

A NOTE ON AIR PHOTOGRAPHY AND ARCHAEOLOGY

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(Mr Hancock's lecture at the Conference took the form of a commentary on a series of his own superb aerial photographs. It was out of the question to reproduce these in this publication, and it would have been meaningless to have printed the text of his lecture without them. He has therefore written the following short note on some of the principles of air photography as applied to archaeology).

With the cutting of new roads over four times wider than the old main roads, the reclaiming of marginal land and deeper ploughing, much work is waiting to be done by air survey.

This work can be carried out by members of archaeological societies as they should know what developments are going on in their neighbourhood. It is important to watch out for features under all types of weather conditions; under light snow, flooding, and even during a heavy frost. Advantage should always be taken of heath fires, as features will often be seen which otherwise could escape notice. Vegetation in green damp ditches is not so liable to burn; on the other hand, dry low banks will often catch what small amount of wind there is during dry spells when fires are most likely to occur.

When sites are to be photographed for record it is worth visiting them on the ground and making notes of surroundings such as haystacks, barns, pounds, etc. It is possible to become confused at sites such as Nettleton, on the Fosse Way, where there are two similar valleys close together. One should bear in mind that quite sizeable railway lines and stations are rapidly disappearing, while on the other hand new housing estates spring up almost overnight, so that the country below the aircraft may bear only a distant relationship to the latest maps.

Early morning and evening sun should be considered during the summer months as well as low angle sun around mid-day in the winter.

When planning flights it is useful to base the route on known sites such as hill forts, as this will enable the operations to tie in new sites more readily.

Colour photographs are far more easily interpreted than monochrome, but are not so useful for reproduction.

Photographs shown at the meeting included views of the valley near Nettleton; ploughed-out hut circles which looked like small hill forts; and well-known sites on Mendip and the surrounding country.