

## Archaeology International

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### News

### Obituaries

Barney Harris<sup>1,\*</sup>

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# Obituaries

## *Barney Harris*

Several distinguished archaeologists who had close links to the Institute have died during the past year. Brief obituaries are given here and reference made to some of the obituaries available elsewhere.

## **Colin McEwan, 1951–2020**

Colin McEwan (Figure 1) was Curator of Latin American Collections (1993–2004) and Head of the Americas Section (2005–12) at the British Museum, ending his career as Director of Pre-Columbian Studies at Dumbarton Oaks in Washington, DC (2012–18). Colin was born in Falkirk, Scotland (11 August 1951) and raised in New Zealand. Back in Scotland, he was awarded a BSc degree in Geography at Aberdeen University (1973), then worked as a ‘rough-neck’ in the North Sea oil rigs to fund his graduate studies at Cambridge University, obtaining a Certificate in Prehistoric Archaeology (1975). While at Cambridge he participated in Eric Higgs’ site-catchment surveys in Asturias-Lérida and in the Somerset Levels Project led by John Coles (1974).

In 1975 he travelled to South America to join Earle Saxon’s (University of Durham) excavation at the famous Paleo-American ‘Mylodon Cave’ site. He then travelled through the Andes, reaching Ecuador where he participated in the Buena Vista Valley excavations led by Liz Carmichael (British Museum) and Warwick Bray (Institute of Archaeology), completing the tour in Yucatán (1976). Later Warwick recruited Colin for the 1977 Anglo-Colombian Expedition along the



**Figure 1** McEwan, a keen mountaineer, in his native Scottish Highlands. (Image credit: Norma Rosso)

Caquetá River (Amazonian forest). In 1978 he worked at Isla de La Plata (Ecuador), excavating an Inca ritual offering. In 1979 Colin joined the graduate programme at the University of Illinois. There Zuidema and Lathrap became the most influential figures in Colin's scholarly career. His PhD research (1983–1990) at Agua Blanca site, Ecuador, focused on political-religious power as expressed by its famous U-shaped stone-sculptured seats, architecture and landscape, with attention to human cognition and agency. Colin also steered the Agua Blanca community in the creation of a cultural centre-cum-museum, where the locals (not state authorities) successfully claimed ownership and displayed their heritage – a first for South America.

After working at the Art Institute of Chicago (1990–2), he began curatorial work at the British Museum, bringing Pre-Columbian Latin America to a worldwide audience through major exhibitions, accompanied by conferences and publications. First was the Mexican Gallery (1994), followed by exhibits on Pre-Columbian Gold (1996), Patagonia (1997), Unknown Amazon (2001), Pre-Columbian Caribbean (2008)

and Moctezuma-Aztec Ruler (2009). Colin forged strong research links between the British Museum and the Institute's faculty. He was instrumental in Oliver joining Bray (1994) to double its Americanist presence. He collaborated in various projects with Graham, Baquedano and Sillar and was a frequent fixture at the Institute's South American Seminars. In 2006 he was named Honorary Visiting Professor of the Institute, of which he was extremely proud. Colin unfailingly and energetically supported the Institute's students by opening the British Museum's collections for their dissertation research and providing internship opportunities, an ethos he took to Dumbarton Oaks. Colin passed away in Tampa, Florida (28 March 2020), after a valiant battle against aggressive leukaemia. His presence at the Institute is sorely missed, but his legacy will live on.

*Dr José R. Oliver*

*Reader in Latin American Archaeology, Institute of Archaeology, UCL*

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## Stuart J.A. Laidlaw, 1956–2019

I had the very great pleasure of travelling to Jerusalem and Jericho with Stuart as part of preparations for the exhibition *A Future for the Past* (2007) featuring the Petrie Palestinian collection. Our brief was to undertake interviews with those involved in the heritage and archaeology of the region that reflected upon Sir Flinders Petrie's complex

legacy. As part of the research trip we made a special pilgrimage to Petrie's grave in the Protestant Cemetery on Mount Zion (Figure 2). Once there Stuart asked me to take his photo while, true to form, he mocked my rookie camera skills, which were indeed spectacularly inferior to his own. Stuart proved an utterly fabulous travelling companion with his own unique brand of humour, irony and relentless yet affectionate teasing that my colleagues, former students, family and friends would certainly recognise.

It was, however, our visit to Jericho that was obviously of most immense interest to Stuart. Using his own 'photographic memory' of Jericho – gleaned from the IoA archives – he recognised all the images taken of Kathleen Kenyon's excavations from the 1950s onwards. For over two hours in the hot sun he was engrossed in taking as many photographs as possible (sometimes at great risk in terms of the precarious angles needed to get the right shots) and he obviously gained great pleasure from following in the footsteps of his mentor Peter Dorrell and Kenyon herself. Stuart not only displayed his ongoing deep commitment to the Institute of Archaeology, his depth of knowledge and enthusiasm, but also his pride at seeing himself as part of this genealogy as the 'Institute's Photographer'.

Indeed, Stuart was a greatly esteemed colleague at the Institute of Archaeology for 40 years. Joining the Institute in 1979, Stuart worked closely with Peter Dorrell and, following the latter's retirement, began his teaching of archaeological photography and illustration. As Lecturer in Archaeological Photography, he was an exemplary teacher of practice and taught many cohorts of undergraduate and graduate students in archaeological photography, latterly including digital imaging techniques. Stuart was always a clear champion of students and strove to make their experience at the Institute an enjoyable, as well as a productive, one. It was no surprise when he received a UCLU Student Choice award for Outstanding Support for Teaching in 2013–14, awards which celebrate outstanding teaching and recognise those that support students in their learning at UCL. These awards are completely student-led – students determine the award categories, set the criteria, nominate the potential awardees and decide who wins the awards.

Stuart's work at the Institute took him to a variety of locations including Libya, Greece, Belize and Russia. He ran short courses on



**Figure 2** Stuart Laidlaw standing by Petrie's grave, Protestant Cemetery, Mount Zion, Jerusalem. (Image credit: Beverley Butler 2006)

Digital Photography for the International Association of Photographers for 25 years in London, as well as around the world, including in Sri Lanka, Tenerife and at UCL-Qatar. His research interests included the evolution of new techniques in archaeological photography and he was always ready to experiment with new technology. Within the IoA, Stuart worked closely in the photo lab with Ken Walton for many years. He was central to the current refurbishment of the Photographic facilities at the Institute and won (with Sandra Bond) a UCL Sustainability Gold Award for the photography studio.

While Stuart participated in, and supported, the research of other Institute staff, including recent work on the making of the Terracotta

Army, his major focus was the Ivories from Nimrud. He worked with Georgina Herrmann and Helena Coffey on this series of publications, which provide a seminal photographic documentation of an Iraqi heritage that has now suffered so much destruction. He was working on the final, eighth volume of the series at the time of his death. While I treasure my memories of our alternative pilgrimage to Jerusalem and Jericho, in sharing their memories of Stuart colleagues have stated how they will 'miss his stories and jokes and choice of music', and how there now exists 'a very large, Stuart-sized hole on the 4th floor of the Institute building'.

These sentiments and Stuart's larger than life character were captured too in a very apt reading from his funeral service, reproduced here:

**'A Successful Man'**

by Bessie Anderson Stanley

That man is a success  
Who has lived well, laughed often and loved much;  
Who has gained the respect of intelligent men  
and the love of little children;  
Who has filled his niche and accomplished his task;  
Who leaves the world better than he found it;  
Who has never lacked appreciation of his family and friends  
or failed to express it;  
Who looked for the best in others and gave the best he had.

*Beverley Butler*

## **Theresa O'Mahony, 1958–2019**

It is never easy to say goodbye to a friend and loved one, particularly when they have had such an impact on your life. Theresa (Figure 3) was an incredible woman with a fiery spirit, brilliant sense of humour and an abundance of love and energy for her family, friends and the causes she believed in. It was a privilege to call her a friend, and I am thankful for having had the opportunity to get to know her over the past five years.



**Figure 3** Theresa representing the Foreshore Recording & Observation Group and Enabled Archaeology at the Thames Discovery Programme Foreshore Forum, October 2018. (Image credit: Chris Haworth/Thames Discovery Programme)

An Institute of Archaeology alumna, Theresa received a BA(Hons) in Archaeology in 2015, followed by an MA in Public Archaeology in 2016. Her published research into contemporary disability and inclusion in archaeology has reached over 3.3 million people in the UK and abroad, and served as the basis for the establishment of the Enabled Archaeology Foundation. Theresa partnered with Breaking Ground Heritage (part of Operation Nightingale), the Bamburgh Research Project and the Thames Discovery programme, as well as other projects, in order to test her inclusion methods and ideas concerning permanent long-term sustainable employment of the disabled in community, academic and commercial archaeology.

Never one to back down from a fight, Theresa challenged the establishment through her work with the Chartered Institute for

Archaeology's Equality and Diversity Group, through various conferences and often by going directly to the sources themselves. She leaves behind a legacy of activism for the disabled, particularly in the archaeological community. As anyone who knew her can attest, she always put the needs of others far ahead of her own; she saved lives and, despite a myriad of health problems, she fought for those who were unable to do so themselves. She touched and inspired those who came to know her and challenged those who were in need of expanding their worldview.

For each and every one of us who came to join her in her cause, there is no doubt that we will carry on from her example and ensure her message of unity and equality resonates through time. May your light shine brightly always, Theresa. You will be missed, but never forgotten.

*Erik De'Scathebury*

You can read more about Theresa's personal reflections on UK archaeology here: <https://doi.org/10.1080/20518196.2018.1487624>.