

## Archaeological Heritage

### Introduction

In this issue of *Heritage at Risk* the ICOMOS International Committee on Archaeological Heritage Management presents some issues for archaeological heritage around the world. Three regions were selected as the focus of this report – Eastern Europe, East Asia, and North America. Each of these ICAHM regions has presented different issues. Japan reports on the accelerating rate of site ‘salvage’, that is removal of the site, in the face of development. In Eastern Europe, there are a raft of issues, many related to the speed of change in heritage systems in societies in transition, and in the USA and Canada, a focus on central urban development pressures on below-ground cultural remains.

None of these risks to archaeological heritage are unique to that country or that region. They draw our attention to some key problems for archaeological heritage, primarily in terms of general misunderstandings about archaeological heritage by other heritage practitioners. ICAHM takes this opportunity to hopefully shift perceptions and remind ICOMOS and others dealing with heritage places and sites that:

- archaeological heritage is NOT only sub-surface; this notion has an effect of causing it to be invisible in development processes, such as in Japan with its horrifying rate of site salvage in the face of development, when sites are fully removed. ‘Rescuing’ such sites is in fact destroying them, as removing the entire site provides no opportunity for later analysis by more modern techniques of evidence remaining *in situ* – this way we lose our past;
- archaeological heritage is NOT simply individual sites, they are interconnected with each other, both representing a past landscape of human interconnectedness. They are also inextricably linked to the environment; the draining of peat bogs in Eastern Europe, for example, not only destroys many individual smaller archaeological sites, but a past landscape – this way we lose our link to the land;
- archaeological heritage is NOT simply artefacts for museum display, whether in a hotel lobby in the location of the former

site, or in an actual museum, as is often the case in central business districts where sub-surface heritage is removed for car parks; it is evidence of past lifestyles and who we have been – this way we lose our story.

Archaeological heritage includes all physical manifestations of past ways of life, and includes many ‘monumental’ items of heritage around the world. Very visible sites, such as Roman temples, ruined medieval castles, temples in South East Asia, or magnificent rock art, all are surrounded by an extensive associated cultural landscape. But they are frequently treated as stand-alone ‘monuments’, for their stylistic and built characteristics, not as holders of past meanings, as ‘archaeological heritage’.

Conserving such large archaeological monuments as individual sites means they are too rarely approached in their full cultural context, that includes both the monumental and the ‘invisible’. This is a network of meaning, a cultural landscape, too often invisible to those making heritage conservation and development decisions limited to the ‘visible’ past. Fragmented approaches, both site-by-site, and by dividing ‘below-ground’ and ‘monumental’ heritage, risk ignoring the fullest evidence of former societies – the villages and economic resources, the trade-routes, the layerings of time, and the associated stories lasting through to the present in the local community, usually the descendants of such former cultures.

ICAHM urges its ICOMOS colleagues to look at the examples below and realise that much can be done in our heritage community to improve our approach to the heritage of the past, by having a wider understanding of what is actually our archaeological heritage.

Whilst these remarks may merely seem to be those of a ‘Cinderella’ in heritage conservation, at a time when ICOMOS sees landscape and setting as worthy of the next General Assembly’s scientific focus, there is an opportunity to approach all heritage places in a more integrated and holistic way.



Zale – early medieval stronghold at Zale in northern Poland, systematically destroyed by ploughing (photo: Zbigniew Kobylinski)



Runowo – early medieval barrows at Runowo in northern Poland – example of archaeological and nature protection area (landscape park) (photo: Zbigniew Kobylinski)

## Eastern Europe

The most serious threats to the archaeological heritage in Central and Eastern Europe, based on information collected from the Czech Republic, Latvia, Poland and Russia are seen to be:

### *Illegal excavation*

The looting of archaeological sites and illicit trafficking of archaeological finds seems to be growing and is a common problem in this part of Europe. The uncontrolled use of electronic metal detectors is part of this activity (for example in Poland, Latvia and the Czech Republic), while in Russia it frequently takes the form of bulldozing burial mounds. The reasons vary and range from use of the mound material for other purposes, to a wrongly conceived interest in archaeology. Even if the law theoretically protects archaeological sites it is very difficult to protect them physically from such destruction. In Poland, additionally there is no consensus among archaeologists about how to deal with this problem, and some scholars even advocate cooperation with those wielding metal detectors.

### *Development*

As all countries of the post-Soviet bloc are developing rapidly, a common threat for archaeological sites comes from various council and industrial developments. Obsolete laws sometimes do not demand the inclusion of the protection of archaeological sites in planning documents at an early stage (for example in the Czech Republic). In other cases, the process of spatial development can be too fast to be controlled (for example, in Latvia the rapid development of areas surrounding towns).

### *Agricultural activities*

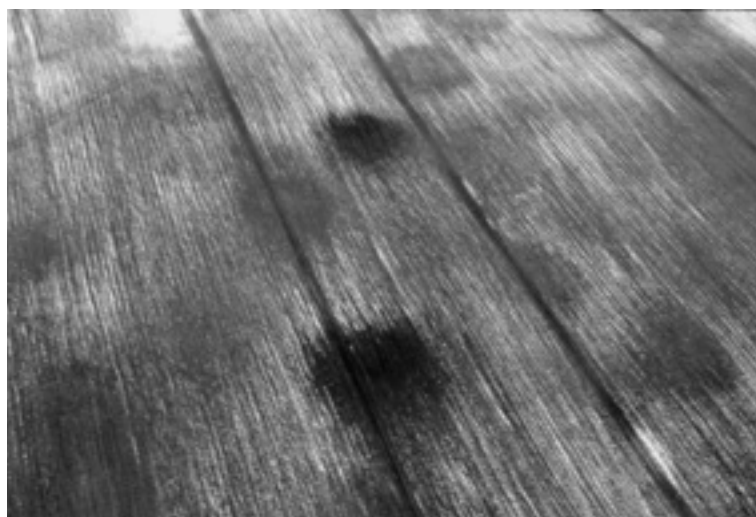
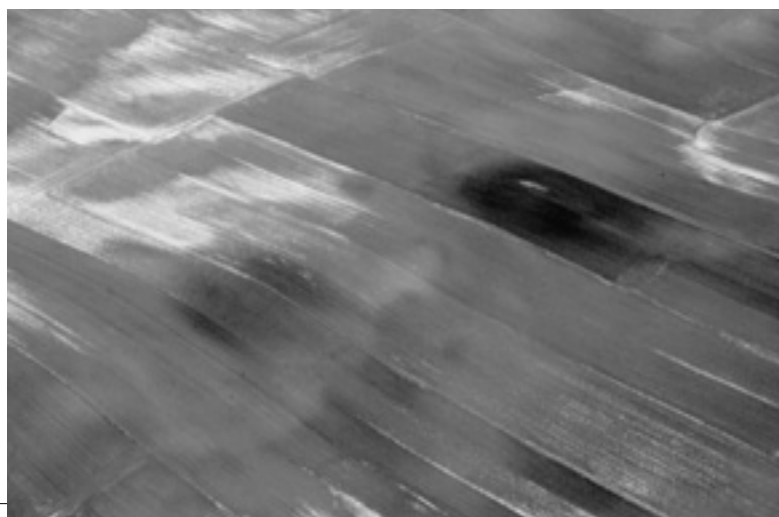
Systematic ploughing destroys most archaeological sites (for example, in Poland some 400,000 sites were recorded on agricultural lands, most of them regularly ploughed), but it is not a readi-



Napole – early medieval stronghold at Napole in northern Poland – the site is in good condition and not ploughed, but the neighbouring area is destroyed – so the site is not part of a historical landscape, but an isolated monument (photo: Zbigniew Kobylinski)

Prehistoric barrows in the south-eastern part of Poland, totally destroyed by ploughing and visible only as soilmarks (photo: Zbigniew Kobylinski)

Prehistoric barrows in the south-eastern part of Poland, totally destroyed by ploughing and visible only as soilmarks (photo: Zbigniew Kobylinski)



ly visible problem, and difficult to control by conservation services. Also, while the developer might be legally forced to pay for rescue excavation, this is not possible in case of farmers.

### ***Changes in water systems***

Large-scale changes to hydrological systems such as in Latvia, where the government supports the building of hydro-electric power stations on small rivers, cause the flooding of some archaeological sites and the destruction of others during the construction of dams. In Poland, by contrast, archaeological sites located in wetlands and peat bogs are destroyed by their drainage and development projects, which cause the lowering of the water-table and the dying out of sites.

### ***Ineffectual agencies***

Weak archaeological protective services seem to be a common phenomenon in all these countries. Even in cases where the law is good, conservation services are not able to provide effective protection to archaeological sites for purely practical reasons - too few people employed in conservation services, a lack of vehicles, low salaries, and so on. In addition there is lack of public education about the significance of archaeological heritage and the need for its protection. As a result, conservation activities are reactive rather than proactive in character.

## **East Asia**

### ***Case Study – Japanese rescue excavation***

There are many aspects regarding heritage at risk in Japan as well as in other parts of East Asia. We limit the geographical area to the Japanese islands and review recent trends and arrangements for this report on archaeological heritage at risk.

In 1973, the total number of excavations carried out in a year was only 1244; of these excavations, 204 were conducted for academic research by universities, institutions and museums. The other 1040 excavations were rescue excavations carried out mostly by local administrative organisations, such as prefectural or boards of education. Rescue excavations have gone on increasing year after year, and in 1997 they had reached 11,738. On the other hand, academic research excavations stayed much the same as before, being 325. Total excavation numbers in the past six years have decreased a little, and according to the new data the total in 2004 numbered 8604, although the year had yet to end.

During the past three decades, the archaeological heritage management system in Japan has developed both in excavation logistics and administrative management. Most of all archaeological sites have been excavated before a development project. Today, it is very rare in Japan to have destruction without any kind of archaeological excavation. This is a positive feature of Japan's archaeological heritage management, as a basic treatment through the 'beneficiary payment principle', that is that the developer or other body that will benefit for the proposed development pays for such costs as site excavation.

On the other hand, ironically, this positive archaeological heritage management system now functions as one aspect in rationalising site destruction or as an indulgence of a 'necessary evil', for a great many archaeological sites have disappeared as a result of rescue excavation. It is in only a few cases, that there is opportunity for the site to be preserved as a 'historic site', designated as heritage by the national or local government.

## **North America – Urban development**

### ***Background***

The approach to archaeological resource management in major urban centres throughout North America varies considerably. Although archaeological heritage management is typically the responsibility of Provincial / State, or Federal agencies, city planners often have considerable influence in determining when, or if, archaeological assessments occur prior to development projects proceeding. This is problematic for at least two reasons:

- most planners lack knowledge of the applicable heritage legislation and
- many planners assume that because a location has been developed to some degree in the past, that these areas no longer have archaeological potential.

While this latter point is true to some degree, a knowledge of locations that tend to correlate with archaeological sites, property development history, and construction methods are required before a true assessment of archaeological potential may be made with any level of confidence. Given the pace of development in many North American cities (for example, Vancouver) this problem has become acute and the impact upon archaeological heritage resources is a growing problem. In this latter scenario, the response to potential impacts to archaeological heritage resources is reactionary.

Twenty-five years ago, urban archaeology in the United States burst into the limelight with imaginative and well-organised programs in major metropolitan areas like Baltimore, New York, and Phoenix, along with energetic programs in smaller cities like Alexandria (Virginia) and Annapolis (Maryland). The last of these, under the direction of Mark Leone, did much to nurture not only public interest, but also academic vitality, in the field. Thanks to such pioneering work, urban archaeology in the United States is well established today.

Yet much about urban archaeology remains problematic. As is the case in Canada, urban archaeology programs are often located in city or county departments of planning. This is somewhat ironic, since essential aspects of conducting archaeological research are frequently not well envisioned. Urban areas are often thought of as the province of architectural treasures, not archaeological ones. To be successful, urban archaeologists must typically be as proficient in advocacy as in archaeology.

### ***Trends***

Approaches to archaeological heritage management in urban centres throughout North America are as diverse as the communities they represent. In some cities such as Seattle, policies exist that require archaeological resources to be considered in the development planning process. In other jurisdictions, such as Vancouver, the approach to archaeological heritage resource management is passive and lacking vision. One growing trend, noted in the Canadian province of Ontario, has cities and municipalities developing and implementing archaeological master plans which use archaeological, historical, and environmental data to develop predictive models that identify areas requiring archaeological assessment prior to development. Ontario jurisdictions with these master plans include: Halton, Waterloo, London, Ottawa-Carleton, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Richmond Hill, Vaughan, and Kingston (Dieterman and Williamson 2001). Currently the City of Toronto, Canada's largest city, is in the process of developing a comprehensive archaeologi-

cal heritage master plan that considers both pre-contact aboriginal and post-contact archaeological resources within its jurisdiction.

Given the emphasis on above-ground cultural resources in cities, the first hurdle faced by archaeologists is to convey the possibility that there is valuable material below ground that might be damaged during rehabilitation of urban landscapes. Even when the archaeologist is successful in transmitting this message, it is not unusual that project boosters, no matter how adept they have been at raising funds for construction, will balk at providing funds needed for even minimal cataloguing and analysis of finds, and preparation of professional reports.

The sheer volume of material that is recovered at an urban site is usually daunting. Any archaeologist who has excavated both prehistoric and historic sites knows that the latter often yield more artefacts than do the former. While prehistoric artefacts are frequently created from organic materials that do not last long enough to be recovered by archaeologists, artefacts made in historic times are more likely to be of durable stuff. Among historic sites, urban sites can be expected to yield the most artefacts. Population density will have been higher in cities than in other areas, and activities like trade and manufacturing that produce many artefacts are common in cities.

#### **Case study – Parliament buildings, Upper Canada**

In Canada's city of Toronto, a heavily developed urban property, long known to be the location of the first and second Parliament buildings of Upper Canada, built in 1797 and 1820, respectively was on the verge of beginning another stage in its industrial use (see Dieterman and Williamson 2001). Prevailing thought assumed it was unlikely that any archaeological heritage resource remained intact due to the urban setting and the extent of institutional and industrial development that had taken place on the site. However, a local heritage advocacy group persisted and the City of Toronto was persuaded to retain an archaeological heritage consultant to assess the property and to search for any surviving remains of the parliamentary complex prior to its redevelopment as a car dealership.

Background research and archaeological test excavations identified the remains of the first and second Parliament buildings of Upper Canada. Techniques that were used included historic documentation and archival research, artefact identification and distributional analyses, stratigraphic and subsurface archaeological feature identification, identification of historic construction techniques, as well as lithographic, botanical, and faunal analyses (Dieterman and Williamson 2001).

This case study demonstrates that urban properties with extensive development histories can still retain areas that contain archaeological heritage resources dating from their earliest uses

and that a detailed understanding of the development history and use of a subject property is required prior to concluding it has no archaeological heritage potential.

#### **Case Study – Philadelphia Independence Hall, USA**

Over the past several years, the Independence National Historical Park in downtown Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, which contains the World Heritage Site of Independence Hall, has been the site of intense activities associated with the construction of the National Constitution Centre. The non-profit organisation that is raising \$185 million to build and operate the Centre was required by federal law to sponsor inventory and evaluation of archaeological resources, and to mitigate any destruction of resources that might be caused by the construction. Indeed, in such a highly visible location, some degree of archaeology was inevitable. Soon, artefacts poured out of the first test pits, which were widened to reveal large areas where the colonial landscape remained much as it appeared when covered two centuries ago. As archaeologist Douglas Mooney said, "... we found evidence of the entire colonial-era city block preserved almost intact below ground surface".

Artefacts associated with Colonial life were recovered in plenty: clothing, shoes, newspapers, muskets, cups, tableware, coins, jewellery, gaming pieces, trade beads, buttons, needles, food remains and toys. Historians found evidence of social diversity that surprised many. The wealthy white elite lived there alongside former slaves, as well as immigrant labourers, shopkeepers, and scientists. The *Philadelphia Inquirer* did a series of stories on the excavation. All archaeologists involved in the research spoke in superlatives about the finds. One called it "the greatest urban archaeological find of our lifetime". More than one million artefacts have so far been taken from the ground.

After sponsoring five million dollars of archaeological research – an almost unprecedented figure in American archaeology – the president of the National Constitution Centre said, as reported on 30 April 2002 by the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, „I don't think we could justify taking more funds away from the building project. This is not a museum about the 18th-century life on the ... block". In the fall [northern autumn] of 2003, the National Park Service acknowledged that they were responsible for the completion of archaeological work, a proclamation that was worrisome to many most concerned with the research. On 14 November 2003, the *Philadelphia Inquirer* quoted Anthony Ranere, professor of archaeology and anthropology at Temple University, as saying: "It's hard to evaluate what they'll be able to do. It's unbelievable, and it's worrisome". The National Park Service remains vague about how they will complete cataloguing and preservation of artefacts, along with analysis of the myriad finds, and finally sponsoring an academic analysis of what they mean to American histo-

Detail of 1872 panorama of Philadelphia, Independence Hall left (NPS website)



ry. Regarded as the 'lead preservation agency' for all others in federal, state, and local governments, the Park Service has suggested that it will utilise its own archaeologists, now in short supply after years of reducing the number of federal employees; or that it will contract for these specialised services with funding that has yet to be identified.

According to United States federal preservation law, failure to complete cataloguing, analysis, and reporting of findings recovered in archaeological investigations constitutes an adverse impact on irreplaceable cultural resources – in much the same way as does looting or destruction of such resources during unmonitored construction. The situation described in Philadelphia is extreme, in regards to the great importance of the archaeological remains uncovered there, far from unique.

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#### References

Frank A. Dieterman and Ronald F. Williamson 2001, *Government on Fire: The History and Archaeology of Upper Canada's First Parliament Buildings*. Eastend Book, Toronto.



Excavation at Independence Park Visitors Centre, Philadelphia (photo: NPS, Jed Levin)



Shallow features can be destroyed by modern construction, Independence Park Visitors Centre, Philadelphia (photo: NPS, Paul Inashima)