

# Commentary

by Gromaticus

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## A smattering of elementary strategy

THE GREAT dilemma of modern archaeology is that archaeological work should be guided by research questions, while archaeological opportunities are almost all provided by the demands of development. Can these two apparently opposing principles be reconciled? If so, how? The answer, we are told, is through the use of strategies – broad frameworks of general questions which can be brought to bear as circumstances arise. The production of a strategy for London has therefore been eagerly awaited for some time.

In this context, one must welcome the recent circulation of a draft paper *Capital Archaeology: strategies for sustaining the legacy of a world city* from the Greater London Archaeological Advisory Service of English Heritage. It defines ten strategic themes – Chronology, change and continuity, River and estuary, City, hinterland and region, Urban status and royal power, Personal and communal space, Ritual and religion, Migration and community, Agriculture and subsistence, Industry and industrialisation, London, Britain and the world – with some suggestions as to where and how they might be applied. Two new projects make their appearance in this section: the *Westminster Urban Archaeology Assessment* and the *Thames Landscape Strategy: Hampton to Kew*.

The themes are followed by a section on *Places and Landscapes*, which provides an extensive background to the more intensive themes. While not decrying the value of landscape archaeology, even in suburban London, a cynic might suggest that the point of this section is to mop up any sites that don't fall into any themes. It's very hard to find

anything to disagree with, even if one wanted to – it's all very 'motherhood and apple pie'. Nevertheless, the document leaves one strangely unexcited.

Why is this? First, the concluding section *Ways and Means* is long on platitudes, such as the current buzz-word 'sustainability', but low on resources. It's all about enabling, but little about doing, archaeology. English Heritage's role is seen as 'promoting policies that ...', but who will implement them? It fails to mention, let alone tackle, the most serious obstacle to research into London's archaeology: the ever-increasing fragmentation of the archaeological record. Second, the document's great weakness is its lack of a clearly defined target; it's stated recipients are Local authority officers and elected members, National Government, the people of Greater London, and Those professionally involved. It's also clear that GLAAS are to some extent writing for themselves, to create a strategy to which they can refer as and when necessary. It is too much to expect any one document to meet all these needs. Two cheers, perhaps, but back to the drawing board yet again.

## Subscriptions

AT THIS YEAR'S A.G.M., the decision was taken to increase the issue price to £2.50 and the annual subscription rate to £10 (U.S.A. and Canada \$20, by air \$25), with effect from the Autumn issue (no. 10). This is the first increase for six years, and the price will be kept at the new level for at least four years. The current volume will consist of twelve regular issues, plus three annual supplements (*Round-ups*) and the index. The decision was also taken to transfer the business address to 8 Woodview Crescent, Hildenborough, Tonbridge, Kent TN11 9HD.

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## Annual Lecture and Meeting

THE TWENTY-NINTH A.G.M. of the *London Archaeologist* was held on Tuesday 12 May at the Institute of Archaeology, 31-34 Gordon Square. The following officers were elected: Editor, Clive Orton; Secretary, Nesta Caiger; Advertising and Promotion, Roy Stephenson; Subscriptions, Shiela Broomfield; Managing Editor, David Gaimster. Tribute was paid to Nicholas Fuentes, who had stood down as Managing Editor, and Betsey Kentish, who was standing down as Advertising and

Promotions Secretary, both after many years of service. The auditor, Tony Snitter, was thanked and re-elected. Two new members were elected to the Publication Committee, representing the Enfield Archaeological Society and the Extra-Mural Archaeological Society. The accounts showed a deficit on the year, and an increase in the subscription rate was approved (see above). After the close of business, Dr. Edward Impey spoke on recent archaeological work at the Tower of London.