

was seen to spread across the filling of an east-west ditch, the lowest filling of which also contained early Roman sherds. Again, one suspects that a small surviving patch of the road was being observed.

#### Site 7 (TQ 176 774)

A second building site, at 209-215 Brentford High Street was visited early in 1969. Foundation trenches here showed that the area was very thoroughly disturbed by recent buildings. In one area however where the lower strata still survived, early Roman pottery was again found to be present. In particular a very large storage jar of the Patch Grove type was recovered. It had been set upright in the Roman ground surface and seems to have been intact until struck by a trench digging machine.

#### Site 8 (TQ 178 775)

The most recent excavations, begun in August, 1970, and not yet completed, have added greatly to our knowledge of the town. Most of the Roman occupation, represented by pits and gulleys, belongs

either to the 1st and early 2nd centuries or to the 4th century. A feature of special interest is a gravel-surfaced Roman road, exhibiting distinct repair or reconstruction layers of mixed soil and brickearth. It is intriguing that the road had fallen into disuse sometime in the 2nd century. Of this there is no doubt, for a number of Roman features of 2nd and 4th century date have been dug through the road layers. It is unacceptable that the route from Londinium to the South-West was abandoned in the middle of the Roman period, and a late Roman road must now be sought in future excavations.

Those who have carried out these excavations, mostly members of the West London Archaeological Field Group, are now assisting with the processing of excavated material on Tuesday evenings at St. Mary's College, Strawberry Hill. Fairly large groups of pottery and animal bone of Roman, medieval and post-medieval date have accrued since 1966 and much useful information should stem from its analysis.

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## London's Archaeological Societies—10

### WEST LONDON ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD GROUP

THE WEST LONDON Archaeological Field Group came into existence as a result of excavations carried out under the direction of Roy Canham for the London Museum at Shepperton and Brentford in 1967 and 1968 and since its inception in 1968 has provided a skilled digging force for further excavations in West London. The Group operates in the western half of Middlesex, roughly the north west quadrant of the Greater London area where the sprawl of urban development either in the form of building work, roads, motorways or gravel extraction is an ever increasing threat to any surviving evidence of ancient settlement and where it is probable that the next few decades will witness the total destruction of all archaeological sites.

The Group bases its work on a scheme of building site inspection. Information about proposed developments is obtained from lists of Planning Applications produced by the relevant London Boroughs and prospective sites are checked against a series of 6in. Ordnance Survey maps which record all known archaeological finds from the area. A continuous watch is kept on all large development sites and any known to be of particular archaeological interest. Recent results from this process include a collection of animal bones, probably dating to the last interglacial period discovered during gravel working at Shepperton and a 14th century pit group from Stanwell.

Combined with the above scheme the Group maintains a policy of excavation for known archaeological sites threatened by building development or discovered as a result of building site inspection. At Heathrow Airport in 1969 a continuous watch on the construction of the No. 1 Runway Extension combined with rescue excavation provided evidence of two ring ditches, the first of their kind to be discovered in the area, and remains of a settlement which was inhabited from the Early Iron Age until the end of the Roman period. The work which lasted over a period of six months, was carried out with the co-operation of the contractors and it was found possible to extract and record the information required whilst in

no way delaying construction work. Further excavations have been carried out in Brentford over the last four years (see p.291) and in addition the Group has helped in excavations at Staines and the current London & Middlesex Archaeological Society's excavations at Bedfont and Kempton Park.

Although site observation and excavation have always been important tools in the decipherment of ancient landscapes and settlement patterns, it is becoming increasingly apparent that this should take place against a solid background of field work and documentary research. The most recent activities of the Group include the formation of two such research groups both working in collaboration with one another on a specific area.

Besides its week-end excavation activities the Group now meets every Tuesday evening at St. Mary's College, Twickenham where the task of washing and marking the excavated material prior to analysis is well under way. All helpers are encouraged to take part in this activity and newcomers are welcome. The task of inspecting building sites, however, involves considerable skill, the primary requirement being experience of archaeological excavation. Unless the field worker is capable of recognising and interpreting archaeological strata in the controlled environment of an excavation, he will be of little use on a building site inspection.

The Group has not "advertised" widely for members, since those without excavation experience cannot be employed in one of the main activities. Furthermore, there are none of the usual benefits from membership such as lectures, visits and publications. However, there is a great shortage of volunteers for excavation in the London area and a list of all those interested in helping is maintained by the London Museum. Details of current excavations will be sent to anyone on application to the Field Officer, The London Museum, Kensington Palace, London W.8.

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