

Antiquity

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Editorial Notes

THE archaeology of Great Britain is now an active and flourishing pursuit, with a growing number of students devoting all or most of their time to it. Like any other branch of science it needs an *apparatus*, and it is therefore opportune to take stock of the existing state of affairs.



The chief units in the organization of research are usually the learned societies devoted to its advancement. They provide a forum for the promulgation of new discoveries and ideas, and set a standard of achievement. Membership is usually open to all serious students, and to any others willing to pay the annual subscription. Societies publish journals and memoirs, form libraries for their members, and accumulate funds which are of course indispensable for conducting excavations or any other form of research. The less spectacular but equally necessary bibliographies and annual summaries of work done have not in the past received adequate attention. We have had (since Professor Haverfield began it in 1910) a series of admirable annual reports on Roman Britain, published by the Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies. The Congress of Archaeological Societies publishes an annual statement that has evolved from the old and valuable Earthworks Reports. But these publications, all excellent in their way, do not quite cover all the ground.



A TRANSYLVANIAN VILLAGE—HUNDERTBÜCHELN

Ph. O. G. Crawford

facing p. 369

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It is therefore good to know that the Royal Archaeological Institute is publishing a classified list of the year's publications. This appears in the Institute's annual volume, the *ARCHAEOLOGICAL JOURNAL*, now in its 80th year; and we understand that *separata* are not being broadcast. It is of course quite a reasonable demand that those who would profit by the Institute's enterprise should become members, or at least buy the *JOURNAL*. (Members of the something-for-nothing brigade are well known in the offices of *ANTIQUITY*).



A parallel and complementary task has been begun by the Prehistoric Society of East Anglia—a society which, we are told, 'is the oldest and only large society in Great Britain specially devoted to the study of prehistory'. It consists of notes on excavations in England, Scotland and Wales during the preceding year, classified chronologically, and is compiled by Dr Grahame Clark the Editor (England), Professor Gordon Childe (Scotland) and Mr W. F. Grimes (Wales). The current issue occupies nine pages of the Society's seventh volume of *Proceedings*, for 1933. We have already attempted to do something like this in *ANTIQUITY* but only in a rather scrappy and disjointed way; it is a task more for a society rather than for a free-lance journal.



Logical minds may inquire why three nation-wide societies are needed; whether all would not gain by amalgamation? The question is of no practical import and therefore purely academic. We admit to sympathy with the idea, but as realists we must also admit that the existing English system has counterbalancing advantages. The undertakings described above could never have been initiated by a single autocratic society; more probably they would have been smothered at birth by it. Too much logic often kills initiative and retards progress; we have only to cross the Channel to see that. Societies keep archaeology alive and keep it interesting; and there is plenty of room for those which exist.

EDITORIAL NOTES

The excavation season has not passed without the usual demands for sites to be left uncovered. The problem is one which must be considered in relation to the circumstances of each particular case. The task of re-burying a ziggurat or even a Cretan palace is so immense that to attempt it would be to divert to a negative purpose a very considerable proportion of the comparatively scanty funds at present available for archaeological discovery.



On the other hand, to attempt, as Sir Arthur Evans has bravely attempted at the Minoan Palace of Knossos in Crete, to preserve the ancient fabric by systematic reconstruction and protection is again an extremely costly policy, and is moreover one which is peculiarly liable to abuse. Reconstruction almost necessarily involves a certain element of guess-work which will permanently detract from the scientific interest of the restored monument.



If we turn to archaeological excavations in this country the problem is the same in kind if not in degree. The Office of Works, after many years of laborious experiment, has brought nearer to perfection than ever before the art of consolidating an ancient structure. But this work is not only costly at the outset, but its permanency is to some extent contingent upon continuous supervision year in and year out. Up and down the countryside are many gloomy instances of excavated foundations of Roman and Medieval buildings which, inadequately protected from the ravages of frost, vegetation, and other interference, have lost by exposure far more than they have added thereby to knowledge.



Generally speaking, it is far safer—particularly after the necessarily destructive methods of modern scientific excavation—to re-bury excavated foundations unless they are (*a*) unusually complete or instructive, and (*b*) on that account sufficiently important to claim in perpetuity the skilled (and necessarily costly) supervision of the Office of Works or of some local body working in consultation with it.

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The present number completes the eighth year of ANTIQUITY. According to present-day opinion it is held that a 'generation' in the life of a periodical must be put as seven years, and therefore we may feel pleasure in having survived the first stage, one which has been so affected by the Great Depression and the most unfavourable time imaginable for establishing such an undertaking.



We hope that we may survive yet another 'generation' though, to put it quite plainly, it means that to do so we must retain the support of all our present subscribers, and that we must attract others. We hope we shall do both. So far as the first are concerned we would ask their attention to the notice printed below, and say once more that an early response is a very considerable help to us.



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A renewal form for subscriptions for 1935 is inserted in this number and we shall be very glad if our subscribers will return it with their cheques as promptly as they may find convenient. The forms are omitted from copies sent to subscribers who pay through banks or who have paid for 1935 in advance.