

## The One-Day Student Conference

Fiona Haughey

*The One-Day Student Conference has become an important annual event in the academic life of the Institute. Fiona Haughey, who has organized the past three conferences and is now a research student at the Institute, explains.*

The Institute of Archaeology is home to an annual event that is about to complete its first decade. Started at the behest of the students themselves, the first one-day conference was arranged in 1989. One has taken place each February since then, and they are now organized through the auspices of the Society for Archaeology Students (SAS). Papers are requested from all parts of the Institute's student body, from undergraduates, taught postgraduates and research students. It is deliberate policy to try to select speakers from each year and each degree represented in the Institute, and this has often been achieved. Members of the academic staff attend the conferences, and may chair particular sessions, but it is the students who organize the event and present the papers.

The aims of the conference are twofold. First, it is good practice for students who are giving (or are planning to give) research papers at conferences elsewhere, and it provides a forum at which they can rehearse their ideas in a conference setting and within tight time constraints. It also encourages undergraduates to begin to formulate their work to a stage where it might be possible to think about offering papers. In the past three years, the time allowance for each speaker has been 15 minutes – which demands a great deal of control over the prepared material and imposes the need to be succinct and relevant. Learning how to manipulate slides and overhead projectors is another practical consideration. Secondly, the conference also brings to the fore research that is currently being undertaken by students at the Institute, both as part of their degree programmes and on a more personal level. Group projects run by members of the Institute, such as those at Compton Bassett in Wiltshire, Sedgeford Hall in Norfolk and on the Kentish Anglo-Saxon Emporia, find it a useful forum at which to present the results of current research and to involve students at the fieldwork level. Not all papers are accepted, and the standard of those that are has generally been high, comparable to what might be expected at professional conferences elsewhere.

The papers cover a broad chronological, theoretical and geographical range, and it would be undesirable to restrict it, given the wide range of degrees, expertise and subject areas taught and represented at the

Institute. It would not be acceptable to adopt a single conference theme because this would exclude some sections of the student body from offering papers.

Each year the papers cover an interesting diversity of research topics. There is an annual presentation by the first-year SAS representative of that year's introductory experimental archaeology course held at the beginning of the first term ("PrimTech"), but otherwise the menu varies from year to year. Recently, there have been papers on archaeometallurgical research in Peru,



**Figure 1** An Institute student recording a medieval doorway in the church of St Bartholomew the Great, London.

Mali, at Abu-Matar in Israel and at Merv in Turkmenistan, as well as on nineteenth-century cast-iron work in Oxford. Papers on two religious foundations have been presented, Southwark Cathedral and Merton Priory, as part of a wider survey of churches (Fig. 1), as well as an examination of Nabatean burials and a talk on x-raying mummies. Boats from Egyptian tombs and from the foreshore at Sandwich, and discussions about Anglo-Saxon women, Jordanian baptisteries, sacrificial figurines from Moche in Peru (Fig. 2), and finds from the Thames foreshore (Fig. 3) have also featured at recent conferences. More theoretical papers have included the use and abuse of ethnic labels, and the validity of archaeological experiments. It is planned to continue this event into the next millennium, giving Institute students a unique in-house opportunity to take part in a research conference in front of their peers.



**Figure 2** The head of a figurine made of unbaked clay from the site of Huaca de la Luna in the Moche Valley, northern Peru, dated to the first millennium AD; height 13.2 cm.



**Figure 3** A team from the Institute recording the remains of a shipyard on the Thames foreshore at Bermondsey, London.