

Editorial

CHRISTOPHER CHIPPINDALE

Every contribution published in *ANTIQUITY* should be important, and I hope every one of the 155 in this year's volume *is* important; those that are not, we should not have been publishing. That said, most may be less important than others; certainly, some catch no attention outside the immediate world of research archaeology. TAYLOR, HAYNES & STUIVER's note in the September issue is a decisive new analysis of Folsom and Clovis chronology in archaic America; it is short, printed as a research note rather than a research paper, yet it re-shapes debate as to the nature of the first settlement of the Americas, and its relation to megafaunal extinction. But that article received no press coverage beyond brief notice in *New Scientist*.

One paper in this issue already has caught attention — on front pages of the main Australian newspapers and of the *New York Times*, on the main BBC television evening news in Britain, with comment in *Nature* and in *Science*: R.L.K. FULLAGAR, D.M. PRICE & L.M. HEAD's paper, 'Early human occupation of northern Australia: archaeology and thermoluminescence dating of Jinmium rock-shelter, Northern Territory', on pages 751–73. The research team, in conjunction with *ANTIQUITY*, released essentials of it for press notice on 23 September. It is printed first among the papers in this number not through a sense of its over-riding importance, but for a practical production reason: placed there, it shares the same sheet of printing paper as the Reports and we can print a couple of its illustrations in colour.

Why does the world think it *is* so special? Because of the numbers: luminescent measurements for the lower levels offer a date for a human presence in Australia between 116,000 and 176,000 years ago, nearly twice the previous estimates, also by luminescent methods.

There exist now three patterns discernible in the confused and contradictory evidence for an Australian settlement; it falls in that difficult area, at or beyond the reliable range of radiocarbon, short of the range when some of the long half-life isotopic methods get going. And

the Australian sites, especially in the acid sands of the tropical north, are exceptionally hard to work with.

It chances that key statements of all three positions have been published in *ANTIQUITY*:

- JIM ALLEN & SIMON HOLDAWAY see radiocarbon dates up to about 35,000–40,000 years, with a threshold at that time-period that marks the start of the human presence: a *short* chronology (*ANTIQUITY* 69 (March 1995): 101–12).
- JOHN CHAPPELL, JOHN MAGEE & JOHN HEAD see that apparent horizon as resulting from difficulties with the radiocarbon technique, so the luminescent dates from the Kakadu sites of about 60,000 years are instead to be depended on: a *medium* chronology (*ANTIQUITY* 70 (September 1996): 543–52).
- RICHARD FULLAGAR, DAVID PRICE & LESLEY HEAD see a pattern of observations from their Jinmium work which places a human presence into the time-span 116,000–176,000 years ago (and a few clues consistent with that from work elsewhere, so there is a pattern beyond the one site); the essentials of a *long* chronology.

If this seems all too uncertain, with credible estimates that span a range of 100,000 years — from under 40,000 to the region of 140,000 — let us remember that the credible range of dates for the emergence of modern humans in Africa has the same uncertainty, as reckoned no more exactly than 100,000–200,000 years ago. This is why the Jinmium dates do not contradict or upset the out-of-Africa model for modern humans, who could have set out within that time-span and reached Australia within the time-span of the Jinmium determinations. (The recent history of introduced mammals in Australia, like the speed with which foxes imported to Sydney reached all the way to Perth, on the other side of the continent, shows just how fast an effective and flourishing predator-species can move.)

Which of the Australian chronologies is correct? Like most archaeological stories, this is not a robust matter of Right and Wrong, with a capital R and a capital W, however convenient that framework would be. The reality is more striking and rather different; it follows from the central feature of scientific knowledge — that it is provisional. We have some defined issue, in this case the date, measured in years before the present, when human beings were first in Australia. (Notice how even that defining of an issue is a matter of cultural choice: many Aboriginal people do not see a useful question, preferring to know, ‘We have *always* been here.’) There is a mass of pertinent evidence, not much of it simple and uncomplicated ‘facts’, for those facts depend on any number of suppositions, regularities and equations that are thought good but may be false. When Aboriginal people burn the Australian bush, as seems to have been their habit for millennia, the smoke and fires leave strata in the sediments marked by carbon and charcoal; so does it follow, when one finds an ancient stratum in the sediments which is marked by carbon and charcoal, that there *must* have been people in the land? Maybe, but neither certain yes nor certain no; and the better answer — not best or right — has to balance that ambiguous evidence with and against other ambiguous evidence.

What will happen now in respect of Jinmium? The bright wizards of Australian luminescence will scrutinize our Jinmium publication; I doubt if that scrutiny will itself be decisive. The normal process of scientific work will continue; further luminescent studies are already in hand, using the OSL variant method. Should the Jinmium team have waited for those? It is not easy to judge when to make an interim publication. Special cause to publish now, on the studies to date, is given by the experience of luminescent dating elsewhere in the Northern Territory. Thermoluminescent dates from Kakadu were published in 1990; it was not until 1993 that OSL dates were released — and they gave much the same answer.

Evidence will accumulate, informed opinion will change as to which clues are more dependable, and one or other of the three dating patterns — or a yet different one — will strengthen up. Some sites and studies may be key: since radiocarbon and luminescent methods seem to give different numbers, sequences

where they can be applied side by side to the same strata will be valuable. (But these are scarce in Australia.) Anomalous or contrary results between the variant techniques of luminescent dating will be resolved, and one variant may emerge as more reliable than others. It will be in a matter of time — years rather than months, and maybe decades — that we will know just where the Jinmium work fits. Luminescent dating of sand-sheet deposits by any variant of the method may run on to unexpected rocks, as dating techniques have done before.

For the present, we have a range of patterns and anomalies to the patterns. If the short- or medium-chronology models prevail, Jinmium will be an anomaly; it may be explicable or not in terms of the nature of the deposit and the studies made of them. If the long-chronology model prevails, the anomaly that now is Jinmium will prove to be an early notice of a larger pattern which by degrees strengthens into the most compelling model.

The propositions in all three papers *ANTIQUITY* has recently published on the subject are, in my view, to be taken seriously; only time will show which (if any) will be the most enduring. For each paper, I worked closely with the authors, giving such assistance as I could in their making the best presentation of their considered judgement. There is nothing unusual or contradictory in my doing that. *ANTIQUITY* has published all three, and thereby endorses all three, because none of us can know in advance which is ‘right’. As JOHN MADDOX, long-time editor of the world’s leading scientific journal *Nature*, has remarked, it is in the nature of the scientific process that it is built on debate, argument and disagreement as well as on agreement.

It is for those reasons that I did not treat Jinmium paper in any way other than the usual consideration given to *ANTIQUITY* submissions: assessment by two or more anonymous referees; a decision taken in the light of their advice, and of other considerations — such as the space an article would take and some attempt to balance *ANTIQUITY*’s overall allocation of pages to different subject-areas.

Our habit does not fit the current trend of dependence on an enlarged number of referees — LYNNE GOLDSTEIN, the new editor at *American Antiquity*, uses a routine four referees per

article — because we doubt if the reaching of a consensus is the point. Often, split decisions arise from fundamental disagreements about what is a useful framework for study in a field. This may be the case at Jinmium, which was a split decision. (An editor aware of these divisions could choose his referees in the hope they will line up ‘safely’ all *pro* or all *con*, to create the answer desired.) MADDOX remarked, in his valedictory *Nature* editorial recently, on the trouble he had experienced with refereeing of FRED HOYLE’s papers — on prehistoric astronomy as well as on astro-physics; when asked, HOYLE’s peers grumbled but would not acknowledge their colleague’s originality and force. MADDOX printed HOYLE’s papers anyway. Perhaps that attitude explains why *Nature* flourished under his editorship.

This view of editing has its risks; it conflicts with the view taken by one of our referees for Jinmium, who considers the referee’s role is to *authenticate* or to *refute* the study advanced in a paper. I do not see how that can be done, since research is by definition new work; if it replicates work done before, and can be authenticated or refuted by reference to that, then it is not research. Certainly, the congruence or dissonance between the new work and the existing pattern of knowledge is very material — but not the only element in coming to an informed view of the article’s merits. In the case of Australian chronology, if each time dates older than those of existing knowledge had been rejected, then we would still believe in a human settlement of the continent just 5000–8000 years ago, as we did in the 1950s! Nor do I think it right for us to trim in light of how the world might respond; I see no cause for us to have held back on Jinmium for fear that some colleagues, or some fast-thinking journalists, might rush to decide it must torpedo the out-of-Africa model of *sapiens* origin. It does not, as the authors say (page 771). (And they did rush.)

Looking back now on the nine volumes of ANTIQUITY I have published as editor, I see no strong pattern: some of our best articles have raised referees’ eyebrows. Some of our less good articles have been accepted on a unanimous approval: I have learnt to be cautious when the referees agree in a weak commendation, ‘It is not what I’d call *special*, but it is all very carefully done, and there’s nothing actually wrong with it.’

☞ I accepted the Jinmium paper for publication on 11 July 1996. At that moment, the editorial process was completed and we put it into the next issue still with space, December’s. The authors and I decided — unusually — to release essentials of the discovery in advance of our publication.

The date of the first human presence in Australia, important for all Australians, is specially important for Aboriginal Australians. It was right that the news be released in a way which the Aboriginal people in whose land Jinmium stands would find comfortable; the Mirriuwung–Gajerrong people have been hospitable and patient since the work began in 1992. We did not want to keep them waiting longer.

We also wanted to release the results so that they could be well reported. Usually newspapers have only a few hours to digest a press release, to enquire of experts knowledgeable in the field, and to write the piece; for technical stories, this is always a scramble, and often the truth gets scrambled in the scramble. It is better for the reporter to have time to digest, to consult, to visit the site, to meet its traditional owners. And that personal meeting is also a courtesy to the traditional owners; they should know just who the person is who will tell the world of discoveries in their country. Jinmium is on the NT–WA border; at a minimum it takes three days to visit there from a Sydney base. One cannot take the collected Australian and world press corps (think of the cost, given Australian air-fares). So that the full story could be reported, and compelling photographs taken to go with it, we arranged for James Woodford of the *Sydney Morning Herald* and the *Melbourne Age* to have advance access.

The stories in the *Herald* and the *Age* were not the first announcement. This had been made on Waringarri Radio, the Aboriginal community station for the Jinmium region, the previous day, a courtesy again in recognition of the special value of the work to Aboriginal people of that country. (The lunch-time announcement was followed by a lengthy interview with the researchers. Any journalist could have listened, written the story down, and published it in their own paper, simultaneously with the *Herald*. Journalists should not grumble if — believing that nothing of importance is announced on Aboriginal radio — they missed it.) Colleagues who say there should have been no announce-

ment until after the *ANTIQUITY* publication forget in their self-absorption that our own research community — practically none of whom had before heard of Jinmium, or who will care for the particularities of the place and what Aboriginal people feel for it — is not the only group with special interests in Jinmium and its date.

And we do well to remember that the media have other concerns before the full and fair reporting of what goes on in the world. NICHOLAS ROTHWELL of the *Australian*, Sydney newspaper in the Murdoch press empire, phoned me to whinge that its rivals should not have been enabled to cover Jinmium that way: the *Australian's* coverage, when it came, was notice-

ably critical. Yet his sister Murdoch paper in London, the *Sunday Times*, cancelled their extensive planned coverage when and because another British newspaper, through its links to the *Herald* and *Age*, made mention of it. So the flagship Murdoch paper in Australia tells me Jinmium must *not* be an exclusive (for the rival), and the flagship in England tells me it *must* be an exclusive (for itself)! It depends on how each paper stands in fights for the scoops. And *Nature*, in covering Jinmium in a 'News and Views' report on 17 October, declined to wait until our publication: for a story like this, *Nature* sees itself as also being in competition with the daily papers.



Grand in the foreground, Strawhenge; small in the distance, Stonehenge.

Every quarter, it seems, we could print a picture of the latest Stonehenge nonsense. It might be Fridgehenge (New Zealand), the only henge in the Southern Hemisphere constructed out of broken household appliances. Or the latest refinement to the Alliance (Nebraska) Carhenge.

Strawhenge, devised and erected by Ian Sandell, who farms the land immediately south of the monument, appeared for a month this summer. It followed a fine and complex crop-circle in the ripening grain by the same artist. A few years ago — when crop circles were objects of mystery made by extra-terrestrials, military spooks, or aerial vortexes — farmers fortunate enough to have one land on their land could make a few bob by charging at the field-gate. Nowadays, when we know crop-circles are made by people who make crop-circles, farmers are able to do the same.

Photograph by Richard Osgood.

🏺 Lapita is a site on the west coast of the Grande Terre (French: 'main land') of Nouvelle Calédonie (New Caledonia), the western Pacific archipelago forming the most southern part of the Melanesian arc. It has given its name to the Lapita cultural complex, and more than 200 sites containing Lapita sherds have been identified to date in the Pacific. Like the Bell Beakers of European prehistory, Lapita is a distinctive kind of ceramic hard to conceive

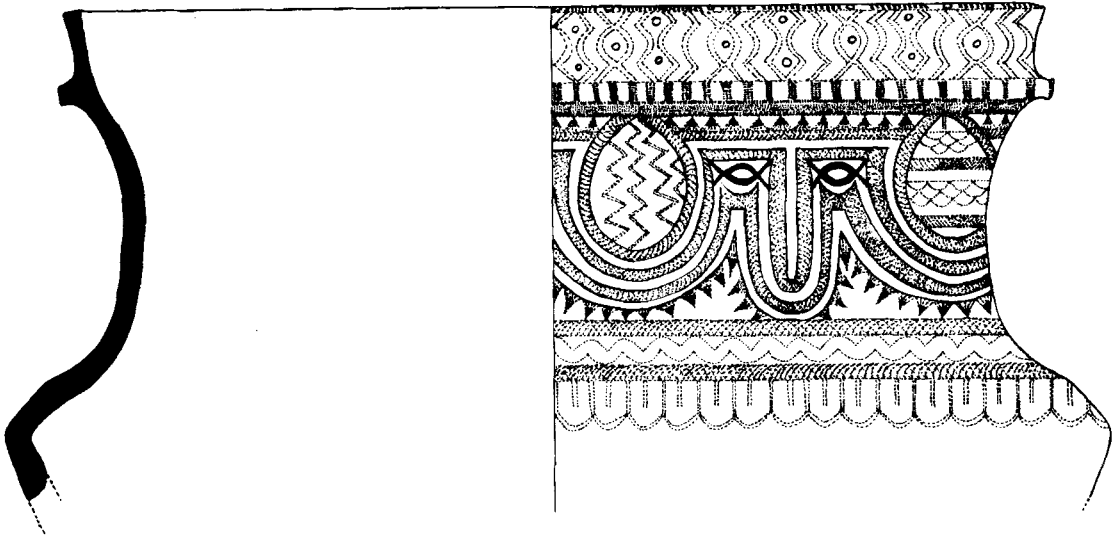
of as an entity in human society: are the pots to be taken as the signature-artefacts of a 'Lapita people'? equated with the arrival of Austronesian-speakers? a specialized trade-good that crosses cultural boundaries? or — oh dear!, oh no! — is Lapita some entity which is archaeologically recognizable, without having any clear social equivalent in terms of human action? Lapita pottery has intricate incised decoration (like the European Beakers again), but the fabric is often weakly



Great Lapita pot from Lapita, rescued October 1995 from the Pacific beach and restored. Largest diameter 54 cm, height 48 cm.

The lower part is round-bottomed, undecorated; above the waist, a tall collar provides a fitting surface to show off a decorated zone; a strong rim completes the frame for the decoration.

Photograph by C. Bento & T. Wickey.



Incised decoration on the collar of another pot of the Lapita group: geometric designs and a stylized face. Pot diameter 44 cm,

Drawing by Karen Coote.

made, and the firing low — as if the pot were more a vehicle for carrying the design than a functional object for daily use.

Lapita (now designated site WKO013A) is on the very beach edge. In October 1995 a group of at least 15 pots were found that had been partly or completely broken down before being placed in a pit 2900 years ago. They were being washed out by the sea, and a Pacific high tide is not an event that can be postponed; they were rescued by CHRISTOPHE SAND's team from the Nouméa museum. The pots are the first discovery of a major collection of virtually complete vessels of this Pacific tradition, more often encountered in worn fragments.

The pots show a wide range of decorative patterns, mostly geometric designs created by a stamped method which characterizes Lapita. One piece depicts a succession of stylized faces, with eyes and nose (see drawing). The size, shape and composition of the pots vary greatly: up to more than 65 cm in diameter and 50 cm in height.

The pots, not strong even when new, were saturated in salt water. Conservation work on over 600 sherds was carried out by KAREN COOTE, ANNE LECULIER & JOE ATKINSON, in the Materials Conservation Division of the Australian Museum (Sydney) over a six-month period, removing salt, consolidating and reconstructing the two main pots and other pot profiles.

The collection will be exhibited in Sydney, then returned to New Caledonia where detailed archaeological study will take place.

🗨 The occasion for my hearing of the rescue of Lapita pots at Lapita was a first-class conference held in the National Museum at Port Vila, Vanuatu, in the western Pacific in August. Organized with effective charm by Ralph Regenvanu (of the National Museum), by Jean Christophe Galipaud (ORSTOM) and Matthew Spriggs (Australian National University), this third in the four-year cycle of Lapita meetings* went beyond Lapita to make a broader meeting on (mostly western) Pacific archaeology. There was a really good attendance, particularly of graduate students (many of them women), and enthralling work reported. The new basics of western Pacific archaeology — from the time-depth of settlement to the holocausts of endemic land-birds as each island was hit — are remarkable; and the old issues relating (or failing to relate) archaeology with oral history, language patterns, human biology and modern material culture are as satisfyingly recalcitrant as they ever were.

* Previously Canberra 1988 and Nouméa 1992, with good publications: MATTHEW SPRIGGS (ed.), *Lapita design form and composition* (Canberra: Australian National University. Occasional Papers in Prehistory 19, 1990); JEAN CHRISTOPHE GALIPAUD (ed.), *Poterie Lapita et peuplement* (Nouméa: ORSTOM, 1992).

I was fortunate to be in Vanuatu while the country's fieldworkers had their annual two-week workshop. Theirs is a unique scheme, devised some years ago by Kirk Huffman, now built into a network of more than 55 fieldworkers; each acts as an amateur recorder and *animateur* in respect of traditional knowledge and custom across the scattered islands, with their diverse ways and many languages (113!), that make up Vanuatu. A central focus and direction is provided by the workshop, each year devoted to a particular subject, when the fieldworkers meet in conference. (The year pigs were the subject, there was so much to report the workshop could have run for a month!) This year's subject was the land, and the day I attended was for reports from Malekula, fieldworkers talking singly or in twos and threes about their region of that island. (Vanuatu culture is so diverse one addresses a language and a region *within* one of its larger islands.) Many fieldworkers are older men, some of them chiefs, but by no means all: Alti Ezekiel from north-west Espiritu Santo might be in his late 20s. Earlier in the week James Gwero, of West Ambae, a senior fieldworker, had been awarded a medal in the Independence Day celebrations: a public recognition of the fieldworkers' role. Another aspect is to act as guide and liaison man for visiting academic researchers working on the islands. Language recording is another; Chief Philip Tepahae's dictionary of his language on Aneityum amounts to 4000 words as a start.

The fieldworkers met in the chief's hut, *Nakamah* of the National Council of Chiefs (1990), next to the national museum, a great hall 35 by 15 metres built in traditional manner, with a high *natangura* (palm leaf) thatch roof sweeping down to low walls of woven split bamboo, painted yellow, red and black. It was as lovely a space for an academic meeting as I have sat in, under its stout shelter, with the downpour of a cyclonic storm clattering on the roof. I am careful to say 'academic meeting' because the fieldworkers' workshop is just that — a community meeting of like-minded researchers who work together to explore a subject, looking, listening, talking, commenting. The talks were too animated, too enthusiastic for me to keep up with the Bislama (Vanuatu pidgin); the Prime Minister's steadying Independence Day speech — 'Man blong Vanuatu, woman blong Vanuatu, youngfella blong Vanu-

atu, piccanninni blong Vanuatu' — had been easier. I could grasp the kinship diagrams and the sketch-maps of divided land; when account of land inheritance required several chalk lines to be drawn across the sketch-map, cutting across and contradicting each other, when I caught the words 'musket' and 'bullet', even I grasped the issue of that story.

Otherwise failing with the spoken language, I took notice of good spirit evident in body language — confident, courteous, accommodating. I heard a great deal of laughter. A Pacific welcome did not incline me to search for disagreements, which surely were there also. It is not only scientific knowledge in the western tradition which has difference in its essence. Still, I had felt uneasy at some attitudes shown by some senior colleagues at the Lapita meeting, where one sensed the research issues in Pacific prehistory had too much coalesced with divisions between old Pacific hands who have been sparring with each other for years. I have felt the same unease a few weeks later in seeing how sharp have been some elbows when discussing Jinmium (above).

Quarter by quarter, a Brownian movement of passing events pushes drifting scraps of paper into the shapeless file marked 'Things perhaps for the next editorial'.

More forward in the editorial mind than any of them is the need to have Europe better represented in what we publish. There is more from the Australia–Pacific region in this number (and its editorial) than may suit the local interests of readers, for a majority of whom that is a distant place on the far side of the globe. There were more than 3000 archaeologists, many of them European prehistorians, at the UISPP congress in Forlì, Italy, in September, and another crowd at the EAA meeting in Riga, Latvia, later in the month. As I go in search of more contributions from Europe, I am aware of how distinct the several European research traditions are in their several nations, perhaps even more separated than they were a generation ago.

The conferences grow in number and in size, not only the famously large US conferences: over 400 at the Texas regional conference, and 541 at the Great Basin meeting — a larger population, Don Fowler reminds me, than the number who may have *lived* in the Basin in Alti-Thermal times.

STUART PIGGOTT, born 28 May 1910, died at West Challow, in the Vale of the White Horse, 23 September 1996, Abercromby Professor Emeritus in the University of Edinburgh. He was a contributor to *ANTIQUITY* from the start ('Fawler as a place-name', 1 (1927): 478–9), later a Trustee, and a strong friend to its editors, old and young, alongside so much that made him a good, a great and a genial scholar.

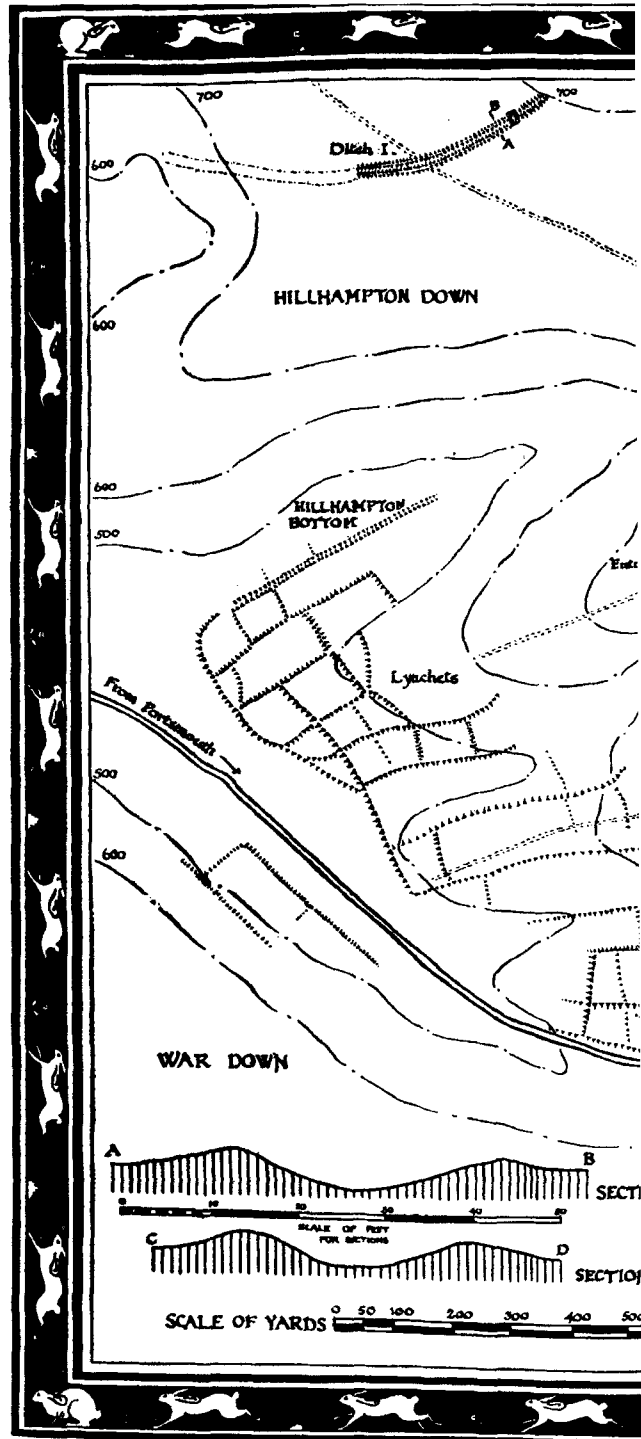
'Earthworks on Butser Hill, Petersfield, Hants.', drawing by STUART PIGGOTT, 1929, to illustrate his *ANTIQUITY* paper, 'Butser Hill' (4 (1930): 187–200). Published as a fold-out on the soft creamy paper of the early volumes, and here less happily reprinted by our modern method.

The senior generation retires, and increasingly that moment is taken as the chance to reshape institutions. On Roy Switsur's retirement, our local radiocarbon laboratory at Cambridge University — the oldest in Britain and the worst-funded in western Europe — closes there and moves to Cambridge's other university, Anglia Polytechnic; his article in this issue reports its recent determinations from South America, in succession to so many in *ANTIQUITY* before. The University of Geneva withdrew the axe it had been dropping on its good department of anthropology and ecology. The Musée de l'Homme, Paris, is losing its fight to be made an effective research centre, and is instead to become a gallery of non-western art.

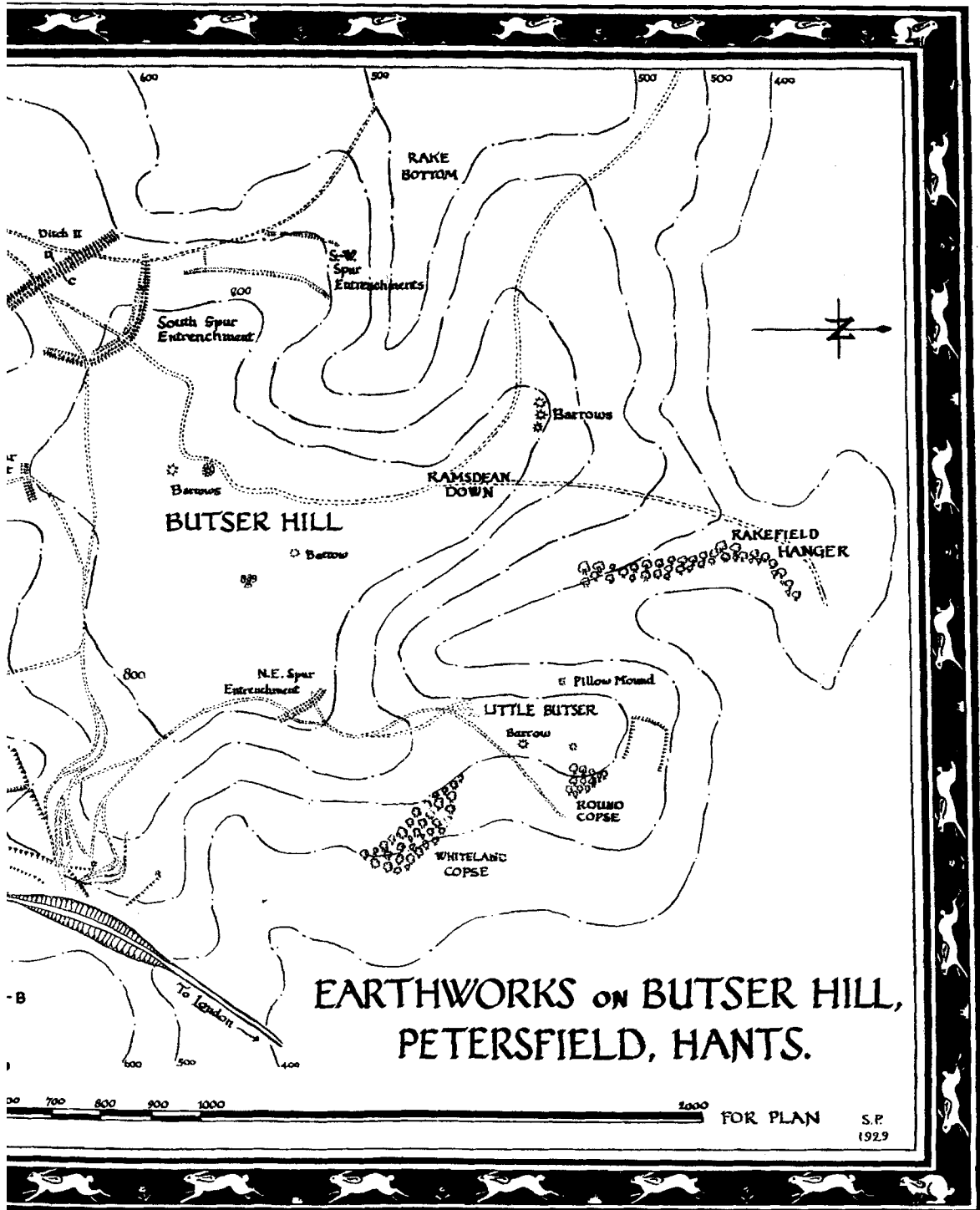
The middle generation is promoted; more often now in Britain, promotion means a professorship as that becomes the senior career-level post on the American model, rather than a special place for the few masters. Oxford, daffily, has devalued the rank by inventing paper professorships, which carry the title but not the salary or the real standing to go with it. (This is why we no longer announce British professors on our Noticeboard.)

The younger generation gets, or fails to get, a junior job as a first step in a continuing career within archaeology. Perhaps it has always been, always must be so; but it hurts when just some of a good cohort have good fortune, and others are marooned and perish from the subject. Whether, with the present pressures on the British universities, junior academic jobs are worth having if you wish to enjoy health and happiness, is increasingly on some of our minds.

In London, the Victoria & Albert Museum has introduced admission charges, the next step in its spiral of decline: since the bulk of a na-



tional museum's income cannot be raised by charging, when admission charges mean fewer visitors, the state grant per visitor actually



increases. At the flourishing National Gallery, still free and once with visitor numbers much like the V&A's, the numbers are so high now

that the state grant there per visitor is far below that in a charging V&A. The British Museum Trustees, it was reported in late October,

New observations on Creation 6000 years on: a symposium of the University of New England 23 October 1996

3.30 p.m. Introduction

3.45 p.m. Day 1 'Let there be light.'

GERRY WOOLSEY *Department of Physics*

4 p.m. Day 2 'Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters . . . let the dry land appear.'

PETER FLOOD *Department of Geology and Geophysics*

4.15 p.m. Day 3 'Let the earth bring forth grass, the kind that yields seed according to its kind, and the tree that yields fruit, whose seed is in itself according to its kind.'

MARGARET BROCK *Department of Botany*

4.30 p.m. Day 4 'Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to divide the day from the night. . . . He made the stars also.'

MATHEW FEWELL *Department of Physics*

4.45 p.m. Day 5 'Let the waters abound with sea creatures and every living thing that moves . . . and every winged bird according to its kind. . . . Let the earth bring forth the living creature according to its kind: cattle and creeping thing and beast of the earth each according to its kind.'

PETER JARMAN *Department of Ecosystem Management*

5 p.m. Day 6 'Let us make man in our own image, according to our likeness.'

ROBERT GARGETT *Department of Archaeology and Palaeoanthropology*

5.15 p.m. Day 7 '. . . and he rested.'

KEN KIPPEN *Department of Archaeology and Palaeoanthropology*

5.30 p.m. Day 8 'In the beginning was the word.'

IAIN DAVIDSON *Department of Archaeology and Palaeoanthropology*
& WILLIAM NOBLE *Department of Psychology*

5.45 p.m. Myth and history in the Old Testament

GRAHAM MADDOX *Dean of Arts & Professor of Politics*

6 p.m. The Big Bang

Champagne will be served. Please stay to celebrate with apples, figs and jelly snakes. Dress optional

As the world plans its celebration of the new millennium AD, another arbitrary millennial birthday was overlooked this fall. Dr John Lightfoot, a Vice-Chancellor of the University of Cambridge, made the most exacting of the several 17th-century calculations of Old Testament chronology, as it could be inferred from all those 'begats' in its Books. Lightfoot's arithmetic, in studies like his *A few, and new observations on the Booke of Genesis, the most of them certaine, the rest probable, all harmeslesse, strange and rarely heard off before* (1642), calibrated the Creating of Man precisely, to 9 a.m. on 23 October 4004 BC, so the 6000th anniversary is 23 October AD 1996.*

The University of Cambridge overlooked the birthday in archaeology and its several other concerned departments — not through embarrassment for an old error; the best visions of space-time,

as devised by Steven Hawking's wizardry in the Department of Theoretical Physics, may seem as quaint 354 years hence. So the chance was missed to remember Glyn Daniel's affection for the moment, early in the university year but after its busy first days were got through (semesterization of the academic year, clearly, was no part of the Created scheme of affairs), in the morning of course — but giving time for a proper breakfast first.

What the universities of England forgot, the University of New England remembered, with this enterprising celebration of seven days of Creation day; its creator, thereby entitled to suit himself, made an extra day to devise the subject of his own research. Their university's time zone being 9 hours ahead of England, 9 a.m. in Cambridge equates to 6 p.m. locally — so an evening party exactly celebrated the morning's birthday hour.

* Or would be, if there were a year zero. Exacting scholars will check the arithmetic and celebrate instead in 1997.†

† More exacting scholars, remembering that Lightfoot's number pre-dates the Gregorian calendar reform, will check the arithmetic some more and celebrate in early November, rather than in October 1997.

see no way forward to balance their books, and are to introduce charges.

British university departments, conscious of the need to show and prove their virtue, publish glossier annual reports. Behind the now-standard clichés — if every university department everywhere declares its unshakeable, exceptional commitment to 'excellence', what words are used for the merely 'good' or the just 'very good' to be noticed? — there may actually be much useful work effectively done. Half of the departments, of course, are *less* good than the average, and always arithmetically will be.

In other business as usual, unneeded books are published, conference papers are published which sufficed as verbal presentations, meetings are dominated by the same faces saying the same old things instead of new faces with new things to say (now I am myself the wrong side of 45, I can call us old things toads). The TAG conference, which has been sliding a little under the toads, is this year organized in Liverpool by ANTIQUITY's other editor, Anthony Sinclair; a splendidly high proportion of the speakers' names in its programme are new to me — as they should be.

Some appalling number of archaeological objects are being dug up (any guess as to how many per day world-wide?), of which a few catch notice — in England, a Roman board-game at Colchester (not *hnefatafl*, said the experts), Iron Age buildings in Leicestershire, a Neolithic funerary platform for exposing corpses in Derbyshire, a stone resembling a Stonehenge bluestone

on an island in the Bristol Channel, some Roman wall again in Chester — through their 'importance' or their novelty or through public-relations effort. Debitage (how many kilos?), coarse-ware (how many tonnes?), animal bones (ditto?), building materials (how many tens of tonnes?) is dumped or lumbered into museum stores whose curators wish the stuff had stayed in, or gone back into, the ground.

Noticeboard

Conferences

4–6 April 1997

'From Somerset to Simris': conference in honour of John Coles, University of Exeter, England.

Fitting themes of: Scotland, the Bronze Age, Experimental archaeology, Wetland archaeology, Rock art.

Ms T.C.S. Machling, The Prehistoric Society, Institute of Archaeology, 31–34 Gordon Square, London WC1H 0PY, England.

26 July – 1 August 1998

14th International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences (IUAES) conference, College of William and Mary, Williamsburg (VA), USA

Session and workshop proposals with an archaeological aspects specially welcomed for a future- and action-oriented conference which falls a century after the Torres Strait Expedition and as a new millennium approaches; by 15 December 1996:

Tomoko Hamada, Department of Anthropology, College of William and Mary, Williamsburg VA 23187-8795, USA; FAX 1-757-221-1066.

MP

