

A survey of the Association for Environmental Archaeology and its membership: 1980-86

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Summary

Some aspects of the history and changing size and distribution of membership of the Association for Environmental Archaeology are presented and discussed.

Most of you will know me by name if not by sight. I am the person who pesters you each year to 'pay-up or be struck-off the membership list'. If you pay by standing order, you may have shared some of the annual headaches I get trying to rectify - at the expense of the AEA and my own time - the errors of the banks. If you pay by cash or postal order or cheque, you may occasionally find your name on a roll of members who have not paid up which appears in the January issue of the Newsletter. (I do this, rather than writing to you individually as it saves time and postage, and I hope it is not embarrassing if your name does appear).

I took over the job of Membership Secretary in 1984, and in the same year, Vanessa Straker took on the job of Treasurer. Bob Wilson became General Secretary in 1984, and this job has since passed on to Mark Robinson. Besides the major task of editing and publishing Circaea, the final job devolving to a member of the AEA committee is that of Publications Officer - this is presently being done by Rob Scaife. Prior to 1984, all these jobs, except the production of Circaea, were done solely by Nick Balaam, who was also instrumental in setting up the AEA back in 1979, along with Professor Geoffrey Dimbleby, Don Brothwell and Simon Hillson. (In fact, if my memory serves me correctly, some of the first discussions at which the idea of the AEA was made public took place at the CBA Urban Environmental Archaeology conference in York). Thus, we all owe a tremendous debt to Nick who built-up the organisation to the healthy state in which I found it (see Table 5). Even now he has not completely stepped aside from AEA duties, as he represents us on the Science Panel of the CBA. This paper, therefore, is dedicated to him.

Prior to 1983, the membership records were handled manually, but since then they have been computerised, so in starting this survey my first task was to try to fill in the 1979-82 'gap' on the computer. Luckily the full membership list which appeared in Newsletter 5 (November 1980) helped, but the records previous to this are limited, so I have not included 1979 in the survey.

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When I started work on this paper, I was simply interested to see for myself how our membership has grown. One of my more pleasant tasks has been to send out details to people wishing to join, and it seems that in each year there has been a fairly large enrolment of new members. Almost immediately, however, a number of other questions posed themselves, and the list of topics to consider grew to form those listed below, of which (1) - (5) cover the seven-year period, and (6) covers 1986 only. Two additional topics I could not fully answer, because the records are not complete enough, relate to the proportion of students, and the division of interests. (To some extent the latter can be gleaned from the Research Interests listings in Newsletter 13 and 14.)

- 1) Number of members in each year.
- 2) Numbers of resignations, new enrolments and reinstatements in each year.
- 3) Number of overseas members in each year.
- 4) Number of institutional members in each year.
- 5) Relationship of membership numbers to rises in subscription.
- 6) Distribution of members.

Numbers (1) - (5) are covered in Table 5 which shows the total membership in each year, and how this is made up in terms of new members and reinstated members. It also summarises the number of resignations in each year. The table gives numbers of overseas and institutional members, but only indicates their net increase or decrease, since these figures are not broken down for resignations, reinstatements or new enrolments. The table shows that after an initial small fall in numbers (most of which was due to resignations from overseas members) the membership has steadily increased, with 1983 the boom year, but increases in 1985 and 1986 being in the order of 30 members. The proportion of overseas members has also grown and they now form about 14% of the total.

Table 5. Summary of AEA membership 1980-1986

	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
New	-	0	1	103	19	46	49
Resignation	-	5	0	2	4	19	23
Reinstatement	-	0	0	1	4	5	9

Institutional	0	0	0	1	4	5	9
Overseas	9	6	6	22	30	39	49
Honorary	2	2	2	2	2	2	2

Total	141	136	137	238	254	283	316

It is interesting, therefore, to note that subscription increases have not, apparently, had any adverse effect upon membership numbers. The first increase, from £2.00 to £4.00 actually occurred in 1983, the year of the greatest increase in membership, and the second increase, in 1986, does not seem to have affected the trend since then. This is illustrated by the graph (Fig. 3), which shows the increase in membership year by year, and gives pointers for the years in which the subscription was increased. The increases in subscriptions, of course, are equated with improvements in the service of the AEA, 1983 seeing the birth of Circaea and 1986 the rebirth of the Newsletter which had been suspended when Circaea first appeared. Part of the reason for the 1983 'boom' must be the appearance of Circaea. Many people who had not previously come across the AEA may have heard of the Association by reading Circaea, and others, who had heard of us but not joined, may have been attracted by the idea of receiving the journal.

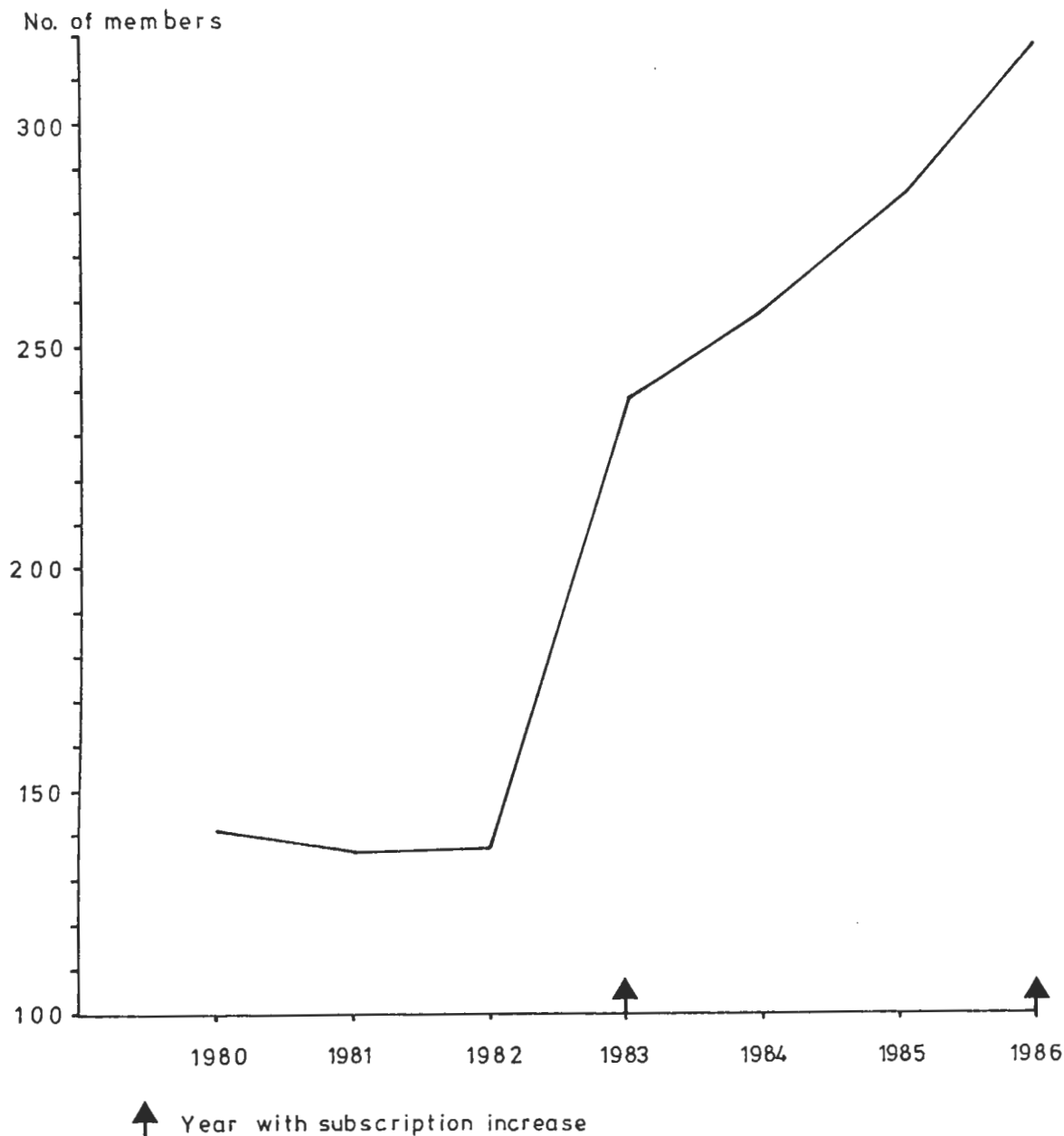


Figure 3. Graph showing AEA membership from 1980-86.

Returning to the table, the only note upon which any alarm may be sounded is the number of resignations in each year. These rose from two in 1983 to 23 in 1986, and although membership also increased, the proportion of resignations in each year has grown (from 0.8% in 1983 to 7.3% in 1986). One explanation may be that we pick up a flush of student members around conference time, and these stay in the AEA for only a year or two. On average, however, people tend to stay members for three years or longer, and over a third of our present membership comprises people who joined in 1981. At the moment new recruitments are outstripping losses, but this is no reason for complacency, and we should ask why the trend towards an increased percentage of resignations is occurring. One explanation may be that most of the losses are students who have graduated and left archaeology (and because the number of students enrolling has grown, so the number of student losses has also increased). The reinstatement figures show that most people do not change their minds after leaving the AEA. Most reinstatements occurred after a one year gap which may indicate simple absent-mindedness, but some were after three- or four-year gaps.

As may be expected of an organisation formed in and operating from Britain, the majority of members are British (86.4% in 1986). Most of these are from England, with only ten (3.2%) in Wales, nine (2.8%) in Northern Ireland and thirteen (4.1%) in Scotland. London is the clear winner in terms of concentrations, with 56 people in Greater London and six more close-by (total 19.6%). Other main concentrations are in Sheffield (19, 6.0%). Cambridge (17, 5.4%) and Bristol (11, 3.5%). Then come Leicester at ten (3.2%), York and Southampton at nine (2.8%) each and Belfast at eight (2.5%). Other locations have six or less; locations with two or more members are listed in Table 6 and their distribution throughout the British Isles is shown in Fig. 4. Table 6 also lists overseas locations with AEA members and quantifies each location. Most of these members are from Europe (38 out of 49) with 11 from The Netherlands representing the largest single overseas contingent.

What lessons, if any, are to be learnt from these figures? Firstly, that the AEA is still a growing organisation, and must now represent a potentially powerful lobby for environmental archaeology, in Britain at least. This latter fact is underlined by the recent input by the AEA into comments concerning the Hart Report (see Newsletter 12) and the House of Commons Environment Committee (Newsletter 13). Perhaps the time has now come to question whether the AEA should take a more active role in lobbying the issues surrounding environmental archaeology and landscape/nature conservation.

A second point is that we should not become complacent about our state or status. The increase in resignations has been pointed out, and we should seek to try to stem this leak. One way of doing this, and improving our service to members, is if people write to members of the committee with suggestions, complaints, etc. Open letters to the Newsletter would also be welcome as would be papers and suggestions for Circaea.

Thirdly, as our overseas membership increases, we should consider ways of improving our service to them. One outstanding issue is the cost, to the member, of sending the annual subscription in sterling. A possibly cheaper alternative would be to send the currency equivalent of £6.00 (allowing an additional sum for exchange rate charges in Britain). If this is cheaper than sending money orders or cheques made out for £6.00 sterling, then please feel free to use this method of payment (see Newsletter 16 for full details of this scheme). Another possible improvement of the AEA's service to overseas members would be if we held meetings overseas more regularly than in the past (to date there has been one meeting, held in the Netherlands). This, however, is very much in the

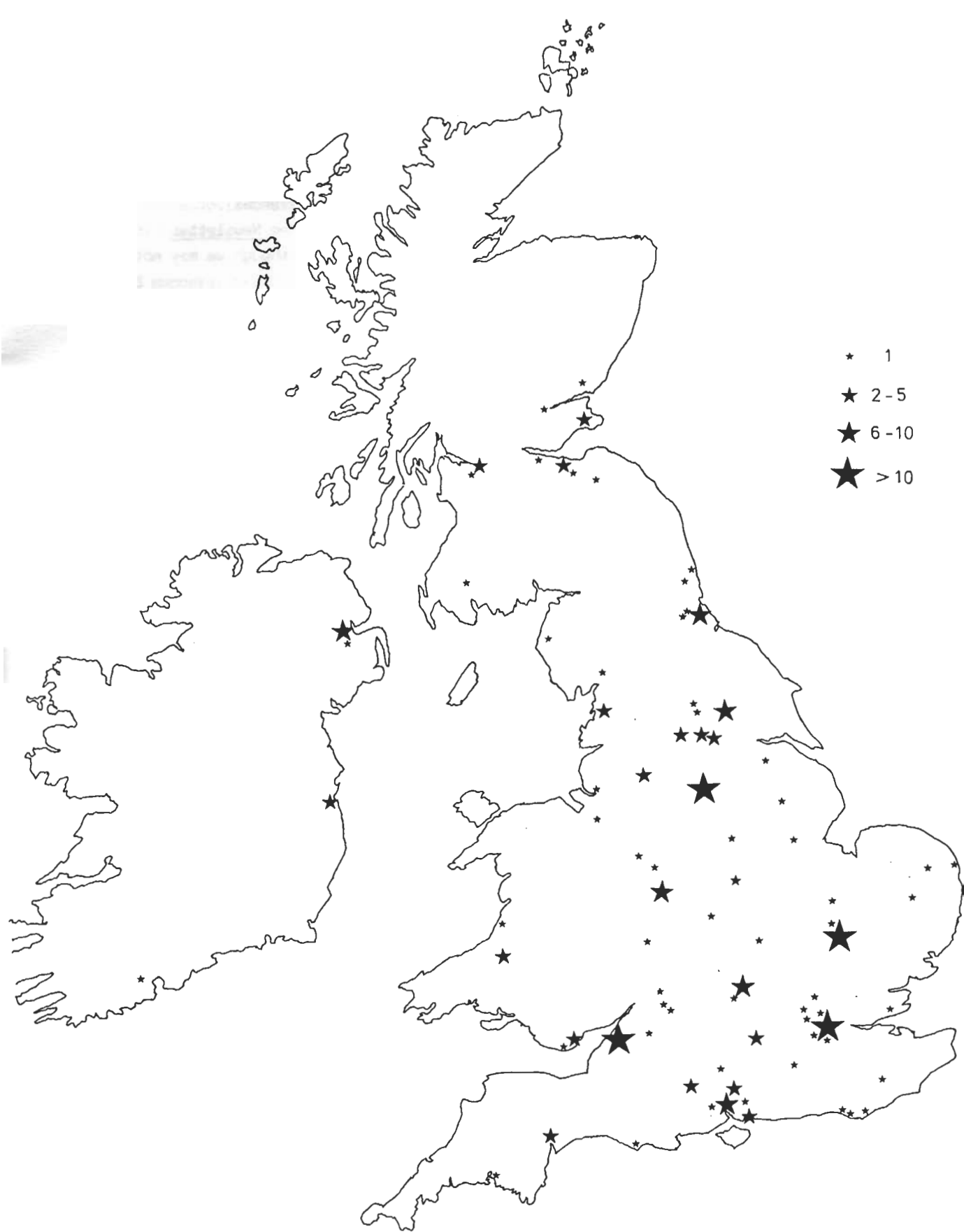


Figure 4. Distribution of AEA members throughout the British Isles (at time of writing). The number of members at each location is indicated by the size of the symbol.

hands of our overseas members to volunteer a venue! (It is to be hoped that the 1988 conference will be held in Denmark; we also have an offer of a meeting in W. Germany.) Also we should consider seeking contributions to Circaea from overseas members, and, perhaps, printing abstracts to articles in other languages, say French and German. Should this certainly be done in the case of the Symposium proceedings?

A recent suggestion for an improvement to our service is for a fund to be set up to help unemployed, low-waged and student members attend meetings and conferences organised by the AEA. Applications to this fund should be made to the Treasurer (see Newsletter 16 for details). This facility will also be available to overseas members, though we may not necessarily be able to contribute 100% of their expenses.

Finally a few words on the organisation of the AEA. The present committee is made up as follows: Mike Allen, Annie Grant, James Greig (elected 1986), Kevin Edwards, Rob Scaife and Mark Robinson - all elected members, and Vanessa Straker (Treasurer), Harry Kenward (Editor, Circaea) and Bruce Levitan (Membership Secretary) - co-opted members. The other editors of Circaea are Allan Hall and Terry O'Connor. The editors of the Newsletter are Vanessa Straker and the present author. I am also AEA representative on the CBA Board, whilst Nick Balaam is the AEA representative on the CBA Science Panel. Any member may nominate another member for a position on the committee. The name and address of the nominee (who must be agreeable to being nominated) together with the names and addresses of the nominator and a seconder should be sent to the Secretary before the AGM (which is held during the annual conference), when voting takes place. Committee members serve for three years on a yearly overlap basis. The three co-opted members are semi-permanent (i.e. until they get fed-up with the job!). Other posts are decided by the committee.

The AEA has three types of membership: ordinary membership which is open to anyone with an active interest in environmental archaeology at a subscription of £6.00 per year; institutional membership which costs £9.00 a year; and Honorary Life Membership which is free and is conferred upon those who are considered to have contributed greatly to the practice and reputation of environmental archaeology. Such status is given by vote at AGMs and at present there are two Honorary Members: Professors Geoffrey Dimbleby and Fred Shotton. The AEA committee would welcome suggestions for any other people who deserve Honorary Membership, and will refer such suggestions to the membership at the following AGM.

Table 6. Summary of location of AEA members

Great Britain: (single-member locations not listed, see Fig. 4)

2 members: Eastbourne, Edinburgh, Exeter, St Albans, Glasgow, Salisbury, Wakefield, Winchester.

3 members: Lampeter, Lancaster, Leeds, Manchester.

4-10 members: Reading (4), Bradford (5), Cardiff (5), Oxford (6), Belfast (8), Southampton (9), York (9), Leicester (10),

over 10 members: Bristol (11), Cambridge (17), Sheffield (19), Greater London (56).
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Continental Europe:

Single member countries: Austria (Vienna), Hungary (Budapest), Italy (Rome), Switzerland (Basel).

Two members: France (Gugnon, Besancon Cedex)

Three members: Denmark (Copenhagen [2], Århus), Sweden (Göteborg, Umeå, Uppsala)

Four members: Eire (Dublin [3], Cork), Norway (Asker, Bergen, Oslo, Stavanger)

Six members: West Germany (Frankfurt, Göttingen [3], Hamburg, Munich)

Eleven members: The Netherlands (Amersfoort [3], Amsterdam [6], Hazerwoude, Utrecht)
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Other Countries

Single members: Canada (Ottawa), Israel (Jerusalem), Jordan (Amman)

Two members: South Africa: (Pretoria)

Three members: U.S.A. (Boston [2], Florida [1])

Four members: Australia (Adelaide, Canberra [2], Victoria)
