

these—a lead coffin—in 1844 Roach Smith noted that it was “contiguous to fields and gardens in which Roman urns have occasionally been found and Roman coins in great abundance.” He also recorded that “the tenant of one of the gardens . . . told us he had dug up within the last few years, at least 500 Roman coins¹¹.” Two more burials were found by John Laing’s staff in April 1969 and reported to the London Museum: both were within 200 yards north-west of the current site¹².

It is hoped that as the excavation continues, more will be revealed of the character of the Roman settlement bordering the roadside at Old Ford. It is, of course, likely that it extends over a much wider area than that currently available for digging. No doubt, much will have been destroyed by 19th century building; nevertheless, the results so far suggest the importance of continuing the work on

neighbouring areas as they come ready for redevelopment.

All of us on the site would like to thank the London Borough of Tower Hamlets and the MPBW for making grants for the work available to the London Museum. Special thanks are due to the site agent, deputy site agent and the staff of John Laing Construction at the Lefevre Road development; their material assistance has helped us over many difficulties and their interest in the work has acted as an encouragement through the winter. We would also like to acknowledge the kindness of London archaeologists who have given valuable advice on the site and the pottery from it. The assistance of the Museum’s Field Officer has also been much appreciated, both in initiating the dig and in its administration.

11. *Archaeologia* 31 (1846) 308-11.

12. The cremation was found at TQ 3697.8372, the in-

humation at TQ 3693.8360. Information supplied by Roy Canham.

London’s Archaeological Societies — 5

WEST ESSEX ARCHAEOLOGICAL GROUP

THIS GROUP was founded in April 1958 as a means of bringing together local people interested in any aspect of archaeology. The membership has been as high as 150, and members come from a wide variety of occupations. Few are professionally engaged in archaeology, but the Group has a nucleus of trained excavators and specialists. The efficiency and enthusiasm of the Group has led to requests from outside bodies, such as the National Trust, to conduct excavations on their properties.

The Passmore Edwards Museum at Stratford, Essex, acts as the base for the Group, and the two former Curators, Dr. E. A. Rudge and Ken Marshall, had much to do with the early years of the Group. Ian Robertson as the present Curator serves on the main committee and also on the Excavation Committee, and the museum has many objects on display discovered by the Group. The Excavation Committee was set up in 1966 to approve and control excavations, tools and reports, since it was found advisable to have some central authority.

Two off-shoots of the Group were formed, the Stort Valley Area Survey Group in 1964 and the Roding Valley Survey Group in 1967, to take a close look at their specific areas, record them and seek major subjects for the Group to excavate. Both these areas are threatened with development. The Roding Valley Group has been very successful in its field work, and in the last two years has identified, and sometimes excavated, Roman roads, a Roman villa, a post-Medieval pottery kiln, a windmill tump and the stable yard of an old coaching inn, many of which were unknown before.

From September to June there are monthly meetings when well-known speakers cover archaeological

and allied subjects. Field and weekend visits are made, but excavation is the most important task. A fortnight in the summer allows a good look at a major objective, whilst weekends are occupied with training or rescue digs.

Major known sites excavated in the past have been the Mesolithic site at High Beech, Epping Forest, a Bronze Age barrow at Billericay, an Iron Age Camp at Wallbury, a medieval site at Barking Abbey, the Romano-British temple at Harlow, a Roman villa site at Abridge and the Abbey precincts at Waltham Abbey. Apart from exploratory digs, only threatened sites are excavated fully, since often identification of a part of the site is sufficient if there is no threat to it.

Motorways, building development and pipe-lines have all kept local members alert, and recently a number of presumed Romano-British cremation burials were observed in the sides of a gas main trench. Aerial photographs led to a number of Roman road sections, and winter walking over ploughed fields produced a Roman villa. When the M11 motorway is built in the near future, help will have to be obtained from all local sources if we are to preserve all of the past that may be suddenly apparent. However, under its President, Dr. John Alexander, the West Essex Archaeological Group lacks nothing in inspiration, and in an emergency can call together a band of volunteers at short notice.

The Secretary is Miss Betty Gobel, The Mulberries, 7A Bosgrove, Chingford, E.A.

F. B. HARVEY