

Contents

ARCHAEOLOGICAL HERITAGE MANAGEMENT IN THE NETHERLANDS

Fifty Years State Service for Archaeological
Investigations

W.J.H. Willems, H. Kars & D.P. Hallewas (eds.)



Van Gorcum
1997

ROB

Rijksdienst voor het
Oudheidkundig Bodemonderzoek, Amersfoort

Preface

Starting in the 1980s and especially during the last decade, the contexts of Dutch archaeological practice have changed considerably. The growing awareness of the rapid erosion of the archaeological record, increased public concern and support for heritage management, involvement at all levels of government, and the lively debate about the necessary restructuring of Dutch archaeology that arose after signing the Convention of Valletta in 1992, have already led to important changes. New legislation, the introduction of contract archaeology in excavations, the growing recognition of the role of archaeological resource management – and of cultural resource management in general – as an important factor in spatial planning and, last but not least, the changed mission and organisation of the ROB (*Rijksdienst voor het Oudheidkundig Bodemonderzoek* – the Dutch State Service for Archaeological Investigations) will lead to a radical transformation in the immediate future.

At the moment, Dutch archaeology is in a state of transition, and so is the ROB which celebrates its 50th anniversary this year. The institute was founded in 1947 as an excavation service and to maintain a national register, a database of archaeological finds and monuments. It is now changing into a national centre for the management and research of the archaeological heritage. The contributions in this anniversary publication are intended to give an overview of the development and present concerns of archaeological heritage management in the Netherlands in an international context.

Although it covers a wide range of subjects, this publication does not aim to give a complete coverage of all relevant aspects. Some obvious topics are lacking. For example, a translation of the revised Dutch Monuments Act of 1988 has been included but there is no separate chapter on legislation because a new revision will be necessary – which is currently being considered. Aspects of this are discussed in the first and third chapter, but the Minister of State for Cultural Affairs, A. Nuis, has just sent a letter to parliament with an outline for the implementation of 'Malta', as the Convention of Valletta is commonly referred to, in Dutch law. By the time this book will appear in print, discussion of his letter in parliament will hopefully have provided the guidelines for a revision.

Nevertheless, we hope that our anniversary publication, which is the first of its kind in the Netherlands, can also be of use as a handbook for students and colleagues and will provide archaeologists and heritage managers abroad with a clearer picture of Dutch archaeological heritage management. For this reason, it has been published in collaboration with Van Gorcum Publishers and not as an issue of our *Berichten van de Rijksdienst voor het Oudheidkundig Bodemonderzoek*. Most but not all contributions have been written especially for this volume by archaeologists within and outside the ROB and in many cases they are directly inspired by the institute's current policies, concerns and priorities. Obviously, many of these are currently being revised and reformulated as a result of the ROB's changing position.

Although the contents have not actually been subdivided, the editors have

arranged the book into several clusters. The first three chapters are general summaries. The introductory article is concerned with the history, development, current priorities and future aspects of archaeological heritage management in the Netherlands. It is followed by a similar contribution from the viewpoint of archaeology underwater and by an analysis of the impact of the Convention of Valletta.

These introductions are followed by two major contributions on predictive modelling and on dealing with the difficult subject of significance, two subjects which are currently the focal point of archaeological interest, and by three chapters on the role of conservation science, aerial photography and urban archaeology.

The next three articles report on specific projects: the *terpen* (the dwelling mounds along the coast), the protection programme on the megalithic monuments in the northern part of the country, and a joint heritage management programme with our German neighbour-institute, the *Rheinisches Amt für Bodendenkmalpflege* in Bonn. All of these have international aspects, and the last project, especially, has been specifically designed to create a basis for fruitful cross-frontier collaboration in the future. In an age with increasing impact of European policies and regulations at the national level, not only the exchange of information but practical cooperation in the management of archaeological resources will be vitally important.

These are followed by two chapters devoted to the subject of finds and how to deal with them, the management of collections that result from fieldwork – a traditional but still highly relevant concern.

Finally there is a contribution on documentation, with a discussion of ARCHIS, the archaeological database of the Netherlands that is the essential link in the cyclical process of managing the archaeological archives in our soil, and the book is concluded by a brief résumé of excavations by the ROB.

The title of the ROB's policy statement for 1997–2000 published earlier this year, *Geef de toekomst een verleden*, can be translated as 'A future for our past'. Providing this future is the central task of heritage management and the contents of this book are intended to show how this is being done. As directors of the ROB, we would like to thank the contributors, many of whom somehow found time to write despite their very busy daily schedules, and to the editors who had a double task. We are also grateful to Mrs. A. Steendijk and Mrs. M. Alkemade, whose assistance was indispensable in the final editing of the text and to Mr. G.H. Scheepstra, responsible for the illustrations.

Willem J. H. Willems (scientific director) and Henriëtte C.M van der Linden
(managing director)

Amersfoort, July 1997