

Twenty-five Years of Making Archaeology Happen

Simon Timms

MEMBER OF THE NATIONAL TRUST ARCHAEOLOGY PANEL,
EXETER, DEVON

Even a cursory reader of the last issue of the Trust's *Annual Archaeological Review* will surely have been impressed by the depth of expertise and dedication that the archaeological staff at Cirencester and the network of archaeologists around the Regions bring to their work. As the twentieth century background to the photograph of smiling faces on page 5 of that *Review* reminds us, the days have long gone since archaeology for the Trust focused mainly on the prehistoric and Roman periods.

The National Trust is today widely recognised as a leading light in the world of historic environment conservation and research.* This lead role has not come about by chance. How is it that archaeology in the Trust has moved from strength to strength during a quarter century when the profession as a whole has undergone such major changes?

There are many reasons for this success. David Thackray highlighted one – professional stability – in his Introduction to the last *Annual Review*. However his characteristic modesty meant that readers of his article would not perhaps have fully appreciated the role that he himself plays at the heart of that stability. And as the year 2000 marked his quarter century of working for the Trust (and happily also the silver anniversary of his marriage to Caroline), it is only right that this edition of the *Review* gives some small recognition to his pivotal role.

David was appointed to the Trust in 1975 to work in the Wessex Region and provide support for Phyllis Ireland who, as the Trust's Archaeological Secretary, did so much to raise awareness of the role the Trust should play in archaeological conservation. Following Miss Ireland's retirement in 1980, David assumed the national duties of Archaeological Secretary (the Properties Committee was soon being told of the huge amount of work he was doing, so much of it in his own time).

From these small beginnings, David has over the last twenty-five years nurtured the growth of the Trust's archaeological services to the coverage we see today. Throughout this time, there have been several key factors behind the success that he has achieved. These include of course the breadth and depth of his archaeological expertise. Then there is the sheer hard work

that he, together with Caroline, put into their work for the Trust.

However, in my own view, it is above all the friendly manner with which David sets about his work that makes the crucial difference. People from across the broad spectrum of interests that the Trust draws together really do wish to draw on his advice and relish the opportunity to work with him. This to my mind goes a long way towards explaining how the Trust has attracted around itself so much support for "making archaeology happen". And, as keen readers of English Heritage's 2000 report, *Power of Place*, will know, it is people not just organisations that bring about success.**

This note (and the formal thanks paid by the Archaeology Panel at its meeting in June 2001) hopefully goes a small way towards saying a collective thankyou back to David.

* The Trust issued *Archaeology and the Historic Environment*, a new leaflet in 2001, describing its wide-ranging responsibilities for the historic environment.

** Recommendation 17 (c) of *Power of Place* states simply: "back people who make things happen".



Stourhead Garden, c1976, taken during David's early career in Wessex.

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