

## Director's Report 2012–13

Stephen Shennan\*

The Director of the UCL Institute of Archaeology reports on events since the publication of the last issue of *Archaeology International* (No. 15), for 2011–12, and comments on current developments.

After the excitement of the Institute's 75th-anniversary celebrations last year, the academic year now coming to end has been more low-key, though there is still much to report, not least a delightful postscript to last year's celebrations with the installation of a monolith in the Gordon Square garden to mark the anniversary, and its unveiling by Malcolm Grant in one of his last acts as UCL Provost (**Fig. 1**). The idea for this came from Andrew Reynolds, who pursued it energetically for well over a year, finally gaining the approval of the Gordon Square Garden Committee and Camden Council. The stone itself is a sarsen from the Avebury area, generously donated by Gillian Swanton of North Farm, West Overton, and collected and installed as an act of goodwill by ME Construction, one of UCL's contractors. It is an extremely attractive addition to the Square, much more so in my view than the other sculptures already there, and could not be more appropriate as a visible expression of our activities and our presence in the square. The unveiling was followed by a party and on the following day we opened the Institute building and took over the garden again for a day of archaeological activities for the public, our 'Festival of World Archaeology'. This was very successful and is now well on its way to becoming a tradition. A huge debt of thanks is owed to the organising committee – Ian Carroll, Charlotte



**Fig. 1:** UCL Provost, Malcolm Grant, unveils an Avebury sarsen in Gordon Square garden to mark the Institute of Archaeology's 75th anniversary (photo: Lisa Daniel).

Frearson, Emily Garland, Louisa Goldsmith, Andrew Reynolds and Kelly Trifilo – and to all those who volunteered on the day.

The most important legacy of our recent anniversary though is the 75th-anniversary appeal. As I said in the letter which inaugurated the appeal, there is now a greater need than ever to build up a fund for the support

\*UCL Institute of Archaeology,  
London WC1H 0PY, United Kingdom  
[ioa-director@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:ioa-director@ucl.ac.uk)

of students who want to carry on in archaeology – or the discipline will revert to being the domain of the well-off, as it was in the early 20th century. I am extremely grateful to those who have already given so generously and would urge everybody else to consider doing so.

While we were not quite able to match the six inaugural lectures from new Professors that we had last year as part of the 75th-anniversary celebrations, we were still strongly represented in the Social and Historical Sciences series this year, by four lectures which demonstrated yet again the breadth of Institute interests. Ian Freestone, who came to the Institute from Cardiff in 2011 as Professor of Archaeological Materials and Technology, explained how laboratory analysis is helping us to understand the origins of medieval glassmaking, the way the glass was made and how the glaziers obtained their glass, in his lecture 'New Light on Medieval Stained Glass'. Liz Graham's lecture as Professor of Mesoamerican Archaeology, 'Between the Devil and the Deep Sea – The Maya of Colonial Belize', examined the nature of contact between the Maya and their colonisers, showing how the Christianity brought by Europeans became an instrument of rebellion and resistance. In 'Re-Mapping West Africa's Ancient Empires' Kevin MacDonald, newly-promoted Professor of African Archaeology, argued that we need to reconsider long-held beliefs about the geography of the ancient empires of Ghana and Mali in the light of new archaeological evidence, while David Wengrow, new Professor of Comparative Archaeology, showed how understanding the past of the ancient Middle East is relevant to the present in his 'An Archaeology of Political Life, from the Bronze Age to the Kurdish Spring'.

As usual, there were many individual successes this year. Dorian Fuller was promoted to Professor of Archaeobotany and Kris Lockyear and Roxana Ferlini to Senior Lecturer. Dorian continued the Institute's outstanding success in the European Research Council's very stiff competitions by obtaining an



**Fig. 2:** Magnetometry survey in progress in Hertfordshire as part of the AHRC-funded project 'Sensing the Iron Age and Roman Past' (photo: Kris Lockyear).

Advanced Grant of 2,000,000 euros for his 5-year project on 'Comparative Pathways to Agriculture'. This is in addition to his new grant of over £700,000 from the Natural Environment Research Council, 'The impact of evolving of rice systems from China to Southeast Asia', which extends his previous work in this field to look at the origin and extent of early wet rice farming. Kris was also successful in the grant-getting field, with an award of over £66,000 from the Arts and Humanities Research Council's Community Heritage Development programme. This project, 'Sensing the Iron Age and Roman Past', brings together a wide variety of groups within the county of Hertfordshire to investigate a selection of Iron Age and Roman sites via magnetometry survey (**Fig. 2**). Of our many other successful grantees I should also single out Amara Thornton, one of our recent PhDs, who was awarded a British Academy Post-Doctoral Fellowship, and Paul Basu, Reader in Material Culture and Museum Studies, who obtained both a British Academy Mid-Career Fellowship and a Leverhulme Research Fellowship.

But grants are not the only awards and it is a particular pleasure to report the success of Charlotte Frearson, our Undergraduate Programmes Administrator, in winning the award of UCL Public Engager of the Year in the Support Staff category (**Fig. 3**). Her mas-



**Fig. 3:** Charlotte Frearson receiving her award, in January 2013, as UCL Public Engager of the Year, Support Staff Category (photo: Jay Stone).

tery of social media is increasingly important to us, from attracting attention to our events to telling the world about our successes and recruiting students. We have also just learned of further awards. Marcos Martín-Torres has won a Provost's Teaching Award, keeping up the Institute's outstanding record in these awards. There is barely a year when we have not won one of these since the awards were introduced, a real reflection of the importance that Institute staff attach to teaching. In addition, James Hales and Judy Medrington have been recognised in the new UCLU Student Choice Teaching Awards. These awards are voted for solely by students. James has won in the 'Outstanding Teaching' category and Judy has won in the 'Outstanding Personal Support' and 'Outstanding Support for Teaching' categories.

As usual, the year has been marked by comings and goings. Liz Pye will be retiring in September after an association with the Institute of more than 40 years, while Audrey Reed, Judy Medrington's right-hand woman for 20 years, is also retiring. Roxana

Ferllini too is leaving. Liz will be replaced by Dr Caitlin O'Grady, Lecturer in Conservation, who arrives in October. During the year we also appointed a new full-time Lecturer in Chinese Archaeology, to replace Wang Tao and Lukas Nickel, holders of positions jointly with SOAS, who left last year. Dr Yijie Zhuang, who currently holds a post-doctoral position at Oxford, will join us in September and his main role will be to support our new Master's degree in the Archaeology and Heritage of Asia, which starts in September.

Unfortunately, I also have some sad news to report, the untimely death of Peter Drewett (**Fig. 4**). Peter was an integral member of the Institute for many years before he left in 2004 to become Professor of Archaeology at the University of Sussex. He set up and directed the Sussex Field Unit (now Archaeology South-East) from 1973–91. He also established the Institute's Experimental Archaeology Field Course for new undergraduates, now one of the Institute's best known traditions, and throughout his career was closely involved in what we now call Public Archaeology. Archaeology South-East itself continues to go from strength to strength under the



**Fig. 4:** Peter Drewett (photo: Stuart Laidlaw).

leadership of Dominic Perring, despite the recession, and this year took over the Essex County Council Field Unit.

One of the Institute's oldest supporters, Peggy Drower, also died this year, only a month away from her 101st birthday. The author of *Flinders Petrie: a Life in Archaeology*, she set up the Ancient History and Egyptology undergraduate degree at UCL and was a member of staff of the History Department rather than the Institute, but always had a strong connection with us, latterly as a Visiting Professor. In 2008 she wrote to me, 'I follow the news of the Institute's members with great interest and am proud to belong to the organisation I have been closely connected with since its inauguration.'

The commitment of our current staff is reflected in the fact that the Institute came top of the *Guardian University Guide* league table of Archaeology departments for the third year running and 3rd in the *Complete University Guide* and the *Times Good University Guide*. We also received a 97% student satisfaction rating in the National Student Survey (NSS) of 2012. The NSS scores are among the so-called 'Key Indicator Statistics' that the Higher Education Funding Council now makes available to prospective students. As I noted last year, such indicators are extremely important in what is now a very

competitive student market, both nationally and internationally. A vital element here is preparing students for employment and, thanks especially to Bill Sillar and Charlotte Frearson, we have been devoting a great deal of effort to this.


The other area where we are judged as an institution is our research and, like everyone else, we are now in the final stages of preparing our submission to the 2013 Research Excellence Framework (REF2013), the national evaluation run by the Higher Education Funding Council. The outcome of this will determine our base research funding for the next five years. This time round it includes for the first time an element of evaluation of the impact of research outside academia. James Steele, our REF lead, has been extremely busy drafting the various documents we need to produce – and encouraging people to complete last-minute publications.

We remain not just one of the biggest but the best Archaeology department in the world despite the difficult external environment. As I move into my final year as Director it continues to be a pleasure and a privilege to lead the Institute, with its outstanding and committed academic and support staff and the excellent students it attracts. There is no better job in archaeology.

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