

# Antiquity

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## Editorial

SCIENCE knows no frontiers; a discovery made by any scientist anywhere—provided it is repeated and verified and is published in the conventional way—is valid for all scientists everywhere, and so the writings of Mendeleeff (a Russian Professor of Chemistry), Mendel (an Austrian monk), Dalton (a Lancashire school-master), Priestley (a Unitarian minister in Birmingham), despite differences in language, became the property of the whole scientific world.' These words were spoken by Sir Eric Ashby, at present President and Vice-Chancellor of the Queen's University of Belfast, and Master-Elect of Clare College, Cambridge, in his Ballard-Matthews Lectures delivered at the University College of North Wales in Bangor in January, 1958, and are now published (with additions) as *Technology and the Academics: An Essay on Universities and the Scientific Revolution*—a small book (Macmillan, London, 1958, 15s.) which should be read by all who are interested in the present state and future policy of higher education in Europe and America.

The study of antiquity, whether it be classed as a science, a scientific humanity, or as history, is more than ever a discipline (humane, but aided by scientific techniques and rigorous in its commonsense objective methodology) which recognizes frontiers only at its peril. From China to Peru, from Greenland's icy mountains, from India's coral strand—anything that deals with the long story of man is the concern of the archaeologist, and anything that deals with the early stages of that long adventure the concern of this journal which, though it has just quoted Bishop Heber, cannot agree with him that in Ceylon (or, as he originally wrote, Java) 'every prospect pleases and only man is vile'. Bishop Heber introduced value judgments into this anthropological hymn-writing and was unhappy that 'the heathen in his blindness bows down to wood and stone'.

We cannot have value judgments in the study of antiquity and can no more worry ourselves about the fate of the individuals buried at Offnet, Tollund and Grauballe than we can about the differing policies of nation-states which finance archaeology and archaeologists. We can judge only by the results of excavation and research, and insist that as much direct contact as possible takes place between archaeological students and professionals as often as possible and in as agreeable a way as can be done.

We write in the memory of one of the most direct, delightful and agreeable examples of international archaeological contacts. In late March of this year the Sicilian Government entertained twenty students and four teachers—Professor Piggott, Professor John Evans, Mr Michael Gough, and the writer of these words—for a fortnight in the Lipari Islands and in Sicily. We saw archaeological sites in Vulcano, Panarea, and Filicudi, we climbed (or at least most of us) Stromboli, we worked on Lipari itself, and we spent two days looking at the main sites of interest in north-east Sicily. This was all organized by Professor Bernabò Brea of Siracuse, Superintendent of the Antiquities of Eastern Sicily, most ably assisted

## ANTIQUITY

by Mademoiselle Cavalier who is Curator of the Museum on Lipari. It was a truly international exchange; the twenty students from British universities were distributed as follows: Oxford 1, Cambridge 11, Edinburgh 4, London 3, Belfast 1.

This sort of international exchange is one which should be encouraged. A few years ago the British Council organized a course in Southern Britain for foreign students: it was planned by Professor Piggott and included among its members Professor Becker, Professor Van Giffen, Dr Ramskou, and Professor Glasbergen. We hope that one day the British Council will organize some more of these courses for foreign students and teachers, and that foreign countries will take note of the very fine example set by Bernabò Brea and the Sicilian Government in the 1959 Lipari-Sicily course. The Danes, as in so many things archaeological, have already done much; they invited British professional archaeologists to work in Denmark in 1949 and then had a special Government scheme for the five years 1949-54 to pay for foreign students to visit Danish excavations. At the moment we understand that negotiations are proceeding for the mutual exchange of students and teachers of archaeology between Czechoslovakia and Denmark.

Czechoslovakia itself will be the host at an interesting exchange of archaeologists in October of this year, when, following a suggestion made at the International Congress of Protohistoric and Prehistoric Sciences at Hamburg last August, the Archaeological Institute of the Czech Academy of Science has convened an International Symposium on Problems of the Eneolithic. This will be held in Prague and Brno between 5 and 12 October. Forty people have been selected from all over Europe to take part in this Symposium and we hope to give an account of it in the next number of ANTIQUITY.

Talk of international exchanges emphasizes the need for some way of finding what current excavations outside Britain would welcome students. For Britain itself we have the *Calendar of Excavations* published regularly by the Council for British Archaeology, and there is now no reason why anyone interested in knowing what excavations are going on in Britain and which ones want helpers should not be fully informed by subscribing to this *Calendar*. (The address of the Secretary of the Council for British Archaeology is 10 *Bolton Gardens, London, S.W.5.*) We are always being asked to recommend excavations on the Continent and in the Middle East that would welcome helpers.

From international exchanges to domestic affairs: three items of news of the greatest importance to those interested in British antiquity have been announced in the last few months. The first is the fact that the Commissioners for the Special Purposes of the Income Tax Acts have agreed that the sums paid to the Society of Antiquaries of London under deeds of covenant are 'annual payments' chargeable to tax under Case III of Schedule III. This Delphic statement is explained below in a note by the Assistant Secretary of the Society of Antiquaries (p. 219). Dr Corder, together with our Advisory Editor, Sir Mortimer Wheeler, then President of the Society of Antiquaries, were largely responsible for the negotiations which led to the decision that will give immediate and necessary financial relief to all archaeological and historical societies in Britain.

The second piece of news was referred to briefly in a note in our last number, namely the foundation of a British School of History and Archaeology in East Africa and the setting up of a Committee to consider a British Institute in the Far East (ANTIQUITY, 1959, 137).

## EDITORIAL

And the third was the announcement of 29 May that the Trustees of the British Museum are proceeding with the imminent reconstruction of two bombed galleries and intend to raise—at some unspecified date—the sub-department of Prehistoric Archaeology and Roman Britain to the status of an independent department. This, said *The Times* in a leading article that very properly presumed this announcement also meant an increase in the staff of such a department, ‘marks a further step both in the recognition of the antiquities of Britain as an important study, and in the long process of subdividing the Museum’s treatment of archaeology’ (*The Times*, 29 May, 1959) and went on as follows ‘One reason which makes it important that the formation and proper staffing of the new department should not be long delayed is the extraordinary development since the war of interest in European archaeology, and perhaps especially in prehistory.’

All right-minded archaeologists will echo those sentiments, as did Professor Christopher Hawkes, in a long and important letter in *The Times* for 2 June in which he contrasted the way in which, since the war, public money was annually spent ‘through the Ministry of Works for the maintenance and excavation of archaeological sites, through the Royal Commissions on Monuments for investigating them, through the archaeology branch of the Ordnance Survey for mapping them, and through the University Grants Committee for the support of departments of archaeology in numerous Universities’, but little on the expansion, reconstruction and development of Museums. ‘The national repository of archaeological material for comparison, in England, for the immense stretch of time before the 5th century A.D.’, wrote Professor Hawkes, ‘is in charge of a sub-department so small and cramped that only by signal valour ... has it managed to make any contributions whatsoever to its subject.’

But making this sub-department into a department is not enough. We need, and should press for, a National Museum of Antiquities. Stockholm and Copenhagen have National Museums which are the envy of all of us; the reconstruction and replanning of the National Museum at Athens, which is taking place now, is a splendid thing, and the new Mycenaean Gallery is one of the most exciting and rich displays in any Museum. The National Museum of Wales has long been the cynosure of others whose Ancient British ancestry has been diluted with Angle, Saxon or Jutish blood. Dublin and Edinburgh have their National Museums, and given buildings and money, could begin to emulate Cardiff. Cardiff, Edinburgh, Dublin, yes, but London, no. What odd people the English are that they have not as yet insisted on a National Museum of Antiquities and allowed even until the middle of the 20th century the strange anomaly that crowds into one building in Bloomsbury our National Library, our National Museum of Antiquities, and half a dozen other Museums as well. Is it not also an anomaly that this excessively important collection of museums and libraries should be looked after by a body, not of experts in Librarianship and Museums, but of oddly assorted public and political figures of which the three Principal Trustees are the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Lord High Chancellor and the Speaker of the House of Commons? We need an Act of Parliament to abolish the Standing Committee of Trustees, make the British Museum (Natural History) entirely independent, and break up the Bloomsbury juggernaut into a National Library, a National Museum of Antiquities, a National Museum of Ethnography, and a National Museum of Near and Far Eastern Antiquities.

These may sound counsels of perfection. So may sound the suggestion of more British Schools abroad. At the moment we have five—Rome, Athens, Jerusalem, Baghdad and Ankara—and are hopeful of two more—East Africa and the Far East. But what about the

## ANTIQUITY

great sub-continent of India itself, to whose political development Britain contributed so much, and to whose cultural development we should continue to do all we can. And Malta? Here we have already done much; Professor John Evans has summarized recent work on its prehistory in his *Malta* (London, 1959), to be reviewed in our next number by Professor Bernabò Brea, and this essay is only a foretaste of the magistral inventory of the ancient monuments of Malta which he has completed for the Committee of the Archaeological Survey of Malta. And it is good to read the *Report of the Museum Department of Malta for the year 1957-8*, produced by Charles Zammit, the Director of the Malta National Museum (itself inaugurated on 11 January, 1958)—an excellently produced document (*obtainable from The National Museum, Auberge de Provence, Valletta*) with plans of rock-cut tombs at Tarxien, and photographs of Saracenic Graves at Rabat. We should help Malta (and the cause of Middle Mediterranean archaeology) by a wider interest in its cultural heritage. And where are the young men, who, going neither east nor west, will tell us what went on in prehistoric times on the islands of Lampedusa, Linosa and Pantelleria, and how the monuments of these islands may be interpreted in terms of our modern knowledge of European prehistory?

And Lisbon? Surely we should have a School of Archaeology and History in the friendly territory of our oldest ally—and not merely to keep up with the Germans in Madrid. The study of the western seaways is a particular aspect of our British history which we neglect, though necessarily less in prehistoric than in post-Roman times. The past of Portugal, southern Spain and north-western Spain is of the greatest importance to those people of the *Prettanikai nesoi* who now call themselves English, Welsh and Irish. Why not a joint Anglo-Irish School of Archaeology and History in Lisbon or Coimbra, with a lunula over the door and a conference room arranged on the plan of a cruciform Passage Grave?

Sir Thomas Kendrick, whose knowledge of the direction of Museums and of the development of British Antiquity, to say no more, entitle his views to the greatest respect, writes that he is not convinced of the need of a Museum of National Antiquities and that if it existed he might prefer it 'to be housed in a dark, draughty and entirely unsuitable old castle with plenty of spiral staircases' (*ANTIQUITY*, 1954, 140), and confessed, when he was Director and Principal Librarian of the British Museum that he treasured and served as his governing text that phrase 'behold he taketh up the isles as a very little thing'. It may well be, as our Continental colleagues who regard the world as ending at the English Channel, and beyond being Ultima Thule, never cease reminding us, that the British Isles are, archaeologically, a very little thing, and that our young archaeologists should be persuaded away to the Mediterranean and the Near East, to India and Africa. But it equally may not be so. The heritage of ancient Britain is a remarkable one; the men who produced Stonehenge and Avebury, New Grange and Maes Howe, Maiden Castle and Tre'r Ceiri, did as well as any. The antiquity of Britain needs a magnificent new Museum, and the skill and interest of its present-day archaeologists opportunity to practise and preach abroad. We are grateful for the promise of a department in the British Museum, and for schools in East Africa and the Far East; we are grateful to the wisdom of those who have restored the covenanted money to our archaeological societies, but we ask for more.