

Commentary

by Gromaticus

Does PPG 16 work?

SINCE THEIR inception in 1990, there has been much concern as to whether the new arrangements for archaeology, embodied in the Guidance Note PPG 16 *Archaeology and Planning*, would actually work. Of particular interest to archaeologists is whether the stated aim, of ensuring the preservation of archaeological remains either *in situ* or failing that, by record, is being met. Various surveys have suggested that nationally the mechanics of the system seem to be working, but it has fallen to an independent body, the Standing Conference on London Archaeology (SCOLA) to carry out a more thorough investigation into its workings in London¹. This highlights some of the problems that have arisen in London: the inexplicit criteria for reviewing planning applications, the paucity of assessments, and the unsatisfactory nature of many project briefs, all of which lie in the 'curatorial' aspects of the system, not in the fieldwork.

The survey has been supplemented by detailed case studies. One has been kindly provided for us by Helen O'Sullivan (pp. 424-431), on the extraordinary Planning Enquiry in Croydon. Another has been published in *Rescue News* no. 68: Harvey Sheldon (p. 3) questions the adequacy of the briefs set by English Heritage's Greater London Archaeological Advisory Service (GLAAS) for a development at Old Ford, in an area known for its well-preserved Roman road and enigmatic roadside settlement. Despite Sue Cole's spirited defence of GLAAS (p. 7), one is left wondering whether the 'County Archaeologist' role that EH has taken on itself in London is compatible with its national interests.

1. S. McCracken and C. Philpotts *Archaeology and planning in London. Assessing the effectiveness of PPG 16* (1995) SCOLA.

The common theme that might be detected in the SCOLA Review, the Croydon Enquiry and the Old Ford debate is that prime importance is being given to bureaucratic procedures, administrative niceties and sometimes a slavish adherence to general principles which may not be appropriate in particular cases. What London needs is a body with both teeth and local expertise, that will stand up for its archaeology: SCOLA tries hard but is under-resourced, EH seems to have its own agenda, and the Museum of London's knowledge base is about to be severely eroded (see below).

Crisis at the Museum of London

ONE OF THE effects of the November Budget was a cut in funding from the Department of National Heritage (DNH) to the Museum of London. Because of the way the Museum is funded (the DNH grant is matched by an equal one from the Corporation of London, and 40% of the Museum's income goes on its fixed costs, e.g. rents and service charges) the impact on staffing and public activities will be severe. It seems likely that the Museum will lose up to 40 posts, including some curators, and will have to curtail its educational activities. Programmes of cataloguing and conservation will be cut, and access for researchers and the general public to the collections will be greatly reduced. Finally, the Museum will cease to maintain the archive of archaeological finds and data from excavations, and will not accept additions, even from current sites.

This is all extremely bad news for London's archaeology. Representations are being made to the Secretary of State for National Heritage, and we hope that at least some of the damage can be reversed.

Annual Lecture and Meeting

THE ANNUAL Lecture and Meeting of the London Archaeologist will be held at 7 p.m. on Tuesday 14th May in the Lecture Theatre of the Institute of Archaeology, 31-34 Gordon Square, London WC1. The speaker will be Peter Rowsome on 'Excavations at No. 1 Poultry — an update'. Before the lecture, the annual reports and accounts will be presented. The proceedings will

include the election of officers and the election to the Publication Committee of six local society representatives, whose nomination should be made to the Chairman, c/o 7 Coalecroft Road, SW15 6LW. Local societies are invited to send one representative with voting powers; subscribers and their friends will also be welcome. Refreshments will be served from 6.30 p.m.