

### From the Chair

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Dear Members,

The GAG sessions at the IfA conference were fairly well attended, despite being in competition with the excursion afternoon! Elsewhere in this update you'll be able to read a summary of what happened.

Minutes of the AGM will be up on the website shortly and at our first committee meeting after the Conference we co-opted Drew Smith to committee. Drew and Liz Gardner will be setting up portfolio assessment for membership applications/upgrades. The GAG Business Plan for 2013-14 was circulated and adopted.



*GAG Committee and session speakers at IfA Conference in April: l-r, Steve Allen, Rob Read, Lesley Collett, Aisling Nash, Judith Dobie, Liz Gardner, Laura Templeton, Richard Bryant, Drew Smith*

Meantime, Tom has been doing sterling work rebranding and updating the former AAI&S Website for the GAG. The website can still be accessed using the AAI&S URL but the primary address is now [www.gag-ifa.org](http://www.gag-ifa.org). There is still a lot of work to be done to get this working the way we want it to, but as ever if you have any ideas please get in touch with Tom.

Meantime, some items of rather less positive developments. Firstly, some of you may know by now that the MA in Archaeological Illustration taught at Swindon College for many years has been axed by the sponsoring university, Oxford Brookes. This happened at incredibly short notice and means that there are now no formal, in-depth training courses in archaeological illustration in the UK. GAG believe this is an extremely poorly-advised and short-sighted decision that will have a negative impact on the training aspirations of anyone planning to enter the profession either as a new starter or as a career path change.

Secondly there is a discussion underway on LinkedIn about the digital alteration of artwork undertaken by an illustrator for a major national body. (I'm afraid I haven't seen the discussion personally and so don't know the precise nature of the case – at the time of writing my request to join LinkedIn's Archaeological Illustration and Graphics Group has been 'pending' for three weeks!). The illustrator is not an IfA member and the other party is not an RAO, so there is little that we can do directly. GAG does however encourage its members to assert their moral rights to be the originators of a piece of artwork. This is distinct from copyright ownership and we would refer interested parties to the relevant section of the [Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works](#) (Article 6bis, latest amendment September 8th 1979) –

#### *Article 6bis*

##### *Moral Rights:*

- 1. To claim authorship; to object to certain modifications and other derogatory actions*  
*(1) Independently of the author's economic rights, and even after the transfer of the said rights, the author shall have the right to claim authorship of the work and to object to any distortion, mutilation or other modification of, or other derogatory action in relation to, the said work, which would be prejudicial to his honor or reputation.*

Finally I should have written a report for this issue about the day school on 'Digital Heritage 2013: Interfaces with the Past' held by the Centre for Digital Heritage of the University of York. This brought together a number of speakers with a significant number of papers on digital imaging. But unfortunately I can't write anything. I heard about the conference in passing from one of the external contributors but we in the GAG were not told about it by the organisers. Although to be fair, I do work for a major archaeology unit, based less than 10 minutes walk from the hosting department and I can say that not one of my work colleagues had heard about it either. Bit of a failure to 'engage with the profession' there it seems...

In the meantime, Rob will shortly be starting work on the identification and evaluation of online training resources which is quite apposite, given what I've written above. As usual, I will put in a request for Newsletter contributions. This edition is a news update and we expect to be producing the next formal Newsletter in the Autumn. If there is anything you have been working on that you feel would benefit the rest of the profession this newsletter can be your first port of call.

*Steve Allen*

## IfA Conference 2013, Wednesday 17th–Friday 19th April

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This year GAG contributed a seminar and workshop to the conference and worked with the Buildings Archaeology Group on a third session. As well as the formal sessions, the GAG Exhibition was on show throughout the conference. This showcased the work of some of the members of the Group, and demonstrates the range of work represented by our members and the all-encompassing nature of our branch of the profession. Reconstruction artwork was prominent but artefact illustration, survey work (landscape and buildings) and locomotives (with the correct shades of paint based on first hand research and sampling, if you were wondering) were all represented.



*The Graphic Archaeology Group's Exhibition*

The AGM on Thursday morning is minuted and available from the IfA Website. We followed with a workshop on Validation procedures for graphics practitioners who are interested in joining IfA.

Graphics practitioners, whether staff or freelancers, often work in isolation from others in the same field within the wider profession. Consequently it can be difficult to get informed feedback about the type and quality of work they produce, especially where work is not published outside of the grey literature world.

The portfolio assessment is a good way to get constructive feedback on professional progress and to help people who are not sure whether IfA membership is for them (it is!). This event helps towards IfA membership applications, in gaining advice on the current level of work being produced, in suggesting ways in which an individuals' work can be developed and pointing them towards sources of advice and support. This type of work is part of the legacy of the AAI&S that we intend to continue at future events.

In the afternoon 'Impact requires Imagery' set out to examine the ways in which graphics work is used to create impact in archaeological projects. All too often, the graphics contribution is pushed to the background of a project, put in as an afterthought, to fill in space once what is thought of is the 'real work' – the text – has been written. Devaluing the contribution of the graphics product not only damages the status of those doing the work but undermines the impact of the project outcome, whether that is a website, publication, poster or exhibition. When the graphics work (and its practitioners) are integrated into the project from the outset, not only does it make for smoother and better working relationships, it creates a far better finished product.

These aspects were amply demonstrated in the afternoon's presentations. At Glastonbury Abbey we were able to see how specialist illustration knowledge was able to solve problems with an archive many years old to reconstruct the site plan and locate trenches which allowed critical parts of a 'lost' excavation to be understood and tied in to the overall project. We saw how study and illustration of Iron Age horse furniture can be used to re-evaluate the reconstruction and performance of chariots and thus our understanding of how they were used. We saw how discussion between illustrator, field team, surveyor and environmental specialists and the process involved in creating a series of reconstruction paintings allowed the project staff to evaluate and evolve their understanding of Silbury Hill. The study of Anglo Saxon sculpture was a good example of an image-led project, something which would have been impossible with text alone, and which will fundamentally alter our perception of this material and of those who created it.

This level of interaction ought to be second nature to all project management. In many cases this does happen, yet it is disappointing to hear from illustrators who are still side-lined or only brought in at the last minute as functionaries rather than as colleagues. This old fashioned style of management should not happen in the modern workplace because it does not benefit the project or the profession. If we want best value, if we really want to make waves we need to have a modern approach.

The value of this was emphasised when we discussed the changing nature of archaeological publication. Web and electronic publication is becoming increasingly image driven rather than text driven. While the death of the print monograph may not be imminent it is no longer the sole means of archaeological dissemination and publication models based on print archetypes must reflect this.

At the same time we need to look at copyright issues especially in the digital environment. A robust discussion on this subject with particular reference to the problems of protecting the copyright of an actually identifying what is and is not copyright. Unsurprisingly, no conclusions were reached but the debate looks set to continue. While at first sight this might not seem to be relevant to the immediate impact of a project, it is an important part of how the work we produce is accessed and developed. As such it must be planned for at the preparation stage and built into the project design.

On Friday, we collaborated with the Buildings Archaeology Group (Mike Nevell and Ed James) in contributing a paper and a discussion about some of the common issues affecting those who work with images and with buildings. 'Making Waves or just treading water?' aimed to examine the barriers to starting a career and the problems of maintaining skill levels in a rapidly changing work environment. Some of these issues were introduced in the paper starting the BAG session that morning. The outcome is clear and the delegates concerns are principally about training- both for new starters and for existing practitioners. We have all been aware of the gradual withdrawal of practical skill training in most University departments- whether due to lack of practical experience among the staff or due restrictions on teaching time imposed from higher up. The result is we have people needing practical skills to enter the profession which they cannot get from an undergraduate degree and which commercial units are reluctant to provide to staff who they may view as temporary or transient employees.

Bridging this gap is a problem. It is one in which IfA has a role to play. We recognise and commit to training and CPD and through the various groups we need to identify where there are gaps and work out what we can do to fill them. CPD events are one way, developing competence matrices to identify what skills people need at stages in their career is another.

The value of the graphics input into the archaeological project cannot be understated. It is the images which sell the product to the audience- whether that audience is academic or the general public. Sometimes these images are records- essential tools to the interrogation and study of the subject. Sometimes these images are expressions of our current thinking – in themselves records of how we interpret a site at the current time. They are responsible for conveying messages to our audience, whether overt or subliminal. If there is one message that we can take away from this year's conference it is that if we want to make waves we must be smart about the way we use images. Images have power to influence thinking; in a changing and

increasingly image dominated world it is a power we cannot dismiss or set aside.

So once again, thank you to all the speakers, the delegates and all those 'behind the scenes' who made this such a memorable event. Glasgow next year!

## IfA 2014 Conference, Glasgow, 9th–11th April 2014: 'Research in Practice'

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By the time you read this, GAG will have submitted session proposals for next years' conference. We are asking for a discussion session and a workshop; the latter in particular is something we want to flag up. 'Meet the Illustrator' is a workshop we intend to tie in with the GAG Exhibition. The idea is that exhibitors will be invited to give short (10 minute) presentations relating to the exhibited work: work which might not fill a conference speaker's slot but which is worth bringing to people's attention, either because of the importance of the subject matter, the method(s) used to create it or the particular issues that had to be addressed. We are awaiting a decision as to whether this will go ahead but in the meantime, could potential contributors please think about preparing such a presentation and gather their thoughts?

## Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Graphics

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In recent years it has become apparent that there is a need for standards and guidance in our field; it is one of the regular requests we get from members (and non-members). As part of the professional body which represents practitioners in this field we believe it is part of the remit of the GAG to prepare and promote such standards. In the immediate future we will be starting work on this and naturally we will be inviting specialist advice on particular subjects. However, if you would be interested in participating, please get in touch.

## Lithic illustration workshop

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The Lithic Studies Society is holding a workshop on lithic illustration at the British Museum on 11th September, 10am – 4pm: to be led by Craig Williams, Illustrator, Prehistory and Europe, British Museum. Open to members of the Lithics Studies Society: please email Claire Fisher for further information and to book a place on this workshop: [cfisher@thebritishmuseum.ac.uk](mailto:cfisher@thebritishmuseum.ac.uk)

### **GAG Committee:**

Chair: Steve Allen

Secretary: Lesley Collett

Treasurer: Laura Templeton

Jennie Anderson

Liz Gardner

Leeanne Whitelaw

Tom Small

Co-opted members:

Drew Smith

Sarah Lucas

Rob Read

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## CONTRIBUTIONS

Please remember that we want to hear from you, the members. Articles and news for the Newsletter can be sent to the email address opposite. The next edition is due out in November.

More material is always welcome for the GAG exhibition; contact Sarah Lucas for details ([s.m.lucas@reading.ac.uk](mailto:s.m.lucas@reading.ac.uk).)

