

Yesterday's Man - An archaeological life 1955 - 1980

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## PREAMBLE

Before I embark on my little history of archaeology as I saw it, and experienced it, in Cambridge (1955-57, 1960-1980) and in Edinburgh (1957-1960), it may be worth the briefest of outlines of how I came to be where I was at the beginning of this saga. Born in Canada, educated at University there, I found myself in the three short years of 1952-1955 working in an office in a small town, and doing things that were of little interest to me, buying and selling. A couple of lengthy visits to Britain and the western seaboard, Norway to Spain, in the summer of these years demonstrated to me that there was a wider world full of stimulating places and events. Thanks to my parents' intellectual support, and my father's boundless energy, I was encouraged in 1955 to consider a new career, and, as will now follow, things began to fall my way.

## ENTRY TO CAMBRIDGE

In August 1955 I was in England, as a tourist, and travelling with several Canadian friends. Already I had some thoughts about ancient history and archaeology, nurtured by my mother's interests, and was attracted by the possibilities of studying such vague matters, vague because I had no real inkling of what they really consisted. Staying with Lincolnshire friends, I obtained from them the name of a History don at Cambridge. On my way south towards London and the boat train to Southampton,

and thence to Canada, I stopped off at Cambridge in the hope of meeting the History teacher to discuss what might be possible in the longer term. I went to an address in Fitzwilliam Street, and a knock on the door brought Dr Leslie Wayper to greet me courteously, to hear of my interest in archaeology in particular, and to phone a good friend of his in the Library of the Faculty of Archaeology and Anthropology. I went there and was met by Miss Mary Thatcher who heard my story and phoned the Professor of Archaeology, Grahame Clark, at his home in Wilberforce Road. I soon found myself invited to afternoon tea by Professor Clark and presented myself rather nervously at his door at the appropriate hour. Here I was warmly welcomed, and escorted to the garden where I met a mixed assemblage of guests, an elderly French professor and one of her graduate students, and a Cambridge student who had come to discuss research, and, I think, one or two others whose relevance to the party I never did ascertain. Mrs Clark presided over the whole, with Grahame Clark proudly displaying the rose garden and its profusion of colours. All of this went on, and on, until the Cambridge student departed, not having had an opportunity to speak to Professor Clark.

By about 5 o'clock I too began to think that my chance had slipped by, and I rose to thank Mrs Clark and to depart for the railway station. At once Grahame Clark said 'I thought you wanted to talk to me about archaeology here at Cambridge.' I agreed and he led me into the house and to his small study where I said my piece about my interest in the subject and how I hoped I might be permitted to study it under his guidance. To my astonishment he at once launched into what 'option' I would take, and what kind of qualification I would get after studying in the Faculty. He said that the Diploma in Prehistoric Archaeology was what I should aim for, and that this would take me two years because I was coming new to the subject and could not complete all the courses and reading in one year. This seemed reasonable for me, and I began to think about timing and finance and such matters. Then he said I would of course do the Palaeolithic and Mesolithic option as this was of a more general and wider area of interest rather than a more geographically limited later prehistory

or post-Roman option. Never having encountered the words Palaeolithic or Mesolithic (but having studied Latin at school) I nonetheless said that this option sounded very interesting. At that, Professor Clark rose and said that he looked forward to seeing me in early October, and led me to the door. As I stepped out, I thought to myself, ‘I have been accepted to study at Cambridge University!’. Then Professor Clark said, ‘of course you’ll need a College’. I was confused by this as I knew nothing of the system of Cambridge. He said ‘It is very late in the year so you had better go to Fitzwilliam; the House can often take mature students from abroad, and you had better have a word with the Censor, W.S. Thatcher.’ All of this was quite bewildering to me but I thanked my host and walked off. A phone box was found and the telephone directory was consulted. Sure enough, there was the name W.S. Thatcher. I phoned and Mrs Thatcher answered, to say that I had just missed Mr Thatcher as he was on his way to a lecture at Ely; I could call again in the morning. Off I went to the station and queued at the ticket office for a London bound train. The man in front of me had just got his ticket and in so doing had laid down his wallet on the shelf. I glanced at it and saw the name – W.S. Thatcher. He departed for the platform for his train. I hurriedly got my ticket and pursued him. I introduced myself. His train, going north, arrived; mine was due any moment, going south. I explained who I was, what I wanted to do at Cambridge, and asked if Fitzwilliam House would accept me. He shook my hand and said ‘Don’t worry, my boy, Fitzwilliam will look after you’; these were his exact words. At that, he was gone. I travelled to London, caught the boat train to Southampton the next day, and on arrival in Canada began to prepare for my return to England in six weeks; a house had to be sold, contents disposed of, and all the usual hassle of an extended leave from my country of birth, a leave of absence that has lasted for over sixty years as I write this.

One small preparatory matter was attended to in Canada. Having lived in the New World, and having worked for several years after leaving college there, I was quite accustomed to travelling about in a car, rather than by public transport. I thought it would be necessary to have some sort of

private transportation in England so I made contact with a distributor of British cars in Toronto, and arranged the purchase of a Morris Minor, to be collected by me from a dealer in Lincoln. All paperwork seemed in order and part-payment made in advance. A few days after my arrival in late September at Southampton by some great liner or other, I was in Lincolnshire with friends. I was driven to Lincoln and to the car dealer, and confidently entered the office and announced I had come to collect my car. Of course, the dealer had never heard of me, had no knowledge of any car purchase, and said that I was clearly unaware that there were very long waiting lists for cars and how could I (a mere colonial in his eyes) expect to waltz in and be handed a car? After a good deal of phone calls made by me to all and sundry, a spare unallocated car was found somewhere in Britain and was duly delivered some weeks later. It was a black Morris Minor and served me well for a year until I succumbed to a more upmarket vehicle, a British Racing Green Morgan Plus Four, of which more can be said later.

## CAMBRIDGE 1955-1957

On arrival in Cambridge at the end of September I was at once confronted by a multitude of problems, or so it seemed at the time. I knew absolutely nothing about archaeology, and at once went off to Heffer's Bookshop in the old Petty Cury and bought my first archaeological book, J.R. Garrood's *Archaeological Remains* (1949) which I proceeded to read from cover to cover. None of it proved to be strictly relevant to the course but it at least introduced me to some of the names that were casually dropped in lectures and supervisions. It mentioned eoliths, axes and flakes, *Homo neanderthalensis*, bone points and the words Palaeolithic and Mesolithic. But in retrospect the book did have some sort of influence upon me. The inside front cover of the book carried a jumble of pictures of archaeological objects, including microlithic flint tools, stone axes, a bone harpoon head, a bronze axe and spearhead, a bronze shield, some pottery and the image of an elk carved onto a bone – almost every one of such pictures became,

in due time, the focus of my various studies and research into prehistoric material culture.

Fortunately, my Lincolnshire friends invited me to spend weekends with them and during the first month or so I stayed in a small hotel in Cambridge during weekdays. Fitzwilliam House had no accommodation for students, much to my surprise, and I had very soon to find a flat in which to eat and sleep, spending most of the days at the Faculty Library (the Haddon) or the lecture rooms. Here I encountered those people responsible for my education.

As a brief guide, it may be worth saying here that the course of instruction at Cambridge was divided into two Parts, Part I being a one-year introduction to Archaeology, Physical Anthropology and Social Anthropology, the three disciplines being studied by all undergraduates with only a small part of the course in which a choice of subject could be made. From here, the student moved into Part II, a two-year course in one of the disciplines and some specialisation within that single subject. Part I was a quite essential guide to it all, but the year in question could be entirely missed by anyone who already had a related degree from another university, or who came to undertake not Parts I and II but a Diploma in one of the disciplines. I was entered for the Diploma in Prehistoric Archaeology and so was thrown in at once into the teaching at Part II level. I knew nothing of anything, had done no reading, but had the advantage of age, experience in the commercial world, and a real urge to succeed in this new adventure.

The teaching within the Faculty for the first-year Part I course was, to my mind, a fascinating mix of the three disciplines, with theory (although not acknowledged as such) and the reality of evidence fused into broad themes, and for those able to absorb some very detailed lectures on Archaeology, Social and Physical Anthropology, the rewards were great. I should have done the full Part I course, but did not have time to attend the two-hundred hours of lectures and demonstrations on offer, as well as the hundred or so hours that Part II offered for students of the Palaeolithic. As it was, I went to some Part I courses on Social Anthropology, as much

of the Physical Anthropology as I could fit in, most of the Archaeology of Part I, and all of the general Palaeolithic Archaeology of Part II, and also the Geological and Botanical course relevant to my interests. All of these lecture courses were loosely linked to the more informal teaching that we got from individual or paired supervisions with members of staff as well as research students and other graduates who had College rather than University appointments.

All of these people were valuable to me in imparting some of their ideas as well as the basic information that drove the coursework on. Gowns were worn both by lecturers and students and some of the lecture courses were very formal affairs, others more relaxed, but debate during lectures was frowned upon and late arrivals often acidly noted by the lecturer. The projection of slides, hand-operated by a member of the Faculty Assistant staff, was sometimes amusing with upside-down pictures and we students would count the number of times a confusing slide could be projected before it appeared correctly; we never I think got to the number seven, but the junior lecturers could get flustered easily and we doubtless had little sympathy with them unless some catastrophic event occurred such as the projector bursting into flames, a glass slide shattering *in situ*, or the screen collapsing; all of these happened during my time there. The black board was most often in use, for spellings of site names, for outlining the structure of the lecture, for summing-up, and when the chalking was legible this was valuable to us.

The Part II courses in the Department of Archaeology had two general thematic series which all students took, one on the Aims, History and Scope of the subject, and one on Methods and Techniques. These were given by a number of lecturers and other archaeologists in Cambridge, including College Lecturers and Research Students, and introduced me to a wide variety of approaches. I suppose there was some overall structure to it all, but the course on Aims was more stimulating and beneficial to those of us who knew very little, than the Methods course which was stereotyped, rigid and rather boring. Field methods were still trench- and section- oriented, open excavation little practised and less understood,

dating methods were few and basic although radiocarbon dating was becoming exciting especially for the earlier periods of prehistory. The only practicals for the course were a bit of surveying and trench-cutting on a local hillfort. The main teachers in the Department, Grahame Clark, Glyn Daniel and Charles McBurney, were not involved in much of the Methods course, which in retrospect was perhaps just as well as none of them had much of a clue about the emergence of modern archaeological science and technology. Both Clark and McBurney had the evidence from their own recent excavations and field studies upon which to base their ideas about the field practices of archaeology, and yet we students gained very little from them in the way of such first-hand knowledge. We profited from lectures on air photography by one of its pioneers, J.K. St Joseph, and if we had the opportunity we went across to the Botany School to hear Harry Godwin talk on peat stratigraphy and, in Geography, to listen to Richard Hey on the Quaternary geological episodes.

Greater variety came from the Aims and Scope courses organised mostly by Daniel, and through his and Clark's contacts there was a variety of visitors who introduced us to events across the world, Australia, America, the Mediterranean lands and northern Europe, and, most excitingly, African prehistory where Cambridge graduates were really at the forefront of research. Desmond Clark and Louis Leakey were among them but we also heard a good deal about South Africa and the intriguing discoveries at Sterkfontein and other sites. We students wanted more of this revolutionary evidence.

The remainder of the Part II course consisted of a set of choices or options, starting with a) the OSA or Old Stone Age (Palaeolithic, and also Mesolithic), b) the NBI (Neolithic, Bronze and Iron Ages), and c) the IRS (Iron, Roman and Saxon). The Department of Anglo-Saxon and Kindred Subjects had its own input to the IRS and its own and separate coursework and Tripos.

My option, the OSA, had been chosen for me by Professor Clark and so I was entrusted to Dr Charles McBurney. For some extraordinary reason

I still have my lecture and reading notes for his course, and it bears all the hallmarks of someone anxious not to miss out on any detail of any subject taught by, or intimated by, the lecturer. My notes, reasonably neatly organised on the pages, and with many diagrams created or copied from the literature, occupy something close to a thousand hand-written pages many with notes on both sides of the page. Photocopying did not exist in the Faculty or perhaps anywhere. All of this note-taking was accomplished, if that is the word, in a year and a half of attendance at lectures and libraries.

In the class of 1955 McBurney had about six, including Ray Inskeep and Eric Higgs, two men who soon made their own marks on the world of fieldwork and scholarship and inspiration. More junior to these were Charles McVean, an extremely jolly man who had completed his Part I Archaeology, and I, who had completed nothing at all in the realm of the subject. McBurney was a dedicated archaeologist, and fanatical about the OSA and its myriad of stone industries and sub-divisions. He was very much a typologist, and extremely clever at deducing the phases of the cultures of the Middle and Late Palaeolithic from the slightest of signals surviving on flint tools and waste flakes and cores. He lectured to us in a ground floor room where the light could be totally blanked out by blinds; the main lecture rooms upstairs had no such provision. He used glass slides, all black and white pictures of course, and the epidiascope, a large contraption that stood on a table and, by use of a heavy lever and glass pressure pad, could project line drawings and photos from books. This required the presence of an Assistant, and it fell to one of the Museum staff to oblige in this. The man was ‘Hancock’, we never knew his first name, and he detested McBurney. We the students, especially McVean and I, took much pleasure from watching Hancock deliberately project the wrong page, or upside-down, or indeed drop the whole book, while McBurney waited and then came the words, ‘Hancock, get it right, it is marked with a slip of paper’. Hancock would mutter ‘Sorry .... Sir’ and fumble about with the machine. The pictures to him, and sometimes to us, looked the same – pages of flint tools, flakes, scrapers, burins, backed

blades, whatever seemed important to the lecturer. And we certainly did learn our stuff, becoming quite expert at identification and categorisation.

Charles McBurney tended to be quite hopelessly impractical about life in general, but extremely focussed when it came to his beloved flint tools of the Palaeolithic. On occasion he would appear for a lecture without notes or slides or books, but he could always manage to deliver some sort of coherent talk. We students thought he probably got lost trying to find his College or his home, but he was rather more resourceful than that and his dogged determination to work in Libya, France, Spain and, later on, Iran and Afghanistan, could only be admired while one tried to ensure personal survival. I managed to avoid foreign travel with McBurney, by chronological luck, but I did get a measure of the potential for mischief later on.

I lacked the first-year introductory course on the Palaeolithic (Part I), and had to cope with McBurney's detail while still trying to get a broader picture of the names and sequences of cultures, and glaciations. Miles Burkitt provided these to all the first-year students, and I was advised to attend his lectures to get some overall idea of what was going on.

Miles Burkitt was considered by most to be 'the original' in Palaeolithic studies at Cambridge. He had taught Grahame Clark and Charles McBurney, had been in the Faculty for decades, and was greatly respected by most of the staff. His lectures were given briskly, without debate or discussion, and were in retrospect very simplistic, without any pretence at uncertainty or complexity; they could really have been absorbed in one afternoon rather than the sixteen lectures that Burkitt gave. His book *The Old Stone Age* (third edition 1955) said it all, and his lectures followed the chapters one by one. Burkitt was always well-attired in suit or equivalent but, unlike others in the Department, did not lecture in academic gown. His room was in the lower reaches of the Museum where he supervised his undergraduates while his wife Peggy Burkitt sat at an angled drawing desk and illustrated the flints that Burkitt was studying. She was a very fine artist and a very friendly figure to encounter in the Department.

On one occasion McVean and I were shown several flint axes by Burkitt who told us he had just that day retrieved them from some industrial excavation hole to the east of Cambridge. As I was spending a good deal of time with McBurney's stone tools and waste flakes from Libya, I enquired politely of Miles Burkitt if there were any flakes found with the axes. He replied yes there were and he had carefully collected them too and had neatly disposed of them by dumping them into a cement mixer he encountered on the Newmarket Road outside Cambridge. 'No one will ever be bothered by them', he said with great satisfaction. I said nothing.

Burkitt had been, and probably still was, a supporter of the Eolithic concept, that some flints recovered from extremely ancient geological deposits had been flaked by man, hence early man had existed in Europe some millions of years ago. The theory had been discounted long ago but Burkitt still supported the concept if not the evidence. He took pleasure in showing us his collection of eoliths (dawn stones) and I well remember one such object with its neat label attached, lettered by Mrs Burkitt, that said 'This is an excellent example'. We were curious to know what the word 'example' meant, example of what?, but were never told. McBurney and Clark were entirely dismissive of Eolithic Man and it was clear that all of the people involved in OSA matters did not want to get into yet another debate about it within the Department. Burkitt would have dearly loved to hear of the most recent of Palaeolithic finds along the East Anglian coast. In 1955, most prehistorians of the Stone Age were more interested in the early investigations at Olduvai Gorge and a few other places in Africa, and attention was rightly placed on the reality of evidence that could be believed by all.

## CHARLES McBURNEY

McBurney's major research interest was in the Middle Palaeolithic of Europe, but he also had a deep concern for Palaeolithic studies in North Africa, and, later, in the Near East. His collaborative work in Libya with Richard Hey had just emerged from the press (*Prehistory and*

*Pleistocene Geology in Cyrenaican Libya*) and this formed the basis of his few lectures on the North African Palaeolithic. He never lectured on African prehistory south of the Sahara, and we students were presented with the evidence from the African North, and thence Western Europe, with barely a reference to its probable original source farther South and East. Already we had Sonia Cole's book on *The Prehistory of East Africa* (1954) and Louis Leakey's *Stone Age Africa* (1936) and the first of many volumes on *Olduvai Gorge* (1951) had appeared. Perhaps the most used of our books was H. Alimen's *Préhistoire de l'Afrique* (1955) which gave a truly exhaustive account of the industries and 'cultures' of the entire continent, and included fossil human remains, rock art and a good deal of geological detail as well. We students were particularly interested in the Australopithecine controversies of southernmost Africa, and the papers and books of Robert Broom, such as *Swartkrans Ape-Man* (1952) and *Finding the Missing Link* (1950) which were assiduously read, and these of course only foreshadowed the huge programmes of work to explore such issues in much of Sub-Saharan Africa. We students heard virtually nothing of it all in formal teaching but this did not deter us from pursuing the discoveries through the literature. In later years I tried to remedy this lack of formal teaching of Southern Africa prehistory.

Some of us also attended a course of lectures given by Jack Trevor, a Physical Anthropologist who had a special interest in 'fossil man', and we learned the basics about *Homo erectus* and Neanderthal man from his entertaining talks. These were interspersed with anecdotes, some quite racey to our ears, about his encounters with various people in parts of the 'undeveloped world' as he called it. We much enjoyed accounts such as his tale of sitting in a cinema just behind a woman with her small child: "The mother had red hair and the child had blonde hair... this seemed unusual to me so when the film ended, I politely said to her 'Excuse me madam but could you possibly tell me what colour hair the father of your child had?' She replied, 'Don't know – he didn't take his hat off'". It was a good introduction to Trevor's lecture on racial characteristics, and doubtless had been embroidered for us.

McBurney had just completed his seasons of excavation in the great Haua Fteah in Libya (1951-1955), and so I was spared the gruelling work and chaotic conditions of camp life in these years. For this I was grateful, the more I heard about it all. McVean had been a member of the team and told me that his luggage had consisted almost entirely of bottles of medicine (his father was a GP) and that he had had a bottle a day, and was the only member of the team not to fall sick with stomach and other unpleasant problems. Nonetheless, the archaeology sounded very exciting, and he and the others, Eric Higgs included, had learned much from the work in the Haua Fteah. McBurney's lecture course did not neglect to dwell upon the findings and preliminary ideas about it all. The Haua Fteah was an enormous cave, some 60m wide and 20m high at its mouth, and the excavations had descended through multiple layers to a depth of 13m. The lowest levels encountered were retrieved from a slender trench due to safety concerns but here there were encountered a series of tools on large and long blades, (called Pre-Aurignacian for some illogical reason) and underlay a deep deposit of Mousterian material, itself beneath an early Upper Palaeolithic occupation, called the Dabban. The trench at this upper level was widened and the amount of material recovered was truly enormous. Hominid mandibles had been found low in the Mousterian levels, and a presumptive bone whistle even deeper in the site.

All of this material, or most of it, had been transported to Cambridge and now filled to overflowing the laboratory, so-called, in the attic of the Museum building. All of the boxes were to be opened and their contents analysed. This was clearly a ridiculous proposition and I am sure that McBurney wished he had done his sampling in Libya. McVean and I were assigned the major task of opening, sorting, washing and labelling the material, estimated to consist of ½ million pieces of worked stone. We two formed the entire post-excavation team, I think, insofar as the lithics were concerned. All of this work, unpaid of course, occupied us for three to four afternoons each week during terms, and sometimes we had great and willing help from Charles' wife Anne McBurney, who became very much a friend to me and to whom we might well raise our eyebrows

from time to time at yet another of Charles' disorganised processing of the stone work – and receive an understanding smile. In due time, a strict sampling strategy was adopted, in that detailed analysis would be made only on every tenth stone subject. A large tray was constructed, with little numbered boxes (1-500) and the material was gradually unboxed, washed, placed one by one in the tray boxes, and then every tenth object removed for Charles' inspection. The rest was boxed again and in effect removed from any further work. In this way any bias in selecting for analysis on size or colour or shape was eliminated. I recall the look of horror on Charles McVean's face when he gathered up a heap of discarded material, instead of numbered pieces, and dumped them into the selected samples box rather than the discard box, thus distorting the process in numbers and perhaps in impartial selection. McBurney just shrugged and told us to get on with it – what else could he do? Once McVean and I had done all the donkey work we were no longer required for the Haua Fteah studies, and the book appeared some twelve years after we had done our little bit. But there is no doubt in my mind that my understanding of lithic technology was hugely increased by this seemingly mechanical set of processes, and I can only assume that McBurney's endless stream of comment and correction was absorbed even as we toiled.

During my year of introduction to the OSA I was asked to help McBurney with an excavation at Hoxne in Suffolk (see below). The site was already famous as the place where the antiquity of man in Western Europe, indeed the world, had been proposed and demonstrated by John Frere in 1797, as Glyn Daniel told us in his lectures on the History of Archaeology (*A Hundred Years of Archaeology* 1950).

## GLYN DANIEL

Daniel was an entertaining lecturer and we always looked forward to his performances, given strictly to time without many, or sometimes any, illustrations; he used the blackboard for the spelling of site names and personalities. He seemed to have an unlimited amount of gossipy

information about almost everyone, including his colleagues, and he did not hesitate to criticise, or praise, large numbers of archaeologists whether dead or alive. We learned much from Daniel about the development of concepts in Archaeology, even though he probably never mentioned such a word as ‘concept’ or ‘model’. McVean and I arranged supervisions with Daniel, in his rooms in St. John’s College, and for these we would attempt to write essays that were less factual than were necessary for other supervisors such as McBurney. It was a rare event when Daniel actually read our efforts, and he probably skimmed over them at best. Instead, we would have an hour of general chat, informative, about people, discoveries, the state of the discipline here or there. On one occasion I arrived with a heavy cold and Daniel at once abandoned all pretence at academic supervision and produced a bottle of wine which we consumed happily. In fact, I seem to recall that a glass, at least, was often offered and his supervisions were anticipated with pleasure. I need hardly comment on the contrast of such an approach to that adopted by McBurney in his supervisions of our Palaeolithic work; essays for him were read and marked up accordingly, and references given, and no sustenance offered. All of these hours were academically valuable, even if, perhaps because, Daniel and McBurney were quite the most opposite of men.

Daniel always gave his lectures suitably gowned and spent the fifty minutes or so flapping and twisting the gown about as he talked, only occasionally glancing at any notes he might have brought along. Other lecturers, Clark for example, wore and handled the gown in a very formal way, while McBurney clearly preferred not to wear a gown as his work was more scientific and gowns hindered movement in handling material.

## GRAHAME CLARK

Our other main lecturer was Grahame Clark, fresh from his remarkable work at Star Carr where he had revolutionised the approach to Stone Age studies. His lectures, on the Mesolithic, were very uninspired and we got little from them. Clark was basically uninterested in undergraduates,

much preferring to advise and debate with research students and, above all, established archaeological figures, essentially and often his own graduates who had colonised the world, according to his view, and had introduced the concepts of discovery and explanation to new areas of the globe. It really was a blinkered view but had the benefit to all of us in that it brought to Cambridge a host of figures who could talk of their pioneering work.

After a morning's lectures, perhaps by Daniel followed by Clark, or often a single lecture by McBurney, we undergraduates would proceed to The Bun Shop or Hawkins, favoured spots where we, perhaps four to six in number, would drink tea or coffee, with biscuits, and dissect the lectures and debate the issues in a quite serious way; these occasions were enjoyable and very valuable to the less experienced among us.

There was another source of information for us, in attendance at lectures given in London and Oxford. One of the leading authorities on the Pleistocene, the backdrop to all things Palaeolithic, was Frederick Zeuner, who lectured in his university rooms in London. McVean and I would attend whenever possible, and the day ticket for us from Cambridge was, I think, 7/- or 9/-. Zeuner preached a rigid geological lesson, glaciations and interglacial periods following on one another, with river terraces shaping and reforming at various levels. It was all neat and tidy, and easy to memorise. Thus instructed, we could more readily follow McBurney's casual Mindel-Riss, Würm, and other intonations, and delve into the obscure world of interstadials and other minutiae. Even so, it was straightforward compared with the logical complexities that are identified today.

In addition to Zeuner, we would also attend Prehistoric Society lectures in the rooms of the Society of Antiquaries of London as well as at the Institute of Archaeology in Gordon Square. We students rarely missed one of these occasions as they brought us into contact not only with recent discoveries from around Britain and the wide world but also with most of the leading lights of the archaeological world.

The dominant figure in the Society was one of its modern founders and

its long-serving Editor, Grahame Clark. He was quite clearly the pre-eminent prehistorian in Britain and everyone would acknowledge this in one way or another. In the discussions after the Society's lectures, when he rose to make a comment, there was clear apprehension on the face of the lecturer, and relief if and when the remarks were complimentary. Clark was always polite on these occasions but his opinion, for or against, was clear to all. He could certainly speak in a cold language.

With the vast quantity of basic archaeological literature available today, it is difficult to grasp how little there was for undergraduates in the 1950s. The great spate of 19<sup>th</sup> century tomes on *Ancient Stone Implements* (1872), *Lake-Dwellings of Europe* (1890), and various regional surveys had for long been consigned to the antiquarian book stacks in the Haddon Library in Cambridge, and I cannot recall any of these being mentioned by any of our principal lecturers. Our main sources of reading tended to be the pages of journals for specific site records, and almost all of the overviews produced by the leading figures concentrated on sites and objects. There was one exception to this practice, Grahame Clark, whose *Mesolithic Settlement of Northern Europe* (1936), *Prehistoric England* (1940) and *Archaeology and Society* (1939, 1947) all concentrated on types of evidence or technologies of research rather than individual sites. His *Prehistoric Europe. The Economic Basis* (1952) was perhaps his most significant book but we students were not persuaded to delve deeply into its wide-ranging observations and opinions, as the approaches in Department teaching were focussed very much on chronological progression.

There were other books, many of them, for the specialist options chosen at Part II level. For the Old Stone Age it had to be French site reports and a variety of typological studies focussed on the concept of 'industry', the Aurignacian industry for example, and this was easily translated during lectures and discussions into the Aurignacian culture, without ever defining what the word 'culture' actually meant, or could mean. Everything was compartmentalised, and the greatest barrier for us OSA students lay between the lithic cultures of the Upper Palaeolithic and the cave and rock shelter engraving and paintings done by the same people

without much doubt, but the source of the one was never integrated with the other. We had a Bible in Henri Breuil's *Four Hundred Centuries of Cave Art* (1952) which came into constant use in the summer of 1956. This gave us a site-by-site list of the range and character of all of the known and accessible painted and engraved caves and shelters in France and Spain and we used this in our preparations for a visit in summer 1956.

But the other side of the OSA studies was its geological base, and here most of us were more interested in the pursuit of minutiae of landscape evidence than in the finest detail of flint burins. The geological progression of Pleistocene events was most cogently delivered to us by the work and presence of Frederick Zeuner, and his book *Dating the Past* (1946, 1952) was a prime source for study of the multitude of glacial and interglacial episodes as well as contemporary events elsewhere in the world. Even so, McVean and I were intent on pursuing the south British evidence to such an extent that we tried to purchase a copy of Zeuner's *The Pleistocene Period* (1945); this proved to be out-of-print so we arranged to have the whole book, all 322 pages, photographed and printed and bound into two elongated volumes, one for each of us. It cost a fortune but was well worth it when we two made excursions to the valley of the Thames and its ancient tributaries to inspect the terraces and debate the geological events. None of this was much use to us in our examination papers but at the time it was an interesting exercise, driving along and down the terraces and becoming familiar with such significant geological names as Taplow, Boyn Hill, Summertown and Wolvercote, and of course visiting the historic sites of Swanscombe and Baker's Hole Northfleet where famous discoveries had been made.

Grahame Clark has often been described as a cold unforgiving figure, a fine prehistorian of course, but difficult to engage with in any personal way. This I never believed even as a very new student in his Department. McVean and I were often invited to the Clark home for Sunday afternoon tea and Mollie Clark was a perfect hostess. Grahame had started to collect modern art and on the walls hung various squares all of a colour with maybe a small contrasting block in a corner of an otherwise, to us, wholly

uninspiring uniformity. He would ask us what we thought of it, and we could not say ‘Boring’, so generally mumbled some inane non-committal but polite words and moved on. Worse to encounter was his fine collection of Far Eastern porcelain, very fragile and housed in glass cabinets. He would extract a piece, and then hand it to one of us, outline its great age and rarity, and whoever got it couldn’t wait to pass it on in case he or she dropped it. All other students would of course refuse to accept the piece and it was a very nervous few moments for all of us. Grahame clearly meant it all.

The Clark garden in Wilberforce Road was large and colourful with roses a special interest for Grahame and Mollie. There was a tennis court and we would be invited for a ‘tennis afternoon’ followed by tea in the garden. Here, on the tennis court, I met Joan and David Oates who became lifelong friends; I think I never played with or against Grahame, which would have been fun, one way or another. And in the Clark house I met such luminaries as Dorothy Garrod who had been the Disney Professor before Grahame, and even the Abbé Breuil who was by then past debating the issues of Palaeolithic cave art; I can picture him on the Clark sofa staring at us undergraduates but nary a word of intelligible French passed between any of us, including Grahame.

## MY FIRST EXCAVATION

The first excavation in which I participated was not an auspicious beginning to my fifty years of fieldwork. Charles McBurney had for long been interested in the Palaeolithic site of Hoxne, first recognised by John Frere some 160 years before, and we had already heard of Frere’s observations from Glyn Daniel. The site was a kettle hole, originally a small lake created by a block of ice left embedded in the glacial deposits as an ice sheet retreated. The pond thus created gradually silted up and became well vegetated, and had attracted animals and their hunters. The debris left behind was stratified within the interglacial peats and thus offered a rare opportunity to expose surfaces upon which the humans had

camped or carried out food processing or stone tool manufacture. The deposits we sought were buried beneath a boulder clay of glacial origin. Thus informed, the team including McVean and Higgs drove out to the site each day from Cambridge in McBurney's vehicle and we spent our time digging down through the overburden deposits which were stiff and very difficult to trowel through. Beneath were the stratified brick earths that promised to yield contextual evidence. My task was to receive the buckets of boulder clay from the diggers, dump them into a wheelbarrow, and to sort through the material looking for flint tools. In due time I picked out a hand axe and this was greatly encouraging to me, to Charles, and to us all. Alas, that was just about the end of the expedition. We got through the boulder clays and began to extract large chunks of brick earth prior to sampling the deposits. The field where we worked belonged to a small company engaged in brick-making, and we were in effect removing and contaminating their raw material. Charles had clearly not discussed what depth he was allowed to reach in the trench, and we were verbally abused and ordered off the site. That was the end of my first excavation, and I had learned at least one lesson from it.

Our courses of instruction included the occasional episode of fieldwork training, and we would be asked to cycle out to the Gog Magogs, a small group of hill-like chalk protuberances in the otherwise quite low and flat landscape. A hillfort, called Wandlebury, had for long been recognised as an Iron Age fortification, better described as an enclosed settlement, with rampart and ditch now much reduced in height and depth. Various parts of the site had been excavated by numerous Cambridge antiquarians and the hills were popular for picnics and other activities. We students were fortunate to have as instructor one of our class, Ray Inskeep, a fine archaeologist and well-experienced in the basics of excavation. Charles McVean and I were assigned to lay out and excavate a narrow trench from rampart top to centre of ditch fill. This we did and spaded and trowelled away happily on a fine spring day. Inskeep kept an eye on our work and on another trench being cut within the interior of the camp, where rather more interesting finds were being made. When he came back to our little

exercise, he made us stand back and look at what we had done; his words were ‘looks like a dog’s leg to me’, and sure enough we had wavered from our line probably as we swerved to avoid the multiple roots that infested the place. No harm done, we hoped, and a lesson was learned once again.

At about this time, the hillfort received a great deal of interest due to the inspiration and determination of Tom Lethbridge. He was not a full member of the Department of Archaeology but gave a course of lectures on the Anglo-Saxons, and was an entertaining figure to listen to but, we thought, not to approach too closely. He was very much an individual, with his own ideas, and he disliked ‘the establishment’ of Cambridge archaeologists. This was a pity, as he had lots of ideas and could be dismissive of many of the fixed conceptions about the past that people such as Grahame Clark and even Glyn Daniels might espouse. Lethbridge somehow got interested in the Gog Magog hills and the legends that referred to the spirits that resided there and protected the place, and the ancient observation that once upon a time a figure had been carved on the hill. Entirely without the knowledge of the Department, he went to the western hillslope and, by probing the soil with thin rods, he could see that in many places the topsoils were thicker, showing that the solid chalk beneath had been disturbed. He ended up with hundreds of rods marking the disturbed positions, and we saw these during our visits to the hillfort. He then ‘joined the dots’ and excavated between the points where he could trace the line or areas of disturbance. He ended up with a complex pattern of images and he interpreted these into a Gog Magog goddess figure with attendant animals, chariot and so on.

We visited the hillslopes and saw it all exposed, and we did not believe it, a view partly supported by the observations of Clark and others that what Lethbridge had found were only natural dissolutions within the upper solid chalks, as water had collected here and there, small streams emerged, tree throws had created pits, and burrowing animals of the past had created many depressions. Solifluction was perhaps another explanation as some believed. In any event, we thought the designs drawn out by Lethbridge were too confusing and surely they should have been more

forceful and clear. And yet the tradition of a hill figure on the Gogs still exists and perhaps Lethbridge had recovered part of it, or had explored in the wrong place, or maybe it was all fanciful from the start. His book *Gogmagog: the Buried Gods* (1957) is an exercise in hope and persuasion, but it was almost universally derided. The most basic of field survey, which we undergraduates practised on the slopes at Gog Magog, pointed to a more prominent west-facing field from where the early sightings may well have emanated. Lethbridge left Cambridge in 1957 and that was a loss to archaeology in general and to the students who had benefited and would have benefited from his down-to-earth and practical approaches.

## CAVE ART

At the end of my first introductory year with McBurney as principal supervisor, I was already getting intrigued by the contrast between the flint tool typology of the Upper Palaeolithic and the existence of paintings and engravings of the animals upon which presumably the flints were used, somehow. Cave art was introduced to us by Glyn Daniel in his entertainingly gossipy way. McBurney paid lip-service to it in his basic lectures and gave us a more directed account in a set of lectures which formed one of the special papers for the Tripos. I was to take the Diploma exams from which the special paper was excluded, much to my disappointment, but nonetheless I was very keen to see some of the art. McVean and I decided on a month-long tour in France and Spain, with a first port of call at Arcy-sur-Cure in the Yonne, where Dr. André Leroi-Gourhan was excavating. We applied and were accepted, and set off in June (1956) in McVean's little Austin. The ferry crossing, at night, was stormy and thoroughly uncomfortable and we were both sick from the ill-chosen greasy meal we had consumed on the boat prior to leaving the dock. We arrived in the dead of night, in a gale with rain. We drove a few km and looked for a place to camp. We stopped where there was a widening of the road, and pitched our two little tents. I only managed to put up the two middle ridge poles and then crept beneath them as the tent

sides blew loosely against me. It was miserable. I was wakened very early by noises near at hand, and peered out. We had put up our tents in front of a farm gate and, waiting to pass through the gate, was a herd of cows, a farmer and his wife and several dogs. They were as astounded as we were and could only mutter ‘les Anglais’ as we dismantled all and packed into our car in dishevelled states. After that, matters improved. We arrived at Arcy and were settled into the side of the valley along with other student helpers.

The camp was run in a flexible way, by which I mean that very little was done to organise anything apart from the evening meal which was taken inside a cave, and very comfortable it was too. The lavatory facilities were nil, with men going into the woods on the left of a path, women on the right. After a couple of weeks of this the woods were unpleasant and full of large orange slugs. We were served fried slug on one occasion, with the source identified by the cook after the meal.

The excavations were being conducted well, organised and monitored; this was my first experience of a proper dig and I learned a lot (fig.2). We excavated into a layer of Chatelperronian-type material and it was a thrill for me to see burins, scrapers and other flakes emerging, and to find a prize specimen of Chatelperronian knife blade which looked as fresh as if made yesterday. The supervisor agreed with me that it was exceptional and did not demur when I demonstrated to him that the tool could cut through a piece of string I had in my pocket; this was before use-wear analysis was practised on such material. In retrospect I suppose it was my first attempt at experimental archaeology, to see how things worked. From this minuscule spur-of-the-moment effort came the urge to develop the concept much later on.

All of the finds were taken, layer by layer, down to the site tent beside the river where they were spread out on screens, washed by water spray, and then the archaeologists in charge selected those specimens to keep, and the rest were dumped into the river. I saw this happen and was surprised by it.

During our time at Arcy, we were invited to explore a nearby tunnel cave and about ten of us ventured in, one by one, crawling and wriggling through narrow and rather terrifying constricted passages into a gallery where some paintings were to be seen immediately above our heads. The man in front of me, on the way out, was fat and got stuck and began to shout in fright. This did not amuse any of us. The whole episode was a very useful introduction to our expedition to the Dordogne and the Pyrenees and Cantabria.

At the end of our work at Arcy-sur-Cure, a celebratory dinner was held in our honour within the cave complex. The menu was signed for me by about twenty of the team, including Professor Leroi-Gourhan and his wife; the food consisted of:

Consummé de Limace  
Ovo-Amanite sur couche  
Poulet à l'Augustine  
Herbe aux Mammouths  
Glaçon du Würm  
Persica et Pira

And the whole was accompanied by Orchestre du Trilobite.

McVean and I drove south to Les Eyzies where we gazed in envy at Les Glycines, a fine hotel where Glyn Daniel stayed on his frequent visits; he had regaled us with talk of the splendid food consumed in the dining room. His book *Lascaux and Carnac* (1955) was just published and although we of course had read it in advance of our expedition we could rarely follow all its recommendations in choice of eateries; his nine-course dinner at Sousceyrac (*potage, foie gras, truite, cèpes, tournedos, salade, fromage, omelette, fraises*), which he claimed had cost only fourteen shillings would nonetheless have been beyond our resources as well as our nerve to even enter the place. We pitched our tents in a farmer's field, beside a stream with a deep pool for early morning dips, and from here we travelled out each day to the sites, using the Abbé Breuil's book as guide.

Looking back now, with today's security gates and controls and restricted access to the caves, in 1956 we could just walk or crawl into almost any cave or shelter – Font de Gaume, les Combarelles, Lascaux, Cap Blanc, Pech Merle and others – and where there was some sort of barrier, the farmer or his wife would cheerfully hand over the key to us so we could gain entry.

The art was wonderful to see and other visitors were rarely if ever encountered. We also visited some of the famous occupation sites, equally accessible, such as Le Moustier, La Ferrassie and La Madeleine.

In June 1956 the art in the enormous cave at Rouffignac had been 'discovered', to huge publicity and controversy. Some few experts at once dismissed it all as modern, paintings made in the 1940s by locals sheltering in the cave. Others, including the Abbé Breuil, said it was truly magnificent and genuinely Palaeolithic. McVean and I had already been warned of the debate and dispute by Glyn Daniel, and we were anxious to see for ourselves. Alas, the entrance was blocked up when we arrived at Rouffignac in early September and we could not persuade the elderly guardian of our valid credentials. An official party of French prehistorians, augmented by Glyn Daniel and Dorothy Garrod, was about to assemble and visit the site to ascertain and verify that the paintings were prehistoric and not the product of bored men who were keeping out of the way of the wartime pressures. Daniel was convinced the art was all a fake. About ten days after we failed to gain entry the official party came, and all were asked to authenticate the paintings as Palaeolithic in age. Garrod and Daniel refused to sign. Little did I suspect in 1956 that on my next visit to the site I would be warmly welcomed and offered a unique chance to debate the issues, with Daniel and the leading French prehistorian of the day in close attendance and respectfully listening to me, of all people.

From the Dordogne McVean and I went to Pair-non-Pair, and then set off for the Pyrenees where, again, we could enter almost any cave we wished with little barrier to our progress or time of visit. Niaux, Gargas, Montespan, Isturitz and others were seen and admired, especially the

truly enormous Niaux where there were plans for a café inside the cave (rather than the munitions factory recently cleared away from inside the entrance).

We generally had only bicycle lamps to help illuminate the engravings and paintings, and occasionally some sort of lantern loaned us by the farmer-custodian. At Le Portel, for some reason McVean and I went our separate ways, he into one of the narrow tunnels and I along another long passage. I was looking for some black-painted animal figures and located them at the inside end of the passage. At that point, I dropped my lamp and it went out. I have never experienced such blackness, total and fundamental. At once I lost any sense of direction. I dared not reach out and feel the walls as they had precious paintings upon them. After a moment of assessment, and a bit of alarm, I shouted for McVean and eventually he replied. He began to come towards me and it was truly awe-inspiring to see the tiny light flickering about in the total blackness of the cave. As the light came near, it could illuminate the painted images for a second or so and this was surely their moment of power and persuasion. The flaming or smouldering torches of the artists and of the first viewers of their artistry must have profoundly influenced all who were involved, as the animals danced on the walls and ceilings of the dark caverns. For me it was an experience never again achieved and never forgotten in any detail whatsoever.

We travelled on to the Cantabrian heights and visited Altamira (fig.3), Castillo, Pindal and other sites. Altamira was of course the highlight of this part of our tour, and nothing much had been done to protect the art from the visitor; we had to lie on our backs and gaze upwards at the ceilings' bumps and paintings well within reach. The whole trip to the caves persuaded me that this was what I wanted to study if I was allowed to move on to research. I prepared a set of slides of the art soon after returning to Cambridge, in the hope that I might use them someday.

After Altamira and the other sites, McVean and I, and now a female companion, set off in his little car for western France and on to Brittany.

We paused for a night at Biarritz where the car was broken into and where my trousers with money and passport were stolen from my tent as I slept on. The local consul advanced us some funds and gave me a letter of recognition for customs and passport control. As we approached the Breton landscape, one early evening, we came up behind a small van, in the open back of which were two Frenchmen in their country clothes. They sat on boxes and were smoking. We followed them along and one of the men reached down and proffered a small fish to us. We nodded yes and he chucked it at our windscreen. Others soon followed and as fast as McVean could gather them in, as I was attempting to drive through the fish-smeared glass, he passed them back to our female companion, and more and more of the fish splattered onto the car. Then one of the men overreached himself, and his beret blew off and away. They settled back on their boxes grumpily, and we slowed to let them disappear. The car reeked both inside and out. We camped and had a fine feast of fried fish, and we three were then ill all night.

Then on to Carnac and the marvellous stone alignments and other megalithic monuments, before arriving back to Cambridge and reflection on what we had seen and done. It was truly a quite amazing expedition for me, and doubtless many others have done and felt the same.

Examination time arrived in mid-1957 and I was confident of a reasonably good performance and, perhaps, a chance to do some research into the Palaeolithic of Western Europe. All students were subjected to oral inquisitions when their papers had been marked, and we all were rather nervous about the ordeal. I don't remember much about what I was asked by the three examiners, Clark, Daniel and McBurney, but I do recall being shaken by the sight of Clark drawing a large zero sign alongside one of my written answers when I made what was clearly an inadequate response to a question. This did not encourage me in trying to work out what next I might do in my endeavour to become an archaeologist. However, I was listed on the official Examinations Board as having reached the necessary levels for the award of the Diploma in Prehistoric Archaeology.

At the end of my Diploma course I toyed with the idea of starting a Ph.D. research on the painted caves of Palaeolithic France. McBurney was supportive of the idea but it had not got further than a brief discussion. He was about to embark on a study of the Upper Palaeolithic caves and shelters in England and Wales, and asked if I would join him on a reconnaissance of the sites. This seemed an interesting exercise to me and we set off in his car in June 1957. We drove towards the Creswell Crags of Derbyshire and stopped for petrol. Here it was that Charles realised he had left behind his briefcase with all the letters of introduction and direction, and all his money. He enquired if I had any money with me, and I had. On an agreement to pay me back when his briefcase caught up with us, we pressed on, and saw the Creswell sites. Charles was interested in the survival of floor deposits left behind by the early excavators and we never searched for wall or ceiling engravings or paintings. Had we done so I expect his expert eye might have detected what we now know to be Palaeolithic images on the ceiling of one of the caves.

From here, I having paid for the hotel room and meals, we went to North Wales for an assessment of the geological conditions and thence to South Wales and the Gower Peninsula with its famous sites. By now our (my) funds were getting low but on we went to the Cheddar Gorge in Somerset. Here we had booked an upmarket hotel, here it was that the briefcase caught up with us, and here it was that Charles announced that in fact the sums in the briefcase were insufficient to meet his debt to me and to pay for the hotel within which we sat. He handed over what was due me and, he said, from now on each had to pay his own expenses. I announced my immediate departure from the expedition, and left without viewing the glories of the Cheddar Gorge. Little did I know that within a very few years I would be leading a group of Cambridge students into the same caves that I had spurned. Back in Cambridge I began to think I should look away for other places of study and I went to Oxford to visit Christopher Hawkes, then Professor and leading exponent of the west European Iron Age. He was not there but I encountered another Professor, Stuart Piggott, at the entrance to the Ashmolean Museum. A day or so later I pursued Hawkes

to his little excavation retreat near Colchester in Essex where he and his assistant Margaret Brown (later Margaret Smith) discussed my vague ideas about Stone Age research at Oxford. He was rather unencouraging, and rightly so, but we parted amicably. Years later he reminded me of our first encounter in Essex and said he had found our talk there interesting and had often thought about how he could have helped me; he did assist me later on by proof-reading one of my first papers, and, being himself, it came back to me covered in corrections and suggestions.

All of my travels in England, France and Spain having got me nowhere in particular but nonetheless quite amazingly varied and novel and stimulating, I postponed decisions about research and departed for Scotland.

## SCOTLAND 1957 – 1960 AND BEYOND

During my time at Cambridge I had managed to play a little tennis at Fenner's, the University club, not very well but I was part of the Cambridge team for various matches and did reasonably well in the club tournament. I never played against Oxford. The important thing that came from tennis was a meeting with a student from Scotland, by name Alan Macfarlane, and we have been close friends for sixty years. In summer 1957 he suggested that I might like to go north to Scotland for two things. The first was to spend some time looking at Scottish castles, especially ruinous ones. The second was to take a break from such a tour and play tennis in the annual tournament at Nairn, a small town on the Moray Firth and a good base for castle-visiting. We played in the singles and Alan and I entered the doubles; as mixed doubles took place in the afternoons we both shied away from this event so we could do our castle visiting from lunchtime onwards. All of this worked well. I managed to win the singles and we staggered through a couple of rounds of doubles.

It was not the tennis, however, that made the greatest impression upon me. The open and untroubled landscapes of the Moray Firth were very

appealing, and each of the various castles and other monuments visited had its own special fascination. The ruinous hall of Rait, built c.1300, lay totally abandoned, and the collapsing wall of Duffus Castle, slipping down the motte, were memorable images still with us both today. The famous Sueno's Stone, standing alone by the roadside, was intriguing to ponder and the Clava cairns opened up new thoughts about landscape setting. All of this was far removed from my Old Stone Age studies, and I was encouraged to think about doing research into some aspect of Scottish archaeology. My Cambridge connection had mostly diminished although the Palaeolithic cave art was still an intriguing prospect. Having departed from the Macfarlane home on the Clyde I spent a day or so in Edinburgh and made my way to the Department of Archaeology to meet Professor Stuart Piggott. After some discussion we parted, and I travelled south to Lincolnshire to consider the options. A letter to Professor Piggott was sent, suggesting that I was very keen to study with him and I thought the archaeology of the Picts would be interesting. He replied at once saying that he would be happy to accept me as a Research Student but that a book on The Picts had just appeared (F.T. Wainwright, *The Problem of the Picts* 1956) and there was little more to be done. However, the Late Bronze Age of Scotland was a bit of a vacuum and could prove to be an interesting project. I had never heard of such a period in such a country but I accepted the offer of a place at Edinburgh and resolved to study the Late Bronze Age. I cannot now say it was the most exciting subject I have ever encountered, but more can be said later on. So once again I packed up and transferred myself and my diminished baggage to the north.

I soon found a pleasant room overlooking the Westhall Tennis Club, already notified of my arrival by a tennis-playing acquaintance we had met at Nairn. I soon joined the club and had many a happy evening playing in local tournaments and, eventually, helping the club to win the Scottish Cup in a memorable match against a west Scotland club; I remember very little of the celebrations that followed.

The principal collection of material believed to be of the Late Bronze Age consisted of hundreds of bronze implements housed in the National

Museum, in a fine old building on Queen Street in Edinburgh. Stuart Piggott was assiduous in introducing me to the relevant players in the museum world, and to the officers of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland. All of these contacts seemed happy to help me in my efforts to learn, as rapidly as possible, about the Late Bronze Age and about the location of material and the literature on the subject. Foremost among all of the authorities was the keeper of the National Museum, R.B.K. Stevenson, a distinguished archaeologist with a rather fearsome reputation. To be invited into his inner office was an occasion not to be missed, because he generally had some new piece of information to impart to an eager student like me. Strewn about the place were many handwritten notes, letters, unfinished reports and the like. None could be read by anyone except his secretary, and it was said that even Mr Stevenson could not read his own writing; I witnessed his struggles to decipher notes he had made about Bronze Age finds as he attempted to keep me informed of the latest discoveries. He was occasionally a bit irascible especially if any other Scottish institution dared to suggest that objects should be housed anywhere other than the National Museum, and, on balance and on my experience, he was almost always right in that conviction. His help to me was very great and our working relationship developed over the years into a friendship that I greatly valued.

The Assistant Keeper in the Museum was Audrey Henshall and there could be no more welcoming a person for a young research student to encounter. A typical working day for me was to arrive at the Museum as soon as it was physically open, well before the public were admitted. Then, I would proceed straight down to the offices, keys obtained, back up to the exhibition hall (fig.4), objects extracted from cases and drawers, down to the workroom for inspection and drawing and catalogue consultation, back up to replace objects in the correct positions, and so on. Mid-morning came an invitation for coffee in Miss Henshall's office with other members of staff and any visitors. The encyclopaedic knowledge of Miss Henshall was extensive and balanced and there was a good deal of information housed within the correspondence files which only she could

extract with any assurance. Stuart Piggott occasionally dropped in on his way to the Department, to check on my progress and to encourage me; with these two in particular, Stuart and Audrey, I was fortunate indeed.

The Library on the top floor, outside Mr Stevenson's offices was also the source of much information and research. I had a chair next to the shelves holding the major Scottish books and journals, and for several months in 1957-58 I read and made notes on everything that I thought could possibly relate to the Late Bronze Age. Another set of the *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* lay in the Department of Archaeology and this was open for consultation when the Museum was closed. Eventually I bought the first hundred volumes of *PSAS* for one hundred shillings from an Edinburgh source.

Soon after arriving in Edinburgh I applied to and was elected to the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland. This was very much based then in the Museum and the monthly lectures were held in the Library, transformed by re-arrangement of the benches and chairs. As a new Fellow I did not miss any of the meetings, and sat at the back where I could observe the election procedure. Inside the entrance to the Library there would be placed the ballot boxes, strange contraptions each with a single tube-like opening within which was a division. Below, were two drawers, one labelled Aye and the other Nay. Fellows could take one wooden ball, and insert it via the tube into the interior of the box, and drop it either to left (Aye) or to right (Nay) depending on the opinion as to whether or not the named applicant, on a label hung on the box, was deemed appropriate to be elected. All this worked well, it seemed, and when the meeting began and the applicant's name was announced as desirous of being elected a Fellow, the attendant would bring up the relevant box and the Chairman would extract each drawer and announce the Ayes and the Nays. The opportunities for mischief were obvious and I witnessed one such event and heard of another. At one election, very few Fellows turned up and hardly any bothered to vote either way. When the Chairman called for the ballot box for one particular applicant the attendant had a surreptitious look into the two drawers to see if all was well before lifting the box;

there were hardly any balls in either drawer so he rapidly placed about ten balls in the Aye drawer. All was therefore straightforward and the election made. Rumour had it, of course, that the attendant did the same on another occasion but inadvertently put the balls in the wrong drawer, and a well-qualified applicant was firmly rejected.

The Department of Archaeology in George Square was small in number of staff and students when I arrived there in autumn 1957. The two Principal teachers were Stuart Piggott and Richard Atkinson. They were quite heavily engaged in excavations in Wessex, a long way from Scotland, and there was certainly a good deal of comment in Edinburgh about their long absences from the north. This criticism was, in my opinion, misjudged as their work, whenever it was carried out, helped keep British archaeology in the public domain, and there was not much competition from others at this time. Nonetheless, Atkinson was not often to be seen fulfilling his lecturing role in the Edinburgh Department. Two research students, Irwin Scollar and Beatrice Blanc were occasionally to be seen during the years 1957-59. A student's room on the top floor was primarily for such persons but in their absence it was occupied by two final year undergraduates, Derek Simpson and Vincent Megaw. I declined their invitation to join them in the room as my work was primarily done in the museums and libraries but developed good relationships with both, and subsequently did some excavations with Simpson in central Scotland at Pitnacree and Grantully. During my time in Edinburgh, Atkinson departed to Cardiff (1958) and Charles Thomas arrived as his replacement.

## THE TOUR

Although Stuart Piggott made many contributions to my education and the preparation of my dissertation, one of his first offers was probably the most beneficial and certainly the most entertainingly instructive. Early in my first year as a Research Student he suggested that we should make an extended journey to the north, to visit as many museums and collections as possible. A 19<sup>th</sup> century report in the *Proceedings* of the Society had

listed the location of abundant artefacts, both of metal and of pottery, in a variety of local and regional Scottish museums, and, so far as we knew, these objects had never been recorded in detail. More recent finds had undoubtedly come into these places, and their existence was barely known to the archaeological community. Stuart was as keen to gather information about Neolithic and Bronze Age pottery as I was to collect details about Bronze Age gold and bronze objects. There was one additional source for me in particular, in a catalogue prepared by Dr Margaret Stewart, who had studied with V.G. Childe during his tenure of the Abercromby Chair of Archaeology now occupied by Piggott. Margaret had made extensive notes about Bronze Age axes in particular; she intended to publish papers on them in due time. Stuart suggested that we should call on her and her husband John Stewart in Perth as our first port of call on our Grand Tour of the northern museums. Margaret and John were welcoming and quite clearly much enjoyed Stuart's friendship. We had an excellent dinner well-fortified by wine of appropriate quality and excessive quantity. We stayed the night with them and in the morning I was obviously not quite as alert and refreshed as I should be. Margaret had the cure, a large bowl of thick hot porridge with a cup of cream; this had the desired effect and off we went. We visited fifteen museums, from St. Andrews and Kirkcaldy in the south to Aberdeen and on to Inverness and beyond and then back south to Fort William. Along the way we spotted many road signs to places where Stuart, and even I, could recite the archaeological finds once made there – Loanhead of Daviot (Neolithic stone circle), Tarves (Bronze Age metalwork), Deskford (Iron Age trumpet mouth) and so on.

As a whole, the museums were in a state of some confusion with few exceptions. Several were no more than a single cabinet of curiosities found locally and housed in the Working Men's Institute or libraries in various towns. Entry to these places could be difficult but Stuart's reputation preceding us had positive effects and a custodian would soon be produced. Once upon entry, the main problem was to open the cabinets that housed the relics that we wanted to inspect. Some cases were not locked at all, but most were firmly fastened, and perhaps had never been opened since

installation. There rarely was a surviving key for the cases and the bronzes and potsherds lay there beneath the glass. When we found ourselves in such circumstances, Stuart would draw away the custodian from the room, engaging him in idle talk, and I would be left alone. I had with me throughout my time in Scotland a small multi-purpose tool which was highly effective. Within its metal tube was housed an array of tools, screwdrivers, awl, forked lever and drill-head among them, and the tool could function as a small hammer as well. The implement was called Bimbo, the name engraved on the tube, and I still possess this ancient artifact. Bimbo could open any cabinet and it would generally take me no more than a minute or two to assess the problem and release the cabinet lid or door. Stuart and the custodian would re-appear and Stuart would make some remark about the poor quality or state of the old lock that had somehow been released, and he and I would then get on with the drawing and note-taking before replacing objects and we would then screw or hammer down everything necessary to secure the case. There is no doubt in my mind that our visit in early 1958 was crucial in putting on record a large number of objects that otherwise would have remained, not unidentified, but poorly-identified and inadequately characterised for future research. I wish I had made more detailed records of these objects but that is always a problem with museum visits.

Other, larger, museums were sometimes well-managed although security was never evident. Some displays open to the public were without case covers at all, and anyone could pick up, drop or perhaps steal the objects. Other museums were in the process of re-organisation, a word that generally heralded a total shambles. At Montrose, this was the situation and all was chaos. We searched through various boxes that lay amidst the museum furniture, and we managed to find almost all of the bronzes and pottery that had been listed for the museum some years before. One socketed axe could not be found and I was insistent that it should be somewhere amidst the dismantled collection. I found it, inside the half-opened jaws of a stuffed alligator that lay on the floor. The tour proceeded on to the Marischal College Aberdeen collection administered by a severe

Professor who was dismissive of me but exceedingly polite to Stuart, and then to Elgin Museum. This we knew had a fine collection of bronzes (for me) and pottery (for Stuart). All was ready for our arrival and we were ushered into a room with a long table upon which lay a row of bronzes and an array of pots. Excellent, we thought until I noticed that nothing was labelled. We enquired and were told, proudly, that ‘for our convenience’ all the labels had been gathered up and put into a Food Vessel at the end of the table. By good fortune both Stuart and I had various notes and we spent some time identifying the objects before we could get down to drawing them. And so it went on, museum after museum, good scenery along the way, good company for me.

Subsequently to this journey I had a southern Scottish expedition to a number of museums including the famous Dr. Grierson’s collection at Thornhill in Dumfriesshire. He had assembled an amazing array of objects from around the world, housed in a large building with active woodworm, eroding spiral staircase, and a gallery that seemed to me to be literally on its last legs. But the prehistoric material was exceptionally fine and the labels were in place. Even better was the museum in Dumfries where Alf Truckell was curator and a mine of information which served me well for several years and many visits to the town. Concurrent with such later visits was the development of contact and involvement with the fine work of Bill Cormack of Lockerbie into the Mesolithic settlement of south-west Scotland.

The two major museums in Glasgow were The Hunterian, where the formidable Miss Ann Robertson was a mine of information about almost all archaeological matters, even if it was sometimes difficult to gain her undivided attention. She was generous in revealing a good deal of archival material which helped in identifying objects both in her museum and in other near-by collections such as the Smith Institute in Stirling where labels seemed often to have been mislaid. The other Glasgow museum was the Kelvingrove, an Art Gallery and Museum combined, which had an outstanding collection of prehistoric gold and bronze objects; it also had an outstanding Keeper of Archaeology in Jack Scott and I had many a

rewarding day in his gallery, with delicious lunches provided in his home by his wife Margaret. Jack became a good friend to me and advised me on many archaeological matters over two decades of mutual interests. His puckish sense of humour, tinged with sharpness from time to time, helped keep my interminable lists of artefacts moderately accurate.

## EXCAVATIONS

My excavation career in Scotland spanned a decade or so and began during my time as a Research Student at Edinburgh. Following on from Stuart's and my visit to Perth to meet Margaret and John Stewart, she invited me to co-direct an excavation at Dalnaglar in Perthshire. A great many hut-circles lay on the hillslopes in the eastern part of the county and Margaret was keen to explore the internal structure of these. There had been some work done previously, and expectations of illuminating finds were not high. Our site was chosen on the basis of access to roads as much as anything else, on the good advice of John Stewart. Our narrow trench from the circle's bank into the centre proved to be full of potsherds much to everyone's surprise and, I suppose, delight. I was in charge of the recording of the site and my carefully-constructed plan, following my admittedly superficial training in Cambridge, was in process of completion one day beside the trench when a terrible dog fight ensued between Margaret's sheepdog and a visitor's Irish Wolfhound; this did no good to the trench sides and during the mêlée another dog, a Spaniel belonging to one of the lady diggers, got excited and jumped about on my plan; the footmarks remain to this day. Even worse, I suppose, was the case of the car window. I had a rather splendid Morgan sports car, a very fast vehicle indeed in those days of no speed restrictions on the road. Its windows were of strong plastic, non-shatterable it was claimed, and removable if one was flat-out with roof down and travelling at a hundred mile per hour (as occasionally happened). At the site, it rained regularly and we often took shelter in our cars. I housed Horace Fairhurst one lunchtime; he was a geographer and worked at archaeology too, and was a distinguished academic. While he

was busy buttering his bread while seated low in my car, his elbow kept knocking the window and to my dismay it began to crack and then split. I was too much in awe, or feeble, to tell him to sit up and behave, and before the lunch ended my window was gone. He never said a word, and perhaps never noticed.

Soon after, I somehow got involved in work in Mid-Argyll, the territory of the formidable and delightful Marion Campbell of Kilberry Castle. Stuart Piggott had encouraged me to pursue the Scottish Mesolithic as it had become a subject of little interest and less activity, or so I was told. My connection with Grahame Clark and his Star Carr work was apparently enough for Stuart to assume I knew something about the subject. Little did he know, nor did I. I was asked to rescue a site that had been mostly blown up by a hydro scheme at Kilmelfort, and thence, some years later, to work alongside Marion Campbell as her guest for Mesolithic sites near Kilberry. Some work was done with a couple of students on cave and shelter sites identified by Marion and although midden deposits were abundantly represented, there was little cultural material in the form of flint tools or bone artefacts. Along with these small projects, carried out in the early 1960s, Marion conducted her own research and it was always a pleasure to visit her in her castle and to sample both food and opinion, always well-prepared and nourishing. On one less auspicious occasion, she became, justifiably, annoyed at my two Cambridge student helpers who were set the task of sieving some sediments recovered from a rock shelter, and in which two tiny flint tools had been noticed. In sieving and washing the material in the kitchen scullery at the castle the two men managed to wash away the two flints along with most of everything else. Short of digging up the drains, the stuff was gone.

Some of this Argyll work was carried out while I held a Carnegie Scholarship in Edinburgh (1959-60); this had been negotiated for me by Stuart Piggott following my accelerated PhD work; he often exclaimed how surprised he had been when I submitted my dissertation in August 1959, having started work in October 1957. In fact, I handed the thing in too soon for the University Regulations and had to collect it from the central offices in early

September and hand it back in on 1<sup>st</sup> October, in order to comply with the minimum two-year period of research. The Examiners were Piggott and Terence Powell of Liverpool who soon thereafter became a good friend and advisor to me. The oral lasted thirty minutes and then they went off to a pub. I was stunned.

My Mesolithic studies continued beyond my Carnegie Scholarship while I was based in Cambridge, but it seems more coherent to describe all my Scottish fieldwork here as it was firmly based in the National Museum or with Scottish colleagues. I also carried on with Scottish Bronze Age metalwork studies, and various museum tours were once again undertaken. By the early 1960s, small collections were beginning to be dispersed, but my credentials were now more assured and access to museum cases and archives was the more easily negotiated.

In south-west Scotland my contact with Bill Cormack continued to develop. He and his wife Sheila were always hospitable and I stayed with them on numerous occasions during museum visits as well as fieldwork for Stone Age sites. On an early such reconnaissance, we were looking for Mesolithic flints in the eroding sand dunes and spied a rather small woman, with dark hair, scurrying along the wooded path. Bill said ‘that’s one of the Mesolithic people’. He explained that south-west Scotland had a great variety of racial types and mixtures, stemming from the numerous incursions of people over many millennia. The lady we spied, he thought, was closely related to the earliest of inhabitants, ‘the wee folk of the Mesolithic’ as he described them, who had continued to live undisturbed in out-of-the-way places in the hills. So, he said, he and I were investigating the settlements of this lady’s direct descendants. It was all thought-provoking, as it was meant to be; I wasn’t sure if I believed it. In due time I made some sort of study of the flint assemblages of the Mesolithic in the region, and Bill and I carried out an excavation of a scooped settlement, or sheltered area, where such artefacts were abundant. In retrospect, he was the driving force and intellectual leader in the whole set of operations.

Looking back now at these times, it is clear that although I had moved

south in 1960, my involvement with Scottish archaeology was strong and it was Stuart Piggott who provided the link and the encouragement to develop new projects in the north. Our meetings in London were frequent and fruitful, at the Prehistoric Society lectures and, soon, at the Society of Antiquaries of London to which I had hastily been elected thanks to Geoffrey Bushnell and others (1963). Stuart obtained the funds for a new Assistant Lecturer at Edinburgh and offered it to me in 1962; I felt unable to accept as he readily understood. In 1967 a Senior Lectureship was offered, and in effect the deputy headship of the Department, and again I felt I was too entrenched to make the move. Subsequently, upon Stuart's retirement another offer, Professorial, came from the University and again I felt it necessary to decline.

My work in the 1960s in Scotland was inter-fingered with a growing commitment to the archaeology of southern England and the latter will be noted later in this account. The Scottish connections with Bill Cormack culminated in 1968 when he and I met in Fife, eastern Scotland, on a farm called Morton. That Morton is my middle name lent an intimacy to the place that soon became a physical reality. A local collector of flints, Reg Candow, had gathered a huge array of stone tools from surface collecting on the farm and from trenching one particular field (1963-67). The objects became subject to a dispute between R.B.K. Stevenson of the National Museum and Jim Boyd who directed the Dundee Museum service. Both wanted the Candow collection and Stevenson called me in, firstly to see what could be done to halt the trenching and secondly to see if any more disciplined work could be done on the site. I met Candow and Bill Cormack at Morton, met and liked very much the farmer and his family, and Bill and I made a small excavation on one of the less-disturbed parts of the site. What we saw suggested that some stratification remained although the conditions were entirely the opposite of what I was already encountering in the peatland of the Somerset Levels. Encouraged and financially supported by both Stevenson and Boyd, I assembled a small team and we had two seasons of excavation in 1969-1970 (fig.5) and several field visits

by myself to see the landscape in more detail. Conditions on site were reasonably good with a couple of experienced student diggers, and they could supervise a group of rather elderly Dundee ladies who worked very hard and were excellent in attendance and in carrying out tasks in rain or heavy snow. The site of Morton is now reasonably well-known in Scottish Mesolithic studies and, looking back, there was much more that could have been done, and one regret is that the previous trenching was so extensive that it was only the peripheries where the evidence survived even for the work we did in 1969-1970; more remains on the edges of the site for the future, we may hope.

During my three years in Edinburgh I had met and collaborated with Derek Simpson, who by the early 1960s was working in southern England. Nonetheless his heart was clearly, and perhaps always, in Scotland and in 1964 he and I embarked on a couple of excavations in Perthshire, with the active encouragement of Stuart Piggott. Along the lowland terraces of the River Tay were a number of intriguing monuments about which very little was known. One of these, a great earthen mound at Pitnacree was selected for investigation (fig.6). It was not the largest mound in the valley, several of which reached over 40m in diameter and as much as 8m high. Pitnacree, at 30m diameter and 3m height, was big enough for anyone to tackle and we assembled a large team of student helpers. The mound was locally called the Knoll of the Law and had perhaps been the site of a medieval court, providing a clear landmark and rallying place. Other barrows in the valley had names like Gallows Hill and Hangman's Hill.

Among the team of workers was a young John Evans, later to become a leading environmentalist in archaeology. He refused our offer of a bed in the nearby B&B where all others stayed, and he pitched his little tent beside the great mound of Pitnacree; we talked to him about the fairies or ghosts of the departed whom he would see during the dark nights, and after three days he confessed to being terrified by the dancing shadows on his tent roof, mostly caused by the overlapping branches and clear moonlit nights, but, he said, not all. He moved his tent nearer to our

small hotel, where the rest of the team was staying, and where already there was some dispute emerging between a couple of students and the cook. After an evening's dinner of mince and mash, the students made some disparaging comment about its commonness, and, sure enough, the next day's packed lunches were entirely of cold mince sandwiches. The thought of further retributions had the desired effect.

During our work at the barrow, some field-walking was carried out and resulted in the discovery of a gas pipeline trench, newly-created, along a high terrace of the river. From the trench had come a few potsherds and in the trench side was a nearly-intact urn with cremated bone fragments spilling out. When we came to mount an excavation here in 1966-67, we encountered both Neolithic settlements debris and a Bronze Age cremation cemetery, but I remember more the arrival on site of the tenant farmer one day when we had machine-cleared a vast area to identify the outer limits of the occupation. As the farmer had not yet been informed of our presence, he was not pleased to see us and it took a deal of persuasion to remain on site, even with the laird's agreement.

Derek and I had rather spacious accommodation in a small hotel. The students camped some distance away from our directorial premises and Derek and I would invite various members, from time to time, to come up of an evening for drinks in the hotel bar; the owner generally served drinks until 10p.m. then would depart, leaving us to help ourselves to whatever we wanted, not that by then we needed anything at all. On one occasion, we had two young ladies for an evening's debate and relaxation, nothing more, and at the end I whispered to them, 'for goodness sake don't let Derek drive you back to camp as he is very drunk'. They chuckled at this and walked home. Next day they told me that Derek had said exactly the same about me.

Above all else my Scottish years offered me the chance to come to know Stuart Piggott well and to debate with him on numerous occasions my own work, his various projects, and to come to appreciate the more his immense contribution to the discipline. I could appreciate his craftsmanship



*Fig. 2 (left) Excavations at Arcy-sur-Cure, France, 1956. Charles McVean at centre.*



*Fig. 3 (right)  
Paintings and shapes  
of the animals at  
Altamira, Spain,  
1956.*



*Fig. 4 (left) The Bronze Age collections at the National Museum, Edinburgh, available for study in 1958-59. Photo courtesy of Alison Sheridan.*



Fig. 5 Excavations at Morton, Fife, 1971.

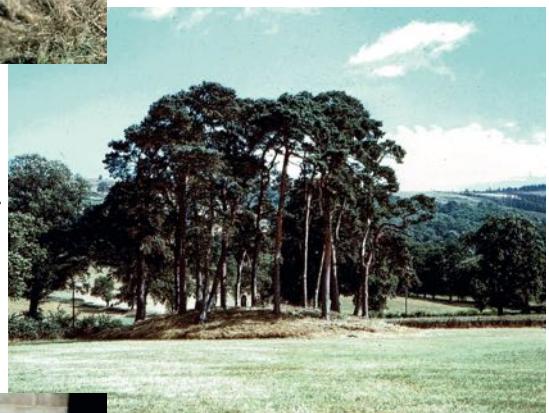


Fig. 6 The earthen mound of Pitnacree, Perthshire, 1964.



Fig. 7 Grahame Clark with John Coles and Leendert Louwe Kooijmans in the Netherlands, c. 1990.

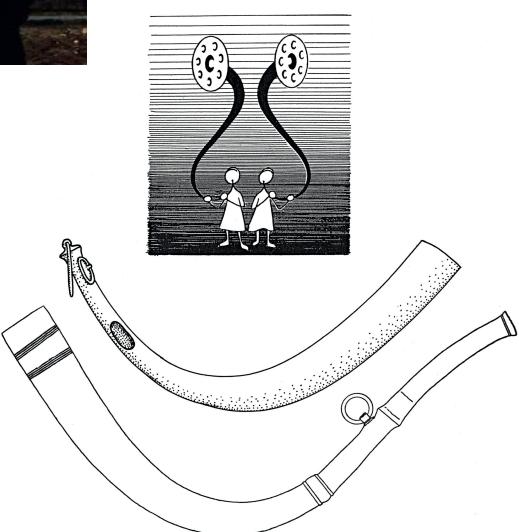


Fig. 8 Irish horns at the National Museum of Ireland, sideblow and endblow. The smaller horn is 62cm long. Above, playing the lurer (Skalk 1961).

and artistry in the production of plans and drawing of artefacts, and his elegant and informative prose, but it was the conversations that exposed his feeling for the warm humanity that lay embedded in the cold archaeological record. He could laugh at his own work and berate himself for neglecting some detail or concept, and tolerate, even enjoy, hearing of, and seeing, some of his work misrepresented. The title of his famous book *Neolithic Cultures of the British Isles* had been cited in another publication as *The Neolithic Vultures...* and it was henceforth always known by this. I could never envisage Clark or McBurney being so amused and unannoyed should one of their books have become so absurdly reduced even in an obscure publication.

In 1962 Stuart wrote to me as follows:

'Dear John,

I am roaring and shrieking away giving the Rhind lectures but unfortunately there is hardly anyone in the audience who can tell whether I am (a) making noble and beautiful contributions to knowledge or (b) drivelling out a lot of lunacies or (c) just hashing up the old stuff again. I wish you were here and could tell me which. I suspect a mixture of (b) and (c), though I try to kid myself it's all (a).'

I have little doubt that it was all (a), and all who read his Rhinds (*Ancient Europe* 1965) will gain from its wisdom and humanity. These two words sum up, I guess, what Stuart Piggott offered to me.

Much later, when I was firmly based in Cambridge, I was invited back to Edinburgh to give a lecture to the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland. My wife Bryony and I appeared at the lecture theatre just in time, with a large audience already assembled. As I walked along the front of the theatre, a number of the audience members waved 'hello' to me, and I returned the acknowledgement; when I had settled into my seat, ready to start the lecture, I said to my wife "How very nice it is to be greeted by old friends, but goodness, how old some of them look". My dear wife replied, "John, have you looked in a mirror recently?"

## Cambridge 1960

I have already referred to my somewhat unusual entry to the University of Cambridge to study archaeology, and early in 1960 the process was repeated. I was in the midst of a period of post-PhD research in Edinburgh with a Carnegie Scholarship and Honorary Research Fellowship in Piggott's Department. There was, in its way, quite a lot of things going on for me in Scotland, museum studies, field work, excavation and a bit of lecturing for various societies here and there. I was busy, I thought, but little did I know what was to come along. Although I had another full year of Carnegie support to come, the future was uncertain. Piggott was asking the University for financial guarantee for a new lectureship which he was going to offer me. But the funds were not forthcoming. So I looked around for possible work, at the end of my very enjoyable Carnegie period. A position was advertised in America for a European-based archaeologist, and I felt I should apply. I wrote to Grahame Clark asking him if he would support my application, and he responded at once, saying yes he would, but there was a position at Cambridge coming up that year. It was Miles Burkitt's old job, now occupied by Ray Inskeep who was moving on to African work. Was I interested in such a post? I answered yes, of course, and heard nothing for several months. Then a hurried note came from Grahame: what was the position of my PhD research? I had been gone from Cambridge for two and a half years, I replied that I had my PhD and now had a Carnegie Scholarship. Dead silence ensued for a month. Then a letter came from Grahame. I had been appointed as a University Assistant Lecturer for three years, starting in the autumn (1960), i.e. in about three months time. No application, no interview. All I knew was that I was to begin lecturing on the Palaeolithic period in October, and it was hoped on European later prehistory later in the academic year. As I had done no lecturing on either of these broad subjects I had to get busy with preparations of all kinds. In retrospect, Stuart Piggott must have been informally contacted by Grahame, and doubtless other consultations

had been made, but nonetheless it seemed, and probably was, an unusual way to make an appointment.

Having been so precipitously appointed I had to forgo representing the East of Scotland (as one of six members) in County Week, an annual competition of tennis teams from many of the areas of Britain, and instead engage in the preparation of the lectures that I had been nominated to give in the first term. But there was time for me to attend the annual Prehistoric Society foreign excursion, and in summer 1960 it was to The Netherlands. The British party included Grahame Clark, Stuart Piggott and other luminaries, equalled by the Dutch in the person of Professor Van Giffen and his three young prehistorians, the Drs Waterbolk, Glasbergen and Modderman. The visit to sites and museums was inspiring, and I hope and think I absorbed a good deal about techniques, material culture, and presentation. Among the party of thirty or so were several of my near contemporaries and rumour had already spread the news of my 'unadvertised' University appointment. I know that Piggott was pleased and rueful, because he told me so. I was somewhat taken aback, and disappointed, that no one of the Seniors stepped forward to chastise one of our party who helped himself to some potsherds from a grave newly excavated for our inspection. The Dutch were too polite to intervene. A junior member of their party was Wil Casparie who was a friend and advisor to me for over forty years.

On arrival in the Department of Archaeology in late September 1960 I was assigned a table in a large semi-subterranean room in the Museum which occupied a prominent part of the building complex in Downing Street. This had been Miles Burkitt's room, and he continued to sit at his desk in the corner on many a morning as I prepared lectures, sorted slides, gave supervisions and arranged practical classes for the thirty to forty Part I students. Burkitt's wife Peggy had a small drawing desk facing him. My table was in part occupied by a very large angled piece of wood serving as Charles McBurney's drawing board. The room was busy, to say the least, and it housed various museum display cases and had high windows framed by disreputable and blackened curtains, never drawn. Within the

first year I managed to get the McBurney artwork removed to his own room, and Peggy and Miles Burkitt came less often as I began to use the room more intensively for teaching. I had to, as I had no college room and my living quarters, in a University ground-floor flat, had a basement with half a metre of floodwater and the atmosphere was cold and damp. I had my eye on those curtains in the Burkitt room and eventually got the Faculty Secretary to have them removed and sent for cleaning. Within a day or so she reported that the laundry had phoned to say that their machine had received the curtains but only dirty water had emerged from the operation. So that was another satisfactory removal as far as I was concerned. A major problem remained, in that the room, being part of the Museum, had to be locked up at 5p.m. each weekday, and locked up all weekend. This was not helpful for supervisions, for lecture preparations, for weekend book consultations.

The room occupied by Grahame Clark in the Department was altogether more conducive to work and he took full advantage of it insofar as its state would allow. I visited him often in my early days and noticed that he never seemed to open any dull-looking mail and his big table was piled high with papers of all sorts. Along the wall hung all of his international membership certificates of various learned societies and there was a world map upon which he marked all the places where his students were now working and bringing Cambridge archaeology to the notice of far-flung places. I never studied this map but others have commented on Clark's obvious pride in the dissemination of Cambridge archaeology. Many years later I was happy to come to occupy Grahame's room for myself, and to discover unopened letters and University documents cast aside or fallen behind the bookcases.

In early October 1960 I gave my first lecture to a roomful of, I hoped, eager students who had opted to hear about the Old Stone Age. This was the first of a course of sixteen lectures and also thirty-two hours of practical classes in the first term. I had decided to introduce the course by talking about the ancient environments of the Pleistocene period, Ice Ages and Interglacials, and the fauna therein. My glass slides were of maps, and

a set of pictures of various elephants and other beasts that had roamed the lands from time to time. In my audience were Princess Margrethe of Denmark and her companion the Countess Waby Armfelt, a lovely lady who had studied with me when we absorbed Charles McBurney's lectures only three to four years previously. I was rather nervous, and handed my little box of precious slides to the attendant who mounted the steps to the elevated projector stand. As I started my introduction to the course, there was a crash. He had dropped my box of slides. A nervous giggle was heard. Slides were gathered up, a muttered 'sorry sir' was heard, and off we went. My slides of animals were all mixed up and it became for me a bit of a gamble as to what might appear on the screen, and whether or not I could identify the thing.

The practicals were much more fun than the lectures and in due time I think the course emerged as a success and was enjoyed, or tolerated, by all. I do remember plotting the lectures so that some might end with a climatic scene – the ice sheet approached, the cave ceiling collapsed, the flint axe broke – so the audience could debate the outcomes and await the next lecture and dénouement. It was not always possible to prolong the tension, if ever there was any, but we did have some good laughs from time to time. Later on, when a colleague and I had produced a book on the Old Stone Age (*The Archaeology of Early Man* 1969), it made for easier compiling of resources for this course, and the book could be referred to from time to time. One year, the class had a rather disruptive student who sat in the front row and would interrupt me with abrupt questions at crucial times. I finally finished him off one day when he said 'But Professor Zeuner does not say that'. I replied as evenly as possible 'Well, you should look up the latest information on the question'. He said 'Where do I find that?'. I said, 'In a book, it is called *The Archaeology of Early Man* and I wrote it'. Much laughter from all except the student who kept quiet for much of the remainder of the course.

The Department with its small staff of three senior figures, and I as a minnow, was busy of course but there was rather little love to be shared between the parties. Grahame Clark was openly critical of Glyn Daniel and tended

to ignore the work of Charles McBurney, perhaps because it was heavily typological and not environmentally-driven. Of Daniel's real contribution to the discipline of archaeology, Clark was entirely dismissive and this naturally came to colour some of the student perceptions and sympathies with the diametrically-opposed attitudes. Glyn was more politically astute and kept his criticisms of Grahame to private conversation where he could express them with considerable force. By this time, 1960, Glyn Daniel was getting into his stride as the editor of *Antiquity* and his college study was crammed with books both for his own research and writings and for his editorial role for the journal. Review books were stacked here and there and at regular times he would determine which were worthy of review and which were not, and the latter would be carted off to David's, a second-hand bookshop in Cambridge; those of us, students and junior staff (me), who had advance warning of such deliveries would be there as soon as possible to gather the scraps at knock-down prices.

Charles McBurney kept very much out of the antagonisms between Daniel and Clark as much by his innate politeness as by his dedication to his research and, I guess, his lack of interest in gossip. His relationship with Glyn was difficult to gauge by the students, and probably just as well. They had a hard enough time trying to sort out good relations with the Professor and his most senior lecturer. Geoffrey Bushnell, Museum Curator, was always a breath of fresh air in all this, and he became a real friend to me as my own interests developed over the first several years of my tenure of an Assistant Lectureship.

Bushnell was best known for his work in the Americas, and his book *Peru* in 1956 had established his authority in the field. He was very much a no-nonsense man, disliking all forms of jargon, believing in the primacy of evidence and very proud of the huge and varied collections of his Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, as it was then named. Bushnell's geological background served as a useful base for his emphasis on 'man and landscape', as illustrated by the immense variety of materials invented and elaborated throughout the world. His practical approach extended naturally enough into a personal assortment of surveying equipment,

levels and clinometer, a fine plane-table telescopic alidade, staffs and tapes. These he happily loaned to me when I began my programme of work in the Somerset Levels. Bushnell retired from the Museum in 1970 but continued his interest in the Cambridge Antiquarian Society until his death in 1978, and was responsible for one of my early forays into outside lectures in England, when I presented a highly noisy concoction of prehistoric sounds from a variety of horns, drums, pipes and whistles to a meeting of the society. Miles Burkitt gave the vote of thanks and this pleased me very much.

For such a well-known and widely-respected Department, there was a surprising lack of technical assistance. No drawing office or technical staff existed, no general archaeological assistants were present to help with research papers or fieldwork, and it was clearly felt that the student body would provide all the necessary help. The Museum however was well-furnished with a Workshop and capable staff, in the person of Mr C. Lilley as head, succeeded by Mr Pat Smith in due time who was a tower of strength for me in the Somerset Levels project. But for some of us, if not all, the lack of a drawing office with trained staff members was a handicap, and so far as I was concerned, if you wanted a map or chart or artefact or plan to be drawn, you did it yourself. The Faculty Photographer, Mr Len Morley and then Mr Gwil Owen, made slides for the lectures and processed films but did very little outside work on site or in landscape research during my time. The occasional remark by me to Grahame Clark about the absence of specialist help never gained any acknowledgement or mobilisation of resources.

Geoffrey Bushnell, Curator of the Museum, was at a different scale and level, and Clark clearly admired his scholarship and envied his easy-going manner and status as a senior figure, senior in some ways to Clark himself. I remember being Clark's guest at a dinner in London of the Cocked Hats, a select dining group of the Society of Antiquaries; at the end of the meal, Bushnell presiding, Bushnell took great obvious and entirely unmalicious delight in calling loudly 'Boots'. This was the signal for 'Boots', the most junior member of the club present, to pass round the snuff; 'Boots' on this

occasion was Clark, and he gamely and happily assumed the role and was suitably deferential. Whether he got back at his friend Geoffrey on Faculty business I do not know, but if so it was done without rancour.

But for me, a junior member of the teaching Department, Clark was anything but aloof or forbidding or distant. He must have realised that I had little knowledge of the complexities of Departmental and Faculty relationships, or of the wider contacts that I needed to establish if I was to become a full member of the small archaeological community in Britain. This adoption, for that was what it was, gradually introduced me to the Society of Antiquaries of London, to the Prehistoric Society, to the British Museum, and to college life outside my own attachment to Fitzwilliam (see below). Geoffrey Bushnell also played a role in some of these introductions, but it was Clark who set out to initiate me into British archaeological society. And eventually I was asked by him and by his wife if I would become Grahame's literary executor, a post which I have continued to occupy since 1995. I had the honour and pleasure to accompany Grahame, later in life, when he received a European award at a ceremony in the Netherlands (fig.7).

Quite often he would invite me to accompany him on some of his many day visits to London or Oxford or Birmingham where he was lecturing to a society or club, or meeting former students, or viewing museum collections. Some of these visits were particularly revealing of Clark's impish, perhaps childish, sense of humour, and of his impatience with rules of behaviour. I give two examples but there were many others.

He was invited to lecture to the archaeological student body in Oxford, an evening talk after Hall, and we set off as usual in his car, and had a brief visit to the Ashmolean, then dinner in some college or other before assembling at the lecture room. The audience was well-fed, and well-watered/wined, and very jovial when Clark announced that he was going to tell them not just about Mesolithic life and their environment, but was going to enliven his talk by reference to the eating habits of modern people in other parts of the world. He at once put on a set of slides showing the intimate

process of extraction, peeling, biting and chewing of enormous white grubs and caterpillars by some hungry person; at this, a swelling sound of retching, spluttering, and other unmistakeable sounds spread through the audience and there was a hurried exodus of about one-quarter. Clark carried on without hesitation and it was only in the car on the way back to Cambridge that he exploded with laughter at the success of his plan.

More dangerous was an expedition with me to the Museum in Birmingham. As we set off in the rain from the Clark home, Mollie Clark ordered her husband and his passenger (me) to fasten seat-belts in the Clark Mercedes. This we did. At the end of Wilberforce Road, where we paused before turning onto the exit road, Clark removed his seat-belt and invited me to do the same – constricting and a waste of effort, he said. Soon we were onto the newly-built M1, straight to Birmingham. He drove the car at 100m.p.h. or more, in pouring rain, in the outside lane without thought or seeming care; the occasional Jaguar passed us, on the inside, tooting horn, but Clark paid no attention. It was truly frightening but what could I do? Worse was to follow. As we entered the city, Clark said ‘We should look at the city map to see where the Museum is’, and he extracted an AA road book which, he said, had a map of Birmingham. The book was the 1932 edition, and the city had had a) a wartime experience, and b) a new ring road built. We whirled onto the latter and drove around, and around; I once caught a glimpse of a likely exit road into the Museum neighbourhood but we were past it before I could suggest a turn. Finally, Clark said ‘If we don’t find the Museum now we may as well go back to Cambridge’. This emboldened me to insert a little order into the operations and we stopped the car at a point where I could actually see the Museum entrance, and indeed the figure of the Keeper on the steps vainly looking for us, or, rather, for Professor Clark. I jumped out and sprinted up the road while Clark argued with a traffic warden who materialised from thin air. Together, the Keeper and I ran back to the car and, with guidance, we reached our goal. The trip back to Cambridge was equally uneventful.

I continued to retain contact with Stuart Piggott and, through him, Richard Atkinson who had a reputation as the face of scientific archaeology

and excavation technology. Clark was very fond of Piggott and they got on well, but Atkinson was dismissed by Clark as peripheral and of minor significance. I had an interesting example of the relationship of the three one summer in 1962 or 1963 when I made a brief visit to the excavation of a burial monument, Wayland's Smithy, in Wiltshire. When I appeared on site all that could be seen were some student diggers at work in the various trenches. I was directed to a dig hut inside which sat Piggott and Atkinson, drinking gin. They at once invited me in and offered me a glass of the same. We chatted a bit and then came a gentle knock on the door. In came one of the students who said 'Sorry to intrude, but there is another visitor coming up the hill'. 'Well', said Atkinson, 'Who is it?' 'It is Professor Clark'. I was crushed in the stampede of Piggott and Atkinson as they both dashed out and rushed around the site, shouting to the diggers to clean up their work, empty buckets, collect discarded sweaters and water bottles and so on. Both Piggott and Atkinson were clearly rattled by his reputation for severity and critical eye, and Clark knew it when he stepped onto the site and imperiously surveyed the trenches and awe-struck students. I enjoyed seeing it all from a distant vantage.

Both Clark and I, and I think Piggott too, had reservations about the work of Atkinson who had a reputation for rigorous and scientific applications to archaeological work in the field. The Department had a lecture and practical course on Surveying and Excavation and one of the books recommended for this course was Atkinson's *Field Archaeology*. In the early 1970s I ventured to produce another version, *Field Archaeology in Britain*, much to his annoyance and critical review. By then I could console myself with his abysmal publication record, notwithstanding his assured and confident guidance to such matters in his own book.

## TEACHING

Within the Department itself, Clark was entirely supportive of me and, once he saw that I could cope with the various courses for which I had been appointed, he encouraged me to expand my research interests and to

introduce new courses for the students. In mid-career I was teaching the following:

The Old Stone Age and Middle Stone Age (Part I)

16 lectures and 32 practical classes

The European Bronze Age (Part II)

and the Iron Age in the absence of other lecturers

The Archaeology of Southern Britain (prehistory)

Experimental Archaeology (lectures and practicals and excursions)

The Stone Age in Africa (Part II)

Surveying (lectures and practicals)

Methods in Archaeology (shared with others)

Wetland Archaeology (special courses)

Annual Field Class to various parts of southern Britain.

All of these courses were accompanied by college supervisions, of Part I and Part II students. The students of course came from all the colleges not just mine and there was always a trade-off at the beginning of term, along the lines of 'I'll supervise your Archaeologists if you will supervise my Social Anthropologists'. This was generally a bit chaotic but soon settled down once the students had made up their own minds as to what courses they would take, and once the college Fellows and others sorted out their timetables. All of this, lecturing and supervising, as well as doing some research and generally keeping head above water, took some doing on my part, and doubtless on others as well.

As a small but I think representative example of the work load imposed upon me, in some cases chosen by me, an early term of eight weeks (recorded in a diary) contained something like the following:

- a) Twenty contact hours per week of term, made up of ten hours of lectures and demonstration classes, ten hours of supervisions of one to three students per session.
- b) London meetings of The Prehistoric Society and The Council for British Archaeology (three afternoons in the term).

- c) Cambridge Prehistorians meeting at Peterhouse, Cambridge Antiquarian Society meetings, Fitzwilliam College meetings (I was Secretary for the Governing Body and there were two meetings per week for much of one term, but normally only two per term).
- d) Lecture and meeting in Edinburgh (one of my first public performances and a bit of a disaster).
- e) Surveying and planning of a large domestic site at Barley, aided by Grahame Clark whose knowledge of large-scale planning seemed to be nearly-nil, but who cheerfully held the staff or the end of a tape. A one-off, fortunately (eight hours total).
- f) Visits with small class of students to Butser Ancient Farm. Other classes in flint-knapping aided by graduate students (two days).
- g) External examinations meeting with Department in readiness for this years Tripos. The Extern was Terence Powell.
- h) (I was spared the Faculty Board in my first two years of appointment).

I make all this about sixty contact hours per week but matters were never that numerically simple, and in effect, I reckon that the whole business of being an archaeologist, preparing lectures and reading essays as well as the formal encounters, amounted to a near-entirety of life. Personal relationships had to be restricted, not a good policy in the long term. I was married and had four children (born 1959-1966) and each of them eventually came to help me on one occasion or another with matters archaeological both in this country and abroad.

I had two comments made to me that I recall quite clearly. The first was from Clark, who stopped me in the hallway during some mid-term period when the workload was very heavy. He said 'John, you look hunted', and passed by. Indeed I was. The second was equally pointed. A fellow lecturer, Brian Hope-Taylor, met me in the hallway and said 'John, you look very tired'. As Hope-Taylor rarely turned up to lecture and did very little else within the Department, I thought this was a bit rich and wanted to say 'If others carried their share maybe I'd not be so worn down', but politeness prevailed, alas.

Within a couple of years of lecturing I realised, although no one else had done so, that it was daft for those who wanted to specialise in the Palaeolithic option to receive some instruction only on north Africa (McBurney's major field of work) and Europe. All of the fundamental evidence was emerging from East and South Africa and the students only got a brief outline of this in their first year, in Part I (from me). So entirely of my own choosing I started up a course at Part II level on the African evidence, which involved a good deal of study on my part and at least a smattering of knowledge to impart. As it happened, my course was attended by about twenty students, far more than the Part II specialists, and included at least two who had worked in South Africa and knew a damn sight more about it than I did. Nonetheless, it went well and I was relieved and pleased to get a round of applause at the end of the final lecture – perhaps ironic but I don't think so. McBurney was so engaged in his own North African and European work that he totally ignored all that I had attempted.

In due time, and rather early-on in my case, the question of examinations arose, both internal of course and external. There were PhD examinations to give from time to time, on both internal and external candidates. I recall in my first year being asked to examine the dissertation of a Cambridge student who had been supervised by Grahame Clark. Knowing nothing of expectations, I rejected the dissertation and demanded a re-submission. Apparently there were severe comments expressed in the Degree Committee when the Examiner's report came to be discussed, but I survived (as did the student with his re-submissions). Later on I became more experienced and more burdened by external examinations, as will be noted.

Equally early in my first terms was a contact with Christopher Hawkes in Oxford, who always had a volume of advice for me, and for others, when some archaeological problem was being discussed. Fortunately for me, he was an academic assessor for the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland and thus saw one of my first large papers on Bronze Age matters, as it passed into proof stage. His corrections to my laborious text were numerous and incisive and were accompanied by many remarks that filled ten closely-

typed pages (which I still possess), and included things such as ‘I suggest you amend (this) to hybridisation of the new blade shape with pre-existing straight ones’, and ‘The trouble about your comparison... and you must do something about this quick!'; but he at last ended with ‘I've nothing at all to say on the Tarves section, so this at last makes a cheerful note to end on’. The published paper when it did appear was immeasurably improved by his intervention, but the editor must have cursed me for the number of corrections to be made to the proof. All of this of course must have been communicated to Grahame Clark, my Head of Department, and I can only assume this helped him maintain some sort of eye on my performance as a budding archaeologist.

## BLOWING MY HORN

In my youth I had learned to play the trumpet and some of my students confused me with another John Coles who was an accomplished trumpeter on the jazz scene, with various 78 r.p.m. recordings to his name. I had played a bit when a student but it was only the name that linked us. In my research interests in Bronze Age metalwork I encountered a large group of bronze horns, mostly from Ireland, and did some work on these in Dublin and other museums. My arrival in the National Museum of Ireland to study these objects was heralded by the keeper Joseph Raftery's decision to put all of the intact or semi-intact horns onto a large table in the Great Hall of the Museum, open to the public, and I was invited to play the horns, invent tunes, and generally demonstrate to an admiring public how wonderful these instruments were. As almost all lacked any mouthpiece, it was clearly going to be a problem for me to extract anything other than a loud untuneful sound from anything at all and I may as well have blown a bit of hosepipe. I was prepared for such an embarrassment and brought along a trombone and a French horn mouthpiece, and I had my old trumpet mouthpiece. With these I could do almost anything anyone might hope to hear, although it was in no way music or authentic, or of any use whatsoever. Satisfied, or deafened, Dr Raftery retired to his office and

I persuaded the assistants to transport all the instruments to the cellars of the Museum where I could record, test, draw and photograph everything without modern insertions. Some of the horns were side-blown rather than end-blown and these were difficult to blow (fig.8); other hornblowers since these days have deduced they are best played as didgeridoos, but all I could get from them were the fundamentals. In any event I did not want to follow the original research worker who had tested the side-blown horns; he, a Dr Ball, had produced a loud note from one such horn, but had burst a blood vessel with the effort and had subsequently died. The record of this melancholy event lay buried in an obscure book until I discovered, and published, it and the anecdote has been repeated on multiple occasions since my report appeared, perhaps as a lesson and warning to all potential experimenters.

Later on, I missed a fine opportunity to discomfit a TV pundit when he and I came to the British Museum to record a programme on Ancient Music. My contribution was to blow a fine Danish Bronze Age horn, a magnificent instrument, as introduction to the programme and then answer a couple of questions about it from the celebrated presenter. I produced a very fine and rather mournful piece on the horn as the camera rolled, and all seemed happy with this, just as well as I had split my lip doing it. Then, just as the interview was to begin, the presenter said to me, ‘These horns are Viking Age, aren’t they?’ I wish I’d kept quiet and let him dig his own grave on camera, but politeness prevailed and I indicated their real date to which he instantly switched without batting an eyelid. Brilliant.

## FITZWILLIAM

Because I had been attached to Fitzwilliam House as a student in the years 1955-57, it was logical that I would link with the same institution on my return to Cambridge. The House at once invited me to join the High Table (there were no Fellows in the formal sense of the word) and I revived old contacts with the Tutors and other officers. W.W. Williams was an

important and friendly figure in the House. Soon, however, the position of the House, as a University-based institution, came under scrutiny and, after a strong campaign within the University, it was resolved that the House be transferred and translated into a College, Fitzwilliam College, and furthermore that immediate steps be taken to obtain a new site and create a new building. All of this took some time, of course, but in retrospect it moved forward well and in 1966 we were installed in the College, as a College. Before the physical move took place, members of the House were invited, at first as a group, then additions one by one, to become Fellows of the College. I think I was just about the last of the First Fellows (as we were called) to be elected and that was a good moment. I got the letter in the middle of Canada in summer 1963.

Being the last of the First had its repercussions; when the Fellows were assembled as a Governing Body in our new premises, we needed to create and agree the Statutes for the College, and we needed a secretary to keep track of the Statutes, one by one, and there were a lot of them to debate. As the junior Fellow, I was invited, asked, required I suppose, to become the Secretary. The meetings, two a week for a term or more, were quite dreadfully boring, complex, tiresome, and yet necessary to get through, and at the end of the year I was relieved of the post, I hope from pity rather than incompetence. Thereafter, as an Ordinary Fellow matters were easier and I worked as Director of Studies in Archaeology and Anthropology for many years and shared a set of rooms in College with Tony Edwards, an Animal Physiologist, who was always a great and good friend to me over the years. We had many a critical and enjoyable debate about College and students, and Fellows, and Masters, and these I think helped us both survive with some sort of balance in times of overwork or other difficulties.

## EXPERIMENTAL ARCHAEOLOGY

It was logical, in retrospect, that my teaching of practical classes, in flintwork in the main at first but also in metalwork and in creating sounds from musical instruments, should lead on to the development of a real

interest in experiments with a wider range of materials. I have written about this work elsewhere and its full development came from my study of Bronze Age horns and shields, both of which I had explored in my PhD dissertation. Added to this interest was the encouragement of Geoffrey Bushnell who was always prepared to help me with some practical work. He would cheerfully open any display case and extract objects for us both to handle and, if appropriate, use. Stone knives could be sampled for effectiveness on occasions, although I often demurred as use-wear traces on such objects were already being sought. Music-making instruments were fair game, it seemed to us, and Geoffrey would remove conch shell horns or didgeridoos from the cases for attempts at blowing; I think today we would demur from such tests. I recall one such conch had been collected by Captain Cook. Another tool we explored was the spear-thrower, and a variety of these could be tested. The students enjoyed such things and especially the spear-throwing competitions we held just outside the door to the Museum. We could aim across the courtyard and mostly our spears did not travel far, thank goodness. I was responsible for a course of lectures on experimental archaeology and would have taken all the blame had an accident occurred. I transferred the student participation to a meadow down by the river immediately after one student, who happened to be the University javelin champion, propelled a spear right across the courtyard at head height, and as a car rounded the corner diagonally across from us, the spear splintered against the windscreen and brought the driver to an astonished halt. We had already smashed a window in the Botany School opposite and enough was enough. But it certainly was fun.

Our classes, year by year, travelled to London for metallurgical work, to the Butser Ancient Farm in Hampshire, to West Stow in Suffolk for woodworking experiments and even farther afield for Roman building work at Coventry and prehistoric earthworks in Wessex. At Butser we had the good fortune to encounter and, on occasion, lock horns with Peter Reynolds, the founder of the Iron Age Farm there. He was an inspiring teacher, very determined and he did not often change his mind about things but some of my students were very happy to have considerable

arguments with him over his dogmatic statements. Reynolds became a good friend to me and we often debated more general and theoretical matters about the concept of experimental archaeology, but I doubt I ever convinced him of my more liberal views. It was always very instructive to visit the place and to see the variety of themes that he was pursuing. The students did not do much practical work at Butser although they absorbed a good deal of information by seeing the houses and banks, and field and pits.

At West Stow they could see the variety of Anglo-Saxon houses being constructed by Stanley West and Richard Darrah, but it was with the latter that they learned about axe-work and adze-work on timber, and in nearby woodland they could help with felling of small trees and coppicing of hazel, using stone and bronze and iron axes in turn (fig.9). The axes came from the Museum in Cambridge where the Workshop staff could provide me with hafting wood and we could learn by experience, bitter at times, how to attach and firm-up axe to handle, and how not to use the implement in ways that split hafts, sprained wrists and lost axes as they flew off into the bushes (the axes not the students).

Our visits to Middlesex Polytechnic were equally as testing and exciting. Here we were instructed by Peter Holmes and his colleagues in the art and craft of metal-working in copper and bronze. We could try our hands at pouring molten metal into moulds, in hammering sheet metal, in wire-drawing and in getting the feel of the weight of things, and the terrific heat of the whole process of melting, alloying and casting. This was a very fine episode in training, I thought, and in retrospect perhaps we were lucky not to be splattered by the bouncing drops of molten copper when the pouring went awry.

More individual had been my own experiments with Bronze Age shields, and I managed to make replicas of wooden shapers, and metal and leather shields, and, on an early occasion (1961) at the Society of Antiquaries of London, to test them against bronze spears and swords. I'd not do this now with the audience sitting directly beside me, the shield-holder, while my

friend Warwick Bray attacked the shields very vigorously. Piggott referred to this demonstration as ‘mortal combat’ and I presume he referred to Dr. Sulimirski, a well-known and senior archaeologist, who came within a foot or so of receiving a deflected sword blow. I shudder to think of it now. But my audience contained, I think, every senior archaeologist figure in the whole country and the ordeal did me no harm in the longer term.

Following this public display, the *Illustrated London News* ran a picture story about the experiments, and showed a photo of Don Allen (an Assistant in the Museum) and me engaged in simulated conflict (fig.10). This prompted a surprising letter from a man in South Africa: ‘Dear Mr Coles, you will not remember me, but I have pleasant memories of you, assuming you are the Mr Coles who was assistant to Baron Von Hügel [former Director of the Museum]... I was at Christ’s 1905-08... with salutation to the forceful warrior with sword and spear...’ I had to disabuse the writer as politely as possible; I did not think that either Don Allen or I looked as old as eighty years or so in the photo.

Perhaps less authentic was an experimental recreation of an Iron Age chariot, funded by the BBC for an early TV programme, and academically-advised by two of Britain’s foremost Iron Age scholars, Stuart Piggott and Terence Powell. The replica was based on an excavated chariot burial, and Piggott’s expertise with wheeled vehicles was put to the test in the Scottish Borders where modern buildings would not intrude on the filming. I was invited as ‘an experimenter’ but all seemed well underway when I arrived by car from Cambridge one sunny day. The cart looked well, with iron-clad wheels and wicker-lined box, open at the rear, and upon which two student Celtic warriors stood uneasily as the pony stamped its feet impatiently (fig.11). Piggott and Powell fussed about the harness matters, and the cameramen were notably unprepared for anything, it seemed. Finally, for a trial run, the warriors brandished their swords and spears, one sitting to guide the pony, the other boldly standing up, and the pony set off. At once, within two metres of the start, the upright warrior fell off the back, his spear clattering to the ground beside him. It would have made for spectacular TV.

## The Somerset Levels

Within twelve months of my arrival in Cambridge I was summoned, along with Eric Higgs, by then an Assistant in Research, to visit the Somerset Levels. I cannot recall that I even knew they existed, other than that they had yielded several wooden bows that Grahame Clark had eagerly pursued, studied and published. The three of us drove to Somerset and met Stephen Dewar, an amateur field archaeologist of extraordinary talent and persistence. He led us out onto the peat bog at Shapwick and we observed the hand-cutting of peat by a number of men, all of whom were known by Dewar and to some of whom he chatted and produced bottles of whisky as rewards for telling him about their discoveries in the peat. We could see some wooden trackways in the peat sections, and Dewar pronounced these to be of the Later Bronze Age, and Grahame Clark turned to me and, with a distinct gleam of the eye, suggested I might be interested to pursue the structures and find out more about them. Little did I know what lay in store for me as I nodded assent. We then went back to a Burle Bed, a sand bank, protruding above the peat, where we found some flints that Grahame identified as of the Mesolithic, looking expectantly at Higgs. He was non-committal, to say the least.

The story of my involvement with the Somerset Levels has mostly been told in the book *Sweet Track to Glastonbury* (1986) but one or two of the early events may not have survived editing the text. I excavated, more or less by myself, several of Dewar's trackways, getting sunstroke in the process, and then in 1966 I identified a substantial wooden track, known since 1880 and called The Abbot's Way, then wholly lost to view, but now dangerously near the surface over a wide area of the peatland. With a small team of Cambridge students we excavated some areas of the track, and in due time traced its course through the peat fields and pasture all the way to a dryland island and its termination there. We exposed small lengths of the structures here and there, and attracted a good deal of attention from the peat-cutters and the farmers, and their cows. We were not much bothered by casual visitors as our work was done well away from the local road and there were wide water-filled ditches to negotiate each day in

order to reach the excavations. Yet one day we looked up from our dark trench and saw a well-dressed man approaching; he had already got over the roadside ditch and seemed very keen to visit us. He came finally to the main barrier, a wide ditch full to the brim with water. I was about to call out and advise him to turn to one side and find the cattle grid across, but he turned back and before I could shout a warning he had retreated ten paces or so, swivelled, ran full tilt at the ditch, jumped, and fell straight in. Amazed by this, we could only watch as he dragged himself out and squelched his way back to his car. He never did get to see The Abbot's Way.

When our investigations of the roadway had finally come to a halt, I was left with a bit of a problem. We had removed some of the wooden planks and pegs of The Abbot's Way, in order to study the axe-marks and splitting facets created by the builders of the structure. They seemed interesting enough to me and to my Professor to warrant some attempt to conserve some of the pieces for museum storage and display. There were no conservation facilities available to me in Somerset and indeed the County Museum curator had very little interest in ancient waterlogged wood. In the University Museum at Cambridge I found expertise of a sort and so I resolved to try to conserve some pieces for museum display in Cambridge. We carted some of the wood back to Cambridge where I, in the absence of any other facility, set up three or four zinc bathtubs in my own room in the Museum, loaded them with The Abbot's Way wood suitable bandaged, filled the tanks with water plus 10% of a polyethylene glycol (PEG) and hung fish tank heaters along the tank sides. These heated the liquid, the water steamed away, more PEG was melted on a small stove and tipped in, and heating went on until, we hoped, the wood had absorbed sufficient PEG and its water content had been reduced, so that it could be removed, dried, wiped clean and preserved. The process worked quite well, for the wood. But my books and papers curled with the damp, and the air that I and my students breathed in, day by day, was probably hazardous. Any photographs or slides must have suffered as well. After about six months of this abuse, we all decided to abandon the Cambridge part of the process

and I soon transferred all the gear to the Levels and to the first of a series of wooden sheds supplied by one of the peat companies. The character of the Levels might be clarified by the following poem:

Few people dare to settle in the wetland.  
They fear the black waters and the sucking swamps.  
Instead, they perch, like a row of swallows,  
On the edge of the wetland,  
Harvesting its wild wealth,  
But trying to avoid its marsh sickness,  
The malaria, and fearful  
Of the will of the wisp,  
The strange flickering lights that appear  
As the mists rise from the dark waters  
And the dense thickets .....

The quaking bog was another  
Even more sinister wetland  
Treeless and unending  
Consisting only of soft hummocks  
And pools of black waters  
And shunned by all animals.  
The whole world would shake  
If you ventured upon it  
And men could vanish here.  
What better place for a final refuge  
From the unfriendly world.

In the late 1960s the work went on in the peatlands as more and more of the peat companies co-operated with me during my frequent visits to the area, where I would visit as many of the supervisors and peat-cutters as possible, given that I was employed by the University and Colleges to teach and supervise. I would drive the 150 miles or so to Somerset on a

Friday evening or Saturday morning, visit and inspect and make decisions about areas of cutting to be held over for my future excavations, drive back to Cambridge on Sunday eve. On one weekend I remember I was hard-pressed with lecture preparation but had to inspect some discovery made by a peat-cutter so I drove down, spent several hours in the peatfield, then drove back to Cambridge; no motorways at all in those days and it did me no good apart from keeping up any reputation for interest amongst the peat-workers.

Among the discoveries and investigations made in the late 1960s were a couple of special interest, now that the passage of times has softened some of the hard slog that the work involved, and indeed over the years certain aspects come more into focus than at first glance. At the terminal of The Abbot's Way, on the island edge of the village of Westhay, where the peatland met the solid rock, we met two families who owned and worked some of the fields. One was Maurice Bell and his wife and three sons, and the other was Dennis Baker and his family. All were helpful and interested in what we were doing, and one of the men said that he had noticed 'some sticks' when he had dug a hole to bury their sheepdog at the foot of the island. We investigated the spot and found prehistoric wood, and in due time discovered the Bell track and the Baker platform, naturally enough named after our informants. The combined site, Bell track and Baker platform, was published as such but in at least one subsequent publication (not ours) the author called the whole thing the Bell Beaker site, assuming we had made a spelling mistake. It had nothing to do with Beakers of any sort. The work on both sites, separated only by a modern ditch, was intriguing, to say the least. Under an upper layer of wood of the track one of the student helpers found a carved lump of ash wood which we came to call the God-dolly, it seemed to be human in shape, was found upside down and has been studied and displayed in many places. However, when I took the object soon after its discovery for inspection by two Professors in Cambridge, one of them Professor Waterbolk from the Netherlands and the other Grahame Clark, both expressed the opinion that it was nothing more than a rather peculiar peg-end from some structure or other. But the

name God-dolly, invented by me simply because I didn't know if it was some ritual object, or a child's toy, or indeed entirely natural, has stuck.

The Baker Platform was much more difficult to explore and its wood was rather dry and fragile. As usual, our instruction to our student helpers was 'no feet on peat', and this meant that no one should stand or kneel directly within the excavation trench. All work had to be carried out from planks suspended across the trench or from wooden planks or iron sheeting laid on the ground beside the trench. We had an excellent supervisor, Andrew Fleming, on the Platform work and he enforced the rule very firmly. One day, however, a novice helper stepped down into the trench and obeyed the rule 'no feet on peat' by standing on the wood. It was logical, to him, but not to the supervisor; the penalty? 'Kindly move the spoil heap two metres to the west'.

And so it all continued, season by season and my students at Cambridge benefited, I hope, from the instruction and the exercise. We drew upon a wide geographical range for other helpers, Australia, South Africa, America, Japan and various European countries. I well remember a very distinguished Japanese Professor who came to work for us and who made the mistake of stepping down into a trench. The supervisor shouted so loudly at him that I swear the Professor rose vertically into the air and somehow gained the safety of the trench planking. We had another mature and established surveyor who came to work for us, in his Rolls Royce, and he was happy to see it get covered in mud and peat as he drove it to the excavation site, until one morning when he drove it straight into a ditch full of peaty water; he said that he couldn't distinguish between the farm track and the ditch surface. All of these visitors to the Levels were looked upon by the locals as folk from another world, they spoke differently, acted differently and sometimes had more money than sense when it came to drinking the local cider, as I subsequently found out to my own cost (see below).

It was not just the cider that laid some of the students low. The local pub in Westhay, where we had our camp site, was called The Bird in Hand and

it sometimes served basic food for those who were unprepared or unable to cook for themselves. One of our students called in sick one morning and explained that he had gone to the pub for a pork pie supper, which was all that remained in the pub's cupboard that evening. He ate it, it tasted 'funny' he said and when he had looked at the package label it said 'consume by September...'; it was August so all was well, he thought. But after consumption he looked again and it was the wrong year.

As the work went on, Grahame Clark became more and more enthusiastic about it and his support helped us raise the meagre funds we needed, year by year, to carry out small excavations of the wooden structures, trackways and platforms, and study their local environment, the evidence for woodland management practices such as coppicing and pollarding in the Neolithic, and wood-working techniques used to fell trees, chop stems and branches into sections, split timber into planks, sharpen pegs and posts and fashion smaller pieces into points and clubs. We began to talk about 'axe signatures', where we could identify the facets left by a particular axe-blade of stone or of bronze, and this was I think the first time such extensive and specific work was conducted in Britain.

One of the major advantages of Cambridge Archaeology's location on the Downing Street site was its proximity, across the courtyard, to the Botany School and its sub-Department of Quaternary Research. The Head of the School was Harry Godwin, a botanist of international repute and keenly interested in collaborative research with archaeologists. He had just recently completed a major environmental study for Grahame Clark at Star Carr, and had pursued his own lines of enquiry in the Fenland and in the Somerset Levels. It was for the Somerset Levels that he and I came together. Already he had investigated some of Stephen Dewar's trackways in the peat and their joint paper in the *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society* had led Clark to propose my involvement. Nonetheless it was with some trepidation that I approached such a distinguished figure one day in 1962 to ask about the Levels and their potential, and more particularly to enquire if I could examine his maps of the area. Godwin was enthusiastic and demanding, wishing to help but at the same time wanting assurance

that I was eager enough and, perhaps, sufficiently prepared to undertake the work. He loaned me his precious 1/10000 maps upon which he had plotted all his, and Dewar's, observations. I took these across the courtyard to my Department where they were photographed (no photocopiers in those days) and prints made for me.

My early work in the Levels, on the trackways and other wooden structures, has been reported elsewhere but it was through Godwin that I came into contact with Alan Hibbert, then an Assistant in Research in the Sub-Department. Godwin called him down from his attic office and we three met and discussed the Levels. Hibbert asked me if what I needed was the occasional pollen diagram to accompany my archaeological report, but I said that I envisaged a more integrated approach, joint authorship of reports and greater involvement by an environmentalist. This was agreed with enthusiasm and the beginning of a long association was soon tested in the fields of the Somerset Levels (see below).

It was the same Stephen Dewar of the Somerset Levels who got me involved with a lady called Winnafreda, Countess of Portarlington. Dewar knew the Countess, and wrote to Grahame Clark about a small group of gold objects in her possession. In due time I was deputed to visit the Lady in her splendid house in Ascot, and to advise her on the gold. Once he heard about the matter, Stuart Piggott mischievously insisted that such a name as Lady Winnafreda had to be invented, and it was all a fiction. I continued to make occasional visits to Ascot, and have sumptuous lunches with the lady, and continued to keep Piggott informed of my good fortune, and suggest that he was jealous; with this he agreed and we had a good laugh about it, especially when her gold was revealed to have a dubious background, not of course in any way due to the Lady herself.

## MORE DEPARTMENTAL MATTERS

As time passed and lecture courses evolved (or degenerated), and the Archaeology staff was increased by one or two welcome appointments, I began to discuss with colleagues in the other Departments about combining some Part I courses so that students might gain some notion of

the relationship between Archaeology, Social and Physical Anthropology. We began with a simple merging of the first two of these, so that two of us (Alan Bilsborough and I) could give a combined human development course, taking turns as we progressed from East and South Africa northwards to end with the Upper Palaeolithic cave art. This last was an enjoyable episode for me, and I hope for others. The combined course was, I think, frowned upon or at best ignored by the purists of the two disciplines. Bilsborough was particularly active in the course work, and reported to me from time to time on his adventures in supervising the young recruits to the course. He apparently had some problems now and then, including one man who was a severe Creationist and another who believed in the arrival of babies by stork – I suspect Alan made up the latter.

Even later on, we created a triple-course, called Race, Culture and Society, in which Physical, Archaeological and Social Anthropology combined in an effort to show the close relationships between disciplines. This proved easy in theory but more difficult in practice and particularly so in the basic time-tabling of lectures. My section of the course (Culture) addressed the Economy (habitat, food, shelter, industries, transport, trade), Sociology (settlement, family, stratification, law and order) and Ideology (science, language, burials and tombs, art, ornament and music). The other lecturers faced up to their own themes and we probably did not succeed in the complete bringing together of our special interests, and in creating long-lasting links in the disciplines, but the course was fun to conceive and present to the audience. (Interesting now to glance at my lecture notes and come upon a page entitled ‘Typological chronology’, which is immediately followed on the hand-written page with the word ‘Ugh!').

I shared other courses with various members of the Department, and the major problem was always to recall whose turn it was – on more than one occasion I bumped into a colleague as he and I both attempted to enter the lecture room, which presumably meant that sometimes neither of us showed up. However, matters generally worked out without much complaint from anyone and doubtless a free hour was as welcome to the students as to us.

I recall one frantic morning when I was supervising until 10 a.m., and then was due to give a lecture at 10 a.m. at another venue down the road. The supervision dragged on until the final minute of its hour. I grabbed my box of slides and speedily walked to the lecture theatre, used the previous week. No one was there. I rushed farther down the road to the Mill Lane Lecture Theatre where, perhaps, my class had been directed. On arrival, by now 10.15, all was quiet, all lecture rooms occupied. I asked the attendant ‘Where is Dr. Coles’ lecture room?’ He replied, ‘Number 3, and Dr. Coles has already started his lecture’. I gazed through the small window in the door to the theatre and saw nothing but blackness, and then a slide was suddenly projected onto the screen. The picture was upside down and I knew at once that my lecture, or a lecture, was being given by my colleague who had a habit of mixing-up the timetable and recovering his slides from time to time. So I went home.

More serious were occasions when a colleague had to be away from Cambridge during a period when he was supposed to give key course lectures. In such cases, I would be approached and asked if I would fill in for him. I would oblige if at all possible, but sometimes it was a bit of a struggle. At the beginning of one term, a close colleague, John Alexander, who lectured on the Iron Age was working in Egypt and was delayed in his return. I was asked to give his lectures for the first week and did so. The second week arrived but he did not, and I began to struggle a bit with finding enough information to give yet more lectures on what was for me very foreign country. At last he appeared and I asked what had happened. He said he and his team had voyaged by boat and camel to the railhead to await the train to Cairo and flight back to England. Alas, he was told ‘The train is delayed, sir’. ‘How long will we have to wait for it?’ ‘Two weeks, sir’.



*Fig. 9 (above)*  
Richard Darrah  
and John Coles  
felling a tree  
with stone and  
bronze axes.



*Fig. 10 Testing swords and shields.*  
Don Allan holding a copper alloy  
shield and John Coles well defended  
by a leather shield. Both shields  
made by JMC.



*Fig. 11 Two specialists, Terence  
Powell and Stuart Piggott viewing  
an experimental chariot.*



*Fig. 12 Glyn Daniel (second left)  
with Prince Charles (centre) in  
Brittany, 1969.*



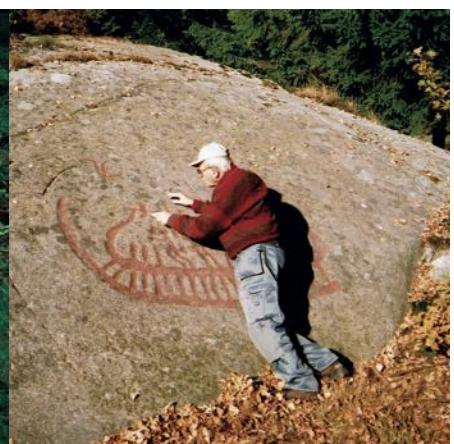
Fig. 13 (top left) Bryony Orme at work inspecting the mumps (peat blocks) for prehistoric wood and stones, 1983.

Fig. 14 (below right) An early excavation of the Sweet Track, c. 1971-2.



Fig. 15 (left) Ray Sweet, the finder of the Sweet Track, trying it out on a copy or replica of the Sweet Track at the Willows Garden Centre in the Somerset Levels.

Fig. 16 (below left) Lasse Bengtsson exposing a rock surface with images of humans and other designs. (below right) Bo Gräslund at work on a large boat-like design.



## A NEW STUDENT

In mid-1967 I was invited to Trinity College to discuss the Directorship of Studies in Archaeology and Anthropology. I was told, privately, that Prince Charles had been admitted to the College and on his arrival to meet the Master, Lord Butler, he had indicated that he wished to study archaeology. The Master had turned to his Senior Tutor and enquired of him who it was amongst the Fellowship who handled such a subject. He was told that at present there was no Director of Studies, as the previous acting Director had resigned to go abroad. My name had been advanced as replacement. I was asked to take this on, and accepted after consultation with my own College. It was decided that the Director of Studies should have a room in College so that the Prince would not have to, or be seen to, travel out to another College for his tuition. So I was assigned a room, a pleasant study in one of the back courts at Trinity College. I was a little bit surprised to see that the door had a nameplate labelled Mr Coles; I at once suggested to the Senior Tutor that as I had a PhD it might be changed to Dr Coles. Alas, he said, the College only recognises higher degrees from Cambridge, Oxford and Trinity College Dublin. Mine was Edinburgh and clearly considered inferior. I should at once have resigned from my Directorship of Studies, but I did not in the circumstances which had by then come upon me, with wide (transitory) publicity and various reporters wanting interviews and pictures. I thought it all a waste of time, and, being a novice at this game, I assumed that once Term had arrived and all students installed, the matter of Royalty and publicity would subside.

Very early on in October 1967 I received a letter which started with the words 'Dear Dr Coles, I have been in touch with Henry VI and others about Prince Charles at Cambridge and expect that all will be well'. I don't think this was a spoof as it went on, and on, about the potential relationship between the author's ancestors and the 'Popish Plot' of the 17<sup>th</sup> century and, indirectly, the Royal Family.

The first lecture in the Part I Archaeology course was to be given by me, on the Old Stone Age. All went well and the class of fifty or so was attentive

and Prince Charles received no more than a glance or two. However, as he left the Lecture Room he was met on the stairs by Glyn Daniel who very obviously wanted to have a part in his education. He was also met by Grahame Clark, rather less abruptly, and it was obvious to me, as an innocent observer, that both men were fascinated by Royalty.

Rather sooner than I would have anticipated, invitations arrived for me, as Director of Studies, to go to various dinners or other parties where it was hoped Prince Charles would be present; it was his attendance that was the key, not mine. I went to as few as possible, but I felt rather sorry for the Prince with the constant buzzing around that he had to put up with. I arranged various supervisions for him in Social and Physical Anthropology, and Glyn Daniel supervised some of his Archaeology after the first term.

In early 1968 Glyn Daniel and I met and, following his lead, agreed to undertake an academic visit to France with Prince Charles, so that he could see some of the Palaeolithic caves and art that I had been lecturing about, and some of the megaliths that Daniel was describing to the Part I students. This proposed tour of about one week was duly announced in the press and prompted a lengthy letter to *The Times* (which did not publish it) and a copy to Lord Butler, which stated that the cave art, announced by us as dating to the Ice Age, was nothing of the sort but was created by the Greeks, and furthermore was initiated by one C. Pompeius of Perigueux. Lord Butler could not cope with this and passed it on to me for a response. I sent an explanation of Ice Age art to the author, and mentioned the work of Breuil and Cartailhac and the dating of the sites, and received a prompt reply ‘you may have allowed the Abbé Breuil to deceive you, but he did not deceive me. And I am hoping that he has not misled the Prince of Wales or Lord Butler’.

On March 25th 1968 (my birthday as it happened but that was kept quiet), we set off from London in an aircraft of the Queen’s flight, piloted by Prince Philip. There were only four of us in the party, Prince Charles, his equerry David Checketts, Glyn Daniel and I. At Bordeaux there was a big crowd of local dignitaries to meet us, in the rain, and after that we

could get down, I thought, to the business of archaeology. Our little group was now joined by a British Embassy secretary and a French civil servant deputed to look after Very Important Persons. Our cavalcade of cars was led by, and followed by, police cars. We were soon joined by François Bordes, the leading French prehistorian of Palaeolithic studies, who was there to guide us through the caves. He always wore a wide cowboy hat and was a great bore, we thought, as he droned on about all his wartime exploits, probably grossly exaggerated in the telling, or so we thought. Our first port of call was Les Eyzies, the centre for cave art of the whole area, and here is where I encountered the hotel that Daniel had talked to Charles McVean and me all those years ago, Les Glycines. Daniel was obviously a regular client and was warmly greeted by the manager and staff. The place was fully booked, seven rooms for the party and all others booked by the reporters and photographers who had descended on the village and pursued us relentlessly throughout the entire week in France. Of this rabble, more later.

The hotel of course put on splendid dinners for us, and the party would assemble for pre-dinner drinks and chat about each day's events. We visited some of the famous caves and rock shelters, and saw the paintings and engravings at Font de Gaume, Les Trois Frères, Cap Blanc and, finally, I found myself on a little railway carriage inside the great cave of Rouffignac, the site that McVean and I had found locked up those years ago. Bordes insisted on dominating all the discussions about the art, and Daniel kept his opinions about Rouffignac to himself, and I had little or no chance to speak to my pupil Prince Charles about the artistic achievements and landscapes of the Dordogne.

When the time came for our party to depart from Les Glycines, it was agreed that the lesser members, namely Daniel and Coles, would check out, pay their bills, and get into the assigned car that awaited us. Then the Prince could come down to the hotel desk, thank the Manager and our group of cars would then set off in good order, picking up the police escort which was waiting for us at a respectable distance. Daniel and I were the only members of the party who had to produce any money at all. For

some reason, the Royal party had come to the opinion that we University teachers should pay for our own meals, but that all accommodation would be looked after by the Embassy. All other members of the party were, of course, on a complete freebie. When Daniel and I descended the stairs and handed in our room keys, Daniel was assured by the desk attendant that there was nothing to pay as he was an honoured guest of long-standing. When I received my bill I was astounded to see that not only was I expected to pay for my food but I was billed for all the drinks consumed by the entire party throughout the entire stay, including the very first day when it had happened to be my birthday. What a present! I had to pay up, and it left me with no money at all. The Equerry assured me, when we met at our first stop of the day, that he would arrange to repay me as soon as possible.

We travelled northwards and had a few visits to various monuments, churches and megaliths (fig.12). Daniel and I were dropped off at a small hotel while the Royal party went to some Embassy event and hostellerie. Daniel kindly paid for my dinner as we ate alone that evening. I dreaded the next hotel, at La-Trinité-sur-Mer on the coast of Morbihan, as it had a formidable reputation for food, hence price.

The Carnac stone alignments were visited, various megalithic tombs, a French naval motorboat transported us to the Ile d'Höedic, and then we arrived at the Hotel Le Rouzic. Here was where the fun began. We now had a small army of press following us, and although we had booked the entire first floor of the hotel, about twelve bedrooms, the press occupied the whole of the second floor and seemed to be lurking in every corner of every public room. Our dinner table was magnificent, with two bottles of fine wines already opened for every person, a variety of dishes from the sea served, and many a strange-looking creature on the plates. It was all delicious and I, although worried about the inevitable bill, had been re-paid by the Equerry that morning so felt more convinced that I could cope when the moment of departure came. As we sat and ate and talked at the table, I could see, in a corner of the dining room, a row of reporters munching their simple plates of food, and sipping their beer.

In the morning, Daniel and I presented ourselves at the departure desk. He was handed his bill and I swear that he turned pale at the cost of his dinner. He paid up, and I received my bill. I gazed at it, unbelieving, for it was 1/10 of his bill, and essentially only for a bed-and-breakfast stay. Yet my room, number 121, was upon it. Daniel glanced at it too and said, from the corner of his mouth, ‘pay it’. I did and got a receipt. We went to our car and waited. A tremendous row broke out at the hotel desk, and suddenly, on the steps of the hotel, appeared the manager and one of the reporters. The latter had stayed, we learned later, in room 221, just above me, and got my bill, and I his. Then all the noise ceased – Prince Charles had appeared, the manager met him, all was sweetness and light, and I muttered to myself ‘come on, Charles, get in the car’. He did and we drove off. It was a glorious day – my birthday at last.

But all was not finished. We drove to an airport for a flight to Jersey. On arrival there we were met by a small welcoming party and by Charles McBurney who was excavating on the island, and Prince Charles was to become a volunteer digger for a few days. Daniel and Coles were now finished as party guides and we were left at the airport, to catch a flight to London, while the official party went off to a reception at Government House. Daniel and I soon realised that our personal luggage had inadvertently been offloaded with the Royal belongings and all had gone off to the Jersey reception; neither Daniel nor I was prepared to let our luggage vanish like this and we demanded a car to retrieve the bags. There was not a single taxi or car at the airport, and we commandeered an ancient bus that sat, almost as a historic relic, by the airport buildings. A driver was found, elderly of course. With its two passengers the bus lumbered off, just as we saw the airplane land to pick up London-bound passengers. We swept, if that is the word, onto the curving drive leading to Government House. We disembarked and were met by Security as well as David Checketts, as the formally-dressed guests, sipping their fine wines amongst the manicured garden, gazed at us. We told our story, and the luggage was speedily retrieved. We departed and made our way back to the airport where, by some mischance, our flight had been held on

the tarmac, full of passengers and awaiting the appearance of two Very Important Persons – Daniel and Coles.

## SCOTLAND AGAIN

One of the pleasant outcomes of the presence of Prince Charles at Cambridge was an invitation in 1968 from the owner of part of the island of Jura in Scotland to come and explore the rock shelters and caves of the coastland, in search of ancient settlement. I think he hoped that Prince Charles would be a member of the party but that was not possible. I was already in contact with the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS) through my Scottish work and the Commission was engaged in the grand survey of Argyll. It was logical for us to combine forces. In the event the party consisted of two, myself and Graham Ritchie of the Commission, who was anxious to make a preliminary visit to Jura to assess the forthcoming survey. We assembled in Edinburgh and drove in the Commission Land Rover to the ferry near Tarbert in Kintyre. The vehicle was lifted by straps up onto the deck and off we went. Arriving on Jura in early afternoon we decided to explore a bit before travelling north to our residence which had been offered to us by the landowner. Within thirty minutes of our arrival on the island our Land Rover was stuck fast in a peatbog. We paddled about in efforts to extract it, and finally hailed a passing tractor to drag us out backwards. Not a good start to the project.

What was truly amazing was that upon arrival at our lodging in the far north of the island, some 30km or so, we were greeted by the housekeeper with the words ‘I hear you’ve had some difficulties with the car’. Bush telegraph, we assumed. We were housed in the estate lodge and well looked after with a fine dinner and hot pigs in the beds. The next morning we were to be met and transported by the ghillies to see the coast and visit any shelters or caves. We rose early and unpacked our gumboots and placed them neatly by the front door. Then breakfast was taken, very full and warming. The ghillies arrived, at the back door of course, and politely

asked if we were ready to depart. We got our coats, and left the lodge by the back door. The ghillies collected two large boxes from the housekeeper as we departed in their vehicle. In retrospect, I can see them glancing at one another as we drove off but they never addressed us directly with questions. On arrival at the dock Graham and I realised that our boots were back at the lodge; presumably the whole island already knew this. The boat was small but powerful and we cruised along the uninhabited west coast of the island, stopping when we spotted something of interest. The men did their best to bring the boat right into the rocky shores but there was generally open water between us and the dry land. What to do? Ignominiously, we were carried across to safe ground. At lunchtime we arrived at an unoccupied hunting lodge on the north-west coast, and Graham and I were ushered into the main dining room; both of the lunch boxes were placed on the table for the two of us. The men went to the kitchen where they ate the sandwiches from their pockets. Graham and I feasted on all manner of good things. Coffee was then brought through to us. It was all very embarrassing and we both felt like complete twits. But the archaeology was good, landscape spectacular, and I think some fine monuments were recognised for the first time by Graham, which helped in the eventual Commission's survey and publication. I relived the whole episode when my wife and I went to Jura many years later, and I expect she was bored by my tale, but not by the scenery.

## The Sweet Track

In 1970 came the discovery that transformed our very small-scale work in the Somerset Levels. One of the peat-cutters, Raymond Sweet, was at work on Shapwick Heath, cleaning back one of the Eclipse Peat Company's trenches. He had already found a fine flint arrowhead nearby, and he noticed a flat piece of wood low in the peat. This he extracted, saw that it was plank-like and thus not in nature's shape, and he wrapped it in canvas and took it to the company office. The supervisor scoffed and said "Tis nothing at all" but Sweet insisted it was interesting enough to send to

Dr Coles in Cambridge for his inspection.

I had fortunately become known in the peat-cutting world as enthusiastic and eager to investigate any discovery. The Eclipse office packed the wood up and posted it off to me. It was indeed a plank, and having lain deep in the Shapwick trench, it should be quite old in Somerset Levels terms. Harry Godwin and Alan Hibbert were excited too and I set off almost at once for the Levels. Sweet showed me the spot, I did a little exploration with a spade and we uncovered a truly magnificent piece of wood, with axe-facets looking as clean and clear as if done that very day.

We mounted a small excavation beside the trench later in the year, the Eclipse company having agreed at once to stop all plans for peat-cutting in the area until we had finished our work. It took ten years before we were clear, but the company didn't know that at the time, nor did we. My team included a student from London called Bryony Orme (fig.13), and neither she nor I knew that our association would become permanent, to my personal good fortune. The tale of the Sweet Track, as the structure came to be called, is long and complex, and parts are told in our book *Sweet Track to Glastonbury* (1986) written by Bryony and me. But perhaps a few of the non-academic moments may be worth the telling here, and the whole enterprise brought me into contact with many people who became good friends and allies in our work.

The wood of the Sweet Track was very soft, well-preserved in the wet peat, and needed special care in excavation. We never used metal tools as they could damage the wood and make new facets and destroy the integrity of the structure. The rule 'No feet on peat' also was inflicted upon all the student helpers and no one was allowed into the excavation trenches unless lying on a plank or standing or kneeling on 'toe-boards', flat pieces of wood that spread the weight and protected the peat surfaces. All work of delicate excavation had to be done with bare fingers, peeling away the peat, or with spatulae, little plastic tools which we invented and made back in Cambridge. They had red numbers painted on them and each digger had one and had to account for it when the time came to

receive their weekly pay – anything from £3 to £20 for the week. No other expenses were paid for these lucky people.

All of the work had to be done from the trench sides, leaning down, or almost always from planks suspended across the trench (fig.14). People would lie on these all day, leaning over and working with fingers and spatulae. The planks were strong and metal-braced at the corners. Most students needed but the one plank to hold their weight. One of our particularly large excavation trenches had a team including two American students, one a very small woman called Sara and the other a huge man, large in height and girth, by name of Bill. The supervisor of the excavation was Bryony Orme, and she and I decided that Bill needed more than the one plank upon which to lie as he excavated alongside the others. We gave him four planks, two widths and two depths, to take his width and weight. Even so, they bent. Another rule that was impressed upon the helpers was that if by chance anyone slipped off his or her plank, no attempt should be made to extract oneself from the peat or the wood, as by doing so more damage might be occasioned to the track. The unlucky person should wait to be helped, or lifted, from the spot. It will be obvious from the foregoing that Bill was the one to slip off his planks and remain stuck in the soft peat. Everyone on site froze in dismay, except for the supervisor who stepped forward, grasped Bill's arm and heaved him free, a remarkable feat under any circumstances and one that impressed me greatly.

But Bill was not to be forgotten by the team for another event. We worked on site for 6 ½ days each week, as the wood was fragile and wet and could not withstand exposure for long, before full recording and removal for study and conservation. On the half-day, the helpers generally went off to Glastonbury for more civilised living. Bill and Sara went off on their half-day and appeared the next morning to be rather glum. I asked them how their visit to the town had been and Bill explained. ‘We both wanted a hot bath and so we went to the George and Pilgrim hotel in the centre of town. We asked for a room with a bath. The woman at the desk consulted her book and offered us a room. She asked us for how many

days we required it, and I answered that we only wanted it for an hour or so. And then she ordered us out of the hotel! Why, Dr. Coles, did she do that?' It was all I could do to respond in such a way that Sara didn't get embarrassed, and everyone who heard Bill had a good giggle. I don't think he ever did understand the reason, but the excavation that day was carried out in very good humour by almost all of us.

In all of these early days of work in the Levels I had the full support of Grahame Clark and also Harry Godwin, so both Archaeology and Botany at Cambridge were on my side and could perhaps excuse the team members when teaching or other Departmental requirements had to be postponed or truncated. The funds made available for the work were minuscule, perhaps £500 for a whole year, and I had to scrounge around for extras, and seek more support from a variety of agencies. The Maltwood Fund was one of these, and had originally been created by Mrs Maltwood in order that the Glastonbury Tor and its zodiacal attributes be investigated. Fortunately the administration of the Fund fell into the hands of a more widely and earthly based group who agreed to support us year by year.

The peat companies were hard at it in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and I had something over twenty peat extraction organisations to contend with, and clearly it was becoming an impossible task to maintain contact with all of them on flying visits from Cambridge. Bryony Orme, now based in Exeter, was well able to assist but she too had teaching loads and other commitments. By 1972 I had a new Head of Department in the person of Glyn Daniel and he continued the support given me by his predecessor Grahame Clark. Departmental meetings were minimalist in time and importance – they had not existed at all during Clark's tenure – and I had a free hand to continue work in the Levels. So in 1973 we could plan a quite major enterprise in the excavation of about 100m of the Sweet Track; hitherto we had limited ourselves to 20m or so, but now the Eclipse Peat Company was planning to open a new field for cutting, and through it ran the Sweet Track, beneath a metre or so of wet peat. A month before our excavations began, I received a letter from the Department of the Environment. It made the following comments:

1. We understand you are planning an excavation in the Somerset Levels.
2. As this seems to us to be an important project, would you be interested in receiving a grant from us?
3. If so, we propose to offer you the sum of £1000 for this year's work.

I accepted and the money was sent to me.

We embarked on the work in heavy rain, day after day; this kept the exposed Track in good condition and did not dampen the enthusiasm of the team. Our large plastic shelters, constructed and positioned to protect the helpers from rain and wind were removed on request from those who spent their days lying on the planks and exposing the wooden structure of the Sweet Track. Midway through the excavation we received a visit from two of the Department of the Environment Inspectorate, and as it happened the day was particularly wet. Both of the men stood silently observing our team labouring away, the rain beating on their backs as they lay prone on their planks. Finally one of the inspectors said something along the lines of 'That is real dedication', followed by a strong hint that it was time for the two of them to get out of the desolate soggy bog and, presumably, back to some sort of civilised part of the country. From that moment on, for fifteen years, support from the national agency, soon to become English Heritage, was unswerving and for this we all were immensely grateful. The Cambridge Department of Archaeology and the Botany School also benefited, I think, from such national support and the students from both disciplines continued to gain field expertise year on year. In retrospect, I think that there were those in Cambridge who respected the Somerset work and its results, a few who were very enthusiastic about it, and several who envied its general achievements and success in the wider public eye. But the Somerset Levels Project, as it became so-named, had a life of its own and a set of standard procedures that would probably have succeeded anywhere even without the 'blind dedication' shown by its principal members.

We seemed able to bend the rules now and then. Under the terms of

the national grant of funds, we should not have been able to establish a conservation laboratory for our thousands of pieces of prehistoric wood, yet by a wave of a hand from the Inspector we did just that. We should not have been able to use our national funds to set up a local museum in the middle of the Somerset Levels, yet when I approached the Inspectorate for permission, the answer was the same – ‘just do it’. The English Heritage inspector who monitored and supported our work for a number of years was G.J.Wainwright, a fine archaeologist with fixed views on how we should work in the Levels, and he provided full support for our variety of approaches. In mid-1982 the Somerset Levels Museum was opened by Dr C.A.Ralegh Radford at the Willows Garden Centre. The new building for the museum was jointly purchased by the Project and E. G. Rogers and Son who operated the garden centre. The museum contained photographs of archaeological discoveries and an open-air exhibition of peat mumps, winrows, hiles and ruckles. In later years, Roger Rogers made replicas of some of the trackways beside the museum (fig.15).

We also occupied various rooms in the University Museum in Cambridge, and in the University of Exeter, for our specialist environmentalists and draughtsmen and women, and we were given a house in the Levels for our field archaeologists by a peat company for an annual rent of £1. Our annual publication of results (*Somerset Levels Papers*) appeared for the full fifteen years of the Project.

We had our share of disasters, of course, in the loss of ancient structural evidence before we could get to it, and in neglect, perhaps, of maintaining contact with all of the parties who lived and worked in the Levels. Our field staff, living in the area, had a multitude of tasks to carry out and naturally enough some were better able to cope than others. We generally appointed one or two staff each year, and they lived amidst the Levels operations, and each day would cycle or walk out to inspect the multitude of trench sides and surfaces exposed by machine cutting, and to talk with those at work in the peatfields. Our archaeologists tended to be female, as it happened, and we gradually came to recognise that the peat-cutters preferred to speak with the young ladies rather than with our young men.

In the conservation of wooden objects we also had our triumphs and disasters. A very large prehistoric hurdle, beautifully preserved, was chosen for conservation and lifted bodily from the peat by a determined effort, and transported to Edinburgh for conservation by a process called acetone-rosin. The tonne weight was hoisted by crane over some terraced houses in the centre of Edinburgh into a conservation building, and prepared for treatment. Then the fire brigade arrived and refused permission for such an inflammable process to be carried out in a residential area. The hurdle was hoisted out again and removed to a building outside the city where it was conserved by a wax process that we were using in the Levels on other large pieces. Upon completion, the hurdle was driven to Taunton in Somerset, unloaded and manoeuvred into the museum. Doors had to be removed to get it through into the building, and our field archaeologist had a finger crushed in the operation. The hurdle now rests at peace in the museum and I was and am heartily glad to know it is there. The Somerset Museum came to occupy an important role in the preservation of wood both carved and natural, with curator Steve Minnitt taking on an increasing interest in the Somerset Levels.

In all of this variety of work, I also had the full support of the Cambridge Department of Archaeology and of the University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology; staff of the latter were particular helpful in equipment and technical advice. I doubt that today it would be possible to carry on such a complicated project, employing people in about ten Universities for specialist work, without far more bureaucratic legalities and responsibilities.

In Somerset itself the presence of Stephen Dewar, who had helped introduce me to the peatland, and Stephen Morland, a notable antiquarian of immense wisdom, continued to assist and inspire me for a number of years. The latter came to visit our excavation whenever possible and on one occasion he was introduced to one of my assistants who was engaged in operating some complicated piece of equipment and was thoroughly unhappy about doing it. Mr Morland made courteous inquiries about its complexity, and this encouraged the poor fellow. Later I thanked Stephen for his interest and seeming knowledge of the business and he said 'John, I

didn't have a clue what he was doing but he looked so miserable I thought I should try and cheer him up'.

## HIGHER DEGREES AND MEETINGS

Almost from the beginning of my time as a Lecturer in the Cambridge Department I was assigned, or perhaps attracted, various students who wanted to pursue research for Higher Degrees. There were many of these young people who passed through the system under my supervision or in spite of my supervision. All were pleasant to come to know, some working well away from England and only occasionally met, others who were rarely out of sight or mind for their two or three years of assembly of material or development of theories. No one failed to gain a Higher Degree if he or she finished the course of work and submitted a dissertation. Some moved into paid employment before completion of their research and, eventually, abandoned the dissertation, and most of these people had successful careers in archaeology, producing books and papers stemming ultimately, at least in part, from their original research. I count these as equally satisfying to me as those who submitted dissertations. Whatever the outcome, during the last stages of work the students would naturally be considering job prospects and, as supervisor, I was expected, and mostly happy, to provide letters of recommendation to the appointing bodies. Where I thought the job was inappropriate or the candidate not fully qualified, I would try very hard to dissuade the student from making a formal application, but on occasion stubbornness prevailed and the results were always as predicted. One well-remembered encounter went as anticipated but with a slight difference in its course. My student insisted on applying for a wholly unsuitable post. I had to write a letter, ostensibly in support, as I was the supervisor. I indicated in clear words that I did not recommend that this applicant be appointed. I naturally marked the letter as 'Strictly Confidential'. The applicant was summoned for interview, and upon arrival at the table was handed my letter and asked to explain exactly why I had written what I did. Upon termination of the interview the student

made straight for my room and a very lively discussion ensued, mostly one-sided. We both got over it in the end.

We as a Department never had a formal meeting of any sort during Grahame Clark's tenure of the Disney Chair. All decisions were taken by him on the spur of the moment, at Faculty Board or Degree Committee, and he rarely opened any University mail. He would ask me, or Charles McBurney, about anything that impinged on our own or joint work, such as lecture timing or laboratory space, but more substantial matters such as new appointments or new premises or research funding were never discussed at Departmental level. In this way we archaeologists quite clearly lost out on extra finance for some new blood in the Department. Quite early on in my tenure as Assistant Lecturer I was put on the Faculty Board for one term and promptly then made Secretary to the Board, with Grahame as Chairman. This was a shambles at first as he had no interest in the bureaucracy and I had no clue as to the working of the Faculty. We both came to the conclusion within a year that the entire business of the Board was too long-winded and we managed to reduce debate to such an extent that one Faculty Board occupied us for precisely thirteen minutes, following which all fifteen or so members staggered out in a daze. Grahame was well pleased. In later years I became Chairman and insisted that all matters that concerned only one of the Departments, or the Museum, had to be decided upon by the relevant section before the Faculty meeting, and merely reported, not debated, at Faculty Board or Degree Committee, and this proved to be a very popular decision. But we never got below the thirteen minute mark.

One aspect of these early days within the teaching group of the Faculty was the real value and enjoyment to be found in the Coffee Room. This place, for staff only, lay just within the Museum part of the building, a quieter place than elsewhere where student bustle and noise was more in evidence. In the Coffee Room, members of staff from all three Departments, and Museum staff too, would assemble for half an hour or so mid-morning, and here much useful discussion could be held about joint coursework, students, research, and general assessment of how people were. Of course,

those who were the most busy spent less time there than some others whose lives seemed to revolve around the mid-morning break. Jack Trevor was the Head of Physical Anthropology and was an important member of that discipline. He had worked with McBurney on the human remains found at the Haua Fteah and was, I think, the founder of the Department's important role in 'fossil man' research; he had given me a course of instruction in the subject when I was studying for the Diploma. Now, I found him to be a friendly colleague always ready to guide me into the latest discoveries. Another figure often to be seen here was Rao Fortune, a Social Anthropologist who did very little constructive work, it seemed. He had a narrow little room with a table piled high with papers and he often told me that he was writing a review of some book or other on the Pacific societies where he had done his original research, long ago, on the *Sorcerers of Dobu*. I think the review never did get finished. At the beginning of the academic year he would put up a small notice on his door saying something like 'I propose to give a series of lectures on Social Anthropology. If interested please contact me'. I think few, if any, students ever did, and I never recall seeing Dr. Fortune actually stand before an audience. In the Coffee Room he was happy to expound his views and was another friendly figure to talk to so far as I was concerned. The contrast with Charles McBurney in terms of work could hardly have been greater.

With the hindsight of thirty years or so I think I now see the existence of an intense rivalry between McBurney and Glyn Daniel. Daniel was the exact age of McBurney but had seniority in a long association with the Department. His PhD of 1938 was ten years prior to that of McBurney, he had had a College Fellowship earlier and his appointment as Assistant Lecturer in 1946 preceded anything that McBurney had. Yet there is no doubt that Daniel greatly admired McBurney in the latter's dedication and single-minded drive towards the revelations within the Palaeolithic world. Daniel had his megalithic interests, if they can be so expressed, but he did not achieve the universal recognition of his achievements in prehistoric archaeology that accrued to McBurney. Daniel's election to the British Academy was scandalously delayed (1982), due to Clark's opposition, while

McBurney was elected in 1966. Yet Daniel was by far the more famous, and more widely read, and better able to promote archaeology as a public pursuit. His lectures to students were mostly educational if littered with anecdotes and thereby made the more interesting. Daniel's archaeological philosophy was always more difficult to grasp than McBurney's self-evident dedication and determination. Perhaps their goals were entirely different and thus cannot and should not be compared. The students of the 1950s and 1960s were much more enamoured of Daniel's approach and for me his enthusiasm for the history of the discipline had led me to a reading of papers about people whose basic contribution to archaeology and to prehistory were entirely irrelevant to my own particular concerns. Yet at the same time I was reading everything ever written, it seemed then and seems now, about McBurney's beloved Palaeolithic. Daniel's magnetism was of course anathema to Grahame Clark, and to McBurney too, and Daniel's huge contributions to the discipline through his editorship of *Antiquity* and the book series of *Ancient Peoples and Places* was rarely acknowledged within the Department.

This then was the setting for my own career within the Department. The Head, Grahame Clark, was an inspiring if distant figure, never much involved in the day-to-day running of the place, and often away on one of his world archaeology pursuits. One could never contemplate Charles McBurney assuming a managerial role for the Department, and he was mostly ensconced in his laboratory on the upper floor of the Museum. Of Glyn Daniel there was rarely a sighting apart from his appearance to lecture; he had no Departmental room until he became Disney Professor in 1974. This left no one in charge, and I was in no position to assume anything. 'By default' was the pattern. No new appointments, no new funding, no direction or strategic planning from above – it was lovely and we all got on with our own work in the exact way we wanted. Of course there were disadvantages, and consciences must have been pricked now and again as those students who needed some firming up did not get it. Excellence was what was required and if you didn't have it then you could well be disregarded and discouraged; I saw this happen too many times,

an eager student but one who struggled a bit might well lose confidence, interest and commitment. Here is where the Colleges' tutorial system was supposed to step in, and sometimes it did, if the College concerned had someone who could recognise and understand what was going on.

It was fortunate that the Colleges did indeed have within their Fellowship a number of archaeologists, not employed by the University, who looked after their own students and exchanged with other College lecturers, supervisors and Directors of Studies, so that students gained their share of wider views and appropriate direction. Some Colleges did rather better for their archaeological students than others, as this was a minority subject and a good deal of sharing had to be negotiated.

It is important to acknowledge the significant roles that the wives of Clark, Daniel and McBurney played in the smooth, or less bumpy, running of the Department. Mollie Clark kept very much in the background but I know that Grahame could not have achieved half as much as he did without her support, and she was a tower of strength and resolve in the difficult times when Grahame was ill and declining. Ruth Daniel was entirely different in that she played an equal and vital part in Glyn Daniel's career, as author, editor and prehistorian. Ruth was, I think, near-perfect as Production Editor of the journal *Antiquity* and without her work I suspect that Glyn could not have maintained such a steady and informative flow of issues, year by year. Anne McBurney, the third in this eminent group, had yet another role, as mentor for Charles McBurney during his frequent disorganisations, entirely due to his unswerving dedication to his Palaeolithic studies, and Anne was clearly a powerful force in the discipline of some of Charles' excavations, as well as devoting immense time and energy to the post-excavation work in the laboratory. I am well aware of the debt I owe to these three ladies who often provided the touches of humanity and sheer friendship from which a very junior colleague benefited greatly.

There were other tasks within the Faculty and Department to be undertaken, and it was inevitable that the junior member was assigned

to most of them. The Archaeological Field Club was theoretically run by the graduating class of students, and often very well-managed, but a Senior Treasurer was needed to control the cheque book and to keep an eye on progress. The Club met every Wednesday in term time, for the first two terms, so that was anything from sixteen to eighteen meetings in the academic year. The Department had a quite constant flow of visitors, many from abroad, and many of whom had been students of Burkitt or Clark especially. Others from India, and some from Africa, came regularly and it was only South America that was not represented at least once per term. The visitors were often put up in the Colleges of the staff member who had invited or received them, and others were self-sufficient so there were few problems for the Senior Treasurer in this aspect. What never could be controlled or guaranteed was the audience for these people. Their subjects, agreed between them and the staff member, could be very obscure indeed, and if term was pressing upon us all, both staff and students, a late afternoon in February was sometimes not very attractive to be sitting in a lecture room where you had already been several times that day. I recall dashing around the whole building on more than one occasion, perhaps two or three times per term, begging everyone I could see to come along as we had only two of an audience already in place. I was embarrassed on more than one occasion with an audience totalling five or six, and once only three. The staff members (Archaeology and Museum) were rarely there in any significant numbers. When Daniel had a guest, he ensured a good turn out by a bit of publicity and by his own reputation as speaker. The others did not have his flair for such events.

## NEW ARRIVALS

When I first entered the Department to read for the Diploma in Prehistoric Archaeology (1955) I had met Eric Higgs, then also studying with Charles McBurney. Higgs had experience in farming and brought some quite strong views to archaeological philosophy, and was early-on installed as an Assistant in Research. He had specialised like me in the

Old Stone Age, but unlike me he had a wide understanding of landscapes and different environments and he deeply distrusted the dogma presented by McBurney. He was an iconoclast, disputing almost everything that was presented as dogma, as the truth, and he disturbed many of those who had come to rely upon the fundamentals of Palaeolithic sequences and the character of its societies. Site catchment analysis became the bywords for the Higgian approach, and his office in the Museum became the focus of his empire. Students eager to learn about the Palaeolithic and Mesolithic periods would arrive in Cambridge and sit at the feet of Charles McBurney, and Grahame Clark too, but would soon be enticed away to the Higgs' school where Stone Age typology and sequence were demolished and the environmental determination (as it was erroneously called by critics) prevailed. The famous arcs and circles drawn around sites, denoting the hour or hours-long pursuits and gatherings of the gatherers, became dominant in journals and books. Higgs brooked no argument with other ideas and approaches, and McBurney's student groups were diminished in size and, I think, hope. Higgs did not enter into Departmental business and kept very much to his own programme of work, field excursions and excavations in the Aegean lands coming to dominate his research. He and I remained colleagues for a long time, wrote a distinctly non-Higgian book together, and had the occasional meeting at which the vicissitudes of the Department could be debated and berated. I recall with some astonishment the many meetings we had together at which the Old Stone Age was debated and dissected, and yet although we came from different camps, we never disputed our combined approach for our book, a book that came in for some strong criticism from the specialists but which survived for some years as a guide, perhaps the only guide, to the generalities of the Old Stone Age.

Equally unbalancing to the Department but nonetheless of very great benefit to many was another student, David Clarke. He was finishing his PhD research when I arrived in 1960 and we happily debated the issues of Beakers and the Bronze Age in the early months. Clarke's real contribution to archaeology is well-known and deeply admired and needs

no gloss here. He contributed more to the students, I think, because he was based in Peterhouse, where he could supervise a variety of undergraduates and post-graduates, and write his papers and books. Here he could, and did, apply deep criticism towards the more formal teaching courses in the Department, and he did little to further the Daniel or McBurney views of prehistory, and mine too I think. Yet he stimulated new thoughts and approaches for archaeology as a discipline and his place in the history of the Department is secure. Both he and Higgs had firm ideas that archaeology had lapsed into a kind of stupor, just proceeding along with no diversions or interruptions. The subject needed a shock and it got it, from Higgs in his own field and from Clarke in a near-universal way. The questioning approach, the non-acceptance of traditional patterns, the introduction of the word ‘theory’ itself, was truly revolutionary to Cambridge archaeology and to the wide world.

At the time of his arrival upon the wider archaeological scene, David Clarke received a very critical welcome from Glyn Daniel in particular, who was happy to publish a variety of expressions of the same negative opinion, particularly with Clarke’s use of the English language (*Antiquity* 1973). At once the opposing forces were drawn up, and it was difficult to keep a neutral position. From about 1973 to 1976 the debates in Cambridge about the whole meaning of archaeology as a discipline and the ways by which studies should be carried out tended to separate the core teaching staff from a majority of the student body in the Department. Matters were not helped in any way by the presence of Eric Higgs and his ‘empire’. Higgs had a very long period of direct Departmental involvement, while Clarke’s tenure of an Assistant Lectureship was short. Clarke’s time in this post was not, I think, as productive as his College years when he could work without interruptions. But he was an amiable colleague and did his best to help with the administrative duties insofar as they could be meshed with his research.

A very considerable contribution, and a level-headed correction to the extreme opinions, was provided by the arrival in the early 1970s of John Alexander, a specialist in the Iron Age and one who became a firm friend

to me, especially during turbulent times in the Department. We shared some Part I courses, and tried to overlap at Part II so students got some balance in approach. His presence was a very important element in the Department of the 1970s and he and I happily swapped lecture slots from time to time as outside work and travels came along.

One of the students already installed in the Department when I arrived in 1960 was Paul Mellars, a disciple of Charles McBurney, and he came back as a lecturer in 1981, and did a great deal of teaching and research into Palaeolithic matters. His role in my circle of associates took some time to become established but, once adopted, we enjoyed many years of collaboration.

## THE FENLANDS

The mid-1970s was a particular busy one for most of the Departmental teachers. McBurney was engaged in major excavations in Jersey, Alexander was working in Africa, I was fully engaged in the wetlands of Somerset, and Daniel was writing and editing, as was Grahame Clark. Clark continued to mention to me, from time to time, that the Cambridgeshire fens would repay a look even with the massive drainage that had taken place. He had for long been deeply interested in the environmental history of the Fenland, and had worked with Harry Godwin in developing the science of environmental archaeology, a bringing-together of disciplines that operated as a single unit, in exploring the complex and crucial relationships of humans and their landscapes over long periods of time. The Fenland provided the ideal training and research ground for such work and yet it had been gradually abandoned by archaeologists in the 1960s and early 1970s. The Somerset Levels had claimed the resources of academic time and governmental money.

Botanical and related work had continued in somewhat sporadic fashion and it was not until the virtues of wetland environments were once again demonstrated in the Levels that the Department of the Environment was

engaged in expansion of its remit. A committee to look at archaeology in eastern England had been assembled in mid-1970s and at its final meeting all of the possible projects requiring funds were debated. Two major projects, from about eight proposals, were selected for recommendation to the Department as worthy of the highest priority for funding. All of those present agreed on the importance of the two projects. One of them was to engage in the Fenlands once again. The Chairman gathered up his pile of papers and was on the point of ending the meeting when I whispered to my colleague John Alexander ‘This is not good enough, we have to get the Fenland on the top’. He nodded and said ‘Have a go’. I said to the Chairman ‘The Fenlands are in urgent need of this work, drainage is continuing, and may I propose that a Fenland Project be our top priority’. The Chairman paused, glanced around at the weary committee members, and said ‘Is that agreed?’. There were no dissenters. We had got the Project and within a very short time we were able to appoint a Field Officer, David Hall, who rapidly established such a record of achievement that the Fenland Project went on and on, re-writing the prehistory and early history of the whole of the Fenland. The timing had once again proved crucial, and Grahame Clark and Harry Godwin’s inspiration, long before, and their continuing interest in the new work, helped all of us who tried to maintain the interdisciplinary approach to the landscapes of the Fenland.

## TEACHERS

The 1960s and early 1970s in the Department were also a quite extraordinary period in the long life of prehistoric archaeology in Cambridge itself, and no more so than to the existing hierarchy of teachers. Just a mere listing of the names of those at work during the period might indicate the conflicts and dismays and encouragements that students encountered, depending on their own reading of signals and decisions about choices: Clark, Daniel, McBurney, Higgs, Coles, Alexander, Clarke. It was a well-spread and entirely accurate tale that a student could hear a logical story about some prehistoric matter, have it wholly demolished in the next hour, the

pair of them dismissed as irrelevant in the next, and finally to be presented with a fourth all-encompassing idea in an afternoon supervision the same day. For the acute student it was undoubtedly an exciting time but for the unwary or unready, it was confusing and dispiriting. I had numerous occasions where students would complain about it all and ask, plaintively, if only someone would, or could, give them a clear and unambiguous direction and interpretation that they could study and learn and accept without being derided and disabused at the next supervision. Here it was plain to me at least that unfettered opinions needed to be brought together by the Head of Department, or someone, rather than being left to evolve on their own uneven terms.

And yet amidst all the quite intense rivalry and debunking of one another there was much enjoyment and I have ‘The Reading List’, created by a bunch of students who had clearly worked out their own opinions of the teaching staff and their oh-so-serious reference lists. Among the items recommended were:

*Human Evolution*, by Ussher and Lightfoot.

*Spacial Archaeology*, by Armstrong and Aldrin.

*Archaeology for Archaeologists*, by Clark, Clarke, and Clark-Clarke.

*Postholes of the Gods*, by Danish von Bacon.

*Elsloo, a Neolithic Bogsite*, by Dohrn-Körös.

*Man Makes Himself*, by Frankenstein and Monster.

*Mickey Mouse Laws, a Theoretical Approach*, by The Disney Professor.

*Nucleated Settlements*, by Otto Ban-der-Bom.

Childish really, but you couldn’t even say that without some wag enquiring if you meant V.G. Childe.

## GLYN DANIEL, HEAD OF THE DEPARTMENT

Glyn Daniel’s work as Disney Professor of Archaeology (1974-81) was more organised than that of Clark. This may have been, at least in part,

due to Glyn's primary base in his College where he could organise his own work and sieve the mass of Departmental and Faculty business in order to attend to the more urgent and more relevant matters, and eliminate the constant dross that came in brown envelopes from central offices. Grahame had sorted everything in his own way, by ignoring the entirety of anything that did not look like true research-orientated correspondence. By such a process Grahame missed the invitations from the Old Schools to request new appointments or take interest in new opportunities. The Department had no additional lecturers appointed for years and years, and it was the same four – Grahame, Charles, Glyn and I – who carried the load, some rather greater than others. In due time however there were new posts, several very successful and positive and long-term, and one or two perhaps less so however measured. Glyn Daniel's tenure as Head meant that the Department at the very least did not miss out on the possibilities of new posts and promotions, and he very soon helped the University to create a Professorship for McBurney and a Readership, then Professorship, for me. He was a very effective Head, supportive of research so long as he could approve of its relevance to the Department's academic development, and he never wanted to get too deeply involved in the details of the programmes, just the concepts. When asked by me if he would support an application for leave of absence to work abroad, he would say 'Of course, and take as much time as you need'. How he managed to maintain his overall responsibility for the teaching of undergraduates while allowing his staff to be absent for long periods I do not know.

At the Faculty Board meetings where Archaeology was often up against the Social Anthropologists and, to a lesser extent, the Physical Anthropologists (re-named later as Biological Anthropologists), Glyn kept a relatively low profile, and mostly sat alongside me as I kept an eye on the Agenda and kept awake. Glyn seemingly did neither and certainly he would often doze off having had a lunchtime glass during the Departmental pre-Faculty Board meetings. But nothing escaped him if it was important and on more than one occasion I could see the other Departmental Heads trying to grasp an opportunity during Glyn's gentle breathing to introduce some controversial subject so that their Department might gain an advantage.

When the Chairman summed up and a proposal was put before the Board, Glyn would open an eye and say one word ‘No’. This generally destroyed the proposition.

## THE PREHISTORIC SOCIETY

Almost as soon as I arrived in Cambridge Grahame Clark began to involve me in the editing process of the *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society*. He had been editor since its beginning in 1935 and was still very much in control of all aspects of its publication. At first, I was asked just to have a look at one or two submitted papers, then a bit of editing down of over-long texts and selection of illustrations. I was elected to the Council of the Society in 1962 and sat there in awe of the great and the good. Stuart Piggott was President and a welcoming figure for me as I grappled with the Society’s business. I became Assistant Editor the next year, but Grahame still was in complete control of it all. Most of the Society’s meetings, both Council meetings and the lectures, were held in London and we would never miss any of these. The train from Cambridge to London and return would see the pair of us reading the potential papers for the next issue of the *Proceedings*, with debate about quality and interest, and we would reduce the candidates by the time Cambridge emerged from the ever-present fog on our return travel in the evening. I was appointed Editor in 1970 when Grahame finally announced he had had enough, after thirty-five years of it. I lasted ten years as Editor and that included producing one special volume of papers in his honour.

There is no particular reason, I think, to dwell on my time as Editor, as this is not relevant to my Cambridge teaching career, but I do treasure one small piece of ephemera concerning the *Proceedings*. As Editors will know, it is often difficult to get authors to deliver their pieces on time, and for archaeology it is no different. On 30<sup>th</sup> December 1970 (almost as soon as I became Editor) I received a telegram from abroad stating ‘Manuscript to be sent Airmail Express 2 January realise may not publish stop apologies stop’. I am still waiting.

The Treasurer of the Prehistoric Society was L.V. Grinsell, a resident of Bristol with financial experience through his work in a bank, and with extraordinary experience in fieldwork. Grinsell's many reports on British barrows represented years of patient and mostly solitary walking across vast areas of the English landscape measuring and recording burial mounds, and then chasing up the records of their ancient exploration by antiquarians. As a guide in the field he was excellent, and his single-minded dedication was well demonstrated to me on one field visit to his home ground in Gloucestershire. A party of us, all archaeologists of one sort or another, were happily seated in a coach, Grinsell at the front describing the sites and fields as we swept along towards a particular mound called Hetty Pegler's Tump. Henry and Hester Pegler of Uley had purchased about an acre of land enclosing the barrow, the sum paid £9, in the late 17th century. The barrow became known as Hetty Pegler's Tump. This large chambered mound had been excavated in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century and many skeletons recovered. Grinsell's interests extended to local traditions and tales about 'fairy rings' and mysterious sightings on and around ancient monuments, and the Tump had its own story about fertility rites according to Grinsell. He expounded on these as the coach approached the Tump, then he glanced away just as we came in sight of the Tump. To our amazement and interest, there was Grinsell's story vindicated, for upon the Tump were a man and a woman busily engaged in perpetuating the tradition. By the time we drew up near the mound, all was peaceful and Grinsell could only observe the rapid departure of an entirely respectable couple, and wonder why we were all disgracefully snickering.

My work as Editor was made easier by a former Cambridge prehistorian who had made Liverpool his home. Terence Powell was a fine archaeologist and a good friend to me. He became President of the Prehistoric Society in 1970, but even before then he had provided good advice to me on Bronze Age matters, and had gently corrected some of my ideas based on inadequate reading or misinterpretation, i.e. stupidity. Powell was rather looked down upon by Clark and Daniel and it was embarrassing

to hear their cutting remarks during intervals in Examiners' meetings. In his Presidential Address to the Society, Powell set out his belief in the importance of new technologies for archaeology, and how those who wished to try out new ideas and applications should be encouraged. The lecture was truncated rather abruptly as he began to falter, and, well aware of the presence of Clark and Daniel, and Piggott too, he felt he could not go on; a pity. He was a strong supporter of me during my early years as Editor of the *Proceedings*, and it was a sad day for me when he died in 1976 while still an active and resourceful prehistorian. Eric Higgs and David Clarke died in the same year, and archaeology certainly suffered from their loss. Each left a legacy in papers, books and edited books, and I know that Grahame Clark for one took great satisfaction from their productivity and lamented their loss, as did I. The values of research staff and also research students could not be ignored by the teaching Fellows, and I benefited from a small number of research associates who contributed greatly to the whole Department by production of books and papers, among them A.F. Harding who co-authored with me a book on the European Bronze Age.

Clark himself, of course, had but one real aim in life and that was the production of book after book on his personal views of prehistoric times. His obsession with research and writing was well-known, and it was a rare day when some book or other was not underway on his little desk in his home. Mollie Clark told me more than once that one text would go off to the printers and on the same day a new book was begun, and its papers began to clog the room. Mollie was a good friend to me throughout my years in Cambridge and she gave me a free hand to act when Grahame died and we two were his literary executors. She would chuckle in her own resigned way when telling me of Grahame's working habits. She had rather weak eyesight and there came a time when she had had to go to hospital for some corrective work. Upon return she had to rest her eyes for some time and Grahame was, she said, most solicitously anxious about them. One morning he asked, as always, how the eyes were today. She replied that they felt a lot better. 'Oh good', said Grahame, 'here are the proofs of my book and I'd like you to correct them for me'. Their relationship over

the nearly sixty years of married life was happy insofar as I could ever see, although doubtless Grahame's relentless dedication to prehistory must have taxed even Mollie's unbounded goodness.

## STUDENT EXCURSIONS

During my early years as a junior teaching officer I was required to organise and lead the second- and third-year students, or most of them, on an annual Field Excursion. This was a three-day event, by coach, to areas where field monuments were visible and accessible. In my very first year I was asked to take the Excursion to a new area, and I chose Essex, Kent and Sussex, areas full of interesting monuments and not too distant from Cambridge. I was too efficient in time-keeping at first, and we ended up in East London with several hours to spare. I thought, why not visit the site of the Swanscombe Skull? Alas, we couldn't find it and drove aimlessly around while the students got restive. Away then to Brighton and our hotel. Bad planning and we got to the luxurious part of the place, with grand hotels, then on to the outskirts, past second-rate hotels and on, amidst groans, to the scrubby hostel where I had booked rooms. Matters improved when I paused next day at a splendid bookshop where the students exhibited real interest and surprising wealth in buying heaps of second-hand tomes.

On subsequent Excursions we went to Wessex, the Fens, the Oxford area and even the Somerset Levels where I had my most embarrassing moment. I knew the Levels intimately and it seemed logical to impart some of my local knowledge in a visit to relatively obscure yet intriguing sites. We arrived in the village of Westhay where I generally stayed in a house when working in the peatland. Down a narrow stony lane was a barn where, I knew, cider was brewed. What better introduction to Somerset than a small cask of cider for the back of the coach, or so I thought. I asked the driver to pause and I walked down the lane alone; entering the barn I encountered two extremely large men sitting in front of a huge barrel, of cider I assumed. I asked for a small cask and was told 'It's all gone, it's

finished, there is no more'. One of the men tapped the barrel and indeed it sounded hollow. He produced a pint glass and held it beneath the tap, then turned the tap and a horrible yellow thick liquid emerged, filling the glass. 'See', he said, 'that's the end of it. Here, you can drink it'. And he handed it to me. Stupidly I took the glass and had a sip. Ghastly. The men, seeing what a fool I was, spoke about how good it had been and encouraged me to taste again, and again. By the time I'd had half the pint I was feeling peculiar and suddenly realised where, and when, I was and took off up the lane. My feet didn't work very well and I stumbled back to the coach. I climbed up and was greeted by thirty pairs of expectant eyes. I spoke, slurring the words, 'There's none left', then collapsed into my seat.

Matters had improved by the time we reached Cheddar Gorge and I led the group into one of the caves. Unfortunately, we were accompanied by one of the official cave guides who did not know our archaeological interests and assumed that we would all be astounded by the stalactites and other geological features. As he intoned his well-practised words about 'mysterious', 'astonishing', 'fantastic' formations, my students began to respond with loud 'ooh', 'aah', 'cor' and comparable inanities, much to the guide's appreciation, to my embarrassment and to the annoyance of the legitimately interested and full-ticket-priced public. As we departed the cavern, the guide positioned himself with conveniently outstretched hand, and my students offered him effusive and exaggerated thanks, but not a penny was put into his palm. My chastisement of the lot of them once back in the bus was received with jovial agreement – 'we deserve it, but so did he'.

Over time I think it became recognised that I was a hard-working and mostly reliable member of the Department – at least I hope so. My timetable during term-time was very tight and my days in the Department began at 8 a.m. or thereabouts and ended at 6 p.m., with evenings preparing lectures. My reputation for work was enhanced among the Research Student body one year by an incident, entirely unplanned. A student, not one of mine, came one afternoon to see if he could discuss a matter concerning his own work. I agreed to give him some time for this and suggested that 9 a.m.

the next morning would suit. This was agreed. The next morning I was at my desk by 8 and was working away when a knock at the door announced the arrival of the student. His face fell when I looked up from my desk and said, firmly, that it was 8.57 and I would see him as arranged at 9.00, so would he kindly leave me alone until then. Doubtless this event impressed some of his fellow students during their leisurely coffee breaks.

But it was not always so smooth for the unwary. One morning I had an unannounced visit from an undergraduate of mine who said he had spent many hours preparing and writing an essay for one of my colleagues, John Alexander, who had a room at the top of the Museum, warmed up by an open fire. The essay was presented and placed temporarily on the floor. The fire in the grate was welcoming and it was all comfortably encouraging for a good discussion. Then the supervisor produced a cigarette, leaned down and gathered up the essay, rolled it up and stuck it in the fire. As it flamed, he lit his cigarette and then cast the essay into the grate where the wide-eyed student watched it being consumed. Nothing more was said about it and the discussion continued, but it was mostly one-way and my student was not so much furious as trembling with astonishment. I assured him that the event did not reflect the opinion of the supervisor as to the quality of the essay – probably.

## TELEVISION

Rather early on in my lecturing career I was invited by a TV company to participate in a series of programmes for schools with the general subject of Prehistory. I was asked to introduce the series and then to launch into the Old Stone Age and the earliest records of mankind. I had an hour for this and I was to be followed by Stuart Piggott on the origin of the Neolithic and then Richard Atkinson on the British Neolithic. The programme was to be recorded in Manchester and I sent draft text and picture sources to the producer in advance of my arrival there. We had a meeting about ‘the Flats’, the series of pictures that would be shown at specified places in my text. The film was to be shot as a unit the next

morning, and a single ‘take’ was all that was allowed, no repeating sections or dividing the hour into manageable pieces. Black and white of course. The rehearsal, with the assistants producing the relevant flat at the right time during my peroration, then removing it for the next picture, went perfectly and we were all relieved at timing and efficiency. Then the real thing was to happen, after a coffee break, and the many ‘good luck’ and ‘hope it goes well’ remarks put me into a real nervous state. In the event I staggered through but it was a close shave at times when I lost the plot and had to backtrack.

More chaos ensued when it was Piggott’s turn. He was to start in the Near East with the origin of agriculture and then take his audience through the Mediterranean lands to the Atlantic. Then he was to discuss the other route, into central Europe and on to the west. He started well, got to the east Mediterranean and then said ‘now we will trace the two routes of European agriculture, starting with central Europe’. Total shambles as the assistant re-arranged all the flats. After a minute or so, all on camera, Stuart realised his error and said, on film, ‘but first we should go back and look at the Mediterranean evidence’.

## EXTERN AT UNIVERSITIES

It was expected that all lecturers would take a share in exchanges of expertise and experience with other Universities during examination periods. I generally managed to be Extern for at least one other University as well as my own almost every year and one year I somehow ended up as Extern at five places which was of course a totally ridiculous position although at the time it seemed politically useful to do.

Within the various Departments of Archaeology for which I had the pleasure of being Extern, or External Examiner (terminology seemed to vary from one place to another), I of course encountered the Professor (Head of Department), his or her Senior Lecturer, more junior Lecturers, and various others including other Externs and Secretaries and Research

Students. All had something or other to contribute to the proceedings of Examinations and many were very helpful to me. At the meetings where marks were debated and Classes assigned it was commonplace to hear special arguments about certain students who, it was said, had had problems during the year, or during the examination. The Extern had to determine how much flexibility could be allowed in the marking of such candidates, and try to control the tendencies toward inflation. The oral examinations, or interviews, were always very useful in these circumstances but there was very great variety in how such particular matters were conducted. The Professor might well engage in defensive talk, to protect the student from too much probing by the Extern, or he or she might feed the student such obvious questions that the time for serious assessment passed by. Experience in all these manoeuvres was soon gained and occasionally I, and my fellow Externs, would have to assert our responsibilities and expose the shortcoming of too intimate and sympathetic an approach. It was not inappropriate, perhaps, to mark up a written paper on the grounds of special problems encountered during the year, but then, I would argue, it was not logical to subsequently mark up an oral performance, and then to ease up the class mark in the final reckoning. Once, yes, several times, no. I remember one occasion when my II.2 mark for a dissertation was vehemently disputed at a preliminary meeting of staff members and me, and detailed argument advanced for a good II.1 mark to be assigned. My companion Extern was given the piece of work, undiscussed, to read overnight and I was pleased indeed when he, in the formal meeting, was asked for his deciding opinion – a third, he said.

More awkward was an afternoon of Oral examinations of a graduating class at what here should be an unnamed Department. As the students appeared, one by one, I asked the same question and got the same answer, the same answer as they all had already written down in their examination paper. After the third or fourth time of asking, when we awaited the next victim, the Professor asked why in heaven's name was I asking the same simple question. I said it was because every student had got it totally

wrong. The Professor said, ‘But that is what I have told them in my lectures’. I replied, coldly, ‘Then you fail too, Professor’.

The perils of trying to be an efficient and timely Extern, wherever that might be, was brought out clearly on one such appointment in Ireland. Having successfully completed my work in Dublin and Galway, my wife and I set off in her elderly car to Cork, on a Friday evening. We stopped in Limerick and booked in for the weekend, being due in Cork on Monday morning. On Saturday we decided on an excursion out along the Dingle peninsula. Beautiful country and lots to see. Nearing the extreme western tip of land, the car ceased to function. It would go in reverse but not forward, some sort of gearbox problem we guessed. By careful driving, my wife managed to reverse up the slopes, turn and coast down the slopes, until finally we backed into a garage in Dingle; it was 5 p.m. and the owner was about to shut up shop. We explained the predicament. He sighed and said ‘It’s a special part you need there, and as the car is a Volvo we have to send away to Limerick for it. Should be here Tuesday’. At that I felt I had to make some gesture and so I drew myself up, put on my important voice (such as I could muster on occasion) and said ‘I am the Extern for the University Colleges of Ireland and I must be in Cork, to examine, on Monday morning’. At that the garage man said ‘Oh dear, this is serious. It is late now and so you should walk down the road to the B&B. They will put you up for the night and give you a meal. Then come back here tomorrow morning, Sunday, at about 10 o’clock and we’ll see what can be done’. Off we went and had a good meal and rather fitful night. We were at the garage at 10 o’clock the next morning. There was the car, and the man, who said ‘It’s all ready to go’. My wife went off for a trial drive and it was as good as ever. I said ‘How did you manage to fix it?’, expecting a reply along the lines of ‘We took a hammer to the gearbox’. But no, he said ‘When you went off yesterday I spoke to my mate and we decided this was a very important repair and he reminded me that a customer of ours, who lives near the town, has a car like yours. So we phoned him up and said he should bring his car in this morning, because it was high time that it had a good service. There’s his car over there, parked, and I don’t

think he will be using it for a few days'. I did not pursue the matter, paid the sum of eight Irish pounds for a (second-hand) part, and off we went. Perfect timing for my Examiner's meeting the next day.

As for the purpose of the entire process of being an external examiner, perhaps a brief listing of some attitudes and responses might ring a bell somewhere:

## THE EXAMINERS' LAMENT

Oh to be in Britain now that summer is here. The birds are twittering, the flowers blooming, and the External Examiners have emerged blinking from their Universities. What awaits this strange breed on its annual pilgrimage hither and yonder? What attracts otherwise normal academics to behave in this way? What is External Examining about, anyway?

1. It is being dragged from your comfortable nest in your own University, where you know the system, into an alien world.
2. It is about Speed Reading four scripts an hour, if you are lucky and can make out the hieroglyphics produced by people trained over three years to write badly, with smudgy ballpoints or fading fine-liners.
3. It is about surviving long nights on arrival at the External place, reading scripts at 2 a.m. that 'just need a quick check' to resolve minor marking disputes between members of the Department, say, 72 and 57.
4. It is reading the howlers year by year – some of them old chestnuts, some of them inadvertently new. Will you miss reading about 'the kings and surfs' of old, or the pollen zones 'of silver fur'? You will not.
5. It is about attending the Examiners Party where you either meet the students you have just failed (or are about to fail), or you meet the staff and attendant hangers-on, several of whom you will inadvertently insult by musing on the quality of teaching, or

- administration, or alcohol, or all three.
6. And finally it is about Academic Standards, and comparing assessments, and renewing acquaintances, and meeting new people, and it is all great fun – but I've had all the fun I can take, thank you, so don't ask again.

John Coles (retired)

## 1980 ONWARDS

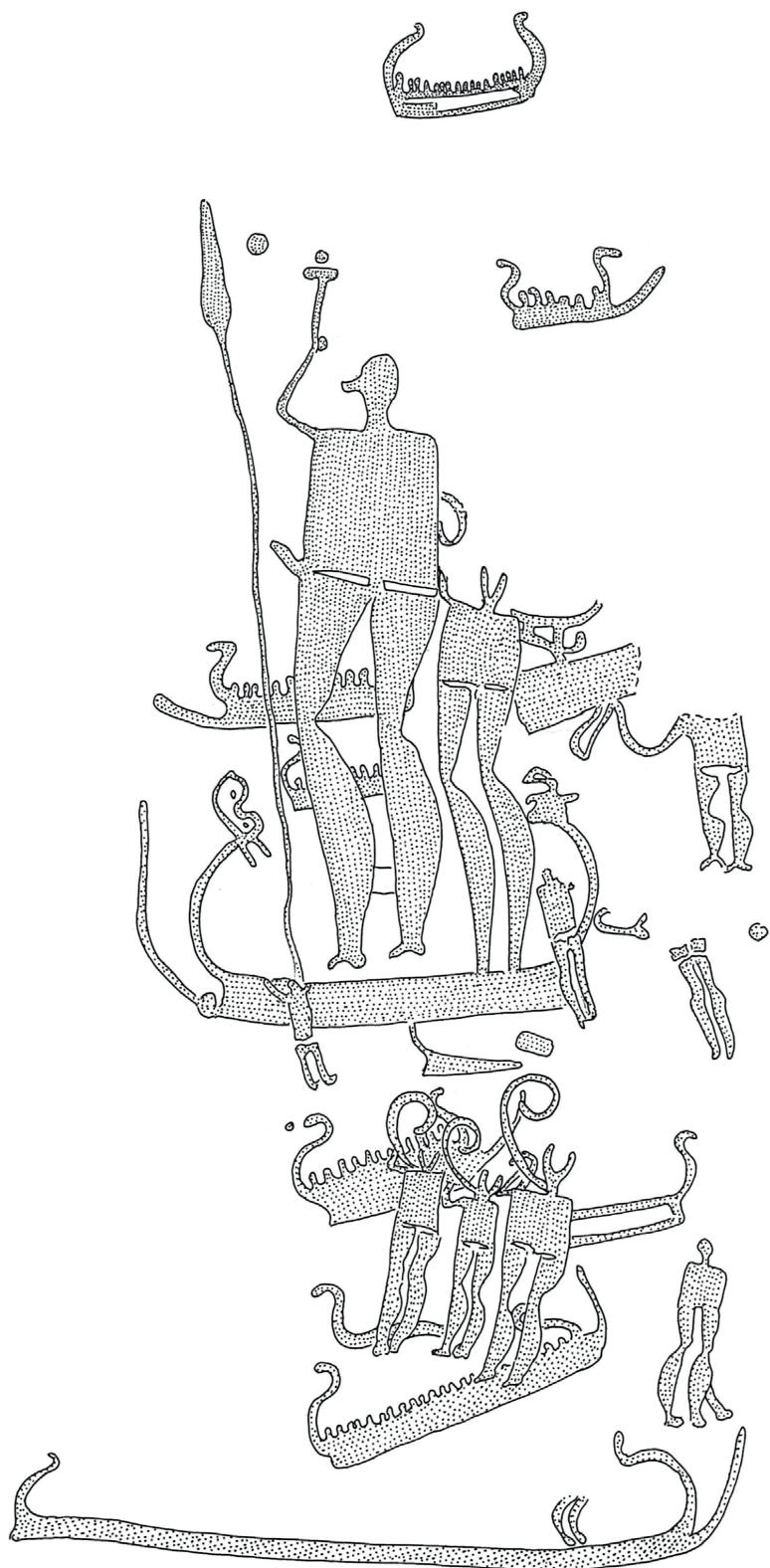
In 1980 the Department of Archaeology at Cambridge received a new leader Colin Renfrew, who succeeded Glyn Daniel and brought new ideas and approaches to the department. By this time I was beginning to receive invitations to join or instigate new approaches and finances for a variety of institutions, including the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Discovery Project of Dublin, the Fenland Project and the Humber Project, both to follow on from the Somerset Levels Project, and the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland. These occupied me for some years and, entirely different from what had preceded them, both episodes added up to about fifty years of archaeology in total – enough for anyone. But one aspect survived.

## Rock Carvings

From about 1974 until 2005, I was increasingly engaged by a study of Scandinavian rock carvings, with which I bring this personal history to an end. My interest in rock art was encouraged by a personal friend, Bo Gräslund, whom I had met through a joint interest in Bronze Age shields, an interest of long-standing by both of us from our respective bases, in Britain and in Scandinavia. It was equally due to a realisation that the rock carvings provided an extraordinary variety of symbols and figures that belonged to the more widespread burial mounds, hoards of bronze objects, erection of standing stones and settlement spreads, as well as the abundant individual pieces of bronze and stone, the axes, spearheads, swords and pottery , that lined a majority of the many museums of north-

west Europe. My interest in such a variety of evidence led to many months of travel in Sweden and Norway, recording hundreds of individual carvings and working to gain an understanding of the landscapes of the relevant prehistoric period. My involvement with such elements of the past lasted for many years but these early days were very much restricted to making an adequate record of major sites, and understanding the variety of subjects and of course in learning about previous studies by many authorities. In such work I was aided by Bo Gräslund and Lasse Bengtsson (fig.16), and Steve Minnitt of the Somerset Museum, with plenty of debate about landscapes and interpretation of the great variety of images (fig.17). My involvement with the northern rock carvings lasted for many years, and during that time I, like others, felt impelled to explore the carvings with poetry as well as more basic books and papers. With poetry (as you will find overleaf) I end my story.

*Fig. 17 Rock-carving at Kalleby, Tanum 248. The surface of the rock may have been smoothed prior to carving. Site plan drawn by JMC 1974, based upon original by T. Högberg.*



## **Rock carving – the maker**

I think of those who will observe  
My handiwork in years ahead,  
My carving of this special rock  
With symbols hopefully made plain.  
I chose this rock myself  
For its stream-smoothed surface and proximity  
To our sacrificial place  
Where, as we know, the gods accept  
Our precious gifts of love and life.  
Here upon the chosen days  
We come and offer all our wealth  
To those who did create us  
And who insist on due return  
By our release of treasured ones.  
It is a time of fierce lament  
And suffering for a few.  
My task here is to commemorate these rites  
To set in stone the shapes and acts  
Whereby we puny folk  
Adhere to long-established rules  
Of birth and death of friends and foes,  
Of fruits from nature's wealth,  
Of sacrificial acts.  
And all for the promise of our northern sun,  
For the warming of our earth  
And the harvest of our lands.  
In years ahead perhaps a few  
Will find this rock and read the message  
So clearly carved.

## **Rock carving – the viewer**

I gaze upon these rocks  
So carefully inscribed with symbols  
Clearly cut yet incomprehensible to me.  
Carved in this surface is a human form,  
A warrior, with spear upraised  
Confrontational, but to what or whom  
I cannot tell.

A puny figure stands before him  
And here, a pair of lovers,  
Or so I think.

Barely touching, perhaps unfriendly after all.  
I should control my thoughts.

Nearby, carved into the rock, is a graceful boat  
With upcurved prow surmounted by a horned head.  
Above the boat floats a sun  
Or is it just the moon,  
Perhaps a wheel of sky-borne cart  
That carried day through night  
And back to morning.

My imagination runs away –  
The boat continues to intrigue.

It carries seven post-like lines  
Between two men with upraised clubs.  
Are these lines the crew – unwilling lot  
Made to row this mythical craft  
Towards a destination that again is lost to me?  
Infuriating not to know.

Would that I could talk  
To those who carved this rock.

