

# RESCUE – STILL CAMPAIGNING FOR ARCHAEOLOGY

June 29, 2012 Giles Carey Archaeological Media, Commercial Archaeology, Community Archaeology, Day of Archaeology 2012, Education, Publishing, Science Anthropology, Archaeological sub-disciplines, Archaeology, archaeology services, Britain, British Archaeological Trust, Charles Thomas, Community Archaeology, Council for British Archaeology, Cultural heritage, Excavation, Kate Pretty, Martin Biddle, Ministry of Works, motorway network, Oxford, Philip Barker, Philip Rahtz, Public archaeology, RESCUE, Rescue archaeology, Robert Kiln, Simon Thurley, southampton, Winchester

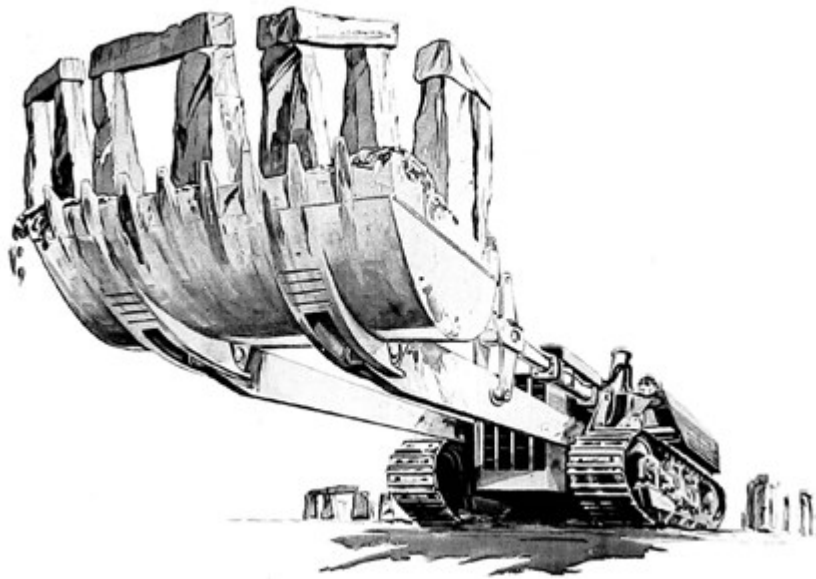
The logo for Rescue, featuring the word "Rescue" in a bold, black, sans-serif font. The text is underlined with a thin, dark brown horizontal line.

Rescue – The British Archaeological Trust have been working for British archaeology for the last 40 years. We continue to campaign, and represent archaeology at a wide level, as well as giving support to those protecting

heritage up and down the country. The Day of Archaeology 2012 is a perfect opportunity to tell you more about what we do, a lot of it behind the scenes, as an independent organisation committed to the protection, conservation, recording and interpretation of archaeology.

RESCUE was founded in 1971 at a time when archaeology in Britain was facing a catastrophic situation. None of the larger, well-funded representational bodies which we now take for granted (ALGAO, SCAUM, IFA, ARIA), were in existence and the Council for British Archaeology was little more than a federation of regional groups which met to discuss common interests. Only in Winchester, Oxford and Southampton was there any ongoing archaeological presence. Elsewhere rescue excavation was undertaken by a diverse mixture of academics, inspectors employed by the Ministry of Works, museum curators and local amateur/voluntary societies. Although many of these individuals and groups did good work, often under extremely difficult circumstances, others were overwhelmed by the rapid pace of destruction. Even today many local and regional museums have substantial bodies of unpublished material dating from this time.

The later 1960s and early 70s saw the establishment of Britain's motorway network, the redevelopment of town centres and the creation of New Towns throughout the Midlands and south-east. These initiatives involved enormous threats to sites and



monuments, none of which were protected or even recognised by existing legislation which dated back to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. In spite of the heroic efforts of individual archaeologists and local societies, it was clear that there were no institutions capable of mounting the type of sustained response to these threats that was required. In addition the sums of money available from the Ministry of Works were wholly inadequate to the tasks of excavation and recording. There was little recognition of the costs of post excavation work or publication.

Rescue was founded in order to draw attention to this situation and to organise a practical response to it. Early members included many whose names have subsequently become well known both inside archaeology and outside; Philip Barker, Martin Biddle, Barri Jones, Robert Kiln, Philip Rahtz, Charles Thomas and many others were active in establishing the new organisation and making it into an active campaigning body capable of bringing pressure to bear on local authorities, developers and the government and making the crisis a matter of national concern. Early supporters in Parliament were drawn from across the political parties with Tam Dalyell prominent amongst those backing Rescue's activities.

In 1972 a junior branch, Young Rescue, was founded by Kate Pretty and local groups sprang up throughout the country. At least one member, a certain [Dr. Simon Thurley](#), still has his membership card and fond memories of the work of Young Rescue.

40 years later the threats haven't gone away, they just take different forms. Rescue has been at the forefront of campaigning for improvements to legislation – including the recent [National Planning Policy Framework](#), as well as highlighting threats to both [terrestrial](#) and [maritime heritage](#), reaching many members through our publication [Rescue News](#).

Most recently, we have been documenting the unprecedented level of cuts to museum and archaeology services up and down the country, and have been equipping local communities to **Fight Back**. We all strongly believe this is vital work, protecting heritage, 40 years on.

