

# Antiquity

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## Editorial Notes

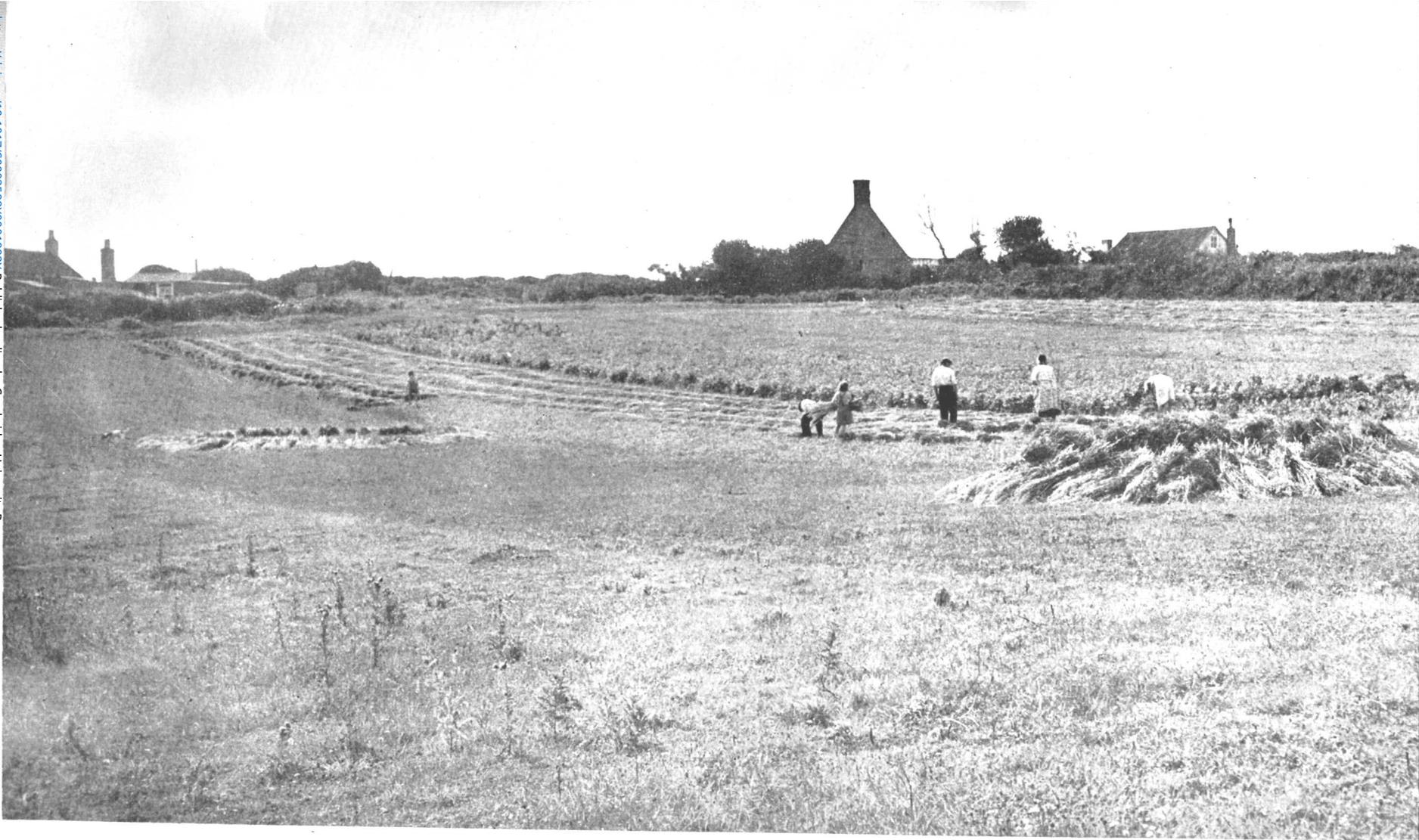
**T**HAT unnecessary war which breaks out from time to time between the amateur and the professional has flared up again in the columns of a contemporary. It began with an article published by Professor Stuart Piggott, who though now securely entrenched in the ranks of the professional 'army', began like most of us as an amateur. The moral is of course obvious, the more so as archaeology has long been a profession where vacancies are hard to fill.



It is difficult to discover what the fuss is all about. Some of those who are most vocal seem to imagine that professors want to suppress amateurs or monopolize opinion; the truth is that whole-time students are much too deeply immersed in masses of facts to bother much about mere opinions, which too often take the form of vague theorizing unsupported by evidence. Anyone of course is free to express an opinion; its value depends upon the factual knowledge and experience of the person who expresses it. Opinions about the meaning of place-names, for example, are valueless if the early forms are unknown; such opinions, when expressed as articles, are rejected, not because editors dislike amateurs—they don't—but because the writers have not taken the trouble to learn their job. In such cases the remedy lies with the amateur; and it is observed that the most aggressive are those who have contributed least to knowledge. Not only is there nothing (except economic difficulties) to prevent an amateur from practising and eventually becoming a professional, if he wishes; but it is also true that there is nothing that gives the professional (whether as professor, editor or civil servant) such pleasure as to come across an amateur who really means business and can be helped.



Given the necessary leisure—and where there's a will there's always a way to find it—the amateur can always somehow familiarize himself with the facts of archaeology, or history, or geology, or whatever subject it is that interests him. And unless he can so familiarize himself, he will never become an archaeologist in any real sense. He cannot become one simply by reading books, going to lectures or even by attending the meetings of archaeological societies, though these all help, and especially the human contacts of the last. Nor do people become archaeologists by writing books about the lost continent of Atlantis or the Children of the Sun or Downland Man, but by walking



MEDIEVAL HUSBANDRY IN SARK  
*Ph. M. T. Myres*

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about the country with a map and an observant eye. Nor do they become archaeologists by learning a dead language ; it is much more necessary to be able to draw plans and sections, to take photographs, to give first aid to fragile objects and to understand the soil. It is not the professional archaeologist who prevents the amateur from acquiring such qualifications as these.



Modern archaeology began with Boucher de Perthes, Schliemann and Pitt-Rivers. Boucher de Perthes was the first to reason from objects to logical conclusions (and not to books) ; what he found was not explained by quotations from the classics ; it explained itself—and the antiquity of man. Schliemann was the first to dig for knowledge, not museum specimens ; his technique was as good as he could make it, and (as his notes show) much better than his books would suggest. Pitt-Rivers created the modern technique upon a secure basis of military precision and discipline. All were amateurs ; there were then no professionals outside museums. Boucher de Perthes was the typical local antiquary, Pitt-Rivers the typical country gentleman. Those heroic days have passed ; the success of the pioneers was due to a combination of personal qualities with concentration on a chosen subject maintained by enthusiasm and will-power. Again no professional archaeologist stands in the way of the amateur who wishes to succeed.



It is difficult to give any advice that will be of much constructive use in a particular case ; so much depends upon the exact conditions. Generally however it is best to proceed from the particular to the general, from the known to the unknown ; to try to relate the particular enquiry to some matter of general interest. To be able to do this demands some knowledge of theory, of what archaeology aims at. Such background knowledge *can* be got from books (including the back numbers of ANTIQUITY). Once acquired it enables one to see things that otherwise would be overlooked. One learns, for example, that the important things in human history are the common things—houses, tools, roads, pottery, domestic animals and plants, simple forms of art and decoration. A traveller in the Balkans or Arabia will come across houses built of mixed rubble and timber, and will remember, perhaps, the similar construction (called *opus Gallicum*) of some Scottish, French and Swiss hill-forts, petrified also in the obelisks of Axum (see ANTIQUITY xx, 4–8 ; 60–69). Or he may observe some primitive type of boat, perhaps one that even Mr Hornell has missed, or unrecorded varieties of domestic animals. By photographing them (especially close up and in detail) he will be doing a useful piece of work ; such photographs are seldom taken and much in demand. Editors and publishers are often glad to use such illustrations (when they are good enough). There is no ‘ closed shop ’ here.



At home there is field-work. The scope is unlimited, and the material equipment an Ordnance Map on the scale of 2½ or 6 inches to the mile. There are many miles of Roman roads still to be discovered and put on the map ; the best and only training is to walk along a good stretch of *known* road, study its appearance and habits, consult some of the standard articles and books (such as Mr Margary’s on the roads of the Weald), and then try and fill one of the many gaps on the Ordnance Map of Roman Britain. Once

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one has become familiar with the signs one can find Roman roads to test on the ground merely from a study of the 6-inch Ordnance Map, especially in Wales, where even on the map one notes some earthworks that are probably unrecognized Roman forts. A very little experience shows where such forts are likely to be situated. In the field many unexpected minor discoveries can be made. If the amateur archaeologist prefers navvy work on a dig to this exciting pastime, the professional will hardly try and dissuade him, but the choice is open; there is no 'direction' of his labour.



Let it not for a moment be imagined that the professional despises the amateur, or wishes to keep him out. If the amateur has the root of the matter in him the professional will welcome him with open arms and do all he can to help him (though this is not always easy); but the amateur must do his own thinking. Certain techniques can only be learnt in the orthodox way, by undergoing a course of training; field-work can only be learnt by doing it. Baiting professors may be amusing and good for the circulation; but to be effective it must be factual and realistic.



The picture which we publish as a frontispiece was taken last August in the island of Sark by Mr Timothy Myres. We publish it partly because it is a very good illustration of a purely medieval type of arable husbandry, partly because it is also a very charming picture. There are probably few places in northern Europe where this kind of work still goes on, and one who saw the scene 'had a feeling that this was taking place round about the Norman Conquest, and that I could have got on terms at once with the harvesters had I spoken to them in the Norseman's French which their *patois* recalls'. As can be seen, the field is divided into strips, the two nearest being fallow; on the second are curious circular ricks with hollow centres to which the children are dragging the sheaves of oats that are being harvested on the third. The whole family is engaged on the job—two men, two women, and several children (not to mention the dog, who appears to have important business to attend to elsewhere). The oats had been sown broadcast and cut with a scythe. When the picture was taken, the four grown-ups were making their second turn up the full length of the strip, gathering the swathes and binding them by hand into sheaves. The scene brings to life again the activities that must have gone on every year in every agricultural village in England, and is a nice illustration complementary to recent notes in *ANTIQUITY* about strip-cultivation.



We would remind our readers that subscriptions for 1949 are now due and should be sent (together with the enclosed form) to *ANTIQUITY*, The Wharf, Newbury, Berks. This address, and not the Gloucester one, is now the one to which all such correspondence should be sent. An early payment saves labour and is much appreciated. Forms have been inserted only in the copies of those subscribers who have NOT yet paid.