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Editorial

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AH! stirring times we live in—stirring times', as Hardy's 'ancient man of malt' declared in *Far from the Madding Crowd*: the French are reorganizing their archaeological structure, Lascaux is fading away in an alarming fashion, Abu Simbel looks as if it might be saved from the rising waters of the new High Dam, the first volume of the UNESCO *History of Mankind: Cultural and Scientific Development* has at long last been published; so too has the first volume of Dr Henshall's *Prehistoric Chambered Tombs of Scotland*, and, soon after Dr Hastings Banda asked for the transference of Stonehenge to Nyasaland to show that the British were once savages (*Daily Mail*, 7 March, 1963; *ANTIQUITY*, 1963, 91), one of the great stones slowly and quietly fell down.



The organization of French archaeology and the standard of French excavation and reporting has long been a matter of criticism in the pages of *ANTIQUITY* by Sir Mortimer Wheeler and by the past and present Editors of this journal. The sympathetic friends of these three men know perfectly well that the purpose of this criticism was constructive, and that France, with its wealth of material and monuments, its sense of the past, its love of art, its privileged position between the Mediterranean and Classical world and the world of the barbarian north-west, the *Ultima Thule* of Europe, is undeniably one of the key areas in the study of ancient Europe. It looks as though, at long last, the country which gave the names to the Palaeolithic cultures, and which nurtured Bertrand, the de Mortillet, Déchelette, Lartet, Breuil, Piette and many more, is putting its house in order.

The whole state basis of field archaeology and excavation in France has been changing rapidly since, over 20 years ago, in 1941, the Carcopino law initiated the basis for state concern in excavation. From this there emerged from 1945 onwards the body of the *Directeurs des circonscriptions archéologiques (Antiquités préhistoriques/Antiquités historiques)* all of whom are—and this is not understood sufficiently clearly outside France—only part-time officers. For a very long time good Frenchmen and true have been campaigning for a new system. The insufficient financial provisions for excavation have been eloquently demonstrated by H. P. Eydoux in an admirable series of books to which we will refer in the next Editorial of *ANTIQUITY*—suffice it to say here that we have nothing in Britain to compare with the brilliant *haute vulgarisation* of Eydoux. But it was not Eydoux's books that produced a change in the French state attitude to their most ancient past. The *Directeurs des Antiquités* themselves, the *Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres*, the *Comité Nationale de la Recherche Scientifique* (the consultative body of the *Centre National*

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de la Recherche Scientifique), have all compiled what the French call, in a delicious phrase we ought to adopt, '*cahiers de doléances*'. We have been wondering, *outré-manche*, what was happening, and we learnt from the *Rapport national de conjoncture* of the C.R.N.S. for 1961–62 (p. 160) that the *Directeurs des Antiquités* have asked a brains trust to think about these problems and to draft suggestions. In the *Rapport* for 1962–63 (p. 165) we learn that, at the request of the *Ministre d'Etat chargé des Affaires Culturelles*, Monsieur André Malraux, a scheme of administrative reform has been begun.

But what is this scheme? We all urgently want to know about it. The archaeology of Western Europe is not the concern of General de Gaulle and André Malraux alone, it is the concern of everyone in Western Europe from Tartessos and Antequera through Lascaux and Alesia to Skara Brae and Maes Howe. On 15 April of this year (after all, Bank Holidays were invented by an archaeologist), clutching our Dubonnet in a café in Chelles, we learnt, in the evening *Journal télévisé* of the R.F.T., in the first of a new series of programmes called *L'Actualité de l'archéologie*, of some progress in this matter. In the chair was Monsieur Quoniam, at present *Inspecteur-général des musées de province*, and with him were Messieurs P.-M. Duval, E. Will, de Bouard and Leroi-Gourhan. At the end of a short programme of archaeological news, Monsieur Quoniam announced the impending creation of a *Service National des Fouilles* in France. This is splendid news, and we hope to publish full details when they have been made public.



One thing the new French archaeological organization will have to tackle at once and that is the fading of the paintings at Lascaux. There has been a dispute about this for years, some saying that the paintings were fading and others that the apparent fading was a subjective memory of a first visit when the great paintings appeared more marvellous and clearer than on subsequent visits. A few years ago we were assured by Monsieur Severin Blanc of Les Eyzies, then Director of Antiquities in the Dordogne, that the alleged fading was a legend, and that no change in the appearance and quality of these paintings had taken place since that remarkable day in September, 1940 when the five boys dropped into the hill-side and discovered the site. These views were expressed eight years ago; even then others were taking a more gloomy view. In the last eight years the view that something was wrong has been gaining ground and recently a most distinguished and knowledgeable archaeologist wrote to us as follows: 'for some years now it has been quite obvious to those of us who have been in the habit of visiting Lascaux at fairly frequent intervals, that the colour (particularly the red) has been fading'. It was hoped by many that the air-conditioning would solve everything. What it did do was remove the complaints of visitors in pre-air-conditioning days who said that they could not breathe for lack of air.

Perhaps it is the air-conditioning that has caused the present deterioration, for, alas, we know now that the colours *are* fading and that a green micro-organism of seaweed structure is growing over some of them—especially the great bull—and that the rock surface is crumbling. Can these paintings be saved? Lascaux was closed early in the spring of 1963, but was to be opened again in mid-July and remain open until the middle of September as an experimental season, after which it would be closed again while experiments were conducted. Monsieur André Malraux, the Minister for Cultural Affairs, set up a large committee of scientists under M. Henry de Segogne to try and find a way of stopping the fading and eradicating the mysterious algae growth. The humidity of the air was to be measured, its movement and the chemical content of the atmosphere. It

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was hoped then that it would be possible to decide whether the growth of the algae was being caused by the presence of visitors or by the mechanism installed in 1952 to condition the air and keep it in motion.

This is what we were informed by spokesmen for the French Government a few weeks ago in late May and had then written, 'By the time these words are in print the French Government commission may have solved the problem. If not and if the results of the experiments is that no control is possible then Lascaux may be closed to the public for all time. But before this very drastic step is taken, we feel sure that all the resources of French and international conservation experts will be fully used.'

And now, as we go to press, grim and grievous news comes from Paris. By kind permission of *The Guardian*, we are able to print verbatim the report of their Paris correspondent Darsie Gillie, himself an *amateur* (in the best French sense) of archaeology. Here is his report from Paris dated 20 June: 'A catastrophically rapid development of the green mould on the walls of the Lascaux caves during the last three months is reported by the expert committee appointed in the middle of May by the Minister of Cultural Affairs. The committee held a meeting in the caves yesterday to examine their present condition and was evidently shocked by what it found. The mould has spread tenfold over the walls in the last three months and was now encroaching on the painting itself. The original proposal of the committee had been first to take some immediate preservative measures; secondly to reopen the caves during two months, this summer, taking records of the exact state of the atmosphere and the growth of the mould; and finally, to close them hermetically for a further period so as to obtain exact information as to the growth of the algae and the factors favouring it. The committee has, however, now concluded that the situation is much too desperate for such deliberate examination, which should no doubt have been made months ago. There can be no question of reopening the caves this summer. The committee, however, believes that energetic and immediate action to oppose the multiplication of the micro-organisms can yet save the essential, but only if the matter is treated as one of extreme urgency. The members of the committee describe the air inside the caves as contaminated like that of the Métro in Paris. This is surprising since the caves were closed on 7 or 8 April. The committee recommends as an immediate measure that the air should be disinfected and filtered. It points out that some of the micro-organisms can under ideal conditions be reproduced eight times over in 24 hours. Some points in this statement are surprising and disturbing. Why was the air still in such an infected condition ten weeks after the caves had been closed? Why did it take the committee a month to get a report on its actual condition or indeed a month to go and look at the caves?'

We agree with every word of what Darsie Gillie has written, and while yielding to none in our appreciation of that delicious filthy cloying nostalgic stink that so certainly defines the entrances to the Paris Métro and reminds one of the strange grids over its subterranean lines, we don't want this in the hills above Montignac. Surely, surely, it is not beyond the skill of the present scientific world to arrest what is happening in Lascaux, and to ensure that all Palaeolithic paintings can and will be preserved intact for all posterity? We print here a reminder of some of the delightful paintings we hope that all will soon be able to see once more *in situ* (PL. XXVII).



Meanwhile, with Lascaux out, the visitors will concentrate on Les Eyzies. They will visit Font de Gaume and Les Combarelles and La Mouthe. We re-echo the words of

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Anne and Gale Sieveking in their *The Caves of Northern France and Northern Spain* (reviewed in these pages, ANTIQUITY, 1963, 71) when they declare that Font de Gaume and Les Combarelles are 'disgracefully looked after'. When the French Government has dealt with Lascaux, it should turn its attention to these two caves. The public, thwarted at Lascaux, will turn more than ever to Rouffignac. The French Government should now turn its attention to this site. That great French archaeologist, the Abbé Breuil, is now dead; it is now high time for an impartial enquiry into this site. Recently we had occasion to be corresponding with Monsieur Bernard Pierret, now a Professor in a Lycée in Morocco. It was Pierret who published, several years before the 'discovery' by Nougier and Robert, the frieze of rhinoceroses. In a recent letter which he has kindly allowed us to publish Pierret sets out clearly his testimony, and it is this: (1) there were paintings when he and his colleagues first visited Rouffignac in 1945, and he particularly recalls those on the Grand Plafond, (2) during their visits to the cave between 1945 and 1949 paintings appeared progressively and in places where they knew that the walls had hitherto been blank—one of these areas was the wall with the frieze of rhinoceroses, and (3) when, in 1949, Pierret and his colleagues discussed the paintings with Severin Blanc he said that *all* of them were false. Pierret does *not* agree with this view and regards most of them as authentic, but some as certainly painted in the late forties. With its new lease of life French archaeology must find out for us how many of the Rouffignac paintings were done in the late forties of this century. Lascaux, Font de Gaume, Les Combarelles and the rest of them may be geographically in France as Altimira and Hornos de la Pena are geographically in Spain; but they are all part of our common, primary heritage from the prehistoric past. General de Gaulle, Monsieur André Malraux, and Monsieur Henry de Segogne are in these matters not merely Frenchmen, but the agents of the world, and the eyes of the world are on them and their staffs as, this summer, they battle with their prehistoric problems in the Dordogne.



The publication of Dr Audrey Henshall's *The Chambered Tombs of Scotland*, vol. 1*, is a very important event in British archaeology and is the beginning of the creation of a megalithic archive for Great Britain such as we have never had before. As Professor Piggott says in his foreword, 'to a large proportion of the public, excavation (wrongly conceived of as an infinitely exciting operation) is the sum total of archaeology: the card-index has no glamour. But those who work within the discipline know better and will recognize Miss Henshall's achievement for what it is, a major and outstanding contribution, of solid and enduring worth, to British prehistoric studies.' Nearly forty years ago the founder and first editor of ANTIQUITY began such an archive with the publication of his *Long Barrows of the Cotswolds* and carried this work on in a series of Ordnance Survey maps and publications in which he was assisted by C. W. Phillips and W. F. Grimes. But the archive did not proceed as *Long Barrows of the Cotswolds* had started it. In the same year that Crawford produced that book another start had been made elsewhere, when van Giffen published in Utrecht, in three very large volumes, *De Hunebedden in Nederland*. Here was the real model for a complete megalithic archive, and it was followed and developed by the Leisners in their *Die Megalithgraber der Iberischen Halbinsel (Der Suden, 1943, and Der Westen, 1956 and 1959)*.

* A. S. Henshall: *The Chambered Tombs of Scotland*, volume I. Edinburgh, The University Press, 1963. 456 pp., 145 text-figs., 27 pls. 105s.

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The van Giffen/Leisner formula is the one that together with excavation leads us forward in megalithic studies. What we now need in the British Isles is a corpus of all our megalithic monuments. Our own *Prehistoric Chamber Tombs of England and Wales* (1950) had not intended to be a corpus. As we wrote ten years later and as Dr Henshall quotes: 'It seemed to me in the mid-thirties that what was needed at that moment was for someone to visit all the megalithic tombs in England and Wales, using the detailed regional surveys which were then coming into existence, to synthesize what was then known of them, and to set the tombs in some sort of genetic relationship with the megalithic tombs of western Europe in general.'

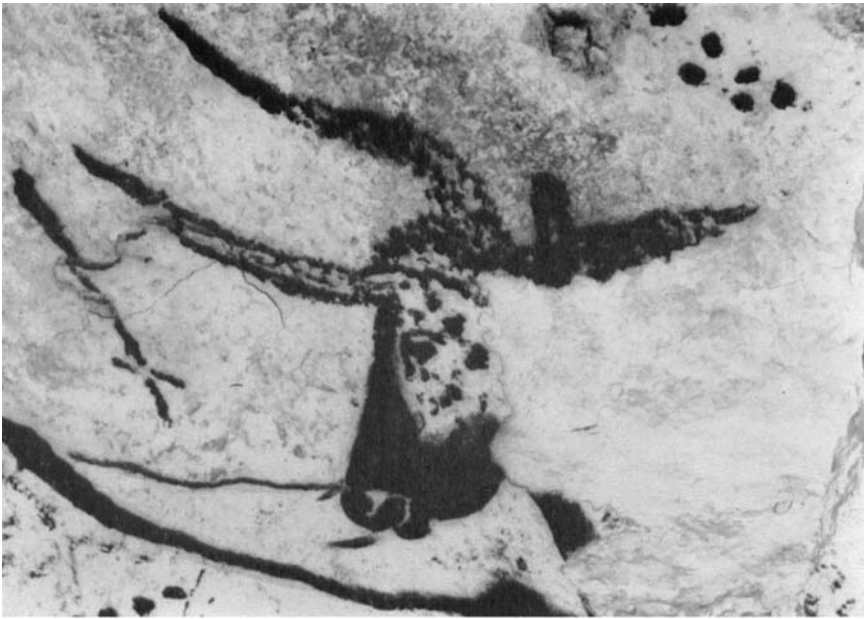
What was needed then is not what is needed in the mid-sixties. We now need a comprehensive archive of our megaliths on the van Giffen/Leisner model. It began in Ireland and we have already discussed the first volume by R. de Valera and S. O'Nuallain of the *Survey of the Megalithic Tombs of Ireland*, vol. 1: *County Clare*, Dublin, 1961. Now here is the first volume of Scotland; it takes in the north (Shetland, Orkney, Caithness, Sutherland, Ross-shire, Inverness-shire, Nairnshire, Banffshire, Aberdeenshire and Kincardineshire). Volume II covering the rest of Scotland is in active preparation. The University Press of Edinburgh is to be warmly congratulated on undertaking the publication of this book and in producing it so well; this is a fine piece of book production—a pleasure to handle and a pleasure to read.

This volume is in two parts; the second part (pp. 156–443) is a catalogue of sites. Plans at a scale of 30 ft. to 1 in. have been included of all sites where any structure can be recorded. All the objects found in the tombs are catalogued and (unless obviously unconnected with the collective burials) illustrated by drawings to uniform scales (pottery at $\frac{1}{4}$, other objects $\frac{1}{2}$). Part I (pp. 1–155) is synthesis and discussion, dividing the north Scottish tombs into five groups: the Clava group, the Balnagowan group (defined here and somewhat tentatively for the first time), the Orkney–Cromarty group, the Maes Howe group and the Zetland group. Each group is dealt with separately and its distribution, siting, architecture, typology, ritual and contents are dealt with.

We propose to review the synthesis and discussion part of this book when volume II is published and we have Dr Henshall's views and complete survey of all the north British megaliths. Here we welcome the first volume and say we eagerly await volume II. But why should the University Press of Edinburgh stop its good work at the border? We hope it will commission some young scholar to do 'The Chambered Tombs of England and Wales', and so bring to a splendid conclusion in the next ten years the work started by Crawford, Phillips, Grimes, ourselves and many others before the last war.

By accident, as we finished writing these words, we came on the footnote in the preface to James Fergusson's *Rude Stone Monuments in all Countries: their age and uses*. 'What is really wanted now', Fergusson wrote in 1872, 'is a "Megalithic Monument Publication Society"'. After the meeting of the Prehistoric Congress at Norwich, a committee for this purpose was formed in conjunction with the Ethnological Society. After several meetings everything was arranged and settled, but, alas! there were no funds to meet the necessary expenses, or, at least, risk of publication, and the whole thing fell through. To do what is wanted on a really efficient scale a payment or a guarantee of £1000 would be necessary, and that is far beyond what is obtainable in this poor country.' Fergusson was writing ninety years ago: we may take heart from the fact that, though we still have no Megalithic Monument Publication Society, we now do not need it, and are no longer poor in the money and men to carry out what seemed to Fergusson, Sir Henry Dryden, Lieutenant Oliver, Eugene Conwell and others of that generation no more than a pious dream.

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(a)



(b)

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(a) Head of the black bull in the Great Hall at Lascaux. An arrow sticks into the muzzle. (b) Frieze of five little horses on the right wall of the axial gallery at Lascaux.

See p. 173]