

Artefact

Newsletter for Archaeology at Southampton

April 2008

Maritime Archaeology on TV

Lecturer in Maritime Archaeology
Dr Lucy Blue has been contracted to the BBC for a six-month period over the academic year 2007-8.

Lucy will be one of four presenters in a new BBC 2 diving-led series called Oceans, to be screened in the autumn. The programme addresses issues relating not only to maritime archaeology, heritage and the cultures of the world's seas and oceans but also marine biology, oceanography, conservation and ecology, with a focus on the major threats and changes that the oceans face. The topics covered include pathogens in sperm whales, a submerged Islamic settlement in Tanzania, Humbolt squid, wrecks of the First Punic wars, shark finning and the deployment of an Argo Float that collates basic data relating to ocean temperature, salinity and depth. Lucy has been filming in the Mediterranean, the Sea of Cortez (Mexico), Tanzania and Mozambique, with the Arctic and the Red Sea to come.

Lucy filming for Oceans in the Indian Ocean; photograph courtesy of the BBC.

HMS Victory

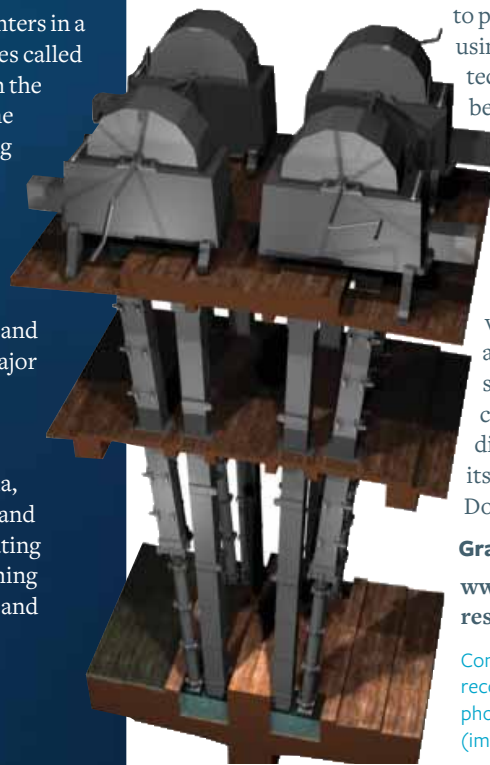
Students and staff from the Archaeological Computing Research Group at Southampton have been working on data from HMS Victory, a British Navy flagship.

The ship served in the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805 and it was on its deck that Admiral Lord Nelson famously died. Students in archaeological computer graphics are working to produce a highly detailed model, using a range of 3D graphics techniques, which will eventually be employed to create a functional replica of the entire ship. This model will illustrate aspects of the ship to the general public via the web. It will also be of use to those studying shipping of the period, providing a virtual environment and virtual artefacts, which, unlike the real ship, can be modified to present changes through time and under differing conditions. The ship itself can be visited at the Historic Dockyard in Portsmouth.

Graeme Earl

www.southampton.ac.uk/archaeology/research/centres_acrg.html

Components like this chain pump have been reconstructed, based on isometric drawings, photographic evidence and historical sources (image courtesy of Gareth Beale).



New course in Medieval Archaeology

2008 will see the launch of a new second-year course in medieval archaeology. The course is an ambitious attempt to allow students to compare different societies in the medieval world, between c.650 to 1500 AD. Students will learn about life in the past in Europe, but also in the early Islamic societies of the Middle East, concentrating on themes such as urbanism, religion, power and trade.

The new course will allow students to engage with amazing but little known sites such as the fortified settlement of Qasr al-Hayr al-Sharqi in Syria.



Focus on Archaeological Art

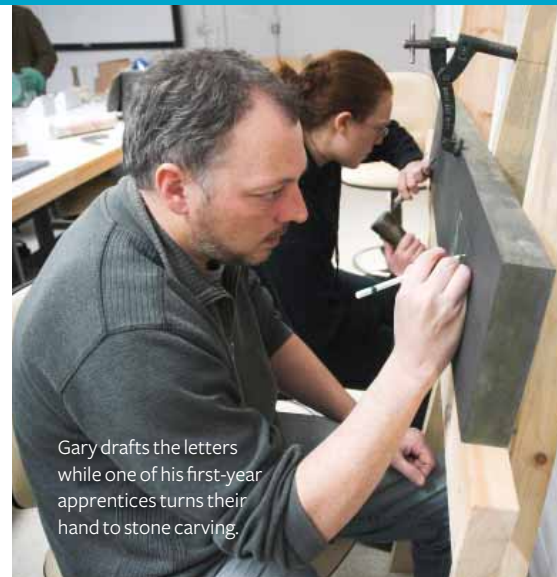
Archaeology's artist-in-residence

During 2007-8 the archaeology department has been delighted to host an artist-in-residence, sculptor Gary Breeze. Here, he outlines his reasons for being here, and why the relationship between archaeology and art is so fruitful.

Art and archaeology are inextricably linked through artefacts, but recognition of the relationship between the methodology of archaeology and that of the artist is rapidly becoming more apparent and more relevant to both disciplines. It is out of this dialogue that the opportunity to join the archaeology department as artist in residence came about, and it is an incredibly rare privilege. To be

among people with such a broad range of interests from across the entire academic spectrum, yet united by a common love of objects and the way they are made, is offering a rich seam from which to find new ideas for my own work. In turn, I hope this work will enhance the life of the department. I have been contributing to seminars where it is felt I might offer an alternative view of the process of making things, and, with the aim of provoking discussion about how we view objects, I am developing a display of artefacts with the participation of staff members. An exhibition of new work created in response to my time here will take place in October.

Gary Breeze



Gary drafts the letters while one of his first-year apprentices turns their hand to stone carving.

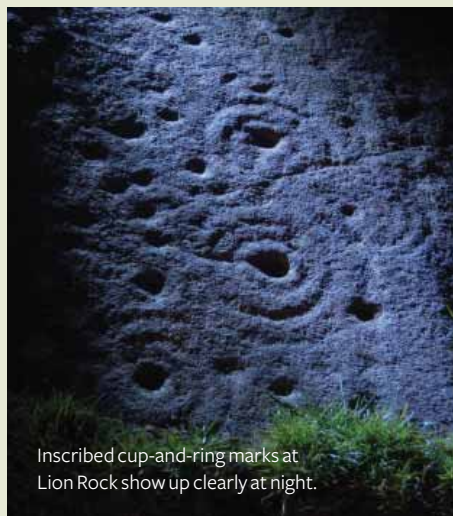
Dating Prehistoric art: Recent excavation in Kilmartin, Argyll

The rock art of the British Isles is enigmatic; it mainly consists of abstract motifs, known as cups and rings. One of the major problems for the archaeologist is that its abstract nature makes it very difficult to date.

The art may date from the Neolithic or the Bronze Age. Until recently this problem seemed intractable as there is no easy method to date carved motifs on stone. However, recent fieldwork by Dr Andrew Jones in Argyll, West Scotland has altered our perspective on this phenomenon and offers the potential for dating art motifs.

The landscape of Kilmartin, Argyll is Scotland's richest prehistoric landscape. In addition it has the greatest concentration of prehistoric rock art in Britain. Excavation around a series of rock art sites has revealed remarkable evidence of ritual activity concerned with rock art production. One site, at Torbhlaren, was enclosed by a stone platform covered in shattered quartz, while formal deposits of quartz were placed in the cracks and fissures in the carved rock surface. These hitherto enigmatic sites were also sources of stone, as evidence of stone

quarrying was revealed during the 2007 field season. It is likely rock art sites were the quarry source for the standing stones erected in the region. Evidence of burning associated with this quarrying activity also offers the potential for obtaining radiocarbon dates, which will provide the first dates for British prehistoric rock art. These dates are currently being analysed by the National Museum of Scotland and Historic Scotland and the results are eagerly awaited.



Inscribed cup-and-ring marks at Lion Rock show up clearly at night.

The Stone Mason's Art

As part of an experimental archaeology day, Gary guided students in the art of epigraphy – inscribing texts on stone – which turned out to be harder than expected, as Chris Healey, one of our first year undergraduates, discovered!

When we were offered a number of practical archaeological activities to choose from I immediately jumped at the opportunity of wielding a chisel. It was obviously going to be easy; all I had to do was hit it with a hammer. Even the outlining of the letters had been completed by the instructor. The piece of rock that we were to perform on was slate, which had been a billiard table at some time. Even better – as this is a soft rock it would be easy to work. In fact that was the first problem, as the moment I placed the chisel on the slate, the evidence was there for all to see and I couldn't rub out the error. The next time I tried, the chisel went in exactly in the direction of the hammer stroke, so when not at the right angle, the miscalculation was plain to see. The whole experience was most enjoyable but extremely disappointing as I now know a career as a stone mason is not going to be for me. Not for nothing is the mason's 'hammer' actually called a 'dummy'.

Chris Healey

If you would like to know more about the department you can contact us at:

Archaeology, University of Southampton, Avenue Campus, Highfield, Southampton SO17 1BJ

Tel: +44 (0)23 8059 4439 Fax: +44 (0)23 8059 3032 Email: arch@soton.ac.uk Web: www.southampton.ac.uk/archaeology