

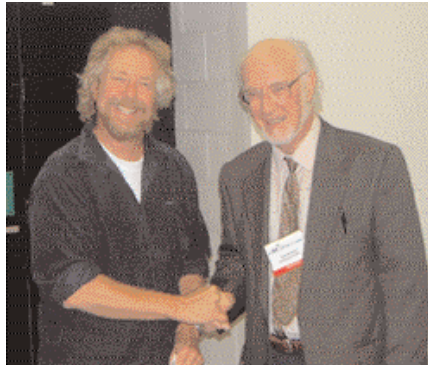
Diary

Woad wins

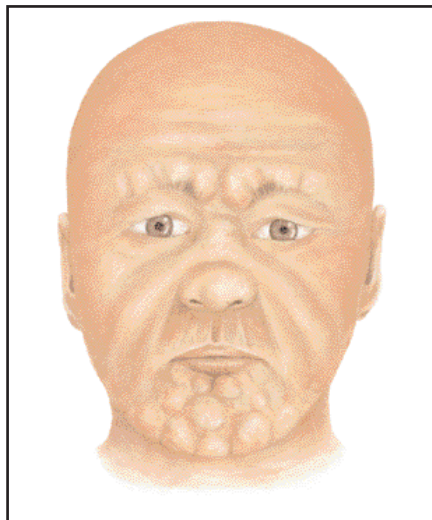
A talk on the production of woad was the winner in this year's Award for the presentation of Heritage Research to the Public. This is the second year that the Award, sponsored by the Royal Archaeological Institute and English Heritage - now joined by Cadw and Historic Scotland, has been held at the British Association's Festival of Science which this year took place at Salford on 11 September 2003.

The top prize for the successful 20 minutes talk is worth £1,500, and this year there was a healthy crop of 24 entries, which had been reduced to a short-list of 13 finalists, including several amateurs as well as professional archaeologists. The resulting programme of 20-minute talks ranged from the archaeology of Poole Harbour to Anglo-Saxon field systems. The panel of judges was chaired by Julian Richards of Meet the Ancestors fame, and included the editor of *Current Archaeology*. The audience was asked to judge the talks as well, and their assessments (about 30 members of the audience filled in forms) were taken into consideration as well as the panel's views.

The awards will be held again next year; readers are encouraged to consider entering. Advertisements will appear over the winter; information will also be available from the English Heritage website; for further information contact Sebastian Payne (sebastian.payne@english-heritage.org.uk).

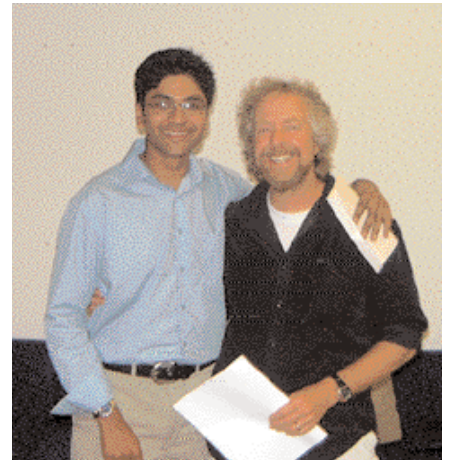


The £1500 overall award went to an amateur, John Edmonds, with a fascinating talk about experiments recreating dyeing with Tyrian purple and Celtic blue: in each case controlled bacterial fermentation plays an important part in preparing the dye - in the case of Tyrian purple, from shells of the genus *Murex*, and in the case of Celtic blue, from woad (*Isatis tinctoria*). (An earlier report on this work appeared in *John Musty's Science Diary* in CA 152.)



The under-30's award was won by Caroline Needham, of Manchester university, here seen between Julian Richards and Brian Dix, representing the RAI. She is an illustrator, specialising in medical illustration, and now does facial reconstruction for the Manchester unit. She designed a most ingenious 'game' - can you tie up the skulls with the reconstructions? - and here we see one of her more grisly reconstructions, of a gentleman who died from leprosy - a most unpleasant disease.

Krish Setah is a butcher by trade, who can reduce a carcass to its constituent parts before you can say Julian Richards. He is now up at Cambridge (where else?), studying Romano-British butchery. He lectured accompanied by a fearsome armoury of knives, choppers and other weapons, and some of the vegetarians in the audience went quite green at some of his descriptions. He concluded that Roman butchers were much more efficient than may be apparent, but his flamboyant delivery won him the well-deserved runner-up position.



Mad as a hatter? The madness of hatters is simply due to mercury poisoning - mercury being used in the making of hats. Graham Martin and Marion Kite curate hats at the V and A, and they have been researching the effects of mercury poisoning to ensure that they do not go mad as well. The hat is hired (and does not contain mercury).

