

then bagged, labelled and stored for washing. A great time saving convenience for the post excavation workers is for the excavator to string the complete vertebrae in order, and to bag separately the left and right sides of the body as well as each of the hands and feet.

Discussion

Conditions and problems will undoubtedly vary from site to site and therefore it would be unwise to offer specific guidelines for others to follow, but it is hoped that the observations relating to the St. Nicholas Shambles site made here may prove helpful to others.

For useful information and references on sampling, pathological changes and racial variations in bone and teeth, ageing and sexing criteria, and other details relevant to the study of human skeletons, *Digging Up Bones* by D. R. Brothwell (1965) proved to be of great assistance.

Copies of the skeleton recording sheets are available from:

Department of Urban Archaeology,
71 Basinghall Street,
London, E.C.2.

Letters

SAFETY ON SITE

MAY I ADD two comments to your valuable article on site safety in the current issue? I would like to see all trenches fenced off at all times, but especially so when the public are admitted. The fence should be high enough to deter adults, but also have a second horizontal to prevent toddlers walking *underneath*. (The Construction Regulations 1966 specifically require fencing on building sites.) A fence also has a psychological effect — it requires a conscious effort of will to cross, whereas natural curiosity will lead people to the very edge of an unfenced trench, which can all too easily crumble.

Secondly, I want to sound a warning note where trenches are excavated close to standing structures. The archaeologist is naturally enough concerned with evidence in the ground, and may not appreciate that excavation close to foundations *could* affect their stability. Special care must be observed when working in front of a wall which is retaining soil at a higher level behind, as indiscriminate digging could produce a slippage by the disturbance of an equilibrium condition.

There is an obvious danger to the excavators from such activities. Less obvious, but no less significant from a purely financial viewpoint, is the risk that damages could be sought by a building owner if his property was affected. Working close to an adjoining property could affect this too! I know of no case yet where archaeological work has led to such actions, but it seems there is an increasing tendency to excavate *before* demolition. None of us want to be concerned in establishing such a legal precedent! So if planning excavations inside or near standing structures, it might be wise to seek technical advice first.

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THE FIELDS BENEATH

IN HIS REVIEW of Gillian Tindall's *The Fields Beneath*, Kevin Flude seems to have allowed his enthusiasm for the documentary history of his area to blind him to the book's archaeological shortcomings. Several points seem to show a lack of archaeological research, especially where the author ventures into outside territory; for example we are told that St Paul's Cathedral stands on the site

of a Roman temple, and that Wandsworth takes its name from the River Wandle. The author's derivation of the name "Kentish Town" from "Kent-ditch," which we are assured means bottom of a ditch, is also rather suspect. As archaeologists we should not allow old chestnuts like these a new lease of life without comment, whatever our opinions of the non-archaeological parts of the book.

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SAFETY ON SITE

WITH REFERENCE TO your article *Safety on Archaeological Sites*, Vol 3, No 6, I would like to make a few suggestions. First and foremost, no mention is made of the wearing of goggles. On some excavations the need to remove concrete foundations and walls requires the use of heavy duty tools like concrete breakers, kango guns and compressor drills. Protective goggles are an essential part of safety equipment both for the operator and for anyone within a twenty yard radius of the work being carried out. Being in the building trade myself, I have on occasion seen pieces of concrete and brick fly out from drill tips and chisels like shrapnel! Also the manual use of hammer and chisel requires protection for the eyes.

Secondly, any electric cables to these tools must be protected from any traffic over them like wheelbarrows, etc.

Thirdly, if you have to stand near the edge of a trench, stand on a scaffold board or something similar to spread your weight.

The wearing of safety helmets is sound advice, but try to wear them at all times — you never know when one of your fellow workers may turn around with a board on his shoulder and try to bash your brains out!

Generally the rules and regulations of the building industry should apply to archaeological sites. HMSO publish several booklets on safety precautions on building sites which should prove useful to site directors.

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