

(mica) is also present and the odd crystal of chlorite.

Thin sections have also been prepared from the experimental firings described (see above). Comparison of the results with sections of the Roman ware enable one or two very tentative conclusions to be made. There are two main types of fabric present at Highgate: normal sandy fabric and one with a slightly soapy texture. Compared with the experimental firings so far undertaken the normal sandy fabric contains added sand, while the soapy fabric contains less sand. However, many more sections need to be made and statistically evaluated before the extent of these alterations to the basic clay mixture can

be stated with any confidence.

It is hoped that future work will make it possible to recognise in thin section Highgate ware from other sites. This will, however, necessitate considerable study of 1st and 2nd century coarse wares, and depend upon some particular technological or mineralogical uniqueness in the Highgate wares.

S. A. MACKENNA

**Correction.** On pages 62 and 63 in issue No. 3 the pottery illustrations have got their captions reversed. The pottery on page 62 is from Pit 2 and that on page 63 is from the base of the rubbish dump.

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## Letters

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### NEW COUNTY SOCIETY

I READ your recent article "Joining a Society" in the Spring issue of *The London Archaeologist* with both interest and enthusiasm. I found that I was in full agreement with the points that you made. It is especially important, as you pointed out, that all who are interested in either history of archaeology, should support their local and county societies. Not only is the quality of the activities of these societies a reflection upon their members, but without them they cannot even exist.

The point which I must contest with you arises due to an omission. This I am sure, is due only to the recent inauguration of our society. I am referring to the formation of the Hertfordshire Archaeological Society, in January of this year.

Many members have already assisted on excavations throughout the county and especially at Much Hadham where we are excavating the Romano-British potteries at Bromley. Others have carried out fieldwork, both on known sites and those recently discovered by aerial photography.

Besides providing evening lectures, the Hertfordshire Archaeological Society which is based on Balls Park College in Hertford, is also arranging and planning a wide range of other activities including training courses. Membership costs £1 per year, and 10/- for any other member of one family, or full time student. Further information may be obtained from the Membership Secretary, 44 The Street, Braughing, Hertfordshire.

9 Roman Way,  
Puckeridge,  
Ware,  
Herts.

MICHAEL SMITH  
(Chairman)

### ANTIQUITIES BILL

WITH reference to the comments of *Gromaticus* in your last number, I would like to make it clear that no museum curator worth his salt wants to discourage people from bringing antiquities—or what they think may be antiquities—to his museum. Such enquiries have always been welcomed in any museum of which I have personal knowledge.

The proposed Bill would, however, impose on the finder

of any archaeological object the duty of sending a *written report* which the local archaeological agent appointed by the Minister would be obliged to investigate. This agent might or might not be the curator of the local museum. An "archaeological object" is defined as "any chattel which has by reason of its archaeological interest a value greater than its intrinsic value or which is otherwise deserving of archaeological study." With certain exceptions, such as surrender for treatment or to an archaeological agent, the finder would be obliged to retain the object in his possession for a minimum period of three months.

What worries London archaeologists is the impossibility of observing this law in a place where thousands of artefacts, each of which might qualify as an archaeological object under this broad definition, come to light each year. A further difficulty is that in most cases the finder is a labourer on a building site, to whom the proposed statutory duties would seem an intolerable burden, and moreover one which promised no reward, since he would have no title to his find.

Extending the responsibility to site agents and others in authority on the site does little to help, since these over-worked people have already quite as much paper-work as they can cope with. I fear that in most cases the easy way out would be taken, and antiquities would quickly but quietly disappear. It is not unknown for similar illegal but understandable action to be taken when human skeletal remains are unexpectedly found—simply to avoid the trouble and delay resulting from proper observance of the regulations. Since failure to obey the law must be concealed from those who are likely to be interested, there is a very real danger that one result of the proposed legislation would be to curtail the freedom now readily given to archaeologists to visit building sites. If so, the loss would be immeasurably greater than the gain.

Guildhall Museum,  
Gillett House,  
55 Basinghall Street,

RALPH MERRIFIELD  
(Assistant Director)

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**Correction.** The price of Graham Webster's *The Roman Imperial Army* mentioned in issue No. 3 should have read as 63s.