

# Annual General Meeting of the Council of British Archaeology, Museum of London, 28th May 2012

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The Annual General Meeting of the Council of British Archaeology (CBA), London Group, took place at the Museum of London on the 28<sup>th</sup> of May 2012. All members of the CBA received an invitation, and the Clore Learning Centre was full to the brim with those who welcomed the opportunity to find out about the latest archaeological developments in London and engage with other organisations and individuals involved in this work.

For those who aren't familiar with the work of the CBA, it is an educational charity working throughout the United Kingdom to involve people in archaeology and to promote the appreciation and care of the historic environment. The CBA, founded in 1944, is run by a board of trustees on behalf of the membership. The Trustees are elected by the members and report back at twice-yearly meetings held at various locations around the United Kingdom, such as this London gathering.

The purpose of this Annual General Meeting was to firstly present the Trustee report and financial statements of the London Group for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2012, secondly to propose elections of new roles and developments for the CBA and finally to



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host the London Archaeology Forum (LAF) which presents what has been happening in the world of London archaeology in recent months.

The May 2012 Annual General Meeting started with a welcome from the Chairman Andrew Dismore and, from the Museum of London, Roy Stephenson. This was followed by the review and acceptance of the Annual Reports and Accounts and brief elections. Any member of CBA London may stand for election to the committee and only CBA members could vote. A new role of Honorary Membership Secretary was proposed and accepted by the London Group. The following Officers of the Committee offered themselves for election: Andrew Dismore (Chairman), Don Cooper (Vice Chairman)

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and Sheila Bromfield (Honorary Treasurer). For the election of Ordinary Members of the Committee, Sarah Dhanjal, Raksha Dave, Kate Sumnall, Roy Stephenson, Peter Pickering, Peter Moore, and Peter Rowsome offered themselves for election.

One of the most pressing concerns voiced in the CBA annual draft report from the Trustees is that local societies are having difficulty sustaining membership and attracting younger people despite offering an attractive membership package, such as opportunities to work on publications, open days, courses, lectures and field trips. To support local societies in this area, Kate Sumnall from the Museum of London presented a proposal for acquiring funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund, which will be discussed below. What is interesting is that sustaining membership and attracting younger people is also a concern of CBA London. In an effort to progress in this area, Roy Stephenson asked the members whether CBA London ought to have social network presence, and how the CBA London web site ought to be maintained. Although the majority of the meeting attendees were certainly not young in age they were digitally savvy and responded positively to Roy's two proposals.

### **London Archaeological Forum**

Immediately following on from the Annual General Meeting, the London Archaeology Forum comprised interesting presentations by the Heritage Lottery Fund, Office of Experiments, Pre-Construct Archaeology, and the CBA.

### ***Heritage Lottery Fund***

Michael Murray of the Heritage Lottery Fund announced that £375 million pounds of funding will be available from the Heritage Lottery Fund and £15.6 million of this total will be allocated to fund London projects; almost double what was available last year. Furthermore that 60% of all grants will go to projects of £100,000 or under. Murray encouraged archaeological organisations to

get in touch with him to discuss potential projects.

### ***Pre-Construct Archaeology***

The Heritage Lottery Fund announcement was swiftly followed by a presentation of recent archaeological work south of River Thames, in Borough High Street by Pre-Construct Archaeology (PCA). The joint efforts by archaeologists from Oxford Archaeology and Pre-Construct Archaeology, who are commissioned by Network Rail, led to the discovery of Roman bath house ruins on land being re-developed as part of the £5.5bn Thameslink programme. Unfortunately, the attendees along with myself could not enjoy what would have been glorious photos of the Roman finds due to a glitch in technology which left the Clore Learning Centre without a power-point throughout the meeting.

PCA supervisor Amelia Fairman described the bath house as having a range of rooms including a cold plunge bath as well as hot rooms warmed by under floor heating. Elsewhere on the site, which has been earmarked for the construction of a new office block, substantial walls were unearthed that are thought to belong to predecessors of St Thomas' hospital on the corner of London Bridge Street and Borough High Street.

In Roman times the main settlement was on the north bank of the River Thames and was connected to the settlement at Southwark by the first London Bridge. Although much archaeological work has been done in Southwark over the years, including at the site of the Shard Building by the Museum of London Archaeology, it's still surprising to discover ruins of this nature and size. Network Rail, in agreement with the London Borough of Southwark, are now exploring ways of preserving the remains beneath the new building to be constructed on the site. Where appropriate, key finds will be deposited with the Museum of London where they will be available for viewing by the public.

### ***Office of Experiments***

The presentation by Neal White of the *Office of Experiments*, who provide alternative ways to collect data from archaeological sites, followed as a good contrast to the more traditional archaeological approach presented by PCA.

*Office of Experiments* was formed in 2004 by artists, academics, scientists, curators, amateur enthusiasts and activists, although the team differs for each project. The overall aim, which subsumes all their projects, is to develop autonomous resources such as archives, databases, publications and field guides, through which audiences can draw material evidence and interpretive speculation on the fabric of sites, spaces and events. In doing so, the various project teams hope to open and create alternative public resources that will inform the broader imaginary, perception, engagement and critical response to the scale, time base and structures of the rational world.

On this occasion, White presented the cold war archaeology and art of West London project. This project explores the ordering of space as it shapes our ideas of culture, political and personal life. Through the use of art as a reflecting framework through which they can ask questions that will lead to unexpected events and ideas, the project investigated the limits of the London Orbital in a Ballardian informed tour that took place in July 2012. The tour was expected to capture the fascinating history and geography of post-1945 scientific research and the testing facilities and spaces created to house technological advances; these are areas that were often developed around the periphery of the Capital. White explained that these uncharted parts of post-war heritage are remarkably under-explored and face threats of redevelopment and loss.

The *Office of Experiments* have also worked with University College London on the "Dark Places" exhibition at the John Hansard Gallery (2009-2010). The Dark Places project was the South Edition of the Overt Research Database which is designed to give access to

documentation of sites of secrecy, science and technology in the United Kingdom. This is part of an on-going project to map and record advanced labs and facilities, and to involve the public in this exploration. The ultimate aim is to spark new relationships and conversations between science, culture and society. The workshop is supported by the Arts Catalyst, University College London Department of Geography and the ESRC fellowship of Dr. Gail Davis.

### ***Museum of London***

The final presentation of the evening came from Kate Sumnall of Museum of London, who provided an update on a new CBA community archaeology project application to the London Heritage Lottery Fund. The purpose of the application is to create new opportunities for active engagement in London's heritage at a local level; learn more about London's archaeology and history and to widely disseminate that information; help protect the surviving remains and where that is not possible to preserve by record; generate web pages of advice and information and the systems for maintaining them; create a network that is sustainable and active and that can survive changes in staff/ members. This will be done by providing support to local societies in delivering new and existing projects and by linking together all the different bodies and individuals who are working in London's archaeology to facilitate the sharing of skills, resources and ideas. Sumnall explained that in order to complete the application, CBA require general feedback on the overall concept from societies, for example, what ideas and suggestions are there for desired training, workshops and society projects which may benefit from this funding. The funding will cover one full time post for 18 months, whereby the post holder will identify the existing projects and ideas and investigate what help is needed in terms of skills, funding and other resources. To acquire the funding, the proposed projects must result in the publication of back-

logged sites, an increase in society membership numbers and improved community and public outreach.

The presentations culminated in an open forum and attendees seemed keen to make their way to the pub. Overall, despite the

disappointment of an unruly power-point facility, the annual General Meeting was well attended and formed by interesting presentations. It will be interesting to follow CBA's developments towards attracting new and younger members.