

Commentary

by Gromaticus

Curiouser and curiouser

STONEHENGE continues to dominate the archaeological headlines, with the announcement that English Heritage, the National Trust, and the Tussauds Group have made an application to the Millennium Commission for funding for a Stonehenge Millennium Park, the cost of which is estimated to be £83m. The scheme will "clear the accumulated 20th-century clutter, including the existing visitor centre, car park and A344 road, to create a Park free for ever from any sign of man's intrusion, where the public will be encouraged to roam in safety and to walk among the Stones as their ancestors did for thousands of years." Leaving aside questions about how (or even whether) our ancestors roamed among the Stone, and how we can prevent the whole area reverting to scrub without exerting very considerable intrusion, this smacks of the "Ministry of Tidy Ruins" on a grand scale.

It is not yet clear what will happen to the A303 trunk road in this scheme. After protests against its choice of the 'Grey Route' for the diversion, the government seems to have accepted that the 'Green Route' (the tunnel) is the best after all. It also seems to be saying that this route is too expensive, and will not be implemented. So where does that leave the A303 and the Stonehenge Millennium Park?

Back in the real world, the prospective state of archaeology's administrative infrastructure is dire. Attempts to prevent the closure of the Museum of London's Archaeological Archive seem to be making little progress, while the major national players (English Heritage and the Royal Commission) are suffering continuing severe financial cuts. Even at County level, where Sites and Monuments Records and County Archaeologists have provided an element of continuity in a kaleidoscope of activity by competing units, severe staff cuts are likely to be needed to meet the costs of setting up new unitary

local authorities. Thus, while very large amounts of money may be available for grandiose 'flagship' projects, the less glamorous but essential routine services such as SMRS may be starved of the funding they need. On all fronts, it seems that it will become more and more difficult to keep track of, let alone use, all the information generated by developed-funded fieldwork. In which case, some perceptive developer will sooner or later point out, why generate the information (and pay for it) in the first place?

The need for quick publication to justify the cost of fieldwork to a sceptical paymaster has had an unexpected side effect on the publication policy of the *L.A.* For over 20 years we have published on a hand-to-mouth basis, not knowing where the next article would come from until we needed it and it appeared. This has changed dramatically in the last few months. Articles are being submitted at a rate far faster than we can publish them, and the publication queue has lengthened to about a year. For the first time, we have to make decisions about which articles should be published quickly, which can wait a while, and which may not be published by us at all. We hope that authors will be patient as we try to find a way and make policy in this new situation, and that readers will help us by telling us which articles they especially like, and what sort of articles they would like to see in future issues of the *L.A.*

Fieldwork Round-up 1996

CONTRIBUTIONS to the 1996 Round-up should be sent to the Editor, c/o Institute of Archaeology, 31-34 Gordon Square, London WC1H 0PY, and should be modelled on the ones in the 1995 Round-up (Vol. 8, Supplement 1). It would be a great help if they could be sent in on floppy disk (ASCII text, PC or MAC disk) as well as on paper.

Annual Lecture and Meeting

THE ANNUAL Lecture and Meeting of the London Archaeologist will be held at 7 p.m. on Tuesday 20 May in the Lecture Theatre of the Institute of Archaeology, 31-34 Gordon Square, London WC1. A team of speakers will give short talks on aspects of the Thames Archaeological Project. Before the talks, the annual reports and accounts will be presented. The proceedings will include the elec-

tion of officers and the election to the Publication Committee of the six local society representatives, whose nomination should be made to the Chairman, c/o 7 Coalcroft 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.