

medieval city'. Mr Clarke and Miss Dunnett call my attention to p. 38, where they say the information will be found. The relevant paragraph begins 'The only other feature of interest [my italics] was a small pit . . . of the early Saxon period.' But what does this mean? Of interest to whom? The writer of the report? The sections published in fig. 5 are quite blank from the modern surface to the top of the Roman layers, a depth of over four feet. Was there really disturbed, undifferentiated garden soil to such a depth everywhere? And if so, what does this mean; over what period did it build up? But the tradition of publishing sections on which only the Roman levels are properly drawn seems only too well established. By far the most extraordinary example is a section through the Close wall at Lincoln, titled 'The Sub-Deanery and Old Bishop's Palace', where a depth of over 12 ft. of post-Roman deposits, in association with major structures, is left blank, only the Roman levels being properly shown (*Arch. J.*, CXVII, 1960, fig. 3 opp. p. 46). It is perhaps hardly a coincidence that so little is

known to us of the post-Roman archaeology of Lincoln.

*Challenge from Colchester*, the appeal leaflet of the Colchester Excavations Committee, makes quite plain where the balance of interest lies. Apart from two passing mentions, the only reference to the post-Roman town calls attention to how little is known 'of how and when the [Roman] town came to its end and the Saxon and Medieval city began to arise in its ruins'. There is no indication that here was a borough of sufficient importance to merit an early Norman castle equalled only by the White Tower of London.

Our present knowledge of Romano-British towns, gathered by extensive and persistent research over the last fifty years and more, sets an example which must be followed in the later periods. It would be a tragedy if the knowledge so well gained for one period should blind us to the need to extend this work towards an understanding of our towns throughout their existence.

## Timber Mortuary Houses and Earthen Long Barrows Again

*Mr Derek Simpson* (ANTIQUITY, 1968, 142) discussed the Editor's note 'Northmen and Southmen' (ANTIQUITY, 1967, 313), with special reference to Paul Ashbee's publication of the Fussell's Lodge non-megalithic long barrow. Mr Ashbee writes:

It is proper that a cause about to be enshrined should have an *advocatus diaboli* probing its frailties. Mr Simpson [1] has taken up this rôle to arraign what are, in his view, general weaknesses in certain arguments regarding Northern and Eastern European elements in our Earlier Neolithic and, in particular, those about the Fussell's Lodge [2] and other pitched mortuary houses which have been incorporated in our earthen long barrows.

Mr Simpson's specific objections regarding Fussell's Lodge are, if he is read aright (his fn. 7 must refer to p. 14 not p. 75 of the report), the absence of positive traces of vertical timbers, the covering by bones of the central pit which was thought to have held such a timber and,

finally, the functions of the pit which slighted the entrance to the trapezoid enclosure.

In 1957 when this excavation was undertaken I also was inclined to be hostile to the concept of mortuary houses. I felt that more positive traces would have to be found for such a view to be acceptable. Mr Simpson must surely realize that prehistory is the product of a relationship between an individual and the mute remains. More positive traces have come to light, namely those at Wayland's Smithy, and my views have changed accordingly.

For the evidence of mortuary houses in earthen long barrows there are two sources. These are, first, the modern excavations which have produced manifold aspects, still largely imprecise and little understood, of the mechanics of the decay and collapse of a structure, and, secondly, the results of excavation over more than a century. Thus the evidence cannot be expected to conform in the ready manner which would seem to be Mr Simpson's expectation.

## ANTIQUITY

To select the points that trouble him, Mr Simpson must have read the accounts of the Fussell's Lodge excavations with considerable attention. He is invited to read them again and weigh his points against the other factors. Posts sited in pits A, B, and C [3] would not have fitted the pits exactly. While it is assumed that continued access to the enclosure interior (infilled at this stage in any case) was not required, some manoeuvring space would have been there over the infilled pit C. On this matter of a post blocking access, surely we are dealing with the simultaneous burial of an assemblage of bones? Objections to the possible setting of a post into the narrow gap between the ends of the trapezoid enclosure are difficult to understand, as is the point regarding the lateral spread of pitched timbers. The former perhaps underestimates early engineers: the latter involves a ridge, and spread timbers inside the enclosure. Bones placed around the erected posts would have overlapped the filling of the pits to a considerable extent and with the decay of the posts, and collapse of roof and superincumbent material, could easily have been spread over and into the top of pit B. The mass of bone-group B, however, it should be remembered, lay largely to one side of the pit [4], not over it. Stacked long bones protruded over the edge of pit A too, and pieces of a pot were found both beneath them and in the pit's infill. There are also other considerations such as the essentially ridged though irregularly spread character of the mass of covering flints, which by their fall and settlement had broken and separated skulls and substantial bones beneath them.

Mr Simpson has doubts regarding many of the sites which I have listed as 'suggested' pitched axial mortuary houses, and these doubts I share to a certain extent. This list does, however, demonstrate that there is a constant pattern of features, in both Southern and Northern regions, which *may* be considered, like the evidence from Fussell's Lodge, as traces of collapsed structures. As a common scheme such structures make a more satisfactory pattern than the dismal 'pits' (?ritual) and piles of stones which Mr Simpson would have as our portion. Again, such timber structures make

sense of certain stone-built long barrows, and *vice versa*.

Some earthen long barrows have not contained mortuary houses. The three in Wiltshire, not far from each other, are such exceptions and may perhaps be a special factor in the wider aspects of the Avebury complex. Some consideration other than burial may have motivated their building. Should they, indeed, be considered as earthen long barrows in the accepted sense?

Mr Simpson is at pains to point out that gabled wooden structures in middle Germany are too late to be ancestral to the British monuments. I am surprised that he should think that such have been thought to provide antecedents. We surely have two parallel developments, one on the European mainland that led to Helmsdorf and Leubingen, another in Britain that led to Wrangworthy Cross.

With these thoughts I can but leave Mr Simpson to his pits and his pessimism, and this with the hope that he may be impelled to excavate one or more of the earthen long barrows on my list which, I suggest, may contain the remains of a mortuary house. An *advocatus diaboli* has the duty of opposing a case however strong that case may be. We must agree to differ. I prefer that 'cautious archaeological optimism' attributed to me by our Editor. Many more things are emerging more widely and clearly than ever I allowed when I wrote the words which evoked that comment.

PAUL ASHBEE

### NOTES

[1] ANTIQUITY, 1968, 142-4.

[2] *Archaeologia*, c, 1966, 1-80.

[3] *Op. cit.*, 7-8.

[4] *Op. cit.*, 13, fig. 4; pl. VIII.

### *Mr Simpson adds this comment:*

As Mr Ashbee directed I have read his most detailed report once more. On the basis of the published evidence I'm afraid my doubts remain. I still feel that Waylands Smithy represents the only site where there is indisputable evidence for a pitched roof mortuary house within the still comparatively small

number of scientifically excavated long barrows. It is surely special pleading to say that three of the number of sites within this latter category, because they presented no such features, must be considered a special case. The argument, like many a typological series, could be reversed. May I repeat once more too that my main doubts concerned the general acceptance of a pitched mortuary house tradition within British

long barrows with the very important implications which this involved for the origin of some components of our Early and Middle Neolithic. The Fussell's Lodge report and its discussion appeared to represent a major turning point in such ideas which existed since Professor Piggott's 'Windmill Hill: East or West'. To me the evidence still appears insufficient to embrace these theories wholeheartedly.

## Verulamium, 1966-8

PLATES VI *b* and VII *a, b*

*Dr Ian Stead, of the Inspectorate of Ancient Monuments, Ministry of Public Building and Works, presents an interim report on the King Harry Lane Site at Verulamium (St Albans, Hertfordshire), and Mr Peter Curnow and Mr Richard Reece have added an appendix on the coins.*

In 1965 the Inspectorate of Ancient Monuments, Ministry of Public Building and Works, was informed of proposals for a large housing development intended to cover some 80 acres outside the Silchester Gate of Verulamium. Archaeologically this area was little known, although it was obviously crossed by the Silchester Road, and the only previous excavations had established the course of a major Iron Age ditch [1]. But its archaeological potential was great, for there might well have been Roman development alongside the road, and Roman burials, and the area could also have been used for Iron Age settlement. Following trial trenching and a proton magnetometer survey in 1965, extensive excavations were carried out from 1966 to 1968. The results are sufficiently important to justify an interim report, but it must be emphasized that the material from these excavations has not been studied in detail—as yet few of the finds have been given more than a cursory examination in the field.\*

### ROMAN SETTLEMENT AND BURIALS

Predictably there were traces of ribbon development alongside the Silchester Road, but both its initial date and duration were of interest.

\* The writer is grateful to Professor S. S. Frere for criticizing the draft of this interim report.

Although the area excavated was between 200 and 500 yds. (182-457 m.) beyond the '1955 Ditch' [2] it was apparent that Flavian, if not earlier, occupation had lined the road as far south-west as Wheeler's Ditch (FIG. 1). The buildings had suffered from centuries of ploughing, which had also removed the metal-ling of the Roman road, and no house-plan was recovered.

Judging from the coin-list the occupation here lasted for about 200 years, ending some time in the middle of the 3rd century. It is difficult to be precise about the terminal date because of the general scarcity of coins minted early in the 3rd century, but the great rarity of coins of Gallienus and his successors is significant. The coin evidence may be illustrated by a histogram (FIG. 2), which compares the King Harry Lane site with other Verulamium excavations. The enormous rise in coins in the AD 250-75 bracket, which is a feature of the other sites, is absent from King Harry Lane, whose coin-list virtually stops at that point. The occupation of this site must have ended by *c.* AD 250-60, and its desertion must surely be linked with the construction of the Verulamium town wall, sometime in the middle of the 3rd century.† The wall excluded the King Harry Lane site, whose inhabitants were presumably rehoused within the town.

Roman burials, found in four separate areas (FIG. 1), were in the main poorly equipped. Cremations were invariably in urns, either alone or associated with a small beaker or flagon; the burials resemble those excavated at St Stephens,

† Professor Frere suggests a date before AD 250 [3].