

Wanted: Volunteers to save London's Past

The work of the explorer or observer in archaeology can be very exciting. Many important finds have been made by amateurs who explored the streets of their town or prowled in woods or byways. Many finds are made by watching roadside cuttings or by maintaining regular and amicable contacts with foremen on building sites. Women have been as successful at observing as men, if not more so: they are more persistent. To be an observer you must (a) be a person who likes walking and looking, and (b) you must be a frequent visitor to museums so that you know what to look for.

Not all archaeology is digging, but occasionally an emergency (or a special problem) leads to an excavation. Amateurs are always welcome but they should attend regularly. It's no use turning up every third Sunday for the last two hours of an afternoon. Real help means an even performance. Do not imagine that all your time is spent in spadework or trowelling—for every hour of digging there are a hundred hours of back-room work, joining up pot pieces, drawing, measuring, etc. This is where teamwork becomes fun and where an amateur learns leadership and evolves into an expert.

Some people don't like digging or joining bits of pot, yet they like people, archaeology, books and organisational problems—all or one of these. People like this are needed in London archaeology, folk who get on with people, who can run a Sunday outing (or just make tea), who pride themselves on tidy paper work, who can talk to councillors and business men, who can scrounge anything, who can turn routine work into fun. Where can these talents of yours be utilised? You can make your start by joining one or more local archaeological societies.

Before joining you should question the secretary as to the part you can play. Remember that it is not just lectures that you want but *participation*. When you join someone will introduce you to things, but it will then be up to you to exert yourself. If a society is moribund and you are a member, **you** share the responsibility!

You are advised strongly to attend evening

classes in archaeology run at various centres by the University of London. You can have a choice of courses ranging from short series to courses lasting four years. If you wish to undergo advanced training in excavation and 'writing-up' techniques you should go to a summer school for a fortnight. These are very stimulating and need not deter beginners. The universities of Birmingham and Keele run special courses of this kind and many 'pupils' have gone on to successful careers as advanced amateur or part-time workers.

As a London archaeologist you should know intimately the displays of the London Museum which is now teaming up with the Guildhall Museum. The collections are superb and the staff is helpful.

For purchasing the annual calendar of excavations and for details of the important publication *British Archaeological Abstracts* you should write to the Council for British Archaeology, 8 St. Andrew's Place, London, N.W.1.

Do something now

There is no place for a booklist here. If you are keen on observation get E. Wood's Collins Field Guide to Archaeology, 1968; if digging is your future forte G. Webster's *Practical Archaeology*, 1963, is invaluable. Then read one elementary book on prehistory, one on the Roman period and so on until you finish up with a book on industrial archaeology. By the time you have read these you will be able to take in your stride archaeological periodicals and reports.

If you feel not enough is being done to advance the study of London's archaeology and history, you should as a citizen stir up your local councillors. Several Greater London boroughs, the G.L.C. and the City of London preen themselves on the help given, but the total effort is lamentably small and does not compare favourably with what is being done at Rotterdam, Milan, Cologne or Marseilles. *Please* do something for London and help salvage its vanishing history.