

FURTHER INVESTIGATION AT ASSUR-NASIR-PAL'S PALACE

In 1956 the Department of Antiquities decided to restore and protect the northern facade of Assur-nasir-pal's throne-room at Nimrud. This work was published in *Sumer* XII (1956) on p. 124 ff. of the Arabic section. In 1959 and 1960 further work, directed by the writer, was undertaken inside the throne-room itself and in the area between its west end and the present edge of the mound (cf. the ground-plan pl. 1). This work consisted of re-excavating Layard's trenches along the walls of rooms B (the throneroom and C clearing the debris in the centre of these rooms, and excavating the stairwell, a corridor beyond it, and two partly eroded rooms none of which had previously been planned. Consequently the walls of rooms B, C, and the stairwell were restored in cement and stone to a height of 3 m.; some fragments of reliefs which had been found were replaced in their original positions. See pl. II (Ph. 1)

Assur-nasir-pal's Throneroom (Layard's Room B).

This well-known room, 45.5 m. long and 10.5 m. wide, was discovered by Layard who sent to London the majority of the Mosul-marble reliefs which covered its walls to a height of over 2.5 m.. The east end was re-excavated by Professor Mallowan in 1951 (cf. *Iraq* XIV, pp. 10, 11).

Many fragments of reliefs were discovered where Layard left them, including four slabs (12-15 in the middle of the south wall) from which only the heads had been removed. These show Assur-nasir-pal, in an attitude of worship on either side of a sacred tree, above which is Assur, the national god of Assyria, in a

winged disc; the king is accompanied by courtiers and winged genies." These reliefs are badly eroded; they are described by Layard in *Nineveh and its Remains* I, p. 382. We also found several fragments of sacred trees and some sawn-off' examples of the inscribed strips which originally separated the narrative reliefs now in the British Museum. The only narrative relief still at Nimrud is part of slab 28, which shows a city by a river with a battle below; the scene above is seriously damaged. The bases of some reliefs taken by Layard are still *in situ* with the remains of soldiers' feet and of a horse crossing a river; these will be published in the near future.

In the centre of the room, 5 m. west of the throne-base and some 40 cm. above the baked-brick floor were found numerous pieces of painted plaster which must originally have decorated the upper part of the walls. Blue was the predominant colour used and appears to have been the background throughout the room. The only recognisable subjects were numerous rosettes and the upper part of a beardless figure carrying a sword and wearing a headband, with his right arm lifted in front and his left lowered behind him; this was obviously an Assyrian official introducing prisoners or tribute-bearers into the king's presence. He and the rosettes were all painted in white and red with black outlines on a sky-blue ground.

Lying together 4 m. west of the throne-base and 1 m. above the floor were a number of objects, similar to some discovered nearby by Mallowan, which may have derived from the fittings of the throne or its canopy. There was one piece of gold-leaf measuring 12 by 7 by 0.5 mm. (MM 1098); six small bronze nails (MMP 345); and several fragments of ivory, some

plain, others incised with patterns that included rosettes and a complete prancing goat (MM 1099, MM 1100 and MMP 344).

With them was the top right-hand corner of a stone tablet with part of an inscription of Assur-nasir-pal; this measured 15 by 12 by 5cm. (MMP 346) and is again paralleled by one of Mallowan's discoveries.

Room C.

Nothing was found in this small ante-chamber except the stumps of slabs 5, 9, and 10, and of slab 1 in door b. These showed sacred trees and genies preserved up to the kness (cf. Layard, *Nineveh and its Remains* I, p. 384 and photograph 2). In the floor at the foot of the west and south walls was a narrow strip of bitumen on which slabs removed in the last century had originally rested.

The Stairwell

This appears on the plan as a corridor 3.5 m. wide running round a solid mass of mud-brick with a plastered face starting from the door in the north-west corner of room C and returning to that in the south-west corner. Rooms of this type are a normal feature of Assyrian throneroom suites, and are usually interpreted as stair-cases.

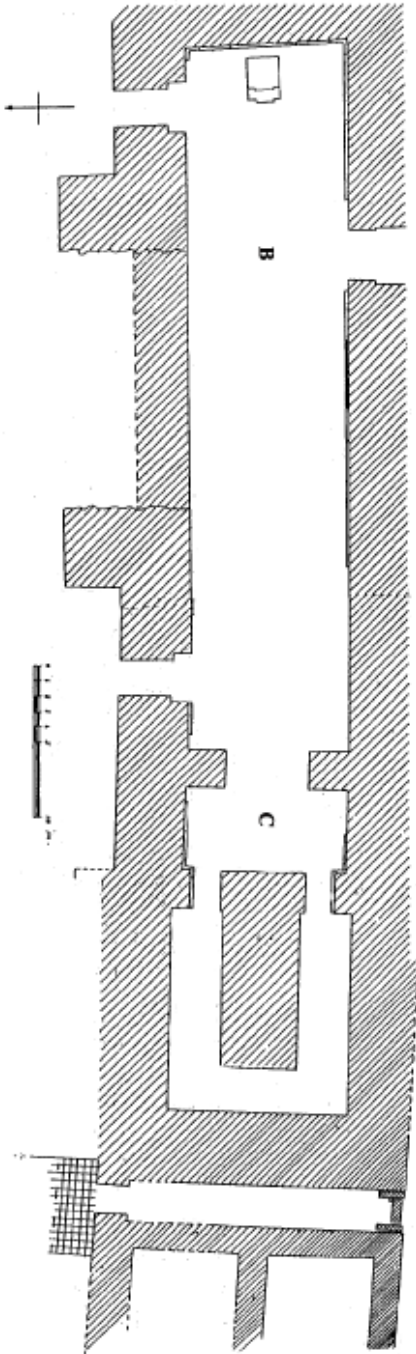
A little gold-leaf and a few fragments of incised ivory representing animals and a winged genie (MMP 395-6) were found just inside the south door of the room. Beside the west wall were some small broken pieces of bronze (MMP 393) and in the north-west corner the well-

preserved head and foreparts of a small bronze lion (MMP 392). In the south-west corner were a few incomplete glazed bricks. All these objects were found on the floor.

The Corridor, and adjacent Rooms.

Beyond the stairwell is a carridor, running from north to south, 19.70 m. long and 2.70 m. wide. Its northern end opened into a courtyard paved with bricks 45 cm. square. This courtyard may connect with that overlooked by the throneroom facade; a protective revetment of baked bricks was found at the base of its walls (cf. photograph 3). The southern end of the corridor was originally open to the south; it was later narrowed and then blocked by the construction of three thin mud-brick walls beside which, in the corner where two of them meet, was a single baked brick, all that survived of the pavement; its size, 28 cm. square, may mean that it belongs to the reign of Shalmaneser III. It was observed that this corridor and the two rooms west of it were slightly higher level than the throneroom itself.

Beyond the west wall of the corridor were the eroded remnants of two rooms, both 6.80 m. wide with a surviving length of 4.50 m. Both had bitumen dado 75 cm. high. Above this, on the eastern wall of the southern room, were the remains of wall-paintings in making which exactly the same colours as those found in the throneroom had been employed. A horizontal band of rosettes was the only identifiable motif. Photograph 4 shows the northern room with part of the southern beyond it.



Pl. I
Ground plan of Assur-Nasir-Pal's throne room and the recent discoveries at its west end and the present edge of the mound. Soele I-109.



Photo 1: General view of the restoration works taken from the west showing the process of erecting the slabs at the southern wall.



Photo 2: The lower part of bas-reliefs at the western end of the throne room.



Photo 3: General view of the corridor taken from the north showing the additional wall blocking its southern end.

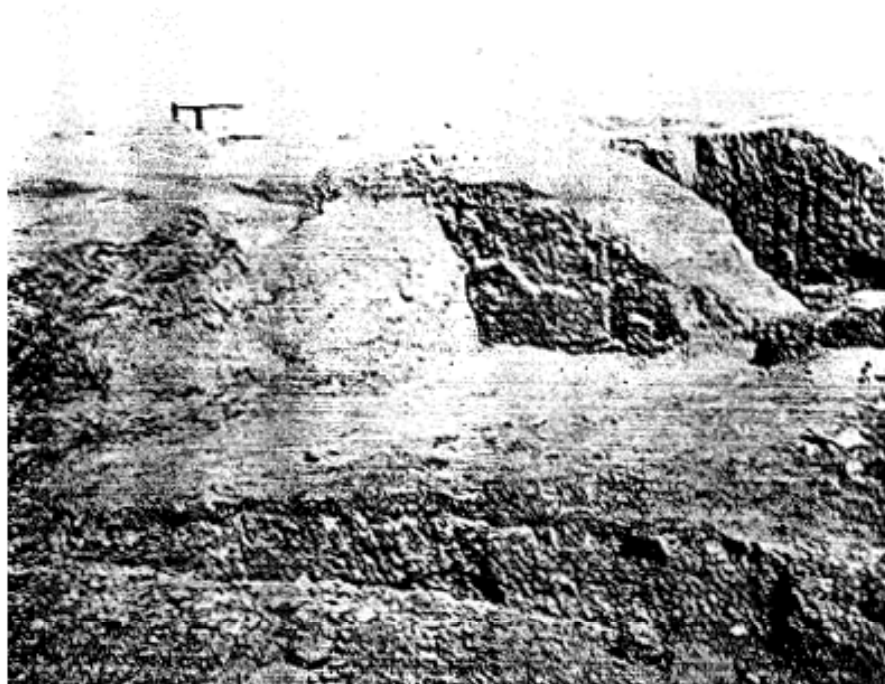


Photo 4: A view taken from the west showing the remanent parts of the two rooms at the far end.