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Editorial

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At the time of writing, we are beginning to emerge from our bunkers, blinking in the unaccustomed daylight of a world easing lockdown measures. The future is starting to look cautiously optimistic; still, however, there are clouds on the horizon in the shape of new Covid variants which might have us all retreating to our bunkers before we know it. With all the optimism of the moment, however, it is hoped that there will be some kind of return to normality in the summer and coming academic year.

This will be a blessing to the *Journal of Conflict Archaeology*, as it may mean that reviewers will be easier to get in future. The biggest obstacle facing the *Journal* in publication is getting reviewers. We would very much like to thank those stalwart souls who have reviewed for us during the pandemic. The *Journal* relies heavily on reviewers, as they provide the academic credibility that validates the papers we publish. The reviewing process is incredibly important to academia as a whole; it is something that we all have to face at some time or another. Being reviewed can be an exceptionally gruelling process; having someone pass judgment on what we have written, telling us that parts need to be re-written, occasionally saying that the hours and years of work put into gathering, interpreting, and writing up the data have resulted in a flawed or even unpublishable result. Reviewing is also gruelling: it is something that we do unpaid, and it is no small job. We must read the work, consider the arguments, and pass judgment on the piece, preferably with constructive criticisms to help the author improve the work. No one really wants to be the cliché of 'Reviewer Two', a reviewer who is acerbic, destructive, and more focused on flexing their muscles than improving the work. Nonetheless, there are plenty of Reviewer Twos around, and most academics have had a bruising encounter with one of these at some stage. We might feel that the whole process is unwieldy and longwinded, and that it would be better to rely solely on the instincts of the academic editors.

While it is certainly tempting, it would be a mistake. Peer reviewing means that we are not reliant on the opinion of a single person to validate a paper, and that reduces the risk of a cosy Old Boys' club around academic publishing. This will only work, however, if people are prepared to participate in the process. The reason I have taken up a chunk of the editorial for this edition to talk about peer review is because all journals depend on reviewers. Please, if you are asked to review a paper, take the opportunity to pay forward the efforts of reviewers who have worked on your own papers and the papers we all benefit from reading. We all benefit from the work of others to get a paper into publication.

Turning to this issue of the *Journal of Conflict Archaeology*, we have a good range of material and hopefully a good range of different topics. We have three papers that all have a Slavic connection, albeit not all entirely obviously so. We have a paper set in Sudetenland, on the border between Czechia and Germany, another set in Slovenia in the Balkans, and a third set in Canada, but concerning civilian internees from the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Taking the latter first, Sarah Beaulieu's paper is based upon an internment/PoW camp from WWI which held men in Canada. These men

were people ostensibly seen as threats to the British Empire because they were intending to return to Europe to enlist in one of the armies of the Central Powers; in practice, they were immigrants from the Austro-Hungarian Empire; Ukrainians, Austrians, Czechs, Poles, and other mixed ethnicities from the multi-ethnic empire. The paper is from a larger project by Beaulieu and it focuses on the faunal remains from the camp to understand conditions faced by the inmates. This is a fascinating look at an aspect of the First World War that is rarely mentioned: the way that one part of the British Empire implemented imperial policies. It is also an indication of the sort of information Conflict Archaeology adds to the understanding we have from the historical framework.

The second paper, by Jan Hasil, Petr Hasil, Per Kočár, and René Kyselý, also looks at faunal remains as an indication of diet. However, rather than looking at a single camp, this paper looks at a whole complex of sites. The research area is an abandoned industrial landscape from WWII, and the inhabitants were workers, forced workers, guards, and PoWs. Rather than resulting from an amorphous population of incarcerated people, different parts of the landscape were used by populations with different status, allowing the interrogation of social structure alongside the dietary evidence. While Beaulieu's paper concentrates on the faunal remains and the artefacts of eating, this paper by Hasil, Hasil, Kočár, and Keselý looks at the wider artefactual material as well; this allows them to see the landscape as the product of a complex interaction between humans, plants, animals, and artefacts. It is really encouraging seeing the different ways in which evidence can be used to understand these conflict landscapes.

The final paper of the issue is by Uroš Košir, looking at the landscape of Rombon in Slovenia. The fighting between the Austro-Hungarian Empire and Italy is one of the less published aspects of WWI, at least in English. This paper does more than bring the area to the attention of an anglophone audience, which is welcome enough, but it relates to Hasil et al. in that the subject of study is a landscape rather than a 'site'. One of the important aspects of Conflict Archaeology as a sub-discipline is understanding the importance of landscape, understanding the reflexive relationship between human activity and the physical environment. Both papers, by Hasil et al. and by Košir, emphasise the importance of this relationship, but Košir goes further in exploring another important aspect of Conflict Archaeology: to understand that a conflict landscape exists in 4D rather than 3D, where time is a critical aspect in understanding that landscape. The most significant part of a battlefield will depend on the passage of time, and the core can quickly become peripheral. What Košir's paper does is to analyse the landscape across time, looking at all the aspects of human activity within that landscape. This is a great approach to Conflict Archaeology and very much to be applauded. All three papers hang together very well, and all are to be congratulated for their contribution to a very strong issue.

Finally, at the time of writing, in Britain there are closures of history and archaeology departments going on. The University of Chester has decided to close its excellent Archaeology and Heritage unit in the Department of History and Archaeology; this is a unit with 100% student satisfaction in the 2020 NSS survey. The universities of Aston and the South Bank in England have decided to close their history units, both of which are highly active in Black British History. There are similar stories across the world where archaeology and history teaching and research are being targeted for

closure. Whatever the reasons might be, whether it is cost-cutting or ideology, the impact is that research is stopped, and students are left without learning opportunities. At a time when there is outrage about statue removal suppressing history, it is very telling about the current atmosphere that the actual suppression of history through departmental closures gets far little media interest. Please, if you get any opportunity to oppose these closures, or similar closures elsewhere in the world, take the opportunity to do something practical for the wider disciplines. Society needs History and Archaeology to have diversity in their approaches and the freedom to explore the subaltern voices, those left out of the official histories. Chester, Aston, and the South Bank really need to rethink these cuts and ensure the continuation of these departments. Black History in particular needs to be supported and promoted; closing down leading researchers in Black History is not the way decent universities are supposed to behave. Rather than silencing Black History, it should be getting amplified by the universities best placed to make sure history is not being covered up. Please do what you can to support these departments; if these closures go ahead, it will become ever easier to close other departments. Apologies to anyone who finds this uncomfortable, but this is a vital issue and needs to have more prominence.