

Antiquity

VOL. XXXV No. 140

DECEMBER 1961

PLATES XXXIII–IV

Editorial

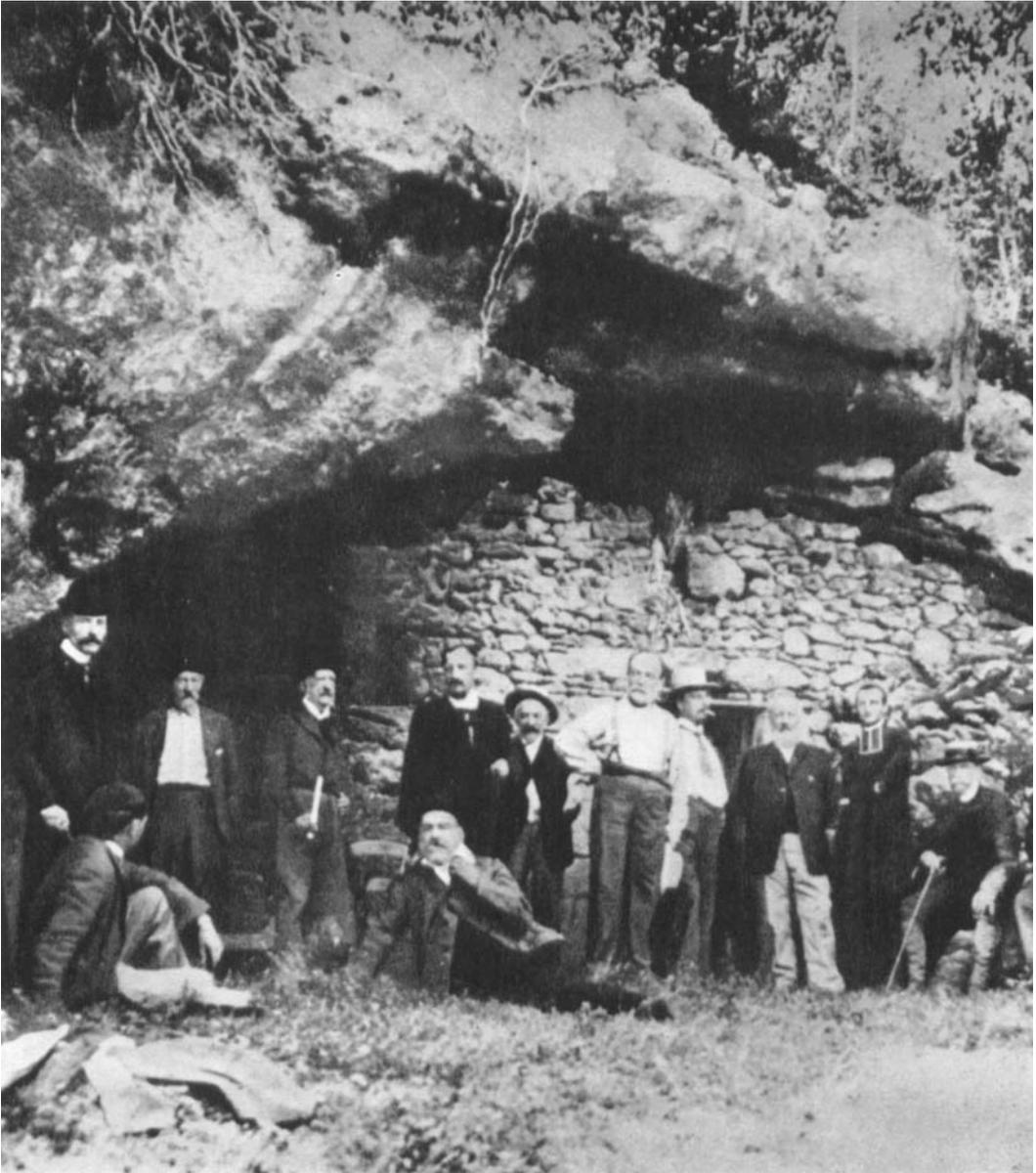
THE death of the Abbé Henri Breuil on 14 August removes from the stage of world prehistoric scholarship one of the greatest scholars that ever graced its fascinating but often treacherous boards. Very few people—it is difficult to think of any—have contributed more than the Abbé to the development of the study of antiquity in the last hundred and fifty years since Thomsen opened the Copenhagen collections, and it could be said that prehistoric archaeology had begun as a humanity scientifically pursued. In any chronicle of the history of archaeology the name of Henri Breuil will justly have a most honoured place. As one of his very first English pupils has recently written in *Nature* Breuil was 'one of the world's few really great prehistorians, and it is the world, as well as France, that has suffered a loss by his death'. Miles Burkitt, who wrote these words, had known Breuil since he first met him in Cambridge in 1912; the Abbé was then thirty-six, and, says Burkitt, 'then, as always, of an electric character'.

In the very month of Breuil's death French archaeology celebrated the centenary of Lartet's publication of the *grottes* of Massat, Seigné and Aurignac. To many of our generation it has seemed that Henri Breuil and the beginning of Palaeolithic archaeology belong together: but it was thirty-six years after Aurignac when, as a young man of twenty, he met Edouard Piette, and it was the sight of Piette's collection of carved and engraved objects from the Dordogne and the Pyrenees that determined his vocation to prehistory. Five years later the Congress of *L'Association Française pour L'Avancement des Sciences*, meeting at Montauban, heard of the discovery of Font-de-Gaume and Combarelles in 1901 and of the evidence which Daleau had produced at Pair-non-Pair and Rivière at La Mouthe. Despite violent criticisms of the authenticity and antiquity of these paintings and engravings, an excursion made to Les Eyzies persuaded most scholars that there was indeed such a thing as Palaeolithic art. We print here a photograph of the scholars grouped round the entrance to La Mouthe, a photograph taken in August 1902, and published half a century later in the Abbé's *Four Hundred Centuries of Cave Art*; it shows the Abbé as a young man of twenty-five standing between Chauvet and Rivière (PLATE XXXIII).

This was the occasion that made Cartailhac write his *Mea Culpa d'un Sceptique*, and in October of the same year Cartailhac took the young Breuil to see Altamira. 'Ce qui nous vîmes', wrote Breuil, 'nous plongeait dans une inexprimable stupeur'. It was this amazement and appreciation that saw the beginning of our real knowledge and appreciation of man's oldest art. No one did more than Henri Breuil in the half century that separated the meeting at Montauban and the discovery of Lascaux in 1940 to authenticate and document Palaeolithic art.

Controversy of course there always was. Montauban and the visit to Altamira were the end of the controversy which started in 1880 when Marcelino de Sautuola's small daughter

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Historical photograph of the excursion of the Association Française pour l'Avancement des Sciences to the cave of La Mouthe, in August, 1902. The outcome of this excursion was definitive recognition of Quaternary cave art. The Abbé Breuil (25 years old) is second from the right. Seventh from the right (standing) is Adrien de Mortillet, and next to him (holding a candle) Emile Carthailhac (see p. 257).

[Photo: Archives H. Breuil, from *Four Hundred Centuries of Cave Art*.]

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penetrated into the low-roofed Altamira, saw the polychromes above her head and called out to her father 'Toros, Toros' (a delightful story which appears in all the books but which, the Abbé Breuil told us, is untrue and part of the folklore of archaeology). The Abbé's life ended in controversies. Miles Burkitt in the obituary in *Nature* which we have already quoted said, 'He had only one really useful eye but with it he saw far more clearly than did other more normally equipped persons, and his intuitions were brilliant', but later goes on to say, 'As he got older and perhaps less sure of touch in his intuitions—his opinions about Rouffignac and the "white lady" of south-west Africa were decidedly open to question—he did not become less pontifical'.



The Rouffignac controversy, now more than ever alive, was commented on in the obituary notices in two reputable English daily newspapers. *The Times* of London wrote (24 August, 1961): 'The controversy which arose in 1956 over the paintings in the cave of Rouffignac was rather a sad anticlimax to his great achievements in this field: his vehemently held opinion that the paintings were entirely genuine was seriously questioned by many of his colleagues'. And that distinguished French correspondent of what we must now learn to call *The Guardian* was even more outspoken: 'In later life', wrote Darsie Gillie (*The Guardian*, 22 August, 1961), 'his fellow prehistorians showed less and less confidence in his opinions. His assignment of the "White Lady" in the Brandberg, south-west Africa, to the second millennium B.C. on the basis of a comparison with Egyptian and Cretan antiquities (a field in which he was not competent) aroused sharp dissent. The seventeenth century A.D. has been proposed with perhaps greater probability. He also failed to carry conviction with many competent prehistorians when he declared authentic all the paintings in the Rouffignac caves. When the *Académie des Inscriptions* of which he was a member declined to discuss a communication he made on the subject . . . he swept out in a memorable whirlwind of soutane. He did not take his seat again for a long time'.

We, in this journal, and elsewhere, have tried for the last few years to suggest that all is not well with Rouffignac and perhaps some other newly discovered caves in the Midi. While the Abbé was alive many of our colleagues kept their views on Rouffignac to themselves: now, we understand, we may hear many things and many points of view. We would think that the time has come for an independent commission on Rouffignac *et al.*, and perhaps also for the French Government to take powers to own all the painted and engraved caves in France, so that there shall be no incentive for private enterprise in these matters—and we use these words 'private enterprise' advisedly. But of course, whereas it is easy to schedule dolmens and hill-forts, it is much more difficult to deal with caves. Yet the painted and engraved caves of France and Spain are an international heritage.

Perhaps the most surprising comment on Breuil's death was in *The Sunday Telegraph* for 27 August, in a paragraph entitled 'Painting the Lily' in the 'London Week by Week' feature. This is what it said:—

Many cave-paintings in France owe their fame and authentication entirely to the Abbé Breuil, whose death was announced last week. Some of the most charming at Les Eyzies in the Dordogne are, however, still inaccessible. When I last visited them, I was told they were 'closed for re-painting'.

Although we have been assured by the Editor of *The Sunday Telegraph* that this is a correct piece of reporting, we can find no one else who has seen such a notice. If it really existed it no doubt referred to something like the *Chateau Fort* at Reignac, an interesting attempt to provide a museum of life in Palaeolithic times in the Dordogne, with walls

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deliberately painted—and very well painted—in Palaeolithic style by a modern artist, and with life-size scenes of men and animals. It certainly is *not* true that any of the Les Eyzies caves are ‘still inaccessible’. But of course with even such a trivial example of genuine misapprehension, may a *canard* begin.

It is always difficult to nail a lie, to rub out a *canard*, finally to dismiss unreasonable belief. There is no smoke without fire, we say; and it is perhaps as one of the pleasures of unreason that the desire to be convinced by the fictitious will persist, long after it has been proved that the smoke was merely Scotch mist and that there never was a fire. Such mist is far from being exclusively Scotch: it is an international agent of wish-fulfilment, the acrid tang of which can be savoured only by those prepared to shut their eyes and be led by the nose of faith. Otherwise, how are we to explain the strange story of the alleged Palaeolithic paintings at Bacon’s Hole, near the Mumbles in the Gower Peninsula? The facts about this discovery are not in dispute and we are grateful to the present Lord Swansea for permission to quote from his father’s notebook and press-cuttings.

In *The Times* for 14 October, 1912, under the heading ‘The Most Ancient Painting in Britain: A discovery in Wales’, we read, ‘The first example in Great Britain of prehistoric cave painting of the kind already familiar to palaeontologists from the caves of the Dordogne, the south of France, the Pyrenees and the peninsula of Spain has recently been discovered on the walls of Bacon’s Hole, near the Mumbles, by Professor Breuil and Professor Sollas’. We read how, after a survey of all the caves of Gower, Breuil and Sollas went into Bacon’s Hole. ‘On entering this, one of the investigators cried, “Les voilà” and the other “There they are”’. The article goes on to describe them—a series of red bands—and to say ‘a deposit of stalagmite has formed over them and sealed them up, so that none of the paint can be removed by rubbing. . . . Similar bands have been described from the walls of Font de Gaume in the Dordogne. Thus Upper Palaeolithic paintings have been found, and now that they are known to occur in our islands further discoveries may be expected’.

The painted bands in Bacon’s Hole were made in 1894 by a man called Johnny Bale from Oystermouth, an interesting character who made a fine Gower rabbit soup. An old Norwegian barque, the *Althea*, outward bound from Swansea with a cargo of anthracite coal was driven ashore. The salvage firm who bought the wreck of the *Althea* used Bacon’s Hole to store their material. Lord Swansea, in his notebook for 17 October, 1912, says ‘Mr Hodgens . . . asserted before us that he himself had seen the marks made by a workman with a ship’s paint brush about 17 years ago. His firm bought the wreck of the barque *Althea* close by the cave. They used the cave to store salvage and the men often sheltered there from the wet. There was ship’s paint there and one man whose name he gave picked up a paint brush on the shore and took it with him, and when larking in the cave, splashed paint at his mates and daubed the wall’.

The Palaeolithic paintings at Bacon’s Hole are therefore without any doubt ‘Johnny Bale his marks’. This fact was clearly apprehended by the first Lord Swansea, Colonel Morgan and others in October, 1912, was widely known, and was well published in *The Cambrian Leader* of 19 and 21 October, 1912. It is therefore saddening and surprising, but salutary, to note that in his Huxley Memorial Lecture for 1913 Professor Sollas still proclaimed their authenticity. Miles Burkitt in his *Prehistory* (1925) was, wisely, more cautious: they were ‘of unknown age’ (p. 15) or ‘of any age’ (p. 204). But in 1957, Geoffrey Grigson, in his *Painted Caves*, is deliciously savouring the acrid smoke of the non-existent fire when he describes the cave as perhaps exhibiting ‘a very few markings in red ochre which are perhaps Aurignacian . . . what may be, after all, the only cave painting of the Old Stone Age in Great Britain’. Grigson was impressed by the fact observed by Sollas and Breuil, namely that the marks were covered by a thin glaze of stalagmite. That glaze had formed

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between 1894 and 1912 and anyone who uses the stalagmitic-cover arguments to authenticate Palaeolithic painting (it is used at Rouffignac) should remember this and should observe the thick stalagmitic manifestations in many of our railway tunnels in western Europe. Johnny Bale is, in a kind of way, a minor hero in the history of archaeology, like Edward Simpson and Marcelino de Sautuola's daughter and the little dog Robot.



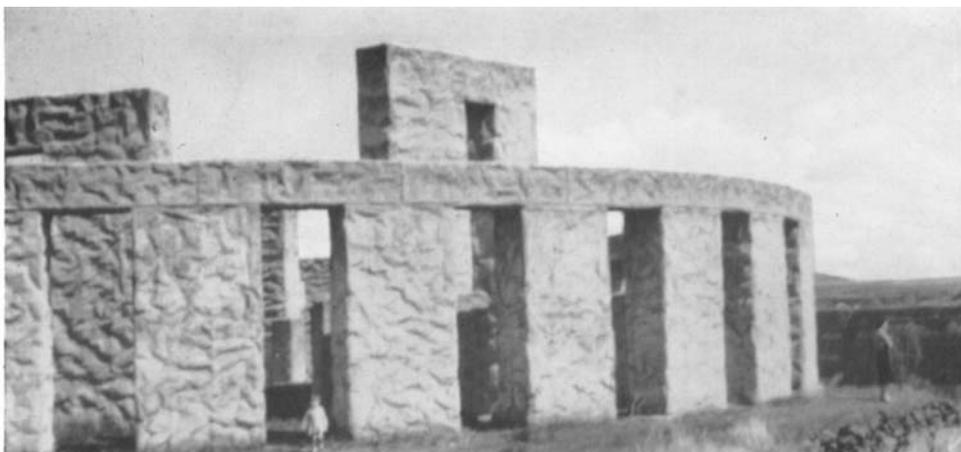
We warmly recommended the various bogus Druid and Neo-Druid organizations that lay claim to Stonehenge to build their own stone circles elsewhere (ANTIQUITY, 1961, 173) but we were surprised to learn that at least one of these odd bodies, in connexion with some of their autumnal equinoctial celebrations in Hampstead, had asked for permission to build a stone circle on Primrose Hill. Now it is surely within the rights of anyone to build a stone circle anywhere or to construct a fine transepted gallery grave to receive the remains of himself and his friends and relatives; the intriguing thing about the request of these 'Druids' was their allegation that they wanted to build this circle because there had been one on Primrose Hill in 1792 and the *Gentleman's Magazine* said so.

Let us try and nail this lie once for all. There has never been a stone circle on Primrose Hill, and there was not one there in 1792. But first, the account in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for October, 1792, under the heading 'Domestic Occurrences' and dated Saturday, 23 September: 'This being the day on which the autumnal equinox occurred, some Welsh Bards, resident in London, assembled in congress on Primrose Hill, according to ancient usage. . . . The wonted ceremonies were observed. A circle of stones formed, in the middle of which was the *Maen Gorsedd*, or altar, on which a naked sword being placed, all the Bards assisted to sheathe it'. Now all this was an invention of Edward Williams (*Iolo Morgannwg*), that remarkable stone mason from the Vale of Glamorgan who mixed so much of a genuine knowledge of the past of Wales with fancies, frauds and false imaginings. And what he set out on Primrose Hill was not a megalithic monument but a circle of pebbles. It was these pebbles he took with him to the Eisteddfod in Carmarthen in 1819 and in the grounds of the Ivy Bush Hotel laid them out as a circle for the Gorsedd of Bards. Those who want to know more about Iolo should consult Elijah Waring's *Recollections and Anecdotes of Edward Williams* (London, 1850) or G. J. Williams's *Iolo Morgannwg* (Cardiff, 1956) with a warning that the latter splendid book stops at 1788 and is written in Welsh. We print here the frontispiece of Waring's book on Iolo (FIG. 1).

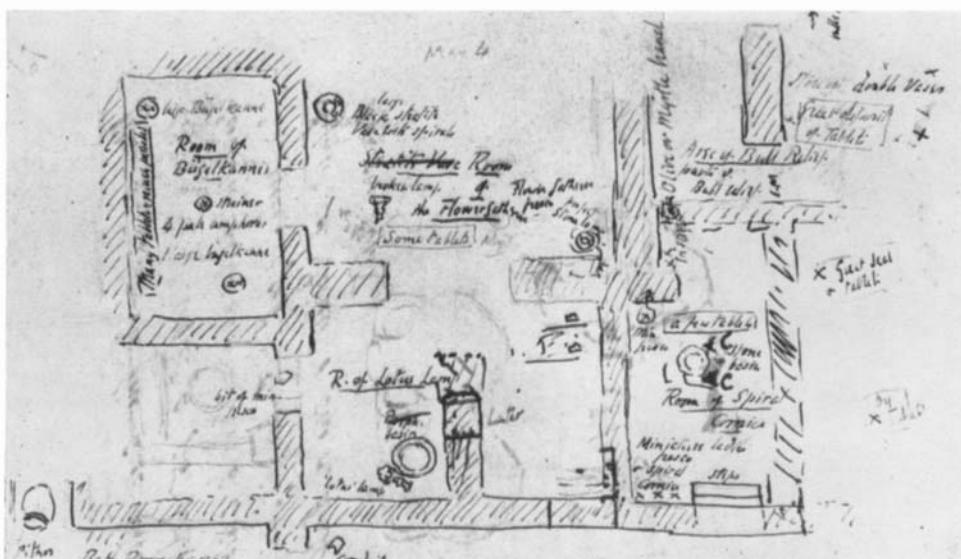
But the absence of authority for a proper stone circle on Primrose Hill should not deter the Druids or any other unreasonable religious body from constructing megalithic monuments. Stone circles are annually built by the Gorsedd of Bards of the Welsh Eisteddfod. A circle was built on a cliff overlooking the Columbia River at Maryhill (Washington) in the 'twenties of this century. It is called *Stonehenge* and was erected by Samuel Hill as a World War I memorial. It consists of two circles and two ovals with an altar stone in the centre. We quote from the official description, kindly supplied by Dr Bu'lock (as is the photograph, PLATE XXXIV): 'The outer circle has 30 upright stones 16 feet in height, and the inner circle consists of 40 stones 9 feet in height. The ovals consist of five pairs of trilithons . . . rising gradually to a height of 28 feet. The center altar stone is 18 feet in length'. We understand from Professor Cohen of Harvard that there is another Stonehenge built in Connecticut after World War II and we would value information and photographs of this and any other recent stone circles built in America.

Conscious antiquarianism is one thing: Stonehenges in Washington and Connecticut like stockbrokers' Tudor in Surrey are fun, just as the Margate Grotto and all follies are

PLATE XXXIV



(a)



(b)

(a) EDITORIAL: A stone circle built on a cliff overlooking the Columbia River at Maryhill (Washington) in the twenties of this century: it is known as 'Stonehenge', (see p. 260).

[Photo: supplied by Dr. Bullock.

(b) KNOSSOS: Sketch plan, dated 4 May, from Sir Arthur Evans's private notebook (1900) showing tablets and other finds in and to the west of the Northern Entrance Passage. Note 'some tablets' in the S part of the RSG. On 4 May, 1900, tablets here are recorded by DM as found 'on the clay floor'. At this point a reoccupation plaster floor was observed at a lower level in 1923 (unreported). All objects entered by AE as found in 1900 lay above this reoccupation floor. Opposite the doorway to the south is the end-block of the reoccupation wall, west of which, 32 cm. below the paving, were found the fragments of an LM II B pithos (1923, unreported). Note further: tablets along the west wall of the RSJ next to the Bügelkannen etc.; the Great Deposit in the NEP next to the double vases; smaller deposits, one with a great seal, to the south of this; tablets in the RSC (see p. 308).

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Fig. 1. Engraving by R. Cruikshank of Iolo Morgannwg, which appeared as the frontispiece of the book Recollections and Anecdotes of Edward Williams.

fun. The problem in archaeology is when to stop laughing. It is not fun to make fakes of cave paintings and perhaps, incidentally, fools of genuine and serious archaeologists. But the genuine and serious archaeologists must always be on the look out for folly, fraud and someone else's fun. And they must always examine the facts. That was the real trouble about Rouffignac: the evidence of discovery and the facts of the affair were not properly studied because it all became involved in the personal act of authentication of the greatest-ever French archaeologist, whose death we mourn.

It would be sad if we allowed a divorce between the subjective judgement of archaeologists and the almost police judgement of facts. Breuil and Sollas never seem to have taken into account the known facts about Bacon's Hole, which would have stopped them from the error of their pronouncements in lectures in Cardiff and London. Lord Swansea wrote in his notebook 'If one desires to see similar marks there is no need to go down to Gower. There are plenty to be seen in the Swansea dry dock walls against the side of which brushes are cleaned everyday of the week'. We do not need a Maigret for Bacon's Hole, and we no longer need one for Piltown Man, although the unravelling of that fake made, as Ellery Queen said, the best detective story of the year. But Inspector Maigret should

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take a few weeks off from the Quai des Orfèvres and sit in the cafés in the Dordogne. I can see his thick-set form clutching his pipe as he travels in the railway that runs through Rouffignac. But we can only guess at what he says to Sergeant Lucas when, a glass of *Calvados* in his hand, and a *truffe sous la cendre* ordered for dinner, they exchange experiences as the mist settles on the river, the limestone cliffs fade out of sight, and the whistle of the Agen-Paris train reminds them that the provincial affairs of the Périgord are the concern of the whole archaeological world.



With this number ANTIQUITY completes its first year of publication for the Antiquity Trust. We are grateful for the continued support of our old subscribers and welcome the many new ones that have joined us in 1961. It is inevitable that the change should involve some dislocation, but we hope that by now all is well. Meanwhile if there is anyone who has not been receiving his copy regularly, will he please let us know. (We realize that this is a little like saying, 'Let me know if you do not get my postcard'.) May we remind those who have not yet paid their subscriptions for 1961 that these should now be paid to Antiquity Publications Ltd., 104, Hills Road, Cambridge. To all our subscribers we urge: *please fill in a Banker's Order and avoid the problem of reminders and invoices.* May we say that we think that a year's subscription to ANTIQUITY is a good Christmas present for any up and coming archaeologist—so is a season ticket to our ancient monuments, as the advertisement below by the Ministry of Works explains.

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