

Archaeologists voice their opinions

IN OUR Autumn 2001 issue (*Mosaic*, vol. 9, no. 10, 292) we reported that the All-Party Parliamentary Archaeology Group (APPAG) was carrying out an enquiry into the Current State of Archaeology in the UK. The deadline for submissions has now passed, and over 250 have been received, from both individuals and organisations. Issues raised include the preservation and management of sites under threat from development and agriculture, the lack of a government strategy for protecting them, the inadequacies of PPG 16 and the undervaluing of the important part played by amateur archaeologists. The group's website, www.sal.org.uk/appag, contains a summary of the issues raised, and a list of those who submitted their views.

This evidence will form the basis of a report which is intended to pave the way for far-reaching changes in government policy and legislation. APPAG is also organising a series of select committee-style meetings in which representative bodies will answer questions arising from the responses. Planned for the early summer, the sessions will invite government and non-governmental organisations, the voluntary sector, museums and education professionals to give their views.

Mortimer Wheeler House

AS FORETOLD in our previous issue (*Mosaic*, p. 320), the Museum of London's second site, Mortimer Wheeler House, opened to the public on 7 February. The London Archaeological Archive and Research Centre (LAARC), which includes a visitor centre and study areas for researchers, is now open Monday to Friday 9 am to 8.30 pm, and the first and third Saturday of each month 10 am to 4 pm. Use of the LAARC is free of charge, by appointment.

Mortimer Wheeler House is also the home of much of the Museum's Social and Working History Collections, which includes architectural fragments, tools and machinery, and materials associated with London workshops, factories, shops and homes. An important group of London-related telecommunications material, part of the *Connected Earth* collection, will soon be transferred to the Museum from British Telecom. Access to the collection is again by appointment.

Mortimer Wheeler House is on Eagle Wharf Road, near the junction with New North Road. Buses 141, 271 and 76 stop nearby, and Old Street and Angel underground, as well as Essex Road rail station, are within walking distance. There is coach or minibus parking in front of the building if specially arranged, so why not think about a local society visit?

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Fathom it out with the British Museum

THE BRITISH MUSEUM has announced that it has joined Fathom, the knowledge and education organisation whose website can be found at www.fathom.com. In doing so it has joined many other national museums, universities and publishers who provide a wide range of learning experiences, from free seminars and articles to paid-for courses. The initial range of courses developed by the Museum with Fathom include a free e-seminar on 'Agatha Christie and Archaeology', to tie in with its major exhibition, and features on Cleopatra and the history of European currencies. The British Museum is already well known for its COMPASS object tours and its *Ancient Civilisations* sites, which support the National Curriculum.

A Fathom course that may particularly interest readers is the e-course 'Poverty, Wealth and History in the East End of London: Life and Work', by Paul Johnson, Professor of Economic History at the London School of Economics. The course costs £31, and the material takes between three and five hours to work through, within six months. For more information, visit www.fathom.com.

Jewish ritual bath found on City excavation

THE EXCAVATIONS at 20-30 Gresham Street, carried out by MOLAS and Aoc Archaeology Group, have revealed an early 13th-century ritual bath, or *mikveh*, at sub-cellar level alongside Milk Street. This suggests that one of the upper rooms of the house above (none of which survived) may have been converted to a private synagogue. The *mikveh* has been dismantled stone by stone, thanks to funding from the Bevis Marks Trust, and a suitable site for its rebuilding is being sought. (Source: *Archaeology Matters*, no. 16, December 2001).

Fly to the past from HEIRPORT

A NEW WEBSITE for archaeologists and historians, HEIRPORT (Historic Environment Information Resources Portal), was launched on 23 January. It allows users to search several national heritage databases simultaneously: the adscatalogue ArchSearch, CANMORE (the Scottish National Monuments Record), SCRAN (the Scottish Cultural Resources Network) and the Portable Antiquities scheme database. The new portal has been developed for HEIRNET (the Historic Environment Information Resources Network) to enable organisations holding information about the historic environment to join together, sharing skills and improving access to their resources. It is hoped that in the future information will be added from museums, the National Monuments Record and lottery-funded projects.

Use of HEIRPORT is free for amateur and academic researchers; it can be found at <http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/heirport/>.

Great Hall re-opens at Ightham Mote

ONE OF THE London area's favourite historic houses, Ightham Mote near Sevenoaks, is undergoing a major programme of conservation. This year the Great Hall and Jacobean staircase re-open after a project costing £800,000. The final phase, the conservation of the South West Quarter starts this year at an estimated cost of £2m – the largest such project ever undertaken by the National Trust. Interpretation panels illustrate the ongoing work, and a *Conservation in Action* exhibition gives further information on the work done since 1989. There will also be occasional limited access to a viewing platform to witness conservation work at first hand, plus limited access to the 15th-century tower.

Sharing skills in north London

The Hendon & District Archaeological Society (HADAS) has recently published the results of a resistivity survey carried out on behalf of the Enfield Archaeological Society in the grounds of Myddleton House just north of Forty Hall in Enfield. The results confirmed the presence of a building, probably the Tudor manor house known as Bowling Green House, beneath the lawn and flowerbeds of Myddleton House. This is the second such survey carried out by HADAS on behalf of a neighbouring society (the first was at Copped Hall near Waltham Abbey), and shows a welcome trend towards collaboration between local societies in the sharing of specialist skills and equipment. (source: HADAS Newsletter January 2002).

HADAS has also announced the launch of its new website, <http://www.hadas.org.uk>.