

NOTES AND NEWS

St. Alkmund's Church, Derby

THE new Derby Excavation Committee started work in October on the site of the church in Bridge Gate, which was being demolished ahead of construction of the new inner ring road just as it passes under King's Street. The generous co-operation of the Derby Corporation, through the Engineer's and Surveyor's Department, and of the Ministry of Public Building and Works has made possible a full-time excavation with a site supervisor (Mr. Ian Young) and several workmen, with Dr. C. A. Raleigh Radford acting as consultant. The excavation is planned to continue until March 1968.

The whole area within the present church has been excavated to more than 6 ft. below its original floor level. The foundations of previous churches, dating back to the 9th century when St. Alkmund's remains were brought to Derby, have been uncovered. A finely carved stone sarcophagus associated with the earliest buildings has been found. Unfortunately it contained only rubble, so its possible connection with the saint cannot be established.

Roman site at Breaston

In a preliminary report Mr. D. Reaney has described the exposure of this site (SK 454525) as a series of ditches prior to the construction of a filter plant. There were two ditch systems both roughly rectangular but differing in area and in the size of the ditches. The narrow ditch system produced pottery, including sherds of mortaria, flanged bowls, carinated bowls and beakers, necked jars and cooking-pots, dating from the second half of the 1st century. The wider and deeper ditches of the later enclosure contained 2nd-century pottery, including necked jars, storage vessels, cooking-pots and samian ware. The site is only a short distance from the Roman road running from Little Chester to Sawley.

Rural settlement of the Roman period

The C.B.A. Research Report, no. 7, *Rural settlement in Roman Britain* (1966), has encouraged members of a course in field archaeology, organized by the Nottingham University Department of Adult Education, to undertake a study of this subject in Derbyshire. The tutor, Mr. H. C. Lane (103 Spital Lane, Chesterfield) would be pleased to hear from members of the Society interested in this project.

The first area of settlement to be investigated is 450 acres of woodland,

known as Scarcliffe Park, near Langwith. Though the site is believed to have been a medieval deer park, this does not appear to explain the full relationship and function of the extensive linear earthworks and enclosures found within and adjacent to the park.

Excavation began in April 1967 on an enclosure, almost oval in form, some 118 ft. by 90 ft. along the major and minor axes respectively. On the evidence of coarse pottery and two brooches the occupation may be assigned provisionally to the late 2nd/early 4th century. The small finds, indicating a variety of activities, include a piece of "refined" lead, a flat surfaced pebble with blackened percussion indentations, a larger flat pebble with one surface highly polished, fragments of worked bone and part of a flat rotary quern.

A Romano-British pottery near Little Chester, Derby

The discovery of a number of potsherds, mostly of flanged bowls and mortaria, by Mr. M. Brassington and Mr. J. Potts in a field N.W. of the Derby racecourse playing fields and about 700 yds. to the east of the walled area of Little Chester led to a trial excavation, which has established the existence of one kiln and probably two others. Mechanical excavation has subsequently revealed masonry with which is associated samian ware of the late 2nd century and other pottery of the 3rd and 4th centuries. It is hoped to excavate the site more fully in 1968.

The Civic Amenities Act 1967

Part I of this Act makes important changes in the law as it affects historic buildings. For the first time it makes provision for the preservation of areas of special architectural or historic interest, as distinct from single buildings. Local planning authorities are required to designate such areas, whose character or appearance it is desirable to preserve or enhance, as conservation areas. This represents a notable advance but much will depend upon how local authorities interpret this obligation especially in the centres of towns where pressures for commercial redevelopment are strongest.

The Act also strengthens the powers of local authorities to secure the preservation of buildings listed as being of special architectural or historic interest. For example building preservation orders may now be made with immediate effect, continuing for six months without prior confirmation by the Minister, and local authorities have been encouraged by the Ministry to make greater use of such orders. More generally they have been invited to take firmer action to protect buildings of special architectural or historic interest and to remember their special responsibility in this matter, especially as owners of listed buildings.

Chesterfield Town Centre Redevelopment

The public inquiry into the redevelopment proposals for the town centre of Chesterfield opened on 6 December and was not concluded until

23 January 1968. The Society's objections to the plan presented by Mr. J. M. Bestall, supported by Mrs. R. M. Milward, Mrs. K. M. Woodhead and Colonel V. O. Robinson, occupied one whole day. It was contended that Chesterfield was a historic town and that the redevelopment of its centre, particularly the Market Place area, should pay proper regard to its historic character. The redevelopment plan was formulated several years ago and therefore took no account of the marked public reaction against much of the commercial development which has taken place in town centres with such harmful effects on their individual qualities. Proposals to build over the Market Place in order to accommodate the demands of national retailers and in the face of widespread local opposition were, it was argued, in direct conflict with present national policy in regard to historic town centres as expressed in the Civic Amenities Act and in the very relevant book published by the Ministry of Housing and Local Government in September entitled *Historic towns — Preservation and change*.

Of the twenty-two listed buildings in the town centre, these proposals would entail the immediate demolition of eight (including the early Quaker Meeting House in Saltergate to provide additional space for a car park). In addition the Royal Oak Inn in the Shambles and the former Falcon Inn (now Boden's Fish Buffet) would only be preserved if it were found feasible to move them to some other unspecified site, and accompanying road changes in St. Mary's Gate require the demolition of the 17th-century home of the Heathcote family and a Georgian house. The King and Miller Inn at the top of the Market Place is the subject of a separate public inquiry because the building preservation order placed on it by the County Council in August very shortly after the passing of the Civic Amenities Act is being opposed by the Chesterfield Corporation and Littlewoods Mail Order Stores Ltd. who wish to develop the site for a new store. The total effect of these various proposals could be the demolition in the near future of more than half the buildings that are now listed as being of special architectural or historic interest.

The Pentrich Rising

The 150th anniversary of this rising, led by Jeremiah Brandreth, was marked by the organization in Pentrich of a festival in June. The main events were a series of lectures on the historical setting and significance of the rising, a performance of Arnold Wesker's "The Nottingham Captain" and an exhibition of documents and other material. The catalogue compiled by Miss Joan Sinar provides a brief account of the events of 1817 and useful notes on the very interesting collection of records from many sources, which made this such a notable exhibition of local and national history. The exhibition has been adapted for use elsewhere and is now available for loan from Mr. C. Charlton, Tawney House, Matlock.