

Antiquity

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Editorial Notes

AT the end of the year it is natural to look back and take stock. What have archaeologists achieved in 1949 and how far has ANTIQUITY succeeded in reflecting those achievements? The two most important events of the year were the publication of a discovery made last year in Palestine, of a cache of Hebrew scrolls of the Old Testament, and the invention of a new technique by means of which ancient fragments of wood and other organic substances can be dated in terms of years. We gave our readers the essential facts about the Hebrew scrolls long ago (September, 1948, pp. 159-60), some time before their importance was generally recognized; and we did the same for the radiocarbon method in our last number. We hope to publish more about both. As so often happens, neither discovery was made by archaeologists; the scrolls were an accidental find, and the radiocarbon method was discovered by physicists. The importance of both lies in the realm of technique rather than in any new historical knowledge revealed. That is obvious for radiocarbon; for the other it seems that the chief contributions will be linguistic and palaeographic—of immense value and far-reaching importance but primarily technical.



The exact date of the scrolls is not yet finally determined. They were stored in pottery jars with saucer-like covers of a Hellenistic type already known and dated a century or thereabouts B.C. As Mr Lethbridge pointed out in a letter to the *Times*, it is absurd to suppose that antique jars, complete with their antique covers to the number (originally) of 30 or 40, would have been used; and the date when the cache was made must therefore be that assigned to the jars—and this is a purely archaeological affair. The jars date the texts.



There are evident signs that British archaeology has got into its post-war stride. The dry summer has been welcomed by air-photographers and excavators. Dr St. Joseph has made some more remarkable discoveries, this time in s.w. Scotland, and we shall look forward to the annual exhibition, organized by Kodak Ltd., with more than usual interest. (Why not have one in the winter?) In this connexion we would suggest that an exhibition of British archaeological air-photographs should form part of the Festival of Britain in 1951. This is a line we started in this country and have made our own, though the French, led by the Rev. Father Poidebard and now also by M. Baradez are now becoming close competitors in Syria and North Africa. (When will they begin

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work at home? France offers a fine and virgin field). Drought has also helped Dr Grahame Clark in his excavation of the first inhabited mesolithic site (if we except his mesolithic camping-ground near Farnham, Surrey) to be discovered and scientifically excavated in this country (see pp. 207-8 of this number). Professor Stuart Piggott has excavated a chambered Long Cairn (Cairn Holy in Kirkcudbrightshire), and found a partly intact burial-chamber. One of the finds was part of one of those greenstone ('jadeite') axes with a highly polished glassy surface which are usually thought to originate in Brittany. Thus they can at last be safely dated, and the already long-suspected migration northwards along the Atlantic seaboard is confirmed in a striking manner. Excavations have continued on the sites of Saxon towns at Thetford and Southampton, and of Roman London and Canterbury; a Roman villa at Lullingstone has produced a very fine pavement and statuary. An ancient homestead site at Mynydd Bychan in Glamorganshire has been excavated. In Ireland, Professor Bersu has proved, by excavation, that hill-forts do exist there, and has found evidence of extensive iron-working in his hill-fort near Kilkenny. (The list is of course incomplete and we apologize for the omissions).



Many of these excavations have been carried out by voluntary student labour. The first-hand experience thus gained must necessarily be valuable; even more so perhaps will be that of those taking part in organized courses. There have been at least two such; one, conducted by Professor Wheeler at Verulamium, and the other by Professor Piggott at Salisbury. The latter was organized by the British Council, whose new enterprise is warmly to be commended. It was designed for advanced students and included archaeologists of known standing and achievements. As was only to be expected, the course followed in the footsteps of General Pitt-Rivers, and aimed at displaying not only the field-works (to coin a phrase from 'field-archaeology') which have survived better here than abroad (hill-forts, Celtic fields, etc.) but also the history of the subject, its organization (by State, Universities and Societies) and techniques (air-photography, excavation, field-work, electrical sub-soil survey). The Archaeology Officer of the Ordnance Survey (Mr C. W. Phillips) gave a lecture on 'Archaeology and the Ordnance Survey'. The success of the course would amply justify its repetition in 1951. May we suggest that representatives of archaeology in the Americas should be specially invited to take part? They would be sure of a hearty welcome from their British colleagues.



Another outstanding feature of the year has been the meetings of the Prehistoric Society. A three days' conference was held at the Institute of Archaeology in the spring and another at Exeter in the autumn. Both were in delightful surroundings, very different from the stuffy atmosphere of Burlington House, and there was 'a vehement spirit of research in the air'. The first meeting was devoted to prehistoric houses, a subject which the President, Sir Lindsay Scott, has made his own. It was an excellent idea to have such a single subject instead of a set of disconnected addresses; it gave coherence to the discussions which were spread over the meeting, and incidentally saved valuable time, because it was thus possible to concentrate into a single discussion the remarks about two or more addresses. The general level of discussion was a high one, controversial points were dealt with in a manner befitting a scientific society; and when it was all over we all felt that we had not only had a good time but also an edifying one.

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In this, the last number of the year, we have to remind our readers that their subscriptions for 1950 are due, and that prompt payment is a very great help. Forms of payment for 1950 are inserted in the copies of all who do not pay by Banker's Order. May we urge those who do not do so already to *pay their subscription in future by Banker's Order*, a form for which is included in the present number? This saves a great deal of work at our end, and will also save them some. It of course involves no obligation beyond the current year. May we also suggest that ANTIQUITY for 1950 would be a very good Xmas present? Many readers have in the past thought this a good idea; the beneficiaries have generally agreed to become subscribers for the following years. The form makes provision for this also.

Will our American readers please note that devaluation has reduced their subscriptions to 3 dollars? And may we suggest that they might spend the balance, which is nearly one half, on a Xmas present? We shall, of course, give the same, or better, value for it.

We would also ask indulgence of those readers who may receive publicity leaflets during 1950. We plan to send out a large number, and although the Editor tries to eliminate known subscribers, he cannot carry in his head the names of all; and mechanical collation is costly and impracticable. If you do receive such there is a very simple remedy—send it on to a friend! The results of our 1949 campaign were very satisfactory—so much so in fact that we had to stop prematurely because we ran out of stock. On the strength of it we have been able to add an extra eight pages; this is only a beginning. If all goes well we shall be able gradually to recover our former size and abundance of illustrations. No one can do more to help achieve this than those readers who get others to subscribe; one such all round (as a Xmas present?) and we should reach the goal at one bound. We are determined to get back somehow to our former size, if possible by increasing our circulation and not your subscription, which—be it noted—is the same as in 1927 when we began.



It is because we are so terribly cramped for space that the Review section has shrunk so much recently. Actually in the present number we have expanded it considerably, but we need two or three times as much space to publish what we already have, let alone reviews of the new books that are constantly arriving. This is a problem common to all periodical publications nowadays. We apologize yet once more to all concerned for the delay, or even failure to review at all; lack of space is wholly and solely to blame. The new section listing Important New Books and Articles is an attempt to mitigate the situation. Again an increased circulation is the only remedy. But we do not wish to end the year with a moan! We have complete confidence in the future, and of our ability to provide our readers with good fare.



As we go to press we have received a very interesting letter, announcing the first archaeological date provided by the radiocarbon method. As there is no room for it on this page we have printed it on p. 229, at the end of the Review Section. Readers in America will be particularly interested.