

Commentary

By GROMATICUS

BRITISH ARCHAEOLOGIST TRUST

IN FEBRUARY, a meeting of 30 top-rank professional archaeologists was held in Barford, Warwickshire to consider the alarming rate of destruction of archaeological sites in Britain. The main proposal to emerge was the creation of an Archaeological Trust.

Initially, this would fulfil the basic requirement of providing a central spokesman to put the archaeological viewpoint to the public, the developers and the government. The Trust which would offer individual membership, could provide the opportunity for the interested public to contribute financially.

The ideas of establishing a pressure group and of public involvement are excellent. The one reservation to the concept of the Trust is whether "yet another organisation" is required. Could not C.B.A. or the R.A.I. in altered form, provide a suitable host-body? Otherwise the Archaeological Trust deserves every bit of support which can be mustered.

A mass open meeting is being held in the New Year to discuss and launch the British Archaeological Trust. Every society interested in conservation should, without fail, send representatives to this meeting which will be in the Beveridge Hall at the Senate House, Mallet Street, W.C.1., at 2.30 p.m. on Saturday, 23rd January, 1971. It is hoped that as many individuals as possible will also go to lend their support to the project and to air their views.

HOME COUNTIES ARCHAEOLOGY

THE CORRESPONDENCE in this magazine over the past year on the archaeological organisation of the five Home Counties suggests that there exists a state of distinct unrest; indeed, correspondence in other journals paints a much gloomier picture. However, hopes of a more peaceful period ahead are now beginning to appear and perhaps time at present spent in disharmony will shortly be put to better use.

In brief the intra-county troubles occur in Essex, Hertfordshire and Kent; in each case the underlying cause has been the lack of a well-organised county society.

Hertfordshire has never had an overall society and the setting-up in recent years of separate Archaeological and Local History Councils to cover the county while an advance, can not be considered a satisfactory state of affairs—not all groups have found it expedient to join and there is no proper co-ordinating body to the two approaches to his-

tory. Although *Hertfordshire Archaeology* equals the best of county society annual transactions, it seems somewhat odd that the *Hertfordshire Archaeological Review* which is sponsored by the Herts. Archaeological Council, is not getting the backing that it deserves—the capital to sustain it in its launching throes comes entirely from the generosity of private sources.

In Kent the Council for Kentish Archaeology (or rather, its forerunner the K.A.R.G.C.), came into being because of the inaction of the county society—which now has a representative on the C.K.A. With two parallel organisations concerned with archaeology there is no wonder that friction arises.

Essex has suffered for a long time from a lack of cohesion—for some while the county society has been inactive except in the east. The Essex Archaeological and Historical Congress sprang up in an attempt to remedy the situation, but it has been unable to improve the archaeological situation (see p.209).

The London & Middlesex and Surrey societies have both been able to move with the times and, consequently, have avoided internal turmoil. Both have local history and archaeological committees (among others), have held annual conferences for both subjects for some years and in other way, are refreshingly progressive. This is not to say that there is no room for improvement, but all the advances which have been made in recent years, have been achieved under the aegis of the extant county society.

End Parochialism

THE MORAL to be drawn from all this is quite clear—for archaeology and local history to flourish in a county, there should be one (and only one) overall organisation and any changes should be made from within that organisation, rather than by trying to set up a rival ginger group.

A county society has the right and duty to do all in its power to encourage archaeological and local history research. Likewise, local societies, their officers and their members have the right and duty to rally to this cause.

The time has surely come in this day and age when individual jealousies and local squabbles can be put aside to fulfil a common cause.

Further, the time **has** come when incumbents of office and power must realise that they should not only be willing to accept change, but should also be prepared to initiate it themselves. The days of cliques inert with hubris must be banished for ever!