

EDITORIAL

NATIONAL REGISTER OF ARCHIVES.—On 23rd March, 1949, a meeting was held at the Middlesex Guildhall, at which Lord Latham took the chair. Lt.-Col. G. E. G. Malet, Registrar of the National Register of Archives, explained the objects of the Register and outlined plans for establishing a voluntary committee in each of the Municipal Boroughs and Urban Districts of Middlesex. These committees would be asked to call meetings at which the aims of the county organisation would be explained. Their permanent duties would be to locate local collections of archives, to get them registered with the N.R.A. and, generally speaking, to make the community "archive-conscious." A very rich exhibition of documents preserved in the County Record Office was open for inspection at the end of the meeting.

It is hoped that during the coming year fresh schools will have joined the Society and that those which are already members will aim at establishing an antiquarian society in their neighbourhood.

Many antiquarian subjects in Middlesex deserve study besides the written and printed documents which the local committees are seeking to preserve all over the country. For example, school societies—and others for that matter—might well attempt to make a complete collection, to be entered on the earliest 6-inch O.S. map available, of the old field-names of their district, like that made for Hendon by our Chairman of Council. The *Transactions* will gladly publish complete lists and will undertake to examine maps, with a view to publication if suitably presented. Before publication it will be necessary to obtain permission of the Ordnance Survey.

Selective lists of the names can be found in the Middlesex volume of the English Place-Names Society, where also are one or two pages devoted to the ancient roads of the county. Here is a second subject for investigation. It may be that certain place-names indicate the former presence of prehistoric paths and there must have been salters' tracks connecting with the Essex roads from the three groups of coast-saltings, for there were no salt-pans in ancient Middlesex. Furthermore,

no complete and systematic study of Middlesex roads mentioned in charters, like that undertaken for Wessex by the late Dr. G. B. Grundy, has yet been published.

One of the weaknesses of antiquarian studies is their diversity. It is therefore hoped that members of the Society will concentrate in increasing numbers on the study of local documents. If this is done all over the county, it will be possible to arrive at an exact knowledge of the way in which our Middlesex forefathers governed themselves in the seventeenth, eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries before the birth of centralisation. Vestry minutes, churchwardens' accounts, the records of overseers of the poor and surveyors of the highways—these documents and others are preserved in the vestries of the old Middlesex parishes or the offices of local councils, and it is strongly urged that those who have not hitherto studied local records, as well as experienced antiquaries, should attack the problem systematically. The co-operation of all will be welcomed and an effort made to publish, sooner or later, the outcome of their investigations. At the same time it should be said that not "quaintness," not unselective transcription, but a reasoned historical narrative, supported by quotation and reference, is the most desirable aim when space is so valuable. It is more useful to offer the *Transactions* a study of the interaction of manor and parish or the development of paid from unpaid officialdom than, what was seen recently in the proceedings of a county society, a dozen pages of detailed payments for the destruction of vermin.

The Essex Record Office has issued a valuable brochure by the Senior Assistant Archivist, Miss Hilda Grieve, entitled *Some Examples of English Handwriting*. The subject-matter consists of photographic reproductions of documents in the county office with translations *en regard* and is designed to give students of local archives practice in reading both Latin and English in various hands.

On 18th December, 1948, an inquest was held at Hunstanton on objects unearthed at Snettisham, at which the coroner is reported to have directed the jury not to regard the three related finds as a single hoard. A letter appearing in *The Times* on 31st December advocates a re-statement of the law of Treasure Trove in the light of current standards, so that a heterogeneous hoard may be preserved intact, the precious

metals together with the base, which may be chronologically important.

Our member and former Hon. Secretary, A. Charles Knight, F.S.A., grand-nephew of the editor of the famous *London* (1841), is Master of the Worshipful Company of Barbers.

During the meetings of the British Association at Newcastle Mr. Miles Burkitt, president of the anthropology and archæology section, advocated the inclusion of archæology as a major subject in the curricula of schools. If prehistory were admitted, it would naturally be offered as a subject for school or higher certificate. Further, Mr. Burkitt thought, there were excellent reasons for its consideration on broad lines by the heads of secondary modern schools.

The difficulties are obvious. What subject is prehistory to displace? Is there a qualified person to teach it? As it is, headmasters have to scheme and compromise in order to squeeze in such subjects as civics and local history. It is possible to find room for the latter as the subject of one term's history in the first year. But no doubt the best way to deal with prehistory is to found one of the out-of-school societies we are advocating and call in the services of a series of outside lecturers.

During the past year it has been agreed by Council that, in the interests of economy, contributors will be asked to accept 12 offprints of their article in place of 25.

The Surrey Archæological Society are to be congratulated on a new enterprise, the publication of a brochure of 40 pages, *Blechingley*, by Uvedale Lambert (1949). This is the first of a Local History Series, which will contain histories of individual parishes and places within the ancient county of Surrey, illustrated with maps, plans, drawings and photographs. The price is 3s. 6d. to members, 5s. to non-members, post free.