

The skeletons in the Great Death Pit also gave Woolley valuable information about the people and society of Ur. From the clothing and jewels found on the bodies, it was possible to work out their social position and status. It seems that they lay down in rows in order of rank, with the more important people closer to their king, just before they killed themselves.

RANK AND FILE

Another surprising revelation was the number of people buried alongside the kings and queens. The largest tomb, known as the Great Death Pit, contained the skeletons of 74 people - probably courtiers and servants who had killed themselves by drinking poison in order to look after their master in the afterlife. However, this is the only known example of human sacrifice in Mesopotamia, so it's not clear if this was the usual custom.

LOYAL TO THE END

We now know that the Sumerians traded farming produce, cloth and manufactured goods for timber, stone and metals. Their merchants journeyed as far as the Mediterranean coast and the Persian Gulf, and exchanged goods with Indian traders at a trading post such as Dilmun (modern Bahrain).

TRADING PLACES

For a link to a website where you can find out all about a game board found in the royal tombs of Ur and play the game as well, go to www.usborne-quicklinks.com

INTERNET LINK



This bull's head, found in one of the tombs, decorated the front of a lyre and is made of gold and lapis lazuli.



This is a gold, copper and lapis lazuli statue showing a goat stretching to eat leaves from a tree.