

ARCHAEOLOGICAL THRILLS.

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS BY GENERAL SIR RICHARD HARMAN LUCE,
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I GREATLY appreciate the honour you have done me in electing me your President, but I must warn you that I am but the veriest amateur in archaeology and the other subjects of which our Hampshire Field Club takes cognisance and that in following the long line of distinguished presidents, many of whom have done pioneer work of great importance and acquired national or world-wide celebrity, I do so with the greatest diffidence.

I must make it clear that in this most important of the President's functions, the delivery of an inaugural address, you must expect no record of original or scientific work to add to the existing stock of archaeological lore. My address will be that of an amateur, a dipper and a dabbler in matters archaeological. It must, therefore, be addressed chiefly to those, of whom I hope there may be a few, who like myself have joined the Club for the interest and instruction they can obtain from the ministrations of others. I hope, therefore, I shall be forgiven by the more learned and scientific members who do so much to add to the pleasure and usefulness of our meetings.

I have called this paper "Archaeological Thrills," and it is with the archaeological section of our activities that I propose to concern myself.

A few months ago I was sitting at dinner next to a man of my own profession who had recently retired from a strenuous life of considerable distinction. He confided to me that he did not know what he was now going to do with himself. He had no hobbies and no subsidiary occupations, and he looked forward with great apprehension to a retirement of boredom and lack of interest. He was, he said, too old to take up pursuits that required active exercise and asked my advice what to do with himself.

Without a moment's hesitation I advised him to join his local Archaeological Society or Field Club. He rather jumped at the suggestion and I put him in the way of finding out how to get himself elected (I may say that he does not live in Hampshire) and he followed my advice. He promised to let me know in due course how my prescription worked, but if I know anything by experience I am certain it will act like a charm. There is no doubt that a vast amount of pleasure and interest can be got even by the complete tyro out of dipping into archaeology. That peculiar shivery sensation which we call a thrill may be associated with any of the

more acute pleasurable excitements, ranging from such experiences as "watching a well-backed horse win the Derby" to "listening to your favourite orchestra play the last movement of Brahms' First Symphony." Different individuals thrill to different subjects according to their training and their natural dispositions. But I am quite certain that the necessary pitch of pleasurable excitement is often attained by those who make archaeological discoveries and may quite easily be reached by those who have only a second-hand share in those discoveries.

Let us think for a moment of some of the greater pieces of archaeological research.

Among the earlier explorations one is at once reminded of the romantic story of the German, Heinrich Schliemann. From early youth, first as a grocer's assistant, and later as a cabin boy he had nourished a passion for Homer's story of the Iliad and had developed the ambition to explore the scene of the siege of Troy and the homes, in Greece, of the leader of the Greek army. At last, having made a considerable fortune, chiefly as a contractor in the Crimean War, he was in a position to carry out his ambition. Firstly, he had to determine the actual site of Troy which had become so completely lost in the flight of the centuries that there were conflicting theories as to its whereabouts, some historians having actually come to the conclusion that it had never existed and that the whole story was a myth. In 1872 he had definitely tracked the site down to the great mound of Hissarlik, three and a half miles from the Asiatic coast of the Aegean Sea and close to the entrance to the Dardanelles. Here he proceeded to excavate and curiously gave a classic example of the mistakes that may be made by unscientific and unskilled workmanship. In his impetuosity he dug down through a series of what was afterwards proved to be eight separate towns until he exposed the deepest one, the ninth, which he made sure must be the "Ilium" of Homer. In so doing he passed through the one he was looking for, which was proved by subsequent exploration twenty years later, to have been the sixth. He was, however, acclaimed at the time by the scholars of the world, among the foremost of whom was Mr. Gladstone, as the re-discoverer of Homer's Troy and received a due meed of honour and approbation. He had to abandon further work on this site owing to difficulties with the Turkish Government and turned his attention to Mycenae, across the other side of the Aegean in Greece, the home of Agamemnon, the great leader of the Greeks in the Trojan War. His discoveries there in the wonderful "pit" and "bee-hive" tombs of the King of Argos, of stores of golden ornaments and artistic pottery, of immense value, produced a sensation and led to a furore of Hellenic archaeological research which has never since completely died down.

Or let us take the case of Lord Carnarvon and Mr. Howard Carter, who has only so recently died, making the discovery in 1922 of the almost untouched tomb of Tutankhamen, an Egyptian Pharaoh of the 14th century B.C. Most of you will remember the excitement all over the world as the successive barriers were removed from between the outer world and the inmost sanctuary which contained the mummy of the king. How the public watched almost spellbound day after day as the various pieces of antique furniture and trappings were brought to the light after thirty-five centuries under ground. No doubt about the excitement these discoveries produced and not in the minds of the researchers alone. All the world was agog and the daily account of the proceedings and the pictures of the discoveries were one of the public's most popular thrills for quite an appreciable time. The excitement was revived and accentuated by the sudden and untimely death of Lord Carnarvon so shortly after and its suggested relationship to the resentment of the dead king's spirit who must have been watching out all the long centuries for such a piece of sacrilege.

But let us come to some discoveries nearer home and the interest they have produced. Captain and Mrs. Cunnington of Devizes, re-reading the account by the antiquary William Stukely, published in 1724 of the destruction of the almost forgotten ring of stones known as "the Sanctuary" forming the head of the supposed Avebury "Dragon," were stirred to investigate the matter. The description by Stukely said that "the Sanctuary" could be seen from a particular spot near Silbury Hill. They proceeded to the place and with field glasses surveyed the landscape in the direction of Overbury Hill for suitable sites. They came to the conclusion that there was only one such spot, lying on the hillside near the Marlborough road, a mile from Avebury and two and a half miles from their observation post. With the true archaeologists' trust in their star they proceeded to the selected spot and commenced digging. In the first trench they struck one of the obliterated stone holes and with that to work on they soon identified the whole series of eight rings of pillars, two of stone and six of wood which are now identified and marked for all to see as "The Sanctuary." Alas! every one of the stones has disappeared, absorbed into local buildings or ground to dust on the great "Bath Road" by generations of farm carts and coaches which have rumbled by so close at hand. One can well imagine the satisfaction that this successful piece of reasoning, so happily justified, must have given to the principals. I know that the mere modest demonstration of their work, at which they showed an open section of one of the post holes containing charred remains of the fire which lighted at the base of the then standing stone had cracked it and brought it down, produced a thrill in the hearts of many of those who were

privileged to be present and listen to their demonstration a few years ago.

Or let us think of the intense interest felt all over the country in the recent excavations by the Wheelers at Maiden Castle, culminating in the discovery of the warriors' burying ground in front of the main east gate of the castle. There, were uncovered some thirty skeletons lying side by side with almost the precision of a war cemetery in Flanders, one or two of them showing scars of the wounds of which they died. Unknown warriors, possibly, even probably, soldiers of the war which made Britain a Roman province and victims of an assault perhaps which caused the Maiden Castle to be maiden no longer. It is details such as these, especially intimate human details, which add a specially intense interest to the objects of archaeological research.

Or to refer to an even more domestic piece of research, the discovery in 1927 by our unforgettable and enthusiastic colleague, the late Mr. Andrew of Michelmersh, of King John's Hunting Box, at Romsey. A combination of knowledge, intuitive eye for the genuinely old, quick reasoning and unflagging pursuit of a theory, were the qualities which made him so successful an archaeologist. They enabled him, by spotting the top fragment of the arch of a 13th century Early English window, to identify a group of rather unsavoury cottages as the *bona fide* and historically recorded Hunting Box of King John, known to have been built at Romsey for King John and subsequently used as the guest house of the Abbey.

By his efforts too, were exposed for all to see, the remarkable collection of coats of arms and mottoes scratched on the wall, which record, as in a visitors' book, the nobles who accompanied King Edward I on his visit to Romsey in the year 1306. The credit and delight of this discovery belong not only to Mr. Andrew but to the other members of this club, Mr. Atkinson and Canon Goodman, who helped to uncover and decipher the points of interest of the building, and not least to Miss Moody, the enthusiastic owner of the property, who as guide never fails to impart some of her own enthusiasm to her visitors.

The pioneer work of another member of our Society, Mr. O. G. S. Crawford, in the realm of Aerial Photography must not be forgotten among the thrills of modern archaeological research, revealing as it does, secrets of burial sites and trenches which would otherwise have been quite invisible.

These are a few examples of the thrills of discovery. We cannot, however, all be researchers and feel the joy and excitement which is their special privilege. But as members of a Society like this, we can, by intelligent interest and support, financial or otherwise, have a share in the successes of those who can play the more active part.

The ordinary member who has never done any research and probably never will, can, however, have a full share of the pleasures of archaeology and I should like to spend a little time trying to make out what the chief sources of this pleasure are and in making this consideration you must forgive me if the illustrations are drawn chiefly from my own experiences.

The pleasure is, I take it, largely derived from the stimulation and exercise of the imagination. Different subjects or aspects of a subject appeal to different individuals, but take it as a whole the more catholic the powers of the imagination the more diverse the pleasure and interest to be obtained, and the more knowledge one has the more acute the pleasure.

A consideration of the antique appeals in some measure to almost every human being. As I have already stated, accounts of archaeological research are some of the best copy for the modern press. An interest in history is largely based on this appeal. Let us think for a moment of the points which cause most interest and excitement in the public mind in an archaeological subject.

Firstly, apart from general antiquity, comes, I think, the human touch. It is the light that archaeology throws on the history of bygone and especially individual men that brings the thrill. "The proper study of mankind is man."

The excavations at Maiden Castle were interesting from the light they threw on the habits and characters of those far off ancestors of ours. Their industry, their skill and determination in erecting that vast series of ramparts intrigue us and the imagination is led to speculate on what could have been the urge which drove them to it. Probably then, as today, one incentive only could have brought about the erection of these huge defences. It must have been the fear of an invader, Belgae or Romans, or just as the Maginot lines have been produced today.

In viewing these works the imagination was deeply stirred but the interest was raised to a completely different plane during the last part of the excavation when the burial place of those who fell in its defence was laid bare.

Next to the acuteness of the human interest comes the age of the find. But this is entirely a comparative matter.

King John's house was built only a little more than 700 years ago, while Maiden Castle, in its most complete form is perhaps 2000 years old and those who love antiquity, specially for its age, might be thrilled by Maiden Castle and think "small beer" of King John. But if they shifted their locus eastwards and became interested in the 3000 to 4000 year old discoveries of Troy, Mycenae or Karnak, Maiden Castle would become an upstart.

Another determining factor in the interest aroused is the association with known historical events and specially with the

importance of these events. The excavation of Troy depends largely for its interest on its connection with the most wonderful epic story that has been written, without doubt, founded on fact, and the similar excavations at Mycenae and Argos depend largely for their interest on the fact that they were the homes of Agamemnon and Menelaus, the great leaders of the Greeks.

The interest one felt in the rather dull looking excavations at the site of the ancient Jericho as far as I was concerned, depended entirely on the half-hope that one might see the old walls lying flat as they did after the sounding of Joshua's trumpets.

The beautiful little Greek island of Delos, which I had the pleasure of visiting last year, stimulates the imagination in a number of ways. Uninhabited today, save by guides and caretakers, it shows numberless remains of a unique history. First, the wonderful legend of its most unscientific origin. It is related that Zeus, to hide the shame of his paramour Latona who had become pregnant, and to protect her from his jealous wife Hera, persuaded his brother Poseidon to anchor the little island of Delos, which had previously wandered about the Aegean among the group of islands known as The Cyclades. There, were born to Latona, the twin gods Apollo and Diana, to whom the island became specially sacred as the remains of numerous temples and statues show to-day. After the battles of Marathon and Salamis it became important as the Headquarters of the great Ionian confederacy against the Persians and the storehouse of its immense treasures, until these were transferred to Athens by Pericles, who used them by the by for beautifying that city. In Roman times it became the great emporium of the eastern Mediterranean especially for the sale of goods captured by pirates and for the disposal of slaves captured in war, of whom the Historian Polybius says as many as 10,000 were sold there on a single day. A view of the marble platform of the slave market discovered there in the excavations, calls up interesting visions and fancies especially when one finds, as I did on developing my snapshot of it, that the platform was occupied by an elderly lady in the dress of an ordinary English tourist. Who could help having one's imagination stirred in a place with such historic associations quite apart from the wonderful beauty of the place, with which, however, I must not concern myself here.

There is another factor which influences the amount of interest which can be evoked by a subject of archaeological research and that is the freshness of its discovery. There is all the difference in the world between seeing Dr. Mortimer Wheeler or Colonel Drew engaged on excavation work or watching Mr. Keiller erecting stones at Avebury, and being shown round the most perfectly preserved site of a former excavation by a guide of the Office of Works with one of their nice little guides in one's hand. It is a

Society like ours which gives one access to recent work of discovery in its most interesting stages.

So far I have said little of the archaeological interest of ancient buildings, ecclesiastical or domestic. Much of their interest is artistic and architectural, but there is much also that is archaeological or historical. In our visits to such buildings many a problem is brought to our notice for study and attempted solution. But I have no time to go into this aspect of the subject.

I have tried, most scrappily I fear, to recall some of the ways in which archaeology can and does promote the interest and pleasure of those who follow it, taking my examples naturally from those subjects which have most appealed to me. Each of you can do the same thing for yourselves, and live over again in memory some of the happy hours you have spent in archaeological expeditions, often I doubt not greatly increased by association with pleasant friends on delightful summer days in our interesting and lovely County of Hampshire.