

Editorial

Sarah De Nardi, Thomas Kador and Carol McDavid

This issue (compiled in the final month of the *annus horribilis* that was 2020) presents us with a common thread of engagement: best practice, and an invitation never to give up trying to reach a deeper, more engaged notion of archaeology and heritage practice. The papers in this issue bear witness to resilient scholarship and writing that emerged despite the huge personal and professional challenges of 2020. From the highlands of the Appalachian region of the US to northern Chile via Wales in the United Kingdom, we follow a thread of meaningful engagements with the past. The meaningful past carves out a place in the sun through a variety of materialities, technologies, spiritualities, memories and activism in this issue's papers.

We start with Kaeleigh and Daniel Trepal's introduction to the papers by Komara and Rivera: we leave it up to them to set the scene, as it were, but we acknowledge that both papers have the rare potential to get us thinking about historical and socio-cultural contexts in a novel way through the lens of engaged archaeological practice. Moving on to Elena Sesma's and Paul Belford and Penelope Foreman's papers, we gather insight into what it means to be truly engaged with the vibrant past in the present. Using photo elicitation to activate contemporary and emotional responses to key sites, Sesma argues that we can picture ourselves in the past and present at the same time if we find continuity and meaning in our emplacement. Sesma draws our attention to the innovative use of 360-degree panoramic photos that can mimic the embodied and place-based experience of walking interviews. This digital technology also enables participants to virtually visit the site while research is ongoing.

Belford and Foreman offer a useful overview of lessons learned during a large community-facing archaeological project in Northeast Wales, outlining what the authors gleaned of the local public's pattern of involvement and level of engagement with a multi-phase endeavour. Aspects of participant agency emerge, as well as a reflection of how the archaeological project responds to the Welsh government's initiative for social agency boosting, 'Communities First'.

As we consider the year that is just beginning, we renew our hope that the world can regain some equilibrium, and hope for a chance to start anew from more positive, wiser, and more grounded positionings. We trust you will find hope and reflection in every paper in this issue.

Speaking of new beginnings, we are sorry to say that JCAH Co-Founder and longstanding editor Carol McDavid will be stepping back from her tireless duties at the helm of the journal from its very beginnings. Fortunately, she will remain on the team as Consulting Editor. But as of the start of 2021, and thus from JCAH issue 8.1 onwards, Sarah De Nardi will be joined as co-editor by Thomas Kador, who has been Associate Editor (Europe) for several years. Despite these changes, we hope to remain true to the ethos and mission of JCAH and continue to publicise a diverse range of contributions to community archaeology and heritage from across the globe.