

Preface

In this year, 1992, the publication of volume 40 of the 'Berichten van de Rijksdienst voor het Oudheidkundig Bodemonderzoek' coincides with the 45th anniversary of the State Service.

This is not a volume with contributions especially commissioned for the occasion: as usual, it contains an overview of recent work in Dutch archaeology. That is appropriate for the occasion since, after all, a 45th anniversary is not a true landmark.

However, the coincidence is there, and such round numbers invite reflection, not about the past but especially about the future. In another five years, the ROB will celebrate its 50th anniversary. For people, that is an age at which it is customary to start worrying about getting old; for institutes it is an opportunity to boast about what has been achieved. So we can safely postpone reflections on the past until the ROB reaches that landmark and turn to the future: where do we stand and where do we want to be five years from now?

This year will probably be of special importance for the ROB, for Dutch archaeology in general, and even for archaeology at the European level. In January, on Malta, many countries including the Netherlands signed the revised Convention for the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage, prepared by the Council of Europe. Ratification of this convention, and its subsequent implementation in national law, will greatly improve the basis for archaeological heritage management and of archaeological research, which is a vital part of that task. The convention should be implemented as soon as possible, because the protection and research of monuments and sites can no longer do without its provisions in the face of the relentless pressure on available space and the ever-increasing use of our soil. At the moment, there is every reason to believe that implementation can be achieved in the Netherlands, as has already been done in several other countries.

International co-operation is another relevant topic.

This year will see the birth of the European Association of Archaeologists, to provide a truly European network for all aspects of archaeological work and to promote archaeological interests at a European level. The ROB will, through its own archaeologists, participate in that network as well as in the increasing number of bi- and multilateral projects which arise from various initiatives. It is gratifying to see that this collaboration involves both universities and institutes for archaeological heritage management. In the Netherlands, this has long been established practice, as is witnessed by the contents of this and previous volumes of the 'Berichten'. We mean to keep it that way.

There are several other developments which will influence the position and character of the ROB in the coming years. One is the need to invest more of the institute's resources in the preventive part of heritage management: the recording and protecting of sites. If those resources are not increased, this may lead to, at least a temporary, reduction of the curative – or, rather, the terminal – part of archaeological heritage management, which are the rescue excavations and associated research. This is a choice that has to be made, because we need to use every single opportunity offered by existing as well as new laws or regulations and technological and methodological advances. It is, however, at the same time a choice which should not have to be made, because it may lead to a serious setback in the long-term research projects which have been set up in various regions where a high rate of destruction of the landscape coincides with a high archaeological potential.

Fortunately, the prospects for an increase of resources for archaeology are not bleak. In addition to the opportunities already mentioned, the Minister of Culture has given the ROB the means to start a comprehensive backlog-programme which will enable the analysis and publication of many excavations that have remained in stor-

age far too long. Not all of these will be published in the 'Berichten' because some reports will undoubtedly turn into monographs. That means we will probably not be able to make up for the first years of the institute's existence (when the series had not yet started) and celebrate our 50th anniversary with the 50th volume. But in any case many results of the considerable investments from the last decades will finally become available, and that is much more important!

W.J.H. Willems
Director

We look forward to the next five years with some fears on the one hand but with high hopes and confidence on the other, and with the certainty that a considerable increase in the published results of our work is within reach. For archaeologists, that is a deeply gratifying prospect.