

EDITORIAL

The Individuals Behind Contemporary Archaeology

Hana Morel*

On the 25th December 2013, David R. Harris, Director of the Institute of Archaeology from 1989 until 1996 who had supported the very first PIA journal, passed away. In the journal's first editorial, Harris (1990) spoke of research activity that reaches the archaeological community 'by diverse and sometimes obscure routes, or not at all' and how 'more frequently the "best bits" find their way into scholarly journals' but that much research remains unknown to colleagues around the world. The PIA was set up as a vehicle to disseminate the 'breadth of research' taking place as well as the 'vigour and range of current research' that may not find routes, or have the means necessary, to reach wider audiences.

The PIA continues to run and each year publishes a journal, through the dedication of volunteers, in hope that it continues to provide a helpful platform for the up-and-coming archaeologist to publish their hard work as they pursue their career in archaeology. We hope to encourage less established researchers to get their work out to interested colleagues around the world, to grow with the help of constructive criticism and feedback that challenge their ideas, and help them to form stronger ones.

There are many challenges faced by archaeologists in these changing times. We hear about them often, through the anecdotes

of previous generations and the battles they fought; or through emerging research on profiling the profession, with statistics to support it. However, our young profession is transforming so rapidly that although old challenges may remain, different challenges have emerged, which are very real, but also obscure. These new concerns are spoken of in whispers and anecdotes on department steps or behind the vapours of a pint, or lost within the twittering ramblings of informal rants on social media.

A few of these concerns are raised here in this journal, if not directly, then indirectly in their own obscure way. They include issues such as mental and physical health, low pay, hierarchical structures, exploitation, and glass ceilings. We have yet to address, let alone quantify, these issues and the personal impact they may have on individuals, and indeed, the discipline itself. However, lack of quantification should not suggest these matters are irrelevant: statistics are often used in ways akin to a drunkard with a street pole - for support, but not illumination. It is my hope that this volume illuminates some of the underlying messages, in their various guises, of the challenges that a new generation in contemporary archaeology face.

Before I introduce the volume, I would like – as ever – to give my unwavering respect and gratitude to the countless peer-reviewers who have gone out and beyond to produce very concise and constructive comments for each of these papers. There is no doubt that

* UCL Institute of Archaeology, United Kingdom
hana.morel.10@ucl.ac.uk

these experts in their field have nothing but pure passion for their research and aspire to see it develop to its fullest potential through new and original studies. Researchers new to the field truly have big shoes to fill, but will inevitably find their way with the help, support, mentorship and feedback provided from their peers.

At the same time, however, in this volume, we change the dynamic and have given the individual, our authors, the opportunity to work with all their feedback, and come back with an article that may go against the grain, but does so with the author confidently standing by their work.

As such, we question – albeit obliquely – who are the people that decide whether a researcher is published or not? What are the conditions of innovation and change, and how do we encourage that environment? Can we break structures without jeopardising the progress, standards, and values of research and publication that we have worked so hard to achieve?

This volume has been quite a worthwhile journey as it has opened many uncomfortable areas of contemporary archaeology, not least through countless discussions and anecdotes of emerging professionals with their fears and desperation halting them to rock the boat, step on toes, or stand up to exploitation. It is my hope that here, we can at least provide some ground for open dialogue, and encourage the further professionalisation of archaeology by addressing these concerns and acting on them.

Volume 24 kickstarts the theme of the journal with the Forum, led by the IoA's Director Sue Hamilton, titled 'Under-Representation in Contemporary Archaeology', for a discussion addressing the new concerns in archaeology and shedding light on the challenges faced by the current generation. We have responses from Oliver Boles, Brenna Hassett, Samuel Hardy and Emily Johnson, who I thank tremendously for stepping up and coming on board with this discussion. It was a great quest to find willing young archaeologists to speak up and make this forum

possible, so I offer a warm welcome for our respondents.

The interview follows suite as I talk to Paul Everill, Lecturer at the University of Winchester and author of *The Invisible Diggers: A study of commercial archaeology in the UK* (2009), about his views on archaeology today. We speak about pressures on archaeologists, the 'training-triangle', and other concerns.

The remaining volume is largely a collection of reports, as we have tried to encourage and support our peers from archaeological sciences to contribute to the PIA, which in recent years has been largely dominated by heritage studies. As such, we focus on their ongoing progress through the presentation of their results at hand.

Our research paper is Liz Henty's *The Archaeoastronomy of Tomnaverie Recumbent Stone Circle: A Comparison of Methodologies* that examines the different methodologies which have been employed in studying Recumbent Stone Circles. In an effort to bridge archaeology and archaeoastronomy, Henty checks the validity of the various archaeoastronomical interpretations and the extent to which they take account of traditional archaeological evidence by examining one well-documented site in detail as well as conducting new research which combines both methodologies.

Following, we start the first of the reports. Muthukumaran works to integrate archaeological and textual data to look at the spatial and chronological distribution of rice consumption/cultivation and trade in the Middle East and the Mediterranean in his report *Between Archaeology and Text: The Origins of Rice Consumption and Cultivation in the Middle East and the Mediterranean*.

His report is followed by a collaborative effort investigating social exclusion, marginality and the adoption of anomalous funerary rites in late prehistoric Italy in *Investigating Social Exclusion in Late Prehistoric Italy: Preliminary Results of the "IN or OUT" Project (PHASE 1)*, co-authored by Saracino, Zamboni, Zanoni and Perego.

Our third report, *Examining Reactive Arthropathy in Military Skeletal Assemblages: A Pilot Study Using the Mass Grave Assemblage from the Battle of Towton (1461)*, is written by Banton. She reports on a pilot study carried out using remains from the 1461 Battle of Towton looking for the presence of microbe triggered reactive arthropathy among soldiers - as military lifestyle put them at increased risk of obtaining bacterial infections during this period.

The last two general articles before the selected reviews are from Gause and Takkouneofytou respectively. Gause provides a critique on Jared Diamond's theory of the Maya decline in *Collapse* by cross-examining his theories alongside current research. Takkouneofytou explores the complexity of the mesoamerican jaguar-cult and its iconography arguing for the need to redefine contemporary interpretation.

The volume ends with chosen reviews selected to go into our printed publication. As we take reviews in all year around, it is worth visiting our website to access the wide range of conferences, books and exhibitions that unfortunately – due to space limitations – do not make it in the printed volume. We thank everyone who contributed to the review section.

Here, however, we have selected three book reviews from Sterling, Doyle White,

and Boles. Following, we have Czapiewsha's review on the British Museum's 2013 exhibition on 'Life and Death in Pompeii and Herculaneum'. Finally, we close with two conference reviews by Roe and Morel.

We hope that you enjoy each section of this journal, that it continues to be thought-provoking, and that you join us with your views and contribute to the discussion via our online channels.

Personally, it has been a pleasure being a part of the PIA team, but it is now time to pass the duties on to the next generation. I dedicate this volume to the invisible individuals that are a vital part of our archaeological community, and to those who continue to rock the boat!

Hana K Morel

Editor's Note

This editorial was written prior to the inclusion of Jamie Larkin's report in the printed version of this volume.

References

- Everill, P.** 2009 *The Invisible Diggers: A study of commercial archaeology in the UK*. Heritage Research Series: 1. Oxford: Oxbow books.
- Harris, D.** 1990 Introduction. *Papers from the Institute of Archaeology* 1: i-i, DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5334/pia.357>

How to cite this article: Morel, H 2014 The Individuals Behind Contemporary Archaeology. *Papers from the Institute of Archaeology*, 24(1): 26, pp. 1-3, DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5334/pia.476>

Published: 27 October 2014

Copyright: © 2014 The Author(s). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 Unported License (CC-BY 3.0), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited. See <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/>.

 *Papers from the Institute of Archaeology* is a peer-reviewed open access journal published by Ubiquity Press

OPEN ACCESS 