

Mesolithic archaeology has featured in *Before Farming* since the launch of the journal and some readers might be inclined to feel that we've taken the title too literally and made this a journal of Holocene prehistory. (Although this issue carries an important contribution from Villa on the Palaeolithic/Neolithic, see below.) The Mesolithic input has come our way by historical accident rather than by design. Recent conferences have been the source of many of our submissions with a Mesolithic theme and other papers have been submitted independently of organised events. Perhaps we are providing a much needed outlet for archaeologists working with this European material. (I do recall a journal of Mesolithic studies that existed in the 1980s but which now seems to be defunct.) Regardless of the stimulus for the input of articles, the breadth of Mesolithic research currently underway is simply impressive. This field, if it can be recognised as such, embodies an enviable blend of science-based archaeology, integrated with careful use of ethnographic data that generates testable propositions that should appeal to a broad range of conceptual interests. Those of us working in other regions and with other time periods can benefit from Mesolithic holism.

The papers in this issue reflect the maturation of Mesolithic research in a regional context (Wickham-Jones on Scotland) and from a theoretical perspective. Finlay asks us to think beyond traditional ecological modelling of Mesolithic lifeways, and to open our minds to a variety of sources of data on which to build more experiential based narratives. Comments on this article from reviewers ranged from the dismissive to fulsome praise. Such strong reactions are a sign of a field in transition and reflect the uneasy – and potentially fruitful – coexistence of old and new theoretical approaches.

Change is also evident in Scheinsohn and Matteucci's spatial modelling of hunter-gatherer landscape use in Patagonia. The adoption of the horse by hunter-gatherers in the sixteenth century radically altered perceptions of the ecological potential of the landscape, and the authors build a predictive model of site location that can be tested with further research. The use of GIS and image processing techniques in this context should interest those working in areas with poor site visibility, and who have limited time and funds to investigate largely unexplored landscapes.

In contrast to Finlay's conceptual challenge to change the way we think and write about the past, Villa gives a timely reminder that taphonomic processes are not simply a legacy of processual archaeology; they are integral to theory building of all persuasions. She reviews the development of taphonomic research as it has been applied to European contexts, and calls attention to the emergence of lithic refitting as an essential tool in the study of site formation processes, a term which is now synonymous with taphonomy in the minds of most Palaeolithic archaeologists. The case studies of Lazaret and Ambrona and Torralba in particular, highlight the importance of integrating refitting and sedimentological analyses as a corrective to behavioural over-interpretation. Villa and Finlay should be read side by side.

The Editor
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