

The eighth issue of *Archaeology International*

When introducing the first issue of *AI* eight years ago, I described it as a new venture for the Institute of Archaeology. Its novelty lay in the attempt to convey each year, to potential readers around the world, an impression of the scope of the research being undertaken by Institute staff and postgraduates. The main aim was to publish annually a mixture of short, clearly written and visually attractive articles that reflected the interests and skills of the Institute's large research community. It has been a challenging task, not for want of choice of topics but for the embarrassment of riches from which to choose. Each year I have selected a variety of topics concerned with different themes, areas and periods – and then struggled to fit them, together with the other regular features that precede and follow the articles, into *AI*'s 64-page format. This year was no exception, and I hope that the twelve articles, which range in time from the Lower Palaeolithic over half a million years ago to the recent past, and geographically from England to Egypt, India and China, will excite the interest of our worldwide readership.

After launching *AI* in 1997/98 and producing eight issues, I have decided that the time has come for me to step down as editor. This year therefore, rather than follow my usual practice of commenting on the current crop of articles, I am tempted instead to try to summarize what has been achieved so far. One way of doing so is to present some facts and figures. Thus, since the first issue appeared, 100 research articles have been published, highlighting the remarkable scope and diversity of field, library and laboratory work being undertaken by members of the Institute's research groups. The world map that is updated in each issue reveals a marked increase since 1997 in the number of current field projects (now 54) and their geographical spread in Europe, Asia, Africa and the Americas. Likewise, the lists that are updated at the end of each issue show that the total numbers of academic staff and registered research students have increased substantially (now 83 and 129 respectively), and that 93 PhDs were awarded between 1997 and 2004. These figures reflect the continuing growth of the Institute's research capacity, but they do not fully convey the extraordinary wealth of archaeological themes, questions and problems being investigated.

From the beginning, my aim has been to display part at least of that wealth in the pages of *AI*, and to do so in ways that are both intelligible and interesting for archaeological and non-archaeological readers alike. I have tried to ensure clarity and simplicity of expression and to eliminate academic jargon – a policy that has sometimes led to lively and lengthy interchanges between author and editor. The illustrations, which are a vital part of *AI*, have also proved to be a challenging part of what has been very much a hands-on job. In the early years, when most authors submitted slides or prints, there were few problems, but since digital cameras, scanners and all manner of electronic files came into use the task has become much more complex. I owe a particular debt of gratitude, for initiating me in the mysteries of vector files, bitmaps, JPEGs and TIFFs, to Roger Jones of Terra Publishing, and especially for contributing his great editorial and technical skills to the production of *AI* each year since its inception. I also wish to thank the staff of the UCL Geography Department's Drawing Office for their assistance over the years with preparation of the maps, Stuart Laidlaw for his photographic assistance, and the administrative staff of the Institute who have helped each year to revise the lists at the end of *AI*. Finally, my thanks go to all the authors whose willingness to contribute made the venture possible, including those former members of the Institute who have recalled its early days in our series of nine retrospective articles.

David R. Harris

Mission statement

The Institute of Archaeology is a research-led institution recognized also for the excellence of its teaching. Its mission is:

- To be internationally pre-eminent in the study, and comparative analysis, of world archaeology.
- To enhance its national and international reputation for the quality and breadth of its multidisciplinary and thematic approach to the study of the human past.
- To promote best practice in the management of cultural heritage and in the study, care and preservation of archaeological artefacts.
- To promote awareness of the problems caused by illicit trade in antiquities and the destruction of archaeological heritage that it entails.
- To ensure that the social, political and economic contexts of the practice of archaeology are taught and appreciated.
- To be at the forefront of international research in archaeological sciences.
- To play a major role in furthering the understanding of London's archaeological and historical past.
- To provide archaeological opportunities of the highest quality to all, regardless of background.