

Artefact

Newsletter for Archaeology at Southampton | Winter 2010

Spectacular discoveries at the port of Rome

A glance at the national and international press over the past weeks will have revealed a major Southampton success story.

The Portus project, excavating the site of the major port serving the city of Rome during the imperial period, has uncovered some sensational archaeology including an amphitheatre. The work, directed by Prof. Simon Keay and Dr Graeme Earl, assisted by many colleagues and students from Southampton and elsewhere, has demonstrated the outstanding importance of this previously little known site. A wealth of information about Portus and the recent discoveries, including images, reconstructions, podcasts and links to media reports, can be found on the project website: <http://www.portusproject.org/index.shtml>.



Initial CGI model of the amphitheatre, by Gareth Beale of Southampton's Archaeological Computing Research Group. This image presents one of several possible interpretations of the archaeological remains.

Marble head of statue found at Portus. The identity of the subject remains a mystery; perhaps one of Ulysses's companions?



New Archaeology post-doctoral researchers Andy, Susanne and Helen

New faces at Southampton

Three new post-doctoral staff members joined Southampton Archaeology in October 2009. Dr Susanne Hakenbeck was awarded a School of Humanities research fellowship, and works on gender-specific mobility in fifth- and early sixth-century AD Europe. Dr Helen Farr and Dr Andy Shaw both hold prestigious Leverhulme early career fellowships. Helen is joining Maritime Archaeology and will be working on the prehistoric Solent, while Andy has come to the Centre for the Archaeology of Human Origins to examine the enigmatic cultural record of the Neanderthals in the Middle East. We are delighted to welcome to them all!

Award-winning dissertations

Due to recent generous donations from our alumni, Archaeology was this year delighted to award prizes for the very best dissertations produced by our final-year students. There were so many strong candidates that awards were given to four students: Rachel Basinger, writing on feminist interpretations of Anglo-Saxon skeletons; Paul Riggott's work on landscape and social process in Argyll; Sadie Harrison's research into ritual incineration of Irish Neolithic timber structures; and William Smith, for his work on activity at medieval Southampton Friary as revealed by skeletal modification of lower limbs. Congratulations to them all, and many thanks to those who made it possible for us to recognise their excellence.

Focus on... student opportunities

Roman Holiday

Third-year student Lucy Elkerton received a grant from Archaeology to visit Rome this summer. Here, she recounts her experiences.

A grant from the David Peacock Travel Award allowed me to attend a Summer School at the British School at Rome. The course provided an introduction to the archaeology of ancient Rome. Each day focused on a particular theme. We left by 8.30 am and



Lucy (left) and friends at the theatre of Marcellus in Rome

spent the day visiting sites, including many not open to the public. One of my favourite days included a fantastic visit to the Forum of Augustus. This is not normally accessible so it was a real privilege to walk around a site central to the development of the city and which I have spent many hours reading and writing about! We then visited the Column of Marcus Aurelius, another restricted monument, which is over 39m high and provides a fantastic view over the city; an overarching theme of the course was the topography of Rome so this helped us understand the connections that exist between monuments in the city. Every evening, on our return, we had a lecture to introduce the theme of the next day.

Overall, this course was a brilliant introduction to Rome and a highly formative and interesting way to learn about the city.

Lucy Elkerton



Rachel explains her view of the past to the next generation of archaeologists

Young archaeologists at Southampton

As part of Southampton's extensive outreach activities, pupils from local primary schools were invited to try their hand at being archaeologists for a day. Recent graduate and current MA student Rachel Basinger explains how the day went.

I jumped at the chance, when offered it, to coordinate the department's primary outreach project. Not only do I love working with kids but I thought it would be a great opportunity to bring archaeology closer to the local community and inspire others with the same passion I have for learning about the past.

The year 3 & 4 pupils from St Swithun Wells primary school were a brilliant bunch, so eager to learn and answer questions! I gave them a 'mini-lecture' on archaeology and then set them the task of dating a site from its pottery assemblage – which they breezed through. Similarly they made interpreting aerial photography look a doddle! Overall a fantastic day and a real success.

Rachel Basinger

The good ship *Intégrité*

From September 2009, Archaeology students will have the opportunity to sail and row an 18th-century naval vessel in a unique type of experimental archaeology.

The gig *Intégrité* is a reconstruction of an Admiral's Gig, captured during the French invasion of Ireland in 1796. Based at Buckler's Hard, itself a shipbuilding site supplying Nelson's navy with warships, the gig offers the chance to experience and learn traditional skills in seamanship and boat-handling. Students studying maritime aspects of archaeology will find this particularly valuable as a way of gaining practical experience of their subject. The vessel is on long-term loan from the United Kingdom Atlantic Challenge, a 'maritime training trust' committed to preserving and teaching traditional seamanship. The Department is currently unique within the UK in being able to offer students regular access to such a vessel.

Dr Julian Whitewright



Intégrité overtakes the Irish gig Unité during the International Contest of Seamanship, Finland 2008

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