

Excavations

CHESTER, 1950

OWING to a shortage of labour in the Chester area, the excavations for 1950 were forced to a premature conclusion and only lasted a fortnight. One trench only, 60 feet long, a continuation of last year's, was completed.

The original purpose of the excavation was to explore the barrack-blocks lying east of Trinity Street and the area to the north, also to discover the east-west road which runs along the north end of the *principia* and investigate the building fronting the north side of this road. However, it was only possible to trench the barrack-block which faced that discovered in 1949.

The curtailment of the season's work was all the more unfortunate as mediaeval and later interference in the single trench was found to be heavy and in its whole length only a three-foot length of Roman flooring remained undisturbed. By chance, however, a series of four walls remained and this offered an opportunity of plotting the barrack-block, but attempts at a chronological assessment of the periods of occupation and construction were made difficult by the absence of stratified deposits in association with the walls. Efforts were directed at salvaging scraps of evidence in the few inches left here and there below the later pits. Very little pottery and only a few small objects were recovered but from them it is clear that there are strong possibilities of third century occupation in this part of the fortress.

Trace of the timber period (A.D. 78—c. 103) in the shape of sleeper beam slots and a roadway were found, demonstrating the fact that the buildings of this period are not coincident with those of the later stone periods and it is probable they were not barrack-blocks, but too little survives to establish their foundation.

The excavations were under the auspices of the Chester Archaeological Society and directed by Mr. Graham Webster.

EXCAVATION AT THE SOUTH-EAST ANGLE TOWER

In 1949, excavations in Trinity Street revealed the existence of an Agricolan turf rampart along the line of later defences. The purpose of the above excavations is to investigate the same features of the Roman defences at another point. At the time of going to press the excavations are still in progress, and so far it

has been proved that the Agricolan turf rampart is in position at the South-east corner, and therefore the defences of this phase of the legionary fortress appear to coincide with those of a later date. It is hoped to determine the relationship between the stone fortress and the turf rampart. Mr. Graham Webster is undertaking the excavations.

BRONZE AGE BURIAL, KELSALL

About fourteen years ago during ploughing operations at Messrs. Morrey & Son's Nursery Gardens, Kelsall, a large flat stone was struck, which when removed revealed a thick deposit of "soot." This incident was recently reported by Mr. S. B. Flood to the Editor, and in January, 1951, excavations were commenced to investigate the matter. Permission to do so was kindly given by Messrs. Morrey & Son.

Several cart loads of stone and about two barrow loads of "soot" had been removed at the time of the incident, but despite this disturbance, sufficient evidence was left to mark the outline of a stone circle 7 ft. in diameter, in which was an area of concentrated charcoal and on the southern edge, a small deposit of calcined bones.

Four feet to the east of the stone circle were more stones of varying sizes closely packed together and showing signs of sinkage towards their centre. Underneath these stones was a small circular pit at the bottom of which was a Middle Bronze Age cinerary urn (p. 27), inverted with its mouth fifteen inches below the underside of the stone covering. A small fragment of bronze was also found in the pit. The urn contained calcined bones which are to be submitted for expert opinion; on the top of the bones was a tusk of a large wild boar.

Five feet south-east of the urn pit was another similar pit which did not contain any visible sign of burial. A larger pit was found eleven feet south of the stone circle. It measured roughly eight feet in diameter at the top and one foot at the bottom. Large stones had been placed in the pit, built up into a kind of rough walling two feet thick, commencing at the bottom and following up the slope of the pit to the top of its eastern edge. Again there was no trace of a burial.

Excavations could not be done in the eastern half of the site as it was under cultivation, but Mr. Ellis Morrey said this could be done when the ground was clear, probably in twelve months' time.

Thanks are due to Messrs. Morrey & Son, for their whole-hearted co-operation, and to all those who gave of their labour or expert assistance.