Durrington

Woodhenge *(Photo by Tony Braime 2013)*

BRITAIN THROUGH THE AGES.

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXHIBITION.

AERIAL DISCOVERIES.

The archeological exhibition to be opened this afternoon at University College (Gower-street) is at once the most select and the most comprehensive of its kind that has ever been arranged in the kingdom. It is, with a very few exceptions, confined to objects that were discovered last year; and of those only a few typical specimens are shown. But the exhibits come from England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland, and they cover the ages from, say, 18,000 years ago to about 600 years ago, from Paleolithic times to medieval. Two things will immediately strike every member of the public who visit the exhibition. One is the amount of field-work in archeology that is being carried on with important results: and the other is the new life that has been given to the study by aerial photography. To many, indeed, the photographs taken from the air will be the most exciting thing in the collection; and the least instructed eye will see how at the Trundle (above Goodwood race-course), at the Stonehenge Avenue, at Maiden Castle and elsewhere, the camera, between 1,000 and 2,000 feet above the ground, has seen the indications of ancient civilizations which could not have been seen without it.

Actually, the discovery of the most striking thing in the exhibition owed nothing to aerial photography. For that title must indubitably be awarded to the little outline of a man (No. 1, i)—possibly a medicine man— wearing a mask, which is engraved on piece of reindeer bone. It is a paleolithic work from the Pin Hole Cave in Creswell Crags, Derbyshire; and it has yet no parallel of its age and kind in Britain. The other paleolithic exhibits from Creswell Crags and from Scunthorpe, Lincolnshire (No. 2), include many exquisite “pygmy” flints, as well as some noble larger flints. Of the neolithic age there is plenty to study; and, indeed, the recent discoveries have contributed

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much knowledge of that age which was new to archaeology. From Windmill Hill, nr Avebury (No. 3), come, among many other things, large round- bottomed bowls, and two saddle querns of sarsen, one with a rubbing stone also of sarsen, which show the earliest known method of grinding corn practiced by the earliest of agriculturists. The Trundle, where aerial photography was of especial service, yields a very large round-bottomed bowl (No. 4,iii.).

FORERUNNER OF STONEHENGE.

But aerial photography has perhaps achieved nothing more remarkable than the revelation of Woodhenge, near Durrington, Wilts (No. 7). A circular bank and ditch, formerly believed to be only a large disk-barrow, was discovered from the air to have dots in it. Excavation showed that these dots were filled-in holes, which had once held timber uprights; and now, at this exhibition, one may look at a complete model of what may be called the proto-type and forerunners of Stonehenge and at the pottery which was found there, pottery as a whole unlike any other group found in Britain, and having no resemblance to the notable beaker (No. 8) found in the grave which aerial photography revealed in the field adjoining.

Sometimes the prehistoric and the historic are intertwined. The excavations at Five Knolls, Dunstable, Bedfordshire (No. 11), have yielded not only a vinery urn of the Bronze Age (and that was of yesterday compared with the earliest finds there), but Roman things and the skulls and bones of what are taken to be Saxon prisoners, male and female, among which are several broken and roughly reset forearms of women. Meare Heath, Somerset (No. 12. ii), has yielded a beautiful bronze scabbard, some 22 centuries old; St. Catherine's Hill, Winchester (No. 14), some things of interest; Mount Caburn, Sussex, British coins and a Carthaginian coin (No 15, ii and iii); Scotland (No. 10) a large loan of very interesting historic relics; and Ireland one of the most interesting things in the whole exhibition. This is the model (No. 17) of the foundations of a house which probably formed part of the, palace of the Kings of Connacht, in the second and third centuries of this era, built on a site in County Westmeath which had been a sanctuary, probably of the Bronze Age, made something like Woodhenge. From Ireland also comes the great one-handed Viking sword (No. 28), made by a German smith, whose name it bears, and the first of its kind ever to be found in a Celtic settlement. But it must have reached Ireland in the ninth century A.D.: and it Is therefore much younger than some of the Roman relics here exhibited.

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