

Antiquity

VOL. XXX No. 119

SEPTEMBER 1956

Editorial Notes

THE news from Jericho, reported here in Sir Mortimer Wheeler's article, is the most exciting we have heard for a long time. Dr Kathleen Kenyon's excavations there have proved that, at a date which seems to be not later than 6000 B.C., the inhabitants had built a sturdy stone wall round their village and strengthened it with a tower and a defensive ditch outside, dug in the hard rock. They also made a stone staircase to the tower, formed of well-dressed stones. The whole of this was covered by a layer of earth 45 feet thick, which contains no pottery and belongs therefore to the period before the invention of pottery. The discovery of this pre-pottery neolithic period was made at Jericho in 1952 (see Dr Kenyon's article in *ANTIQUITY*, xxvi, 1952, 116-22); last season's work shows not only that it was of immense duration, to be measured in millennia rather than in centuries, but that the people then living there were no squalid savages but people who had already begun to be civilized. They were no nomadic hunters but were obviously settled permanently on a spot which they defended against potential attack. They were able to do this because they had already invented (or acquired) agriculture and so were able to accumulate a surplus supply of food.

These discoveries are revolutionary; they carry back the origins of civilization to a period far earlier than anything that has hitherto been found in Egypt or Mesopotamia. Sir Mortimer gives his reasons for believing that civilization originated in oases rather than in the big river valleys, which are subject to flooding. That is a perfectly legitimate inference from the Jericho evidence; but perhaps one ought to remember that, in those valleys, the oldest deposits are now below the water-table and therefore inaccessible to excavators. Obviously Jericho was not the only oasis to be inhabited at a very early date, though its copious spring must have given it an advantage over those less well supplied. There must have been others, and one wonders what may be hidden in such age-old centres of habitation as Damascus and Aleppo and many others. Nor should one forget that there are still vast blank spaces on the excavation-map beyond the Persian Gulf. The uncovering of deep deposits on such sites is not, however, a light task; it requires a high degree of skill and organization, and strong financial backing.

To appreciate what these remarkable discoveries mean we should look at them against the background of European prehistory. In Scandinavia the last phase of the Ice Age was just coming to an end; the great ice sheet, which had once extended as far south as Berlin, had shrunk into two big ice-caps; Britain was joined to the continent, and the earliest mesolithic settlers lived on the edge of a small lake in Yorkshire at a cultural level equivalent to the Siberians, or lower.



JERICHO

Showing early 'non-pottery neolithic' fortifications. The lowest figure stands in the rock-cut ditch ; the two middle figures are on or by the lower part of the town-wall ; below the uppermost figure is part of the internal circular tower. The whole of the accumulation shown at the side of the cutting is non-pottery neolithic.

Ph. Miss Kenyon

ANTIQUITY

These comparisons are made possible only by the new techniques of dating developed in northern Europe and America during the last few decades, of which by far the most valuable is the radiocarbon method, because it gives an approximate age in years. The dates thus acquired agree nicely with others reached by means of varve-counting in Scandinavia. In the Middle East we are entirely dependent on radiocarbon, and it is satisfactory that, thanks to Professor Zeuner and others, we can now do the work ourselves in England. The Jericho excavations are sponsored by the Palestine Exploration Fund, the British School of Archaeology in Jerusalem, and the British Academy, and donations to the Jericho Excavation Fund will be most gladly received at 2 Hinde Street, London, W. 1.



It is good news that something is to be done at last about the ancient field-systems, whose obliteration we deplored in our last number. The matter has been taken up by the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments (England), which has persuaded the Treasury to authorize an increase in its staff for the express purpose of recording them by plans. It is too much to hope that all such systems can be saved from obliteration, but at least we can hope that they will not perish unplanned, and that special measures will be taken to preserve some of the best examples. It is often overlooked that that is one of the functions of the Royal Commission; the Royal Warrant instructs the Commissioners "to specify those [monuments and constructions] which seem most worthy of preservation," and each Report contains a list of those thus specified; the last Report published (West Dorset, 1952) contained a list of 110 such monuments. Whatever measures are taken must be taken quickly; some of the best systems have already gone, and others are threatened; there is no time to lose. In Scotland, where the problem is also important though far less formidable, equivalent action has been taken by the Scottish Royal Commission.



Every modern country follows a standard system of grammar, spelling, and punctuation which has come to be accepted because of its obvious convenience. We try in ANTIQUITY to conform with the style recommended by such generally approved authorities as Fowler's *Modern English Usage* and the *Oxford English Dictionary*. Unfortunately there are many occasions when these authorities give no help, for in a subject which, like archaeology, is growing rapidly, new words or combinations of words arise to describe new things. An example is the use of the word Henge for those round or oval British earthworks consisting of a bank and ditch and regarded as constructed for religious rites. Should it be printed Henge, henge or -henge? We think Henge is best, and shall print it thus in future. The word is etymologically indefensible but it fills a need and has come to stay. (It is, of course, derived from 'Stonehenge', which is an Anglo-Saxon word meaning 'Stone gallows').



But there are also creeping into archaeological writings certain variations which are just plain errors. We have often to use the word 'millennium', and it is coming to be spelt, even by those who should know better, 'millenium'. This is wrong, and is unsupported by our authorities for sound reasons (see Fowler). Other deviations from conventional style and language are forced upon us by the press and the typewriter. The newspapers have ordained that *all* nouns of multitude, such as 'government', 'committee', 'company', 'firm', *must* have a plural verb; and we believe that they have

EDITORIAL NOTES

even drawn up regulations for the guidance of their staff on the subject. As Fowler quite rightly says: 'Any attempt to elaborate rules would be waste labour'. Style should conform with the spoken language, and no educated person says 'the firm think'. Or take punctuation; why is the semi-colon becoming extinct? It is a most useful break in a sentence, but it is falling out of use, and some typewriters today are made without it. Instead, the colon is used—a stop that had almost fallen out of use, except (as Fowler says) in its function 'of delivering the goods invoiced in the preceding words'. Typewriting from written manuscripts is also responsible for the use of commas to separate complete sentences—an unpardonable illiteracy. We encounter all these shortcomings in articles submitted to us for publication, and the correction of them both creates unnecessary work and also makes the script untidy and more difficult to set up in print. We shall continue, however, to correct them because we refuse to submit to a deformation of the English language imposed by newspapers and the manufacturers of typewriters.



On Midsummer Day a body of people calling themselves 'Druids' assemble at Stonehenge to watch the sunrise. They take themselves more seriously than we and others do, but they are quite harmless and are entitled to carry out their rites without molestation. This year they were subjected to a disgraceful display of hooliganism by Army Officers stationed on Salisbury Plain. Smoke bombs and thunder-flashes were thrown and the 'Druids' were molested. The offenders were mostly junior officers, but amongst them was a Lieutenant-Colonel. This is not the first time that rowdiness has occurred there on Midsummer Day, nor is it confined to that day. Not long ago some tank guns were placed during the night on the top of the trilithons. These foolish pranks are not only discreditable to the Army but might also do irreparable harm to our most famous national monument. So far as we know, no disciplinary action was taken by the military authorities. We wish to call their attention to the matter and suggest that Stonehenge should in future be placed out of bounds to all ranks on the night preceding Midsummer Day; and that hooliganism of all kinds should be forbidden at any time.



This year Professor Gordon Childe is retiring from the professorship of archaeology at London University Institute of Archaeology, where he is being succeeded by Mr John B. Evans (who contributed an important article to our last number). As a tribute to a great prehistorian the Prehistoric Society, of which he was the first President, is presenting to him the 21st volume of their *Proceedings*, containing twenty-six essays written in his honour, a bibliography of his writings, about 310 pages of text and 30 plates. Members of the Prehistoric Society will of course receive this free, but for those who are not, a limited edition has been printed and bound, and will be available for purchase (price £2 2s.) when this number of *ANTIQUITY* is published. The volume can be obtained direct from John Bellows Ltd. (Eastgate, Gloucester), from the Assistant Secretary, Miss Bull, 11a Kensington Church Street, London, W.8, or from H. K. Lewis, 136 Gower Street, London, W.C.1. We have seen the list of contents and can confidently recommend our readers to buy it.