

James Rose, communications manager at the Council for British Archaeology, lifts the lid on CBA activities to champion archaeology and public participation

The Festival of Archaeology goes online



Live streamed events ran throughout the Festival week

The World Health Organisation declared the covid-19 outbreak a pandemic on March 11 2020, with the UK finally following the example of countries around the world by going into lockdown five days later. Although there had been little else in the news for weeks, the pace of events caught many organisations unaware, throwing their plans for the year into doubt.

At the Council for British Archaeology (CBA), a major part of those plans was our summer Festival of Archaeology. Now in its 29th year, it has grown from a single day to an annual fortnight of activity to celebrate and encourage participation in archaeology. Restrictions on public gatherings drastically altered our preparations.

While fieldwork was being cancelled across the board and scores of people within the archaeology sector faced – and continue to face – uncertain futures, we felt that it was vital that events should go ahead in some form. The decision was made to split the festival into two, with a week of digital events between July 11 and 19, and, pandemic allowing, on-the-ground events to return in the autumn.

The small CBA team, now working from home, faced a daunting task in quickly adapting to the potential of online technology to create activities that could engage audiences also confined to their homes. We relied

on the volunteers who host the bulk of festival events to step up to the digital plate – some for the very first time. In those early weeks there was a palpable nervousness about whether people would respond.

That apprehension dissipated as virtual events and activities racked up in the listings from all over the UK, covering almost every aspect of archaeology. By launch day there were over a hundred, and our worries turned to how our small team could keep control of the beast and ensure that events had an audience.

We believe we succeeded. Digital Week exceeded our expectations – independent evaluation puts an upper estimate of 500,000 participants worldwide, and a social media reach of over 20 million. It exposed archaeology to new audiences, and as learning curves go, it was a steep and valuable one.

We extend our thanks to everybody who gave their time to organise, promote, donate or take part. We know that online isn't for everybody, and by its nature excludes some, but digital events will continue to form an important part of future festivals. Digital Week demonstrated the CBA's potential to provide a platform for the archaeological community to share and communicate. It gives us much food for thought for what we can offer and gain from our valued members –

every one of whom played their own part in making the festival happen.

One advantage of holding events in this way is that many were recorded for posterity. Here are just a few highlights; there are many more to discover on the festival website (festival.archaeologyuk.org) and the CBA YouTube channel (bit.ly/CBAtube). We hope to see you for Part II from October 24–November 1. There will be more digital events, although whether we can get back outside remains to be seen.

Discover Environmental Archaeology

The 2020 theme is Climate & Environment. Enjoy this behind-the-scenes video tour of Wessex Archaeology's environmental lab with a familiar face, *Time Team*'s Phil Harding: bit.ly/wessexenvironmental

Time Team Talks Climate & Environment

Talking of *Time Team*, cast members got together virtually to chat about some memorable episodes that highlighted issues of climate change: bit.ly/timeteamfesty



Time Team Talks Climate & Environment

Pandemics, Pits & Potsherds: The Black Death in your Back Garden?

Carenza Lewis takes the long view on pandemics through the latest research into the “mother of all pandemics,” the medieval Black Death. Linked to the CBA's Dig School programme of archaeology workshops for secondary learners (digschool.org.uk): bit.ly/blackdeathgarden



The Campaigns of Septimius Severus in the Far North of Britain

In AD207 Septimius Severus was in search of one final military campaign to cement his reputation as one of the greatest warrior emperors. Simon Elliot charts the emperor's journey through two bloody campaigns in the north of Britain to his demise in AD211: bit.ly/septimiusseverus



Simon Elliot explores the Campaigns of Septimius Severus in the Far North of Britain

Archaeology & the Climate Change Conundrum

A Career in Ruins podcast produced for CITIZAN (Coastal Intertidal Zone Archaeological Network). A panel including CBA director Neil Redfern reflects on how climate change is affecting archaeology, and assesses where the profession stands in the debate: bit.ly/careerinruins



Career in Ruins Archaeology & the Climate Change Conundrum

History at Home Live Archaeology Special

For younger viewers, English Heritage expert Matt Thompson talks to CBBC's Ben Shires about archaeology

through the ages:
bit.ly/historyathomearch



History at Home Archaeology Special

Alex Langlands – Digitally Reconstructing Excavations at Old Sarum

Festival ambassador TV's Alex Langlands digitally reconstructs the 1912 and 1913 excavations of Old Sarum's cathedral site: bit.ly/langlandsoldsarum



Festival ambassador Alex Langlands digitally reconstructs excavations at Old Sarum

Richard III: The King under the Car Park

A digital talk about the 2012 discovery and identification of King Richard III's remains by Mathew Morris, University of Leicester Archaeological Services: bit.ly/kingunderthecarpark

A Day in Archaeology

A series of blogs showcasing "a day in the life" of archaeologists from all over the UK. Discover the variety of ways that people work and take part in archaeology: festival.archaeologyuk.org/day

Competitions

The Archaeology Showreel competition, in partnership with TV talent agency Past Preservers, invited the public to submit short

videos that showcased their enthusiasm for archaeology. Emma Stockley, winner in the adult category, produced this impressive short film on cooking in a 14th century longhouse: bit.ly/emmastockley



Archaeology Showreel winner Emma Stockley

#Rubbish Art saw people getting crafty with things they would otherwise throw away to create archaeological scenes. View the gallery: bit.ly/rubbishgallery



Neuschwanstein Castle rendered in cardboard for the #Rubbish Art competition

With thanks to festival funders and partners: Historic England, English Heritage, Shout out Loud, National Lottery Heritage Fund, Royal Archaeological Institute, Cadw, European Archaeology Days, Towergate, Heritage Hub and Queen's University Belfast ■



Phil Harding gives viewers a tour of Wessex Archaeology's Environmental Laboratory