

Editorial

Our special section on London archaeology in the September 1990 issue reported discoveries from the capital's archaeological boom of the 1980s. Its introduction ended with cautious words for the future. London archaeology had been fuelled by a decade of rising property markets and a huge rate of new building; and it had in large part been funded by developers' paying towards salvaging the archaeology which their new foundations destroy. The London property market turned hard down last year, and the London archaeology express hit the buffers in a halt both abrupt and bruising. The Museum of London made 130 of its archaeologists redundant in September 1990, and another 100 in October – together more than half – amidst fears of yet more job losses to follow early this year, and concerns even that sufficient funds might not exist for redundancy payments. The *Museums Journal* introduced the story with the good news: full closure of the Museum of London's archaeology service had been averted.

What went wrong in London? Where else may be clobbered?

Perhaps nothing *did* go wrong in London. The speculative office market is a financial roller-coaster, whose downswings every few years break a number of companies who have forgotten that the up does not go up for ever. London archaeology has been in the forefront of seeking developer funding with much success – and with some alarums like the Rose theatre affair. Tied on to the tail of the property roller-coaster, it now follows the downward roll like any other sub-contractors in the building trade. And developer funding is just what archaeology units all over England are being encouraged to depend on. One large minus in the London Museum's unhappy arithmetic is a new void, as English Heritage's present grant of a 'core funding' towards central costs is being phased out. The Museum is being asked to run London archaeology on project-by-project funding alone. Yet the archaeology of a great European city is, both intellectually and in terms of available physical evidence, a venture on the longest possible time-scale, not a site-by-site

month-to-month operation that can start and stop as the roller-coaster requires.

A first casualty of the roller-coaster has been the London staff. Again, one can look to business habits in the property world to see what one can expect: a rather small core of permanent staff with job security and a career structure; and a large periphery of marginal workers, who have an illusion of security and structure when the upswing runs for long enough.

The stop has one great plus. It puts the brake on new development and on new destruction, not just on urban sites. The demand for building materials has also turned down, and with it the pressure to quarry river-gravels with their Pleistocene and later sites. The Maxey quarry, which has been eating its way through a Neolithic landscape outside Peterborough, is shutting down.

A danger for business in a long upswing is that people come to forget, or even never to have known, what life is like on the down. During the 1980s, salvage archaeology in England – the rest of the United Kingdom has circumstances a little different – settled down to the established rules of its game. At least in the city, the sums are so huge that development cannot be halted. Developers have no statutory obligation to provide for archaeology; instead they can be enticed, encouraged, leaned on or blackmailed into putting some of their surplus into the rescue. As there often cannot be a physical preservation, then there can instead be a rescue excavation that amounts, in a favourite English Heritage phrase, to 'preservation by record'. Fine on the upswing; but when it turns down, there is less development, and less margin for developers. How do you then cajole developers to provide for archaeology out of a generous surplus they do not possess?

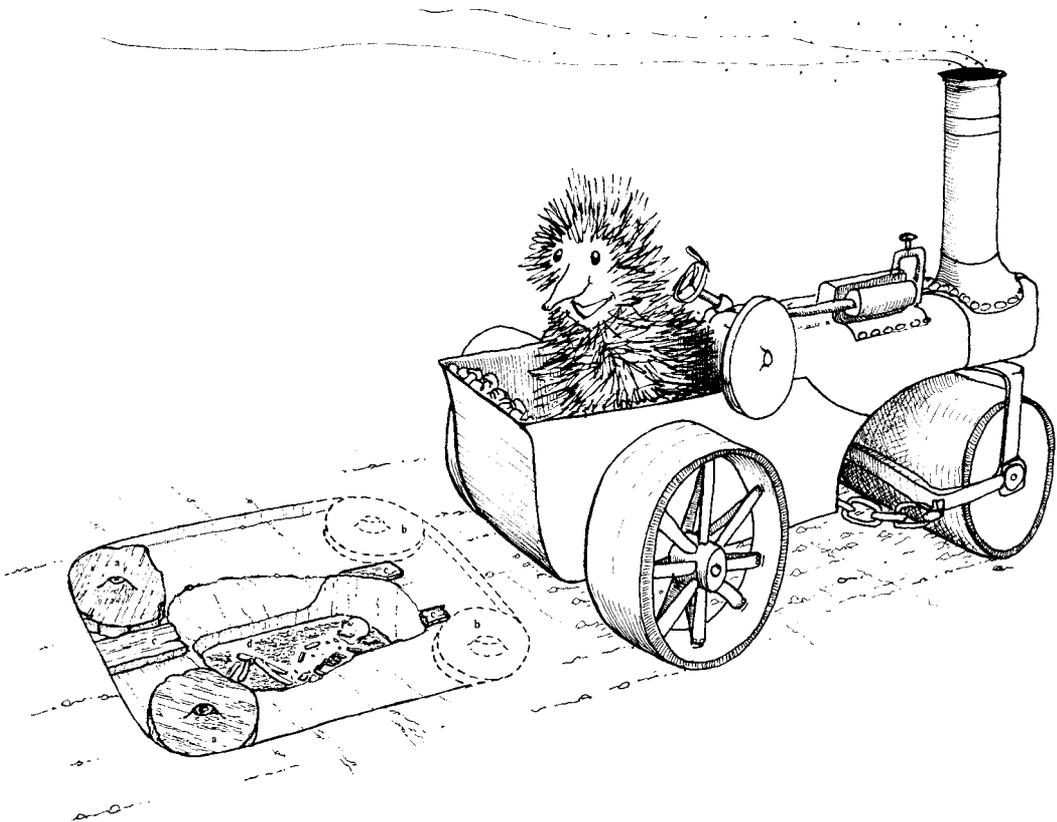
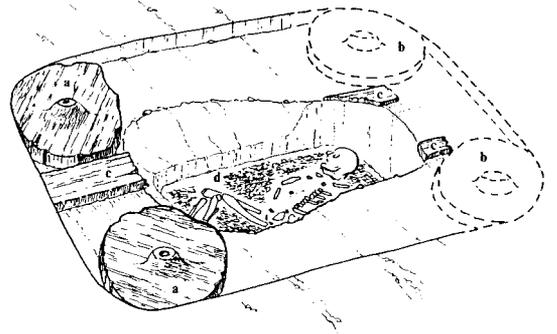
Even in the best of times, it is a minority of developers who give full regard for archaeology under a voluntary code of ideal practice. British government agencies have not all set a good example. Noticeably mean in its provision for archaeology has been the Ministry of Transport. Studying the Ministry's new road-building programme for the 1990s, English Heritage

Flattened fauna is the fitting title of a practical field-guide published for travellers to recognize crushed creatures as they may be observed on the highways of the western USA. It could have companion volumes on birds, *Feathers in the grill*, and on insects, *Splut on the screen*.

Presumably flattened fauna may go back as far into prehistory as do wheels to flatten them.

Right, drawing by Keith Bennett (of the Ashmolean Museum) illustrating a journal paper on an early wooden wheel from the Balkans. A colleague noticed how the cart-burial looked as if had been squashed, inspiring the artist to the fantasy below, in which the hedgehog strikes back – on behalf of porcupines, armadillos, echidnas, and furry little flat things under wheels everywhere.

For another contribution to this research question, see also **THE FAR SIDE** in this *ANTIQUITY*, page 11.



reported it was likely to affect over 800 known sites, and many more that are unidentified. The estimated cost of a proper recording is £70 million, to be covered – or not – by an annual provision from the Ministry which has just gone up to £500,000 a year from £100,000. Even that reasoned estimate provoked outrage from the department of road-building.

Michael Heseltine took a notable interest in historic buildings when the responsible minister in the Thatcher government. On his return to the same office in Mr Major's first administration, he soon made a ruling that I hope will be a landmark of a precedent. This was his decision to refuse 'scheduled monument consent' (permission to interfere with a known site of value) for the hotel development at West Kennet Farm, in the World heritage area near Avebury that was described by Michael Pitts last year.* The developers, Marlborough Homes,** advised by their archaeological consultants, put forward a scheme partly to excavate the site (by the doctrine of 'preservation by record'), for the most part to preserve the Neolithic enclosure unexcavated under new buildings. This had satisfied his ministry's inspector, but it did not satisfy Mr Heseltine. The remains he considered to be of such archaeological importance that their integrity should not be compromised by burial beneath further development. In this case, he concluded, 'the preference must be for the physical preservation of any remains where they lie as opposed to preservation by record'.

I do hope this verdict will kill the phrase 'preservation by record'. It is intellectually dishonest. It expresses the belief that excavation can provide a record so fair and full that it amounts essentially to the same as preservation. This is nonsense. There is no such thing as a complete or objective record of a site, and even a wholly splendid record by any contemporary standard decays with time, as new research questions and new research methods show its gaps. Let us call this option what it is, 'partial record as a poor substitute for physical preservation'.

A feature of the public enquiry hearings about West Kennet was open argument between archaeologists. On the one side was the Trust for Wessex Archaeology, consultants to the developer; on the other was the Prehistoric Society and other archaeological bodies. When counsel for one party was examining an expert witness about its archaeological aspects, the advisers to the other were feeding him questions that the witness might find tricky. That is unhappy, but the natural outcome of archaeological livelihoods becoming closely tied to developers.

West Kennet was not the first, and will not be the last, public enquiry that sets archaeologists against archaeologist. Odder, and more disturbing, were the proceedings the previous year in respect of gravel-digging at Dunbridge, Hampshire, where the archaeological consultant to the developer, Dr Simon Collcutt, had also been archaeological consultant to the independent agencies that were evaluating the proposed development! I reported aspects of Dunbridge at the time in an editorial (*ANTIQUITY* 63 (1989): 413–16). Fortunately, the Institute of Field Archaeologists is established as a professional body to regulate conflicts of interest and related matters, as bodies like the Royal Institute of British Architects have done for other trades in the property-development business. At its September 1990 AGM, the Institute adopted a code of approved practice which provides sensible guidelines in respect of conflict of interest.

We shall see if the Institute is able effectively to police these matters. There has been already a disciplinary action – a very rare occurrence in the years since the Institute was founded – arising from this issue. A disciplinary action was brought against me by Dr Collcutt, who laid 13 complaints and had me in breach of four rules of the Institute's Code of Conduct, for printing some facts and views about the Dunbridge affair. The Institute threw out 12, and the thirteenth was withdrawn by the complainant. Curiously, the Institute has forgotten to provide in its Code a robust assertion of the value of open debate on matters of public and professional concern. Dunbridge, like West

* Michael Pitts, What future for Avebury?, *ANTIQUITY* 64 (1990): 268–9.

** Now in receivership, a sign of the times. The essential

arithmetic, according to the *Times* (20 December 1990), was to gain a planning consent which would transform a site purchased for under £1 million, into a value of £7 million.

Kennet, raised important issues that ought to be debated. (One that I would raise is the rate at which we have consumed sites by excavation, which leaves me sympathetic to the argument that the West Kennet site could indeed deserve a safe burial under a 'raft' to support new buildings, which would prevent all access for many decades.) In the 13th of his complaints about me,* Dr Collcutt explains that the 'proper channel for criticism of a fellow Member of the Institute would have been through the Disciplinary Committee'. Here is a sign of where open discussion on matters of historical knowledge will move if the normal rôle of the archaeologist becomes that of consultant to the developer, the proper forum for academic debate becoming the legal public enquiry, and the proper place for criticism becoming the quasi-legal disciplinary court!

☞ Talking on television and writing for the newspaper is good for academic researchers when it nudges them into setting aside the ifs and buts and saying plainly, in just 30 seconds or 100 words, what is really going on. And the moving pictures and talking heads of good television have the power to impress as few books can. Part of the secret is in shooting many metres of film and editing it down and down right to the essence. The most moving archaeological film I have seen for a long time was *African King*, about the looting of antiquities from Mali, in the desert fringes of the western Sahara, shown in the Bandung series last autumn and as sad an archaeological story as may be told. A trickle of terracotta figurines came to light between 1940 and 1979, their age unknown until the first was recovered by controlled archaeological excavation at Djenné-jeno, and shown to date to the period round AD 1200. Since then they have flooded out as collectors' art pieces, looted before or despite Malian legislation in 1985 tried to protect the unknown history of the one Africa's poorest countries.

There is nothing new here, but the same suffering as was inflicted in past centuries on another African kingdom, Egypt. One can read about the great old days of plundering in Brian

Fagan's *Rape of the Nile*, and find words which today equally apply to Mali and to Komaland, over the border into Ghana, where the terracotta gold rush has also sent the spade: 'Excavation was still largely the domain of the dealer and tomb robber, and the resultant destruction was catastrophic and on an immense scale.' That was Egypt in the 1840s; here is Mali in the 1980s, as Roderick and Susan McIntosh, of Rice University, write:

Since the adoption in 1985 of legislation in Mali prohibiting the pillage of archaeological sites, the rate of site destruction by 'pot-hunters' has increased dramatically, fueled by an extraordinary increase in the market price of terracottas and by ever-increasing demand. Not only statuettes, but also pots in good condition are eagerly sought. In a recently published article on 'Le pillage des sites archéologiques au Mali' (*Jamana* no. 23 (Septembre 1989): 18–21), archaeologists Tereba Togola and Michel Raimbault estimate that virtually all of the hundreds of known archaeological sites in the Inland Niger Delta, which is the principal source for terracotta statuettes, have been subjected to clandestine digging. The scale of the digging and the consequent destruction is often breathtaking. This past spring, local 'antiquaires' in the Inland Delta were organizing work parties of up to 200 peasants to systematically dismantle sites in the quest for marketable items. We heard of these activities through students of ours (Tereba Togola, among them) who were conducting research in an adjacent region. Walter van Beek has confirmed this information. The unfortunate fact is that we are witnessing the wholesale destruction of the archaeological record of one of the great civilizations of Africa, before even a minute percentage of it has been scientifically studied and recorded.

If there is a difference, it is of speed and scale. Dismantling half ancient Egypt took centuries, while the materials for the history of Mali are going in a matter of years. Perhaps it is because classical and near eastern archaeology has always been an adventure of looting as well as a story of scholarship that many archaeologists in those fields seem to feel not much outrage. The vases have committed no sin, so they are welcomed into the museum. And the excitement of archaeology is naturally to be found in the chase and the capture. Here, it is essential to distin-

* Dr Collcutt's full 'Complaint of improper conduct by a Member of the Institute' of 20 December 1989 is a remarkable document, with a particularly delicious complaint 11,

which has me helping 'to undermine yet further the credibility in the real world of persons' from the universities of Oxford and Cambridge.



Two terracotta figures from Ancient Jenne. 24 cm. 11th–15th century AD (thermoluminescent tested, Oxford 281 h 57.1). Private collection.

Illustration from Werner Gillon, *A short history of African art* (Harmondsworth: Viking, 1984): figure 62.

guish old sins from present wickedness. In the days of the great game, museum acquisition was about wheeling and dealing with the assets of gentlemanly and ungentlemanly adventurers, or sneaking the spoils past careless or ignorant native officials. That game ended decades ago, and so should the habits of its players.

The makers of *African King* interviewed some smooth gentlemen whose livelihood conveys Malian terracottas from the peasants in the looting fields towards connoisseurs of 'primitive' art, and heard a variety of evasive justifications. The dealers depend on a market in the

developed world; an efficient market needs demand, supply, and confidence – confidence that the terracottas are genuine antiquities, not fakes cooked up in gas ovens by exiles in Paris. Age in terracottas can be proved by thermoluminescence (TL) tests, which give an approximate age in centuries and clearly distinguish the old from the brand new. So *African King* also addressed the standing of the Oxford University Research Laboratory for Archaeology and the History of Art, which was cruelly introduced as world leaders in TL dating with no questions asked. That a TL

certificate makes a difference to the price is evident in auction estimates. Twenty-two Koma figures offered for sale without certificates at Christie's in 1988 had pre-sale estimates averaging £175. Seven Koma figures offered with certificates at Sotheby's in 1987 had estimates averaging £1200. (See, in passing, how the history of west Africa is lost for the sake of sums that are not, by western standards, serious money at all.)

So the programme also included an interview with Professor Michael Tite, head of the Oxford lab. It is sad to report that his manner and his explanations did not, as they were screened, appear to differ much from those of other persons interviewed. He justified his lab's rôle in terms of ends and means: it is this commercial work which pays for its research, a method of funding necessary in Mrs Thatcher's Britain; and in terms of expediency: if the Oxford lab did not do the work, then someone else would.

These are not good arguments. The first must depend on proof that the benefit of the lab's research is actually greater than the damage due to its servicing a trade that depends on plundering of archaeological sites. The second, though it may well be true, forgets what the research lab is, not a commercial concern that may do anything British law permits, but an integral part of a university whose purposes (supported by its charitable status) are scholarship and learning in archaeology among other subjects. The Macintoshes go on, in the letter to Professor Tite quoted above:

In view of the irreparable damage that the illegal art trade has wrought on not only the cultural heritage of Mali, but also on world archaeological patrimony, we hope that the Oxford Laboratory will seriously reflect on whether it wishes to continue servicing the trade by providing TL dates for undocumented terracottas. If these dates served science or legitimate knowledge in some way, a rationale could theoretically be advanced for continuing to produce them. However, the absence of data relevant to meaningful interpretation of the dates, including information on soil type, depth of deposit, and dosimeter studies for the provenience matrix, drastically reduces their scienti-

fic utility. Not only does the TL dating of unprovenienced, undocumented terracottas make for poor ethics, it makes for poor science as well. The Oxford Laboratory could extricate itself from at least part of this dilemma by refusing to accept for dating any Malian terracotta lacking proper, verifiable export documents, especially for terracottas not demonstrably acquired before 1985, when Malian cultural heritage legislation went into effect. We urge the Laboratory to reconsider its acceptance policies for TL samples. While this will certainly not stop the illegal trade in Malian terracottas, a concerted refusal, by the relatively small number of experts in a position to authenticate and validate these pieces, to examine undocumented artifacts would likely deflate significantly the current, rapidly escalating market. We hope the Oxford Laboratory will join in this effort to mitigate the destruction of Mali's rich and still largely unstudied archaeological record.

An Oxford University archaeologist has asked the lab to stop dating West African terracottas that have no scientific documentation or export certificates. As the number of tests Oxford runs on African terracottas is in the region of 20 a year in a total of more than 1000, withdrawal in fact means no serious loss of income. TL tests for authenticity of other items would continue.

As we went to press, Oxford was wording up a policy on the matter.

 In the real world, especially of classical antiquities, one cannot act as if the items did not exist that come to light other than by proper archaeological means. Geraldine Norman, a wise lady who has been reporting the London sale-rooms for many years, estimates, 'Eighty per cent of all antiquities that come on the market have been illegally excavated and smuggled' (*Independent*, 24 November 1990).* A grudging and reluctant recognition is in order, as is given by the Archaeological Institute of America's reasoned and reasonable policy, recently re-affirmed. This prevents AIA meetings, and its journal the *American Journal of Archaeology*, from being used as the vehicle for 'the announcement or initial scholarly presentation' of objects with an improper history.**

* If one makes allowance also for the fakes – at 10 per cent?, 20 per cent?, 30 per cent? – how many does that leave that are 'good'?

** ANTIQUITY, not often used as a place of first publication

of valued art objects, has no declared policy. To my knowledge, we have published nothing in contravention of the AIA policy, and will follow the AIA rules if the question arises.

But there is no escaping another fact of the real world: whenever scholars treat with respect and regard items with a grey history, we act to make those things respectable and valuable, whether it is to describe them when they are put on sale, to celebrate their display in a gallery exhibition catalogue, or even to treat them as historical evidence of a weight equal to those objects that have come to attention through a proper channel.

The real world has other pressures as well. Consider how a museum or gallery may stand, say a British museum of national and international reputation which feels – as the great British museums have cause to feel – under strain and underfunded. It is dependent for its health, even it may fear for its survival, on corporate sponsorship, on patrons, friends and supporters, and for acquisitions on the generosity of private individuals who may give or bequeath it treasures from their own collections. Suppose there arises the opportunity of a temporary exhibition of dazzling antiquities from some alluring place – central Asia, say, that high cultural cross-roads on the roof of the old world where so many civilizations meet. An unparalleled group of fine things can be brought together, to be studied, compared, celebrated. One private collection, particularly generous in its wish to lend to the show, can offer to exhibit some superb things that seem rarely, or never, to have been seen in public before. There are no doubts as to full legality and complete correctness of ownership by the laws of the United States or Switzerland or wherever it is that the collection is domiciled. The registration scheme of the Museums and Galleries Commission, which expects rather strict attention to be paid to the history of objects that a British museum acquires, has no equivalent rules for a temporary exhibition. Why should the museum director resist the chance of such a prize? Uncomfortable questions as to when and how these delights moved from the roof of the world to the connoisseur's cabinet are not asked. On with the show!

Enough of these gloomy matters from the shadows of the real world. Joy is in order, when we celebrate the award of the Erasmus Prize, given annually for an exceptional contribution to European culture, society or social science, to Grahame Clark, Emeritus Professor at the Uni-

versity of Cambridge. The Erasmus Prize is given for his life-time of archaeological and other achievement; the archaeology aside, it runs from a coup d'état of 1935 – in which some young and radical conspirators transformed the regional Prehistoric Society of East Anglia into a national and international Prehistoric Society – to the imperial peopling of world prehistory with his Cambridge graduates, in places everywhere from Otago to Oronsay. At a time when Europe is in flux, and east Asia on the edge of war, I am particularly struck by the prescience of his *Archaeology and society*, whose first edition dates to 1939. In an era when the language of archaeology, perhaps less untrue, is certainly more ugly, I enjoy reading vintage Clark: not fine writing for its own sake, but exact, direct, clear and straightforward as anyone would want. Here are the opening words that introduce the classic among his classics, *Prehistoric Europe: the economic basis* (1952):

The principal sources for the reconstruction of economic life during prehistoric times include actual traces of living or working, material embodiments of these activities in the form of artifacts, and contemporary representations of any or all of these. The archaeological evidence has survived imperfectly and above all unevenly, according to the substances utilized in antiquity and to the conditions prevailing in the soils where they were found; only too often it is the trivial which has endured, the significant which has perished. Again, it must be admitted that there is still far too wide a range of variation in the standards of archaeological technique in different parts of Europe, since it is upon the competence of excavators that the very possibility of extracting scientific data from vestigial traces in the soil depends. The overwhelming proportion of archaeological evidence has been gathered rather by accident than by design and studied more as an exercise in classification than as a source of history: not only have too many excavations had to be undertaken for reasons extraneous to science, but the whole approach of excavators has too often been perfunctory or at best unimaginative. One may take as an example the 'pit-dwellings' consistently reported from early iron age sites in England. Generations of excavators have cleared such pits and accurately recorded their infillings without ever asking themselves what it was they were exploring. Only when Dr Gerhard Bersu undertook the excavation of Little Woodbury, near Salisbury, with the avowed object of learning more about the daily life of a community of iron age farmers was their true function recognized. The transmutation of these pits

from dwellings to storage-pits, used for a few seasons and then filled with rubbish, has gone far to alter our appreciation of a whole phase of prehistoric settlement.

✂ I have had cause to grumble before about electronic mail – ‘Email’ – which we try to use although we find it as flooded with junk Email from electronic ‘bulletin boards’ as real mail is with junk. My children’s encyclopaedia – a period piece from 1977 which brings many unfond memories of its typesetting, my own first encounter with computerized page

make-up – tells me that Email and its variants were even then about to replace all conventional letters and payments by cheque (!), so perhaps Email has been longer in this world than I knew. Now there is sign of its yet greater antiquity in an entire German book devoted to the electronic medium as long ago as the early middle ages: Günther Haseloff’s *Email in frühen Mittelalter* (Marburg: Hitzeroth, 1990). Curiously, the pictures illustrating the book are all of enamelled metal objects.

CHRISTOPHER CHIPPINDALE

Noticeboard

John Collis has been appointed Professor in the Department of Archaeology and Prehistory, University of Sheffield.

British Archaeological Reports

We noted (64: 672) the uncertain future of this most successful monograph series. Some planned titles have been published by Oxbow, David Brown’s admirable book-selling business which has now grown into publishing, or elsewhere. Now another Oxford archaeological publisher, *Tempvs Reparatvm*, is to take on responsibility for producing new titles for BAR, which will be sold by mail-order as before. The new General Editor BAR is: *David Davison, Tempvs Reparatvm, 29 Beaumont Street, Oxford OX1 2NP, England.*

Bulletin for the History of Archaeology

This new publication hopes to act as a ‘clearing-house’ for the growing interest in the history of archaeology. It intends to begin publication in May 1991, publishing short essays and reports, and acting as a forum for sharing current work, for discussion of books and articles on the topic, and notice of archival sources. The subscription is US\$5 in the USA, US\$8 outside. Contributions offered and subscription payments to: *Douglas Givens, Bulletin for the History of Archaeology, Saint Louis Community College – Meramec, 11333 Big Bend Boulevard, St Louis MO 63122, USA.*

International Journal of Cultural Property

Contribution are invited for this new journal, whose first issue is to be published by Walter de Gruyter in July 1991, to the editor: *N.E. Palmer, International Journal of Cultural Property, Department of Law, University of Southampton, Southampton SO9 5NH, England.*

Conferences

Canadian Archaeological Association

St John’s, Newfoundland, Canada, 8–11 May 1991
Suggestions for symposia, paper titles and abstracts, by 31 January 1991 to: *Ralph Pastore, Department of History, Memorial University of Newfoundland, St John’s, Newfoundland A1C 5S7, Canada.*

Re-placing the past: regional cultures and the transformation of Europe

University of Newcastle upon Tyne, England, 15 May 1991

The place of the past, and perceptions of regional history, as the future of Europe promises to offer strong regional identities within a federated community. Details from: *Peter Fowler, Department of Archaeology, The University, Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 7RU, England.*

24th annual Chacmool conference:

Culture and environment: a fragile coexistence

University of Calgary, Canada, 7–10 November 1991

Following successful conferences on the theme of gender and of ideology, this thriving Canadian conference – surely the largest annual meeting to be run by a board of students – turns to a timely, Green theme for 1991. Session and paper proposals to: *Programme Committee 1991 conference, Department of Archaeology, University of Calgary, Calgary, Alta. T24 1N4, Canada.*

Ancient medicine in its socio-cultural context

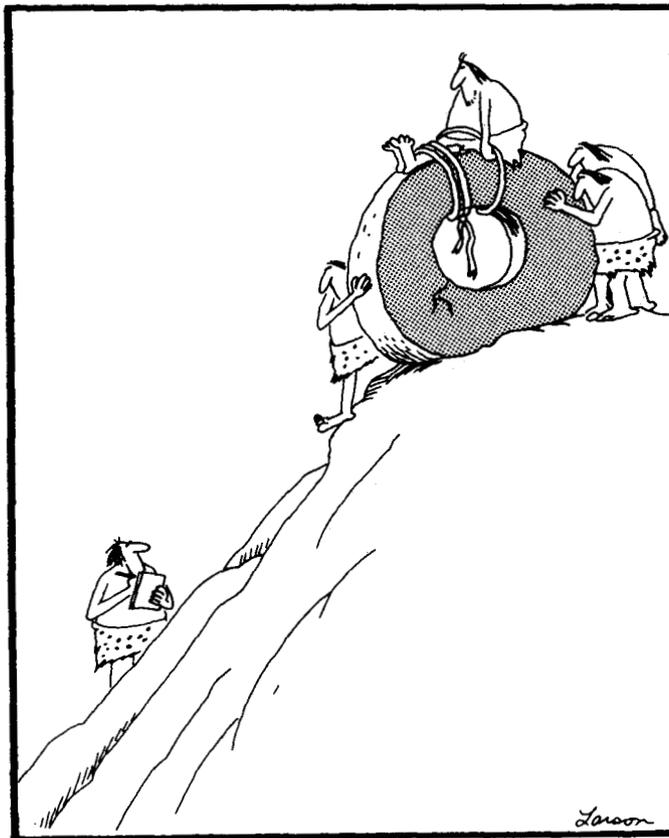
Leiden, Netherlands, 13–15 April 1992

An integrated approach to disease and medicine in antiquity through the themes of: patients and diseases, medicine, doctors and the medical professions. Proposals and offers of contributions by 1 May 1991 to: *H.F.J. Horstmanhoff, Department of Ancient History, Leiden University, Post-box 9515, 2300 RA Leiden, Netherlands.*

William P. McHugh Memorial Fund

A fund has been set up in memory of William McHugh, the American researcher one of whose last papers on the earlier archaeology of Egypt was published in *ANTIQUITY* (1989). Based at the American Research

Center, it will fund studies of Egyptian palaeo-archaeology. Contributions to: Director, American Research Center in Egypt, New York University, 50 Washington Square South, New York NY 10012, USA.

THE FAR SIDE in ANTIQUITY

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Early experiments in transportation