

# Commentary

By GROMATICUS

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## ARCHAEOLOGY IN GREATER LONDON

THE RECOMMENDATIONS of RESCUE's *The Future of London's Past* and the present deliberations of the City Corporation hopefully should together produce an archaeological unit for the City of London. Meanwhile although Southwark has had its own full time group for over a year, the rest of London is archaeologically undercovered. Various museums have taken on the responsibility for some of the boroughs, local societies look after others, but there are still a number of boroughs basically uncovered including the very important City of Westminster.

However at the same time not only is C.B.A. currently considering altering its group structure, but the Department of the Environment is talking of establishing regional archaeological units. The outcome of this will probably be the setting up of a full time group for Greater London which area will also become a separate C.B.A. Group.

The biggest problem will undoubtedly be finance as the Department is rightly attempting to obtain much of the money from local government. With the 32 London boroughs, some of which are already being reasonably generous towards archaeology, there are going to be some frustrations for the alms-gatherer.

## POPULARITY BREEDS PUBLICITY

ARCHAEOLOGY IS POP! or perhaps more precisely, entrepreneurs seem at last to have realised that the general public is genuinely interested in the subject.

Readers will already be aware of the big increase in the publication of books on archaeology and its allied subjects, but more fascinating and even bizarre are some of the attempts by public relations firms to push their clients' products by using the archaeological band wagon. Some examples of the publicity circulars received by *the London Archaeologist* in recent months will illustrate this.

At one end of the scale on behalf of a plant hire firm in the north of England comes a photograph of one of its machines working on a Roman site in County Durham — interesting but misplaced! The

other end includes a photograph with commentary on a cook corporal who made a seemingly very accurate copy of Tutankhamun's bust out of chocolate — interesting but inappropriate — and a firm who developed a technique for the easy removal of chewing gum trodden into the carpet of the Tutankhamun exhibition — uninteresting and inappropriate.

However where there is publicity, there is presumably money and perhaps archaeologists should try more often to make mutually beneficial arrangements. What is good enough for racing cars or golf should be good enough for archaeology. Perhaps this is one way the financial problems of the Greater London unit could be solved.

## TREASURE HUNTING AND ARCHAEOLOGY

IN HIS LETTER (p.71) on my article in the last issue Mr. L. E. Morris quite rightly makes the point that there is no such thing as public ground — it all belongs to someone — and that a key point in the legal objections to treasure hunting is that finds made in this way are very far from being accidental. "They are the result of a deliberate attempt, planned in advance and requiring the acquisition of equipment, to find objects concealed in the ground."

It is somewhat worrying that this quoted sentence, perhaps with the last phrase slightly amended to read "... under or on the ground," can be applied to a number of archaeological groups engaged in field walking or mudlarking. I have before me drawings of a fine Iron Age sword recently recovered from the riverine mud by a group fore-armed with ranging poles, probes, picks and shovels!

So often a museum or archaeologist group tends to 'acquire' objects which action, if performed by someone else, could well be construed as a criminal offence — a sobering thought.

Perhaps the true distinction is a moral one — to acquire material for display in a local collection for the public benefit is quite different from the motive of personal gain when an object will either be added to a private collection or be disposed of for money. This is surely the real distinction between an archaeologist and a treasure hunter.

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## SUBSCRIPTIONS RENEWALS

The Subscriptions Secretary again wishes to acknowledge with great thanks the increased subscriptions sent in by many readers to make up for the proposed increase which was cancelled by the 'freeze.'

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## THE INDEX TO VOLUME 1

The Editor wishes to gratefully acknowledge the dedicated work of Daphne Brinklow who compiled the index to Volume 1 which was circulated to all subscribers with the last issue.