

Antiquity

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Editorial Notes

THE excavation season in Great Britain and Ireland is in full swing as we write, but will be practically over by the time this number appears. Woodhenge and the adjacent small circles are being explored by Captain and Mrs Cunnington with highly satisfactory results; the Trundle (near Goodwood, Sussex) by Dr Cecil Curwen; the lake-village at Meare by the Somerset Archaeological Society; St. Catherine's Hill (Winchester) by the Hampshire Field Club; the village at Chysauster (near Penzance, Cornwall) by Mr T. F. Kendrick, of the British Museum; and Belas Knap (Glos.), by H. M. Office of Works. The excavation of four Romano-British towns—Colchester, Caerleon, Richborough, and Alchester (Oxon.)—is in progress (see p. 353). We mention only a few of those undertakings which are personally known to us; there are doubtless many others on foot. Of those mentioned the majority are due to the enterprise of private individuals, associated in some of the cases with archaeological societies.



At Woodhenge there are, in addition to Woodhenge itself, about a dozen small burial-circles, ranged for the most part in a line to the south-south-east. One is double and shows also signs of holes; and there is a small circle of holes without any ditch. All these smaller circles were, like the essential features of Woodhenge, revealed by air-photography—they are practically invisible on the ground; and prints from negatives made this year by the R.A.F. are being used to guide the work.

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Air-photography is also indirectly responsible for the excavations at the Trundle, for it was an air-photograph which drew attention to a hitherto unnoticed inner circle, representing probably an older 'camp' on the same site. Here too the photographic print is being used as a map, though the remains in question are plainly visible on the ground.

Furthermore, the spell of dry weather we have just enjoyed has produced a fine crop of new discoveries in several widely separated regions, some of them being of first-rate importance. These have all been made by Officers of the Royal Air Force in the course of their duty. The photographs taken will be published in due time, some of them in ANTIQUITY. For the present, therefore, we shall say no more, except that the results surpass the most sanguine expectations.



A propos of surface aids to excavation, we have been asked by a correspondent to explain 'General Pitt Rivers' method of discovering pits and ditches by means of hammering the surface with a pick, referred to in "Man and his Past" (p. 214)'. The method is quite simple. When the ground is struck, the sound given back is much deeper and more 'booming' over a silted-up and often invisible ditch than elsewhere, where it has been undisturbed. By walking and hitting the ground with the butt end of a pick, it is quite easy to locate such hidden ditches and pits, and even to ascertain their exact width. It was thus that General Pitt Rivers found the Angle Ditch on Oakley Down in Cranborne Chase. By using this method on Worthy Down, near Winchester, the writer and the late Mr Hooley recovered and pegged out the plan of a Celtic village; the plan was transferred to paper and a sealed copy deposited, before excavation began, with the Society of Antiquaries. When compared later with the results of excavation, there was little to alter. The method of 'ramming' or 'sounding' was used at Stonehenge by Colonel Hawley and is being extensively employed at Windmill Hill by Mr and Mrs Keiller and their staff. At the latter place a specially made wooden ram is used, resembling the one used by navvies. The method is probably not applicable to certain soils; it works best on the bare chalk, where there is only about six inches of humus.



Another correspondent suggests that 'an opportunity for discussion and correspondence in ANTIQUITY would serve a distinctly constructive

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purpose'. We agree; and we can generally find room for the ventilation of new ideas and for fresh interpretations of observed facts. But the border-line between friendly argument and polemics is easily overstepped. When once an argument has begun it is apt to become lengthy and involved, and sometimes heated. The details of controversy are generally dull and technical and more suited to the meetings of a learned society. Even a friendly argument might pall if conducted in a Review appearing at intervals of three months, especially if the parties to it lived on different continents, thus perhaps involving even longer intervals of time between each letter. Space also is limited.

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For some of these reasons we have deliberately ignored the Sligo controversy, to the regret of another correspondent who charges us also with neglecting Ireland. (The Sligo controversy turns on certain limestone boulders which are claimed as humanly-made objects, and as evidence for the occupation of Ireland by Man during the Palaeolithic period). We think the charge is exaggerated.¹

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The quarrels of the learned are notorious; but flints seem to have some unusually provocative quality in this respect. Can it be that they still retain an 'aura' of forgotten fights in far off eolithic days?—or is there some simpler explanation? The main bone of contention is whether certain English flints were chipped by Man or by Nature. It is a case of great importance, for upon the verdict depends nothing less than the antiquity of man. The facts to be proved are (1) that the flints have been humanly worked; (2) that, if so, they were found in an *undisturbed* geological deposit of the age claimed.

In recent controversies in East Anglia both claims have been put forward by some and denied by others. Either the 'implements' have failed to carry conviction, or subsequent disturbance of the deposit has been alleged. The earliest rude attempts of Man to make a tool would naturally resemble Nature's handiwork; but there are several facts which suggest rather a natural origin for rostro-carinates and eoliths—the immense numbers found, for instance, on a given site. Another criticism is based on the fact that not a single fragment of a human bone has ever been found, in spite of the abundance of the

¹ See for instance Vol 1, pp. 97, 98 and plate, pp. 124-6, 253 and 510, but, with the whole world to cover, we must ask for patience. We have not forgotten Ireland, and have received the promise of a certain article when the time for its publication shall have come.

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'implements' and the diligence of their discoverers. (The Foxhall jaw-bone, now lost, has no evidential value).

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The point at issue between Mr Hazzledine Warren and Mr Sainty (see pp. 344-5) concerns an alleged disturbance of the boulder-clay in which an undoubtedly 'human' implement was found. It is a point which, as Mr Warren says, cannot now be settled; for it arises from an observation which from the nature of the case cannot be repeated. We would remark, however, that boulder-clay is a formation whose subsequent disturbance or rearrangement is often very hard to detect; and was it not from under alleged boulder-clay that there came the famous Ipswich skeleton?—at first claimed by Mr Reid Moir to be of pre-Glacial age.* He subsequently realized that the supposed boulder-clay under which the skeleton was found was nothing more than hill-wash†, as claimed all along by his opponents. This hill-wash covers a prehistoric floor with flint implements and *pottery*, which Mr Reid Moir regards as Lower Aurignacian, but which others consider to be not earlier than Neolithic. If, in an observation of such fundamental importance as this, Mr Reid Moir—and, one may add, many other observers of great experience—could be misled by appearances, surely it is equally possible that Mr Sainty may have made a similar mistake?

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The whole world has now realized the importance of the UR Excavations, which yielded such magnificent finds last season. Those who have seen them at the temporary exhibition in the British Museum will have noticed with what skill they were unearthed and preserved. The excavation of the royal cemetery will be continued this winter, and there are good reasons for expecting more valuable discoveries. The readers of ANTIQUITY made a substantial contribution to the funds last year, and we are now asking them to help again. A form is enclosed in the present number for this purpose.

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During October and November the Editor will be travelling in the Middle East, out of the reach of correspondence, and all communications concerned with ANTIQUITY should be addressed to the Assistant Editor, 24 Parkend Road, Gloucester.

* *Proc. Prehistoric Soc. East Anglia*, vol. I (part 2) 1912, p. 194; and *Journ. Roy. Anthr. Inst.*, vol. XLII, 1912, p. 345.

† *Nature*, 12 October 1916.