

Commentary

by Gromaticus

Hangin' on

ONE OF THE reasons why this issue is late is that we have been awaiting the outcome of the meeting of the Board of Governors of the Museum of London held on 23 September. This meeting has loomed over London's archaeologists all summer, as once again the future structure, indeed the very existence, of London's professional archaeology was to be discussed. Against a background of persistent rumours that the Board was proposing to close down, or at least severely curtail, the Museum of London Archaeology Service, a small group of the senior staff of the Service put forward a plan to transfer it to an independent trust. This provoked the question "did they jump or were they pushed?", the 'push' being the intolerable pressure of trying to run an organisation whose existence was felt to be under perpetual threat. After some discussion of the financial viability of this scheme (one of the main current problems is a lack of working capital, and what bank would lend to a trust that had cut itself adrift from its parent body because it was seen as a financial liability?), it was found to be unworkable for legal reasons, the Museum of London Act not permitting the necessary transfer of staff and assets.

The Board's meeting was fortunately almost an anticlimax. MoLAS is to continue in its present form, subject to closer financial scrutiny, and two reviews are to be set up: one by the Board into MoLAS itself and one by the Department of National Heritage into the whole question of the provision of archaeological services in Greater London. This, in the nature of such things, is likely to take a long time (years rather than months, I would guess), and the terms of reference and choice of members and chairman will be crucial. Provided it is done fairly and with proper consultation, a review is to be welcomed; one just hopes that the situation will not have deteriorated beyond repair by the time it reports.

While all this was happening, it looked as if 'Passmore Edwards Land' (the five boroughs east of the River Lea) was an area of peace and calm by comparison. There seemed to be plenty of work, and things seemed to be running smoothly. Now we

hear than Newham Borough Council, which funds the Passmore Edwards Museum, is discussing cuts in its funding, including proposals to close the main museum building (housing the archaeology and local history displays), delete the post of curator, close the whole archaeology function of the museum, including both fieldwork and curation, and dispose of the collections. It has even been suggested that responsibility for the archaeology east of the Lea should be transferred to MoLAS, which may cause some wry smiles there. It seems that cuts of some sort are inevitable, the question being where they will fall. A decision should be made by the Council's Policy and Resources Committee on 13 October. We hope that the pending London-wide review will prevent any rash decisions that would be difficult, if not impossible, to reverse.

Apologies

WE APOLOGISE for the late delivery of the Summer issue, which was due to a very obscure computer fault (corruption in the WIN.INI file, for those to whom that means anything). The accidental interchange of Figs. 1 and 2 in the article on St. Vedast's was nothing to do with computers, but a simple misunderstanding between the editor and the printer.

There were more serious errors in the article on the Globe Theatre in the Spring issue. In an attempt to simplify Fig. 3, we misprinted the stage depth dimension as 27ft instead of the correct figure of 27.5ft, and also inserted two broken lines (running up the page) that should not have been there. The gallery width from mid-bay to mid-bay should be "slightly longer than 12.5ft at mid-bay", not 12.5ft as given. We apologise to Dr Cuyler for these errors, and to any readers who may have been confused by them.

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READERS should have received a copy of the Index to Volume 6 with the Summer issue. If you did not, or if you are a new subscriber and would like one, please contact the Subscriptions Secretary. We are very grateful once again to Daphne Brinklow for undertaking this onerous task.