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Recollections of Glozel

by DOROTHY GARROD

Professor Dorothy Garrod was the only English member of the famous Glozel Commission of 1927, and is one of the only two surviving members of that body—the other is Professor Bosch Gimpera of the University of Mexico. She recently recorded an interview with the Editor of ANTIQUITY in Paris in which she gave a full account of the strange goings-on at Vichy and Glozel. This interview will be broadcast in the BBC-2 'Chronicle' programme later this summer, together with a documentary film of Glozel, in which Emile Fradin, now in his late sixties, appears. This article, which we publish by kind permission of the BBC, and with the co-operation of Paul Johnstone and his 'Chronicle' staff, is edited from the monitored version of what Miss Garrod said at the interview.

A GREAT many people have forgotten about Glozel: indeed many archaeologists now alive may never have heard of it. The affair started in 1924, and at the time nobody took much notice. A young farm boy at Glozel, near Vichy, was ploughing with his oxen, and the oxen fell into a hole which turned out afterwards to be a glassmakers' furnace. This was a genuine medieval glassmakers' furnace of a type well known in France. The boy however didn't know this, he couldn't think what had been found on his farm, and mentioned it all to the local schoolmistress. She paid a visit to the site, thought it could be an interesting site, and suggested that she and the boy should do some digging.

Their excavations revealed a paved floor and some fragments of glass, and, curiously enough, a Neolithic polished stone axe-head. This was a genuine antique, but its presence in a glassmakers' furnace was quite fortuitous. It was one of the three or four objects which were declared genuine by our Commission. The Commission said that apart from these objects the whole material from Glozel was modern. The local schoolmaster, M. Clément, became very interested in Glozel and he urged on the farm boy, whose name was Emile Fradin, and lent him

books with illustrations of various archaeological objects. Fradin now began to produce strange things which didn't fit in at all with what had been found before. All this finally came to the notice of M. Salomon Reinach, the very distinguished director of the Musée des Antiquités Nationales at St-Germain. Reinach was eminent in many fields of scholarship but he was in no sense a field archaeologist or 'dirt' archaeologist. However he was impressed with the things he had seen, some of them very curious: he began to encourage the boy and to feed him material intended to awaken his interest, but which instead had the effect of launching him on a career of organized forgery. Soon he began to produce clay tablets inscribed with pseudo-Phoenician characters, and copies of bone artifacts such as Magdalenian harpoons.

The local archaeological society was not so keen, but a doctor in Vichy, by name Morlet, was interested. Morlet had rather strange ideas and was a very excitable and uncritical person. He did not realize that Emile Fradin was merely reproducing objects which he saw in the various archaeological books that were being lent to him.

It is not too difficult to understand why the Glozel discoveries had such an impact on the

RECOLLECTIONS OF GLOZEL

public in France at the time. A number of eminent people had, rather surprisingly, allowed themselves to be taken in by it all: they had talked and written about it and brought it to the notice of the public. There was Salomon Reinach, and Lhote, and Esperandieu—all members of the Institut, and then Professor Déperet, the noted geologist of Lyon. When the anti-Glozel movement began the public said, this poor boy, and Morlet, this worthy local archaeologist, are being persecuted, although they are approved of by many scholars. Then the rival scholars began to tear each other to pieces, and the Glozel affair provoked the learned world to battle. It is very difficult now, well over 40 years after *l'affaire Glozel*, to see how members of the Institut allowed themselves to be taken in, but they did, and when the opposition developed, they got more and more furious. The opposition began with Vayson de Pradenne, the French archaeologist, who had a very keen eye for frauds. He published some observations on Glozel, throwing the gravest doubts on its authenticity. The matter was followed up by the English archaeologist, O. G. S. Crawford, founder and editor of *ANTIQUITY*. He thought there was something very fishy here (he was never enamoured of France and French archaeology) and went off down to Vichy, had a look himself at the objects and the site—Crawford was a trained and skilled field archaeologist: he came back to England and published in *ANTIQUITY* the nature of his doubts.

I became involved in Glozel towards the end of 1927. Before that one could not be an archaeologist, least of all a prehistorian interested in France, without having heard of Glozel. But I must admit that I had not by 1927 any very firm opinion on the matter: I did think however that there was something fishy. I became involved in this way. The Institut International d'Anthropologie organized a congress in Amsterdam. I was present at that congress: by now the controversy about Glozel was hot, and it was decided to appoint an international commission of archaeologists to go to the spot and examine the site, to study the objects found. The Committee of the Congress

nominated this commission and I found myself one of the members. The difficulty in selecting members was to get archaeologists who had not already said in public what they thought about Glozel, or were not known to hold extreme views in private about the dispute. This probably explains why I was chosen. I was young, I had just finished excavating in Gibraltar, and I certainly wasn't what you might call a very well-known prehistorian. They were looking round for people who didn't already know too much about Glozel and who might be expected to take a fairly objective view about the whole affair.

There were originally intended to be eight people on the commission, but one fell out: our number was seven and I was the only representative from England. There were three Frenchmen, a Belgian, a Swiss and the Spanish Professor Bosch Gimpera. He and I are the only surviving members: he is now in Mexico, so that the attacks on the commission that have recently started up have been directed to me.

It was decided that the commission should operate from Vichy, that we should meet there, spend three or four days examining the site and the finds, and make our own control excavation. We all met for the first time in Vichy: I myself came straight from England, and when I was changing trains in the Gare de Lyon I saw approaching me one of the most distinguished anti-Glozelians, namely the Comte Bégouën, Professor of Prehistory at Toulouse, and discoverer of two or three very famous Palaeolithic caves such as Tuc d'Audoubert and Les Trois Frères. I was a little embarrassed to see him come to see me off: of course he didn't say 'Well mind you bring back a good anti-Glozelian report', and of course I said nothing to commit myself in any way, but the incident was observed and afterwards it was said that Professor Bégouën saw Miss Garrod off and gave her her last instructions on what to say.

When we assembled at Vichy we discovered that the Municipal Council had invited us to be their guests and lodged us in one of the very biggest of the palace hotels for which Vichy was famous. I felt at once that it was not very wise of us to accept this invitation and this hospitality;

ANTIQUITY

it seemed in a way to commit us since, quite obviously, the Vichy authorities hoped to see Glozel become a great tourist draw. The hotel placed a magnificent sitting-room at our disposal and here we held our meetings behind locked doors. We went down to Glozel at once and were met by the farmer and his father—but they were more or less lay figures—and then the boy, Emile Fradin, who was the star of the whole affair.

He was at the time barely 18. We decided to see the museum after we had examined the site so that we should not be influenced by the objects. There had already been a lot of excavation: any notable person, particularly if introduced by Salomon Reinach, could have his own plot in which to dig and we were shown Esperandieu's trench and Professor Déperet's trench and the trench of the King of Romania. We chose the spot for our trench, and then we changed from our Paris clothes into our blue overalls—the *combinaisons* which are virtually the uniform of French field archaeology. We changed in the farmhouse at Glozel, and as I was the only woman on the commission the best spare bedroom was placed at my disposal. As I went upstairs, Peyrony, who always looked at things in a dramatic detective way, hissed in my ear 'Look under the bed!', which of course I did at once but found it innocent of any compromising archaeological objects.

Suitably clad, we proceeded to the site and at a spot chosen by us Fradin and workmen excavated a trench through grey clay with dark earth on top and sterile sand underneath. The section was two feet deep. We worked there for three days. Our programme was to go out from Vichy to Glozel early each morning, work there all day, eating a picnic lunch on the site—this left the members of the commission more independent and didn't waste any time—it was November and got dark early. We returned to our palatial hotel in Vichy early each evening and locked ourselves into the great sitting-room placed at our disposal by the management, discussing what had happened during the day. (M. Peyrony, who took, as I have already said, a dramatic view of the situation, insisted on the precaution of locking the doors.) On the first

evening, after we had been sitting and talking for ten minutes, he got up, darted to the door, flung it open suddenly in the best detective story manner—but no one was revealed listening to our proceedings.

We didn't speak to each other during the day because of the conditions under which we worked: we were all in a row in our small trench: immediately behind us on the edge of our trench and literally breathing down our necks was Dr Morlet and his friends, and I don't know how many journalists and photographers. All the national French newspapers were represented and many provincial papers and many foreign papers as well. The only thing to do was not to speak, not to exchange views on the site: we observed what the papers crossly called *un mutisme absolu*. It was all rather trying because they watched us all the time to see the slightest batting of an eyelash or any reaction whatever.

On the first day of our excavations we found absolutely nothing, and that was characteristic of anyone's digging at Glozel because, of course, the hoaxers had not yet had time to furnish our hole with the necessary finds: indeed they did not know that first day where we were going to dig. But on the second day finds began to appear, typical Glozelian objects. We found a little round piece of bone with scratches of Glozelian characters on it, and then we found one of the famous tablets. These tablets of clay were not big, they were quite soft, and had on them extraordinary scratches in which Phoenician letters alternated with various meaningless signs—the whole making up what were referred to as 'inscriptions'. And it is worth noting that even the most devoted Glozelians had not themselves been able to read any of these 'inscriptions'. It was however noted that the Phoenician alphabet used on the Glozel tablets was the same as that on the sarcophagus of Eshmunaza in the Louvre. This was a fairly late form of Phoenician writing: a book about it had been lent to young Fradin.

There was a kind of pocket of dark earth in the trench and at the bottom of this pocket we saw something that obviously looked like a rectangular slab or a tablet. We investigated and

RECOLLECTIONS OF GLOZEL

found that this object was not very hard—as none of the tablets was. We thought that the last thing we must do in our agitation was to spoil this find: we decided that as Fradin was used to moving these things he had better dig it out himself, which he did. He lifted it out on a spade and carried it away through the crowd amid cries of 'Make way, make way!' The crowd was delighted and thought that at last the authenticity of Glozel had been proved. There could now be no doubt since the Commission had actually made a find of a tablet *in situ*.

That tablet was our major discovery. We didn't find any of those strange Glozelian pots with oculi designs on them, nor did we find an idol, and no Palaeolithic objects. We found a few bone-pins, nothing significant. What was interesting was that we had noticed in the section of our trench the pocket of dark earth in the general greyness. We noted that the tablet lay at the bottom of this pocket and that a stone had been placed on top to flatten it down—a rectangular stone of about the same size as the tablet. Some of us thought this was very suspect, to say the least, and that evening we discussed the conditions of our find, and came to the conclusion that without doubt the whole set-up was very strange. The question arose as to whether things were altered overnight. The tablet had obviously been put in from above, and the round stone as well—the latter probably through a slit. That would have been quite easy to do without tampering with the face of the section.

We now come to the most dramatic moment of the whole affair. We had decided that, as a precaution on leaving at night, we would powder the face of the section with plaster. A sack of plaster was produced and the whole surface was powdered with it so that if there were any interference in the night we should presumably discover it in the morning. At the same time, some of us realized that our device was not fool-proof because, since the sack of plaster remained it would have been easy after interfering with the site to put on a fresh coat. So, egged on by Peyrony, it was decided that we should make a kind of pattern in the plaster. Three of us went back after the others had left, and after all the

journalists had gone, by poking in the plaster with a stick, we made a number of holes in a pattern, and I was detailed to put down on a piece of paper the order of holes in this pattern.

We arrived early next morning: Peyrony, Hamal-Nandrin of Liège and myself were detailed to go down and see whether the pattern we had made in the plaster was undisturbed. We went off to our section as quickly as possible because we wanted to do our test before the crowd arrived. As we got near the site there were shouts and cries and we were aware of a large body of people behind us. Peyrony and Hamal-Nandrin made me go on—I suppose as the youngest I was the most nimble member of the Commission. I hurried to the site as fast as I could and was just checking the section with the paper marked with the pattern in my hand when I heard a furious voice raised behind me. It was Dr Morlet shouting out an extraordinary series of accusations. I became so embarrassed and confused that I hardly knew what was happening but the gist of it was 'You made those holes yourself, you're trying to salt this site and then suggest that it is I, Morlet, who have tampered with it.' He spoke in an extraordinarily violent way without stopping a moment to allow me to answer him. I didn't know what to say or whether to say anything. Fortunately he calmed down slightly: the other members of the commission arrived and I tried to explain what had happened. I said we had made these holes for a specific purpose: Morlet wouldn't listen. 'You've admitted it, then,' he shouted. 'You've said you made the holes yourself.' I said that of course I did but that it was for the specific purpose of checking whether the site was being tampered with. Morlet would not listen, insisting that the holes had been made to salt the site. I just had to give up: then everyone joined in a heated free-for-all. The members of the commission began taking off their *combinaisons*, saying there was nothing left for us to do but to go back to Paris.

And for a moment it looked as though that was how it would end. But we withdrew, had a conference, and realized that to leave in a huff would be a mistake. We decided to stay but of

ANTIQUITY

course we couldn't do so without Morlet's agreement: he had the right to bar us from the site. We went back and tried to smooth him down and to get him to admit that there had been a misunderstanding, and, after a while, in a kind of half-hearted way, he did admit it. He also agreed that nothing should be said about the incident, and the journalists agreed to this course, promising to publish nothing. I didn't think myself that this was terribly satisfactory from my point of view. They induced us to shake hands, which I may say I did most unwillingly, and, judging from his face, I think Dr Morlet was equally unwilling. But it was done and we were photographed doing it: the photograph showed rather clearly that I wasn't happy about the whole affair.

For the rest of the day we worked on and closed down our investigation for the last time. A great effort was made to get us to make a pronouncement at this point but we firmly refused to do this. It was not at all easy because it wasn't only Dr Morlet who was pressing us for a decision, but all the journalists—and many people were saying that they could see from our faces that all was genuine. As none of us by that time thought it *was* genuine it needed a great deal of self-control. We did decide to give Morlet a sort of certificate testifying to his good faith and saying that he was innocent of fraud, and this we believed to be true—we thought of him as a dupe rather than a principal in a forgery.

This done we went up to the museum to look at the finds. I must say that a more improbable collection of objects one could not imagine. Extraordinary vases, and extraordinary tablets all made of half-baked clay and practically falling to bits, and extraordinary engravings on bone purporting to be Upper Palaeolithic. We looked at them all but said nothing. We returned to Vichy that night and made our final decision, namely that the whole of Glozel was a fake. Abbé Favret was charged to draw up a report which we would work over later in Paris. We then returned to our homes and were back in Paris in ten days' time.

It was now early December. We were lent an apartment by Monsieur Louis Marin, who

had been a Minister. He was a keen amateur anthropologist and had been president of the Société d'Anthropologie. He felt that using his apartment would give us privacy we might not have had in a hotel: this was so; but every day when we arrived in the morning or left in the evening we were beset by journalists whose faces were now becoming only too familiar. It took us three or four days to draw up our report. There was a split between the old friends of Salomon Reinach, who wanted to spare him and to water down our conclusions, and the younger, more ruthless, members of the commission of whom I was one, who thought that a modified sentence would take all the bite out of what we said and indeed might give the impression that some of us believed Glozel genuine, which none of us did. By dint of being obstinate we got the report signed after a farewell banquet by Vayson de Pradenne (which perhaps gave the show away as he was a firm believer in the non-authenticity of Glozel).

We all went home for Christmas; the report was published at the very beginning of the New Year. It caused a great storm, particularly among the reporters who thought they had been tricked by our silence into making them believe all was genuine. Dr Morlet was so furious that he persuaded himself he was absolved from his view of silence about the incident of the plaster and the holes and all this came out, and everyone joined in, high and low. The whole affair dragged on for a long time.

The Société Préhistorique de France decided that the only thing to do was to have a police inquest at Glozel. This had to be kept extremely quiet so that no one, especially young Fradin, knew what was happening. The president of the Society, Monsieur Félix Regnault, went down to Glozel, and got in touch with the Préfet at Moulins. Five policemen and a commissioner proceeded to the Fradins' farm, took the inhabitants completely by surprise, searched the premises and found unfinished tools and Glozelian objects, including inscribed tablets of clay drying in the rafters of a barn. For most people this was the end: the whole thing had been reduced to absurdity. A few, like Salomon Reinach, persisted in believing Glozel authentic,

RECOLLECTIONS OF GLOZEL

and so, of course, did Dr Morlet; and a few years ago a determined effort was made by some journalists to resurrect the whole *affaire Glozel*. I myself left for the Near East in 1928: I began

my first tour there about a month after the appearance of our report. I became absorbed in other interests and hardly gave a thought to Glozel again.

Book Chronicle

We include here books which have been received for review, or books of importance not received for review, of which we have recently been informed. We welcome information about books, particularly in languages other than English or American, of interest to readers of ANTIQUITY. The listing of a book in this chronicle does not preclude its review in ANTIQUITY.

Greek Oared Ships 900–322 BC by J. S. Morrison and R. T. Williams. *Cambridge: University Press*, 1968. 366 pp., 31 pls. (unlisted), 3 maps. £6. 6s. 'Written in the belief that a proper understanding of Greek civilization in Antiquity requires some knowledge of its background of seafaring.'

Prehistoric Animals and their Hunters by I. W. Cornwall. *London: Faber*, 1968. 214 pp., 29 drawings by M. M. Howard, 2 tables, 4 diagrams. 42s. By the Reader in Human Environment at the Institute of Archaeology in the University of London.

Quaternary Paleoecology ed. by E. J. Cushing and H. E. Wright Jr. *New Haven and London: Yale University Press*, 1968. 434 pp., illustrated by photographs, maps, diagrams and tables. £6. 15s. Vol. 7 of the *Proceedings of the VIIth Congress of the International Association for Quaternary Research*, sponsored by the National Academy of Sciences—National Research Council (held in Boulder in 1965). Twenty-nine authors from ten countries contribute articles.

The Archaeological Evidence of the Second Millennium BC on the Persian Plateau by Robert H. Dyson Jr. *Cambridge: University Press*, 1968. Fascicle 66 of the *Revised Cambridge Ancient History*, Vols. I and II (Vol. II, Ch. XVI). 36 pp., 2 figs. UK: 6s; USA: \$1.25.

Palestine in the Time of the Nineteenth Dynasty (b) Archaeological Evidence by H. J. Franken. *Cambridge: University Press*, 1968. Fascicle 67 of the *Revised Cambridge Ancient History* Vols. I and II (Vol. II, Ch. XXVI (b)). 11 pp. UK: 3s. 6d; USA: 75 cents.

Pleistocene Extinctions: the Search for a Cause ed. by P. S. Martin and H. E. Wright Jr. *New Haven and London: Yale University Press*, 1968. 454 pp., illustrated by photographs, maps, diagrams and tables. £6. 15s. Vol. 6 of the *Proceedings of the VIIth Congress of the International Association for Quaternary Research*, sponsored by the National Academy of Sciences—National Research Council (held in Boulder in 1965). Eminent world palaeobiologists contribute 18 papers, and reveal a major controversy between the 'extinction by Prehistoric Man' theorists and the 'climate and vegetation' extinction theory. Some plump for a combination of both.

Everyday Life in Imperial China by Michael Loewe. *London: Batsford*, 1968. 208 pp., 95 figs. (drawn by Eva Wilson) include a few photographs. 25s. This volume, in the well-known series, deals with life during the Han period 202 BC–AD 220, by a lecturer in Classical Chinese in the University of Cambridge.

Aspects of Antiquity by M. I. Finley. *London: Chatto and Windus*, 1968. 228 pp., 8 pls., 2 maps. 30s. Fifteen stimulating essays by the Reader in Ancient Social and Economic History in the University of Cambridge, and frequent contributor to such periodicals as *The New Statesman*, *The Listener*, *The New York Review of Books* and *Horizon*, in addition to learned journals.

The Geological Ages by D. L. Linton and F. Moseley. *Cambridge: University Press*, 1968. Fascicle 61 of the *Revised Cambridge Ancient History* Vols. I and II (Vol. I, Ch. I). 38 pp., 1 table, 2 figs. (1 folder). UK: 6s; USA \$1.25.

continued on p. 215