

teers, the MSC-programmes, unionisation, the 'Institute of Field Archaeologists' etc., might also cause considerable and potentially unwanted consequences for archaeology. Many of these consequences have not been thoroughly discussed, and their importance for the future job situation -- with respect both

to availability and nature of work -- makes them very important for generations of unestablished archaeologists. It seems essential to discuss these aspects of our subject, and ARC welcomes comments and letters concerning these issues.

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The Interpretation of the Archaeological Heritage.

As issue 2:1 of ARC showed, archaeologists are becoming increasingly aware of the need both to serve the public adequately and to be accountable to it.

However, there is, as often, a great disjunction between what is said and what is done. Archaeologists rarely consider what will happen to the products of their work -- material and natural remains, site plans, photographs, etc. -- after they have been used to produce a report and safely housed in an archive. The task of curating this archive is then often left to museum workers, who, partly through lack of funds, are rarely able to present the results of archaeological research in a way that is interesting to anyone other than a committed student of archaeology.

I feel that if archaeologists want to serve the public and not just themselves, then the results of archaeological research must be communicated in intelligible fashion to as wide a number of people as possible. The large numbers of people in treasure-hunting clubs, interested in genealogy, local history, and 'heritage' programmes on television show how much enthusiasm there is for the past. Archaeologists can channel this interest by writing not just for their academic peers, but also for someone with only a passing interest in archaeology; by using amateurs in

their research; by giving guides and lectures, by publishing popular accounts of their work; and by giving advice on the way evidence should be presented via all the audio and visual media.

The funds are available to do this sort of work. The financial magnates in the City have been persuaded recently to invest in tourism, and Government grants totalling £35 million a year are available for the tourism and leisure industry. One place where novel interpretation methods have been used -- the Viking Jorvik Centre in York -- received the maximum grant for such a heritage project from the English Tourist Board.

It is easy to sneer at such attempts at popularisation and to retire into academic pedantry. A more productive approach would be for archaeologists, whether in museums, field units or research establishments, to join forces with those experienced in tourism, interpretation and mass communication in order to present a past which is widely intelligible. These popularisations do not have to take the form of traditional 'histories' of particular periods or peoples; issues of current debate can also be communicated to a wider audience. 'The archaeology of mind' is potentially of just as great (if not more) interest to the public as the archaeology of Roman Britain. What is required is the ability to express complex ideas in a clear way -- something at which archae-

ologists do not excel. Without communicating the results of archaeological research to the people whose past they have been

studying, archaeologists have not completed their task.

Nick Merriman

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Nonsense and Jargon in Contemporary Archaeology - a Plea!

The last decade or so has witnessed the publication of a truly substantial amount of archaeological literature which may be fairly classed as apparent nonsense: apparent because the level of jargon in such publications has now reached such a pitch that it is difficult to decide whether the authors are writing sheer gibberish or are merely indulging in a feast of obscure terminology. The situation has, indeed, become grim. One can spend many hours ploughing through a paper and looking up the technical language before arriving at the painful conclusion that the effort has been wasted and the content is quite specious. Furthermore, even in those cases where the paper, upon decoding, actually makes sense and is of some interest, it is all too often the case that the text could have been put more concisely, more plainly and in fewer words with fewer syllables.

At the risk of appearing partisan, it must be stated that the situation is many times worse in the United States than in Britain. This may be related to the volume of archaeological literature published in that country. The quite prodigious amount of material which goes to press each year in America is not, I think, matched by an equally prodigious wealth of original and useful ideas. On the contrary, there is something of a chasm there between quantity and quality. Papers which, scarcely two decades ago, would never have been considered for publication now fill the burgeoning list of journals. Indeed, the quantity of text required yearly to float the pro-

ceedings, the journals, the colloquia, monograph series, reports, newsletters and so on which overwhelm our libraries does more than a little to perpetuate and worsen the situation. And let us not be self-satisfied on this side of the Atlantic: British archaeology is not above such a circus but just (as usual) one step behind.

There is, of course, a place for technical words and phrases in modern archaeological writing; indeed, given the highly inter-disciplinary nature of the subject, it would be almost impossible to avoid them. Authors writing papers which incorporate statistical techniques, chemical analysis or specialist information are more than entitled to include appropriate technical terms -- indeed, they would be foolish to invent new terminology, or to try to expand the existing terminology in plain English. More reluctantly we might be willing to accept the technical language which some have adopted from Sociology, Social Anthropology, Linguistics and Psychology; 'modes of production', structural contradictions, Critical Theories, emic/etic distinctions and the 'construction of self' are all more or less necessary shorthand tools of the theoretical apparatus grafted onto modern archaeological studies. And then there are the equilibria, information potentials, feedbacks and so on of the New Archaeology. No, this is not the jargon which I am complaining about although it too makes for turgid and sometimes incomprehensible papers. The jargon which is truly offensive because specious is what, to paraphrase Clifford Geertz, one might call 'thick jargon'.