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# **E**DITORIAL

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Why are archaeologists not more involved in the climate change debate? Most archaeologists, but in particular those who have studied prehistory, are well aware of the reality of past changes in climate and are in a position to express informed views on the implications of such change for Planet Earth and all the life forms which it supports. Archaeologists, along with their Quaternary scientist colleagues, know that climate change has been a constant throughout the span of human existence thus far and inevitably will continue. Other scientists are concerned with attempting to predict the extent and timing of future climate change and, as we know, argue amongst themselves about the degree to which modern anthropogenic use of fossil fuels and resulting greenhouse gas emissions are driving the process. The current debate may perhaps result in measures which limit some of the present effects on the climate of human interference but archaeologists, taking the long view which 150 years of prehistoric studies have enabled, can assert with authority that sooner or later, and irrespective of human intervention, there will be dramatic climatic shifts with equally dramatic life-form consequences.

Archaeologists also know what the results of such shifts in climate regimes in the past have been, for example following the expansion of glaciers across northern Europe or the desertification of the Sahara. In human terms, a major consequence has been migration. Migration is an inevitable response to a situation where a previous homeland becomes inhospitable because the effects of climate change prevent continuation of the existing subsistence strategy. The outcome can of course be successful adaptation, assuming the availability of suitable refugia for migrants to occupy, as we can see was the situation on many occasions during the Pleistocene.

Perhaps the reason for archaeologists' silence on the subject, however, is that their expert knowledge of the past must make them pessimistic about the future for humankind. If it is accepted that climate change and resulting migration are inevitable, then a major mismatch for resource availability of all kinds, including land, is created by the continuing exponential growth in the human population. Unless the scenario beloved of science fiction writers whereby colonization of

subterranean, submarine, or extra-planetary worlds becomes possible, creating brand new realms for inhabitation, then conflict and starvation likely will ensue. These latter are, as archaeologists are well aware, an ever-present part of the human condition and they do not in themselves threaten the survival of humanity. But looking into the future the equation which permits these regulating factors to achieve what passes for equilibrium will be unbalanced by the combination of massive population growth (and its demands on resources) and developments in conflict technology.

My musings in this editorial have been prompted by a letter on climate change seen in a recent magazine which ended: 'we cannot afford to cause the earth to return to prehistoric climatic extremes'. Archaeologists may concur with this opinion in terms of the implied effect of such a return, but will instinctively be less sanguine about the ability to avoid it in the long term. Prophesying eventual misery and decimation, if not actual extinction, for the human race will not make archaeologists popular, and arguably could rather undermine the rationale of the whole heritage project, but it is a realistic and logical position for archaeologists to adopt given what they know from the past. And expressing their views might just help to broaden the debate sufficiently for journalists and politicians at least to take a more informed perspective from the past when making their predictions for the future.

Meanwhile we press on! The pessimism of the above is, I should stress, not manifest in any of the articles in this issue, which are all by authors getting on with the job – and rightly so – of pursuing our understanding of the past. Eva Andersson Strand and her collaborators are in fact decidedly up-tempo about the possibilities for applying new approaches and techniques to the investigation of ancient textiles. It is a given of archaeology that textiles all too rarely survive, but when they do they certainly warrant the attention these authors are advocating.

Chris Scarre looks at the phenomenon of chambered-tomb construction and use in Neolithic Europe now that advances in radiocarbon dating have allowed it to be seen that megalithic monuments, contrary to past theories of longevity, are often of very time-constrained duration. Portuguese megaliths feature in this article, and Portugal is also the setting for the article by Carla Maria Braz Martins. In this she describes the evidence for Roman lead mining in Aveiro district and seeks to establish an association with the provision of gladiatorial displays for the entertainment and control of the miners.

The final article tackles some of the vexed questions surrounding the appearance and development of lustreware in Italy. Marta Caroscio combines consideration of the literary evidence with an up-date-view of the – actually surprisingly limited – archaeological data and concludes that individual potters must have been more mobile between production centres in Renaissance Italy than previously thought.

A full complement of reviews of an even greater diversity of archaeological publications than usual concludes this issue.