

ANDREW SELKIRK REPLIES . . .

THE LONDON ARCHAEOLOGIST has always been an independent magazine, and this independence has given it much of its strength and reputation. Recently however, there have been several editorials lavish in praise of the GLC. These editorials were written by Mr. Orton; however what Mr. Orton did not reveal was that he himself had become a member of the new London Suburban Unit and was thus a direct recipient of the GLC's bounty. Readers of the LA should be made aware of this; and members of the Management Committee of the LA, if they value its independence, should take steps to maintain its independence.

This bias has led Mr. Orton into publishing a diatribe against me in the Autumn edition of the LA which contained a number of inaccuracies. There were two inaccuracies that I found particularly wounding. Firstly, he accused me of believing that "Professional teams are profligate, bureaucratic and inflexible". I believe nothing of the sort. On the contrary, I have always been an admirer of the DoE and its project funding system, and have said so both privately and publicly: indeed in the recent CA 83, I wrote that the Inspectors "succeed in maintaining the Rolls Royce tradition of the British civil service at its best" and went on to say that the units were living in a "golden age".

He then went on to imply that I believe that "it is bad, *per se*, to spend public money on rescue archaeology". Yet in the very piece of which he complained I had argued that it was right to spend public money on rescue excavations in the City. I do not mind at all being criticised for what I do say; but I do object to being criticised for what I do not say. And when I have supported the DoE and the units so consistently for nearly 20 years, I find it very hurtful to be accused of the reverse.

Certainly the huge expenditure on archaeology by the GLC does seem to be excessive. At present the GLC area has around 130 full-time rescue archaeologists. The DUA has 50 permanent staff, and 20 more on short-term contracts, making 70 in all. The Suburban unit then has 30 permanent staff, and a further 30 on short term contracts, making 60 in all. This means that the suburban unit, operating in an area which comes 2nd from the bottom in the list of scheduled sites, has by far and away the largest unit in the country after the DUA. If one compares this for instance, with the Wessex unit, which covers the counties of Dorset, Wiltshire, Hampshire, Berk-

shire and the Isle of Wight, — the very heart of British archaeology — and yet has only 13 full-time staff, you get some idea of the anomalous situation of London.

The danger is that the units are acting as a vacuum cleaner, sucking up all the available sites, and leaving nothing for the independents. Already this is happening, and recently there have been a number of excavations which could, and should have been carried out by independents. A good example of this are the trenches put across Grim's Dyke and reported in the latest issue of the LAMAS Transactions. Then again the work at Merton Priory and at the Beddington Roman villa could and should have been undertaken by independent local societies. But this will not happen unless they are given the opportunity. Already in north London we have a contrast between the situation in Camden, where the local council has always been very generous in its support for professional archaeologists, but where there is no local archaeological society, despite valiant attempts by Cherry Lavell and others to form one; and the situation in Barnet, where the council has always resolutely refused to support archaeology, but where there is in consequence a strong and active local society, HADAS, which does all the archaeology in the area. Which situation is preferable?

I am not against the professionals, far from it; but they must not swamp the local societies. We must maintain a balance, and work out what is the role of the professionals, and what should be left to the societies. In my original brief note in Current Archaeology I suggested that the professionals should concentrate on the deeply stratified sites in the City and Southwark, and I would be happy to extend this to Westminster and the monastic fringes. However outside this I think that archaeology should be left to the local societies.

One of the sad things about the GLC has been its totalitarian attitude towards archaeology: it wants to do everything itself, and appears not to know that local societies exist. Can we hope that once the GLC is abolished we can begin to get some rational, sensible and informed discussion about roles of independent and professional, and that people will once again recognise the existence of the local societies and give them some incentive to contribute to archaeology. For unless an incentive is provided, and unless we make it clear that there are important and worth-while sites for the independents to dig, then the local societies will continue to fade away. Perhaps LAMAS and Surrey Archaeological Society could get together and work something out.

Letter

BOUDICCA RE-VISITED

I HAVE JUST read the article *Boudicca Revisted* by Nicholas Fuentes in your Autumn '83 edition, in which it is suggested that the final battle with Boudicca was fought some two miles west of Staines.

Some years ago I read *Imperial Governor* by George Shipway (published as a Mayflower Paperback in 1970). This was fiction of course, an imaginary autobiography of Gaius Suetonius Paulinus, but appeared to be very well researched. The interesting thing is that Mr Shipway reached pretty much the same conclusion — though with some differences in the preceding timetable — and placed

the final battle on the line of the Staines-Silchester road.

Shipway has Paulinus reaching as far west as Silchester, where he waited in vain for the II Augusta before marching east ward to meet Boudicca's army at a point about 10 miles west of Staines, perhaps at what is now the Old Dean Common near Bagshot. True or not, it was an enthralling read!

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