

Mind the gap

The current financial turmoil in world markets has, temporarily I hope, eclipsed climate change as the headline threat to our future livelihoods. Once the market settles and more considered debate ensues on the underlying causes of this panic then other pressing worries will return to the headlines, including the long-term uncertainty posed by global warming. Perhaps the archaeological record can provide some small comfort for the perpetually anxious. Our hominin forbears have had a long history of responding to dramatic swings in temperature and rainfall that have altered profoundly the availability of basic resources. Technological innovation has certainly been one recourse, as has been conflict, but hunter-gatherers had one option not readily available to us and that is mobility. Simply moving to more favourable areas when times are hard is not feasible for those of us dependent on an employer, supermarkets and investments tied to property. Economic migrants seeking a better life in Europe or the Americas, however, are exercising that old option of mobility, and we in turn consider how to respond with social and physical barriers. Lessons from the distant past may not be appropriate or of interest to us today, but they are at least worth considering as they represent a record of human ingenuity and adaptability in the face of severe challenges. The archaeological record forms our collective store of experience and perhaps wisdom as a species.

The papers in this issue and in the next two to come examine in considerable detail how hunter-gatherer communities across the Americas responded to a long and internally variable interval of warmer and drier conditions during the middle Holocene. This was a global phenomenon that interrupted our otherwise benign interglacial that has been favourable to development of societies dependent on intensive agriculture. Raven Garvey and her co-organisers begin this series of papers with an overview which outlines the contents of most of the papers in this volume and of those to come. We will, of course, continue our eclectic mix of other topics as is the case here with Mitchell *et al* who write an extended response to an earlier paper by Jolly on the process of interaction and acculturation between foragers and farmers beyond the Kalahari.

The Editor

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