

NOTES AND NEWS

Darley Abbey, Codnor Castle and Burley Hill

EXCAVATIONS and surveys were carried out at these three important medieval sites by the Archaeological Research Group and reported in its newsletter. Work was planned at Darley Abbey after information had been received from the Belper Rural District Council that building was to start on a site formerly used as allotments off Brick Row and Old Lane, which it was suggested might have come within the precincts of the abbey. Extensive trenching however revealed no trace of building foundations nor other occupation features. The scarcity of medieval pottery reinforced the view that the site was not within the area of the abbey. The Group was particularly indebted to Mr. H. D. Stanworth, Engineer and Surveyor of the Belper R.D.C. for his enlightened co-operation in giving advance notice and for permission to go on the site.

The future of Codnor Castle has been causing concern for some time and with demolition being proposed the Research Group has made a survey of the site. At the medieval pottery site at Burley Hill, Duffield (*D.A.J.*, LXXVII (1957), 57-60), magnetometer surveys were made in an attempt to locate possible kiln sites and associated archaeological features. Surprisingly little magnetic variation was recorded over the field, but two anomalies almost certainly represent a pottery kiln and probably a filled clay pit or puddling hole.

Historic Towns

In 1964 the Council for British Archaeology in a memorandum on *The Buchanan Report and Historic Towns* made a strong plea for the preservation of historic town plans and buildings in any schemes for development, emphasizing that such plans often formed a suitable basis for modern designs which seek to segregate pedestrian from motor traffic. In town redevelopment the importance of a historic street-plan is often overlooked or ignored and the individuality of a town destroyed. As a second C.B.A. memorandum entitled *Historic Towns* says, "The street plan is the framework or skeleton of a town. The flesh may have been renewed, and a medieval street may contain only Georgian or even later buildings. Nevertheless, its medieval quality — its width and the scale of its buildings — persists and forms an essential ingredient in the quality of the town." A list of towns where particularly careful treatment in any planning or redevelopment proposals seemed most essential has been published. It contains 324 towns but many others which also have claims for treatment as historic towns had to be omitted.

In Derbyshire three towns were included in this list: Ashbourne for its well preserved ancient town plan and for its number of historic buildings

worthy of preservation; Belper for its Georgian town plan and its 18th- and 19th-century buildings; and Buxton for its Georgian town plan and buildings. The Council of the Society had recommended in addition the inclusion of six other towns:

Bakewell	Ancient town plan and bridge crossing, castle site, important ecclesiastical site.
Chesterfield	Ancient town plan, Georgian and Victorian buildings.
Derby	Ancient bridge crossing, Georgian buildings.
Dronfield	Georgian buildings.
Glossop	Victorian town plan and buildings.
Wirksworth	Ancient town plan, ecclesiastical site and buildings.

In these towns as well as in those on the national list their unique qualities need to be understood by local authorities and their historic structure treated with sensitivity. Chesterfield is one town whose historic qualities are now threatened by a plan for the redevelopment of the central area which shows no understanding of the street-plan nor regard for the buildings, which are listed as being of special architectural and historic interest, in the market-place area. The Council of the Society has expressed its criticism of this plan of destruction.

Historic Houses

Sudbury Hall is to be acquired by the National Trust, which is receiving a grant of £49,000 for repairs and £1,844 annually for five years for maintenance from the Historic Buildings Council. The Derbyshire County Council is also making a contribution to this scheme. Sudbury Hall, the home of the Vernon family, which was begun in 1613 but not completed until after the Restoration, is described in the annual report of the Historic Buildings Council as "perhaps the most important house of its period since the destruction by fire of Coleshill."

North Lees Hall, near Hathersage, which was in a ruinous state a few years ago, has been very happily restored by its owner, Lt-Col. Hugh Beach, with the aid of a substantial grant from the Ministry of Public Building and Works. The work of restoration, which has been supervised by Lt-Col. Gerald Haythornthwaite, has included the notable plaster ceilings as well as the fabric, and the Hall is now used as a small guest-house. The Peak District National Park has produced a booklet on North Lees, including a romantic Victorian history of the house, which should be compared with the recent article by Miss Meredith on the house and its occupiers (*Derbyshire Countryside*, September 1965).