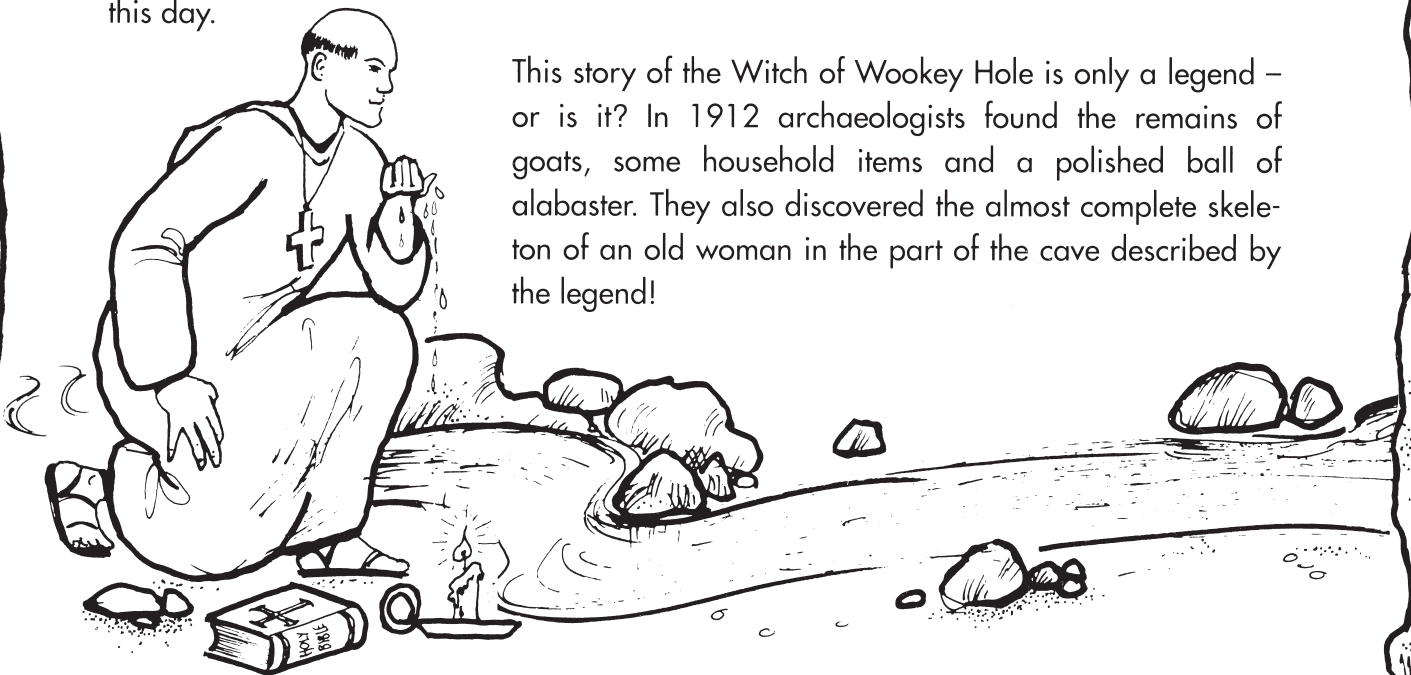


THE LEGEND OF THE WITCH

The caves at Wookey Hole are surrounded by mystery and legend. It is said that during the Dark Ages an old woman who kept a dog and some goats lived alone in the caves. Everything that went wrong in the village was blamed on the old woman. The local people believed that she was a witch who cast spells on their animals and caused illness in their families.



Eventually, the people decided that something had to be done about the evil witch and they sought the help of the Abbot at Glastonbury Abbey. The Abbot sent a monk called Father Bernard to exorcise the witch's spirit. He entered the cave alone, clutching a bible for protection and a candle to light his way. In the faint light Father Bernard saw the witch stooping over her cooking pot. They began to talk but the talking soon turned into a fierce argument. Screaming curses and casting spells, the witch fled deeper into the cave down a narrow passageway called Hell's Ladder. The brave monk followed her and they met again in the shadowy depths of an inner cavern. Quickly, Father Bernard scooped up a handful of water from the river, blessed it and threw it over the witch and her dog. Instantly, they were both turned to stone and their frozen figures remain in the cavern to this day.



This story of the Witch of Wookey Hole is only a legend – or is it? In 1912 archaeologists found the remains of goats, some household items and a polished ball of alabaster. They also discovered the almost complete skeleton of an old woman in the part of the cave described by the legend!

Questions

1. What is a legend?
2. The witch was blamed for everything that went wrong in the village. What kind of things was she accused of?
3. What two things did Father Bernard take with him into the cave and why?
4. In your own words describe how the witch and her dog were turned to stone.
5. What do you think the witch might have used the polished ball of alabaster for?
6. What do these words mean? Use a dictionary to help you.
(a) mystery (b) archaeology (c) exorcise (d) alabaster