

THE NORTH HERTS ANTIQUARY



PRODUCED BY THE NORTH HERTS ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

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HON. EDITORS

J. MOSS-ECCARDT

P. PALMER 11, Runnalow, Letchworth

FREE TO MEMBERS

THE NORTH HERTS ANTIQUARY NO. 3.

LOCAL WORK. Further excavations were carried out at Blackhorse Road from 25th July until 13th August. A preliminary survey by Dr Aitken with the proton magnetometer made the location of features easier. The most important find was of a pit some 8ft in depth and of the type discovered in 1960. It contained potsherds from at least five vessels which belonged to the late Neolithic. There were fragments of deer antler and other bones, while a bone pin was of especial interest. At another part of the site pits and small ditches were found. The material included Neolithic, Bronze Age and Iron Age potsherds, an antler pick, and some flint implements. A further investigation of Icknield Way by cutting a section showed the arrangement of three ditches as in former years still held good beyond the railway bridge.

Pound Farm, Ickleford. These investigations were reluctantly concluded due to the unpromising nature of the site. Some really enthusiastic helpers did a fine job in difficult conditions. We have decided that the medieval manor house was probably destroyed very near the surface in modern times .

Survey of moated-sites. The Committee hope that this work will go forward during the Autumn and winter. Several authorities on the Medieval period have given the opinion that the work is important and worth doing. Anyone interested should get in touch with the Secretary.

FINANCIAL STATEMENT

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR ENDING / 31st MARCH, 1966

<u>EXPENDITURE</u> : -	£	s	d	<u>INCOME</u> : -	£	s	d	
Stationery, printing, postage	18	10	1	Subscriptions : -				
Lecture expenses	9	6	3	Full members (28)	30	8	0	
Society's subscriptions	1	16	0	Junior " (3)		15	0	
Periodicals	1	1	1	Institutional(3)	6	6	0	
Hire of projector	1	1	0	Donations received	1	1	0	
Loss on outing to Uffington	1	10	0	Cheque to Colchester not presented and written back		10	6	
				Collections at lectures	19	0		
Excess of Income over Expenditure carried to balance sheet	6	16	1	Profit on Cotswolds outing		1	0	
	40	0	6			40	0	6

BALANCE SHEET

<u>LIABILITIES</u> : -				<u>ASSETS</u> : -				
1966/7 Subscriptions paid in advance				Cash in hand	2	10	8.	
Full members (4)	4	4	0					
Junior members (2)		10	0					
<u>Sundry creditors</u> : -				Cash at Bank	39	5	5	
F.Green Ltd. - Duplicating	2	14	6					
Beds Arch. Council subscription	9	10	0					
Excess of Income over Expenditure for the year ended 31st March, 1966	£6	16	1					
Credit balance brought forward from previous year	£18	1	6.					
	24	17	7					
	41	16	1			41	16	1

Signed

N.M. BLAIR.

Hon. Treasurer.

I have audited the accounts of the North Herts Archaeological Society with the books vouchers etc., produced to me and certify them to be correct.
signed L.G.A. Gowers A.I.B. Hon.Auditor

CHAIRMAN'S ADDRESS at Annual General Meeting.

The Society's activities over the year 1965/66 were outlined and slides shown of some of the places visited during the excursions. Included were Avebury, Belas Knapp, Uffington and Chedworth. A plea was made for greater support of these outings. The lectures during the Winter had maintained their usual high standard and included: "Hallstatt and La Tene" by James Dyer, "The County Record Office and Local History" by Miss E. Lynch, "Geology for archaeologists" by Peter Smith, "The excavation of fossil mammals and the formation of a Cave Research Group" by Dr. Sutcliffe, "Heraldry" by W.H. Kuhlicke. Evening meetings had been held in the Museum to enable members to take part in practical work but these had been poorly attended. A scheme to carry out a survey of moated sites in Hertfordshire was begun with a visit to the motte-and-bailey site at Pirton. Shortly afterwards The Ministry of Public Building and Works requested a rescue investigation of the moated site at Pound Farm, Ickleford and work has been carried out there at weekends under Mr. Palmer.

The remainder of the talk was devoted to the importance of local archaeology in throwing light on vital aspects of human history. The excavation at Blackhorse Road provided a great deal of this kind of information. Amongst the rubbish on archaeological sites were animal bones in large quantities which can be studied and analysed by zoologists with an interest in archaeology. The bones from Blackhorse Road were studied at Cambridge and showed the types and sizes of animals kept there. Among the Neolithic bones were those of *Bos primigenius*, an early ox with a horn-spread of around 6ft from tip to tip. Other animals included sheep, goats, deer, dog or fox. In the Iron Age pits were horse remains as well as the other more common domestic species. Among the smaller animals were snails of various species, so small that they had to be seen through a microscope. The conditions under which the various species flourish are well known to specialists and it is therefore possible to interpret the occurrence of certain snails as evidence for the climatic conditions in which they flourished. Further evidence for climate is forthcoming from botanical specimens which may be found in the form of charcoal or carbonised fragments. At Blackhorse Road 10 different species were identified at the Royal Botanic Gardens Laboratory.

An important aspect of human progress is the manufacture of tools from natural resources; what we describe as technology. Stone tools and implements are known from many local sites and those from the Neolithic which were found at Blackhorse Road are of very fine workmanship. Some axes in our neighbourhood are of igneous rock which can be traced back to their place of origin by petrological analysis. Several examples come from the Hitchin area and indicate the importance of Icknield Way as a trade - route. One axe originated in E. Ireland while several came from S. W. England. Stone can also serve for grindstones and was often transported over considerable distances. A fragment of lava had been brought to Blackhorse Road from the Rhineland and was traced to the quarries at Mayen and Kottenheim.

Iron objects from the earlier periods was scarce at Blackhorse Road but there was some evidence of local iron-working in the form of slag which was examined by the Iron and Steel Research Federation and found to be the result of a primitive extraction process. A large chunk of iron which dates from the mid-second century B.C. was a cauldron-rim of a type well-known on the Continent but hitherto unknown in Britain.

From the excavation of sites actual events can be recognised in many cases. At Ravensburgh Castle and Wilbury a period of great activity in the building of defences coincides with the arrival in S. Britain of the Marnians, an event dated to the third century B.C. Similarly rebuilding of Roman forts or the destruction of villas indicate historical events.

The archaeologist is continually re-thinking and evaluating the interpretation of sites and localities. A classic example is the discovery of the dagger carvings on one of the Stonehenge trilithon

uprights by Dr. Stone. For over 3000 years these carvings had remained undetected until Dr. Stone began to photograph the inscriptions on the stones. The daggers are of a type known to belong to the Shaft Graves of Mycenae (16-1500 B.C.). Investigation is not confined to the field; museums and their cellars have frequently been the sources of important discoveries. The regular study of aerial photographs can be rewarding and a visit to a building site is never a waste of time.

A true archaeological enthusiast will almost haunt his local museum until he is entirely familiar with its contents and the circumstances of their discovery. For too many people archaeology stops after the completion of an excavation, for the few interpretations is the prime object as it is in this way that the story of the Past is unravelled. Archaeology is a wide and varied discipline and there is room for any interested person provided he or she, has an unshakable belief in accuracy and truth.

ON THE TRACK OF NEANDERTHAL MAN.

Many of our members will remember the interesting talk given by Mr. E. S. Higgs, Department of Archaeology, University of Cambridge, on the value of animal bones to archaeologists. Last year Mr. Higgs led an expedition to the cave site of Asprochaliko, near Ionnina, N. Greece. The site is Palaeolithic and is dated by Radiocarbon techniques to 25,000 B.C. The finds are the earliest known in Greece. A further cave was discovered at Kastritsa where the finds are Upper Palaeolithic and date from the later part of the last ice age. The 1965 season had as its aim the establishment of the stratigraphical sequence at Asprochaliko. The bottom layer contains a Mousterian industry and is some three feet thick and above this is a five foot layer containing a micro-Mousterian industry which was related to the industry of the layer below. Deposits of five feet thickness above this contained Upper Palaeolithic material which is most important in the study of the emergence of homo sapiens in Europe. Mr. Higgs has just set out for Greece again to carry out his 1966 season of work on these important sites.

A GREAT FIND AT DUNSTABLE AND ITS AFTERMATH.

During excavations carried out on the site of a Dominican Friary in Dunstable the Manshead Archaeological Society discovered a gold badge in the form of swan. This find belonged to the early fifteenth century and was the heraldic badge of Jean, duc de Berry (d. 1416). A number of families in England used the Swan Badge by virtue of their connection with Godfrey de Bouillon, son of a count of Boulogne, a line to which Jeande Berry was related through his stepmother, and his second wife. The English families included Beauchamp, Neville, Bohun, Courtenay, Luttrell, Cary and Stafford. (For further information see Sir Anthony Wagner in *Archaeologia* MCVII).

The badge was found to be the property of the owner of the site and not Treasure Trove. It has not gone to the local museum at Luton, nor to the British Museum. but was auctioned at Sotheby's at a price of £4,000 and is to go out of the country if an export licence can be obtained.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS.

University of Cambridge - Board of Extra-Mural Studies

"The Prehistoric Archaeology of North Hertfordshire" - Course of 24 sessions.

The course will be a practical one for those who wish to learn something of the archaeology of their own area. It will be held in the Museum on Wednesday evenings at 7.30 p.m. and will begin on 28th September. The course tutor will be Mr Moss-Eccardt. Original work will be done by the students who will use maps, drawings and objects to collect information for a publication on local archaeology. No previous experience is necessary and the course is designed for those who wish to apply their own practical abilities to the furtherance of local knowledge. There will be visits to monuments in the locality, as well as to museums.

Those wishing to receive further details should apply to the Warden of the Settlement.

