

Antiquity

VOL. XXXIV No. 133

MARCH 1960

Editorial

THREE could surely be no nicer present for an Editor of ANTIQUITY who lives and works in Cambridge to receive on Christmas Day than the two volumes (plus the separate container of plans of King's, St John's and Trinity Colleges) of *An Inventory of the Historical Monuments in the City of Cambridge* produced by the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments (England). These volumes, published by Her Majesty's Stationery Office, and printed under that authority by William Clowes & Son (H.M.S.O., 1959, £5 5s. for the two parts) are a delight in every way, and must be purchased by all Cambridge men and women—residents compulsory, old boys obligatory—and will, of course, be bought by all in the British Commonwealth, in America, and in Europe, interested in one of the most interesting cities in Britain. These volumes set a much higher standard of production and editorship than the *City of Oxford* volume produced twenty years ago. This is not to say that the *City of Oxford* volume was not a fine production; it was. But these Cambridge volumes are outstanding productions. A most distinguished Cambridge bookseller said to us that they were the best value for money he had seen in the book trade for many a long year.

The *City of Cambridge* volumes are not only amazingly good value, and fine productions but at once a triumph of, and an advertisement for, British archaeology. When they are seen in Paris and Zurich and Frankfurt and Copenhagen, archaeologists and historians, and, what is more important—historically minded statesmen—will say 'Why are such volumes not produced in our own countries; why have we not got such a system as these British Royal Commissions?'

But they should pause before they try to duplicate our Commission system in their own countries. The three Commissions charged with recording our ancient and historical monuments are now about half a century old, or as near as makes no matter. They were all founded in 1908, and all three have, puzzlingly, different titles; they are the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments (England) with the Marquess of Salisbury as Chairman and Mr G. F. Webb as Secretary, the Royal Commission on Ancient Monuments in Wales and Monmouthshire with Professor J. G. Edwards as Chairman and Mr A. H. A. Hogg as Secretary, and the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland with the Earl of Wemyss and March as Chairman and Dr K. A. Steer as Secretary. To date, the English Commission has produced twenty-two volumes covering nine counties (Dorset not yet complete) and the two cities of Oxford and Cambridge, the Welsh Commission nine volumes covering nine counties (the second half of Caernarvonshire is in the press), and the Scottish Commission seventeen volumes covering sixteen counties and the city of Edinburgh. At these rates the Commissions will be busy working a hundred years from now, the more so as the Welsh Commission will have to re-do the earlier volumes, especially the

ANTIQUITY

Pembrokeshire *Inventory* which called forth that historic review in this journal (ANTIQUITY, 1927, 245-7). The last sentence of that review has seldom been bettered in invective and accuracy and in result, and we make no excuse for quoting it again here: 'Indeed with all restraint it may be urged that the Commission as at present constituted is a laughing-stock amongst professed archaeologists and is financially an unjust charge upon the State.'

It may well be that the Commission form of organization is not the right one at all for the recording and description of our ancient and historic monuments. Royal Commissions are normally called into existence for specific and limited purposes; our three archaeological Commissions are virtually permanent departments of State. Should they then perhaps be recognized as such? Indeed is there not a possibility of duplication and triplication between the Commissions, the Ancient Monuments Department of the Ministry of Works, and the Archaeology Department of the Ordnance Survey? Perhaps they should all be grouped together in a newly created Department of the Queen's Antiquary in a reorganized Ministry of Education and Culture.

Whether such a change would increase their speed of production we do not know. At the moment there is much cause for disquiet and in a careful, cautious and courageous letter to *The Times* (19 December, 1959, 7) Mr Maurice Barley voiced criticisms which are felt widely by many. In the last twenty years the Scottish Commission has produced *Orkney and Shetland* (1946), *the City of Edinburgh* (1951), *Roxburgh* (1956) and *Selkirkshire* (1957); the Welsh Commission has produced only one volume—*Caernarvonshire I*; and the English Commission *Dorset I* (1952), and the present two *Cambridge* volumes. It would be idle to pretend that the output of the Welsh and English Commissions is satisfactory. What is wrong? Laziness, perfectionism, lack of staff, lack of Government support, lack of drive? If the output from the English and Welsh Commissions resembled the Scottish Commission we would not complain, but, as it is, we all do, loudly and long and justifiably. The *Cambridge* volumes are fine, and so is the first *Caernarvonshire* volume; but we want *more* volumes, and *more frequently*. Recently the terminal date of the English Commission was extended from 1714 (where it was fixed in 1908) to 1850. It is a ludicrous and terrifying thought to envisage the Commissioners, in 2060, solemnly extending their terminal date to the present. The real question is when does one become an ancient and historical monument oneself?

One of the drawbacks of the Commission Inventories is their size and price. Would it be possible for portions of the inventories to be excerpted and issued separately? The Stationery Office did this recently when it published an account of *St Albans Cathedral* taken from the work of the English Commission. The same could be done for the Cambridge Colleges, and we recommend this idea warmly to the Stationery Office and the Commission. And, apropos of this suggestion, is it an absolutely outrageous idea that the Commission should publish their work in parish fascicules which libraries and others could bind up later when a County or City is complete? We understand that the revision of the *Cambridge Ancient History* Volumes I and II is going to proceed in this way. With a steady flow of parish fascicules, and a make-your-own-*Inventory*-kit, we might avoid what seems at the moment, even to the most sanguine centenarian, these long delays.

It would be unfair and improper in voicing a fairly general criticism of the slowness of appearance of the Commission volumes not to remind readers that, of course, there are many volumes in production at the moment. In 1956 the English Commission took on a new task, namely that of recording prehistoric and other early earthworks threatened with destruction by afforestation, opencast mining and above all by new methods of agriculture. (In parenthesis we ask was the Commission the proper body to do this? Why not the Ministry of Works? The real answer is the department of the Queen's Antiquary.) A

EDITORIAL

special problem arising from this commitment was presented by the early occupation of river gravels. The increase in gravel digging in recent years has brought about the destruction of many archaeological sites. The English Commission is issuing early in 1960 a short guide to the number and distribution of sites on river gravels and the variety of remains to be found on these gravels. The guide will be illustrated by air photographs taken by Dr St Joseph, Curator of Aerial Photography in the University of Cambridge, and many of these will be photographs specially taken on flights for this survey of the English Commission. We await this guide with interest and excitement.



Volume XLIV of the *Proceedings of the British Academy*, just published, contains obituary notices of three distinguished archaeologists, namely A. J. B. Wace (1879–1957), V. Gordon Childe (1892–1957), and O. G. S. Crawford (1886–1957). These notices, written, respectively, by F. H. Stubbings, Stuart Piggott and Grahame Clark can be obtained from the Oxford University Press for sums varying from two to three shillings. Professor Clark's account of Crawford will be of particular interest to readers of this journal and he has much of importance to say about Crawford and ANTIQUITY. Writing of ANTIQUITY he says: 'More than would have been possible or desirable in the case of an organ of a corporate body he was able to give expression in its pages to his own personal interests, enthusiasms and prejudices. In a sense, indeed it served as a safety-valve or compensation to an individual who found himself caught up in his official capacity in an organization which rightly or wrongly he found frustrating and basically unsympathetic. . . . ANTIQUITY provided Crawford with the means of communication with his fellows that circumstances and his own disposition denied him in daily life, and the Editorial Notes, which must often have been read as documents of predominantly psychological interest, gave him a particularly welcome means of "blowing off steam" Although it satisfied a personal need, the main driving force behind ANTIQUITY was Crawford's zeal for the idea of human history and his sense of the part archaeology was capable of playing in making possible its re-creation.'

We make no excuse for quoting these remarks *in extenso*. In his account of Crawford's life and work, Grahame Clark makes no mention of *The Andover District* and it is indeed curious that Crawford himself did not mention it in his autobiography *Said and Done*. *The Andover District* was published in 1922, but it had been set up in type and corrected in proof before the 1914–18 war. It was submitted as a thesis for the Diploma in Geography in Oxford in 1910, and was an account of Sheet 283 of the One-Inch Ordnance Map. Crawford had the idea that, just as there were Geological Memoirs, there might be Geographical Memoirs, and *The Andover District* was such a one. The scheme was never developed. But, recollecting what he did, is there not now a case for archaeological memoirs? In a recent number of ANTIQUITY the present Archaeology Officer, Mr C. W. Phillips, described the remarkable expansion of the Archaeology branch of the survey and its new methods of work (ANTIQUITY, 1959, 195). Is it not worth considering that Crawford's original idea of a geographical memoir for each one-inch sheet, might, nowadays, be developed into an archaeological and historical memoir for each sheet? We have county guides and volumes of Royal Commissions on Ancient and Historical Monuments and still the volumes of Methuen's County Archaeologies—and what a sad thing that that series came to an end. But nothing quite replaces a memoir, or pamphlet, supplementing a single sheet of the Ordnance Survey. We hope this idea is worth following up. Is it not possible that the quick outline guides we might demand from our Royal Commission and these one-sheet guides from the Ordnance Survey might be one and the same? Only perhaps if the State reorganizes

ANTIQUITY

archaeology, as it must one day do, as we have suggested under a Queen's Antiquary directly responsible to a Minister of Education and Culture.



Our warmest congratulations, in which we know all readers of ANTIQUITY will join, to Sir Bruce Ingram, F.S.A., on completing sixty years as Editor of *The Illustrated London News*. In its issue of 2 January, 1960, there is a Mark Kauffman photograph of the Editor, and an appreciation by Sir Arthur Bryant, who says, *inter alia*, that Sir Bruce 'began his career as the youngest editor in Great Britain; he is now the oldest . . . the quality of his editorship has remained throughout a constant factor. . . . During his editorship Sir Bruce has made *The Illustrated London News* a recognized medium for presenting in popular form great achievements in the Arts, Natural Sciences and Archaeology—all personal interests of his own, which he has used this journal as a medium for communicating to others.' Ingram took over the Editorship in 1900, the year in which Arthur Evans began work at Knossos, which saw the death of General Pitt-Rivers, and the publication of Ripley's *Races of Europe* and the Rhys and Brynmor Jones *The Welsh People*. Mortimer's *Forty Years Researches* was not yet published, Abercromby had not yet produced his map of Beakers, Douglas and de Geer had not commenced their geochronological researches; the discovery of Les Combarelles and Font-de-Gaume was a year away, and Cartailhac's *Mea culpa d'un Sceptique* had naturally not been written—he and the Abbé Breuil had not set out on their famous journey to Altamira. When we were engaged in collecting material for *A Hundred Years of Archaeology* we wrote to find out how it was that *The Illustrated London News* had illustrated archaeology so well and supported its *haute-vulgarisation* so brilliantly. Bruce Ingram replied: 'As a boy at school, I was taken to Egypt by my father for an extended tour of most of the exploration sites, an experience which made a lasting impression on me. When the control of the paper fell to me in 1900, I made up my mind that there were a great many people who would have been equally interested if they were to be given an opportunity of seeing what was being done all over the world to throw light upon the civilization of the past. The difficulty was to combine technical accuracy with an exposition simple enough for the comprehension of the layman, and by that means to stimulate his desire for further publication of a similar character.' This letter of 16 February, 1949 was quoted in *A Hundred Years of Archaeology* (1950, 311) with this comment: 'A survey of *The Illustrated London News* in the last half-century will show how brilliantly Ingram achieved his aims.' The 'fifties have shown no diminution in the archaeological interest and skill of *The Illustrated London News*. Long may this source of accurate, immediate and attractive archaeological communication continue.



Our remarks—and those of our Advisory Editor, Professor Stuart Piggott—on Carbon-14 dating in the last number of ANTIQUITY have brought comments from many quarters. We publish in this number, Professor Waterbolk's report on the Groningen meeting in September 1959 (p. 14, *infra*) and his views on the whole problem. Dr Barker of the British Museum has offered to tell us where archaeologists go wrong, and we have accepted his invitation, remembering his most useful and clear article recently published in this journal (ANTIQUEY, 1958, 253). Professor Milošević has offered to tell us where physicists go wrong and we have accepted his offer. Meanwhile Dr Watts, of the Department of Botany of Trinity College, Dublin, has taken us up in our statement that 'it is too soon as yet to

EDITORIAL

rewrite our Western European prehistory of the Neolithic and Chalcolithic' (*ANTIQUITY*, 1959, 239-40), and we hope to publish in our June number the new dates for Carbon-14 analysis which Dr Watts and his associates have produced for the Neolithic and Chalcolithic of Ireland in the C-14 Laboratory in Trinity College, Dublin. We were on the verge of saying how sad it was that this laboratory, only set up two years ago (*ANTIQUITY*, 1958, 193) should now be shutting down in 1959/60 because of lack of funds, but we understand that it has already answered most of the many problems of Irish prehistorical chronology presented to it. If this is so, what is the fate of the fifty-odd C-14 laboratories that exist in the world? Are they being set up to answer questions that are already answered? Will we, in ten years' time, perhaps only have ten to fifteen laboratories to deal with the questions left over from the major answers that are going to be given in the next ten years or already have been given?

We think this is an over-optimistic view and that there still will be an enormous amount of Carbon-14 dating work to be done, in Ireland, as elsewhere, for the next quarter-century. We learn, with the greatest regret, as we go to press, that one of the pioneers of radio-carbon dating in Europe, Professor de Vries, of Groningen, will no longer be taking part in this work, and we mourn the tragic death on 23 December, 1959, of a great scholar, who contributed so much to this extremely important aspect of archaeological research. De Vries's name will be particularly remembered for his work on CO₂ counting and on the dating of radio-carbon samples between 30,000 and 70,000 B.C.

Meanwhile the work of the Committee for Distribution of Radio-Carbon Dates, founded in 1956, has come to fruition, and cards are being distributed to those who are subscribers to this essential service. We reproduce here (PLATE I) a facsimile of one of the punched cards sent out by this service. We described the working of the Committee in an earlier number (*ANTIQUITY*, 1958, 194). It may also be worth reminding readers of the *Radiocarbon Supplement* to the *American Journal of Science* (see *ANTIQUITY*, 1959, 80) of which volume I is published.



A friend who has kindly read through the proofs of the present number of *ANTIQUITY* thinks that Dr Calvin Wells's *Study of Cremation* is rather strong meat—if that in itself is not an ill-considered phrase in this context—for most readers, and should be prefaced by the same sort of warning as, we are informed, appears before some television programmes, namely, 'Not suitable for children or adults of nervous disposition.' At first we did not think so, and yet, writing these words in a warm café in Amiens and watching the snow flaking past the window panes, we begin to wonder. Is it really a comforting thought for an editor, who could be described in Dr Wells's objective terms as 'male, middle-aged, with a tendency to corpulence and a full head of hair' to realize that he will (a) burn rapidly, and (b) perhaps leave behind a large but curious Illington-type clinker of transformed keratin? With rich flames and hired tears they may solemnize our obsequies: but, Sir Thomas Browne, did you ever see those rich flames as gas jets? We may, Sir Thomas, be carried out of the world with our feet forward, but how are we laid on the cremation bench? Is the cadaver (admirably objective word for use by all students of death and detection) laid prone or supine? Dr Wells will tell us, assisted as he was by the authorities of two modern crematoria 'with great courtesy and enthusiasm'. There is a marked lack of enthusiasm inside the café and the cold of the snow seems to be creeping in. *Garçon, un verre de Calvados, s'il vous plaît.* Shall I rather be pompous in the grave or splendid in ashes? Is cold clay to be preferred to the heat of those gas-jets? Let us settle on a collective tomb and the comfort that when my grave is broke up again, it will be for some second guest to entertain. Yes, good old John Donne is more comforting than Dr Wells's gas-jets and Sir Thomas Browne's urns. And yet, it is but cold comfort. *Garçon, un autre verre.*

PLATE I

