

THE MUSEUM ARCHAEOLOGIST

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EDITORIAL COMMENT

Consideration is to be given by the Committee to both the Constitution and the future activities of the Society. The present system of Committee members representing areas does not appear to have worked very well in practice and some alternative method of election to the Committee might be preferable. These matters will be discussed at the Annual General Meeting, which is to be held on the 30th May, 1980.

It is regretted that this number is a thin issue due to the problems encountered in obtaining suitable articles. It must be emphasised that there is no point in The Museum Archaeologist continuing to appear unless members feel that they wish to write for it. This is perhaps symptomatic of the problems facing the Society which up to now has tended to deal with what might be termed 'political' issues rather than those relating to archaeology in museums. This is very different to the activities of some other specialist groups. It may be that museum archaeologists regard themselves as archaeologists who merely happen to be working in museums and in this case The Museum Archaeologist would appear to have no future and perhaps even the Society.

Contributions for the next number should be received not later than the 1st April, 1980.

SOME THOUGHTS ON MUSEUMS AND OFFICIAL ARCHAEOLOGY IN THE HOPE THAT THIS MIGHT PROVOKE SOME DISCUSSION

A paper read to the Society of Museum Archaeologists on the 14th September, 1979, by Max Hebditch.

The last decade is one which has seen a great many improvements for archaeology in general. For official archaeology, there has been, most notably, an increase in government support for rescue work. Mostly, I think it is fair to say, the increase came from national government; whether that represented real growth in relation to the Department of the Environment's budget, or merely the transfer of funds from other areas such as motorway construction and so on, is obviously very difficult to assess. But certainly more money was available through the Inspectorate of Ancient Monuments. Now I am sure there are probably exceptions to this, but the amount of money coming in from local authorities did not increase in anything like the same proportion. Indeed, if you look at all the totals in the City of London, the input from local authorities is still very low, compared with the money which we get from the Department of the Environment. One of the current problems in that connection is that, with the Department of the Environment also saying to local authorities that they cannot increase expenditure, there have been very few arguments available to us to persuade local authorities to put more into rescue archaeology.

The last decade has also seen, as a result of DoE money, the establishment of a fairly large number of archaeological units scattered somewhat unevenly across the land; some quite big, such as the Museum of London or at York; others quite small, and others, of course, very little more than expanded versions of the old field archaeologists museums were establishing back in the early '60's. We have not really succeeded in rationalising that pattern of units, despite attempts by the DoE and everyone else to look at the matter, and the coverage is still incredibly uneven, and it could not be more uneven than it is in Greater London. In the City, quite rightly, we are employing about sixty or seventy full-time archaeologists all the time; in Greater London we have an extremely patchy and uneven collection of units: Southwark, the Inner London North Unit, work being done east of the Lea by the Passmore Edwards Museum, and so on, but nevertheless leaving enormous gaps in territorial coverage. And I think it is fair to say that a great deal of duplication of resources, or potential duplication of resources exists between one unit and another.

We have also seen, in this period, a great increase in private contributions from industry and from developers towards archaeology. Indeed, one of the great features of recent times, perhaps, has been an acceptance on the part of most developers and their architects that rescue archaeology is indeed part of the redevelopment process; something which has to be allowed for and something which should now be expected. It is no longer, I think, so difficult to convince developers of the need for archaeological work being

done upon their sites. Equally, of course, we have most planning authorities now receiving some form of archaeological advice, either from their own archaeological officers or from Museum involvement.

I believe one of the greatest achievements of the last five years, perhaps forced on independent minded archaeologists by necessity, is an acceptance by field archaeologists that Museums and Curators do have some part to play in archaeology in its wider sense. This acceptance may also stem from improvements on the Curatorial side of archaeology in Museums, although not as much as would be liked. There are the beginnings of improvements in the documentation of our collections. There have been slight improvements in the conservation facilities available. And I think one of the most interesting facts more recently is that Museums are now able to attract very much higher quality archaeological staff than perhaps was the case in post-war years. Now I think this must probably stem from difficulties elsewhere rather than the intrinsic attraction of Museum salaries, but nevertheless at the moment, with a much higher output from universities and a great shortage of jobs in the academic sector, we can get good people. But I suppose the greatest achievement of the last ten years has been to get the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act on to the statute book. Although it has many defects, the Act does go a long way towards giving us adequate opportunity for control both of field antiquities and portable antiquities, which are our particular concern, in the interests of the public at large. Looking at the Act from the Museum standpoint, although perhaps many may think it does not go far enough, I believe we will have better control of treasure-hunting. We will have the opportunity to hold antiquities for study and conservation without prejudicing the rights of the owners in the matter. There are powers of entry to certain sites, surely a great improvement if we are really to take care of things. Another positive improvement is the extension of basic antiquities legislation to include maritime sites as well. To conclude this look at the last ten years I would say that things have actually improved, although perhaps many new into the profession do not realise it. Official archaeology is in a better financial position than ever it was; it has a reasonable legislative framework. And there are getting on for enough staff.

Official archaeology is undertaken by official archaeologists, that is people paid by national or local governments either directly or through another agency. Official archaeologists include not only those who work in Museums, but also those who work in organisations such as archaeological field units, in planning offices, and the Inspectorate of Ancient Monuments. As official archaeologists, we do not have the opportunities or the freedom to pursue research in its broadest sense, to follow any line of knowledge. In other words, our research, which must nevertheless be of the highest quality, must be geared to very particular official ends.

It is important to stress that engaging in this sort of official archaeology does not require of us any less intellectual rigour. Indeed I think that it is required in large measure, and will be required increasingly in the future. In addition as official archaeologists we have to add a further dimension to our talents, which is very considerable management skill.

We are expected to be good managers of the cultural resource, to use that awful piece of jargon. We also will require in the future a great degree of single-mindedness, perhaps, in pursuing our professional duty of looking after the archaeological resources of Britain. I think we are going to need to be very careful that we do not allow our judgment of the needs of our collections and sites to be coloured either by current fashions in archaeological research or by the tempting offer of sponsorship. I say this because despite all the advances which I mentioned earlier on, I think there are a number of very real problems still with us, and perhaps one might look at some of these.

Local government in general, unlike most developers, is not yet fully convinced of the need for rescue archaeology or of their responsibilities in it; we have still got a long way to go before we get that right. In addition, despite the fact that we can now recruit better staff, most local authority administered provincial museums have not been allowed to play a sufficiently active part in official archaeology, not least because our own depressed salary structures prevent an adequate place being afforded to the field staff. In other words, until directors and curators in charge of museums are paid a lot more, we are not going to be in a position to build up really good field sections. And, of course, Museums have certainly not received anything like adequate resources to meet the need for more space to accommodate the products of excavation and so on. On the field side, too, we have this terrible situation that there is still virtually no security of employment in any part of that area of activity.

Another problem for us stems from the improvements I have mentioned. In getting those improvements, in the early '70's, official archaeology had the support of very powerful pressure from well-known archaeologists, who saw the importance of rescue archaeology to their studies and their way of developing archaeological method. Many of these have moved on, perhaps to new interests. In addition a new generation of archaeologists is growing up with other interests. Quite naturally, in the future, both groups will be pressing for the financial resources available to official archaeology to be used in pursuit of new trends in research.

Now this is going to make it very difficult for us, because I think we are going to be left holding all their previous babies. To take one for example, urban archaeology, now a slightly less fashionable pursuit than it was; having put all this investment into urban archaeology in the City of London over the last seven years, it is going to be another twenty to twenty-five before that investment is going to produce real dividends. It is going to be very difficult to hang on to the resources which are going to be necessary to continue with that sort of undertaking.

If we were still in a growth economy, which we have not been for some time and which has now been made even more painfully obvious, then I do not think this would be a problem. We would be able to have the finance both to maintain present commitments and to solve some of the problems I have already mentioned as well as to deal with the new commitments which might be placed on official archaeology as the result of the development of pure archaeological research. But, of course, that is not the case, and it is quite clear to me that the resources available to official archaeology over the next five years,

in other words the life of this present government, will probably be less in real terms than we enjoy now. And this, I think, poses a large number of questions for us, as Museum archaeologists having a curatorial responsibility, to provide answers. In producing answers we have got to look at the problem with great intellectual rigour; with considerable skill in the management of limited financial resources and unswayed, as far as possible, by current research fashion, but taking account of the best interests of the community at large in our antiquities.

The sort of questions which occur to me at the moment are these:

If, for instance, as we well know already, fewer rescue archaeology sites are going to be dug by the established units, what is going to be our attitude to the antiquities recovered on sites ignored? Are we going to say that because antiquities recovered in that way do not fit in with current approaches to archaeological knowledge, we should therefore abandon them to what is basically the art market, or have we got somehow to try and get these into museums? Current archaeology on the whole has stressed the value of the site and its interpretation in the context of the development of regions and areas. It ignores all those other properties of portable antiquities and indeed, of ancient monuments, which require their preservation. I mean such things as their inspirational quality, their power to act as symbols which is the way we utilise these objects in Museum displays. But if the rescue units are not going to recover them, who is? Is it the amateur? Is it the metal-detector user or is it the hard pressed curator?

The second question is this. Given that resources are going to be limited, but that probably the pressures on redevelopment are not going to get very much less than they are at present, who is going to present the case for the greater preservation of sites intact and undisturbed? Because that is what should happen if there are not the resources available to dig those sites that cannot be sacrificed to redevelopment. In this respect, the new legislation, although it appeared to be an improvement, may actually be a false improvement. Because although areas of archaeological importance are a splendid and interesting new concept, the actual resources available to tackle them, if redevelopment takes place, are no-one's responsibility. Without financial backing, areas of archaeological importance will have no more significance than any other area of the countryside, except for certain provisions such as those prohibiting the use of metal detectors. Although apparently providing us for the first time with the means of having a finger in the development control process, archaeological areas will be very much a mirage if we have not got the resources to do anything about it.

The third point stems from the second. We now make increasing use of grants from developers for the excavation of their own sites. On sites in the City developers themselves produce not only a certain amount of free labour and plant, but also cash. Now this obviously is a good thing. It is very much, I think, in accordance with Tory party policy. But the important thing here is how are we to decide whether excavations or site watching should take place. Is it to be dictated by the availability or otherwise of cash to do it, or by the actual archaeological needs of

the area under study. These are also problems which have to be looked at very seriously. Money is always tempting, but temptation should not be followed if it is not within our archaeological and museum interests to do so.

The fourth point is well known to all curators. How do we decide how the material from rescue excavations is to be used? And I use the word 'use' quite deliberately. I do not think we should use terms like 'storing this material'; it is dangerous and it produces all the arguments about 'why bother to store the material, if no-one actually gets access to it', and so on. 'Used' is what we want to say. Used to form an archive, which will perhaps not be re-studied for fifty years but nevertheless of use; used to provide type-series or closed groups for scholars; used to provide all sorts of comparative material for students and others. In making the decision about how material is to be used, there is also the fundamental decision which we have to tackle: how do we select the material in the first place? Have we, in fact, to select everything that has been excavated? And is that decision taken before the Museum has agreed with its unit to excavate a particular site, or after?

The fifth point is the question of publication of the results of official archaeology. Not only, I think, of that which has been excavated anew, but also of the results which are achieved by improved systems and documentation in the collections themselves. I would hope one of the things that we can always do is make the point that improved documentation and cataloguing of collections is at least as valuable an exercise and of great benefit to scholarship, as actually pursuing new work in the field. With regard to new excavations, there is the question of how much is published, particularly of the level 3 material. The only thing that occurs to me about level 3 publication is that if one has done all the research anyway, at a cost of say £50,000, the £5,000 it cost to put it in print seems rather marginal.

Those are just five points on which museum curators need to have an opinion. They are well known and did not need me to rehearse them, except as a basis for getting ourselves talking about them. But if we are going to look for answers, I think we have got to try and ensure, as museum curators, a couple of things. Firstly, we have got to be quite confident of our professional position in archaeology, and of our ability to make quite definite pronouncements about the fate of archaeological material. In particular, we must make sure that our voice is heard in the deliberations of those bodies which control the allocation of official funds. Secondly, we will have to accept that we are going to have to play the game of the museum curator for the next five years under the rules of the new Conservative administration. In other words, asking for more money from the government (while I would not suggest that we should actually give it up), is unlikely to be particularly productive. We have to accept that we must generate more resources (with all the dangers that it brings) by looking for private sponsorship. In this new situation we have two things in our favour. There is a new and greatly improved legal basis on which we

can operate - the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act. There is also the fact that entrepreneurial skill is likely to be encouraged; on the whole if we raise money, I think we are likely to be able to keep it, not lose it, as so often in local authority museums, into the general rate fund.

We are in for a very difficult five years. I have simply outlined some of the problems which occurred to me in the seven days in which I was asked to introduce this session in effect. There are many others, but I hope, Mr. Chairman, I have stimulated one or two talking points.

NEW EXHIBITIONS IN THE PETRIE MUSEUM OF EGYPTIAN ARCHAEOLOGY

Ancient Egyptian Linen Dresses

Rosalind Hall

As part of the Sesquicentennial celebrations of University College London in May, 1978, the Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology mounted a number of new permanent exhibitions (Hampstead Express and News, 1978). Included amongst these was the display, in a specially designed perspex case, of a newly-conserved linen dress ('Contact', 1978). This had been discovered the previous summer during a programme of linen conservation undertaken by the Victoria and Albert Museum's Textile Conservation Workshop at Osterley Park (Hall and Landi, 1979). The sorting of a heap of dirty linen had revealed a dress with yoke and sleeves still bearing distinct signs of pleating.

The garment (UC. 28614Bⁱ) is clearly provenanced to the First Dynasty (c. 3100-2890 B.C.) site of Tarkhan near the Fayûm area of Egypt, excavated by Sir W.M. Flinders Petrie during two successive seasons 1911-1913 (Petrie, 1914). It was found in one of the large mastaba tombs no. 2050 in association with other objects, such as stone vessels, all clearly of a First Dynasty date.

The conservation programme undertaken by the Museum's Head of the Textile Conservation Department, Mrs. S. Landi, was a painstaking task as the garment was caked together with mud and much weakened, and in addition was found inside-out. Unfortunately the whole of the bottom of the skirt was missing, and as no part of the hem was left, there was no way of ascertaining what the original length may have been. The remaining main body of the dress was made from a straight piece of material 76 cm. wide joined selvage to selvage down one side, with a fringe of extended weft threads turned back to make a decorative fringe on the outside. The sleeves and yoke were cut from two pieces of material, seamed at the top of the skirt, and meeting at centre front and back to form a V-shaped neckline. All the material was tightly pleated to follow the line of the neck, shoulder and arm, and the stitching itself was crude, but with rough rolled hems. It was possible to ascertain that the tailor had been right-handed.

In 1978 two further dresses were revealed during the sorting of linen in the Museum from the Fifth Dynasty (c. 2494-2345 B.C.) site of Deshasheh, again near the Fayûm (Petrie, 1898). Petrie had found large quantities of linen in the tombs here - roller bandages placed on the bodies, large cloths and shawls laid over them as winding sheets, and stores of newly-laundered clothing, both made-up garments and long pieces, deposited alongside. Grave 148b, a female burial, contained nine made-up dresses in the coffin, two of which were too rotted to unfold, but a further two of which had obviously been brought back by Petrie. The dresses (UC. 31182 and UC. 31183) are made in one piece of material from waist to feet, sewn down the edge, and as with the Tarkhan dress, bearing an additional fringe. At the top two pieces were sewn

on passing over the shoulders and continuing out into long sleeves, which also have fringes left at the seams. The gap at both front and back was closed by tying with three pairs of strings. Conservation work, again carried out by Mrs. Landi, has just been completed on UC. 31182, by far the stronger and more complete of the two garments. The dress mounted on a body shaped to fit, as with the Tarkhan dress, will be exhibited in a specially designed case, hopefully during the autumn term.

The Petrie Museum also contains two more linen dresses from the Late Period (c. 800 B.C.) cemetery at Tarkhan, and an extensive collection of provenanced linen both on display and in storage. An exhibit showing a complete range of conserved Dynastic and Coptic textiles was also mounted as part of the 1978 Exhibition, and now forms a permanent display.

These garments are of exceptional interest from an archaeological point of view - extant early garments are extremely rare, and dresses as such are very rarely represented on Ancient Egyptian reliefs. The Tarkhan dress can lay claim to be the oldest surviving linen garment in the world, and certainly in Egypt itself. It seems clear that these garments, judging by their long lengths and equally narrow widths (with an average length of 150 cm. and width of 40 cm.), and their staining from the mummification process, were designed purely as grave goods. It is interesting that a comparative dress from Naga-ed-Dêr in Middle Egypt of Sixth Dynasty date (c. 2345-2181 B.C.), has horizontal pleating to the body of the garment thereby shortening it to a reasonable length for everyday wear (Smith, 1935). Clearly in the early periods the deceased was provided with actual examples of spare clothing for the afterlife, whereas in the later periods reliance was placed on the magical coming to life of representations on the tomb walls. It is significant that these tomb reliefs often show a hieroglyphic sign representing a sleeved garment, the shape of which is very similar to the Tarkhan and Deshasheh dresses.

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Graeco-Roman Mummy Portraits

Barbara Adams

In 1976, the Department of Egyptology, University College London, entered into a conservation programme with the Conservation Department of the Institute of Archaeology. This was made possible through a small annual grant established by the College after a recommendation made by the Standing Commission on Museums and Galleries when they visited the Museum in 1975.

The arrangement has been that two or three of the third year conservation students work on a range of material from the Petrie Museum. Since its inception the conservation programme has had a noticeable effect on the collection, and now the quantity of objects completed, many of which had never received any treatment, is quite impressive, including objects of bronze, iron, silver, stone and organic materials. Textiles have also been cleaned under this programme at the Victoria and Albert Museum's Textile Conservation Workshop at Osterley Park. (See article by Rosalind Hall).

As well as receiving the general benefit of current research on conservation methods at the Institute of Archaeology, some groups have been the subject of students' thesis topics. One such is the encaustic wax and distemper mummy portraits on wood on which Brian Ramer prepared his dissertation (Ramer, 1977). The Petrie Museum holds forty of these portraits painted on thin wooden panels, chiefly from the cemetery at Hawara in the Fayûm, excavated by Petrie in 1888 and 1911 (Petrie, 1889, 1911, 1913).

The site was the burial ground for the occupants of the prosperous community of Arsinoë and the majority of the portraits had been painted to be hung in the home during life and then trimmed down to be secured over the mummy's face with linen wrappings after death. They had evolved from portraits painted directly on the linen envelope over the face in the middle of the First Century A.D., themselves derived from the earlier Egyptian and Ptolemaic cartonnage masks. A wax-based medium on wood was then used in the Second and Third Centuries and finally a distemper colour in the Fourth Century A.D..

When Ramer began work only one of the portraits had been conserved at the Courtauld Institute and three others commenced by another student at the Institute of Archaeology. The unconserved mass exhibited varying states of preservation, some being saturated with oil from the mummification process. All of them were covered with dirt, some with paraffin wax, and some were in a fragmentary condition. Mr. Ramer gave attention to the cleaning, re-attachment of flaking paint, the repair and stabilisation of the wooden bases, and analyses of the paint and wood of the portraits, and has now published an article outlining his methods (Ramer, 1979). After he left the Institute, further portraits were conserved by Patricia Johnson (making a total of twelve) and the Department hopes to continue this process as funds permit.

TOWARDS A COLLECTING AREA POLICY FOR THE EAST MIDLANDS

A.J. White

Whenever talk turns to collecting you can guarantee that the word 'poaching' will be used. This curiously emotive term conveys a world of mistrust and envy, but is rarely based on the breach of an agreed code of conduct. Each of us, in isolation, has a fairly good idea of what the boundaries of our own collecting area are; rarely do we discuss this with our neighbours or attempt to reach agreement and compromise with them.

It is a fact of life that museums and resources are very unevenly distributed. There may be on the one hand very large, and possibly archaeologically rich, tracts of countryside with low population and few resources, while on the other may be large conurbations which are archaeologically unproductive but which have large financial resources. The natural tendency is for the latter to regard the former as natural collecting areas. Boundaries are usually mental, rather than physical. Museum staff can envisage a District Council area, or a county; sometimes a larger museum may seek to cover a 'region'. Occasionally they may wish to 'build on strength' where they have some earlier private collector's material forming a large and important part of their collections, drawn from a particular area. All of these may be perfectly valid, but there is much to be said for finding out what other museums regard as their areas, and following this up with collecting area agreements and reciprocal arrangements for transferring items offered by individuals to what may be the wrong museum. Transcending such regional agreements (and even here we need agreements between the various neighbouring regions) there is the vexed question of collecting policies in the national museums. This problem cannot be swept under the carpet: it is fundamental to regional agreements and needs to be aired further.

Various attempts have been made to ascertain what collecting areas individual museums claim: this has been undertaken for example by the Area Museum Service for Yorkshire and Humberside. Other surveys and agreements may not be directly relevant - the agreement on industrial and technology museums in the East Midlands⁽¹⁾ for instance, refers to these specific categories of material and its conclusions are not necessarily valid where archaeology is concerned. Archaeology after all is a very localised study and needs in many ways to be studied very locally - it does not make great sense for one museum to collect only one or two specialised categories of find.

Moves are now afoot in the East Midlands under the auspices of this Society, to establish the claimed collecting areas of museums in Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire (including Rutland) and Lincolnshire. In addition co-opted members of the regional group from outside the area - Sheffield, Doncaster and Scunthorpe, for example - have been asked to add their views where at present or historically they have interests within the area.

¹ Boylan, Patrick J., An East Midlands regional agreement on industrial and technology museums. Museums Journal, 76, 67-68.

The results are illuminating: for the most part there is no clash of interest, and only in two cases is there a substantial degree of overlap. This state of affairs, though good, is not good enough. The next stage is that of agreement and compromise at directorial level, followed by the wide publication of this agreement. After all, it is not only for private satisfaction that this is being carried out: we owe it to future donors and in particular to the Archaeological Units to make quite clear which is the appropriate museum for the deposition of material in any given area. Museums have gone their own individualistic way for a long time: now there is a need to stand together and present a united view on this and other matters. Why else should we form a Society of Museum Archaeologists?

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RCHM 'SURVEY OF SURVEYS' AND MUSEUMS

A.J. White

The recent appearance of the RCHM's Survey of Surveys should give rise to some questioning among museum archaeologists. Its exact purpose is not very clear: if a national picture of survey and fieldwork is intended, then it falls down through selectivity; if a selective illustration, then it fails to define its exact terms of reference. Museums seem to be the major omission. A total of nine people out of sixty-five questioned are given a museum address, but several of these people appear in their role as secretaries, etc., of committees and not as museum archaeologists per se.

To a certain extent this may be seen as a reflection of the changing roles of museums and their retreat in many cases from active participation in field archaeology of any kind. Without a parallel survey among museums it is hard to arrive at a true picture of the state of museum involvement in field archaeology. Nonetheless from a rapid mental assessment it is clear that many museums with field archaeology interests including Sites and Monuments Records, fieldwalking projects, response to planning enquiries, and salvage excavation have been totally ignored without any reason being given why this should be so. Again, in many cases the quantity and quality of the records held is often greater than that of bodies which have been consulted.

This is a state of affairs not to be tolerated among museum archaeologists; to be ignored or written off as being of no relevance is the ultimate in insults. Museums still are very often heavily involved in this field and moreover can occupy a key position in the communication link between professional and amateur.

Is your museum actively engaged in maintaining a Sites and Monuments Record? Has it been ignored in the publication of this survey? Do you feel strongly about it? If so, why not send in details of your Sites and Monuments Record to me* and help to show the true state of affairs?

The details required are as follows:

1. Number of staff employed wholly or partly in maintaining the record.
2. Type of recording system used (card index, maps, cross-indexing, etc.).
3. Cover of air photographs.
4. Field survey (do you carry out any?)
5. Cover of air photographs.
6. Relationship to local authority planning procedures.
7. State of publication of survey material.

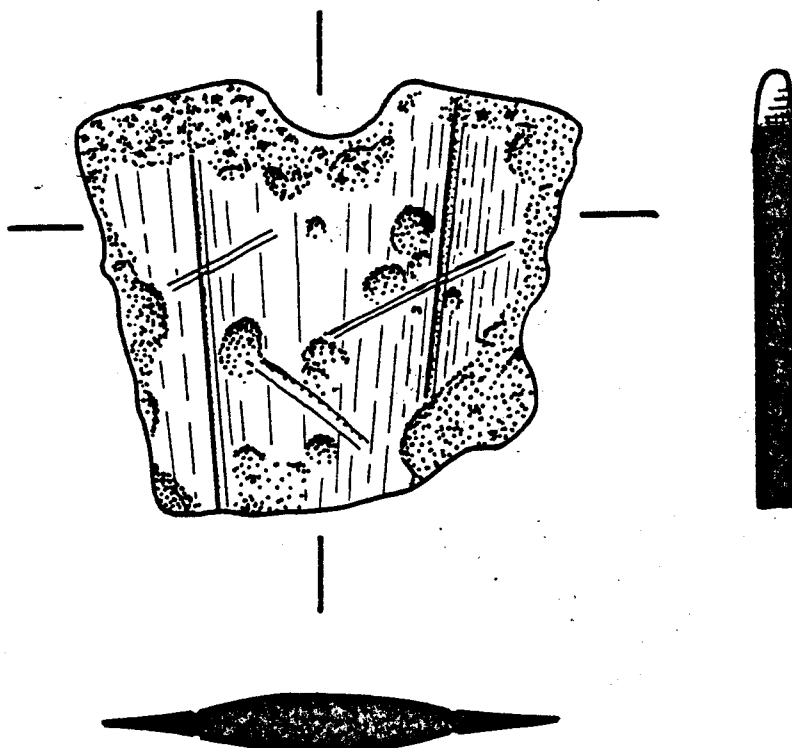
Please do not ignore this. If you do, then museums stand a very good chance of being ignored again in the future, and deservedly so. We need this information to counter with hard facts what appears to be a highly distorted picture.

* A.J. White, Keeper of Archaeology, City and County Museum, Greyfriars, Broadgate, Lincoln, LN2 1EZ.

NOTES AND QUERIES

1. It has been suggested that a forum be set up in The Museum Archaeologist to allow an interchange of ideas on the mystery objects which sometimes come into our museums. There are as we all know many fragments brought into museums for identification which lack any feature to give a clue to what they once formed part of. Occasionally, however, a fragment is brought in which one would think should be identifiable (having some tantalisingly familiar characteristic) but its original function cannot be determined. When this happens it is often a case of looking for a more complete example. Perhaps we could use these pages to ask, 'Has anyone seen anything like this?'

In order to set the ball rolling, perhaps members could consider the object shown here.



This was found some years ago in the parish of Roxby, South Humberside but has only recently been donated to Scunthorpe Museum. It is made of copper or a copper alloy and is a trapezoid 55 mm. long by 65 mm. maximum width. In its wider end is a rounded notch with what may be fractures either side of it. On each face of the object are two grooves; these follow the line of a change in the object's section emphasising a flat mid-rib. The end of the object opposite the notch is clearly broken and areas of its surface are corrosion pitted.

The section of this fragment is very similar to that of a Group IV rapier blade with its flattened mid-rib but it is difficult to understand the presence of the notch in its 'hilt' or to see how it was hafted. In plan, the object resembles a Roman skilnet handle but its section is altogether wrong.

K. A. Leahy,
Keeper of Archaeology,
Museum and Art Gallery, Scunthorpe.

2. Archaeological excavation recording. The Museum Documentation Association is currently re-assessing its Archaeological Object recording cards (for use in museum collections). It is also proposing to survey existing practice for excavation recording by museums, units and other excavating teams. From this background we hope to develop a comprehensive documentation system to include field, excavation and museum recording.

We request: examples of specially designed forms/cards for manual or computer use, or data sheets to record levels/features/stratigraphic units/groups of excavated material (e.g. pottery/bone); small finds, etc.. Information about their use or protection on site; storage of records; control of terminology, etc., would be much appreciated.

Such examples of specially designed recording media would be for our own reference only.

In addition we would like to know how museums deal with the transference of excavation records and finds (usually context/stratigraphy-linked) into the museum collections which are usually classified by material or chronology.

Contact: Jennifer D. Stewart, Museum Documentation Advisory Unit,
Imperial War Museum, Duxford Airfield, Duxford, Cambs., CB2 4QR.

3. Seminar on archaeological recording. The Area Museums Service for South Eastern England is holding a seminar in March, 1980 to consider the problems of the integration of recording systems used on excavations and in museums. Jennifer D. Stewart of the Museum Documentation Advisory Unit will be the main speaker and it is hoped that contributions will be made by archaeologists who have practical experience of the problems. Further particulars will be available in due course from AMSSEE, 34 Burners Lane, Kiln Farm, Milton Keynes, MK11 3DA. There will be a fee of £10 for non-members and £5 for members.

4. Members may be interested in the following extract from the Presidential Address of Miss E. M. Shaw, President of the South African Museums Association (S AMAB Volume 13 for 1979). This not only emphasises the world-wide nature of the problem, but also the danger of even larger scale looting than that from which we suffer already.

'To go back to what is being lost and the protective laws - the National Monuments Council, aided and abetted by various other bodies, has succeeded in getting through Parliament a tightening-up of the Act, which will, amongst other things, enable it to take some action against the despoliation of important historical wrecks on our coastline. The wording of the amendment is also intended to curb that other type of looting - the use of metal detectors on battlefields and elsewhere, but there is some difference of opinion as to how far it will succeed in this. It does not help our efforts to prevent loss of historical material from wrecks or historic sites, when the press and radio keep featuring those activities as exciting and adventurous hobbies. It would be preferable if they would feature the preservation of such material as an exciting and adventurous hobby. Over all is the prospect of monetary gain - bronze cannons from ships for example, fetch fabulous sums even as scrap metal without taking account of their historical significance. We were told a horror story last week about a person who has a variety of metal detector that can be used at sea. So he trails it behind his boat and at the spot where it reacts, he puts down an explosive charge. This is not the only country where metal detectors are causing concern - local authorities in Britain are tightening up their regulations. We are far from having the tough conservation laws of the state of Texas - where everything found underground or under-sea belongs to the State, but perhaps our museums should be active in trying at least to influence public opinion'.

D.C. Devenish,
Museum Curator,
Museum and Art Gallery,
Hastings.

COMMITTEE (November, 1979)

Chairman	K. J. Barton	Director, Hampshire County Museum Service
Secretary	R. G. Thomson	Keeper of Archaeology and Antiquities, Southampton City Museums
Treasurer	Mrs. E. Hartley	Keeper of Archaeology, The Yorkshire Museum
Editor	C. N. Gowing	Curator, Buckinghamshire County Museum

Representatives

National Museums	I. A. Kinnes	Assistant Keeper, Department of Prehistoric and Romano- British Antiquities, British Museum
Scotland	Miss H. C. Adamson	Depute Keeper, Department of Archaeology, Ethnography and History, Glasgow Art Gallery and Museum
Yorkshire and Humberside	Miss P. Beswick	Keeper of Antiquities, Sheffield City Museum
W. Midlands	Ms. J. Peirson- Jones	Assistant Keeper, Archaeology Birmingham City Museum and Art Gallery
S. Midlands	C. Saunders	Keeper of Field Archaeology, St. Albans Museums
E. Midlands	A. White	Keeper of Archaeology, Lincoln City and County Museum
London Museums	Miss P. Wilkinson	Senior Assistant Curator, Archaeology and Local History Section, Passmore Edwards Museum
S. W. Federation	D. P. Dawson	Curator in Archaeology and History, Bristol City Museum and Art Gallery
Welsh Affiliated	C. J. Delaney	Curator, County Museum, Carmarthen, Dyfed

S.E. Federation	D.C. Devenish	Curator, Hastings Museum and Art Gallery
Co-opted	G. Davies	Director and Keeper of Archaeology, St. Albans Museums
M.A. Liaison	M. Hebditch	Director, Museum of London

New Members since list published in The Museum Archaeologist No. 3

Bourrian, Miss J.	Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge
Brisbane, M.A.	Tudor House Museum, Southampton
Hall, Miss R.	Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology, London
MacGregor, A.	Ashmolean Museum, Oxford
Oliver, Ms. I.E.	Council for Museums and Galleries in Scotland
Price, Miss J.	Salisbury and South Wiltshire Museum
Rhodes, M.	Department of Urban Archaeology, Museum of London
Thomson, R.G.	Tudor House Museum, Southampton
Waterman, Miss C.L.	Maidstone Museum and Art Gallery