

Membership subscriptions I know it's a miserable way to begin a newsletter, making it sound a little like an electricity bill, but if we get it out of the way now, we need not worry about it springing out at an unsuspecting readership from behind a lecture summary! So, members are reminded that subscriptions fall due on January 1st. Those naughty ones amongst us who have still not paid for this year should recognise therefore that now is the time to do the honourable thing before a letter typed in red lands on the doormat. There are few more satisfying and touching sights than the smile on the face of an Hon. Treasurer, so join with me in making this possible by handing over a tiny fraction of your worldly wealth at the A.G.M. on April 20th, or post your sub. without delay to Robert Edwards, 12 Davis's Close, Kirkella, Hull, (£8 family, £5 ordinary, £3 student). The savings on postage to the Society, not to mention the Treasurer's tooth enamel, would be appreciated too in the matter of covenanted subscriptions. If you are paying by covenant and have not yet signed and returned the form sent to you, will you please do so right away. The Inland Revenue is stirring, which is not a pleasant experience at the best of times, so do please help the Hon. Treasurer by returning the signed covenant form promptly, that is to say NOW! Your cooperation in this matter is essential. And so to the joys of life ...

Society excavations Two projects which members have the opportunity to participate in will soon be underway. Excavation on the platform of a medieval moated site at

Arnold, near Long Riston (TA 126418) will begin after Easter on a regular Sunday basis, and anyone who wishes to participate, whether you have engaged in this sort of thing before or not, should contact Peter Armstrong (0482 632946) for further details. Members are also invited to join forces with students from the University of Durham in July for an excavation at Bursea House, Home-on-Spalding-Moor (SE 813338), to investigate a Romano-British industrial complex, where pottery manufacture and/or iron working is anticipated based upon recent intensive field walking and geophysical survey. For further information contact Peter Halkon (0482 446201).

Letters

Sir, I feel compelled to make my views known having just read the lead article in ERAS News 13. I suppose I must be naive to expect, as a metal detector, fair treatment from the Society. Several of my friends and many of my fellow enthusiasts nationwide have already been alienated from orthodox archaeology by such bigotry. I am not alienated but simply infuriated by such scurrilous comment. I would have thought that reasonable folk would have wished to avoid a polarisation of beliefs.

The word "orthodoxy" was used I suspect in an attempt to validate the present state of archaeological malaise. Banning metal detecting will not strengthen archaeology. It is not because of metal detecting that the Humberside Archaeological Unit is threatened with decimation or that the Dyer Lane/Walkergate dig had to be abandoned prematurely and unnecessarily. These are symptoms of archaeological complacency brought about by its inability to compete with the material pressures of the twentieth century.

I do not wish to launch into a general attack on "orthodox" archaeology, but I really do feel that the headlong pursuit of man's past has led to a rather obscene preoccupation with our ancestors' death rituals. This began with the

barrow digging antiquarians and has continued unabated to the present day, when we can look and witness the wholesale exhumation of whole churchyards. One might have thought that such digs would only precede building development where the grave would be destroyed irrespective. I do not expect many ardent archaeologists are as squeamish about such desecration of Christian burials as the author suggests they are of "collecting bird's eggs or uprooting wild flowers". The clergy have however begun to question this archaeological practice. And if archaeologists, blinded by "orthodoxy", decide that pagan burials might still be violated I would ask whether the profession is really as concerned, as it professes, with how our ancestors really ticked and what was important to them as indisputably ritualistic and deeply religious folk.

The article mentions "organised assaults" and I ask - on what? On the vast open areas of British agricultural land and foreshore which are hardly, even now, visited by metal detectors let alone archaeologists, and where artifacts have in many cases been ripped out of context by the plough many years ago?

The author suggests that reasoned argument will maybe curb "this irresponsibility" and I welcome such an educative process which I presume is to follow his emotive diatribe. Offensive words and phrases such as "little concern", "capricious whims", "organised assaults", "irresponsibility", are rather suggestive of an unhealthy bias and are unbecoming of a body involved in such a noble pursuit as archaeology. This sort of language polarises opinion and suggests that the writer is not really interested in reasoned argument, but simply with abolition by "rebel-rousing" tactics.

Why is so much energy being wasted attacking a body of people who have, I know, done so much for archaeology? Why do not more amateur archaeologists or even professional archaeologists spend as much time in the field as do my fraternity? Perhaps, after all, the author was right to

suggest that personal gain is an issue here.

I feel that I am competent to comment on such issues having one foot so to speak in each camp. Until the archaeological world, the E.R.A.S. included, begins to focus on the real issues and applies itself, even whilst sat in its armchair, to speaking out vociferously on relevant issues, for instance the demise of your fellow professionals in the area and the low priority afforded to archaeology in general, then in the words of the writer the "ceaseless mutilation of our country's archaeology" will continue. And if this is your main concern, as I agree it ought to be, then archaeology will need to operate more as a "pressure group" not dissipating its energies as at present by attacking metal detectors, who are not vermin but are quite friendly and useful creatures really, as I suppose are most archaeologists.

Yours faithfully,

D.Haldenby, (Mr.)
12 Main Street,
Elloughton.

Editor's comment: Polarisation is a self-evident condition when people are poles apart. It is more than common ground that is required; common principles are essential surely. But let me confine myself to just two points of Mr. Haldenby's letter. Of course archaeology cannot compete with twentieth century material pressures because it is neither funded nor staffed at a level anywhere even vaguely approaching that which creates those very pressures in the first place, nor will it ever be. Even so, the accusation of complacency can hardly be sustained in the context of the rescue efforts of the last 20 years, the very stimulus indeed which I suspect has generated his own undoubted interest in archaeology. And secondly, the organised assaults are, as we all know, on sites where treasure, a word more correctly defined as archaeological artefacts, has already been located. The discovery of sites, if properly reported and respected, is arguably the only justification for the use of metal det-

ectors in archaeological fieldwork. When sites are found only to be plundered for gain and without record, then something is seriously wrong, and concern over treasure hunting (not metal detecting per se) is as relevant as any other in archaeology. I would be saddened to feel that it is treasure hunting in the form in which the Society's committee has defined it that Mr. Haldenby is defending. Any more comments or rejoinders?

The Roman Province in the North So ran the title of the York Archaeological Weekend of the 26th-28th November last, attended by our vice-chairman, Peter Halkon. He has been good enough to provide us with a resume of the papers presented.

Once again the York Archaeological Weekend proved to be a great success, with most interesting lectures and efficient organisation. As is customary the weekend began with contributions from members of the York Archaeological Trust, namely Patrick Ottaway and David Brinklow, on recent discoveries in the York area. Evidence for the colonia and canabae (settlement around the fort) was reviewed. Although evidence is remarkably sparse for such an important settlement, two main conclusions were reached: a) there was some reorganisation along the riverfront involving terracing and reorganisation of roads and buildings in the later 2nd century AD, and b) there was no evidence for the flooding which is supposed to have caused the decline of York.

On Saturday morning Mr.D.Philips and Dr.B.Heywood gave a most impressive joint paper on the remarkable excavations undertaken beneath York Minster in which between 25 and 45 tons of material were shifted daily between 1967 and 1973! Visitors to the undercroft will be aware that the Minster is built on top of the principia of the Roman fort. This building was of monumental proportions, about the same size as the nave and transepts of the present Minster, and was occupied from the beginning of the fort right

through to the 9th century AD, when the roof collapsed. There was some evidence of upgrading in the late 3rd century, and it must be remembered that Constantine I was declared emperor in York. The slides illustrating this lecture were excellent.

Charles Daniels of Newcastle University then reviewed evidence for frontier developments. Major new theories were argued: the lack of archaeological evidence for the AD 197 destruction and the major changes that took place in the late 3rd and 4th century forts when it appears that chalets housing soldiers and their families were built inside forts, which means accepting smaller garrisons than previously thought.

Tony Sumpter gave an excellent and amusing lecture about his work in Castleford. (Roman Castleford still conjures up pictures of legionaries with flat hats, whippets and black puddings, drinking Tetley bitter!) At last the elusive fort has been located, as well as a large bathhouse. The building of a new superstore will provide further opportunity for excavation shortly.

Perhaps one of the most interesting lectures of the whole conference was given by Mr. Mark Hassal concerning the Notitia Dignitatum and its relationship to Britannia Inferior. The Notitia was a list of dignitaries in the late empire. It shows that by the 4th century the Roman army had changed considerably, consisting now of field armies (comitatus) and frontier troops (limitanei). The archaeological evidence shows that the dress of the Roman soldier was quite different at this time, the soldiers wearing trousers and helmets much more akin to barbarian than the traditional legionary, and was much more likely to follow a dragon standard than an eagle. Pages of the Notitia gave the insignia of the new commands and even the shield of each detachment of the army. The role of the Dux Britanniarum and Comes Litoris Saxonici were discussed and the setting up of a most complex bureaucratic organisation - "purple parchment" rather than red tape!

Mike McCarthy then gave an account of excavations

in Roman Carlisle. These are especially impressive due to the large amount of organic material recovered, including writing tablets and a cartwheel. Evidence of continuity in the vicus was also discussed.

Of especial interest to members of our Society was Mr. J. Wachter's discussion of the civitas capitals of the northern province. Each area was examined in turn, including Brough-on-Humber, which the speaker saw as a naval or military base rather than as the civitas capital of the Parisi. He suggested that the theatre inscription was not sufficient evidence to confirm this. (I briefly informed Mr. Wachter of the work undertaken by the Society in Brough, and it could be that this new evidence may slightly alter his interpretation).

On Sunday, appropriately, Dr. R. Jones discussed religion and burial practice. Warnings were given about implying too much from archaeological evidence, and whether indeed burial and religion were as closely connected as has hitherto been thought. For example, it is not even certain that all Christian burials are aligned east-west. Although there is nothing comparable to the Hinton St. Mary's mosaic pavement as a concrete example of Christianity in northern parts, the speaker referred to several churches on villa sites in the north. As Christianity was an imperial, and the official, religion in the late Roman empire, there should be no surprise at Christian finds at a late period, even through into the 6th century.

Our own Dr. Ben Whitwell gave a most interesting lecture on rural settlement in Britannia Inferior. There is good evidence of continuity on some sites from the Iron Age. Excavations at Garton Slack and Wetwang Slack have proved that the landscape had become highly organised by that time. At other sites too, such as Dalton Parlours in West Yorkshire, there was continuity. The villas in East Yorkshire were discussed, such as Rudston and Brantingham. It appears that some farm sites, such as Welton Wold, were part of

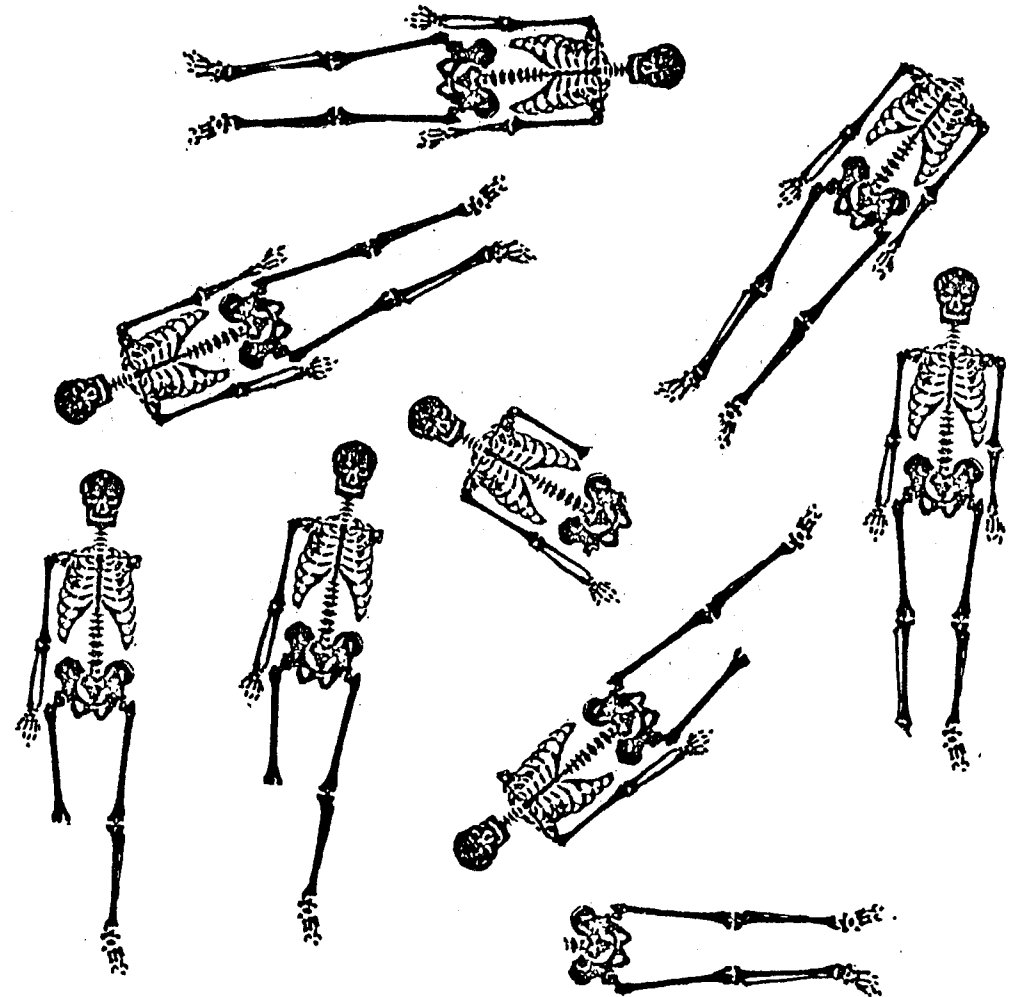
large estates, or latifundia, and that some of the tenant farmers lived in oppressive poverty. The work undertaken by the E.R.A.S. Field Study Group in the Home-on-Spalding-Moor area was also mentioned, as well as the question of possible continuity at such sites as Deepdale, near Barton-on-Humber.

The conference was rounded off by an excellent and controversial talk entitled "The Romans in the North - profit or loss". Dr.P.Salway, author of the new Oxford history "Roman Britain", pondered the motives of the emperors in attacking and holding Rome's most northerly province. Caesar and Claudius both gave mineral wealth as excuses for conquest. In fact, what both men sought was fame and popular support in Rome. Reference was made to Caligula's farcical attempt at invasion in which he ordered his troops to gather sea shells as spoils from the sea! Evidence for invasion and conquest for political prestige can be seen in the great propaganda value attached to campaigning in Britain. Claudius named his son Britannicus and was given a naval crown outside his palace in Rome. He made great play of the fact that no less than eleven British kings had surrendered to him. The Historia Augusta says that Commodus was referred to as Britannicus by his flatterers, and the virtues of the island of Britain are mentioned in a panegyric to Constantine I. The importance of York was stressed; after all Severus and Constantius Chlorus had died there, and Constantine himself was declared Augustus in the city. The monumental nature of Hadrian's Wall was considered in the light of his flamboyant and extravagant personality. The luxury and immense size of his villa at Tivoli, and the large number of settlements called Adrianople, are evidence of this. Could the monumental nature of Hadrian's Wall be further outward show of his personality? Constantine I, who dominated the Roman world in a similar manner to Hadrian, was also well known for monumental building works. Is the huge size of the princip-

ium in York explicable in its imperial connections? Dr.Salway left us with the intriguing picture of York and its northern province as being the centre of the Byzantine Empire!

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The Humberside Archaeological Unit reorganised



or

..... Diggers Unearth Horror Story!

Excavations within a book-lined enclosure, believed to have once housed members of the ancient Bungleside culture, have revealed the remains of what experts think could be victims of a bizarre ritual, possibly even involving human sacrifice. Radio-carbon samples obtained from an organic pulp deposit, thought to be evidence of flooring once several feet thick, date the carnage to 3rd February 1983.

"These people must have lived knee-deep in paper inside this enclosure," said Mr. I. Digham, an amateur antiquarian leading the investigation. "But what we had not expected is this mutilation of the tribesmen. Some of the victims seem to have suffered less than others," he said, "but one or two really seem to have got it in the neck. We must suppose that they were at the bottom of the social scale."

But the team sifting through the remains are still puzzled. "We shall probably never know what superstitious folly brought about such a catastrophe. These were primitive times," he added.

The excavation is expected to finish later this week because of shortage of funds.

Lecture summaries

15th December - The work of the West Yorkshire
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Archaeological Unit. David Michelmore
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David Michelmore, standing in for Phil Mayes, reviewed the archaeology of the heavily built-up area of West Yorkshire. The policy of the Unit is of thorough-going documentary survey before fieldwork. A three-volume published survey is tangible evidence of this. In the course of its preparation, Mr. Michelmore and Stephen Moorhouse had between them examined 6000 medieval charters. In addition, as sites are identified they are plotted for reference on Ordnance Survey maps. Separate town surveys are also under com-

pilation. This latter involves practical work to secure measured drawings of existing buildings of the medieval and post-medieval periods. In this context Unit staff are working in conjunction with the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments. Buildings representing the whole social spectrum have been examined, a particularly numerous group being the Pennine aisled halls, the largest body of medieval house type outside the south-east of England. In the West Riding cruck construction is restricted to barn buildings. By the 17th century stone-built houses are common in the area. Documentary evidence is used extensively in these surveys to enlarge the detail of the houses under study, and in this the probate inventories of the late 17th century onwards are particularly valuable. Working class housing of the 18th and 19th centuries are not overlooked, and included are single storey dwellings of the ironworkers, miners and quarrymen as well as the 19th century "slum" houses of the towns, of which little record has hitherto been compiled.

Aerial photographic reconnaissance across the receptive limestone belt has been successful in the past, and the less sensitive coal measures area are now being systematically flown. In the field of excavation many projects have been promoted. At Ledston trial excavations were undertaken across a series of pits of Iron Age date. At Dalton Parlours, near Collingham, a Romano-British villa complex with bath-house, aisled building and wells, superseded prehistoric enclosures and round houses. At Rothwell, in an area of open-cast mining, boundary ditches and a well of a native Romano-British occupation site has been excavated. At Castleford work has been designed to locate the Roman fort at the Aire crossing, following Phil Mayes' pre-Unit excavation work.

The Dark Age period in West Yorkshire requires illumination. Grimm's Ditch is a surviving feature of this time, possibly of the British king-

dom of Elmet which survived as late as 618AD. It may have been an eastern boundary defence, and although a section across it has been excavated more work is required to assess its date and character more fully.

Fieldwork on medieval period sites has been varied. The standing building of Elland Hall was dismantled and found to be of 13th century date with an earlier aisled hall beneath it. Floor joists were found to have been reused lengths of tenter frame with hooks still in place. Hillam is a village site whose discovery stemmed exclusively from the Unit's investigative documentary research, tenorial evidence indicating the existence and location of this settlement which was abandoned in the 15th century and subsequently "lost". Excavation revealed that the buildings had been of timber raised on padstones which had left virtually no trace on the ground.

A programme of consolidation and limited excavation is in progress on the important northern stronghold of Pontefract Castle. Originally a Motte and Bailey castle of 1180, it was considered by Henry VIII to be the only castle in the north fit to house his royal person! In the 19th century insensitive landscaping obscured much of the standing remains, and the Unit is directing a Manpower Services scheme in the restoration of the monument combining with it research excavation. Kirkstall Abbey, owned by Leeds City Council, is also under restoration, and the Unit is undertaking structural surveys in advance of the repair work. Excavation is also proceeding, the guest house being currently under examination in the course of a Unit/Leeds/M.S.C. consortium project.

For the post-medieval period the 17th century water-powered Thwaite Mills, rebuilt in the 19th century, was an operating concern grinding whitening as recently as 1976 when the mill dam was washed away. The Unit is organising work here in order to restore it as a fully working mill. The dam was found to be timber-framed in the

medieval style, but reconstruction here is likely to be too costly to undertake.

A number of new projects are currently in preparation, including work in the churchyard at Ferry Fryston, which lies on a township boundary with a henge monument nearby, and on the Iron Age hillfort of Almondbury within whose outer earthwork a town was planted in c.1200AD which failed and was deserted by the 16th century.

19th January - Stanwick in the Northern Iron Age.
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Percival Turnbull
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The hillfort of Stanwick lies between the Tees and the Swale where the Stainmore leaves the A1 at Scotch Corner. Large earthworks criss-cross the site which was taken into guardianship following the excavation work of Sir Mortimer Wheeler in 1951. On average the banks survive to c.15 feet, and curiously were interpreted incorrectly by the compilers of the Victoria County History in 1906 as part of a deer park complex. A large part of the area remains pasture today, and although the earthworks enclose an extensive area, Wheeler's excavation within the ramparts was confined to one small portion (Site F), with the predominant investigation concentrated upon the ditches and banks. Wheeler interpreted the fort defences in a three phase sequence: the Tofts he saw as phase one, an enclosed area of 16 acres; this was extended by the addition of an enclosure to the north cutting the northern part of the first phase work, with part of phase one retained as an annexe; phase three was represented by a massive enlargement added to the south side of phase two encompassing Henah Hill. A fourth post-Roman phase of earthworks added to the south has been proven by Mr. Turnbull's own recent work to be no more than an element of the parish boundary and should be discounted for the purposes of the monument's understanding in defensive terms.

Wheeler's archaeological work on the site was

reviewed. His excavations had been set against the historical background supplied by the Roman historian, Tacitus. Wheeler inferred therefrom that Stanwick was the stronghold of Venutius, who led an anti-Roman faction of the Brigantes whose queen, Cartimandua, was adopting a policy of collaboration. In support of the interpretation, Wheeler provided evidence of pottery which fitted a date range of 50s to 70s AD and interpreted rampart collapse as deliberate slighting of the stone facing after Venutius' forces had been defeated. Excavation at the gateway also gave Wheeler cause to put forward a theory of an unfinished defence work at this point, probably as a consequence of the surprise Roman advance to quell the rebels. Within Site F Wheeler exposed hut and drainage gullies whose dating was based upon only a small quantity of fine pottery wares. Three phases were suggested for occupation in the 50s AD, 60s AD, and finally immediately before the Cerialian advance early in the 70s AD. However, a recent reassessment of the Samian pottery indicates that the earliest material is of the 40s AD. The imaginative interpretation made by Wheeler of the sliced human skull and sheathed sword found from the ditch near the gate as indicative of the battle fought for Stanwick may also be faulted, since a more likely source of such remains would have been the superstructure of the gate itself, where Celtic tribesmen habitually displayed trophies of this type. A general reassessment of the site, therefore, seems to be in order, and evidence from Mr. Turnbull's excavations at Stanwick was presented for consideration.

The rampart defence of phases two and three were found to have been revetted in stone throughout and natural decay presented a pattern of ditch fill indistinguishable from an effect of deliberate slighting. The phase one work was not revetted in stone. Limited excavation within the earthworks in 1981, associated with magnetometer survey, produced evidence of a curvilinear enclosure and a sub-square enclosure with an entrance to

the north-east. Ditches and gullies were exposed in a 20m. square excavated area, one ditch having no fewer than five re-cuts, although no pottery to date it. The ditch silts were sealed by a 15 to 20cm. thickness of black, sooty soil containing animal bone in quantity, pottery and Roman roofing tile - clearly a single levelling deposit. This was in an area close to Wheeler's Site E, a cutting across the adjacent phase one rampart, where a similar deposit of dark soil containing animal bone is clearly sealed by the upcast bank. There are obviously important implications for Wheeler's rampart phasing sequence if the two deposits are one and the same. Excavations have recently provided evidence of a stone-built round house, c.7m. in diameter without post holes used in the construction. The structure had a central hearth, though without charcoal, and the entrance had been blocked. Small quantities of Roman pottery of native type (termed by Wheeler "Brigantian ware") were present along with the finer wares, and also glass. Metal working can also be shown to have been undertaken.

Taking all the evidence into account, the revised dating for Stanwick may now be confirmed as the 40s to the 70s AD. Dobson has recently reinterpreted Wheeler's defence phases, reversing phases two and three. Mr. Turnbull also feels that a revision is required but would go so far as to postulate a single phase defence with internal divisions.

In the native settlement context established by aerial survey, Stanwick can be seen against a background of square enclosures surrounding hut circles, presumably small native homesteads. Stanwick's strategic location at the junction of two Roman routes, which were in all probability lines of communication of even greater antiquity, gives its commanding force a controlling advantage over the movement of goods from the north to the markets of the new Roman province to the south which was established and organised soon after the Claudian invasion of 43AD. Stanwick

perhaps ought to be seen as both the instrument and expression of that controlling influence in the adjoining, and as yet, "free" area of Britain. Inevitably, further archaeological work is called for before the pattern can be fully understood.

16th February - New light on the Saxon settlement of England: excavations at Cowdery's Down. Martin Millett

In 1977 expansion of the Hampshire town of Basingstoke put pressure upon an area of known Iron Age and Romano-British settlement, and a survey of archaeological sites and excavation at Cowdery's Down was financed by the Basingstoke local authority. Cowdery's Down is a low ridge dipping down to the valley of the River Loddon, a tributary of the Thames. Excavation in 1978, ostensibly on Civil War period earthworks, revealed a sequence of occupation ranging from the Early Bronze Age to the 8th century AD, viz. a) three round barrows preceding the construction of round houses, b) late Iron Age land boundaries, c) a rectangular enclosure of c.50AD with a driveway to the River Loddon, d) quarrying and late Roman burials, e) a small hamlet, dated 550 - 700AD by radio carbon and thermoluminescence, f) field boundaries of 9th/10th date following a period of abandonment. Of these several aspects, Mr. Millett concentrated his audience's attention upon the architecture of the Saxon buildings, which constituted the most significant period of the site's occupation, using reconstruction drawings to evoke the form and style of the structures involved.

The preservation of the structural forms in ground plan were good for three reasons: plough damage had been minimised because of the siting of field boundaries which coincided with building locations; a resilient clay with flint subsoil was resistant to ploughing in any case; and a thick topsoil overlay, derived from chalk quarry-

ing operations nearby, had provided a further mantle of protection against agricultural erosion. The clarity of post positions and sizes was unusually excellent because of the hard, marly clay matrix of the post hole and trench infilling, preserving charcoal and burnt daub-filled post pipes which were all that remained following fire destruction. Wall sills also survived and sixteen buildings in all remained for investigation in this way. Consequently it is possible to examine the structural methods employed in great detail. Timbers were found to have been of standard size and had been split not sawn. In the first phase of building, principal structures were accompanied by two subsidiary ones in a courtyard. In the second phase, an additional building was set into the courtyard fence. The third phase is represented by the provision of additional buildings further downhill. Post hole construction was the initial building technique, and the narrower annexe to the rectangular structure was built into an enclosure on the east side, even though the doorways were placed centrally in the two long sides outside the enclosure fence. Each post hole was set with pairs of timbers placed so that the regular space between formed a straight alignment along the length of the wall. At the corners pairs of smaller post holes were found. The structural type can be explained as one of clasping uprights containing horizontal boards overlapping at the corners and forming the wall infill. On the outside, smaller posts occurred and internally the building was partitioned.

Later buildings had continuous wall trenches dug to take the uprights, rather than separate post holes. Here deeper set posts which occurred in the middle of the short sides were aligned with central axis posts. The single uprights of the outer wall are thought to have supported wattle and daub infill in their grooved edges, not boards as Hope-Taylor infers from similar evidence at Yeavinger.

Building Cl2 at Cowdery's Down is one of the largest Saxon buildings ever excavated in Britain measuring 22m x 9m, a span as large as could be achieved without a central support. The structure is rectangular and has end partitions; doors are opposed mid-way along each long side, with one in the shorter end wall. The wall survived in the form of staggered timbers set in a wall trench with stakes placed in the centre of the trench at regular intervals in the space between the uprights. Daub was present indicating that the stakes should be seen as evidence of wattling. External posts could be seen from the post pipe angle to have been steeply inclined, although too close to the wall to be useful as buttresses, and normally intersected (by projection) the wall posts at a height of c.6 feet. The assumption, therefore, is that, low as it is, 6 feet must be the height of the side wall top, and the raking timbers must be supports for the wall plate, which would be here mortised onto the upright posts of the wall, and must have been designed to counteract the torsion of a flat wall plate.

Another building offered other evidence with major implications for the assessment of the internal character of these structures. An internal gully running along the inside of the wall, which had filled up, not with rubbish, but with burnt daub is evidence that until the building was destroyed by fire there must have been some form of covering preventing the gully from filling in with occupation debris. A timber board floor is therefore postulated. Further to this, the wall timbers in the opposing long sides were perfectly symmetrical in position, as was also the case between the short walls and their corresponding internal partition walls. It would have been possible with this careful wall post setting, therefore, to lay joists across the building in the main hall and similarly within the end rooms. These would not only have provided the framework for floorboarding but would also have served to tie opposing walls together,

particularly if the joists were raised well above ground level, creating an elevated floor.

Mr. Millett demonstrated effectively how the Saxon architecture at Cowdery's Down was of the highest quality. Only at Yeavinger and Malmesbury have other buildings of comparable size been examined, and these are universally recognised to be high status sites. At Cowdery's Down the absence of artefactual evidence is puzzling, and it is unclear quite why the site fell out of use in the 7th and 8th century AD. A nearby chalk pit, known as Lychpit, has been traced back by charter evidence to late Saxon times, and the name is suggestive of finds of human remains. These may have been associated with the Saxon occupation. Basing developed in the late Saxon/Norman period and this may have caused the reduction of the Cowdery's Down settlement to a small hamlet. Mr. Millett was of the opinion that the sites of settlements of the type described might well be traceable through charter records.

Forging links with Scunthorpe Our speaker for the Society's Annual General Meeting on 20th April is Kevin Leahy, Keeper of Archaeology at Scunthorpe Museum, who will be speaking on "Archaeological forgeries". This promises to be a most entertaining and informative contribution to the programme, rounding off this season's lecture series. Do turn out for this one.

And remember, even though full meetings of the Society will not recommence thereafter until September, members can still get together regularly through the Field Study Group gatherings on the first Wednesday in every month at Wilberforce House. All are welcome. And also, of course, there is the summer excursion, not to mention excavations at Arnold and Burse House. What a lot going on! Makes it worth the price of subscription, wouldn't you say?! Which takes us back to where we began. But then all good things are worth reading twice!