

Past master

Paul G. Bahn

Time Detectives: How Archeologists Use Technology to Recapture the Past.

By Brian Fagan. *Simon and Schuster*. 1995. Pp. 270. \$24, £17.99.

As one has come to expect from Brian Fagan, a leading popularizer of archaeology, this new collection of essays is lively and highly readable. It comprises a wide variety of topics, many of which he has recently covered in the magazine *Archaeology* in feature articles or in his regular column. But he gives us no indication why these particular subjects have been chosen for inclusion in the book, and one can only

Fagan has been ill-served by his publishers in one respect: the text is illustrated with only a few line drawings, while at the centre of the volume is a collection of 20 small, mostly uninspiring, black-and-white photographs, making it look like the kind of book published in the 1950s or 1960s. The text, by contrast, is vivid and often gripping, with only an occasional oddity, such as the description of Pueblo Bonito as "a Sistine Chapel of Native American architecture". Fagan's one weak point seems to be names: the sites of Dos Pilas and Olsen-Chubbuck are misspelled throughout; Yuri Knorosov is repeatedly called Knosorov; and fleece-expert Michael Ryder becomes Martin. But these are minor quibbles in what is otherwise an excellent book.

I was left with one final, personal source

IMAGE UNAVAILABLE FOR COPYRIGHT REASONS

Out for a drive? American bison 1811.

assume that the limited geographical spread in this potpourri represents those parts of the globe with which he is most familiar — the New World, the United Kingdom, Egypt and the Near East. He presents 13 studies in these regions, ranging from prehistoric hunter-gatherers to the gardens of eighteenth-century Annapolis in Maryland, and from American bison-kills to Hadrian's Wall across the north of England. Some of the material is easy to convey to the public, such as the exciting and spectacular finds from the Bronze Age shipwreck of Uluburun in the eastern Mediterranean or the written documents from the Roman fort of Vindolanda near Hadrian's Wall, but other topics are unprepossessing, and even Fagan, despite his talent for making difficult subjects palatable, is sometimes hard pressed to maintain the reader's interest with evidence for environmental change. As the subtitle indicates, the focus is on how archaeologists use new technology to obtain information, but this is not a consistent theme, as some essays, such as the bison-kill study, involve no such technology. The book's excellent title, however, is both apt and evocative.

of puzzlement: how Fagan, a scholar with a healthy degree of scepticism and who can be hypercritical of some evidence (notably in claims for early occupation of the New World), can swallow unquestioningly the conclusions of Tim White and others that the Anasazi of the American Southwest were cannibals. He seems to believe that there are scientific criteria for identifying anthropophagy in the archaeological record (I am unaware of any, other than finding human remains in human stomachs or faeces), that "White has documented cannibalism at Mancos" and that "without question, these Anasazi were eating human flesh". Needless to say, White has proved nothing of the kind, and other possible interpretations of the Anasazi bones have been swept aside or ignored (see P. Bullock, *Man* 29 (1), 190-191; 1994). This lapse of judgement, however, does not detract greatly from the quality and perspicacity of a book that can be warmly recommended to anyone seeking some idea of how modern archaeology works in a variety of settings. □

Paul Bahn is at 428 Anlaby Road, Hull HU3 6QP, UK.

Spring Books

Next week's issue contains *Nature's* Spring Books supplement. Reviewers include David Jones on nanotechnology, W. C. McGrew on the orangutans of Borneo, John L. Casti on reductionism, Stuart Sutherland on the history of multiple-personality disorder, George J. Annas on human experimentation in the United States, June Goodfield on Marie Curie, Roy Porter on landscape and memory, Paul R. Gross on science and anti-science, and Frank Gonzalez-Crussi on human physical disability and deformity in ancient Greece and Rome.

New Journals

This year, *Nature's* annual new journals review supplement will appear in the issue of 21 September. Publishers and learned societies are invited to submit journals for review, taking note of the following criteria:

- Journals that first appeared during or after June 1993 and issued at least four separate numbers by the end of April 1995 will be considered.
- Journals covering any aspect of science are eligible, although those dealing with clinical medicine and pure mathematics are excluded, as are publications of abstracts.
- Frequency of publication must be at least three times a year. The main language used must be English. Translation journals in English are, of course, eligible.
- Deadline for submission is the end of May.

When submitting journals for review, please send at least four different issues (the first, the most recent and any two others) of each title, together with full details of subscription rates. For further information please contact Peter Tallack, *Nature*, Macmillan Magazines Ltd, Porters South, Crinan Street, London N1 9SQ, UK. Tel: +44 (0)171 833 4000.

New in paperback

Conversations with Nell's Brain: The Neural Nature of Thought and Language

by William H. Calvin and George A. Ojemann. Addison-Wesley, \$12. A series of popular stories about the combined efforts of a surgeon and a neuroscientist to remove a portion of the temporal lobe of an epileptic patient's brain.

The Gnat Is Older Than Man: Global Environment and Human Agenda

by Christopher D. Stone. Princeton University Press, \$15.95, £12.95. An overview of the possible risks surrounding various environmental problems and what can be done about them.

The History of the Countryside by Oliver Rackham. Weidenfeld and Nicolson, £12.99. A classic history of Britain's landscape, flora and fauna.

Mary Evans