

# Editorial

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We are delighted to welcome you to our December solstice edition, volume 2 issue 2. As the Sun moves away from the solstice, this is a good time for looking back over the previous year. However, for the *Journal of Skyscape Archaeology* it is a special time as we can look back further and celebrate two years of publication and thank those authors who have made them possible. The broad scope of skyscape archaeology has taken us, in our past issues, on a global journey through time and cultures to bring you the latest research from across the world, stopping off at the ancient cities of Thebes, Hattusha, Carthago Nova and Petra before travelling through the American Southwest, the Inca empire, Mexico, Belize and Mesopotamia. Closer to home we have visited southern Ireland, northeast Scotland and Orkney. The common element which unites these diverse regions and time periods is the concern with how the skyscape has had a material impact on the archaeology of these far-flung places. In this volume, we hope you will follow our journey as we travel to southwest Wales, the Argentine Northwest region, the Maya lowlands and Utah.

In 2001, archaeologist Gordon Barclay looked at how politics has influenced the development of archaeological thought in the British Isles. Using Scottish archaeology as an example, he showed that there is the tendency to “erect English patterns as a norm against which other patterns can be seen to be abnormal” (Barclay 2001, 8). He theorised that the archetypal image of the English rural landscape, with its rolling downs, remained powerful, coming in part from the division, drawn by Fox in *The Personality of Britain* (1932), between lowland and highland areas which debased the latter in favour of the former (Barclay 2001, 13). Thus, Scottish and Welsh archaeology were peripheral to the core narrative and became subsumed under British – that is, *English* – accounts. A parallel can be drawn between the way that archaeological narrative deals with regionality, which, as Barclay notes (2001, 13), is recognised but assigned a minor role, and the conspicuous absence of the prehistoric sky – which, if some archaeology books are to be believed, has no role at all. In *JSA* we are trying to re-envision our archaeological heritage and assign under-researched monuments and their relation to the sky a more prominent role. In our last issue, we started this process with the publication of Douglas Scott’s paper on the solar lunar orientations of the Orkney-Cromarty and Clava Cairns. In this

issue, we are delighted to offer “Shadows, Stones and Solstices” by **Olwyn Pritchard**; a survey of seventeen standing stone pairs in southwest Wales. On the basis of the phenomenon of shadow-casting between pairs of stones she explores the interesting possibility of shadow union occurring intentionally at the solstices; a theory augmented by shadow-casting research from across the British Isles and Sweden.

From Wales we cross the Atlantic Ocean for our second research paper, entitled “Archaeoastronomy on Inca Sites in Northwest Argentina”, by **Ivan Leibowicz, Ricardo Moyano, Alejandro Ferrari, Félix Acuto and Cristian Jacob**. They look at how solstices, equinoxes and lunar standstills had an impact on the location, layout and spatial design of four Inca sites in the Argentine Northwest region. The paper is beautifully illustrated with photographs and plans, while the measurements and detailed data for each site are available as supplementary online material.

We move north to Mesoamerica for our third research article, by **Ivan Šprajc and Pedro Francisco Sánchez Nava** and entitled “Astronomy and Architecture in the Maya Lowlands”. This is an area that has been well researched over the decades, but because the authors questioned existing data they embarked on a systematic research project with a more rigorous methodology than previous research, in order to detect patterns not previously recognised. Indeed, this work enabled them to identify a previously unknown group aligned to the major lunar standstill positions.

With the inevitable focus on alignments and measurements and because of the lack of ethnographic material, archaeoastronomers have been forgiven in the past for not giving due consideration to the cultural element which underlies the monuments and ancient sites examined. With skyscape archaeology we encourage a multidisciplinary perspective to fill these inevitable gaps. Sometimes, we simply need a fresh pair of eyes. In Utah, where we travel to next, artist Joe Pachak studied the Ancestral Puebloan culture and traditions relating to the movements of the Sun, Moon and stars and went on to create a sculpture called ‘Sun Marker’ to demonstrate light-and-shadow effects on re-created rock art images at the equinoxes and solstices. The story of this sculpture and how it has helped formulate vital research questions for cultural astronomers today is told in “‘Sun Marker’: A Laboratory for Experiential Cultural Astronomy” by **Angela M. Richman, Von Del Chamberlain and Joe Pachak**.

We continue this issue with a Forum which turns the clock back to the early 1990s to ask whether a controversial debate between archaeoastronomers and archaeologists is still relevant today. The first issue of *Archaeoastronomy and Ethnoastronomy News* was published on the September equinox, 1991, and its editors were John Carlson, David Dearborn and LeRoy Doggett. This supplementary newsletter was relatively short-lived, with the last issue appearing at the December solstice, 1999. However, beyond its short papers on archaeoastronomical research there were a number of essays by leading scholars in the field which expressed views on the development of archaeoastronomy and ethnoastronomy and their difficulties with other academic fields, and these papers still make interesting reading today.

In the second issue of 1991, in an article entitled “Bridging Disciplines & Falling in Cracks”, Dearborn said that the “artificial partitioning of Knowledge into disciplines

affects our perceptions and limits our actions” (Dearborn 1991). He demonstrated this by relating the difficulties Clive Ruggles encountered in publishing the two volumes of proceedings – *Astronomies and Cultures* (Ruggles and Saunders 1993) and *Archaeoastronomy in the 1990s* (Ruggles 1993) – from the third Oxford conference. Apparently, the publishers wished them to be considered solely by the astronomy editor, despite Ruggles’ suggestion that archaeoastronomy was more related to the fields of archaeology and anthropology. The archaeology editor declined sole responsibility, as the papers covered not just archaeology but ethnohistory, history of religions and classics. Ruggles subsequently found different publishers. These apparent publishing problems can perhaps be explained by Anthony Aveni’s earlier suggestion (Aveni 1989, 3) that there were two archaeoastronomies, the New World anthropological approach and the Old World statistical approach: a dichotomy which came to be known as the green/brown divide because of the differently coloured covers of the 1981 Oxford conference proceedings (Aveni 1982; Heggie 2009 [1982]).

In the year following Dearborn’s article, archaeologist Keith Kintigh (1992) weighed into this debate with his seminal article on the relationship between archaeoastronomy and archaeology. He explained his perceptions, which he said were shared by other archaeologists, on what he called the chasm or void between the disciplines. Anthony Aveni (1992) promptly published a riposte in the following issue. Despite the fact that Aveni had reprinted the Kintigh/Aveni papers in his compendium *Foundations of New World Cultural Astronomy* in 2008, Ruggles revisited the debate in 2011 and said it belonged to the past (Aveni 2008; Ruggles 2011). To find out to what extent attitudes have changed, we invited leading archaeoastronomers and archaeologists from both the New and the Old Worlds for their views. Following a short introductory explanation, “A Slow Convergence”? Archaeoastronomy and Archaeology”, we are delighted to publish up-to-date-commentaries by **Anthony Aveni, Timothy Pauketat, Juan Belmonte and Tim Darvill**.

From the New World, Aveni suggests that progress (albeit slow) has been made in archaeoastronomy with the development of interpretative archaeoastronomy and cultural astronomy, concluding that it will succeed better when it is fully integrated into the culture-based disciplines. Pauketat says that while parts of the Kintigh/Aveni debate still resonate today, archaeological theory has opened up to the necessity of exploring the way in which people relate to the heavens, offering new possibilities for archaeoastronomers to work with archaeologists. Back in the Old World, Belmonte tells his own publishing story to show that in his opinion there is still a degree of separation between archaeoastronomers and archaeologists, but that this is diminishing in some areas such as Mayan and landscape archaeology as well as in Egyptology, one of his specific fields of interest. Darvill concludes this Forum and reminds us that the nature of the material evidence very much dictates the type of research methodology that can be applied. Drawing parallels between landscape and skyscape archaeology he calls for greater integration between the two. From their very different backgrounds, these four distinguished scholars not only acknowledge the importance of skyscape but offer suggestions as to how it can be better integrated into archaeological investigations.

A conference review then demonstrates the positive steps that skyscape archaeology is taking in its aim to integrate itself with mainstream archaeology. **Pamela Armstrong** reviews the Prehistoric Society's one-day conference entitled "The Land, The Sea and The Sky" held in London at the Society of Antiquaries in March this year. Here the sky was validated as an important resource for prehistoric studies, on equal footing to the better-established landscapes and seascapes.

We would also like to draw your attention to our book reviews, which show how skyscape archaeology encompasses both sky and earth. **Bernadette Brady** reviews *Heliacal Phenomena and Astronomical Introduction for Humanists* by Salvo De Meis to further explain both the relevance and difficulty of astronomical phenomena, while **Fabio Silva** turns his attention to *The Archaeology of Darkness*, edited by Marion Dowd and Robert Hensey and based on papers given at a 2012 conference entitled "Into the Earth: The Archaeology of Darkness".

During a skyscapes discussion at TAG in 2014, involving archaeologists and archaeo-astronomers, it "was agreed that, moving forward, one goal would be for a short 'Guide to Archaeoastronomy for Archaeologists'" (Connolly 2015, 148). Happily, David Connolly, who participated and reviewed that session for us, took the lead on this, and suggested that such a guide would be a useful addition to the library of 42 downloadable guides available from the British Archaeological Jobs Resource website (BAJR 2016). We are pleased to announce that guide number 43, *Archaeoastronomy for Archaeologists* (Connolly 2016), was published in October this year. It's a good, free starter with plenty of links to useful software and websites, as well as explaining some of the key principles of the field.

We would like to thank our contributors and everyone involved in the publication of our journal. Buoyed by the positive responses to skyscape archaeology from our Forum contributors, we look forward to 2017.

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