

NOTES AND NEWS

present Lecturer in Archaeology at Edinburgh, as Professor of Archaeology in the University College of South Wales and Monmouthshire at Cardiff. It may come as a surprise to many readers of *ANTIQUITY* outside Great Britain that a University of Ancient Britons has waited sixty-five years before it has recognized officially the study of its own remote past. The ghosts of Edward Lhwyd and Sir John Rhŷs will haunt with pleasure the hall at University College, Cardiff, when Professor Atkinson gives his inaugural lecture.

THE SCHAFFHAUSEN CELTIC EXHIBITION

The Keeper of Antiquities in the Ashmolean Museum kindly points out that our note on the Schaffhausen Exhibition in the last number of *ANTIQUITY* was misleading in one detail. Three objects from Oxford were exhibited (although they did not appear in the printed catalogue), namely the Minster Ditch scabbard and two bronze 'spoons' from Penbryn. We are glad to be able to add the Ashmolean to the very small list of those museums and private individuals who sent material from Britain to this Celtic Exhibition.

THE ANGLO-SAXONS AND THE B.B.C.

Two years ago the B.B.C. arranged a series of special broadcasts on Roman Britain, and last year a similar series on the Anglo-Saxons. This year it is to be the Normans. These broadcasts are seldom discussed outside the broadcasting review columns of the daily and weekly papers; yet serious discussion is wanted and welcomed by producers of these programmes and of The Archaeologist on Network Three and Buried Treasure on B.B.C. Television. We are happy to print here the comments of Miss Rosalind Hill of Westfield College on the Anglo-Saxon broadcasts.

The work of the B.B.C. in stimulating a popular interest in archaeology has been an unqualified success. Indeed, we have reached the stage when archaeologists have to be cautious in mentioning new discoveries for fear lest the inrush of enthusiastic spectators may hinder their work.

Can the same interest be aroused for the study of history, and in particular for the history of England between A.D. 597 and 1066? In a recent series of broadcast talks the B.B.C. obtained the services of a body of learned men, each of them a first-rate authority in his own field, who held eight discussions on the subject of Anglo-Saxon England. The result, according to evidence obtained by the producers, was to give great pleasure to people with some knowledge of the subject, but not to capture the imagination of the general public. My own limited researches among university students tend to confirm this opinion. Those who knew something of the outlines of Anglo-Saxon history were interested, even to the extent of regretfully foregoing their suppers. Those who knew nothing of the period were completely baffled.

It was unfortunate that the course was started in the middle of the period with the reign of Alfred, 'the one person in whom the [English] sense of belonging can be personified'. Most English people under the age of forty have been brought up without any strict training in historical chronology, with the result that their ideas of history are inevitably muddled. Nevertheless, most people understand a story better if it has a beginning, a middle and an end. The use of the 'flash-back' seems to be of doubtful value even in romance, and it can be extremely unsafe in history unless the student has already grasped the main outlines of the period. An intelligent person with no specialized knowledge could not but be interested to hear an expert lecture on Bede's Northumbria or Alfred's Wessex; he could hardly be expected to assimilate a few scholarly remarks on both, presented in reverse order with no very clear indication of the relationship between them.

The whole popularity of the 'Brains Trust' or 'Any Questions' programmes seems

ANTIQUITY

to arise from the fact that each question can be answered separately without reference to the next, and therefore such programmes are extremely suitable for discussions between people of wit and wisdom. History does not work out in this way, and it cannot be tabulated under a series of convenient labels. It seems likely that the subject can best be presented to a popular audience if the experts are prepared to take a strictly limited period (probably of not much more than a century) and to start by explaining, *viva voce* so as to catch the attention of the experimental listener, the obvious background of written sources and accepted dates upon which they propose to work. The quick and allusive style of the Anglo-Saxon broadcasts delighted some historians and infuriated others, but it could not reasonably be expected to capture the interest of the average listener who knew nothing of the subject. A more satisfying result might be obtained if each expert were invited to lecture, in a simple style with as few technical phrases as possible, upon his own subject, and not forced to pour a gallon into a pint pot. Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*, for example, is probably the greatest historical work produced by an Englishman, and as a literary achievement it is at least as outstanding as Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*—but who would claim the power to introduce a reader to Chaucer in the course of half a discussion lasting, in all, twenty-eight minutes? The account of the excavations at Yeavinger, set in their historical perspective, kept a highly-trained audience at a meeting of the Society of Antiquaries on tiptoe for more than an hour. Could the same material really be made intelligible to the man who was not a specialist in the course of a quickly-delivered conversation of about twelve hundred words?

The capacity of the ordinary listener should by no means be underrated. Whether in breeding budgerigars or in studying parish registers, the amateur often shows a capacity for patience and thoroughness which should put many professionals to shame. But the amateur historian will rarely have studied the history of pre-Conquest England, nor is he likely to be spurred into action by generalizations, however sound, or by great numbers of isolated facts, however interesting. He must be able to relate them to some clear and solid background of time and space. If he studies the B.B.C.'s pamphlet on *Anglo-Saxon England* he will find much, including an excellent bibliography and a time-chart, to help him, although he may be puzzled to see that the adjective 'Celtic' is defined as, *inter alia*, 'the artistic style typified by Anglo-Saxon crosses and illuminated MSS', and that two separate Runic symbols are said to denote the sound of 'th' as in 'three' and 'thin'—not, as is surely true, the sound as in 'thin' and 'those'. The trouble is, however, that he will not send for the pamphlet, or read the books, unless his imagination has first been caught by the broadcasts.

Might not much greater success be obtained by taking one limited field—for example the history of Northumbria between the arrival of Paulinus and the death of Bede—and asking each scholar to lecture on his own particular subject within it? This might lead on to an extremely valuable symposium planned with some idea of the questions which listeners wanted to ask. The present method of discussion, excellent for archaeological subjects, does not seem to be suitable for the teaching of history, even in the hands of historians who are masters of their craft.

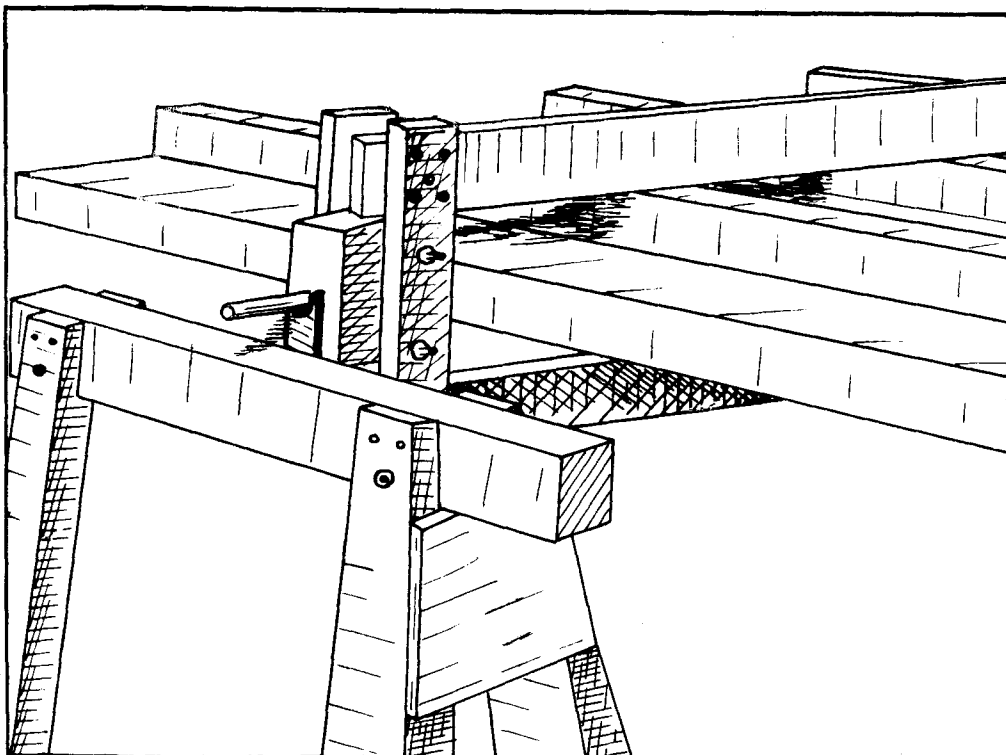
ROSALIND HILL

PLATE XV



(a) Undercutting and rolling back the mosaic attached to a sheet

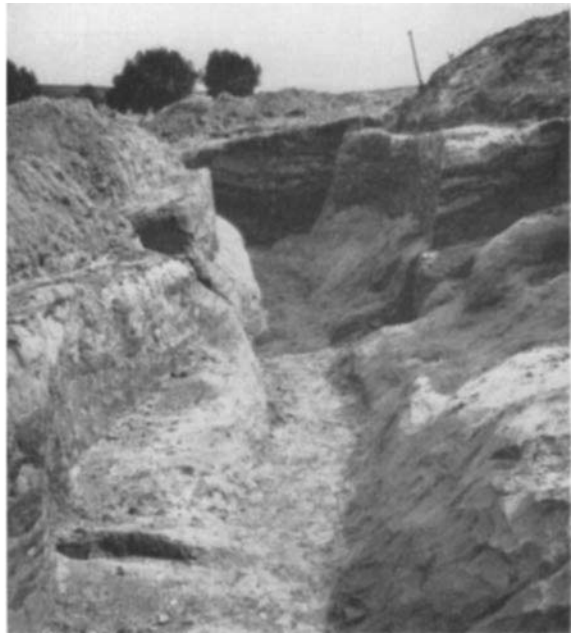
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(b) Sketch to illustrate method of rotating framework

[See p. 119

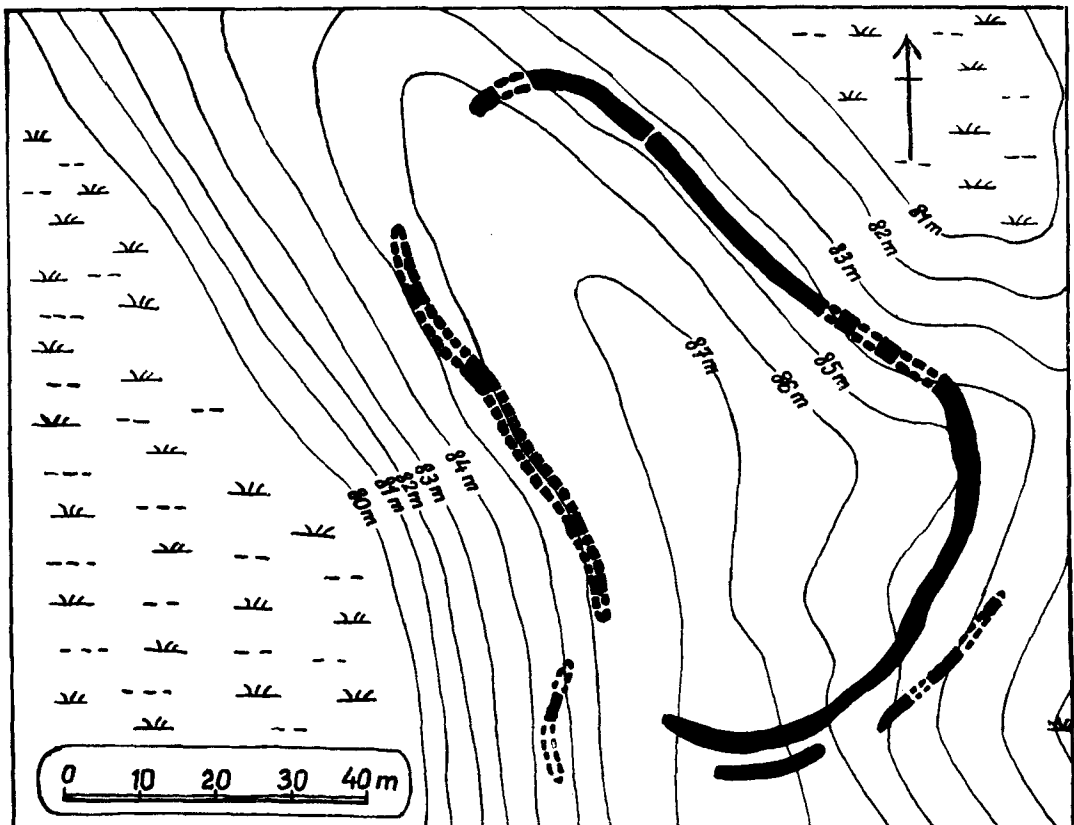
PLATE XVI



(a) Biskupin. Main trench in S. part of kraal. Dots mark later deposits, dashes the ditch itself

(b) Main trench of kraal with deposits above the ditch. Eastern part viewed from North

See p. 122]



(c) Plan of the Early Bronze Age kraal at Biskupin