

**ENQUIRING MINDS****EQM EP 10 SEG 2**

**SACHA:** Archaeologists are not just unearthing relics in places like Greece, Italy or Egypt but they can also be digging around right here in Australia.

**LAURA:** Looking at old buildings makes you wonder what used to be here before. Archaeology is the study of historical artefacts and I know somebody who's really keen on becoming an archaeologist. Alisha, thanks for coming all the way here. Now the reason why I brought you here is to meet a real archaeologist.

**ALISHA:** Great.

**DR CRAIG:** My interest in archaeology began as a child. I had a passion for history for as long as I can remember. My mother always jokes that she bought me a sand pit when I was a toddler and she could never get me out of it and that was the beginning of her vision of me becoming a dentist or something like that destroyed. Hello, welcome to the Nicholson Museum. I'm Dr Craig Barker, I'm an archaeologist and welcome to Australia's largest collection of archaeological artefacts from ancient Egypt, ancient Greece and ancient Rome.

The Nicholson Museum is at the University of Sydney. It's Australia's oldest university museum and it was founded in 1860 by Sir Charles Nicholson and he actually travelled to Egypt and Italy purchasing material to send out to the museum.

Over here, guys, we've got one of my favourite objects in the entire museum collection. It comes from ancient Egypt and it's very, very

pretty. It's a little plaque made from a material called faience. It's kind of like a combination between glass and clay. But what it shows is a slave walking the owner's dog.

ALISHA: What types of pets and animals did people have?

DR CRAIG: Look, in ancient Egypt same as us, they had dogs, they had cats, they had the domestic animals. But what's really important, of course, is that because of ancient Egyptian religious beliefs often the Egyptian gods were associated with animals or with animal behaviour and the cat in particular was considered sacred for the ancient Egyptians so you will see statues and depictions of cats all over ancient Egyptian art. Indeed we've got a mummified kitten if you want to see one as well.

LAURA: Wow.

DR CRAIG: I just realised that but of course I can show you a mummified kitten. Here is an example of a mummified kitten or cat and you can see we've also got it X-rayed next to the real object because we're not going to unwrap the bandages around the mummy and you will see, I was talking before about statues of cats as well so here you've got representations of Bastet who was one of the Egyptian gods as well. We've got 30,000 items in the museum here. They get used by students all the time. There's a lot of objects, they get used by student all the time to study how we date them, what sort of context they come from, how archaeologists can actually learn from them as well. So you want to come and see our student study area?

ALISHA: Okay.

DR CRAIG: One of the great things about this collection is because it's grown we now have close to 30,000 objects so people can come in at any time and explore at their own pace to find out what's going on. So we're open during the school holidays, for example. So there's a whole range of different ways you can get involved both from a formal tour through to a chance to come and discover it for yourself.

Now do you want to see some of the objects that we've got? Maybe hold something up like this with the magnifying glass because it's quite heavy. But this is made from bronze.

ALISHA: What is it?

DR CRAIG: It's a really important object and I can guarantee that you will have one in your own house. It kind of goes like that.

LAURA: A tap.

DR CRAIG: And it would have been used like that. It's a tap handle. Now this one is Roman and this one comes from a Roman city called Pompeii. It's a very, very important place because it was destroyed in 79AD by a volcano, Mount Vesuvius, and when the volcano erupted the city was covered and all of the archaeological material was protected.

ALISHA: Whoa, it's a lot heavy than I expected it to be.

DR CRAIG: It's much heavier and then remember, of course, if you were a Roman you'd have to be turning it as well. It shows you just how skilled they were in metallurgy and working with materials. So this is an object from Pompeii from the Roman city. Again it's made from metal, it's got the bronze, we can see from the greenish colour. What do you notice

at this end?

ALISHA: There's sort of like a little screw.

DR CRAIG: Yeah, there's a point, there's a hard point. The other end is hollow now but would have originally had something inside it and what this would have been used for is a hole punch. It would hammer little holes in and you would use it if you were making something out of leather like belts or tell me, what type of shoes did the ancient Romans wear?

ALISHA: Sandals.

DR CRAIG: Sandals, excellent. Now do you have a pair of shoes?

ALISHA: Yes.

DR CRAIG: Actually do you have a pair of boots?

ALISHA: Yes.

DR CRAIG: Because I think that's what we're going to need next. So we're standing in the Rocks which is one of the historic areas of Sydney, this is where the first European settlement took place in the colonial days of early Sydney. Now have you ever worked on an archaeological site before?

ALISHA: No.

DR CRAIG: The reason I asked you to wear the boots is because some friends and colleagues of mine are working up the road and we're going to visit them and you're going to go and actually dig with them as well.

ALISHA: Oh really?

DR CRAIG: Yeah, really.

VOICEOVER: The big dig is an archaeological site right in the middle of Sydney and is located under a building. The building was built over the site so the archaeological exploration could continue.

DR CRAIG: So what we're going to do is to use a tool like this which is called a trowel, we're going to sort of just trowel off a little bit here and see what we can find. And already you will see just how rich the site is because that appears to be some glass. And because we're going to see the neck of a glass bottle from the late 1800s.

ALISHA: Can I please have a go?

DR CRAIG: By all means you can have a go. So what you need to do is to hold the trowel in your hand and just carefully scrape back and I'll watch what you're doing. There we go and if you can pick that up and there we go, some more of the -

LAURA: Another piece of pottery.

ALISHA: Yep.

DR CRAIG: And of course made in China and then transported to Australia so it also tells us stories about the ships that were coming in and out of Sydney Harbour which of course is just a couple of blocks down that way.

VOICEOVER: With some artefacts unearthed it's time to get washing.

DR CRAIG: What do you want to look at first?

ALISHA: This one.

DR CRAIG: Excellent, okay. Dump it in the water and give it a good scrub, just be careful not to cut yourself.

ALISHA: It's not that sharp now.

DR CRAIG: No, it should be pretty worn down from all the years in the soil.

ALISHA: So every piece tells a story?

DR CRAIG: Yes, some pieces will tell more of a story than others but again, we need to clean them to actually work out what's significant and what's not. So once you finish that one we'll put it in the bucket and we'll go inside and have a look at some of the objects that the guys found this morning and see what types of stories those objects tell us.

Okay, so what we've got here are the objects that you've found and that you've just washed. Now a big part of our job as archaeologists is to look for other examples of them so we can learn what it is. Luckily for us the archaeologists here have shown us some examples. So do you recognise this bottle here?

ALISHA: It looks like that one.

DR CRAIG: That's the top. You've got the top of one of those. So what you've got is a small fragment from the neck of one of these black glass bottles.

Then over here on this book we've got some examples of the whole tobacco pipes which we've only got the small fragments. Open that one up. And we keep catalogues of everything that we find and it means in the future other archaeologists can come and do more research on them. Now I hear you're very good at jigsaw puzzles.

ALISHA: Yes.

DR CRAIG: Excellent, then you might want to consider becoming an archaeology conservator. What's happening here is that Alex is putting together all the different broken shards from a cup that was found earlier and hopefully if all the bits join then it can be put back together into one piece and who knows, may even end up in a museum like the one we started looking at as well. So maybe one day you will be able to go and visit a museum and see this particular piece on the shelf.

LAURA: I think Alisha has developed her interest in archaeology. So from now on she will be looking at jigsaw puzzles in a whole new way.

VOICE-OVER: If these stories have inspired you then check out our website for activities and loads of information on all of our experts. Plus don't forget to challenge yourself with our Enquiring Minds game.

END OF TRANSCRIPT