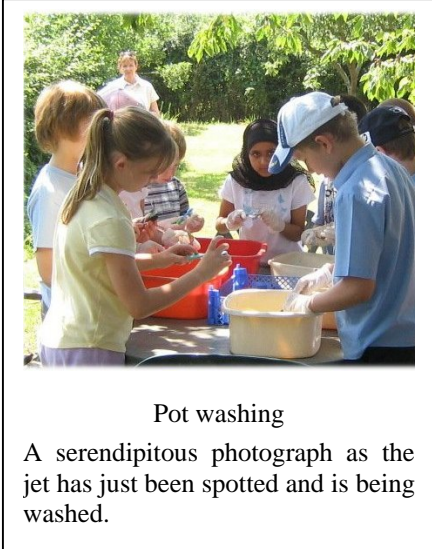




Blackden 2006

April Members of the Congleton Writers' Forum came to explore. They spent a day in The Medicine House absorbing the atmosphere, and writing.



Pot washing

A serendipitous photograph as the jet has just been spotted and is being washed.

July Gifted and Talented Year 5 students from three schools (Astbury St Mary's C of E Primary; Congleton; Upton Heath Primary; Chester and Seymour Park Primary, Salford) attended *An Introduction to Archaeology* course. Students were encouraged to observe and comment on the buildings and on the archaeological material that had been found around them. They washed unsorted artefacts, and by referring to a type series of pottery locally found, they dated and identified the pottery they had washed. Building on this, they created a timeline to which the pottery they had identified was assimilated.

One student selected and washed what he described as a 'strange stone', later identified as a jet pebble with an east coast provenance. Jet is associated with Bronze Age burials. A Bronze Age cremation was found beside Toad Hall in 1970, when foundations for The Medicine House were being dug. Here was the case of a young, sharp eye adding to the understanding of the site.

October The Trust ran a *Practical Skills* course for Gifted and Talented Year 10 students from Shavington High School and two courses designed to give Sixth Form students an insight into what a degree in archaeology would involve and to what careers it might lead. These courses were attended by students from The Manchester Grammar School, Wilmslow High School, Holmes Chapel Comprehensive School and Sir John Deane's College.

Also in October, MA students from the University of Manchester carried out an archaeological investigation involving architectural survey and geophysical survey, and the digging of some test pits. Their findings added to the knowledge of the site.

November Two 6th Form students applying for university places in 2007, and who had attended the courses in October, joined an undergraduate student who was using the resources here as examples in her thesis on ritual in the Bronze Age. They watched flint being knapped and helped to sort a Bronze Age cremation. While here they also read an eighteenth century will, studied a recently-discovered eighteenth century map of the site, and related some of the pottery that they had washed and sorted to the map and to the will. In December, both were offered places at the University of Oxford.

The students benefited from the generous teaching of Professor Mark Edmonds, Professor of Landscape Archaeology at York; Dr Melanie Giles, lecturer at the School of Arts, Histories and Cultures at the University of Manchester; Professor Richard Morris, Director of the Institute for Medieval Studies at the University of Leeds; Dr Mark Roberts, Principal Research Fellow, University College London; Richard Smith, freelance teacher and part-time lecturer at Chester College; and Fiona Sharpley, second year undergraduate reading archaeology and anthropology at Durham University.

The most successful and enjoyed activity was pot washing and identification, made possible by the type series established by Dr David Barker, Senior Archaeologist at Stoke-on-Trent Archaeology Service.

The success of this first season was a vindication of the educational policy of the Trust, which is to provide intensively supported courses to small numbers of students, giving them the opportunity to work with primary evidence, and to enable them to contribute to the making of history.