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Editorial

The President of the Prehistoric Society, John Cowen, had much of interest to say in his Presidential Address to the Society given in London on 19th February. It will be published in full in the *Proceedings* of the Society in a year's time, but meanwhile one or two of his general points are worth immediate comment. Dr Cowen drew attention to the fact that he was the first amateur President of the Society and hoped, as we do, he would not be the last. We should remember that there were amateur Presidents of the Prehistoric Society of East Anglia out of which the Prehistoric Society grew. He described himself as 'a member of a species now rare indeed, and destined soon, no doubt, to become extinct. I am in the most stringently literal sense an autodidact, and proud of it. At no time have I attended a course, class, seminar or tutorial of any kind in the field of prehistoric studies. The fact may scarcely be thought worth the mentioning, even as a historical curiosity, but it does seem to bracket one with the dinosaurs.'

He then went on to criticize some of the papers he had had to sit through as President: 'The experience of the last three years has convinced me', he said, 'that an unacceptably high proportion of these papers are either ill organized or ill delivered—near inaudible, that is, or plain incomprehensible. . . . The root cause of most of the trouble lies in the endlessly repeated attempt to pour a quart into a pint pot; and this applies to the slides just as much as to the texts. I estimate that at least half the papers I have attended in the past three years were over- and not under-illustrated; and the texts, all too often, overloaded with detail, down even to bare lists of place-names. This kind of ineptitude, which I have found distressingly common, simply inhibits comprehension. . . . The malady extends, I am sure, far beyond our own parochial affairs. From what one hears the infection spreads widely into our universities, and may be found at more than one level of teaching. That raises the suspicion that the habitual overloading to which I refer may well be due to some deep-seated cause, operative over a wide field of academic studies, and taking the form of an ingrained and too often exaggerated reverence for the material itself . . . and for the processes and results of ratiocination on every aspect of it.'

Dr Cowen had much to say about the nature and teaching of prehistory. 'It seems likely', he said, 'that an early casualty . . . may well be the unity of prehistory itself. And when it comes the break will come between Palaeolithic studies and the rest. It may indeed prove possible for some time longer to continue to teach the subject as an indivisible whole up to a first degree level. But beyond that point I foresee all higher studies and research being handled by two distinct streams of people. That is indeed, to a large extent, what is happening already. At the International Congresses it is remarkable how few nowadays of those attending the lectures at large attend the

Palaeolithic Section; still more striking how few of those attending the Palaeolithic attend any other. It is practically two distinct congresses sitting under one roof. Few would be seriously hurt if they were to meet separately. And in due course this is what I expect to happen.'

We fully agree with Dr Cowen's criticisms of lecturers and have twice stated our views (ANTIQUITY, 1963, 90; 1966, 249). It is surprising that still there are lecturers who are unaware that the fast BBC rate of speaking is 120 words a minute, that no one speaks at this fast rate in an archaeological lecture, so that in a normal 50-minute lecture the quick-broadcasting possibility of 6,000 words is impossible. When one adds the necessity of pause and communication with the visible audience, the need for ad-libbing, and the presence of lantern slides, the novice should be told firmly that the text of a 50-minute lecture should never be more than 4,500 to 5,000 words, i.e. 22 to 25 pages of normal typescript. But then, as we learn so often and so bitterly, so many people do not understand what normal typescript is. With a complete ignorance of or disregard for modern typesetting they write on foolscap paper and single-space their work. Do please observe these rules: (i) always type—if not, your holograph manuscript is sent back to you; (ii) always type on quarto paper, i.e. normal typing paper 10 inches by 8 inches; (iii) double-space everything including footnotes and captions—you are typing for the printer, not for the reader; (iv) calculate 22 to 25 of these standard typescript pages for a 50-minute lecture, and (v) avoid footnotes, which are the inelegant parade of unsure scholarship—adopt the Harvard system for your references, and only use footnotes when something must be said which cannot be put in the text (how frequently and how justifiably is this so?) or which has come up since you wrote your piece. (The Production Editor would add a sixth plea—for the almost universally neglected (by British, but never by American authors) advisability of putting name and address on the typescript.)

While we are in this minatory and didactic mood let us remind contributors that ANTIQUITY works to the tightest of fixed schedules from which there can be no variation if the journal is to appear regularly on the first day of each quarter. Proof changes must be of the most minimal and must be calculated letter-space-wise to replace what is taken out. What bliss it is to receive corrections from archaeologists who understand this: alas, they are middle-aged and older and themselves have wide editorial experience.

While we agree with Dr Cowen on lecturing and the presentation of material, we wonder whether he is right about the unity of prehistory and archaeology. Has there ever been any unity of prehistory except that all things studied by the prehistorian are, in Christopher Hawkes's phrase, text-free? Is there anything, necessarily or actually, in common between Charles McBurney's *Haua Fteah* report and Nancy Sandars's *Bronze Age Cultures of France*? The answer is no: Palaeolithic prehistorians should not be berated because they find La Tène fibulae dreary. There is no unity in prehistory, and there certainly is none in archaeology. For too long too many archaeologists have been dancing around discussing whether archaeology is a science or an art, or saying, as Sir Mortimer Wheeler once did in one of his more colourful and extravagant moments, 'I do not know what archaeology is', when all the time we know that archaeology is a craft and a technique. Archaeologists are craftsmen and technicians just as are epigraphists and students of diplomatic. Theirs is an expertise practised in the field, the museum, the laboratory and the study. In their forthcoming *Penguin Dictionary of Archaeology* Warwick Bray and David Trump say crisply that archaeology is 'the study of man's past by means of the material remains he has left behind him. It is therefore a technique.' Archaeology is a craft, a series of techniques: we should use these techniques and crafts for the study of man from the beginnings to yesterday; we should encourage this study in depth, from the stone tools of Olduvai to

deserted medieval villages and decaying railways and tomorrow's rubbish tips, and in breadth, from the driest taxonomy of Palaeolithic flints to the most subjective appreciation of Sumerian art and Olmec heads and American colonial tombstones, and all this without any feeling that any one aspect of the study—in time or place or topic—is necessarily more important than another. We do not subscribe to the view that many archaeologists are at the the present day selling our birthright for a mess of pseudo-scientific pottage. We do not believe that the present state of our studies is a deep conflict between the kind humanism of Jacquetta Hawkes's article published in our pages last December (ANTIQUITY, 1968, 255) and the brash methodological mystique of David Clarke's *Analytical Archaeology* (to be reviewed here shortly). It takes all kinds of archaeology to make the world of history.

Archaeology must be pursued in depth from eoliths to today and in breadth from the excavation report to art history. It is possible to be a distinguished and scholarly archaeologist by confining oneself to one's techniques and crafts. The brilliant excavator is in his own right a scholar in the same way as the man who makes elegant experiments in a microbiological laboratory or collates the manuscript versions of a text. Of course it is not enough to have dirt on your boots: there must also be the dust of museum cases and books on your hands, and brains in your head. But one can be a superb archaeological craftsman and technician, and no more or less: all archaeologists don't have to write, or pretend to write, history.

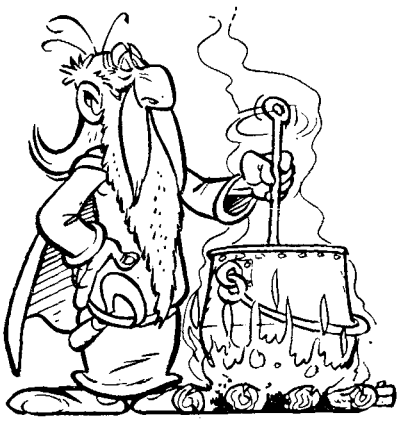
The work of all archaeologists may be conceived of as a broad band with at one end the dirt archaeologist and the taxonomist, the collector and the classifier; in the centre the synthesist and historian; and at the other end the art historian. Many archaeologists can achieve distinction in many parts of this band; others specialize in only one activity. The danger archaeology faces at present, and particularly protohistoric and prehistoric archaeology, is the growth of a new pseudo-scientific archaeology imbued by what Malcolm Muggeridge has called 'the highfalutin notion of scientific exactitude—the great mumbo-jumbo of the age' (*The Times*, 11 January 1969). This new archaeology hides behind an uneasy façade of statistics and computers the fact that the study of artifacts is descriptive not analytical, and that the facts of history we can obtain from the preliterate phases of man's past are really very few. It is this realization that drives some, like Victorian parsons in cold remote country rectories, to question their faith; and others to give up any pretence of being historians and to spend their lives contemplating their own digs and their finds—the navel/cabbage-patch archaeology; or to take refuge in the mystique of methodology.

We will see what the under-forties think when we receive their entries to our 'Whither Archaeology?' contest (ANTIQUITY, 1969, 6); and we reserve the right to publish more than one of the essays sent in.

We wrote recently about the painful necessity of rejecting so many notes and articles for ANTIQUITY, and the special difficulty of being able to get space for highly technical articles dealing with scientific matters or with the craftsmanship of archaeology—excavation, aerial photography, among many others. *Nature* now asks us to draw attention to the fact that this distinguished journal is particularly interested in the application of scientific techniques to archaeology. Authors of such

articles might well submit their contributions to *Nature*. We have already drawn attention to *Archaeometry*, and perhaps *World Archaeology* may also help. This journal, originally announced to appear last year under the imprint of Weidenfeld and Nicolson, is now advertised to start this summer, published by Routledge and Kegan Paul.

In the early sixties a new and original cartoon character made his appearance in the French children's comic paper *Pilote*. This was *Astérix Le Gaulois*, a 'petit guerrier à l'esprit malin'—a shrewd cunning little warrior to whom all perilous missions were entrusted. He got his superhuman strength from the magic potion brewed by Panoramix, the venerable village druid (the origin of this recipe is lost in the mists of time; it is handed down from Druid to Druid by word of mouth; all that can be revealed is that there is mistletoe and lobster in it. 'The lobster is optional', says Panoramix, 'but it improves the flavour.') Astérix has many friends: Assurancetourix the bard (*assurance tous risques*), the farseeing Panoramix, and Abraracourcix (*à bras raccourcis*), but closest of all is Obélix, a menhir-delivery man by trade, much addicted to wild boar. In 50 BC it was thought that Gaul was entirely occupied by the Romans: but not quite—one small village held out surrounded by the Roman legionaries who garrisoned the fortified camps of Babaorum, Aquarium, Laudanum and Petitbonum. In this village lived Astérix, here Panoramix collected mistletoe and brewed his potions, here Obélix spent his days delivering menhirs to megalithomaniacs. The chief of the one independent Gaulish tribe was Abraracourcix—majestic, brave and hot-tempered. He had only one fear, that the sky might fall on his head tomorrow, but he always said to himself, 'Tomorrow never comes.' He appears in English as Vitalstatistix.



The Editor of ANTIQUITY has long been an admirer of Astérix the Gaul, 'this Iron Age Popeye' as Margery Fisher has called him (*The Sunday Times*, 2 March 1969, 56). He knows that at least three Professors of Archaeology in Britain share his admiration for these new Gauls, and in his book, *The Druids* (reviewed here by Dr Ellis Evans, p. 132) Professor Stuart Piggott, long an Astérix fan, says: 'The whole series shows a real knowledge of the Gaulish scene which enriches the comedy for prehistorians.' By series he refers to the fact that the Astérix legend has outgrown the cartoon strip into books, and these books, hitherto in French, are not only being redistributed in England in their French form with cribs to make the allusions and puns better understood, but also in English translation. The enterprising English publisher is the Brockhampton Press, Leicester, and the first translation, *Asterix the Gaul*, was published at the end of February; *Asterix and Cleopatra* is due out as we go to press, and *Asterix the Gladiator* will follow. The original French text was by Goscinny and the drawings by Uderzo: the English translation is by Anthea Bell and Derek Hockridge. All are at the very reasonable price of 12s. By kind permission of the publishers we are permitted to reproduce here black-and-white versions of Astérix (p. 87), Obélix (p. 89), Panoramix, anglicized as Getafix (p. 88), and Vitalstatistix (p. 90). In the English edition Assurancetourix has been transformed into Cacofonix (the new name will not be lost on fans of this series). Other happy transmogrifications include Caius Bonus, the Roman general, into Crismus Bonus, and Cetyounix into Tenansix (which may be

supposed, with the onset of decimal coinage in Britain, to need a gloss of its own one day).

In France the Astérix legend knows no bounds: there are Astérix films, television and sound programmes, and records: there are Astérix pencil boxes, buttons, Easter eggs and key-rings: the first French satellite was named after him; and in 1967 a full-size Gaulish village, covering several acres, drew thousands of visitors to see it in the Floralies exhibition at Orleans.

Why has there been this phenomenal success? Many reasons have been suggested: the humour of the visual and verbal puns, the bold interplay of ancient and modern allusions, the mixture of fact and fancy. But the real reason is probably that the French have compared the achievements of Astérix and Co. in defying the might of the Roman Empire with their own contemporary struggle for international independence and recognition after the calamitous days of the Fourth Republic.

Mrs Kate Pretty recently sent us a letter which a friend of hers, a Mr Christopher Hawkes of Bristol, found inside a copy of Volume II of *Excavations on Cranborne Chase*, and we reproduce it here.

Private

ackd 19/11/88

Rushmore
Salisbury
15 Nov. '88

My dear Sir,

In reply to your request of 12 Nov. 1888 for a copy of General Pitt Rivers 2nd vol. of "Excavations in Cranborne Chase" I have directed a parcel to you this day and also one to The Yorkshire College of Science. Will you be good to acknowledge their receipt *direct* to General Pitt Rivers without any reference to me.

This second volume is, I'm glad to say, being received with quite as much favour as the first, a matter of no small satisfaction to me as you may imagine.

It sounds like "blowing your own trumpet", but I cannot refrain from mentioning that the whole of the vol, now on its way to you was produced i.e., printed, bound and edited in 3 wks only so you may guess that I had a pretty warm time of it. A new feature is the means by which we have been able to compare the ancient bones of domesticated animals with those of modern breeds, by which the estimated height and size of the Roman horses cows &c can be got at with great certainty.

With kind regards,
Believe me
Yours very truly,
Fredk: James.

Walter Rowley Esq

We drew Professor Grimes's attention to this letter with its remarkable account of a piece of rapid editing and printing. His comment was, 'When I look across at Volume II of *Cranborne Chase*, I can only conclude that the General must have had his whips out!'

In an earlier editorial we commented sharply on Mr Ian Blake's repeated criticisms of the excavation of Silbury Hill, and invited him to say in 500 words how he would dig this fascinating prehistoric monument (ANTIQUITY, 1968, 251). We know that readers of ANTIQUITY, as well as its Editor and its Advisory Editorial

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Board, have been looking forward to his reasoned, clear statement, and to the comments of Professor Atkinson. Alas, this is not to be: despite several reminders, nothing comes to us from his pen, which is curious. A critic who writes easily in a destructive vein should find constructive criticism more easy to write. From this strange non-confrontation readers of ANTIQUITY and *The Irish Times* might draw conclusions which the Editor is slow to do. And the more so if they read Blake's outbursts in *The Irish Times* for 13th March of this year in which he warmly praises Professor Charles Thomas's review of *The Quest for Arthur's Britain* (ANTIQUITY, 1969, 27), saying that he himself eleven months ago had asked whether the fund-raising techniques used by the Camelot Excavation Committee 'were doing anything but damage to the cause of British archaeology'. He concludes: 'Here at last is a breath of fresh air. Perhaps there will now be another professor who will do the same job on the Silbury project. After all even Camelot does not have (to my knowledge) commemorative ties for those taking part!'

It does not have to be a professor, Mr Blake. We invited you, publicly and privately, to tell the world through the pages of ANTIQUITY what was wrong with the Silbury project and how you would have done the job. You have failed to accept this invitation and retreated to snipe at British archaeology from the safe obscurity of Dublin. A shameful (non-) performance.

These cross words are being written in a Pan American Jet Clipper speeding from Los Angeles to London. It was exciting to visit the Carbon-14 Laboratory at UCLA, in between seeing the magnificent exhibition of ancient Peruvian art in the Los Angeles County Museum and paying a pilgrimage to the Simon Rodia towers at Watts. We were allowed to see the La Laguna skull, now dated to 15,200 BC—the 'first American', and we hope he survives better than Piltdown, which Smith Woodward infelicitously called 'the first Englishman'. We discussed with Professor Rainer Berger and Professor Hans Suess the necessary modifications in C14 dates to be made because of the dendrochronological evidence from the bristle cone pines. We hope to have from Berger and Suess a definitive statement on these matters (with a graph that can be used by all archaeologists) within the next six to twelve months.