

3rd Annual Public Lecture - 1994

THE CHANNEL - BARRIER OR BRIDGE: TRADE IN THE ANCIENT WORLD

Professor David Peacock

Professor Peacock started his lecture by observing that, in earlier times, sea transport was more efficient than road transport and it was probable that the Channel would have been seen as more of a bridge than a barrier. In support of this observation he examined the nature of trade from the Neolithic period to the post Medieval period.

During the Neolithic period axes, made of jade, were imported and a concentration of jade in the Solent suggested that this was an entry route for jade into Britain. Seaborne or water borne trade had continued during the Bronze Age and the Bronze Age Dover boat was a very important find.

During the Iron Age, the country had suffered its first imbalance of payments with a flood of imports, including Roman pottery and wines. The Roman period saw military activity in the Channel and trade in general was considerable. In the late Roman period relatively large amounts of pottery were exported out of south Hampshire.

Professor Peacock mentioned the important Sutton Hoo and Graveney boats of the Medieval period and went on to describe how stone for the City walls of Southampton had come from areas such as Pembroke, the Isle of Wight and France. We were now left, in the main, with pottery and metals from this period and there was a need to know more about wrecks, whose contents could help fill in the gaps. To achieve this, geophysical surveys of the Solent need to continue and anomalies investigated.