

# Antiquity

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### Editorial Notes

AS we write the excavating season in England is in full swing. Verulamium (St. Albans), Colchester, Richborough and Hembury are all sites of first-rate importance, and they are all, needless to say, in good hands. In Wales the prehistoric hill-fort of Llanmelin above Caerleon is again being attacked, and on Hadrian's Wall the *vicus* of Housesteads and the fort of Birdoswald. It is not without significance that at four of these seven sites attention is being directed to native settlements outside Roman towns (or forts). In the Cotswolds new ground is being broken at Salmonsbury, outside Bourton-on-the-Water, where a small walled town is being excavated. This, too, is an outstanding site, and it has yielded both Roman and pre-Roman remains.



If the season of 1932 is equally eventful—and already it promises to be—we shall have plenty to show our guests during the International Congress of Prehistoric and Protohistoric Studies which meets in London next summer (25 to 30 July). It is gratifying to know that the preliminary discussions in Berne have had this satisfactory result, for it was no secret that certain difficulties had to be overcome. Gatherings like this serve a useful purpose if they make known to one another the real workers in a common field of research. The

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best results are often achieved as much by formal and informal discussions as by the reading of papers. At the ideal Congress, as at the best dinners, there would be few speeches but many opportunities of personal intercourse.



The Congress may well prove to be a landmark in the history of archaeology : for a new start was made at Berne. The representatives of sixteen nations agreed that it would be both easier and more desirable to found a new Congress than to revive the old one. This bold, but obviously right, decision was the inevitable outcome of recent events, and we feel sure that, under the capable direction of its permanent Council, the new Congress will have a prosperous career. The British representatives on the Council are Sir Charles Peers and Professor J. L. Myres, and the British secretaries Professor Gordon Childe and Mr Christopher Hawkes.



There was a friendly argument at Berne about the title of the Congress itself (with its implications)—whether to retain the old one (*Congrès internationaux d'Anthropologie et d'Archéologie préhistoriques*) or invent a new one. The second course was almost unanimously adopted, and the new title is International Congress of Prehistoric and Protohistoric Studies. We think the decision was a wise one. In theory, no doubt, the mingling of archaeology and anthropology is quite proper, but in practice the fusion is often very incomplete, and is not likely to be assisted by the holding of a joint Congress. There are however certain aspects of anthropology in which archaeologists are directly interested—such subjects for instance as the megalith-makers of Assam or the cave-dwellers of Tunisia. Here are found living survivals of primitive cultures, which contribute directly to an understanding of prehistoric conditions. We are glad that, under the new constitution, such subjects will not be ruled out. They are on quite a different footing from the unrelated study of primitive customs and the anatomy of the human body.



For instance, a motion-picture like Mr Hilton Simpson's of primitive life in the Aurès mountains of Algeria falls well within the scope of the Congress. From such displays it is possible to learn more about the sort of life prehistoric man led than from many archaeological

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papers. For it must be confessed that lectures with a 'human touch' of this kind do much to relieve the monotony of technical discourses, and are always well attended by both specialists and the general public. ANTIQUITY has consistently advocated the policy of flood-lighting the past by means of the present. We believe that much anthropological research, however valuable in itself, does not achieve this result, and had therefore better be left to its own specialists.



One of the inevitable recurrent by-products of excavation is the controversy about leaving excavations open, as opposed to filling in. This cropped up three years ago in the London papers, and the pros and cons were stated by an experienced digger. Theoretically, the best course to adopt after uncovering the ruins of a town, palace, temple, or other building, is to leave them open for inspection under suitable weatherproof protection. The classic instance of this is the Palace of Minos at Cnossos in Crete. Here protection, admirably combined with a minimum of legitimate restoration, has been carried out in irreproachable style by Sir Arthur Evans. In this country similar conservative measures have been carried out by the Ancient Monuments Branch of H.M. Office of Works, whose achievements in this direction are still too little appreciated. (In order to realize what we owe to an enlightened policy of conservation, critics should watch some southern craftsman reconstructing the past from a single brick or from a few loose tesserae).



But the argument is not one which can be profitably conducted on purely theoretical lines. Those who advocate the leaving open of ruins should visit some of the Long Barrows and Roman Villas that were ravaged and left desolate during the last century. Rain, frost and vegetation will soon have destroyed them utterly. In nine cases out of ten it is a duty to re-cover the remains with earth, and in the tenth to construct some weatherproof protection. This practice is now pretty generally observed in Great Britain, but the difficulties to be met are sometimes forgotten, and no harm will be done by restating them for the benefit of the interested parties. Needless to say we have no particular modern instances in mind.

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Our National and other libraries are used so generally that we make no apology for giving our support to the Society of Friends of the National Libraries which has been formed. Everyone knows that libraries are the last institutions to receive proper financial assistance, and the amount allotted from public sources is ludicrously small for the services which are expected. From time to time we are informed that such and such a collection of papers of the utmost importance for the study of National History is likely to leave the country, or that books of great rarity are to be offered for sale, and that the ordinary funds available are inadequate to acquire them. It is in such cases as these that the Society now formed will be of use. Just as the National Art-Collections Fund has saved many a masterpiece for England, so may we hope that the ' Friends ' will become as great a force in acquiring documents and books which, on account of their historical, literary, or bibliographical interest, should become National property.



The word ' National ' does not imply that such purchases will necessarily always be made for the great libraries. It is proposed to frame the constitution of the Society so that assistance may be given to university, municipal, and other libraries, which in their several capacities serve the needs of the community at large. We welcome the happy idea of including them.



To be really effective, wide and generous support is required and we feel sure that this will be forthcoming, even in these difficult days. Inquiries concerning the Society, and subscriptions, should be sent to the Hon. Secretary, Mr H. D. Ziman, British Museum, London, W.C. 1.