

NEWSLETTER 35



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August 2012

Wow, what a summer! The photo above was taken on Muck on one of the few dry and sunny days we had. However the weather doesn't seem to have dampened spirits and everyone has been busy chasing up archaeological sites, Scottish and foreign. Read about them in the following articles. There's sure to be an interesting bunch of entries in this year's Photographic Competition whose closing date is on 14th September.

We're planning that the next newsletter will be the 25th Anniversary edition, so please send in memories, old photos, field trip programmes, anything of interest for inclusion.

WR

Dolmenes de Antequera



La Peña viewed from the tumulus covering L Menga.

In early April, we took a trip to Antequera in Andalucia, roughly 40 kms. north of Malaga, Spain. The ancient town is located in a very fertile basin, surrounded by mountains, where the landscape is dominated by a prominent rock formation known as La Peña de los Enamoradas. Its shape resembles the face of a recumbent, sleeping woman. Turn the above picture sideways for the full effect. Perhaps unsurprisingly, it has long enjoyed cultural significance. Close by can be found a rare dolmen group, acknowledged as part of one of the best such megalithic landscapes in Europe, dated to perhaps 6,500 years ago.

The three that have been excavated and opened to the public are truly astonishing structures, and it is clear that they would have required formidable community effort to build. And while one is aware of the similarities between the structures (they are, for example, all corridor tombs, leading to a tall and wide chamber), more striking still are the differences between them.

All were used for ritual and funerary purposes, and it is little wonder that one of these dolmens is orientated towards La Peña.



Menga Dolmen

The longest, and widest (internally) of the tombs is the **Menga Dolmen**. It is 27.5 metres long and has a maximum width, at the inner chamber, of 6 metres. The height also increases from the entrance (2.7 metres) towards the rear (3.5 metres). Fascinatingly, there is a 19.5 metre deep shaft cut into the sandstone, in the inner chamber. And uniquely, at least amongst the discovered and excavated tombs in the region, it is oriented towards La Peña and, perhaps even to a specific area of ritual significance on the face of La Pena.

As the photograph shows, it was constructed of large upright stones, and its width required internal supporting columns at the inner chamber, where it is wider than available and manoeuvrable stones would allow a single span



Viera Dolmen

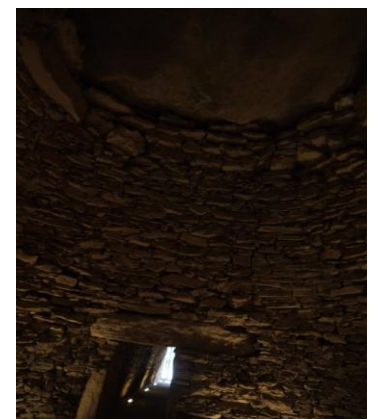
By contrast, the **Viera Dolmen** has an interior length in excess of just 21 metres, and its corridor is much narrower (widening towards the back from 1.3 to 1.6 metres). At the end there is a small square chamber, but no discovered shaft. It, too, is buried under a 50 metre diameter tumulus, but whereas the Menga Dolmen has an orientation of 45 degrees, the Viera faces just south of east, more in common with Iberian megalith practice.

I'm tempted to say this was my favourite, without quite knowing why. It's not the most spectacular, and there is little of intrigue in the orientation; but it is beautifully constructed, and has a balance and lack of extravagance that certainly appealed to me.

Then there is that chamber at the furthest point in the corridor ... perhaps it simply reminds me in some respects of Maes Howe. I wonder what the sun illuminates at the winter solstice?

And then we came to the **Tholos of El Romeral**. Here, the corridor is just over 26 metres, and the average height just under two metres. Unlike the Viera and Menga dolmens, the corridor in El Romeral is built of masonry, not megaliths. However, the roof is flat and makes use of massive slabs, like the other two.

At the end of the corridor is a large, round chamber, 3.75 metres high and 5.2 metres in diameter. Also constructed with masonry, it has a single horizontal slab at its crown (see picture opposite).



At the opposite end of this chamber from the entry passage is a much smaller passage, which leads quickly to another much smaller chamber, these two features being similarly constructed. The whole (c. 34 metres long) is covered again by a tumulus, in this case 68 metres in diameter, and most unusually (for the Iberian peninsula) it faces south-south-west.

Achnahannaid this isn't ... but well worth the trouble of getting there, nevertheless.

The Inchnadamph Bone Caves: The Light That Failed.

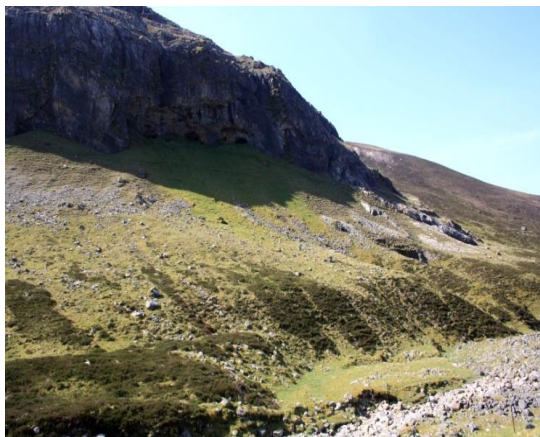
On a blistering hot day last May we made our way up the Allt nan Uamh to visit the Bone Caves at Inchnadamph in Sutherland. The glen is Cambrian limestone and wonderfully beautiful on such a day, with wild orchids, rowans, hazel, red campion, golden plovers and waterfalls – there is a corker just at the start of the walk.

The little fall here is called 'Easan Dubh', described in the waterfall plunger's bible by Louis Stott - *'The Waterfalls of Scotland: Worth gaun a mile to see'* – get a copy if you spot it. The amazing thing is that less than half a mile above this fall, the whole river itself bursts out of the ground as if struck by an Old Testament prophet – the Gaelic name for the site is *Fuaran Allt nan Uamh (Spring of the Stream of the Caves)* and the rest of the glen carries only a dried geological riverbed of tumbled rocks and ancient waterfalls.

At this point the caves can be seen high up at the base of the steep limestone cliffs to the south – there is a loop track which takes you up and round the ledge they sit on, 70m above the glen floor.

There are four caves: from east to west Fox's Den (really only a rock shelter); Bone Cave; Reindeer Cave and Badger Cave. It all sounds a bit like Woodland Happy Families Snap card game.

These are special places if you can get up to them – Reindeer and Badger are connected and both have inner chambers, one of which can be crawled into on all fours. Not recommended and my nerve failed as I was up there alone.



The view from the interiors to the high valley floors opposite is particularly splendid especially on a day like we had when the white quartzite bounced back light as if from a glacier – and, of course, at this height we are at the level of the former valley floor before the last ice gouged out the valley below. There are 13 caves in this valley alone and another 19 in the Traligill valley to the north.

An account of the excavation in these caves is given below, although no final report was ever published and the search for the field journals of the lead excavator, James Cree, has proved fruitless so far. The claims made by the original excavators for the human remains and artefacts are now accepted as simply wrong. However, the wealth of faunal archaeology is still being analysed – the 'bear skull' found in 1927 has recently been identified as polar bear. This has tended to overshadow recent re-dating of the human material to the Neolithic and Early Medieval periods, and poses the question – what were the humans up there for?

Undulating floors of red 'cave earth' are the vestiges of the old trenches from which the 'pay dirt' was excavated but the stylish little guidebook available at The Assynt Centre in Lochinver appeals against casual howking.

A Brief and Melancholy History of the Bone Cave Excavations:

1889 - Two Titans of Scottish Geology, Ben Peach and John Horne 'discover' the caves during their heroic Geological Survey of Sutherland, on a day off from rock bashing to fish the glen. They dig out the Bone Cave and find a huge cache of Ice Age faunal material, noting possible hearths,

charcoal and split bone – as well as bones of Northern Lynx, Reindeer, Wolf and Cave Bear. These excavations are later characterised by Cree as ‘of a very perfunctory character’.

1926/1927- James Cree, a feisty, experienced amateur (from Mexican ranching to excavating Traprain Law), visits the caves in 1925 finding more bear teeth and reindeer antlers. He decides to put together a consortium with the professional archaeologists J.G. Callander and John Ritchie from the Royal Scottish Museum.

Ritchie is sent to interview the ageing Peach who is generally unhelpful and claims that he and Horne dug out the Bone Cave completely (they didn't - he is ill and dies the following year), but Horne is still enthusiastic and plays a major role in securing funding for the expedition. Perhaps just as well he didn't get to see a final report!

Cree and Callander spend three weeks opening up Badger Cave to discover an inner chamber but little human material, other than a human femur sticking out of a badger burrow, some charcoal and a neat fluted bone haft with two suspension perforations at its tip.

However, their move to the adjoining Reindeer Cave proves more encouraging. In the upper gravel a horizon with almost 1000 reindeer burs from about 450 individual juvenile reindeer is packed along with what Cree considers to be a javelin/spear point in association with Cave Bear teeth.



In 1988 a generalised dating study of bulked antler samples suggests they are from c.10,000 BP – about the Loch Lomond Stadial (11,000 – 10,000 BP) Other researchers consider they might have been the residue of a deliberate antler cache for a tool-making project which never took off. This proves highly controversial and in 1993, further more precise dating of individual samples confirms that the deposition took place over thousands of years from the Middle Devensian (32000 – 22000BP). They were predominantly young females and juveniles, indicating that these upper glens were historic calving grounds for vast reindeer herds, long before any known human activity.

The human material proved even more contentious – Cree reports two caches of skeletal material. One lay at the rear of Reindeer's outer cave, a deliberate burial in a small 'cist' of two vertical stones on edge, with the natural rock face forming the third. This was a skull and vertebrae possibly associated with a double ring headed bone pin – found in two halves about 1.8m apart. A second cache lay within a fissure near to the communication passage between Reindeer and Badger Caves – a skull, face up, with a confused selection of bones above, *'thrown into this recess head down, possibly in the hope or belief that the body would slip down still further...The whole thing savours of two bloody murders !.. Was the victim a one legged man, or was his other femur the one we got in Cave No.1.?' Cree feverishly notes.*

The reception to these heated events proves disappointing. Doubts are expressed almost from the beginning by a cautious Gordon Childe and Movius in the 1930's, and by Lacaille and Audrey Henshall in the 1950's, over both the dating and the interpretation - especially in the absence of any confirmed and published humanly worked artefacts.

2005 - Alan Saville returns to the original artefacts, where he can find them, for modern dating and in the light of the better understanding developed in the geological and archaeological understanding about the Upper Palaeolithic in Britain. His investigations prove chastening for hopes of a Palaeolithic presence.

- The bone pin is found to be of walrus ivory and RC dated to 60BC to AD 340. However, with the considerable dating offset to be found with maritime material, the best guess for this item is AD 1000 - 1300. The usual source of this material is of course Scandinavia during the Viking period.
- The spear/javelin point that so excited Cree because of its similarities to 19C Cresswell Craggs Upper Palaeolithic material, is now considered to be a natural tine from pre-glacial contexts.
- The fluted bone haft from Badger cave, is RC dated to AD1040-1280 and is possibly a weaving shuttle.
- The human remains, much mixed up and of doubtful contexts after 80 years, are radiocarbon dated to 3500 – 2950BCE. They are one of the many examples of cave burial in the Neolithic as seen at many southern and several Scottish sites (Carding Mill Cave in Oban, An Corran Rock Shelter in Skye).

Why then was nothing published? Saville notes that Cree was unwell over both seasons and died in early 1929 and that Callander seems to have lost interest, possibly believing that the evidence was too scanty, or that he hesitated in the face of Gordon Childe's scepticism and their mutual antipathy. But is it 'game, set and match' to the sceptics?

Well perhaps not – T.J.Lawson concluded in 1981 that the caves were unlikely candidates, since the nearest confirmed Upper Palaeolithic was at Kirkdale Cave 430k south in Cumbria. This gap has recently been dramatically narrowed by Tam Ward's work in the Upper Tweed valley. If it's reindeer migration which was the magnet for Palaeolithic hunters, they were heading this way.

So let's leave Cree with his moment of brief glory as he scribbled off to Callander on that July evening nearly eighty six years ago, when he thought he'd found the first evidence of Palaeolithic humans in Scotland.

*Hotel,
Inchnadamph,
Loch Assynt,
Sutherland*

8th July, 1926.

My dear Callander,

It is already 10 o' clock so this must be just a line. But I wish to tell you of the day's developments and of the finds at Reindeer cave...I brought home this evening about 65 burrs, besides a lot of bones – big & small- animal and bird. But, this was not all! Are you prepared for a thrill? We got another bear's canine tooth...we have the earliest record of the bear in Scotland.

Now have you recovered from that thrill? I have, I believe, another and a bigger one to give you! I am almost confident I have got a Bone Pin.

But I again say unto you – "why in the hell did you leave"?

Now this is meantime private. Don't be writing or telling Mann. It will soon be enough to tell him when you have seen the thing & confirmed it as a pin...What do you think? This, if I am right, is the earliest artefact found in Scotland. Found in association with burrs and a bear's tooth and in that gravel deposit.

I can't see to write anymore so must be off to bed.

Yours ever,

J.E.C.

How poignant. I'll bet he poured himself a stiff dram.

Mann is of course our own dear Ludovic MacLellan in Glasgow, whom everyone believed capable of knocking out a quick note to the Glasgow Herald with his part in the dramatic discovery.

Ian Marshall

For more information, the full text of Cree's letter and sources of the above:

Callander, J.G. Cree, J.E. & Ritchie, J. 'Preliminary Report on caves containing Palaeolithic relics, near Inchnadamph, Sutherland.' PSAS. 61, (1926-27)

Lawson, T.J. 'The 1926-7 excavations of the Creag nan Uamh bone caves, near Inchnadamph. Sutherland,' PSAS. 111, (1981).

Saville, A. 'Archaeology and the Creag nan Uamh bone caves, Assynt, Highland.' PSAS. 135, (2005)

Kipling, Rudyard : The Light that Failed (1890)

SYMPOSIUM REVIEW

ALEX. MORRISON: memories of a generous scholar

On 2 May 2012, University of Glasgow Archaeology mounted a symposium commemorating the work of Alex Morrison, the first Lecturer appointed to that Department, and a long-term contributor and friend to the ACFA certificate course. It was heartening therefore, to see a healthy representation from ACFA participating in the event.

Chaired by Colleen Batey, there were paper contributions from, amongst others, Kenny Brophy, Euan Mackie, Rachel Barrowman and Tony Pollard, all of which prompted interesting exchanges. However, I don't propose in this short piece to summarise each paper, but rather to confirm the esteem in which Alex was held, and the acknowledged importance of his work to Scottish archaeology.

All speakers referenced Alex's influence on them personally, as did almost every person commenting from the audience. Perhaps it was epitomised by a direct quote from Steve Driscoll, echoed by others, who said that Alex was "*the most influential figure that's been in this Department*".

Alex was a landscape archaeologist when the description was barely recognised, a fact that may have derived from his route into the discipline with his student background as a geographer. Perhaps, too, this helped explain his comfort and ability in working in various disciplines, and using an atypical breadth of sources. His interest in people in the landscape, past and present, also meant that his approach was holistic and his research was copiously contextualised (including, of course, his historiographical research). One speaker summed it up especially well for me, noting Alex's "*focus on the form, function and genesis of a landscape, placing particular emphasis on the crucial interaction between people and their environment*".

Other accolades were plentiful, and included the following: inspiring; influential; invaluable but under-recognised contribution. And touching, too, were comments noting his sense of humour, his persistence and doggedness, and his friendship. In essence, a modest man, who liked little more than bringing information to the public. Strikes me very much as an ACFA soul mate.

Ewen Smith

British Prehistory in Ten Verses

In Britain's story mankind's unseen
Throughout most of the Pleistocene.
Indeed a sight of human face shall
Not turn up till th'last great glacial.

But then the ice began to melt,
And then came isostatic tilt,
And rising seas bring to our annal
The Irish Sea and English Channel.

So our ancestors, all a-lather,
Put up the cry "Let's hunt and gather!"
Then in an unexpected turn,
The cry was changed to "Slash and
burn!"

Then people learned to grow the food
That once they'd hunted in the wood:
Meat, fruit and grain, to be specific,
And so began the Neolithic.

Time thus saved with bow and arrow,
Was spent at standing stone and
barrow.
And when the heavens had been read,
They'd somewhere nice to put the dead.

And with the uplands clear of trees
And criss-crossed with ranch
boundaries,
Past traditions were confounded
By change from barrows long to
rounded.

"Hurrah for bronze!" The public's grown
Fed up with using bits of stone.
The future of the flint is bleaker,
It's out with grooved ware, in with
beaker.

With living standards thus improved,
Folk up into the hillforts moved,
To dwell upon the hill's summits
In wattle huts with storage pits.

The Iron Age, an era when
Stuff came from Hallstatt or La Tene;
A range of prestige goods to choose,
Arrayed in Celtic curlicues.

But prehistory's end had come,
Brits said "Civis romanus sum".
A Roman said "Let's build a town!"
The next agreed, and wrote it down.

Nick Davis (sent in by Carol Primrose)

Dates for the Diary

Throughout September: Scottish Archaeology Month – www.scottisharchaeologymonth.com

6th October : ACFA 25th Anniversary Field Trip Kilmartin

13th October : Archaeology Scotland AGM, Edinburgh

25th October : Scottish Woodland History Conference, Perth www.nwdg.org.uk/history_group_4

27th October : ACFA AGM, STUC, Glasgow

3rd November : Tayside and Fife Archaeological Committee (TAFAC) Conference, Perth

10th/11th November : Community Heritage Conference, Dunkeld. www.archaeologyscotland.org

A Last Look Back

I know I have been saying it for years but, after almost half a century of teaching archaeology, I have finally decided that session 2012-13 should mark my retirement. Most of you know that my archaeological interests are confined to the prehistoric period; indeed, when teaching European prehistory I sometimes said my brain “switched off” at 1000 BC. Nor have I confined myself to Europe with, at various times, forays into the Middle East, Egypt, Meso and South America and, most recently, Polynesia.

For my final course, which I hope to do in the centres I've been teaching in the last few years (Bearsden, Clarkston and Glasgow for Glasgow University; Kilcreggan, Dunoon and Castle Douglas) I thought it would be appropriate to reflect on some of the changes in the interpretation of some of the major changes in human history.

I'm going to start in the Old World with the “Neolithic Revolution” in the Middle East.

The discovery of new sites like Gobekli Tepe and the reinterpretation of others such as Catal Huyuk (both in Turkey) have led to profoundly different conclusions concerning the transition from hunter/gatherer to farming and stock rearing. Then I head back to Brittany and Britain to review the advances in our knowledge of chambered tombs - still my favourite subject - and stone circles and henge monuments. Moving on to the East Mediterranean, I'll briefly review the great Bronze Age civilisations of the Minoans, Mycenaeans and Hittites before reviewing the evidence for trade at such great sites as Ugarit (Syria), Enkomi (Northern Cyprus) and the shipwrecks off Cape Gelidonya and Uluburun (Turkey).

A complete change of direction takes me to South America and the remarkable geoglyphs and petroglyphs of Peru and Chile. Nazca, of course, is well known but new discoveries are being made and the geoglyphs of Chile are quite spectacular. It was the vision of Machu Picchu which first brought me to Peru, but there is so much more of the magnificent civilisation of the Incas to explore. I end with Polynesia, my current interest because I'm not retiring from archaeology altogether. In fact, I was able to spend most of April in the company of Mark Eddowes, a New Zealand archaeologist living in Tahiti, as we explored the archaeology of French Polynesia, including the Society, Tuamotus and Marquesas Islands. Talking to Mark brought home to me both the similarities and differences in our approaches to studying material culture. Here I am on the other side of the world discussing the importance of petrographic analysis of stone tools and the information we can obtain for trade - adzes in Polynesia, stone axes in Britain - and the realisation that we were both talking about a neolithic society, only that the Polynesian neolithic didn't come to an end until the 18th century AD.



That prompts me to think what I should do in the future. Will chambered tombs be usurped in my affection by “Marae” (ceremonial and burial structures), or is it time to return to Scotland's sometimes wet and windswept hillsides? I'll have to think about it!

For anyone interested, full details of the Glasgow University courses will be available in August, but it will be an 8 meeting course starting on Tuesday, 2 October, 2012. The Kilcreggan class starts a bit earlier - Wednesday, 12 September, 7.30-9.30pm and is again 8 meetings; full details from Ann Bray.

Lionel Masters

Notes for Kilmartin Trip

- 1. Every one signed up for the trip should have received by email or post the itinerary and the accommodation list. If you haven't, please let Sue Bryson know.*
- 2. There has been a cancellation so there is room for one more ACFA member.*
- 3. Jennifer Boag is happy to give a lift up to Kilmartin. Her phone number is 01475 720 125*
- 4. Pat Wilson in Kilmahog is looking for someone to car-share with. Her phone number is 01877 330 151.*
- 5 People who are planning spending Sunday night would like to know who else will be there. Could you please let Sue know and she will spread the word.*

s.bryson@ntlworld.com

0141 587 4675

Britain from Above Project

The latest community heritage project at RCAHMS was launched on June 25th and uses the organisation's online expertise and innovation to engage communities with a fascinating collection of aerial photography.

Britain from Above is a Heritage Lottery funded project to conserve, catalogue and make accessible approximately 95,000 historic aerial photographs from the Aerofilms Collection, a unique air photographs archive of international importance. It has been saved for the nation by English Heritage together with its partners, the Royal Commissions on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland and Wales.

The collection includes 1.26 million negatives and more than 2000 photograph albums of images taken by the pioneering firm Aerofilms Ltd between 1919 and 2006. Its breadth covers almost every British settlement, industry and natural environment and presents the changing face of Britain's urban, suburban and rural landscapes from the end of World War I to the beginning of the 21st century.

The images give a detailed and compelling record of reconstruction following both World Wars, the Depression of the 1930s, sweeping agricultural development in the 1940s, industrialisation, suburbanisation and radical change to international transport infrastructure across England, Scotland and Wales. It includes striking images of national events and landmarks and provides valuable evidence for understanding our recent past and managing the built and natural environments.

The Britain from Above project is conserving 95,000 of the oldest and most valuable photographs in the Aerofilms collection. These images, dating from 1919 to 1953, will be scanned into digital format and made available for everyone to see. There are over 4000 images of Scotland, with particularly good coverage of the greater Glasgow area.

The website www.britainfromabove.org.uk gives users the opportunity to share and record their memories of the places shown, enhancing the images by adding the important personal stories and recollections which help interpret and improve our understanding of the history of these places.

The Britain from Above project is going to make the collection widely accessible by undertaking projects with communities across Scotland, developing educational resources for schools, launching a touring programme of exhibitions and producing a publication telling the Aerofilms story.

For more information please contact the Britain from Above Activity Officer for Scotland, Brian Wilkinson: brian.wilkinson@rcahms.gov.uk

Certificate in Field Archaeology

Glasgow University

The Committee has been advised that senior management of Glasgow University Centre for Open Studies has taken the decision to defer the Certificate in Field Archaeology course for two years, despite strong support for an option which would have allowed it to continue uninterrupted.

This means that we will be unable to recruit new members via the course for 3 years (bearing in mind students are not eligible for Associate Membership until they have completed the first year). Although we have been assured that the course will be offered in 2014, we cannot afford 3 years without new blood; we must explore other means for recruiting members in the interim.

Accordingly, we wish to explore possible alternative training opportunities. We will liaise with Archaeology Scotland and the Institute of Field Archaeology (Scottish Group) to establish what might be available locally. Other options might be distance learning: a number of institutions offer online courses, notably Exeter University; and residential courses such as the Research Training Course at Vindolanda on archaeological earthwork survey.

There is also the problem of identifying people who would be interested in going down this route, perhaps as a preliminary to taking the CFA course later.

We would greatly value any ideas, suggestions or comments members might wish to make in order to advance this process.

Carol Primrose,]

Chair

CALLING ACFA MEMBERS!

Surveys

ACFA members are encouraged to undertake field survey, not just at a landscape level but also on a smaller scale for perhaps just one building or feature. These can be sent to RCAMHS and kept as a collection of ACFA Site Reports in addition to the Occasional Papers.

Contact the Committee if you are thinking of proceeding. There are many people who will be happy to advise if required. So, if you have come across an old farmstead or a kiln or a WW2 air raid shelter or any unusual feature in your walks, consider rallying a few of the members, drawing it up and writing a short report.

ACFA does of course promote the larger scale survey where a team of volunteers labour over many weeks / months / years. The costs of printing can be considerable depending on the size of the final report but the Committee will assist survey directors in applying for grants and also advise on a combination of in-house printing and electronic publishing.



Planning the next survey or resting from the last?

Title page photo : Aird nan Uan burial cairn, Muck. Photo by Peter Raine

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Submissions - It would be appreciated if submissions were sent in Word format. Please note that the Editor reserves the right to shorten and generally edit articles, as required.

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