

archaeological notes

FRANCE

Volunteers Restore Chateaux

Thousands of young volunteers spend their vacations each year clearing out rubble and restoring ancient castles and manor houses in France.

They are members of an increasingly popular organization called "Le Club du Vieux Manoir," with headquarters in a restored chateau at Argy in the Indre department of central France. Here 10-day courses are regularly held to train restoration organizers and excavation leaders.

In the last year, students have been restoring abandoned or neglected houses and digging out forgotten ruins and foundations in 12 different sites in 11 departments of France. Founded in 1954 with 45 members, the club now has more than 3,500.

BRITAIN

Television Sponsors Three-Year Dig

The British Broadcasting Corp. announces it will sponsor a three-year archaeological dig into a puzzling prehistoric mound of earth called Silbury Hill in Wiltshire—the largest such artificial mound in Europe.

In collaboration of scientists from various fields, the BBC will televise the investigation from start to finish, offering a five-minute live transmission each day.

Silbury Hill is an enormous man-made mound of chalk, soil and clay in the shape of a truncated cone with a flat top 100 feet in diameter. It stands 130 feet high, and its base covers more than five acres.

Scientists have long puzzled over this mound, presumably piled over the remains of the dead by people living long ago. Previous borings and tunnels unearthed only a few antler fragments. This April scientists will start digging a tunnel into the mound, to be supplied with a railway, lighting, forced air supply and telephone. Then, under the eye of the TV camera, they hope to find evidence of the builders of the mound.

TURKEY

Sculpture from Aphrodisias

Byzantine gold coins, bronze lamps, and finely carved marble statues so far unearthed in Aphrodisias in southwestern Turkey are only part of the treasures to be found in that area, once the crossroads of the world.

The finds were described at the annual meeting of the Archaeological Institute of America in Boston by Dr. Kenan T. Erim of New York University, who believes he has only skimmed the surface of the treasure trove after six years of digging at the ancient Greco-Roman city.

Unfinished marble figures and sculpted fragments lie jam-packed in ditches and ruins, and tumble out from old walls where they were used as fill several centuries later. One wall yielded a massive statue of the goddess

Aphrodite for whom the city was named. The center of an important school of sculpture in the early days of Christianity, Aphrodisias exported marble sculpture in great quantities throughout the time of the Roman Empire.

PALESTINE

Dead Sea Scrolls Safe

The famous Dead Sea Scrolls, rumored lost or damaged during the June war between Israel and Egypt, are safe, according to *ANTIQUITY* (Dec. 1967), the British quarterly review of archaeology. On the eve of the war they were packed up and put safely in a strong room in the basement of the Palestine Archaeological Museum (Rockefeller Museum), according to a reliable authority. Shortly after the cease fire the collection was found intact by Israeli authorities who proclaimed all scientific rights of foreign scholars working on the Scrolls for publication would be preserved.

NEW YORK

Modern Mound Builders

A new kind of archaeological site—actually a mound of soil, bones and pottery—will be constructed this spring by Cornell University students to help scientists 100 years from now.

Under the direction of Dr. Robert Ascher, students will build a mound 80 feet long, 15 feet wide and five feet high. As they build, they will bury articles such as bones, pottery, coins and textiles. Then each year, for the next 100 years, one-hundredth of the loaf-shaped mound will be sliced off and inspected for changes. Deformation of the mound, effects of plant growth and of rain and snow, as well as of burrowing animals and soil changes will be noted. It is hoped the experiment will benefit archaeologists studying the final portion of the mound 100 years from now, said Dr. Ascher. Two similar mounds, designed by a committee of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, have been constructed in England.

YUGOSLAVIA

Salvaging Prehistoric Houses

The remains of 41 houses, several burial chambers and more than 30 stone carvings dating back some 8,000 or 9,000 thousand years have been unearthed in Yugoslavia.

The finds are superior to anything else of that date so far discovered in Europe, scientists believe.

Yugoslav archaeologists have been digging around a 1,500-square-yard site near the village of Lepenski Vir. It is also near the Iron Gate where the Danube River is forced through a narrow gorge. The area will eventually be covered by waters from a large dam now under construction.

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