Institution: University College London

Unit of Assessment: 17A – Geography, Environmental Studies & Archaeology: Archaeology

Title of case study: Thames Discovery Programme: Community archaeology on the foreshore

1. Summary of the impact

The UCL Institute of Archaeology has collaborated with Museum of London archaeologists in the identification of stratified archaeological sites on the open Thames foreshore, and the development of a systematic methodology to record these threatened features. This has led to an innovative programme of community archaeology through the Thames Discovery Programme, which has developed a broad community of trained volunteers from the London community who have demonstrated sustained and deep engagement with the research. Research has also contributed vital data for planning in London, and been widely covered in the broadcast and digital media.

2. Underpinning research

London's situation on the lower Thames is fundamental to its historical trading role, and the port has therefore been the chief source of its wealth. Unsurprisingly, the Thames itself and its foreshore have long been an important source for finding artefacts, as the collections in the British Museum and Museum of London demonstrate. But before 1993, the general consensus was that there were no stratified sites on the open Thames foreshore and consequently, none of the artefacts found there were *in situ;* thus their archaeological research value was lessened.

UCL research into London's archaeology was led by Gustav Milne (Senior Lecturer in London Archaeology and Maritime Archaeology, who joined us from the Museum of London in 1993). Milne is a leading authority on London's waterfront archaeology and its history as a port [a, b]. Milne and collaborators' research showed that important *in situ* archaeology *did* exist on the open foreshore. Initiated by the Institute's newly-established 'London Archaeological Research Facility' in partnership with the Museum of London and English Heritage, the Thames Archaeological Survey (TAS, 1993–9) was the first systematic survey of the open foreshore in central London. It demonstrated that archaeological sites, layers and features from the prehistoric period to the Blitz *did* survive, but were under threat from tidal scour or waterfront redevelopment [c]. Additionally, Milne and collaborators developed innovative recording methodologies for recording visible remains of historic watercraft on the foreshore, and demonstrated their application in the salvage recording of an important group of Thames barges, lighters, and other hulks on the Medway [d]. Their recording pro forma was intended to be useable by professional and amateur archaeologists elsewhere, to record such endangered evidence of often poorly-known boatbuilding traditions.

As a result of the TAS team's work, parts of the Thames foreshore that have recently been or will in future be threatened by riverwall refurbishment, new jetties or waterfront buildings are now - as a matter of planning policy – adequately professionally recorded, before they are destroyed. The fate of the rest of the foreshore sites, however, remained unresolved since their destruction would be the consequence of continuous tidal scour, a factor lying outside the planning process. In addition, therefore, researchers at UCL in partnership with the Museum of London have developed an innovative model of community archaeology, which mitigates the difficulty of surveying a constantly changing environment by developing a dedicated team of volunteer archaeologists [e]. The *Thames Discovery Programme*, directed by Milne, was set up in 2008. Through this Programme a volunteer group was trained to regularly monitor the long-term fate of selected sites in central London using the tools developed by the TAS team. This Foreshore Recording and Observation Group [FROG] now mounts regular surveys of over twenty key sites, helps undertake more detailed surveys of the most threatened areas, and carries out research on other related projects [e]. As a significant research outcome, archaeological data obtained by FROG for the key sites has been deposited with the National Monuments Record through the use of OASIS forms, the Greater London Historic Environment Record – as GIS feature class data for over 1000 features recorded on the sites – and with the London Archaeological Archive and Research Centre as interim foreshore survey reports and archive plots.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

[a] Milne, G. (1995). *Roman London: Urban Archaeology in the Nation's Capital*. London: Batsford/English Heritage. ISBN 978-0713468519. Available on request. Sample review

comment: “Anyone interested in finding out about Londinium could do no better than to start here.“ [Wacher, J. (1996) *Latomus* 55: 908–910]

[b] Milne, G. (2003). *The Port of Mediaeval London*. Stroud: Tempus. ISBN 978-0752425443. Available on request. Sample review comment: “a well illustrated and much needed synthesis of some thirty years of archaeological excavations along the waterfront of the city of London in a volume which may be regarded as a worthy successor to his *The Port of Roman London* (1985)“ [Brooks, N. (2007) *Engl. Hist. Rev.* 122: 1072–1073]

[c] Milne, G., Bates, M. & Webber, M. (1997) ‘Problems, potential and partial solutions: an archaeological study of the tidal Thames.’ *World Archaeology* 29(1): 130–46. DOI: 10.1080/00438243.1997.9980367

[d] Milne, G., McKewan, C. & Goodburn, D. (1998) *Nautical Archaeology on the Foreshore*. London: RCHM(E). ISBN 978-1873592328. Available on request. Sample review comment: “Enhancing enlightened public interest (through ownership) in the fate of our maritime heritage is crucial. This publication is potentially an important contribution to that project“ [Burningham, N. (1999) in *Int. J. Nautical Archaeology* 28: 299–300].

[e] Cohen, N., Milne, G. & Wragg, E. (2012) ‘The Thames Discovery Programme: public engagement and research on London’s foreshore.’ *Archaeology International* 15: 99–106, DOI: 10.5334/ai.1506 [Cohen and Wragg were TDP project staff]

The quality of research is demonstrated by the positive reviews in scholarly journals noted above.

4. Details of the impact

The Thames Discovery Programme (TDP) set out explicitly to develop a new model of community-engaged foreshore archaeology, where – as in all community archaeology – volunteer members of the community whose own heritage is the subject of investigation were trained to use tools developed by researchers, but here specifically adapted to the fieldwork conditions of the intertidal zone. The first phase of the TDP (2008–2011) was initiated within the UCL Institute of Archaeology in close collaboration with the Museum of London, the Thames Explorer Trust and UCL’s Thames Estuary Partnership, and hosted by UCL. It was supported by a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund with matching funding from a variety of other sources [1]. The Steering Group included representation of all these bodies, as well as of English Heritage, Port of London Authority, Council for British Archaeology and the Environment Agency. Since 2011, TDP has been hosted by Museum of London Archaeology, but is still directed by Milne; TDP’s team leader, Nathalie Cohen, is an Institute alumna and Honorary Research Associate.

Since its establishment in 2008, TDP has grown to a community of 400+ trained volunteer members (FROG, the Foreshore Recording and Observation Group [2]), able to systematically and regularly monitor archaeological features threatened by erosion on a long-term, sustainable basis. The group’s work has made very significant contributions to the archaeology of London [3]. Among beneficiaries of the TDP, it is therefore FROG members who have been most intensively and sustainedly engaged with the values and goals of the research.

FROG was established as **an archaeology project in which local people can become involved**, rather than a community project with archaeology as the vehicle for community engagement. During the first phase, 331 volunteers completed the FROG training, of whom 139 had no previous archaeological experience (34.4%). The majority of those with experience were members of local archaeological societies, students, or had taken part in digs in the past. FROG members lived in all London boroughs: of the 331 who had completed training, 149 (45%) came from local authority areas which are among the 30% most deprived in England [2 p.12]. There was a good spread of ages, including many in both the 18–21 and over-60 age groups (Health and Safety restrictions prevent under-18s from becoming members). Of these 331, 147 had gone on to participate in fieldwork by September 2011 (survey respondents indicate that where they did not go on, this was often due to other commitments rather than lack of interest [2 p. 25]). An independent report for the HLF, covering the period 2008 to September 2011 [2], evaluated their experiences based on 145 FROG members’ survey responses. Commitment and enthusiasm were high: 87.4% of survey respondents who had done fieldwork said that they would continue as FROG members in the future, while 12.6% were not sure (their reasons were cited as other commitments, the possibility of moving away from the area, or health problems) [2 p. 38].

Part of the satisfaction obtained by FROG volunteers comes from **participating in the knowledge-gathering process** ('citizen science'). As one FROG volunteer put it, "*I have got one O level. This has been a great opportunity for me to work with academics, which I wouldn't have been able to do otherwise*" [2 p. 15]. FROG surveys [3] have revealed submerged prehistoric forests, remains of a late Bronze Age bridge or jetty, Anglo-Saxon fish-traps, a medieval timber jetty, the baseplates of Tudor waterfront structures, the footings of the 18th-century Putney Bridge, and many examples of waterman's causeways used by the once ubiquitous Thames ferries, as well as river-wall repairs from bomb-strikes in the Blitz and a complete mine-watching observation post from the 1940s. They have also recorded vessel remains in quantity, representing everything from ballast barges to the 131-gun HMS *Duke of Wellington* of 1852. During the first phase all the classroom training sessions for the FROG members were held on UCL's campus, usually at the Institute of Archaeology, and all the professional project staff were Institute alumni. To progress this aspect of its public engagement, in 2009 TDP also created the Riverpedia, a web-based River Thames archaeology and history database which documents work at the twenty key sites that FROG has been monitoring, and puts them in a thematic context, with research articles by FROG volunteers.

To widen the reach of the impact and engage with London audiences beyond the core FROG membership, TDP has also **raised awareness of the capital's foreshore heritage through its annual conferences** held in London, its extensive events programmes, its award-winning website, reports, articles and a series of TV features. During the HLF-funded period the TDP organised not just training programmes for FROG participants, but also over 100 other events ranging from children's activities, to training workshops and guided walks, attended by in total 7,000 persons [3].

TDP's success as a **model of community archaeological engagement** was recognised within the field in July 2012, when TDP won the award for 'Best Community Archaeology Project' at the annual British Archaeological Awards organised by the Council for British Archaeology. TDP also won the Institute of Field Archaeology's 'Archaeology Training Forum Award' for 2013; the citation states that it "*demonstrated a coherent set of objectives and benefits, was clearly a good partnership between the professional and volunteer sectors, helped individuals kick-start their careers, was responsive to the training needs of volunteers, and provided a practical solution to a real archaeological problem*" [4]. In February 2011 the project was one of only five nominated by *Current Archaeology* magazine for 'Best Research Project of 2011'; and in 2013, TDP Project Director Gustav Milne was one of three nominees for *Current Archaeology*'s Archaeologist of the Year (runner up). *Current Archaeology* (circulation 17,000) aims to build a bridge between professionals and a volunteer/lay-interest archaeological readership: its awards are chosen annually from work published in *Current Archaeology*, and the final selection is based on votes cast by readers. The nominations reflect TDP's and Milne's success in public engagement.

The TDP website itself (www.thamesdiscovery.org) won the *British Archaeological Award* for 'Best Representation of Archaeology in the Media' in 2010. This award from the Council for British Archaeology recognises, among other things, the website's contribution to enhancing public education and understanding in relation to archaeology, and its accessibility and appeal for its intended audience. Website traffic analysis shows that it has had substantial impact in its own right with 135,271 visitors from its launch in January 2009 to 31 July 2013. Each visitor spent an average of nearly 3 minutes on the website, indicating the significance of this resource [5]. TDP maintains an additional online Scribd repository of its newsletters, articles, recording guidelines, etc. (66 uploads, 54,469 views to 26/10/13), and a Flickr photo archive (2,780 photos, 352,500 views to 4/11/13). TDP has also produced 10 short video documentaries and three training videos which are available online, and which received a total of 52,000 views to 26/10/13 [6].

The reach of this project was expanded further nationally and internationally through appearances in numerous newspaper and TV news items, and has **featured in several prime-time programmes** broadcast on terrestrial TV including the first episodes of *Peter Ackroyd's Thames* (ITV, 2008; Ep. 1); Alice Roberts' *Digging for Britain* (BBC2, 2010; Ep. 1); and Dan Cruikshank's *The Bridges that Made London* (BBC4, 2012; Ep. 1). Perhaps most substantially, a Time Team Special 'Brunel's Last Launch' (C4, 2011; 1.5 million viewers [7]) followed FROG archaeologists who had made a dramatic discovery in 2010, on the foreshore at Millwall, of the substantial remains of the 150-year-old slipways used to launch Isambard Kingdom Brunel's huge steam ship, the SS *Great Eastern*. The programme used these new discoveries as a narrative entry point to

examine not just the history of Brunel's ship, but its influence on subsequent British shipbuilding.

In addition to these impacts on community archaeology along the Thames foreshore and consequent wider public engagement, TAS and TDP have had substantial impacts on **the planning process and the conduct of archaeological mitigation work**. All development projects on the Thames foreshore in London are now required to conduct archaeological work mitigating the effects of development in the intertidal/foreshore zone [8]. The Inspector of Ancient Monuments for London and the English Heritage officer responsible for the statutory consultations from the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) for the London Region, is responsible for recommending licence conditions for any works which will impact upon archaeology within the intertidal zone. She testifies that: "*I regularly request the MMO to place archaeological conditions on the licences they issue, to ensure that these archaeological remains are carefully recorded before either potentially or certainly being damaged through works. The types of work range from repairs to river defences to major infrastructure schemes such as the proposed Thames Tideway Tunnel. Such schemes have the potential to significantly damage archaeological remains, but this can be mitigated by careful recording, recovery and publication of remains. I consider the methods devised by Gustav Milne and team members of the Thames Discovery Programme to be best practice for the types of site I deal with regularly, often of national significance. These methods, which I have seen many times in the field, are efficient, diligent, comprehensive and accurately capture the detail of these often complex sites. Working within the intertidal zone can be fraught with difficulty and so robust methodologies are crucial. The methods are used by all professional teams working on the Thames foreshore in association with the marine licences mentioned above, and such working practices are required by myself, and my colleagues in the City of London Corporation and the London Borough of Southwark, who have their own archaeological officers*" [9]. The recording system and approach developed by the TAS and TDP staff has also been adopted nationally, e.g. by community archaeology projects at Purton on the Severn and at Forton Lake in Hampshire [10].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

[1] The budget of the Thames Discovery Programme (2008–11) as a whole [e.g. 2, p. 4] was £519,234, funded by a grant of £421,500 from the Heritage Lottery Fund (Grant Ref. HG-07-00672) and the balance of £97,934 from a wide mix of help in kind.

[2] Bell, N. (2011) *Evaluation of the Experience of the FROG volunteers on the Thames Discovery Programme,* unpublished Independent Evaluation Report for the Heritage Lottery Fund, HG-07-00672. Can be supplied by the HEI on request.

[3] Cohen, N. (2011) *Thames Discovery Programme: Final Report October 2008-September 2011.* Report compiled by the TDP Team Leader for submission to the Heritage Lottery Fund, HG-07-00672. Available online at: http://bit.ly/1bMBiYb.

[4] Archaeology Training Forum Award to TDP in May 2013: http://bit.ly/1bBADL0.

[5] Google Analytics report demonstrating the reach and significance of the TDP website. Can be supplied by the HEI on request.

[6] Scribd page: http://bit.ly/HRn3YW; Flickr archive: http://bit.ly/18Ck0KX; Vimeo page showing number of views: http://bit.ly/1d45Rh7 [11,213 views to 15/11/13]; YouTube videos, showing number of views: http://bit.ly/I5lIxk; [22,733 views to 26/10/13]; http://bit.ly/17zZSye [18,141 views to 26/10/13]

[7] C4 on Demand archive video: http://bit.ly/18Ck5yc; viewing figures: http://bit.ly/1eXKsGh.

[8] E.g. *Greater London Archaeology Advisory Service: Standards for Archaeological Work* (2009) http://bit.ly/17zZXSn; Corporation of London's Planning Advice Note *3:* Archaeology in the City of London, http://bit.ly/1eXKAFL.

[9] Statement provided by the Inspector of Ancient Monuments for London (15 Nov 13) stating that Milne's methods are used by all teams on the Thames foreshore and are required by her office as well as in Southwark and the City of London; available on request.

[10] Community archaeology projects outside London described at: http://bit.ly/179qcNa.