

Some highlights of the 2008/2009 academic year

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

While last year marked something of a changing of the guard at the Institute, with a significant number of retirements, 2008–2009 was more one of business as usual. The main event of the year was the publication of the long-awaited results of the 2008 Research Assessment Exercise, the national evaluation of Departments' research strengths at British universities, in terms of the quality of the publications produced by their staff, their quality as an environment for carrying out research and the esteem in which they and their staff are held. Needless to say, the Institute did very well, and achieved a greater absolute amount of world-leading and internationally excellent research than any other Archaeology Department. Unfortunately, the UK government decision to allocate more research funding to science and engineering subjects than to humanities meant that this excellent result did not receive a corresponding financial reward.

Nevertheless, our continuing achievements are reflected in many other ways. This year produced a bumper crop of academic promotions: Arlene Rosen became Professor of Environmental Archaeology; Cyprian Broodbank Reader in Mediterranean Archaeology; Dorian Fuller Reader in Archaeobotany and David Wengrow Reader in Comparative Archaeology, while Louise Martin, Marcos Martinon-Torres and Karen Wright all became Senior Lecturers.

We also continued our remarkable run of success in the Provost's Teaching Awards, with Roger Matthews gaining one this year. Institute members of staff have been successful in all three years since the awards started, a record not matched by any other UCL department. The importance we attach to teaching continues to be reflected in our results in the National Student Survey, an increasingly important so-called "key performance indicator" these days, and once again we achieved a very high position in the various newspaper league tables of archaeology departments. Of particular importance was our outstanding success in the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council new Block Grant scheme for postgraduate studentships. Previously individual students applied directly to the AHRC for PhD and Masters studentships. In the new system academic institutions apply for a block of

studentships for relevant departments and students then apply to the Departments. The Institute was specifically mentioned in the AHRC letter to UCL for its outstanding track record of awards in the past and this has led to an allocation of 6 doctoral awards for each of the next five years and 5–7 Masters studentships, more than any other Department in UCL and, we suspect, more than any other Archaeology Department in the country though there are no statistics to confirm this. Institute students were also extremely successful this year in the competition for UCL Graduate Scholarships, Global Excellence Awards and Overseas Research Studentships. These cover all subjects at UCL, with outstanding applicants from all over the world, so this is an enormous tribute to the quality of the students we attract.

There were a number of departures and arrivals during the year. Suzanne Keene retired from her Museum Studies position and was replaced by Paul Basu, who was appointed Reader in Material Culture and Museum Studies. Paul previously did his PhD in the UCL Anthropology Department. Dietrich Stout also left us during the year to take up a post at Emory University, USA, while Martin Welch took up a full time position as a UCL Faculty Tutor. Susanna Harris and Michèle Wollstonecroft (both former research students) returned to the Institute to take up their British Academy Postdoctoral Research Fellowships. As I noted last year, these Fellowships are very difficult to obtain and the awards reflect extremely well not only on the scholars themselves but also on us as the host institution. To obtain two awards two years in succession as we have done is an outstanding success. Once again, no other Archaeology Department obtained more than one such award. A further success in a very difficult competition, the Leverhulme Early Career Fellowships, enabled Anne Kandler to stay with us for another two years, continuing on from her previous postdoctoral position with the Institute's AHRC Centre for the Evolution of Cultural Diversity (CECD).

It is also good to be able to report successful departures of our postdoctoral researchers to other places to develop their careers. Felix Riede, one of last year's British Academy competition successes, also based in the CECD, left to take up an Assistant Professorship in Prehistoric

Archaeology at the University of Aarhus in Denmark, and Aimee Plourde (CECD) was appointed to a Teaching Fellowship in Biological Anthropology at Bristol University.

Less positive were the eight redundancies that the Institute's Field Archaeology Unit had to make in response to the drastic reduction in building development activity requiring archaeological investigation that followed the financial crash. However, they have fared far better than many other archaeological units in Britain and thanks to the excellent management of Dominic Perring and his team are now back on an even keel with a sustainable flow of work so long as things do not get any worse.

As in previous years, there were many examples of individual recognition and only a few of them can be mentioned here. One that must certainly be highlighted is the award to Richard Macphail of the Geology Society of America's Rip Rapp Archaeological Geology Award for 2009, which is given for "outstanding contributions to interdisciplinary field of archaeological geology". It is excellent to see Richard's long-standing major contribution to this field recognized in this way. Congratulations also to Sue Colledge, Joe Flatman, Dorian Fuller and Kevin MacDonald who were elected as Fellows of the Society of Antiquaries of London. In March 2009 Roger Matthews delivered the distinguished Kershaw Lectures in Near Eastern Archaeology at the invitation of the Archaeological Institute of America and a number of staff gave plenary addresses and keynote speeches at major conferences.

There were several major grant-getting successes in addition to many smaller ones. Dorian Fuller obtained a NERC grant of £560,677 for his project "The Identification of Arable Rice Systems in Prehistory" which will enable him to appoint two postdoctoral researchers and a PhD student. Paul Basu was successful with his application to the AHRC's "Beyond Text" grant programme and obtained a three-year grant for his project "Reanimating Cultural Heritage: digital repatriation, knowledge networks and civil society strengthening in post-conflict Sierra Leone", which will bring a PhD studentship to the Institute.

Andrew Gardner (in collaboration with the BM) also obtained AHRC funding, for a Collaborative Doctoral Award on the subject of "Dress, Adornment and Identity in Late Iron Age and Roman Britain"; the award covers student fees and stipends. Elizabeth Pye and Dean Sully too were successful in obtaining Research Council funding. Theirs was AHRC/EPSRC funding for a

Science & Heritage Research Cluster on “Cultural Encounters and Explorations: Conservation’s Catch-22”. The cluster involves specialists in conservation, museums, cultural heritage, materials science, engineering, anthropology, haptics and virtual technology.

Our long-established tradition of world-wide fieldwork shows no sign of flagging. Among many other projects, Sue Hamilton undertook another successful field season on Rapa Nui with results that attracted a great deal of attention in the press. Kris Lockyear brought the final field season of his AHRC-funded Noviodunum project to a successful conclusion and David Wengrow led a team of 30 UCL students, mainly undergraduates, to excavate at the important site of Tel Bet Yerah (Khirbet Kerak) on the shores of the Sea of Galilee in northern Israel. They worked with local archaeologists, led by Dr Raphael Greenberg (Tel Aviv University), to investigate the origins of urban life in the Jordan Valley during the Early Bronze Age (with a particular focus on interregional connections between this region and the Caucasus), as well as the early spread of Islam during the Umayyad Caliphate.

Several scholarly events take place at the Institute every week so it is only possible to pick out the highlights. The International Centre for Chinese Heritage and Archaeology (ICCHA), our joint enterprise with the School of Archaeology and Museology at the University of Peking, continues to maintain a high profile. Under its auspices Dr Shan, Director General of the State Administration of Cultural Heritage, P.R. China visited the Institute on 19 February 2009 and gave a lecture on Chinese cultural heritage which was chaired by the UCL Provost. The ICCHA also organized a conference on “Sharing Archaeology” in Beijing in November 2008, fulfilling one of Peter Ucko’s very last wishes before he died.

The CHAT (Contemporary and Historical Archaeology in Theory) conference 2008 (“Heritage CHAT”) was held at UCL in November 2008, a joint venture with English Heritage and Atkins Heritage, while a major conference on early iron metallurgy across the world, “The World of Iron”, organized by Jane Humphris, Xander Veldhuijzen and Thilo Rehren of the Institute, supported by major commercial sponsorship, was held in February at the Natural History Museum. Nor was the Darwin Bicentenary neglected, with a seminar series on Darwin’s influence in Archaeology and Anthropology organized by James Steele. The conference on “Writing as Material Practice: Substance, Surface and Meaning”, organized by Kathryn Piquette

and Ruth Whitehouse, winner of this year’s Institute conference award, took place in May; it attracted interdisciplinary and international participation and generated considerable enthusiasm. The Institute’s Kenyon Lecture was given by Professor Yuval Goren, Tel Aviv University, on “International Exchange in the Eastern Mediterranean: Food and Ships, Sealing-Wax and Kings as seen Under the Petrographic Microscope”.

The most moving event of the year though was not an academic one. On 14 May 2009 we facilitated the repatriation of Australian Indigenous Human Remains. The remains had been held at the Institute since their transfer from a Cheshire auction house. A Ngarrindjeri delegation (Mr Major Sumner and Mr George Trevor) collected the remains and held smoking ceremonies in traditional dress, within the Institute building and then

out in Gordon Square, which cannot have seen too many occasions as extraordinary as this one.

The saddest occurrence of the year was Ben Samphire’s death in Ecuador in February 2009. Ben had completed his PhD at the Institute in 2008 under my supervision and had moved on to work in primate conservation. While volunteering on a primate reserve he was shot by a local landowner who supposedly mistook him for a burglar. Ben was a wonderful young man and his loss is a tragic one.

I finished last year’s report noting that the financial future in British academia looked grim but we were in a strong position to cope. This year the outlook appears even darker but thanks to the ability, commitment and dynamism of its staff and students the Institute continues to flourish and is well placed to meet the future.

The Institute’s primary research groups

The coordinators of each of the Institute’s five primary research groups report on their group’s activities during the 2008/2009 academic year.

The Environment and Culture Research Group

Coordinator: Arlene Rosen

Deputy Coordinator: Ignacio de la Torre

Student Coordinators: Brenna Hassett and Anke Cross Marsh

The Environment and Culture Research Group provides a link for staff, research students and honorary members of the Institute whose research concerns past interactions between people and the environments they occupied. Several members of the group also participate in the activities of the AHRC Centre for the Evolution of Cultural Diversity which is directed by James Steele (see report on pages 10–11).

Research

Research Group members are involved in research around the world. Several members continue to work with the Çatalhöyük Research Project. Simon Hillson is a joint coordinator of the Çatalhöyük human remains team with Clark Larsen of Ohio State University. They completed the first human remains database for the Neolithic collections from the site, which involved a complete reassessment of all the material and constitutes an important resource for their future research work. He also developed an entirely new dental pathology database. Emmy Bocaage collected dental impressions for her PhD project from the Çatalhöyük children’s remains and she has been working on them since the

field season. In addition, Emmy and Morag McBride (an MSc student) have been cataloguing the teeth from James Mellaart’s excavations which came to the Institute from storage at the Natural History Museum.

Simon Hillson also had a field season in July–August 2008 for his Astypalaia project (including the world’s largest children’s cemetery, see this issue of *Archaeology International*, pages 17–21). In April 2009, he gave a poster presentation of his work on dental caries in Peruvian material from the Ilo Valley in southern Peru.

Andrew Garrard and his colleague Corine Yazbeck (Lebanese University) had their last season of excavations at the Epipalaeolithic and Neolithic cave site of Moghr el Ahwal in the Qadisha Valley of northern Lebanon in summer 2008. Since that time, they been working on the analysis of the finds, including a detailed study of the faunal and human remains by Yvonne Edwards at UCL. For further details see <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/archaeology/project/qadisha/>

Ignacio De La Torre continued excavations at the Upper Palaeolithic site of Buendia in Cuenca (central Spain), conducted surveys in the Middle