Editorial

CHRISTOPHER CHIPPINDALE

An unkind (as I felt) corrrespondent — when I remarked in an editorial on the standing archaeology of the Second World War, as still concretely visible on the Normany beaches — told me that the Editor's holidays are none of ANTIQUITY readers' business or interest. When this July I went down part of the 1000 kilometres of the Western Front that run from the North Sea at Zeebrugge to the Swiss border, it was a matter of business and editorial obligation.

My grandfather fought in a European war (the Great War of 1914–18, on the Western Front, and won an MC and was gassed and never wholly recovered from the gassing); my father fought in a European war (outside Europe, and it changed him); I have not, and am now of an age I likely would not; my children, well-informed young people, are perfectly aware of the facts of two European and world wars — yet they find it hard to grasp there being such a degree of national acrimony within western Europe that it could lead to a war. (Aware of the other European war of this century that has had Sarajevo as a key, they like me have never felt they understood the ancient base of cruel animosities or their modern exploitation that has fired the wars of the collapsing wreck of Yugoslavia — or the endless tragedy of divided Ireland.)

This summer has been the 81st anniversary of the largest of the Battles of the Somme, which opened 1 July 1916. The time is nearly passed for personal memories. So there will be no more books, like above all MARTIN MIDDLEBROOK's, written with benefit of first-hand memory.[1] We now have the documentary record and the physical remains.

This was the infamous mud of Flanders, chalk turned to clay, with the very streams blocked by the shelling then overtopping their weak banks; here is the Tranchée des Baïonnettes at Verdun, where part of a French regiment were overwhelmed to suffocate or drown when a trench caved in; just their bayonets survived, sticking in disciplined line up and out of the watery earth. What is the physical archaeology of the Western Front as it stands today? What has withstood 80 years of natural healing in a temperate landscape? And how do the memorials of the Great War look today as the material expression of the Great War in modern memory? They were built by brothers, fathers, cousins; now the immediate remembrance of the war is itself moving distant into history, they are becoming impersonal.

Yet the Great War does not diminish in present respect. Rather the reverse. It is many years now that the exact anniversary of the 1918 Armistice — the two minutes' silence at the Eleventh Hour of the Eleventh Day of the Eleventh Month — was shuffled sideways to be remembered instead on the nearest Sunday, whatever date that falls. But the last few years in Britain have seen a hankering to return to the true and exact anniversary, a wish encouraged but not created by the British Legion. Why does *this* human story, among so many brutalities of a century, carry now a force that is renewing itself? Is it because it now seems so pointless and its cause so obscure, as a crushing ritual of struggle between old European powers, rather than a war in which one grasps a real element of just morals, of something that was good and something that was evil?

Battles, for the most part, take days or even just hours, so there is often nothing now to see on the ground: instead, the topography may inform — *here* is the defended crest, *there* is the valley of advance — when we know how it structured affairs. At Towton, scene of the bloodiest battle on British soil, AD 1461, we do not even know that; and a mass grave encountered there in summer 1996 was re-buried without archaeological study. So the enduring monuments of war are the fixed points, the bases from which mobile forces moved: the armoured submarine pens in western France, and the air-

1 MARTIN MIDDLEBROOK. *The first day on the Somme*. 1971. London: Allen Lane.

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fields of the Second World War in southern England reported in the June ANTIQUITY: and the static defences, whether the hillforts of later European prehistory, the showy medieval castles, or the Martello towers of the British coast anticipating Napoleon's invasion, and the pillboxes anticipating Hitler's.

The First World War was overwhelmingly a static war of defence, a stationary slog on the Western Front,[2] until the invention of the tank as an all-terrain armoured vehicle of attack made it move again; and the shell-smashed landscapes in the period photographs — *images de l'enfer*, as the French call them — are physical as can be. Yet nearly all the Front is become rich fields once again, the wheatlands of the European bread-basket; 80 years of time and of greening plants, and of the patient diligence of Picardie farmers have seen to that, just as their forebears must have recovered the land after Crécy (AD 1346: no standing earthworks) and after Dury (AD 1870: no standing earthworks), and again after the battles of the Somme bridges (AD 1940: practically no standing earthworks), and events of AD 1944 (when armoured divisions ran across the *département* in less than 24 hours: no standing earthworks). Where the earthworks do survive is in the woods, under trees now standing 80 years high, where you learn rapidly to recognize the patterned zig-zag of a trench line. (Trenches always zig-zagged so a bursting shell would not kill all down the line.) The rest, the mass of shell-holes of all sizes, has no pattern; and the detail of intercutting hollows is masked when there are brambles and scrub. What is telling is the absence of flat surfaces: these are not hollows *within* a ground-level, but an undulation made *only* of dips and hollows. Come to the end of the wood, and the clean profile of arable begins, a smoothing surface re-asserted. You see this most clearly at Serre, at the edge of the woodland that today is preserved as the Manchester Regiment's memorial. The trenches that are plain within the wood will beyond be visible — if at all — only from the air as chalk-marks in the bare soil of winter.

2 For the Western Front, the standard guide — comprehensive, brief entries, much-illustrated, tiresomely setting places as 'left' or 'right' rather than 'north' or 'south', which fails when you come from another compass bearing — is ROSE E.B. COOMBS, *Before endeavours fade: a guide to the battlefields of the First World War*. 7th edition, revised by Karel Margry, 1994. London: Battle of Britain Prints International; 0-900913-85-X paperback £11.95.

So the surface archaeology is largely gone, as it needed to do after the scale of destruction, and the matching need to restore homes and lives. So many young Frenchmen died that national demography and social structure were upset for half a century. As many as one-third of the villages of the Somme *département* were effectively demolished, and then re-made in the 1920s. The visual clue to those now is in the standing buildings — but not in any planned homogeneity; when the whole ruined town of Albert was rebuilt, it was done plot-by-plot and usually replicating pretty well what stood on each before. Instead one just observes a lack of buildings of more than 80 years ago. Where even the old-style courtyard farms are of 20th-century brick, look to the church for the deciding evidence. This will always be Gothic; when it is all of a piece in a 1920s Gothic, usually in strong red brick with stone detailing, you know this to be another re-created village.

A feature of the First World War was the sappers' mining, facilitated by the Western Front geology of clay-and-loess over chalk; chalk is strong enough to support a tunnel, weak enough to blow up well. Long tunnels were driven down and forward in the chalk bedrock under the opponents' trenches and packed with ammonal or guncotton explosive; terrorist attacks in our own decade, when a ton or two of fertilizer-based mix is set off in a truck in London or Oklahoma City, show us the force of this mass of stuff. These mines were fired just before an attack, intended to crush and shake the enemy, and to offer a sheltering lip around the resulting crater. Some of the rock must have just gone straight up and come straight down again, with bodies intermingled; enough flew further to leave the most tremendous holes.

There has been not much systematic preservation of mine craters. At the Butte de Vauquois, an entire hill-top village was so mined and counter-mined (once the ordinary conflict of shell and bullet and flamethrower and poison gas stymied between front-line trenches separated by only 40 metres) that the ridge is now hollowed completely out, as if quarried thoroughly through on a grand scale; Vauquois now is recognized as a *monument classé*, with the new village retreated prudently down the slope. Elsewhere it is only the very largest mine-craters which survive simply as holes quite beyond ploughing through and even too big to

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fill up with rubble and rubbish; the villagers of La Boiselle slowly reclaimed their land over more than a dozen, until just one is left: 'Lochnagar Crater', blown with 27 tonnes of ammonal at 2 minutes before Zero Hour on 1 July 1916 to break the Schwaben Höhe position. The largest single hole on the Western Front, it is now a neat symmetrical crater, shaped entirely like a pudding-basin, with a big lip of chalk rubble. Seeing the fields smoothing and creeping closer, RICHARD DUNNING, a private British citizen, purchased it as his own act of preservation a dozen years ago.[3]

With so much gone — apart from larger mine craters, the brambled undulations in woods, and a dwindling 'iron harvest' of unexploded shells ploughed up each winter — the visible mark on the landscape is more than ever in the war cemeteries and the created memorials. Their nature, and the archaeological story they tell, is directed by different circumstances of battle and then by different national policies towards the war dead. Advancing armies, especially when they move to a new fixed line that endures, have opportunity and inclination to recover and to care for their own dead, more so than those of the enemy they also deal with. Retreating armies lose opportunity to recover their own. More than in most wars, the static artillery exchanges of the Western Front smashed and re-smashed ground and the bodies lying on it. On the Somme alone, 99,631 British graves are of soldiers identified, but 53,409 of unidentified; approximately 106,973 soldiers were (and are) missing, which leaves up to 53,564 of them still in or under what is now the ploughsoil.[4] When the new and not large South African memorial museum was built in Delville Wood in 1987, three British bodies were encountered, who now lie under added grave-markers in Delville Wood cemetery close by.

3 A memorial service is held on 1 July each year, the anniversary of the mine's blowing and the crater's making. 'The Friends of Lochnagar' are at 25 Daymer Gardens, Pinner HA5 2HW, England. Another of the celebrated Great War sites, the Butte de Warlencourt, is now owned by the umbrella Western Front Association, PO Box 1914, Reading RG4 7YP, England.

4 Figures from MARTIN & MARY MIDDLEBROOK's first-rate *The Somme battlefields: a comprehensive guide* (London: Viking, 1991; out-of-print). A small portion of the missing will have been alive, the deserters who never turned up later under their own names.

Of the Allies, the United States repatriates the dead if families so wish, which some 60% did for the Western Front. Those who stayed were concentrated into a very few large cemeteries. For the Somme there is Bony, ordered ranks of whitest marble crosses (Stars of David for Jewish dead), Stars-and-Stripes on a high flag-pole at the centre, memorial chapel (superb design by GEORGE HOWE, 1930); all kept spruce and neat as can be. Following US attitudes to veterans, there are burials here that one would not find in other nationalities' cemeteries. A first grave-marker I took note of there was of a woman nurse who died after war's end.

The British did not permit repatriation, though bodies were moved within the country where a soldier fell. Like the other nationalities, the British did not generally separate their dead by rank. All shall lie together, ordered in rows as if in eternal parade, but each will be an individual: so many of the grave-stones are marked at the head 'A SOLDIER OF THE GREAT WAR', and at the foot 'KNOWN UNTO GOD'. For their unidentified dead, the French chose instead to use mass graves — *ossuaires* — and so did the Germans — *Kameradengräber*, generally placed at the rear of the cemetery, behind the individual graves.

Different nationalities favoured different materials and different styles in their cemeteries. And the cemeteries were made in the years after the Versailles peace settlement, in a certain atmosphere within France towards Germany. The French unluckily chose concrete for their grave-marking crosses, a visible mistake now the reinforcing iron is bursting the weakened concrete apart; so they are having to replace the markers (choosing instead a plastic-cum-marble composite material which doubtless comes with a life-time guarantee). The German used wooden crosses, which rotted with time and are now replaced with black metal crosses. The British used stone, which looks well (though new slabs of facing stone on memorials show the quiet maintenance needed to keep them so). French cemeteries fly the *tricolore* flag; they favour light-red roses between the graves. The German cemeteries are dark, just grass and evergreen shrubs. The British are flowered, in a more varied way; the standardized British memorials look very well seven decades on, in whose choice the British Museum director FREDERIC KENYON had a deciding hand.

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Thiepval Memorial: to the British and Empire missing of the Somme 1915–1917. Designed by EDWIN LUTYENS, *built 1929–31, inaugurated 1932.*

A great building: high, barrel-vaulted arches of dark red brick; lower portions covered with textured stone panels, the texture being in the line upon line of carved names of the missing.

Thiepval was hard to build, on disturbed ground hard by front-line trenches. Thiepval has been hard to maintain, its engineering not withstanding well the frost, wet and the wind that swirls through its open arches; it was re-faced with different bricks in the 1970s, reckoned cheaper than making a new memorial to bear the names.

There are 73,357 names of missing on the Thiepval memorial, alphabetically listed by regiments. Where names and initials are duplicated, regimental numbers make a distinction.

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For this archaeologist, a hard aspect to the human lives we professionally deal with is the impersonality, the lack of names: for what human story is not first and best told by the names of the characters? Whoever, apart from a sociologist, when given the choice made the story in terms of impersonals? And after war or disaster, our culture's habit is to make such an effort to identify the individual, so there will be a known body in a known grave to prove a known life under a known name.

On the Somme is the Commonwealth war-cemetery extension to the *cimetière communale* at Worloy-Baillon, well back from the front lines; in this village was a hospital (the building is now the *maison de retraite*) where the wounded were taken. In its visitors' book are signatures of the family of Private WILLIE BENNETT, King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry, died 8 July 1916, aged 30, who visited on 8 July 1997 and left flowers on his grave. There are 28 dead from that one day buried in his line, among them, to name three names:

Lance Cpl E. MAYNARD
Pvte H. SCOTT
Pvte ALBERT VICTOR MOTH

In the naming of names, one hopes to recover some human element. From individual graves of the Deutsche Kriegsgräberstate Fricourt:

GERHARD ZEUREN Ersatz. Reservist
EUGEN WERZ Unteroffizier
JOSEF BECK Ersatz. Reservist

Named on the walls of the Bony chapel, amongst the 333 listed missing:

D'ANNOLFO SALVATORE Pvt
DARR FRANK Pvt
DAVIDOFF BERNARD Pvt

At St Hilaire-le-Grand, in the Russian cemetery, where a white chapel with golden onion-dome tower gives Orthodox touch to a cemetery otherwise in the French manner:

KOURGTCHOFF NICOLAS
SOROKINE SIMEON
KOUZNETZOFF STEPHAN

And in the same cemetery, as in others, the fewer graves of the next conflict, amongst them:

SSOSLENCR
SOLDAT SOVIÉTIQUE
MORT POUR LA PATRIE le 2–1–1943

What *does* it say to say the names, to carve the names, when all there is in a name is the name — if Kourgtchoff and Sorokine and Kouznetzoff are not also known in some human memory as individual individuals?

Prehistory is by definition about the unnamed, and perhaps there is a tougher truth there. Next to the Russian graves from the Great War at St Hilaire-le-Grand is a mass grave for Soviet troops of the Second War, with a collected inscription and no names, expression of a different attitude towards the individual and the collective. In a well-titled review-article in this issue, 'Body of knowledge/Knowledge of body', MARGARET W. CONKEY notices WIKTOR STOCZKOWSKI'S well-titled *Anthropologie naïve, anthropologie savante*, a book about human origins, imagination and received ideas: 'if certain theories seduce us, it is [often] because they confirm our private naïve convictions, legitimized by means of some appearances of a scientific nature'. The individual names have been kept precious on the Western Front and — in some national military cemeteries — the integrity of the individual's physical body: names of regiments, names of places, names by which we *naïfs* choose to legitimate our world

South from the Somme is Verdun, strongpoint in the French sector, where the static war reached its fullest intensity of unhuman bloodiness. Here, where the destruction was past recovery, the individual is most lost. There is hectare upon hectare of woodland pecked and pocked with the shell-holes. Nine villages of the hills east of the town, beyond any rebuilding, have become just names in the woods:

BEAUMONT — BEZONVAUX — CUMIÈRES
DOUAUMONT — FLEURY — HAUMONT
LOUVEMONT — ORNES — VAUX-DEVANT-DAMLOUP

The bony bits of about 132,000 dead, French and German mixed, were retrieved from the Verdun ground; these are heaped as disconnected bones in the basement of the great ossuary at Douaumont. This long low building is unhappily evocative of a military submarine in form, with a central tower (paid for by the United States) unhappily evocative of a Polaris nuclear missile in form. The upper floor is the memorial, with names of some individuals:

ALEXIS DE BERTIER DE SAUVIGNY
23.10.1896 – 9.3.1916

and of some cities which define our human world:

NEW YORK — LONDON — WASHINGTON — BRUXELLES
QUEBEC — ST BRIEUC — RENNES — TOULOUSE

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🙵 *Hello!*, a magazine whose purpose is to celebrate the celebrated (some famous only for being famous), has found itself with a reputation for ill-fortune. Just as everyone who sees Tutankhamun's tomb dies in the end, so a rapid curse of *Hello!* is said to break marriages and partnerships the moment they are fêted in its pages. Is there a curse of ANTIQUITY? Tempvs Reparatvm went bust when we welcomed its reviving the British Archaeological Reports which had gone under before without ANTIQUITY'S help. (British Archaeological Reports, rescued from the new wreck, are now published by JOHN & ERICA HEDGES: good luck!, if that is not a curse — BAR is a useful element on the publishing scene.) And now the archaeology section in the research school at the Australian National University (ANU) has been sentenced to death in due response to my having welcomed in ANTIQUITY its re-foundation as a Division of Archaeology and Natural History.[5]

The closing of the foremost research unit in Australian archaeology is an odd act. It makes no sense in the frame of the discipline nationally, where emerging regional centres — now established even in the outback Northern Territory — sensibly focus on regional pictures (though, Australia being a whole continent, a smaller picture there is bigger than any one European national picture). It makes no sense internationally, since the ANU department has led in working across the broad region, in Papua New Guinea and in the new Pacific nations like Vanuatu, where co-operation in matters of cultural heritage with generous-minded Australian and New Zealand institutions like ANU and the Australian Museum in Sydney are of the essence. Since cultural matters do matter, it makes no sense in terms of Australian national interests in relation to its neighbouring nations of the western Pacific (and ANU as the Australian *National* University should notice national interest!). It certainly makes no sense in terms of broad archaeological understanding, where Australian issues and Australian research approaches are of world importance: this is the same good reason why ANTIQUITY has given much space these last years to Australian and Pacific work (this number included). Feedback from ANTIQUITY readers and colleagues, incidentally, tells me that their interests remain broad-minded. They have not demanded, instead, local reports in spirit confined to Lower Little Snoring or Le P'tit «Hillfort» *dit* Le-Crapaud-sur-Saône: in choosing what to publish, we ask referees, 'Is the article of interest, beyond the contribution it makes to specifics?', and take much notice of the answer. Key issues in Australian and Pacific archaeology — from the distinctive nature of hunter–gatherer society and therefore of hunter–gatherer archaeology through to the claims and 'ownership' in the present of a complex and disputed past — are, rightly, key issues in global archaeology. Three papers that chance to fall into this number and are printed as its opening articles illustrate the point: I have started, by choice, with AMBROSE from the damned ANU research unit; then SAND from the archaeology service in Nouvelle-Calédonie; then TERRELL & WELSCH from the Field Museum in Chicago. Their common specific subject is Lapita; the central uniting issue is the nature of the human affair represented by *any* distinctive archaeological entitity.

Where an odd and local logic comes into play is in the internal structures of the ANU, and of Australian public funding. The details are historically specific; the issue is universal — how to fund ever-growing higher education and research after such a traditional habit of dependence on (ever-growing) public resources. The details follow from the unique and obsolete structure of the ANU, in which the subject of archaeology is split between two departments: one in the 'faculties' is a conventional research, under- and post-graduate teaching department (Department of Archaeology & Anthropology); the other is a research unit within the 'Institute of Advanced Studies' (Division of Archaeology & Natural History within the Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies). When the Australian universities have a funding squeeze, when ANU seems élitist in the wrong sense of the word, when its schizophrenic structure makes not enough sense, when Pacific and Asian Studies within ANU choose to be largely economic and contemporary in their focus, when the future of the archaeology programme appears a matter only for that other research community to decide — then the best outfit can be shut down without cause. The cock-up theory of how the world works wins once more!

5 I have an interest to declare, as a frequent visitor to the ANU since 1990. One of its many virtues is the welcoming framework it provides for colleagues.

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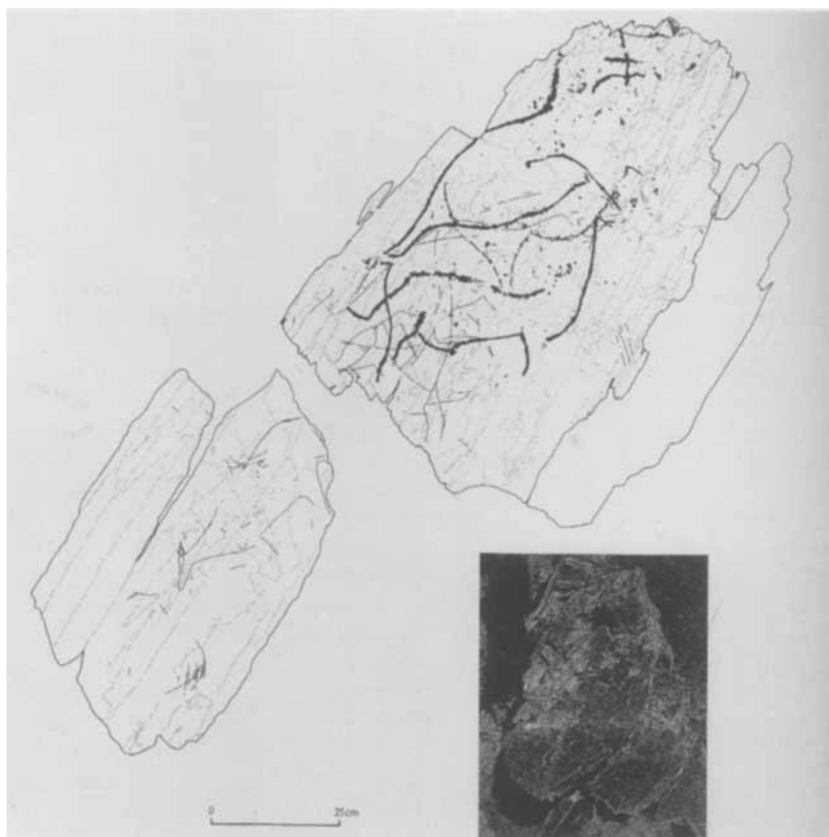
The marks on this surface, Penascosa rock 5c, are read as four figures.

Centrally below is a deep-bodied ibex facing right.

Under it, facing down and left, is an aurochs with square muzzle by the ibex's tail, chest-line across the ibex's body and back-line parallel to the left edge of the rock.

The upper part of that same line makes the back of a horse, facing up and right, with back leg running down into the ibex's body, and dipping body-line that runs across the ibex's face.

Finally, separate at the top, a possible anthropomorphic stick-figure appears, of Neolithic or Chalcolithic character.



The petroglyphs of the Côa Valley, Portugal (ANTIQUITY nearly *passim* by now), have finally been saved — insofar as any human decision about a human landscape is definitive and final. The Portuguese government, having suspended work on the new dam whose lake would have flooded the figures, has terminated that project for good. Instead a law passed in May made the Côa Valley a National Monument in recognition of the petroglyphs and their landscape. A good outcome.

The drawing is from the full report with first-rate colour illustrations of the Portuguese Government's scientific commission on the Côa figures: JOÃO ZILHÃO (ed.), *Arte rupestre e pré-história do Vale do Côa: trabalhos de 1995–1996.*[6] One figure of the four we reproduce here from the book is thought to be Neolithic/Chalcolithic in its character; the others, on the face of it, look jolly Palaeolithic to my short-sighted eye! Debate as to the dating of the Côa figures will continue.

6 1997. Lisbon: Ministério da Cultura.

22 June 1997 marked the 200th anniversary of John Frere's report to the London Society of Antiquaries of implements from Hoxne, Suffolk: what came to be called handaxes which had been found 12 feet below the surface in the bottom layer of undisturbed strata, a situation that — in the remembered phrase — 'may tempt us to refer them to a very remote period indeed, even beyond that of the present world'. There is nowhere in Britain with a proper on-site display of Pleistocene archaeology in its stratigraphic context. (Please may one be made at Boxgrove, with its near-in-place deposits and fragment of hominid bone?) The best-known site at Swanscombe has the appearance of an abandoned and overgrown quarry on the edge of a grey housing estate.

Upstream from Abbeville, northwest France, where Boucher de Perthes a generation after Frere decisively made matching observations, is «Le Parc Archéologique de La Garenne à Cagny» in mixed coppice secondary woodland, *site classée le 15 décembre 1959*, where three standing sections within 100 metres show the

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manner of Lower Palaeolithic archaeology fitting for 1797, for 1897 and for 1997.

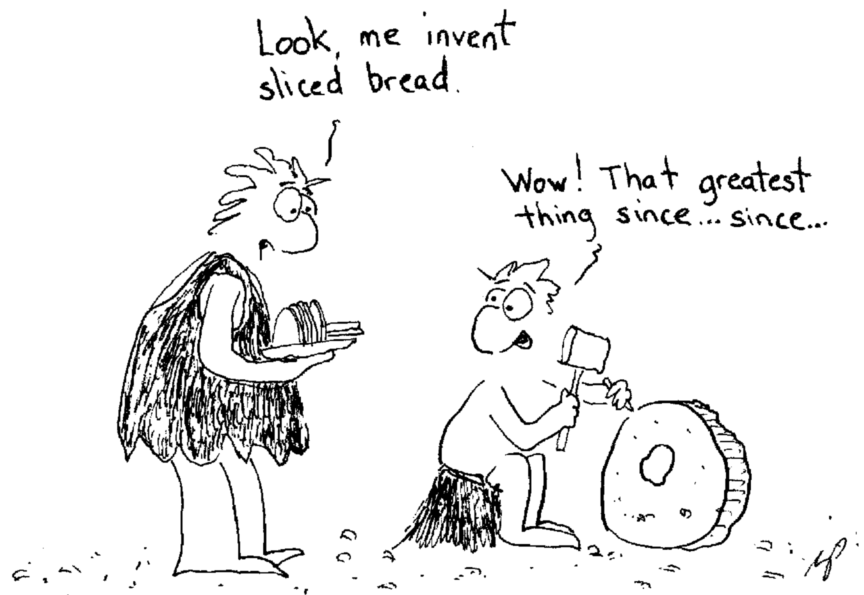
Standing for 1797 are the crumbling walls of the scattered old gravel-diggings (for the most part dating to the inter-war years, but quarried in the old manner), reached by the mountain-bikers' paths that nowadays curve between the trees. A section stands nearly 3 metres high. A metre of loess under the top-soil makes the upper part, with that lovely smooth feel of fine dust when you roll it between your fingers, but gritty too — it is redeposited. Then mixed and confused gravels and chalks falling away in a talus. At base, under the slumped stuff, gravels full of dark-grey rolled flints, which I guess is where one looks for the implementiferous base.

Standing for 1897 is the main witness section, rather taller, not slumped much yet, fenced for protection and with (vandalized) display boards. This cut face is much more recent than 1897, of course, but the research essentials are those of the first part of this century, resolving a complex fluvial and glacial sequence, with its re-workings, solifluctions and cryoturbations, so as to place its human element into a determined Pleistocene sequence for Europe of four glacials and three interglacials.

In progress in 1997 is the current site, cutting back on a grander scale from an old quarry face, with the sequence clearer: topsoil over mixed gravels over grey loess over lower gravels, stiff with flint. Protected by sheet plastic is a large open area of the lower gravels, ready for more painstaking excavation and three-dimensional plotting in the best and diligent French manner. Above that in the face of the loess, a column of sample holes, and a larger rectangular grid of larger sample holes, labelled with their OSL references, material for the physical alchemy by which La Garenne will be tied to the oxygen-isotope chronology.

The tantalizing magic of handaxes and handaxe sites is in the endurance of their questions. Unlike other categories of Frere's day — the 'antediluvial' and the 'Celtic antiquities' — this category endures and puzzles; the relations between different handaxe forms, once called 'Abbevillean' and 'Acheulean', and with adjacent industries like 'Clactonian', are not resolved. Even the basics — is the handaxe the made object, or the by-product from striking flakes? — are to a degree open. Yet you can hold a handaxe in your hand and have that in common, one hopes, with some ancient kind of human creature, a prehistoric person of whom as usual one does not know the name. (Did humans then *have* names? have speech to speak the name?)

MP



THE INVENTION OF THE METAPHOR

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