



David Lammy



The dig at Mellor

Minister Backs Push for Community Archaeology

An international gathering of archaeologists joined politicians and community activists recently at a conference at the University in a bid to urge the public to get involved in archaeology.

Organised by the Field Archaeology Centre and other archaeologists from the School of Arts, Histories and Cultures, the event included contributions from schoolchildren, government minister David Lammy and leading archaeologists.

The conference, called 'Archaeology for All', also featured the 'Dig Manchester' project, run jointly by the University and Manchester City Council. Other contributors included Julian Richards from BBC's 'Meet the Ancestors' and schoolchildren from Littlemoss High School for Boys in Tameside, Greater Manchester.

Janet Tatlock, Widening Participation Manager for the University's Faculty of Humanities, said: "The 'Archaeology for All' conference demonstrated the University's commitment to becoming the most accessible research-intensive university in the region. To demonstrate this, a group from Littlemoss High School for Boys that had been working with the Faculty of Humanities Widening Participation Team and some archaeology post-graduates presented at the conference.

"The students from Littlemoss had undertaken a series of workshops and presented short papers on the impact that studying archaeology had made on them individually and as a

learning community. This is part of a Faculty initiative to include a widening participation strand at conferences at the University so that local students experience and benefit from the excellence of research at Manchester," she added.

The Manchester Museum was also involved in the conference. Its Discovery Centre held interactive archaeological activities and showed exhibitions of work by local archaeology societies. St Aidan's RC Primary School, Northern Moor, took part in two digs at Northenden Corn Mill as part of the Dig Manchester Project. Working with Clare Pye at the Museum, they delivered a conference presentation based on their memories of the dig, demonstrating how work on an excavation can be embedded into work within school.

David Lammy MP, who is Culture Minister, said: "I hope this conference will demonstrate that archaeology really can be for all. Each new archaeological discovery adds another piece to that jigsaw of understanding of ourselves as a constantly changing island, and how that island has interacted with the rest of the world. It's about understanding the story of who we were, who we are now, and who we want to be in the future."

Norman Redhead is based at the University's archaeological unit and is also Assistant County Archaeologist. He said: "The University of Manchester is one of the national leaders in taking the idea of community archaeology forward. Professional archaeologists from the unit have developed the special skills needed to run complex community excavations and provide training, in tandem with local people and organisations. The 'Dig Manchester' project has been particularly

successful in being socially inclusive, engaging with disadvantaged groups and individuals who might not normally consider taking part in such an activity.

"The University also has a strong commitment to widening participation and we hope that some of the thousands of children and adults taking part in summer digs in the Manchester area will aspire to study at the University. Community archaeology makes people think about the lives of their ancestors whilst providing a sense of place and belonging. The digs provide a vibrant atmosphere for social interaction between people of different ages and backgrounds and a real sense of community pride develops," he added.

Involvement with the Mellor dig is just one example of the Archaeological Unit's work in the community. Over the ten years this project has been running, a previously unsuspected Iron Age hill fort has been discovered, including round houses and a deep defensive ditch, as well as remains of prehistoric flint tools, Roman settlement and a medieval timber hall. The University of Manchester Archaeological Unit, who have trained local volunteers in archaeological skills, have supported a bid by the Mellor Archaeological Trust to gain a substantial grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund to carry on the project. And the great news is that the Trust has just received a grant of £455,000 to carry on its work at the excavation site and to broaden the project to research the history, buildings, and archaeology across the whole of Mellor parish