



AVEBURY, WILTS (see 'The Plan for Avebury', pp. 490-3)
A4r-ph. Major G. W. G. Allen

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Editorial Notes

THE PLAN FOR AVEBURY, which we print on pages 490-3, has been issued to the public over the names of a number of distinguished persons as an appeal for funds 'to preserve the surroundings of Avebury by means of a Planning Scheme'. The sum of £11,000 is required, and the scheme will be controlled by representatives of certain public bodies and by the National Trust. We most heartily commend it to our readers and (quoting the words of the appeal) to 'all those who love the English countryside, who reverence our long history, and who wish to see what is still unspoilt preserved for our children's children'. The address for subscriptions is The Avebury Preservation Fund, Barclays Bank, 23 Grosvenor Gardens, London, S.W. 1.

We are indebted to Major G. W. G. Allen for allowing us to reproduce as our frontispiece the very fine air-photograph of Avebury which he has taken quite recently.



The scheme is the most important of its kind that has been submitted to the country since the land round Stonehenge was acquired for the National Trust ten years ago, for about three times the amount now needed. It would be possible, of course, to suggest minor improvements in it, such as the inclusion of part of Avebury Down, with its little circle of stones and its prehistoric hollow road lined with sarsens,

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and we earnestly hope that it may be found possible to include this area. The land is of little value, being rough pasture that has never, since prehistoric times, been cultivated—which is why it is of such interest to archaeologists and others. But for the rest the scheme is probably the best that could have been devised to secure for all time a beautiful fragment of historic England.



Nearly 300 years have passed since the day in January 1649 when Avebury was discovered by John Aubrey. What a day that must have been for him! Nowadays his successors, the field-archaeologists who roam the countryside with Ordnance Maps, have for the most part to be content with such minor monuments as round barrows; and it is for them a red-letter day if they can bag a new long barrow or a camp. The harvest has been gathered in by a long succession of field-workers, and their discoveries have been, in great measure, embodied in the national maps. We in England have now arrived at a fairly satisfactory state of affairs in such matters, by a characteristic compromise between the State and the individual. The process consists of discovery, record of position, scheduling, and finally (in certain instances) of excavation. We even record the exact position of important finds of objects; in this the co-operation of museums, learned societies, and individuals with the Ordnance Survey has reached a high point of efficiency.



Scotland is perhaps one of the most promising parts of Britain awaiting the field-archaeologist. It would not be correct to imply that many major sites remain to be found there, though Mr Ian Richmond's rediscovery of a lost Roman fort at Fendoch, near Crieff, shows that such possibilities cannot be ruled out. Nevertheless it is certain that a whole mass of minor antiquities are still unrecorded on the maps, and the field-archaeologist may expect to be amply rewarded. A great many ancient monuments were recorded by the compilers of the Statistical Account of Scotland in the 18th century, before the Ordnance Maps existed. When the national survey was undertaken, many of these sites were incorporated on the maps, and the surveyors,

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in those more leisurely times, often took a great deal of trouble to locate them. But they had necessarily to rely mainly upon the help of local archaeologists, and when such were not to be found in a district some sites were naturally left out. For instance, until recently it was not known that there is a small group of long cairns in Strathearn, though some of them were mentioned in the Statistical Account ; and another example also mentioned there, in the extreme south of Roxburghshire, was only located (by the present writer) last summer.



The difficulties of the pre-Ordnance Survey field-archaeologists can best be appreciated by a visit to countries which still have no large-scale maps. They had no means except verbal description of recording the exact position of their discoveries ; no doubt they did their best, but their descriptions are often vague and baffling. One encounters precisely such difficulties today in Balkan lands which archaeologically are almost in the same condition as England was in the 17th century. It was the good fortune of the writer to explore part of Bulgaria last autumn, in the company of two colleagues who are familiar with the field antiquities of that country. As one drove along the roads in a primitive four-wheeled cart one passed rows of round barrows placed on the hills just like those of Wessex. Near one such group was a miniature Carnac, consisting of some twenty huge stones, some standing, some fallen, some lying in pits dug for them by the farmer who desired to get rid of them. It was curious to find the same method adopted here as at Avebury during the 19th century and before. One felt as if one were travelling in time back to the days when Long, Colt Hoare and Stukeley denounced the vandalism they were powerless to prevent.



We discussed the problem of preservation on the spot. We looked forward to the time when every country will treasure such relics of its ancient past ; we had an advantage over the older British archaeologists, for whereas they could look forward to such a day with the eye of faith only—for in their time national protection of ancient monuments did not exist—we could point to a historical enlightenment that had actually occurred elsewhere in Europe. The main difficulty was one of

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education. For national protection is a function of public opinion ; where no body of educated opinion exists, when no support for such measures can be found even in quarters where it might properly be expected, there vandalism and wanton destruction must inevitably achieve their fatal results. The remedy is one which lies beyond the reach of the archaeologists most concerned. Their colleagues in other lands can, however, help them by various methods ; and it is partly with this intention that these remarks have been printed here. Bulgaria has a rich heritage of ancient history, and the remains are still for the most part wonderfully perfect. Her museums are served by devoted enthusiasts whose work is a labour of love. But they need more support if they are to achieve for their country all that they could accomplish if only the means to do so were available.



The completion of the eleventh volume of ANTIQUITY brings us once more to the time when we ask our Subscribers for the renewal of their support and their attention to the notice printed below. We would also add that in more than one way it is a great help if they will be good enough to make an early response to this intimation. Each year we have to send out more than one reminder, a trouble which might be spared.



VOLUME XII for 1938

A renewal form for subscriptions for the new volume is inserted in this number. It is omitted from copies sent to subscribers who pay through their banks or who have paid in advance for 1938.