

## JAMES REID MOIR, F.R.S.

Mr. J. Reid Moir, who did valuable and original work on the early history of man, particularly in relation to the geological deposits of East Anglia, died on the 24th February, 1945, at the Mill House, Flatford, aged 64. Although born at Hitchin he was educated in Ipswich and was associated with the town for the whole of his life. His serious life work upon the older and more obscure periods of pre-history began with investigation in the bed of stones at the base of the Red Crag sand exposed in the Dales Road Brickfield of Messrs. Bolton & Laughlin, Ipswich. Without fully realising the revolutionary nature of his contentions, he published in 1910 the results of this research, maintaining that flints which he had found at the base of the Suffolk Crag had been humanly worked, although that deposit had previously been regarded as of the Pliocene Age and previous to the existence of man. His views accordingly secured limited acceptance at the time; but he was supported by Sir Ray Lankester who dealt with the discovery in the Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society, giving the name Rostro-Carinate to the beak-like flaked flints discovered by Moir, who meantime demonstrated how these could be made by hand, and showed that they formed a link in the evolution of the Palæolithic hand axe from the notched or side trimmed Eoliths which were represented in the same deposit, and had also been discovered on the North Downs, though their age was still uncertain. The controversy still remains; but the trend of expert opinion both here and abroad has been modified by the discovery of Rostro-Carinate implements among ancient stone industries of Africa and India and by later general acceptance of evidence that Palæolithic Man was present in Western Europe between and during the successive advances of the ice.

Mr. Moir's researches on the varieties of worked flints from below the Red Crag showed that these represent five distinct periods of time and industry, and that even if the deposit is of early Pleistocene date, as now generally held, the basement bed including them contains debris from the preceding Pliocene Age. He reviewed the evidence for this succession of periods in a paper on the "Age of the pre-Crag-Implements" published in 1935, and summarised the evidence as to the age of man in the world in the Huxley Memorial Lecture, which he delivered before the Royal Society in 1939, estimating that it was about two million years since the first implements were made.

From 1910 until within a few weeks of his death Mr. Moir devoted a large part of his time to excavations in the Tertiary and Pleistocene deposits of East Anglia and to examining natural exposures of these in the cliffs of Suffolk and north Norfolk. For example he investigated the basement beneath the Cromer Forest Bed and conducted many excavations in the Ipswich district. With the late Professor J. E. Marr and Mr. Miles Burket of Cambridge, he investigated the relation of the Palæolithic implements in the pleistocene loam at High Lodge, Mildenhall, to the Chalky Boulder clay capping the ridge. He conducted excavations on behalf of the British Association, at the noted site at Hoxne where John Frere had first discovered flaked flints in 1798. Moir showed that these were clearly of inter-glacial age, and obtained similar results from examining deposits in

an old brick field near Derby Road station, Ipswich. He dealt with a like problem during prolonged excavations in the deposits flanking the Dales Road valley, where he found a series of superimposed occupation levels in loam and clay later than the excavation of the valley itself. The discovery of a small fragment of a very thick human cranium, comparable with those of the Neanderthal race, supported the opinion expressed by the late Professor Commont of Paris, that these finds belonged to the Mousterian and Aurignacian industries; but the presence of pottery on the same level led other authorities to ascribe the implements to the Neolithic Age. The few animal remains found on the level in question unfortunately did not suffice to date the deposit. Mr. Moir's more recent work was accordingly applied to studying deposits elsewhere in the Ipswich region where similar implements occurred in association with Pleistocene animal remains, in the hope of gaining confirmation as to the possible occurrence of pottery with palæolithic industries.

One of his deductions from studying the Dales Road valley deposits was that climatic conditions producing such beds of loam and clay in a lateral valley above the main stream, would result in accumulations of gravel and sand in the main valley, beneath which would occur the mid and later Palæolithic levels. This contention was confirmed by the discovery that magnificent specimens of leaf-shaped flint blades of the type associated in France with the Solutrian period had already been found in deep cofferdam excavations at the power station in Constantine Road, Ipswich. Also by the finding of numerous Mid-Palæolithic implements beneath masses of sand and flint brought down to the old river level by the melting of the last ice upon the higher ground. His observations thus added considerably to knowledge of the position of Mid and Later Palæolithic industries in the river valleys of Eastern England.

Mr. Moir supported the formation, and was twice President, of the Prehistoric Society of East Anglia, which was long the only body to issue in the English language specialist publications on pre-history, and developed later into the Prehistoric Society of Great Britain. He gave assistance in the Society's clearing of one of the flint mines at Grimes Graves, and took part in explorations of a later period, notably the investigation of the Roman Villa at Castle Hill, Whitton, which he himself conducted.

Mr. Moir was connected with the Ipswich Museum for many years as a member of the committee, becoming president upon the death of Sir Edwin Ray Lankester, and adding largely to the Museum's collections, which during the period in question attracted the leading specialists from all over the world. He read widely and was always active in supporting measures for the development of the museum's interest and efficiency in any department. He contributed to our Transactions in 1915 and 1918 articles on "Pre-palæolithic Man" and on "The Ancient Flint implements of Suffolk" adding to the latter a very valuable bibliography. He became Vice-President of this Institute in 1925. He was a Fellow of the Royal Society, a Fellow of the Royal Anthropological Institute, and an Honorary Member of various Continental Institutions concerning the Palæontology of Man. In addition to the specialist articles which he

produced in number he published two books, the one, *Prehistoric Archaeology and Sir Ray Lankester*, the other "The Antiquity of Man in East Anglia", written for the general reader, and admirably fulfilling its purpose. He held to his views with firm conviction and was at times an active and trenchant controversialist, but he was also a fluent, lucid, and much sought after writer and lecturer on the subjects in which he was interested, and possessed in marked degree the power of making them attractive to the general public.

Mr. Moir presented to the British Museum and other public collections a certain number of his more typical and significant finds drawn from East Anglia, and succeeded in converting to his views (with some reservations) the chief authorities of the Museum on Prehistory (cf. *Archæology in England and Wales 1914—1931* " by Kendrick and Hawkes, pp. 8, 10, 13, 14, etc.). Tribute to his researches has also been paid by the Abbé Henri Breuil of France and by Friedrich E. Zeuner PH.D. Professor of Environmental Archæology, University of London. (cf. *Dating the Past*, 1946, pp. 180—183, etc.).

His name has been given to the Archæological Department of the Ipswich Museum which contains the results of his many researches and where a portrait and inscription commemorates his work.

He was deeply concerned for the preservation of the natural beauty of the countryside, and as to the rapid disappearance of ancient buildings, supporting proposals for the preservation of both. A memorial seat bearing his name has been placed beneath a large oak tree, which together with the open space beside the Ipswich by-pass road on which it stands was purchased and presented to the corporation of Ipswich by the late Alderman T. R. Parkington, then chairman of the Museum Committee, as a result of an appeal made in the press by Mr. Moir for its exclusion from a building scheme which would have entailed the tree's removal.

G.M.