Emergency excavations of an early Bronze Age settlement and burial site at Vliněves in Central Bohemia. The site in a sand extraction pit (above) was left on an island while being investigated (below). Photograph taken 29 August 2007 by Martin Gojda, Institute of Archaeology, Czech Academy of Sciences (Prague), using Sony DSC-F828 Digital camera (email: gojda@kar.zcu.cz).

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[Above] Chert microlith from excavations at the site of Liang Abu ('the ashes rockshelter') in East Kalimantan, on Borneo, Indonesia. Photograph taken with Nikon Coolpix 4500 and mini tripod, by Jean-Michel Chazine, CNRS-Marseille (email: jm.chazine@wanadoo.fr). [Below] Distal flake of Moss opalite, found during site recording in the Pilbara region of Western Australia. Photograph taken by Nicholas Grguric with a Kodak EasyShare C713 digital camera in October 2008 (email: eqeta@yahoo.com.au).

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EDITORIAL

In spite of its name, *Antiquity* is a modern business – a creature of today. Maybe our heart lies deep in the past, but our head is here and now. We aim to move with the times – or just ahead of them – making the past necessary, accessible and relevant. So stand by for *broadcasts* from our website, and for those numerous readers who have never heard my voice, this may come as a shock; but once the horror relapses please reflect that the spoken word often reveals more than the written, and revealing more is our game. My first comments are about this website itself, which over the last few years has acquired a personality of its own, incorporating all the things that our old extended editorials were before the internet was invented and the pressure of submissions tied the editor (by self-denying ordinance) into four pages maximum in the printed journal.

On the website, exquisitely refurbished by our digital couturier Pat Gibbs, you will find the *Journal* and next to it the *Bulletin*. The journal is the journal, the same that you can read in codex form – but with every page published since 1927 digitised and searchable by word and phrase. This facility tells you who wrote that article on the church of Debra Dama Ethiopia (Derek Matthews), when David Clarke's innocence was debated, and by whom (1973), and what editor Glyn Daniel found at the tomb of Saint Erkembode (a pair of bootees). It's probably worth stressing to those who have still to discover its wonders, that this *online archive* is not only invaluable to researchers, but is handy for students writing essays and teachers setting topics. Just give them a few keywords and watch them go. To guide the readers through the archive – available to our subscribers (we had to pay a lot to create it) – each quarter will feature an Editor's choice of articles and reviews.

The *Bulletin*, which is just to your right if you are listening to this 'pod', will be new to webophobes and you may be wondering what it is and why we have it. Well now, its principal function is to bring you news – news of archaeologists, news of projects and news of conferences to come. It exists only on the web and is on 'open access' as we say nowadays, in other words free to everyone.

The *Bulletin* has three main bits, each tossed on to your screen by the click of a button. The button labelled *Recent doctorates* lists newly completed PhDs. As everyone knows, the award of a doctorate does not necessarily make a thesis available, but using our facility means that this new piece of major research can be announced to the world within a few minutes of its author donning the hat and gown. It offers a small hand of support in that scary time that can separate the completion of a dissertation from an actual job. To put your work on the ether, just email us with the details.

The button labelled *Tributes* celebrates the lives of archaeologists who have died. Before you dismiss this as *'ah – obituaries'*, I'd like to try and interest you in two innovations of presentation and selection that make this something warmer and more informative than the usual. We are all familiar with the orotund eulogy in which a broadsheet sings the praises of a life laden with honours – and apparently unblemished by public failure or the small private catastrophes of ordinary mortals. Moreover, the choice of those singled out for the notice of the gods – and the still more arbitrary omission of others – is sometimes puzzling. To counter these undemocratic, *Prunkgräber* tendencies and to enlighten the celebrity blindness

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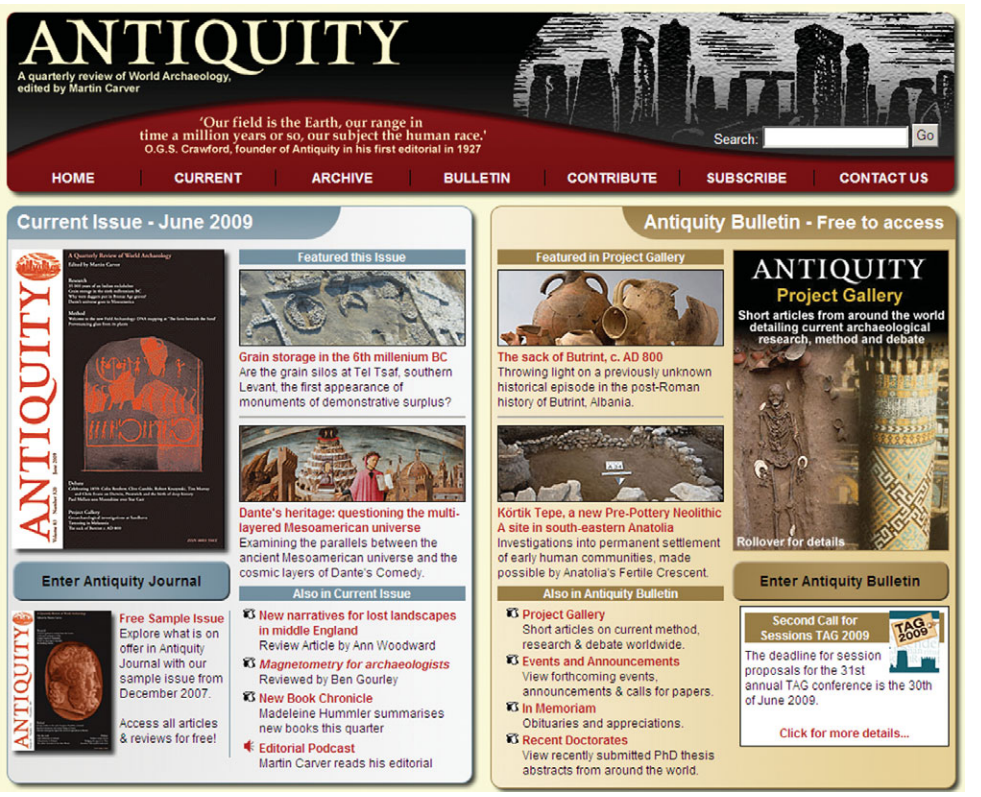

that afflicts the media and the chattering classes, *Antiquity* offers a chamber of mourning in which all may be remembered. And any mourner can make their comment there, short or long, so that we create not so much one solemn official verdict as an affectionate bundle of tributes; anyone can add a bouquet to the grave. In the fullness of time my hope is that these contributions will build a veritable prosopography of the practising archaeologists of our time. Everyone who gives a life to archaeology really gives something, and they are welcome here. Our most recent addition is, all the same, a real celebrity, one of the few teachers of whom it could be said that he was beloved as much as he was admired – Lawrence Barfield, student of prehistoric Italy.

But the principal cargo carried by our *Bulletin* is the announcement of new projects, the *Project Gallery*, which tells us about projects just started or the progress of those already underway. The contributions are colourful, significant and short (typically 1000 words and 6 pictures). They are not peer-reviewed research papers, and are not meant to be. So why do we publish them at all? That is easily answered. 'Archaeology takes a long time' is an adage familiar to all who do it. The work required to design and execute, analyse and publish a major field project is as great as that required to write *War and Peace* or compose *The Ring of the Nibelungen*. But while Tolstoy also managed several other novels, and nothing could reduce Wagner to silence, a very industrious archaeologist can only expect to complete two or three large projects in a lifetime. For each, the average eventual output is a book, several

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articles and 12 largely unvisited archive volumes of reports from lab and field; and these may take three times as long as the project itself to come to fruition. So, during a period of 20 years or more, the archaeological community is obliged to feed off rumours, conference papers and posters; even a vigorous digital self-promotion campaign can be as ephemeral and inscrutable as silence. Our *Project Gallery* offers measured, opinionated, edited, permanent accounts of work in progress, turned round in under three months and free to everyone. Moreover, the web-visitor can react instantly by emailing the author: I've got one of those, she says, looking at a picture of an Iron Age plough from Iran, but mine has knobs on. Thus the loneliness of the long distance researcher is transformed by dialogue. Fieldworkers in particular should believe that wherever they are in the world, and however frustrating the circumstances, there is an *Antiquity* reader interested in what they are doing and wanting it to work. The Project Gallery is for them.

☙ The remains of the human experience can often seem infinite in their variety and complexity, and to lie before us *'as on a darkling plain, swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight, where ignorant armies clash by night'* (to quote Matthew Arnold, pacing on his Dover Beach). Small wonder then that archaeologists try to manage their trade by classifying and assembling materials in inventories: of pottery, brooches, burials, sculpture, temples, castles and everything. Where materials still lie underground, we have discerned that they are neither infinite in number nor safe, but disappearing annually through decay and the onward march of the developer. The assembler of the corpus has thus moved from the back room to the front line.

Among the most important and vulnerable of all archaeological deposits are those that lie beneath our vigorous, throbbing, endlessly modernising towns. These strata contain the essentials of European social history from the Iron Age to the present day, but are under constant threat of being upturned, overturned and trodden in through the building of new tower blocks, car parks and metros. The careful protection and judicious management of these resources is self-evidently sensible and the accepted responsibility of all cultured nations. France has been foremost in championing what they call *Les archives du sol*, setting up the outstandingly successful *Centre National d'Archéologie Urbaine* at Tours, originally under the leadership of Henri Galinié. This kind of intelligent inventory takes patience and dedication and the CNAU has now been at it 25 years. In that time it has not been idle, producing assessments of the surviving archaeology in town after town in more than 1000 published dossiers. These assessments map the extent of Roman and later towns, show where deposits survive, and how, uniquely, they could relay the stuff of history to researchers. They have been, and continue to be, models for the world to emulate.

Rather surprising, then, that the French government is proposing to close the whole operation down. Is this just another example of the professional politicians' inexhaustible propensity to fiddle with things they don't understand? Or maybe it is a real political decision, in which case it reveals some warped priorities: Europe surely does not intend to fund the trillions of euros dispensed through its research councils by allowing the wealth-creation mammoth to trample its own cultural property, the resource that makes the research possible.

Those who want to express their dismay are requested to lend support to the *Motion pour le maintien du CNAU proposée par le Laboratoire Archéologie et Territoires CITERES UMR 6173, Université de Tours, CNRS* which they will find online at http://webmail1f.orange.fr/webmail/fr_FR/sauvonslecnau@free.fr or email Joëlle Burnouf and the team direct at sauvonslecnau@free.fr.

☙ Readers will know that some archaeological reports escape in abbreviated form to the pages of *Nature*, the science journal; and although this means that the new work is featured in one of the world's most widely consulted media, practising archaeologists may not realise that it's there. So far this year, the star of the show has been Nicholas Conard's wonderful site at Hohle Fels, Germany, whence he has reported a 35 000 year-old bone flute and a female figurine of similar date. The flute (218mm long) had 5 finger holes and a forked mouthpiece and was fashioned from the wing bone of a griffin vulture (*gyps fulvus*). The female figurine was modelled in mammoth ivory and has a preserved height of 59.7mm, a width of 34.6mm, a thickness of 31.3mm and weighs 33.3g. Commenting on the find in the same journal Paul Mellars said that *'the sexually explicit figurine of a woman. . . ..provides striking evidence of the symbolic explosion that occurred in the earliest populations of* Homo sapiens *in Europe'*.

Nature also reported the redating of the Zhoukoudian *Homo erectus* (aka Peking man), using cosmogenic $^{26}Al/^{10}Be$ measurements of the quartz stratum where he lay. The new dates correlate to marine isotope stages (MIS) 17-19, in the range of 0.68 to 0.78 Myr ago – so may imply early hominin presence at the site in northern China through a relatively mild glacial period corresponding to MIS 18[1].

☙ Sixty years ago, *Antiquity*'s publisher (and saviour) wrote to its editor: *'Considering that the deepest depression seems to reign everywhere, we find business not too bad'* (Letter from H.W. Edwards to O.G.S. Crawford, 6 October 1949). One may certainly hope that in difficult times people will tend to their roots, and that this will be good for the business of the past and the business of publishing it. It should be good for the universities too, as 'reorganised' executives decide to spend their redundancy money 'doing what they've always wanted'. And in that short list of desirable avocations, archaeology must be near the top. Meanwhile, let me thank our authors, readers and subscribers for their support, pledging our loyalty to each other and holding to our belief that the human past we collectively discover and disseminate is fundamental to whatever the future brings, even in the hardest times.

Martin Carver
York, 1 September 2009

[1] *Nicholas J. Conard, Maria Malina, Susanne C. Münzel, New flutes document the earliest musical tradition in southwestern Germany,* Nature *(24 June 2009) doi:10.1038/nature08169 Letter; Nicholas J. Conard, A female figurine from the basal Aurignacian of Hohle Fels Cave in southwestern Germany,* Nature *459: 248-52 (14 May 2009) doi:10.1038/nature07995 Letter; Paul Mellars, Archaeology: origins of the female image* Nature *459: 176-7 (13 May 2009) doi:10.1038/459176a; Guanjun Shen, Xing Gao, Bin Gao, Darryl E. Granger, Age of Zhoukoudian* Homo erectus *determined with 26Al/10Be burial dating,* Nature *458: 198-200 (12 March 2009) doi:10.1038/nature07741 Letter.*