

Director's Report 2011-12

Stephen Shennan*

The Director of the UCL Institute of Archaeology reports on events since the publication of the last issue of *Archaeology International* (No. 13/14), for 2009–11, and comments on current developments.



Fig. 1: The Princess Royal, Chancellor of the University of London, visiting the Institute during its 75th anniversary celebrations.

There is no doubt about this year's headline: the Institute's 75th anniversary! Starting in January this year (2012) there has been an amazing series of very well attended events that has taken over the life of the Institute,

organised with enormous energy by Andrew Reynolds and his supporting team (see below, pp. 7–10). The celebrations started with six inaugural lectures from Institute Professors who have been promoted in the last few years. All of them were models of what such things should be, show-casing the work of their presenters in a way accessible to a non-specialist audience and demonstrating very

* UCL Institute of Archaeology,
London WC1H 0PY, United Kingdom
ioa-director@ucl.ac.uk



Fig. 2: The late James Mellart, with Ian Hodder, his successor as director of the Çatalhöyük excavations (photo: Jason Quinlan).



Fig. 3: Mike Parker Pearson (Professor of British Later Prehistory).

clearly why they deserved their promotions. Cyprian Broodbank kicked things off with a preview of his just completed *magnum opus*, with the title *The Making of the Middle Sea*. He was followed by Liz Pye, looking back over her career as the Institute's longest-serving member of staff and considering the stories that objects tell through the traces of their life histories, together with the issues those raise for the practice of conservation. Stephen Quirke, Edwards Professor of Egyptian Archaeology and Philology, and Curator in the Petrie Museum, then critically addressed the question of the political role of archaeological archives and objects and their perception inside and outside Egypt, hoping that the 2011 Egyptian Revolution might mark a new start.

The following week Arlene Rosen showed the importance of steering a course between denial of the impact of climate change on past societies and an environmental catastrophism that looks for climate change as the major cause of social and economic collapse in the past. Andrew Reynolds then went on to show how archaeology can contribute to our understanding of long-standing issues in the legal and constitutional history of early England, before Sue Hamilton closed the series by presenting her work on 'people-centred' landscapes, from southern England to her current exciting 'Rapa Nui: Landscapes of Construction' project.

The lectures were followed by a series of '75th Anniversary debates', in which panels of distinguished visitors were asked questions by the audience on a series of currently relevant topics, covering 'Archaeology and the Media', 'Archaeology and Politics', 'Presenting the Past', 'Archaeology and Contemporary Society' and 'Archaeology into the Third Millennium' (as described below, by Joe Flatman, pp. 35–39). Then at the end of April we had a visit from the Princess Royal, in her capacity as Chancellor of the University of London (**Fig. 1**). This was particularly appropriate as she had also visited to mark the Institute's 50th anniversary. I encouraged her to return for the centenary! Shortly afterwards we had the opening of the Museum Studies students' annual exhibition, this year 'Breaking Ground: 75 Years of Pioneering Archaeology' (for which see Adam Koszary's account below, pp. 62–64), an evocative presentation of the Institute's history, accompanied by an excellent booklet.

Things culminated at the end of the academic year in early June, with the 75th Anniversary party on the evening of Friday 8th, attended by over 500 Institute alumni and other guests, and a 'World Archaeology Festival', with experimental archaeology activities, open to the public in Gordon Square and the Institute building on the Saturday (pp. 7–10). This was a delightful occasion, fortunately blessed by good weather, of which the

high point for me was Matt Pope's *tour de force* skinning a deer carcass with flint tools while giving an extremely informative and engaging lecture on human evolution.

It is sad to recall though that two of the leading figures from the first 75 years of the Institute's history have died recently. The death of James Mellaart, who was lecturer in Anatolian archaeology from 1964 to 1991 and the first excavator of Çatalhöyük (**Fig. 2**), has followed that of John Evans who, as Director from 1973 to 1989, steered the Institute through the difficult years of the 1980s into its merger with UCL (see *Archaeology International* 13/14 (2009–2011): 7–10, for his obituary by David Harris).

Turning now to other news, once again we had a bumper crop of promotions. Liz Graham, Kevin MacDonald and David Wengrow were promoted to Professor, Lukas Nickel and José Oliver to Reader, and Corinna Riva, Bill Sillar and Ulrike Sommer to Senior Lecturer. In the event though, Lukas, whose position was split between us and SOAS, decided to move completely to SOAS and so did not take up his Readership. This was one of an unusual number of staff changes over the past year. As well as Lukas, Wang Tao, Arlene Rosen and Joe Flatman, all members of the academic staff, have also left, as has Shahina Farid, the Field Director for the current Çatalhöyük project, on which she reported in the last issue (*AI* 13/14: 36–43). But there have also been significant new academic appointments. Mike Parker Pearson (**Fig. 3**) has just joined us after a long career at Sheffield, to become Professor of British Later Prehistory, and Rodney Harrison has joined us from the Open University, after being appointed to a Lectureship in Cultural Heritage and Museum Studies, while Matt Pope takes on a new role as Senior Teaching Fellow. We hope to make further academic appointments in the course of the coming academic year.

Successful grant applications have also brought in new research colleagues. Most notable has been the Institute's success in the intensely competitive European Research



Fig. 4: Helen Clarke receiving the silver medal of the Royal Swedish Academy from King Carl XVI Gustav (photo: Mikael Röhr).

Council Starter Grant competition. Ignacio de la Torre was awarded more than £1,000,000 for his project on 'The Origins of the Acheulean in East Africa', which got under way this year (see below, pp. 89–98), and we have just heard of two more awards of similar size for projects that will start in the coming year: to Margarita Gleba for a project on Mediterranean textiles, and to Marc Vander Linden, who will be coming to us from Leicester, for one on the spread of farming in the Balkans. Other notable awards include an AHRC grant of £532,000 over three years to Thilo Rehren for a collaborative research project on the rise of metallurgy in Eurasia, which will remain within the London Institute despite Thilo's move to Qatar, and Simon Hillson's Leverhulme project on the 'Archaeology of growth and development in children', which was awarded £102,000. Of special note, although the sums of money are not as large, is the adoption by the British Academy of Marcos Martín-Torres and Andy Bevan's project 'Imperial Logistics' as an official 'British Academy Research Project' in recognition of 'the excellence of their scholarship, and the promise and excitement of their programmes'. Only five projects have received this recognition since 2008. The project is a joint initiative between the Institute and the Museum of Emperor Qin Shihuang's Mausoleum and involves investigating the crafting methods and logistical organisation behind

the construction of the Terracotta Army and the broader mausoleum of the First Emperor of China (see *AI* 13/14: 65–75). In addition to these there were as usual many smaller grant awards for projects across the range of the Institute's interests and activities.

There were also other successes for members of the Institute community. In March 2012, the Royal Swedish Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities awarded Helen Clarke, a former member of the Department of Medieval Archaeology, UCL, and now Honorary Senior Lecturer at the Institute of Archaeology, their silver medal (*antikvariska medaljen i silver*) for services to Swedish archaeology. It was presented by King Carl XVI Gustav of Sweden at the Academy's annual festivities (**Fig. 4**), which are held every March in memory of Queen Ulricka Lovisa who founded in Academy in 1753. The award was a recognition in particular of her more than 30 years work as translator and editor of *Excavations at Helgö*, an early medieval site west of Stockholm, published by the Royal Swedish Academy since 1961. And Joe Flatman's book, *Becoming an Archaeologist: A Guide to Professional Pathways*, won the Current Archaeology Awards 'Book of the Year' for 2012 (see p. 26).

As usual, we did well in the annual published league tables of Archaeology Departments. For the second year in a row we were ranked first in *The Guardian* league table;

and we were 2nd and 3rd respectively in *The Times* and the 'Complete University Guide' tables. It goes without saying that it is *The Guardian's* criteria that are the most insightful and useful ones! These high ratings were confirmed by the results of the increasingly important 'National Student Survey'. We again received a 100% score for student satisfaction and came =1st out of 41 returns by Archaeology departments.

Needless to say though we cannot afford to rest on our laurels. In response to the undergraduate fee increases and the increasing emphasis on preparing students for employment and on improving the 'student experience', we have carried out the first undergraduate curriculum review since 1997, under the outstanding leadership of Mark Lake as Chair of Teaching Committee. The new curriculum will be introduced in 2013–14. We are determined to make sure that we continue to provide an outstanding undergraduate education of broad interest, not limited to training future archaeologists, one that is responsive to the changing demands of the outside world while remaining true to the Institute's traditions. This 75th anniversary year has brought home yet again the remarkable history of achievement that the Institute has to its credit and the corresponding pressure to continue to live up to that history – now and in the future.