

THE ADVANCE IN KNOWLEDGE OF OUR SUBJECTS DURING THE LAST FIFTY YEARS

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THE Hampshire Field Club and Archaeological Society was founded on the 22nd March, 1885, and this year we celebrate the Jubilee of the Club. This fact may provide a sufficient excuse for attempting a brief sketch of some particular advances in the knowledge of our two main subjects, namely Natural History and the Antiquities of our County. I shall not attempt any description of the Club itself, or of its work and development; that is in more capable hands. What I shall try to do is to examine briefly two matters, one in the domain of Natural History, and one in that of Archaeology, to see in what way our ideas now differ from those of fifty years ago.

To take first the study of Natural History: The sixth edition of Darwin's *Origin of Species* was issued in 1872, the first having been published in 1859. The first edition of the *Descent of Man* was published in 1871 and the second in 1874. When our Club was founded the air was not free from the controversy caused by these celebrated books. Darwin had died three years before; Huxley had still ten years to live. Humanity has now had more than two generations in which to think over the question of the general truth of the theory of evolution, that is, of continuity in the organic world; and there can now be no doubt of the complete acceptance, by educated people, of the fact of evolution. That is not to say that there does not still exist a small remnant, belonging intellectually to an earlier age, who believe in special creations; but, then, there are still some who are, in Kipling's expression, "geoplanarians," that is to say, flat-earth people. We can class them together.

But, whilst the fact of evolution is securely established, there is much discussion about the mechanism of heredity, and it was during the past fifty years that great light was thrown on this matter by the discovery of the epoch-making researches of Gregor Mendel, Abbot of the Augustinian monastery at Brunn, in Moravia—now in Czechoslovakia and spelt Brno. Mendel died in 1884, a year before our Club was founded. As we all know, his experiments with ordinary cooking peas laid the foundations of modern theory and practice in the breeding of plants and animals, but their importance was not realized for many years, not until the year

1900, in fact. Mendel's work remained buried, or shall we say preserved, in the report of a local Natural History Society, for 34 years, for the report was written in 1866. If local scientific societies had nothing more to their credit than this record of the preservation of Mendel's work, their existence all over the world would be amply justified.

In the second division of our subject matter, namely, the study of the Antiquities of the County, we have no such striking advance to chronicle during the last half-century. But there has been steady progress in our unravelling of the history of the past. We can conveniently make a comparison between our present ideas and those of fifty years ago in the matter of the hill-forts of southern England. And the first mention of these in our *Proceedings* is to the credit of the Club.

In the Report of the Club for 1885, we find it mentioned that,

"The Club examined the earthwork at Buckland Rings, after which it was resolved that a communication be sent to the Director-General of the Ordnance Survey suggesting that the word 'Roman,' as printed on the Ordnance Maps as descriptive of the earthworks at St. Catherine's Hill, Old Winchester Hill, and Buckland Rings, be omitted from the maps seeing that these earthworks, in the opinion of the Club, exhibit undoubted marks of British origin."

It may be added that the Ordnance Survey followed this advice.

To get an idea of exactly what the Club meant by "British," we can consult the writings of the late Mr. T. W. Shore, one of the most prominent of our founders, to whose memory the Club owes a deep debt of gratitude. In the first volume of our *Proceedings* he says that "the ancient enclosed earthworks, called camps . . . were much more than occasional camping grounds," and were "constructed by the Celtic tribes for permanent defence in case of need."

In his book, *The History of Hampshire*, published in 1892, the same authority remarks, "We have camps and other defensive earthworks still remaining in Hampshire, some of which were probably constructed by its ancient Iberic inhabitants, . . . and which were probably the strongholds of the land before the Celtic invasion, but which were certainly adopted subsequently by the Celts as their own castles of refuge." Elsewhere he refers to "the ancient Iberic or Neolithic race"; and elsewhere, again, to "the bronze tools used by the Celts in Hampshire during the Bronze Age." He also mentions the invasion of the Belgae some centuries later than the first Celtic conquest, and says, "If the manufacture of iron was not introduced into Hampshire on the arrival of the Belgae, it is certain that it followed soon afterwards."

This picture of the successive occupations of southern England is rather different from the picture that we should draw now, fifty years or so later.

As to the Celts, or Kelts, uncertainty still remains with regard to the period of their first invasion of this country; the estimates vary from 1000 to 500 B.C. It may be noted that Prof. Macalister dates the Celtic occupation of Ireland at about 400—350 B.C. And you will find in Mr. Peate's article in *Antiquity* for June, 1932, the remark that "The whole problem of the Kelts in Britain, insoluble without the help of philology, should be re-examined by archaeologists." There is an opportunity for some of our members!

As to the Belgae, the problem appears to be practically solved. Dr. Wheeler, again in *Antiquity*, states that the Belgae were driven into Britain in the early years of the 1st century B.C. They were of mixed Celtic and Teutonic origin, and the Belgic tribes began to settle along our shores in the first instance, and when Caesar arrived he found them in occupation of the maritime districts.

And now, to come back to the hill-forts, which are, perhaps, the most important, and are certainly the most imposing, pre-historic monuments in Hampshire—thanks to the labours of many archaeologists, amongst whom we must mention our last President, Dr. Williams-Freeman, Mr. O. G. S. Crawford, Dr. E. C. Curwen, Mr. and Mrs. Cunningham, Mr. A. Keiller and Mr. Leeds, we know that a few of these sites were, as a fact, occupied by small Neolithic camps, that is, by camps constructed, let us say, before 1800 B.C. Of the ten sites that have, so to speak, been certified as Neolithic, six are in Wiltshire, three in Sussex, one in Berkshire and none, I believe, in Hampshire. But though these sites are in neighbouring counties, they must be taken into account in considering our own hill-forts, and perhaps we may find evidence, some day, that some of the latter were originally fortified in Neolithic times.

It is to Mr. Christopher Hawkes that we owe our most complete study of the hill-forts, and it is to him and to his colleagues, Mr. Myres and Mr. Stevens, that we are indebted for the most important excavation of a Hampshire hill-fort, namely, that on St. Catharine's Hill, which, with the financial assistance of our Club, was carried out in the years 1925 to 1928.

All this is fresh in the memory of our members, and it is not necessary to do more than mention that, whilst there are a few cases in which some inner, smaller defences, on the same hill-tops, are to be ascribed to the Neolithic Age—if such a term is now permissible—the large hill-forts, as we know them, are structures of the Early Iron Age, an age which lasted from the seventh century B.C. in this country until the Roman conquest. There appear to be no hill-forts of the Bronze Age. Some time in the 7th century B.C. there was a great invasion of Kelts from the Lower Rhine;

and it is to these people and to their successors that we owe our hill-forts. The earlier forts, like that on St. Catharine's Hill, have a single line of rampart and no complicated entrances. Multiple lines of defence and complicated entrances are sure signs of a late date.

In this matter, and in other questions of pre-historic archaeology, we owe the increased precision of our knowledge chiefly to excavation. Now, for many years, our Club, as a club, carried out no excavation. In fact it was not until the year 1925, ten years ago, that we began to take an active part in this essential function of any society which desires not only to study what other societies and individuals have discovered, but also to take a share in adding to our knowledge of the past ; to penetrate, in some degree, the darkness which surrounds those distant ages, and to learn something of the manner of life of those early predecessors of ours. Perhaps, some two or three thousand years hence, our successors and descendants may take a similar interest in us, and in our times, and may be able to build up some picture of England in the 20th century not very remote from reality.

Fig. I

Neon Hill or Houghton Down.

