

Mosaic

A-level Archaeology fails to make the grade

Examination board AQA has announced that they no longer plan to offer A-level archaeology at a time when there was a CBA team working on its reform. Mike Heyworth, CBA Director has pointed out that, with a need for more archaeologists, the CBA had been working on expanding their support for the revised A-level linked to apprenticeships as an alternative route into the archaeological career.

Other bodies, such as the Society of Antiquaries, noted that AQA themselves had stated that “archaeology was the ultimate subject for an all-round student, combining elements of many other academic disciplines...” AQA also stated that it was not a question of finance but that it was the breadth of the subject and the lack of sufficiently competent examiners that were the main problems. It must be feasible to provide an abridged syllabus and to find suitable examiners lurking amongst the academic institutions or units.

As LA goes to press, Art History and Statistics have been reprieved. There is hope yet for Archaeology but only if the wider community responds (see the online petition www.change.org/p/aqa-save-a-level-archaeology).

Burning issue

With all the commemorations of the 350th anniversary of the Great Fire of London and as part of the Visit London's Great Fire 350 activities, you can now watch a film online, *London 1666: watch it burn* (50 mins duration), of the burning of a large-scale model of London, as it floated on the Thames on the date of the fire beginning.

Described as a contemporary perspective and funded by Arts Council England, the wooden model was set alight while viewers were invited to comment. Interviews were also conducted with fire specialists. See it at www.visitlondon.com/greatfire350.com or look at the new Museum of London site (www.fireoflondon.org.uk) which has been designed as the go-to site for anyone wanting to learn about the

Great Fire. For a better archaeological perspective of the Great Fire, see Nigel Jeffries' overview in this issue (p296).

Ship ahoy

The newly-opened Cancer Centre at Guy's Hospital has unveiled a bronze sculpture inspired by the New Guy's Roman boat, the remains of which lie buried *in situ* under access roads and grassed areas adjacent to the new centre. Portions of the well-preserved carvel-built Roman sailing barge were first uncovered in 1958, 1960 and 1965 and again prior to the building of the new cancer centre in 2010 when more of the midships section was uncovered, plus evidence of keel planking. The boat, abandoned in c. AD 190–225, had been preserved under fluvial sediments. The sculpture, costing £100,000, symbolises a patient's journey while undergoing treatment.

Chinese whispers

An article in *The Times* (23rd September 2016) and several other papers highlighted the fact that not only were four skeletons in a Roman cemetery at Lant Street in Southwark¹ found to be of African origin but that two others were of Asian ethnicity, probably Chinese – the first to be identified in Roman Britain.

In a new study published in the *Journal of Archaeological Science*² specialists looked at the isotope analyses and the morphological features of the skulls of a number of Roman burials from Lant Street, Southwark. Rebecca Redfern, from the Museum of London's Centre for Human Bioarchaeology and one of the authors, was quick to point out that the research being undertaken with Michigan State University showed that the two cemetery inhabitants had not been born in Britain and had traits that indicated

an Asian ancestry and that perhaps they were part of generations of slowly westward-migrating peoples.

Although rare evidence from the Roman Empire on the face of it, there is another example from Italy identified as having Asian ancestry and further isotopic work is likely to reveal more examples given that the Roman Empire was a cosmopolitan mix of peoples and the silk route was an accepted route of transporting goods and slaves to the Empire. The Spitalfields Roman woman had been wearing a silk damask gown (the silk came from China) when she was buried – so why not migrating peoples?

Loss of further museum jobs in a London Borough

Following on the loss of Orpington Museum, the two curatorial posts at Sutton's two heritage centres, Honeywood and Whitehall, are to be abolished and two development officers created, based not within the two museums, but at the Central Library. There will no longer be any specialist staff on site to care for the collections, run the schools programme and liaise with the Friends group and volunteers.

Honeywood reopened in 2011 after HLF-funded refurbishment and Whitehall is currently closed for similar reasons. There seems little likelihood of saving money as extra staff will be needed even if the intention is to use volunteers to plug the gap.

A plea for the future of the PAS

Roger Bland, former Keeper of the Prehistory to Early Europe Department at the British Museum and Department of Portable Antiquities and Treasure, has received a President's Medal from the British Academy in recognition of outstanding service to the cause of the humanities and social sciences. In his acceptance speech and as a staunch advocate of the Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS), he raised his concerns that the future of the PAS as a national service remained insecure and pressed the British Museum to maintain its important responsibility to it.

1. V. Ridgeway, K. Leary and B. Suds *Roman Burials in Southwark* (2013) PCA Monogr. 17

2. R. Redfern, D. Gröcke, A. Milland, V. Ridgeway, L. Johnson and J. Hefner 'Going south of the river: A multidisciplinary analysis of ancestry, mobility and diet in a population from Roman Southwark, London' in *Journal of Archaeol. Science* 74 (2016) 11–22

Diary

Please note that most societies anticipate a donation for attendance by non-members.

January

9 (7.45 pm) West Essex Archaeology Group. 'Diocletian's Palace' by John Shepherd. Sixth form block, Woodford County High School, High Road, Woodford Green IG8 9LA.

10 (6.30 pm) London & Middlesex Archaeological Society. 'Raising the Curtain on London's First Theatre: recent excavation at The Stage, Shoreditch' by Heather Knight. Museum of London, 150 London Wall, EC2Y 5HN.

10 (7.30 pm) Southwark & Lambeth Archaeological Society. 'The River Effra' by Jon Newman. New Cut Housing Co-Operative Hall, 106 The Cut, SE1 8LN.

13 (8.00 pm) Richmond Archaeological Society. 'Bumps and Bombs: the archaeology of Richmond in the Second World War' by Simon Fowler. Vestry Rooms, 21 Paradise Road, Richmond, TW9 1SA.

14 (2.30 pm) Merton Historical Society. 'Recent Researches' – illustrated talks by a number of members. Christ Church Hall, 58 Christchurch Road, SW19 2NY.

19 (8.15 pm) Bexley Archaeological Group. 'Death of the Gods? From Paganism to Christianity in the Late Roman Empire' by David Calow. Sidcup Conservative Club, 19 Station Road, DA15 7EB.

February

10 (8.00 pm) Richmond Archaeological Society. 'The newly discovered Romano-British site at Flexford, Surrey' by David Calow. Vestry Rooms, 21 Paradise Road, Richmond, TW9 1SA.

11 (2.30 pm) Merton Historical Society. 'Thames Road Bridges' by Richard Fitch. Christ Church Hall, 58 Christchurch Road, SW19 2NY.

14 (8.00 pm): Hendon & District Archaeological Society. 'London Ceramics at the time of the Great Fire' by Jacqui Pearce. Stephens House,

17 East End Road, Finchley, N3 3QE.

14 (6.15 pm) London & Middlesex Archaeological Society. AGM & Presidential Address: 'New Troy to Lud's Town: Geoffrey of Monmouth's London Revisited' by John Clark (LAMAS President). Museum of London, 150 London Wall, EC2Y 5HN.

14 (7.30 pm) Southwark & Lambeth Archaeological Society. 'Railway Archaeology in our Town: restoring the abandoned interiors of Peckham Rye Station' by Benedict O'Looney. New Cut Housing Co-Operative Hall, 106 The Cut, SE1 8LN.

March

1 (8.00 pm) Epsom & Ewell Historical & Archaeological Society. 'AGM and talk: 'In the land of Gods and Monsters: shrines and sacrifice in Celtic Gaul and Britain' by Jon Cotton. St Mary's Church Hall, London Road, Ewell, KT17 2AY.

14 (6.30 pm) London & Middlesex Archaeological Society. 'From Blackwall to Bishop Rock – Britain's Historic Lighthouses: with special reference to London's only lighthouse at Blackwall' by Tom Nancollas. Museum of London, 150 London Wall, EC2Y 5HN.

14 (7.30 pm) Southwark & Lambeth Archaeological Society. 'MOLA Excavations at 25 London Bridge Street 2008 to 2012' by Tony Mackinder. New Cut Housing Co-Operative Hall, 106 The Cut, SE1 8LN.

April

7 (8.00 pm) Richmond Archaeological Society. 'Bucklersbury to Bloomberg: Excavations on a site in the City of London' by Jessica Bryan. Vestry Rooms, 21 Paradise Road, Richmond, TW9 1SA.

11 (6.30 pm) London & Middlesex Archaeological Society. 'Liquid Assets: Interpreting the Prehistoric Finds from the Thames' by Jon Cotton. Museum of London, 150 London Wall, EC2Y 5HN. Joint lecture with Prehistoric Society.

11 (7.30 pm) Southwark & Lambeth Archaeological Society. Symposium:

Short talks on various subjects of local historical and archaeological interest. New Cut Housing Co-Operative Hall, 106 The Cut, SE1 8LN.

Exhibitions

Tunnel: the archaeology of Crossrail opens on 10 February to 3 September 2017 at the Museum of London. The most complete range of archaeological objects unearthed by Crossrail, Europe's largest infrastructure project, will go on display alongside the story of this great feat of engineering in a major new exhibition. Items on display will explore 8,000 years of human history, revealing the stories of Londoners ranging from Mesolithic tool makers and inhabitants of Roman Londinium to those affected by the Great Plague of 1665. These finds were from locations as diverse as suburban Abbey Wood in the south-east, through Canary Wharf, across to Liverpool Street, Tottenham Court Road and ending in Westbourne Park and Acton. Exhibition preview on p294–5.

Practical archaeology

AOC Archaeology. Contact Melissa Melikian, Post-Excavation Manager (020 8843 7380).

London Archaeological Archive & Research Centre. Contact Frances Grew, Archive Manager (020 7566 9317).

Croydon & District. Contact Jim Davidson, 8 Brentwood Road, South Croydon, CR2 0ND.

Borough of Greenwich. Contact Greenwich Heritage Centre (020 8854 2452).

Hammersmith & Fulham. Contact Keith Whitehouse (020 7385 3723).

Kingston. Enquiries to 020 8546 5386.

MOLA. Contact Karen Thomas, Head of Archive (020 7410 2228).

Pre-Construct Archaeology. Contact Märit Gaimster, Finds Manager (020 7639 9091).

Surrey. Enquiries to Rob Poulton, Archaeological Unit Manager, Surrey History Centre (01483 594 634).