

happily ask our universally valid one—for example: “how do we identify 5th century occupation at a given site?” The need to provide replies to that and similar questions could itself lead to the formulation of research priorities. Secondly, and more generally, there must be the question of whether a given site provides any prospect of supplying any sensible answer to the universal question. No point in wasting effort if the answer to that one is negative or at best dubious.

This matter has, incidentally, many implications about how we should draw distribution maps, but that’s another story.

I threatened to return to the question of our ancestors, a matter beloved by our friendly local historians. Our individual and collective *ancestors* are inevitably the field of the genealogist and only in rare cases can they penetrate any distance. Our *predecessors* in a given place, however, are a different kettle of fish and these are the separate subjects of local historians and archaeologists alike. But, again, archaeologists and local historians alike are studying the place not, *vide* Richard Reece, the people. The studies of both can only tell us little about the people: they can tell us much about the place and what these little known predecessors did to it.

In as much, therefore, as the archaeologist is an historian at all, he is a landscape historian and has nearly always so been. The local historian can join the landscape bandwagon or not, as the mood takes him, but once the intricacies of manorial descent and

institutional progress have been worked out there is little else left for him to do. The archaeologist cannot avoid the landscape of which his site is part. The shadow of Hoskins falls on us all.

While modern, and not so modern, destruction will not allow answers to our universal question in many places, especially in those places where most things have happened, it becomes of growing importance to concentrate on those parts of the jig-saw puzzle which enable the missing pieces to be guessed at (“inferred” is the polite term): the geographer’s technique of pattern making. Up to a point, the confirmation of inferred patterns is a justified activity, even a priority, but beyond that hard-to-define point, we will only be providing redundant information. In most areas of archaeology today any site that produces a decently stratified sequence of deposits and artefacts, over an area large enough to see what it is we are digging, will be well short of the point of redundancy. In some areas, even the poorly stratified site glimpsed through a keyhole-sized trench will be on the useful side of the redundancy point: these areas should be clearly defined and identified. But in many areas the keyhole examination of poorly stratified deposits will be unlikely to produce more than redundant information—potsherds hardly worth washing—but at least, here “fun” archaeology can do little harm, as long as the standards are high enough to avoid spurious and incorrect conclusions. In some areas, even the large scale, well conducted and expensive excavation will only produce redundant information: this should be avoided as we cannot afford it.

Dr. John Morris

DR. JOHN MORRIS, Senior Lecturer in Ancient History at University College, London and author of *The Age of Arthur*, died on 1st June at the age of 63. It is a hard task to write in the past tense of one who lived so fully and left with all whom he encountered an impression of youthful vigour. His pupils in the University and elsewhere will be suffering a particularly keen sense of loss, for his enthusiasm in teaching and his perpetual interest in his students made him immensely popular.

It was my own good fortune to attend his seminars at University College, where it was the tradition that first year students in the Classics Department received from him a grounding in the history of the ancient Mediterranean civilisations. Yet the objective of his teaching was as much to provoke thought as to impart facts. He was a perfect choice for a difficult task, that of freeing young minds reared on the examination system from the mental constraints acquired from such an environment. If his charges were to think without fetters, then each must learn for himself or herself the importance not of furnishing answers but of posing questions, not of quoting authorities but of knowing sources. To these things we were led, not dragged, and for each there was the trauma of discovering that knowledge was confusing and paradoxical, yet alive and dynamic. In some he awakened an urgent need, a quest for the roots of our knowledge of the ancient world. These would elect to follow him in studies shaped to reveal the true nature of

source material and to grapple with the thorny problem of assessing bias and subjectivity in ancient texts. His selection of the reigns of Augustus and Tiberius and the Roman occupation of Britain as special subjects for finals provided fertile ground on which those who were fired by his approach might exercise their minds.

Inevitably he developed a following among those whom he taught, for without affectation he was at ease with all and would join an undergraduate party at the drop of a hat. He was a source of continuing fascination to us, full of energy, full of humour, and in so many ways the antithesis of his contemporaries whom we so blithely and wrongfully maligned. His chequered career on the left wing of politics, his involvement with the Committee of One Hundred, the manner in which his charisma brought to the door of his study the most astonishing range of personalities, all added to the unique atmosphere of joyous intrigue which permeated everything that he taught and did.

He would sit often with his students, long after hours, clearly enjoying their company as much as they his. I recall a contemporary demanding from him the name of some Greek battle, the answer to a clue in a crossword we were striving to complete. Morris had clearly forgotten it but did not hesitate, “I’m an historian, you know, not a chronicler”, came the chiding but gentle reply. Let none deny it.

ROY CANHAM