

## Some highlights of the 1999/2000 academic year

Peter Ucko

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

Following last year's precedent, I start by referring to some of the initiatives noted on the back cover of the 1998/99 issue of *Archaeology International*. I am delighted to report that:

- Dr Rachael Sparks has joined the staff as Curator of the Petrie Palestinian Collection. She has begun the huge exercise of cataloguing and identification and has also examined and photographed the objects that were donated by Petrie to the Nicholson Museum at the University of Sydney, Australia. Whenever we hear of someone about to travel to places to which Sir Flinders or Lady Hilda Petrie sent objects from the sites of Tell Fara, Ajjul and Jemmeh, he or she is asked to take digital and still photographs for us. The most recent "victim" of this stratagem was solicitor Derek Hayes, when he visited Cracow, Poland. And I have pursued my personal interest in the Collection by writing an article on its history and its role in the development of the Institute which has recently been published.<sup>1</sup>
- Dr Andrew Reid, formerly of the University of Botswana, has been appointed to a new joint lectureship with the British Institute in Eastern Africa. He returned from fieldwork in Botswana in January to begin teaching and has also assisted Kevin MacDonald in planning the new MA in African Archaeology.
- The research project on rock art funded by English Heritage concluded with a highly successful presentation in the Institute of its draft final report, given by the teams from the University of Bournemouth and the Institute. An appreciative audience supported the idea that the project should be followed by a UK-wide programme of rock-art recording.

I am glad to be able to record that we have strengthened our initiative in Chinese archaeology on which I reported last year. We now have four Chinese postgraduates studying at the Institute: research students Quanguy Wang (archaeometallurgy of Jin bronzes from Shanxi) and Jigen Tang (urbanism at Bronze Age Anyang), Shuya Wei taking the MSc in Principles of Conservation and Rui Chai the MA in Field and Analytical Techniques in Archaeology. Furthermore, the Provost of UCL welcomed Professors Lin Qinzhu and Wang Wei from the Institute of Archaeology of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences when they came to lecture here in September 1999 (see Fig. 1 and p. 5 of this issue).

In October 1999 we also welcomed our

French colleagues from the Musée des Antiquités Nationales de Saint Germain-en-Laye to mark the formal programme of collaboration between our two institutions. The director of the museum, Patrick Périn, lectured on excavations at the Basilica at Saint Denis, and the following day Laurent Olivier and Sue Hamilton gave a presentation on their collaborative research in Burgundy on the Iron Age burial mound at Sainte Colombe sur Seine. Further joint fieldwork is planned in various parts of France, and a research project on Late Palaeolithic Azilian painted pebbles from Mas d'Azil in the French Pyrenees is expected to begin shortly.

Among many other visitors to the Institute this year I mention only two: the Chairman of the UCL Council, Lord Young of Graffham, who was particularly fascinated by his visit to the Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology, and Marcia Langton, Professor of Australian Indigenous Studies at the University of Melbourne, who gave an electrifying address on her experiences as an Aborigine in the context of the continuing political debates as to whether Australia should become a republic.

In November 1999, several of us participated in a seminar in Athens on the theme of anthropology and archaeology in dialogue. It was organized by the Institute together with the universities of Athens and Crete and the Archaeological Society at Athens. The Institute-wide thematic seminars that we initiated last year have continued. This year Andrew Reynolds organized a series in the spring term on the theme "Challenging historical narratives: case studies in the relationship between archaeology and history". The ten speak-



**Figure 1** Professor Lin Qinzhu and Professor Wang Wei at the Institute of Archaeology, September 1999.

ers who contributed to the series included four from the Institute (Richard Reece, Ian Shaw, Harriet Crawford and Tom Loftfield) and visitors from the universities of Leicester (Mark Gillings), Southampton (David Wheatley), Wales (Joshua Pollard) and York (Martin Carver) as well as the British Museum (David Gaimster).

I am pleased to report that we are making good progress towards establishing closer links with our alumni. Over 4000 names are now inscribed on a database and Rosalind Janssen has become the Institute's alumni coordinator, assisted by Barbara West. On 12 June 1999 the Institute hosted its second annual reception for its former students. A hundred guests, most of whom were alumni, gathered in the Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology, where Rosalind gave a short talk on the museum's famous collection of textiles. A second event took place on UCL Reunion Day in September when some 40 alumni returned to the Institute. A reception was held in the foyer where students taking the MA in Museum Studies this year had mounted a much-acclaimed exhibition, "Ancient Egypt: magnet of the Western imagination". Dominic Montserrat, himself an alumnus of UCL, introduced the exhibition, and I took the opportunity to present framed certificates to Judy Medrington, the Institute's academic administrator, and Rosalind Janssen, in recognition of their both having given 25 years of service to the Institute and College. In the evening many alumni returned to join present and former staff and students at a surprise presentation party for Judy. The third annual alumnus reception is scheduled for 10 June 2000, when the writer and broadcaster Michael Wood will give a lecture entitled "The legacy of the ancient world: travels in the heartlands of civilization".

I am particularly proud to end this note with the news that the Institute has been commended by UCL for its actions in admitting a blind MA student, Simon O'Connor, who is, we believe, the first such student to take any postgraduate archaeology degree. As a result, the Institute is not only graced by new lifts that speak as well as go up and down, but also by Simon's guide dog Dolby.

### Note

1. P. J. Ucko, "The biography of a collection: the Sir Flinders Petrie Palestinian Collection and the role of university museums", *Museum Management and Curatorship* 17, 351–99, 1998 (published March 2000).