

EDITORIAL

☞ The repositioning of archaeology at Edinburgh has been of exceptional interest, not just out of sentiment for the Abercromby Chair (*Antiquity* 80: 778-79), but because of the current signals for the subject's future coming from a great university. Their new Professor of Classical Archaeology and Head of the Subject Area of Archaeology is to be Jim Crow (currently of Newcastle), to whom we offer warmest congratulations. Jim's research interests extend from Roman frontiers and Hadrian's Wall to late antiquity and medieval Byzantium. The new professor is an experienced practising archaeologist, and, moreover, he comes out fighting: "Contrary to the anxieties you raised in the last issue" he writes, "this does not constitute the end of archaeology at Edinburgh. As part of a programme of restructuring, Archaeology will join the large School of History and Classics which will be renamed the 'School of History, Classics, and Archaeology' from September 2007. As the School's website announces, the appointment of the new Chair 'promises welcome synergies both within the existing School (especially in Classics and Medieval History) and with our new partners in Archaeology'. This appointment does not replace the existing Abercromby Chair in Archaeology, but represents a substantial investment in the subject that is a clear token of the University's determination to ensure that the integration of Archaeology into its new School (which is already home to several colleagues with archaeological interests) is a successful one".

He also reminds us that when Roger Mercer was at Edinburgh (see *Antiquity* 80: 987-95) Classical Archaeology and Byzantine studies were part of the normal fare offered to archaeology students. At that time David Talbot-Rice, a Byzantinist, was not only a distinguished Professor of Art History in the University, but had excavated and published on the Great Palace in Constantinople and had written the first book on Byzantine glazed pottery. "It seems surprising" he chides me, "that your editorial can only reflect on the past achievements of prehistorians, when today, in most successful Archaeology 'departments', teaching and research can range from the origins of early man to the archaeology of the twentieth century. By comparison with the 'big battalions' like History and Geography, Archaeology 'departments' remain relatively small, but the subject's strength remains its interdisciplinarity and the synergies that can be created both within, and beyond, the new 'schools' and faculties of today's universities".

Why does Professor Crow put the word 'departments' in quotation marks, I wonder? I can see that words like 'restructuring' and 'synergy' might deserve what modern editors call 'scare quotes', but Archaeology departments have been bidding for intellectual independence since the 1960s, and should have shed their inverted commas by now. Research thrives on discourse, but good discourse needs independent minds. As our readers will know, archaeology is a study of prodigious variety. Should we not protect *all* our subject areas? – they will live longer than we will. Furthermore, like mathematics in science, prehistory has an axial role in the study of the past. It is *primus inter pares*, it is *sine qua non*, not *rudis indigestaque moles* or *parcus deorum cultor*¹.

But reading between the lines, there is some hope that prehistory will soon be back at Edinburgh as an independent discipline with a new Abercromby professor at its head,

¹ For those not familiar with the chit-chat in a Classics department, respectively 'a rough and unordered mass' (Ovid) and 'a grudging worshipper of the gods' (Horace).

dedicated, as he wished, to *the antiquities and civilisation of the Countries of Europe and the Near East from the earliest times to the period at which the written history of each country may be said to begin*. No-one can deny the merits of an interdisciplinary study of the past, but prehistory must be an independent partner, especially in the city in which the term was invented by Daniel Wilson 156 years ago².

📖 In 1978 Edinburgh University Press published *Time and Traditions*, the first influential book to be written by Bruce Trigger who died on 1 December 2006 aged 69. To quote the McGill University website, “His death came just two months after the October release of *The Archaeology of Bruce Trigger*, in which 22 scholars paid tribute to Prof. Trigger’s influence on generations of archaeologists. At the launch of the book, Prof. Trigger said: ‘This last year has been one of the happiest of my life. First of all, I’ve been able to spend time with my wife and family, which is always very pleasant. In June I was made Professor Emeritus and now this book, *The Archaeology of Bruce Trigger* is evidence in print of my colleagues’ appreciation’.”

The tributes in our *In Memoriam* (www.antiquity.ac.uk) remind us how important are those long, un-chronicled, unselfish hours that the best academics give to their students. Junko Habu, Professor in the Anthropology Department at Berkeley, California, remembers: “Although Bruce was not my main advisor, I learned so much from him during my PhD study at McGill from 1988 to 1996 . . . I could not thank him enough for all the things he did for me”. And for Matthew Johnson, Professor of Archaeology at Southampton, “Prof. Trigger was a collegiate academic and a very kind man. When I visited McGill as a mere research student, he took several hours of his time to talk with me and I left his office laden down with offprints; he valued others’ opinions and always engaged with them seriously and sympathetically however profound the difference of view was. I disagreed with many of the things he wrote and said, but always came away from reading his work provoked into a new way of thinking about a problem and a new challenge. There can be no higher praise for an academic.”

📖 It’s a great shame that Trigger could not be present on 23 October 2006, when a lively crowd of students and researchers gathered in Cambridge, UK, to hear Colin Renfrew, Michael Schiffer and Ezra Zubrow reconstruct and evaluate their early pioneering involvement in the ‘New Archaeology’, now more commonly known as ‘processualism’. Robin Dennell, Rob Foley, Paul Mellars and Marek Zvelebil were discussants. The videotape and full transcript are available on <http://www.arch.cam.ac.uk/personal-histories>. The event was conceived, organised and sponsored by oral historian Pam Smith. Here is her account of this remarkable *Processualists’ Reunion*.

“Graeme Barker began with a short overview, noting the incredible transformation which occurred in archaeology in the 1960s. ‘If you wish to know what it felt like for those of us living through it,’ he remarked, ‘compare the 1963 edition of Brothwell and Higgs’s *Science in Archaeology* to the 1969 edition. There was a fantastic revolution in methods which underpins everything that we do today.’

Colin Renfrew experienced the American New Archaeology as an expansive attempt to answer the questions: What is the nature of archaeology, what are the theoretical

² In his *Archeology and Pre-historic Annals of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1851).

underpinnings of this enterprise? ‘We were fortunate,’ he stated, ‘in having the philosopher of science, R.B. Braithwaite, whose [1953] book, *Scientific Explanation* remains seminal’. In the Annus Mirabilis, 1968, Binford’s *New Perspectives in Archaeology*, and David Clarke’s *Analytical Archaeology* appeared. Renfrew considered post-processualism, with its philosophical questioning, to lie ‘within the [same] broad church. It is schismatic, but broad churches have their schisms’.

As an undergraduate at Harvard, Ezra Zubrow saw that the ‘New Archaeology was part of a general movement. There was the new maths, new biology, new physics. We were democratizing archaeology and science! [A teacher] said archaeology was about probity-value but I thought that archaeology could be done by anybody. It could be repeated; it could be replicable! Culture could be analysed as a system!’

Mike Schiffer, Binford’s student at UCLA in 1967, evoked the feelings of the late 1960s: ‘enrolment was vastly expanding, new universities were built, the democratization of higher education occurred . . . the Vietnam War was gearing up. I started out as a chemistry major but did not want to become a pawn in the war machine. Binford provided a blueprint for engagement in society. As a lecturer, he was unique. He emphasized that independent causal processes could give rise to variability in the archaeological record which was an important insight’.

In discussion, Robin Dennell remembered the introduction of intensive large-scale sieving and flotation, and for Marek Zvelebil, ‘the methodological innovations of the 1960s were revolutionary, making explorations of the past invariably more complex . . . But did it actually advance our understanding of past societies?’ Paul Mellars responded that 1960s archaeology emphasised accessible data: ‘technology, subsistence, food supply, demography, settlement patterns, environment and particularly explanation of change.’ Rob Foley remembered how scientists and anthropologists were in uneasy alliance, but ‘from about 1965 to 1975, [they] converged and worked very powerfully together.’ The lively question period was abruptly interrupted by a ringing phone. Binford calling? Sadly not. It was only the Building Syndicate reminding us that we had forgotten about the time!”

Many thanks to Pam Smith and we look forward to more reminiscences on the archaeology of ourselves. Readers might also note Mark Lake’s article ‘Whither Processualism?’ which will be found in the review section of the current issue.

📖 Anthony Thwaite, whose poem on wet sieving featured in our September issue, has brought out a charming anthology of archaeological poetry entitled *The Ruins of Time* (Eland, London, October 2006, price £5). As a taster, I offer one of Anthony’s own contributions, *Sigma*, which will appeal to anyone pottering around their garage after a long winter:

*Unable to get on with anything,
Throwing out papers, fiddling with piled mess,
I pull a box of sherds out, stacked up here
Among the whole accumulation, less
Because I want to but because it’s there –
A scattering of pottery I picked up
Among the Libyan middens I knew once,
And rake it over, chucking out here a cup-
handle, broken, and a flaking rim:*

*And, in among it all, there’s suddenly
This scrap that carries a graffito - Σ
A sigma, a scratched ess; and try to tell
Where it once fitted – as beginning or end,
As some abbreviated syllable,
Or sign of ownership, or just a scribble
Made on a day in 450BC
By someone else who messed about like this,
Unable to get on with anything,
But made his mark for someone else to see.*



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Poetic readers may also know Jim Wiseman's 'The Muse within us' and 'Poetic Visions of the Past' which presented some of his favourite poems in *Archaeology* magazine; and the lyrical response it provoked in the same journal, including 'When they find Atlantis' and 'Shall I compare thee to a backfill pile?' (whatever that is) (www.archaeology.org/online/features/poetry).

☞ One of the highlights of this year's TAG (Theoretical Archaeology Group) at Exeter (UK) was the session led by Paul Lane on historical archaeology in Africa. A cohort of brilliant young speakers demonstrated that theory is active there, and we look forward to bringing some of this work to readers in future issues. Historical archaeologists have been at pains to show that they are driven by a post-colonial type of inquiry – one that focuses on the country receiving

Staffordshire whitewares, not the one making them. All the same, in our own research community it is also clear that the theories of interpretation are largely those worked up in England and North America rather than, say, Africa or India. Is there any way of squaring this circle? We wish to understand the past, we wish to share its interpretation, we aspire to no imperialism of thinking; and yet . . . even post-modern archaeology assumes that there is a hierarchy of understanding (however much it might want to keep that opinion to itself).

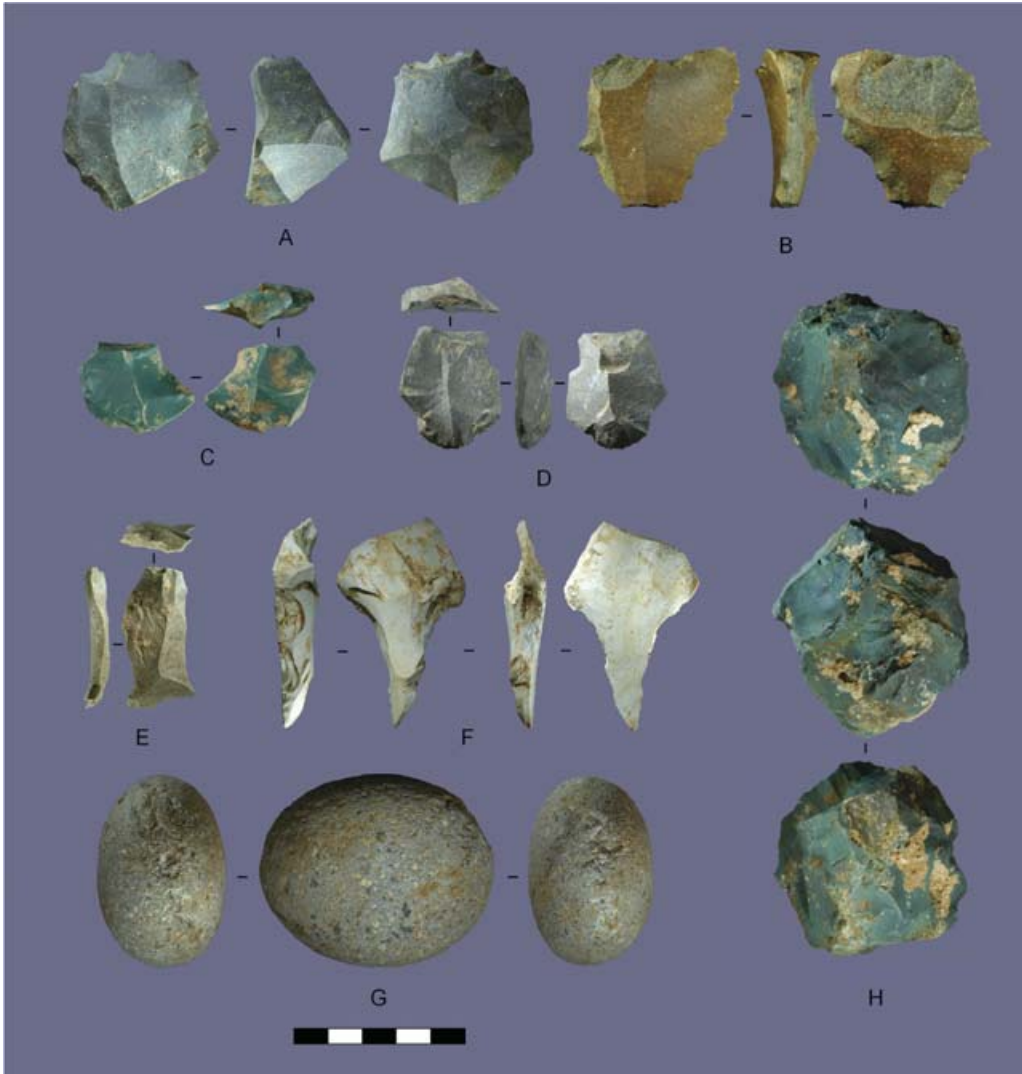
A signal curiosity was provided by Greg Bailey's film *In transit*, in which a group of archaeologists from Bristol and London 'excavated' an old Ford Transit van. We all have strata in our cars, especially mine, which is a travelling material archive of old tickets, socks, earphones, homework, sweet-wrappers, the sweets themselves (in an advanced state of diagenesis), mud and maps. The stratification of the Transit van was not only rich and varied, but subjected to archaeological recording rather more detailed and rigorous than, say, the Sutton Hoo ship burial. I was particularly impressed by the wheel arches, which remembered, in the micro-layers adhering to the underside, the mud of the many regions through which the van had travelled.

☞ Andrew Sherratt's memory (see *Antiquity* 80: 762-66) is being marked by the establishment of a trust fund to support young researchers from academic institutions anywhere in the world who are working in the field of old world prehistory. Details of the fund can be found at www.sheffield.ac.uk/archaeology/andrew-sherratt.html.

Martin Carver
1 March 2007



Graham Connah contributes this caption: Western end-section of the 6 × 50m Cutting VIII through the settlement mound at Daima, north-east Nigeria. Photographed, after completion of excavation, by Graham Connah on Kodachrome II slide film with an Agfa Silette Record, my best camera being reserved for the (at that time) more important black-and-white photography. Photographed 7 May 1966 in light conditions described in my records as 'Cloudy sun', 1/60th second, at f8, at infinity. Excavation foreman Umoru Gol stands at top, my principal assistant Julius Tilleh at bottom. Ranging rod of 2 metres in 20 centimetre divisions. Relatively little fading has occurred with this photograph in the forty years since it was taken. (Connah, G. 1981. Three thousand years in Africa: Man and his environment in the Lake Chad region of Nigera. Cambridge University Press). Email graham.connah@effect.net.au.



Mark Moore contributes this caption: Stone artefacts recovered in 2003-2004 from the Pleistocene deposits of Liang Bua Cave, Flores, Indonesia, in association with *Homo floresiensis* remains. (A-C) Radial cores. (D) Bipolar core. (E) Blade-like flake. (F) Perforator. (G) Hammerstone. (H) Multiplatform core/hammerstone. Scale 50mm. This plate is made up of 26 separate images taken by Mark Moore at the University of New England using a Nikon D100 digital SLR with an AF Micro-Nikkor 60/F2.8D lens. The camera was mounted on a desktop studio and the artefacts were lit incidentally with adjustable fibre optics. The coloured background was added digitally using Micrografix Picture Publisher 10. Liang Bua Cave was excavated as part of a joint Indonesian/Australian interdisciplinary study, principally funded by the Australian Research Council, exploring the timing, nature, and palaeoclimatic context of the early hominin and modern human occupation of island Indonesia. Email mmoore2@une.edu.au.