

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

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Letters to the Editor

Dinton

Items by George Engleheart

STONEHENGE

To The Editor of *The Times*

Sir, - There can be no one who does not feel as strongly as Lord Eversley the desirability of acquiring Stonehenge for the nation. Any other Government but an English one would have seized the late opportunity of so acquiring it. But Lord Eversley asserts in his letter that the public are "unnecessarily excluded" from Stonehenge. This question has been debated within recent memory, but you will perhaps allow me to point out that Salisbury Plain is now thickly populated right up to the Stones by a probably permanent army not only of disciplined soldiers, but of undisciplined camp-followers. Can Lord Eversley really believe that the most precious prehistoric monument in Europe would in such circumstances, if unfenced, be safe from injury?

I am Sir, &c.,

GEORGE ENGLEHEART F.S.A., Local Secretary

For Wiltshire of the Society of Antiquaries

Little Clarendon, Dinton, Salisbury.

(*The Times*, (London, England) Thursday, Dec 30, 1915)

STONEHENGE

To The Editor of *The Times*

Sir, - We are not told who they are who, in Lord Eversley's words "have been for so long associated with him in an effort to restore public freedom of access" to Stonehenge. I may claim to express the reasoned opinion of a large and not incompetent body of those who think differently from Lord Eversley and deprecate a superficially liberal and possibly popular movement to abolish the present safeguards of this monument. By "reasonable regulations" Lord Eversley clearly implies something less stringent than the existing measures of protection, which are proving barely sufficient. If he will visit Stonehenge for himself he will see names freshly scratched on the stones, despite the vigilance of the capably custodians, and will be told of the recent ejections of visitors for ill-behaviour. The permanent character of the buildings on Salisbury Plain is evidence that its occupation by soldiers and camp followers will not cease with the war. Considering the protection it affords, it is difficult to understand the objection to the small entrance fee, which might be given in perpetuity to some charity. The destruction of more than one-third of the original number of stones is due much less to time and weather than to "freedom of access enjoyed for centuries."

I am Sir, &c.,

GEORGE ENGLEHEART F.S.A., Local Secretary

For Wiltshire of the Society of Antiquaries

Little Clarendon, Dinton, Salisbury. Oct 2

(*The Times*, (London, England) Friday, Oct 4, 1918)

To The Editor of *The Times*

Sir – allow me to support Mr R.S. Newall's plea, which you print today, for the rescue of the antiquities of Salisbury Plain from destruction, in actual process or imminent. During over forty years lived almost under the shadow of Stonehenge it has been my misfortune to see barrow after barrow, earthwork after earthwork, effaced from what Mr Newall rightly calls the most prehistoric site in Europe. It is only in our islands that such vandalism is possible; we workers in prehistoric archaeology may well envy the enlightenment of a little country like Denmark, where every ancient monument is conspicuously numbered and protected under penalty.

In the war years the then Commander-in-Chief of the Southern Command put means at my disposal for fencing the Cursus against military traffic, but agriculture has now made it a waste of arable land. The plough, as Mr Newall writes, is now closely threatening the Avenue of Stonehenge, the great importance of which, as an integral and, perhaps, explanatory feature of Stonehenge, has lately been shown by aerial photography. I understand that H.M. Office of Works, which is doing so much to safeguard our medieval buildings, has full powers to schedule and protect these equally, or even more important, because fast vanishing, remains. But urgent representations to the Department have so far met with no response.

Yours faithfully

GEORGE ENGLEHEART, F.S.A. Local

Secretary for Wiltshire of the Society of Antiquaries

Little Clarendon, Dinton, Salisbury, July 30

(The Times, (London, England) Thursday, Aug 2 1923)

TROUT AND TAR

To The Editor of the Times

Sir – There has been no reference in this correspondence to the probable effect of tar on fly, the trout's most valuable food from the sporting point of view. It has, I believe, been shown that a percentage of tar in water, quite too minute to affect trout directly, may yet be fatal to the delicate larvae of the flies which there can be no "rise." My experience on one stream, the Wiltshire Nadder, may perhaps elicit that of other observers elsewhere. Up to some 15 or fewer years ago this river was visibly full of excellent trout, because of their rise to successional hatches of small fly through the spring and summer months. We no longer have these, and their dwindling and extinction certainly synchronize with the tarring of the roads which run along both sides of the river-valley. The storm-water from these, even if considerably filtered in its passage, must obviously reach the river. The trout are still here, we have found none dead, but, in this dearth of fly, are changing their habit and becoming "bottom-feeders" – feeding more and more on minnows, water-shrimps, and such insect life as is resistant to tar. The robuster mayfly survives, but the trout, owing to this change of habit, no longer take it with their old avidity.

I am Sir, &c.,

GEORGE ENGLEHEART

Little Clarendon, Dinton, Salisbury, Dec 28

(The Times, (London, England) Friday, Dec 30, 1927)

PICKPOCKETS' METHODS

To The Editor of *The Times*

Sir, - May I prescribe a very simple but effectual protection? It is to close the opening of a pocket containing valuables with a large & strong safety-pin. The fingers of an adroit thief can easily manipulate a button, but not this.

I am, &c.,

GEORGE ENGLEHEART

Little Clarendon, Dinton, Salisbury, Oct 23

(The Times, (London, England) Monday, Oct 27, 1930)

Points from Letters

STONEHENGE

As one who has had something to do with the preservation of Stonehenge I can assure Dr Eddowes that the site is well cared for, but that this care will not include the barbarous treatment of the stones with any acid solution. – Mr GEORGE ENGLEHEART, F.S.A., Little Clarendon, Dinton, Salisbury.

(The Times, (London, England) Monday, Jun 8, 1931)

RESPECT FOR COUNTY HISTORY

To The Editor of *The Times*

Sir – The Wiltshire County Council has submitted to the Minister of Health proposals for the re-arrangement of the county districts and parishes in Wiltshire. A schedule of the changes to be effected is in my hands from Whitehall; 62 parishes are to lose their identity by amalgamation with others, and the ancient boundaries of 80 are to be altered.

The immediate comment is that a new scheme of large expense is here launched at a time when severe national and local economy is being urged. The re-adjustment and re-mapping of 80 boundaries mean the payment of surveyors over a length of time and a mass of re-printing.

More than this, the historical associations of many parishes are to be swept away. A flagrant instance is that of Bemerton, a name hitherto bound up with that of George Herbert wherever English is spoken, but now to be deleted, so far as officialdom is concerned. Though the name may remain in the village, its disappearance from legal and official documents must weaken its association. Names full of English history, such as Clarendon, Bohun, Bruce, Fitzwarren, and the like, are similarly effaced.

If an unimaginative body has power to do this for greater convenience in rating, &c., what can prevent it from designating the parishes by simple numbers, or, more effectively, ruling off a county into numbered squares? The matter is of wider than county concern. Wiltshire is not wanting in historians and archaeologists of repute, whom its Council might well have consulted before taking such high-handed action.

I am Sir, &c.,

GEORGE ENGLEHEART F.S.A., Local Secretary

For Wiltshire of the Society of Antiquaries

Little Clarendon, Dinton, Salisbury, Oct 22

(*The Times*, (London, England) Wednesday, Oct 26, 1932)

SAVING THE RAIN

To The Editor of *The Times*

There is an enormous annual waste of rainfall from tiled or slated roofs. Underground cisterns of brick and cement are not very costly; two such give a storage of some 5,000 gallons of soft water from the roof of my small country house, and the overflow is very much more. The tiles, 16ft. by 13ft., on either slope of a little garden-house fill a 400 gallon tank in one night's good rain, and each of the two 50ft. span-roof greenhouses supplies an inside tank of the same capacity. A man of my acquaintance who set up a garage with a bungalow for his family at a high point on our Wiltshire downs has had an ample supply of pure drinkable water from the roof in a sealed cistern throughout the present drought. A well there would have to be sunk through perhaps 300ft. in the chalk, and this is true of many villages on Salisbury Plain. A communal cistern to store water from the roofs of two or three adjacent houses would tide a whole village through a long drought. – Mr GEORGE ENGLEHEART, Little Clarendon, Dinton, Salisbury.

(*The Times*, (London, England) Saturday, Sep 23, 1933)

STONEHENGE CAR PARK

To The Editor of *The Times*

Sir, - In the communication on this matter from the Wiltshire Archaeological Society to the Editor of *The Times* there appears to be some misapprehension of the facts.

Two charges are brought against the action of the National Trust and the Office of Works. First, that no notice of the project was given to the Wiltshire Archaeological Society or those locally interested. In answer to a question on this point, the First Commissioner of Works stated in the House of Commons on December 19 last that "he had been to Stonehenge himself and had received representations from local people and knew of only one person who objected to the change." On December 29 last the Permanent Secretary of the Office of Works, Sir Patrick Duff, with an Assistant Secretary, Mr F.J.E.

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Raby, F.S.A., met myself and another member of the Wiltshire Archaeological Society at Stonehenge by appointment to discuss the site of the car-park. Not only did they show us the utmost courtesy but they made it clear that their sole desire was the removal of an increasing eyesore, and the restoration, so far as is now possible, of the solitary impressiveness of the monument. This is largely achieved by the excellently chosen situation of the car-park.

As to the accusation of alienation of National Trust land, the First Commissioner gave the definite assurance in Parliament that "the National Trust have not alienated the site but have made the Commissioners of Works guardians of it under the Ancient Monuments Acts." The contention seems untenable that of the land vested in the National Trust for the "protection" of Stonehenge no smallest plot may be used for its protection from an increasing eyesore.

Yours, &c.,

GEORGE ENGLEHEART F.S.A.,

Local Secretary for Wilts of the Society of Antiquaries

Little Clarendon, Dinton, Salisbury.

(*The Times*, (London, England) Saturday, Feb 2, 1935)

STONEHENGE

THE ENIGMA AND

THE CLUES

A SURVEY OF MODERN

THEORY

By George Engleheart

The immense advance of scientific archaeology within the present century enabled the First Commissioner of Works, in his appeal in *The Times* of May 28 for the preservation of the Avebury complex of prehistoric monuments, to assert with confidence that the Avebury megaliths were set up by the Beaker immigrants of 1900-1700 B.C. from the Low Countries, a folk still in the Neolithic or premetallic stage of civilization. Stonehenge, after all the super-abundant literature devoted to it, still presents a more difficult problem of its age and builders.

For a possible solution Stonehenge cannot be reckoned an indivisible unit, but must be considered feature by feature from periphery to centre. The excavation of about half of the contained area by the Society of Antiquaries, in 1920-26 inclusive, was largely concentrated on the boundary-ditch; wisely, as it proved, for determining evidence of the date of this outlying element was thus obtained. Of the great Avebury ditch the First Commissioner wrote that it was dug with picks made from the antlers of

the wild red deer; and the Stonehenge ditch is collated as to date with Avebury by the finding on the floor of the portion excavated of some 100 antler-picks, whole or broken. No ditch of barrow or camp of the full Bronze or Early Iron Age has disclosed the same use of deer-horn tools. In excavating a Bronze Age ditch in Cranborne Chase General Pitt Rivers found not only the marks on the chalk of a small bronze celt but the actual tool fitting the marks, a proof that on the introduction of the metal the use of a very small bronze implement was found less laborious than the frequent renewal of fragile deer-horn.

AUBREY IN 1666

Closely associated with the Stonehenge ditch and bank a third element corroborated this early date. The antiquary John Aubrey had noticed and marked on his plan of 1666 "little cavities in the ground" from which he conjectured that a ring of stones had formerly stood within and close to the bank "as at Avebury." The verifying of this by the recent excavations indicates both a primitive phase of the monument and its probable sepulchral origin. Others of the greater stone circles of ascertained Neolithic or Transition date consist similarly of ditch, bank, and a stone ring enclosing a grave, sometime still extant, though in most, as in Stonehenge, all traces of this have been effaced by repeated digging for treasure throughout the centuries.

The inner structure, Stonehenge proper, still keeps the secret of when and by whom it was built. Its architecture – the hewing and dressing of the intractable sarsen stone, the shaping of the lintels to an accurate curve to fit a continuous circle, the methods of securing them to the uprights and to one another – would seem to imply the skill of an era later by many centuries than the Neolithic or Chalcolithic, so that it has even been ascribed to an acquaintance with classical architecture. There is, nevertheless, substantial evidence of its erection, though probably somewhat later than that of the original monument, within the Early Bronze period, the most conclusive being the fact recorded by the Wiltshire historian and archaeologist Sir R. Colt Hoare of the discovery by his coadjutor William Cunnington of a fragment of Stonehenge "blue stone" in undisturbed association with the intact burial-chamber of a Bronze Age barrow. Both Cunnington and Hoare, by his published endorsement, accepted this as a proof that Stonehenge must be at least as old as the barrow, and the great antiquity of the barrow was established by the deposit of a bronze knife-dagger of a type peculiar to the inception in Britain of the Bronze Age.

The finding of deer-horn picks in the excavations of 1901 for the erection of the great leaning sarsen led Professor Gowland to the same inference of date as was drawn from their presence in the ditch – namely, "the latter part of the Neolithic Age, or period of transition from stone to bronze." The apparent discrepancy between such a date and a mature craftsmanship has been explained by the hypothesis of a rendering in stone of carpentry-methods already practised. It is probable, however, that to chip stone with stone was an earlier accomplishment than to fashion wood with a flint knife; moreover, no other stone monument in Britain exhibits these devices. For an analogue we must look further afield – perhaps even as far as the elaborate premetallic stone architecture of Malta. There has been found in many Wiltshire barrows a distinctive bead of blue faience identified by a consensus of the most eminent Egyptologists with an Egyptian fabric of 1500-1200 B.C., also two examples at least of gold-rimmed amber bosses, practically identical with a brooch from Knossos in Crete, dated by Sir Arthur Evans *circa* 1500 B.C. The archaeologist's legitimate hypothesis has been defined as "disciplined imagination working on ascertained fact," and the inference is perhaps not wholly visionary that, if a trade route existed for the bearers of these trinkets and the earliest implements of bronze, there is no demonstrable impossibility of the importation from abroad of an advisory master-mason for Stonehenge.

THE BLUE STONES

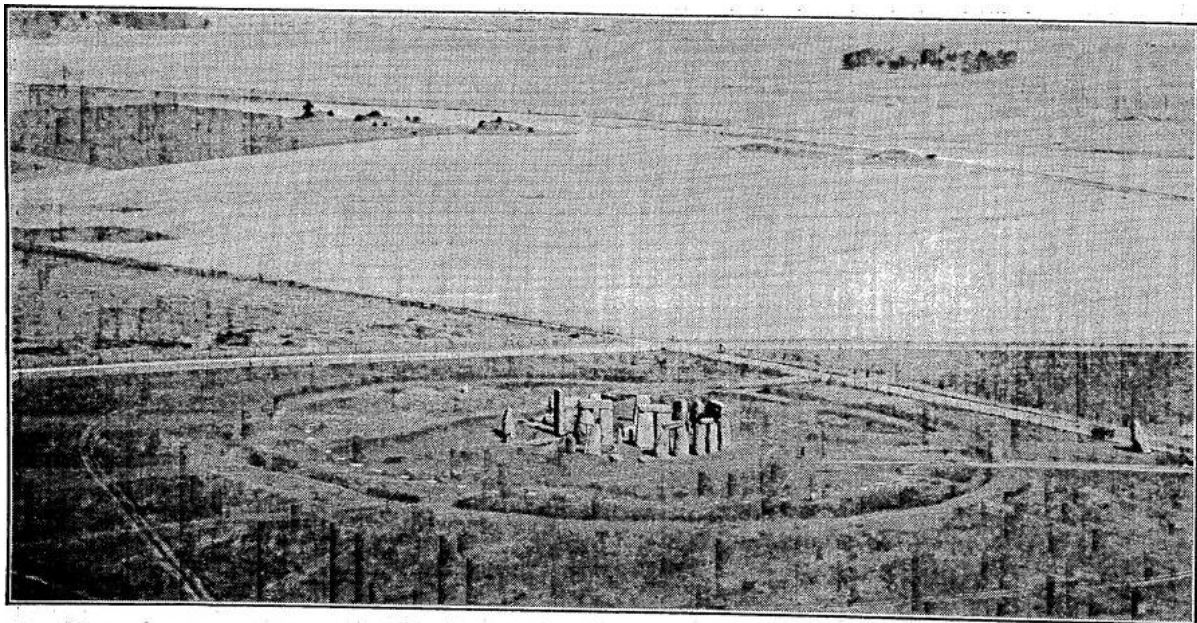
The mystery of the foreign or "blue stones" remains only half- explained. By the research of the Late Dr Thomas, of the Geological Survey, these are now known to be refashioned boulders of the igneous rocks of the Prescelly Hills in North Pembrokeshire, a region abounding in sepulchral circles of a

people other than the builders of Avebury and perhaps Stonehenge. The great antiquity of these stones is apparent from the finding of a blue stone boulder in a Wiltshire long barrow of the Neolithic period, perhaps dropped on the way from Wales or superfluous from Stonehenge. If, as is thought probable, they represent an earlier monument incorporated in a reconstruction, the site must have possessed an immemorial religious association sufficient to determine the transport of either some 180 miles through forest and fen or of over 500 by sea. Two large sarsen monoliths, the so-called Hele and Slaughter Stones, outside of and apparently unrelated to the monument, were observed by the Berlin archaeologist Schuchardt to stand precisely that same distance apart as the diameter of the existing sarsen ring. Hence he surmised that they may be the rejected members of a primitive, Avebury-like circle, the rest having been reshaped for the newer structure. The discovery of a probably "tabu" ditch round the Hele stone may indicate a reverential regard for it as a relic.

In 1923, in searching the ground between the "Aubrey Holes" and the sarsen circle, the unexpected discovery was made of two rings of holes rudely concentric with the other circles. Their excavation in part yielded no satisfactory evidence of date; they had apparently never actually held stone, but their size and shape have suggested a tentative and abandoned layout of the blue stones. At present they must be said to add another to the enigmas of the place.

Stonehenge is now national property, safeguarded against builder and petrol-pump by an inviolable belt of freehold land vested in the National Trust. But the First Commissioner's demand for Avebury for "such further archaeological research as is clearly needed" applies also to Stonehenge, more than half the area of which lies unexplored.

** Picture on p. 16



STONEHENGE FROM THE AIR.—A survey of the modern theories as to the age and builders of Stonehenge is made in an article which appears on page 13. In this picture of Stonehenge from the air the features of the monument are shown in clear relief, and the "Aubrey Holes" are seen marked on the ground by chalk rounds.

(*The Times*, (London, England) Saturday, Mar 14, 1936)