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PAUL EVERILL & KAREN BURNELL (ed.). 2022. *Archaeology, heritage, and wellbeing. Authentic, powerful and therapeutic engagement with the past*. Abingdon: Routledge; 978-1-032-02165-2 hardback £120, eBook.

Good health and wellbeing is Goal 3 in the UN list of 17 Sustainable Development Goals which they hope member states will achieve by 2030 (see *Antiquity* 96: 3–10), and there is wide recognition and an expanding base of empirical evidence that archaeology and heritage can meaningfully contribute to this and other goals (Darvill *et al.* 2019). At the core is using archaeological sites, landscapes, and museum collections in new and imaginative ways to help a variety of communities improve their wellbeing. This wide-ranging volume of essays, involving 28 contributors, provides a welcome addition to the fast-growing literature on the subject, although readers should be aware that it is an eclectic mix of discussions and case studies. After an introduction charting the editors' journey together thinking about wellbeing and the structure of the book, there are fifteen chapters arranged in five equal-sized thematic parts. The assignment of chapters to sections seems rather arbitrary at times and the volume might have been better if it was less compartmentalized.

One big question raised by the title is what is meant by 'wellbeing'. The term, and the concepts behind it, are incisively explored in the first chapter where Baxter and Burnell set the stage by recognising that wellbeing is a widely applied term capturing many aspects of mental and physical health across a range of disciplines. In Britain, archaeology has tended to take a similarly broad perspective, with much recent work directed towards the field of social prescribing, and foregrounding mental health wellbeing. The importance of measuring and evaluating levels of wellbeing, and changes as a result of interventions and therapies, using quantitative and qualitative approaches is fully explored and properly emphasised by Baxter and Burnell. However, later chapters in the book espouse rather different understandings of wellbeing, some of which extent into fields such as inequality and decolonialisation, while very few of the case studies include systematic evaluations of the wellbeing.

Completing Part I are two further chapters that try to define the key concepts in the title. First, Everill unfolds a highly personalized account of his own journey in archaeology, and the emotional responses that doing archaeology can prompt. Burnell and Woodhouse then introduce heritage in a very different way, focusing on recorded heritage interventions that have sought to improve mental health and wellbeing; it is a list that is growing monthly although their conclusions are mainly being enriched rather than challenged by new results.

Part II deals with museums, healing and wellbeing, the chapter by Thomson and Chatterjee doing exactly what one would expect based on the results of a series of initiatives led by University College London (UCL). Various participant-focused evaluation techniques were used, and they are

usefully compared and contrasted. Cooke examines the case of Australian military veterans who have used the creation of exhibitions to work through and overcome their traumatic memories. Benjamin looks in broad terms at how heritage sites, green spaces, and a focus on the natural world can improve wellbeing amongst BAME (Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic) communities, focusing on the achievements of the International Slavery Museum on the historic waterfront in Liverpool.

Part III comprises chapters that connect with the land. Smith and colleagues discuss how Ngaduri communities in South Australia retaking their tradition lands has contributed to a sense of wellbeing and how community archaeology has contributed to the process. Rather different is the chapter by Dobat and colleagues who discuss how a kind of ‘self-therapy’ can be achieved through recreational metal detecting to find archaeological items with case studies in Britain and Denmark. Another military example is discussed by Everill and colleagues where veterans work alongside students and specialists on a long-running research project investigating a fortified settlement at Nokalakevi in Georgia. Bonding and reconnecting with friends and colleagues is identified as a powerful wellbeing outcome.

Part IV is the most focused section of the book looking at archaeology as a therapeutic tool amongst military veterans. Ulke summarizes two, one an excavation in Cyprus and the other in Belgium. Participants at both were monitored, and the results reveal an uplift in wellbeing. Bennet draws on results from an evaluation of two military veteran-focused projects – Breaking Ground Heritage and Operation Nightingale – to support the recognition of short-term enhancements in mental health and wellbeing. Waters-Barham and Humphreys describe work on the American Veterans Archaeological Recovery project which helps veterans as they transition to civilian life; it takes an holistic view of wellness focusing on a strengths-based approach that works through developing social relationships and coping skills.

Part V is the most diverse section with its broad theme of engaging with wellbeing. Cobb and Croucher take a polemical look at wellbeing in current archaeological teaching and learning in higher education, emphasizing a need to develop more inclusive approaches to curriculum content, delivery, and environment. Monkton takes a very different direction in thinking through ways to provide strategic direction to heritage and well-being programmes within public bodies in order to maximize impact. Finally, different again, Finneran and Welch unfold a study that involved documenting urban spaces around participant communities in Whitechapel, London, capturing a sort of psychogeography through emotional responses to situational environments.

Looking across the book as a whole archaeology and heritage are clearly contributing much to the enhancement of wellbeing for many communities, albeit in many different ways and through a variety of approaches. Talking to each other within our own community of practice is important, but the next stage is to communicate these positive results to politicians, policy makers, and those setting the agenda for the next upcoming reorganization of healthcare provision.

## **References**

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