Archaeology
A Very Short Introduction

By Paul Bahn

Questions for Thought and Discussion

- Where do you stand on the question of returning the Elgin Marbles to Greece?
- How can rational people tackle the problem of bestselling books such as those by Von Däniken or Hancock, filled with fantasies about extra-terrestrials or lost super-civilisations?
- Is it right to disturb the dead -- and should they be put on show?
- Many archaeological sites are receiving too many visitors, who are loving the past to death. How can we strike a balance between the public’s right to see its heritage and the need to conserve sites for future generations?
- Has archaeology been harmed or enhanced by the antics of Indiana Jones, Lara Croft, or “Relic Hunter”?
- In a world of recession and cutbacks, how can a “luxury subject” like archaeology justify its funding?
- What is archaeology? Where does it start and end?
- Can “amateurs” still make a valuable contribution to archaeology, or should they now leave it to the “professionals”?
- Archaeology is no longer a treasure hunt, so what are archaeologists really seeking?
- Recent years have transformed archaeological research by bringing us computers, satellite photos, genetics, and chemical analyses -- what will be the main advances in the future?
- Discuss some practical applications of archaeology to current debates such as climate change, sea-level rises, earthquake activity, deforestation or ancient food production, the history and development of diseases.
- We are finding far too much archaeological material, and cannot store or conserve everything -- what is to be done?
- How can one differentiate a genuine artefact from a natural object?
- How does taphonomy -- i.e. the fact that some materials survive far better than others -- affect our deductions about the past?
- What is an archaeological site?
- How can museums strike a balance between instructing and entertaining the public?
- What are the good and the bad aspects of archaeology on the Internet?
- Is the antiquities trade the main cause of the looting and destruction of archaeological sites?
- Do you think that TV documentaries, or series like “Time Team”, have improved archaeology’s popularity in the eyes of the public?

Other books by this author
Cave Art: A Guide to the Decorated Ice Age Caves of Europe (Frances Lincoln, 2012)
Disgraceful Archaeology (The History Press Ltd, 2012)

Further Reading
Martin Carver Archaeological Investigation (Routledge 2009)
John Morton Coles Experimental Archaeology (The Blackburn Press 2010)