B. A. R. G. BULLETIN

VOL. 6. No.9.

DECEMBER, 1979.

Bulletin of the Bristol Archaeological
Research Group, c/o Bristol City
Museum, Queens Road, Bristol, BS8 1RL.

This is an emergency issue of BARG Bulletin, for three reasons. Firstly, in September, Mrs. Parker resigned as Editor owing to family preoccupations, and, since no successor was forthcoming, production of Bulletins fell to an Ad Hoc Committee, convened by the undersigned, which could not easily assemble a full issue. Secondly, the future of the Bulletin, as of BARG itself in some respects, appears uncertain in view of the increasing competition for material and readers by the Newsletter and Journal, (Avon Past), now being produced by Avon Archaeological Council. Thirdly, and most important, inflation has so reduced the value of BARG's income from subscriptions that there is nothing left in the Bank with which to produce a fullsize, offset printed Bulletin. We are almost at the point where the cost of publishing and mailing the Bulletin ALONE will exceed the Group's annual income !

These matters must be resolved by the Annual General Meeting of the Group on 23rd February. A further notice of the meeting will be circulated to members, but please note the date now. The Group's subscription rates will have to be raised to a realistic level, and the role of BARG and the Bulletin must be reviewed and clearly defined for the future.

This issue has been assembled by Mrs. D.S.Parker and Messrs. L.V.Grinsell, M. Ponsford and J. Russell. Mrs. M. Ashley typed the stencils, which were manifolded by Mrs. J. Bishop, and the collation and distribution were done by Mrs. P. Belsey. To all these, my thanks.

A. J. PARKER.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Subscriptions for 1980 are due on 1st January. Current rates are :

£2. 00. for members aged 18 and over.
£3. 00. for husband and wife.
£1. 40. for Senior Citizens and special cases on application.
£0. 40. for Associate Members (Under 18 years).

Cheques and postal orders should be made payable to 'Bristol Archaeological Research Group' and sent to:

Mrs. J. Harrison,
Hon. Membership Secretary, BARG.
Bristol City Museum, Queen's Road,
Bristol, BS8 1RL.

Any change of address should be notified to Mrs. Harrison. Will members who pay annually by Banker's Order on 1st March, please check that they are paying at the correct rate.

Members who have not yet paid their 1979 subscription will be struck off the membership list.

EXHIBITION

Will members please note that the Bristol City Museum 'Ceramics' Exhibition is open until the end of January.

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EXHIBITION

Will members please note that the Bristol City Museum 'Overseas' Exhibition is open until the end of January.

'ORIGINS'

The radio series 'Origins' returns to the air on 30th December at the new time of 7.30 p.m. on Sundays, (Radio 4) A series of six weekly programmes will cover topics at home and abroad on the theme 'The Museum Connection'.

EXCAVATION NEWS

by

James Russell.

During the past three months several archaeological projects have been in progress within the County of Avon. In Bristol, the City Museum excavation at Tower Lane (ST 58867317), previewed by Eric Boore in the last Bulletin (p.202) has now begun. The site is located immediately within the 12th century inner wall of the medieval town, and is adjoined on the N.W. side by St. John's Churchyard consecrated in 1409. The area is known to have been occupied by gardens between the 14th and 17th centuries, and seems to be largely free of later cellars. It is hoped that these factors will have resulted in the survival of evidence for the early development of the Norman walled town, and, possibly, for its relationship with its Saxon predecessor, which seems to have been centred on the Castle area to the East. Light should also be shed on the later history of the Broad St./Tower Lane area. The excavation is likely to continue throughout the winter months (Mondays to Fridays), and volunteers will be welcome. Other work planned by the City Museum for the coming year includes survey and excavation in the Redcliffe Back area.

In Bath, excavations were carried out during October and November by the Bath Archaeological Trust within the roundabout garden at Orange Grove (ST 75226476). The main discovery was the base of a semicircular chapel attached to the 12th century eastern arm of Bath Abbey, demolished in the early 16th century. Extensive deposits of debris associated with this demolition were also found, together with evidence for the later use of the site.

At Stoke Gifford (ST 62708009), the greater part of the Roman settlement discovered in 1977 has now been destroyed by housing development. Regular observation by J. Hunt and A.J. Parker of new pipe and foundation trenches has nevertheless continued to produce fresh remains of walls, ditches and other features, adding considerably to the plan of the settlement. Fieldwork by BARG members has also continued throughout the Autumn at Barrs Court, Oldland (ST 65857203). Documentary research among the Newton family papers at Gloucester Record Office is beginning to produce valuable evidence for the appearance of the vanished manor house. Further fieldwork within the Oldland and Kingswood areas is likely to begin during the next year in advance of the proposed East Bristol Ring Road.

RECENT AND FORTHCOMING PUBLICATIONS

by

L. V. Grinsell.

Recent:

Darvill, Tim. Concealment and Constriction in the Cotswold-Severn Long Barrow Group. December, 1978. Thesis, Southampton University. 122 pages. A4. typescript.

A useful study of the methods used in concealing, or closing the entrances to the passages or chambers in the long barrows in this area. (Unpublished).

Newcomb, Robert M. Planning the Past. 1979. 256 pages. Price £8. An analysis of cultural resource management with special reference to archaeological sites in America, Denmark and the British Isles: a subject to which increasing attention is being given.

Ordnance Survey. Map of Roman Britain. 4th edn. 1979. Scale of 1: 625,000. Book version (2 folded maps and 31 pages of text) : £5. North and South sheets only, each £1.

R.C.H.M. (England). Stonehenge and its Environs. 1979. xxiv and 31 pages. 3 folded maps in colour. Price £3.50. An up-to-date assessment of the archaeological potential of the area of 13 square miles around Stonehenge.

Forthcoming :

BARG. Field Guide 3a. Earlier Medieval Sites (410-1066) in and around Bristol and Bath, the South Cotswolds and Mendip. by Elizabeth Fowler and others. About 32 pages. Price 90p. It is hoped that this will be available at the Group's A.G.M. on 23rd February, 1980.

Rahtz, Philip. Saxon and Medieval Palaces at Cheddar. 1979. 411 pages, 121 figures, 17 plates. British Archaeological Reports, 65. (Oxford). £10. Review by Mike Ponsford.

Because of its considerable content this important publication, the first full report on a Saxon palace in this country, has not only been postponed for many years (Rahtz's M.A.(Bristol) thesis on the subject was completed in 1965), but also became an obvious target for the application of the D.o.E's. so-called 'Frere Report' (Principles of Publication in Rescue Archaeology, 1975). This then, is a Level 4 report, i.e. a synthesis of the main work, but including important data relevant to that synthesis. The extensive omitted details may be found in an archive deposited both at the Somerset County Museum and at the National Monuments Records, where microfiches and other deposited material are available on request. The question then is, 'Does the report suffer from the omission of so much ?.

The book consists of five chapters, liberally equipped with the necessary figures, Introduction and Historical Background; the Site, its Excavation and Chronological Sequence; Detailed Description of Areas and Buildings; the Finds; Historical Synthesis. The historical sections are of prime importance, since they provide the final royal and episcopal (from 1230) framework to one of the most important excavations ever carried out in this country; charismatic names such as Alfred and his Wessex successors and their peripatetic courts provide a backcloth for the excavation. Yet, had this information not been available the significance of the monumental timber structures found at the site would have been self-evident.

The excavations in 1962-3 were unusual for their time in that mechanical excavators were used on a large scale to strip topsoil. While concerned lest evidence might have been lost, Rahtz yet has provided us with a unique sequence of buildings and other structures, all phased with the utmost care and consideration of the meagre, often tenuous, evidence. Rahtz was fortunate in finding Anglo-Saxon coins in strategic places; a coin of Athelstan of c.930. in the upper silt of a massive storm-water ditch heralds the reinstatement of pottery manufacture not only at Cheddar, but

(probably) throughout most of the South West and Welsh Marches in that period. On the other hand, the meagreness of finds and occupation in one of the earliest buildings, the Long Hall, which was succeeded by no fewer than three overlying chapels, is seen, quite reasonably, as equally good evidence of a date well before 930.

Stratigraphic relationships, while important at Cheddar, were often lacking between excavated areas. This meant, among other reasons, that Rahtz had to rely heavily on both positive and negative evidence for correlations within his periods of occupation from pre-930-present: several structures may belong to one or more periods where proof for one or the other is less than adequate. In each of these periods, apart from the first and last, there is always a chapel and hall, or even two halls. In the first period the famous Long Hall was one of the first 'boat-shaped' Saxon buildings to have been found in this country. The report includes some important reconstruction by J.T. Smith of the timber buildings at Cheddar. Of these, the earliest present the most problems, as comparable standing examples do not exist. I was worried about the lack of longitudinal ties; the reconstructed building consists of free-standing paired timbers with trusses,i.e. with no or weak purlins, and appear to have a pack-of-cards stability. Smith also has an aversion to the concept of a ridge-beam. Smith's report is one which has been relegated to the archive. One of the most interesting structures is the period 2 'fowl-house', which consisted of an annular gully with central platform linked with two opposed rectangular depressions. The parallel is a 9th-century sketch of a similar structure at St. Gall monatery in France.

There are, as might be expected for such an important site, extensive reports on the finds, all presumably cut (there are 21 other contributors to the volume). The Saxon pottery is the first important group published in detail from the area. It is too early as yet to talk about sources and distribution, but most of the Cheddar material is clearly Saxon rather than Saxon-Norman, a term that readily appears in other publications for the period. For the medieval period much of the pottery comes from our immediate area, from Ham Green and Bristol. For me the most interesting finds were fragments of window moulding from the 10th-century chapel which were held in place by wattles. This implies that they may have been set in a rubble, or even a cob wall. There is also a wide variety of other material including Romano-British glass linen smoothers, much metal work, Roman and later coins, and animal bone.

It is impossible here to detail such an extensive report. It was certainly readable, although the 'Frere method' may have eliminated many an interesting qualification or adjective. The arguments for function or dating are perhaps a little overdone, in that it could have been useful to have the author's finite conclusion on some of them, although I appreciate his wariness of too much dogmatism. I was less than happy about the use of pottery as a raw dating medium, although in fact it affects the historical thesis not at all. Often, a few sherds are considered as dating material of the most precise kind when clearly they may have been on the site for a considerable time before finding themselves in a final context. This drawback is often, on the other hand, overridden by a stratified relationship.

In all, Rahtz is to be complimented on his synthesis of an extremely complex site (see his figure 8). I think that, in this case, the Level 4 approach was right: the text might

have been weighed down with amorphous and not necessary relevant detail for the sake of full publication of an almost unique site. The Level 4 format can force us to think of the truly relevant data; this is the kind of publication we are going to read in the future, and, despite the spartan format of BAR reports, there is some value in the approach. The only pity is that I feel that such a prestigious report would have been better shown off as a Society of Antiquaries or D.o.E. Research Report. At the BAR. price, however, it is available to a wider public which is perhaps the most important consideration.

CALENDAR OF FORTHCOMING EVENTS

January - April, 1980.

University of Bristol Extra Mural Courses are not included.

January

** 9. BARG. 'Recent Developments in the Study of Local Medieval Ceramics' by D.P.Dawson. 7.30 p.m. at Bristol City Museum.

10. Bath & Bristol Numismatic Society. 'Greek coinage in Bactria and India' by Dr.C.M. Kraay. 7.30 p.m. at Bristol City Museum. BARG members are especially invited to this lecture.

17. Bristol City Museum Winter Lecture 'Art, Power and Symbol in Benin, Nigeria' by J.W. Picton. 7.30 p.m. at the Large Engineering Lecture Theatre, University of Bristol Queen's Building, University Walk.

18. Keynsham & Saltford L.H.S. 'The Course of Wansdyke from the Air' by J. Hancock. 7.30 p.m. Ellsbridge House, Bath Road, Keynsham.

** 19. BARG Members Symposium. 2.30 p.m. at Bristol City Museum.

21. GADARG. 'Glevum and the Coloinae of Roman Britain' by Henry Hurst. 7.30 p.m. at the Old Crypt Schoolroom, Southgate Street, Gloucester.

31. Clevedon & District A.S. 'Aerial Archaeology' by John White. 7.30 p.m. at the Community Centre, Princes Road, Clevedon.

February

4. GADARG. 'Marks of Work and Wear on Prehistoric Bronze Objects' by Richard Savage. 7.30 p.m. at the Old Bakery, Chester Walk, Cheltenham.

6. Bath & Camerton A.S. 'Roman Bath' by Peter Greening. 7.15 p.m. at the Lecture Theatre, Bath Technical College (New Building).

** 13. BARG. 'Crickley Hill' by Philip Dixon. 7.30 p.m. at Bristol City Museum.

** 16. BARG Outing to London for the Viking Exhibition. Meet at 8.15 a.m. corner of Woodland Rd. and Tyndalls Park Road, or 8.30 a.m. Stoke Lodge. £3.00 coach fare plus £1.40 entrance fee (70p. OAPS.); send £1.00 deposit in advance to Steve Reynolds, 12a Royal York Crescent, Bristol, 8.

18. Keynsham & Saltford L.H.S. 'The Medieval Deer Parks of the Bristol Region' by Rob Iles. 7.30 p.m. at Ellsbridge House, Bath Road, Keynsham.

** 23. BARG ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING followed by a talk by the retiring Chairman, Mr. R.W. Knight. 2.30 p.m

28. Clevedon & District A.S. 'Dark Age Somerset' - questions & answers by Ian Burrows. 7.30 p.m. at the Community Centre, Princes Road, Clevedon.

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March

3. GADARG. 'Rural Settlement in England - continuity of cataclysm ?' by Trevor Rowley. 7.30 p.m. at the Old Bakery, Chester Walk, Cheltenham.

4. Bath & Camerton AS. 'Medieval Moated Sites in Somerset' by Ian Burrows. 7.15 p.m. at the Lecture Theatre, Bath Technical College (New Building).

5. B.&.G. 'Edward Jenner' by Prof. Bruce Perry. 5.45 p.m. Bristol City Museum.

6. Bath & Bristol Numismatic Society. 'Commemorative Medals' by T.R.S.Whitting. 7.30 p.m. Bristol City Museum.

** 12. BARG. 'Wookey Hole and the Mendip Iron Age' by Stephen Coghill. 7.30 p.m. Bristol City Museum.

13. Bristol City Museum Winter Lecture. 'Life and Death in Prehistoric Avebury' by Aubrey Burt. 7.30 p.m. at the Large Engineering Lecture Theatre, University of Bristol Queen's Building, University Walk.

17. B.&.G. 'Bayeux Tapestry' by Canon Eric Gethyn
++ Jones. 5.45 p.m. Bristol City Museum.

27. B.&.G. 'The Roman Cotswolds' by D.J.Viner. 5.45 p.m. Bristol City Museum.

++ Bath & Bristol Numismatic Society. 'An aspect of
20. German Coinage' by E.M.Besly. 7.30 p.m. at Smith's Assembly Rooms, Westgate Buildings, Bath.

April

1. Bath & Camerton AS. 'Glastonbury Excavations 1979' by William Wedlake. 7.15 p.m. at the Lecture Theatre, Bath Technical College (New Building).

** 9. BARG. 'The Roman Temple Compex at Uley' by Peter Leach. 7.30 p.m. at Bristol City Museum.

21. GADARG. 'Hereford and Chepstow'- a comparison of two towns' by Ron Shoesmith. 7.30 p.m. at the Old Crypt Schoolroom, Southgate Street, Gloucester.