



Masters in Maritime Archaeology students excavating the wreck of an early medieval riverine cargo vessel at very low tide on the River Axe, Devon. The excavations were undertaken by the University of Southampton in May 2009. Among the artefacts found was a wooden shovel with the owner's mark carved into it. The vessel was probably used to move coal up and down the River Axe. Image by Rodrigo Pacheco Ruiz.



Guidoiro Areoso Barrow 5 seen from the south, with the inner part of the Ria de Arousa in the background. Guidoiro Areoso is a small islet in the middle of the Ria de Arousa estuary, Galicia, Spain. It is just 600m long from north to south and less than 200m at its widest point, mostly covered by a sand dune. The islet shows much evidence of prehistoric occupation from the Neolithic and Early Bronze Age in the intertidal zone, along with five Neolithic circular barrows. For the last 10 years the islet has altered significantly, as its sands are very variable, corresponding to a sand dune environment. Barrow 5 was first reported in 2005, when the top of two standing slabs could be seen emerging from the sand on the western beach. Since then erosion has increased, and in winter 2013 the site was completely destroyed by the sea. In 2011 the entire structure of the tomb could still be seen on the foreshore: the megalithic chamber was formed by at least six granite orthostats, only two standing in their original position. The tallest stands 1.25m above the soil, and appears to be the backstone. Another four, together with a smaller slab, lie fallen. The slabs are in the centre of a ring of small stones, 0.3–0.5m in length, which probably defined the exterior of a mound of around 8.5m diameter. Most of the earth of the barrow has disappeared. Image by Xosé Ignacio Vilaseco Vázquez, June 2011.

EDITORIAL

☞ Migrations and colonisations of various kinds have fundamentally shaped the planet and human experience, both for good and ill. Their accompanying archaeology, however, has not been without controversy. We know, for instance, that the Anglo-Saxons settled Britain, but how many of them were there? Before the 1960s, most changes in material culture were attributed to the arrival of newcomers. Most of these claims were called into question during subsequent decades, as diffusionism was widely rejected as an illusory *deus ex machina*. But though it fell out of fashion, it didn't disappear entirely, and it couldn't mask the fact that people—and peoples—were mobile in the past, just as they are today. The entire debate has been given new life and substance by the development of new techniques in archaeological science. We may still argue whether a change in pot types or house shapes is the tell-tale testimony of people on the move. Where skeletons are available, however, and where preservation is favourable, we can now answer that question directly. Ancient DNA and stable isotopes offer a clarity of analysis that was unthinkable 30 years ago. But material culture has still an important part to play, not least when it comes to the issues of ethnicity and identity that were caught up in those events.

A number of papers in the present issue cover the movement of people in different times and places. The precursor of all later colonisations was of course the long series of journeys that took modern humans beyond their African homeland for the first time. Adaptability was the key to success, giving them the ability to outcompete rival hominins (notably the Neanderthals in western Eurasia) and to survive the climax of the last Ice Age. Ultimately, they boldly went where no hominin had gone before, reaching New Worlds in Australia and the Americas. That much is beyond doubt. Controversy remains, however, over the timetable. In the Americas, there is much evidence to suggest an initial colonisation around 15 000 years ago, spreading rapidly south to reach Monte Verde in southern Chile a few thousand years later. The case for an earlier settlement of Brazil continues to be made, however, and in this issue of *Antiquity* Eric Boëda and his team present new discoveries from a site close to the famous (or notorious) Pedra Furada rockshelter, whose claims were contested in *Antiquity* some 20 years ago (Meltzer *et al.* 1994¹). Whether or not we accept the argument, the new evidence deserves serious consideration.

Colonisations of more recent vintage are covered in two other papers. In one, Aleksander Pluskowski and colleagues tell of geomagnetic survey and excavation at the small medieval frontier settlement of Biała Góra in Poland. This was a settlement of merchants and farmers, precariously placed in dangerous territory that was still contested between Christian and non-Christian, as first the nascent Polish state and later the Teutonic Crusading knights strove to push their borders eastwards by military means. Security must have been a continual concern, yet the settlement was never fortified and some of the inhabitants were sufficiently prosperous and confident to build brick houses with tiled roofs. Biała Góra is testimony to how, beneath the radar of the official histories of conquest and campaigning, other people

¹ Meltzer, D.J., J.M. Adovasio & T.D. Dillehay. 1994. On a Pleistocene human occupation at Pedra Furada, Brazil. *Antiquity* 68: 695–714.

quietly got on with life, pursuing advantage where they could as larger events unfolded around them.

Biała Góra was probably a mixed settlement of Germans and Pomeranians, and very likely a place that sometimes saw highly charged encounters between locals and newcomers. Cultural encounters of a different kind are documented in the fascinating story behind the Aboriginal shield from Kamay Botany Bay, now in the British Museum in London. Several lines of evidence lead Valerie Attenbrow and Caroline Cartwright to identify this as the shield collected by Captain Cook during his first voyage to Australia in 1770. Analysis of the bark, however, locates the origin of the shield on the north coast of New South Wales, some 500km distant. Thus the shield was witness to one of the first colonial encounters in Australia; but it had come to Kamay Botany Bay through a long-distance network of contacts and exchange between neighbouring Aboriginal peoples. That network that did not survive colonial settlement, making the shield vivid testimony to a lost world.

🏺 One of the beliefs that *Antiquity* holds particularly strongly is that archaeology transcends national frontiers. We may all feel a particular warmth for and interest in the archaeology of our country of birth and residence, but leaving aside islands or other naturally defined units, for most archaeological research, national boundaries are modern inventions. Furthermore, while pride in national heritage often helps to safeguard sites and underwrite research, we can all learn something more by looking over the fence, and thinking more broadly. The human past is more than simply the sum of its nation state components. But not all funding bodies see matters in those terms.


This becomes a crucial issue when research is evaluated mainly in terms of its economic impact. Of course, no archaeologist would seriously deny that they desired their research to have impact, but how that impact is to be measured raises difficult issues. Earlier this year, the House Science, Space and Technology Committee of the US Congress began considering a 'Frontiers in Research, Science, Technology Act' (FIRST Act) that will set budgets and new procedures for funding from the National Science Foundation (NSF). Sponsored by Republican politicians it aims to rebalance future funding away from the Social, Behavioral and Economic Science Committee (SBE) by ring-fencing budgets for individual areas of research and reducing those that are considered to be less valuable or important. Public funding requires public accountability, and it is entirely appropriate that politicians review (and renew) national funding programmes from time to time. The implications of the proposed legislation, however, could be very damaging for archaeology, with a proposed cut of 40 per cent to the SBE budget. They are likely to be particularly difficult for US archaeologists seeking funding to conduct archaeological research outside the USA.

Among the key tenets of the draft legislation is the provision that projects should only be relevant for funding if they are in the national interest. That surely applies everywhere, but the national interest can be defined in very different ways. Some might argue, for example, that it should be restricted to projects that bring clear economic benefits. A number of countries are placing increasing emphasis on 'impact' in prioritising their research agendas, but often extend that to include social benefits and projects outside their national territories. The FIRST Act raises a much more challenging question and the politicians behind the Act have already made clear their opposition to a number of projects recently funded by the

NSF. One recent listing included projects on Mayan architecture, Bronze Age Cyprus and prehistoric metallurgy in Russia. Citing the need for more research on medical advances, especially in the context of wounded personnel returning from military service, Lamar Smith, the chairman of the committee, argued that there had to be priorities in funding and questioned whether the NSF should fund research on Mayan architecture when more medical research was needed to help wounded soldiers or to save lives more generally.

A range of scientific and archaeological organisations in the USA have responded publicly to this line of thinking, arguing that it is contrary to the goals of the NSF. There are broader issues too. Sturt Manning, for example, has pointed out that the USA is a product of global migration, both in the distant past when it was first settled, and more recently with the arrival of European settlers and African slaves. There are also specific arguments to be made in the context of climate change, in using research on the Pueblo peoples, the Nabataeans or the Khmer to better understand water management and human responses in the past. Fundamentally, however, it is also about identity and awareness. How can we as states or individuals be competent actors in the modern globalised world without a proper understanding of our own past, other cultures, and how things came to be as they are?

This is a challenging debate, and governments do of course need to make decisions about the best use of public resources. It is extremely difficult to weigh the needs of medical science against the claims of archaeology. We would hope, however, that a mature research agenda would be able to accommodate both. But above all, we are reminded once again of the constant need to make the case for the value and importance of archaeological research.

 That value and importance find international expression in the UNESCO World Heritage List. Sceptics continue to question the value of the programme. It doesn't in itself ensure the safety of the sites that are included, as we have learned all too painfully from the continuing damage to World Heritage Sites in Syria, all eight of which are currently red-listed. The Roman theatre at Bosra has been turned into a fortress, the loggia at the great Crusader castle of Crac des Chevaliers has been severely damaged, and a mortar shell has pierced the spectacular mosaics on the façade of the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus. Meanwhile ISIS in eastern Syria and northern Iraq has been funding its campaigns through the systematic looting of archaeological sites and the selling-on of the stolen antiquities. Satellite images show formerly protected archaeological sites such as Apamea and Dura-Europos pock-marked with looters' trenches. The before and after contrasts could hardly be more graphic. The imagery is analysed in a recent article (Casana & Panahipour 2014²) and underlines once again how, alongside the tragic human cost, archaeology is one of the first casualties when civil society fragments. I recall visiting Dura-Europos in its dramatic riverside setting long before the current troubles began, and it is deeply distressing to see the scale of damage that the satellite coverage has revealed. The Syrian conflict reminds us again that the looting and sale of antiquities not only damages archaeology but also thrives on others' misfortune. It is also fuelled by external markets, by buyers outside the region who create the demand.

² Casana, J. & M. Panahipour. 2014. Satellite-based monitoring of looting and damage to archaeological sites in Syria. *Journal of Eastern Mediterranean Archaeology and Heritage Studies* 2: 128–51.



Evidence of looting at Apamea, Syria: left) image from July 2011; right) image from April 2012. © GoogleEarth.

The UNESCO World Heritage Site programme may be unable to protect even important sites such as these in times of war, but it does flag up the value of archaeological sites and buildings and encourages governments and public alike to consider their heritage as an asset. The WHS committee meeting in Qatar in June saw the one-thousandth site added to the list (the total now stands at 1007). This latest batch of 26 new WHS sites includes the prehistoric earthworks of Poverty Point in Louisiana, Erbil in Iraq and the controversial Chauvet Cave in France: controversial not for the importance of its Palaeolithic art, which surely ranks alongside Lascaux and Altamira (sites that are already on the list), but for the argument over its chronology. The earliest images may date to before 30 000 BC, but that would put them at odds with classic stylistic analysis that suggests a more recent age, later than 28 000 BC and in some instances perhaps attributable to the Magdalenian (18 000–12 000 BC). The debate will no doubt run on until new dating methods clinch the argument one way or the other (and perhaps beyond that). There is no denying the importance of the site, however, and World Heritage status is surely well deserved.

Other new sites added to the WHS list are less easily defined—the Silk Road, the Grand Canal in China and the Inca Trail, for example, don't have clear edges and the last, perhaps, hardly needs to attract more tourists. But the geographical diversity of the 20 new cultural sites is to be welcomed, with candidates in North and South America, eastern and western Asia, and Europe (though none in Africa). It is easy to question what this list really achieves. Not everyone will agree that these are the most significant places that could have been chosen. Nominations are handled by 'states parties' or national governments and hence all too readily become embroiled in modern political agendas. Yet in these times of funding cuts and economic priorities, and of international strife, anything that raises the status of heritage in the eyes of governments and the public must surely be a good thing.

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