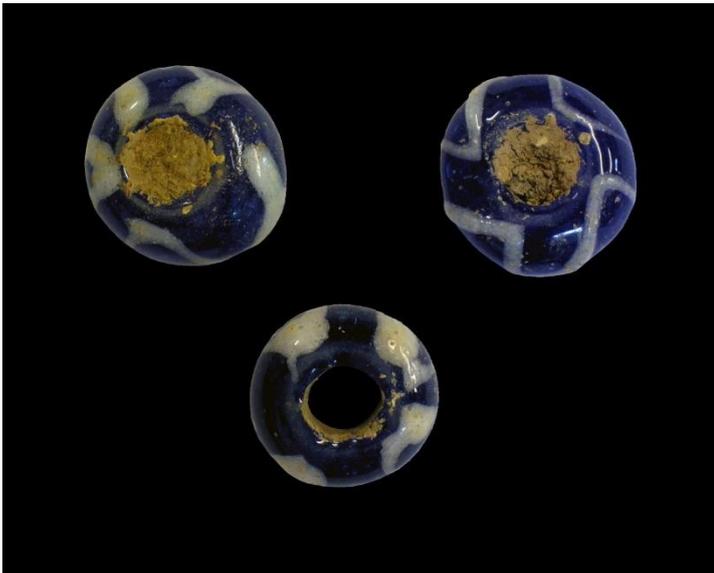Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Gwynedd
Gwynedd Archaeological Trust

Bead Making Activity

Make your own bead!

- Suitable for ages 7+
- First get everything you need (read list below)
- Read the information section (page 3) to learn about some examples of beads found by Gwynedd Archaeological Trust.

What you'll need ...

Two packs of different coloured modelling clay that hardens in the oven we used Fimo Soft (you could also use play dough)
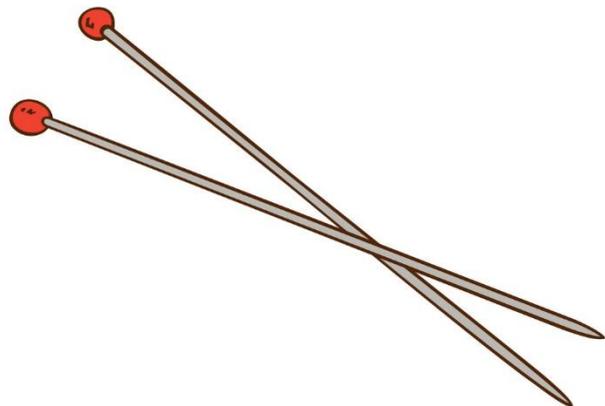
This is available to purchase online.

If you decide to use any other kind of modelling material remember to check whether its suitable to place in the oven.

A Pencil or Knitting Needle

You'll need something pointy to make the hole in the centre of the bead. Make sure you have an adult's permission to use this, and that you have help if needed.

Information Section

Here are some examples of beads found by GAT. These were discovered during an archaeological excavation carried out at Bryn Cegin Fach, Llandygai, Bangor. This excavation was funded by the Welsh Government. These finds are now on display at Storiel Museum, Bangor.

Bryn Cegin Fach

During the Late Iron Age and Roman period (around 2000 years ago) Bryn Cegin Fach was a roundhouse settlement. Archaeological work was carried out here so that traces of the past could be investigated and recorded, helping us to learn how people lived and used the land thousands of years ago.
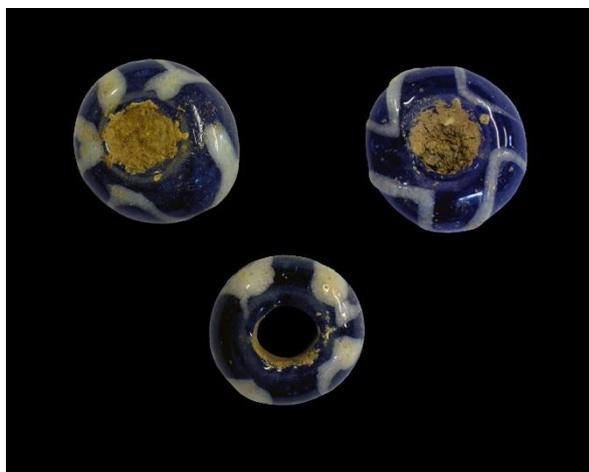
Roman Beads

At Bryn Cegin Fach archaeologists excavated a number of roundhouses. Within one of these roundhouses (Roundhouse H) archaeologists found sherds of Roman glass, two glass beads and a glass counter. The sherds of glass found may suggest that bead making took place on this site.

On the other side of Bryn Cegin Fach, archaeologists uncovered a pit in which they found 230 blue annular beads and 16 cylindrical glass beads.

Glass beads from Roundhouse H

Blue and white annular beads

Red cylindrical beads

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The red cylindrical beads were probably blanks' that were to be cut down to make smaller beads. This was a very unusual and interesting find as beads are not usually hoarded. Archaeologists believe that these beads would have been of value to those who deposited them, though the reason why is uncertain.
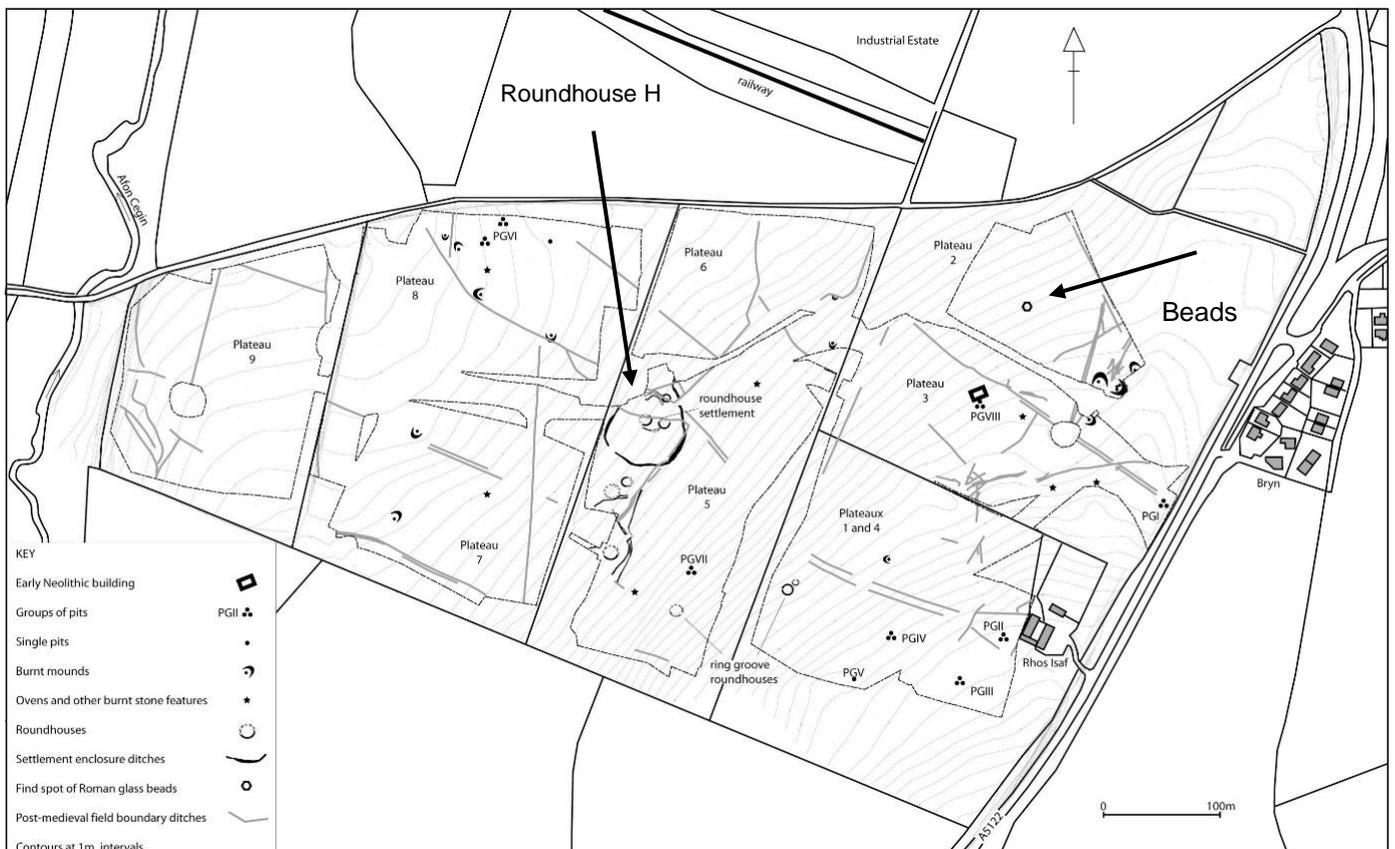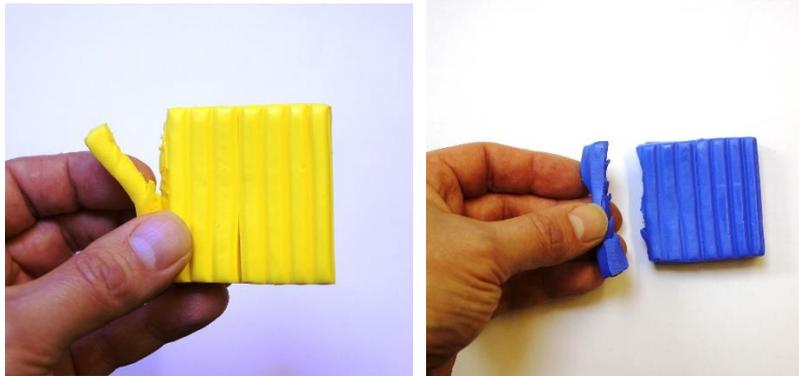

KEY

Early Neolithic building	◪
Groups of pits	PGII ⋯
Single pits	•
Burnt mounds	⌒
Ovens and other burnt stone features	★
Roundhouses	○
Settlement enclosure ditches	‿
Find spot of Roman glass beads	○
Post-medieval field boundary ditches	∿
Contours at 1m intervals	

Fig 1. Site plan

Let's Make Our Own Bead

If you've read the information section and have everything you need, you're now ready to make your own bead! Good luck! Send us a picture of your finished bead!
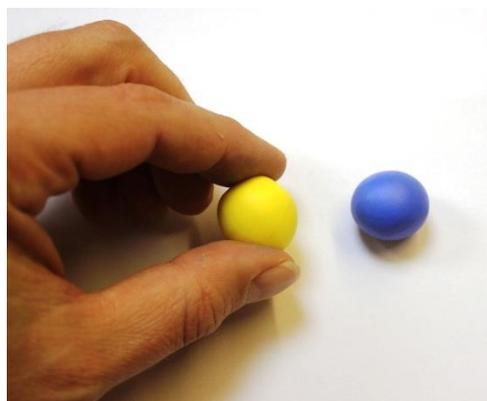
1. Break off a small strip of clay from each colour.

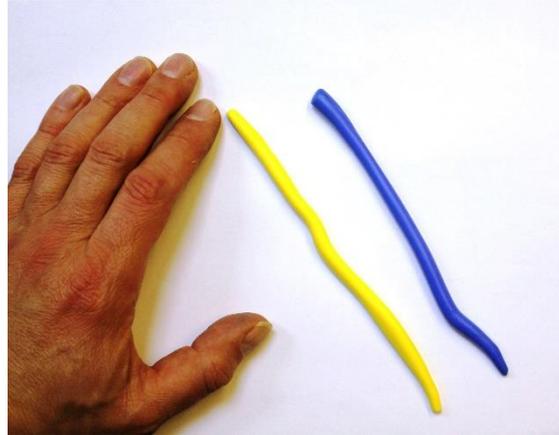2. Knead these until they are soft and warm with no hard bits.

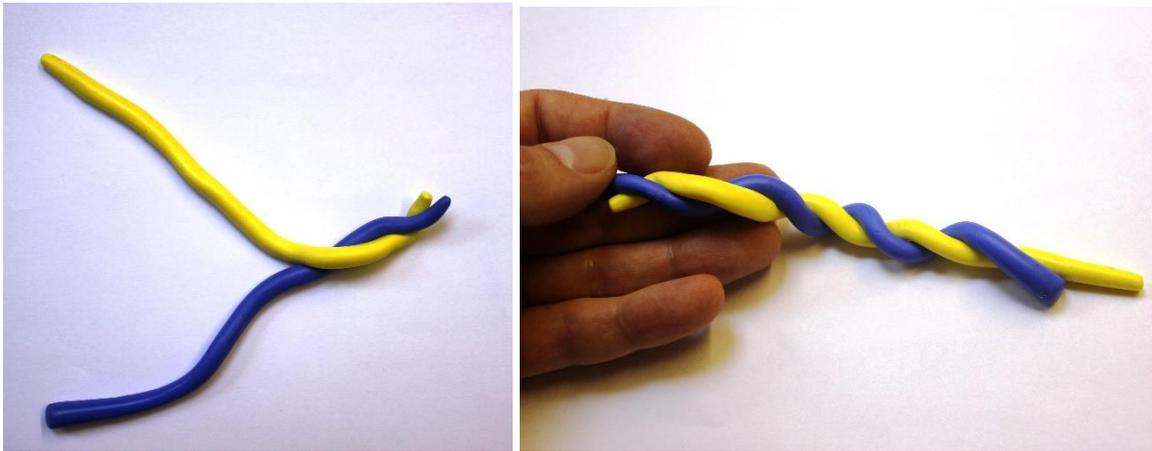3. Using the palms of your hands, roll them in to balls.

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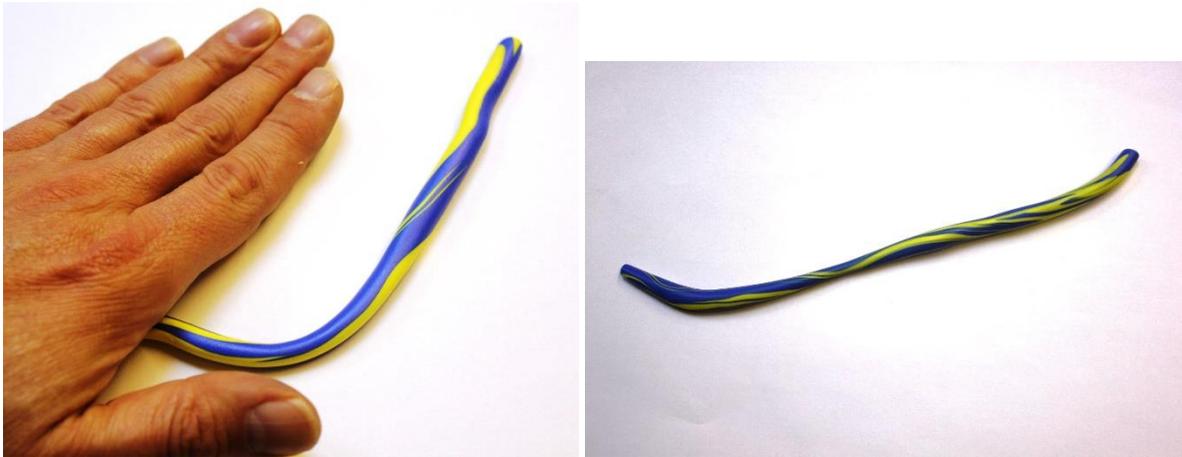4. On a hard surface (such as a table) roll each ball into a sausage shape about as long as your hand.

5. Plait the 'sausages' of clay together (wind one colour around the other).

6. Roll the plaited clay into another ball.
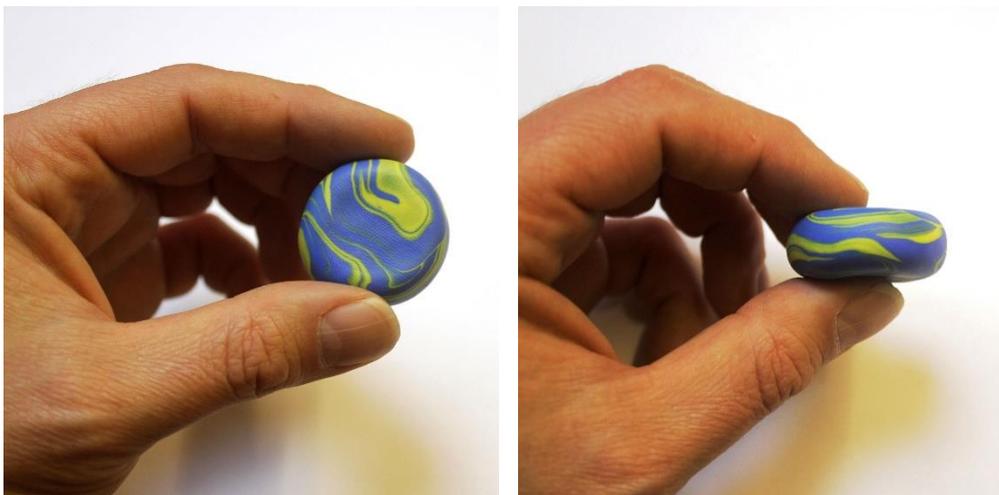

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7. Roll this ball into another sausage.

8. Roll this sausage into the final ball.

9. Gently squeeze the ball to make it a bit flatter.

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10. Ask an adult to carefully make a hole through the bead (using something pointy like a pencil or knitting needle). It helps to make a hole on one side, then a hole on the other side so that both holes join. You can wiggle the pencil to make the hole slightly rounder and bigger.

11. Ask and adult to help you bake your beads. Use a non-stick baking tray. We used Fimo Soft and baked our beads at 110 °C for about 25 minutes. The tray will be really hot when it comes out of the oven.

12. Let the beads cool – they won't be properly hard until they've cooled.

13. If you'd like to make a necklace, ask an adult to cut a piece of string, thread this through the bead and tie to make a necklace.

Gwynedd Archaeological Trust run the Bangor branch of the Young Archaeologists' Club". The club is for 8-16-year-olds. If you're interested in joining contact @dan.amor@heneb.co.uk

young archaeologists' club

@gwyneddarch

clwb archeolegwyr ifanc