

Antiquity

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Editorial Notes

SOON after this number appears the Ur Exhibition will be open. The objects from the Royal Tombs will be on view for several months at the British Museum. Then some of the exhibits will go to America and some will return to Baghdad. The division of spoils takes place at the end of each season. The British representative of Iraq selects what he wants for the Baghdad Museum, and the rest is divided between the British Museum and the Museum of the University of Pennsylvania, which finds half the money for the excavations. Most of the objects, however, need expert treatment before they can be exhibited at all ; and since this cannot be done in Baghdad, they are sent to the British Museum for this purpose. Consequently, when the exhibition is closed, the finds will never again be seen together in one room. Many of the finest objects are, at the time of writing, unpublished, and some are still 'in hospital'. At a recent meeting of the Society of Antiquaries, pictures of the best were thrown on the screen by Mr Leonard Woolley, with dramatic effect. The gold bulls' heads and the inlays astonished us with their naturalism ; the style is mature and plainly ancestral to the conventionalized designs of later dynastic times which have long been known from engraved seals. The technical skill displayed demands a prolonged antecedent period for its development.

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The year 1928 will be remembered not only for Mr Woolley's discoveries, but also in a different way for the publication of the second volume of Sir Arthur Evans's *Palace of Minos*. A concluding volume has yet to appear and thus set the coping-stone on a really great achievement. Throughout the life-time of some of us Sir Arthur Evans has devoted himself and his resources unsparingly to the service of archaeology. With a flair for discovery and for correct diagnosis, he first found and then bought and excavated the site of Knossos. New civilizations and new phases of art were revealed, both standing in the direct line of descent of European culture. Reading Sir Arthur's account one rejoices that the man, the place and the circumstances were so happily conjoined. The book is a masterpiece of which British scholars may well feel proud. Indeed, we may congratulate ourselves upon the work of British archaeologists in the near East, in Iraq and in India. The recent epoch-making discoveries in all three countries have been due to British, or British and American, enterprise; and the published record is evidence of the thoroughly sound methods employed.



In other departments of archaeology we have led the way. Britain is the only country that marks ancient remains in plan on its large-scale maps, and as a result the study of earthworks is a peculiarly British subject. (As a matter of fact few foreign countries mark any antiquities at all on any of their maps, unless these are so large that it is unnecessary. There are practically none on the French 1:80,000 map, which corresponds roughly to our 1-inch-to-mile Ordnance Map). The absence of cadastral maps handicaps the student of earthworks. Not everyone has the time or the skill necessary for making his own plans—rather a long business before air-photography was invented. But anyone with a little elementary knowledge of surveying can use a plan, on the scale of 25 inches or 6 inches to the mile, to illustrate his account of a camp or group of barrows, or to record the exact position of new discoveries. A landmark was the foundation in 1901 of the Earthworks Committee of the Congress of Archaeological Societies. One result of the Committee's printed propaganda was the publication of several good books on the earthworks of certain districts. Another was the preservation of some earthworks which would otherwise have been destroyed. The inclusion of special chapters on Ancient Earthworks in the volumes of the Victoria County History—itsself a notable landmark dating from 1900—was a symptom of the growing interest in open-air studies.

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The cumulative result of all this work is a mass of reliable information, as yet undigested. The process of observation and record began with Camden in the 16th century, but it acquired great impetus during the 19th century from the formation of local societies. It is easy to disparage the work of such societies, but we should be the poorer had they not existed—witness the footnotes in Rice Holmes' *Ancient Britain*. The facts recorded in their transactions are the raw materials of synthesis, and the time is ripe for coordinating them.

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A distribution-map is itself a synthetic product, revealing much that is new. It brings out the regions which have been the centres of population in the past; and comparison with a soil-map generally suggests the controlling factors. That is true today, when the areas of densest population coincide with the coal-fields; but it was equally true in prehistoric times when the densest population was usually in limestone regions. It is remarkable how constant this coincidence is. Certain regions which may broadly be described as the Cotswolds, the Middle Thames region, the chalk uplands of Wessex, the carboniferous limestone area of Somerset, and favoured portions of the North and South Downs were thickly inhabited in several successive periods. Others were, apparently, inhabited in some and in others deserted or traversed by nomad hunters only. These facts can only be accurately determined by means of carefully compiled maps of each period, and until they have been completed and published our knowledge must remain shadowy.

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The objects whose distribution provides the clue may vary in size from a hill-top camp of several acres to a Roman villa, or a barrow only a few feet across. A very large number of these sites are of course already marked on the Ordnance Maps; but many are not. Moreover, of those which are marked the true character may be unknown. A little reflection will show that this must necessarily be so. The diagnosis, so to speak, of an ancient site is a matter requiring knowledge and experience; the number of such sites is legion, and the number of persons who are even interested in such is limited. Yet there is no more fascinating pursuit than field-archaeology. To add a new site to the map or confirm a doubtful one by mere inspection, is to add a brick to the temple of knowledge; the satisfaction of one such discovery is equal to that of the collector who acquires a new specimen, and it is perhaps more lasting.

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The game begins usually at home, with the encounter of an allusion in some obscure article or in the diary of some long-departed antiquary. A ramble with an Ordnance Map on the next fine day, guided by his description—often, alas! deplorably vague—and by reference to a good contemporary map, if vanished names are used, will often result in rediscovery. It is extraordinary how even important sites well-known in their day fall sometimes into complete oblivion. Two Roman villas near Maidenhead—at Feens and Berry Grove—are frequently referred to in Hearne's diary. He visited them constantly and dug in them. Yet the sites of both were completely forgotten. One has recently been rediscovered, by three people, all searching quite independently. The other is still lost, but is being looked for. There are many similar examples to be found all over the country. The sites of Roman houses are often quite easy to identify, from the broken tiles, pottery, tesserae and such like lying on the surface. (The Feens villa was thus located). Barrows are often so large and obvious that no doubt is possible; though there are of course traps to beware of. Skill comes with practice only; it cannot be taught.



Work of this kind is as valuable as excavation. It is the necessary preliminary to the study of a region; as it develops there arise problems as fascinating as those of any detective story. No elaborate equipment is required—nothing but a 6-inch map of the district and a severely critical attitude of mind. Books are consulted and read for the facts they supply, not for the opinions of their authors. Knowledge is acquired at first hand, from facts.



We continue to receive most encouraging letters from our readers, and we wish once more to thank them for their support and to assure them that their good wishes are deeply appreciated. The success of our undertaking has been assured from the start, and the renewal of the vast majority of subscriptions relieves us of anxiety for the immediate future. But of course the larger our circulation, the more we can spend on each number, and the more illustrations and maps we can provide. These are very expensive, both to prepare and to reproduce. Subscribers could help us enormously by interesting their friends in ANTIQUITY, as we know several have already done. We should of course be only too glad to assist them by sending leaflets to any who may care to have them for distribution.