

# Editorial

CAROLINE MALONE

As readers will see, the Colour Notes continue to flood into the Antiquity office, and we are delighted to include diverse and stimulating material from around the world. Clearly there is no crisis in the enterprise and energy that archaeological colleagues direct towards survey, excavation and general observations in the world of archaeology, regardless of difficulties of politics, geography or resources. Over the year, every continent has been represented, and we hope that these news reports will continue to provide interest and information.

In September, we described the activities of English Heritage's review of Heritage and the Historic Environment. The results of the Mori poll conducted to examine the results are now released before discussion by Government in November. Pertinent to the Special Issue we published in March 2000 on Education and Archaeology is the extraordinary interest shown by the respondents to the survey which suggests 98% of people believe 'the heritage is important to educate children about the past and that all schoolchildren should be given the opportunity to find out about England's heritage'. In addition apparently 96% thought 'the heritage is important to educate adults about the past' and 76% reckoned 'that their lives were enriched by the heritage', indeed 58% of the population had visited sites and museums in the last year. However, particular sections of the population, especially ethnic minorities, felt excluded, and the press release makes clear that these groups are to be specially targeted in future policies on presenting and preserving the historic environment. You can read the results of the poll on [www.english-heritage.org.uk/discovery/heritage-review/mori](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/discovery/heritage-review/mori)

In this issue we include a long Retrospective paper by GEOFFREY WAINWRIGHT, the former Chief Archaeologist of English Heritage. We invited Professor Wainwright to review the changing world of archaeology in England since 1960, and comment on the development of the practice and the discipline. The paper reveals how the various directions over the years have

come about, and how the current structure of archaeology and heritage has been gradually formed. Many readers from outside England will doubtless consider that the archaeological services that now operate here are a strange anachronistic affair lacking centralization. However, as Wainwright recounts, there were moments in the fairly recent past, when opportunities could have been taken to set up a far more centralized and coherent archaeological service. As always, in this subject, individuals and their passions have been the major force behind change, one way or another.

The Quality Assurance Agency have begun the country-wide review of archaeology departments over 2000–2001. Cambridge was the first department scrutinized, and, as we write, staff are breathing heavy sighs of relief on the completion of the assessment. They scored a fine 23 out of the maximum 24. Presumably, being the first place seen, 24/24 was not likely — after all, better places may exist. The reason given was not enough bureaucracy — in spite of the mass of departmental files on show! Can archaeology ever win such games?



*The material culture of assessment. The base room also contained a paper shredder, coatstand and coffee machine. (Photo Gwil Owen.)*

There are few sites in England that represent so clearly the beginnings of English society than Sutton Hoo in Suffolk. The discovery of the great treasure in 1939 and the subsequent ongoing academic research, publication, prominent display in the British Museum, as well as inclusion in the National Curriculum for History, mean this is a key site. It is all the more surprising that a muddle has developed over how future work should be undertaken at the site.

### Sutton Hoo

It has been said that each generation gets the Stonehenge it deserves: in May 2000 I was prompted by a visit to Sutton Hoo to wonder if that is true of that site also and, if so, what version the 21st century is about to create.

Excavations took place in early summer 2000 in advance of the construction of a visitor centre by the National Trust in the grounds of Sutton Hoo (now Tranmer) House, some 500 m away from the burial mounds. The results of that excavation were very interesting, and may cause significant reinterpretation of what had seemed to be a well-understood site. Anglo-Saxon burials were found, both inhumations and cremations, with grave-goods which date them to the 6th century. Apart from a bronze hanging bowl these finds were not unusually lavish — spears, shields, brooches and beads of types known from many other contemporary graves. Some of the cremations were surrounded by circular ditches, a feature which can be paralleled in northern Germany but rare if not unknown in England. Six of the excavated mounds contained cremations, but the new circular features seem very narrow for barrow ditches, and look more like foundation trenches for a palisade.

These burials seem to be either earlier than, or contemporary with, the earliest of the mounds. Some features are common to both groups of burials: a mixture of cremation and inhumation, circular features around cremations, bronze bowls as containers for cremations, a predominance of male over female burials. The new burials provide a local context from which the rites developed for the mounds could have emerged. This is true if they represent a small separate cemetery, but even more clearly if we are looking at two ends of one enormous burial ground. Instead of alien rulers setting up overpowering memorials to their family in a separate élite burial ground we could have a

population whose roots go back at least another half-century, from which the élite emerged. It is still true that all of the graves belong to a tradition which has its origin across the North Sea, mostly in northern Germany, which may (but need not) mean that the ancestry of those buried there is also Germanic. But invading Swedish princes now seem even less relevant.

This is all very interesting — but my first reaction was concern about the way in which the excavation had come about, as a developer-funded project in advance of building. The local unit, Suffolk County field team, put in a tender for the job and was successful. Experienced diggers excavated the site with frequent monitoring from the county archaeological service. The hanging bowl was lifted and taken to the British Museum for expert conservation. Within the framework of developer-funded archaeology there was nothing wrong with this excavation. But if it had been a research excavation larger resources in terms of time and money might have been forthcoming, which would have allowed more confidence that all the fragile evidence had been recovered. Fifty years ago Brian Hope-Taylor showed at Yeavinger how much more information can be retrieved from sandy soils if the surface is kept clean and damp. The ‘sandmen’, three-dimensional bodies consisting mostly of discoloured sand, took a long time to dig in the 1980s, and yielded important information about the burials. Much less time was available this year. Wider discussion of methods and aims would have been possible with a longer time-scale, which would have allowed the deployment of more specialist help. It need not have been the National Trust which bore the cost since this is one of the few sites where there must have been hope of research funding.

So why was that path not taken? I believe there are three answers:

- 1 The public, and much of the archaeological profession, in practice if not in theory, still do not recognize that archaeological ‘sites’ are artificial constructs, lines drawn around segments of the landscape which happen to have recognizable features within them — stones, ruins, mounds. Most popular ideas about Sutton Hoo come from the 1939 ship burial excavation (first reported in *ANTIQUITY* 53, March 1940) which produced the treasure now to be seen in the British Museum. The 1980s project at

Sutton Hoo did widen the focus to the mound cemetery as a whole, and beyond it to Anglo-Saxon East Anglia, and the whole North Sea region. But even that project drew a line around the mounds. There was a clue — an imported bronze bucket (reported in *ANTIQUITY* 63, June 1989) found nearby, which was recognized as suggesting the possibility of more rich burials, outside the area distinguished by visible mounds. But this idea did not get wide circulation — partly for fear of illicit metal-detecting. Most discussion still starts from the concept of a definable, separate, group of rich barrow burials. When excavation was proposed at Sutton Hoo at the end of the '70s it provoked considerable academic debate, with many opposed to further excavation. In 2000 no-one seemed to know or care that machine stripping on a large scale was taking place a few hundred metres away from the burial mounds.

It is unfortunate if the National Trust still views archaeological evidence in terms of discrete monuments rather than as an alternative facet of that same landscape which it has done so much to preserve, but how can they do otherwise if archaeologists appear to think the same way?

2 The evaluation produced some prehistoric features but 'did not reveal any evidence for activity of Anglo-Saxon date'. So no significant finds were expected.

Evaluation by digging usually involves machine-cut trenches, which are notoriously likely to miss — or destroy — the most important features on a site. In this case the reason they missed them was because the burial area was not trenched, partly because it was difficult of access through trees and build up of soil, and partly because it was not initially intended that that area should be developed. Here I think some divergence from best practice might be detected — when the plan was changed this area should have been evaluated. Also, since PPG16 gives preference to preservation *in situ*, I would have expected that when, unexpectedly, important finds were made, plans, either for building or for investigation, should have been changed.

3 Neither the local archaeologists nor the National Trust thought that a research project was necessary. This was partly for the reason given above, but also because developer-funded archaeology has so much become the norm in British fieldwork that it is almost synonymous

with 'professional' archaeology. It seems as if that is how digging is and should be done. It is not my intention to argue against developer-funded archaeology *per se*, because I see it as in many ways a successful system which has produced an enormous amount of archaeological evidence, otherwise destroyed. If and when academics and field archaeologists can devise means to disseminate and assimilate this information, it has the potential to transform our understanding of the past in Britain. But it is a system which has weaknesses, some apparent at Sutton Hoo.

It necessarily involves compromise between development and archaeology. There are occasions, and I believe this was one of them, where that compromise need not be made, where the archaeology has priority over development. This was a site being excavated in advance of the construction of a visitor centre by a conservation agency. It was not about to be swept away by a road or housing estate. We have come ourselves to see excavation through commercial eyes. Of the two bids put in for this job, the cheaper won. I am not convinced anyone should have been bidding for anything except research funds.

We have had a Sutton Hoo which was a curiosity to be looted; the treasure of an ancient king; a focus for scientific retrieval and reconstruction of minute fragments; evidence for early medieval politics and ideology. Do we want ours to be a site cleared in preparation for a replica?

CATHERINE HILLS, Cambridge, August 2000

 *ANTIQUITY*'s attendance at the recent European Association of Archaeologists Conference in Lisbon, and report on the meeting:

### European Archaeologists discover Portugal

The sixth annual conference of the European Association of Archaeologists took place in Lisbon during 10–17 September. About 15 sessions were on substantive themes in prehistory or history, including a notably successful one on 'Monumentality and landscape in Atlantic Europe'; and five were on particular areas or sites. Nine were on method and technique and nine on theory, interpretation, and the history of archaeology. There were nine too on heritage management, three on access, education and dissemination, and three on training and professional matters.

To understand these proportions, some sociology is needed. First, more than half of the Association's 1100–1200 members are students. Then, of some 650 people at Lisbon, a sixth were from the UK, and nearly 70 each from Russia and Sweden, but barely 100 Portuguese and Spaniards in all and only about 65 from Italy, France and Germany together. There was stimulating exchange between colleagues from different countries but regional predilections were discernible. Thus, while Russians and Ukrainians indulged in archaeologists' archaeology, discussion of resource management was dominated by Britons, Dutch and Scandinavians.

The Association is supporting campaigns on professionalization and standards in training, on preservation and the antiquities trade, and on access to aerial photographs. It is encouraging the development of a database on legislation and of electronic access to archaeological records.

The conference was very well run. It was held in the immense Cultural Centre at Belém, built pointedly, 10 years ago, in front of the great Medieval monastery. Participants had free entry to, among others, the National Archaeology Museum, where the main gallery is being reorganized to illustrate religion and acculturation under the Romans — Portugal in Europe. Discovery of the Côa Valley's Palaeolithic art (to which, among other destinations, a tour was organized) showed how development brings both new finds and threats to preservation. The national Institute of Archaeology was reformed, accordingly, in 1997; and university courses are growing. Full-time jobs are few, however, and publication is said to be lagging. Yet Portugal has announced itself.

NICHOLAS JAMES

### Presenting history: development and failure in York

The York Archaeological Trust has closed its Jorvik Viking Centre until next April for remodelling. Since opening in 1984, it has had 12 million visitors taking 'time cars' through a reconstruction of the site itself in 948, past preserved remains, through a reconstruction of the Trust's dig there and then past tableaux of post-excavation work, before stepping through a gallery of finds and (of course) the shop (Addyman & Gaynor 1984). Peter Addyman, director, reckons that the 'experience' has done much to rectify the Viking image, horned helmets and all

(Uzzell & Blud 1993). In the early 1990s, the Centre was recommended by the National Curriculum for English schools.

Why change it, then? For one thing, analysis of the excavation results has revealed new information about York a generation after 948: it became 'the Hong Kong or the New York of the period!', cries Director of Attractions, Richard Kemp. Buildings were twice as high as before. For another, visitor numbers have fallen by more than 40% since 1986. A temporary exhibition, this year, on the skeleton of an apparent battle victim, demonstrated how new display (or — the Centre's revisionism notwithstanding — Viking violence) can prompt a surge of interest.

Next year's presentation 'will stun the world', promises Mr Kemp, who is spending £4.8 million on it. 'Capsules' will carry visitors up and down a reconstruction of the river bank of 975 and over or among buildings both higher and more numerous — the mechanism of the capsules releases 50% more display space. Among some 'new senses', the famous smells will be retained and Mr Kemp promises an innovative display technique. ANTIQUITY looks forward to revealing the surprises!

Meanwhile, there will be an exhibition in the neighbouring church, which the City Council converted into a 'heritage centre' on the theme of the 'York Story' in 1975 (Percival 1979: 63–76). The concept of heritage centres sprang from European Architectural Heritage Year, that year. As at the Jorvik Centre, the number of visitors to the 'Story' declined and, for want of redevelopment, it was closed this year — hence the space for a temporary exhibition. Considering that, at the outset, 'there was not much thought given to . . . subsequent funding or management' (Gee 1985: 13), the Story lasted well; but its demise probably marks the end of the 'heritage centre' concept. It is rare that any *in situ* archaeological display can be thoroughly updated (James 1998: 413). Although charitable status limits the amounts, the Jorvik Centre's secret is the profitability that allows it to shut for the whole winter.

NICHOLAS JAMES

### References

- ADDYMAN, P. & A. GAYNOR. 1984. The Jorvik Viking Centre: an experiment in archaeological site interpretation, *International Journal of Museum Management & Curatorship* 3: 7–18.
- GEE, M. 1985. *Heritage centres Report*. Manchester: Manchester Polytechnic Centre for Environmental Interpretation.

- JAMES, N. 1998. Comparative studies in the presentation of archaeological sites, *Antiquity* 72: 412–13.
- PERCIVAL, A. 1979. *Understanding our surroundings: a manual of urban interpretation*. London: Civic Trust
- UZZELL, D. & L. BLUD. 1993. Vikings! Children's social representation of history, in G.M. Breakwell & D.V. Canter (ed.), *Empirical approaches to social representations*: 110–33. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

### Errata

Due to technical problems, two papers in the September issue suffered the removal of vital lines of text. We reprint the material here, and have also mounted the entire papers on our web site: <http://intarch.ac.uk/antiquity/74-285.html>

### Memory tools in early Mesopotamia

SARAH KIELT COSTELLO

(*Antiquity* 74 (2000): 475–6)

The first paragraph, top of p. 476, should read as follows:

‘An artefact found at several Halaf period sites in Turkey appears to have functioned as a type of “external symbolic storage”. This term is taken from Merlin Donald’s recent work, and refers to the most recent transition in the development of human cognition — the use of symbols to store information outside the brain.’

### Palaeoindian artefact distributions: evidence and implications

DAVID G. ANDERSON & MICHAEL K. FAUGHT

(*Antiquity* 74 (2000): 507–13)

The last sentence at the foot of p. 510 should read as follows:

‘We predict that Clovis points may be most prevalent in the Southeast, reflecting our opinion (currently unsupported by any real hard evidence) that the technology may have originated there.’

 We wish to thank our outgoing Advisory Editors who have given energetic and valued advice and ideas to the journal over the last three years and more. Many thanks to Mike Blake, Robin Coningham, Alessandro Guidi, Norman Hammond, Heinrich Härke, Fekri Hassan, David Mattingly, Roger Mercer, Sebastian Payne, Jessica Rawson and Ezra Zubrow for their support and effort in helping to shape the present form of ANTIQUITY.

 The recent deaths of Geoffrey Dimbleby & Robert Cook, both pioneers in their fields, are marked here by appreciations.

### Geoffrey William Dimbleby

1917–2000

Professor G.W. Dimbleby was a pioneer in the study of environmental archaeology. Like many other archaeologists of his and earlier generations, he was trained as a scientist — in his case in botany — and brought an interdisciplinary approach to bear on his archaeological research. He moved from the Oxford Forestry Department in 1964 to the Chair of Human Environment at the London Institute of Archaeology, where he remained until his retirement in 1979.

No environmental archaeologist will dispute Geoff Dimbleby’s scholarly significance, nor doubt that the influence of his work reached well beyond Britain. Nor was it limited to archaeology, being significant too in soil science and forestry. With his death on 8 April 2000 at the age of 82, the scientific community lost a pioneer in the ecological study of human environments, past and present.

Geoffrey Dimbleby’s scientific career, and his lifelong concern with environmental questions, stemmed from his love of the countryside. Born in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, educated at Cheltenham Grammar School, he read Botany at Magdalen College, Oxford, before serving in the RAF in the Second World War, there contributing his botanical skills to aerial photographic interpretation. In 1945 he returned to Oxford as Demonstrator, then from 1947 as Lecturer in Forest Ecology. His research on forest soils, first reported in his D.Phil. on ‘The ecology of some British podzol formations’ (1950), showed that pollen could survive sufficiently well, especially in acid soils, to allow inferences to be drawn about soil development and vegetation history; and he went on to resolve the question of whether British lowland heaths and upland moors had been forested in the past.

In a recent retrospective article (Dimbleby 1998/99), he recalled how this research introduced him to environmental archaeology ‘in a dramatic way’. Investigating the soils of the North Yorks Moors, he faced the much debated question of whether the soil there had always been too poor for tree growth. It occurred to him that the prehistoric burial mounds on the moors might have ancient soils preserved beneath them, so ‘I cut a section in one from its present surface down to the old land surface beneath’. This revealed a fertile brown soil