

# Antiquity

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## Editorial Notes

ANTIQUITY' is not a news-journal; a quarterly publication can seldom hope to be 'first with the news' when there must be so long an interval between getting the news and publishing it. Our function is rather to tell our readers about the most interesting things that are going on in the archaeological world; and also to foreshadow coming events of outstanding importance. In this number we publish two articles which are definitely 'news', being the first reports of new discoveries. Mrs Woolner describes some pictures of ships scratched hundreds or thousands of years ago on two standing stones of the Bronze Age temple of Hal Tarxien in Malta. The temple was deeply buried until it was rediscovered and excavated forty years ago by the late Sir Themistocles Zammit. During all those years the ship-graffiti were exposed to view and just as plainly visible as they are today; and the stones must have been looked at by thousands of people (including the present writer). But, like those axes carved on the stones of Stonehenge (illustrated in ANTIQUITY No. 109, March 1954), the graffiti escaped notice until Mrs Woolner spotted them. There may be other graffiti awaiting discovery both in Malta and elsewhere (perhaps in Sardinia, for instance?); but, of course, they can hardly be expected to survive on monuments that, unlike Hal Tarxien, have long been exposed to weathering. Mrs Woolner's interpretation of these ship-graffiti as thank-offerings of grateful mariners is supported by a telling modern parallel. If she is right it shows once more how little the substance of the Mediterranean religion has changed throughout the millennia.



It was during the middle and latter part of the 2nd millennium (say about 1500 to 1100 B.C.) that there was a great outburst of seafaring all over the ancient world, which modern opinion attributes largely to the Mycenaeans. We must not forget, however, that this was also the period of Egyptian imperial expansion, and that one of the chief evidences of far-flung sea voyages is the discovery of those segmented and other faience beads which were chiefly made in Egypt about 1400 B.C. They have been found in Britain and Ireland (quite recently by the late Professor O'Riordain in the mound above a Passage Grave on the Hill of Tara); in France, Spain and Lipari, and in Greece. But they have also been found in India, whither Mycenaeans could never have gone by sea. In our next number we hope to publish an article on this fascinating subject of early shipping by Dr R. G. Barnett of the British Museum.

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The other news-item we now print is the Note by Professor Marinatos on his discovery of an intact group of burials in a ruined tholos at Pylos on the west coast of Greece. Pylos is famous as the home of Homer's Nestor whose palace is being excavated by Professor Blegen. A tholos is a round building of dry stone walling, the stones being made to overlap, course by course, in the manner known as corbelling, so that ultimately they almost met at the top, thus forming a sort of dome over the tomb. Similar roughly contemporary tombs in Spain, Portugal, Brittany, Britain and Ireland are usually called Passage Graves; and although it is generally agreed that there must have been some cultural connection between the builders in the different regions, it is still not known exactly what form it took. The new discoveries (illustrated on Plates IV to VIII) are of outstanding artistic excellence, some of them recalling the inlaid daggers of Mycenae.



Jericho needs no apology to our readers who will by now have realized that it is opening up a new world, hitherto unsuspected. Our present instalment is a friendly argument between Professor Braidwood who is excavating what we must perhaps call a rival site at Jarmo in Iraq, and Dr Kenyon, who has boldly gone back to prepare the fifth season's excavations at Jericho. Such arguments are normal and necessary in all scientific work, and are a sign of vitality. Knowledge is advanced by informed criticism as well as by new discoveries, and Jericho has provided both. This truth—or truism—is often misunderstood by people unfamiliar with the atmosphere in which modern archaeologists work and live; whatever may have happened a century ago, before archaeology became a science and a profession, it is now wholly untrue to say, as did the Minister of Works recently in the House of Commons, that 'there is a profound suspicion among all archaeologists about what all other archaeologists say or do'. Archaeologists are sometimes critical of things done or left undone by his Ministry, particularly at Stonehenge, where a recent instance could be given of expert assistance foolishly refused; and they rightly expect that, before such major operations as the raising of fallen stones—itself a perfectly, proper but ticklish undertaking—are begun, there shall be an assurance of full and genuine co-operation with experts outside the Ministry. We only become 'suspicious' when we are informed in political communiqués that there is 'complete identity of views on all the subjects under discussion', because the facts are always obviously otherwise. People who live in glass houses should not throw stones.



Professor Vogt's article is an excellent instance of this 'informed criticism'. By using the modern most careful excavation technique he has proved that the lakeside settlements of Switzerland, formerly thought to have been built on piles over the water of the lakes, were in fact built above damp, but not watery, ground. The opinion that they were 'lake-dwellings' was based upon faulty observation and grossly deficient methods, in the days before archaeological excavation-technique was developed, that is, in archaeology's pre-scientific days. Here, if anywhere, has critical observation advanced knowledge. Mr Gabel's article, too, criticizes earlier views about the Neolithic Period in Europe, but from a different angle.



It is hard for the Editor to maintain a balance between light and heavy matter in each number; it should be added that these adjectives convey no disparagement whatever; for in this kind of journalism light articles often outweigh heavy ones! We hope our readers

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will agree that in this present number the balance is kept. Our next number will contain, besides the article already mentioned on early shipping, a very important one on a subject that cannot be disclosed beforehand, and another on Balkh, mother of cities, in Afghanistan by Mr Allchin. It is good news that Sir Mortimer Wheeler is organizing an excavation there. Balkh is a vast site; the town itself was seven miles in circumference, and it is perhaps the most outstanding site yet remaining virtually unexcavated. Our December number will be devoted to Evolution, in anticipation of the centenary, in 1958, of the first announcement of Darwin's theory of the Origin of Species. Articles will deal with the evolution of Man himself, of his tools and of society.



We offer a hearty welcome to the first number of *Scottish Studies* (published twice yearly for the School of Scottish Studies by Oliver and Boyd of Edinburgh, £1 a year). The School was founded in 1950, with the blessing of the University of Edinburgh and the (perhaps more effective) 'generous aid of the Carnegie Trust'. Its activities cover archaeology (especially in the direction of compiling maps of prehistoric and early historic Scotland), place-names, oral traditions, folklore and music. The School has a local habitation and a staff, and as already a going concern it deserves support and encouragement from Scotsmen all over the world, who might well profit themselves and help the School by subscribing to *Scottish Studies*. This number contains 150 pages and many illustrations. The articles deal with the School and its works; historical contacts between Scotland and Scandinavia; Scottish cadastral maps; folk-tales; the plough in Scotland; and the classification of Gaelic folk-song. The article on maps deals with some fascinating old 18th-century Estate Plans in Lothian, illustrated by copies beautifully drawn by Miss Findlay, and also by air-photographs of the same areas. The only criticism we have is of the format, which could be improved, e.g. by condensing the prelims, for which four pages seem unnecessary, by adding page-numbers to the List of Contents, and in various other ways.