

Antiquity

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Editorial Notes

WHAT is the reason for the great increase in interest in archaeology that has taken place recently? There is no doubt about it, for it is proved by the number of archaeological books published, by the popularity of television programmes, by articles in the press and last (but not least, from our point of view) by the rising circulation of *ANTIQUITY*. New readers have written to say that they are pleased with the contents of *ANTIQUITY*, so we may conclude that it tells them what they want to know. We try to keep them informed about what archaeologists are discovering about man's past everywhere—how and when he first made tools and learnt to make and use fire, what sort of roads he made, what his religious beliefs were and so on. Every year we find out more and more about these basic things, for archaeology is now a very live subject. But we must have a field for our activities, and every year that field is getting smaller and smaller.

There are many causes at work. Ancient sites are deliberately destroyed or obliterated. At one end of Italy excavation is revealing the riches of the Greco-Etruscan city of Spina on the north-east coast, while at the other bull-dozers are at work destroying the oldest Greek colonial city, Metapontum, and the local archaeologist can do nothing but stand by and pick out a few of the more striking objects thus brought to light. He and his colleagues made their protest but it was of no avail. We are told about the Greek vases found on the former site (see *The Times*, 28 March last), but the destruction of Metapontum is passed over in discreet silence. In the Nile Valley, a whole country, Nubia, is to be submerged by a huge dam and reservoir, so that its early history and prehistory will be for ever irrecoverable. It is unlikely that letters of protest published in the press would have much effect, but they would at least prove to posterity that a few people regretted the loss. A few people did in fact write such letters, but it was not until someone pointed out that the famous temple of Abu Simbel would be submerged that *The Times* published any of them. That will of course be a great loss, but it is not the greatest, which is that all the unknown and unexcavated ancient sites—villages, temples, churches and cemeteries—will be submerged also, and it is the excavation of these, spread out over the years, that will be for ever impossible, once the waters have covered them. It is the loss of this field of research, and of the new knowledge potentially present therein, that archaeologists most regret.

For it is acquiring knowledge about prehistoric and early historic periods that provides the incentive for archaeological research; and when we archaeologists have

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done our bit, we display the results in museums, publish them in books and journals for others to read, and encourage people to go and look at the remains of the buildings we have uncovered. Thus, then, from this direct contact with the work of earlier men's hands they may get a deeper insight into the past—and the present which has developed out of it. Sometimes we do not have to do any uncovering; the work lies open to our view without it. England is still rich in the remains of prehistoric fields, abandoned some 1600 years ago and never since disturbed by human activities. These fields are marked by banks called lynchets on the slopes of a hillside, and some of them still show the remains of the old stone field-walls, and even occasionally the actual marks of the furrows; see for instance those at Grassington in Yorkshire (ANTIQUITY II, no. 6, June 1928, p. 170) and in Wiltshire (*Wessex from the Air*, plates 19 and 20). Could anything give a more intimate glimpse of prehistoric life than these fields which sustained it? Nowhere else in Europe could such fields be found so perfectly preserved; yet we are obliterating them. Heroic efforts are being made by individuals to persuade a reluctant Government department to schedule them and so preserve them from obliteration by ploughing, and some have been so scheduled—always on the initiative of private individuals.



These things may seem to some of our readers to be matters that concern us in England only, and they may wonder why we call attention to them publicly in a journal that is read by the people of many other countries. But people often come to England on their holidays or to study archaeology; we want to take them to see our prehistoric sites, and they enjoy exploring them and learning from them. The present writer has often taken people to see them himself—students of our local university studying history and professional students of archaeology from abroad who come here because we have such things to see, and because we have developed the pursuit of field archaeology further than other countries. What folly to destroy our priceless and irreplaceable heritage!



Unfortunately this is not the end of the story. Since the war there has been a holocaust of destruction of archaeological sites and their amenities by many agencies, and the pace is quickening. One might have thought that, when the downs had all been ploughed up, at least the barren heaths and moorlands would remain for the field archaeologist to explore and the rambler to enjoy. Not a bit of it. Another government department, the Forestry Commission, has seized them and is planting them with dense forests of conifers. Soon there will be no open country left anywhere. And here the Ancient Monuments Inspectorate is powerless, because one government department cannot dictate to another. These heaths and moors abound in the handiworks of prehistoric man; only recently the present writer found some unrecorded linear earthworks on one of the New Forest heaths that was scheduled for afforestation. For it is a mistake to suppose that, as someone rather naïvely remarked, all ancient sites are known and marked as such on the map! We regret not only the obliteration of these things by afforestation, but perhaps even more the deprivation of the field of our explorations. There are many people who take pleasure in rambling over open country to get fresh air and exercise combined with an intellectual interest; these amenities count as much with them as does the archaeology. In this matter we think we can speak also for nature lovers generally.

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The B.B.C. Television Service sends us the following information about the archaeological programmes they are preparing. On 31 July there will be a programme on the excavations at Jericho directed by Dr Kathleen Kenyon. The film was taken at Jericho itself last March, and it shows amongst other things the pre-pottery neolithic town walls and tower—by far the oldest in the world—the discovery and clearance of two more plastered skulls (found this year), and some shots of the Bronze Age tombs with their unusually well preserved contents, taken immediately after the tombs were opened. On 18 September there will be a programme on Pompeii. Plans for the winter include programmes on the Early Peoples of Dartmoor, Carnac (Brittany), and on the Faience Beads, with shots of the intrusive Bronze Age burial in the Mound of the Hostages at Tara in Ireland.



The Index to the first twenty-five volumes of *ANTIQUITY* will be published and on sale soon after the publication of this number. It is expected that it will be much in demand, and readers who wish to buy it are advised to write at once to the publisher (H. W. Edwards, Ashmore Green, Newbury, Berks, England) ordering it. The price is £2 10s or \$7.50, and postage is included in the price.



We often get letters from those wishing to take part, as voluntary diggers in excavations, enquiring what they should do. They should write to the Assistant Secretary, Council for British Archaeology, 10 Bolton Gardens, London, S.W.1, asking for the Calendar of Excavations issued each month from March to September by that body. The Calendar states where volunteers are needed, and can be obtained regularly for an annual fee of three shillings. It also gives information about summer schools, training excavations and week-end conferences. Prospective subscribers should write to the Assistant Secretary enclosing their subscription in the form of a Postal Order, or cheque crossed and made payable to the Council for British Archaeology.



We are informed that the Second British fascicule of the *Inventaria Archaeologica* is now available. The set has been edited by Professor Hawkes and Miss M. A. Smith, and published by the Trustees of the British Museum. It consists of ten cards, covering five important Bronze Age hoards in the Museum, namely those from Plymstock, Maentwrog, Thorndon, Thenford Hill Farm and Meldreth.

The set costs 10s and may be obtained from Messrs Garraway Ltd., 11 Kensington Church Street, London, W.8, or from the British Museum. *Individual cards may be obtained from the Museum, price 1s each.* Postage is extra.



New readers may like to know that the Editor's autobiography, *SAID AND DONE* (Weidenfeld and Nicolson, £1 1s) was published last year and may still be obtained. Chapter 14 tells how the idea came to him of founding *ANTIQUITY*. The book has been very well reviewed.