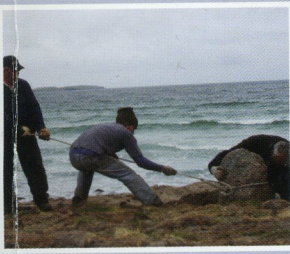# Archaeology
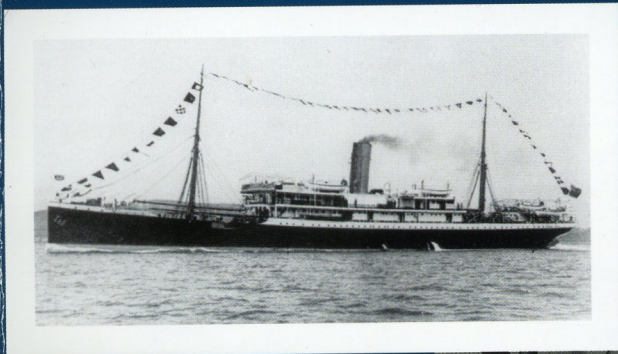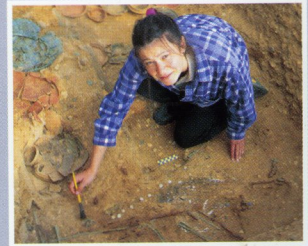
THE VOICE OF ARCHAEOLOGY IN BRITAIN AND BEYOND

Save the past: be your own community archaeologist

Henge scheme scrapped. Is that it?

The Dru who saw Romans invade U

The shocking story of the SS Mend

CBA correspondent

Mike Heyworth introduces a new initiative to promote archaeology in the community

Since archaeology was firmly introduced in the planning process across the UK in the early 1990s there is a perception that opportunities for the public to get involved in hands on archaeology have diminished. Despite the significant advances in archaeology which developer funding has contributed, many bemoan the lack of opportunities that existed in the "good old days", when excavations run with and by volunteers took place, often at weekends.

My own introduction to archaeology took place over a cold and windswept weekend in the mid 1970s on the chalkland site of Old Down Farm in Andover, being excavated by the Test Valley Archaeological Committee (where the site supervisor was Sue Davies, now chief executive of Wessex Archaeology and recently awarded a well-deserved OBE in the new year's honours). I was lucky enough to be able to go back and work for TVAC on many future weekends and school holidays. This subsequently led to the decision to pursue a career in archaeology, and I have been fortunate enough to be able to do so: but many contemporaries in Hampshire were content to continue to pursue their archaeological interests in their own time while working in other jobs. Everyone should be able to contribute in their own way.

More recently, particularly with the benefit of funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund and the

Ingleborough Archaeology Group working on the Kingsdale Head Project

(now completed) Local Heritage Initiative, there has been a growth in new community archaeology groups. These groups are often home grown, with new people coming together with an interest in their local heritage who are not necessarily already tapped into the existing local archaeology society infrastructure. They are truly working "from the ground up", rather than being part of an outreach project run by professional archaeologists (which themselves can often be excellent and much appreciated, but are not always necessarily so well rooted in the local community).

To showcase the work of the new community archaeology sector, the CBA has been working with the Marsh Christian Trust to launch the inaugural Marsh Archaeology Award. The award will be given to a community archaeology group in order to "recognise and promote high quality archaeological work being carried out by the community archaeology sector to sustain and transmit knowledge and our cultural heritage to future generations". The prize is £1,000 and the opportunity to present the work of the group at a CBA event during 2008.

The new award was promoted in late 2007. Eleven entries were thought worthy of inclusion on the long list for judging, which principally assessed two main criteria: the contribution the group has made to archaeological knowledge and understanding; and the activities of the group within their local community, and the level of community engagement in the activities. The group should have worked to the highest archaeological standards and advanced knowledge of their area by making new discoveries, or new interpretations of existing evidence. They should also be a lively and open social grouping that gives back to the wider community the results of their work.

Highly commended projects entered for the award were:

The Westbury Society's desk research, fieldwork and geophysical survey on Westbury Sleight, Somerset uncovering a prehistoric platform cairn and

remnants of a prehistoric field system on the Mendips

The Chess Valley Archaeological & Historical Society's geophysical survey and excavation at Chesham Bois House, Buckinghamshire to locate and record a medieval manor house (www.cvahs.org.uk)

The Community Landscape & Archaeology Survey Project's Local People – Local Past, seeking to define the Romano-British landscape of an area of West Northamptonshire (www.claspweb.org.uk)

The Ingleborough Archaeology Group's historical documentary research, combined with geographical and topographical surveying and fieldwalking, leading to a site gazetteer and excavation of a longhouse in the Kingsdale Head Project, North Yorkshire (www.ingleborough archaeologygroup.org.uk)

The WAG Screen project, related to the Washingborough Archaeology Group, Lincolnshire undertaking digital recording of the Witham Valley Survey and filming scenes from the medieval Luttrell psalter (www.wagscreen.co.uk)

The Solihull Archaeological Group's research by a local historian leading to geophysical survey and archaeological excavation at the 13th century manor of Knowle Hall, Warwickshire (mysite.freeserve. com/solihullarchaeology)

The Unst Archaeology Group's work at Sandwick, Shetland with SCAPE and the Adopt-a-Monument programme to excavate and reconstruct a prehistoric site on the coast of the Isle of Unst in Shetland (see feature, this issue).
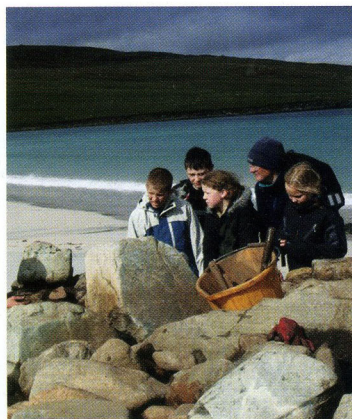
All these projects, wide-ranging

in their scope and spread across England and Scotland, had their individual merits, but for the short-listing judges there were four projects which stood out in relation to the award criteria. The finalists are:

The Badsey Society Enclosure Map Project (www.badsey.net/enclosure) which looked at the development of the parishes of Badsey and Aldington, Worcestershire since 1807, starting with the early 19th century enclosure maps

Mellor Archaeological Trust's work on the multi-period site around Mellor Church (www.mellorarchaeology.org.uk) which led them on to research, investigate and record the history of the whole parish of Mellor, which includes Ludworth and Marple Bridge, near Stockport in Greater Manchester

The North of Scotland Archaeological Society's programme of survey and excavation on the Glen Feshie Estate (www.nosas.co.uk) in the Scottish Highlands

Royton Lives Through The Ages, a sub group of the Royton Local History Society for their work on the history of Royton

Saving prehistoric remains with the Unst Archaeology Group

The Chess Valley Archaeological & Historical Society with Time Team

Hall, Manchester which included excavation with extensive public interpretation and display, and work with local schools (long web address: google Royton Lives Through the Ages).

The entries from the short-listed projects were sent to Brian Marsh OBE, chairman of the Marsh Christian Trust, who has the difficult job of deciding on the inaugural winner of the Marsh Archaeology Award. This will be announced in a forthcoming issue of British Archaeology. It is hoped that the winners will receive the award direct from Marsh at the Discover Archaeology LIVE event at Olympia, London on May 2.

The Marsh Archaeology Award will be presented every two years. It is part of a support programme with which the CBA hopes to encourage community archaeology groups across the UK. The hub of this support is the online Community Archaeology Forum, launched in late 2006 on the CBA's web site (www.britarch. ac.uk/caf; see On the web,

May/Jun 2007). The forum is already an award winner itself, recipient of the TalkTalk Community Innovation Award by the charity Citizens Online. The CBA was one of 30 charities selected from over 700 to be recognised for helping communities make innovative use of online technology. CBA staff Dan Hull and Marcus Smith received the award from Lord Bletsoe at a ceremony at the House of Lords on November 14.

The online forum will be further developed during 2008. We plan to add details of all entrants for this year's award to the site to showcase their work. There is already much relevant material for anyone thinking of starting their own community project, and other developments will be announced during the course of 2008 as they are confirmed – in line with the CBA's ethos of offering full support to Archaeology for All.

Mike Heyworth is director of the CBA