

Notes and Reviews.

EXCAVATIONS AT SEACOURT, BERKSHIRE, IN 1939.

The excavation of a village site has long been one of the chief gaps in medieval archaeology. The site at Seacourt appeared to fill this gap admirably. It was the site not merely of a village, to judge from documentary references, prosperous and important in its heyday, but also of one known to have been deserted and in ruins in 1439 and never subsequently reoccupied, thus possessing all the archaeological virtues of a sealed and dated site.

Exploratory excavations were carried out in June and July 1939 for four weeks. They resulted in the discovery and partial excavation of the main road of the medieval village, three groups of domestic buildings and the church, and in the location of two other groups of domestic buildings, besides, throwing light on a number of surface features and yielding great quantities of medieval pottery and a variety of small finds.

Owing to the war it has not yet been possible to examine the pottery, most of which was stratified in relation to the domestic buildings, or the small finds or to draw out the sections or make final deductions as to the dates of the various features. Eventually however it should be possible to tie down the dates of the domestic structures closely, as all of these were associated with stratified deposits.

The wall footings of the domestic buildings were apparently not taken down to natural (which was on the average something like three feet below the surface) but lay directly on the soft soil at a depth of some eighteen inches. This, together with the absence of mortar remains or of any kind of binding, suggested that the buildings were inferior structures of dry stone walling.

The main road of the village was traced for some 250 feet; it was on the average 12 feet wide and was constructed of irregular lumps of field rubble, apparently on a bed or made-up platform of clay, though this last point was difficult to establish as the stratigraphy had been disturbed by the insertion of modern field drains. The surface of the road was identical with that of local farm roads still in use. A ditch underlay the edge of the road and ran parallel with it. Pottery was recovered from all depths in the silting of the ditch.

The church was apparently quite small. It had an apsidal east end, and quantities of stone roofing slates and stained glass were mixed with the rubble debris from the walls. Four burials were excavated in the chancel, but there was no trace of any floor. It was evident that the church had suffered even more than the other buildings located from the robbing of its stonework for use as building material.

The cemetery, the excavation of which should be of considerable importance to medieval anthropology, probably occupies a flat area to the south of the church, but this was not trenched.

The excavations showed that the site was rich in pottery, small finds and stratified deposits. As for the architectutal remains, which are abundant, although the bare wall footings only remain, the recovery at least of complete dateable ground plans not only of the church but of a variety of farm and domestic buildings should only be a matter of time. Many but interesting surface features, notably along the bank of the Seacourt stream, and adjacent to the road in the lower field, remain to be explored.

The small finds include nails, brooches, buckles, horseshoes, shears, knives and jettons. The dating of such things is still very vague and the stratified finds from the sealed site at Seacourt should do much to make possible a more detailed chronology. The site also promises important results in connexion with the dating of later medieval pottery.

A fuller account of the excavations is appearing in the forthcoming number of *Oxoniensia*.

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RAMS HILL, UFFINGTON.

The current number of *The Antiquaries Journal* (Vol. 20, No. 4, October 1940) contains an article by Mr. and Mrs. Stuart Piggott on the excavations carried out by them in 1938 and 1939 under the aegis of the Newbury Field Club at Rams Hill, in Uffington. This hill is about one mile east of White Horse Hill and lies to the south of the Ridgeway. A brief summary of the 1938 work appeared in the *Transactions of the Newbury Field Club* (VIII, 116). The structures now reported consist of (1) the Inner Enclosure on the hill-top (Middle Bronze Age, about 1500 B.C.), (2) the Main (Camp) Enclosure (Hill-fort of the Iron Age A culture, about 400 B.C.) and (3) the Rectangular Enclosure (which enclosed a settlement in early Roman times; in the 5th century A.D. two individuals had been buried in its ditch).

In the Inner Enclosure 16 sections were cut shewing the ditch to enclose an oval area of 400 by 270 feet and in Section II sherds of a Middle Bronze Age cinerary urn were found and a reconstructed drawing of the vessel is given. It is similar in ornament to one from the Lambourne Seven Barrows and may have been made by the same potter. Sherds of a secondary occupation of the inner ditch belong to the Late Bronze Age.

Sections in the ditch of the Main Enclosure shewed it to be unfinished, comparable to that unfinished part of the ditch of the Woodbury settlement. Early Iron Age A pottery was found low down in the silt, the closest analogies of which are sherds from Liddington Castle in north Wiltshire. Drawings of 21 sherds are given.

Three sides of the ditch of the Rectangular (Roman) Enclosure were found abutting upon the east side of the ditch of the Early Iron Age Fort. In the filling of this ditch Roman and Belgic pottery was found and is here described and drawn. In a cleared out part of the ditch two burials were found. Nine coins of the Theodosian period were associated with the first burial and these are described in an annexed report by Mr. C. H. V. Sutherland. There were no grave goods with the second burial. A third burial of a child was also found with no grave goods. No evidence of masonry or of interior buildings were found. This enclosure may have resembled that of the first period of Ditchley (A.D. 70-200) in Oxfordshire, the site of which, however, is in marked contrast with the upland position of Rams Hill which should more properly be compared with the Roman site on Lowbury Hill near Streatley.

CHARCOALS FROM MAIDEN CASTLE.

The current number of *Forestry Abstracts* (Vol. 2, No. 3, 1940) contains the following abstract of a paper in the *Journal of Ecology* [Vol. 28 (1940), 310-325].

SALISBURY, E. J. and JANE, F. W. Charcoals from Maiden Castle and their significance in relation to the vegetation and climatic conditions in prehistoric times.

From an examination of a large number of pieces of charcoal from the Neolithic, Early Iron Age and Late Iron Age deposits probably representing several hundred individual trees and shrubs and comprising some seventeen species, there is evidence that in Neolithic times the chalk of Dorset probably grew a closed woodland plant community of the Oak/Hazel type. In passing from the earliest to the latest period there is evidence of change, probably due to continued climatic action resulting in leaching and the development of a less calcicole flora, while forest destruction by man led to a more open vegetation and less favourable edaphic conditions. Nearly two thousand annual increments of growth have been measured in the prehistoric charcoals of Oak and Hazel, and the results compared with measurements of annual rings in charcoals prepared from recent specimens of the same species. From a statistical analysis it appears that climatic conditions were much the same throughout the period represented as at the present time. The early Iron Age specimens were few in number and included no species not present in the earlier or later periods. Species present in both Neolithic and Late Iron Age charcoals were: *Corylus avellana*, *Fraxinus excelsior*, *Pyrus malus*, *Quercus? robur*, *Salix* sp. In the Neolithic charcoals only: *Populus* sp., *Rhamnus catharticus*, *Sorbus aria*. In both Neolithic and Early Iron Age: *Taxus baccata*. In Early and Late Iron Age: *Acer campestre*. In the Late Iron Age charcoals only: *Betula* sp., *Crataegus* sp., *Sorbus torminalis*, *Ulmus* sp., *Prunus domestica*, *P. avium*, and *P. spinosa*. From authors' summary.

PHOTOGRAPHIC RECORDS.

CHURCHES AND ANCIENT BUILDINGS.

BERKSHIRE ARCHITECTURAL RECORDS COMMITTEE FORMED.

Day by day, as a result of enemy action priceless architectural treasures are being destroyed and of many of them no illustrated records exist. An urgent effort, therefore, is being made to obtain photographic records of old churches and other buildings of merit throughout the country, so that reliable information will be available in case of the destruction of these buildings by aerial bombardment or from other causes. It is desired to enlist the interest of as many people as possible in this work.

On December 10, 1940, a meeting was held in St. Mary's Church House, Reading, when it was resolved to form a Berkshire Architectural Records Committee to assist in obtaining records of such buildings in the county.

Among those present at the meeting were the Rev. C. A. M. Roberts (representing the Archdeacon of Berkshire) and Canon A. G. Parham; Mr. E. A. L. Martyn, Mr. A. Betts, Canon C. E. M. Fry, Miss Swadling, Canon A. W. Batchelor, the Rev. H. C. Wilder, Miss E. S. Beach, Canon F. J. Kernan, Mr. G. Adams, Mr. H. T. Morley, Mr. A. J. Campbell Cooper, Miss Bailly, Mr. J. W. Dodgson, Captain R. H. Watson, Mr. H. J. C. Neobard, Mr. K. N. Crowe, the Rev. G. C. Matthews, Mr. E. Ravenscroft, Mr. H. M. Hutt, Mr. N. Whitley, the Rev. C. Bourne, Mr. M. Adams, Mr. F. M. Underhill and Mr. C. B. Willcocks.

A strong committee was elected, including Mr. A. Thomas Loyd (the Lord Lieutenant of Berkshire), the Ven. R. Wickham Legg (the Archdeacon of Berkshire), and representatives of the Ecclesiastical Authorities and of other religious denominations, the Berkshire County Council, Reading University, Reading Museum and Art Gallery, the Berkshire Archaeological Society, the Berks, Bucks and Oxon Architectural Association, the Berkshire Society of Architects, and the Institute of British Photographers, etc.

Canon A. G. Parham, M.C., M.A., was appointed chairman; Mr. H. J. C. Neobard, O.B.E., vice-chairman; and Mr. C. B. Willcocks, F.S.A., F.R.I.B.A., hon. secretary and treasurer.

At the meeting it was resolved that every effort should be made to obtain without delay as many as possible of the proposed records.

HOW RECORDS SHOULD BE MADE.

With regard to churches, a letter is to be sent to all incumbents in Berkshire, asking if they will endeavour to arrange for complete photographic surveys of their churches to be made, if the buildings are of interest and this has not been done already, which records should be made as follows:

(1) By taking a set of overlapping views of the exterior, showing every side and every angle, forming a complete survey.

(2) By doing the same thing in the interior.

(3) By taking separate, close-up views of special features, showing the details of monuments, carved niches, screen-work, pulpit, glass, bench-ends, font, etc.

(4) The prints should be unmounted. A description of each should be written on the back, giving the name of the church and its dedication, e.g., St. Mary Walton: Exterior, S. transept; or Interior, Chapel at end of S. aisle; or "Smith," Monument, E. wall of N. transept. The name and address of the photographer should be included, and the dates on which the photographs were taken.

No attempt should be made to make the photographs artistically good as pictures. Their purpose is technical, architectural and archaeological, so as to be a practical guide to architects and craftsmen in any work of reconstruction, and in course of time to be an illustrated guide to the churches of this country for the students of the future.

The photographs should be in duplicate, in case of accidents to one copy, and in addition the committee will be glad to receive the negatives, if not required, also any measured drawings, plans, detailed sketches and other information with regard to the churches, copies of which have not already been deposited with the Central Council for the Care of Churches.

OLD BUILDINGS OF MERIT.

The committee also desires to obtain similar photographic records of other old buildings of merit throughout the county—town halls, manor and other houses, almshouses, mills, inns, cottages and of old bridges, etc. If complete records of these buildings are not practicable such photographs as can be taken should be included.

In the case of old cottages and other buildings which are unlikely to be rebuilt, complete internal photographic records are not required, but good interior views will be useful.

The photographs should be of good quality, taken by competent amateur or professional photographers, preferably about a quarter to half plate size permanent glossy prints and suitable for enlargement. Alternatively, stereographic photographs will form valuable records.

Local photographers are co-operating in the movement and Mr. Gilbert Adams, 22, Market Place, Reading, has been appointed chairman of a photographic sub-committee. He will be pleased to advise, on behalf of the Institute of British Photographers, as to photographers and the cost of photographing any building.

The duplicate photographs and any other particulars should be sent to Mr. Willcocks at 47, St. Peter's Avenue, Caversham

Heights, Reading, who will enter them in a County Register and than send them to the following depositories :

One copy of the photographs and any negatives, measured drawings, etc., of Church of England Ecclesiastical buildings will be sent to the Central Council for the Care of Churches, for inclusion in the collection which the Council is making of records of all churches in the country. This collection it is intended to keep at the Church House, Westminster, after the war. The second copy of these photographs will be deposited in the Diocesan Registry.

Photographs, etc., of buildings of other religious denominations and of secular buildings will be dealt with as follows :

One copy of the photographs and any measured drawings, etc., will be sent to the Record Depository at the Shire Hall, Reading. The second copy of the photographs and any negatives received will be sent to the Courtauld Institute of Art, which is making a collection of photographs of English architecture.

OTHER COMMITTEES TO BE FORMED.

Similar committees it is hoped will be formed shortly in Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire. In the meantime, the photographic recording of buildings in these counties should be proceeded with and the records of Buckinghamshire buildings should be sent to Mr. E. A. L. Martyn, F.R.I.B.A., The Museum, Church Street, Aylesbury, Bucks. Oxfordshire records should be sent to Mr. T. Lawrence Dale, F.R.I.B.A., Lloyds Bank Chambers, Carfax, Oxford. The depositories for these records will be probably the same as for the Berkshire records, except that instead of one copy of the secular buildings, etc., records being sent to Reading, they will be sent, in Buckinghamshire, to the County Museum, Aylesbury, and in Oxfordshire to an approved depository.

In view of the urgency of this matter, it is hoped that everyone interested in this scheme will give all possible help, both by taking photographs of such buildings as they are able to, and by interesting other photographers in the project.

It should be noted that in some districts under War Office control a permit for taking photographs must be obtained.

The committee will also be grateful for financial help. Donations should be sent to Mr. Willcocks.

It is not, perhaps, generally realized that throughout Great Britain there is a series of buildings of historic and archaeological interest such as is found in no other country. If photographers, both amateur and expert, will undertake, without delay, photographic surveys of these buildings in their districts, they will be doing work of great national value and preserving much which may otherwise be lost.

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