

# Commentary

By GROMATICUS

## Kiln Study Group

GROMATICUS was unable to attend the first conference organised by the London Kiln Study Group in April, but managed to get to Farnham in October for their one-day seminar on the potteries of the Farnham area. Despite the Group's name, participants were not subjected to a day's dose of flue arches, fire-bars and muffles. In fact, the scope of the meeting was agreeably wide — ranging in date from Roman to the present day and in topic from the experimental re-firing of sherds to the social aspects of decorated floor tiles. The inclusion of Mrs Eames' work on these tiles widened our horizons beyond the expected view of pots, pots and more pots. There would be little value in repeating here the main points made by the speakers — if you were there then you know them, and if not an inadequate summary will not help. Besides, some of the work has already been published (Jeremy Haslam's kiln at Cove and Felix Holling's at Farnborough: in *Post-Medieval Archaeology* 9 and *Surrey Archaeological Collections* 68 respectively) and the rest looked as though it should be ready soon. Two particularly provocative points were made by Felix Holling: (i) is "Surrey ware" any longer a viable term, now that kilns producing it have been found in Hampshire, and kilns producing "West Kent" and "Sussex" wares have been found in Surrey? (ii) what is "Tudor green" ware, which now seems to have been produced in association with much coarser wares?

Well, we all enjoyed the seminar (I think) and all learnt something too. But how does the meeting fit into the wider picture of London's archaeology as a whole? Firstly, it seemed right that the meeting should have been held some miles from London, near the centre of one of the main pottery production areas in both Roman and later periods. Working in London, one can easily become very "parochial," but London's pottery does not really make sense except in the context of its source of supply, many of which lie outside the London area as such. Many more such days will be needed before a balanced picture appears: other areas which come to mind are (in no particular order) Kingston/Cheam, Highgate/Brockley Hill, Harlow, Oxford, Colchester, Sible Hedingham, Hadham, Nene Valley, Dorset. There are no doubt many more, and of course the more central kiln sites should not be overlooked in the rush to the hinterland.

Secondly, one was left with a feeling akin to indi-

gestion: so much ground had been covered so quickly. Perhaps one day in depth on either the Alice Holt Roman potteries or the "border" kilns would have been more digestible and therefore more useful.

Thirdly, interesting as details of excavations and surveys are, I would have welcomed more details about how to recognise the products of the kilns when they are found in London. It was clear that shape alone is not enough — some of the drawings of second century Alice Holt jars could easily have been mistaken for their counterparts from Highgate. The ideal (but not very practical) answer might be to give away free annotated samples with each lecture, so that one could make direct sherd-to-herd comparisons in the future. More realistically, how about some rule-of-thumb guides to identification?

In conclusion, the Group seems to be fulfilling a real need, and I hope it will continue to develop a useful role in the future. Anyone working on pottery in the London area should at least be aware of the Group's activities.

## Index

It is something of an achievement for the index for Volume 2 of the *L.A.* to be ready in time to accompany the first issue of Volume 3, and we announce its delivery to you with just a hint of pride. All credit goes to Daphne Brinklow, who is warmly thanked for undertaking this specialised task.

## Au Revoir

IN THIS ISSUE the *London Archaeologist* says au revoir to Gale Canvin, who has assisted in its production since 1972. During this time he has worked on the archaeology of south-west London in various roles, most recently in the South-West London team under Scott McCracken. He has now gone to Sheffield University to read for a degree in archaeology. His place with the *London Archaeologist* will be taken by Beth Richardson, who works as finds assistant in the Inner London Archaeological Unit. Beth will also be taking responsibility for the Excavation Round-up (see p.8). Gale's successor in South-West London is Annie Robinson, who will already be known to some *L.A.* readers from her days with I.L.A.U. She had previously worked in Exeter and Chesterfield, and has just completed a M.A. course in archaeological sciences at Bradford University. *Gromaticus* wishes all three every success in their new roles.