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Brief summaries of the sessions at the conferences can be found at the Web site http://www.liv.ac.uk/Archaeology_Classics/tag96.html. Unfortunately, this page, set up for registration purposes, has not yet been updated following subsequent revisions to that preliminary timetable. However, most of the information is accurate. The following are brief discussions a selection of the sessions attended by members of the Institute.

'The Archaeology of the Everyday'

This title made me a little apprehensive: would it consist of processual interpretations backed up by ethnographic parallels such as Binford and his drop and toss zones, or would it be a postprocessual or even cognitive attempt at getting inside the mind of and 'ordinary person'?

The first paper, '*Writing the Archaeology of the Fields*', was given by Willy Kitchen. He began by stressing that the division of behaviour into 'ritual', as opposed to 'everyday', was unhelpful, and, using examples of Bronze Age field systems, he examined the ethnographic evidence for groups where the memory of cultivation cycles has been recorded. Another unhelpful dichotomy was, he said the split between functional and symbolic explanations, which could be healed by finding some middle ground and joining the sacred with the profane, effecting a junction somewhere between Mercer and Tilley. The conclusion reached was that the way to write an archaeology of the fields was by a broad account which included more detailed examples. This paper provoked a number of questions from the floor, including a comment regarding the dangers of taking empathy too far.

The second paper, by Joshua Pollard (Newcastle University), was entitled '*The life and times of everyday things*'. He discussed the difficulties of describing the everyday, stressing how fragmentary data become further fragmented by our methods of analysis and reporting. In site reports, for example, pattern is often stressed at the expense of process, and structures, finds and environmental data are dealt with by separate people in separate sections. He concluded that the answer to this problem was to avoid the separation of mind from body by a move towards a holistic approach, where objects are viewed as extensions of people rather than as a backdrop to human behaviour. In the study of Neolithic Britain in particular, there is an obsession with arenas outside of the everyday (i.e. large monuments where 'special' rituals took place), perhaps partly due to the fact that traces of settlement at this time remain ephemeral.

These two papers both emphasized the need for a more holistic approach that removed unhelpful dichotomies wherever possible.

'The Familiar Past'

I arrived here for what could be described as a funerary session! Harold Mytum (York University) spoke on '*Culture and Context in Pembrokeshire pedimented gravestones*'. This was basically a stylistic analysis from which social relationships could be derived, and interesting differences (both temporal and geographic) were highlighted in terms of the English and Welsh-speaking communities. The large slabs often contained text used as a media for the education of the children of the community about ancestry identity and moral values. The degree of 'houseproud' behaviour displayed in the upkeep of family plots both reflected and reinforced social hierarchies. As an environmentalist in an alien session, I found this paper very rewarding in its stress as to how stylistic variation is constrained by social and ideological factors.

The next paper, '*Wormie Clay and Blessed Sleep*' by Sarah Taylor, was also fascinating. Death is a subject that has always interested me (I greatly enjoyed the Art of Death exhibition in the V&A), so this contribution held my attention well. The paper addressed some stylistic changes over time in terms of the changing social attitudes towards death. Beginning in the sixteenth century, Taylor traced various trends in the use of heraldic devices on memorials to reflect the importance of ancestry and family history. She then considered the deployment of morbid devices and language (such as skull and cross bones and sand timers), the attempts of the Victorian middle-classes to buy their way to immortality with impressive neo-classical monuments, and finally the 'softly, softly' approach to death of the present day, where people don't just die and rot, but rather pass into a blessed sleep to wait for a joyful reunion with loved ones. This concept Taylor described as the 'prettification of death', and suggested the reason could be that there is currently a greater feeling of relationship between the body and self. Grief has replaced fear as metaphor replaces biological reality. I was left wondering if the current transatlantic tendency towards cryogenics was the culmination of this trend!

'Archaeology and Environmentalism'

The first paper in this session was '*The Archaeology of William Morris*' by Martin Brown (East Sussex CC). He began by commenting on the coverage of Morris's work in this his centenary year. Many exhibitions had been mounted, the principal one at the V&A, which concentrated purely on the man as a designer and gave scant coverage to his radical politics and conservation sympathies.

He was a founding member of the Society for the Preservation of Ancient Buildings (nick-named 'anti-scrape' by its opponents). Morris refers to people as the trustees for those who come after (a very enlightened viewpoint for a Victorian Gentleman). A closer look at Morris's early life explains much of this perspective: he went to school in

Wiltshire, with its plethora of prehistoric monuments; at Oxford he was exposed to a city in which medieval buildings adjoined working-class slums; influenced by Ruskin's ideas, he toured Flanders and Normandy to view the 'Gothic'. He was impressed by a visit to Iceland, with its egalitarian society imbued with a strong sense of place- a Utopia in his opinion.

Whilst Pugin and Gilbert Scott were trying to recreate what they felt was the perfect expression of 'Gothic', Morris and the antiscrapes were worried at the destruction of original art that the pursuit of this endeavour entailed, namely the scraping of the plaster and subsequent loss of wall paintings. He felt that buildings and monuments were educational and had the potential to inspire people in years to come. By looking forward to the future, rather than back into the past, he displayed a noticeably Marxist view of history. Martin Brown's closing quotation of 'Art for All, Education for All, Freedom for All' did have a rather fanatical ring. However, it must be remembered that for all his ethics Morris, a man who promoted craftsmanship, went into mass production and his company, Morris and co. became a capitalist success that Richard Branson or Bill Gates would have been proud of.

The second paper followed on very smoothly and reiterated many of the ideas and aims of the first. Grahame Fairclough's (English Heritage) paper '*Now and in the Future; Archaeology's accommodation with sustainability*' began by asking the question, 'What do archaeologists really do?', stressing the fact that by its very nature archaeology is a non-renewable resource. There are, of course, sites that have yet to be found, but most future work will surely involve either reclassification (for example, including newer sites in urban situations and rural locations) or alternatively, ensuring that we maximize the amount that we learn from existing data). He stressed that the need for dialogue was very important: that archaeologists must listen to the people as well as talking to them; and that English Heritage needs to overcome its obsession with the academic/educational. For example, more needs to be made of sites that are of local importance, compared with those high profile sites of national and international importance. The need for a greater degree of public involvement was emphasized again. He then questioned exactly what it is that we are passing on to future generations: firstly in terms of the environment as a whole; secondly as our interpretation of the archaeology (or 'our archaeology'); and finally, the public and political climate in which archaeology can be supported.

Thrift is better than hoarding, but as the public perceive archaeologists as 'people who find things', we need to raise awareness of other aspects of our work such as preservation. He concluded that sustainability must be accommodated as everyone has a different agenda for archaeology and uses it in different ways. I was surprised how some of his closing remarks echoed those of the previous paper. What a pity that 100

years or so after Morris suggested a way forward we are still discussing it and not actually doing anything about it.

'Rethinking the Neolithic: a view from the North'

This session centred upon recent work in Scotland. I arrived as Tim Philips was speaking on '*Circular monuments in a linear landscape: the micro-topography of the Clava cairns*'. This proved to be a very interesting spatial analysis of monument location in relation to human behaviour. Two types of cairn are found in this group: those with an entrance and a roof and those which have no entrance and no roof (termed passage graves and ring cairns respectively). The monuments are distributed along a river valley, the linear landscape of the title. Given that the passage graves are more visible than the ring cairns, it is suggested that they can be seen as houses of the dead, whilst the ring cairns had a less demonstrative function.

The last paper of the session, '*Listening to the Stones*' by Aaron Watson, was by far the most unusual and entertaining paper of the morning. He began by commenting on the current trend towards the concept of the 'experience' of place used by Tilley and Thomas, but in these discussions the experiences described have so far been restricted to the visual realm. In contrast, this paper presented an acoustic study of experience of place.

The first example was that of a stone circle with a recumbent stone, which created a box that reflected sound back into the centre of the ring. The 'pink noise' was measured along a transect, in detailed values, and the effect was similar to that produced in a theatre. A chambered tomb was then studied. If a sound is made in the central chamber it is lost if those standing outside move away from the entrance, thus limiting the amount people outside would be able to discern of what was happening inside. This gives weight to those hypotheses which stress the exclusive nature of rituals performed in these monuments.

The next stage was to consider resonated sound: that is, sound which has been increased by some means of amplification. This can be done by means of percussion - for example four beats per second would not be heard but could be felt. This would create a strange experience for the people outside the tomb. Different chambered tombs were found to have different readings. Noticeably, both Newgrange and Maes Howe display increased resonance. Watson commented on the fact that tombs displaying similar acoustic properties were often some considerable geographical distance apart, whilst two that exhibited different properties may be located in relative proximity. He offered no explanation for this observation beyond the suggestion that other factors were involved.

Although I enjoyed this paper greatly for its innovative approach of experimental investigation (particularly when most explanations pertaining to these monuments are of

a very personal nature), I was a little concerned that the acoustics of these monuments might be more the result of restoration rather than properties manipulated by the designs of the original builders.

SW

'Time resolution and Palaeolithic archaeology'

This Tuesday afternoon session organised by Paul Pettit and Dimitra Papagianni served as a warning to those who are afraid to tackle the problems of chronological resolution when interpreting Palaeolithic sites and behaviour. The speakers explored the themes of temporal and spatial resolution, palimpsest accumulations, chronological correlations, and related disciplines such as absolute dating, and environmental studies. Whilst emphasizing the need for an appreciation of the effects of time resolution in research design, the session succeeded in offering positive approaches to what seemed at first a depressing array of problems associated with interpreting Palaeolithic archaeological behaviour.

The standard of the papers given was as high as the debate that followed was heated, but three speakers stood out in particular. Mark Lake presented a lively paper that asked what hope there might be for archaeologists working amongst "tiny islands of time in an ocean of material"! He referred in particular to sites at Koobi Fora, where locations may be hardly separated by space, and chronological separation unknowable.

Francis Wenan-Smith looked at the ways that palimpsest accumulations may offer insights into Palaeolithic behaviour not afforded by the "Holy Grail" of small snap shots in time. Using the analogy of bottle banks and archaeological evidence from Boxgrove, he showed how palimpsest horizons could highlight hominid activities structured around the landscape.

Perhaps more pessimistically, Paul Pettit urged caution when interpreting the Middle - Upper Palaeolithic transition, when time resolution of radiocarbon dates is so poor. His argument was aimed particularly at those who would construct scenarios for Neanderthal and Early Modern Human interactions on the basis of so-called absolute dates.

'Old and New in Palaeoanthropology'

The following day, this session (organised by Patrick Quinney and Mark Collard, and chaired by Peter Wheeler), took us on a madcap chase through the diverse discipline of palaeoanthropology. There was something for everyone in this session, ranging from primate behaviour, and skeletal biology, to palaeoecology, and Palaeolithic archaeology.

Once again the debates raged, as John McNab presented an explosive paper that offered a challenge to those who still cling to the idea of the Clactonian as a distinct tool

industry in lower Palaeolithic Britain, and Chris Knight and Catherine Arthur also presented a controversial paper on the co-evolution of ritual and speech. However, the papers that stuck most clearly in the mind, (given that I am particularly interested in environmental reconstruction) were given by David Bell and John Gowlett, followed by Sylvia Hixson and Peter Andrews.

Bell and Gowlett argued that "palaeoecology" is a misnomer for what is an essentially flawed process of cobbling together information gathered using techniques with well understood methodological problems. These include a lack of suitable analogues for what are often unique faunal associations, and taphonomic biases that mean we often cannot control the suitability of samples. Along the same environmental theme, Hixson and Andrews presented a novel approach to environmental reconstruction. They argued that there is a correlation between faunal ecological adaptations visible in the fossil record, regardless of taxa. These adaptations include factors such as body size and skeletal structure, and that these homologous adaptations can be used to infer habitat and niche. Computer modelling of modern and archaeological assemblages to reconstruct environments was used with some success, offering an alternative to those comparisons of analogous faunal assemblages that are restricted by taxonomy.

LG

'Geographic Information Systems'

Most of the speakers, with the exception of Maschner, were in agreement that GIS is more than simply a tool whose application within archaeology is atheoretical. Gillings emphasized that the specific problems for which GIS is utilized in archaeology mean that the methodology will not be the same as in other disciplines, so that a new approach will need to be developed. James McGlade, while agreeing that more knowledge of the theory of GIS is needed by those who utilize these systems (so that research can drive technology, rather than the other way around), also suggested that there is no need for GIS theory per se: GIS is not a discipline in itself, and is only useful in archaeology as part of a wider approach to the subject under study.

On the negative side, Wise provided a cautionary tale of an incorrect interpretation of GIS data, while McGlade warned that people are often too willing to accept without question the accuracy of maps and statistics. He also pointed out that GIS maps are poorly adapted to a wide range of archaeological problems - for example, they cannot handle non-functional aspects of social and cultural processes.

In his summary of the talks, Zubrow noted that there was a general push for the simultaneous use of both processualist and postprocessualist approaches in GIS, and that while GIS is on the threshold of its maturity, its full potential has not yet been realised or harnessed by archaeologists.

'Teaching Archaeological Theory'

A new session at TAG, this seminar was set up as a forum for teachers of archaeological theory in the various universities and colleges to discuss their ideas and methods. For those students who attended it was interesting to see and speak to some of the famous names in British archaeological theory today, as well as to see how their own courses compare with those of other institutions.

Before the discussion was thrown open, several speakers were first invited to describe the structure of their theory courses at their own institutions (Anthony Sinclair (Liverpool), Julian Thomas (Southampton), Robert Young (Leicester), Michael Parker Pearson (Sheffield), Matthew Johnson (Durham) and Michael Shanks (Lampeter). This effectively demonstrated how differently theory is incorporated into undergraduate courses at the various institutions, ranging from a third year option (*e.g.* Liverpool) to its incorporation as an integral core course from the first year (*e.g.* Southampton) - Parker Pearson admitted that his way of introducing it to first years was by 'stealth', under the guise of anthropology!

The discussion itself was fairly restrained and polite, dominated as it was by postprocessualists who were more eager to agree than disagree. The main point of consensus was that theory is too often sidelined in archaeology departments, and treated as an extra tool for interpretation to be used or not, at the student's/tutor's discretion, rather than being made integral to the discipline from the start. The point was made that this will remain the case as long as theoretical ideas are discussed solely in the artificial isolation of theory classes, while colleagues teaching specific regions and periods do not incorporate them into their courses.

One student did remark upon how few female theoreticians we read. The point was contested by several others, but remains valid: whether or not they exist (and they certainly do), how many female scholars crop up as consistently on theory bibliographies as do Hodder, Shennan, Thomas *et al.*, *other than* for sessions on the topic of gender?

Hopefully, this new session will be sustained in future TAG conferences, perhaps encouraging more debate, as well as providing a useful forum for the exchange of ideas. It would be particularly interesting to hear some of the non-postprocessualist viewpoints on the issue of teaching theory which undoubtedly exist amongst the more general academic staff of our departments.

LP