



Safawi Kite 104 in the Basalt Desert of north-eastern Jordan. The 'head' is 200m across at the widest point and has a curious trapezoidal shaped inclusion on its south-eastern wall (centre, left). 'Tails' (the radiating walls) range from 600–1300m in length, totalling c. 3.7km which stretch across a wadi (top right) before intersecting with a baffling succession of stone-built structures. Within the Safawi area (c. 650km²) are at least 172 Kites and over 100 Wheels, Pendants and Walls. Thought to be hunting traps for migratory herds of gazelle, oryx and onager, the 'Kites' are more numerous (tens of thousands), more extensive (c. 30 000km²) and far older (up to 6000 BC) than the Nazca lines of Peru (thousands, 500km² and c. AD 200–700 respectively). ©David Kennedy (APAAME_20090928_DLK-0058).



Clay sealing with cylinder seal impression uncovered in a room of the Eastern Palace (Room P) at Mishrifeh/Qatna (Syria) dating to the Middle Bronze Age II (eighteenth to seventeenth century BC). The sealing measures $7.6 \times 3.8 \times 1.7$ cm and depicts two bull-men holding an ankh, the Egyptian symbol of life. To the left is an Egyptian deity, possibly the goddess Hathor, followed by another bull-man with an ankh-symbol. ©Archaeological Mission of the University of Udine to Mishrifeh/Qatna, photographer: Massimiliano Gatti.

EDITORIAL

🗿 In these times of economic unrest, archaeology needs to decide whether it is a public service, has something to sell or is just an inspiring pastime. While the latter is always true, it's not particularly relevant in the context of maintaining an income. As for the first two, silver-tongued advocacy has employed professional archaeologists as never before, caring for earthworks and old buildings – the *conservation sector* – and recording everything that is going to be destroyed – the *mitigation sector*. For most of us, that is as it should be – the case for valuing some of the material past is unanswerable: we do it for the unborn. As with tigers, whales and other endangered animals, we just know we want our children to see them. We are less bothered by endangered mosquitoes – and thereby hangs a tail.

Do politicians, of any colour, agree that we are necessary? I imagined taking one of them, a Mr Fiscal Firebrand, on a little tour, just to hear what he thinks really matters, what needs investment, what could do with some fresh air. First stop Stonehenge, where we were in complete harmony; no disagreement that Stonehenge should be cherished (and that it needs a visitor centre). Harmony too at the towers and walls that provide such a spectacular vista down to the sea at Visby, on Gotland, where this year's Scandinavian *Ruins Conference* took place. These town walls are not really ruins, but big and coherent things, where children play and traffic passes in and out. Inside Visby are some 19 medieval churches, many in ruins, and the conference took the view that these were all 'heritage' and deserved to be conserved, just as they are, in fossilised authenticity. The imaginative (and successful) attempt of the community to make the roofless church of St Nicholas into a concert hall for hardy audiences attracted criticism from purists: its historic dignity was being distressed by percussive music and purple strobe lighting. This is nonsense of course; buildings like to be used. And beware: for some, including my friend Fiscal, 19 historic churches is 18 too many. If they haven't already, the state agencies will soon feel an icy wind from the south, where every assumption is to be questioned. No ruin gets a free lunch: a castle must earn its keep.

🗿 If the conservation industry is being asked to audit itself with unprecedented severity, the mitigation business feels itself in an even more precarious position, as proclaimed in *Archaeology and the global economic crisis*¹. This publication may be read by an archaeologist as a feisty bid for survival in hard times – but risks being regarded by my Mr Firebrand as an own-goal. Our source of income is drying up because development has slumped, it says, so we need the state to step in and pay us anyway, otherwise we might lose our skills. That's like the league of embalmers complaining there aren't enough dead people. It might have been easier to make the case that mitigation archaeology in Britain is really a public service, if it hadn't already been commandeered by companies operating like giant businesses at national and international level. The document also makes some questionable claims about the high standards of mitigation fieldwork, which in practice is too often rushed, messy and perfunctory;

¹ N. Schlanger & K. Aitchison (ed.). 2010. *Archaeology and the global economic crisis. Multiple impacts. Possible solutions* (ACE/Culture Lab Editions): 107–116. Available free online at <http://www.ace-archaeology.eu/fichiers/25Archaeology-and-the-crisis.pdf>.

and some snooty comments about supposedly unproductive ‘cottage industry researchers’. Nevertheless, Nathan Schlanger, aided by an impressive metaphorical menagerie of guinea-pigs, Trojan horses, red herrings and canaries, paints a picture of a lively and articulate workforce ready for new adventures in new lands². And perhaps that’s a key to the future.

👤 Looking for reasons to support our business, I might present Mr Firebrand with a copy of the new international journal *The Historic Environment Policy and Practice*.³



*Thurstan Shaw at his 96th birthday party in Cambridge, 27 June 2010. The former Professor of Archaeology at Ibadan, president of the Prehistoric Society and author of *Igbo-Ukwu* is seen in jubilant mood. We were sent this picture by Thurstan’s devoted companion, fellow African archaeologist Pamela Jane Smith, of whom it has been remarked, not unkindly, that ‘she married her data base’. Pamela is a champion of archaeological biography and has initiated the Personal Histories project and the Histories of Archaeology Research Network, which readers will have encountered in our pages from time to time.*

Roman helmet need to be in a museum where people can see them; and equally obvious that the sums of money paid to treasure hunters are as absurd as their public adulation. Two million pounds for the helmet and three for the Staffordshire hoard – these are sums that could keep a small museum going for several years. There seems to be a bit of inflation in your conservation, mitigation and treasure hunting operations, observes F.F. What’s the real product? What is it that archaeology offers which is gilt-edged and copper-bottomed? What is always needed, always keeps its value?

It was not a bad idea to decide that history has an ‘environment’, so that its conservation can attract the kind of sentiment we give to tigers and whales. But what is the Historic Environment, and what precious species lurk within? Unfortunately this is the one thing they don’t tell you. As Tom King remarks in his contribution, ‘*The Editorial Board discussed this question rather vigorously and agreed – I think – to leave the definition open*’. He goes on to fill his own basket to the brim with everything material and immaterial, ancient and modern: ‘*the historic environment is everything that has influenced, or that reflects, our cultures and those of our progenitors*.’ There are some nice case studies in this journal and for that let’s wish it well. But the historic environment (if it exists) is not some genteel parkland tended by complacent executives; it is a battlefield of values, and it would be good to have some of them discussed.

For example, why should we pay a treasure hunter 1000 times more than an archaeologist to dig up an object? Even to my politician, it seems pretty obvious that new finds like this year’s Crosby Garrett

² Schlanger, N. 2010. Postscript: on dead canaries, guinea-pigs and other Trojan horses, in N. Schlanger & K. Aitchison, *op.cit.*: 107–116.

³ Published by Maney; see www.ingentaconnect.com/content/maney for sample content.

Tally for 2010. The full article may be located in the index by using the author name in brackets.

PLEISTOCENE

1. *Before 100K BP*

2. *100–25K BP*: Bow and stone-tipped arrows in South Africa (Lombard); New rock art in southern France (Mélard); Bone-working and ornamental art in Caucasia (Golovanova); Dating the Gravettian of northern Europe (Jacobi).

3. *25–10K BP (8000 BC)*: The origins of monumentality (Watkins); Dogu statues from Japan (James); Rock art faces in East Timor (O'Connor); Early Neolithic Cyprus (Manning); A sitting burial in Jordan (Richter).

HOLOCENE

4. *8000–5000 BC*: Coca chewing in Peru (Dillehay); Use of grinding stones in Neolithic China (Liu); Human and deer in Indian rock art (Taçon); Rock art bird stencils at Djulirri, Australia (Taçon); The earliest pottery in Syria (Nieuwenhuys); Artefact scatters in Faynum, Egypt (Holdaway).

5. *5000–4000 BC*: Farming and storage in Chalcolithic Levant (Hubbard).

6. *4000–3000 BC*: Cultivation of wheat and broomcorn millet in Bronze Age Eurasia (Frachetti); Origins of metallurgy in Italy (Dolfini); Bevel-rim bowls for making loaves in Mesopotamia (Goulder); A stone row on Dartmoor, England (Fyfe); Rock art cattle in the Neolithic Sahara (Di Lernia).

7. *3000–2000 BC*: The spread of rice cultivation in China (Zhang Chi); Gazelle traps in Early Bronze Age Levant (Nadel); Animal bones and social complexity in northern Norway (Hodgetts); Animal bones at a Harappan fort, India (Chase); The Iceman as a burial (Vanzetti); An Early Bronze Age log-coffin from England (Melton); Metalwork thrown into water in Bronze Age England (Yates).

8. *2000–1000 BC*: Copper workers in Iron Age Levant (Ben-Yosef); A Wessex 1 grave from Bronze Age England (Needham); Dating the Iron Age Levant (Finkelstein).

9. *1000–0 BC*: Co Loa, Vietnam's Iron Age capital (Kim); The Sarmizegetusa bracelets (Constantinescu); Woodcraft in Iron Age Iberia (Carrión); Radiocarbon dating and Biblical history in Iron Age Levant (Levy); Biskupin and its context (Harding); Cities in Sasanian Iran (Karimian); A meteorite falls on Bavaria (Rappenglück).

10. *0–1000 AD*: Wealthy, female and black in Roman York, England (Leach); Rouletted ware and Indian Ocean trade (Magee); Mancala players at Palmyra (de Voogt); Pre-Tuareg Timbuktu (Park); Symbols carved on trees in central Europe (Dreslerová); Ancestral femurs among the Zapotec (Feinman); Horse symbolism in Late Roman France (Gleize); The Khmer road system in Cambodia (Hendrickson).

11. *1000–1500 AD*: Human sacrifice in Peru (Klaus); Phasing rock-cut churches in Ethiopia (Fauvelle-Aymar); Exchange of lithics in 14th century New Zealand (Walter); Chert hoes as digging tools in the Mississippian (Milner); Artefact scatters in aboriginal Australia (Holdaway).

12. *1500–2000 AD*: Houses as persons in 17th century Finland (Herva); Maroon settlement in Suriname (White); Climate and social change in the pre-contact Marquesas (Allen); Ephemeral campsites in the Rocky Mountains (Scheiber); Transitions from slavery in the Caribbean (Armstrong); Conflict archaeology in WW1 Jordan (Saunders); WW2 occupation and resistance in the Channel Islands, England (Carr); The radio telescope as archaeology (Edmonds); Witchcraft and deep time (Mitchell).

Our *Tally for 2010* (previous page) gives an answer to this question. The purpose of archaeology is to find out about the past: people need archaeologists to tell them about that. Patching up the ruins of former tyrannies, or recording flint scatters and medieval cesspits – these things matter most when they serve that end: conservation provides research capital, mitigation a research dividend. Even treasure hunting is bearable if it puts new knowledge above high price. Somehow we must change the whole basis on which most archaeologists are paid: not to rid sites of their archaeology as cheaply and speedily as possible, but to create a past that wasn't there before.

The Tally reflects archaeology's real mission. Our authors dig deep into the human experience, strive to increase our intimacy with the very old. They locate the circumstances when the bow and arrow was first used to kill an animal, and then an enemy. They explore what makes people congregate – not only, it seems, through social insecurity, 'big man' coercion, agricultural ingenuity, craft or the exchange economy – but belief in imaginary beings. Documenting human behaviour reminds us that mind-expanding habits go way back: coca chewing in Peru, curating human femurs in Mexico, throwing objects into ponds in England, scribbling on rocks in India, Australia and the Sahara, their artists fixing on deer, cattle and the human face. Investigations of equal importance show how climate relates to settlement in the Marquesas, how cereals arrived in China and metalworking got going in the Levant; all founding moments of modern life.

Notice also the flourishing of interest in the very modern period – so much so that we have created another *Antiquity* period (period 12) to contain it. To those who say 'that's an odd bunch of stuff,' I would respond: have a read. It's not just good analogy, though there is that; these contributions give a vivid account of how material culture works, as language, evidence and feeling. Interestingly, some of the best stories are coming from sites that are not conserved, but simply withering away, like the Jodrell Bank radio telescope – a bit of modern wild life in the historic environment's prim park.

But notice too how the world is not equally favoured by archaeological investigation, even though every place on earth had a past. Countries in Asia and Africa experienced episodes of the greatest importance for the world narrative, but their archaeology gets swept away by floods or side-lined by social emergencies. If overseas aid has a role, helping a country to recover its past should be part of it.

In a stormy economic climate, it is natural for every branch of the archaeology profession to be apprehensive. When politicians are ready to eliminate everything that doesn't create wealth, let's keep hammering out this conviction: knowledge is wealth. Let's not think of ourselves as esoteric, or marginal, or advocates of a 'backward-looking curiosity,' or frustrated philosophers. Nor are we just the agents of tourism or supernumeraries of the building trade. Archaeology is in the business of understanding the climate, the soil, society, religion, conflict, commerce, living together: no minor matters. It is as important as every other science, from medicine to space travel, and its findings have a permanent value. Whatever the future brings, let's hang on to this principle: the true currency of archaeology is knowledge; that's our gold standard, valid everywhere.

Martin Carver
York, 1 December 2010