
EDITORIAL

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I write this editorial having just attended the successful 2006 annual conference in Edinburgh of the UK professional association known as the Institute of Field Archaeologists. Despite its name, the Institute's over 2000 members are drawn from a wide variety of cultural heritage and historic environment backgrounds (mostly in Britain), not just from those actively involved in mainstream archaeological fieldwork. This is reflected in the conference's extensive programme, ranging from sessions on finds-work to historic building recording, from rock-art studies to maritime archaeology, from ethnicity and identity in the context of Roman period Europe to the scientific analysis of collagen and strontium isotopes from early Bronze Age human remains, and from civil engineering perspectives to developments in digital applications. Something for virtually any archaeologist one might think.

Delegate attendance at the conference, however, speaks volumes for the divide that exists within archaeology between academia on one side and those working within the state, local authority, and commercial sectors on the other. The latter dominated at the conference, with the number of academic archaeologists present from UK universities countable on the fingers of one hand. Although the conference took place at a university, it was sponsored by the state heritage agency in Scotland and by an insurance company specializing in financial coverage for archaeologists, not by the university itself. Would this situation be replicated elsewhere in Europe?

Asking such a question in an editorial is no longer necessarily an empty rhetorical exercise. Thanks to the new initiative from the Association's reviews team of Cornelius Holtorf and Troels Myrup Kristensen, there is now a weblog facility on the EAA website (www.e-a-a.org) where comments can be posted and views exchanged. This *News, Views and Reviews* blog is available to all readers of the *EJA* and I hope it will become a natural and popular medium for posting comments on articles in the journal.

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And in this issue there are three excellent articles, which should stimulate debate. Needham and Bowman get to grips with a rare and exotic category of Bronze Age metal artefact – the flesh-hook – which they catalogue, classify, and then situate within the particular social milieu of the Atlantic feasting complex of the late second and early first millennia BC. I am sure this article will become a standard work of reference for specialists in this field throughout Europe, but it will also be of much wider interest because of the feasting aspect, since this has become one of those ‘hot’ topics in archaeology, which is now cropping up in discussion of faunal assemblages of all periods from the Mesolithic onwards.

Colledge, Conolly and Shennan are even more pan-European in their article dealing with the initial spread of agriculture. Some readers may feel this is a perennial topic which is perhaps over familiar, but the authors here are working from a database of archaeobotanical assemblages which supersedes that available for any previous approaches to this issue and breaks new ground. Nevertheless the subject will probably always be a contentious one, since there are many rival views in circulation, and I would be very pleased if workers based in other parts of Europe or from other disciplinary backgrounds feel incentivized by this article to consider responding in the *EJA*.

Finally, Simandiraki, in her article, takes prehistory right into the present in her analysis of the way in which the archaeology of Minoan Crete was used – and arguably abused – in association with the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens. This active use of the cultural heritage in the contemporary socio-political process is a fascinating case-study. The focus here is on Greece, but is there any European country in which the past is not currently being exploited in ways to which we as archaeologists should be alert and about which we should be prepared to express our concerns?