

EDITORIAL

THE Annual General Meeting of the British School of Archaeology in Iraq will be held at 5 p.m. on Wednesday, 20th November, in the rooms of the Royal Geographical Society, Kensington Gore, by kind permission of the Council. Lord Salter, the School's President will be in the Chair, and Professor Mallowan will give an illustrated account of the discoveries made at Nimrud during the Spring season of 1957.

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A detailed report of the 1957 Expedition will be published in *Iraq* during the course of 1958, thus following the normal practice of making available some scientific and general information about our discoveries as soon as is conveniently practicable after each season. This year, in addition to the photographs published in the *Illustrated London News*, three articles appeared in the *Daily Telegraph* which gave generous financial support to the Expedition and sent out Canon C. B. Mortlock as special correspondent to report on the dig.

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The 1957 campaign, our eighth since the war, was once again very successful and gave every expectation of further rewarding expeditions in an unexpected direction. Within the akropolis, in the highest lying part of the mound we re-excavated a building which had been partially dug by Layard in the last century and was thought to have been a palace of Aššur-eṭil-ilani, the penultimate king of Assyria. It was satisfactory to have been able to fix the exact position of this building on the map of the mound, its relation to the Nabu Temple, and to make further additions to what Layard had found. The exact date of the foundation of this building is in fact still uncertain, but we now know that it was sacked and burnt together with Ezida and the 'Burnt Palace' in 612 B.C., or thereabouts.

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An interesting discovery made in this Palace (AB) was that some of the walls had been covered with plain ivory panelling, a form of decoration which will call to mind the Old Testament reference to the ivory house of Ahab in Samaria. The fact that the panels in this building were not carved with figures is, however, an indication that the later kings of Assyria were not long before the fall obliged to practise domestic economies which they would not have considered some generations earlier.

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After the destruction of the Palace the ruins were used as a burial ground by later occupants of the site, in the Hellenistic period. Several stone cist graves were found, and in one of them (PG.21) there was a silver coin of the type of Seleucus I (323–312 B.C.). The grave itself may perhaps be as much as 100 years later than that period, and is of special interest because the deposits around the skeleton suggested that its occupant had been a collector of antiquities.

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Amongst the articles found in this grave there was a finely carved inscribed cylinder seal of the Agade period *c.* 2300 B.C. in addition to other amulets, beads and pendants, some of which were many centuries older than the burial itself, and dated back to Middle Assyrian times. This discovery confirms evidence from other parts of western Asia that the Seleucids were well aware of their ancient heritage and were already collectors if not archaeologists.

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In the same sector of the mound, along its eastern ridge, the Expedition also conducted an excavation in order to test the stratification of settlements which fortunately had not been touched by Layard or his successors. Here, in broad trenches numbered O, P, R, we were able to excavate seven successive levels of buildings of which the seventh from the top revealed solidly constructed mud-brick walls contemporary with the Palace AB.

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The six successive levels which after an interval of about four centuries followed the destruction of the Assyrian city consisted of small mud-brick houses containing domestic utensils on the floors, and graves beneath them. All these remains could, thanks to the discovery of Greek coins, be fitted into a well dated sequence which falls approximately within the second century B.C. In a grave PG.15 associated with the fourth level from the top for example, there was a silver drachme of Aradus (174–137 B.C.) and, amongst other beautiful specimens, in the sixth level a silver tetradrachm, an issue formerly attributed to Eumenes II of Pergamum, now known to have been minted before 190 B.C.).

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This series of coins will be invaluable for enabling us to date precisely pottery and metal objects of the Hellenistic period, hitherto insecurely fixed in Mesopotamian chronology. Some of the iron weapons, agricultural implements and glazed pottery was of good quality and proved that the later occupants of Calah, or Larissa as it was named by Xenophon, were a fairly prosperous community. But the rapid succession of houses in a surprisingly

deep accumulation may be taken to demonstrate that there was no longer within this district a strong central government capable of enforcing either maintenance and repair, or the erection of the formidable public structures which had been characteristic of ancient Assyria.

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The most spectacular results of the 1957 season were, however, obtained not within the akropolis, but in the outer town, at its extreme south-east corner. Here the Expedition found a huge building which has been named 'Fort Shalmaneser,' occupying about 12 acres of ground. This heavily defended fortress was a storehouse for the distribution of wine and oil to the occupants of Calah. Huge magazines contained besides foodstuffs, large wine jars marked with their capacities in terms of the *homer*, *sutu* and *qa* the Assyrian measures then used, and it has therefore been possible to calculate these capacities in terms of their modern equivalents.

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Fort Shalmaneser appears also to have been a repository and a treasury in which antique ivory furniture and gold incrustated plaques were kept, perhaps after they had been discarded and replaced by more recently made acquisitions within the inner city. Many of the rooms within this building still contained ivory panels superbly carved with male and female figures elaborately attired in fine linen raiment. Two motifs predominate, a seated lady before a table of offerings on which bread and wine are laid, and a standing hero who clasps the branches and flowers of a lotus tree, the tree of life which in western Syria was associated with the god Tammuz.

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This set of plaques is not at all Assyrian in style and is likely to have come to Nimrud (Calah) either as tribute or as booty from N.W. Syria or S.E. Anatolia, some time between about 800 and 750 B.C. One of the tablets ND.6212 found in a wine-store within the same building (associated with two others ND.6218, 6214 which are dated to 784 and 778 B.C. respectively) mentions an allocation of wine for a *zikritu* woman from Arpad. It is known that king Adad-nirari III attacked this city shortly before 800 B.C. as a preliminary to the capture of Damascus, whilst a later king Aššur-nirari V (753-746 B.C.) made a treaty with one of its kings named Mati-ilu. Another king who received tribute of ivories in Arpad, about 742 B.C. was Tiglath-pileser III. A date some time in the earlier half of the eighth century B.C. therefore fits well with what we know both from the historical and artistic sources, the latter best illustrated by the monuments and small objects of Zençirli.

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Many other varieties of ivories were found within the same building, some of them brilliantly executed, but these are new and the like of them has not appeared at Nimrud before amidst all the thousands of pieces discovered in the course of the last century. It is fortunate therefore that some panels were duplicated and could be allotted to the Expedition. Less than one fourth of the great building in which these treasures were stored has been dug and there is every prospect of adding to them and completing the ground plan in 1958. The preservation of such beautiful fragments is due to the fact that the building was partly burnt when the city was sacked and although much was plundered many objects were buried under the collapsed roofs and walls.

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One find that should not go unmentioned and is interesting through its association with the ivories, is an Aramaic ostrakon, the first ever recovered from Nimrud. This has now been deciphered by Dr. J. B. Segal whose article on it appears below. It is written in ink, in a legible script and appears to be a list, perhaps for purposes of rationing, which includes persons of Phoenician and Hebrew origin with names such as Menahem and Hannanel now familiar from the Old Testament. We have little doubt that somewhere in this quarter of the city there must be a large archive of a type hitherto undiscovered at Nimrud.