

## IV. Investigations at Rijckholt prior to 1964

Between Rijckholt and St. Geertruid, in the slopes of the eastern Meuse valley, occur a series of woods known as the Savelsbos Nature Reserve. Thanks to protective maintenance this splendid wooded slope with its deeply scored dry valleys accommodates a flora and fauna of national value. Previously the area obtained international renown on account of the discovery of prehistoric flint extraction activities.

After its discovery in 1881, Belgian archaeologists studied the area for a number of decades. It appeared then that the flint for the production of tools had been extracted at the site and, to be precise, largely in underground mining.

The discoverer of the prehistoric flint exploitation on the Savelsbos plateau, the Belgian scientist Marcel de Puydt of Liège University, was active with colleagues in the Savelsbos until 1914. His student, Jean Servais, curator at the Archaeological Museum Curtius in Liège, continued the investigations until 1923.

In 1903, the later famous Belgian trio became established when Prof. Hamal-Nandrin included the Savelsbos flint industry in his working field. For fifty years until 1953 Hamal-Nandrin had excavations carried out especially targeting the 'Schoone Grubbe' as well as the knapping areas.

Dutch scientists strongly doubted the prehistoric age of the Rijckholt flint industry, until investigations of the Groningen archaeologists Prof. van Giffen en Dr. van der Sleen, in 1923-1925, supplied irrefutable evidence. At the outer limit of the 'Grand Atelier' an extensive mining gallery system was discovered.

After van Giffen's research, no further investigations were carried out by Dutch scientists at Rijckholt and the Savelsbos was left to Hamal-Nandrin again.

In 1928, a group of French Dominican friars of the Rijckholt monastery started an intensive research along the 'Schoone Grubbe' at the instigation of Hamal-Nandrin, which was to last for more than three years.

An extensive description of the discovery of the flint exploitation at Rijckholt-St. Geertruid, and

subsequent investigations, has been published in RADEMAKERS (1998).

More than forty years after van Giffen, in the spring of 1964, Prof. Waterbolk commenced his extensive investigations on the plateau at the forest margin and at the Grand Atelier (WATERBOLK 1994).