

## Some noteworthy events of the 1998/99 academic year

### Peter Ucko

*The Director of the Institute comments on academic developments since the 1997/98 issue of Archaeology International was published.*

**A**s a follow-up to the plans for the future of the Institute noted on the back cover of the 1997/98 issue of *Archaeology International*, I have great pleasure in being able to report that:

- After interviewing applicants from both the UK and Japan, Dr Koji Mizoguchi (PhD Cambridge, and Associate Professor of Archaeology at Kyushu University) has been appointed to the Lectureship in Japanese Archaeology. He will take up this position in January 2000 and will teach a specialized third-year undergraduate course in Japanese prehistory.
- Thilo Rehren, from the Deutsches Bergbau-Museum at Bochum (Germany), an internationally renowned expert in archaeometallurgy and the analysis of glass, who has carried out fieldwork in Ecuador, Egypt and Germany, takes up the new Professorship in Archaeological Materials and Technology in September 1999. I look forward to seeing how, under his influence, the teaching of archaeological materials science will develop over the next few years, and I anticipate new initiatives that we hope will place the Institute firmly at the forefront of international activity in the analysis of ancient materials.
- As a result of the intensive review of conservation studies in the Institute undertaken last year, it has been decided to introduce a one-year MSc, Principles of Conservation, from September 1999, and to follow this in September 2000 with the introduction of a new two-year postgraduate degree on Conservation for Archaeology and Museums. By changing from its previous undergraduate degree in conservation to postgraduate degrees, the Institute aims to retain its international leadership in the training of conservators and to develop its role in pure and applied research in archaeological conservation.

One of the most satisfying and unforeseen events of the year has been the formal Designation, by the UK government's Department of Culture, Media and Sport, of the Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology as one of the 50 most important collections in England outside the national museums. The Petrie Museum is recognized as one of the world's most important teaching and research collections of Egyptian archaeology, with an unrivalled range

of material that is exceptionally well researched and documented. This national recognition should greatly facilitate efforts to improve the Museum's accommodation and access, and the computerization of its holdings.

During the past year, in accordance with College requirements, the Institute presented UCL with a strategic plan for the next five years. In the event, it turned out to be the first departmental strategic plan that the new Provost of UCL, Professor Christopher Llewellyn Smith, had to consider – even before he took up his official position! The Institute's plan emphasized the need for a settling down period to allow the syllabus and other changes announced in the first issue of *AI*, including creation of the Research Groups, to be assessed. Professor Stephen Shennan and I came away from the Provost's review of the strategic plan reassured that the College would continue to support the Institute's activities strongly – even to the extent of providing finance in advance to appoint a cataloguer for the Petrie Palestinian Collection (see back cover), and funds for a pilot project to help prepare a major grant application for the redesigning (during the 1999–2000 academic year) of the Institute's Conservation Laboratories.

I am also pleased to report that, in addition to the seminars organized by the new Research Groups (see the coordinators' reports below), two series of Institute-wide thematic seminars were organized this year by Jeremy Tanner. In the autumn term the chosen theme was "The Archaeology of Change" and in the spring term "Comparison in Archaeology". Half the speakers were Institute staff and the others came from the universities of Bradford, Cambridge, Durham, Hull, Oxford, Ohio State and the Slovenian Academy of Sciences.

The Institute's already extensive international links were strengthened further this year by lectures on archaeological theory given by four of our academic staff since the 1950s to the Department of Archaeology of the Peking University, and by return visits to us by Drs Xing Wen and Dashu Qin. We have also welcomed, as a visitor for this academic year, Dr Wang Qi-zhi from the Institute of Archaeology of the Nanjing Museum. We look forward to continuing collaboration with our Chinese colleagues.

Perhaps the most satisfying development this year, for me personally, has been the self-evident success of the new

Research Groups, whose creation and aims were described in my contribution to the first issue of *AI*. As can be seen from the reports of the coordinators of the four primary groups, and from some of the announcements on the back cover of this issue, the Groups have been successful in formulating new research initiatives, sponsoring interesting seminars and shouldering many of the Institute's administrative tasks. They have also acted effectively in helping to determine staffing priorities, and the collective views of their members have been translated, via the strategic plan, into a reaffirmation of the academic importance of filling posts in archaeobotany, geoarchaeology, Latin American archaeology, African archaeology, and conservation, for which new appointments are now being made.

Finally, for the record, Happy Hours (see my comment in the first issue) have continued happily to bring together, over wine in the sixth-floor common room, members of the Institute and visitors from all points of the compass.

#### Mission statement

The Institute of Archaeology is a researched institution recognized also for the excellence of its teaching. Its mission is:

- To be internationally pre-eminent in the study, and comparative analysis, of world archaeology.
- To enhance its national and international reputation for the quality and breadth of its multidisciplinary and thematic approach to the study of the human past.
- To promote best practice in the management of cultural heritage and in the care and preservation of archaeological artefacts.
- To ensure that the social, political and economic contexts of the practice of archaeology are taught and appreciated.
- To be at the forefront of international research in archaeological sciences.
- To play a major role in furthering the understanding of London's archaeological and historical past.
- To provide archaeological opportunities of the highest quality to all, regardless of background.