An Archaeologists at work

Archaeology is the study of what has been left behind from the people of the past . An archaeologist is a person who excavates objects of interest from the ground.

The place where the archaeologists work is called a site. Sometimes sites are found by accident such as new construction of a motorway , this is called rescue archaeology. Sites may be found by examining aerial photographs or old documents, this is known as research archaeology.

Before the site is excavated it has to be planned very carefully. A survey of the site is conducted and the topsoil is removed. The area is then divided into grids and a site map is produced. When an Archaeologist begins to work , they use tools such as brushes , shovels , trowels and sieves to remove soil and extract the artefacts . They must be patient and very carefully in order not to damage the artefact.

Artefacts might include pottery , jewellry or weapons. Everything is photographed and labelled and then sent to a laboratory. The exact age of the artefacts can be identified by a method called Carbon 14 dating which involves examining the amount of Carbon 14 is left in the skeleton or fossil found. Wooden artefacts can be dated by a method called dendrochronology i.e , by the growth rings on the wood. Human bones can identify cause of death , the date they died and their health conditions. Another method is called stratigraphy which means the deeper an artefact is found in the soil , the older the artefacts is.

Eventually artefacts are stored in museums . Historians use this to provide more clearer information on prehistoric times.