

London's Archaeological Societies – 13

BROCKLEY HILL EXCAVATION & FIELD WORK GROUP

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION was nothing new to Brockley Hill when the writer arrived on the scene in 1968. Believed to be the site of *Sulloniaca* and bisected by Watling Street, Brockley Hill attracted the attention of the antiquaries, Camden, Norden and Stukley, then more recently S. E. Vulliamy and Hugh Braun. It was the latter's paper "Some Earthworks in North-West Middlesex" in the *Transactions of the London and Middlesex Archaeological Society* (1937) which did much to stimulate interest in the site. In that year a campaign of research excavations was started by the Brockley Hill Excavation Committee.

In 1952, as activities widened, the committee became the North Middlesex Archaeological Research Committee, which, under the chairmanship of Professor W. F. Grimes, mounted a series of excavations from 1952-58 on the Roman settlement at Brockley Hill and the linear earthwork Grim's Ditch. Excavations at Brockley Hill from 1937-1956 provided evidence of a thriving pottery industry in the 1st-2nd centuries but no substantial Roman buildings. In 1959 two further excavations were conducted on the suspected line of Grim's Ditch at Brockley Hill. However, in 1960 the North Middlesex Archaeological Research Committee decided to concentrate its activities elsewhere. Apart from minor excavations in 1960-61 Brockley Hill remained virtually neglected until 1968.

In Spring 1968 tipping activities started in Field 157, and a rescue excavation was mounted which revealed a number of features; further excavations were conducted in the following two years. In 1971 a kiln was revealed during sewer laying operations. It was becoming abundantly clear that the kilns at Brockley Hill formed part of one of the principal potteries in the province during the Flavian-Trajanic period.

Because of the threats to the site and the disbanding of the North Middlesex Archaeological Research Committee in 1970, the Brockley Hill Excavation and Field-Work

Group was formed in 1971. The objectives of this group are to foster an interest in the archaeology of Brockley Hill and surrounding area, to ensure that threats to sites are met with prompt excavation and recording, to observe such operations as pipe laying and building development, to ensure that artifacts found in this area are deposited in the appropriate museum, and to ensure that reports are promptly and adequately published.

With these objectives in mind, the group conducted excavations in 1972 in three threatened areas on the east side of Watling Street, revealing part of a pottery kiln and a clay pit of the late 1st century. Field 410, immediately to the north was subject to deep ploughing in January 1972, the first for many years. Trial excavations disclosed a mid-1st century pit, three pottery kilns and large quantities of 2nd century coarse pottery wasters. These excavations were followed by further deep ploughing in November 1972 which resulted in severe destruction. Representations have been made to the Department of the Environment in the hope of preventing any further ploughing. With a pottery manufacturing centre perhaps on the scale of Hartshill and Mancetter in Warwickshire awaiting exploration, such destruction makes prior excavation essential.

In 1973 a further excavation on the linear earthwork in Pear Wood which could be a continuation of Grim's Ditch, indicated quite clearly that it is of late-Roman or later date; the group is hoping to have it scheduled.

Observation and excavation will continue and whilst it is realised that part-time/weekend excavation is usually insufficient, some of the evidence is better than none at all. The only satisfactory remedy is the establishment of a full-time professional research unit covering the area. Until such a time, the Brockley Hill Excavation and Field-Work Group will endeavour to cope as best as it can. Inquiries to Hon. Sec., 31 Micklefield Way, Borehamwood, Herts.

STEPHEN CASTLE

Excavations and Processing

Excavations

City, by Guildhall Museum. Excavation in Upper Thames Street near Tower of London of medieval Custom House and waterfront together with Roman waterfront under direction of Tim Tatton-Brown. (See p.93). Volunteers required on week days—subsistence allowance payable for continuous attendance. Excavations expected to continue for two months. Inquiries to Guildhall Museum, 55 Basinghall Street, E.C.2. (01-606 3030 ext. 744).

Southwark, by Southwark Archaeological Excavation Committee. Several sites from the Roman periods onwards. Inquiries to Harvey Sheldon, S.A.E.C., Montague Chambers, Montague Close, S.E.1. (01-407 1989).

The Council for British Archaeology produces a monthly Calendar of Excavations from March to September, with a final issue in January summarising the main results of fieldwork. The Calendar gives details of extra-mural courses, summer schools, training excavations and sites where volunteers are needed. The annual subscription is 80p post free, which should be made payable to C.B.A., 8 St. Andrew's Place, N.W.1.

Processing

Ewell, by Nonsuch Antiquarian Society. Roman and medieval material from Ewell and a kiln at Cheam. Thursdays at 8 p.m. at Upper Mill, Kingston Road, Ewell. Inquiries to Frank Pemberton, 16 Ross Road, Wallington, Surrey. (01-669 5621).

Putney, by Wandsworth Historical Society. Work on the prehistoric and Roman material from Bemish Road, Putney, takes place 7.30-9.30 p.m. on Friday nights (except the last one of the month) during term times at Hotham School (top floor), Hotham Road, Putney, S.W.15. Inquiries to Jim Slade, 18 Bendemeer Road, S.W.15 (01-789 3797).

Southwark, by Southwark and Lambeth Archaeological Society and Southwark Archaeological Excavation Committee. Mondays and Thursdays, 6.30-9 p.m. at Montague Chambers, Montague Close (adjoining Southwark Cathedral near London Bridge); Thursdays 6.30-9 p.m. at Archaeological Workshop, Archbishop Temple School Annexe, Westminster Bridge Road (near Lambeth North Underground Station). General inquiries to Graham Dawson, Cuming Museum, Walworth Road, S.E.17 (703 6514).