

## Some highlights of the 2000/2001 academic year

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*The Director of the Institute comments on developments since the third issue of Archaeology International was published.*

Following established practice, I start by referring to some of the initiatives announced on the back cover of the previous issue of *Archaeology International*.

- The Institute has now adopted a document setting out the implications for staff of its ethics policy on the illicit trade in antiquities. It is worth noting that, while we were formally incorporating in the Institute's mission statement the commitment "to promote awareness of the problems caused by illicit trade in antiquities and the destruction of the archaeological heritage that it entails", the government announced that it would (at last) ratify the UNESCO (but not the UNIDROIT) convention; and that meanwhile a lively debate on whether there can be a "good collector" is being published in the new international journal *Public Archaeology* (see the first three issues of volume 1, 2000).
- It is a pleasure to be able to update last year's announcement of the award of three Wallace Visiting Research Fellowships with the news that a fourth fellowship has been funded for Sri Lanka. The four appointees are Jagath Weerasinghe (Postgraduate Institute of Archaeology, University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka), Dr Nassim Khan (Department of Archaeology, University of Peshawar, Pakistan), Rabindra Kumar Mohanty (Deccan College, Pune, India) and Professor Shah Sufi Mostafizur Rahman (Jahangirnagar University, Dhaka, Bangladesh). A series of colloquia on South Asia, based on the presence of the Wallace Fellows at the Institute, and with the participation of experts from several institutions in Britain, took place during the spring term, organized by Dr Vivek Nanda (see p. 5 of this issue).
- Much has happened regarding the Volubilis project (see Fig. 1 on p. 7 of this issue). First, Dr Nicholas Stanley-Price left the Institute to become Director-General of the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Properties (ICCROM) in Rome, and he has been succeeded in his post at the Institute, and as one of the directors of the Volubilis project, by Dr Gaetano Palumbo. An initial field season was carried out at Volubilis in September 2000, and the second, in April 2001, included the first excavation in the southern part of the site in order to investigate the early Islamic occupation. In January a very successful event was hosted by Mrs Rita Bennis (a bene-

factor and supporter) and attended by the Minister for Culture, Media and Sport, Chris Smith, to raise funds for the five-year project; and I am pleased to be able to report that the sum required for the work of excavation and preservation in 2001 has been raised.

In last year's issue of *AI* I announced Dr Rachael Sparks' appointment to catalogue the Petrie Palestinian Collection. Now, after 18 months' work, we are in a position to predict that it will take at least two people a further 18 months to identify all the individual items and complete the cataloguing of this unique collection. In addition, the Institute's Collections Manager, Ian Carroll, has carried out a conservation-condition survey which has revealed how precarious is the condition of many of the objects, particularly the metalwork.

I am glad to report that this year enrolment in all the Institute's new MA and MSc degrees (listed on the back cover of *AI*) has met the required minimum numbers of students for each course. This was due in part to an anonymous donation, together with an Institute grant, for the African Archaeology MA and grants from English Heritage in support of the Artefact Studies MA, Managing Archaeological Sites MA and Technology and Analysis of Archaeological Materials MSc.

I also welcome the revitalization of the Institute of Archaeo-Metallurgical Studies (IAMS). This has included meetings with the Provost of UCL and the Peruvian Ambassador (His Excellency Mr Gilbert Chauny) and Cultural Attaché (Mr Luis Escalante-Schuler) with the Chairman of IAMS (Sir Sigmund Sternberg, who this year became an Honorary Fellow of UCL), the Director of IAMS (Honorary Visiting Professor Beno Rothenberg), the Chairman of its Scientific Committee (Dr John Merkel) and Professor Thilo Rehren (one of several new IAMS trustees).

I have relinquished the directorship of the UCL Centre for Museum, Heritage and Conservation Studies to Dr Nick Merriman, who has simultaneously become College Curator. This was made possible by the appointment of Dr Suzanne Keene (previously of the Science Museum and a graduate of the Institute) to the permanent staff. This new arrangement will also allow Dr Merriman to continue some teaching in the Museum Studies MA and in a proposed Archaeology of London MA.

Finally, I should mention the main activity that has distracted me from most other duties, namely this year's Institute research seminars and public lectures on,

respectively, "Indigenous peoples and patenting the past" and "Moving forwards with indigenous peoples into the 21st century", both of which took place during the spring term. Closely associated with these events, which were organized by Jo Dullaghan, Bill Sillar, Natalie de Silva and myself, was a third-year undergraduate course on "Indigenous Archaeology" taught by Bill and me, and a master's degree course on "Archaeology and Ethnicity" taught by Vivek Nanda.

One of the primary aims of these activities was to make speakers, discussants and audiences more aware of the complexities of the current usage of the term "indigenous". In some contexts, the stress is primacy of occupation of land (with its obvious connection to archaeology), whereas in some parts of the world, such as Africa and India, no such distinction is made, all current inhabitants being claimed as indigenous.<sup>1</sup> Another important point that has been brought into the debate is the very different ways that the ascription of "indigenous" is being employed by anthropologists, archaeologists, lawyers, linguists, non-governmental and aid organizations, and by indigenous peoples themselves.

Students, as well as staff, participating in the seminars have been so gripped by the subject that they have even missed their evening meals to attend the public lectures when the indigenous speakers have been able to talk at greater length about their main preoccupations, such as land rights and the maintenance of distinctive cultural activities, from dress and song to the ownership of tropical forests.

### Note

1. I have discussed some of these complexities, in the context of Sámi ("Lapp") culture, in a recent article: P. J. Ucko, "'Heritage' and 'indigenous peoples' in the 21st century", *Public Archaeology*, 1(4), 227-38, 2001.