

Antiquity

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Editorial Notes

FOR many of our readers this will be their first number of ANTIQUITY. They will have read the leaflet which has been circulated, and will have decided to give ANTIQUITY a trial. The proof of the pudding is in the eating, and we hope that this one will come up to expectations. We have to cater for all tastes and there is not room for every branch of archaeology to be represented in any single number, but we think that this and the succeeding numbers will be fairly representative. Many readers look for articles about British archaeology, especially when it can be illustrated by air-photographs; they will find something very much to their taste, we think, in the first article, in which Mr R. J. C. Atkinson gives the first adequate account of a very remarkable prehistoric earthwork in Cranborne Chase, called the Dorset Cursus. What it was is still rather mysterious; the name 'cursus' is one that was first used by Stukeley in the 18th century of a couple of shorter, but otherwise similar, affairs near Stonehenge. He thought these were race-courses, and his guess may not have been far out. We know from Homer that funeral games were held at the burial of warriors during the Trojan War, and although these cursuses cannot be precisely dated they are probably not more than a few centuries older.



Those whose interest is chiefly in classical lands will read Professor T. B. L. Webster's stimulating remarks about the recently deciphered Mycenaean Tablets and their bearing on the interpretation of Homer. These tablets have proved to be inscribed in an archaic form of Greek; they are contemporary, in an archaeological sense, with the heroic age about which Homer wrote, and therefore of prime importance. Like the archaeological remains they show that 'Homer has a poetic ancestry which stretches back into the Mycenaean age' (p. 13). But Homer also modernized some of his descriptions, of chariots for instance; and other poets, dramatists and artists in other ages have done likewise.



Photography is an indispensable adjunct of all archaeological work, whether it be done in museums or in the open air, and particularly of course of excavation. It is an art that has been surprisingly neglected even by some excavators whose other work has been of a high standard. As in so much else General Pitt-Rivers was a pioneer in the use of photographs to illustrate and record his excavations. Now Mr Cookson, who has worked as a photographer with Sir Mortimer Wheeler for many years, has written a

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book about it, reviewed on pages 15 and 16 by Miss Alison Frantz, who of late years has been doing the photography for the American excavations in the Agora at Athens. Both the reviewer and the reviewed are experts and enthusiasts with a record of achievement that is familiar to all who read archaeological literature. Indeed, just as the art critic can often identify a painter by his style, the reader can sometimes identify the photographer in the same way. The present writer once came upon a photograph of a peculiarly difficult object ; it could only be, he felt sure, by one of these two people—and it was. Readers of Sir Mortimer's latest excavation report (Stanwick) will find there superb examples of Mr Cookson's skill ; full advantage has been taken of lighting, and the results (particularly the frontispiece) are most pleasing works of art as well as adequate records of archaeological facts. With a little thought and perseverance it is generally possible to get a photograph which is aesthetically pleasing without any loss of archaeological efficiency.



One of the problems that still remains obscure is the continental home of the people who invaded and settled in Britain after its abandonment by the Romans. It is a problem that closely concerns us because we are their descendants. In his review of Dr Maurer's book Dr Tischler describes some of the chief tribal groups that were on the move in what is now Germany and Holland during the period of the great migrations, and just before it. Clearly the term 'Anglo-Saxon' denotes an amalgam of many cognate cultures.



For many years it has been known that there existed in the Aleppo district of Syria a curious type of house of a very primitive kind resembling a beehive. But it was difficult to find any adequate description of them. They are of interest because they appear, from their very nature, to be a survival from a far distant past. Indeed the oldest known example of such structures, though not of identical form, are the tholoi of Arpachiyah which is not a very long way from Aleppo. Mr Copeland describes these queer beehive villages on pages 21 to 24.



These articles deal with British prehistory, the beginnings of European literature, archaeological technique, European cultural origins and a strange survival. That is perhaps not a bad sample of the sort of thing we aim at in this journal. There are inevitably certain lacunae ; but many of these will be filled in later numbers. We have a review by Professor Pericot of some recent rather startling correlations which Professor Menghin, now of Buenos Aires University, has claimed to detect between the earlier archaeology of South America and the Old World. We hope also to publish an account of recent excavations in Malaya, where fragments of imported Greek vases have been found. There will be an article on recent excavations in Crete on a neolithic site, and another on Mycenaean Athens.



The problem of reviewing books is a difficult one because of space. There is bound to be a certain lag in publication—and for this there are, we regret to say, sometimes other reasons as well. But we know the difficulties ; reviewers are all busy people, and some are engaged on important excavations and other researches which occupy all

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their time. Moreover, if we are to secure the best criticisms we must often go to distant parts of the world, and this and the subsequent proof-correction takes up time. Readers, in return, can be sure of getting honest opinions by those best qualified to judge, and it seems to us that this is more important than the time-element.



Thus it will be seen that ANTIQUITY is not just a journal published by archaeologists for other archaeologists, and specializing in some particular aspect or period or country. It covers the whole field and it is kept going by its readers, the majority of whom are not archaeologists in the strict sense, but just intelligent people who are interested in archaeology and like to hear about it. It was for them that ANTIQUITY was founded and without their support it could not exist. Indeed, without them there would be little or no archaeology today! For the day of the rich individual patron is over; archaeology is kept going by the taxpayer, and it is only right that, in return, an attempt should be made to explain to him and her what it all means. We make the attempt in ANTIQUITY, by publishing popular but authoritative articles, notes and reviews dealing with matters of current interest and importance. Our readers can help us by suggesting subjects of interest to themselves, particularly if they can also suggest someone to write about it. It was thus that we obtained Professor Webster's article in this number, and we wish to thank the reader who made so happy a suggestion.



We have to keep up and increase our circulation at intervals by the distribution of leaflets, sent out either directly by ourselves or indirectly by societies, whom we take the opportunity of thanking most sincerely for their cooperation. It is inevitable that many of these leaflets will be sent to those who already take in ANTIQUITY regularly, and we hope they will excuse this and understand that it cannot be avoided when thousands are circulated. We have to put up with the same thing ourselves; we recently received several leaflets urging us to buy *Archaeology in the Field*!



One of our readers in the U.S.A. writes, apropos of Dr Glyn Daniel's article on 'Television' in the December ANTIQUITY, saying that the first archaeological television programme was put on by Dr Froelich G. Rainey, Director of the University Museum of Philadelphia, and some of his colleagues, in 1948, under the title of 'What in the World.' It has continued as a great national success down to the present time. Sir Mortimer Wheeler took part in it as a guest performer in 1950, and introduced the idea to the B.B.C. on his return to England, where it eventually took shape as the well-known programme of 'Animal, Vegetable or Mineral'.



At the time when this number of ANTIQUITY is published the Editor expects to be abroad where he will be for the whole of March. During his absence letters are not forwarded, and he apologises in advance for not replying to them until he returns. This of course does not concern matters dealt with by his partner, Mr H. W. Edwards, the publisher. The Editor expects to be back at Nursling about the beginning of April.