

mary Report<sup>12</sup>—that certain skulls of oxen and horses, found in a series of pits, were deliberately laid there as ritual deposits. The same attitude is reflected by a question in the Archaeological and Anthropological Tripos this summer:

“It has been said that religion is the last resort of the puzzled archaeologist. Do you agree<sup>13</sup>?”

The right answer is surely that it should not be, and that the archaeologist must also take account of *superstition*, the tattered survival of a discredited religion. For both are facts of history, and like all other human activities have left their marks on the archaeological record. These can be studied as objectively as any other archaeological phenomena. They are not less interesting than the evidence for practical details of life and technology, and may throw much more light on the mental attitudes of the past. Finally, any evidence is disregarded at our peril, and failure to recognize that belief in the supernatural has always been a factor in human behaviour may lead to some odd errors. It may be

12. *Anti J.* 49 (1969) pt. 1, 36.

13. Quoted in *Antiquity*, Sept. 1969, p.172.

appropriate to conclude with an example of this, which arose from a misinterpretation outside our area, but has caused a considerable amount of confusion in London archaeology. Steeple-shaped glass apothecaries' bottles are now known to be characteristic of the 18th century, but were long regarded as late medieval, because one was found under the foundations of a Leicestershire church built about 1400. Several others have been found in similar circumstances, and it was suggested as long ago as 1876 that they were buried under the church walls in much more recent times as a variant of the witch-bottle charm<sup>14</sup>. This view was almost certainly correct, but in the 20th century it seemed easier to believe that these tapering bottles showed in their “Gothic” lines affinities with late medieval architecture, than that human beings should burrow so senselessly to the bottom of an old wall! This misjudgment gave rise to an incorrect theory of the evolution of apothecaries' phials, which, as a result, were dated much too early all along the line<sup>15</sup>.

14. *Archaeologia* 46 (1) 133-4 and footnote.

15. See W. A. Thorpe, *English Glass* (1949) 86-6.

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## Specialist equipment available in the London area :

### Surrey Archaeological Society

at Castle Arch, Guildford

Cowley Level

Dumpy Level

Optical Square

Photographic Tower

Resistivity Meter

#### Contact

Felix Holling, Castle Arch, Guildford Surrey.

*Amendments to List in the London Archaeologist No. 1*

### London and Middlesex Archaeological Society

1. As Upper Ground is closing down all the equipment stored there will have to be moved elsewhere; so far a new home has not been found.
2. The Proton Magnetometer is now kept at London Museum.
3. Enquiries should now be addressed to Roy Canham, Field Officer, London Museum, Kensington Palace, tel. WES 9816.

### Southwark and Lambeth Archaeological Society

1. As Upper Ground is closing down, all the equipment stored there will have to be moved elsewhere.

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The above mentioned articles of equipment are available for loan to local societies and other similar organisations in the London region on the following general conditions.

1. They are only available for loan when not required by owner society.
2. Transport of the equipment in both directions is the responsibility of the borrower.
3. All damage sustained by the equipment other than fair wear and tear must be recompensed by the borrower.
4. Locations quoted are only the usual ones for the equipment but borrowers may have to collect from other places.
5. Additional conditions may be made.

If any other society has items of specialised equipment which they would be willing to loan out, would they please contact the Editor with the details.