

The Centre for Applied Archaeology (CAA)

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The Centre for Applied Archaeology continues to provide a home for the Institute's team of professional archaeologists, working on a wide range of fieldwork and heritage management projects in the UK and internationally. As was reported on in the last issue of *Archaeology International* this is not an easy time to secure an income from commercial contracts, since clients in the construction industry are struggling to escape the effects of the credit crunch. We are also waiting on proposed changes to the planning system due to emerge from the National Planning Framework, where attempts to simplify procedures and devolve decision making to local communities (as proposed in the Localism Bill) are at risk of combining with staffing cuts in local government to lessen the level of protection available for archaeological sites, landscapes and buildings. These are testing times, and our challenge is to make sure that economic problems and structural changes do not undermine our ability to undertake high-quality research and engage effectively with the many different communities of interest affected by our work (ranging from property developers to students undertaking archaeological research).

The Institute of Archaeology offers a particularly strong platform from which we can meet this challenge. Several members of staff within the field team (Archaeology South-East) are undertaking post-graduate research at the Institute that feeds directly into our study of the archaeological landscapes of southern Britain, and we have similarly ben-

efitted from a wide range of research and teaching contributions from academic staff and graduate students. University College London can boast one of the world's greatest concentrations of archaeological expertise, and this is of enormous value to our operations. Whilst commercial clients are keen to keep costs low, they are equally anxious to ensure that the reports that they commission will be fit for purpose. It helps to have a long-established professional reputation, and to be based in southern England where the effects of the crisis in the construction industry have been less severe. Above all we rely on the skills of a project management team able to respond to some 600 invitations to tender each year, and manage the 300 odd commissions that ensue – delivering high quality reports on time and to budget.

Drawing on these strengths we have been able to re-instate most of the posts lost in redundancies in 2008 and we currently have a team of 45 permanent staff. Careful management of budgets means that we operate without any form of subsidy from UCL, whilst ensuring that any commercial profits obtained are fully re-invested in teaching and research. Much of the work is routine, but contributes to the better understanding and management of historic properties and archaeological sites and landscapes throughout southern England. In undertaking this work we continue to work with local communities wherever possible, and have mounted a series of successful open-days and outreach events.

Over the past two years the main focus of our work has been the preparation of a series of research monographs reporting on the results of rescue investigations in southern England. These include reports on a large

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Fig. 1: The Roman baths at Tower Street, Chichester being cleaned for display within Chichester Museum

Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Eastbourne, East Sussex where a fine collection of grave goods was recovered from some 200 graves dating from the 5th-8th centuries;¹ the multi-period landscape at Brisley Farm, where a Late Iron Age settlement and ritual complex included two warrior burials accompanied by grave goods of metalwork and ceramics;² a report on the landscape of the West Sussex Coastal plain describing the intensification of agricultural activity in the Mid/Late Bronze Age through to the Anglo-Saxon period;³ a report on the results of a series of major excavations in the heart of medieval Lewes;⁴ and a synthetic volume describing the results of forty years of study of the medieval vernacular architecture of the eastern High Weald.

The past two years have also seen the further development of our Heritage Management services. Three projects illustrate the range of work now being undertaken. The first of these involved helping put together nomination documents for the application for World Heritage Site status for the twin monastery of Wearmouth-Jarrow. This entailed organising workshops to facilitate discussion of issues of site governance and stakeholder participation, followed by intensive work in redrafting the site management plan and editing the proposal documents

for nomination. In Abu Dhabi we have been working with the Abu Dhabi Authority for Cultural and Heritage to provide guidance on conservation issues associated with the proposed construction of a new archaeological park based around the Bronze Age tombs, Bronze and Iron Age settlement sites associated at the Al Ain oasis. We have also been working with Birzeit University on a survey project based on the early Islamic palace at Khirbet al Mafjar, where our main interest has been to provide training in archaeological survey for a new generation of Palestinian archaeologists.

References

- 1 Greatorex, C., Brookes, S., and Harrington, S. in prep, *Archaeological Excavations of a Late Iron Age Site and Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at St Anne's Road, Eastbourne*, Spoilheap monograph series.
- 2 Stevenson, J., in prep, *Excavations of a Multi-Period Landscape at Brisley Farm, Ashford*, Spoilheap monograph series.
- 3 Dunkin, D., Priestly-Bell, G., Sygrave, J., in prep, *Archaeological Investigations on the West Sussex Coastal Plain*, Spoilheap monograph series.
- 4 Swift, D. in prep, *Excavations in Medieval Lewes*, Spoilheap monograph series.