

# Antiquity

VOL. LVII No. 221

NOVEMBER 1983

## Editorial

Those of us who write about the history of archaeology often come in for adverse criticism, and rightly so, because we concentrate our narrative on Western Europe, Scandinavia, and the Mediterranean. But until now we have not had a readily available account of what went on in Central and Eastern Europe. Here, at last, is a book that redresses the balance. Dr Karel Sklenář contributed an important essay on 'The history of archaeology in Czechoslovakia' in (ed.) G. Daniel, *Towards a History of Archaeology* (London, 1981). In this book, *Archaeology in Central Europe: the first 500 years* (Leicester: The University Press; New York: St Martin's Press, 1983. 182 pp., 26 figs., 9 maps, £16.50), he tells the story at greater length, and over a wider area, which he defines as east of the Rhine valley and Switzerland, south of the Baltic coast of Germany, west of a no-man's land between Poland and Russia, and delimited in the south-east by the Turkish Empire in the northern region of the Balkans—in a word the regions which during the nineteenth century formed the territory of the two great empires of Austro-Hungary and Germany. The book, well produced with full bibliographical apparatus in the original languages and in English, has a sympathetic and helpful preface by Stuart Piggott.

It is a fascinating story. Sklenář reminds us that the early medieval manuscript of Tacitus's *Germania* was discovered in the monastery of Hersfeld in 1451, printed in Venice in 1470 and in Nuremberg in 1473; and that we should rate very highly J. Dubrovský, the father of Czech prehistory, who published the first purely scientific paper on Czech archaeology, 'On the burial customs of the ancient Slavs', in 1786, and pronounced archaeological finds to be 'the speaking documents of our most distant past'.

He is particularly good on the long delay in nineteenth-century Central Europe in accepting

the Thomson Three Age system, and on forgeries, including false runic inscriptions which seem to have been as common in Central Europe as they now are in America.

This is a book that must be read with care by all archaeologists and by everyone interested in the past history of their own studies. We may make three criticisms. The 500 years of the title was the period from the turn of the fourteenth/fifteenth centuries up to the first half of the present century: it is a pity Sklenář did not carry the story on from 1950 to the present day. Secondly, he is curiously reticent on the contribution made by archaeologists outside his area to the archaeology of Central Europe. Déchelette and Åberg do not appear in his story and it is extraordinary that Childe's *Dawn of European Civilisation* and especially *The Danube in Prehistory* go unmentioned.

Our third cavil is his bibliography which is confined to native sources: there is no mention of Michaelis, Oppeln-Bronikowski, or Eggers, who went part of the way to write the basis of this book.

But let us not look a gift horse in the mouth. This book is one of the most welcome gifts archaeological scholarship has received for some while. May we hope and pray that someone will give us a similar volume on the history of archaeology in the last 500 years in Russia.

☞ The Duchy of Cornwall owns large estates in the West Country of Britain, including Maiden Castle, the Isles of Scilly, and parts of Dartmoor and Bodmin Moor (not to mention the Oval in Kennington!). The Prince of Wales, as Duke of Cornwall, decided that every scientific aspect of his land should be properly studied. He set up an archaeological advisory group under the chairmanship of the Editor of ANTIQUITY. The other members of this committee are: Henry Cleere, Professor Charles Thomas, Dr Tom Greeves, David

Morgan-Evans, Professor Malcolm Todd, Dr R. N. Milman, Nicholas Thomas and Michael Chandler.

The first meeting of this committee took place in the sweltering heat of 12 July in farms near Bath in the presence of the Prince of Wales and John Higgs, Secretary to the Duchy. It was fascinating to study the Englishcombe survey on the spot and walk along Wansdyke. The Committee endorsed the firm line which the Duchy has taken in banning metal detectors from its lands and it organized surveys of the Isles of Scilly and of farms in Devon and Cornwall. The Duchy Committee will naturally work in close cooperation with the National Trust whose archaeological officer, David Thackray, has already done so much to interest the Trust in our archaeological heritage.

¶ We note with sadness the deaths of Joan du Plat Taylor, Maureen Cornish, Hugh Plommer and Tadeusz Sulimirski. Maureen Cornish died at Bath in May: the July edition of *Popular Archaeology* marked the third anniversary of the launching of that successful magazine of which, as the Editor says, she was 'the linch-pin', and the August edition has a personal and moving appreciation of her by Magnus Magnusson. Joan du Plat Taylor was very properly described in *The Times* obituary of her as 'a pioneer of underwater archaeology' (4 June 1983). She began her archaeological career as one of Wheeler's girls at Maiden Castle—and how archaeology has benefited from that *corps de ballet*! She worked in Italy and Cyprus and was for a while assistant curator of the Cyprus Museum in Nicosia. In 1945 she became the first full-time librarian of the London University Institute of Archaeology and did that job with great efficiency and dedication for a quarter of a century. She was fascinated by underwater archaeology and, although not a diver herself, set about organizing this new discipline in the UK. She helped to launch the epoch-making excavation of the bronze-age wreck at Cape Gelidonya directed by George Bass in 1960. She was instrumental in setting up the Council for Nautical Archaeology and in founding *The International Journal of Nautical Archaeology*, which she edited for eight years. We were all delighted when she was given an honorary doctorate by the University of Pennsylvania. When she retired from her librarianship in London she came to live near Cambridge in the west end of those low hills nonsensically called the East Anglian Heights, and was a constant and

generous source of advice and instruction to the Cambridge Department of Archaeology.

If Peter Fleming deserved the sobriquet of the last English public-school boy, Hugh Plommer deserved the title of the last Cambridge eccentric. A devoted and earnest lecturer in the Department of Classical Archaeology, a walking encyclopedia of information about Greece, Rome and architecture, he spent part of his life castigating ignorant writers on Greek archaeology and ill-advised architects proposing new projects in Cambridge. But his astonishing achievement, repeated every morning, was cycling through the flat Cambridge streets on his way to the Ark (the Museum of Classical Archaeology), puffing and blowing and giving the impression that he was in fact dealing with one of the most difficult Pyrenean passes in the *Tour de France*. Only a genius could persuade us every morning that the level land from the Round Church to the Senate House was in fact that difficult road from Mas d'Azil to Saint-Bertrand de Comminges. But he was a persuasive genius.

Tadeusz Sulimirski, who died in London in June at the age of 85, was a Polish archaeologist who came to England in 1940. He fought in the First World War, first in the Polish legion of the Austro-Hungarian empire against Tsarist Russia, and later in the Polish Army. He trained as a lawyer at Lwow, but turned to archaeology and was appointed to the Chair of Prehistoric Archaeology at the Jagellonian University of Cracow in 1936. His teaching in the University of London, where he was a lecturer from 1958 to 1965, and his writings, especially his *Prehistoric Russia* (1970), did much to inform the west about Eastern European archaeology. He took over the mantle of Minns, fascinated by the Scythians, Sarmatians and Cimmerians and their relation with the Classical World, the Middle East, and barbarian Europe.

¶ It was a great pleasure, at long last, to visit, in June, Val Camonica and to see, guided by Emmanuel Anati, one of the great engraved rock surfaces for which the valley is famous, and gaze at the small strange figures which, as he said in his book *Camonica Valley* (London: Cape, 1964; a translation of his *La Civilisation du Val Camonica*, Paris: Arthaud, 1960), are 'a depiction of village life in the Alps from neolithic times to the birth of Christ'. The Institute which Anati created at Capo

di Ponte, and over which he presides (except for the four days a month when he teaches in the Department of Archaeology at Lecce where he is Professor), is a most efficient and well-organized set-up.

We drove along the hot dusty roads of June Lombardy, pausing for a glass or two or three at Soave, to Aosta and saw the remarkable site at Saint-Martin-de-Corléans which Dr Franco Mezzena has been excavating since 1969. The comparable site of Le Petit Chasseur, at Sion in the Valais on the other side of the Alps, is well known, but the Aosta site is even more remarkable and is, without doubt, being splendidly excavated. We admired the purpose-built, dome-like structures, built in Milan, which cover and protect the excavations (please everywhere copy) and are delighted to know that, when the excavations are finished in three or four years' time, there will be a permanent structure *à la* Fishbourne.

From Aosta to Martigny where the ancient Roman city of *Octodurus* is celebrating its 2,000th anniversary.

Having seen the archaeological delights of Martigny, we retired after dinner to the Café de la Tour for a glass of Williamine and were astonished to see a plaque saying 'Ici on loge à pied et à cheval', and a grand list of lodgers including Rousseau, Goethe, Madame de Staël, Stendhal, Chateaubriand, Metternich, Byron, Liszt, Flaubert, Charles Dickens, Ruskin, Wagner, Prosper Mérimée, Jules Verne, Renan, and Mark Twain.

And from Aosta to Paris to see the crypt of the parvis de Notre Dame excellently excavated by Michel Fleury from 1965 to 1970 and most splendidly set out for all to see, telling the story of Paris from its beginnings. We have done well in York: Paris is equally good but how much we must congratulate municipal and ecclesiastical authorities for their vision and inspiration! The past lives as we walk under York Minster and the parvis of Notre Dame. We, who travel constantly around France, are always suddenly saddened and made thoughtful by a wayside stone saying that here a young boy was brutally machine-gunned by the Germans. This is history. But so is the brief notice at the head of the stairs leading out of the Parvis Museum. It is a list of names of those who fell defending the Tour du Petit Pont (which became Le Petit Chatelet) against the Normans in 886!

☛ The British Museum is to be warmly congratulated on its new series of books. Four of them have already appeared: *Roman Britain* (by T. W. Potter), *Assyrian sculpture* (by Julian Reade), *Clocks and watches* (by Hugh Tait) and *Egyptian sculpture* (by T. G. H. James & W. V. Davies). Fantastic value at £4.95 each: where else, for example, could an Egyptologist, or a non-Egyptologist, find 36 colour illustrations of sculpture (and 60 black-and-white) for under five pounds? Answer, nowhere.

Celia Clear, Managing Editor of British Museum Publications Ltd, writes (14 July 1983):

It is certainly quite a milestone for the Museum to be able to produce such attractive handbooks to the most popular areas of the collections. For this we are indebted to the Henry Moore Foundation. As you know, Henry Moore was very much influenced by the British Museum 60 years ago and his continuing interest led to the publication of our book *Henry Moore at the British Museum* in 1981 . . . The idea for the series came from numerous requests at the Museum shop, 'Do you have more about . . . ?' There was obviously a need for attractive, accurate, inexpensive introductions to the parts of the Museum which most often fire the imagination of visitors. But they are not guided tours and they are not restricted to the Museum's own collections. *Roman Britain*, for example, was inspired by the imminent opening of the new gallery, but although it draws largely on Museum objects for illustration, it is a concise survey of Roman Britain as a whole.

☛ We welcome a new journal from Australia, *The Australian Journal of Historical Archaeology*, edited by Graham Connah of the Department of Pre-history and Archaeology of the University of New England, NSW. The Australian Society for Historical Archaeology was founded in 1970 to promote the study of historical archaeology in Australia: the Society supports the conservation of sites and relics which are a part of the Australian heritage, and this is its journal. All success to it.

Subscriptions to the Society are as follows: Life membership \$100.00; individual membership (per annum) \$10.00; Corporate membership (per annum) \$20.00. Communications should be addressed to: *The Australian Society for Historical Archaeology, Box 220, Holme Building, University of Sydney, NSW 2006, Australia*. In addition to the journal members receive the quarterly *Newsletter*.