

Antiquity

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Editorial Notes

OUR readers will remember that one of Wing Commander Insall's most important discoveries was a second Woodhenge, just outside the city of Norwich. We published his air-photograph of it at the time (*ANTIQUITY*, 1929, III, 257) and we were not without hope that those residents in Norfolk who profess an interest in archaeology might do something about it. The site would not have required much money or labour to excavate; it is so placed that sooner or later it was likely to be threatened by building operations. It therefore came within the scope of sites recommended for excavation by the Research Committee of the Congress of Archaeological Societies (see the Committee's first report, p. 1). The Roman town of Caistor did not, as was pointed out in our same volume (pp. 186-7). The site was not threatened; nor was it likely to yield an adequate return for the money to be expended upon its excavation. Nevertheless a large sum was raised and excavations have been carried out there for several seasons. As a matter of interest the photograph referred to above is now reprinted.



It is now too late to excavate the Norwich Woodhenge in the way it should be excavated, for in 1931 a pylon for a power-line was planted upon it. We are not amongst those who cry 'sacrilege' at the first



PREHISTORIC CIRCLES AND WOODEN POST-HOLES NEAR NORWICH, DISCOVERED FROM
THE AIR, 18 JUNE 1929

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suggestion of touching sacred sites and graves, though if conducting excavations we should always respect their feelings in such matters. We prefer to emphasize the loss of a great opportunity—the excavation and preservation of a unique monument, unexpectedly presented to us by air-observation and photography. It is all the more to be regretted because the Norwich Woodhenge lay just outside a large town, and therefore was easily to be seen by large numbers of people. Further comment is unnecessary; the facts speak for themselves.



Nevertheless we would not wish to leave this subject without a few general remarks. The Earthworks Committee of the Congress, which did such good work before the War, and which laid the foundations of much modern field-archaeology, used to classify the items in its annual reports under the headings of Preservation and Record, Destruction, Exploration. From this it was a legitimate inference that the work of county archaeological societies should be primarily concerned with these three aspects of their local antiquities—to ‘explore’ them, to add new ones to the map and describe them, and to preserve existing ones from harm. It may be thought that the creation of a special Government Department to schedule and preserve antiquities has relieved provincial societies of some of their responsibilities; but it has not done so. The Ancient Monuments Branch of the Office of Works is dependent upon local information, and cannot be expected to be aware of threatened interference with sites unless it is informed by those on the spot. The responsibility still lies with interested residents to report such threats to the proper quarter if they cannot avert the danger themselves. There seems no reason to doubt that in the present instance timely action would easily have averted the disaster. A very small deviation in the line of pylons would have been sufficient.



We came across the following passage recently in a book we were reading :—

‘No copies of the *Zeitschrift für Rassenphysiologie*, which deals largely with the questions [of blood-tests of race] discussed, are to be found in London, the capital of the Empire containing

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the greatest diversity of races. One copy passes through a London bookseller to Australia'. [Essay on 'Prehistory in the Light of Genetics' in a book entitled *The Inequality of Man*, by J. B. S. Haldane, F.R.S. (Chatto and Windus, 1932, p. 69)].

If one may judge from their bulletins, the Trustees of the British Museum still concentrate upon the acquisition of breviaries, books of hours, rare editions, and other curios. We would suggest that there is a section of the public which would welcome a change of policy, and the purchase of such foreign journals as the *Zeitschrift* mentioned above in preference, if need be, to specimens with a 'rarity interest' only.



This attitude towards foreign scientific journals makes research work unnecessarily difficult, and it is difficult enough in any case. It also hampers the diffusion as well as the advancement of knowledge. For instance we asked the author of the book referred to above for an article describing in non-technical language the use of blood-tests in classifying the races of humanity. The article was well in hand, but some essential facts were contained in the *Zeitschrift* mentioned. This was not obtainable in England, and the article had to be abandoned. The public must therefore remain in ignorance, so far as ANTIQUITY is concerned, of one of the most far-reaching discoveries of modern times.



But it is not only in foreign periodicals that our National Libraries are deficient; they do not even possess complete sets of the Transactions of the British learned societies. The excuse given is that some of these, not being published in the legal sense but privately printed, do not come within the Copyright Act and do not therefore find their way automatically to these Libraries. When it is suggested that they may be purchased by a small outlay, one receives the evasive reply that the Librarian cannot be expected even to be aware of the existence of many local societies. This answer ignores the fact that each year there is published a Year-Book of Scientific and Learned Societies (Charles Griffin and Co.) with the names and addresses of officials and details of publications issued. It would not have been

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difficult to check this with the catalogue once a year, and make up sets of Transactions. The foregoing generalities are based upon actual experiences in a library receiving books under the Copyright Act ; our first experience occurred about a quarter of a century ago and the last during the present year, in the same library—which is not in London.



It should be pointed out, for the benefit of librarians, that the Transactions of local societies contain essential facts—raw materials—for any one who is doing research work of an archaeological, historical or topographical nature. Much of their contents may be second-rate, or valueless ; so are the contents of most of the newspapers received. But nearly every issue records discoveries which are nowhere else described. Taken singly such records may appear commonplace and of no special importance ; but English prehistory is largely built with bricks of this kind—the map of Roman Britain (and its forthcoming successor) almost entirely. And how much the work of a great pioneer like Professor Haverfield was based upon casual records in local Transactions may be seen from the references attached to his articles in the volumes of the Victoria County History. ‘ Common things ’, said General Pitt-Rivers, ‘ are of more importance than particular things, because they are more prevalent ’. By ‘ particular things ’ the General no doubt meant ‘ rarities ’, such as appeal to the collector.