.glosarch.org.uk/index.html>
- Know your place – interactive maps over various time periods (including overlay option)
<http://www.kypwest.org.uk/tag/gloucestershire/>
- Ben Uri Collection - Teaching resources and lessons plans that explore themes of identity and portraiture
<https://benuri.org/schoolsandfamilies/>