

at UNESCO's foundation and there is no reason, why 38 years later, it should be hostile to it to such an extent as to withdraw from the organisation.

At the practical level, UNESCO is the only truly international forum of intellectual exchange capable of overcoming political barriers, a condition which is necessary if it is to be practical. Taking the examples of the Nubia and Carthage campaigns, few archaeologists would doubt the relevance of such projects and the important role played by UNESCO in making them possible. For many poor countries, UNESCO fulfills a variety of roles which, in wealthier countries like Britain, are often provided by government-financed bodies which these countries cannot afford. If Britain were to withdraw, the move could be seen as denying the principal of international cooperation.

It is also difficult to deny UNESCO's range of publications. The publication of handbooks provides a basic source of practical and concise information on education, science and culture and are often used by educational institutions in the Third World.

Rather than withdrawing outright from UNESCO, Britain should stay within it and assure that the reforms outlined above are carried out. In this way it would maintain an active voice in the international forums of education, culture and science provided by UNESCO. Continued membership would also see that the results of the better management of resources are used for worthwhile projects which have been waiting for attention.

The combination of the unprecedented need to preserve the world's heritage, and a more efficient UNESCO which should mean that more of this type of programmes will become possible, is an exciting prospect for all those interested in preservation and excavation. The return of cultural property to its country of origin and the provision of safe museum installations and trained staff, should provide not only some sense of history for the countries concerned but will also provide the basis for truly international exchange. This will, undoubtedly, help to promote international consensus.

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The Gallery of World Prehistory and Local Archaeology, University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Cambridge: A Review

Background

A hundred years ago, in May 1884, the Cambridge University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology first opened its doors. It moved to its present site in Downing Street in 1910, and since then its collections have more than doubled in extent. It now houses over half a million specimens, much of them acquired through fieldwork by such pioneers as Captain James Cook,

A.C. Haddon and Grahame Clark, and receives visits from researchers from all over the world, as well as about 17,000 members of the public annually.

By 1970 it was realised that the museum would have to be completely reorganised to alleviate the great storage problem that had arisen. In 1974, under the curatorship of Peter Gathercole, the museum was effectively sliced in two, with all the former exhibition galleries in the south section of the museum becoming storage and research areas and half of the collections, notably European post-

Palaeolithic archaeology and African ethnographic material being transferred to an external store. By 1981 the structural work on the storage areas had been carried out at a cost of roughly £200,000, and three-quarters of the collections were re-housed. Thus by 1980/81 staff were preparing to proceed with the second, more evident part of the refurbishment of the museum, which was the transformation of the displays. This is a process which will take at least until 1988/89, but on May 1st this year the first part of this work was completed when the new gallery of World Prehistory and Local Archaeology was opened by the Prince of Wales in commemoration of the Museum's centenary.

The Gallery

The gallery, which occupies the ground floor of the museum, is primarily aimed at an undergraduate audience, although it does make strong efforts to cater for a more general public as well.

The first display in the gallery is a deliberately-chosen old-fashioned case illustrating the history of the museum in one section and explaining the museum's current functions in the other. It is particularly gratifying to find the latter, as it is rarely made clear to the visitor that museums are concerned with acquiring, conserving, documenting and storing objects just as much as displaying them. The second case is full of British goldwork, which unfortunately confirms the 'treasure-seeking' image of archaeology, but is necessarily in that position for security reasons. Following this, the exhibition proper begins. The gallery is divided into 13 sections, each clearly distinguished with its own symbol (a fossil skull for 'The first humans', a wheel for 'Technology', and so on). The displays are given further cohesion by the unity of the labelling

system. Each section has from two to ten cases, identified by their symbol, and each case has at least one large, easily readable general text and further smaller 'theme' labels. Thus the visitor can choose his or her own level of interest and still gain something from even a cursory glance at the exhibition. This helpful form of labelling has been dubbed "The Rupert Bear syndrome" (Schadla-Hall and Davidson 1982). The objects and texts are well-supplemented by photographs, maps, reconstruction drawings and plans, whilst the displays are presented on different coloured felt backgrounds with matching labels (and matching coloured carpet tiles!). The whole display thus has a very pleasing visual effect which, one presumes, might stimulate the visitor to pay more attention to what is being displayed. Some museums, it seems, are at last learning from the techniques of packaging and display used by shops and are presenting their collections in an attractive way rather than hoping the objects will do all the work for them.

This point is well illustrated by the first section of the gallery, which concerns 'The first humans'. It is notoriously difficult to make a lively display from the material remains of such early periods, but here a fine attempt is made by using models of human hands to demonstrate how stone tools were made, and by using maps and colour photos to put the objects in context. At no time, however, are the objects secondary to the illustrative material.

The strength of the museum's collections from the point of view of teaching is demonstrated in this new section and in the following one, "Modern man and the new continents". Material is exhibited from sites such as Choukoutien, Swanscombe and El Tabun, together with reproductions of such classic material as the Willendorf Venus.

One particularly fascinating display is in the Australian section where there is a row of beautifully flaked points which turn out to be made from bits of broken bottles and ceramic telegraph insulators, adapted for their own purposes by the aboriginal population of the last century.

The display then moves through "The developing food quest" to "Farmers and craftsmen in Europe 7000-1000 BC", where the sensible policy of mounting sherds on sloping panels to ensure maximum visibility is used to good effect. The wide scope of the collections, ranging from such sites as Nea Nikomedeia and Vinca to the more extensive material from the Alpine lake villages is a continual surprise, particularly as much of it has been closed to public view for ten years or more.

The general European story is concluded with three cases on the theme of "Europe 1000 BC-1000 AD". The virtual impossibility of attempting a synthesis of such a wide area and timespan in such a small space is brought home here by, for example, the label on iron-using. This is limited to a label of nineteen words, which was apparently all that was possible in the limited space available. One does feel that, as bronze-using merits a display of its own, the problems of the impact of increased iron exploitation are rather underplayed here.

The focus of the displays then narrows down to a consideration of "Prehistoric Britain 4000 BC- AD 50". The text supplementing the objects presents a rather conventional materialist view of British prehistory. This may be perfectly acceptable for teaching purposes, but I feel that the visitor is not prompted here to ask any questions, and is not given any hint of the problems that still remain. The text reads rather dogmatically,

explaining, for example, all bronze hoards as founders' deposits or caches hidden in times of danger, and fails to hint at arguments concerning their possible ritual nature (e.g. Bradley 1982). Other sections of the museum are, however, much more open-ended in their interpretation of the material.

The final 'British' section is one on Roman Britain, which attempts much in the small space available and includes reconstructed parts of a Roman villa. The area covered then narrows even further, firstly to "East Anglia AD 400-1100" and finally to "Cambridgeshire 1100-1850". Here the museum shows its history as the descendant of the collections originally formed by the Cambridge Antiquarian Society, and indeed it still is, by default, the local archaeological museum. One section at the end is particularly intriguing as it deals with the growth of Cambridge as a town. The museum has strong collections for this area and would make a very good town history museum. However, at present it receives no regular financial help from local government and, until such aid is forthcoming, cannot expand its service to the local community.

A small section on 'Technology' completes the circle of the gallery, leaving three sections to see in the centre of the room. The first comprises two cases on the entire prehistory of Africa. It is refreshing to see a treatment of pre-Dynastic Egypt which is not swamped by material from later periods. This happens because collections from Dynastic Egypt are housed in the Fitzwilliam Museum and are outside the scope of the gallery, which, apart from the Roman display, concentrates on world prehistory. This policy is in fact understandably slightly contravened in the next section on Asia, in the display on Mesopotamia. The treatment of ur-

banism and writing is so necessary to an introductory archaeology course that its exclusion would have been unthinkable. In this same section it is particularly interesting to see the material from the Far East and India, which would be unfamiliar to many other than the most dedicated British Museum visitor.

The gallery finishes with an extensive display of material from the Americas, ranging from North America in the Archaic period to post-Conquest Peru. This links in nicely with the museum's ethnographic material and makes the journey upstairs to view it a logical step in a tour of the museum.

The gallery is, as a whole, excellently packaged, well thought out and does what it sets out to do by providing a wide-ranging and manageable introduction to world prehistory and local archaeology. It doubtless works quite well as a teaching gallery for undergraduates, particularly when coupled with the specially-prepared guide to the collections. The main problem as a teaching display is its necessary superficiality. Presumably, anyone studying the prehistory of Africa in detail would not be content with its treatment in two cases, but one would hope that a non-specialist might be inspired by the display to go off and find more about the subject. It is in their inspirational role as catalysts to stimulate people's interest in particular subjects that museums really have their part to play (Lewis 1980). I feel that perhaps a little more could be done here to provoke reaction in the visitor, perhaps by having displays where people could touch or even handle artifacts, or by conveying a little more the actual excitement of archaeology. However, it is perhaps unfair to criticise too much an enterprise whose main constraints are lack of money and

space. The only criticism I would have which would not cost anything to remedy is the male-dominated language of some of the labels. ARC has a policy of promoting non-sexist use of language, and I would hope that words such as 'human beings' or 'people' could be used instead of 'man'.

Aside from that, the main criticisms that could be levelled at the museum are ones of which the curator, David Phillipson, is fully aware, and which concern the use of the museum by the public. The museum is only open to the public for two hours per day and has little provision of public services other than visits by school parties. David Phillipson would like to expand the museum's operations in this area by having longer opening hours, public guide-books, children's quizzes, demonstrations and more school parties, but it he is at present unable to do so due to inadequate funding, which is partly due to the unusual position of university museums. The museum is run mainly from University funds, and claims for more money for the museum are in direct competition with claims from university departments. At present the museum has, at best, four curatorial staff and one full-time and two part-time attendants, and at such low staffing levels expansion of the museum's services cannot be contemplated. It is to be hoped that a solution might be found if funding were undertaken jointly by local government and the University, as has been arranged in the case of the Manchester Museum.

The staffing problem might be alleviated to some extent if the Centenary Appeal is successful, as one of its aims is to raise £150,000 to endow a graduate traineeship in the museum. The other aim is to raise £250,000 to refurbish the two upper display galleries, when the archaeology galleries have been completed at a

cost of £138,400. The first floor will house the extremely important ethnographic collections, whilst the second floor will provide space for temporary exhibitions of all sorts. A leaflet describing the appeal is enclosed with this issue of ARC.

One can only hope that at least when this refurbishment is completed the importance of the museum will be recognised at both university and local government level and that both the public and research use of the museum will be increased. The museum is in Downing Street and is open to the public from Monday to Friday 2pm to 4pm and on Saturdays from 10am to 12.30pm Admission is free. I can only encourage you to visit it and make up your own mind about it. Personally I would prefer a visit

this museum rather than the massiveness of the British Museum, as it is possible to study each case in an afternoon's visit and leave without feeling that one has undergone some form of physical and mental punishment. They even sell ARC for us as well!

References

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