

## EDITORIAL

THE Annual General Meeting of the British School of Archaeology in Iraq will be held on Wednesday, November 26th, in the rooms of the Royal Geographical Society, Kensington Gore, by kind permission of the Council. Lord Salter, the School's president, will take the chair.

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At this meeting, Professor Mallowan will describe the discoveries made by the School's expedition to Nimrud during the Spring season of 1958. This, our ninth campaign since the second world war, proved in even greater measure than before how extraordinarily rich the Assyrian city of Calah had been during the last two centuries of the Empire.

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A preliminary account of the season's work was written by Jacquetta Hawkes and appeared in the *Observer* on Sunday, May 25th. Miss Hawkes was with the expedition during the last weeks of the season as special correspondent for that newspaper and gave a graphic description of the site.

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It seems unbelievable that once again Nimrud produced yet another sumptuously rich hoard of ivories, but that is the truth of the matter: immense wealth; superb craftsmanship. Of course many pieces were not novelties, for ornamental furniture must repeat itself. But there were also unique carvings which will add to the many treasures from Calah now found in the Iraq Museum, Baghdad. A number of duplicates, types already known, were allocated to the expedition and will be distributed to Museums and Institutions which provided financial support for the dig.

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The success of the 1958 Expedition was, however, by no means confined to the discovery of small antiquities which, in addition to the ivories, include many metal objects, especially weapons and armour, some painted glass plaques, silver vessels partly overlaid with gold, closely dated pottery and some important inscriptions. Aside from all these articles, mostly datable between about 800 and 612 B.C., there was a building unique in the annals of ancient Assyrian architecture.

Notable additions were made to the plan of Fort Shalmaneser which was a great armoury and treasury situated at the extreme south-east corner of the outer town, defended by enormous walls and high towers. The building was founded by that king some time after the fifteenth year of his reign, 844 B.C. This information was provided by an inscription on the king's throne-base, which in later years had been removed from the throne-room and set up in a corner of a great courtyard at the south-east end of the building. A similar inscription was recorded on an alabaster door-sill at the entrance to the throne-room. Clay docketts also referred to the place as the *bît maširtu*, an identification made by Professor Laessle, and we know from a prism of Esarhaddon found at Nineveh that such buildings were 'for the ordinance of the camp, the maintenance of the stallions, chariots, weapons, equipment of war, and the spoil of the foe of every kind'.

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This description accords perfectly both with the lay-out of the building, and with the discoveries made within it. A wide inner gateway with emplacements for double swing-doors still contained a perfectly preserved strip of tarmac road with traces of the Assyrian chariots' wheel-marks. It is possible, though not certain, that some of the carved ivory panels found in one of the treasuries had once been the fittings of ceremonial chariots; metal fittings of horses' harness were also found. Many of the carvings known were no doubt component parts of royal furniture such as beds, chairs, tables and the like.

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The plan of the building is unique in Assyria: occupying an area of over twelve acres of ground, the fortress provided accommodation for a strong contingent of the Assyrian army, and one of its notable features were suites of bathrooms and barrack-rooms. At the south end there were residential and ceremonial halls for the king and officers of state and strong-rooms for the more valuable treasure.

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By the end of the season, Mr. David Oates was able to plot the limits of the main building, but it will probably require another two seasons' work to complete the excavation of the towers, the residential extension on its southern side, and thoroughly to examine all of the more important magazines.

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Fort Shalmaneser had a long history and we were able to establish the fact that major repairs and renovations of the building were effected some time after its first foundation. The discovery of inscribed cylinders of King Esarhaddon suggested that he may have been responsible for this work. Some of

the treasures may be attributed to his reign and it is certain that a number of the ivories was carved in the seventh century B.C., more especially types which are in the Phoenician and Egyptian styles. Others which appear to have north Syrian and Urartian traits may belong to the early eighth century, and some of those engraved in the Assyrian style may be dated to the ninth.

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The repair and reconstruction of these objects is a laborious process which needs both skill and patience. But already this work is well in hand, and the publication of its results will be eagerly awaited. The Nimrud collection of ivories is now by far the richest and most varied ever discovered at any one site.

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In accordance with our policy of publishing a reasonably full account as soon as possible after termination of a season's work, this issue is devoted principally to a description of the discoveries made in our eighth campaign, 1957. Most important, and a novel contribution to Mesopotamian archaeology, is the examination of the Hellenistic villages discovered at the south end of the akropolis together with the associated graves, pottery and coins. Here we have a well-defined body of material, the bulk of which may be assigned to a hundred years of occupation following after about 240 B.C.

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The last article in this issue contains a further selection of the remarkable series of letters discovered amid the archives of the North-West Palace, in the chancery, during the season of 1952. Most interesting is one possibly written by Sargon to his son Sennacherib when the latter was still Crown-Prince. This, and other documents, relate especially to the political intrigues on the northern frontiers of Assyria and are particularly interesting as touching on the Mushki, probably the Phrygians, whose remains have recently been so abundantly revealed at their capital, Gordion in Asia Minor.

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Readers of *Iraq* will already have seen in Part I Volume XX, published this year, the account written by Mr. D. J. Wiseman of 'The Vassal-Treaties of Esarhaddon'. This was the formal record of a treaty made by that king in the year 672 B.C., and enforced by oath on nine vassal-princes from bordering frontier states in Iran. The documents were discovered at Nimrud in 1955 during the sixth expedition, and because of their exceptional character we have devoted an entire issue of *Iraq* to them. Here we wish to draw attention to the fact that a limited number of copies bound in buckram are available at a price of £3 (three pounds sterling, postage extra). Orders should be sent to the Hon. Secretary, the British School of Archaeology in Iraq, 5, New Square, Lincoln's Inn, London, W.C.1.

As this issue of *Iraq* goes to press we have received the news that H.E. Dr. Najî al Aşîl has reached the legal age of retirement, and resigned his office after a period of fourteen years as Director-General of the Iraq Antiquities Department. Scholars connected with Oriental Archaeology, in many different countries, will surely join with us in expressing their best wishes for a happy and well deserved relaxation from his strenuous labours, and will hope that he may continue to be active in the pursuit of his many and varied scholarly interests.

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Dr. Najî al Aşîl's period of office will long be remembered because of the extraordinarily wide range of activities with which he was associated. Thanks to his drive, energy and enthusiasm, the Department achieved high distinction in many different fields. The excavations at Eridu and at Hatra revolutionised our knowledge of Mesopotamian prehistory, and of Parthian art and architecture. At many other sites, such as Harmal, the Aqar Quf, Wasit and Kufa, exciting discoveries heightened our appreciation of Sumerians, Babylonians, Kassites and Islam.

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No less important than these excavations was the task of conserving the ancient monuments, a heavy burden and responsibility in a country with the rich cultural heritage of Iraq. Here again the Department has been active in many different places which range from the gates of Nineveh, Nimrud and Babylon to the splendid Abbasid monuments of Baghdad.

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Such achievements have necessitated the foundation of a new Museum designed to display the rich and varied collections of antiquities which have far outgrown the capacity of the present building. We hope the time is not far distant for the realisation of this project.

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None of these tasks could have been accomplished without the co-operation of the conscientious and skilled staff that compose the Department, every member of which has contributed to making the Antiquities Service second to none. It must, moreover, be a source of satisfaction to the retiring Director to know that a trained body of young men already in the Department, as well as the many well tried older ones, will be available to carry on these traditions of high endeavour.

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Lastly all scholars from abroad, as far West as America and as far East as Japan, will acknowledge how much the retiring Director has fostered that liberal spirit of scientific co-operation which, we believe, has been for the common benefit of Iraq and of many other countries in the diffusion of knowledge. It remains only to wish his successor and his staff a no less fruitful period of activity in the years to come.