

Some highlights of the 2004/2005 academic year

Peter Ucko

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

This year I start by referring to two of the academic initiatives announced on the back cover of last year's issue of *Archaeology International*.

- Dr Qin Ling of the University of Peking returned to the Institute in March 2005 with four other Chinese members of the Joint Steering Committee and Working Group of the International Centre for Chinese Heritage and Archaeology (ICCHA). She stayed on for a week to give talks at the Ealing Chinese School (to which over fifty children and adults came) and Xinran Hall, Queensway, as part of the Institute's innovative activities under UCL's Widening Participation scheme (see the back cover of this issue of *AI*). Under the same scheme, one of the Marie Curie fellows (see the back cover), Dr Roberto Valcarcel Rojas from Cuba, who came to the Institute for three months, spoke about archaeology to three groups: St Aidan's Primary School in Stroud Green, the Caribbean Studies Centre at London Metropolitan University, and to a meeting for Cuban families in London; and Dr Philip Oye-laran from the University of Ibadan, Nigeria, who is currently auditing the Forensic Archaeology BSc, is scheduled to speak to three West African groups in London.

- The Tenth International Conference of the European Association of Southeast Asian Archaeologists, which was co-organized by members of the Institute, took place at the British Museum in September 2004 and was well attended and successful. The Institute is also sponsoring the biennial meeting of the European Association of South Asian Archaeologists which will take place in July 2005, mainly at the British Museum. It will break new ground by being organized thematically. Participants from most South Asian countries and from Europe and North America will discuss a wide range of topics under such themes as economy and technology, art history and iconography, landscape archaeology, urbanism, and heritage.

On 3 March 2005 the inaugural lecture of the ICCHA, entitled "Collections of Chinese antiquities outside China: problems and hopes", was given at the Institute by Dr Magnus Fiskesjö, former director of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities in Stockholm. The President and Provost of UCL, Professor Malcolm Grant, took the chair at the lecture and hosted a reception after it. Among the audience were several distinguished European Sinologists and

archaeologists who, earlier that day, had been discussing possible future collaboration with the ICCHA. Among other recommendations, it was agreed that the ICCHA in the UK would perform a very useful function if it could establish and keep up to date a newsletter on the worldwide web that would feature European archaeological projects in China and report details of MPhil and PhD theses concerned with Chinese archaeology undertaken at European universities. It was also suggested that the ICCHA in Beijing could safeguard equipment on behalf of European researchers so that resources could be shared effectively.

After a review of the Institute's Field Archaeology Unit (FAU), and the departure of its director, David Rudling, to take up an appointment as lecturer in continuing education at the University of Sussex, the director's position was advertised and Dr Dominic Perring, formerly of the University of York, was appointed. He has already recruited some new staff, and his 5-year strategic plan for the FAU is eagerly awaited.

During the year, in addition to the Marie Curie award and the second grant to the Centre for the Evolutionary Analysis of Cultural behaviour (see the back cover), we were delighted to receive news of three other major awards. The first, from the Leverhulme Trust, is to support a new phase of Ken Thomas's research in western Sicily, with postdoctoral fellow Marcello Mannino, on late-glacial to mid-Holocene environmental changes and their impact on prehistoric settlement and subsistence. The second, to Kris Lockyear from the Arts and Humanities Research Board, is for a three-year programme of survey, excavation and analysis at the Roman city of Noviodunum in Romania. The third is a prestigious two-year (2005–2007) British Academy Readership for Elizabeth Graham, primarily to enable her to complete a monograph on the Mayan site of Tipu-Lamanai in Belize and a book entitled *The idol rich: Spanish and Maya Christians in Colonial Mesoamerica*, based on comparative research concerned with Maya interaction and religious change during the pre-Colonial and Conquest periods. (Earlier stages of all three of these projects have been described in *Archaeology International* in, respectively, the 2003/2004, 2002/2003 and 2000/2001 issues).

The agreement with UCL Press (to which I referred on p. 3 of last year's issue) has begun to produce books written since the eight volumes in the Encounters with Ancient Egypt series were published in 2003. The first three titles published are:

A. Gardner, *Agency uncovered: archaeological perspectives on social agency, power, and being human*, 2004; O. El-Daly, *Egyptology: the missing millennium. Ancient Egypt in medieval Arabic writings*, 2005, and R. Mace, C. Holden, S. Shennan (eds), *The evolution of cultural diversity: a phylogenetic approach*, 2005.

The Institute-wide seminar series in the autumn term examined the archaeology and heritage of Palestine, commencing with the history, cataloguing and digital recording of the Institute's Petrie Palestinian Collection (PPC). Attention then turned to current excavations at such sites as Tell el-Ajjul and Tell el-Mafjar, and to other ways in which the heritage of Palestine may be expressed, for example through films, literature and collections of clothing. The issue of the role of archaeology and material culture in the development and recognition of a Palestinian identity has become a major research theme for Dr Beverley Butler, who organized the seminar series. Meanwhile the re-cataloguing and remedial conservation of the PPC (to which students taking the Conservation MSc contribute) continues to move towards completion, thanks to the very generous support of the Stockman Family Foundation Trust. It is planned to launch a website to coincide with a PPC exhibition and international conference in 2006. The Institute seminar series in the spring term, organized by Andrew Reynolds, was entitled "Reading landscapes". Ten well attended seminars were given by Institute staff and senior speakers from other universities on a wide range of themes and landscapes, from Avebury and Stonehenge to Romania and Madagascar.

This is my final director's report, which gives me an opportunity to thank my predecessor, Professor David Harris, for having created *Archaeology International* and then kept it going as editor. Working with him for the past nine years while he edited *AI* has given me much pleasure, and some degree of pride, because it kept him closely in touch with developments at the Institute and allowed me to consult him on several of them. He has supported the Institute loyally and I hope that I may be able to support my successor, Professor Stephen Shennan, similarly. I wish Steve all the very best in a job that I am sure he will find inspiring.