

Review

New Book Chronicle

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Does archaeology make any sense? This quarter's chronicle comments on a selection of books about its public image, how to manage it, and on the contributions of a few of its practitioners. Also featured are a couple of studies that present the people of the Eurasian steppes and an update on some European journals of archaeology.

Making sense of archaeology

CORNELIUS HOLTORF, illustrated by QUENTIN DREW. *Archaeology is a brand!: the meaning of archaeology in contemporary popular culture*. x + 184 pages, numerous illustrations. 2007. Oxford: Archaeopress; 978-1-905739-06-6 paperback £14.99.

NICHOLAS J. COOPER (ed.). *The Archaeology of the East Midlands: An Archaeological Resource Assessment and Research Agenda* (Leicester Archaeology Monograph 13). xvi+378 pages, 72 b&cw & colour illustrations, 8 tables. 2006. Leicester: University of Leicester; 0-9538914-7-X paperback £19.95.

JOHN HUNTER & IAN RALSTON (ed.). *Archaeological Resource Management in the UK: An Introduction*. Second revised edition (first published 1993). xiv+402 pages, numerous illustrations. 2006. Stroud: Sutton; 978-0-7509-2789-5 hardback £25.

R.G. MATSON & TIMOTHY A. KOHLER (ed.). *Tracking Ancient Footsteps: William D. Lipe's Contribution to Southwestern Prehistory and Public Archaeology*. xiii+188 pages, 35 illustrations, 2 tables. 2006. Pullman (WA): Washington State University Press; 978-0-87422-290-6 paperback \$22.95.

JEFFREY L. HANTMAN & RACHEL MOST (ed.). *Managing Archaeological Data: Essays in Honor of Sylvia W. Gaines* (Arizona State University Anthropological Research Paper 57). x+202 pages, 37 illustrations, 42 tables. 2006. Tempe (AZ): Department of Anthropology, Arizona State University; 978-0-936249-18-6 paperback \$33.50.

MICHAEL D. COE. *Final report: An Archaeologist Excavates His Past*. 224 pages, 6 figures, 35 plates. 2006. London: Thames & Hudson; 0-500-05143-7 hardback £18.95.

CORNELIUS HOLTORF's book, *Archaeology is a brand!*, is an entertaining enquiry into the meaning of archaeology in contemporary popular culture, investigating what is absorbed into the popular fabric, the image archaeologists project, and the role the archaeological profession plays in the shaping of popular perceptions. QUENTIN DREW's cartoons (I liked the pickaxe through the television set on p. 105) and the uncomplicated style make it the sort of book that gets picked up in the site hut at tea-break. It might even lead to discussions amongst professionals about their role in society, which is what Holtorf intends. But please don't indulge in any more talk about appearance. It must be a man thing: hairy worzels, young pros in high-visibility jackets or weary managers in tired suits, what's the matter with you? Look at the women in television archaeology programmes, they look just fine and get on with the job. That job is still very much connected with digging in popular culture, a culture that wants to be fascinated. Holtorf explores this culture in four interconnected themes, identified by letters – A for Adventure, D for Detection, R for Revelations and C for Caring – using material from television, newspapers, popular books, cartoon strips, films, computer games or museum displays, mainly from the United Kingdom, Germany and Sweden. The public's positive attitude towards archaeology, argues Holtorf, must be cultivated, through education, public relations and the democratic process, three models discussed in chapter 6; in other words, archaeologists must 'work with rather than against the pre-understandings and expectations of non-archaeological audiences' (p. 139). What did I make of it? I enjoyed reading the book, the prose is clear, 'on message' without being too patronising. Yet it felt a bit like going to a party when you should be doing serious work instead. At heart there is some imbalance: first, the demarcation between archaeologists and the public is artificial, since we are all members of shifting constituencies; second, too much space is taken up with the description of the stereotypes and metaphors that exist in the public arena and too little is devoted to the conclusions that could be drawn from them.

The book ends just as we get to the nub of the matter, politics. The now familiar solutions – multivocality, participation or community archaeology – seem feeble. While greater engagement is desirable, I believe archaeology is missing a trick if it continues to pander to the fascination with ‘doing it’ rather than ‘with the actual results being produced’ (p. 131). Mature professions are more confident: hospitals do not advertise fun days at the end of which you can perform your own vasectomy. Perhaps only when archaeology has grown up enough to interest anyone in the stuff of the past, however multivocally this is done, will we be able to say, 40 years after David Clarke, that ‘archaeology is archaeology is archaeology’.

The stuff of the past, the British East Midlands has plenty. Required by the British government agency English Heritage to assess the state of knowledge in the region and to formulate a research agenda, the East Midlands adopted a collegiate approach, in eight specialist seminars between 1998 and 2000. The result is *the Archaeology of the East Midlands* from Palaeolithic to Modern times, first published on the web (<http://www.le.ac.uk/ar/research/projects/eastmidsw/index.html>), and now between two soft covers. The volume edited by NICHOLAS COOPER cannot entirely avoid civil service-speak, particularly in the sections that detail the elements of the research agenda, or wish-lists. Everything is covered, from overarching themes such as ‘resource procurement and utilisation’ to the very specific (item 38 in the Anglo-Saxon list is ‘consumption of cetaceans’). But apart from identifying gaps in the data and signposting avenues for enquiry, the 13 authors have compiled a huge amount of information, making this an essential work of reference for the region. In fact they would argue that the East Midlands is England in a microcosm, a landscape that straddles the lowland/highland divide from the Lincolnshire Fens to the Derbyshire Peaks, and that the trends they identify there have far wider currency. Sites such as Arbor Low, the Iron Age causeway at Fiskerton or artefacts like the Witham shield are proof enough of archaeological wealth and this new book further proof of potential. One disappointment was the choice of colour plates: all of them are of historic buildings, the prehistory is monochrome (except for the covers which show Mam Tor and Creswell Crags).

In the East Midlands as elsewhere, new sites have appeared at such a pace that the new edition of *Archaeological Resource Management in the UK* is a timely event. HUNTER & RALSTON’s collection of

1993 is fully revised, ‘encapsulat[ing] the “state of the art” with regard to applied archaeological practice in the United Kingdom in 2004-5’ (p. v). The structure (22 chapters) and headings remain the same but 10 new authors have joined the crew (amongst them Gavin Lucas, Alan Saville, Jason Wood, Claire Foley and Graham Fairclough sign chapters originally written by other hands). Whether changes are correctly identified – one could for example take exception to Lucas’ assertion (p. 22) that ‘it is only in the past five years or so that [the conciliation of theory with practice] has progressed into critically new ways of doing archaeology, especially fieldwork’ – changes there have been, and major ones. This follow-up diagnosis after a decade of developer-funded practice and major assessment exercises, paired with the rise of commercial outfits, electronic data collection, archiving and dissemination, portable antiquities schemes, or the power of television, will prove invaluable to practitioners of archaeology in the United Kingdom, and perhaps more importantly to observers from further afield who wish to see what a deregulated system can produce, good and bad. Sadly Hunter and Ralston, also Grenville (p. 176) note that ‘the split between academic and professional archaeology continues to grow to the intense detriment of both sides’ (p. 176). Bucking this trend is a role *Antiquity* is determined to play.

The delicate equilibrium between CRM (Cultural Resource Management or contract archaeology) and academic archaeology was and is also an essential concern for William Lipe, a major figure in Southwestern and public archaeology in the USA, celebrated in *Tracking Ancient Footsteps*, an affectionate appreciation by colleagues at a meeting of the Society for American Archaeology in Denver in 2002. Lipe’s career spans five decades from the late 1950s onwards; its progress not only charts changing priorities in American archaeology but also reflects his influence on these priorities. Salvage archaeology at Glen Canyon in the 1960s, processual approaches at Cedar Mesa, a big collective project at Dolores in the 1970s, research designs and public archaeology, the creation of the Crow Canyon Research Center and subsequent growth in the 1980s, the hidden toil of a university teacher, these are achievements in both the CRM/public and academic spheres. MATSON & KOHLER’s book ends with a couple of chapters on the ethics of conservation and an extended reflexive interview with Lipe. In this context, let us note Lipe’s mature thoughts on preservation, summed up

by Lynne Sebastian on p. 123-4. Quoting a 1996 paper by Lipe ('In defence of digging: archaeological preservation as a means, not an end') – 'pledging to dig only on sites that are otherwise threatened has the unintended effect of trivializing research and its contributions to society' – she argues against the concept of 'banking' for the future and advocates the *conservative* use of the archaeological record to invigorate research.

Another practitioner in Southwestern archaeology and pioneer teacher of computer applications at Arizona State University, Sylvia Gaines, is honoured in *Managing Archaeological Data*. This *Festschrift*, edited by HANTMAN & MOST, contains 16 papers by 24 scholars who have in common an engagement with large and complex data-sets, made possible with the advent of electronic storage and manipulation over the past two or three decades. A large proportion of the articles are concerned with showcasing analyses of Southwestern material and inevitably sherd-counting is part of the diet. But it does not stop there, as many comparative and integrated studies, taking in for example dendrochronological data, identification of timber species, faunal data for lagomorphs, musculo-skeletal stress indicators, or comparing coprolytes with data derived from flotation show (see in particular chapters 7, 9, 10 and 11). And not all the papers are directed at the Southwestern specialist: theoretical, methodological and educational issues are explored, and three papers (chapters 12-14) are by Mesoamericanists (Cowgill, Stark, Nicholas & Feinman respectively) who reflect on their survey and excavation data. As a snapshot of developing processual approaches, this collection has much to offer.

If appreciations and *Festschriften* are by definition benevolent offerings, autobiographies are in another class. How to write without hubris but without false modesty, without rancour but with an alert critical mind, how to cast a dispassionate eye on one's own achievements are difficult waters, elegantly and skilfully navigated in *Final report*, MICHAEL D. COE's memoirs. The fine writing, the light touch, the subject matter – Professor Coe is after all a towering figure in Mesoamerican archaeology – all contribute to the success of the book. To continue Coe's own metaphor ('I have been digging into my own past and this is my report on what I have found', p. 8), what the author does very well is provide context. That context is deep and multilayered: it introduces the reader to a privileged East Coast upbringing, fishing and the natural beauty of Wyoming and Massachusetts,

life as a CIA agent in Taiwan, salvage archaeology in Tennessee, Angkor Wat, Russian émigrés and scholarship in Soviet Russia, learning and teaching at Harvard and Yale, and of course Mesoamerica, its Formative horizons, the Olmecs and Maya glyphs. Coe's contribution to Mesoamerican archaeology is for other specialists to discuss. Here, I would just recommend *Final report* to anyone interested in people, past and present. By introducing us to his world, Coe has reminded archaeologists how privileged they are to be observers of and participants in other people's lives. In a way quite different to the post-modern, managerial or processual approaches discussed earlier, this book helps make sense of archaeology.

People of the Eurasian steppes

VLADIMIRA G. PETRENKO. *Krasnoznamenskii Burial-ground: Early Scythian Elite Burial-mounds in the Northern Caucasus* (*Corpus Tumulorum Scythorum et Sarmaticorum* 1). 304 pages, 11 figures, 126 plates (incl. 32 colour plates), 22 tables. 2006. Moscow, Berlin, Bordeaux: Paleograph; 5-8952-6017-9 hardback (English edition); 5-8952-6016-0 hardback (Russian edition).

The report on the *Early Scythian Elite Burial-mounds* of Krasnoe Znamya in the district of Stavropol in the central Caucasus is the first volume of the *Corpus Tumulorum Scythorum et Sarmaticorum*, a handsome hardback published by Paleograph Press (website: www.paleog.com; email: books@paleog.com), a relatively new Moscow publisher dedicated since 1997 to publishing Russian research in archaeology, ancient history, numismatics and linguistics. To quote Paleograph: '*Familiarity with the Russian language is not widespread among scholars . . . and many important scientific works originally published in Russian are often not available . . . Unfortunately, Russian publishers and academic institutions still make little efforts to promote their publications . . . The aim of this project has been to make the results of current scientific studies available to a larger number of scholars through the publication of new, serious, well researched books in English, German, and French . . . for the first time . . . We hope that our books will broaden the resources available for the field of Humanities and will contribute to closer cooperation among scholars, regardless of the languages they speak or the countries where they live.*' *Antiquity* extends its welcome to this project. VLADIMIRA PETRENKO's report is an example of truly heroic recording of an enormous (c. 15m high) late seventh-century BC