
 COMMENTARY

Glyn Daniel: An Obituary

The Editors of *ARC* asked me to write something 'different' in memory of Glyn Daniel. To write 'differently' about a man whose own inimitable editorials in *Antiquity* defined the obituary writer's art and beggared his successors is a formidable task. I can write only of my own experience of him, and about a man at once so eclectic and yet so consistent, that I can expect to find both agreement and difference in other readers' perceptions of him.

It is difficult to know at what point Glyn emerged from a sea of well-known names and unknown faces when I was an undergraduate. In that first year we were brought up on his books: *The Megalith Builders of Western Europe and The First Civilisations* -- friendly little blue-backed Pelicans, well-written and within our reach -- we looked ahead to understanding the arcane mysteries of *The Prehistoric Chamber Tombs and sampling The Hungry Archaeologist in France* and to a recondite appreciation of snails and Calvados, of oysters and claret. Glyn gave us both a digestible synthesis from his own archaeological experience and promised a deliciously indigestible gastronomic foray under expert guidance. We longed to travel with him. He seemed marvellously erudite, witty, warm and sophisticated -- he would introduce us into this Franco-Celtic world -- and indeed he did.

Although at first he seemed to 'belong' to the Johnnians -- privileged creatures -- we came at Part II to understand that he knew about us and cared about us. I had practical experience of this: I still have Glyn's letter, sent to me in Australia, asking whether I would like to come back to do

research, pulling me out of the threat of an intransigent down-under future and putting me in the position where I can write this obituary. I never felt that female students were less important than men to Glyn and indeed many of us felt adopted as Johnnians and part of the same warm structure which the 'Connection' provided. I also saw Glyn's practical kindness to students when he bailed out one of my incipiently alcoholic friends by a mixture of firmness, cash and reward in what I now recognise as an admirably 'tutorial' way. I learnt something from him then which I never quite forgot -- how to be a good patron or sponsor and when to apply the boot or the carrot. I didn't of course realise it at the time but it stays with me twenty years later.

In the fog of boredom induced by many of the lectures of that period Glyn stood out as someone who could keep you awake. As a raconteur, for Welsh *hwill* and sheer oratory, he could not be bettered. The past, his backward-looking curiosity, came alive for us through his own intense interest. Generations of us learnt from him how to relax as a lecturer, how to speak directly to an audience and how to involve that audience in the story. He didn't gaze out above our heads, nor did he pace the floor, and his clarity and simplicity were in counterbalance to the growing Americanisation of the jargon-laden New Archaeology which began to invade Cambridge just after I graduated.

One of the saddest aspects of that invasion was that it became fashionable to deride Glyn's scholarship and to ignore his real contribution to archaeology. He was concerned with human beings in a personal sense, in the past as in the present, in contrast to the

prevalent interest in institutions and groups where the influence of individuals became lost in the generalisations of the social sciences. Like many European prehistorians his work on megaliths had to be substantially altered in the light of C14 dating and he had to agree, which he did willingly, that some of his early conclusions had been 'wrong'. The Young Turks of subsequent generations inevitably found him an easy target, without acknowledging the building blocks he had provided. Moreover his ideas, stated clearly and concisely in simple English, were not valued by later generations accustomed to woolly thought and verbiage. The new professionalism of the seventies which demanded that archaeologists should be Super People -- competent excavators, scientists and social theorists -- bred a generation who wanted their heroes either to excavate in beards and boots or to pontificate in beards and sandals. Glyn, clean-

shaven, urbane and debonair, did not fit these images and the value of his scholarly work on the history of our own discipline was buried beneath the values of the New Archaeology, where anecdote and a strong sense of the importance of the individual take second place.

Most if not all older archaeologists risk this devaluation of their work as fashions change, since our view of the past is endlessly mutable. What Glyn produced was a historical framework of reference for British archaeologists which offers both an explanation and a sense of belonging to the emerging discipline within which he worked. We may want to believe that we are scientists but we need to be reminded at the same time that we are human, concerned with the past of humanity and it is this concern that we inherit from Glyn.

Kate Pretty

* * * * *

Transitional Traditions

(A comment upon the conference "The Origins and Dispersal of Modern Humans", Cambridge, March 1987.)

During the last week of March 1987, the Cambridge Graduate Centre played host to a conference entitled 'The Origins and Dispersal of Modern Humans', organised by Drs Paul Mellars and Chris Stringer. It was a joint conference between both archaeologists and physical anthropologists and a joint effort to solve a problem considered by both parties to be of utmost importance. As an observer I found the conference to be most interesting: as much for what it revealed about academic debate and discussion, as for any new light it threw upon the discussion.

For archaeologists, the debate about modern humans, that is those people whom physical anthropologists classify as *Homo sapiens sapiens* (*H. sap. sap.*), centres around the so-called Middle-Upper Palaeolithic transition. For the physical anthropologists it centres upon the actual skeletal change itself. Whilst at the outset, therefore, they appear to be dealing with the same problem, there are in fact two; curiously related and yet at the same time very separate.

In an influential article, Mellars set out the characteristics of the Middle-Upper transition as he saw them for the area of south-west France. He noted the change to a blade technology, and the appearance of many more tool types. Bone work appeared, as did art. Populations increased, both in