

Commentary

By GROMATICUS

TWO YEARS AGO (*Mosaic*, Vol. 2, No. 15) L.A.M.A.S. Archaeological Research Committee set up a Working Group to enquire into the employment of archaeologists in London. The Group has now reported the findings of a survey carried out in 1976/7, and to which 2 out of every 3 of the seventy-seven archaeologists then employed by the London units responded. The findings confirm what has been felt, but not factually demonstrated, for some time. The report shows a young (80% aged 29 or less), mostly (81%) unmarried, highly qualified (74% with a degree or equivalent) workforce, underpaid in comparison with their contemporaries (on average earning £600 to £800 less p.a. than teachers or librarians of the same age). They are fairly satisfied with working conditions but dissatisfied with salaries and career prospects, largely because the system of 12-month contracts is a practical and psychological barrier to settling in London. Clearly there is a social problem in the making—what happens as these people grow older, and want to start a family, take out a mortgage, etc? Will they be prevented because they are archaeologists or will they be forced to leave London (or archaeology), taking their hard-won knowledge and expertise with them?

But employment is about getting the job done as much as about providing security and job satisfaction. Here, too, the situation is unsatisfactory. More than half Greater London has inadequate archaeological coverage, and all of the units (except the D.U.A.) reported that they were severely understaffed. They were also short of the money required to undertake large excavations.

The Group's recommendations come under three headings: 1. Staff, 2. Organisation and 3. Finance. In the first, they recommend that salaries should be increased and common scales set up, and that staff should be employed on open-ended contracts, providing normal benefits (holiday pay, pension rights, etc.). In the second, they tackle the controversial question of a unit or units for Greater London (see *Gromaticus*, Vol. 3, No. 4), putting forward a compromise between the Greater London mega-unit (favoured by the DoE) and the local mini-units system. They see Greater London covered by seven units, with an eighth providing common services—conservation, photography, archives, etc.—all governed by a co-ordinating committee responsible for overall policy, administration and allocation of finance. Finally, they recommend that the DoE should be asked to guarantee long-term (as opposed to year-to-year) funding, and that the sum so provided should be at least matched by a local authority con-

tribution.

It is impossible to comment in detail on this report here. One thing is clear: archaeology costs money, and if we want Greater London's past to be recorded before it is destroyed we must all be prepared to pay for it, and to convince our local politicians that we are prepared to pay for it.

Local Society Publications

FROM TIME TO TIME, we hear of publications by local societies which might be of interest to readers of the *L.A.* living outside the area of the sponsoring society. Some come to us for review; but we know of many that do not. As an experiment, we shall be running a feature giving brief details of all such publications notified to us since the previous issue. Societies wishing to publicise their work should send the editor a note of their title, length and price, and address from which they can be obtained. If the response is sufficient the feature could become a permanent one, though perhaps not in every issue. Listing of a publication in this feature would not prevent it being reviewed later. Over to you.

A Museum of Garden History?

WHEN A CHURCH becomes redundant, as the modern jargon calls it, either a new use must be found or it faces demolition. This prospect now faces the historic church of St. Mary-at-Lambeth, a grade 2* listed building situated at the gates of Lambeth Palace, in the heart of the historic core of Lambeth, and on the site of a Saxon church. Fortunately, an excellent alternative use has been proposed. Using as a link the tombs of the two John Tradescants in St. Mary's churchyard, the Tradescant Trust has been set up with the aim of preserving the church as a Museum of Garden History. The churchyard is to be developed as the Tradescant Memorial Garden, planted with the trees, shrubs, herbaceous and other plants that the Tradescants introduced to this country. Other aims concern the giving of lectures, courses and exhibitions, the conservation of endangered species and the dissemination of information to the public. The church authorities are willing to grant the Trust a long lease at a nominal rent, and all that is now needed to get the Trust off the ground is money — £250,000 in fact. *Gromaticus* urges readers to support the Trust's proposals if possible in a practical way. Details can be obtained from The Tradescant Trust, 7 The Little Boltons, SW10 9LJ.

There are no book reviews in this issue because the main articles were longer than expected.