

## London's Tudor Palaces

AS SOMEONE IN the middle of a national survey of archaeological archives and the person responsible for at least some of the archives referred to, I read David Gaimster's article 'London's Tudor Palaces Revisited' with great interest. Although not qualified to comment on the likes and dislikes of medieval archaeologists, I can thoroughly concur with his wish for coherent strategy instead of 'ad hoc' site by site publication. Indeed this is MOLAS policy, and we are mid-way through a very major publication programme, generously funded by English Heritage, which aims to provide a coherent strategy for publication on a thematic basis. Unfortunately the Museum of London sites mentioned in the article fall outside its remit, but lack of immediate action should not be confused with lack of concern. Of the sites in the article, the Tower Postern is at an advanced stage and the importance of Baynards Castle fully realised. In both cases we are actively seeking funding support separate to the more traditional agencies. Baynards Castle is one of six projects identified by the City of London Archaeological Trust as being of the highest priority, and that organisation is actively seeking funds for publication. In the present climate of budget cuts and commercialised archaeology, much is still being achieved, and this is to the credit of the specialist staff working in London archaeology and their dedication to research the city's past in all its facets.

I can also find sympathy with David's concern at the way archives become dispersed, although I would disagree that the Museum of London, Historic Royal Palaces and English Heritage are 'competing' organisations, and material held by the Museum of London and the Palaces if 'scattered to the four winds' has at least not blown too far. However, these are minor quibbles; the main point made by David is the need for an accessible archive. Whether this should be based on the Royal Palaces or within the wider context of material from Tudor London as a whole is a moot point, and a London-wide archive would achieve both aims. Whether this is the responsibility of English Heritage, local authorities or the Museums and Galleries Commission and central government is a debate being addressed by the present national survey into archaeological archives. In the meantime, this case study highlights the urgent need to resource properly the excavated archaeological resource for both researchers and general public.

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## Archaeological evaluations in London

I WAS SURPRISED to read Chris Phillpott's article 'London evaluations in the 1990s' in the Summer issue of *London Archaeologist*. It is set in 1992-3 and therefore many of the issues raised are now somewhat out-of-date and do not allude to the great improvement which the advent of PPG16 has provided in the protection of the archaeological resource.

I think it would be valuable to put right some of the assumptions made in the paper, which might have given cause for alarm as to how the archaeology of London is being curated. All work undertaken in London, evaluations included, is underpinned by research objectives which have regional and site-specific questions to answer. The Greater London Sites and Monuments Record (GLSMR) systemically records information gained from all interventions, including where investigations have identi-

fied absence of evidence. As the Unitary Development Plans come up for review, the Greater London Archaeology Advisory Service (GLAAS) reconsider the archaeological priority areas, which act as indicators of where significant archaeological potential is known in each borough, although they are not the only areas of potential.

I hope your readers will take the opportunity to consult the GLSMR when undertaking research, and see for themselves how things have improved since the advent of PPG16, and particularly since the early 1990s which Chris Phillpott referred to.

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DOUBTLESS DR. PHILLPOTT'S article will raise a certain amount of controversy, which can be a good thing, and we are glad to see some additional publicity being given to the excellent report he wrote for SCOLA a couple of years ago. However, he is somewhat premature in his predictions concerning the details of SCOLA's next project.

We are certainly hoping to promote an 'evaluation of evaluations' in the capital, but the precise form this will take has not yet been fixed. At present we are looking into the possibility of testing the level of confidence that can be placed on the results achievable or achieved during evaluation. It is simplistic to claim, as Chris does, that 'a successful evaluation is one that correctly assesses the site': there will be a sliding scale, not an on/off switch (if I may mix my metaphors). It is important to know the confidence that can be associated with the results of different evaluation strategies in the particular site conditions prevailing in London.

The project will not aim to update the basic findings of our PPG16 survey – to some extent that is already happening as a result of the welcome annual reporting system introduced by GLAAS. SCOLA is monitoring the results of this, and will discuss refinements with Jez Reeve. The survey we are proposing to commission will concentrate on a narrower field.

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## Westminster Abbey bell

THIS ENQUIRY is not about any of the reports of the latest issue of the magazine, but about a single feature of, probably, the saddest day of this decade: the Funeral Day of Diana, Princess of Wales.

When we were all watching the televised broadcast of the funeral bier being brought to the Abbey for the Service, all we could hear was the sonorous sound of the Bell: can anyone tell us how big that bell is, and also how old? For I believe that it is at least a ton in weight; that it was made about AD 1295; and that it could be the workmanship of the famous bell-founder Paul the Potter of Whitechapel. Can anyone confirm the general accuracy of the supposition that is made here, please?

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