

IN MEMORIAM

Clare Isobel Fell, M.A., F.S.A.
10th October 1912 - 17th July 2002

Clare Isobel Fell was the daughter of Lieutenant-General Sir Matthew Henry Gregson Fell and Marion Isobel Wallace. She was educated at Harrogate College and Newnham College Cambridge, where she played an active part in prehistoric studies. Her archaeological career began almost by accident. She went up to Newnham College, Cambridge, in 1931 to read Economics and obtained a II.ii in Part I of the Economics Tripos. However, she did not enjoy the subject and changed to Archaeology and Anthropology at the suggestion of her Director of Studies, because of the family connection with the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society. She obtained a 1st Class in Section A of the Archaeology and Anthropology Tripos in 1933, but because women were not allowed degrees at that time she did not receive her M.A. until 1948. In 1933-34 she was awarded the Sparkes Scholarship by Newnham College.

Her excavation report on the hillfort at Hunsbury, Northampton was published in the *Archaeological Journal* and she published a joint report with Christopher Hawkes on Neolithic and Iron Age finds from Peterborough.

Clare's career at Cambridge was interrupted by her service as an ambulance driver in the A.T.S. during World War II. She returned to Cambridge after the war and catalogued Lord Braybrooke's collection of antiquities which had been given to the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology in 1947, and about that time became Assistant Curator of the Museum under the newly promoted Geoffrey Bushnell.

In the summer of 1949 she joined the first season of excavation at the mesolithic site at Star Carr being undertaken by Grahame Clark and in September of that year began her work on the axe factory at Langdale. In the 1950s she again worked with Grahame Clark at West Harling in Norfolk, where the work on late prehistoric settlement archaeology is widely acknowledged as one of her major achievements outside Cumbria.

In 1952-53 she became Secretary of the Faculty Board of Archaeology and Anthropology, and in the same year joined the Third Foundation Association which, in 1954, founded New Hall as the third college for women. In 1953 she left Cambridge to look after her ageing parents at Flan How, Ulverston, and from that time her archaeological interests were centred on Cumbria.

She was elected a member of the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society on 1 July 1937. After serving on the Council from 1945 she joined her father Sir Matthew Fell among the vice-presidents in 1957 and served as president 1963-66. She was also a member of the Council of the Prehistoric Society and a contributor to its *Proceedings*. In 1951 she was elected a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of London.

Clare became a member of our Committee for Prehistoric Studies from 1937 and was its chairman from 1953. She was also a member of our Excavation Committee from 1957. These committees were reconstituted as the Fieldwork and Excavation Committee in 1973. She was chairman from 1973-1976 and then continued as a

member until 1982 when she thought that she should step aside and allow younger people to carry on. She felt at that time that she wished to take a less physically active role. However she remained available to help if needed and carried on offering active assistance and advice, encouraging others to contribute to the knowledge of Cumbrian prehistory, giving freely of her time and expertise. Essentially a shy person, she did not enjoy speaking in public, and would prepare by finding some quiet corner where she could relax and gather her thoughts beforehand. This obviously worked, for Clare was an excellent orator who spoke with great clarity.

From as early as 1940 she submitted reports to *Transactions* and over the years became the major contributor on prehistory. Her papers have added fresh dimensions to our knowledge, always keeping abreast of the advances in scientific techniques. Her association with Professor Winifred Tutin (Pennington) in the study of the effects of man on the environment, resulted in pollen analyses for the artefact layer in the organic exposure in the sea-cliff at Drigg and the peat deposits at Brantrake Moss. Both sites were subsequently carbon dated to the Bronze Age and Roman periods and are published in the *Transactions* of our Society.

The first mention of the Langdale axe factory was written by Clare as a note in *Transactions* in 1948: she followed this with a more detailed account, jointly with Brian Bunch in 1949 in the *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society* and in 1950 in our Society's *Transactions*. Her view that there would be other workings wherever the volcanic tuff outcropped has been proved correct and it was largely due to her efforts that a field survey was carried out by Chris Houlder, the results of which were published in 1979. Her work in co-operation with Dr Vin Davis on the petrological identification of stone implements from Cumbria broke completely new ground and led the way for all subsequent work in Great Britain and Ireland. Not long before her death she was considering, with Dr Davis, the re-evaluation of stone implements using geochemical and computer analysis. Her research on the distribution of stone implements set a high standard for other scholars and was maintained for all her life. When a more comprehensive study of the Langdale axe factory by Professor Richard Bradley and Dr Mark Edmonds was carried out using all the latest available techniques, the report, published in 1993, was dedicated to Clare, as a tribute to her kindness and encouragement.

Clare thought that it was not necessary to be a professional archaeologist in order to make a contribution to our knowledge. Members of the Society should write a short note of any finds they made, so that they could be properly recorded. She demonstrated this at the Annual General Meeting of the Society in 1963 when she read a paper on the location and simple survey of a group of cairns she had noted during a walk on the fells in High Furness.

Her own reports were models of their kind, written in clear concise English, with reference to other papers which would give support to the opinions she had expressed. Over the years she became the major contributor to *Transactions* on all matters prehistoric and at the same time was always willing to encourage and advise those less knowledgeable than herself. Her paperback *Early Settlement in the Lake Counties* exemplifies both her style and approach. It has all the merits of a short book written by someone who has all the facts and their implications at their fingertips.

Clare spent many hours with us on the fells and the coastal strip, not only advising, but also helping to find, collect and classify the artefacts. After our first

visit to the Eskmeals sand-hills in 1961 we sorted the finds on the carpet in front of the fire in her home at Flan How in Ulverston. There I was told that I must report the finds in *Transactions*. She agreed to read and correct my amateurish efforts, because if I intended to search for more evidence of prehistoric habitation, I must also be prepared to write reports. From that time, she critically but tactfully assessed all my reports before I submitted them to the editor. Since our first work together at Eskmeals we became close friends, and it gave me particular pleasure that in later years I was able to repay her, in small part, for all she had done, by providing drawings and photographs for her publications.

Appreciation of practical help freely given, together with her kindness and generosity in sharing her encyclopaedic memory has been a constant theme from all her friends who have expressed their sorrow and sense of loss at Clare's death. She will be greatly missed by the Society and all who were privileged to know her.

James Cherry

