

Antiquity

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Editorial

AS a Christmas offering we have gathered together in our frontispiece some stamps which will be of special interest to archaeologists. We are grateful to Madame Anne Philippe, Mr Marcus Greenhorne, Mr H. A. Shelley, Mr Graham J. Clark and Monsieur Moisin for their help in collecting them. The French issues of Carnac and Lascaux and the Belgian stamp of the Spiennes flint-mines are particularly beautiful examples of stamp design. In making this selection we had hoped to use it as propaganda for a British archaeological stamp of some fine prehistoric object like Stonehenge or Avebury or Silbury Hill, when, to our horror, there appeared offensively on many of our letters the new 4d stamp of Tarr Steps in Somerset erroneously described as 'Prehistoric'. It seemed so sad that our first British 'prehistoric' stamp should not be prehistoric at all. How could the Postmaster-General have been so ill-advised as to label this pretty clapper bridge 'Prehistoric'? We felt this was another example of the way in which the outrageous inefficiencies of a centralized bureaucratic machine increase from month to month.

Lady Fox wrote to *The Times* (13th May 1968) as follows:

I have just received a letter with the new 4d stamp engraved with a picture of Tarr Steps and boldly labelled 'Prehistoric'. Tarr Steps is a Clapper Bridge across the River Barle on Exmoor, built for pack horse traffic, probably in the Middle Ages, and reconstructed after damage by floods fairly recently: like the similar structure at Postbridge on Dartmoor, it has no claim to be prehistoric. It seems a pity that whoever decided on the design did not consult either

the archaeologists of the Inspectorate of Ancient Monuments or the Ministry of Public Building and Works, who include Tarr Steps in their Schedule of Ancient Monuments.

No reply came from the Postmaster-General during the next few weeks and on 30th May we wrote to him ourselves:

You will have seen the letter that appeared in *The Times* on 13th May from Lady Fox about the new 4d stamp showing the Tarr Steps. The stamp, as you know, alleges that these steps are prehistoric, which is certainly not so. I shall draw attention to this curious error in a forthcoming editorial in ANTIQUITY; but before doing so I would like to know what advice was taken by your Ministry before this stamp was issued, and whether you intend to withdraw the stamp now that the error has been pointed out.

I hope we may have a stamp with some prehistoric antiquity. The most obvious one would be Stonehenge. The French had, two years ago, a very good stamp of the stone rows at Carnac in Brittany, and have just issued an attractive stamp of the Upper Palaeolithic painted and engraved cave of Lascaux in Dordogne, while the Belgians have issued a very attractive stamp of the Spiennes flint-mines.

There was no immediate acknowledgement of this letter and as the weeks passed it looked as if the Postmaster-General would preserve the same indiscreet silence as he had in the face of Lady Fox's letter. And then on 5th July there arrived the following letter signed 'D. J. Ferry p.p. L. Pettit' from the G.P.O. in St Martin's-le-Grand:

Thank you for your letter of May 30th to the Postmaster-General about the Tarr Steps stamps. I am very sorry for the delay in replying to you.

In a specialist field of this kind we do not of



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course rely on our own sources of information but take care to consult experts. As you will know there are different views as to the age of the Tarr Steps. It used to be thought that they were prehistoric and our researches led us to this view.

As a result of your letter however we have challenged one of the leading sources and it seems that most experts consider the steps to be medieval in origin.

We very much regret putting out this inaccurate description of them and would like to thank you for the correction.

We have added your suggestion about a special stamp featuring Stonehenge to the list from which the choice will be made for the 1969 special stamp programme.

This is very good news; in the past few years we have had some excellent special stamps in Britain, and Stonehenge would make an admirable subject for a future issue. And now the Mexico Olympic Games have stimulated the production of a great number of archaeological stamps: Ecuador and the Kathiri State in Hadhramaut have delightful Greek scenes, mainly from vases, while Czechoslovakia, Sharjah, and the Mahra and Upper Yafa states of southern Arabia (two countries whose existence, let alone their stamps, was a surprise) have pre-Colombian antiquities. The Paraguay series is particularly good with pots, sculpture, glyphs and gold plaques.



The 1968 season of work at Silbury Hill has already achieved a great deal and Professor Atkinson has provided us with a summary of this work which we print in this number. *The Daily Telegraph* alleged that a C14 date had already been obtained which showed that Silbury was pre-Mycenaean in date. This was an error. What Professor Atkinson said at his press conference was that as yet there was no positive evidence for date but that material had now been collected which could provide a radiocarbon date and that his 'guess and nothing more was that it would turn out to be in the Early Bronze Age'. In a letter to the editor he says 'This was a guess and nothing more, based only on the probabilities afforded

by the presence of a turf stack and stake circle, which has hitherto been confined to barrows of this period in Britain.' We hope to publish the C14 date from his material when it is available, as we publish in this issue, with great pleasure, the date of the Red Lady of Paviland, (which the Editor from his childhood in Glamorgan always thought of as a rather dashing great-aunt of his family), and a date for a Neolithic settlement in Scotland. The March issue will carry some new dates for Durrington Walls.

Professor Atkinson has had to deal not only with the hazards and difficulties of the Silbury Hill excavation, but also with a press which showed varying degrees of ignorance of what was going on. Some, unaware that through the good offices of the BBC they were for the first time privileged to see the unfolding of a scientific excavation, moaned because no fine objects had appeared, as though archaeology was a treasure-hunt. And from the safe distance of Dublin, Mr Ian Blake, as archaeological correspondent of *The Irish Times*, continues week after week to dip his pen in vitriol and, as we said in a letter in *The Guardian* in May, to express a perverse delight in castigating the excavations of his elders and betters. *The Irish Times* is a responsible paper; it is curious that it fosters an irresponsible archaeological correspondent. Professor O'Kelly of University College, Cork, made this point forcibly in a letter published in *The Irish Times* of 2nd September 1968:

I find it surprising that you allow your Archaeological Correspondent continuously to disparage the work of leading British archaeologists who, since they are unlikely to see your paper in the ordinary way, are not in a position to answer.

The most frequent recipient of Mr Blake's abuse is Professor R. J. C. Atkinson who is digging at Silbury Hill. I happen to know a good deal about the years of preparatory work and study which Professor Atkinson has put in on this site before excavation and I also know that he is one of the best field archaeologists in Britain. Yet Mr Blake, who has himself accomplished nothing, sees fit to demolish all this skilled and brilliant work. There is scarcely an

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article of Mr Blake's in which Professor Atkinson or Silbury Hill is not attacked. A glance through the back files of your paper will verify this.

In my view, this is not good enough for a reputable Irish paper. If Mr Blake wants a platform from which to attack Professor Atkinson of Silbury Hill, Mr Leslie Alcock of South Cadbury Castle, or Mr G. W. Dimbleby of Overton Down—all at the head of their respective fields, be it said—I think he should seek it on the other side of the Irish Sea.

What are Mr Blake's own credentials in archaeology? He is unknown to me except as a journalist. Most of the archaeologists mentioned by him, whether in praise or blame, are very well known to me and I can only say, writing as he does, he is a long way from presenting a true assessment of the work being done in archaeology in Britain today.

Mr Blake (whose archaeological publications are known to the Editor of *ANTIQUITY*, and who, we understand, is now a master at Charterhouse, a school with an archaeological headmaster) replied, very feebly, to Professor O'Kelly's justified attack (*The Irish Times*, 7th September 1968). His argument seems to be that 'tunnelling is an archaic and discredited method'. We now dig down, not along; the establishment of vertical stratigraphy is the be-all and end-all of archaeological surgery. This is all very depressing. When will the young learn that there are no absolutes in the practice or interpretation of archaeology, only techniques and methods adopted which seem suitable at the time? Professor Atkinson has carefully devised a complex series of techniques which he thinks suitable for the 20th-century exploration of Silbury Hill. They seem to us eminently right and we have not heard them seriously criticized except by the very old or the very young.

At first sight, going through the press-cuttings of Mr Blake's pieces in *The Irish Times* and *The Guardian*, one has the impression of an obsessional narker with so many chips on his shoulders that it would be difficult to hack one's way through to what he really thought. But he may have a point, and may lack a platform. We invite Mr Blake to come out from

his hiding in Dublin and write for us in 500 words why he thinks the present excavations at Silbury are wrong, and to tell us how he would have excavated the site. And we shall invite Professor Atkinson to reply. 'Continual refusal to discuss the substance of my own and other criticism . . . does not, I fear, do our subject much credit', says Mr Blake. The Editor and the readers of *ANTIQUITY* await those 500 words from the archaeological correspondent of *The Irish Times*.



We have all been brought up on Hector Munro Chadwick's *The Origin of the English Nation* but few of us remember that it was exactly a hundred years ago that John Beddoe won a prize in the Welsh National Eisteddfod for an essay on the origin of the English nation. In the 1860s Arthur Johnes of Garthmyl, Montgomeryshire, contributed a prize of 100 guineas to be competed for in the Eisteddfod on this subject. Johnes, whose dates were 1809–71, was a county court judge, his district at one period extending from Holyhead to Hay; he was one of the founders of the *Cambrian Quarterly Magazine*, and himself in 1831 won a prize offered by the Cymmrodorion Society for an essay on 'The Causes which in Wales have produced Dissent from the Established Church'. The Eisteddfod Committee supplemented the prize with an offer of £50 more. For four years, although there were contenders—two of whom, L. Owen Pike and Dr Nicholas, subsequently published their unsuccessful essays—the prize was not awarded, until in 1868 it went to John Beddoe. Incidentally, as he points out himself, though he received the original prize money of £100, somehow the extra £50 never got to him. Many years later he published his *The Races of Britain: a Contribution to the Anthropology of Western Europe* (1885) which, as he says in his preface, was 'to a great extent an expansion or development of a manuscript Essay which in 1868 carried off the great prize of the Welsh National Eisteddfod'. Why not, in 1969, the year of the Investiture of the Prince of Wales, a prize essay on the origin of the Welsh nation?

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The following passage from the third chapter of *The Races of Britain* gives a clear view of the nature of Beddoe's thinking:

The natives of South Britain, at the time of the Roman conquest, probably consisted mainly of several strata, unequally distributed, of Celtic-speaking people, who in race and physical type, however, partook more of the tall blond stock of Northern Europe than of the thick-set, broad-headed dark stock which Broca has called Celtic, and which those who object to this attribution of that much-contested name, may, if they like, denominate Arvernian. Some of these layers were Gaelic in speech, some Cymric; they were both superimposed on a foundation principally composed of the long-headed dark races of the Mediterranean stock, possibly mingled with the fragments of still more ancient races, Mongoliform or Allophylia. This foundation-layer was still very strong and coherent in Ireland and the north of Scotland, where the subsequent deposits were thinner, and in some parts wholly or partially absent. The most recent layers were Belgic, and may have contained some portion or colouring of Germanic blood; but no Germans, recognizable as such by speech as well as person, had as yet entered Britain.

Here we see one of the important elements in the development of the successive populations theory of the past. The 'Three Age' technological model as developed and understood by Worsaae provided one source; the successive ethnic elements as developed by Beddoe provided another. Prehistory as set out by Boyd-Dawkins and Rice Holmes owed much to Beddoe's ethnic strata.

These five strata were those which Sir John Rhys called pre-Iberian, Iberian, Gaelic, Cymric and Belgic. In 1912 in his Presidential Address to the Cambrian Archaeological Association (*Arch. Camb.*, 1912, 61) Boyd-Dawkins, in referring to the second stream, said 'It matters very little whether we call them Iberian, as I proposed in 1880, or Mediterranean, as Professor Sergi termed them in 1895.' But Beddoe had used the phrase in his 1868 Eisteddfod essay, and von Humboldt in 1821 was describing the Iberians vividly. The Iberians one can understand easily in the literature of late 19th-century ancient history, but it is often a little difficult to see where the

pre-Iberian stratum came from. To a great extent it must be physical anthropological observation. Beddoe himself quoted two sources: the first was de la Bourdonnais, who on returning from travels in the Himalaya wrote his *Voyage en Basse Bretagne* (Paris, 1892) and said in it that the Bretons were Mongoloid. The second source was Renan who wrote 'my ethnic formula for the Breton would be a Celt, mixed with a Gascon, and crossed with a Lapp'.

John Beddoe emerges as a charming man in his autobiography *Memories of Eighty Years* (Bristol and London, 1910). He was not Welsh but took pride in his Welsh name which, he wrote, was 'said to signify the birch tree, which was an emblem of courtesy'. Beddoe was born and brought up at Bewdley and describes his childhood in the Welsh Marches, and how the East Radnorshire folk and the men of Archenfeld regarded each other as utter foreigners. 'In my time', he wrote in 1910 of the 1840s, 'the English peasants used to mix bean-meal with their wheaten flour for bread, and the Welsh used barley-meal; but the converse did not occur. The Welsh fed largely on porridge and butter-milk, which the English rejected: the Mercian pork-pie, black-pudding and peas-porridge were English dishes.'



We asked in our last Editorial when was there last an archaeologist, *sensu stricto*, who was a Fellow both of the Royal Society and the British Academy, and wondered whether the answer was Sir Arthur Evans. The Secretary of the Geographical Society kindly reminds us that Sir Flinders Petrie was also a Fellow of both learned bodies.



Readers of ANTIQUITY will have read with sadness of the sudden death of Dr László Vértés on 20th September 1968. Vértés was the head of the Archaeological Department of the Hungarian National Museum and was one of the leading authorities on the Palaeolithic in Central Europe. He is best known to the world for his discovery in 1965 in the travertine

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quarry at Vértesszöllös, 50 km. north-west of Budapest, of part of a human skull dating to about 400,000 years ago and associated with fire and pebble-tools. Dr John Napier and Dr Kenneth Oakley reported on television that the Vértesszöllös skull was not *Homo erectus* as at first thought but primitive *Homo sapiens*. A full report on the skull was published by Dr Andor Thoma in *L'Anthropologie*, LXX, 1966, 495, where he gives it the name *Homo sapiens palaeohungaricus*. Dr Vértes also made important contributions to the chronology of early man by collecting carbon samples in association with Palaeolithic artifacts. He was able to push back the date of the Aurignacian in east Central Europe to over 40,000 years BP, considerably earlier than its appearance in western Europe. Dr Oakley writes: 'The death of László Vértes is a great tragedy. It is difficult to believe that a man so spare yet so vigorous and humorous should die at 54. In a letter which I received from him of 2nd July 1968, he said "I am very sorry being so late in answering your letter, but I suffered because of finishing my new book, *Pebble-path*." He went on to give me a series of new radiocarbon dates; for example, bottom of the Aurignacian I at the Istállóskő Cave, $44,300 \pm 1900$ BP, and assured me that I could use them in the new edition of my book.' Incidentally these dates are published in *Foldrajzi Kozl* in an article by Vértes, M. A. Geyh, and J. C. Vogel, entitled 'New Chronological Dates of the Wurmian of Hungary'.



Certainly archaeology makes headlines these days, and some of the headlines are startling: 'Coins Found in Roman Lavatory', '£100,000 Asked for Mosaic in Garden', 'History Goes Up for Sale at £2 a Piece', 'Gasworks may be Saved as Ancient Monument'. The gasworks are at Fakenham in Norfolk and were built in 1848: now disused, they are said by the Norfolk and Norwich Archaeological Society to be of great interest. In passing we may note that one of Britain's earliest lead-mines, at Llanidloes in Montgomeryshire, was on 13th September handed over to the Ministry of Public Building

and Works as the first ancient industrial archaeological monument in Wales. The mosaic in the garden is the strange story which began with this advertisement in *The Sunday Times*: 'Archaeological Investment: Wanted one investor with approximately £10,000 for half share in proceeds from archaeological dig in August. Already partly uncovered two mosaic floors with at least two more discovered. Pieces of mosaic already being advertised in America plus Roman coins etc. Asking price of one mosaic £100,000. Leading London auctioneers interested plus several museums.' The archaeological correspondent of *The Sunday Times*, Patricia Connor, revealed that the author of this advertisement was an American called Walter Yearick whose garden in Cirencester covers several Roman mosaic pavements which he has allowed the Cirencester Excavation Committee to excavate.



It is known to many that the Editor of ANTIQUITY (and the Production Editor) move to the hamlet of Zouafques-par-Tournehem-sur l'Hem in the Pas-de-Calais for four months each year (which may account for some of the delays in correspondence). When Professor Christopher Hawkes heard of this he said 'Why the Pas-de-Calais? I call it the Pas-de-Forêts department.' This is not true: the Pas-de-Calais has several large national forests, one of them the Forêt d'Eperlecques, on the edge of which is a magnificent piece of last-war archaeology, the *blockhaus* which was to have controlled the annihilation of Britain. We have often had a glass of wine in the Café du Blockhaus after showing visitors this fantastic château-fort of the last war. But in the neighbouring Forêt de Tournehem is something more interesting: in the middle of the wood is a circular clearing and in this clearing a small chapel. Nôtre-Dame-de-la-Forêt has candles burning every day. The great service of the year is at 3 p.m. on 15th August, the Feast of the Assumption, and great crowds gather to worship here, including men and women who are never normally seen in ordinary village churches. What can they be worshipping? Can

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Nôtre-Dame-de-la-Forêt be a Christianized version of those circular clearings in woods of the 4th millennium BC which subsequently gave rise to our Woodhenges and Stonehenges?

Many people have written commenting on the Danish rag tree which we wrote about recently (ANTIQUITY, 1968, 167), and we were thinking of that circular clearing in the woods of south Sjaelland when we drove away from the Forêt de Tournehem and parked the car in St Omer. We walked into the Basilique de Nôtre-Dame especially to see the tomb of Saint Erkembode, a fine 7th/8th-century tomb cut out of a single block of limestone and set on two grumpy lions. To our astonishment we saw alongside the tomb a collection of rags—pieces of handkerchiefs and underwear and socks. We went back especially the following Sunday to see whether these ex-votos were still there while mass was being celebrated. They had all been cleared away, but three days later, on top of the tomb, were more rags and a pair of children's booties. The traces of the elder faiths are everywhere.



Among articles and notes which will appear in the 1969 volume of ANTIQUITY we mention Eric Higgs and Michael Jarman on the origins

of agriculture, Lord William Taylour on his sensational discoveries at Mycenae in 1968, Ian Stead on his excavations at Verulamium, Euan MacKie on the Iron Age in Scotland in the light of his recent excavations and C14 determinations, Professor Antonio Blanco and Dr J. M. Luzón on the pre-Roman silver mines they have discovered at Riotinto, Professor Hallam L. Movius on the Châtelperronian in French Archaeology with special reference to Arcy-sur-Cure, Professor Thurston Shaw on Archaeology in Nigeria, A. H. A. Hogg on French hill-forts, H. H. Coghlan on bronze arrowheads, and R. F. Tylecote on the question 'Can the composition of metal artifacts be a guide to provenance?' Well, we hope they will all appear, but the longer we edit ANTIQUITY the more certain we become of the need for more archaeological journals. We are delighted with the success of *Current Archaeology*, saddened by the demise of *The Archaeological News-Letter*, and eagerly await the first issue of *World Archaeology*. But more than ever we need a journal of technical archaeology. *Archaeometry* deals with only some aspects of the technique of archaeology. We are constantly having to turn down excellent contributions in this field because we believe they are too technical for ANTIQUITY.

Australian National University

CHAIR OF PREHISTORY

Applications are invited for the Professorship of Prehistory in the Research School of Pacific Studies.

The successful applicant will be the first head of a new and independent department. At present there is an academic staff of six, with adequate support and facilities. The new Professor will be primarily concerned with research and post-graduate training with special reference to Australia, South-West Pacific, and South-East Asia. Particular attention will be paid to environmental, ecological and ethnographic relations with prehistory.

The normal salary will be \$A13,000. Superannuation is on the FSSU pattern. Reasonable travel expenses are paid on appointment and assistance with housing is provided. The Professor will be entitled to study leave of one year in four with up to \$A3,200 expenses.

Further particulars should be obtained from the Academic Registrar, Australian National University, GPO Box 4, Canberra, ACT. The closing date for applications is 31st January 1969.