

British Archaeological Awards 2012

Awards of a less controversial kind were being handed out at the British Museum when our Fellow Loyd Grossman was the compere at the 2012 British Archaeological Awards ceremony on 9 July. In front of Heritage and Tourism Minister, John Penrose MP, Loyd made an impassioned plea on behalf of scholarship, which, he said, 'was the bedrock of everything we do in the heritage sector'. He went on to praise the sector's volunteers, saying that the Heritage Alliance, of which he is the Chairman, estimates that some 700,000 people in the UK regularly give volunteer time to a heritage cause. John Penrose responded by acknowledging that the projects being recognised through awards at the ceremony represented 'the tip of the iceberg of the huge breadth of activity that goes in the UK and that is so essential to our understanding of what brought us to where we are'.

Fellows of our Society were prominent among those who received awards or who were highly commended. Cambridge Archaeology Unit's Must Farm palaeo-channel excavations carried off two of the six awards, winning Best Project and Best Discovery for the flotilla of Bronze Age boats that have been excavated from this site rich in organic remains and dating back to the Mesolithic period. Fellows Alex Bayliss, Frances Healy and Alasdair Whittle won the Best Book award for *Gathering Time: dating the early Neolithic enclosures of southern Britain and Ireland*, published by Oxbow Books and English Heritage. The Thames Discovery Programme was acclaimed Best Community Archaeology Project, while our Fellow Julian Richards, Director of the Archaeology Data Service, collected the award for the Best Archaeological Innovation for the Grey Literature Library. Fellow Francis Pryor collected the award for the Best Public Representation of Archaeology on behalf of the 'Time Team' programme 'Reservoir Rituals, Tottiford, Devon', the other members of the Time Team being busy filming an excavation in Pembrokeshire while the award ceremony was taking place.

There were two surprise presentations on top of the six awards. Our Fellow Mick Aston was presented with the Lifetime Achievement Awards. Mick was invited to attend the ceremony (without being told why) but declined, so Fellow Mike Heyworth, Chairman of the British Archaeological Awards, headed down to Mick's Somerset home with cameraman in tow to give him a birthday cake and an extra birthday surprise, not entirely sure how Mick would react. What was captured on film and shown at the Awards was an entirely happy event in which Mick, surrounded by some of the volunteer archaeologists who turn out every weekend to undertake fieldwork with him, was told that he had inspired people all over the world who now had a better understanding of archaeology and their place in the world thanks to his teaching and commitment to archaeological communication.

The second surprise was the presentation to representatives from Operation Nightingale. Mike Heyworth explained that this innovative project, which uses archaeology to boost the recovery and career prospects of military personnel injured in Afghanistan, had been nominated for a number of awards, but being such an unusual project did not quite meet the criteria for any of them. Therefore, said Mike, 'the trustees of the British Archaeological Awards were unanimous in deciding that Operation Nightingale was a project worthy of special recognition,

not just because of the important archaeological work undertaken, but due to its positive impact on the well-being of courageous soldiers from The Rifles who have been able to take part. We are delighted that archaeology can play such an important part in their rehabilitation.'

The names of all the BAA award winners and the highly commended runners up can be seen on the [BAA website](#).