

MACEDONIA : NEA NICOMEDEIA, 1964

In the summer of 1964, the British School of Archaeology undertook the cleaning and preservation of the Early Neolithic remains at the site of Nea Nikomedeia which were exposed during the 1961 and 1963 excavation campaigns. Mr. Robert Rodden, Co-Director of the 1961 and 1963 excavations, supervised the work. All structural features were cleaned. The surface of the area excavated in 1963 (that part of the mound which was disturbed in 1958-59 by mechanical excavators digging for road-fill) was cleared of baulks where necessary, and sloped to facilitate surface-water drainage. A trench was cut on the eastern side of the 1963 excavations in order to carry the surface-water clear of the site.

In an attempt to preserve the excavated remains of the structures found in 1961 and 1963, which are generally represented only by discolourations in the soil, two methods were adopted. In one area, the excavated surface was covered with plastic sheeting and earth. Where this was not feasible, due to the presence of large pits and post-holes extending below the local water-table, the area was sprayed with chemicals which prevent the growth of vegetation and consequential breakdown of the soil and destruction of the archaeological remains.

A reconstruction of an Early Neolithic house, built according to the methods, and with the materials indicated by the archaeological evidence is being erected around the excavated remains of one of the best preserved houses found during the excavation. This reconstruction - cum - shelter will be left to stand as part of the project for the preservation of the site.

During the 1964 "cleaning-up" operation, the limits of the primary and secondary Early Neolithic settlements on the east side of the mound were defined. A final scraping of the deposits in the eastern half of the 1963 exca-

vations established that in this area the original settlement on the site was of rather limited extent, and that the second building period probably marked an increase in the size of the settlement. In the course of cutting the drainage trench just outside the area of the 1963 excavations, traces of two parallel walls attributable to the first building period were found. These represent the most substantial examples of mud-walling found on the site; to judge from their orientation, the walls circumscribed the original settlement, at least on the land-ward side. The evidence from the drainage trench suggests that in the second building period, the original circumballations were replaced by an enclosing ditch, which probably served as a moat. As this ditch extended below the local water-table, it was utilized as a drainage ditch for the 1963 excavations.

A number of burials pertaining to the first occupation phase of the site were discovered in the eastern part of the area excavated in 1963; these were single, contracted interments in shallow pits which were apparently dug into virgin soil outside the habitation area of the original settlement, but inside the village walls.

Remains of two intrusive trenches of Late Neolithic date were found. It is now apparent that there is a series of concentric Late Neolithic trenches surrounding the highest point of the mound.

Together with the Early Neolithic house reconstruction already mentioned, a second similar structure is being built outside the excavation area. This second Early Neolithic house reconstruction will be burnt down and then excavated in the spring of 1965, the results being compared with the evidence yielded by the 1961 and 1963 excavations. The "archaeological experiment", and the conservation and reconstruction measures described in this report, mark the completion of the present programme at the Nea Nikomedeia site.

R. J. RODDEN

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