

# Research and Publication of London's Archaeology

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FROM AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL point of view, London is potentially probably the most important of urban areas anywhere in Europe. The opportunities therefore which even now exist for archaeological exploration must be seized in a way which reflects the historical importance of London as a major European capital. Even so, London is unique amongst continental cities in having been the subject of almost continuous, if spasmodic, archaeological research during the last quarter of a century. As is well known this research has been conducted against considerable odds, both financial and practical, by dedicated workers with very limited resources.

It is perhaps not surprising, therefore, that so little of the results of these immense labours have been published in a form which reaches anything like the standard which has been common place with urban excavation during the last decade—and in some instances since the 1930's. Work is being done, though slowly, on a large number of sites of immense potential interest on both sides of the Thames, and comparatively large areas of London have now been the subject of archaeological investigation of a greater or lesser degree of adequacy. Even now, however, the archaeological responses to the opportunities which are now open in the present, and which will be in the near future, are cramped by the general lack of manpower, money and, in particular, forward planning on anything like an adequate scale.

For instance, most of the archaeological material in what is potentially one of the largest and most important areas available for the study of Roman, Saxon and medieval London—that of the river front area to the south of St. Pauls and including Baynard's Castle—has this summer been almost totally destroyed by pile-driving activities, most of it unrecorded and, it seems, unrecorded. Valuable evidence about the topography of docks, roads and dwellings has been lost because so little has been recorded of what has been revealed in the contractors' excavations, in a site left open, but unexcavated for two years.

If archaeological excavation is to take place, therefore, on anything like the scale which an adequate supply of money and foresight would even now make possible, then there must be set up an outlet for the definitive publication of the immense amount of research which these excavations engender. I am therefore proposing, providing that agreement

can be reached amongst all those whose business is with excavating and recording archaeological material in the London region, that a Monograph Series be established to be devoted to the publication of reports of London excavations.

The recent establishment of a permanent excavation group in Southwark as well as the probable imminent formation of an archaeological research centre for the City (if not for the whole of London), mean that the amount of time, money and resources which are being put into archaeological and historical research in the region is already increasing at a hearteningly rapid rate. These efforts make it essential, therefore, that there should be established a vehicle which will be adequate to cope with the publication of reports of the many past and present excavations in London, and all those many more to be undertaken in the future, many if not most of which, will (if they are to be written up fully) necessitate reports which will fill a whole volume in themselves.

The present arrangements for the publication of such excavations have clearly neither the flexibility nor the capacity to take the full reports which are being contemplated, and it therefore seems that we must take the opportunity *now* to establish an outlet which will be cheap, of high quality and of standard format, and which can be used by any individual or group who is in a position to publish detailed and careful research work relating to London.

A lot of discussion is now centring around the role of county journals—indeed of journals in general—as publishers of detailed archaeological material. Printing costs are rising so fast that the financial basis of local as well as national journals is becoming less and less securely based. Inevitably, the situation will arise, even if it has not done so already, when the increasing pace, especially of rescue archaeology will require new outlets for its proper publication, in ways which bypass the extensive and lengthy process of letterpress printing and blockmaking and the limited publishing capacity of journals in general.

If, therefore, a Monograph series for the publication of London excavations is established, it must be produced by offset-litho, a process which produces results which need be in no way inferior to conventional letterpress and blockmaking. The costs of this are between a quarter and a third of normal

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## FIELD OFFICE FOR SURREY

THE SURREY Archaeological Society has for some time, as noted in its *Annual Report* for 1971, been negotiating with the Surrey County Council concerning the need for a County Archaeologist or for the establishment of some equivalent alternative arrangement. The County Council have now offered a substantial grant towards the employment by the Society of a full-time professional officer. The County Council will play a part in the appointment of the officer.

The duties of the officer will include the maintenance of the Society's Archaeological Index, offering advice to the County Council on the archaeological implications of planning applications and development proposals, and carrying out archaeological observation and rescue work. The post will be, of course, quite distinct from the arrangements that the Society has already made concerning motorway archaeology.

## NEWS FROM HENDON

THE INVESTIGATION of the moated site at the Manor House, Finchley has been postponed due to the need to investigate the site of a group of 19th century houses at the Burroughs; these were in one of the old parts of Hendon. At one end of the site coarse grey and black medieval pottery in a much fragmented condition is being found in a dark occupation layer. A collection of clay pipes from three makers near London has been assembled.

In connection with the Festival of London a travelling exhibition of photographs of some of the districts interesting buildings has been shown locally around Hendon. At the Hampstead Garden Suburb Institute, an assembly of documents and photographs relating to the history of the Suburb was also shown.

## A.G.M. OF THE LONDON ARCHAEOLOGIST

THE A.G.M. was held on the 9th June at Church House, Dean's Yard. The annual report and accounts were accepted and the five officers were re-elected. Representatives to serve on the Publication Committee were elected from the following societies—City of London, Croydon, Fulham & Hammersmith, London & Middlesex and Southwark & Lambeth.

After giving excellent service for three years as Chairman of the Committee, Lionel Fereday (Enfield) retired under the rotation rule. At the subsequent Committee meeting Harvey Sheldon (London and Middlesex) was elected to take his place.

After the close of business of the A.G.M. Harvey Sheldon gave a fine exposition on the state of rescue work in the London area. The lecture was followed by a lengthy and stimulating discussion.

## ARCHAEOLOGY IN THE CITY

THIS SUMMER unprecedented activity has been shown in the City where four excavations were being carried on at the same time, three on a full-time basis—never before have more than two taken place at once nor has anything like the amount of paid labour been used.

Another first for the City has been an excavation under Peter Marsden in the basement of a still occupied office block just to the east of Cannon Street station. Here a further part of the Governor's palace has been found, including two hypocausts. Beneath this were

traces of timber-framed buildings and a quantity of Belgic or Belgic-derived pottery.

Further Roman timber-framed buildings have been discovered on a site at Aldgate just inside the City walls where Hugh Chapman of Guildhall Museum was directing on a rather restricted site; also found was a military type ditch. At Baynards Castle where Jeremy Haslam is working on the north east corner, a much resurfaced medieval road has been discovered alongside the possible dock for the Castle. Part of the site has shortly to be surrendered to the contractors, but work on the remainder will continue at least until the end of August.

In Milk Street off Cheapside, the only part-time excavation, volunteers from the City of London Archaeological Society with some help from Wandsworth Historical Society under the direction of Nicholas Farrant, are working at week-ends against the clock—the contractors are expected on site before the end of August. Of particular interest on the site is what appears to be a Roman road running parallel with the road on which the tower of St. Mary le Bow is built.

## REGENT'S CANAL WALK

A SECTION OF the Regent's Canal towpath in Camden is now open to the public. Camden Council, with the help of the Regent's Canal Group and G.L.I.A.S., has now opened its first stage of the towpath walk. The canal was built as a result of an Exchequer Bill passed in 1817 and was completed in 1820. Along the canal can be seen a lock-keepers cottage, locks, a roving bridge, horseslips and a Stephenson Railway Bridge. An attractive brochure called "Camden's Canalside Walk" can be obtained from the planning department at Holborn Town Hall.

## THE BANQUETING HOUSE, WHITEHALL

THE DEPARTMENT of the Environment is proposing to carry out alterations to the Banqueting House in Whitehall. Some of the alterations are considered desirable on historical grounds and other work will improve the acoustics of the building which is often used for Government and other receptions and occasional concerts.

Before the work is put in hand the Department is mounting a small exhibition of the proposals in the Banqueting House itself. This will be open to the public who will be invited to make comments.

*Items of news or interesting notes for this feature, should be sent to Brian Bloice, 94 Hubert Grove, S.W.9.*

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printing costs. There are also other benefits of this process: the time taken to print and produce one volume need only be a few weeks, rather than almost a year; and more information can be included about the evidence produced by the excavation—evidence which while not being needed by all, should however be readily available in print. Full publication of all the evidence need not, therefore, be at the mercy of the limitations of editorial and financial restrictions.