

# Antiquity

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## Editorial

WHEN ANTIQUITY was founded in 1927 our knowledge of the British Neolithic was thin and uncertain. The first edition of Childe's *Dawn of European Civilisation* and Kendrick's *The Axe Age*, both published in 1925, spoke of Wexcombe Ware: in the same year Menghin in his appendix to the third edition of Hoernes's *Urgeschichte der bildenden Kunst in Europa* talked of Grimstonkeramik. Four years before, Cyril Fox (who contributes an article of outstanding interest to the present number of ANTIQUITY) said that the Neolithic was 'an ill-defined dumping ground for stone implements (other than Palaeolithic and Mesolithic) not known by clear-cut associations with datable grave deposits to be of the early metal age.'

The work of Leeds and Childe prepared the way for the work of Stuart Piggott; his *Neolithic Pottery of the British Isles* appeared in 1932, and his *Neolithic Cultures of the British Isles* eighteen years later. In this book Piggott argued for the beginning of the British Neolithic at around 2000 B.C. and so it seemed to most people in the nineteen-fifties. Now radio-carbon dating has shown that this date was a thousand years out. We have already, in the last few numbers of ANTIQUITY, printed in notes and articles by Waterbolk, Giot and Watts the dates for the Neolithic in France and Ireland, and now we are happy to print here (p. 212) Dr Isobel Smith's note on the three dates for Windmill Hill itself determined by the British Museum Research Laboratory. It is now clear that the beginning of the Neolithic in north-western Europe belongs to the second half (or perhaps the fourth quarter) of the 4th millennium B.C.

Incidentally, we have had to wait a long time for the publication of these Windmill Hill dates; perhaps the British Museum could devise a quicker system of releasing its Carbon-14 dates. It is good to know that when the Carbon-14 plant in the National Physical Laboratory is working its dates will be released as and when they are determined and not be delayed for the periodical meetings of a Committee. The Council for British Archaeology, in its report no. 10 for the year ending 30 June, 1960, in commenting on the recommendations of its Neolithic and Bronze Age Research Committee, says: 'The screening of specimens submitted to the National Physical Laboratory for Carbon-14 tests, and the speedier release of information on tests undertaken by the British Museum, has been urged by the Committee.'

There are still some archaeologists who are loth to accept Carbon-14 dates; Professor Milošević of Heidelberg is perhaps the most vocative of them. Some point to the apparent gap of a thousand years between the archaeological and radio-carbon dates, but often on

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examination this gap is an illusory one. We could say in Britain that there was a gap of a thousand years between the date of the Neolithic given in Piggott's *Neolithic Cultures* and the radiocarbon dates for the beginning of Windmill Hill, but this gap was due only to the fact that our archaeological dates before 1400 B.C. had no firm basis whatsoever. The same is true of Eastern Europe and in the next number of ANTIQUITY we will be publishing a very interesting article by Mr James Mellaart, Assistant Director of the British School of Archaeology at Ankara, dealing with the problem of the apparent gap between archaeological and Carbon-14 dating in Anatolia and the Balkans.

Recently Dr Harry Godwin, F.R.S., Professor-Elect of Botany in the University of Cambridge, and for many years Head of the Department of Quaternary Research gave the Croonian Lecture at the Royal Society—a masterly performance, demonstrating brilliantly how the dates for the late Quaternary and Holocene produced by clay varve counting were confirmed by Carbon-14 dating, and themselves confirmed it. When published, this lecture will be an indispensable summary for all concerned with prehistory. In a letter to the Editor Dr Godwin urges that all archaeologists should give the source of any Carbon-14 dates which they quote, and we ask that anyone writing for ANTIQUITY should do this, as Dr Isobel Smith has done in her note, using the accepted abbreviations for the Laboratories.

Meanwhile Willard F. Libby, who started Carbon-14 dating when he was in Chicago, and is now Professor of Chemistry in the University of California at Los Angeles, has given us a readable summary of the technique and method of radio-carbon dating in an article in the May, 1960 number of the *Journal of the Chemical Society*. It has, however, some curious statements which show that Libby, distinguished scientist though he is and originator of radio-carbon dating, is sometimes unable to appreciate the application of his work to human history, as when he says: 'We do not find any evidence of human beings in England before about 10,000 years ago. This is also the oldest American—the oldest Dane—the oldest Irishman, etc.—and they are all contemporaneous.' This is a devastating example of the divorce between science and the humanities which is so often written about.



We make no apology, even to our readers most far from the British Isles, for returning briefly to the problems of the Royal Commissions on Ancient and Historical Monuments discussed six months ago in the Editorial of our March number (ANTIQUITY, 1960, 1). In the first place, we have received a very considerable amount of correspondence on this subject. Secondly, *The Times* (21 March, 1960) devoted a two column article to the problem. Thirdly, the matter was raised in the House of Commons in an Adjournment Debate on Wednesday, 25 May (*Hansard*, vol. 624, no. 120, pp. 405-414).

A quarterly like ANTIQUITY can hardly have a lively correspondence, and the rapid and valuable give-and-take which goes on in the correspondence columns of the daily and Sunday papers is impossible here. But we must mention, editorially, some points from two of the many letters we have received about the Royal Commissions. The Director of Publications of Her Majesty's Stationery Office writes that 'the suggestion that the Inventories be issued in sections is certainly of interest. The Royal Commission on Historical Monuments (England) is, in fact, already considering the possible advantages of issuing their works in smaller, and therefore, cheaper, volumes.' The General Secretary of the Institution of Professional Civil Servants writes: 'It may not be known to you that the staff (of the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments (England)), through the Institution of Professional Civil Servants, gave evidence to a Committee of Inquiry domestic to the

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English Royal Commission that sat in 1958. The Institution is very anxious indeed that there should be a speed-up in the publication of volumes because there is a developing frustration amongst the staff at this failure to secure publication. . . . The Institution has made specific suggestions that would streamline the efforts of these highly skilled individuals and throw rather more responsibility on the officers in the field making the surveys. At the present moment we are convinced that the procedure which involves to quite an extent a re-doing of the work of the field officers, holds up volume production to an enormous degree, and the improvements secured are certainly not worth the delay involved.'

The article in *The Times* was called 'Leisurely Progress of History in the Making: More Volumes Besought more Often' and contained the results of an interview with the Secretary of the English Commission in which he is reported as having said, 'Now that we have got the measure of the prehistoric material and are being assisted by modern methods, we shall have a far higher rate of production. We are better equipped than ever before.' It is good to know that there are some official quarters where it is thought that the measure of prehistory has been obtained. The debate in the House of Commons was initiated by Mr Martin McLaren who revealed that the annual vote for the Commission was £50,000, and concluded that 'it may well be that the work of the Royal Commission would receive new impetus if the Commission was wound up as such and its functions transferred to the Ministry of Works, where they could be combined with the Minister's existing responsibilities.' Major Sir Frank Markham, supporting Mr McLaren, said he was 'appalled at the slowness of publication of the Royal Commission,' and added, 'My own estimate is that, considering the present pace at which the Commission is proceeding, it will take 240 years before it covers the British Isles.' The Financial Secretary to the Treasury, in replying, was sympathetic and informed. He was particularly sympathetic to the idea of publication in parts, and said that he was himself to be the Chairman of a Working Party to discuss the work of the Royal Commission, and 'to arrange any necessary reassessment and reorganization of the Government's various activities in this whole field.'

The existence of this Working Party is splendid news, and we wish it luck. It should consider all the activities of the state in relation to archaeology and our ancient and historical monuments. It will, of course, consider the possibility of grouping together the various activities at present carried out by the Royal Commissions, the National Buildings Record, the Archaeology Division of the Ordnance Survey, and the Ancient Monuments Department of the Ministry of Works. We believe that the Commission system is out-dated, and that we need a Central Archaeological Archive in a Department of State under some such official as the Queen's Antiquary, directly responsible—until we have a Minister of Fine Arts, or of Arts and Amenities—to the Minister of Works. We believe that, even if the Archaeology Division remains, it should be reformed by decentralization, especially by decentralization of editing, and the production of work by parishes or regions in fascicule form, each entry initialled by the investigator concerned. (To hell with the Civil Service tradition of anonymity; these entries are not policy minutes but scholarly records, and how can we attract scholars into our Commission staffs if they are to remain mute and inglorious while their colleagues in museums and universities can publish under their own names?)

We shall publish with excitement the results of the Treasury's Working Party. It is good to know that there is such interest in the state in archaeology. We reiterate what we said six months ago: the British archaeological effort in state archaeology is so good in so many ways that we are all encouraged to try to make it better in certain ways. Our Ordnance Survey maps and the volumes published by the Royal Commissions since the last war are the cynosure of foreign archaeologists. This should not make us complacent. We must improve.

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Under an improved and centralized organization there should be no need to half-apologize, as the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland has done, for their admirable publication *The Stirling Heads* (H.M. Stationery Office, Edinburgh, 1960, pp. 20, 40 plates, 10s.). The Stirling Heads are a series of carved medallions which once formed the enrichment of the timber ceiling of King James V's Presence Chamber at Stirling Castle; they are one of the most remarkable and least known legacies of Renaissance craftsmanship in Britain and no detailed study has ever been made of them before this monograph. The Scottish Commission felt that adequate justice could not be done to these Heads in their forthcoming *Inventory of the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Stirlingshire*, and so prepared this illustrated account. Warmest congratulations to them and their staff and to the enterprise of the Scottish Stationery Office. There is a real demand for monographs of this kind, and if the Commission staffs were released from a too rigid county basis, we could have often small books like this one dealing with a special subject or a special area to the benefit of all. The only small publication the English Commission has attempted is the Guide to St. Alban's but we understand several other Guides were planned but never published. The Commission is working in Dorset, Wiltshire, Yorkshire and Cambridgeshire. We want little guides to Ely and York Minster and Avebury, for example, and we cannot wait 240 years for them. *The Stirling Heads* points the way, and Sir Edward Boyle's Working Party will, we hope, see that way.



Several correspondents have referred to our suggestion that there could be such an official as the Queen's Antiquary: by implication we were thinking back to the King's Antiquary. But has there ever been such a person in the British State? The article on John Leland in the *Dictionary of National Biography* states: 'In 1533 Leland was made King's antiquary, an office in which he had neither predecessor nor successor.' In the *Warburg Institute Journal*, 1950, 313, Professor Momigliano discusses this statement and finds its first authority in T. Smith's 1691 *Life of Camden*. In his 'Newe Yeares Gyfte to King Henry the VIII' called *The Laborious Journey and Searche for Englandes Antiquitees*, Leland states that in the thirty-fifth year of the King's reign he obtained a 'moste graciouslye commyssion to peruse and dylygentlee to searche all the lybraryes of Monasteryes and collegies of thys your noble realme', and signed his pamphlet 'Joannes Leylandus Antiquarius'. Momigliano asks is there any authority other than this signature for supposing Leland was King's Antiquary, referring us to the opinions of E. N. Adams (*Old English Scholarship*, 1917, 12) and T. D. Kendrick (*British Antiquity*, 1950, 47). But even if we have no precedent, let us go ahead with the idea of a Queen's Antiquary in charge of a centralized archive, responsible for the protection of our monuments, the archaeological entries on our maps, and the publication of descriptions of our ancient monuments in quick, appropriate and readily available form. We commend this idea to the Treasury Working Party.



We wrote in the June 1960 Editorial of the death of Sir Leonard Woolley, and we print here (p. 220) a note by Professor Max Mallowan describing the Woolley Memorial Fund. We also print (p. 211) a note by Professor Emery on the UNESCO plan for Nubia. In previous comments on this matter we have said that we would try to provide information to guide the many who want to volunteer for work in Egypt and the Sudan, and to answer the many queries we have received on this matter. In a letter to the editor Professor Emery

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says: 'I have made no mention of volunteers, for the hard fact is that we have a surfeit of them. What is needed now is money and gifts of equipment.'



As we go to press, the *Observer* publishes in its issue of 3 July an article by Professor L. R. Palmer, Professor of Comparative Philology in the University of Oxford with the extravagant title 'The Truth about Knossos'. The *Observer* also, in a piece of infelicitous and sensationalist journalism, common enough in some Sunday newspapers but fortunately rare in the *Observer*, headlines Palmer's contribution as 'Knossos Findings Misrepresented: Archaeological Sensation: Oxford Don's Discovery', and then adds in two sentences which have been widely deplored by scholars (including Professor Palmer): 'Did Sir Arthur Evans, carried away by the splendour of his discoveries, unconsciously misreport the evidence? Or has Professor Palmer exposed a conscious misrepresentation, reminiscent of the Piltdown Man fraud?' These vulgar, startling catch-fivepenny words make one ask: How many guns can one jump?

We shall return to the problems discussed by Professor Palmer in a later issue (meanwhile, the article we print in the present number by Mr Sinclair Hood on 'The Late Bronze Age *tholoi* of the Aegean Area' is very relevant to the whole problem of Minoan-Mycenean relationships), *but only when his views are fully published*, and we deplore the fact that he has not given us his views in a scholarly and well-argued form before attacking Sir Arthur Evans in the necessarily compressed form of a newspaper article. We censure the *Observer* for its bad taste and for trying to make capital out of what in the end must be a complicated matter of conflicting interpretations by archaeologists and linguists. The parallel is not with Piltdown but with Rouffignac, where the truth (or otherwise) of an important discovery was wilfully subordinated to press publicity and sensationalism. These things do great harm to archaeology and scholarship and should be vigorously resisted. Compare the Palmer-Knossos and the Rouffignac affairs with the debunking of Piltdown Man which first proceeded by learned papers and lectures to learned societies, and widespread discussions in the scholarly world, before ever there were newspaper articles. It is worth remembering with pleasure at this moment the restraint, integrity and scholarly care with which Dr Oakley and Dr Weiner handled the publication of their archaeologically sensational discoveries. Incidentally Piltdown is in the news again. In a recent issue of *Nature* (July 9, 1960, p. 174), Dr Ashley Montagu argues that the Piltdown cranial bones were artificially thickened, and Dr Kenneth Oakley says that Dr Montagu's experiments while 'most interesting', 'cannot be considered as providing a possible explanation of the unusual thickness of the Piltdown cranial bones.' In fact he questions that it is so unusual and says that in the British Museum collection there are other crania with walls just as thick as those of the Piltdown skull.