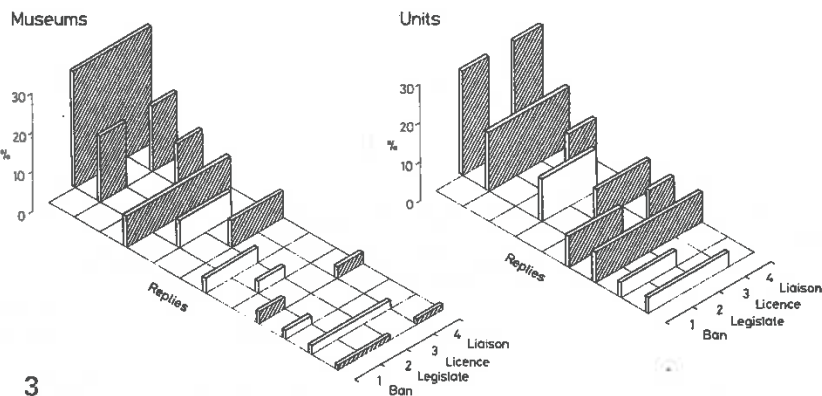


1

2



3

Fig. 1 Distribution of museums (circles) and Units (triangles) in the survey. Replies expressed as solid symbols.
 Fig. 2 Distribution of treasure hunting clubs (circles) in the survey. Replies expressed as solid symbols. For explanation of other symbols, see page 10.
 Fig. 3 Approaching the treasure hunting problem. Four possibilities were offered, and the popularity of each chosen combination of approaches is contrasted for museums and Units. Shaded combinations are those which included 'liaison' as a possibility.

THE WORK OF A LOCAL SOCIETY AND ITS INTERACTION WITH PROFESSIONAL ARCHAEOLOGY

Brian Charge

Introduction

The Haverhill and District Archaeological Group was formed in 1975 in an attempt to channel archaeological interest and enthusiasm in such a way that non-professionals would be able to make a useful contribution to the discipline. The primary objectives have been to investigate an area within a 10km radius of the town (which includes parts of Cambridgeshire, Essex and Suffolk) using various methods of fieldwork, but excluding excavation since it was recognised that the group lacked the interpretive and analytical skills necessary to undertake excavations. It was felt that the local knowledge, enthusiasm and above all the time which members were prepared to devote to their hobby, would be most usefully employed in a programme of fieldwalking, survey and documentary research, thus we are accumulating non-destructive data for our professional colleagues who lack the manpower and time to conduct such general research.

It was recognised from the outset that it was essential to liaise with professional colleagues in all three counties so that the local fieldwork projects would provide a useful corpus of information. A local group has a duty to inform the public as well as the discipline of its work; therefore contact was made with two commercial companies, the Provincial Insurance Co. Ltd., of Haverhill, and Haverhill Meat Products Ltd., who provide financial assistance and printing facilities respectively. This enabled the group to produce an annual Journal in A4 format containing detailed reports on specific projects which is distributed to members, university libraries and county record offices. Exhibitions open to the public are staged in alternate years on the premises of the Provincial Insurance Co. Ltd. In 1982, some 2000 people toured the exhibition over three days.

Organisation and Scope of Work

From the outset, it was recognised that a local society will be comprised of both keen members whose raison d'être is fieldwork as well as those who for various reasons such as age and lack of time, will be non-active in the fieldwork sense. Accordingly, it has been necessary to provide a programme of monthly lectures by guest speakers during the winter, with visits to sites, etc., during the summer months. This section of the membership still plays an important part in our fieldwork, since it provides secondary help in processing finds and cataloguing.

The Group committee decides the current fieldwork priorities

and delegates overall responsibility to a 'Fieldwork Coordinator' who exercises day-to-day control, ensures that all necessary equipment is available and arranges the final disposal of finds to the appropriate County Unit for examination. After we ourselves have written an initial report, the Coordinator liaises with our Records Officer to ensure that all information is logged in the group Sites and Monuments Record.

Broadly, our fieldwork falls into three main categories:

- 1) Fieldwalking arable land to locate new sites and sites suspected of yielding artifacts.
- 2) Simple surveying of earthworks by chaining/plane-table, etc; these surveys include moated sites and boundaries.
- 3) Rescue work (fieldwalking or survey) where development or change in land-use may destroy previously unrecorded evidence.

At any given time, one or more of the above types of fieldwork may be underway under the supervision of a project leader. This system works well; it is flexible and should a sudden unexpected threat be recognised to a site, personnel can be and are switched to deal with the problem by the Fieldwork Coordinator.

Both fieldwalking and surveys are initially of a general reconnaissance nature, but detailed surveys of sites have been undertaken. Examples of fieldwork so far undertaken by the Group include: survey of the church and buildings in the parish of Wixoe (Suffolk), which also included fieldwalking all arable in the parish; brief survey of the 100 moated sites within our area, using the Moated Site Research Group format; discovery and gridded fieldwalking of a Romano/British villa/settlement at Kedington (Suffolk), now scheduled by the Department of the Environment; detailed gridded survey of an interrupted ditch system, yielding over 3000 flint artefacts from the Late Neolithic-Early Bronze Age; survey of a deserted medieval village (previously unrecorded) at Horseheath (Cambridgeshire); fieldwalking the fifty or so cropmark sites within our area (continuing), the initial results of which tend to confirm that the ubiquitous 'ring-ditches' in this area represent ploughed-out Bronze Age barrows.

Liaison with Professionals

Haverhill lies in the south-west corner of Suffolk, the county boundaries with Cambridgeshire and Essex lying 3km west and 1km south of the town respectively. Our area of interest ignores these recent boundaries. We liaise, therefore, with three professional bodies: the Suffolk Archaeological Unit and the Archaeological Officers of Cambridgeshire and Essex County Planning Departments. Having proved our worth to these bodies, we have access to their Sites and Monuments Records (all three,

by the way, employ totally different systems of indexing sites and find-spots, which impedes the flow of information to the others), and they supply copies of all relevant maps and plans vital for fieldwork and the proper recording of finds. Both the Suffolk Unit and Essex now regularly survey our area from the air. Prior to our formation, some 50 sites/find-spots were known. Our work has increased this figure in eight years to over 300, and has increased professional interest in the area.

At our inception, it was the Suffolk Unit who made the initial investment of time and effort, providing several training courses covering a variety of archaeological techniques. I (and presumably they) regard this investment as having been worthwhile, as the Group itself now undertakes training of new fieldworkers. We receive copies of all planning and development applications, since with our local knowledge, in conjunction with records of known sites/find-spots, we can quickly assess any threats.

The degree of co-operation and mutual respect which has developed over the years is now considerable and is an example of what may be achieved when amateurs and professionals set out to work together, rather than the all too frequent wary posturing which has regrettably been a feature of archaeology in the post-war years.

Future Roles

The 'good times' in post-war British Archaeology during the 1960s and 1970s have passed. There is a built-in reluctance on the part of many professional archaeologists to give credence to the idea that non-professionals can play a useful role today. Non-professionals themselves have all too frequently been guilty of assuming that, despite the reduction in resources and manpower available, the professionals will always regard the amateur as only a useful source of undisciplined labour to be employed on excavations. Surely the time has come when archaeology must consider itself as a whole in terms of how the limited resources of both money and labour should be employed. We are all interested in learning about our past.

To further the prospect of fruitful co-operation, amateurs must continually strive to improve the standard of their work in order to gain a more ready acceptance of its usefulness. The professional must utilize the biggest asset that the amateur has to offer: enthusiasm, which all too often is at least jaded and sometimes totally absent in many professionals.