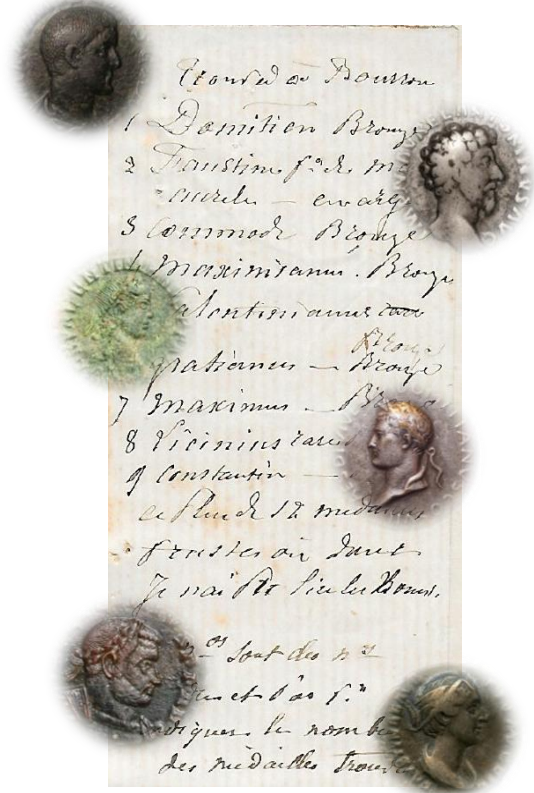


Archaeological finds in Bourron-Marlotte

Several articles discussing the prehistory of Bourron-Marlotte and related past discoveries were published in the early issues of the Bulletin des Amis de Bourron-Marlotte¹. It is certainly worthwhile to give some of them renewed visibility on this site.

Roman coins at the château

In 1850, Roman medals or coins were discovered in the grounds of the Château de Bourron. On January 12, 1873, the Marquis de Sinéty, owner of the Château de Misy, held these coins and shared an inventory of them with Father Pougeois, abbot at the church of Bourron, as shown in the manuscript on the right. (As the actual coins found at the château have not survived, the accompanying photographs serve merely as illustrations.)



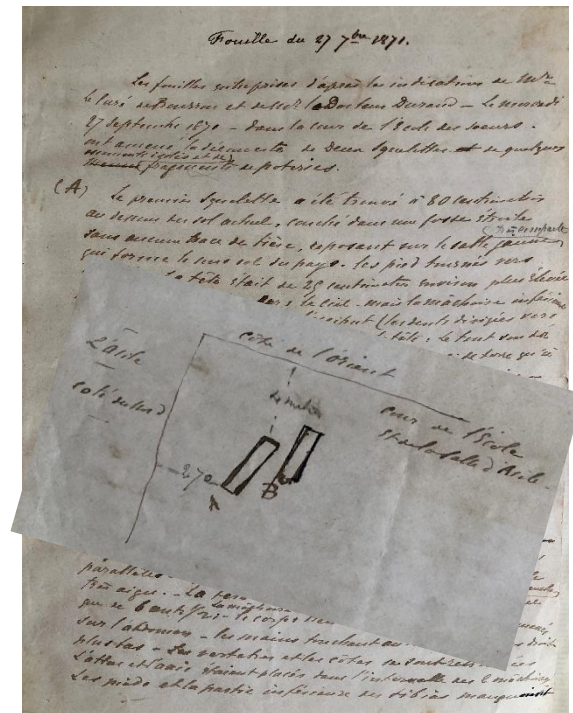
Excavations near the church

In 1871, archaeological excavations were carried out in Bourron; the commune had become a focal point for archaeologists. What drew their attention was the recent discovery of an ancient cemetery. Houses in the village center were built over graves. Local tradition offered no information regarding the origin of these burial sites. A great number of them were uncovered during street paving, the digging of cellars or wall foundations, and the breaking up of uncultivated land. Alongside the skeletal remains, several of these graves yielded objects that deeply intrigued specialists in the study of antiquities.² Abbot Pougeois left a more detailed report³, in which his personal views, still tinted by the controversy sparked a few years earlier by Charles Darwin's theory⁴, are evident.

On Wednesday, September 27, 1871, an archaeological excavation was conducted in the courtyard of the Sisters' house, near the nursery school, under the supervision of Mr. Levé, a member of the Anthropological Society of Paris. This operation led to the discovery of two bodies, found under the conditions described in the accompanying report drawn up by Mr. Levé at the time.

Ferdinand Levé (1835–1907) was a Parisian printer, a scholar, and an active member of the Anthropological Society of Paris during the 19th century, where he took part in discussions regarding the history, languages, and origins of ancient peoples.

He was the son-in-law of Pierre Henri Lachèze, member of a wealthy and generous Bourron inhabitant and, as such, a regular visitor to Marlotte.



F. Levé's notes of the excavation

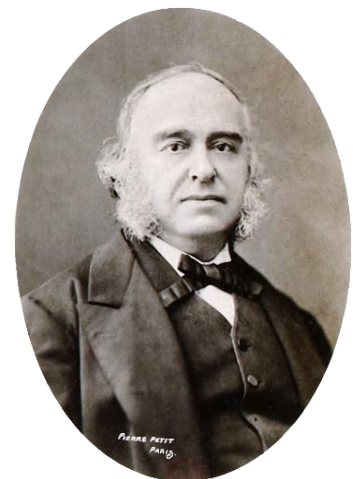
On Saturday, October 7, Dr. Broca, founder of the aforementioned Anthropology Society, came to Bourron to visit the site of the excavations conducted by M. Levé and to gather information that might help him decide whether to undertake a more comprehensive study. The doctor, a disciple of Darwin's absurd doctrines, was apparently searching for ancient burial sites, hoping to find in the skeletal remains of early humans confirmation of the notion, at once absurd and anti-religious, that man is descended from apes. There is no harm in encouraging the research of these so-called

Paul Broca (1824–1880) was a French surgeon, physician, and anthropologist renowned for his work on the brain. After conducting research on bone and cartilage histology, as well as on cancer and aneurysms, he turned his attention to infant mortality and sought to improve care for disadvantaged populations.

His most significant discovery concerned the link between specific brain regions and precise functions; he identified the left frontal lobe as the site of speech production. His work thus paved the way for modern neurology and a better understanding of the relationship between brain lesions and language disorders.

A pioneer in physical anthropology, he founded the Anthropological Society of Paris in 1859, the **Revue d'anthropologie** in 1872, and the School of Anthropology of Paris in 1876.

scientists, for one can be certain from the outset that it will end in their own discomfiture.



Paul Broca by Pierre Petit

The Bourron Vase

During this same period, other archaeological discoveries were made, notably by Dr. Durand.⁵ The most famous is undoubtedly the *Bourron Vase*.⁶ It is a *spherical vessel with a constricted, sub-cylindrical neck, measuring 17 cm in both maximum diameter and height; the diameter of the opening is approximately 9 cm. The clay body is fine and black, with a thickness of 0.5 cm, while the surface is a brownish-orange hue. Only the neck is partially broken. Three horizontally perforated, rope-like handles encircle the body, positioned slightly above the point of its greatest diameter. This vessel represents one of the fundamental pottery types of the Linear Pottery culture found in the Paris Basin.*⁷

Linear Pottery culture is the oldest Neolithic culture in Central Europe. It is considered the primary manifestation of the Danubian current, a spread of Neolithic peoples across Central Europe who followed the Danube and practiced slash-and-burn agriculture, a technique they gradually introduced to Europe.



Bourron vase – Ceramic bottle with a sub-cylindrical neck (Early Neolithic, 5000 to 4700 BCE) © Musée de Préhistoire d'Île-de-France, D77 / Durand Collection / Deposit from the City of Fontainebleau.

1 - Articles by H. Froment et J. Poignant in tomes 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11 and 12 of Bulletin des Amis de Bourron-Marlotte, 1977-1982.

2 - *Discovery of ancient tombs in Bourron* by Abbot Pougeois, in L'Abeille de Fontainebleau, October 13, 1871.

3 - *Historical notes on Bourron*, by Abbé Pougeois.

4 - The first French translation of Charles Darwin's *The Origin of Species* became available in 1862.

5 - *Prehistory in the Bourron-Marlotte Region – Dr. Charles Durand*, by Henri Froment in Bulletin des Amis de Bourron-Marlotte No. 10, 1981.

6 - We are indebted to Ms. D. Tuzi, Archaeology Development Officer at the Museum of Prehistory of Île-de-France in Nemours, who provided us with the photograph of the vessel held in the museum's collections.

7 - *Presence of the Danubian Neolithic in the Beauce and Gâtinais regions*, by Gérard Bailloud, Bulletin de la Société préhistorique française*, 1962.