to be only reluctantly accepted. I knew we were getting somewhere, however, when, on one of several visits to Ministers, a Personal Private Secretary greeted us as ‘the people who are causing me more work than everything else put together’.

Wainwright castigates those of us who wrote *Archaeology and Government* (1974) as being authors of ‘the last illogical surge of the rescue crusade’; presumably because, from within, he could not see that at the time it was utterly logical to propose an executive structure ‘complementary to but distinct from’ the DoE Inspectorate. The logic lay precisely in the continuing inadequacy of what the Inspectorate (not all individual Inspectors) seemed able to do, and its continuing appearance of being unable to bring about significant change from within. Further, following Walsh, Barford, *Rescue*, and the humiliating political retreat at the first whiff of grapeshot over regional archaeological units (how many of us still have letters offering us Directorships of such?), in despair it seemed that the better bet — for the field situation remained serious — was to attempt to by-pass the Department and put effort into bringing about political action to create a new organization specific to the real situation. English Heritage was not quite what we had in mind, but 10 years later, there it was, and now it is regional. But a fundamental difference between Wainwright and myself is that his narrative quietly but insistently parades a smoothed-out history of goodwill, deliberation and far-sightedness whereas, on both the particular and in general, I am much more inclined to remember on the one hand and look for on the other, unpreparedness, confrontation and even conflict as triggers of action and change.

Nevertheless, some events were, to an extent, serendipitous. Wainwright is kind but wrong in placing on me the sole responsibility for bringing archaeological resource management back from the USA in 1975 after drinking deep in Dallas of the teachings of Bill ‘Conservation ethic’ Lipe and Bob McGimsey, author of the original *Public Archaeology* (1972). The then Chief Inspector of Ancient Monuments was there too. Andrew Saunders, who knows I tell this story, pronounced ‘Nothing new in this — it’s what we’ve been doing for 100 years’. If so, maybe Wainwright’s narrative, even if nearer a sort of historical correctness than I am allowing, may be telling posterity only how PPG was stitched up the borders of an already-old heritage canvas. Either way, historical truth, like the last quick one, is sometimes difficult to put down.


**Last Orders?**

**DAVID BAKER & RICHARD MORRIS**

Professor Geoffrey Wainwright’s perspective on the last half-century of British archaeology (‘Time please’, *ANTIQUITY* 74 (2000): 909–43 — below TP) was an explicitly personal account of a remarkable series of developments in which he played an influential part. This equally personal comment reflects mainly on the world of archaeology’s collision with market forces.

The world of archaeology
The world of archaeology’s ‘intensely tribal love of gatherings, feasts and vendettas’ is both a strength and an Achilles’ heel. Until the 1980s, economic irrelevance allowed the discipline to develop internal philosophies, methodologies and practices which were largely unconditioned by either external paymasters or wider social obligations. Perhaps no bad thing in itself, this had a downside in weak structural and intellectual contact with the rest of humanity.

A classic example was the abortive attempt to create a regional structure of field archaeol-
ogy units in the 1970s. TP over-estimates the influence of archaeologists on its outcome, even to the extent of assuming that one of us engineered its collapse. The reality was messier, and more prosaic.

The Department of the Environment’s proposal was not preceded by consultation with the Association of County Councils (ACC) about what naively amounted to central direction of how locally-raised taxes should be spent, and an assumption that local authorities would cheerfully fund something which would often be based and working outside their own borders. The ACC sought advice from the newly-founded Association of County Archaeological Officers (ACAO) which found itself trying to limit damage while persuading puzzled ACC lawyers that good men had made the proposals in good faith in an entirely worthy cause. ACAO opposed the regional proposal, not to safeguard local positions but because it was impracticable. The interests of research and the span to achieve critical organizational mass did indeed point temptingly towards regional arrangements, but these would neither have served, nor have been served by, a local government system with responsibilities in planning, museums and education at county or district level. Today, with regional government back on the political agenda, it is timely to remember this.

The sixteenth PPG – Planning and Archaeology (PPG-16)
TP rightly celebrates the genesis of PPG-16, which successfully integrated a mechanism for archaeological conservation into development control and planning policy, but does not face up to its inherent limitations. PPG-16 is not a strategic blueprint for a knowledge-based activity, and nor should it be; in those terms it is tactical, an environmental land-use planning document for managing threats to the material inheritance. It is not designed to provide wider access to results through the social purposes of research, education, tourism or community interest. In the absence of parallel provision for such access, economic forces to which archaeology is secondary have sapped the discipline’s primary strength as a knowledge-based activity, while doing nothing to improve what TP acknowledges as a poor record in non-academic communication.

The plight of Sites and Monuments Records (SMRs) illustrates the point. The pioneering Oxfordshire system created by Don Benson in the mid 1960s was based in a County Museum service, and sought to inform the good folk of Oxfordshire as much as land-use planning. Yet as SMRs spread with the steady appointment of County (and later District) archaeologists, mostly in planning departments, increasing pressures and reducing resources made wider dissemination of information holdings almost impossible without an institutional framework, such as a museum, dedicated to such activities. An assessment of English SMRs in 1998–99 showed that most were run by one person; that usage was mainly internal, planning-related and largely disconnected from the wider social uses which politically justified the planning constraint in the first place. Attempts to stimulate public debate on the latter aspect were played with a dead bat by government and English Heritage alike, in terms which failed to see past the restricted scope of PPG-16.

Those growing pains — the three ‘C’s
TP also celebrates the emergence of the ‘curator’, ‘contractor’ and ‘consultant’ — a reformatting of the tribes that was a steep entrance fee to pay for access to the real world. The new roles overlaid an older concept of managing and understanding the archaeological inheritance through a universally shared curatorship — something which TP dismisses as an ‘illusory golden age’ and which admittedly was never seriously tested by real world pressures. Yet the new model is itself inadequate because in practice, thus far, the roles do not inherently embrace researchers and communicators. Too many curators are under-resourced and handicapped regulators of an essentially commercial process, lacking the time and sometimes the fieldwork experience or academic background fully to monitor or control contracting activities. Contractors mostly find themselves ‘mitigating environmental impacts’ rather than answering historical questions, adding to knowledge of a topic or a place, or sharing the knowledge on a sustained basis with those who live in it. To survive, many have to bid prices below a level at which a site can be properly examined, with deleterious consequences for quality of output, staff wages and conditions of work. Some consultants seem to promote their
clients' interests on the tacit assumption that a good curator will make it all turn out right in the end. The Institute of Field Archaeologists struggles with the burdensome administration of self-regulation through its scheme for Registered Archaeological Organisations, but the main problem lies with those who would never get registered; dealing with instances of alleged unacceptable practice is difficult in the dangerously litigious waters of the commercial market. All this is the context for the E30 million or more triumphantly said to be generated by the new 'industry' (more inapt jargon). In reality it is an atomistic spend, not a lump sum at the disposal of coherent enquiry that could ultimately benefit all.

Nonetheless, what PPG-16 has helped achieve should not be underestimated, and it is easy to forget the conditions prevailing before 1990. Today, more people are doing more work to higher standards; major projects are being conducted within rigorous research designs; some high quality reports are emerging. Yet 10 years on, most of the strategic effort within archaeology's world is still going into the slow and painful preparation of research frameworks, regional and topic agendas and urban strategies. This is effort essentially related to input, helping to improve the aim of development-led archaeology (or compensate for the lack of control outside the planning system), rather than the output of results into understanding and the community. The views of respected researchers about the usefulness of what PPG-16 is actually generating have been sounding warning bells for some time.

More change
Continuing change in archaeological and wider worlds has created both obstacles and opportunities for those who want to mitigate the impact of commodification. The biggest structural problem is the continuing decline of the public service ethos, exacerbated by political insensitivity to archaeology's social value. PPG-16's appearance coincided with the introduction of 'purchaser-provider' models into public services, and energetic attempts to externalise or privatize the providers. Misleading analogies with the 'curator-contractor' model increased the vulnerability of locally based archaeological services trying to provide intellectual access for local people. PPG-16's requirements made demonstrating commercial property more important than building or providing a viable local service. In most areas, the emerging territory-free market-orientated commercial network is intrinsically unfitted to sustain local services with any knowledge-based continuity.

The exceptions tend to prove the rule. TP cites Essex, but Essex has always been one of the best counties for historical conservation services. More symptomatic is Bedfordshire's experience. The county-wide historical conservation service could not survive cuts arising from the mid '90s review of local government. Though planning work continues, its 25-year-old field unit lost its core funding for local service provision including backlog post-excavation work. Recognizing a crisis, but suffering financial problems of its own, English Heritage substituted an archiving programme in place of analysis and publication for most of its grant-aided projects. The field Unit has recently been commercially rebranded as part of a Council programme of wholesale privatization with a view to stand-alone financial viability.

Ironically, just as the world of archaeology reformatted itself to serve commercial requirements, the world of ordinary people has declared a hunger for knowledge that market-driven archaeology is largely unable to deliver. TP describes the growing popularity of programmes like Time Team, Meet the Ancestors and Talking Landscapes. Again, contributions from commercial archaeology, such as the Museum of London's effective projections of the Spanish Lady and girl-power gladiators, tend to be the rule-proving exceptions. Sadly, instead of recognizing a potential bridge, the world of archaeology's introspective tendency reacts to the Time Team with self-defining hostility.

Seeds of another kind of dysfunctionality lie in the new comparatively well-funded cultural and environmental access initiatives triumphantly wheeled out by governments of decidedly unjoined-up temperament. Enterprises such as the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), the Local Heritage Initiative and Culture-on-Line bestow their largesse into a situation in which resources for the basic management and promotion of the historic environment (upon which access depends) are generally reducing. Referring back to SMRs, HLF funds are avail-
able for access projects, but not adequately for
the structural development that must underpin access; many archaeological officers are
saying that the time-take of complex paper-work rules out developing project proposals.

What to do?
In order to realize its cultural value in the widest,
public, sense, the world of archaeology needs
to revisit its root idea: that everything to do
with the historic environment is knowledge-
and question-based. There is an unassailable
case for adequate — not extravagant — sup-
port from public funds for necessary infrastruc-
ture and the provision of intellectual context
and continuity for otherwise disembodied com-
mercial work. Public interest archaeology calls
for public support. No other source exists.
Honourable exceptions aside, neither site-based
privatized solutions, nor public–private collabo-
rations, nor independents and societies are by
themselves able to provide the permanence and
stability essential for long-term knowledge-based
activity.

Here we must consider the frustration and
the future of archaeology’s independents and
local societies. For decades they have been the
mainstay of interaction with the rest of soci-
ety. Many feel overwhelmed by or suspicious
of the bureaucracies and procedures of ‘pub-
lic’ archaeology. Reasonably enough, many will
want to continue to do their own things rather
than provide bottom-up responses to top-down
imperatives for access which seek to reach con-
stituencies wider than they usually address.
Even so, non-commercial partnerships between
locally based professional services and local
independents, carefully handled, could re-en-
ergize on all sides, assuming a realistic approach
by the latter, whose contributions would vary
greatly from place to place.

Funding from the public purse would bring
responsibilities. ‘Best value’ regimes now be-
ing applied to many public services might pro-
vide the right kind of scrutiny and accountability
— provided they can be adapted (with ‘value’
properly defined) to deal effectively with knowl-
edge-based activities. For commercial archae-
ology, some kind of regulation may be the only
way to equilibrate existing distortive and of-
ten counter-productive stresses generated by
market forces. ‘Curators’ (better called ‘plan-
ning archaeologists’) ought to be able to ensure
not only that what is required in the commer-
cial sector is fair both to the developer and the
archaeological inheritance, but also, crucially,
that the process requires results to be fed back
to research and community. This will demand
new mechanisms, resources and performance
indicators in order to confer permanence and
prominence upon public explanation. A prop-
erly resourced professional Institute ought to
be able to inspect and monitor the standards
and infrastructure of all fieldwork-related or-
ganizations. Development of training pro-
grammes in parallel would consolidate the
standards needed to make regulation light-
handed rather than confrontational.

Regulation, of course, will be anathema to
some — as indeed it deserves to be if it amounts
to a festival of managerialism or restrictive prac-
tice in narrow professional or academic inter-
ests. But it is not the kind of control some
currently fear in the context of implementing
the Valetta Convention; rather, its purpose would
be to protect the knowledge-based nature of
archaeological work. It is the unavoidable an-
idote to the market-driven nature of develop-
ment-related ‘interventions’ if they are to pull
their academic weight beside the research
projects that TP rightly celebrates. As many have
said many times, we need a structure within
which the right kind of competition can take
place, for the best research design, for the best
ability to provide the range and continuity of
skills for the task, and for the most economical
and efficient delivery of results within those
parameters.

Get these ends and means across to the poli-
ticians, the professions and archaeology’s in-
volved or supporting public at large, and we
will be faced not with Last Orders and drink-
ing-up time, but an extension of licence, to print
history rather than money, without term into a
productive future for the continuing explora-
tion of history’s universe.