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BRITISH SCHOOL OF ARCHAEOLOGY IN IRAQ

(*Gertrude Bell Memorial*)

31-34 GORDON SQUARE, LONDON, W.C.1

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REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MAY, 1965

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THE THIRTY-SECOND ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE SCHOOL WILL BE HELD IN THE ROOMS OF THE ROYAL GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY, 1 KENSINGTON GORE, ON WEDNESDAY, 17th NOVEMBER, 1965, AT 5 p.m., TO HEAR MR. DAVID OATES; TO CONSIDER THE ACCOUNTS, THE BALANCE SHEET AND THE REPORTS OF THE COUNCIL AND THE AUDITOR; TO ELECT MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL; TO APPOINT AN AUDITOR; AND FOR ANY OTHER BUSINESS WHICH MAY PROPERLY BE TRANSACTED.

BEFORE THE MEETING THERE WILL BE A MEETING OF THE COUNCIL.

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REPORT OF THE COUNCIL

THIS year there was again a marked increase in the number of students and official visitors accommodated at the School in Baghdad. In view of this the Council has rented a larger and more modern house situated close to the existing premises and the new Iraq Museum. The School's new postal address is 90/1 Karradet Mariam, Baghdad,

Further work on the Nimrud Ivories project was carried out, and in May the division of some of the material took place, from which the Iraqi authorities allowed the School 72 pieces. Mr. J. J. Orchard has almost completed fascicule No. 1 of a projected "Nimrud Ivories" series, covering the ivory horse-harness decorations from Nimrud. Mr. Orchard had the assistance of Miss M. A. White and Miss M. V. Cardale in restoring the ivories, and Mr. R. T. Benson-Gyles was responsible for the photography.

From March to May the School was engaged, in collaboration with the University Museum, Philadelphia, in the second season of excavations at Tell al Rimah under the direction of Mr. D. Oates. Mrs. T. H. Carter of the University Museum was Assistant Director, and the staff included Mr. and Mrs. A. Trik and Miss Siiri Woodward of the University Museum; Dr. H. W. F. Saggis of the School of Oriental and African Studies, London University; Miss Elizabeth Dowman, Mr. N. H. S. Kindersley, Mr. J. E. Reade, Mr. J. Bellingham, Mr. G. E. Turner and Mr. A. Tait of the British School. Mr. D. H. Crownover of the University Museum, Miss Dominique Collon and Mr. D. H. French joined the expedition during April. Sayid Ghanim al Wahida represented the Directorate General of Antiquities and was of great assistance in the fieldwork.

The most interesting feature of the season's work was the further knowledge that was gained of the great temple situated on a high terrace overlooking the town. Enough of the plan has now been recovered to permit a reconstruction of the original appearance of the buildings which stood on the upper terrace. Here some twenty-four rooms were set around a square courtyard, with the shrine and ante-chamber on the west, the main entrance on the east and subsidiary entrances on the north and south. We found last year that the courtyard façades were decorated with elaborate patterns of half-columns, and this year we confirmed that the whole of the exterior was adorned in the same manner, with obvious and painstaking attention to visual effects, achieved by precise planning and construction. Although the temple had no foundation platform and has suffered severely from subsidence, parts of it still stand to a considerable height; the walls of the shrine and ante-chamber are preserved more than twenty feet above the original floor level. The remains of mud-brick vaults survive at a number of points and they were clearly a standard feature of the building. The original masons built vaults with a high elliptical profile which required scaffolding only at the crown; in later repairs a different technique was adopted which reduced still further the amount of timber needed during construction. This evidence may reflect the scarcity of timber in the area; it is also of interest to the architectural historian, for both techniques have a long history to which our new and unusually early examples are an important contribution.

During this season we extended our trenches along the sides of the high eroded cone which adjoins the temple on the west, immediately behind the shrine. This proved to be a solid mass of mud-brick with only a small chamber

in the middle, and is evidently the remains of a small ziggurat. Parts of the south and west façades were exposed, and were found to be decorated with patterns of half-columns similar to those in the temple. The scale of the decoration was again carefully adjusted to the viewpoint of the spectator. On the south façade, which faced the upper terrace, panels of small columns were employed, while on the west face which directly overlooked the town large columns alternated with heavy pilasters. The ziggurat survives to a height of about forty-five feet above the terrace on which the temple stands, and some seventy-five feet above the level of the town below.

The temple had a long and complicated history. In the few places where we have yet reached the original floors we have found a succession of six occupation levels dated approximately to the nineteenth and eighteenth centuries B.C., followed by the three levels of the sixteenth to fifteenth centuries and, finally, a Middle Assyrian occupation which came to an end in the thirteenth century. During this time the prosperity of the town evidently declined, the vaulted rooms of the temple collapsed and were progressively replaced by an agglomeration of less pretentious buildings, although the shrine was restored on a number of occasions and retained something of its original dignity. Work on a second site in the town below this temple told the same story. Here in 1964 we found traces of a large administrative building of the Old Assyrian period founded on virgin soil at a depth of over twenty feet. Continuing clearance of the site has revealed a succession of more modest houses, attesting long occupation with periodic and sometimes violent interruptions.

Finds in the temple included objects of glass and faience dated to the later stages of occupation between 1500 and 1250 B.C. Most notable is a fine faience head with eyes, hair and necklace of multi-coloured inlay, evidently part of a composite statuette dedicated in the shrine. In the same level was a collection of tablets, including some dated to the reign of Shalmaneser I about 1250 B.C. Like those found last year they had formed the archive of a merchant family in the last years of the town's life. Their owners dealt in metal and other commodities, and these records should yield valuable information on the economy of this little known period. Objects of Old Assyrian date were comparatively few, but a stone relief of a winged genius is probably to be assigned to this period. Although damaged by erosion it shows evidence of considerable technical skill and displays unusual features which make it a useful addition to the small corpus of early Assyrian sculpture.

In conclusion we must again express our gratitude to Dr. Faisal al Wailly, Director General of Antiquities, and to Sayid Fuad Safar, Inspector General of Excavations, for the valuable assistance and co-operation we have received from them and from their staff throughout the year.

On behalf of the Council,
J. M. TROUTBECK
Chairman of Executive Committee

D. OATES,
D. J. WISEMAN,
Joint Directors.

22nd September, 1965.

