

NEWS

Centre for Applied Archaeology (CAA)

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The Institute's Field Unit – The Centre for Applied Archaeology (CAA) – also known as Archaeology South-East, has had another busy year, during the course of which we started work on some 450 new projects generating a turn-over in excess of £5M. The bulk of this work takes place within the UK, where archaeological research is a routine component of planning and construction.

We now employ about 80 research staff within the core team, supported by additional field archaeologists recruited for individual projects. We aim to achieve research excellence in as wide a range of specialist sub-disciplines as is sensibly possible, and to this end have strengthened capacity in several key areas over the last year. New recruits include Dr Ed Blinkhorn, a specialist in the archaeology of the Upper Palaeolithic and Mesolithic; Angela Vitolo, a palaeo-botanist working on the analysis of charred plant remains; and Dr Gwladys Monteil who we welcome back to the team, working on the analysis of Romano-British pottery. Three of our new staff come from the ranks of students of the Institute of Archaeology: Isa Benedetti occupies a trainee post in the study of Ceramic Building Materials, Dr Elena Baldi has taken on responsibility for artefact conservation, and Sally

MacLennan is working on Conservation Management Plans and related aspects of our consultancy services in archaeological heritage management.

Our strategic investment in capacity building has also involved the purchase and refurbishment of new offices in Witham, Essex (managed by Mark Atkinson). When building work is finished, in September 2015, we will have a first-class research and teaching facility within easy reach of the proposed UCL East complex at Stratford. These offices will give us a long-term base for archaeological fieldwork and research throughout East Anglia. We have also invested heavily in the development of our new inter-relational database ('asebase'), which is now moving into routine application (under the guidance of Guy Hopkinson). This is destined to radically improve our handling of the wealth of archaeological data recovered from our studies, and open up access to this resource for UCL teaching and research. Many years in the planning, this is now providing a gateway to far more ambitious uses of archaeological data.

Project highlights

The largest fieldwork project of the year took place at Pocock's Field, Eastbourne (Sussex) where Bovis Homes are building new housing. This involved a seven-month long excavation and community archaeology project on the edge of the Willingdon Levels, a former marine inlet (**Fig. 1**), where a wealth of marsh-side resources had attracted settlement from

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Figure 1: A public open day visit to the heart of the Iron Age marsh-side settlement. Photo: CAA: Archaeology South-East.

the Bronze Age onwards (managed by Darryl Palmer and directed by Giles Dawkes). An enclosed Iron Age settlement, containing roundhouses and bread ovens, was accompanied by a cemetery set over a promontory into the marsh: burials here were isolated from the 'mainland' by a ditch that defined an 'isle of the dead'. Contemporary salt extraction generated a large and significant assemblage of briquetage, (ceramics used in the extraction process) including vessels and pedestals from dozens of bath-tub shaped pits. In the Roman period salt-making gave way to grain processing, represented by a corn-drier, granaries and other agricultural buildings. An enclosed inhumation cemetery associated with the Roman settlement included a structure that may have been a mausoleum. The excavation also found the Saxon settlement of Eastbourne, as anticipated by earlier discoveries of Saxon graveyards. This included several sunken 'grubenhauser'

(pit houses), including a weaving shed, and an unusual square post-built structure. Later medieval settlement of timber-framed buildings, surrounded by enclosed fields, was followed by the construction of a large stone-built Tudor hall on a small knoll at the bottom of the slope adjacent to the marsh. This was an impressive building, although the 17th-century addition of a brewery furnace and washroom may have marked a decline in its fortunes. Work is now in progress on the analysis of the several tonnes of finds recovered from 6,000 excavated contexts.

Our work at La Cotte de St. Brelade in Jersey has been equally challenging (managed by Jon Sygrave). Here we have been helping Jersey Heritage and the site owners the Société Jersiaise, with their research ambitions and management of one of the most important Middle Palaeolithic sites in northern Europe. Following a series of storms around the coast of Jersey in 2013–2014 the CAA has been providing strategic

advice and management support in a programme of stabilisation and protection works for the Ice age sediments that had accumulated within a jagged fissure in the rocky cliffs of the modern south coast of Jersey. In addition to immediate needs of archaeological fieldwork, and condition recording through laser scanning and photogrammetry, we have also been working on a series of initial conservation management plan documents. These documents outline potential designation schemes to which the site could apply; they update its significance in comparison to similar European sites and describe how La Cotte could benefit Jersey and the region's Tourism and Development Plans. The work at La Cotte has the potential to combine ground breaking archaeological research (as conducted by the La Manche Prehistoric (LaMP) research group and managed by the CAA) with sustainable economic development (see also the article on LaMP by Pope et al in this Issue).

Our main training project has been a joint venture between Archaeological Expertise (Kazakhstan) and the CAA, involving the excavation of the abandoned Silk Road city of Kuik-Mardan, Otrar (**Fig. 2**), in south-west Kazakhstan (led by Gai Joraev and Giles Dawkes). The fieldwork team included five students from UCL Qatar, who are undertaking the MA in the Archaeology of the Arabic and Islamic World. The month-long excavation focused on one of the corner towers of the 7th / 8th AD century citadel, a structure still standing in places up to 6m in height. The tower consisted of a massive mudbrick platform with a stepped external face and topped by a cellular arrangement of rooms. The tower had been partly demolished and reconstructed on at least three occasions. Work will continue in 2016 when we intend to explore the wider urban landscape at Kuik-Mardan, including field-walking and geophysics of the fortified town (Shakhristan) and the suburbs

(Rabat), as well as excavating the, as yet undated, smaller second citadel.

Research and publication

Our publication programme is picking up speed, now that the 'SpoilHeap' monograph series has become established. The latest volumes to appear include a report on the Roman villa at Snodland in Kent (Dawkes 2015), and our recommendations on the development and use of archaeological archives based on research into finds from Essex (Doherty 2015). Monographs describing our work on the extensive prehistoric landscapes around Peacehaven in Sussex (Hart, forthcoming) and on the early human landscapes of the Darent valley in Kent (Anderson-Whymark et al forthcoming) are complete and due for publication imminently. Numerous other site reports have been published in local county journals and as chapters in books, including a major survey of recent work undertaken on Roman London (Perring 2015).

The Centre for Applied Archaeology's seminar series on 'The Value of Commercial Archaeology' concluded in February 2015. Altogether we held seven seminars that explored a range of key issues facing the development of commercially funded archaeology. The seminars were exceptionally well attended (with audience numbers ranging from 25 to 65), and the quality of both contributions and discussion was uniformly excellent. What emerged most clearly is our need to make the most of opportunities to win wider public benefit: ranging from applied research and teaching to social inclusion and public engagement. The CAA-ASE team is uniquely placed to achieve this, as an integral part of the UK's largest university archaeology department.

Building on these diverse initiatives the CAA continues to play a vital role in exploring ways of making the doing of archaeology matter to a wide range of audiences, whilst building Archaeology South-East into one of the largest and most research active contract archaeology teams in the UK.



Figure 2: Excavating the 7th/8th century corner tower of the Kuik-Mardan citadel, Otrar, Kazakhstan. Photo: CAA: Archaeology South-East.

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