

1 Editorial

Mark Simpson (<mailto:ms788@york.ac.uk>)

So, as 2011 comes to a close it is time to reflect on the archaeological year gone by.

During the last twelve months archaeology has come under fire from a number of sources. Budget cuts mean that various councils across the country have not only shelved building programmes, hence doing away with the need for watching briefs and rescue excavations, but they have also been cutting back on museums and heritage sector staffing.

In June, the council leader in the Fenland district told an awards dinner for developers that he would ‘sweep away’ the need for expensive archaeological ‘interference’ in any future building plans for the area, sparking a national outcry and a Facebook group to co-ordinate a response. I am proud to say I was a part of that protest, though a small part, but as they say at Tesco, ‘every little helps’. That debate raged across BBC national radio, broad sheet newspaper and even had questions asked in both Houses of Parliament, before the council leader was taken to task by his own political hero, Eric Pickles, the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government.

Closer to home, the student digs in York at Heslington East and Hungate, both of which have been running for about five years, are now reaching their final phases. So, is this a bad time to be studying archaeology?

Not a bit of it!

The University of York has taken in over 100 archaeology students again this year. There are more students staying on beyond the three-year degree to do Masters and PhD courses than ever before. The recession meant that many people moved out of the archaeological profession and despite the gloomy forecasts on the news, the market WILL pick up. So students going through the education system now are in possibly the best place, ready to step in as the jobs become available. It is only a matter of time.

So, as the old year gives way to 2012, the year of the London Olympics, remember that you are fortunate to be studying at one of the top universities in Britain, with some of the best staff it is possible to study under, in a subject that has relevance to everybody. We are the lucky ones. . .

On a final note, congratulations to the archaeology department for winning the Queen’s Anniversary Prize for Higher and Further Education in November.

Mark Simpson (Co-editor)