

# Mosaic

## A GROUP FOR CONSERVATORS

THE ARCHAEOLOGY SECTION was the first specialist section formed within the United Kingdom Institute for Conservation. This occurred in 1976 and was brought about by archaeological conservators who felt a need to act together, to organise meetings and promote research in their field as well as form an elected committee which would represent the voice of archaeological conservators. It is producing a set of very useful guidelines for the non-specialist which have been written by working parties formed from section members. When necessary, committee members meet various government bodies to discuss aspects of archaeological conservation.

Membership of the section is open to all persons with an interest in archaeological conservation. Membership costs £2 and can be applied for, whether you are a member of UKIC or not. Please apply to Archaeology Section, c/o Archaeology Department, University College, Cardiff CF1 1XL (cheques payable to Archaeology Section UKIC).

## A WEEKEND AWAY

THE WEEKEND VISIT to a town or area of historic or archaeological interest is a feature of the programme of a growing number of local societies. One difficulty that may arise in arranging such visits is that of accommodation, since only a large (and therefore probably expensive) hotel will have enough rooms to take a large party. An alternative source of accommodation is that provided by colleges, mainly during vacations. Although this source has been used for many years for national society conferences, it appears to be little used for local society visits, perhaps because of the difficulty of knowing what is available, where and when.

An organisation set up to bridge this gap is HEAC – the Higher Education Accommodation Consortium – which has information and advice on accommodation and other facilities at fifty colleges and polytechnics across the country, from Exeter to Newcastle and from Harlech to Canterbury, as well as three in Scotland. The accommodation offered ranges from prestigious conference centres (open all the year), through the usual single study-bedrooms to keenly-priced accommodation suitable for school outings. Catering arrangements are flexible and there are other benefits which hotels may not be able to offer, like lecture theatres and sports facilities.

If your society is thinking of organising a weekend (or longer!) away, the contact is Jill Staniforth, Higher Education Accommodation Consortium, 36 Collegiate Crescent, Sheffield, S10 2BP, South Yorkshire (tel: 0742 683759).

## THE MARY ROSE IN LONDON

A SELECTION OF REPLICAS and artefacts from Henry VIII's warship *The Mary Rose* are now available for sale at the London Brass Rubbing Centre at St. James's Church, Piccadilly, London, W.1 – the only place in London where they may be found.

Amongst the objects offered for sale are paperweights containing actual pieces of the ship's timber or anchor rope which it was not possible to use in the reconstruction of the warship. Replicas of the pocket sundials issued to officers and men of the ship, pewter spoons, Tudor nails, books, prints and other objects are also available. Prices range from 25p for posters to £17.95 for a sundial.

The sale of 'unwanted fragments' raises difficult ethical questions. It seems likely in this case that such fragments would probably have to be allowed to rot through lack of conservation if they were not sold, and also that the money raised will make a valuable contribution to the funds needed to complete the conservation and presentation of *The Mary Rose*, an aim we can all applaud. Taking a broader view, however, one wonders

whether this approach will tempt hard-pressed archaeologists to break up collections by selling off 'surplus' artefacts. More seriously, will it reinforce a belief among the purchasing public that the archaeological record can be bought and sold as if it were a simple commodity and not a finite and diminishing resource? It's a question with no easy answers.

The London Brass Rubbing Centre is open every day of the year except Christmas Day, from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. from Mondays to Saturdays, and from 12 noon to 6 p.m. on Sundays. Further information may be obtained from Helen Osmaston or Andrew or Trisha Dodwell on (01) 437 6023.

## CERAMIC BUILDING MATERIALS RESEARCH GROUP

IN GENERAL, it is only recently that excavated assemblages of building materials have come to be regarded as worthy of study in depth, and then quite often through sheer embarrassment at the quantity accumulating. It is common that the person within an archaeological group delegated the task of dealing with it, having no prior knowledge of this material, works in isolation largely unaware of other people working in the same field. A number of societies and research groups deal with one aspect or another of the subject but this makes the field fragmentary and difficult to keep track of.

The inaugural meeting of the CBMRG agreed there was a great need for a forum to facilitate and co-ordinate communication. It was also agreed that a Newsletter would be the best format and that apart from the editors, a formally constituted body was not necessary. Regular meetings are not planned although individuals may get together to discuss a particular point of interest. It is anticipated that the Newsletter will appear some four times a year; it aims to establish an accepted typology/terminology for brick/tile of all periods and to promote discussion of topics of mutual concern. It will provide information on excavations, meetings and publications having an important building material component.

Further information is available from V. A. Shelton-Bunn, DGLA, Port Medical Centre, English Grounds, Morgans Lane, London S.E.1.

## 'GOLDEN AGE' AT THE BRITISH MUSEUM

AS A CONVINCED 'Saxon nationalist' I approached this exhibition with a built-in bias, tempered with a dirt archaeologist's mistrust of things arty. I was delighted to find a splendid display of the achievements of the late Saxon period, including old friends from the Winchester excavations of the 1960s. The exhibits are magnificent: illuminated books and manuscripts, delicate ivory carvings and fine jewellery take pride of place, but humbler objects, like glazed tiles, fragments of window glass and pieces of bell-mould are also on show. The display is arranged thematically so that, for example, part of a stone frieze representing an episode in the *Volsunga Saga* is displayed under 'Literature', not 'Sculpture'. There are also displays on such unlikely themes as 'music', 'medicine' and 'travel abroad'. The whole is linked and set in context by panels giving the historical background.

Some visitors may complain that the lighting is dim in places, but I suspect it must be to preserve the delicate manuscripts. My only complaint is that the maps are not up to the same high standard as the rest of the accompanying material – some towns appear to 'wander' from one map to the next.

This is not only a fine display but also a very 'integrated' and well-organised exhibition, setting these splendid objects in their historical context for the first time, at least on this scale. Visit it if you can – you will see the Saxons in a fresh light.

CLIVE ORTON

1. The Golden Age of Anglo-Saxon Art, 966-1066 (see Diary).