A Review of the Last 10 Years

Note: This is based on the presentation made at the May Meeting

Introduction

A combination of technological change, new or refined processes, partnerships and sponsors is making a real difference to how CDAS operates and what we can achieve.

At our 20th anniversary Kieth Lawson, then our President, described CDAS's first year. The text of his report is available on our web site. I have focused on the last 10 years partly because in 2006 CDAS worked with the Chichester Harbour Conservancy on their major "Rhythm of Tides" project and this seems to have acted as a trigger for change.

Technology

We have acquired the skills and in many cases the equipment to make use of range of techniques.

- Auguring – Peter Murphy not only has an augur but can read the core samples it produces.
- Geophys Surveys – English Heritage based in Fort Cumberland ran an outreach program where they trained local societies to geophys & would lend some of their older kit. This got us on the ladder. We now have 2 resistivity machines and one mag plus the supporting kit in terms of surveying equipment, walk lines, canes, tapes etc.
- Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) – English Heritage (EH) wanted a test site & approached us to negotiate the use of the Warblington Villa field. Needless to say we were more than happy to arrange this
- Internet – What to say other than research tool, CDAS website, & email communication
- LiDAR – Thanks to experience gained from High woods we now have the expertise to interpret the publically available data collected by the Environment Agency
- Topographical Surveys – where we record lumps & bumps
- 3D imaging –as a result of working with the British Museum High Fisk has the skills & the kit to produce wonderful 3D images some of which are held on our web site.

If I had to select one technology that has changed the way we can approach fieldwork projects it is Geophys. Not infallible but in general it indicates if something is there & enables any excavation to be accurately focused. In the past you might have a good idea of

a possible location but could well dig in the wrong place & find nothing. In some cases the geophys results are sufficient.

However, LiDAR will probably become equally important in terms of helping us to identify possible sites for further investigation.

Processes

Some projects are as much about the process as technology these processes include:

- Coastal Monitoring - regular monitoring of shoreline during periods of rough weather to record features before they are lost
- Condition Assessment - regular monitoring of sites to identify if it is deteriorating or is under threat
- Field walking – Structure searching of ground surface with subsequent processing of any finds.

The Internet and all that it enables has revolutionised way the society and its projects can be run. It is much easier to keep members informed & to seek volunteers for the various events.

Partners and Sponsors

CDAS has worked hard to develop and maintain contact with a range of partners. These are organisations and individuals who have supported us in a variety of ways. The following chart summarises individuals or groups who have provided support. The symbols, defined below, identify the type of support provided:

- Green stars – those who give formal permissions
- Gold ovals (pots of gold) – those who have given money in terms of grants often for specific pieces of equipment
- Blue blobs– Those who provide advice and assistance in kind. For example, ASE in relation to early work at Medmerry, for a Coastal monitoring training course, ongoing advice and CiTIZAN in terms of support for Coastal Monitoring.
- Red rectangles – organisations where we have operated in partnership

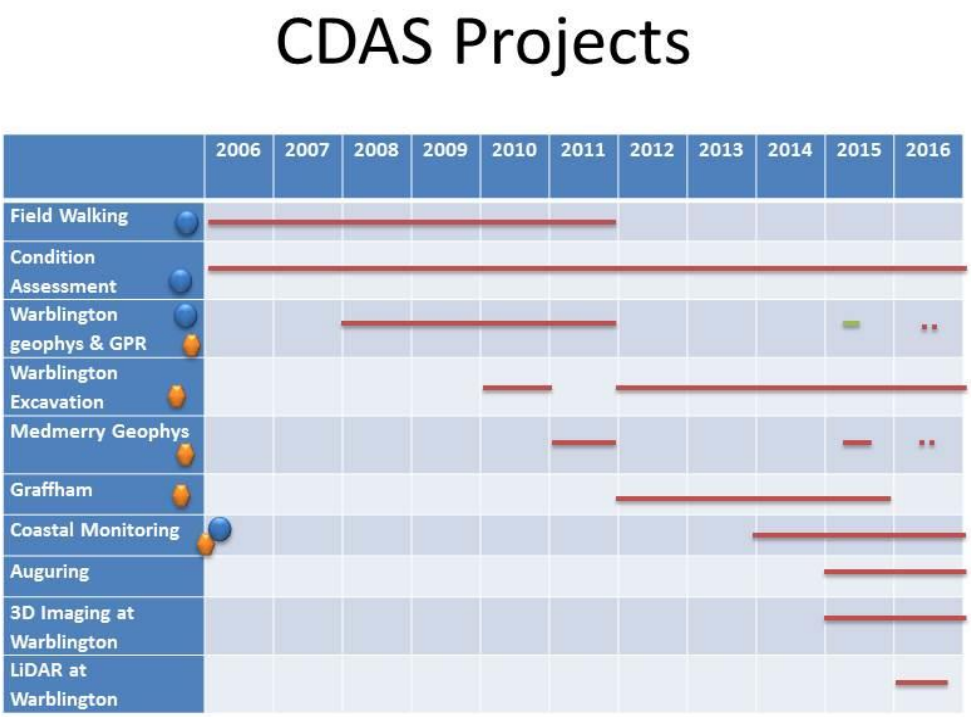
Projects

In 2006 Chichester Harbour Conservancy (CHC) ran a project called “Rhythms of Tides” which covered a variety of environmental aspects within the Harbour AONB. They employed some professional archaeologists but CDAS provided a majority of the local volunteers and took over the legacy projects namely Field Walking and Condition Assessment.

There is a chart at the end of this section that provides a timeline for the projects described below.

- Field walking - CHC provided training in more formalised field walking techniques and assisted in gaining permission for access to what had been identified as interesting sites –sadly farming practices mean that it is rare for there to be an opportunity.
- Condition assessment within AONB – Once again CHC defined the processes, provided training and identified the sites to be assessed. We have visited the sites on an annual basis ever since. It was the monitoring of the Warblington Villa field that initiated the whole Warblington project.
- Warblington geophys –We geophysed Warblington over a number of years and at one stage CHC sponsored the purchase of a magnetometer. There are still areas of the villa field where we want to take more detailed readings. EH/HE trialled their latest GPR last year
- Warblington Excavation – Each year CHC have made significant contribution towards the costs – sadly this fund is now closed.
- Medmerry Geophys – Before the construction work for the managed retreat started we geophysed several of the fields. There was an associated Manhood Peninsular project for local initiatives and we obtained a grant for a resistivity meter.

- Graffham Common – CDAS's first large scale topographical survey. We were supporting the Sussex Wildlife trust, who had recently taken over management of the site. We got a grant for a dumpy level from the South Downs Park.
- Coastal Monitoring - Once the work on the Medmerry managed retreat had completed it was always planned that CDAS would return. One aspect was monitoring the coast line. I was wondering how we might do this when Peter Murphy joined the society – he was the EH expert. As well as support from ASE we are now working with CiTIZAN who have sponsored a First Aid course.
- Auguring – Has demonstrated that a stream bed near the Villa was not once a tidal creek destroying a long held vision of mine. We have also shown that a site shown as a salting in the official records was not a salting.
- Hugh now has the skills, the s/w & the decorating pole to enable him to produce 3D images of our trenches. He also recorded the disappearing farm house at Medmerry.
- LiDAR Steve & I are using the EA LiDAR images to see if we can locate possible locations for the Warblington DMV.



Where are we now?

- Feedback from our members is generally positive
- A volunteer organisation acknowledged to do a professional job by outside organisations
- Can usually raise enough volunteers to run activities/projects
- Training has increased the number of members with skills to run activities
- Well equipped & financially sound

What of the future?

Challenges:

- Members often join on retirement. Later retirement means that recruits often have less energy than was the case a few years ago
- Increasing demands from grandchildren and/or parents reduces the time that is available for CDAS
- Sponsorship is drying/ has dried up
- Equipment (some expensive) getting a bit long in the tooth and will need replacement

These have the potential to impact CDAS in terms of:

- Maintaining our membership at a sustainable level
- Raising volunteers for individual activities
- Recruiting members for General & Fieldwork Committees
- Funding for our activities & our equipment – at some point we may no longer be able to undertake particular activities if the equipment no longer works

Focus for next couple of years

- Improve our approach to publicity so that CDAS is better known
- Continue recruitment drive
- Build up individual expertise & confidence so that more members can run activities
- Review present committee roles in terms of sub-dividing or job sharing so as to make them easier to fill
- Develop successions plans so that handovers are smooth as members stand down after 4 years
- Investigate different sources of funding and/or change our approach to how projects are undertaken and funded.

Ann Davies
CDAS Chairman
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