

THE NORTH HERTS ANTIQUARY



PRODUCED BY THE NORTH HERTS ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

NUMBER 2

FEBRUARY 1966

HON. EDITORS

J. MOSS-ECCARDT

P. PALMER 11, Runnalow, Letchworth

FREE TO MEMBERS

Contributions should be typed if possible. All items should be as concise as possible; contributions will be reproduced in full but the editors will not accept responsibility for the views stated.

PORTRICOT LECTURES March 8th "Planning England's First Cave Studies Centre"

The above lecture is at Letchworth Grammar School at 8.00p.m.

BEDFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Wednesday 16th March "Excavations at Elstow Abbey" by D. Baker, B.A & P. Tilson

Wednesday 6th April "Records and Destruction" by Tony Hales

Visitors are welcome. Lectures will be in the Town Hall, St Pauls Square Bedford 7.15p.m.

SOUTH BEDFORDSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Tuesday 22nd March "Monumental Brasses" by A.W. Guppy B.Sc.

Tuesday 26th April "The Romano-British Villa" by W.H. Manning B.Sc.

Lectures will be held in the Carnegie Room at the Central Library at 7.30p.m.

ROYSTON LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

March 25th "Simple Annals of the Poor - A survey of the relief of the Royston Poor, 1700 - 1840.

Lectures will be held in Garden Walk Secondary School, Royston 7.45p.m.

The December lecture was called 'Hallstatt and La Tene' and was given by James F. Dyer M.A. who visited these sites during last summer.

Hallstatt which is a small village in Austria was his first stop. It is a village of perhaps 300 houses built on a delta beside a lake. The wooden houses stand on stilts to raise them above the watery ground beside the lake, which is some 5 miles long. For centuries the only way to reach Hallstatt was either by lake, on foot, or mule over a tortuous track through the mountains. Finally in 1862 - 3 a road was built enabling travellers to come and go with ease. Above the lake is the hanging Salzbögen valley which as its name implies has for long been a centre for salt mining. In fact, as long ago as 1511 a royal charter was granted to Hallstatt owing to its importance in the salt industry. The salt was found to exist naturally in vast seams and the overlying materials were not unduly difficult to dig through.

As is evidenced by the charter, the mines were known to be historically very old, but it was not until the early 19th century that their archaeological importance became obvious. This was occasioned while operating the Emperor Joseph mine in which the miners broke through into a shaft of earlier origin. In this shaft they came across the body of a man who was literally pickled in salt; but the most impressive thing about this poor unfortunate was the peculiar way in which he was dressed. His clothes were mostly of crude leather with a leather protective helmet on his head and by his side a leather rucksack. With him were found wooden spalls, on the end of which were teeth marks. Obviously the lighted spall was held between the teeth while leaving both hands free to work. In this way a meagre light would be shed upon the salt working. Most important of all was the find beside the body of a crude adze, with a blade of iron. This, with the mode of dress, indicated an Early Iron Age miner, and much interest was aroused.

In 1846, while engaged on gravelling a footpath leading to the mines, Georg Ramsauer, the mine manager, revealed the remains of a human skull. Beside the skull lay an earring of bronze, and at some distance, a second skull, complete with skeleton and bronze bracelet. From the attitude of the burials it became apparent that here was a cemetery and upon further excavation, no less than eight skeletons were uncovered, together with numerous bronze objects. Unfortunately the Austrian winter interrupted any further work on the site that year and so the finds were taken to Vienna by Ramsauer. Here they were received with great excitement and plans were made for the following year.

In 1847 Ramsauer once more returned to the site and found a further 42 burials with associated objects of bronze including numerous daggers and swords. 1848 once more saw this determined man at work and a further 37 graves were opened. Altogether, in these and subsequent years, a total of 90 graves were exhumed and some 6,080 objects found. To add the final touch to this man's illustrious career he produced beautiful water colour drawings of the graves and finds, which can still be seen to this day in the small museum at Hallstatt.

One curious feature of the graves was the variety of attitudes in which these early Hallstattians were buried. Many graves contained clay trays on which reclined a macabre half body, the other half sometimes at the opposite end of the grave. In one pit lay a pair of legs, while the upper remains were found in a cremation pile in the same grave.

Parts of bodies were scattered throughout the grave system: on the clay trays were many gift objects, such as pottery, urns, brooches etc.,. The jewellery included amber, bracelets, and spiral brooches which operated exactly like our modern safety pins.

Another curious find at the centre of the cemetery was a spring which flowed into a well on which were found models of hands and legs. These were probably offered in the hope that the donors would be healed or cured in the corresponding limb.

In later years Sir John Evans of Hertfordshire decided to excavate there and came away well satisfied with many finds which are now in the British Museum. However the genial hospitality which one usually associates with the Austrian peoples had overstretched itself and it was later discovered that the finds had been planted in order that the visitor from England should have 'a good dig'.

The La Tène site, which according to Mr. Dyer is now a thriving Holiday Camp, is situated in Switzerland on Lake Neuchatel. It became necessary to drain part of the lake in 1850 and during the process, a Colonel Frederik Schwab, a native of the area uncovered some 200 lake villages. The majority of these villages proved to be of Neolithic origin but as the water level receded, quite a considerable amount of later iron age material was discovered. The old river mouth was exposed and the remains of two very old bridges became visible. In the stretch of river between these bridges were found literally hundreds and hundreds of swords, daggers and spears etc. Possibly these were lost during the bridge defence on some long obscure battle. Much wood was preserved in the old river mud and, most important of all, a perfectly formed wheel complete with spokes and iron rim. This is the earliest known example of a wheel and makes La Tène along with that of Hallstatt a milestone in the long road towards a full understanding of the peoples of early Europe.

The talk was well supplemented by colour slides from Mr. Dyer's extensive collection and they provided a fascinating backcloth against which the story of the early iron age in these areas was unfurled.

Paul Palmer.

COIN NOTES

Florins of Queen Victoria Silver florins were not coined in Britain until 1849 when they were introduced as the result of a proposal to convert our currency to the decimal system. This is the reason that the value is expressed until 1887 as ONE FLORIN-ONE TENTH OF A POUND. The first issue - "Godless and Graceless" - was withdrawn on account of popular indignation at the omission of DEI GRATIA (by the Grace of God) and FIDEI DEFENSOR (Defender of the Faith) from the Queen's titles, and was replaced by the extremely common 'Gothic' florin.

The inscription is in the black letter script, and around the head reads VICTORIA D G BRIT (or BRITT) REG. F.D., followed by the date in Roman numerals, often so worn that it is difficult to decipher. A typical example would be MDCCCLXXVII = 1877.

Between 1887 and 1890 was coined the double florin, or four-shilling piece, the only time this denomination has been minted. Nevertheless it was coined in great numbers and is still of very common occurrence.

Die Axis The relative positions of the obverse and reverse dies of English coins has varied at different periods. In the Middle Ages, the dies were usually irregularly aligned, and not until the introduction of minting by machinery in 1662 did the die axis become regular. Gold, silver and copper have the die axis inverted at first - gold and silver until 1887, copper until 1860. Thereafter, the axis has always been vertical.

BUILDING GLOSSARY.

Some Building terms which could prove useful to those interested in historic buildings of the earlier periods.

Arcade Plate. A horizontal timber in the roof of an aisled hall, supported by the piers of the arcade and supporting the lower ends of the rafters of the nave roof. It is in the same plane as the piers.

Bay. A unit of building, its length determined by the distance apart of the principal uprights, or of the window openings. The length is commonly 16 ft but may be as little as 9 ft.

Chamfer. The surface made by cutting off the square angle of a ceiling beam or of the opening of a door, window or fireplace. The chamfer often ends with a carved feature (the chamfer stop), which with the form of the chamfer itself may have chronological significance. The chamfer may be, for instance, plain (i.e. concave) or evole moulded (i.e. convex and forming approximately a quadrant).

Collar purlin. A horizontal timber along the axis of a trussed rafter roof, supported by the crown post and supporting the collar to each pair of common rafters.

Crown-post. A short post standing on a tie-beam and supporting the collar-purlin.

Crucks. Pairs of large timbers inclined inwards from the line of the outer walls and meeting at the apex to support the ridge beam.

Gablet. The small gable formed at each end of the main ridge of a hipped roof by bringing the rafters of the hip up to a point below the crest. The triangular opening so formed was left open for smoke to escape, or, in a barn, for ventilation.

Header. A brick so laid that its end or head appears on the face of the wall.

Hipped roof. A roof with sloped ends, instead of vertical gables. In a half-hipped roof the slope begins about halfway between eaves and ridge level.

Jetty. The overhang of an upper floor in a timber-framed house.

Joists. Timbers laid across from wall-to-wall, or to an intermediate beam, to support the floorboards of an upper room. Usually visible from below in the seventeenth century and earlier; i.e. no ceiling.

King-post. A vertical timber resting on a tie-beam and supporting a ridge-beam.

Louvre. An opening in the roof for the escape of smoke from an open hearth.

Mullion. A vertical bar in stone or wood, dividing a window opening.

Newel stair. A stair turning round a central post or newel i.e. spiral or winding staircase.

Pantile. A clay roofing-tile, S-shaped in section, of Dutch origin.

Pargetting. Plaster rendering of the outside of a timber-framed house or building. East Anglian term.

Purlin. A timber running the length of a roof, intermediate between wall plate and ridge, supporting the common rafters.

Speer. A screen to exclude draughts from a doorway.

Stretcher. A brick so laid that its side appears in the face of the wall.

String. A horizontal band, in stone or brick, projecting from the face of a wall between floor levels. In brick houses this led e supported the ends of the joists.

Stud. A vertical timber in a wall of a timber-framed house, or an internal partition.

Summertree. A tree or beam used as a "summer" or horizontal bearing beam; called a breast-summer or bressumer when on the face of a building.

Tie-beam. A horizontal timber across a building, resting on top of walls and tying them together.

Transom. A horizontal bar, of stone or timber, in a tall mullioned window to strengthen the mullions.

Truss. A triangular arrangement of timbers in a roof, either of common rafters with a collar, or of larger timbers at intervals forming the principal members, as in a cruck truss, hammerbeam truss, speer truss. etc.

Tumbling. A gable in brick with a series of triangular wedges of brick work laid at right angles to the line of gable, so as to make a smooth finish to its edge; of Dutch origin.

Vance roof. An East Anglian term for the roof space of a house elsewhere termed the garret.

Those people requiring more information should consult "The English Farmhouse and Cottage" by M.W.Barley. (Routledge, Kegan Paul).

'THE COUNTRYSIDE IN 1970'

Summary of Proposals relating to ancient monuments and historic buildings

A Second Conference on 'The Countryside in 1970' was held in November, 1965, under the joint auspices of the Royal Society of Arts and the Nature Conservancy. In preparation for the Conference twelve Study Groups, drawn from varied and often conflicting interests, reported on such key issues as: planning; professional training; technology; legislation; recreation; traffic; countryside treasures; reclamation of derelict land; information; life and work in the countryside, and the special issues involved in Scotland. The C.B.A. was represented on Study Group 8 which considered the Preservation of Natural, Historic and other National Treasures. The Group's Report (1) contains a number of proposals which have a direct bearing on British archaeology. These, together with relevant recommendations put forward by other Groups, are summarised below for general information and discussion.

1. The Group proposed that a comprehensive register should be prepared on a county basis. This would list the Countryside Treasures, defined as "those natural or man-made features of the countryside which are of public interest by reason of their aesthetic, archaeological, architectural, historic, scenic, scientific, sociological or traditional interest, and whose deterioration or destruction would represent a serious loss to our heritage". The Group rejected any kind of grading in order of merit or of national and local importance. Man-made Treasures were specified as including ancient monuments and field systems, Roman remains, monuments and memorials, engineering works, metalwork, wood-work, stone-work, clocks and sun-dials, instruments of punishment, parish pounds, period gardens, etc. Buildings were classified as collective and individual. In assessing whether a group of buildings qualified as a Countryside Treasure it was not required that each building should be individually worthy but that it should make a modest contribution to the general effect. In addition to grouped buildings, attention was drawn to show towns or villages, model towns and scenic towns or villages. Individual buildings included those on the Statutory Lists, a wide range of domestic buildings from country houses to cottages, lodges, inns and follies, agricultural, civic, industrial, military and commercial buildings, schools, colleges and charities, maritime works and ecclesiastical buildings of all denominations.

2. Having defined the Countryside Treasures, the Group considered the administrative machinery required to gather information and select items for conservation, to collate and publish information on chosen items and to control, maintain and use them appropriately. It was suggested that the Minister of Housing and Local Government and the Secretary of State for Wales might sponsor the scheme in England and Wales respectively. Formulation of a policy for the implementation of the scheme would be a matter for consultation between the Ministries (2) of Housing, Land and Natural Resources, Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, the Department of Education and Science, and national voluntary bodies, including archaeological societies and local authority associations.

3. After consultations, a policy circular would be sent to County Councils and other local authorities inviting them to set up County Countryside Committees. To ensure cooperation between the latter and the County Planning Committee it was suggested that the Chief Planning Officer should be one of the principal officers advising the County Countryside Committees, which would consist of two-thirds county councillors with one third coopted members drawn from organisations having interests associated with either the countryside generally or with particular types of items chosen for conservation. The Group did not advocate representation of an organisation by virtue of the fact that it happened to exist within a county; only active organisations would be considered and the representative would be a person whose interest and knowledge justified his presence.

(1) Report of Study Group No.8: Preservation of Natural, Historic and other Treasures. Royal Society of Arts (1965). Price 3s.

(2) The Ministry of Public Building and Works is not referred to in the Report

4. The initial task confronting the County Countryside Committees would be to compile a list of all 'Treasures' in the county, whether adequately cared for or not. This initial list would then be broken down to be worked on by District, and by Parish Councils. On the basis of lists so returned the County Countryside Committees making full use of voluntary help, would compile a master list which might subsequently be given legal status possibly under the Local Land Charges Register. Owners, occupiers, users and the public should be adequately informed, and it should be ensured that a statutory or voluntary body or person would bear responsibility for the maintenance, management and finance of each Treasure, the condition of which should be reviewed triennially. Schools might be encouraged

to include local treasures in their environmental studies, and to become junior guardians assisting in the care and maintenance of treasures in their neighbourhood. Private owners might be encouraged to allow specialist surveys and to enter where advisable into suitable management arrangements. On this basis adequate publicity should be undertaken and a county Treasure Week could be organised to ensure full knowledge and appreciation of the county's treasures and of their conservation.

5. The registers would include a large-scale map showing the location of the 'Treasures' and would be made available through normal local authority channels. Libraries and/or museums, it was hoped, might be willing to assume responsibility for answering enquiries from the public in regard to local 'Treasures'.

6. While responsibility for ensuring that the 'Treasures' were reviewed would rest with the County Countryside Committees, it was proposed that the task should be carried out by the Parish Councils, reporting to the District Councils. In the case of 'Treasures' needing specialised management, a report would be sought from an appropriate voluntary body or a local correspondent. Women's Institutes were also envisaged as acting as watchdogs with regard to the general welfare of the local 'Treasures'.

7. The Group recommended that grants should be made available by local authorities and Rural Community Councils to voluntary bodies and private owners and/or occupiers who undertook conservation.

8. After considering existing provisions for the conservation of localised features, the Group passed on the following comments and recommendations to Study Group 5, which was reviewing legislations:-

(a) the term "Ecclesiastical Building" should be more closely defined so as to allow only places of worship actually used as such to be excluded from the provisions of Ancient Monuments Acts and the Town and Country Planning Acts.

(b) that the Interim Preservation Notice/Preservation Order procedure under the Ancient Monuments Acts should be simplified where practicable to resemble the B.P.O. procedure of the Town and Country Planning Acts.

9. Study Group 5 recommended the re-enactment on a comprehensive basis in a new Town and Country Planning Act of the "amenity clause" which should be renamed the 'conservation clause' and would include objects of architectural or historic interest. It was urged that so far as possible the clause should be accepted by and applied to the Service Departments.

10. In considering Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Group 5 drew attention to the inadequacy of safeguards from agricultural operations and forestry, which are exempt from planning control. In particular, where a Site is ploughed and a ploughing grant obtained from the Ministry of Agriculture, there occurs the illogical situation of one Department frustrating by financial incentives the statutory aims and functions of another. The Group proposed that the Ministry of Agriculture should be relieved of any obligations to make ploughing grants for land in Sites of Special Scientific Interest. The Group did not advocate that forestry should be brought under planning control, except in the case of Sites of Special Scientific Interest.

11. The Nuffield Enquiry into Common Lands emphasised the crucial nature of the next five years during which the registration of common rights will be proceeding under the new Act. The Report contains detailed proposals for the management of different types of common land. It suggests that features of exceptional archaeological interest, such as well preserved long barrows, should be fenced to give protection in places where public use is heavy. If finances are straightened, it suggests that tolls should be charged to visit them.

12. Study Group 4 considered planning practice and its Report (1) contains information which amenity and archaeological societies would find of interest. The Group stressed the need to enlist public participation at an early stage in the formulation of Development Plans: local societies could help by marshalling informed opinion.. In considering the scope of local planning controls, the Group concluded that the fines imposed for violation of B.P.O.s (and tree preservation orders) were too small to act as a deterrent and the procedure for making such orders too cumbersome for action in emergency.

13. Study Group 10 reviewed the whole field of information and the countryside. Listing the channels for information available, the Group remarked that local museums were obvious centres, but relatively few people visited them. This was attributed to the fact that they were not well advertised, were often tucked away in back streets, and were sometimes only open for irregular hours where staffed by volunteers. Lack of staff and resources also limited the impact which they could make through the use of new techniques in presenting their collections.

As regards local societies, there was a coordinated campaign to inform the public through these channels. Lectures were attended by only a limited range of people. An information campaign should be mounted and Countryside Information Centres. organised. Archaeological societies and museums could profitably take part if such activities transpired.

14. Study Group 9 which considered planning and development in Scotland, recommended the establishment of 1 Countryside Commission in Scotland.

(1) Study Group 4: Report on the Countryside: Planning Practice.
Royal Society of Arts (1965). Price 3s.

Scottish Broch Mystery Solved.

The origin of the Scottish dry stone towers known as Brochs has at last been established. During excavations carried out last year by the Ministry of Public Building and Works, Mr. J.R.C. Hamilton, Inspector of Ancient Monuments, discovered that the Brochs were built at the beginning of the Christian era. The Shetland Island broch site of Clickhimin near Larwick was the scene of the dig which yielded much useful information.

After removing hundreds of tons of debris Hamilton uncovered an earlier stone fort dating from the fourth to the second century B.C. It was the heightening of the low walls of this type of fort that later gave rise to the familiar shape of the brochs. The reason for the increased height appears to be the necessity for protection against fire raids.

Contrary to popular belief, the wall did not however enclose a number of round huts. In fact, there were tenemented half-timbered buildings erected round the inner face of the wall, two and even three storeys in height. The ground floors of these Celtic dwellings were used for curing hides, corn grinding, cooking, pottery and metalwork as well as providing shelter for the domestic cattle. The living quarters were at first or second floor level and were reached by wooden ladders. Doors from the first floor rooms gave access to the rampart walk on top of the encircling wall. A two-storey blockhouse defended the main gateway and its approach across a tidal isthmus. With these impregnable defences can one wonder that the mystery of the broch has been so well guarded?

BOOK REVIEW

"OF GRAVES & EPITAPHS" By Kenneth Lindley published by HUTCHINSON at 50s.

This is a fascinating book which shows how visiting and looking at graveyards can be extremely fascinating. The author has gathered much information about design and rection of churchyardmemorials. He shows how the styles have varied over the centuries, recording lettering, and epitaphs of all descriptions and the available materials were used ranging from Cornish slate to Shropshire cast iron.

The end covers and frontispiece have been made in the fashion of the Pre-Raphaelite period, giving the impression of weathered stone and green ivy - drawn by John Piper and engraved on the wood by Kenneth Lindley. But as the rubbings and photographs reveal, there is plenty to see and discover in the mid-twentieth century. In fact, the churchyard remains one of the richest untapped sources for the discovery of vernacular art its imaginative best. It is also one of the most important, and least respected, features of our landscape, the like of which is to be found nowhere else. If you want to find out about the Englishmen of past generations, how they lived, what they believed, their trades and professions, their superstitions or their achievements then you can shoose no better, or more enjoyable, source for such information than a churchyard, with this book as guide and stimulus.

If you would like to obtain the above book please contact the Secretary.