

## OPEN DAYS AT KESTON

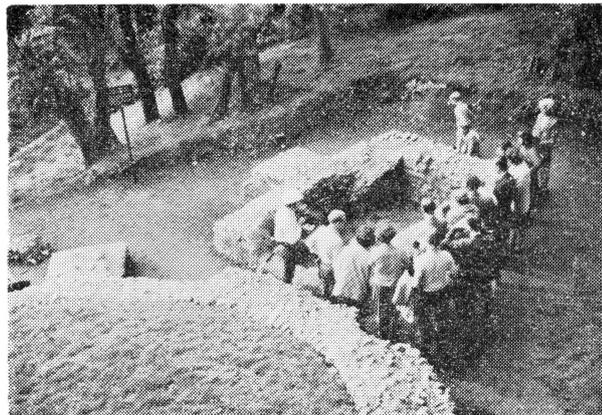
EARLY IN October the West Kent Archaeological Group again opened its Roman and Iron Age sites, situated on private ground, to the public. This is the fourth year in succession that the site has been opened and this time more than 3,000 people made the difficult journey to the site on the four "open" days.

As before, a team of eight guides took groups of between 10-40 people on free tours of the site lasting 20-30 minutes and on the way, described the monumental Roman tombs, the south wing of the villa and the sites of other Iron Age and Roman structures. In addition there was a display of photographs and finds from Warbank and other local sites.

In many ways these special "open" week-ends are ideal. In the first place it is possible to make special arrangements which would be quite impossible every week-end throughout the year. Special permissions can be obtained, temporary fences erected and notices and parking arranged. The event can be advertised and the public, sometimes guilty of trespass, can be welcomed. The special guided tours are, anyway, a very much better service to the public and, indeed, help create a splendid atmosphere.

In return the public will normally make substantial contributions to the funds in the form of donations and this will help finance further work. Publications can be sold in large numbers and in October we sold 955 of our various books, including a complete sell-out of the *Kent Archaeological Review*. In addition, potential new members come forward and many local chance-finds are reported. Besides being an enjoyable and beneficial event the "open-day" scheme probably does more to promote local archaeology than any other single event.

BRIAN PHILP



One of the parties listening to a guide describing a condary tomb. In the foreground is part of the main tomb with some of its buttresses showing.



A view of the impressive display of finds from Keston.

## Letters

### GROUP 10—A COUNTY SOCIETY VIEW

DURING THE PAST three issues correspondence has been appearing on the subject of the C.B.A. Groups around the London area, which has aroused a good deal of interest. Much of the criticism contained therein obviously comes from disappointed enthusiasts, but seems to arise from confused views of the functions of the organisations concerned.

So far I have never seen the constitution of the C.B.A., but as a national body it seeks to represent the views of its member societies, etc., on national issues affecting archaeology, gathering its information and views from their reports on a regional group basis. The criticisms are, principally, on the failure of C.B.A. either from the top, or at ground level, to co-ordinate the archaeological work in the group area. It requires very little thought to see how this is, in the main, almost impossible.

Most of the letters refer in one way or another to Group 10 (London, Essex and Herts.), Group 11A (Kent and

Surrey) and Group 11B (Sussex), and in particular to the first-named. This lapsed a few years ago, when the Conventor died and the Hon. Secretary left the district. Various attempts to resuscitate the group have been made, and at last it has been re-established, on a basis reluctantly accepted by C.B.A., and due for review in 1972.

The difficulties arise very largely because of the inability of the C.B.A. and the county societies in Group 10 and 11A to accept the view that the Greater London area really comprises one geological and archaeological area; the Then there is the further difficulty of defining the areas of greater part of which is urban, surrounded by a rural one. interest and responsibility where the counties about the urban area of London.

This problem may require some careful re-thinking out of group areas, but C.B.A. would soon remind us that this is a matter for the Executive Council and not for the areas. Suggestions have been made for a Greater London Archaeological Society, but that is not the solution. When one considers the increase in administration that might

involve, and possibly require, permanent staff and office accommodation—with increases in subscription to pay for it—it scarcely bears consideration at this time. A change in the grouping might offer a temporary solution.

As to how Group 10 figures in this matter, one would do well to read Dr. Kent's statement appearing on p.165 (No. 7) of the *London Archaeologist* summarising the position. Now the matter can be carried a stage further in that on the 5th July last, the first meeting of the new Group 10 was held.

The feeling in some of the active London societies is that little is to be gained by the new group, except an increase of committees to attend by active officers, already heavily committed, which does not necessarily mean more archaeology. Still, the new organisation should be given a fair trial.

It is only right to point out, at C.B.A. Report No. 19 (30/6/69) on p.52 states, that the omission of a report from Group 10 does not imply that no activity is taking place in that area. As far as my own society is concerned, there is a full programme of lectures and visits, an annual publication of its *Transactions*, a full programme for the Archaeological Research Committee, and for the Historical Buildings Conservation Committee, and the annual conferences for Local History and London Archaeologists. These last are well attended and invitations are sent to neighbouring societies.

179 Coombe Road,  
Croydon.

S. W. HOWARD,  
Vice-President and Chairman,  
London and Middlesex  
Archaeological Society.

#### MUSEUM RESERVE COLLECTIONS

MR. HOLLING is quite right to draw attention to the need to contact curators before making museum visits, and I have every reason to know how ready they are to make their reserve collections available. But this facility does not diminish the value of regional exhibitions of recent discoveries, which was what I was talking about in my answer to Mr. Horne, in the Summer issue, on the subject of C.B.A. Groups.

My implied criticism of contemporary museum policy in gallery display was, perhaps, out of place there, but my point is that in re-designing these displays to attract and educate the general public, there is a tendency for them to become much less valuable to the archaeologist and, indeed, to any person with an intelligent interest in the past. The reserve store-rooms have always been vital for the serious student, but they are not, as a rule, places where a general picture of an aspect of regional archaeology can readily be appreciated. There should be a happy mean between the case full of stuffed birds and assegais, and the case containing three shiny pots sitting on crimson velour.

47 King's Road,  
Richmond,  
Surrey.

R. A. H. FARRAR

Mr. Holling writes:

As one who has to arrange archaeological displays for the general public, I entirely agree with Mr. Farrar in rejecting the "three shiny pots." Our own policy is to try and explain the life of a period from as many aspects as possible, illustrated by objects with pictures, text and maps, etc. aimed at a reasonably intelligent level; but the problem of space means that we have to select a few characteristic examples of any particular class, such as

Roman brooches, where the more knowledgeable would prefer to see a full range with less background information.

The ideal solution is probably the recognised "two-tier" system of display which employs one case arranged in the manner I have described, and a second containing much more material for those who do not need the basic information, leaving the visitor to find his own level; but this is impracticable for most small museums unless, perhaps, they have access to large funds for modern display arrangements, and if we have to make a choice, we are, I feel, right in placing the needs of the majority of visitors first, bearing in mind that these include the children.

Mr. Farrar concludes:

The needs of the "majority of visitors" are, of course, paramount. There is no sense in the archaeologist beating his head against that particular brick wall; which brings us back to the point I made at first, that we must organise our own exhibitions of current finds on a regional basis (like that of a C.B.A. Group) narrow enough to ensure that there are not too many gaps, and wide enough not to demand too much of the active archaeologist's valuable time in attendance.

#### TAKE YOUR PICK

THERE IS A deeply cherished belief, widely held by the general public and volunteer excavators alike, that excavation is normally undertaken solely with the aid of the mason's pointing trowel. The quickest way to remove spoil in quantity is to gently break up the layer (or a small portion at a time) with a pickaxe and then move it, via shovel and wheelbarrow, to the spoildump. The pickaxe, properly used, is a far more efficient tool for this purpose, than the trowel and allows for a natural ease of movement and posture to be adopted when working, rather than the crouched position required for trowelling.

The pickaxe customarily employed on excavations is the heavy "navvy" type with a head weighing between 6-9lbs., to which must be added the weight of the normal 36in. handle. This tool, used in capable hands, is an excellent one but few of us possess the expertise or strength to use it for lengthy periods of time.

One alternative implement, the shorthanded, cumbersome, but lightweight military entrenching tool was much used on excavations in the early 1950's. Unfortunately this tool lacks the weight and penetration of the normal pick. It is also unbalanced in design and the short handle requires either much stooping or use only when kneeling, thus preventing the full use of the body to drive the point home. It still has it's devotees and can be very useful in confined places.

For many years the writer has used a smaller and lighter version of the "navvy" pickaxe with considerable success. This lighter tool, sometimes labelled the "gentleman's" pick has proved suitable for all but the most frail of workers. The head weighs only a bare three pounds while the slightly smaller handle suits the naturally shorter person or those with a weak grip. The manufacturers are Swindell and Co., Withymoor Works, Dudley, Worcs., and is marketed under the brand name of Griffin tools. They are also available from the following local stockists: W. A. Stapeley, High Street, Orpington, Kent; J. W. Carpenter, 201 High Street, Chiswick, London, W.4., also at 166/8 Queensway, London, W.2.; and E. J. Woolards Ltd., High Street, Waltham Cross, Herts., price £2.

Redgates Nursery,  
Great Cambridge Road,  
Waltham Cross,  
Herts.

BERNARD BARR  
Hon. Secretary,  
Hertfordshire  
Archaeological Society.