

EDITORIAL

THE Annual General Meeting of the British School of Archaeology in Iraq was held on Tuesday, November 6th, in the rooms of the Royal Geographical Society, Kensington Gore, by kind permission of the Council. On that occasion the School commemorated its Silver Jubilee. About six hundred persons attended the meeting, at which Lord Salter presided, and afterwards there was a cocktail party to which members of the School and their friends had been invited.

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Professor Mallowan gave an account of the discoveries made in Mesopotamia since 1932. A series of lantern slides and coloured projections illustrated some of the twelve different sites at which excavations had taken place, both in Syria and in Iraq. The objects shown on the screen ranged in date from the Neolithic period before 5000 B.C., down to Hellenistic times, about 300 B.C., and demonstrated that the School's activities had covered a very wide field. The vote of thanks for the lecture was given by Sir John Troutbeck.

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During the year 1956-1957 the School held a special Exhibition in the British Museum to illustrate twenty-five years of Mesopotamian discovery. The room used for this purpose was a large hall known as the Assyrian Basement. No more appropriate place could have been chosen since the walls are lined with stone bas-reliefs discovered by Layard at Nineveh and at Nimrud a little more than a century ago. Visitors therefore had before their eyes the evidence of more than a century of British archaeological activity between the rivers Tigris and Euphrates.

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In the ante-hall, busts of Layard showed him as a young man at the outset of his career and also as an elderly statesman after his period of archaeological activity was over. Amongst other items of interest from the last century were manuscripts which included contemporary sketches made by Ross in the fifties of the last century; one of them showed Layard at work, sketching in the ruins of Nineveh, another depicted the celebrated well in the North-West Palace at Nimrud where Layard excavated in 1851 before leaving Assyria for the last time. At the bottom of this well just one hundred and two years later the British School of Archaeology discovered a set of ivory and wooden writing boards to which were adhering traces of Assyrian cuneiform inscribed upon wax.

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At one end of the Exhibition hall the set of bronze gates discovered by Rassam in 1877 had been remounted. They were the gates set up by King Shalmaneser III at Balawat where in 1956 the School discovered another set erected by his father in a temple dedicated to Mamu, the God of Dreams. These recently discovered gates are now being cleaned and mounted in the laboratories of the Iraq Museum, Baghdad. It was extremely interesting to see alongside the old gates a contour map of the mound at Balawat, and the completed plan of the recently discovered temple showing the exact position at which the new set of bronze gates had been found, together with the lay-out of a processional way which appears to connect the temple with a palace no doubt erected by King Aššur-našir-pal II. This new discovery indicates the direction which should be taken in the further excavations which the School hopes to conduct at Balawat in the spring of 1957.

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Prominent in the exhibition were some splendid ivories from Nimrud including one of the famous chryselephantine plaques from the North-West Palace, one of a pair of which the perfect specimen is in the Iraq Museum, Baghdad. Another notable exhibit was the large treaty tablet drawn up between King Esarhaddon of Assyria and a Prince of the Medes in the year 672 B.C. This splendid document, some 700 lines in length, which has now been cleaned, mounted and deciphered is to be published by Mr. D. J. Wiseman in a subsequent number of *Iraq*. The tablet itself was returned to Baghdad in the course of the month of February.

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Several cases displayed objects from much earlier periods, especially from sites in the Ḥabur and Baliḥ valleys of northern Syria, where the School had worked between the years 1933 and 1938. Amongst these objects there was an altar-piece composed of coloured limestone encased with gold bands set on wood from T. Brak, to be dated a little before 3000 B.C.; a selection of the remarkable alabaster black and white idols from the same site, and necklaces mounted from the many thousands of beads discovered in the foundations of the Eye-Temple.

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From Chagar Bazar, a site in the upper Ḥabur valley at which the son of the King of Assyria in about 1800 B.C. used to keep teams of chariots and horses, there were some interesting terracotta models of chariot cabs, of harnessed horses, and of spoked wheels. These small objects manufactured between about 1800 and 2000 B.C. are a most interesting reminder that the horse was

first being exploited at that period on the plains of Northern Mesopotamia in the North Syrian steppe, and in South Eastern Asia Minor. Literary evidence also suggests that the horse was there introduced by peoples who were non-Semitic, probably the Hurrians, and that the use of this new-fangled animal was at the time looked upon with disfavour by the more conservative circles of the older rulers. Thus King Šamši-Adad I of Assyria rebuked his son for his extravagance in the maintenance of horses, and the King of Mari, Zimri-lim, was warned by his vizier not to be seen riding on horseback in the land of Akkad. It was to take some centuries before the horse became truly widespread and was altogether accepted by Semitic rulers, but even as late as 1450 B.C., those who took the greatest interest in its *élevage* were the non-Semitic Aryan rulers of Mitanni.

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Much admired was a case of delicate painted pottery from Arpachiyah with its vivid colours and beautiful sense of space and design. Many of the vessels showed evidence of the fire which had consumed them when the potter's shop in which they had been produced was burnt down. It is interesting to recall that when this pottery was found 25 years ago the evidence for its extreme antiquity had yet to be fully established. It was largely through the excavations on this site that proof of its great age was finally obtained, for the village in which it was found underlay a series which belonged to the Al 'Ubad period, one of the oldest known epochs of occupation in southern Babylonia.

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The findings of carbon 14 dating, although still in their early stage, tend to suggest that the prehistoric periods of Mesopotamia may be even more ancient than was once supposed, and today it is probably conservative to date the polychrome pottery from this site later than 4000 B.C. Indeed it would not be surprising if it had been produced some centuries before that time, and certainly the immense series of ancient painted potteries which have been revealed both at Eridu and at Warka (Erech) in Southern Babylonia support the evidence for the very early context of Halaf ware in prehistoric Assyria. At this same period domed buildings on stone foundations were being erected and the craftsmen were showing a high degree of skill in the carving of miniature amulets.

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There was also in the Exhibition a case showing the development of ancient technology in which beads from Brak at various stages of manufacture were displayed as well as the apparatus on which they were ground; moulds for the casting of copper weapons and implements from Chagar Bazar; glass-makers'

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kit and slag from Nimrud. Visitors to the Exhibition were also interested by a set of prehistoric painted pottery which was displayed alongside caps with embroidered designs still worn by the peasants in the Kurdish hills. These designs often resembled those displayed on the pottery itself. Exhibits of this kind remind us how much we have lost of ancient textiles which, with very few exceptions have perished. Comparisons with modern embroideries however, enable us to realize how often similar designs must have been applied to different materials, and how often craftsmen imitated an expensive material in a cheaper medium. This point was also well illustrated by the angular shapes of the Nimrud palace-ware pots which were exact copies of the more expensive bowls made in bronze.

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Turning once more to the manuscripts, the visitor saw displayed some of Rawlinson's notebooks which were opened at pages where he was providing the world with the first complete understanding of Assyrian and Babylonian cuneiform scripts; and there were copies made by Layard himself of Assyrian writings on the walls of Nimrud. There was, in addition, a varied series of photographs, water-colours, copies of mural paintings, illustrations of the excavations conducted by the School, maps, plans and sections of Nimrud which demonstrated the latest development in archaeological technique. The Exhibition, attractively mounted, and well lit, made a happy impression on the visitor because it was not too large and contained a rich collection of beautiful material assembled together in a pleasant hall.

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The display lasted for a period of two months in all, from November 14th, 1956 until January 15th, 1957. It is remarkable that during that time more than 14,000 visitors saw it, a testimonial to the great public interest in Oriental archaeology. There is no doubt that had this not coincided with the introduction of petrol rationing and indeed with the Christmas season, a greater number of persons still would have seen it. The School is grateful to: Sir Leonard Woolley for having kindly consented to declare the Exhibition open on its first day; Mr. R. D. Barnett, the Keeper of the Department of Western Asiatic Antiquities, for encouraging us to hold the Exhibition here; his entire staff for the great help which they gave us; the Trustees of the British Museum for allowing the School to use the Museum for this purpose.

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The thanks of the School are also due to the Trustees of all those Museums and Institutions which so generously consented to lend objects for this special Exhibition. In particular we must mention: the Iraq Museum, Baghdad,

which allowed us to show the magnificent treaty tablet; the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, which sent a number of ivories including the head known as 'The Ugly Sister' and the fine ivory cheekpiece of a horse; the Birmingham City Museum and Art Gallery which lent ivories and a set of magical figurines of sun-dried clay; the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, which provided us with an extensive collection of small antiquities from Nimrud, Brak and Chagar Bazar. All these objects were additional to those which were moved from the upstairs galleries in the Department of Western Asiatic Antiquities of the British Museum and remounted and arranged for our special Exhibition. Finally an interesting set of air views of Nimrud taken through the good offices of the Iraq Petroleum Company was also on loan, and together with the maps, plans and photographs prepared by the School, formed another interesting set of exhibits.

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In order to commemorate the holding of this Exhibition as well as the School's activities, a short illustrated book eighty pages in length has been written by M.E.L. Mallowan entitled *Twenty-five Years of Mesopotamian Discovery*; the last half of the book is devoted to the history of the dig at Nimrud. This work has not been written as a catalogue, nor merely as a detailed account of the School's discoveries. The main purpose is to show how the School's expeditions to Mesopotamia have contributed towards our general understanding of Mesopotamian archaeology. Thus the author, whilst describing the many different places at which the School has worked, has referred to many other important discoveries which have a bearing on them, and has especially concentrated on mentioning problems raised by such activities. The book, price five shillings, is written for the general public as well as for the specialist; it may be obtained from Oriental booksellers or by sending an order to the British School of Archaeology in Iraq, 5 New Square, Lincoln's Inn, London, W.C.2.