

From The Times, London, 13 December 1956

MICHAEL VENTRIS

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TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES

Sir, - Michael Ventris died at the age of 34 on September 6 in a motor accident. His discovery that the Linear B texts of Knossos, Pylos, Mycenae, and other sites were Greek ranks as one of the most brilliant achievements of scholarship and has been internationally acclaimed a feat of the same order as that of Champollion in deciphering the Egyptian hieroglyphs. The discoverer was awarded the Order of the British Empire by her Majesty the Queen, an honorary doctorate by the University of Uppsala, and an honorary research associateship by University College London. The brilliance of this discovery is matched by its importance and it will take years to work out the consequences of the new knowledge which proves that Mycenaean civilization was Greek-speaking, gives us texts contemporary with and comparable with texts from the adjoining civilizations of Egypt and the Near East, and shows us the state of the Greek language half a millennium before our earliest Greek literature.

Michael Ventris was trained and practised as an architect. To his profession he brought the same analytical brilliance that distinguished him as a classical scholar, and there lay ahead of him a career of exceptional promise. He had an uncanny gift for languages ancient and modern, and was fired to study the Linear B texts by a lecture given by Sir Arthur Evans which he heard when he was a schoolboy at Stowe. He was, moreover, a person of quite peculiar charm who was instantaneously loved by all with whom he came into contact.

We feel that many people will wish to join us in forming some memorial to his genius and personality. We hope that it may be possible to found a Michael Ventris memorial award or studentship, which would be open both to post-graduate students who were working on subjects connected with Mycenaean civilization and to students of architecture, because we feel that thus his two main interests would be represented. The fund would be used either for studentships or for grants and would be administered by a trust representing the two interests. Contributions should be made out to the Michael Ventris Memorial Fund, and sent either to the Secretary, Architectural Association, 34-36, Bedford Square, W.C.1, or to the Secretary, Institute of Classical Studies, 50, Bedford Square, W.C.1. Yours faithfully,

R.D. BARNETT, Keeper of Western Asiatic Antiquities, British Museum;  
JOHN CHADWICK, Lecturer in Classics, Cambridge University; KENNETH  
M.B. CROSS, President, Royal Institute of British Architects; IFOR  
EVANS, Provost of University College London; A.W. GOMME, President,

Hellenic Society; GONTRAM GOULDEN, President, Architectural Association; SINCLAIR HOOD, Director, British School at Athens; R.D.H. JENKINS, Chairman, Managing Committee, British School at Athens; R. FURNEAUX JORDAN; JOHN F. LOCKWOOD, Vice-Chancellor, University of London; L.R. PALMER, Professor of Comparative Philology, Oxford University; N. PEVSNER, Professor of History of Art, Birkbeck College, London University; ERIC V. REYNOLDS, Headmaster of Stowe School; TORGNV SEGERSTEDT, Rector of Uppsala University; E.G. TURNER, Director, Institute of Classical Studies; A.J.B. WACE, Emeritus Professor of Classical Archaeology, Cambridge University; T.B.L. WEBSTER, Professor of Greek, University College, London University.

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